



# (Re) Conceptualising Dance: Moving towards embodying environment from Japan to Aotearoa

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## **Abstract**

This study is about the relationship between body, landscape, and dance through the researcher's experiences of learning a Japanese movement approach known as Body Weather (BW) in rural Japan in 2007, and her current dance practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ). To explore this topic, diverse viewpoints concerned with rethinking our notions of dance technique and training are reviewed (Bales & Nettle-Fiol, 2008; Browning, 2010). The cultural and somatic understandings of the Japanese dance practice and philosophy *butoh* (Crump, 2006; Fraleigh, 2010; Hamera, 1990; Stein, 2001), and its offspring Body Weather (Grant & de Quincey, 2006; Orr & Sweeney, 2011; Snow, 2006; Taylor, 2010) provide a lens expanding the notion of dance. Body Weather relevance within the Aotearoa context is also highlighted. How Māori notions of ecology (Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003; Royal, 2007, 2009) might inform or share conversation with Body Weather practice in Aotearoa is analysed.

Approaches of dance ethnography and practice-based research are blended to unearth somatic and cultural knowledge from Body Weather experiences in Japan and Aotearoa in response to the research question: What cultural and philosophical perspectives were gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka's Body Weather farm? And the guiding sub questions: a) what conceptualizations did I, the researcher, bring to the experience? b) How does knowledge from the experience in Japan inform current practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin?

The thesis argues that Body Weather is a somatic, ecological movement practice that is rooted in Japanese notions of body and spirituality, and offers insight into the ways in which it can successfully transplant in Aotearoa. The study aims to stimulate a critical somatic perspective that expands our definitions of dance.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

踊りは間違いなく人間のことをやる表現です。そして地球史・生命史という制度の内での一つの方法た らんとするものである。

With no doubt dance is an expression concerned with what it is to be human. And it . . . aspires to be a means available within the institution of the history of the earth and of life. (Tanaka, 2012b, “With No Doubt”)

*I remember being fascinated with my mother’s movement as a small child, watching her strong, calm, dexterous hands untie knots or sew up holes. How she moved seemed beyond my capacity and beyond my understanding. I tried my best to embody her way of moving but her hands seemed to have an intelligence of their own; a way of working that had developed over a long period of time. Her body spoke of patience, familiarity, and ease and I wanted to embody these qualities too. For me, dance has been a continuation of this desire: to assimilate knowledge of and through the body for understanding and orientating within the world.*

*I grew up learning ballet and contemporary dance, going on to train at the Unitec dance programme in Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand. There I learnt about a wide range of approaches to the body and movement. After graduation, my interest turned away from codified dance to more improvised and somatic techniques. A turning point was when I began learning butoh from Wilhemeena Monroe. In 2006 I decided to take a leap of faith and joined my friend Cara to study butoh in Japan, and I ended up living there for 16 months. I was attracted to the practice and philosophy of butoh because it seemed freer, messier, darker, and more spiritual than dance I was accustomed to. It*

*encompassed not only new ways of moving, but also new ways of thinking and being in my body.*

*In Tokyo, I studied with Dairakudakan Butoh Company as part of their two-month Mujinjuku training course, and kept a journal of my experiences. I also attended Yoshito Ohno's classes at his Yokohama studio and Ima Tenko's class when visiting Kyoto. However, my real dream was to go to Min Tanaka's Body Weather farm, and experience the lifestyle and training there. An opportunity arose towards the end of my stay, and for six weeks I took part in an intensive investigation into the relationship between the body and the environment. The Japanese context challenged me to look at my own cultural bias and identity, and to rethink my notions of dance. It also stimulated insights regarding cultural and somatic knowledge. While I sought to understand daily life there, I often felt clumsy, impolite, or self-conscious. I found that being in Japan was valuable for coming to terms with my own identity and expanding my understanding of dance.*

This research focuses on my experiences at Min Tanaka's Body Weather (BW) farm in 2007, and reflects on how this time has influenced my current dance practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ). Using a combined practice-based and dance ethnographic methodology, I have explored the research question: What cultural and philosophical perspectives were gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka's Body Weather farm? Within this primary question, two sub-questions arose that guided the examination: (a) What conceptualisations did I, the researcher, bring to the experience? (b) How does knowledge from the experience in Japan inform my current practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin? The implications of this research signal an understanding of BW practice and philosophy from a Pākehā (NZ European) dance practitioner's



perspective. The study aims to stimulate a critical somatic perspective that expands our definitions of dance.

This introductory chapter locates BW's roots in Japanese *butoh* and Min Tanaka. It also indicates BW and *butoh* threads within the Aotearoa/NZ contemporary dance scene. In chapter two, current literature is reviewed about broadening our notions of dance, providing critical perspectives for re-thinking technique and training, and showing how cultural lenses are fundamental to somatic understandings of the body. In addition, global and local dance contexts are discussed; social, cultural, political, and economic contexts affect dances and vice versa. In *butoh* and BW literature, historical and current interpretations in US, European, and Australian contexts reshape these practices. Chapter three articulates how dancing, a tool in both practice-based research and dance ethnography, and writing descriptive memoirs, are best suited to this study. The data context, analysis process, ethical considerations for researching dance in Aotearoa/NZ, my research position, and the limitations of the research are explained. Chapter four presents the BW farm and my somatic dance experiences, identifying two emergent research themes. The chapter articulates how my notion of dance has evolved with the help of Min Tanaka, and how BW informs my current practice in Aotearoa/NZ. In addition, how Māori ecological perspectives might inform or share conversation with BW practice in Aotearoa is explored. Chapter five concludes by summarizing the research, pointing to its broader implications, and signalling possibilities for further research. The concluding chapter highlights the value of the BW perspective for dance pedagogy, for Aotearoa's bicultural identity tensions, and for deepening self-understanding and connection with homeland.

