

Chasing Sticks Around

A Report on the Tathra Bodyweather Workshop

Wambiri Youth Camp

June 1 – 10

2001

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When I begin to wish I were crippled – even though I am perfectly healthy – or rather that I would have been better off crippled, that is the first step towards Butoh.

Tatsumi Hijikata¹

I don't dance in the place, but I am the place.

Min Tanaka²

Our task is to stamp this provisional, perishing earth into ourselves so deeply, so painfully, so passionately, that its being may rise again, 'invisibly', in us.

Rainer Maria Rilke³

¹ Quoted in Jean Viala & Nourit Masson-Sekine, *Butoh, Shades of Darkness*, (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), p. 75.

² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³ Quoted in Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 375.

Contents

Acknowledgements	9
1. Introduction.....	10
The Participants	14
2. Preparation.....	15
<i>humility</i>	15
Annotated Packing List (In alphabetical order).....	16
Thursday 31/5/1 9:43 am.....	19
<i>a white wall</i>	20
<i>my body</i>	20
<i>previous workshop reports</i>	21
3. Day 1 Friday 1/6/1 Departure Day	23
<i>fagless but patched</i>	23
<i>the bus station</i>	24
<i>departure</i>	25
9:58 am Botany Rd.....	26
10:55 am North Wollongong	27
<i>ah wollongong!</i>	27
The Bus.....	28
3:10 pm Moruya	28
3:45 pm Narooma.....	29
4:40 pm 4km from Bega	29
4:45 pm Bega	29
<i>a call</i>	29
5:05 pm Bega	30
5:20 pm Bega	30
8:45 pm Tathra The workshop begins	31
Groundwork 1.....	32
Exercise 1 Hand and Breath.....	32
Exercise 2 Hand and Breath lying down.....	33

Exercise 3	String in mouth.....	33
Exercise 4	Walking backwards.....	34
	<i>stars</i>	34
4.	Day 2 Saturday 2/6/1	34
7 am	The first morning.....	34
7:30 am	Breakfast	35
8:30 am	Half an hour till the first MB session.....	35
	MB 1	35
	Manipulations 1	37
12:30 pm	Lunch	38
	1:20 pm	38
	Groundwork 2.....	39
Exercise 5	Cat's Ears.....	39
Exercise 6	10 Person String in Hand Blindfolded.....	40
Exercise 7	2 Person Blindfolded String Lead.....	41
Exercise 8	Blindfolded String Lead Feet Planted.....	41
	A Thought on the String.....	41
Exercise 9	3 People moving a Person in the Sand.....	42
	Another Thought on the String.....	42
Exercise 10	1mm/Sec Walk (Bisoku).....	42
Exercise 11	Sea Horse Ears.....	43
	7:35 pm	43
	Pathology Report Day 2	43
5.	Day 3 Sunday 3/6/1	44
7:30 am	Breakfast	44
	MB 2.....	44
	Manipulations 2.....	44
	<i>it's good</i>	44
	Lunch	45
	1:45 pm	45

Pathology Report Day 3	45
Groundwork 3.....	46
Exercise 12 Looking and Dwelling.....	46
Exercise 13 Sticks and Soundfield.....	47
Exercise 14 Soundfield Forehead Self-Draw.....	47
Exercise 15 Tube Finger Walk.....	48
Exercise 16 Giving 2 Hands into Breath.....	48
Exercise 17 3 Joints Twitch.....	49
Exercise 18 Stick Shuffle.....	49
Exercise 19 1cm/sec Walk with Stick.....	49
Exercise 20 Blindfold Run.....	50
Group discussion of my work.....	50
Chasing Sticks Around.....	51
6. Day 4 Monday 4/6/1	53
<i>weak winter sun</i>	53
The Coffee Story.....	53
Quote of the Day.....	56
MB 3.....	56
Manipulations 3.....	57
Lunch	57
Pathology Report Day 4	57
Groundwork 4.....	58
Exercise 21 Noh Warm-Up.....	58
Exercise 22 Dwelling and Talking.....	59
Exercise 22a Outer Dwelling and Talking.....	59
Exercise 22b Inner Dwelling and Talking.....	60
Exercise 22c Imagination Dwelling and Talking.....	60
Exercise 23 Talking to the Beach.....	61
Exercise 24 1mm/sec, 1cm/sec, 10cm/sec Walk in Water.....	62
Exercise 25 Giving Wind.....	62

Exercise 26	Time running.....	62
Exercise 27	Cats Going Home.....	63
	Dinner.....	63
10:13 pm	A Thought Before Bed.....	63
7. Day 5	Tuesday 5/6/1	64
	Breakfast.....	64
	8:35 am.....	64
	MB 4.....	64
	Manipulations 4.....	65
	Pathology Report Day 5.....	65
	Lunch.....	66
	Groundwork 5.....	66
Exercise 28	Mirror Walk.....	66
Exercise 29	Mirror Finger Follow.....	67
Exercise 30	Mirror Horizon Walk.....	67
	A stupid but interesting question.....	68
	Dinner.....	69
8. Day 6	Wednesday 6/6/1.....	70
9:38 am	The stupid question again.....	70
10:00 am	Clearing Land.....	71
12:10 pm	Top of Mt Gulaga.....	71
	<i>was it mallarmé</i>	71
	6 pm.....	73
	Dinner.....	74
	10 pm.....	74
	Groundwork 6.....	75
Exercise 31	Embodied Memory States.....	75
Exercise 32	Fire-Being.....	76
	<i>the world's eye</i>	76
8. Day 7	Thursday 7/6/1	78

Breakfast.....	78
Pathology Report Day 7 8:30 am	78
MB 5.....	78
Manipulations 5.....	79
Lunch	79
Groundwork 7.....	80
Exercise 33 Umbrella.....	80
Exercise 34 Focal Point Umbrella.....	80
Exercise 35 Noh Warm-up Exercises (No Sound).....	80
Exercise 36 Noh Warm-up Exercises.....	80
Exercise 37 Looking and Dwelling.....	80
Exercise 38 Looking and Dwelling With Finger Point.....	81
Exercise 39 Looking and Dwelling With Moving Body.....	81
Exercise 40 Broad Field Vision.....	82
Exercise 41 Giving Wind.....	82
Exercise 42 The Killer.....	83
Pain	84
9. Day 8 Friday 8/6/1	86
8 pm	86
MB 6.....	86
Manipulations 6.....	86
Lunch	87
Groundwork 8.....	87
Exercise 43 Noh Breathing.....	87
Exercise 44 Cloud-Being.....	87
Exercise 45 Ground-Being.....	88
Exercise 46 Water-Being.....	88
Exercise 47 Remembered Fire-Being.....	88
Note on Exercises 42 - 45.....	89
Exercise 48 1mm & 1cm/Sec Walks With Dots.....	89

Exercise 49	Giving and Taking Wind.....	89
Exercise 50	Giving Wind 2 on 1.....	90
Exercise 51	Word Pulse.....	90
10 pm	More on Pain.....	90
10. Day 9	Saturday 9/6/1	92
7 am	.....	92
<i>tathra morning</i>	.....	92
MB 7	.....	93
Manipulations 7	.....	93
Groundwork 9	.....	94
Exercise 52	Standing Manipulations.....	94
Exercise 53	Two-Way Standing Manipulations.....	94
Exercise 54	Three Kinds of Foliage.....	95
Exercise 55	Three Joints Drawing Shapes.....	95
Exercise 56	Omnicentral Imaging 1 (Head and Legs).....	95
1 am	An insomniac ramble concerning the question of Tess De Quincey	97
Campfire 2	.....	99
Talking about Pain	.....	99
Academia and Documentation	.....	101
11. Day 10	Sunday 9/6/1 The Last Day.....	102
<i>these birds</i>	.....	102
MB 8	.....	102
Manipulations 8	.....	102
Groundwork 10	.....	104
Exercise 57	Omnicentral Imaging 2 (Arms and Torso).....	104
Diffuse Intermediate Awarenesses: Speed and Simultaneity	.....	105
<i>still...</i>	.....	107
12. Afterthought	.....	108
13. Appendices	109
Index of Poems	109

Index of Groundwork Exercises.....	110
References	113

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The birds of Tathra.

All the participants of the Tathra Bodyweather workshop, for their shared humanity.

1. Introduction

This writing is a piece of first-person reporting. It is a diary, a record of *my* experiences, attitudes, opinions and responses to the ten day Bodyweather workshop held at the Wambiri Youth Camp in Tathra, on the Far South Coast of New South Wales, between the 1st and the 10th of June, 2001.

As such, it is not so much *about* the workshop, but rather something which emerges *from* the workshop, as a feature, however inconsequential, *of* the workshop⁴. It could only have occurred, in its current form, within the context of my full participation in the workshop. It was reinserted and folded back into the workshop by Tess De Quincey, the workshop instructor, who used it as an impetus to instigate group discussions. These group discussions, in turn, were written into the report and affected my subsequent thinking and writing.

The writing encompasses the full period of the workshop, as well as the two days leading up to it and the two days after it. It covers my thoughts and preparations in the lead-up to the workshop, a diary of all the exercises performed, daily reports and musings, poems, a short story, a few theoretical generalizations for further possible investigation, and a few afterthoughts.

I attended the workshop as a full participant, performing all the required activities. I wrote mostly at night, from memory, and occasionally during the day, from direct observation where possible. Consequently there may be some small factual errors, some forgettings, and perhaps some imagined rememberings in my reporting of the order and content of the exercises and events. However, the vast bulk of the material accords with my perceptions and recollections of events, and I believe that any unintentional minor omissions and additions will not detract from the worth, if there be any, of the writing.

It traverses different writing genres, modes of address, and modes of engagement with the material. To aid navigation through these differences, I have attempted, through the use of different fonts and formatting, to provide a readily identifiable schemata of visual cues to designate different styles of writing and trajectories of thinking. This raises two primary concerns for me. Firstly, I have seen similar attempts at the use of multiple fonts and formatting turn into mere gimmickry, even in the hands of far more erudite and scholarly thinkers than myself. Secondly, there is a danger that the variety of formatting styles may clutter the page and defeat the purpose of clarity. I hope I have not fallen into either of these traps.

With few exceptions, I have held to the chronological order of the original writing of events. Although this separates some sections which are thematically congruent, there are many

⁴ In much the same way as Edward Casey describes lichen growing on a stone as being of the stone. See Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 216.

more instances of incidents, events, speculations and writings which relate to each other thematically across and between the generic modes, but which make sense only in the context of other antecedent and precedent incidents, events, speculations and writings. In order to provide ready access to all instances of each separate genre of writing and thinking, to aid readers who may find more relevance or be more interested in some sections than others, I have provided, in addition to the main index at the start, a collection of sub-indexes at the end, grouping the material generically.

I attended the workshop in the wake of a 12 week lecture course on ethnographic approaches to embodiment, given by Dr Lowell Lewis at the University of Sydney. My experience of the workshop was mediated to a large extent by concepts and understandings I encountered and developed during the lecture course. Conversely, my own embodied experience at the workshop gave me a relatively more embodied and immediate understanding of some of the concepts I had encountered in the lectures. Each informed and enriched the other.

This writing is as much a response to the lectures as to the workshop. Consequently, the theoretical positions taken up are all relative to ethnographic readings from the lecture course, woven around a central thread of my reading of *Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This seminal work, completed in the 1960's has, since the early 1990's, been picked up as a crucial philosophical underpinning to the assumptions of much ethnographic writing on embodiment. I also believe that this book is cut from the same epistemological and ontological fabric as *Bodyweather*.

Due to the fundamentally subjective nature of the enquiry, I have not attempted to make a categorical definition of *Bodyweather*, or to reveal empirically verifiable, objective truth of any kind. I have merely observed, speculated, reflected, propounded, posited and poesied.

The emergent theoretical generalizations taken up in the writing are not intended as revelations of essential determining conditions; they are merely conceptual metaphors which arose alongside my embodied experience of the workshop to aid the telling to myself of the strange and unfamiliar story of what was happening to me.

The validity or worth of these theoretical generalizations can be verified firstly in their usefulness to my apprehension of what happened to me; secondly, in their potential application by other participants and practitioners in *Bodyweather* workshops who might find them of value as a means for speaking and thinking about *Bodyweather*, to themselves, between each other, and to other people; and ultimately, perhaps the most telling indicator of the validity of these metaphorical responses is the extent to which they may contribute to the nascent stutterings of the hoped for conversation between student fieldworkers and

practitioners of performance. As Michael Jackson puts it, “The measure by which the worth or truth of any view is judged must be a worldly one”⁵, so that we create

knowledge not as something that grasps inherent and hidden truths but as an intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground⁶.

I am aware that the Bodyweather workshop I attended was not the same experience as that encountered by the other participants. We brought a wide variety of fore-knowledges, abilities and prejudices⁷ to the workshop. However, we all shared in a mutual apprehension of a series of activities, exercises, conditions and discussions, which I have tried to report as accurately as possible.

This workshop was a profoundly transformative process. My body was pushed to the limits of its endurance, undergoing pain and injury. Perceptual and kinaesthetic potentials which I had never experienced or imagined were released. Consequently, the writing of the experience is intensely, unashamedly, and for me, necessarily personal. The other participants were also operating at their limits. It was an intimate, intersubjective encounter. As a gesture of respect for, and sensitivity towards our shared experience, I have decided to maintain the anonymity of the other participants in relation to specific events and statements. It was suggested however, that I include a list of all those who attended. Bodyweather is a fundamentally intersubjective and intercorporeal process. The attention to the needs of the ‘group body’ is paramount. Although I am, at times, frivolously and glibly critical of some of the other participants, I hope I have not violated the integrity of the group.

I have, however, named and quoted from Tess De Quincey. Although she expresses a desire to limit her teaching activities, I believe that these workshops are important products of her life as an artist. The creative ethic which coheres in her teaching is generous and expansive. The workshops are a testament to her commitment to fostering the creativity of other people within the context of her own work. In this sense, by naming her, I am merely giving her signature to the work. On top of this, I can think of no reason to maintain a spurious illusion of anonymity by referring to her as “the instructor”.

⁵ Michael Jackson, ‘Introduction’, in *Things as They Are, New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁶ Ibid., p.8.

⁷ I should perhaps note here that I use the term “prejudice” in the “positive” sense outlined by Gadamer as, “the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience”, “biases of our openness to the world”, and “simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us”. H-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Edited & Translated by David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 9.

Finally, I would like to thank Tess and the group. This writing serves as my tribute (at times descriptive, humorous, critical, dumbfounded, masturbatory, self-demeaning, wondrous, meandering and perhaps sometimes just plain wrong) to the experience we shared.

The Participants

Tess De Quincey – Instructor

Lee Pemberton - Organizer

De Quincey Company –

Victoria Hunt

Kristina Harrison

Koon Fei Wong

Ashley Pearson

Blaide Lallemand

Carolyn Diaz

Catherine Sewell

Daniel Mounsey

Gretel Taylor

Gwyneth Roberts

Heike Qualitz

Ilane Abrahams

John Addis

Louise Osland

Lynne Santos

Marion Poynton

Meredith Elton

Monica Tesselaar

Nancy Sposato

Robert Reid

Salome Rosa

Saskia Vromans

Shannon Hill

Skye Etherington

Stella Senior

Stuart Grant

Suzanne Hapley

Tom Davies

Tracy Crockford

2. Preparation

humility

*the essence
of humility
is
in knowing
with
immaculate precision
the right time
and
the right place
to tell someone
to get fucked*

Annotated Packing List (In alphabetical order)

Ankle Bandage	Medium sports support ankle bracelet. Essential to avoid exacerbation of ankle injury. (See Ankle Injury).
Ankle Injury	Sustained during a fall downstairs carrying a 30kg electric scooter which landed on my right ankle, causing a tendon injury which tore the white surface of the bone away. Dr Criticos at the Marrickville Metro Medical Centre said it will never heal and will cause me pain on and off for the rest of my life.
Back Pack	Large green rucksack with detachable daypack. A gift from an ex-girlfriend prior to a trip to Indonesia.
Bad Liver	Hepatitis C induced enzyme hyperactivity leading to chronic pain and fatigue.
Band-Aids	For heels and other blisters. (See Sandshoes).
Books	“Powers of Presence” by Robert Plant Armstrong. “Performance” by Marvin Carlsson. “Getting Back Into Place” by Edward Casey.
Boots	A well-worn pair of ox-blood, lace-up, lightweight Blundstones with oil and acid-resistant sole. Purchased 2 yrs ago from Stoliar Bros surplus store in George St.
Dental Floss	Colgate Total waxed dental ribbon. 25m pack. Running Low. The only brand that doesn't fray on my bridgework.
Deodorant	Dove roll-on, moisturising deodorant with mild scent. Doesn't irritate my armpits.
Doxycyclin	Broad spectrum antibiotic. I have had a mysterious infection in my urinary tract for 2 months. All tests have proved negative for known pathogens. Doctors have been throwing a variety of antibiotics at me to no avail. The infection varies in severity, between, at one extreme, an excruciating burning on passing urine, to a slight, not entirely unpleasant itch at other times. The state of irritation is apparently unaffected by the medication.
Elocon	High-powered corticosteroid ointment. Cures chafing overnight.
Eye Drops	'Poly-Tears' eye drops for ulcerated, unhealed scratch on the epithelium caused during a fight whilst trying to throw a pissed Irish backpacker out of a strip club. To be used four times a day.
Eye Gel	'Visco-Tears'. To be used before and after sleep to prevent eyelid from

	tearing epithelium away from eyelid. (See Eye Drops).
Fear	There are many stories of faintings, escapes and injuries at Bodyweather workshops. I am old and out of shape. 10 days is a long time. Tathra is far away. General fear of the unknown. Anything could happen.
Fore-structures of Understanding	I know what I know in the way that I know it and from the point of view I bring to it ⁸ .
Hat	An old blue fishing style hat with a Bart Simpson Logo that was cool last year when my son bought it at Fox Studios.
Jacket	Beige London Fog lightweight zip-up jacket with pockets. No use in the cold. Gets dirty easily.
Jeans	2 pairs of blue denim Levi's jeans. The only brand that don't make me feel fat.
Jumpers	1 old blue V-neck pullover. Origin unknown. 1 modern style, 100% polyester, grey, ribbed sweater with pockets and a zip-up long collar which folds up to the ears. Warm. Gift from my girlfriend especially for the trip.
Keys	I'll need them to get back into my girlfriend's flat when I rise like a phoenix from the ashes after the workshop and come back to Sydney.
Mind-Body Split	After years of an uncompromising, poststructuralist-influenced, complete refusal of the existence of anything called mind, and recent, more pragmatic, anthropological studies of embodiment, I am still aware of the extent to which I perceive my body as an other. A decaying, perishing thing that I do things to and that brings me pain.
Nicotine Patches	2 packets Nicabate 21mg slow-release nicotine replacement patches. Despite being unable to breathe properly, chronic chest pains and regular thoughts of cancer, I smoke a 30g pack of White Ox tobacco every one and a half days. I am attempting to give up at this workshop.
Notebook	Foolscap, Springbound notebook with a pink cover. Purchased in Chinatown. \$6.
Pens	8 assorted ball-point pens.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 191. Heidegger's notion of the forestructures of understanding is central to my reasons for providing such detailed descriptions of my state of mind, prejudices and physical preparations prior to the workshop.

