

Working with Physical Exposure in Contemporary Outdoor Dance

Paula Kramer

Coventry University, England

Introduction

This article is primarily based on my practice-as-research PhD in Dance, which I completed at Coventry University (UK) in 2015 (Kramer, 2015). Most specifically it draws on the movement and performance practices that I have developed and carried out in conjunction with (as well as beyond) this doctoral project, such as the making and showing of a performative afternoon entitled: *body, trees & things* (2012). In particular, the present article proposes to configure *physical exposure* as a relevant practice for contemporary outdoor dance, one that invites and supports working in confederation with the liveliness and agency of materials and atmospheres on site. I have developed four modes of physical exposure that I call *transitioning, walking, dwelling* and *moving-dancing*, which I introduce in the course of this text. I consider these four to be intricately connected and of mutual influence and I move freely between them in my working rhythm of preparing performance work or teaching. I thus use this differentiation as a tool to allow for different aspects of physical exposure to come into view, whilst proposing that *intermaterial confederations* as well as performance making happen within and across these practices.

My use of concepts such as *confederation* and *agency* draw on the emerging field of new *materialism* and most particularly on the work of political theorist Jane Bennett. In particular I position the human-world relationship to manifest through confederations made up of materials of different orders, which I indicate with the term *intermaterial*.

My core trajectory, in this article as well as beyond, is to further our thinking on

things, objects and materials as having liveliness, agency and autonomy rather than being considered to be passive or dead matter that is fully available for human projection and consumption. Jane Bennett's work in particular inquires directly into how our world might be different if we thought of materiality as lively, of our own bodies as heterogeneous assemblages and the locus of agency as shared, confederate and distributed (although not necessarily equally) between humans and non-humans (2010). She proposes for example that our world may not be filled "with ontologically distinct categories of beings (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations" (2010, p. 99). Based on my research I suggest that such confederations can be experienced and made use of in the making of dance work. I further argue that the experience of such confederations offer possibilities for inspiring a move away from an ontology that positions the human being as the sole and central force of creation and decision-making and supports moving towards a decentralised human position that exists in changing confederations. Such a repositioning of the human seems to become growingly relevant in the context of the humanly caused ecological, economical and political crises we are currently facing.

Tracing the Roots of my Movement Practice

My movement and performance practice has been influenced by studying several movement and body-work techniques to varying degrees, including Authentic Movement, Contact Improvisation, Body-Mind Centering® (BMC®) and Klein Technique™.¹ Most influential however, has been my work with movement practitioners who work outdoors, in particular Bettina Mainz (GER) and Helen Poynor (UK). The work of both is influenced (among other sources) by *Joged Amerta/Amerta Movement*, a movement practice that has been developed since the early

¹ Authentic Movement is a form of "self directed movement [...] usually done with eyes closed and attention directed inward, in the presence of at least one witness" (Authentic Movement Community n.d.). Authentic Movement was first developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse (1911 – 1979). Contact Improvisation is a duet-based movement form "with dancers supporting each others' weight while in motion" (Novack, 1990, p. 8). The form was first developed by US-American dancers Nancy Stark Smith (b. 1952) and Steve Paxton (b. 1939) in the 1970s. BMC® is "an integrated and embodied approach to movement, the body and consciousness" developed by Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen (USA), who opened the School of Body-Mind Centering® in 1973 (School for Body-Mind Centering, 2014). Klein Technique™ works "at the level of the bone, not the traditional level of the muscles" and is a movement and bodywork practice that aims in particular at professional dancers. It was developed in the US, initially by Susan Klein in 1972, and furthered in collaboration with Barbara Mahler (Klein and Mahler, 2001).

1980s by Indonesian movement artist Suprpto Suryodarmo in a unique intercultural setting between Java, Indonesia, where Suprpto Suryodarmo is based, and Western Europe as well as to some extent North America. *Amerta* expert Sandra Reeve (UK) describes the work as “a somatic and performance practice” that, amongst other specifications “pays attention to environmental embodiment and attaches crucial importance to the mutual interdependence and co-creation of organism and environment” (2010, p. 189 – 190). The name *Amerta* translates as “the nectar of life” (e.g. Bloom, Galanter and Reeve, 2014, p. 308) and has been slightly modified in 2010, when Suprpto Suryodarmo began to refer to his practice as *Joged Amerta*, which Sandra Reeve translates as “the moving-dancing nectar of life” (Reeve, 2010, p. 189). This shift gave dance a stronger presence in the name of this movement practice and further made the term *Amerta Movement* available to be used as a more generic term for work that is influenced by Suprpto Suryodarmo (Bloom, Galanter and Reeve 2014, p. 308-309), which is how I use the term here and in the context of my own work.

