

Going

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Abstract

This piece of work talks to a journey of practice that led to the performance of *Go* (2013), the performed element of my submission for the MA Creative Practice at Trinity Laban. This document also includes the discussion of an earlier solo, *Replacing Me with Her* (2012) in the context of developing *Go* (2013). The writing is a continuation of questions and study of a framework of practice. It is written to stay open to change and as permeable as I dare.

The opening chapter charts the territory of the early part of the process. It proposes letting go of pre supposed relationships in performance and in the studio through an interrogation of the dichotomy between subject and object. The practice/ writing draws initially on the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas and but soon shifts to Karen Barad's work, a shift through which the very categories of subject and object are abandoned completely and the processes of making, performing and spectating become co-implicated in the realisation of *Go* (2013). Barad's thinking remains key in the studio and on paper. Her work unfolds the words and continues to unfold the practice.

This thesis includes description, journal experience and poetic annotation as well as more formal academic prose. There are other voices present as well as my own, there to deepen aspects of the study and experience. The early pages, like

the earlier activities in *Go (2013)*, prepare the reader for the experiential journey through the dance that comes later.

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Introducing the Practice and reconstructing Reason

I performed a solo, *Go*, in the Bonnie Bird Theatre on 11 July 2013.

I propose that the activities performed in *Go (2013)* are becoming the words that follow. The writing offered here emerges as a portrait of the transformational space that *Go (2013)* holds open. Immediate thinking is apparent throughout the text. It makes visible the less rational thought processes that collide with structure in the immediacy of *Go (2013)*. These thoughts and words can be encountered as action.

The relationship I want to have with the reader is an open one. It is demanding work and as David Abrams says in a note to the reader at the beginning of *Becoming Animal* "I have no intention with this work to offer a definitive statement much less a comprehensive one. (I've written this book), in hope that others will try my findings against their own experience, correcting or contesting my discoveries with their own." (Abram, 2010 p8)

This work is a charting of activity and imagination that hopes to deepen attention to the continuing and evolving practice.

The making processes that are excavated in this writing began in 2012. I was invited to Brescia in Italy to perform a solo as part of a dance festival there. I went with the intention of using the time to begin thinking about a frame for the work I might research for the final project of my MA. I was alive specifically with some ongoing queries that lived on from an older piece of work as well as information and feedback from earlier modules.

The first of the two solos, *Replacing Me with Her* (2012), was made then in Brescia, Italy in September 2012. I had been invited to take another work that was made some years before but on my arrival I realised that I needed to think radically and differently about what work I could do there. I found myself programmed into an event where the programmed work was very dramatic and also that it would be presented in a huge theatre space. I made a new piece in response to this situation and also to continue my research of the problems that I will now unfold in the coming writing.

Because I began work on this very early in the academic year, the project became a two stage making process from which two different dances eventually emerged. The first paved the way for the next. I didn't set this up as such, but as I performed it a number of times it became clear that the action inside the first dance, *Replacing Me with Her* (2012) had begun to fall into a more Cartesian

pattern of presentation. By this I am referring to the idea where you and I are related through our opposing perspectives, I being subject (performer) and you (audience) being objective observer. It was this realisation that set about that another set of shifts that would eventually manifest *Go* (2013).

Letting go of representation

I am interested in the possibility to let go of representing anything. I cannot find an embodied sense of representation when I am practicing my own work. I find myself in a place of interpretation. The problem of representation then is that I might be at arms length with an idea rather than experiencing it fully as the work itself unfolds in the moment.

These thoughts come from working in the studio and trying to address how to deal with many aspects of space; relational space; internal space; language space. The process of stepping away from completing and waiting to be invited seemed to create the physical space and the spaces inside the work. To let go of representing causes not just suspension of temporal or durational space. It also disperses multi-directional space.

The physical space and time that is set up by *Go* (2013) infer that space becomes an equal player¹ and belongs as potential for agency². "there is neither presence nor absence but presence absence, distance and non distance ... the absolute felt in the least thing"(Wahl in Levinas; 73) Wahl is quoted by Levinas as he highlights the problem of representation as a pre determined performance completeness. The problem I was trying to address was about making something generative and open and not to operate a closed score or to answer a set of questions.

So this begins to strip away things that are certain and uncertainty supports my enquiry in how to make the performance fully live, open and not a closed object.

One of the first sources of text that I used in *Replacing Me with Her* (2012) was another quote by Emmanuel Levinas in *Outside the Subject*. I was imagining how

¹ See the commentary about Bruno La Tour's Actor Network Theory in the following section.

² Agency is most usefully defined for the purposes of this thinking by listing some of its synonyms: activity, intervention, action and work. It's key meaning is activity. The fuller study of agency begins on page 13.

I might claim simultaneous subject object in performance and initially spoke these words as I entered the performance space.

To speak is to interrupt my existence as a subject, as master, but to interrupt without offering myself as spectacle, leaving me simultaneously subject and object ... the subject who speaks does not place the world in relation to himself, nor place himself purely at the heart of his own spectacle as does the artist, but in relation to the Other ... by the proffered word the subject that posits himself exposes himself ... and in a way prays (Levinas, 1994 p.76)

As the work continued to fold with and inside my movement practices and reading, I began to experience these interruptions that Levinas mentions as part of me and the ensuing actions as directed not by position but by a sense of invitation. It became difficult to continue posed as a subject in space and or as a philosophically bound subject. The binary operation of considering object subject, even upturned or deconstructed was eventually not useful in any way and so I chose to abandon the whole premise.

I am concerned therefore with performance that challenges representation, and where the matter of practice is in doings or actions that do not focus on correspondence between reality and description or necessarily between each other. *Replacing me with Her* (2012) set out to circumvent relating to the audience and to the event of performance as if they were exterior to the creation of the work. This solo and later *Go* (2013) instead intend to create spaces where transformational situations are possible.