Phone and Charger	The brochure says that Tathra has no mobile phone coverage, but I don't believe it.
Raincoat	Bright blue, zip-up, thigh length, plastic coat with a hood. Belongs to my girlfriend.
Sandshoes	Brand new black Dunlop Volleys, purchased from Stoliar Bros, specifically for the workshop.
Sleeping Bags	1 thin non-insulated sleeping bag stolen from ex-girlfriend. (See Backpack). 1 expensive, down-filled, lightweight sleeping bag with hood. Borrowed from current girlfriend.
Sleeping Mat	200cm x 50cm x 8mm 'Camp Mat'. Pale blue. Purchased from Stoliar Bros especially for the workshop. \$14.95.
Soap	Campbell's Aloe Vera. Recently suspected of causing allergic itch after showering.
Socks	4 pairs of wool/synthetic blend hiking socks with worn heels about to become holes. Purchased 2 yrs ago at Franklins Edgecliff.
Sunglasses	Serengeti Eaton with Photochromic lenses which cost me \$300 a year ago when I had lots of cash. Now scratched and bent, like their owner, through neglect.
Sunscreen	UV filter, factor 30. I don't go outside very often.
Ticket	One way Greyhound bus ticket to Bega. \$50 student concession.
Toothbrush	Macleans Flex. Medium. Green. Purchased with toothpaste.
Toothpaste	A tube of Colgate Sensation Whitening that I bought especially for the trip from Coles Kingsgate supermarket in Kings Cross.
Towels	The brochure says to bring own towels and linen. 1 beige & 1 blue, old, frayed small bathroom towels.
Tracksuits	2 cheap, plain black, pure polyester tracksuits. Purchased at K-Mart the day before leaving. \$50 in total. Large, loose-fitting vessels for body-shame.
Trousers	1 loose lightweight pair of grey cotton trousers with drawstring waist. Purchased 4 years ago in Byron Bay. Drawstring might come in handy if I need to hang myself in custody.
T-shirts	1 Grolsch beer promotional t-shirt. Grey, with a picture of Van Gogh on the back. 1 South Sydney RLFC t-shirt. Red, with a picture of a white bunny on the front.

	1 plain black Bond's t-shirt.
	1 Essendon FC Premiers 2000 t-shirt. Black, with bomber logo.
Undies	6 pairs of white pure cotton PTU's by Holeproof. Minimizes chafing.
Watch	Seiko Quartz. Stainless steel. Black leather strap.

Thursday 31/5/1 9:43 am.

The day before I am due to leave. My ankle is very sore. I am nervous about going to the workshop, but the thought of getting away from the mess of my life is very appealing.

The workshop looms as a challenge. An unknown daunting block of possibility.

A few expectational adjectives: ascetic, cold, difficult, solitary, alien, transformative, exhausting, fundamental, torturous.

I don't think it is possible for me to be ready for this thing.

I have less than \$80 to go away with.

I think, for the purposes of writing a report on the workshop, that an awareness of my expectations and an account of the conditions of my life and mood prior to the event is important. I need to know where I am coming from and what I am bringing to the proceedings. (See note 6, above).

Recently I wrote a series of descriptions of my experience of being in an audience. The main revelation of these writings was my capacity to experience similar situations in vastly different ways, for seemingly unfathomable reasons. Although my rigorous, detailed note-taking about what I had been doing, thinking and feeling prior to the performances I attended and wrote about did not enable me to demonstrate any definite, determining relationship between circumstances leading up to an event and the ultimate appropriation of the event, I have not sufficiently tested this apparent lack of relationship, so I am not yet prepared to dispense with the detailed writing of events, thoughts and feelings in the period prior to an event.

Anyway, I like to set the mood.

One thing that did arise from my writing about the experience in the audience was the three-way interplay between the world as it is acting on me, my response to it, and my observation of the interaction between the other two. I expect a similar situation to emerge in the workshop.

*

Looking over my packing list, I am struck by how much medication I am taking along. My body is pathologized. There is something wrong with it.

a white wall

a
white
wall
approaches
me

my body

my body
(and any reticence
felt in using
the personal
pronoun to refer
to the object
stems less
from concern with
the implied proprietary
relation to the object
than from the
disgust and
low-esteem
in which I hold
the object)

is
a cesspool
hiding small frightened
muscles studded with
toxic fibrous lumps
hung together by
frayed sinews and
bored
crystallized tendons
twitching recalcitrant joints
resentfully articulating
mute bones
around stained
malfunctioning organs

*in a sea of
shameful
runny
yellow
fat*

and

*skun
in a
limp
pale
hairy
sac*

previous workshop reports

vic said

*you're going
that's great
you'll love it
take it easy
do it at your own pace
you'll find some new muscles you never knew you had
do it at your own pace
you'll love it
you'll have a great time*

georgia said

*it was awful
I was up all night the night before
I thought I was going to die
I passed out
and get this
they said it was just the body reacting
can you believe that
I nearly cried
I thought I was going to die
I never went back*

emma said

yeah
it was hard
it was hard but good
yeah...it was good
it was alright
I liked it
but it was hard

vic's male friend said

I did it
it's good
you do it barefoot
take shoes
you will need shoes
but do it barefoot
it's good
you'll have no problems
yeah

arion said

it was sheer torture
you'll probably die

3. Day 1 Friday 1/6/1 Departure Day

fagless but patched

*this wet morning
fagless but patched
on a 423 bus down enmore rd
i saw the saddest girl i ever saw*

*she had that turned
down at the sides mouth
old women have
but she couldn't have been 25*

*i suppose being sad
is a habit like any other habit
like picking your nose
saying y'know
adding up number plates
cracking your knuckles
or milk in your coffee*

*if she wanted to get happy
all she'd need to do
was get a new mouth*

*and the urges for a smoke
came frequent but without panic
as they always do on patches*

*and i looked at oil rainbows
on puddles in the rain
and was thankful
i had never had a job
for which i had to catch
one of these
crowded blue rush hour buses
full of the saddest people
i ever saw*

the bus station

*everything that can be said
about bus stations
has not yet been said*

*but they're always populated
by the same sorts of people
backpackers
bus drivers
unwashed ferals
old men drinking out of styrofoam cups
workers on lunch breaks
little old ladies
people dressed cheap with lined faces
harried mothers snapping at snotty children
plastic shoes and plastic bags and plastic coats
and pimply teenagers
with packets of potato chips and coke bottle enthusiasm
somebody studying the form guide
somebody with a clip board and a dirty uniform
and somebody writing something down*

*the bacon is pre-and-over-cooked
the fried eggs are hard and thick and round and rubbery
the raisin toast is cold and greasy
and the coffee tastes like stewed felt*

*there is no glamour in a bus station
popstars
trophy wives
lawyers
media moguls
a-listers
real estate tycoons
fashion designers
go-getters
merchant bankers
tv presenters
sports stars
property developers*

*supermodels
disc jockeys
frequent flyers
millionaires
and politicians
don't go by bus*

*but the \$6 all day breakfast sign is broken
the primo coffee café umbrellas are grey
with the residue of bus exhaust fumes
the chipped paint tells the time
everybody's looking at their watch
i'm looking at the spots on the back of my hands
and someone stuffs a dead burger into a pale face*

*and the buses
they come and they go*

*and nobody knows anybody
and nobody ever will
because people that catch buses
don't want to know
people that catch buses*

and everybody's always happy to leave

departure

*i promised myself
i wouldn't write about
getting old and death*

*but as the tyres
of this greyhound service
224 to bega
hiss and bite
the wet eddy ave asphalt
and this ulcerated stomach
rises into this throat*

*that regularly feels itself
for signs of cancer
i feel myself pulled
to somewhere
between the terminus
of the few loose facts
i call my knowledge
and the last stop
on the line of
the tenuous tread
of my brief habitation
of this floating lump
of rock and water
circling a dying
ball of hot gas*

*and once again
i don't know
what's going to happen*

*and that always makes me
write about
getting old and death*

9:58 am Botany Rd

I woke up this morning with a sore throat, swollen tonsils and a headache. My body knows something is going on. The stress of my life built to a climax last night. I have nowhere to live, no money and numerous other problems which I won't go into. The relevant factor is that I am going into this workshop very stressed. I don't know what I'm coming back to.

I hope the workshop is so all-consuming that I can forget everything. This is an escape for me. I want the miracle cure; the ten day mental, spiritual and physical transformation; then I'll come back to Sydney and my life will just all fall into place.

In the meantime, an eight hour bus ride.

10:55 am North Wollongong

At the risk of sounding trite, the way this process goes as a journey is becoming apparent. I am going somewhere else. The little I know about Bodyweather has to do with its environmental aspect. A person's body is always situated somewhere, within an environment. A human body is itself an environment; an environment occurring within an environment of which it is a mutually co-determining feature.

My usual environment, characterized in recent months as urban, disrupted, dislocated, stressed and uncertain, is a very particular set of circumstances. I would expect that being removed from this environment for ten days, subjected to an unaccustomed level of exercise, and concentration on my body as the environment from which this writing emerges, will enable some sort of rapid adaptive transformation. Or at least I hope so.

I can understand why the heat of Alice Springs and Tathra in the winter are chosen as sites for this process of extreme environmental immersion.

ah wollongong!

ah wollongong

you caryard

you lonestar steakhouse

you perfectly rectangular block of red-brick veneer flats with a tv aerial on top

you for sale sign

you oddly incongruous palm tree in the front yard

you white weatherboard on the corner of church and campbell

you torn poster on a lamppost

you respectable family station-wagon

you rows of green wheely-bins lined up on the nature strip

you bus-stop

you land of roundabouts and give way signs that I have only ever passed through on the way to somewhere else

you flat-pruned melaleucas on the median-strip

you repco beaurepaire hertz video-ezy hardwarehouse

you jewel of the illawarra

you sweet and sour pork green dragon chinese restaurant

you unswimmable beach

you \$35 a day no strings attached

you perfect satellite industrial graveyard

you freeway turnoff

you somewhere else altogether

you university town
you oil refinery
you mythical land of doing it tough
you bastion of civic pride
you concrete
you caged walkway over the main road
you tracksuit walking a greyhound
you exit sign
you gone
ah wollongong!

The Bus

The bus is the 9:30 am daily Greyhound-Pioneer service to Bega. An average interstate coach sort of vehicle, licensed to seat 50. Not your luxury-liner, Mercedes-Benz, brand-new, shiny thing you might see on a brochure, but not your slab-seated, diesel-spewing suburban bus either.

The seats are a hardy but comfortable blue synthetic fabric with a velvety finish, moulded into a comfortable enough inverted buttock shape, with moderate lumbar support. The backs of the seats are hard grey vinyl, bearing the Greyhound logo, with a square elastic basket about 30 cm across, flush to the surface, containing a plastic rubbish bag.

Deep overhead luggage racks line both sides of the ceiling, extending the full length of the bus. There is a small panel above each seat, on the underside of the luggage rack, with light switches, air vents, a speaker and a volume control.

There are 6 passengers, a TV set which is turned off, and articulated air-conditioning/heating. Large, lightly tinted windows afford a panoramic view. The engine hums a muted roar.

3:10 pm Moruya

A sick feeling of inevitability and inescapability has come over me. There is no turning back.

I have a very limited frame of reference to bring to this situation. My only bodily fore-knowledge of sustained physical exercise and discipline is remembered pain and exhaustion. There is no joy there.

I think of Val Daniel's observation of the ultimately individuating unshareability of pain and I realize the profound task of self-responsibility I am about to undertake⁹.

I catch myself smiling defiantly to myself, but I know it is a hollow attempt to comfort myself with the mechanisms of control and sovereignty which I habitually use to navigate difficult situations. This is one I will not be able get through on my wits. If there's a roort there, I can't see it. I am going to have to go through it, not around it. I do not possess, cannot even begin to formulate the conceptual means required to mediate this situation.

There is something dark and heavy in my guts.

3:45 pm Narooma

I feel like I have done something very wrong and am about to be punished for it.

4:40 pm 4km from Bega

Rolling green hills and mist settling in gullies. The sun is on the way down. The cows are coming home from the paddocks.

A fairly painless bus ride is almost over.

And now the business begins.

I am the last passenger on the bus.

4:45 pm Bega

The bus arrived in Bega half an hour early. It's not as cold as I thought it would be. My lift is not here yet. Smell of woodsmoke and diesel in the air.

a call

*There is a peace
over there
somewhere.*

⁹ E. Valentine Daniel, "The Individual in Terror", in Thomas J. Csordas (ed), Embodiment and Experience. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

*It calls me
but i can hardly
hear it and
it can't
touch me*

Still it calls.

Still.

5:05 pm Bega

Bega looks just like the country town it is. I've got a headache. There are big 4 wheel-drive lifestyle vehicles everywhere.

I'm dying for a fag.

Hallucinating. Panicking.

Not even waiting.

I could sleep right here on this porch.

I don't belong here.

I'm trying to remain open-minded, but my knee-jerk reaction is to hate the countryside and its towns. It's so outside.

I need a fag. Spots before the eyes. Deranged. The page is shimmering.

5:20 pm Bega

The appointed pick-up time has passed. Still no lift.

A strange looking woman with a long white raincoat and a scarf covering her whole face up to the eyes has gotten off the bus from Narooma. I wonder if she's going to the workshop. She is ignoring me. I presume she is mentally ill. She must be going to the workshop.

Eventually, a teenage girl with spectacles and a German accent arrives in a beat up old car. She says her name is Heike. I assume she is old enough to own a driver's licence. We exchange greetings. Me and the strange scarf-headed woman in the long white raincoat, who has still not uttered a syllable, put our bags in the back of the car.

Heike gets under the back of the car to strap on the muffler, which has fallen off and is scraping on the road. Once it is temporarily secured with a flimsy looking plastic strap, she

hits the bitumen, driving through narrow winding country roads at terrifyingly high speeds. I sit in the front, the strange woman in the back.

While Heike and I make small-talk about who we are, what we are doing here, where we've been, who we know, how we found out, and other normal human ice-breaking conversation. The strange woman, scarf still completely covering head, sits silent in the back seat.

Tathra here we come.

8:45 pm Tathra The workshop begins

Tathra is a traditional fishing village and working class holiday spot with a couple of pubs, a few motels, and endless caravan parks spread along 3 glorious kilometres of wide, fine-sand yellow beach with passable 1 -2 metre waves rolling in all year round. It's far enough away from both Melbourne and Sydney, and sufficiently inaccessible to have remained fairly undeveloped.

Camp Wambiri is situated towards the north end of the town and the beach. It is a basic facility consisting of a group of demountable buildings. The main building contains 6 dormitory rooms with 4 - 6 double bunk beds per room. In the same building, there is a mess area which seats about 30 – 40 people and a reasonably well-equipped, functional kitchen, with a large professional gas stove. There is also a general activities building about 50m away. The dormitory building opens out onto a large grassy area about 100m square. All the buildings are demountables made from kits. They all have verandahs.

When we arrive, muffler hanging on the road, shooting sparks into the dark night, most of the other participants are already there. Rooms and bunks have been claimed. I have no option but to take a bunk in a room with 5 women.

Everybody is milling around on the verandah of the dormitory building. Some people know each other already; catching up, making introductions, exchanging credentials, who knows what and who, who has done what with Tess or whoever, where we are from, how we got here, the weather, the night, the moon.

After a half an hour so we are asked to assemble in the general activities room. Everybody takes their shoes off outside the door. I copy them.

There are 20 participants in the workshop for the first weekend: 15 women and 5 men. Most appear to be dancers, or have some background in dance. As we sit around on the floor exchanging greetings, I note the variety of positions taken up by their flexible bodies. Some are experienced Bodyweather practitioners, most are not. Most have had some contact with Bodyweather techniques.