My first encounter with *Amerta Movement* influenced movement work was completely incidental and happened through meeting Bettina Mainz in 1998 in the recreational sports programme at the Free University of Berlin. I was studying political science at the time and had not yet shifted my main attention to the study of contemporary outdoor dance and movement practices. One of the crucial points was for me to experience movement in the expanded field of the world ‘at large’: part of the work took place outdoors, in Forlorn school yards under thin pine trees growing in the limited spaces of the city as well as corn fields, gravel-pits, pastures or woodlands around Berlin. Slowly this particular engagement with the outdoors through a dance practice that allowed me to find my own way of moving began to occupy a central place in my life. It offered a context in which I could attend to and be with the world with and through my body, rather than only critically thinking about both world and body as I did as part of my feminist leaning political science curriculum. I began to notice and follow my body, to trust it, express it and use it for the creation of dance and movement. It was in this context that I first learned to expose my body, to the things, objects and materials that comprise our world at large and to be involved with this abundance in and through creative practice. More than a decade later and during the course of my PhD research the work of

Helen Poynor and also of Simon Whitehead (both UK) particularly impacted my way of working as well as thinking about contemporary outdoor dance. In terms of exposure Helen Poynor's work in particular supported me in trusting and relying on the possibility of working with physical exposure throughout a complete cycle of making and showing work, rather than only in the context of teaching workshops or in specified moments of a rehearsal process. Simon Whitehead's work particularly influenced my understanding of *walking* as a practice of exposure, which I return to in a later section of this article. Working with Suprpto Suryodarmo himself (when teaching in Europe) has also impacted my movement practice in recent years, as well as the work of outdoor practitioners Jennifer Monson (US) and Sandra Reeve (UK). All these individuals have inspired me to understand the site that I work in as a partner, teacher and co-choreographer and have encouraged me to work through exposing myself to what is present on site rather than predetermining movement material, a particular narrative or spatial arrangements.

Working With Physical Exposure

I now turn more specifically to the process of creating *body, trees & things*, which began in February 2011 and from which I have distilled the notions on physical exposure that I put forth here. The working process was at first entirely informal and only after six months moved towards a series of three (still rather informal) public performances. In March 2012 I then began to prepare the formal performative contribution to my PhD, which I entitled *body, trees & things* and which was presented as a public performative afternoon in May 2012. The whole working process took place in a field with trees and a creek that stretched along the side of a road, close to the village of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, near the city of Coventry. One of the most visible features of this field is a group of several impressive and significantly old, half-burnt chestnut trees that were probably struck by lightning. Much of my work took place in this small copse, which I came to refer to as the *Chestnut Site* (for images see p. 11).

As part of this working process I began to further develop, to better understand and also to document my own movement practice. Documentary outcomes of this process include two small booklets with words and images. The first one encompasses the preparatory phase and is entitled *trees, ... music & movements, seen*

and unseen. The second one is entitled *body, trees & things - preparing performing*. The main aim of the preparatory phase was to get to know the site and experience how it functions under various (performance) conditions. It was in this phase that I began to work more consciously as well as confidently through physical exposure - to the site, to the weather, to my current condition and to the practice of movement. In this time I often worked in the generous company of musician Michaël Lacout from Birmingham, who brought his double bass out to the site to co-practice with me and who was involved in and supported two of the preparatory performances as well as the final piece.



Fig 1: Double bass and strings on the field, Stoneleigh (UK), 14.04.2012

At the heart of my practice was the commitment to spend a significant amount of time on site, to expose myself and to work with and from the materials and atmospheres present on site, as well as to follow my body and to not work against its needs. From these basic orientations I generated both the wider structure of the event as well as the specific movement material. When writing my thesis I began to use the term *physical exposure* for this process. Both the term and what I seek to express with it is resonant of Helen Poynor's words and ways of working, which she described to me in an interview:

I don't initially start [...] from an idea. I start by moving. Or going to the

place. And/or moving in the place. And then the content comes from that. [...] Sometimes I'll start, I'll be in a place [...] [and] I'll have an image [...]. So I start from that. But I don't find it's helpful to start from an idea because all that happens then is that I work from my head. And then I make a piece that's very not embodied. It needs to come from a physical encounter with the place. Even if what comes then is an image. And the same in terms of working in the studio, if I'm making a piece. (Interview 13.04.2011)