## **The Roots of Body Weather: Butoh**

Experimental dancer Min Tanaka, who is considered the founder of BW, was deeply influenced by the work of butoh legend Tatsumi Hijikata. Tanaka says he felt “beyond respect and admiration” for Hijikata (Tanaka, 2006, “You’ve Said In The Past” section, para. 1), and was “transfixed” by him (as cited in Snow, 2002, p. 65). The two worked together on a few occasions, but Tanaka found the man to be such an overwhelming presence that he decided to study dance on his own, saying, “I knew he would swallow me completely” (Tanaka, 2006, “You’ve Said In The Past” section, para. 1). Both dancers saw themselves as outsiders, and unsurprisingly both were expelled from training institutions on separate occasions due to giving unorthodox, radical performances (Snow, 2002). Tanaka in fact regards himself to be the legitimate son of the butoh rebel (Snow, 2002). Therefore, through Tanaka’s regard for Hijikata, butoh has deeply informed the formation of BW. It is important to firstly investigate butoh’s origins and function in order to understand BW philosophy and practice.

Butoh is known as avant-garde dance that arose from the post-war context in Japan, in the 1950’s. Its beginnings are generally accredited to two prominent but very different dance masters: the radical, assailing Tatsumi Hijikata (mentioned above), and the gentler, more delicate Kazuo Ohno (Stein, 2001). There are many differing descriptions of butoh, but it seems best to view it as an historical dance that arose from its particular post-WWII context, and a powerful intercultural force that has impacted experimental dance, performance, and arguably art at large; and it continues to influence many artists today (Fraleigh, 2010; Klein, 1988; Schechner, 2006; Stein, 2001).

In its inception, butoh was said to be an attempt to recapture and recreate the Japanese body in changing times (Baird, 2012; Stein, 2001). Described as a “shriek out” (Slater as cited in Stein, 2001, p. 378) against the sudden influx of US culture in Japan,

butoh was an interrogation of Japanese identity and social norms. In practice, dancers such as Hijikata and Ohno began by discarding Japanese dance traditions for other kinds of techniques (Klein, 1998). For example, Ohno used “personal charisma” as an alternative to dance technique (Klein, 1988, p. 7), while Hijikata discarded “any dance techniques which went beyond what he felt were realistic limits of the ‘natural’ body” (Klein, 1988, p. 9). Hijikata’s famous *Forbidden Colours* (1959) is generally regarded as the cornerstone performance that gave birth to *Ankoku Butoh* - the dance of “pitch black”, “utter darkness” (Klein, 1988, p. 2), or “gloom” (Kuniyoshi in Stein, 2001, p. 376).

However, butoh also drew on traditions that began outside of Japan, notably the European-born art movements of Expressionism and Surrealism that developed at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Fraleigh (2010) both Ohno and Hijikata studied German Expressionist dance, known as *Neue Tanz* (New Dance), a “creative” and “experimental” (p. 21) approach brought to Japan via composer Kosaku Yamada after studying in Berlin (1910-1913). Yamada’s collaborations with dancer Ishii Baku enabled the teachings to be passed on to others such as Eguchi Takaya, Masumura Katsuko and Ando Mitsuko whom Hijikata and Ohno learnt from (Fraleigh, 2010). Surrealism too affected Hijikata’s butoh, through his identification with the work of surrealist playwright Antonin Artaud. Illustrating Hijikata’s surrealist-saturated aesthetic, Fraleigh notices he “draws imagery from the unconscious . . . creates fantastic, erotic imagery juxtaposing dream states and reality in contradiction” (2010, p. 22).

Butoh scholar Susan Blakeley Klein (1988) argues that the word ‘butoh’ in postmodern times generally relates to dance which is influenced by its early proponents, stating that it is only since the late 1970’s that choreographers “have aims and principles that differ from the founders’ ideas” (1988, p. 2). She points out that the word *butoh* “has come to signify the entire spectrum of dance that has, in one way or another, been

influenced by Ohno Kazuo and Hijikata Tatsumi” (Klein, 1988).<sup>1</sup> Lemi Ponifasio, an Aotearoa-based Samoan director and choreographer of MAU dance-theatre agrees, saying: “butoh encompasses many, many different performers all with different styles, techniques and staging. It means different things to different people” (Meredith, n.d., para. 4). However, for Ponifasio butoh is about “the process of discovering the original state of being human and the expansion of that human concept” (Meredith, n.d., para. 4).

The above literature shows that butoh was a philosophy and performance practice that responded to the immediate changes in the political and social climate of Japan. Dancers were expressing desperation and the crisis of their socio-cultural environment by rebelling against established norms in search for a new way forward (Hamera, 1990; Fraleigh, 2010). Indeed, butoh has been described as a “violent spasm of anti-dance” (Stein as cited in Hamera, 1990, p. 55); its dancers radically questioned conventional views of the body and performance, breaking down existing notions of dance technique through experimentation and confrontation. Their work has left a legacy for contemporary performers who glean butoh’s aesthetics, practices, and philosophy to create new global morphologies (Fraleigh, 2010).