Tess gives us a welcoming address, taking great care to point out that the exercises must be done at a certain pace. She says that it is important to find the right balance between

disclaimers and read some instruction cards on a small table. She stresses that there is no ideal state to be attained, or level to be reached; it's an ongoing process. She says, "it's the body you have now, it's what you have to work with".

During the introductory session, the cook comes in. He is an energetic little man named David, who promises to accede to all of our requests within reason, and warns us to stay out of all the fridges but one.

We then begin some exercises.

Groundwork 1

Exercise 1 Hand and Breath

Working in pairs. One partner stands with closed eyes, concentrating on the breath. The other partner places one hand anywhere on the body of the breather, applying gentle pressure, feeling the breath and guiding the breathing body.

The breather focuses on their breath, and the hand of the other person, "moving with the breath into the weight of the hand". The roles are reversed. Discussion between the two partners about what happened.

Observation

As the person giving the hand, I oscillated between wanting to guide the other person and wanting to follow their movement. I searched with my palm for the breath in the skin. As I lessened the pressure, the person was drawn towards me.

As the receiver of the hand, I felt myself at times resisting the weight of the hand, at times being guided by it. A sense of "giving over" to the hand.

Exercise 2 Hand and Breath lying down

Same as Exercise 1, but lying on the floor, starting in a position of your own choice, and moving around the floor with the pressure applied by the hand. Change Roles . Discussion.

Observation

Tess asked us to discuss the difference between the exercise lying down and standing up. I noticed that on the ground I was more aware of my weight and movements, feeling the pressure of the floor on my body and an awareness of the flow of movement from body part to body part.

Somebody asked a question about why only one hand was used. Tess said that with two hands it would be a very different exercise. She spoke of conceiving the body as a respiring membrane, focusing the whole body through the hand of the other person and the energetics of weight and breath.

Exercise 3 String in mouth

2 groups of 6 people and 2 groups of 5 people. Each group is given a spool of cotton thread. The aim is to walk to the beach (about _ km, across a road, through fences and over dunes in the dark) with the thread in our mouths. We are spread about 1m apart from each other along the thread. The tension must be kept on the thread, but not enough to break it, paying attention to the speed, tension and direction of the thread.

Observation

It was a slow process, concentrating on the pressure of the thread, the group movement, and the terrain. At one point, on the beach, I was thrown out of attention to the exercise when I looked outside the concentration on the string for the first time and saw a gigantic ring around the moon illuminating the whole sky. However, the demands of the exercise took my concentration again very quickly.

We walked abreast across the sand to the water's edge. One of the dancers in Tess's company said she realized that she had been holding tension in her neck, and when she relaxed it, the whole thing became much easier.

Exercise 4 Walking backwards

Walk backwards all the way from the beach to the camp.

Observation

This immediately brought Drew Leder's observation¹⁰ about the sensibility of the back as a perceiving surface when sitting down in a chair. There was a sense of walking blind, a slowness and a need to thematize the act of walking itself, making it conscious; the heel on the ground, the speed and the direction.

stars

even though

it's true

that some of these people

are full-blown

hippies

i have to say

jesus fucking christ almighty

there are some stars in this sky

4. Day 2 Saturday 2/6/1

7 am The first morning

Birds.

A clear cold morning.

A dormitory with 5 hippie women.

I'd better keep my mouth shut.

Last night Tess stressed the importance of punctuality. She said that apart from the fact of MB being dangerous if you missed any part of the whole session, that being late was "shitting on everybody else in the group".

She talked about mental hygiene, a martial arts attitude, and the MB floor cleaning ritual.

Each day 3 people are rostered to clean the floor of the general activities room in the morning

¹⁰ Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p 29.

before MB. Tess sees this as a discipline. It's good to work in a clean area. It's also a contribution to the group.

7:30 am Breakfast

Do it yourself: Toast with honey and vegemite

Instant Coffee – Caterers Blend – tastes like dirt

Muesli & Soymilk

The porridge looks too scary to eat. Especially at this hour.

8:30 am Half an hour till the first MB session.

The birds. A whole singing society in the sky. I will get to the birds.

A rosella is eating from a Banksia. A big fat grey thing with a point on its head and a bad attitude comes up and squawks at the rosella and chases it off the Banksia. The rosella lands on another branch and shrieks its impotent annoyance at the other one.

The fat one attacks. The rosella scoots off again.

MB 1

My body is a complete fucking idiot.

Tess is speaking a language of bodily mapping and relationships of speed, direction and trajectory of movement that I know I need to learn, but this pudgy white fleshlump has got a long way to go.

MB stands for muscle-bone. It consists, in this instance, of continuous movement for two hours. I may be wrong, but from what I have come to understand, it is structured roughly into three sections as we are doing it on this particular workshop, but can contain five or more sections. An experienced Bodyweather practitioner told me that Min Tanaka, the founder of Bodyweather, is highly flexible in how he structures the MB, sometimes eschewing it altogether. This is a feature of the practice of instructors of Bodyweather. Whilst there is a notion of the “correct” way of doing it, which must be adhered to, there is also a great degree of flexibility in the specifics of what work is done when, in relationship to the environment, the group, and the stage of the process.

Students and practitioners of Bodyweather spend a lot of time talking about the structure and goals of particular MB sessions on particular days. I do not understand the details of what is

trying to be achieved, even in the context of this specific workshop, let alone the bigger MB picture.

I have been told that we will be doing a three part MB. Roughly, there is a “warm-up” section, a “jumps” section, and a “cool down” section. I don’t know what the other two are. I will find out.

We begin by walking in all directions slowly around the room, focusing on the skeleton and how it walks, getting an image of the walking skeleton. What are the bones of the feet doing, the hands, where are the hips. Tess then instructs us to “change gears”; walking at a different speed, observing the differences in the skeleton in the different walks at different speeds.

Then the space in the room comes into question. How is everybody walking around the room. We are instructed to “take in the space”; to concentrate on a point in the room and focus, then choose another point and focus there, continue varying the points, developing a spatial awareness of the moving relationship to the points. Still concentrating on the skeleton. There is an oscillation of focus between in and out, and between points in space and the skeleton.

There are also other people walking around the room. It is important not to bump into them.

The group then forms into lines, sometimes two lines, sometimes three, dependent on how much space is needed for the move being performed. A series of simple walks, concentrating on parts of the leg, loose knees, the ball of the foot, skips and kicks, on both sides of the body, at different speeds, backwards and forwards.

The lines move from one end of the room to the other and back again, sometimes continuing the exercise backwards on the return to the other end of the room, sometimes walking back to begin a new exercise.

The particular moves are done for particular purposes at particular times in the MB process to promote particular embodied foci and awarenesses in the context of the overall structure of the particular MB session¹¹.

The complexity of the moves increases, wide arching arm and leg movements, complex directional turns, increasingly vigorous jumps, more demanding combinations of arm, head, and leg coordination. At various times Tess directs us to observe our internal body speed and temperature.

¹¹ Once again, I don’t understand how it works. These observations concerning the underlying structure and intent of the MB are reports of conversations with the practitioners. It is necessary that I believe what these people are telling me about what they are doing. They have nothing to gain by lying to me, except perhaps the mystification and aggrandisement of what they are up to, but I can’t see that they have anything to gain. I don’t believe this to be some kind of weirdo cult that wants me to give them all my money and send me out on the street recruiting new victims.

Concentration is requested on which parts of the body are foregrounded in the move, where the hips are pointed, how the flow of energy moves between the areas of the body.

The people at the front of each row set the pace and rhythm. As the row follows and the skill level of the participants decreases, the rhythms, directions, and speeds of the moves become more broken and chaotic. The tight containment of the energy disperses.

As the moves complexify, concentration becomes harder, awareness more diffuse; a mediation between attempting to imitate the form of what the leaders are doing, keeping time with the music, learning and remembering the moves.

I am very bad at this. I can't remember combinations of steps, my body is inflexible, I have no focal points on which to concentrate in order to find my way in the exercises. I am put in a position where I have to confront myself in a situation where I have no knowledge, no ability, no expertise. Invigorating.

Manipulations 1

After a 15 minute break, during which we are instructed to wash and dry off, we begin the manipulations.

Working in pairs, one manipulating, one receiving the manipulation. The person receiving the manipulation, lying down on a mat, breathing loudly, vocalizing the breath. The room fills with loud sheeshing and hissing sounds. The manipulator falls into time with the breath of the receiver. Breathing together.

There are apparently 7 different manipulations. Today we are doing the first two of them. I don't remember much detail on the content of what actually happens in the manipulations. I am too stunned by the impact of the MB. I will fill it in as the days pass and I become more aware of what's going on.

It begins with the manipulator raising the arms of the receiver and stretching them out, giving pressure in time with the breath. The arms and legs are manipulated to the sides, stretched out, folded up, tested for the range of movements available; the muscles are explored in an "internal" investigation. Pressure is applied to the chest, ribcage, hips and legs.

Tess speaks of an awareness of where to enter the body with the pressure and when to send the weight in relation to the breath. She emphasizes that the manipulator is not giving a massage, but performing an "exploration of the other person's body for the other person".

The manipulations are very precise, relying on specific applications of pressure on parts of the body of the other person. I am aware of my inability to experience what is happening for the body of another. There is a silence in another person's body. I cannot feel what they feel. I wonder whether a skilled practitioner of Bodyweather, with the advanced techniques of breathing together and experience of manipulating and being manipulated, develops a tangible sense of what is occurring for the other person.

As for me, I am once again rendered largely ineffective by having to mediate between learning the moves, working in the absence of the sensation of what's happening for the other person, not having sufficient strength to perform some of the pressures in the required positions, hallucinating from the exertions of the MB, and feeling self-conscious about looking completely incompetent.

However, what does become apparent to me is the fundamental presubjective intercorporeality at work in the mutual breathing and giving of weight into the other body. Working directly with an awareness framed in terms of energy, weight, speed, and resistance, perhaps provides access to a shared experience between human bodies, before sex, before culture, before identity. Or maybe not.

Nevertheless, there is something important emerging for me here.

12:30 pm Lunch

Lettuce, beetroot, tomato, lentilburger, bean shoots and a roll.

I am at the end of the queue. As I approach the food, plate in hand, I watch most of it disappear on to the plates of greedy hippies. By the time I get there, I'm left with a lettuce leaf, a cold, soggy lentil burger, and a couple of bean shoots. An unaccustomed blend of anger, disappointment and fatigue overwhelms me.

Never trust a hippie around free food.

As consolation, I ask the cook for real coffee. He says he will leave some out in the morning.

1:20 pm

After the manipulations I speak with Tess about the possibility of having a chat about the performances of her solo show "Nerve 9", that I had seen the week before. I also mention the theme of intercorporeality which is emerging for me at this early stage of proceedings.

She makes an interesting comment about the importance of being able to find ways to speak about what is going on here. I ask whether we are dealing here with lost bodily potentialities or perhaps making new connections. I realize it is a dumb thing to say as I am saying it. She says that if we do not talk about things, we tend to forget they are there.

This provides me with a very direct understanding of Michael Jackson's idea about the practical use of philosophical generalizations. Jackson contends that the act of making generalizations, when freed from its universalizing role within Western empirical science, as

the creation of objective, ahistorical, ontological essences, can become “a way of mediating conversations”, and a “means of creating solidarity, not objective knowledge”¹².

Groundwork 2

Exercise 5 Cat's Ears

Sitting on the ground in the grassy area out the front of the dormitories, listening with the ears of a cat. Then, locating a place in the soundfield and walking to it. Either lying down, sitting down, or standing there. Then repeating from that position to another. As with every exercise, forming into small groups and discussing the results.

Observation

On closing my eyes the first thing I heard was the mad cacophony of the birds. (Somebody said later it was a cat's paradise). My attention was drawn to one bird's voice, a barking parrot sound. I waited for it. I found myself on all fours. Each time I heard the voice, I moved towards it. There were other birds different distances away, in different directions, that sounded like the same species.

Deprived of my sense of sight with its forward projection I was placed in a 360° field of distances and directions.

When I lost track of the original bird I began choosing other voices and moving towards them, but they kept disappearing into the field, so I would listen to one, place it, listen to another, place it, and then plot a course in the middle of the two and move towards the emptiest central place between them.

¹² Michael Jackson, 'Introduction', in *Things as They Are, New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p19.

Exercise 6 10 Person String in Hand Blindfolded

A variation of the string in mouth at Exercise 3. This time the string is held between thumb and middle finger instead of the mouth. In groups of 10, blindfolded and led by an experienced Bodyweather practitioner. At the end, discuss within the group.

Observation

Once again, deprived of sight, drawing direction and focus from the height, tension, direction and velocity of the string's movement, the people directly in front and directly behind me became crucial to how I proceeded. My whole sense of where I was and where I was going was dependent on the energy flow of the whole group through the string,

The theme of an intercorporeal field of directions, velocities, weights and intensities began to emerge.

We eventually made it to the beach after the string broke 3 or 4 times. For me, the breaking of the string felt like failure. The dismemberment of the group body.

Exercise 7 2 Person Blindfolded String Lead

On the beach. Working in pairs. One person leading the other blindfolded partner with the string, at different speeds, heights, and directions. Then the roles are changed and the exercise is repeated. Then change partners and repeat again. The instruction is to concentrate on the shapes made by the body under the pull of the string. Discuss the results with the partner.

Exercise 8 Blindfolded String Lead Feet Planted

Same as Exercise 7, but the person being led must not move their feet from the starting position, or if it is absolutely necessary, they may take no more than one step and then return to their original position as soon as possible. Discuss the results with the partner.

Observation

Paradoxically, I experienced a greater sense of power and freedom when unable to move my feet. My focus was more on the shape, directions and speeds of my body than on where I was being led to. Taking foot movements out of the picture concentrated my attention, which had been more diffuse in the previous exercise.

A Thought on the String

The string is the concrete manifestation of the flow of intracorporeal energy. The body of the person attached to and being led by the string is an area of intensity on the string, responding to, passing on, and resisting a series of imperatives of velocity, direction and tension. Each person on the string simultaneously mediates the receiving and sending of the energy.

The string is the flow of the groove. The common impulse of the corporeal body.

Exercise 9 3 People moving a Person in the Sand

Working in groups of 4, each member of the group taking a turn at allowing the other 3 to move and shape their body in the sand. Discuss in the group of 4.

Observation

While moving the other person I was struck by the range of possible relationships in the media at my disposal. Working with the sand, digging, putting it on and around the body of the person; moving the person's body into still positions, shaking, touching, pushing and pulling them. Working by myself around what the other two were doing with the body, working together, supporting them, responding to them; whether to respond to what had already been done or try something new.

Another Thought on the String

Is it possible to do the intercorporeal flow thing without a concrete connecting device like the string? Bad breath, a boxer dodging and weaving, footballers anticipating each other's moves. Acorporeal intercorporeality.

Exercise 10 1mm/Sec Walk (Bisoku)

The whole group, lined up along the shoreline, close to the water, looking out to the horizon, walking at 1mm/second. Discuss with a few surrounding people.

Observation

Very difficult. I envisioned moving forward through measured space at 1mm/sec, but as soon as I moved my hand and thought about my heel lifting from the ground, I realized that distance in my body had to be traversed in order to move through space. The heel moves upwards, the wrist backwards, before the body can move forwards.

I thought of Merleau-Ponty's assertion:

**I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them,
my body combines with them and includes them¹³**

¹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge, 1962), p 140.

Space and time move through my body as I move through them.

Exercise 11 Sea Horse Ears

Same as Exercise 5, Cats Ears, but listening as a Sea Horse instead of a cat. Discuss with nearby participants.

Observation

The crushing pressure of the ocean on the ears. A feeling of claustrophobia. Plenitude , fullness. An image of immersion, floating, measureless, oceanic. Sound muffled.

I frequently lost concentration, finding it hard to go anywhere or do anything. Could not connect. There was a degree a paradox at work in this exercise which I was not used to working with. I have thought about paradox of this order, mused on it, but never attempted to base my actions and perceptions on it.

7:35 pm

Two days off the fags. I made it through the first full day of the workshop, feeling sore and invigorated. There are conceptual openings and metaphors popping up everywhere. I must be careful to apply myself to the exercises as immediately as possible, and not, at this early stage, fold back my partial theoretical understandings over the experience, but let it unfold as what it is.

Pathology Report Day 2

- Woke up with the eye jammed shut. Must lubricate with Visco-Tears more effectively. My body is not behaving according to its usual predictable patterns.
- Muscle pain in all limbs and lower back. I will apply Deep Heat before bed.
- I'm a bit worried about the ankle. I might need to support it a bit more solidly than just the strap. I'll decide after MB tomorrow.
- Two full days on the patches. Three or four urges to smoke today. Not very intense in the even more intense affective soup I'm swimming in.
- Blisters on the undersides of both big toes. I will wear socks in MB tomorrow and wrap the toes in bandaids.
- I need to cut my toenails and shave. Maybe on Monday, or a trip to the supermarket tomorrow at lunchtime.

5. Day 3 Sunday 3/6/1

7:30 am Breakfast

Same as yesterday. Except today David the chef has left me a coffee plunger and a small handful of coffee beans in the grinder. A couple of the hippies are eyeing my coffee. This could get ugly.

MB 2

It is a bit more intense today. My body is hotter and faster. I pick up some more of the moves and am able to stop a little less often.