This conversation forms one of many instances that have encouraged me to work directly from and with the site through what Helen Poynor terms "physical encounter", beginning with the basic act of going somewhere and moving. I have chosen the term *exposure* instead of encounter to highlight a quality of yielding to the site, which I consider to be relevant in the context of my work. I seek to emphasise here the vulnerability of the human dancer in relationship to the site, a sense of being smaller than the site as well as opening towards its properties. In my experience such a sense of exposure is particularly obvious in severe weather conditions or when working in environments such as mountain ranges or cliffs and boulders by the sea, which immediately position the human being as exposed and vulnerable and only marginally relevant to the larger scheme of a particular weather or geographical feature. Exposure further suggests that I consider my humanness to be open in a way that allows the site to affect my system. Medievalist Eileen Joy calls this "self-donation, making ourselves hospitable so that things and events can take place in and with and around us, so that the world can happen *to us* for a change" (Joy, 2012, p. 170, original emphasis). I find resonance with this in Jane Bennett's hypothesis that "thing-power works by exploiting a certain porosity that is intrinsic to any material body" (Joy, 2012, p. 254), which she develops in her work on hoarders, whom she considers to be so sensitive to material agency that they basically become over-powered by it. I consider outdoor dance practice to be a site in which we can practise tuning our susceptibility to what Jane Bennett refers to as "the call of things" (2010, 2012) without succumbing to it defenceless as hoarders might, but instead answering this call with a process of making and creation.

The final piece *body, trees & things* consisted of four elements: a walk up to the performance site; an outdoor installation with things, objects and materials that spoke of the whole process of making; a solo performance; and a collective meal.²

² Elements such as the installation stand in relationship to the PhD as a whole, during which I develop-

Elements such as the walk up to the performance site, all concrete physical locations and the specific movement material were developed through physical exposure. Contrary to my expectation or imagination I noted for example on the fourth day of working on the final performance that it “*feels like I will not perform in the chestnut site. It could be the central gathering site with exhibit & then eating*” (drawing pad fieldnotes 01.04.2012). I was at first quite taken aback by the feeling that I would not perform in the copse that was most familiar to me and that I also considered to be the most spectacular site in this wider territory. Yet in the end this was the decision I took. For the final presentation the Chestnut Site became the central gathering site rather than the central performance site it had mostly been during the preparatory process. Day by day the whole event was pieced together by moving in many locations, physically testing their viability, listening to what emerged, working in dialogue and confederation with the site. After a few more days on site I began to set my solo performance on an open field, in relationship to a mid-size singular oak tree and a group of three small oak trees planted in a triangle around a large root that was left after cutting an old tree. Others also contributed to the forming of the event as a whole, for instance a pilgrim who was following a map with suggested hikes around Easter time, inspired the inclusion of a walk the audience took from the village church up to the site.³

Importantly I argue that physical exposure is not only a practice of making, but extends into performing. After the showing of *body, trees & things* I note “*how new pieces come, can come, still and even in performing, how life is revealed in the doing, how the dance comes about in the dance*” (reflective documentation of performance in drawing pad, May 2012). Whilst I had prepared and practised extensively, a core element of my performing was to keep my pores open, so to speak, and continue to physically expose myself to the site, to myself, to the audience, to the performance – in this specific moment in time. Open to notice the shifts, changes and liveliness of the various material confederations present on site, making offerings that allow for realising aspects that have not been realised in previous instances of practising or performing. Physical exposure thus remains current, also in the moment of performing.

ped participatory installations as a central method for research and dissemination. Further discussed in Kramer, 2011 and 2012b.

³ Alongside my experiences of Simon Whitehead’s walking practices and my own affinity to walking.

Transitioning

My practice on site is usually preceded by a phase of *transitioning*, which this section attends to. Transitioning here refers most specifically to the process of getting to a performance or teaching site, but also speaks of phases in between different activities on site. I understand such moments to be an inherent part of creative practice rather than separate from them. Working on a performance or the preparation of a workshop for example begins for me with getting ready and going to a site. Preparatory activities include getting dressed, considering the terrain and the weather, most often putting on some layer of waterproof clothing to facilitate moving on or near the ground. I gather food and water as well as something to write and draw, occasionally I take a photo and/or a video camera. Leaving the house then marks a shift in my way of being in the world. I begin to tune into and attend to my moving body as well as to open my perception to my environment in a way that I would describe as wider and less discerning than when I am out to run errands. Ideally my mode of transportation is walking, which I return to further below, but in the case of *body, trees & things* I most often cycled. In other cases, I use public transport and very seldom I am in a car. The experience of transitioning differs in each mode, but more relevant here is the significant shift of leaving the house and entering the phase of creative practice. I begin the process of making in this phase and in a hoarder kind of way (Bennett 2012), I tune my perceptual system for the call of things, objects and materials around me.