The work itself and the method of working comes into being from feeling processes. That is to say that rather than using a predetermined plan, the action scores arrived while I practiced decision making with a softer tone of thinking. I have worked through a number of situations earlier in the MACP³ where it has been useful to learn to watch my tone of thinking moving change as I practice. Thinking tone can refer to the way in which we apply directionality to thoughts. The work of Deane Juhan in *Job's Body* (Juhan, 2003) infers that we are able to work in many different muscular tones and that this applies not only to physical movement but also to thinking. So by softening musculature we can more easily access different ways of processing thoughts and ideas.

Joan Skinner⁴ says that,

Releasing begins with allowing change, letting go of the familiar, that which seems part of our identity, letting go of a tension pattern that travels from the shoulder to the jaw, to the sound of one's voice, tension patterns that are part of 'keeping ourselves together'. Letting Go, to open to new experiences. (Skinner Releasing Institute, 2010, p4)

³ MACP refers to the Masters in Creative Practice (professional dance route) offered by Trinity Laban in partnership with Independent Dance

⁴ Joan Skinner is a dancer who, since 1963 has dedicated herself to the development of a unique technical approach to dancing. Skinner Releasing Technique is a pedagogy that is processual in its philosophy and ethos.

Once I applied this to the compositional process I realised that, to further elucidate the activity, I also needed to completely let go of my earlier concerns about disappearing the binary of object – subject.

Agency, Intervention and Form

Agency

Agency is described by Frank Bock as being in the situation. He and I were discussing specific conditions set up for a series of Groundswell events, for falling in to conversation. He suggests that agency can be felt in conversation when the right state for the conversation has been created or set up. Bock uses Gendlin⁵ focusing methods to prepare for conversations between artists at these events. This specific method of focusing asks both speaker and listener to attend to a deeper felt sense rather than a rational or intellectual response.

So here the conversation is not a preparation for or an evaluation of an action, **it is** the action. It could be suggested that Bock, like Skinner, is proposing that it is the encounter in the action through conversation or through the release of physical tension that moves us away from a representation (of) (the) familiar patterning.

⁵ Gendlin focussing is a psycho-therapeutic method first researched by Gene Gendlin.

Go (2013) is structured as a linear performance that consists of several activities. Each activity is placed in a particular order to offer the right landscape for the next. These actions initially were intended as relatable to the others and thus always in conversation with the others. In performing these activities I use my experiences of falling into conversation to inform how the activity I was experiencing or performing, speaks to the next. By attending to this deeper sense of encounter I can stay open and available to the unfamiliar even within a tight choreographic structure where the action is set. This again implies accessing a less concrete way of forming thoughts and action.

Karen Barad is a particle physicist and a professor of feminist studies, philosophy and the history of consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Her writing and her ideas are a crucial important source of thought and have shaped how I consider and shape ideas of question, place and of self throughout these studies. I propose that Barad be considered as an interventionist in *Go (2013)*.

Her thoughts and ideas act frequently as anchors and as catalysts in this practice.

In particular her theory of Agential Realism⁶, her critique of representation and her work on Intra-action⁷ open out and cut through my practice again and again.

As such I sense that her work, like the studio interventions, are also woven through the activities in the performed work and also through this writing. Barad does not act as explanation or weight giver. She becomes another equal player in the process.

I am learning that I make generations of work over time. This is a way of making sense of how the emerging of something folds deeply into the emerging of the next. So the process of making dances usually begins because something is calling from the piece already in performance. (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

⁶ In her definition of Agential Realism, Barad proposes that matter is never inanimate but rather, 'matter is substance in its iterative intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency.' (Barad in Kleinmann p5)

⁷ Intra-action can be defined as action that happens inside action and because of itself. Barad says that "the usual notion of interaction assumes that there are individual independently existing entities or agents that preexist their acting upon one another. By contrast, the notion of "intra-action" queers the familiar sense of causality (where one or more causal agents precede and produce an effect)" (Barad in Kleinmann, p2) She goes on to propose that individuals do not exist as separate entities but come into being in action.

Part way through the process of making *Go (2013)*, I had a conversation with Matthias Sperling. He discussed his experience of practicing a Deborah Hay solo score daily over several months.

I have tried to respect Deborah's direction to allow the work to arise from within itself over time, and to avoid thinking rationally from outside the practice about what might work, what might have meaning. I see her approach as pointing toward the undermind⁸ as the maker, rather than the rational/explicit/linguaged/strategic mind. (Sperling, 2013)

I remember that it felt incredibly resonant as I made *Go (2013)*, to hear about Hay's methodology that allows work to arise from within itself over time. Also the links to Claxton and to the maker existing through the undermind give weight to perhaps a previously less confident unfolding of the intuitive process in making *Go (2013)*.

⁸Here Sperling is referring to Claxton's (1997) concept of undermind. Claxton speaks of his undermind in contrast to dominant rational thought during his lecture in 2002, *New Mind Expanding*; It is entering a state of mind that is less focused, less questing, less impatient and less controlled than our education tends to value. It suggests that people may differ in the ease with which they enter or enjoy such a state of reverie ... Engaging successfully and enjoyably with complex uncertainties – mysteries – requires the ability to let your mind go and roam around by itself, and to feel comfortable doing so (Claxton,2002)

The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality ... to matters of practices/ doings/ actions (Barad, 2003 p802)

Rosemary Butcher works intensively and I would propose purely with landscapes of activity and tensile doing of task as a way of building compressed material and I drew on my studies with her (spanning several years) in the studio as I began to ask questions about the tension present in representation that is explained earlier, and later the different tension present in *Go*, that of non-representation.

Butcher and Hay are examples of practices that have blazed trails that enable such problems to be inside the choreographic practice.

It is impossible to imagine a world where emphasis stopped being given to clarity and to form and yet as I move toward a piece of work to mark this time in my practice research it is the dissolution of form and a different sense of the very proposal of clarity and also of the action of becoming. (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

Bruno la Tour speaks of a set of ideals that reassemble the social, his Actor Network Theory. He suggests that in this system all parts are equal and interactive and that this in itself is a gathering or an assembly that makes things come into being just by their co-existing. When I began the process to make this work I had a sense that I wanted to work to embody the flattened or democratic space.

I am interested in a series of activities that provided conditions where the stage and the seats and the performer and the spectator exist equally and can exist only because of the action. So I cannot rehearse the work alone. I need to be in direct

encounter to make sense of my place in the work. The audience are as much at play as I am, and I cannot action without them.