### **Min Tanaka and Body Weather**

Min Tanaka began working with the idea that bodies and their environments are interrelational in the 1970’s, with performance colleagues from Mai Juku dance company (Snow, 2002). The approach became known as “Body Weather” or “Bodyweather”. Tanaka’s earlier training in classical ballet and modern dance had become unsatisfying for him by the 1960’s (Tanaka, 2012a), so he looked to Hijikata and “wondered what could make one so strong a being in dancing” (Tanaka, 2006, “You’ve Said In The Past” section, para. 1). Tanaka’s exploration of dance since has led him to collaborate with

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<sup>1</sup> Here she uses the surname first followed by the given name, as is common practice in Japan.

many artists from other disciplines, including musicians Minoru Noguchi, Cecil Taylor, and Derek Bailey; visual artist Richard Serra; composer John Cage; writer Susan Sontag; painter Karel Appel; performing artist Meredith Monk; and photographer Masato Okada, which spanned thirty years (MoMA PS1, 2012; Artists: Min Tanaka, 2007). These



*Figure 1.* Min Tanaka performing in oil during the Hakushu Art Festival, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan, 2007. Photo: Miriam Marler

collaborations enabled him to work with the fields of music, opera, film, multi-media, visual arts, dance, theatre, literature, and psychiatry (MoMA PS1, 2012; Artists: Min Tanaka, 2007).

Tanaka also began to work as a solo artist who improvised in response to the environment (Tanaka, 2002; Snow, 2002; MoMA PS1, 2012), and explored performance in both traditional theatre venues and in other outdoor sites (Tanaka, 2007; MoMA PS1, 2012; Venu, 2006). His prolific and varied approach is congruent to his wish to “discover and initiate dance in all places” (Tanaka as cited in Viala & Masson-Sekine, 1988, p. 199). For example, in 2004 Tanaka undertook a 45-day dance journey travelling through Indonesia, named *Locus Focus*, where he danced anonymously everywhere and anywhere: on rural streets with few passersby, in the fields with the animals, or as part of the village festivities (Rawlings, 2008; Tanaka, 2007; MoMA PS1, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

BW grew out of Tanaka and Mai Juku’s ‘laboratories’ which were first held in Tokyo in the late 1970’s, and later in 1985 in the rural farming village of Hakushu in the Yamanashi Prefecture, two and a half hours northwest of Tokyo (Snow, 2002). The farming lifestyle was a way in which dancers could sustain themselves, engage in physical training, and research dance through working the land (Tanaka, 2006). It was an intensive investigation of the relationship between the body and the landscape (Venu, 2006). Long hours of manual work on the organic farm; rigorous training known as “MB” or “M&B” which stands for Mind/Body, Muscle/Bone or Music/Body, all and any of which can be used (Van de Ven & Snow, 2012); hands-on collaborative bodywork known as “Manipulations” (Snow, 2002; Tanaka, 2007); and sensorial, image-based improvisation sometimes known as “Groundwork” (Snow, 2002), made up the BW lifestyle. The different components were often practiced outdoors; living and dancing were in direct relationship with the natural environment and its continually changing processes.

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<sup>2</sup> His journey has been documented in film and photographic essay. I suggest contacting the Body Weather farm via Tanaka’s website for inquiries about accessing these documents (<http://www.min-tanaka.com>).

Peter Snow (2002) studied BW practice for ten years before writing his PhD, in which he uses Australian-based BW practitioner and previous Mai Juku member Tess de Quincey's description of BW. She calls it "an *approach* to training" (as cited in Snow, 2002, p. 68, Snow's italics), rather than a movement genre. Snow (2002) explains that BW is "often linked to butoh" (p. 68), but it differs since it is not a performance aesthetic. Instead, workshops are open to all kinds of people, not just professional performers, and the training, rather than performance, is at the fore of the practice (Tanaka, 2007; Snow, 2002).

As suggested above, dancers who explore BW investigate the boundary between themselves and their environment (Snow, 2002). Snow (2002) articulates the definition of this concept of *environment* in BW, saying "environment as 'weather' is not simply nature and its forces but rather the whole world in all its dimensions" (p. 66). This suggests that BW investigates the relationship between the body's inner experiential landscape and the outer material environment, as well as how non-material elements like sound, movement, and other experiences can be part of dance. Tanaka's statement that, "A dancer, in essence, is an anonymous lightning, a medium of the place" (as cited in Grant and de Quincey, 2006, p. 252), suggests that dance embodies all the elements and atmospheres of a place or situation, and this is the purpose of dance for Tanaka.

Mary Anderson (2011) agrees that BW is about relationships between dancers and places, saying, "Bodyweather training looks and feels like Butoh training in its de-programming of pedestrian movements and in its pedagogical attention towards environmental receptivity, but the role of place and the natural world factor in even more strongly in Bodyweather" (2011, p. 41). The role of the environment for dance is further illustrated in Tanaka's famous words: "When I dance, I don't dance *in* [emphasis added] a place, but I *am* [emphasis added] the place" (as cited in Grant & de Quincey, 2006, p.

247). Tanaka suggests that dance for him is about bridging the gap between place and his own existence, about embodying his environment through dance. Stuart Grant (2006) describes dancing this way as “An ontology of the identity of self and place” (Grant & de Quincey, 2006, p. 247), suggesting that the borders between the body and the environment do not merely permeate one another but co-create one another’s identity.

Since its beginnings, BW has been subject to global transitions. It has migrated to locations outside of Japan and has been investigated and adapted to suit the needs of artists in new contexts. Annual summer workshops, open to selected international visitors from 1988 up until 2009 (Tanaka, 2012a) undoubtedly contributed to the dissemination of BW knowledge. Tess de Quincey, Frank Van de Ven, Katerina Bakatsaki, Stuart Lynch, Oguri, Andres Corchero, and Christine Quoiraud, some of whom worked with Tanaka in his Mai Juku performance company, are listed as BW practitioners on the “Bodyweather” website in Australia, Europe, and the US (Body Weather, n.d.). In the Pacific region, Australia in particular has seen an influx of BW through Tess de Quincey’s research, alongside other Japanese performance practices such as *butoh* and Suzuki method (Marshall, 2006). Such artists use BW as a springboard for creative work, critiquing, interpreting, drawing from, or melding the practice with other techniques and disciplines (see Fraleigh, 2010; Grant & de Quincey, 2006; IndependANCE, 2011a, 2011b; Orr & Sweeney, 2011; Smith, 2012; Snow, 2002, 2006; Taylor, 2010; Wood, 2009). In Aotearoa too, the effects of BW and *butoh* relocation and re-interpretation flavour our performance practices. The following section traces some of this history.