Walking

I consider walking to be the most effective mode of transitioning that I try to include where possible into my routines of making and teaching. But apart from getting to a site, my walking and roaming continues upon arrival, especially in the beginning of a creative process. In the case of *body, trees & things* I spent most of the first day with walking around what felt like the borders of the wider field, spending time just beyond a visible treeline that frames one of its sides (along with a river). This was a territory that I had never been to prior and did not return to throughout the whole process. It is often one of my beginning gestures to mark the wider border of a site, a process during which I open fully to the possibilities of a location and explore uncharted territory. Often I never return to the places I walk

early on in a process. Like a herding dog I circle fields of practice, within which I then develop my work. The material features of a site guide my route, in the case of *body, trees & things* these were treelines, bushes, blossoms, roots and a river to which I respond with *walking* and charting the territory of a site.

The commitment to and taking seriously of my own walking practices has been facilitated by encountering and working with movement artist Simon Whitehead in Scotland and Wales. He describes walking as something he does almost obsessively, both during the day and at night, which is something we speak about in our first and unrecorded conversation (fieldnotes 23.11.2010) and which I practise extensively when participating in his workshops.⁴ In an interview with US-American movement artist and writer Melinda Buckwalter in 2009 Simon Whitehead speaks about his walking practice and the making of work through walking when he first moved to rural Wales from London in the early 1990s.

The first thing I did was walk a path in the winter from my door up the mountain each day, and by walking, making a physical path that was reclaimed by the mountain in the spring when the grass grew back. [...] I think the walking was the first, instinctive response. Early in my life here in Wales, I made a dance piece that emerged from walking the coast (littoral) close to my home each day over a season. I collected artifacts [sic] on the walks (an old caravan amongst others) and placed them in the performance space. (Whitehead and Buckwalter 2009, n.p.)

Simon Whitehead's walking is presented here as a physical way of dealing with a new place and landscape, of getting into contact and beginning to make work by stepping outside. It is a direct exposure of the physical self to the immediate surroundings, which Simon Whitehead frames as an "instinctive response". Walking here functions as a practice of arrival, as a way of making contact with one's material context and as a process for making work. From my perspective Simon Whitehead describes a physical conversation with the natural environment, a dialogue he enters by marking a path in the winter, which the mountain takes back through overgrowth in the spring. I consider this to be an example for intermaterial confederation that expands across seasons in which both human and mountain

⁴ As part of my research I participated in *4x4 Dance, Body and the Environment Workshop* (18. – 29.04.2011), which took place in Scotland and was facilitated by Simon Whitehead and Jennifer Monson amongst others, as well as *Locator 22* entitled *at SEA* (16. – 19.07.2011), which took place in Wales and was facilitated by Simon Whitehead.

speak, act or engender change.

One thing I have learned from working with Simon Whitehead is that walking helps me to get a sense of my own materiality. In the context of his workshops I sometimes struggled with working with fewer practices that supported me in landing in my material body than I was used to from working with Bettina Mainz or Helen Poynor. But in this context I also realised that a kind of sheer exposure to working and walking outdoors also bears fruits. With ample time spent walking and running and being in direct contact with outdoor materials such as water, rock, heather, wind, tree, rain and so on, a sense of arriving in my body happened almost on its own, aided by the time spent in exposure to the abundant presence of materials.

In the context of working with Simon Whitehead I have in particular experienced a slow adaptation into what I would call my *outdoor body*, a process that takes me a few days and feels like a slow kind of morphing. It has to do with being outdoors, running and walking extensively, exposed to all kinds of weather and circumstances. To this my body reacts with a growing 'fitness' but also with a greater appreciation and ability to respond to outdoor sites and materials. During the 4x4 workshop with Simon Whitehead and others in Scotland, in which I participated in 2011, I experienced a significant shift from first feeling overwhelmed and exhausted by all the outdoor walking time, to being drawn to the outdoors more and more. On the eighth day of the workshop I note: "*Since the day before yesterday I can really feel that I only want to be outside*" (fieldnotes 26.04.2011). This shift also occurs for me during extended hikes, when after a few days of walking and sleeping outdoors, indoor spaces and a sedentary lifestyle begin to seem like far removed realities.