It was this study of agency that led to the next choreographic intention or problem to be detailed that is an interrogation of intervention.

Intervention

My first ideas of intervention were about rupture and incision, where a dominant power acts on a situation. Intervention seems to be studied and put into action mostly in situations of crisis. The term is most usually linked to surgical or medical procedure, politics where interventions are on political systems seen as failing or interventions by political power structures on its people's, early childhood and end of life situations, family crisis and armed response. Intervention therefore is associated with an action on a situation and mostly takes the form of organised sets of actions by experts.

Intervention was initially defined most helpfully for this practice as "the act or fact or a method of interfering with the outcome or course especially of a condition or process (as to prevent harm or improve functioning)" (Merriam Webster, 2013)

But then things changed as I began to experience intervention through the people and writings I was encountering through the making process. Eva Karczag had been a part of my very first conversation in thinking to make *Replacing Me with Her* (2012). We sat together in the empty theatre and her thoughts about how to survive in work offered me a permission to let go of the initial and fixed content that I thought essential to the piece. Instead she encouraged me to allow

the new and challenging landscape in which the work was to be shown to lead me and make visible the necessary content.

Later I asked her to write her own definition of intervention. Eva's paragraph arrived quite some time after the other interventions had happened in the studio but it belongs, I imagine, as a prequel. It became the programme note for *Go* (July 2013) and follows as an alternative and now more appropriate and specific way of defining intervention for the purposes of this, my work.

Intervention when thought through the body is attentive to what are generally experienced as the mundane routines of living life: the complex act of standing or walking, a simple gesture, a thought that alights, a feeling that rises, a look, a touch, a sigh, a laugh, the pleasures of shifting and stretching, the tasks of making, creating. We move to live – living life with dance at its centre. A belief that dance is where we live. (Karczag, 2013)

Eva's intervention also offered me something that I think has to do with resting in the dance. I have been working to rest in the body in the movement that is happening. Resting while dancing encourages me to remain in an open place of availability and invitation.

Charlie Morrissey also talked to me about resting in a recent conversation,

It is about resting into the materials of the body, into the substance of the body, into the nervous system, and the instruments of perception. To be, rather than to be aiming myself at anything, to be resting in an expanded state of awareness so that I might again notice and be open to what arises. (Morrissey, July 2013)

I chose the term intervention primarily because I was interested to sense how open I could remain in the acts that occur when an incision or decision is made inside a structure already completed. And I experienced the planning as singular not collaborative. I decided the nature of and the organisation of the interventions. What I had no idea about were each of their decisions and their interpretation of and actions of in intervention. The attention to rest would become the method of staying open during these interventions.

From one solo to the next

Once *Replacing Me with Her* (2012) had been performed and had been shown in public a number of times, I began to work with feedback and comments about the piece, from observers. I reflected that this feedback caused me to have a specific and different set of interactions with the work, a kind of honing of my rational understanding and embodiment of the piece through their (spectator) relationship to it. This is a simplified argument but suggests that to relate to something from this position places it in the world as two separate entities. "... but I wanted to continue to feel and be produced inside and because of the action of the work." (Coe, notebook, 2012/13) This is not the same as the point when a piece of work exists in the physical environment and we as witness; spectator; performer; maker; sense ourselves becoming as a result of the work.

Barad explains,

Therefore, according to Bohr⁹, the primary epistemological¹⁰ unit is not independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties but rather phenomena. On my agential realist elaboration, phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of "observer" and "observed"; rather, phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components". (Barad, 2003, p815)

It was then that the absolutely essential nature of the interventions entered the process. To create intra active space I must let go of owning of the work. It needed to transform but not because of my own hand but because I allowed other parts of the environment of making to transform it from inside the choreographic process. (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

I asked into the frame three trusted dance artist colleagues. They were invited to intervene freely in the choreography and into the activities already framed inside the performance. A letter went out to them as an initial way of making contact and they were invited individually to the studio across three days in one week. All three are familiar with my dance practice and had also seen earlier performances of *Replacing Me with Her* (2012). Charlie Morrissey, Nicola Conibere and Joe Moran became the intervention (ists).

⁹ Bohr argues for the rejection of the separation of observer and observed or knower and known.

¹⁰ As pertaining to Epistemology, a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge (n/a, 2013)

By the end of that week, some activities remained, some went, and some new ones came or were transformed.

I am aware that this is for sure an unscientific situation and yet there is an intuitive plan and a clear set of parameters. It doesn't however adhere to any rules or formulae. There were no conditions set to guarantee that the environment for each would be the same, nor anything to prevent or stop the specificity of the three different offers that were placed so generously into the work. My intention, simply put, was to remain open to anything that might happen. It is important to acknowledge that the interventions happened day after day. This means that the level of settling between each intervention was minimal. It was intervention on intervention.

There was an unsaid rule that we didn't spend time talking about the other interventions but I was completely blown away by the sensitivity of how each consecutive intervention seemed to process and deepen its predecessor, with no explanation or even demonstration.

The lasting experience of these interventions remains in places un-thought and I am curious to revisit them. The generosity of the offer and the trust implied automatically through this way of working meant that the instant depth of collaboration was one I had not experienced before in a choreographic space. It felt most akin to some of my experiences of touch, where the skill and specificity

of touch¹¹ (in a movement space) has made space for a level of experience that transforms not just the touched/ touch persons but where the whole space changes because and through that interaction. (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

¹¹ I refer here to touch that happens when working with a specified partner task (eg a partner graphic in SRT) and also but more rarely to some experiences of working in a more open Contact Improvisation environment.

The stories of the three studio interventions

Desire and Invitation

Charlie Morrissey's intervention was unintentionally but crucially twofold. During the week that the interventions happened in the studio, Charlie was teaching professional morning class at Independent Dance¹². I took this daily class with him during the week when the interventions happened and that content became essential to navigating each activity in *Go (2013)*.