### **Japanese Contemporary Dance in Aotearoa and the Inspiration for this Research**

A significant number of Aotearoa/New Zealand dancers are influenced by BW or *butoh* techniques, yet there is little written about this history. A search of “*butoh*” on the Dance Aotearoa New Zealand (DANZ) website currently finds fifteen mentions of the



practice, yet I have been able to find only three scholarly documents about butoh in the Aotearoa/Pacific region. These are: Miki Seifert's (2011) doctoral dissertation, William Franco's (2008) master's thesis, and Bert Van Dijk's (2011) article. In addition, renowned butoh scholar Sondra Fraleigh (2010) notes only two artists of the global butoh movement in Aotearoa/NZ: Lemi Ponifasio of MAU Dance and Wilhemeena Monroe of SOUL Centre (p. 31), both based in West Auckland. Ponifasio has stated that Min Tanaka inspired him to find his own way in performance after turning his back on conventional contemporary dance techniques (Manson, 2000). However, he does not see himself as a butoh dancer (Jahn-Werner, 2008). Monroe is also influenced by Tanaka, fusing butoh with somatic education and contemporary dance (Fraleigh, 2010).

However, there are a significant number of other contemporary dancers in Aotearoa/NZ influenced by butoh or BW in various ways. Charles Koroneho, Lynne Pringle, and Michael Parmenter are three such practitioners, each being a notable artistic and educational presence in our dance scene. Koroneho "explore[s] cultural collaboration, intercultural performance and the intersection between choreography, performance art and theatre" (Koroneho, 2011, para. 2). His artistic research, under the conceptual platform Te Toki Haruru, investigates "the collision between maori [*sic*] cosmology, New Zealand society and global cultures" (Koroneho, 2011, para. 2). At times he "draw[s] from Dance, Body Weather and Performance Art" to explore an indigenous approach to choreography and performance (Smith, 2012). Pringle is "deeply committed to the development of the performing arts in New Zealand" (Bipeds Productions, 2005, para. 1). Her BW knowledge was learned through working with Parmenter and through study with Tanaka in New York (Bipeds Productions, 2005; personal communication, July 5, 2013). Parmenter is also influenced by Tanaka's BW Laboratory, melding it with Hawkins Technique, and American "new dance" methods

such as Klein technique, Alexander technique, Contact Improvisation, and Ideokinesis (IndependANCE, 2011b). In addition, Alyx Duncan, Dave Hall, Joshua Rutter, Elle Louise August, Tru Paraha, and myself all trained with Min Tanaka in Japan, and have since worked in various performance trajectories.

MB is a popular training approach for professional performers in Auckland where regular classes run through IndependANCE, led by tutors such as Kerryn McMurdo, Becca Wood, Geoff Gilson, Charles Koroneho, Michael Parmenter, and Joshua Rutter (IndependANCE, 2011). Christchurch's recently established Re:Map classes run by Paul Young, Erica Viedma, and Julia Milsom also offer MB classes (South Island Dance Network, 2012). In addition, Ōtepoti/Dunedin has co-led community classes run by myself in conjunction with dance-colleagues at the University of Otago.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of BW threads in Aotearoa's contemporary dance scene, it does signal the extent to which contemporary dancers, choreographers, and educators in this country might be indirectly or directly influenced by the Japanese-born practices of BW and butoh and/or their philosophies. My experience provides one example of this influence.

In Auckland I heard stories of training at the BW farm; teachers such as Koroneho, Parmenter, and Monroe (2005, 2006) used techniques from Tanaka and other teachers and passed them down to us in their classes. NZ dancers who travelled to Japan to undertake Tanaka's training would note the challenges of this undertaking on their return. Their stories were told and retold within the contemporary dance community and they stimulated a craving within me for a fresh approach to dance.

While living in Japan at the end of 2006, I saw Tanaka perform in Tokyo. This fired up my passion to go to the farm. I was utterly mesmerised by the way he moved,

being interested not only in his intricate, unusual, and erratic movements, but also in what I thought was a kind of “stillness” I saw in him. I saw some sort of undefined calmness and fluency in him; he seemed so sure of what he was doing and the reasons for his dance that his presence expanded beyond the walls of the theatre in an un-faulting way. He was dancing unselfconsciously, with a body that intrinsically knew its way through the movement. I found it very beautiful to experience and admired these qualities deeply, wanting to learn to embody them myself.

This study is implicated in discussions about redefining dance and developing a more critical somatic dance practice. Drawing from autobiographical content such as my time in Japan, “somatic memoires”, and my current practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand, these experiences are used to explore critical Dance Studies debates. For example, Browning (2010) suggests assumptions on what constitutes technique need to be questioned, and calls for a broadening of our definitions of dance. Bales and Nettle-Fiol (2008) agree with Browning and note how professional dancers engage in a variety of techniques and are making diverse choices in their training approaches. These practices are changing the look and epistemologies of contemporary dance. In addition, more critical somatic dance perspectives like Fraleigh (2000), Beavers (2008), and Williamson (2009) state that there is a move back to the self and “soma”, which encourages the generation of new ideas and the questioning of assumptions in dance. Other scholars such as Grau (2011), Reed (1998), and Cruz Banks (2011) show the importance of specific cultural knowledge in somatic conceptualisations such as the body, the senses, one’s identity, and space. Grau (2011) points out that dance and somatic experience are in fact culturally, socially, and politically embedded.