I have a problem picking up moves that involve changes of direction and multiple bodypart movements, Concentrating on the direction and placement of the feet makes an opening that helps me to make a little progress.

As the days go by I will try to trace any developments. I don't have a good enough grasp to remember the specifics of different moves. It's all a bit much.

Manipulations 2

Tess's comment yesterday about finding a place for entering and sending the breath, and a more sensitive partner, gave me a better sense of the flow between the two bodies.

I was a bit confused by the metaphors of stretching and extending metres beyond the body. Is there something here about the way the body extends beyond its apparent physical limits.

it's good

it's

good

out

here

in

the

sun

warming
righteous
pain

Lunch

Fish with vegetable kebabs. Lettuce, beetroot and chickpea salad. The hippies are complaining about the food. I can't tell the difference between this shit and supposedly good vegetarian food.

1:45 pm

This morning, immediately before MB, I had a hot shower and applied too much Dencorub to my thighs and buttocks. They were on fire. Somehow some of the horrible mentholated shit got on my scrotum and my dick. I thought I was going to die. As I entered the room for MB, I was preoccupied.

I was rostered on the MB floor ritual. Each day three people are rostered to clean the floor of the room. Tess observed, without actually using the word, the humility involved in performing this task, comparing it to a martial arts preparation ritual.

For me, I like to sweep. I like the rhythm. I like to look at a clean floor.

Pathology Report Day 3

- Sore from MB.
- Toes blistered but stable.
- Ankle was very sore during the night but seems ok.
- Another bad night with the eye sticking to the inside of the lid.
- My neck is out.
- Just changed a patch and applied Poly-Tears.
- Only had 2 hours sleep.

Groundwork 3

Exercise 12 Looking and Dwelling

Sitting in front of the general activities room, around a gravel path, the whole group spread out on steps, fence rails and on the ground, focusing on various points in the field of vision and dwelling there for 5 seconds; then moving to another point and dwelling there for 5 seconds. Then changing position 90° and repeating. Changing position by 90° twice more and repeating in each new position. Discuss the results with two or three others nearby.

Observation

The word “dwell” had a particular resonance because Tess had mentioned to me earlier that she has, in recent years, been coming to understand Bodyweather as a combination of half Zen/ half Heidegger, and is developing the practice accordingly.

The first time through this exercise, I interpreted the word “dwell” to mean imagining myself as being at the place I was looking at. I recall a sense of circling up under the stairs of the building in the darkness and the dust. The second time through, we were instructed to dwell at each point for no more than a second, and have awareness and responsibility for the speed and direction of the trajectory between the points in the field of vision.

The third time, we were asked to look at a point very close; and compare the experience of dwelling far as opposed to near. I found myself throwing my attention out to the far points, combing and projecting into the horizon. The closer points came into me as though as though I was holding them into myself. I found myself drawing mental abstracted diagrams of the directions of trajectories.

By the end, I lost it and couldn't focus anywhere.

Exercise 13 Sticks and Soundfield

Using a small wooden skewer from the lunchtime kebabs. In pairs, on the grassy area in front of the dormitories. One partner touches the other in the area between the eyes with the point of the skewer and pulls it away about _ metre.

The holder of the stick then draws their experience of the soundfield with the skewer, while the other follows the end of the drawing stick with the point between the eyes, maintaining the distance between stick and forehead, following with their movement and whole body if necessary. Discuss the results with the partner.

Observation

A complex relation. The person holding the stick draws an interpretation of or response to the soundfield. The other person embodies the stickholder's moving visual impression of their experience of the sound, while the stickholder sees the other person's embodiment of their original interpretation or embodiment.

This opened a synaesthetic field of mutual flow between the perceptions of the two partners, concentrating the diffuse soundfield into a foregrounded, concentrated, shared experience. The question of oscillations between diffuse and concentrated perceptual foci is emerging here.

Exercise 14 Soundfield Forehead Self-Draw

Imagine a point between your eyes. Use it to draw an image of the soundfield to yourself with your own body.

Observation

Trying to locate a frame of reference through which to approach and interpret instructions which refer to apparently paradoxical combinations of different perceptual organs, opened up a zone of indeterminacy similar to Exercise 9, Moving a Person in Sand, and Exercise 11, Sea Horse Ears. Being confronted by paradoxical or open-ended instructions, which contradicted habitual foreknowledges of understanding and common sense, my body was forced to find its own orientation and focus in a diffuse field. The means by which I was forced to proceed, in interpretation and action, were determined by whatever openings and blockades presented themselves in the field in which I was immersed.

Exercise 15 Tube Finger Walk

Using half metre long cardboard tubes held to the eye. Working in pairs with one partner holding up a finger to lead the other. The follower, with one eye closed, looking through the tube with their open eye, following the finger.

Each partner in each role for 5 minutes; first 5 minutes to get to the road, second 5 minutes to get to the beach. Discuss the results with the partner.

Observation

The concentration of focus of view through the tube was very intense. There was a complete handing over of intention and direction of movement to the finger. Another instance of an intercorporeal energetic flow, this time between the eye and the finger.

Also, the polyvocality of the hand became apparent. Sometimes it was just a hand in a non-specific gesture, sometimes indicating direction, sometimes exploring and touching surfaces, sometimes pointing out objects, sometimes beckoning, sometimes a stop-sign, sometimes telling jokes.

Exercise 16 Giving 2 Hands into Breath

Same as Exercise 1, except with 2 hands.

Observation

A complex field of interrelationships was formed. The decision whether to resist or follow the hand, the following of the in and out of the breath, the movement of the body. Neither partner was ever entirely directing the exchange. Instead there was a mutual interplay between hand, breath and movement.

With two different partners I had, it was hard to focus and follow the flow. Only with the third partner, an experienced Bodyweather practitioner, was I able to really experience the mutual exchange, and only with small concentrated movements.

Exercise 17 3 Joints Twitch

In pairs again. One partner points to one of the other's joints with a stick. The pointed-at partner moves the joint randomly, exploring the full range of movement possible in the joint. Another joint is pointed at and moved in a random fashion, keeping the other one going. Then a third is activated and all three are kept moving simultaneously at random. One joint is stopped and another activated in its place, keeping three joints active at all times. Discuss the results with the partner.

Observation

My partner suffered from some sort of movement disorder, so I didn't get anything from the exercise. He also pointed to parts of my body that weren't joints, such as forehead, shins, forearms etc. I wondered whether my inexperience presented similarly unfulfilling encounters for more experienced practitioners.

Exercise 18 Stick Shuffle

Everybody plants their skewers in the sand all around the general area. Shuffling flat-footed, never losing the contact of the whole foot with the ground, between and around the sticks, always curving, never in a straight line.

Observation

Severely hurt my sore MB legs.

Exercise 19 1cm/sec Walk with Stick

Same as Exercise 10, except at a speed of 1cm/sec and holding a skewer pointed in the direction to be moved. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

Once again, Merleau-Ponty came to mind.

The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch¹⁴

I started slow gradual movement of my foot through the air but my balance was so bad that I decided to count one second, then slide my foot 1cm through the sand. I knew this was cheating, but I was very tired. I suppose it was the digital 1cm/sec stick walk.

Exercise 20 Blindfold Run

Working in pairs. One partner, blindfolded, runs, walks, rolls, or crawls in whatever directions they please for 5 minutes. The other partner follows beside making sure no accidents happen and that the blindfolded person does not stray from the prescribed area.

After 5 minutes, the blindfold is removed and the person draws a map in the sand of where they thought they went. The other partner also draws a map of where they thought the blindfolded one went. The maps are compared. Then the roles are exchanged.

Observation

There were great discrepancies both ways. I couldn't remember very well which directions my partner or myself went. It was late in the day. My concentration was lapsing.

Tess and the other observers noted the explosion of activity that occurred when the exercise began. People running and stumbling and crawling and rolling in all directions.

Group discussion of my work

Tess has asked me to lead a discussion based on some of the ideas I have been throwing up to her about the theoretical tools I have been using to apprehend the workshop. This is a bit daunting. I am nervous about the way it might be received. I might be wrong, but I detect a marked bias amongst these people against a largely unthought concept of Western Culture. I fear that the sort of theoretical wankery I habitually indulge in will be seen to be a part of this mythical oppressive West.

¹⁴ Ibid, p 143.

Added to this, I believe people don't like to talk about what happens to their bodies in transformative process. It's almost as though they think that talking about it will destroy some sort of magic. It seems important to people to have areas of experience which are "beyond expression".

Perhaps this anticipation of prejudice is merely my own prejudicial reading of the situation.

When we eventually begin, only about half of the group is present. The others have gone to bed. I begin the session by saying who I am, giving a brief preamble about the work of the Department of Performance Studies, stating the subjective nature of the inquiry and my complete lack of desire to arrive at universal truths about what is happening in the workshop.

I talk about phenomenology, intercorporeality, fields of flow of intensities and diffuse indeterminate perceptual zones. I am asked to define and refine some points. There seems to be some enthusiasm for and interest in the work I am doing, especially among students. There is some small degree of suspicion and uncertainty, but the main thrust of participation is a refreshing questioning.

Tess asks questions about field theory. Some of the members of Tess's company ask about specific phenomenological thinkers and approaches. Other people want to know more about phenomenology.

It becomes a forum for people to speak about how they think about their own experience. This is, I believe, what Tess wanted to happen. I pick up a few ideas about the different sorts of experiences people are having here. I am also reminded of the danger of intellectualist fallacies of folding the theory back onto the experience, and consequently experiencing the theory instead of the event.

I ask everybody to feel free to contribute anything to my research. The overall impression seems to be favourable. Tess thinks it is a worthwhile part of the proceedings and suggests an update in a couple of days.

I leave feeling a bit validated, a bit dubious. It is the nature of the beast. As a subjective mode of inquiry, without the ballast of the call to objective truth, this is necessarily an uncertain business. Its verification is in the discussion, its worth measured by its ability to promote and continue the discussion. To feel secure in the inquiry; to have solidly-planted feet, would defeat the purpose. It is only through the lightness and uncertainty of tread that I am able to approach and apprehend the material. I don't want to scare it off.

Chasing Sticks Around

During the discussion, Lee Pemberton, the organizer of the workshop, told an amusing side-story. Earlier in the day she had been speaking to one of the local business people who had asked her how the workshop was going. She had replied that it was going well; everybody

was having a great time. The interested small business person had replied that he had seen the group on the beach, chasing sticks around.

6. Day 4 Monday 4/6/1

weak winter sun

weak winter sun

pain

birds

the sky

is so blue

i can't find a metaphor

pissweak coffee

The Coffee Story

On the second day of the workshop I spoke to the cook about the possibility of getting some real coffee. In his welcoming address on the first night, had extravagantly promised to provide us with "anything you want",

I didn't give it much thought at the time, but in light of subsequent events, it has become apparent, in retrospect, that his behaviour in responding to my request was odd in the extreme. He hunched his shoulders, cast his glance from side to side, lowered the pitch and volume of his voice, and said in a hoarse, clipped, whisper,

- you mean beans?

I realize that I had, at the time, noticed the odd air of his bearing, but the combination of my desire to achieve the goal of getting some coffee, combined with my general state of tiredness and dislocation, made me ignore it. It was all I could do, in my compromised state, to reply,

- Yeah beans.

The oddness and peculiarity of the situation was compounded when he looked at me out the corner of his eye, shrugged his shoulders knowingly, assumed a cockiness in his whisper, and asked,

- What sort?

By this stage, the surreality of the situation was so consuming that I had lost the ability to know what was and wasn't normal. But my need for coffee was a strong enough motivation to keep me to the task at hand, so I assumed an air of nonchalance and threw away with apparent insouciance.

He looked disparagingly at me as though I were someone who was out of their league; someone who had, by accident, got involved in something they weren't equipped to handle. I was losing him. My lack of ability to name my bean of preference was severely hampering the negotiation. He snapped,

- Colombian, organic, Kenyan....i can get whatever you want.

I grasped for a response.

- I normally drink espresso.

He nodded knowingly.

- Arabica.

- Yeah. Arabica's good.

- Done

The confident camaraderie which took over his manner at this stage told me I was home and hosed. I would have coffee. Somehow, in some way beyond my comprehension, the chef and I had bonded. He said that this transaction was between me and him, and as far as he was concerned, nobody else had asked him for coffee.

I winked knowingly, nodded my head, and tried to give the impression that I understood what was going on and that his secret was safe with me.

*

Now, to the best of my knowledge, coffee is not illegal on the South Coast of New South Wales; but as I think back on the events of that odd morning, I am convinced that the chef and I were talking about different things in the functional kitchen of that demountable building.

I was talking about the brown hot caffeine drink I take every morning in order to feel human. For the chef however, there was a lot more at stake. He was talking about something illicit; something dark, mysterious, secret and powerful. This was a clash of cultures I had not experienced since buying hashish on the streets of Fes.

*

The next day, yesterday, at the appointed place, in the grinder attached to the kitchen benchtop, I found a small handful of dark beans. The chef is a man of his word.

After I ground it, inhaled the aroma and made my way into the mess area with the plunger in one hand and the saucer of ground brown powder in the other, some of the other workshop participants began to show a marked interest in the affair.

There were only enough beans to make 1 plunger of 3 weak cups.

Some of the other interested participants began to ransack the kitchen. I realized they were all people who were resident in the local area. It was as though they had lost all social

decorum and restraint. Something savage and dark had been released in them. I now began to see a glimpse of what the chef had feared. They tore the kitchen apart until they found a stash of tins, and amid much grinding and plunging of all sorts of varieties of the revered bean, a mood of celebration prevailed in the mess hall.

I tried to erase the event from my mind as the day progressed but the feeling of disturbance and uneasiness nagged at the fringes of my consciousness in everything I did.

*

Later in the day, the chef pulled me aside. He was flustered and angry.

- Listen Stuart, we had a deal. I don't mind putting the beans out for you...we had a deal...but....

I immediately knew he was talking about the ancient pagan bean festival that had occurred earlier in his kitchen. I knew I had to cover my arse. I explained what had happened, rattling on all the hippies. He was visibly upset. I suggested he put out more beans so that everybody could have some. He shook his head violently at this suggestion, and said that until someone else approached him, he would stick to our original deal.

And so, again, this morning, in the appointed place, as yesterday, in the grinder, I found a small handful of beans. The chef is a man of honour. There were, however, three or four more people who expressed interest in having a cup. I suggested they ask the chef to put out more beans. They retreated, shaking their heads in horror at the proposal. I shrugged my shoulders and pushed home the plunger. This was getting weirder by the day.

*

I needed to talk to somebody; somebody I could trust. I broached the subject with a couple of people with whom I had struck up an accord. During discussions of the question of why the chef might be so protective of the revered bean, I recalled that at some time in the previous couple of days I had seen the chef's assistant carry a bucket over to the hot water urn. He approached the urn carefully, making sure nobody was watching.

After groping with the urn and the bucket for 3 or 4 minutes, trying different angles and positions, he returned to the kitchen, shutting the door behind him.

Then, through a crack in the serving hatch, I saw him remove a glass cylindrical tube containing brown liquid from inside the bucket. His face was lit by a mixture of triumph and anticipation. The chef and the kitchen hand looked on at the removal of the plunger from the bucket, their faces echoing the mixture of lust and reverence on the face of the assistant.

*

As I sit here on the step of the mess hall, in the morning sun, muscles aching all over my body, it's becoming increasingly clear to me that there is something weird and dangerous

going on here. There are powers at work beyond my comprehension, and dark forces at play. I would rather not know about it.

After the manipulations today I will go into town and buy a packet of Lavazza.

Quote of the Day

“Length is length is length” Tess De Quincey.

MB 3

Much more intense today with the smaller, more skilled group. 5 people who were here just for the weekend have left. MB started differently. Instead of beginning with the walking at different speeds envisioning the skeleton, Tess tells us to chant our name, address, and phone no., while walking around the room forwards and backwards. While walking backwards, she tells us to develop the perceptual field behind us.

We then walk, shaking our upper bodies, yawning, howling like wolves and dingoes. Then we go into the skeleton walk. Then, again in lines, through all the parts of the leg in the walk, bringing arms, head, and neck into play. Then into more vigorous stepping and jumping.

At one point Tess pulls me aside and demonstrates a simple transfer of weight from side to side by bending the knee and sliding the other foot across. For the first time, I have a conscious experience of the flow of energy from one part of my body to another.

There is another realization today. I notice that I have trouble changing the flow of direction of energy in a part of my body when my whole body is travelling in a different direction. There is a simple jump in which the knee is lifted forward and then kicked out behind while the body continues to move forward. I can't negotiate the change in direction from forward to backward in the leg while the rest of the body keeps moving forward.

There is a lot more partner work in today's MB. There is a complex forward and backward diamond jump, first off the left foot, then the right. This creates problems even for the more experienced people in the room. There is a point when things grind to a halt around this move, and the energy in the room dissipates completely.

Overall, I feel like a goldfish lying on the table next to the bowl.

Manipulations 3

Tess introduces Manipulations 3 and 4. These entail a far more radical folding up of the body over itself and pulling apart of the spine, arms, legs and head. After the session I come away enlivened with new flows of energy, openesses and potentials in my body. I can move my hips and shoulders in directions they have never moved.

I left the MB and Manipulations today with an embodied awareness of energetic flows of a clarity and intensity I have never experienced.