I already knew that it was vital to take morning class before going into the studio to make any dance work and planned the intervention week to include these morning classes. Experience across many situations and many years of practice have proved that class for me is not only essential to prepare for performance but also offers essential thinking and digestion space when I am composing, curating,

¹² Independent Dance (ID) is an organisation dedicated to the needs of independent dance professionals. Their daily professional classes are part of a large portfolio of activity. ID are also partners with Laban in the facilitation, tutoring and management of the Master of Arts Creative Practice (professional dance route).

writing or preparing to teach. The class can act as a library, sanctuary and landscape for inhabiting ideas, investigating and playing out practice.

The work that Charlie proposed during these classes gave me spaces and conversations to find ways of inter-weaving the (my) action full body and the disparate activity. I have been in dialogue with and have been taught by Charlie for some years and his current teaching aligns particularly well with the landscape I find myself in.

We walked and practiced resting in moving. We worked in partners, in familiar exercises but where the emphasis and language fundamentally shifted away from leading or following. Morrissey describes the intention of the practical exercises in his class,

to offer palpable experiences, and structures through which to practice notions of availability, invitation and resting in the body. The exercises offer a route in, and perhaps a stimulant for a particular kind of questioning and sensing in the body/mind. (Morrissey, 2013)

I wait at one side of the space with a partner who is facing me, just a few inches away. We wait together. She is inviting me into space and I wait for the sensation of invitation. Its like hovering, I imagine that this buzz, this nausea I feel in the effort to truly wait for her, is right. Images of roller coasters, of first kisses, of waiting to be chosen to be in a team all flit across my thoughts. The strangest thing is we are co-existing, sharing possibly the same space and yet I cannot equate this to the usual relationships that are expected in similar classes or situations. I might even suggest that I am not in relationship. But if she or I make a decision to 'go' I override the sensation and we move into following or leading. Its clumsy and exhausting and funny and addictive. (Coe, notebook, May 2013)

I asked Charlie Morrissey recently to speak to his own experience of the *place* that he was offering to us in class ... of simultaneously inviting and being invited, of it's sense and it's attention,

I like the idea of availability because it implies that there is more than just me in the equation of any dancing moment, and that I am not the only instigator of action. If I am available, there must be something that I am available to. My intention is to be available to all of the choices on offer: the choices that space (inside and out) offers me by the simple fact that it allows me to move in so many directions at once. Space invites movement. (Morrissey, 2013)

All these exercises arise in practices where listening and seeing are applied to the whole body as a way to open up potential and new possibility of choice and vocabulary. Invitation as a state then, might be considered with or perhaps interweaved in a state of desire. In Lisa Nelsons Tuning Scores¹³ desire is considered an important reason for entering the moving space and is picked up here by Morrissey's insight, "What I observe in myself and others is an expansion, a reaching outwards and inwards in the attempt to make sense of the puzzle that these ideas and accompanying experiences might provoke." (Morrissey 2013)

¹³ Lisa Nelson's Tuning Scores are compositional tools, improvisational practices and layers of observation altogether ... to communicate desires, imagination and memory ... they are a vehicle to attune to an individual and collective sense of space, time and behaviour. (?, 2005)

I propose then that desire is different to and distinct from ego. This proposal draws primarily on experiences of practicing the Tuning Scores and also in attending in practice to Joan Skinner's releasing principle of letting go of ego. Desire is felt often in these experiences and to follow it makes new possibilities available as I move/ think. Space in this state is perhaps experienced as a dissolution of boundary where agency then can pass through. Ego, instead always deals with imposition and ideas and emerges from a separation of conscious self from sensation. The ego demands to be viewed as separate and unique spatially. Ego loss implies a deepening awareness of the whole.

There is something also inferred here that rejects dominant structures where, because it is passed from one to another, power is always present. An example of this in the studio is leading and following. However, the intention to invite implies instead that there must be room or space between each person/ element/ idea and that they are offered as choices.

An invitation is a question rather than a command and the invitation can be accepted or refused. My remaining available to all the possible responses means that I don't have to hold on to the outcome. The invitation is an offer of one of many possibilities. (Morrissey, 2013)

Therefore desire is fundamentally a felt sense, given space through intra activity in the same way that Charlie Morrissey offers invitation in his description. Like Joan Skinner's principle, the Tuning Score fundamentally honours a purpose that is not

to compose or complete but to experience states through actively letting go of ego. In Skinner Releasing Technique the state reached where the releasing dancer experiences letting go of self (ego) often corresponds with a sense that one is no longer dancing but is being danced.

These examples of physical sensations all offer spaces in the thinking body that are full of potentiality. The spaces emerge places where agency can pass through and is offered space to co-exist. An experience of being danced in a Skinner Releasing class goes some way to exemplify this idea that agency is passing through;

and then the walls and doors slip away and what all that is left is like mercury, insideness disappears and merges and water is moving around masses that are slowly melting. And then the movement leaves ... later I have a sense that there is still a lot movement happening but that (my) mass is no longer existing ... and so the water is the same as the air and fountains of that wet air hang in every moment (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

All this philosophy and practice offer me models of practice that I can then refer to in my own dancing, thinking and making.

somewhere in all this is also a (huge) question of what I mean by me. I think of being available to all of the known and unknown possibilities that might or might not be on offer. There is an intention to invite and be available to all possibilities - it's a body/mind practice that is curious about the relationship between the two, if indeed there is any separation at all (Morrissey, 2013)

Here it seems pertinent to drop in a word on autobiography. The solo performed by it's maker inevitably suggests that the work is in some way about them. Well of course it is but it begins and stays in the activities. I am becoming because of the

activities, so the whole idea of autobiography becomes one of collective perception.

From Translation to English Dancing

Nicola Conibere made perhaps the most incisive change. She removed a whole activity/section of the work. The letter¹⁴ had been implicit in making meaning during the earlier performances in Italy. The letter had indeed lost its authenticity. It had been originally written to deal with translation, being read by me and immediately translated live by an Italian actress. The words in the letter had emerged from a particular situation. Nicola saw that the issue was that I was using the letter to do the audiences work for them. The security of this letter needed to be given up to offer them equal play in the work. I had held onto the letter as a method of revealing the reasons for the disparity in the performance states and actions. It was this removal of explanation that led eventually to a whole new activity. This was the intervention that was the most acute. Trust and logic aside, this was explanation disappearing and it was shocking.