I thus understand walking to be a practice of physical exposure that offers a way of arriving within a geographical territory whilst simultaneously arriving in the territory of one's (outdoor) body. An unknown area is made familiar through exposing the body to it and moving around and within it. At the same time the physical material of the body that enables this movement begins to rise or to speak.

Dwelling

The third exposure practice that I now turn to is *dwelling*, a term that is prominent

in the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger (e.g. 1971) and that anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000, 2005, 2011) extensively engages with. I use dwelling here not in direct relationship to these bodies of work, but rather to delineate activities that I carry out on site that are more of a sedentary than of a transitory nature, such as eating or sleeping but also documentary practices such as drawing, writing or photographing. Often after a first scan of and walk in, across and around a territory, but sometimes also prior, I settle into a site and dwell. Specific dwelling routines vary across projects and in the case of making of *body, trees & things* they included taking a first photograph of the Chestnut Site after entering the field through a gate just off the road from Stoneleigh village.



Fig. 2-4: Arrival photos 08.04., 11.04. and 08.05.2012, Stoneleigh (UK), Chestnut Site

I had also tied twelve small ribbons on various branches on the fourth day of working on the site to document the growth of the leaves during the phase that I worked there. At some point of each site visit I took a photograph of each of them, documenting the passing of time as it materialised in their growth.



Fig. 5-7: 06.04., 15.04. and 30.04.2012, Stoneleigh (UK), Chestnut Site

Every day on site I took several breaks to eat and drink and almost every day to sleep on site at some point, sometimes seated, sometimes lying down. Sleeping became part of my routine based on the commitment that I would not work against my body, which included sleeping when tired. But beyond this following of basic needs I further consider and experience sleeping on site as a way of dwelling and relaxing that supports my integration into the materiality of the site. On the second day of working on site for *body, trees & things* I note:

i don't know when i got here and how much time passed then, but i may have slept a good hour. deep, heavy, full sleep. not just a little rest. sleep-sleep-sleep-sleep.

sleep under the big oak tree, sleep under the huge oak tree, branches wide and strong with fingers and feathers moving in the wind.

the big trunk in which i can rest, offering many niches. i am not sure i can dance here, but i can sit and i can sleep both of it really well. (Fieldnotes 29.03.2012)

After taking these notes I move in this particular location and then sketch and write into my drawing pad:

after a long deep sleep under the big oak i entangle my hair with the fingertips of the oak branches. the rough branches against my skin i feel the bounciness of the branches their feathery reaching o[u]t. the tree is a big upside down lung anyway (Fig. 8 - Drawing pad fieldnotes 29.03.2012)

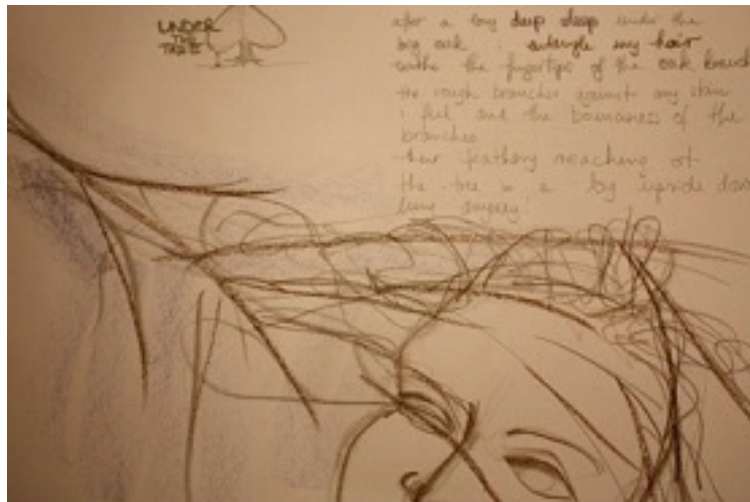


Fig. 8: 29.03.2012, photograph of my drawing pad

Described in these notes I find rather tender intermaterial confederations, in this case between fingertips, hair and branches. Human hands and hair intertwine with tree hands and hair, human branches meet tree branches, human material confederates with tree material. It is my understanding that these confederations are supported by just having slept. I often begin moving right after waking up, having settled deeply into my material body when sleeping and harvesting upon waking

a profound physical relaxation, accompanied by a momentary cancelling out of all prior activities and imaginations. Depending on how soundly I have slept, I also note an overall softening of the exact discerning qualities of my mind and sometimes I begin working in a transition state between sleeping and waking. I have been introduced to such states of relaxation as a relevant quality for the making of movement in the context of *Amerta Movement* and Bettina Mainz positions relaxation as a “practice to increase our potential for receptivity and communication” (Mainz, 2011, p. 145).