This is why this study culminates in an examination of how my BW practice intersects with the cultural context of Aotearoa/NZ. What I have found is that this

practice has given me a deeper sense of home in my body and in the landscape in which I was born. It has provided me insights into my *whakapapa* (genealogy) and inspired my attention to Māori perspectives of land, body, and identity, or what Māori *tohunga* Rev. Māori Marsden (2003) calls a “symbiotic relationship” (p. 45) between all elements of the natural world.

In the next chapter, I review relevant literature about broadening the notion of dance, in terms of technique and training and global to local contexts. The discussion is used to show how butoh and BW are implicated within these broader debates. BW is a relatively new and little-known practice that often sits outside of Dance Studies conversations; practitioners and scholars discuss it in relation to performance studies, geography, or politics of place (see Anderson, 2011; Grant & de Quincey, 2006; McAuley, 2006; Orr & Sweeney, 2011; Snow, 2006; Taylor, 2010). However, this study situates BW in terms of somatic literature and Aotearoa-specific perspectives. The upcoming review shows some of the issues faced by scholars and practitioners engaging in intercultural readings and the transplantation of practice across socio-cultural contexts.

## Chapter Two: Broadening the Notion of Dance and Understanding

### Body Weather

動くってことはひょっとしたら嘘つくことかもしれないわけですね。

振りを付けて踊るということ、そのものは基本的には嘘。をつくことだと思いますね。その瞬間に感じているものと動いていることとのギャップをダンサーがどうやって埋めて行くんだろうとかって問題がある。

We . . . move, we may be telling a lie. Choreography is fundamentally deceptive.

I am concerned with how a dancer fills the gap between what he/she feels in a given moment and how he/she is moving. (Tanaka, 2012b, “We We Move”)

Tanaka’s quotation above reveals his critical view of the relationship between movement and a dancer’s experience; it alludes to Body Weather’s somatic dance tenets. This chapter discusses present trends in scholarship that re-evaluate essential notions and practices in dance, such as the notion of choreography and somatic experience. For example, literature demonstrates how somatic and improvised approaches can provide unique possibilities for dancers to find their own technique (Beavers, 2008; Whatley, Alexander, & Garrett, 2009). In addition, somatic experience is revealed to be culturally specific and richly diverse (Cruz Banks, 2011; Fortin, 2002; Grau, 2011; Reed, 1998). Other scholars have argued that less-researched local and global instances of dance need to be incorporated into Dance Studies debates in order to counter historical and current power imbalances (Foster, 2009; Savigliano, 2009).

BW literature paints a picture of international transplantations mainly from Australian dancers’ viewpoints (Grant & de Quincey, 2006; Orr & Sweeney, 2011; Taylor, 2010), although other contexts are mentioned (Snow, 2006). These authors

question the relevance of BW for their homeland environments and for cross-disciplinary work, discussing issues of translation and the incorporation of local and indigenous knowledge into their work (Grant & de Quincey, 2006; Orr & Sweeney, 2011; Taylor, 2010), while others investigate BW in performance situations (Snow, 2006). How BW perspectives are reshaped by various landscapes and identities is explored; the viewpoints below contribute to current scholarship providing specific and unique perspectives of dance, technique, and training.

### **Re-Thinking Dance Training and Technique**

Barbara Browning (2010) suggests that there is technique in anything practiced, whether it is a movement system such as dance, or simply doing everyday things. How things are done can happen in a variety of different ways, and there are multiple techniques for activities such as walking, running, giving birth, or making love (Browning, 2010). The body holds cultural information that is politically, socially, and culturally constructed. Browning (2010) suggests assumptions on what constitutes technique need to be questioned and calls for a broadening of our definitions of dance.

Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettle-Fiol (2008) agree with Browning, and note how professional dancers engage in a variety of techniques and training approaches in the US. Research on postmodern dancers indicates that they make diverse choices that transform the span of their careers in unique ways (Bales & Nettle-Fiol, 2008). According to training stories from these dancers, the authors state there are three areas of praxis. First, dancers have an alternative movement practice such as yoga, running, or somatic practices like Feldenkrais, Body Mind Centering or Pilates to supplement or take the place of dance training. Second, ballet is used as a supporting technique. Third, dancers have an “eclectic, self-styled approach to training”, meaning that each crafts his or her practice to suit individual needs (Bales & Nettle-Fiol, 2008, p. ix).

This self-styling approach to training can be seen in experienced dancer Ralph Lemon's training: he uses running and stretching alone. He no longer trains in ballet, modern dance techniques, or yoga, but this prior training informs his current-day performance-making. He says:

When I'm doing my lynching site rituals, or my living room dances, in front of an audience or passing cars, or an old woman sitting in a chair, I'm sharing something with them, and simultaneously considering all that I know about my modern, or postmodern dance. Everything that I've learnt I access. I'm engaging when I move. I'm thinking about ballet, or straightening my leg, about bending my knee, flexing my foot. I'm thinking about jogging, about breathing, or about "How do I feel?" I'm thinking about how delightful it is, or if I will hurt myself, or if I am warmed up enough. I might even be wondering if it is all that different from being in a ballet studio or being on stage. All that becomes part of my moving. (Ralph Lemon as cited in Bales & Netti-Fiol, 2008, pp. 223-4)

Lemon's reflections indicate how techniques are inscribed in the memory of our bodies, and inform a dancer's somatic identity and movement choice. Although Lemon no longer takes dance classes, he engages with his body through his self-styled practice of running, stretching, and community performance. This practice implicitly challenges traditional notions of dance by engaging in non-conventional training.