In early tutorials with Kirsty Alexander I had discussed the nature of intervention as a potential transformation and it was in this particular space that these words became the only way I could experience fully and openly the letting go of all of this assuredness and structure in the work ... to be left with nothingness and not to reach into that or try and get hold of any answers (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

¹⁴ The letter was taken out of the work during Nicola Conibere's intervention. See Appendix A for the letter.

The tension between these states, the encounters described and the activity of making a piece of work are felt most acutely through this particular experience. Even now as I think about that day I have a strong feeling of the internal alarms ringing as well as a loss of another level of control. I could only wait to be invited. I experienced first how my encounter with an idea was changed, the letter went and I had nothing in its place. Then, as I waited longer, I experienced how the idea itself changed through the encounter. The image of an English dance arrived because I had managed to sit fully in the nothingness that had been left by Nicola's intervention.

The activities happening internally in and through me as Nicolas intervention went on, can be likened to Barad's apparatus¹⁵. They can be considered then as practices themselves and that as such they are "... perpetually open to rearrangements, re-articulations and other re-workings." (Barad, 2003, p817)

The only practice possible in this experience had been to be fully with the reworked space that was arriving from the absence of explanation. This was just

¹⁵ An apparatus in this context is a set of material-discursive practices that materializes inside its action.

like standing in Charlie's class waiting to be invited and sensing an openness that is not just a perpetual reorientation as Barad suggests but a whole new perception sense.

Transitions as a work in themselves

Joe Moran asked me to consider the journey of the transitions, suggesting that in *Go* (2013) they must become a work in themselves. He left the actions themselves alone and turned my attention to the space between each of those activities.

I realized as Joe spoke that I had formed concrete ideas in the transitions, that the invitation I was so keen to embody for them was losing openness and potential because I had 'solved them'. Joe reported and worked with his knowledge of me as a performer to navigate how long to stay in each activity and when to let the next one begin. I think there is more to be done here as I reflect find it difficult to remain true to this once I am in performance. (Coe, notebook, 2012/13)

In Barad's intra-actions "boundaries do not sit still.... Reality is not composed of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but things-in-phenomena" (Barad, 2003 p817).

I notice as I write that all these transparent moments between the activities are becoming vivid. By referring to La Tour and Barad again I suggest that the images of the actions themselves can only be seen because the emerging of the image through these transitions? Joes attention makes this implicit.

After Joe's intervention I no longer felt that the work was dealing with space or time in the same realm as *Replacing Me with Her* (2012). Together we now understood that replacing was no longer in the field at a new piece *Go* (2013) was arriving.

Form

I understand through this writing that I have a long-standing interest, even yearning to know more about where I belong.

The Practiced Form.

Barad speaks of performed alternatives to representationalism as actions related through the doing of the actions and not because of any pre-determined linguistic meaning "What often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all" (Barad, 2003, p803) The activities in *Go (2013)*, disparate and displaced for sure, can be considered in this field of doing, where relatedness can never be still or held because it is the doing.

In many ways *Go (2013)* is formal in its content and structure. It complies with many of the conventions of theatre and of a solo made for a stage. It has sections, is approximately half hour in length and is best played in a proscenium type space with a seating bank and a stage that faces the audience seating. As such it adheres to many of the traditional considerations of relationship and of formality. This is important and it is also just a container.

The sequence of actions in *Go (2013)* are named as follows

Singing with you	transition 1
Falling because I am part of you	transition 2
Running around you to hold on to you and bring you with me	transition 3
Dancing a historical court dance	transition 4
Talking to the places where none of us are	transition 5
In-completing, listening for loss & leaving everything inside	

Form is a word that can depict a certain aesthetic and certainly a given structure.

In *Formless, a users Guide*, Bois and Krauss ascribe the following (un) definition to

Batailles' informe that is more helpful as a way of understanding how form is

emerging in *Go (2013)*

It is not so much a stable motif to which we can refer, a symbolisable theme, a given quality, as it is a term allowing one to operate a declassification ... Nothing in and of itself, the formless only has an operational existence: it is a performative, like obscene words, the violence of which derives less from semantics than from the very act of their delivery ... The formless is an operation. (Bois & Krauss, 1997)

Form as Becoming

Formless then is not without form and so the formless operations of *Go (2013)* are becoming.

To speak of becoming in this context is to intend processes of change or of movement. The processes of becoming are patterns between the discrete elements of an event, of an encounter or La Tour's single actor. This way of defining the action of becoming comes from a study of some of Deleuze and Guattaris' writing (Martin-Jones and Sutton, 2008 p45). Becoming, in the process of *Go (2013)* is a generative act then, not a representation or simulation of being in action. Each performed task is an action that is removed from its original place and purpose and from that, transformation emerges new function and potential.

Each action (section/ phrase) is episodic and disparate. This is not device but relates to the way of working that is unfolding. Instead of smoothing the edges of these actions, curiosity lies in conceiving their differences by practicing them inside the container of the whole piece. The duration and proportionality of each episode of activity is fluid. Their respective lengths and size can only be played out in the performing of the activity.

The work is not limited to the presentation of the episodes or activities. It and they exist because they are happening and because **all** the elements in the environment are happening. Each episode and its transitions intra-plays in the environment of the work.

A journey through Go

In the experience that follows, my written encounter of each performed action, shown in green, is met by artist Hilary Kneale's encounter of *Go* (2013) from her place as audience player. Her writing is in orange font. I also include other key encounters and experience where they may have been part of the journey of a specific activity.

1 Singing with you

I hang out in the foyer, speaking to friends and remembering that I represent nothing. Nothing begins until I let go of arriving and watch the landscape becoming from inside the doing. Then once we are seated I am waiting till I can see the dust in the empty stage space and feel a readiness and rest in the belly that signals invitation to begin. I wonder if anyone will join me and how many people will turn to look and how many will go red? The sound is untrained, loud and probably over dramatic, but we sink into it and something is generating itself in that sinking in. I try not to reach out to find when it's enough. That would return us to relating. It's tough not to go there and I wonder if I have?