It occurs to me that I have had a strong sense of energy flow between the participants, and the sense of a group body mediated by the combined separate bodies, and also the sense of the participants' bodies embedded and integrated into the landscape. But before today I have not had a direct awareness of the energetic flows within my own body. The perception and experiencing of the blockages and new potentialities in my body has become thematized.

Lunch

Kebabs. Particularly uninspiring. I guess it must seem OK to cardboard eating hippies. But I crave blood.

Pathology Report Day 4

- Further scrotal Dencorub burns.
- The eye was still a bit rough when I woke up this morning but not as bad as yesterday.
- Legs and buttocks still in agony, and new sore muscles in chest.
- Neck still out.
- Ankle getting stronger.
- Blisters on toes still covered with Band-aids for MB, but removed afterwards.
- 4 days off the fags. Worst day yet. As the pain increases my desire to smoke grows.
- Today I shaved my head. I feel like a new man. A very sore, but new man.
-

Groundwork 4

Exercise 21 Noh Warm-Up (Originally from Yoshi Oida)

The whole group standing in a circle. Starting off with heads bowed, hands loosely folded in front of the body, making a continuous 'mmm' sound. Then, taking a step to the side raising hands out to the sides of the body, wrists cocked upwards, opening up into an 'aaa' sound. Fingers meeting over the head, palms up, then lowering the hands down in front of the body, making a triangle with thumbs and forefingers, moving down to chest level. Breathe. Pushing the triangle up and out to eye level, extending forward and leaning the body as far forward as possible, making an 'aayy' sound. Hands drawing back to sides of body, palms down, fingers extended towards the front at armpit level. Hands pushing down towards waist at side of body, palms still down, making an 'eee' sound. Hands draw behind and around from the back with fully extended arms, crossing over the head, making an 'aaww' sound. Hands meeting over the head, folding together and returning to the starting position, closing down to an 'mmm', with head bowed.

Repeat a number of times as a group.

Observation

At first I found it very hard to co-ordinate copying the moves, with making the sounds, concentrating on the breath and opening out the body, all at once. It became a little easier after the third or fourth repetition of the cycle. But primarily I came away with the impression of not having been adequate to the task set by this exercise.

Exercise 22 Dwelling and Talking

3 zones of focus are posited:

1) A fully projected ec-static zone of focus on things "out there" in the world.

2) An "inner" zone of focus on the conditions of one's own body.

3) The intermediate zone of imagination, concepts and ideas.

The first two zones are dependent on sensory stimulation, the third is entirely internal.

Exercise 22a Outer Dwelling and Talking

First, sitting down in the grassy area outside the dormitories, focusing entirely outwards into the world and dwelling in the things and space around us. While dwelling "out there", talking constantly about the experience and the things being perceived. Then getting together in small groups to talk about the experience.

Observation

I dwelt with my eyes. I only realize this in retrospect. I looked at trees, fences, buildings and chimneys, listing their features to myself through the talking. The imperative to find things to say made me look for more in the environment to talk about. Consequently, with the increase in attention, I saw more things in greater detail than I would have otherwise.

Whilst dwelling in the tussocks of grass very close to hand, I thought about the imaginary worlds I used to make as a child with toys and soldiers. I realized that there is no pure outwards focus, devoid of inward, imaginative and remembered focus

Exercise 22b Inner Dwelling and Talking

Laying down and dwelling entirely in the inner body experience. As in 22a, talking all the time. Then discussion.

Observation

I felt my insides as a dark hole, then began locating various body parts with my awareness, talking my way through my body. Once again, the imperative to talk drove me on to create new awarenesses.

When putting my awareness into my fingertips It felt as though they were touching something. I am aware of them as surfaces which touch other things. After a while, I followed my breath, which became a pulsing electric wave suffusing my whole body. The imagination intrudes again. There is no pure inner focus either.

Exercise 22c Imagination Dwelling and Talking

The same as 22a & b, but this time dwelling in the imagination.

Observation

I thought of my son Oscar, and began to cry. It was immensely pleasurable to cry. I cried for a couple of minutes and then forced myself into a fantastic imaginary mode. I imagined myself paddling in green slime, up to the ankles, then knees, waist and chest, until I was completely submerged and suspended in the slime. The fantastic scenario took on a life of its own, obviously influenced by TV images. Aliens had trapped me in the slime. Oscar would save me from the aliens. He went to fight the aliens, but ended up making peace with them and piloting their spaceship. There was a dream logic at play. I meant to say to myself that he was wearing a helmet, but I said the word "headdress" by mistake, and suddenly he was wearing a full Native American regalia. Word associations abounded as speech and reverie intertwined.

Exercise 23 Talking to the Beach

Walking slowly to the beach; 10 minutes to get to the road, 10 more minutes from the road to the beach. Moving between the three zones of focus outlined in Exercise 22. Talking all the way about what was happening.

Observation

A direct walk to the beach would only take 2 or 3 minutes, so there was a lot of meandering, walking, talking and focusing on zones of awareness to do.

I began by feeling the pain in my body and talking to myself about the level of soreness in different parts of my body and how good it was it was to just meander along letting it all out. Then I began to think about what I would write tonight, focusing on the anxiety about how much had occurred and whether I would be able to get it all down, or whether I would forget important things, but then I told myself to have faith in my academic processes to recall what was necessary. I then dwelt in thoughts of knowledge as faith.

I looked at things, picked a flower. As I left the perimeter of the campsite, my intensified focus gave me a pronounced feeling of being outside the protected home area; a very intensified outsidersness.

Constant shifting and mediations between the worlds of inner, outer and imaginary experience collided, rubbed up against each other, created openings in each other and informed each other all the way to the beach.

At one point I found myself repeating to myself over and over again, "i fucking cried I fucking cried I fucking cried".

When I finally made it to the water's edge, I laid down on the sand, looked up at the sky, and repeated,

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

up under the blueness of that big nothing sky

for about two or three minutes. I felt purged.

Exercise 24 1mm/sec, 1cm/sec, 10cm/sec Walk in Water

Same as Exercise 10, except three minutes at each speed, in the water up to the knees. Discuss the results in small groups.

Observation

I do not have sufficient balance to do this exercise as I would wish.

Exercise 25 Giving Wind

In pairs. One partner imagining themselves as a plant; a "viscose" plant, with a bit of spring in the stem. The other partner pressing a hand against their body, or past their body, in a straight line, as the wind.

The emphasis is on keeping the speed and direction of the hand movement consistent.

The aim of the plant person is to move like a plant in the wind, following the stimulation without adding anything.

Repeat in groups of 3; 2 people giving wind to the other one. Discuss among the groups of 3.

Observation

We will be doing more of this. A very hard exercise. I couldn't focus on it very well. I will write more on it as it reveals itself to me.

Exercise 26 Time running

A line is drawn in the sand, about 20m from the water's edge. Running from the water to the line over different lengths of time - 30 secs, 20 secs, 10 secs, 5 secs, 3 secs, 60 secs.

Observation

I began by counting in my head, but after a while developed a sense of how long it took. Running the distance in 3 seconds was beyond my capabilities.

Exercise 27 Cats Going Home

Returning from the beach to the camp imagining ourselves as cats. Not walking on fours, but thinking of the musculature, skeletal, nervous and perceptual structure of the life of a cat. Discuss as a whole group.

Observation

I was aware of not imitating a cat. I found myself doing a rolling sort of motion, with very little excess movement in the limbs. There was a dead bird on the beach. I pawed it with my foot, but was aware that I was responding to an idea of what a cat should do, rather than responding to a relatively immediate bodily image of a cat.

Dinner

A thin tasteless soup with grains, noodles and miso; followed by Anzac biscuits, fruit and nuts.

10:13 pm A Thought Before Bed

As the days progress, things are getting weirder. Everybody is entering a zone of perpetual perceptual dislocation and physical fatigue. There are changes in the way everybody is speaking and moving. I will describe the progression of this as the days go on.

7. Day 5 Tuesday 5/6/1

Breakfast

Same as yesterday. And the day before. And the day before that.

8:35 am

I have woken up feeling rebellious. It seems like this workshop thing is going to go forever.

I have smeared myself with Deep Heat, done some stretches, had a few cups of coffee made with the packet of Lavazza I bought at the supermarket, and it's off to fucking MB.

MB 4

Tess is raising the tempo and complexity every day. The structure is becoming more apparent to me. The first section, the warm-up, gives awareness of the structure of the moving body, focusing and isolating separate parts. The jumps section works with higher velocity energy flows and transfers, heating and speeding the body, and working co-ordination and direction. The cool down section loosens and stretches different parts of the body while slowing its speed and lowering its temperature.

There are also two more sections, which I believe are called co-ordination and circle work, which we are not doing, because Tess thinks we need to do Manipulations 3 and 4 instead, and there isn't sufficient time in our schedule for both.

Each day I master a few more moves, and become a little more capable of directing my energy in a more concentrated fashion.

I spoke to one of the more experienced Bodyweather practitioners, who had trained with Min Tanaka in Japan, about the feeling of payoff when you master a move and get it right. I was told there is no payoff. It always goes deeper. There is always something to improve; something that isn't working. The body awareness becomes more and more focused until there is no satisfaction, just continual problem solving. The person also spoke of how drastically Min Tanaka alters each workshop to suit the group. It seems the relationship between the MB, Manipulations and Groundwork components, and the amount and structure of each in a given workshop is highly variable. They told me about one six-week workshop with Min Tanaka where they did very little MB, worked in the fields all day, and ate outside, so that everything had the quality of groundwork.

After MB today I feel invigorated. The initial wave of muscular pain is passing. I have never felt so alive.

Manipulations 4

I am ambivalent about doing the manipulations today, particularly 3 and 4. I cannot put my feet on the floor over my head, so yesterday it was very unclear as to how I would be able to negotiate it. However, the experience of mobility and separation in my body yesterday was the most profoundly opening and liberating physical experience I have ever had.

Tess says it becomes a matter of balancing and finding the appropriate level of extension without straining yourself.

Then, while receiving pressure to the spine towards the end of the fourth manipulation, a catastrophe happens.

Pathology Report Day 5

The fourth manipulation is particularly strenuous and challenging for me. However, it has unlocked my body and opened possibilities of movement in directions which I have never experienced. Today, during this manipulation, while having pressure applied to my spine, I felt a sharp clunk, accompanied by a perceptible inner noise and a pronounced sudden shifting movement of one of my ribs on the left side. It was accompanied by a sharp, intense pain which cut through all the other small and general pains all over my body, becoming the only sensation of which I was aware.

After labouring through the remainder of the manipulation, I told Tess, who seemed very concerned and said that I should get to the doctor as soon as possible and keep warm in the meantime.

An appointment was made for 3:30 in the afternoon. I participated in the first few groundwork exercises for the afternoon, until the time came to go to the doctor. The pain had subsided a little, but there was obviously something very wrong. My range of movement was severely diminished by the pain. Direct pressure to the affected area was excruciating.

The surgery was perched atop the highest hill in Tathra, with majestic views of the ocean and surrounding countryside. After paying \$29 and waiting about 10 minutes, the doctor, a pleasant Englishwoman in her fifties, called me in to her room. She pressed on the sides of my body and asked whether it hurt. It didn't. She then applied pressure directly to my sternum and back, which sent shudders of pain jarring through my whole body.

She said that the lack of pain from the side pressure indicated that there was no bone damage, but the cartilage where the rib attaches to the sternum was torn. She said to rest it.

There would be a good deal of pain for a few days then it would continue healing for 5-6 weeks.

I asked whether it was OK for me to continue the sort of exercise I had been doing. She said to take it easy and don't do anything too jarring.

Upon my return to the camp I did some laundry, practised some singing and felt happy that it wasn't any worse.

It's just the sort of thing that happens to an old, neglected, ossified, rigid, body when it gets shocked into activity.

I decided to keep working at the exercises as best as I could and try to work around the pain.

Tess said she's never had an injury like this occur in her workshops. I said she'd probably never come across a body like mine.

Lunch

Bread, hummus, tabouli, eggplant, pickles, olive, lettuce, tomato, onion.

Groundwork 5

Today we are instructed to put on warm clothing and drive to the headland at the South end of the beach. Tess tells me to do nothing that might strain the injury. I am due to attend the doctor at 3:30.

Exercise 28 Mirror Walk

We are each given a small rectangular mirror and told to place the long edge along our forehead with the mirror side pointed downwards, reflecting our feet. Then, looking up into the mirror, walking down the rough track towards the headland to a rocky shelf with the ocean breaking over the side. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

Distance was hard to judge; direction even harder. The sound of the person ahead became crucial in knowing which way to follow. The small view in the mirror created a gap in the

decision making process of whether to step up, down, long, short, left or right. Every step was a gamble.

Exercise 29 Mirror Finger Follow

In pairs. Same as Exercise 15 (Tube Finger Walk), except with mirror to focus view of finger instead of tube. One partner with the mirror in the same position as Exercise 28, above the eyes, reflecting downwards, being led by the reflection of the other partner's guiding finger. The guiding partner is instructed to make the finger's trajectory as interesting as possible for the follower. Discuss the results with the partner.

Observation

Looking at the reflection of the finger instead of the reflection of the feet meant that there was no visual perception of the approaching terrain. It was impossible to see where the feet landed. This created the necessity to negotiate the rocky path with the feel of the feet.

This was very disorienting. Impossible to proceed with any certainty. In all of the mirror exercises, height, depth, distance and direction were all difficult to negotiate. The gaps in the perception created confusion and fear.

Exercise 30 Mirror Horizon Walk

Each person with a mirror held across the bridge of the nose, looking down into it. Positioning the mirror so that the horizon of the sky and the ocean is parallel to the edge of the mirror. The whole group standing in a line across the uneven rocky terrain, walking sideways.

Observation

The mirror in this position created the effect of standing on the edge of a cliff, leaning over it and staring into the abyss. When walking sideways with the group, it was like stumbling blindly along the edge of the cliff. Once again, creating a very unsettling and disturbing situation which demanded a negotiation between the knowledge that you were walking on solid ground and the perception of falling over a cliff.

There were more exercises, but I missed them as I had to go to the Doctor. (See Pathology Report, Day 5, above).

A stupid but interesting question

Whilst acknowledging the essentializing reification implicit in the question, I have begun to ask myself what Bodyweather is. How can it be categorized as a genre of social activity.

I would not be asking this question had I not recently read Lowell Lewis's paper, "Genre and Embodiment : From Brazilian Capoeira to the Ethnology of Human Movement". Lewis raises the question of genres of social activity. Whilst I question the value of laying down categorical genres of the things people do, I was intrigued by the question of the ways in which capoeira eludes the acknowledged generic categories of movement activities recognized in Western languages and cultures. Lewis cites the work of Briggs and Baumann, which points out that the problem is generated in the very attempt at categorization: "no system of genres as defined by scholars can provide a wholly systematic, empirically based, objective set of consistently applied, mutually exclusive categories"¹⁵.

Lewis observes that capoeira is neither dance, nor martial art, nor way of life, nor sport, nor game, but combinations of some and/or all of these things to different practitioners at different times, in different circumstances. And so, Lewis contends, capoeira always emerges between accepted genres of movement.

It occurs to me that Bodyweather is similarly always in a state of inbetweenness. I recall a comment of Tess's, that Bodyweather was half Heidegger, half Zen. She said that Min Tanaka was consciously approaching Western culture, as the westerners who studied with him were approaching Japanese culture. The variety of artists with whom he has collaborated, including conceptual artists, sculptors, and jazz musicians, attests to this.

This mediation of differences spreads across Bodyweather in all its aspects, practical, conceptual and technical. It is, to different people at different times, a training method, a way of life, a philosophy, a genre of performance, a spiritual practice and a science.

I saw a video in which a friend of Min Tanaka's characterized it as a negotiation of the gap between the so-called everyday body and the so-called natural body.

In practice, in this particular workshop, it operates between the senses. The exercises outlined in this writing are full of instances of synaesthetic interplay between the senses,

¹⁵ Charles Briggs and Richard Baumann 'Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2(2): 131-172. Cited in J. Lowell Lewis, 'Genre and Embodiment: From Brazilian Capoeira to the Ethnology of Human Movement.', *Cultural Anthropology* 10(2): 221-243.

visualizing the soundfield, embodied nervous sensation of the speed of flame, and other embodiments of conceptualized complex perceptual imagery.

I will develop this theme after I talk to people about it a bit more.

Dinner

Overcooked fettuccine with a palatable enough tomato and spinach sauce with grated cheddar cheese.

As good as it's likely to get here.

8. Day 6 Wednesday 6/6/1

9:38 am The stupid question again

Today we have no MB and manipulations. We are driving through the increasingly steep rolling hills on the way north to Gulaga mountain, which we are going to climb. This morning the chef told me it was a female mountain. I don't understand, but the chef is obviously well versed in local mythology and ritual, so maybe I'll find out what he meant. I shall see.

I swept the dormitory floor this morning. I'm also feeling comfortable enough to have begun singing practice every day in the mornings.

The weak winter sun can't move the mist collecting in the gullies and clinging wisps around the scrubby outcrops and foothills. As we ascend there is less cleared land and more scrappy stands of something approaching forest.

This morning I asked the cook for something to eat with blood in it. He seemed to think something could be arranged and cracked a joke about a giant piece of tofu on a spit.

I am changing; but not.

I have been wondering about my specific mode of immersion in Bodyweather. I recall Peter Snow's comment that it can only be "known" by doing it. I always thought this comment undervalued the types of knowledge generated without intensive immersion in the practice.