In a different manner, Sarah Rubidge (2010) also finds new ways of working with technique in her embodied research approach that is informed by Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory of space. The theory views space as material, able to prompt the senses and movement, which is significant because the human body has generally been considered more important than objects or "empty" space. Rubidge describes her practice and how she engages with the studio context on a somatic level. She states that she can

feel a different sense of space if she directs her intention and focus away from the form of her movement, and towards the space itself. Rubidge views space as a relational material substance that is in constant flux with her body, rather than measureable, stagnant, or empty. Her choreographic research illustrates a unique way of generating movement that moves away from focus on form, toward sensing and feeling.

This shift towards sensing and feeling is also apparent in Wendell Beavers' (2008) article. He describes current discourses on technique to be about "bring[ing] back the possibilities of the individual organism to know, to understand, [and] to be part of the whole" (2008, p. 128). He suggests balancing traditional Western<sup>3</sup> theatrical dance perspectives that separate technique from other areas of life. In the past, dance technique has been a kind of context-less practice where the importance of thoughts, feelings, experiences, beliefs, spiritualities, values, and histories of individuals were not acknowledged (Beavers, 2008). The author maps important developments in new practices where principles from other disciplines, theories, or worldviews have opened up fresh meanings for dance technique. Somatic and improvised practices are important for this re-conceptualisation: "All of this work includes learning to work with body feedback and self-observation on the subtle level of sensing, perceiving and doing" (2008, p.128), allowing us a deeper understanding of ourselves (Beavers, 2008). What is highlighted is the capacity for every dancer to find her or his own "technique" or systems for moving from a somatically aware standpoint.

The term "somatics" was first coined by Thomas Hanna as:

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<sup>3</sup> It is not my intention to homogenize "Western dance"; it is a term frequently used to describe a wide collection of predominantly European and Northern US-influenced theatrical dance traditions.



The body as perceived from within by first person perception. When a human being is observed from the outside, i.e., from a third-person viewpoint, the phenomenon of a human body is perceived. . . . The soma, being internally perceived, is categorically distinct from a body, not because the subject is different but because the mode of viewpoint is different: it is immediate proprioception-a sensory mode that provides unique data. (Hanna as cited in Fortin, 2002, p. 128)

Therefore somatic movement methods value subjective, experiential understandings of the body (Fortin, 2002), rather than approaching the body as it is seen externally by others. Eddy notes that somatic inquiry “focuses the awareness process on the ‘whole person’ inclusive of his or her associated physical and emotional needs, inviting wisdom ‘from within’ to inform decisions” (as cited in Eddy, 2002a, p. 119).

When somatic practices emerged at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in Europe, the US, and Australia, inquiry addressed pain, physical limitations, injury, and a thirst for new spiritual or physical practices (Eddy, 2009). Practices that fall into the field of somatics often use touch, concentration, experiential anatomy, sensing, feeling, rest, imagery, improvisation, exploration, talking, writing, drawing, and partner or group work and deepen people’s awareness of their bodies, minds, emotions, spirits, and their relationships with others and the wider world (Williamson, 2009; Skinner et al, 1979). Somatic inquiry is often related to health or therapeutic practice; however, there is growing use of it for dance research (Beavers, 2008; Eddy, 2002a).

Somatic investigation is significant to dance and movement since the dancing body is an experiencing soma, not just a moving body devoid of feeling and intelligence (Fraleigh, 2000). As suggested by the above literature, dance and choreography can

benefit from somatic perspectives. For example, somatic movement practices balance rest with movement, and often allow more time to process information than to execute movement (Batson & Schwartz, 2007). Resting offers time for reflection and allows the body to recalibrate new information (Batson & Schwartz, 2007). Batson and Schwartz (2007) point out the rich internal movement within an un-moving soma:

In stillness, a person may, from the outside, appear to be not moving, but inside the body, movement manifests largely: blood rushes, breath enters and exits, and joints adjust and shift in relation to micro level responses to the gravitational field. (2007, p. 49)

This is why in somatic education, neurological processing in rest is the focus, in contrast to much dance culture where success is “accomplished by testing physical limits through extreme effort and exhaustive practice” (Batson & Schwartz, 2007, p. 49).

Holistic wellbeing is one of the values highlighted by somatic movement dance educator Amanda Williamson (2009). She says somatic dance education in community contexts is “growing in importance because it helps people to feel better about their body” (“What Is Somatic Movement”, para. 1). It uses kinaesthetic intelligence, anatomical awareness, community practice, and contemporary spirituality. These approaches develop “a ‘deeper sense’ of self” and more meaningful relationships (“What Is Somatic Movement”, para. 1). Therefore somatic inquiry may be one way to counter attitudes in dance that value an externally-focussed, virtuosic body (Batson & Schwartz, 2007). It can be used to extend our capacities to sense, feel, orientate, and respond to the world around us in dance or everyday situations, and deepen our knowledge of our own nature.

Like Williamson (2009) and Beavers (2008) above, Whatley, Alexander, & Garrett (2009) state that recent dance scholarship shows a move back to the self and “soma”, and a revisiting of our relationship with others and with the environment around us. The authors advocate dance research as “a space for sharing and exchanging ideas and experiences” (2009, p. 4), and support practitioners’ reflections on emergent practices. They encourage the generation of new ideas, the questioning of assumptions in dance, and highlight a growing interest in dance research from outside and within the discipline.

In summary, Beavers (2008), Browning (2010), Bales & Nettle-Fiol (2008), and Rubidge (2010) show how conversations about training and technique can include broader and more diverse conceptualisations. There is a call to include innovative, hybrid, individualised, somatically-informed, improvisational, theoretically-informed, ecological, intercultural, and interdisciplinary approaches for thinking about and doing dance. These authors and others (Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Whatley, Alexander, & Garrett, 2009; Williamson, 2009) suggest that deep listening to the soma can deepen self-awareness and lead to new possibilities in dance theories and practices.