I sit in the auditorium of the theatre. I know that she is already present, sitting as though audience. I wait, watch and listen into the space that gradually opens up as people fill the auditorium and settle into their seats, expectant. We all wait. As those who have gathered settle into silence, she looks out along the row and sings a note, emits a sound, into the new and expectant space. The sound she emits is not towards the stage but sideways into the auditorium along the row in which she is seated. An unpolished sound emerges from her throat and out through her mouth, riding her long breath, the sound is thin and linear as it moves towards the ears of all present. A new sound and a new sound, come from her one after another, she looks at us hearing her, she does not quell, though at

any moment I wonder if she might, she stays with the sounds not seeming to make them into any shape or song but simply allowing them to move out of her in the raw state in which they arise. The sounds fill my experience, and jangle in their unfamiliarity and unexpectedness, through the black trough of the empty stage that is full lit in front of me. As she looks at us, all familiarity of form through the stage and auditorium, is pulled away with her eyes, she looks too familiar, too personal.

Everything I am doing in the singing section

Filling space with sound

Being with you ... The same as you ... Residing next to you

Will I need a microphone?

Then I wait for transition number 1

2. Falling because I am part of you



Figure 1

In the quiet of the corner of the stage I understand that momentum will continue. I have a purpose to fill the space again now that the vocal filling is only audible in the light and memory and tissue... And this landscape has a history already, and it only has a history because of the activity, all the activity from every perspective and from all perceptions. And I cannot stay fully vertical and so that is why I begin to fall. I fall in order to begin another way of filling and because staying vertical in a landscape full of sound couldn't operate in this system. The falling changes and then I change and then the falling resumes. I am relieved because that same rest and belly state of invitation is there and this is how I know when to keep falling. Then it's not there any more.

Moving up and out of the auditorium she ascends to the stage and places herself to one side and toward the front. The momentary familiarity of her standing on the stage facing us, falls with her, as one foot and ankle fold beneath her bringing her to the floor, arms raised, eyes staring. She rises and falls, rises and falls, each time she rises her ankle again folds under her and her foot slides beneath her as she finishes once more sitting on the floor arms raised as though a puppet whose strings are holding only her arms aloft. She stares up and out of herself as she falls again and again. I feel myself fall with her, into the piece, into the unknown as I release any residue of expectation that I might still have retained.

Everything I am doing in the falling

Introducing ... And giving into the space something that the space expects ...

Then I wait for transition number 2

3. Running around you to hold on to you and bring you with me



Figure 2

This is home for me. We are impressed in this activity. And I am listening as I run and I imagine how the steps in the theatre count my own running steps. I hope I don't fall down the steps. This is explicitly mechanical. All of us embody the running. We all know what this feels like. Suddenly we are together in our activity. The work has its own continuum now. Sometimes I am only heard and sometimes I am imagined but I never stop. That is until physical limitation makes the transition.

She moves now towards the side of the stage as she again changes the shape of herself, she removes the top layer of her clothing, revealing colour co-ordinated

sports clothes and bringing out matching running shoes from under the curtain at the side of the stage which she then takes her time to put on. She begins to move at a run into the auditorium, running up the left hand stairs along back of the auditorium and down the right hand stairs and across the stage. Round and around with its ups and downs she runs, we hear the pattern of her moving feet change as she travels up and then down, we hear her breath. For one circuit she leaves the theatre, we sit in the theatre space, in her absence I am thrown back on myself into my own breath and my own heartbeat as I listen for her. She returns still running and runs the internal circuit until she is finished, run out.

Everything I am doing in the running ... Exhausting my physical self ...

And in the studio it was all about repetition ... To a point of exhaustion ...

At the What_Now Festival in April 2013¹⁶ I made a work called *(to constantly) Vent* (Coe, *(to constantly) Vent*, 2013). A small group of performers ran a continuous

¹⁶ The What_Now 2013 festival is described as 'initiated by Independent Dance co-director Gill Clarke, this series of festivals is a showcase for the incredible innovation and diversity of contemporary independent dance artists working today' (Independent Dance, 2013) The 2013 festival was curated by Frank Bock, at Siobhan Davies Dance Studios in central London.

circuit that came through the festival building and the local area. Each circuit was around fifteen minutes in length but the time spent in the building was just a few seconds inside this fifteen minutes. The running performers had an open phone line in their costumes, linked to wireless speakers placed around the building. Therefore the sound of the running was constant where the visible activity was momentary.

The activity of running happened over several hours and several days. It was a new experience in my choreographic (different than performance) practice to get to know an activity so deeply. Through this deep knowing I began to question the difference between interventions (on) and Barad's intra-vention (in). We ran through spaces and interrupted other events. So were we intervening? The images below show the runners coming through.







Figures 3 - 6

In February 2013 I went to listen to '*Performing from the back of the Pack*' (Whelan, 2013), a conversation between performance artist Greg Whelan and Professor David Williams. The talk was about endurance running as a performance activity. I went to the talk as I was questioning the practice and purpose of the running in the pieces I was making. I wanted to understand better why I felt so strongly that I should run continuous circuits around the people in the auditorium, circling them. I had set out to create imagined activity, sometimes visible and often invisible. But having performed *Replacing me with Her* (2012) a number of times, and as I approached (to constantly) *Vent* (2013), I struggled to articulate the importance of the witnesses being literally inside the activity. Here is what came up when I was experiencing the interview.

Whelan talked to running as a participatory activity, as a way of participating.

So did I invite a more participatory experience by asking the witness to see, hear and possibly feel me running past them even though I wasn't asking the audience to run with me?

Williams then proposed endurance running through its physicality as one of filling time and covering distance. I run until I cannot run further, until I exhaust the activity. Someone asked how difficult is it to keep going over such long distances. Whelan's response included the following experience, 'When you are inside an endurance event it's a relief to be inside it' (Whelan February 2013). This resonates with my question above.

So by placing the running as a continuous action around the people watching it, the act of spectating, usually done from the sidelines or from the periphery of a stadium, is displaced to one of immediacy and of encountering the multi-sensory experience of an action. It made sense that the spectators might find other possibilities from this position than those offered when they are passive bystander or anxious race watcher. They become relieved and inside the running too.