I thus argue, that not only motioning but also resting, eating or sleeping – what I summarise as dwelling here – support a material landing and integration into a site that fosters intermaterial confederations in the process of movement making.

Moving-Dancing

The fourth and final practice of physical exposure that I develop here is *moving-dancing*, a term I use to speak of movement processes that most resemble a classical understanding of the word ‘dance’. The term moving-dancing draws on the literal translation of *Joged Amerta* as “the moving-dancing nectar of life” (Reeve, 2010, p. 189) as well as on Suprpto Suryodarmo’s teaching practice in which he often uses this combined term, saying for example: “How I can feel my moving-dancing connecting the constellation?” (fieldnotes 09.06.2011). I make a distinction here between moving-dancing and transitioning, walking or dwelling to mark moving-dancing as a specific practice with its own unique qualities of attention and expression, without however suggesting that moving-dancing is the only moment of performance making. Moving-dancing here refers to phases of working in which I most fully relinquish to the manifold possibilities of creating bodily movement and follow as well as bring forth freely forming and ever changing ‘dancerly’ movements of my body. Transitioning, walking and dwelling may have a closer resemblance to daily life intentions or tasks, yet as I have shown, a wider performative event comes into being through all the mentioned practices of physical exposure working together.

What I have learned from both Bettina Mainz and Helen Poynor, is that one way of developing moving-dancing in relationship to materials on site is to begin with

practices that support the dancer in sensing his or her own materiality. This strategy informs my moving-dancing, which I develop through exposing myself to materials, often beginning with my own. I then aim to leave all assumptions on what should happen to the side, comparable to a phenomenological epoché or bracketing that the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl has brought forth (e.g. Ravn, 2009, p. 42f), and work with the attitude of the “What if ...?” questions developed by dancer and choreographer Deborah Hay (e.g. Hay 2000). I ask for example: “What if my body could touch materials directly? What if sensing the different qualities of contact, temperature or texture could inspire and guide my movement?” The possibility of direct contact builds on the notion that “*all has fact*”, which I have developed in my doctoral thesis in relationship to the work of Suprpto Suryodarmo. Here I suggest that his working practice allows for working with things, objects and materials in a way that cuts through the levels and layers of meaning that form an inseparable part of any thing, object, being, material or action. In a workshop I attended, Suprpto Suryodarmo suggested for example: “Let go of the image but still be in the fact. And then you can see about imagination” (fieldnotes 09.06.2011). In my understanding Suprpto Suryodarmo’s work does not aim to deny the simultaneity of meaning and material nor does it indicate an essential truth located in the material. It rather opens what I consider to be a possibility of direct contact in movement practice, a way of permeating the layers of meaning inscribed in things, objects and materials. I have found useful resonance for this way of working in the writings of object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman, who suggests that all has its own “reality”, beyond (but not ignorant of) the multiple layers of meaning, knowledge or mythology. His work strongly highlights the autonomy of this reality, suggesting that all entities (human and non-human, animate and inanimate alike) have a presence of their own which is partially beyond (human) access. At the same time it is possible to sense and be in relationship with this reality – just not entirely (Kramer, 2012a, p.84). Graham Harman suggests that “we can never do justice to the full reality of things” (2015, p. 12) and in my moving-dancing among materials I find solace in the notion that I can be in contact with and influenced by the “fact” and “reality” of things, objects and materials, but do not have to claim either complete contact or full separation.

In moving-dancing, things, objects and materials make themselves felt and impact

our movement choices and qualities. Non-human materials affect and resonate in the human dancer and through intermaterial confederations the dance comes forth. It is therefore not only the human dancer that is making the movement, but it is through exposing ourselves and attending to materials and their effects on us that allows for movement to emerge. I further illuminate this suggestion with an example from making *body, trees & things* that I also discuss in 'Bodies, Rivers, Rocks and Trees: Meeting agentic materiality in contemporary outdoor dance practices' (2012a):

As I lie down in the grass I can work with the sky moving. My back in the grass, my hair getting wet, I move sideways with the clouds [...] there is a lightness I can draw from, a distance, a cloud texture, [...] shades of grey moving, for a moment the rain has stopped, the air is cool against my wet face. (Fieldnotes 25.04.2012)

A witness was present with me on site on that occasion and this particular movement section emerged as she was witnessing one of the first run-throughs of my solo performance. I was positioned near an old root in a triangle of small oak trees, and whilst everything until that point that I had performed for her had been somewhat settled, I was now entering territory that I as of yet had less clarity about. But here a distinct movement quality emerged which then became a part of the final performance that I felt particularly clear about. In my essay I have reflected on this instance as follows:

I am exposed to rain, my feet are soaked and the grass is entangling itself with my body, hair and skin. [...] This combination suddenly has me notice and acknowledge the sky, as both immaterial and distant, as well as filled with material and movement qualities that, together with the surface contact to the ground, directly affect my body. I am no longer 'alone' in producing movement but can feel both ground and sky rise towards me, allowing me to leave all questions behind, all lostness of what might come next, and inviting instead the pleasure of 'just moving'. (Kramer, 2012a, p. 89)

Both this moment of moving-dancing and my previous writing about it speak of intermaterial confederations being brought forth by physical exposure in outdoor movement practice: movement develops through my being exposed to rain, grass, ground and sky, all rising towards me and directly affecting my corporeality.

The role of the witness here is relevant in so far as I suggest that heightened perceptivity and attentiveness on the part of the dancer can aid the sensing of and corresponding with material qualities and textures. The presence of a witness can support such heightened attention through providing a *demand* that I am exposed to: a human presence that receives and responds to my movement practice. As I suggest elsewhere, such demands affect the dancer who is practicing physical exposure: "The topography of the land, uneven features, thorns, animals, infrastructure, vegetation, refuse, darkness, buildings, weather, other humans – all place an immediate demand of attentiveness on the mover, thus activating the perceptual system" (Kramer, 2012a, p. 85).

Conclusion

This article positions physical exposure as a way of working in contemporary outdoor dance that allows for honing our abilities of discerning and making use of the multiple sources that bring movement about. Physical exposure invites material agency to affect dance making and fosters the emergence of intermaterial confederations. More specifically this article differentiates between four exposure practices, which I have called *transitioning*, *walking*, *dwelling* and *moving-dancing*. I propose that all four are responsive ways of working with material agency and the close reading of all four that this article provides suggests that it is not the sole artist, human or choreographer that brings movement work about, but rather that it is through intermaterial confederations (and thus in an always already expanded field) that we live and create. I further suggest that working with physical exposure is an example of what Tim Ingold calls thinking through making (2012, n.p. and 2013, p. ix). In a lecture of this title which he gave in 2012 in Finland, he suggests that making through thinking is a way of "projecting form onto material" whereas thinking through making is based on what he calls a "joining with the movements of materials and awareness as they feel their way ahead in real time" (2012, n.p.). Tim Ingold thus describes a process of following along rather than jumping ahead. He acknowledges that "thinking does have a habit of running ahead of making [...] our imagination runs ahead of what we do" however, he suggests that "if we're working with materials close up there's a limit to how fast we can move. Materials have their own friction, their own drag, they hold us back" (2012, n.p.). I argue

that the examples of this article also speak of how material “drag” can impact on dance making, be it in this case the way in which *body, trees & things* was pieced together in a slow confederation with the materials on site, or the commitment to sleep when tired. Whilst my mind also made projections into the future, it still took many transitions, walks and times of dwelling and moving-dancing on site to finally determine what would happen where.

I suggest that this impact of materials that Tim Ingold describes in terms such as “friction” and “drag” is also noticeable as residue in my body after working with physical exposure among different materials. This residue informs my choices in performance making but also more generally affects my sense of being in the world. During my regular movement practice I note for example that: “*even if movement is ephemeral it is still there. not like a chair but more than a computer day*” (drawing pad fieldnotes, 26.08.2011). This describes material consequences of working with practices of physical exposure, the sense of something remaining and manifesting in the body. Whilst hours spent on the computer have the potential to leave me with a feeling of emptiness or not having done anything, I notice that movement practice leaves a different kind of feeling and sense of accomplishment, even if nothing in particular was produced and no trace of the actions are left. In another instance I note that “*egal was ich da mache im wald danach habe ich ein bisschen mehr luft + platz in mir*” (drawing pad fieldnotes, 04.11.2011) [“*no matter what I do in the woods, I have a bit more air + space in me afterwards” (my translation)]. This suggests an impact on my corporeality as I have a sense of having more space within me, such as space to breathe and to expand into.*

In summary I thus suggest that repeated practices of physical exposure as described in this article, practised in this case as transitioning, walking, dwelling and moving-dancing, lead to sensing material agency and noticing confederations with site in an almost inescapable way. Because our bodies are porous and permeable, as argued with Jane Bennett and Eileen Joy further above, we cannot but notice material agency and intermaterial confederations at work when exposing ourselves to a site. This, so my key argument, affects our dance making; but beyond creative practice also our life at large. I thus suggest that if we attend to material agency and intermaterial confederations, a decentralising shift

of the human positionality more generally is the consequence. If we notice how resting with rain, dancing in the cold or touching something smooth can affect and bring forth moving-dancing, it also becomes more evident how much we are a part of and ingrained with the material world, rather than in separation from and entitled to dominate it. A re-positioning of ourselves as part of a material world that is alive thus bears the potential to impact how we position ourselves in this world more generally and could affect human activity beyond the specific capabilities of dancing outdoors.