This particular study offers a distinctive contribution to the above discussion for broadening our notions of dance training and technique. It signals a self-styled Aotearoa/NZ practice informed by a Japanese BW worldview and draws on the somatic sensibilities. As a dancer, I am inspired to find a new approach for conceptualising and practicing dance that like the above literature, challenges more established modes of thought and practice. However, as the next section reveals, experiences of the body in both dance and everyday life are rooted within essential cultural contexts that should not be negated.

**A critical somatic dance perspective.** Dance forms hold their own specific somatic and cultural codes depending on the context from which they arise, and somatic experience is not universal (Grau, 2011; Reed, 1998). Renowned historian and somatic practitioner Martha Eddy (2002b) accredits previously unacknowledged cultural material in the field of somatics. She describes the evolution of somatic practices, saying:

While a part of the historical development of the field of somatics involved the choice to acquire a metaview-standing back from distinct cultures and investigating the individual organism separate from any identity other than that of being human- the profound influences of Eastern and African movement concepts and practices have been seminal in the development of European and American somatic paradigms. And, of course, there has been a large degree of information flow between Europe and the Americas. (2002b, p. 47)

She notes that it is important to reference teachers when passing on somatic knowledge in order to identify and respect cultural influences. However, she does not discuss how cultural understandings intrinsically inform our daily embodied understandings.

Grau (2011), Reed (1998), Royal (2007), and Cruz Banks (2011) show the importance of specific cultural knowledge in somatic conceptualisations such as the body, the senses, identity, and space. There is often an assumption that somatic approaches to dance are culturally neutral, but as Andrée Grau (2011) points out, dance and somatic experience are in fact culturally, socially, and politically embedded. She says, “‘Dancing bodies’, ‘space’, ‘place’ and the ‘senses’ cannot be accepted as universal concepts since they are embedded within typically western understandings . . . all corporealities and spatialities are socially and culturally mediated” (Grau, 2011, p. 5). Grau (2011) reminds us that the Western conceptualisation of the body is culturally constructed too, it is based on the Cartesian assumption that sees mind and body as

separate, and that the mind dominates the body. However, this is not a universal way of thinking. People experience the world differently, holding differing worldviews, conceptualisations, and ontological understandings (Grau, 2011). Grau says, “Whilst shared throughout the human species, cognitive capabilities are used in varying ways across the world and in different social contexts” (2011, p. 8). She illustrates how conceptualisations of “space”, “the body”, and “the senses” depend on context; for example, she points out that people spatially orientate in diverse and different ways.

Similarly, Susan Reed (1998) shows “the body” and “the senses” are conceptually specific to different dance forms. She traces research by Novack that compares the idea of the body in ballet as “an instrument . . . trained to conform”, with the “expressionist” body in modern 1930s-1940s dance (as cited in Reed, 1998, p. 522). The body thus plays different roles in ballet and modern dance; behaviour in and the reasons behind dance differ. Reed cites Bull too (p. 522), who argues that the role of the senses is variable: sight is predominant in ballet technique; touch in contact improvisation; and sound in West African dance. Although Bull’s analysis provides a simplistic view of these dance forms, it does highlight how sensory knowledge is unique to dances that are rooted in cultural understandings of the body.

In Aotearoa dance, Māori understandings of the body are often connected to the natural environment. The work of Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal (2007), in the revitalisation of pre-contact Māori performing arts, explores this relationship. Royal discusses *whare tapere*, “traditional village based ‘houses’ of entertainment, storytelling, music and dance” (p. 194), and how present-day outdoor renderings might facilitate contemporary performing artists in drawing creative impetus from natural phenomenon. For example, he proposes that dancers “look to natural occurring features of the natural world - fish, birds, water and so on - as models for dance” (p. 206). Royal explains that

identity is understood through “unity with elements of the natural world” (p. 206), rather than understanding identity through difference. Furthermore, “the natural world finds expression in human creativity and performance” (p. 204). These words suggest that dance in this context acts to strengthen understandings of identity, and can be a conduit for spiritual connection with elements of the natural world.

Royal’s work signals how a Māori worldview, although varying from *iwi* to *iwi* (tribe to tribe), *hapu* to *hapu* (sub-tribe to sub-tribe), and *whanau* to *whanau* (family to family), is underpinned by a deep connection to the landscape through the creation story. This story enables the *whakapapa* of all living beings, including people, to be traced right back *Papatuanuku* (Mother Earth). According to Marsden,

Man did not evolve from the primates but was born out of the seed of the god Tāne,<sup>4</sup> impregnated into the dawn maid *Hineahuone* who was formed and shaped out of the red clay – *onekura* – of Mother Earth. (2003, p. 63)

The story links humankind with the planet through the use of symbolism and personification of the earth: it exists to remind us where humanity came from, implicitly demanding respect for the natural world (Marsden, 2003).

Similar to Royal, Ojeya Cruz Banks argues dance is a way of “strengthening connection to home, land and sea” (2011, p. 82). Her research on Māori contemporary dance company, Atamira Dance Company shows how dance embodies the local context. The company’s performances are a way for dancers to examine their identities and *whakapapa*, enriched through the landscape (Cruz Banks, 2011). Cruz Banks describes how somatically the dancers “seem[ed] to come from an expansive reaching out from within” (2011, p. 80), in the dance *Taonga* by Louise Potiki Bryant. The dancers were

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<sup>4</sup> Tāne is the god of the forest.

“moving as if an ocean resided in their pelvises, their bodies . . . simultaneously heavy, light, fluid; they flick[ed], and ripple[d]” (Cruz Banks, 2011, p. 80). The author’s reflections illustrate the important role of place and the natural environment in Māori conceptualisations of self and body. She provides an alternative for considering dance as a way of somatically embodying landscape and identity.