I noted something in myself as I listened to the conversation. I was feeling so much of what was said. I understood it not as a concept or an idea but absolutely

as a visceral and whole experience. I was in the activity and the theory simultaneously. My state changed. It was similar to an experience of releasing and yet I was listening to two people talk about exhaustion and training.

Everything I am doing in the running

Being constant

Being visible and invisible

Showing off

Wondering what it feels like to be watched as I approach physical exhaustion

Then I wait for transition number three

Transitions



Figure 7

In the dance of the transitions then, there is no encounter between *I and you* across space. There is a flow of agency that makes *me* seem as another part of *you*.

Again we sit with and through a moment of transition, the nature of transition seems to sit at the core of the work *Go*. I have experienced witnessing Coe move from one form, one essence or one focus to another throughout the piece, through works, words and forms given to her by others. As we live our lives we continually move through transitions, from the underlying continuum of in breath and out breath to the space between actions in the wider world. These transitions

sometimes appear fluid and sometimes almost arbitrary being generated by meetings with the outside world from the many different perspectives of mind and body.

This then, this transition, is the ultimate wait for invitation. This is intervention inside invitation and we light up.

4. Dancing a historical court dance



Figure 8

I am dancing because it is our displaced common ground and this old dance requires a lot of hope.

Here comes the final piece of the jigsaw although it is not last. It is no longer hinted at or alluded to. It is fully embodied because it belongs here as much as we do. It is serious and so ridiculous I look hard at the other humans in the dance with me to see if we still believe it. It's history gives the space weight. It gives me

ground after the running. I sense a tragedy that stops me from over playing or getting on top of the task. I remember suddenly that I am not performing. And I remember that this dance was once a letter to the audience. I am completely involved in the action and I listen to us all after the music stops. Wait once more to be invited to move on. I curtsey, badly and I notice how strange my legs are when I look down at them.

She now begins a dance. I see her now in a dance of partnership without the 'other', I sense the 'other' and see her dance alone amongst them. Through her movements, she pulls me back to another time, the shapes that arise as she dances clothe her form, absorbing her sports clothing, which I then 'see' no more. The dance is of an old structured repetitive form and it fills the space of the stage through her movements and the presences of the invisible 'others'. I am drawn deeper into the body of the work and ride its unexpected twists and turns, it is with a sense of appreciation that I sit with this growing unknown form, I am caught up within its' moving landscape. The dance is over. I imagine the residue of the repetitions that I have witnessed inhabiting a hall of mirrors through which shadows of her move amongst them in an endless continuum.

Everything I am doing in the English¹⁷ dancing

Pleading, hoping, relying on charm, being honest

The English dance emerges from the 16th century court. It is a dance for four people, two women and two men. It is exact and detailed in its structure and in particular its inter-relationships. I learnt this dance, *Cuckolds All in a Row*, from Nicola Gaines-Armitage, a historical dance expert. It was the closest I could come to a dance for a woman. I had originally been looking for a solo dance for a woman but as far as I researched, early solo dances were meant for men. And so the dance that I learned was the woman's part in this group dance. I had also been keen to learn a dance that belonged to the working class but it seems that early dances belonged to the court, and their dissemination to a wider population came later. And so I learnt a court dance that would have been watched by my working ancestors. The layers of displacement just kept unfolding and I was happy to allow them to direct and concertina this old dance's place in *Go (2013)*.

¹⁷ Some recent studies of my personal ancestry revealed an unusually long personal history of living and working inside the borders of England. I put out a request for some assistance to find an old dance for a woman and among the many responses, one pointed to an expert who lived in Charing, just a few miles from where I was born. It was to this village that I returned to learn the dance with Nicola Gaines Armitage.

Then I wait for transition number 4

5. Talking to the places where none of us are.



Figure 9

I do this and continue Barad's, La Tour's and Go's claim that all parts are equal and that the apparatus is as present in air as it is in each of us.

Picking it up ... Putting it down

It has me and (pause) I have it ... I imagine that my teeth are tearing meat

I look out and see (turn) us there ... Together ... While I tear meat ... I don't eat meat

(longer pause)

Tear and stick and see, tear and stick and see

(longer pause)

Imagine me standing out there looking at the back wall. (pause) My right arm goes up and I am looking at it and I know that we are a looking at it. There is measuring going on ... Walk it out ... Smooth it ... Ignore the stains and the weight in my wrists ... Walk into it and measure it again

(longer pause)

When I lift this one I understand the difference between dirt and filth ... Maybe there are clothes that fit this ... But for now I have to cover the patches where I still see bare skin (pause) With small torn pieces ... Stuck on, not added somehow but stuck on. I wonder how heavy these words are? ... How long they are staying (pause) How long can I speak into where I am not before expectation takes me out there?

Now I see others taking care of their charges ... I don't know their process of cover - cover up - dress up - colour in - cover in - hide the plainness - hide the beauty - hide the sameness (pause) reveal a little more about me through the blue.

(longer pause)

Then at the end I kneel and I wonder if our hands hover?

This script emerged from a daily practice¹⁸. I played out a simple task of covering and uncovering familiar apparatus that I expected to use and to see. I spoke to these things and about the story of the actions as I was doing them, eventually writing the pattern and resonant images. Initially I worked with a recording of my voice speaking these half thoughts. Eventually though, the action demanded that the words live in the space and be spoken into the direction of the imagining.

She now talks into the void between us in half sentences. I catch the drift but not the context and let the words go through my mind and out into the space, as she does. We watch her and hear her speak as though to herself and also to us. She speaks as though giving voice to the words that pass through her mind as she questions herself or us. Are these her words or words of another, perhaps they are lines of a play or thoughts from a dream, the construct of the words remind me of the surrealist dream-like film, famous for its enigmatic narrative structure, 'Last Year in Marienbad' 1961, screenplay by Alain Robbe-Grillet.