According to Tess, there is a "correct" way of *doing* certain aspects Bodyweather, but I don't think this amounts to a correct way of *encountering* Bodyweather. I believe this notion of correctness goes more to Min Tanaka's idea of the "everyday body" in its relation to the "natural body". It is about the openness with which the person's body is available to hear the world and the way the world tunes the person's body.

The person who told Lee Pemberton that he had seen us "chasing sticks around" on the beach, had a perfectly valid interpretation of Bodyweather as he saw it in relation to his foreknowledges. My job is to hear his voice as clearly as I can, to hear Tess's voice, to hear my own body, to hear the world which calls me to immersion, to humbly allow the immersion to happen, and once again to listen.

Bodyweather opens onto the same ground which Heidegger calls the condition of possibility of truth. That is, the bearing of open comportment into the way of openness¹⁶. Bodyweather opens the human body to the openness of its possibility, and discloses the hiddenness of the Mystery of Earth in which human being holds sway¹⁷.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, 'On The Essence of Truth', in *Basic Writings*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Basic Writings*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

10:00 am Clearing Land

Up in the heights now. In the forest. Still a lot of cleared land, some recent pine plantations, but some big old gums as well. Most of this forest is no more than 50 years old.

The people that cleared this land did not clear it for pasture. Not entirely for timber either. They cleared it primarily for the sake of the clearing. To make the land clear to themselves. To create a texture they could understand and into which the texture of their own bodies could be inserted.

12:10 pm Top of Mt Gulaga

1 _ hours of steady ascent to a clearing just below the summit. Lunch.

After 25 mins, I began to shake. I stopped, took a piss, and ate some barley sugar. The shaking stopped.

After an hour my legs turned to jelly. I could barely control them. My feet were slipping on the ground. I hit my head on an overhanging branch. I persevered. By the time we reached the top I could barely feel the lower half of my body.

The workshop participants are sitting around talking about not eating meat and other workshops they have done: Buddhist meditations, bhuto, other dance techniques, other meditation techniques, retreats, systems of movement, dietary restrictions, strange Tibetan therapies, etc...etc...etc...

These people are workshop junkies. Some people work in banks and have mortgages; some people rob houses and shoot up smack; some people collect model trains; some people feel more comfortable locked in jail; these people do workshops. I wonder what it is like to be them. Internal cultural tourists. I wonder what it is like in there.

was it mallarmé

was it mallarmé

who wrote

the blue

the blue

the blue

i can't remember

*with the sound of
the z and the u
in azure
echoing
flies
buzzing
from the
shit hole
dunny
just
down
the track*

*hippies
talking
shit
about not
eating meat*

*the sun
and
the wind
painting
trees*

birds

everywhere birds

*and that
blue
blue
blue
blue
blue
sky that never begins*

6 pm

We ran up the mountain, performed half an hour of delirious exhausted groundwork at the top and ran back down again.

The terrain was a very different texture to the beach landscape we have been working in; steep, rocky, scraggy forest, cold, thin air, and damp, lichen covered, soft, rotting tree stumps. To merge with the texture of the place in any sort of fruitful way would have taken hours, perhaps the whole day to find an opening into the flesh of the land joining with the texture of my own flesh

Like cool concrete on a drunken cheek or floating on water.

Edward Casey's use of Merleau-Ponty's concept of "the flesh of the world" is illuminating here. Casey points to the stratum underlying the nature/culture division, which is a "more encompassing flesh", in which "my body and natural things are not just coterminous but continuous with each other", in a "two-way participation in universal flesh".¹⁸ This is reminiscent of Min Tanaka's defining statement of Bodyweather, "I don't dance in the place, but I am the place".

All the way up and down my awareness was dominated by the presence of a large gaseous bubble in my lower abdomen signalling the loose stool due to a lack of animal fats and proteins in the diet.

I have reached a stage of exhaustion in which I cannot decide what to do or not do. Today I was in a car with a young girl who cried at the sight of a dying snake which had been run over yet hissed defiant with its last breaths while the blood poured from its mouth. To cry in the face of the magnificent cruelty, the sheer vitality of the dying animal, seemed to me to be a sign of decadence and corruption. I wanted to inflict a mortal wound on her so that she would understand it in her own slow death.

Could she not smell the death in her own dirty vein blood. Maybe she could; and that's why she was crying.

*

As of tonight I owe my girlfriend \$45. We had a couple of bets before I left for the workshop. She said she knew the breed of person that did these workshops; they would be tree-hugging hippies. I said no, I thought they would be groovy abstract performance art types.

Irrespective of the utter worthlessness and delicious intolerance of this sort of categorization of sub-cultural groupings among young Western people with too much leisure time, I said I would give her \$5 for each full-blown case of sprout-munching beanie-wearer that I came

¹⁸ Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 255.

across. I have decided that although they all show some tendencies in this direction, there are only 8 serious cases. So I'm happy to give her \$40.

She also said that there would be a campfire and people would play out of tune guitars badly and sing "Kum Bah Yah", "We Shall Overcome", and Nirvana songs. Although there are no guitars, there is going to be a campfire tonight, and...what's worse...it's a full moon. The only weirdness I ever experienced during a full moon, was the tendency of certain categories of people to stupidly blame their behaviour on it.

If another person here asks me my star sign, I will not be held responsible for my actions.

Anyway, I owe her another \$5 for the campfire.

Dinner

Working in pairs. Rolling pre-prepared serves of yeasty pizza dough into circles, then putting toppings on. Giving it to the chef to cook.

It is disgusting. Thick, breadly, undercooked dough with too many flavours and no salami.

10 pm

We have returned from the campfire. I helped build the fire. It occurred to me that I, who had been building fires for at least 35 years, and who always takes control of the fire on camping trips and barbecues, was allowing myself to be directed in the activity by Tess De Quincey, a person whose fire-building skills were a complete mystery to me. This acceptance of direction in this activity is out of character for me.

In most of areas of my life I am used to being the boss. I have been doing most of the things I do for a very long time and I am good at them. Tess De Quincey is also used to being the boss. She is also very good at the things she does. In this situation, I am on her turf. She is the top of the food chain. And so, I graciously allowed her to boss me around in the making of the fire.

In matters to do with the human body, its anatomy, this discipline of Bodyweather and the particular approaches to perception, physicality and the world that it opens up, I have much to learn from her. She knows a lot more about these things than I do.

But as I stated in the poem at the very start of this writing, humility is about knowing with immaculate precision the right time and place to tell someone to get fucked; and I deemed that this campfire was not such an occasion.

Come to think of it I don't suppose Tess De Quincey meets many people who tell each to get fucked in the world of contemporary performance, funding committees, and rehearsal rooms

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's not much difference between pissed Rugby League footballers in stripclubs and art bureaucrats.

There was an interesting episode today as we drove away from the foot of the mountain. More than one person I spoke to expressed dissatisfaction with the way Tess had dealt with her disappointment and anger over the misunderstandings that led to the hurriedness of the trip up the mountain. A couple spoke of her "violation of the group body". They felt as though they had done something wrong and were being punished.

When an appropriate time to discuss the issue arose, no-one mentioned it. Nobody tells the boss off; especially when the boss has got the key to the secret of why everybody is here.

*

At the campfire we looked at the ocean at night under the moon.

It was a hell of a moon.

A blood moon which turned white and silvered the ocean with light.

Then we did some exercises.

Groundwork 6

Exercise 31 Embodied Memory States

We are told to remember an event or moment or feeling from the run up the mountain, inhabit the state induced by the event and embody it now. Discussion by the whole group.

Observation

The open-endedness and indeterminacy of this instruction caused great confusion. When questioned, Tess talked about not mimicking an action, but recalling the event, amplifying it, and embodying the atmosphere of it. The paradox and indeterminacy at work necessitated the release of fundamental creative processes.

I recalled the moment when my legs had turned to jelly on the walk up the hill. The strangeness, exhaustion and disbelief in my ability to go on. A fast light tremulous sensation.

On the second attempt at this exercise, after more discussion, I recalled the dying snake and realized that at the moment I stood in front of it watching the blood well up into its mouth from inside its body and splashing magenta on to the gravel, I was more profoundly affected than I had registered at the time.

As it was happening, my attention was taken up by the crying girl I was with, wanting her to shut up her whimpering over something so natural and normal. But while performing this memory exercise later in the day, I realized that this snake was giving me something more. I was being confronted with the immediacy of death in life. Would I, in the face of the imminent inevitability of my death, stand up and fight for the last few drops of my life draining away, as the snake did?

Exercise 32 Fire-Being

Looking into the fire, at one particular lick of flame.
Observing its speed, its verticality, its rhythm, its texture.
Taking its qualities into our own bodies. Discuss in small groups and then as whole group.

Observation

Once again, a paradox. What does it mean to take qualities of an element “into” my body. Tess stressed it was about speed and texture, but not about muscularity. It was to be a nervous embodiment. The idea was not to mimic the fire, but to take it in, to lift, flicker, burn, breathe and devour as the fire. Then to examine the repercussions on the body of the “taking in” of the image.

Letting an image inhabit the body, and letting the body become consumed. The intention and concentration are in the connection between the fire and the perception of it. The image enables a cellular/molecular reformulation of the body.

the world's eye

*i sat on
top
of a mountain*

*picked up a
handful
of moist black*

*dirt, ran it
between
my fingers and*

palms and smelt

*the
darkness of its*

*life somewhere
between
the outside of*

*itself and a
horizon
wider than the*

*world's eye
of
the possible*

8. Day 7 Thursday 7/6/1

Breakfast

Toast, muesli, coffee.

Pathology Report Day 7 8:30 am

- Rib sore but OK. Painful in extreme positions and during movement.
- Ankle very sore from the mountain yesterday.
- Eye has been good for a couple of days.
- Stool loose.
- No more need for bandaids. Blisters healed. No more high velocity MB possible because of rib.
- Muscle pain gone. It seems the vinegar has done the trick 2 tbsp at night – you wake up with no pain.

MB 5

Early on in the jumps my rib becomes very painful. I have to go out on the side and do edited down, smaller, slower versions of the moves. Consequently my body temperature and speed do not pick up very much.

Some moves, which involve extending the chest, are impossible..

I find it difficult to feel myself as a part of the group. As though a certain level of intensity of involvement must be maintained to make a contribution to, and avoid being a flaw in the integrity of the group body. At times I feel that the low level of physical energy I am bringing to the exercises is actually draining group energy. I speak to Tess about it and she says that these thoughts and feelings are my problem, not the group's. I have to deal with it. At the same time I should be aware that it is as much the responsibility of the other group members to work around me as it is mine to work around them.

She speaks about conducting an investigation of the movements available to me with the current condition of my injured body; about isolating muscles and groups of muscles, separating them to find out what causes pain under what circumstances. She says to work in millimetres. The investigation continues on a different scale, and moves to a different register.

Manipulations 5

It hurts to lay on my back. It hurts worse to lay on my front. It hurts to move my legs. It hurts to move my head. It hurts to move my arms. Tess puts me with an experienced Bodyweather practitioner with the aim of mapping the contours of my pain.

At the end she asks questions of me and my co-manipulator about which movements hurt. Something shifts in my understanding of what she has been trying to say since I became injured. I need to take over the line of questioning she is offering me.

From now on, my task is to redefine and reassess every movement I make, relative to my pain. If I reach down to tie my shoe and it hurts, I need to lift the foot differently, or reposition other parts of my body to find a painless route to achieving the desired aim.

Tess says it will change every day but from now on this is the task and scale of the investigation.

There is such joy in this approach; such wonder. The language is seductive.

Lunch

Grey-green soup with nutmeg, bread and butter. Fruit salad.

Groundwork 7

Exercise 33 Umbrella

Standard martial arts loosening up exercise. In the grassy area outside the dormitories, standing in a circle. Feet apart approximately shoulder distance, turning hips from side to side, arms hanging loose, then adding the head, looking around the full field of vision. First slow, then faster, then reducing speed again.

Exercise 34 Focal Point Umbrella

Same as Exercise 33, but picking one point directly in front and one directly behind to catch focus with the eyes on the way through. The eyes stop long enough to focus the point without stopping the head and body. Once again, speeding up and slowing down.

Exercise 35 Noh Warm-up Exercises (No Sound)

Same as Exercise 21, but performing only the movements, not the sounds.

Exercise 36 Noh Warm-up Exercises

Continuation from Exercise 35, but with sounds as outlined in exercise 21.

Exercise 37 Looking and Dwelling

Similar to exercise 12. Standing in the grassy area outside the dormitories. Dwelling on points in the perceptual field. Concentrating on trajectories, speeds, directions between

points, and dwelling time at each point. Discuss with others nearby

Exercise 38 Looking and Dwelling With Finger Point

Same as Exercise 37, but with finger pointing to the dwelling point.

Exercise 39 Looking and Dwelling With Moving Body

Same as Exercise 37, but adding body movement to follow trajectory. For this and the previous exercise, the group was broken up into two smaller groups, one observing the other, then changing roles.

Observation

The development through exercises 37, 38, and 39, caused by adding increasingly greater bodily involvement with the perceptions brought greater intensity to the sense of dwelling. With the whole body following the finger into the focus, the commitment to the dwelling was so much more involved and intense, creating a more consistent, even and restful perceptual speed and texture.

The effect of observing the other group created an objectified reference to the experience. An opportunity to see how embodied images and trajectories are capable of creating bodies which are far removed from the day to day bodies we see around us.

Exercise 40 Broad Field Vision

Focusing on the widest possible points of peripheral vision on both sides at once, as close to a full 180° as possible. Then, maintaining the sideways focus, walking to different points, sensing the full periphery and turning to perceive the full 360° perceptual field.

Observation

It was difficult to keep the focus wide. The eyes were constantly drawn to focus on what ever was at the central point directly in front of the face. After the first attempt at the exercise, Tess spoke of sensing with the whole plane of the front of the body and seeing with the knees.

On the second attempt I turned from the knees and hips, keeping the upper body moving as a unit to maintain the sense of the plane. It was as though I was seeing with the knees and hips, which were giving direction to a flat picture plane which moved in front of me. Rather than a field of depth of different distances, the fixed plane moved as a whole.

Once the plane was able to be maintained, the exercise was repeated with concentration on the trajectories of movement of the plane. Once again giving direction with the knees.

When walking backwards it was as though the world was sucking sight out of me into itself.

Exercise 41 Giving Wind

Same as Exercise 23. I had to sit out because of my rib.

Observation

Tess gave great emphasis to the straightness of the trajectory, noting that the human body naturally moves in circles and curves. In this exercise the temptation to follow the body's curves should be avoided in both giving and receiving. She also emphasized maintaining awareness of the consistency and variety in the length and speed of trajectories.

Looking on, it seemed to me that most of the people were confusing her instructions. It seems that the application of the plant metaphor is creating the confusion. How to embody the plant? It occurred to me that this exercise is about separating body parts and avoiding habitual bodily movements. It also occurred to me that it wasn't being done very well.

Afterwards I asked Tess if this was a particularly difficult exercise. She said it can take years for people to find it.

Exercise 42 The Killer

I also sat this one out.

Everybody is blindfolded. One person is selected as the Killer.

The Killer must kill all the other people in the room by placing both hands on the back of their neck. Once killed, the person takes off their blindfold and is out of the game. It continues until the Killer has killed everybody.

Observation

It was obvious from the beginning that the stakes were high in this game. The person who Tess was trying to select to be the killer thought that they were being killed. Before the game began, the killer had to be caught first. Tess chased the potential killer all over the room, having to exert a great deal of force to let them know they were the killer. Then the hunt began.

It was immediately obvious that everybody was operating in the soundfield. At first the Killer was clumsy, but rapidly developed skills for locating the other participants. Movements became refined by intention. The hunted people also rapidly developed skills of evasion.

Over a period of 40 minutes, 11 people were killed.

The spectacle was transfixing. Some of the struggles for life and death were extraordinarily violent. At one stage, one of the victims' heads was smashed hard into a wall, forcing their withdrawal from the game in a state of shock. They spent the rest of the game covered by a blanket.

The longer the hunt went on, the more skilful it became. At times, the dance between people who could hear, smell and feel, but not see each other, motivated by the hunt, was exquisite. Pure intercorporeal movement, with each body sensing the others, moving towards, with and away from each other in uncanny connected and disjointed relationships.

It was a highly charged encounter. Something very special. At the end, four participants remained unkilld. The killer took off the blindfold and burst into tears. A dangerous game played for high stakes.

Pain

Most of the people here are in pain. There are a couple of serious ankle and knee injuries, blood blisters the size of 50c pieces on the soles of feet, dozens of other blisters, a badly torn calf muscle, other lesser muscle strains, my rib, and a host of other minor injuries, pulls, tears and sores too numerous to mention. In one of the dormitories, four women have begun to menstruate in the last 2 days.

Medicines and treatments, remedial and prophylactic, include herbal lotions, liniments, Dencorub, band-aids, cider vinegar, support bandages, strapping, cold packs, hot packs, pain killers, amino acids and hot water bottles.

Everybody is dealing, as a fundamental part of the process, with pain. They came here expecting it. The pain is not incidental. It is an inevitable accompanying ingredient of the conditions achieved and processes undergone in the work.

There are pains to be “worked through”, pains to be “worked with”, and pains to be “worked around”. I have yet to give much thought to these provisional categories of pain; where they cross over and depart from each other; or specifically in which activities or limitations of activity they consist. I will elaborate this as the time goes on, but roughly for now; pains to be worked “through”, include such things as period pain, minor strains and muscle aches. These pains more or less completely disappear in the performance of the work and can be helped by the work.