References

AUTHENTIC MOVEMENT COMMUNITY. About Authentic Movement, n.d.

Available at: <http://www.authenticmovementcommunity.org/about>.

Accessed on: 22 Apr. 2015.

BENNETT, JANE: Powers of the Hoard: Further Notes on Material Agency. In COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome (Ed.). *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*. Washington, DC: Oliphant Books, 2012, p. 237-269.

BENNETT, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

BLOOM, Katya, GALANTER, Margit, and REEVE, Sandra (eds.). *Embodied Lives. Reflections on the Influence of Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*. Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2014.

HARMAN, Graham. Strange Realism: On Behalf of Objects. *The Humanities Review* v. 12, n. 1, p. 3-18, 2015

HAY, Deborah. *My Body, the Buddhist*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2000

HEIDEGGER, Martin. Building Dwelling Thinking. In HEIDEGGER, Martin. (Ed) *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 145-161.

INGOLD, Tim. *Making: Archaeology, Anthropology, Art and Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2013.

INGOLD, Tim. Thinking through Making. Video of a lecture given at Tales from the North, Conference at the Institute for Northern Culture in Lapland, 12. April 2012. Available at: <http://syntheticzero.net/2014/03/12/tim-ingold-on-thinking-through-making/>. Accessed on: 05. Sept. 2014.

INGOLD, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge, 2011

INGOLD, Tim. Epilogue: Towards a Politics of Dwelling. *Conservation and Society* v. 3, n. 2, p. 501-508, 2005.

INGOLD, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge, 2000

JOY, EILEEN. You Are Here: A Manifesto. In COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome (Ed.). *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*. Washington, DC: Oliphant Books, 2012, p. 153-172.

KLEIN, Susan and MAHLER, Barbara. 'Klein Technique', version adapted by Mahler in 2008. New York: Susan Klein and Barbara Mahler School of Dance and Movement Studies, 2001. Available at: <https://barbaramahler.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/barbaramahler.pdf>. Accessed on: 01 May 2015.

KRAMER, Paula. *Dancing Materiality: A Study of Agency and Confederations in Contemporary Outdoor Dance Practices*. 2015. 232 p. Thesis (PhD, Dance). Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University, Coventry, 2015.

KRAMER, Paula. Bodies, Rivers, Rocks and Trees: Meeting Agentic Materiality in Contemporary Outdoor Movement Practices. *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* v. 17, n. 4, p. 83-91, 2012a

KRAMER, Paula. Dancing in Nature Space - Attending to Materials. In RAVN, Susanne and ROUHIAINEN, Leena (Eds.). *Dance Spaces. Practices of Movement*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2012b, p. 161-174.

KRAMER, Paula. Of Not Getting Lost: Making use of Materials. *Auditory Perspectives*, E-Journal on Visual and Art History n. 2, p. 1-7, 2011. Available at: <http://www.kunsttexte.de/index.php?id=907&L=1>. Accessed on: 25 Aug. 2011.

MAINZ, Bettina. Part 1, Body of Becoming and Progressing into no-Progress. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* v. 3 n. 1+2, p. 145-147, 2011.

NOVACK, Cynthia Jane. *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.

Ravn, Susanne. *Sensing Movement, Living Spaces: An Investigation of Movement Based on the Lived Experience of 13 Professional Dancers*. Saarbrücken: VDM, 2009.

REEVE, Sandra. Reading, Gardening and 'Non-Self': Joged Amerta and its Emerging Influence on Ecological Somatic Practice. *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* v. 2, n. 2, p. 189-203, 2010.

SCHOOL FOR BODY-MIND CENTERING: About BMC, 2014. Available at: <http://www.bodymindcentering.com/about>. Accessed on: 19 Apr. 2015.

WHITEHEAD, Simon and BUCKWALTER, Melinda. Simon Whitehead in Conversation with Melinda Buckwalter, 2009. Available at: <http://www.movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/?p=610>. Accessed on: 04 May 2015.