¹⁸In *Replacing Me with Her* (2013), this activity was the text, spoken out loud, from a poem by Jorie Graham, *Notes on the Reality of Self*. It was her words that arrived the idea of covering and uncovering familiar apparatus every day. See appendix A for Graham's poem.

Everything I am doing in the speaking

Telling a story to the space ... Identifying myself as an imagined form ... Taking myself seriously

Then I wait for transition number five

6. In-completing, listening for loss & leaving everything inside



Figure 10

Is there the potential for another dance?

Where are we now? Certainly there is no longer momentum, or laughter, or clever lighting. I have lots of options in this incompleteness and all I can do is listen out for the invitation to step aside, by sensing when we have lost our sense of being a part of each other. When I can no longer sense us all in this then it is done. We have gone. And I worry that I finished too quickly.

Is this a final transition of the work Go, into an end or is it simply a turn of attention from performance into non-performance? Much of life is performance to some degree, performed learned forms are repeated, reactions or responses from unknown sources that have become embodied over time catch us and live through us as though they are a truth.

In this, the last performed action, the tasks are so multi layered and simultaneous that they sometimes do not become visible. In the doing I have to reach back to the feeling of appearing and disappearing that I experienced in the running to help deal with the complications of trying to think in this many tones and places at once. It becomes impossible to complete anything. And so the closing happens through noticing the moment when I have lost the ability to exist with you, between us and here all at the same time. Then we can no longer hold the spaces open together.

After Go

In August

I am sitting in a quiet place on Dartmoor and thinking through *Go* (2013). I can see for miles across moorland and I am reminded of Sara Maitland's¹⁹ search for solitude. I am not looking for solitude but I have found in this process an experience of performing that relies completely on a deeper level of quiet in listening the whole landscape including everything that is in it with me.

Today I don't feel romantic about the work, or the words, but I am sure that noticing how I live and where I live is essential in how I practice as a performer, teacher and maker. There is an ethos about this way of making that insists a certain giving up to exactly what is happening, to the leaning of my wrists on the table as I write, to the interruption of the cat at the door and to the irritation of my tongue in my mouth because I drank hot coffee too quickly this morning.

¹⁹ In her book, Maitland searches for a place in which she can be quiet. Maitland is writing from a part historical, part autobiographical journey of a spiritual search for silence

Our intelligence struggles to think its way out of the mirrored labyrinth, but the actual exit is to be found only by turning aside now and then, from the churning of thought, dropping beneath the spell of inner speech to listen into the wordless silence ... only thus do we remember ourselves to the deeper field of intelligence, to the windblown thinking that is not ours, upon which all our thought depends (Abram, 2010, p178)

I notice as I type a new level of trust, well actually a practice that is more confident in listening and waiting on decisions that are no longer about the self but seem more like an operation in the whole environment. I feel more able to receive and action perceptive shift in every direction.

I am excited about the possibilities that Go is living out in me.

I am thinking about intervention and Barad's intra-actions. Given that I am practicing conditions that emerge intra-activity, then I am mistaken in thinking that I have been seeking intervention at all.

I am asking for 'intra-vention'. I am asking Charlie, Nicola and Joe for multiple-perspectives to be available in the work. Their incisions as well as the other actors (Barad, Karczag and so on) mean that I am more able let go of ownership or authorship in any concrete way, of pre-supposed relationships that may have established should I have asked for feedback on the work.

All players are inside the environment and therefore no single action or position can play out without all other actions and positions. Nor can completion or solution be part of this encounter as maybe an intervention would imply because then this unstable potential would be replaced by a more static power.

The matter of performance is not independent from the phenomena of any intra-action. The matter of performance is in the intra-action.

In September

I find myself back at the same place on Dartmoor. The swifts are still here but only just. The cat is inside now as I type and I am drawn to walk somewhere high up with just one other person. I hope we might sing into the space together, run along the path between the gorse and around the tor and then wait quietly or perhaps loudly for the next action.

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Appendix A

The letter from Replacing Me with Her

I will begin seated and move slowly from the chair ... let me hum and ahhh at least twice before beginning

To speak is to interrupt my existence as a subject, a master, but to interrupt without offering myself as spectacle, leaving me simultaneously object and subject ... *I will move away from the seats and then move in the gangway ... when my moving builds begin again...* the subject who speaks does not place the world in relation to himself, nor place himself purely at the heart of his own spectacle, as does the artist, but in relation to the Other ... By the proffered word the subject that posits himself exposes himself and, in a way, prays. (Emmanuel Levinas in *Outside the Subject* p149)

I will run in on the steps – lots! You can sit for a while if you like. Then I will come to the stage and take my trainers off and pick up the letter. I will read first and look at you when its time for you to read –

Dear Audience.

This seems to be a translation – about transition and transformation. I thought I would write a short letter to you as a way of building a relationship between states. An interstate relationship if you like.

I chose the words for this letter – and the poems that form the spine of this work - in English. And now I read to you out of breath – in English ... but

As I look out at you I wonder how you will translate my English dancing?

Transformation is problematic - I am guessing everyone in the audience will be aware of that – especially as I dance speak and you translate as I dance! That will be improvised. Your relationship to me is in constant transformation. I should probably look up all the research that has been written about the problem of transformation – but I won't – I think it might paralyse me or make me cut out entirely – or perhaps I could just dance and hope that everyone understands my 'meaning'

I think the reason I am letting you know about all this is that I am searching

I think, transition and transformation are related ... inextricably linked and interlinked. And so in every moment of transition there are many gates opening – just a little – and I will wait for one to become open just wide enough for me to move through

And I must make sure that I remain in the moment of action.

And then something else arrives, like a memory but as I write it on paper – to you – I understand that it is not from the past but is my next step. I am wondering if my words ‘live’ in a different way if I dance them – living words – moving words.

The question of who I was consumed me
I became convinced I should not find the image
of the person that I
was: seconds passed. What rose to the surface in me
plunged out of sight again. And yet I felt
the moment of my first investiture
was the moment I began to live – by degrees – second by
second – unrelentingly – Oh mind what you're doing! –

And the garment – how it becomes you! – starry

With the eyes of
others,
 weeping –

“Notes on the Reality of the Self” from *Materialism* (Graham, J.)