Pains to be worked “with” are such injuries as more serious muscle strains and ligament damage, where movement is impaired to a degree, but the normal activities of MB can be performed, albeit with some modification. One participant, with a ballooned knee which is strapped, bandaged and covered with ointments and hot/cold packs, said that the limitations of the injury caused her to operate in MB at a lower level of intensity which made her able to achieve more precision than when she was fully exerting herself. But even with this knowledge, she still pushed herself too hard and aggravated the injury. She had to push as hard into it as she could. She continually had to test the pain and keep it in the foreground.

Pain is a question, a challenge, perhaps an invitation.

The more intense the pain, the more it becomes foregrounded and shape-giving to the work.

In extreme cases of pains to be “worked around”, such as my rib, the pain is foregrounded to such an extent that it becomes the subject of the work. The pain needs to be mapped.

Microscopic observation and analysis reveals which movements cause the pain and how it can be avoided. When a movement causes pain, other parts of the body are moved, tensed, relaxed and given weight, in order to work out how movements and tasks might be performed without having to go “through” the pain, but rather, to find a way “around” it.

At one point today, while trying to get up from the floor, after a few minutes of exploration, I found that by putting my weight on one of my hands, releasing the tension in my neck and letting my head roll sideways, I could sit up without any pain.

The satisfaction I felt was akin to when a difficult co-ordination move in MB clicks. Body wonder. There is a joy in releasing and mastering body potentials in this work. Working “around” the pain is a form of mastery over a recalcitrant body that impedes instead of opens. Working with bodily impedance is an important part of the work, particularly in the manipulations.

Potentials are released in the body by isolating nerves, bones and muscles. The ability to locate, separate and control a part or section of the body, in isolation from its accustomed relations to other parts of the body is a reward of the discipline. Pain can aid this process by necessitating greater focus, concentration and mapping.

A recalcitrant body in pain provides a problem to be solved; a new and necessary site of investigation to separate and control body parts and sections. The obstacles provide new bodily awareneses, pathways and relationships in the body and between the body and the world.

So, for Bodyweather, a body in pain, or a pained body, becomes a specifically textured body which has certain speeds, directions, relations and trajectories which need to be negotiated. And in Bodyweather the negotiation of bodily texture is one of the principal purposes of the work.

9. Day 8

Friday

8/6/1

8 pm

Today has been dominated by my injury. I woke up in a lot of pain. I started with the strategy of working around the pain. Every time I encountered pain whilst moving or trying to do something, I would draw back 1 cm or so, hovering on the edge of the pain, and adjust my knees, hips, arms, or head, until the pain receded. I would then reattempt the movement in the new position, taking it as far as I could until the pain reappeared. Then I repeated the process.

This has given me a slowness and fluidity to which I am unaccustomed. I feel very much at ease with the world.

MB 6

I begin the session working with the group in the lines. As soon as the jumps section starts I move to the side and try to extract something, (a balance, a flow, a shape, a gesture, a pattern, a speed, a focus, a direction) from each exercise, which seems to address my needs at this rudimentary stage of my apprehension of the process.

I have come, thanks to Bodyweather, to see the injury as a gift. It gives me the freedom to address my needs in a very limited context, enabling full concentration on the small tasks. It is essential, however, that I maintain focus and concentration, and avoid the pitfall of using my limitations as an excuse to bring less than full commitment to each of the movements and exercises. There is an intensity of focus, precision and energy that I learned in the first couple of days of MB, that I must tap into, even when performing the smallest move.

Today I am able to isolate my lower abdomen and get a slightly better sense of it as a centre of balance. Geometric shapes, drawn small, are easier and more controlled than on previous days. Small progress in many ways.

Manipulations 6

Since the injury I have been working in the manipulations with an experienced Bodyweather practitioner. This is apparently an unusual situation. It is desirable to change partners every day to work with as many different bodies as possible, to explore their shapes, structures and potentials.

The person I am working with shows genuine interest in mapping the boundaries of my pain with me. The knowledge, support, generosity of spirit, and application brought to the task have been invaluable to my embodied understanding of the process.

As I leave the manipulations today, I feel energised, relaxed, and a lot less in pain.

Lunch

Vegetable Bake with Tomato Sauce. I am beyond criticizing the food.

Groundwork 8

Exercise 43 Noh Breathing

Same as Exercise 19. On this occasion we run through the positions first before making the sound. We are also left to go at our own pace at the end of the exercise.

Observation

I was unable to extend my arms properly. It was a worthwhile exercise finding how far I could extend my arms and chest without pain, and then trying to keep the movement smooth in the positions I found.

When left to make my own tempo I found a great deal of variation in speed and concentration, dependent on the nature of the sound I was making and the difficulty of the movement.

Exercise 44 Cloud-Being

On the beach. Concentrating on one cloud or group of clouds, observing the changing shapes, speeds, and directions, and taking the texture of it into our bodies. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

At first I couldn't focus because my eyes were blinking too fast from the glare. I eventually found a cloud in a part of the sky which I could hold and dwell with. Over a short period of time it dispersed and disappeared completely. I remained highly focused on the absence of the cloud, holding the perception and awareness of diffusion and dispersal.

Exercise 45 Ground-Being

Same as Exercise 44, except this time focusing on a small patch of sand and taking it into our bodies. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

There were ruts, mounds, divots and holes in the shifting grainy sand, but the overwhelming perception was of the slow density of the earth; stable, solid and deep. I had problems absorbing the weight and density. I felt that I would need a long time to embody this texture.

Exercise 46 Water-Being

Same as Exercises 44 & 45, except this time with the ocean, concentrating on a flat patch, not the waves. The idea is to get a sense of the deep current and mass of the ocean. Performed first in a standing position, then lying down. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

My body was already, to some extent, imbued with the weight of earth, giving it an undifferentiatedness. I felt like a lumpen mass. As I observed and drew up the multiple flows and cross currents of the water, concentrating on the feeling in my body, I became aware of flows moving through me in all directions. An internal multidirectional swimming sensation; slow, heavy, dispersed, non-geometric, incommensurable. The result was similar in a lying down position.

Exercise 47 Remembered Fire-Being

Recalling the fire from Exercise 32. Discuss in small groups.

Observation

I was surprised how easily I was able to recall first the image of the particular lick of flame I had worked with two days ago, its insatiable verticality, the way it curled around the log; and then the ease with which the memory translated to my nerves.

Note on Exercises 42 - 45.

It struck me that for me the verticality and speed of the flame were easier to assimilate and embody than the weight and density of the earth. I stand upright. My thoughts and perceptions move at great speed; the sense of sight in particular covering great distances in minute durations. As much as I wish to develop an understanding of the ways in which my body means and knows, I still primarily conceive thoughts in a language where they move up towards the head.

To dwell with the earth would require accumulated duration of weight to become earthed and embedded. Perhaps with sufficient practice it would become easier.

The ocean and the clouds, as movements towards dispersal and incommensurability, were more in tune with the modes of diffuse awareness we have been dealing with all week, and so were readily assimilable.

Exercise 48 1mm & 1cm/Sec Walks With Dots

Same as Exercise 8, except instead of continuous movement, imagining the body as lines of dots, and moving the dots in increments of the prescribed distance across the prescribed time. Discuss as a large group.

Observation

I found this much easier than the continuous slow walks. Perhaps my balance is improving. I look forward to a day when I am sufficiently stable to experience the flow of this exercise.

Did I write that? am I thinking of doing more of this? Life is very strange.

Exercise 49 Giving and Taking Wind

Same as Exercise 23. This time performed as before, in pairs, except with both partners simultaneously giving and receiving the trajectories of the wind. Discuss with partner.

Observation

This is difficult. I haven't even gotten very far with doing it one way, either giving or receiving, let alone having to negotiate the two directions at once. Even a basic level of embodied understanding of this exercise eludes me.

It demanded simultaneous focus in and out. It was necessary to focus on the speed, length and direction of the wind being received at the same time as reading the movement and resistance in the other person's body, giving straight and consistent wind at different speeds and trajectories.

I was incapable of operating in such a diffuse field of focus.

The situation was further exacerbated by pain.

I was left feeling frustrated and inadequate to the task.

Exercise 50 Giving Wind 2 on 1

Same as Exercise 23 again, but with two people simultaneously giving to one receiver.

Observation

I hurt my rib and could not continue with any productive degree of concentration.

Exercise 51 Word Pulse

Laying down, looking at the sky, the ocean, the ground, the other people, anywhere, saying words as they come to the mouth. Keeping the pulse of words flowing.

Observation

Very relaxing. Allowing the words to come, recognizing relations and connections between them, following the connections, riding the rhythms and textures of my body, the words and the world as they intertwined effortlessly.

I could sleep for 1,000 years.

10 pm More on Pain

I finished the groundwork today in pain. After the manipulations and a full 24 hours of mapping the pain, moving slowly, always maintaining a speed and distance in relation to it, I realized that some moves into the pain, even slight ones, are capable of seriously irritating the injury.

Under normal circumstances, I would just push through the pains of getting up, turning over and laying down associated with an injury of this sort. In taking the lead given me by Tess and

making it the subject of the investigation, I am treating it with greater delicacy. My movements are a dance with the pain.

The pain is the source of difference between my habitual everyday body and the more aware, delicate, slower, thinking body of the pain.

The pain is the meaning of the movement.

10. Day 9

Saturday

9/6/1

7 am

Yesterday, at the end of the day, Tess pulled me aside and thanked me for my contribution to the workshop. This gesture did not surprise me. She runs things with a refined sensitivity. She is rigid in her demands of adherence to the things that she feels are necessary: punctuality, respect for the group body, the correct approach to the exercises, commitment to the process, a spirit of openness, containment of the ego, the necessary skills and level of development it takes to teach the exercises are all necessary to the potential release of possibilities in the process. They are things about which she says she is “quite passionate”, which means they must be rigorously adhered to.

However, with these things clearly defined as the parameters within which Bodyweather unfolds, she moves with delicacy and responsiveness to the needs of the group. It appears that she has even learnt to suffer fools, if not gladly, then with a generous forbearance. I don't think this skill would have come easily to her.

I have found her supportiveness and generosity inspiring and motivating me towards bringing the fullest possible engagement I have been able to bring to each moment of the workshop.

I enjoy, appreciate and applaud her quiet, dark sovereignty.

tathra morning

three people

on a verandah

predictably

amazed at the

always improbable

shapes

cast by clouds

the clean

just washed

pungency

of my laundry

pressed against

my face

and birds

*shaping the stuff
of silence
and stuffing the
cacophonous shape
into a place*

MB 7

Once again, off to the side, working gently and slowly; some progress. There are new people in the group who have arrived for the weekend. I realize how much progress I have made when I see the difficulty they are encountering. The capacity I have developed is not so much in the ability to do things with great coordination and form, but in the approach to the investigation, and the slow faith towards the next problem.

I feel a little frustrated at not being able to do jumps today.

Manipulations 7

Working again with the same experienced Bodyweather practitioner. Today I am in less pain after the MB, so I am able to take more pressure and receive more manipulations.

My partner has an injured foot. Today I am less tentative in manipulating it and more capable of providing meaningful stimulation.

Groundwork 9

Exercise 52 Standing Manipulations

Working in pairs. One partner manipulating the other's arm, exploring the full range of movement of the limb as well as conducting an internal manipulation of the structure.

When the manipulation stops, the partner being manipulated freezes in the last position, and using embodied memory, continues the manipulation of themselves, unaided, in the same manner as the other was manipulating them. Then roles are then reversed.

This exercise is repeated with different partners, manipulating the head and the pelvis. Discuss with each partner.

Exercise 53 Two-Way Standing Manipulations

Same as Exercise 49, except both partners manipulate each other simultaneously.

Observation

This was another example of giving and receiving simultaneously. The focus on the action of giving manipulation, and the consequent involvement in the other's body blocked the ability to receive the manipulation in any meaningful way. Focusing on the receipt of the manipulation made the giving flaccid and formless.

Exercise 54 Three Kinds of Foliage

In the grassy area outside the dormitories. Locate three different kinds of foliage that attract your attention for some reason. Imagine a point in the middle of the forehead, go to the first foliage and draw it using the point in the middle of the forehead, following the foliage with the point. Repeat for the other two types of foliage.

Observation

I noticed that the shape and size of the foliage, combined with the distance I stood from it, determined the speed of the drawing. The relativities between size, distance, time and speed are becoming more and more thematized in my approach to the world.

Exercise 55 Three Joints Drawing Shapes

Working in pairs. One partner directing the other in drawing simple geometric shapes (line, square, circle and triangle) of different sizes, on different planes, with specified joints (elbow, knee, ankle, knuckle, etc.). For example, a small, vertical triangle drawn with the elbow. When one shape is established, add another, using a different shape drawn by a different joint on a different plane. Then a third. Keep all three drawing simultaneously. Take one away, then add another. Discuss with partner.

Observation

I could barely get one shape consistent, let alone two or three. It seemed that it would require a great deal of time and practice before this sort of complex embodiment could become habitual.

Exercise 56 Omnicentral Imaging 1 (Head and Legs)

A butoh technique based on the partition of the body into four areas (head, legs, torso, and arms) and four images of qualities of movement associated with each area. The principle is to animate each of the body zones with one of its four

movement qualities, and keep all four areas moving simultaneously.

Head 1) Butterflies: In a closed cranium, place moving butterflies in the space of the head.

2) Wave: Move the whole head with the ebb and flow of waves through it.

3) Feelers: Imagine insect feelers of a specific length on the front of the head. Catch the relation to the length of the feelers.

4) Waterfall: An old Buddhist practice. Imagine a strong waterfall pouring down on top of the head and the water streaming down the face.

Legs 1) Sharp-edged stones: The feet are walking across a terrain of sharp stones. Angular, irregular surfaces.

2) Foliage: Trace the shape of foliage with an imagined point on the thighs. Follow the structure and texture of the foliage.

3) Ocean: The whole legs embody the flow of deep ocean water. Heavy passages of long current.

4) Branches: The legs are hollow dry branches in the wind. A trembling brittle dry quality.

These images are used to animate the relevant body part as an area of sensitivity. The idea is not to create emotional reactions and responses, but to give different sensitivities to different muscle groups and nervous structures through the embodiment of the various images.

The exercise is performed in 2x2 groups of six people. One group of six practices the four images in the head, while the other group looks on and then comments on each. Then the roles

are reversed. The results, as in all the groundwork exercises, are discussed. Then the leg images are practised.

Then both legs and head are combined. The format of the 2 sets of 2 groups of six studying each other are maintained throughout.

Observation

There was a great deal of diversity in interpretations of the images in the bodies of the different members of the different groups.

I found this exercise very difficult. I could not maintain the two separate images simultaneously for very long.

The question of whether the awareness and focus on the images in the different zones of the body were actually spontaneous or just very fast movements of attention between the body parts arose for me. I will discuss this further with Tess and the group.

Tess said she would give us the rest of the images tomorrow.

1 am An insomniac ramble concerning the question of Tess De Quincey

This is the last night of the workshop. I can't sleep. So much has happened. I am torn between the demands of fatigue, homesickness, the desire to continue the investigation and the fear that I may not be able to do justice in this writing to the scope and depth of the experience I have had here.

I have used a variety of writing styles and modes of address in an attempt to capture it with as rich and full a range of perspectives as I can, without losing the factual details of the workshop itself.

*

I recall discussions I have had in the recent past concerning Tess De Quincey as movement artist and subject/object of her own work. I note particularly the creation of a public persona, intentional or otherwise, as part of the work of an artist whose body and self is an important feature of their work. In the case of Tess De Quincey, the public persona has been characterized by the dark demeanour, the reputation for uncompromising rigour and ascetic dedication to the work, an unapproachability and an eschewal of the unnecessary fripperies of polite society. This reputation serves to charge her self as affecting presence in the work in the perception of the audience. The audience brings it into the auditorium.

However, on this workshop, I have found her to be humorous, joyous, at times mildly self-demeaning, not immune to life's sensual pleasures, and above all a gifted and generous teacher.

Some of the participants of this workshop who have attended other workshops with her in the past have noted a difference in her demeanour in this setting as opposed to past workshops, commenting on her availability and approachability. In a light moment at the campfire tonight, she spoke of how she used to work people for 12 hours a day, but as she gets older her capacity and her desire to work people so hard diminishes.

I question the worth of writing about the Tess De Quincey persona in the context of this workshop report, but for a couple of reasons I think it is not only acceptable but both necessary and illuminating.

Firstly, this is a subjective mode of inquiry. It is about my experience of the workshop. My subjective experience of the workshop is an encounter with the other people attending the workshop. As a subjective experience it is fundamentally an intersubjective experience. As Hans Joas interprets Merleau-Ponty,

The basis of all experience is not just corporeality but the interrelatedness of our experience of our bodies to our experience of other bodies¹⁹.

My encounter with Tess De Quincey is basic to my experience of the process. How I conceive of her. apprehend her and relate to her are fundamental coordinates of the experience.

Secondly, it follows from the very nature of Bodyweather that a workshop with a different teacher would be a different interpretation of Bodyweather. All the people who teach Bodyweather across the world do it very differently. This has led to a problem for Bodyweather practitioners concerning accreditation and authenticity, but that is not the point at question here.

The sensitivity and sensibility of the teacher is a vital catalyst in the structure and unfolding of a Bodyweather workshop. A workshop is an investigation for the teacher. Different teachers structure specific workshops differently according to their perception of the needs of the particular group and place of the workshop.

As an intercorporeal life-form inhabiting an environment, the texture of a Bodyweather workshop is determined by its participants and the terrain. It would be rendered different, to some degree, in some way, by the removal or addition of any of its participants. And no participant is more determinant to the specific articulation of the intercorporeal body than the instructor.

Thirdly, I believe that Tess De Quincey is an important artist. I believe further that that importance stems, in part, from her particular answer to the question: what is art? I believe

¹⁹ Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), p 181.

that Bodyweather workshops, as she runs them, are works of art. They are large improvised site-specific performances addressing similar questions to some of her other works; durational performances; pieces in which she has harnessed and deployed the creativity of other people; works which raise the question of place; and the thematization of the nature of the audience.

In addition, the creation of the Tess De Quincey persona is a factor to be considered not only in the sense that her body is her work, but also in that the persona attracts a particular character of audiences and workshop participants with particular needs and expectations. People go to a workshop partly to get what the teacher has to offer.

So, for these reasons, in spite of criticisms which may emerge, from myself or anyone else who may read this, including Tess De Quincey, I have decided that these personal investigations are necessary to my process and must be not only addressed, but also documented.

Campfire 2

We finished off the last night of the workshop with a campfire, eating barbecued fish and tofu kebabs. A young girl with a smooth empty white face upbraided me for attempting to put a partly painted piece of wood into the fire because it would release toxic chemicals into the atmosphere. I looked at her, saw the lifetime of pain she would suffer if she was lucky, and in the nicest possible way said that the difference between me and her was that I didn't give a fuck about the release of toxic chemicals into the atmosphere, but, as I did not possess a sufficiently well developed sense of my own rectitude to impose my will on other people, I would refrain from putting the offensive piece of wood on to the fire out of respect for her wishes. Why should I take the opportunity to add to her pain. Self-righteousness has no ears.

Talking about Pain

Around the toxic chemical-free campfire Tess suggested I give an update of my work. I asked the question of the role of pain in the workshop. Initially there was very little response. At first I took this to be an expression of the fact that it was too mundane to be of interest to the group. I prodded a bit more. The discussion yielded the third category of pain to be worked "with", in addition to my "through" and "around" categories.

So, as it stands at this writing, the provisional working categories of pain I will refer to are:

- 1) Pain to be worked through – pain which, if ignored, will pass from awareness for substantial periods during the work, having minimal effect on its execution.

- 2) Pain to be worked with – pain which is more intense, to the point where it affects performance, requiring a modification of technique. Pain of this order may or may not indicate conditions which could become worse as a result of performing the work.
- 3) Pain to be worked around – pain which is too intense to work normally, and which could lead to serious exacerbation of injury if ignored. Pain of this order can completely change the nature of the investigation by foregrounding the pain to an extent that it becomes the point of the investigation.

In the pain to be worked through category, the doing of the work stops the pain as the tasks become foregrounded. This leads to a freedom from awareness of pain, or even a curing of the pain.

In the pain to be worked with category, the pain persists and detrimentally affects performance, but can improve concentration and produce interesting results in the work. In this category there is a danger that “good” and “bad” pain might become confused. If the pain is bearable and the tasks of the work become sufficiently foregrounded to diminish the awareness of pain, the body’s warnings of serious damage may not be heeded.

Pain to be worked around changes speed, time, direction, weight, distance, balance and the whole energetics of flow in the body.

I didn’t consider it at the time, but it was pointed out to me later by one of the participants that pain is a taboo subject in such situations. In both Western dance culture and Eastern martial arts, pain and injury are expected and complaint is not allowed.

I was surprised at the stupid heroism at work here if this was the case.

I saw one participant, who continually denied the existence of any pain, even muscular aches, in the shower running hot water on their lower back, in obvious distress. When I asked what the problem was, the response, through gritted teeth, was “just getting warm”. This person was either inordinately cold on a warm sunny afternoon, or lying about pain.

I find it odd that in a discipline such as Bodyweather, which is supposed to be about an intensive bodily awareness, that something so crucial to the experience of the body should be denied or overlooked.

This requires further investigation.

Academia and Documentation

At the campfire, there was also discussion of the question of the worth and relevance of my work, of writing a report of a workshop, of documentation of performance and rehearsal, and of the value of academic work on art generally.

Tess raised the question of the low esteem in which academic work is held by some practitioners. About half of the group saw academic work as an inferior practice to the “true” art that they saw themselves engaged in. They saw its descriptions as irrelevant and inadequate to creative processes; an impediment to creative work rather than an aid.

These opinions were based on a conception of academic writing as a secondary, representational form of writing, couched in a search for ultimate truth and absolute knowledge, rather than a productive creative enterprise.

The other half of the group, which included me, Tess, her dancers, and a few others argued in opposition to this position. I stated the belief that academic writing is an art in itself, which can be conducted according to a method and spirit which eschews the search for ultimate reductionist truth. I cited Deleuze’s idea that philosophy is an art which produces concepts.

I stated that I claimed no authority for whatever was produced in my work, but if it proved to be of interest to anybody other than myself, I would be pleased.

Tess spoke of the importance of documentation to her as an artist. She was unconditionally supportive and encouraging of my work, even when our opinions differed. She argued against opinions which expressed concern that documentation somehow compromised the essential act of performance

Further discussion revealed the predominance of an ethnocentrist and avant-gardist view of art in the group, and a self-consciousness of a “preciousness” in relation to it. When I raised the question of a Bodyweather workshop being a piece of performance art, the response was almost universally dismissive. The dominant view was of a training method to aid the “real” performances in which their creativity was expressed.

These people had not yet even asked the questions of postmodernism and poststructuralism, let alone questioned those questions.

11. Day 10

Sunday

9/6/1

The Last Day

these birds

*these birds
will
make this
place the
same here
tomorrow
different*

*but this
collection
of oddballs
weirdos
hippies
frauds
angels
and dancers*

*will have
gone
back
to
somewhere
else*

MB 8

No new major breakthroughs. Small progressions. The fact that it is the last day predominates.

Manipulations 8

There are substantial improvements in the intensity of the pain in my rib. There has also been an odd shift from yesterday, when movement of the left side of my body caused more pain in the injury, while today movement of the right side causes more pain.

The investigation continues.

Groundwork 10

Exercise 57 Omnicentral Imaging 2 (Arms and Torso)

Completion of Exercise 56.

Torso 1)Galah Wings: In the chest. Capturing the shape of fluttering wings connected to the chest. Finding out where the chest can go.

2)Clouds: The whole torso is a moving cloud formation. The image is determined by what sort of cloud, how fast it is travelling.

3)Birdsong: The torso follows lines of birdsong. Direction and movement of resonant birdsong.

4)Rainbow Serpent: Up the spine. Capturing the movement and colours of the snake and the rainbow moving up the spine.

Arms 1)Lines of Flight: Points on the arms carrying directional lines of flight.

2)Mosquitoes: The elbows move as mosquitoes in flight.

3)Grasses: The fingernails are three metre long grasses in gentle wind.

4)Flames: The arms move with the speed and character of flames.

Performed in the same groupings and orders as in Exercise 56.

Observation

After the torso and arm images were practised, we combined three body zones, and then four. Paradoxically, many of us found four images easier to assimilate than three.

Also, some images in different parts of the body harmonized, some conflicted. I found it harder to maintain separation between embodiments of similar movement textures. For

example: ocean legs and wave head, because of similar speeds and trajectories, would move together.

Fast nervous movements, like fire in the arms, made it difficult to maintain smooth movements, like cloud torso, in other parts of the body.

Diffuse Intermediate Awarenesses: Speed and Simultaneity.

As the separations and co-ordinations of multiple embodied images in these Omnicentral Imaging exercises unfolded, I saw a thread of development which had occurred in the workshop over the previous week.

Exercises 44-47 had prepared us for the idea of “tasking in” images of the terrain; earth, cloud and water. Paradoxical gaps had had to be bridged to develop a concept and practice of embodied understanding, different from the normal mental “grasp” of things as objects of knowledge.

In exercise 49 on Day 8, Tess had introduced the simultaneous giving and receiving of wind. In the standing manipulations at exercise 53, each partner was manipulating and being manipulated at the same time. This simultaneous combination of awarenesses focusing in and out required an ability to inhabit *between* the focal directions.

Then, at exercise 55, drawing three shapes with three different body parts on different planes, we were introduced to the final step before Omnicentral Imaging. This development has been a story of an intensifying and broadening of the capacity for embodiment of multiple awarenesses.

This raises two important theoretical issues for me. 1) Diffuse states of intermediate awareness, and 2) Inbetweenness.

I mentioned in the diary of Day 8, under the heading ‘A Stupid but Interesting Question’ Tess’s comment early on in the workshop about Bodyweather being half Heidegger, half Zen. She had spoken of Min Tanaka’s desire to approach the West, and the desire of the Westerners who worked with him to approach Japanese Culture. She said that Bodyweather had developed as a conscious inhabitation of an encounter between cultures. This is just one unfolding plane of inbetweenness of a discipline which emerges at an encounter inbetween different existential registers.

At the campfire last night I raised the question of Lowell Lewis’s social genres of movement activity. (See above: A stupid but interesting question, p 61). I also raised the question with members of the group separately. About _ of the participants saw Bodyweather as a useful training for their more “creative” pursuits. Some spoke of a means of bringing together body and mind. For Tess it is deeply embodied philosophy which has shaped her whole life. For me

it is about a miraculous release of potentials in this body. Only two people spoke of it as a “way of life”, and “way of being”. Three or four saw it as a dance technique.

The parallels with Lewis’s work on capoeira are obvious²⁰.

I also raised the question with Tess and the group of whether it is actually possible to maintain simultaneous multiple focal points or directions. Tess said she believes it’s a matter of scanning and “shuttling” through the body at high speed. Moving, for example, between awareness of one image in the head to another in the legs, to another in the torso. She spoke of the achievement of a “vibratory” condition.

One particularly vocal member of the group was a strong supporter of the idea of simultaneity rather than speed, stating that multiple selves are always co-present in the body.

My own experience of the state, in a small, limited way, was of periods of no more than a few seconds of a feeling of openness; an almost vibratory high-speed state that moved so fast it wasn’t experienced as speed.

I also asked the group about the experience of the exercises (22, 23, 51) that involved talking to ourselves about our experiences of focal directions, in, out, and imaginary, as we experienced them. The talking created another focal dimension, intermediate to the others. Another case of the proliferation of awarenenses, movements, foci, zones, actions, images and embodiments which we were moving between.

Within the in/out/imaginary distinctions in focal direction, the group found many grey areas and indeterminacies. Multiple focal directions were recognized in some bodily zones. The skin is the most singular example of this; a two-sided membrane facing both in and out, mediating perceptions of the world and the body’s sense of its rising to its own surface. And where does the cold chill skin-prickle of a memory of fear come from?

The nasal cavity and the lungs draw the outside in and contain it. Memory is a three way mediation of imagining the outside, gone past as being somehow stored inside. Synaesthetic experiences combine imagination and outwards perceptions to create internal bodily confusions.

In fact, in every experience, the internal focus, the external focus, and the focus of the imagination are always co-creating perception in a diffuse interpenetration of awarenenses.

For me this demonstrates the arbitrariness of these categories of perceptual focus. This is not to deny that they may well be relatively fundamental perceptual orientations determined necessarily to some extent by bodily structure. It is just a recognition that they are handy

²⁰ J. Lowell Lewis, ‘Genre and Embodiment: From Brazilian Capoeira to the Ethnology of Human Movement.’, *Cultural Anthropology* 10(2): 221-243.

idealizations or generalizations used as tools to mediate or navigate a condition which is originally multi-focused.

There is continual movement in all directions in a human body's encounter with itself and the world. Bodyweather is a system for negotiating and manipulating these movements.

This makes sense of the role of Bodyweather in moving towards the idea of the negotiation between the "natural body" and the "everyday body".

I interpret the term "everyday body" as the habitual set of relationships in a particular body; a particular arrangement of awarenesses, foci, flows and textures to which a given body is accustomed as a result of its place in relation to its usual cultural and physical environment.

The "natural body", on the other hand, can be conceived as a more conscious inhabiting of the potentials of the human body. The practice of Bodyweather is a means by which it is possible to gain creative access to the movements, awarenesses, flows, foci and textures of the human body in place, and forge different arrangements of the diffuse structures in which we live.

The everyday body takes itself for granted. It thinks it is a normal given state. It has forgotten that it is merely one set of possible diffuse arrangements among an infinity of potential other arrangements.

still...

black tree silhouettes

still...

as dark weight

of

sky nights down

birds invisible silent

still...

as ocean sings

in

distant froth

faint memory scent

still...

as lingering light

on

life's ineffable palate

mosquito night whine
still...
as hot blood
in
capillary stink puncture

and this
young last night
still...
rains damp farewells
in
skin's ancient breath

12. Afterthought

I've been back in Sydney for 2 days. Yesterday I felt energised. My usual surrounds looked different, my body was loose and easy. I walked the streets casting perceptual trajectories in all directions, aware of the roll of my feet on the hard ground. I saw details in buildings, and relationships in the cityscape I had never seen before.

Tonight I have to go to work. I have been sitting at the computer all day. I can feel the released potentials and energies of the last ten days dissipating and folding back into the habitual, sedentary structure of my body.

I want to do more of this Bodyweather. Ten days was a mere foretaste.

My fears were ungrounded, my expectations of release from stress and of new experiences of my body were exceeded.

And I didn't tell anyone to get fucked.

flying over sydney
in a giant dog
things looked bad

michael dransfield

13. Appendices

Index of Poems

<i>humility</i>	15
<i>a white wall</i>	20
<i>my body</i>	20
<i>previous workshop reports</i>	21
<i>fagless but patched</i>	23
<i>the bus station</i>	24
<i>departure</i>	25
<i>ah wollongong!</i>	27
<i>a call</i>	29
<i>stars</i>	34
<i>it's good</i>	44
<i>weak winter sun</i>	53
<i>was it mallarmé</i>	71
<i>the world's eye</i>	76
<i>tathra morning</i>	92
<i>these birds</i>	102
<i>still...</i>	107

Index of Groundwork Exercises

Exercise 1	Hand and Breath.....	32
Exercise 2	Hand and Breath lying down.....	33
Exercise 3	String in mouth.....	33
Exercise 4	Walking backwards.....	34
Exercise 5	Cat's Ears.....	39
Exercise 6	10 Person String in Hand Blindfolded.....	40
Exercise 7	2 Person Blindfolded String Lead.....	41
Exercise 8	Blindfolded String Lead Feet Planted.....	41
Exercise 9	3 People moving a Person in the Sand.....	42
Exercise 10	1mm/Sec Walk (Bisoku).....	42
Exercise 11	Sea Horse Ears.....	43
Exercise 12	Looking and Dwelling.....	46
Exercise 13	Sticks and Soundfield.....	47
Exercise 14	Soundfield Forehead Self-Draw.....	47
Exercise 15	Tube Finger Walk.....	48
Exercise 16	Giving 2 Hands into Breath.....	48
Exercise 17	3 Joints Twitch.....	49
Exercise 18	Stick Shuffle.....	49
Exercise 19	1cm/sec Walk with Stick.....	49
Exercise 20	Blindfold Run.....	50
Exercise 21	Noh Warm-Up.....	58
Exercise 22	Dwelling and Talking.....	59
Exercise 22a	Outer Dwelling and Talking.....	59
Exercise 22b	Inner Dwelling and Talking.....	60
Exercise 22c	Imagination Dwelling and Talking.....	60
Exercise 23	Talking to the Beach.....	61
Exercise 24	1mm/sec, 1cm/sec, 10cm/sec Walk in Water.....	62
Exercise 25	Giving Wind.....	62
Exercise 26	Time running	62

Exercise 27	Cats Going Home.....	63
Exercise 28	Mirror Walk.....	66
Exercise 29	Mirror Finger Follow.....	67
Exercise 30	Mirror Horizon Walk.....	67
Exercise 31	Embodied Memory States.....	75
Exercise 32	Fire-Being.....	76
Exercise 33	Umbrella.....	80
Exercise 34	Focal Point Umbrella.....	80
Exercise 35	Noh Warm-up Exercises (No Sound).....	80
Exercise 36	Noh Warm-up Exercises.....	80
Exercise 37	Looking and Dwelling.....	80
Exercise 38	Looking and Dwelling With Finger Point.....	81
Exercise 39	Looking and Dwelling With Moving Body.....	81
Exercise 40	Broad Field Vision.....	82
Exercise 41	Giving Wind.....	82
Exercise 42	The Killer.....	83
Exercise 43	Noh Breathing.....	87
Exercise 44	Cloud-Being.....	87
Exercise 45	Ground-Being.....	88
Exercise 46	Water-Being.....	88
Exercise 47	Remembered Fire-Being.....	88
Exercise 48	1mm & 1cm/Sec Walks With Dots.....	89
Exercise 49	Giving and Taking Wind.....	89
Exercise 50	Giving Wind 2 on 1.....	90
Exercise 51	Word Pulse.....	90
Exercise 52	Standing Manipulations.....	94
Exercise 53	Two-Way Standing Manipulations.....	94
Exercise 54	Three Kinds of Foliage.....	95
Exercise 55	Three Joints Drawing Shapes.....	95
Exercise 56	Omnicentral Imaging 1 (Head and Legs).....	95

Exercise 57 Omnicentral Imaging 2 (Arms and Torso).....104

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