Visual artist, choreographer, and scholar Moana Nepia (2012) also discusses Māori perspectives to dance. He draws on nineteenth century Māori *tohunga* Mohi Ruatapu’s understandings of *Te Kore* (nothingness, void, or potentiality), to discuss its existence within the realms of humankind. In relation to his performance-making process which involves dance, creative writing, video, and installation, Nepia uses *Te Kore* as a methodological tool and a subject for creative investigation. He shows how *Te Kore* has been an integral part of tangata whenua connection with the rhythms of nature, such as the moon’s cycles determining seed sowing or for *kai moana* (seafood) collection. In terms of dance practice, similar to the somatic approaches discussed above, *Te Kore* can inform rhythms of rest and the execution of athletic movements in a way that balances and supports the dancer (Nepia, 2012).

As the literature suggests, a moving body can be a window into many worldviews. Eddy (2002b) has begun to acknowledge cultural influences on the field of somatics, while Reed (1998) and Grau (2011) further argue for a re-thinking of conceptualisations in dance, pressing for multiple perspectives of somatic notions. Such a lens is valuable for understanding and respecting different dance practices and cultural knowledge. Royal (2007), Cruz Banks (2011) and Nepia (2012) offer alternative views of dance from Māori perspectives, guided by a close relationship with homeland. Assumptions about what constitutes dance or movement practice highlight culturally-

embedded values and philosophies. The way somatic practices and various socio-cultural perspectives overlap can create a rich dialogue and new conceptualisations for dance.

Indeed “interpreting movement . . . requires a sensitivity to cultural space” (Reed, 1998, p. 523). Thus, “space is not an inert backdrop for movement, but is integral to it, often providing fundamental orientation and meaning” (Ness as paraphrased by Reed, p. 523). The environment in which movement is rooted is therefore of utmost importance to understanding dance. By looking at the context of life surrounding dance, we can understand where and why particular dance exists. Dance is unique and specific in different geographies, communities, and to different people. It is constantly evolving and adapting within its socio-cultural, political, and economic environment as global and local transformations occur.

For example, BW has roots in a Japanese social, cultural, and political context but it also reconfigures when taken outside of Japan. Like other dances, BW is enmeshed within the socio-cultural, political, and geographical particularities of the people by whom and place where it is practiced. Tanaka’s words illustrate this clearly; when asked about the connection between art and life, he said, “Do you mean they may not be connected? Impossible” (Tanaka, 2006, “Is Art and Life Connected” section). Before looking at BW’s evolutions, the following section explores how other dances outside of the canon are implicated within forces of globalisation. The section provides a broader picture of how dance responds to, and is intertwined with its shifting environment.

### **Global, Local, and Aotearoa Dance Perspectives**

In order to locate BW’s global positioning for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to outline some of the situations dance faces in the current global climate. The relatively new and trendy term “World Dance” is indexical to this discussion because the term is implicated in colonial relationships and foreign readings of dance culture (Foster,



2009; Savigliano, 2009). However, all dance such as BW sprouts from a specific cultural context. Scholars note dance needs to be examined in the context of its historical complexities, intercultural relationships, and from the voices of practitioners in order to open up debates for reading, articulating, and broadening the conceptual framework for dance (Foster, 2009; Savigliano, 2009).

Marta Savigliano (2009) advocates for a critical unravelling and re-thinking of the umbrella term “World Dance”. She brings to light the many concealed issues for dance forms that do and do not fall under the category of “World Dance”. For example, she questions the power implications of the notion “choreography” which is deemed to be “a processor of differences” (2009, p. 175), although it is rooted in Western dance traditions. The author highlights the need for being open to multiplicity, processes of translation, and the tailoring or reframing of dances in order to be recognised by institutions. In other words, dance that falls outside of the canon must be processed by established and recognised frameworks in order to be accepted (Savigliano, 2009).

Correspondingly, Susan Leigh Foster (2009) reveals the fabrications within institutional descriptions of “World Dance”, a term which “intimates a neutral comparative field wherein all dances are products of equally important, wonderfully diverse, equivalently powerful cultures” (2009, p. 2). However, we see through Foster’s critical tracing of dance history that there are vast imbalances between dances. She outlines the politics of power implicated in researching dance that need to be acknowledged and questioned, both in past research and in present studies.

Together Foster (2009) and Savigliano (2009) question how “World Dance” might replace “Dance”. They note an expansion of territory to include some but not all dances that were previously not recognised, and highlight the differences in power between dance that falls within the frame, and dance in “wild” places outside of it: “out

there in the world” (Savigliano, 2009, p. 163). Both affirm “the need for new models of history writing that could provide alternative narrative structures” (Foster, 2009, p. 3), and imply that communities which have not been written into dance history, such as minority and indigenous communities need to be given voice.

For example, in the Cook Islands dance “engage[s] local identities with global processes” (Alexeyeff, 2009, p. 1). Kalissa Alexeyeff (2009) shows how Cook Islands dancers are affected by changes in tourism and commodification, by funding and other support (or lack of it), by European invasion, and the introduction of Christianity. These changes in politics, economy, and social fabric can be seen through looking at Cook Islands expressive dance practice as well as through individual, local, and national identities (Alexeyeff, 2009).

Consequently “Worlding” dance sees dance not as separate from culture, cultureless, or as a cultural mirror or reflection of society, but as an actual producer of culture (Alexeyeff, 2009; Foster, 2009; Savigliano, 2009). In this way, dance crafts identity and generates culture within and outside of itself. Simultaneously, dance is affected by political, cultural, social, and economic constraints, as illustrated in Alexeyeff’s (2009) study on Cook Islands dance. She shows how one community is in fact a microcosm of globalisation.

In Aotearoa too, the somatic experiences and choreography can be determined by and negotiate the social-political landscape. Sharon Mazer’s (2007) research explores this topic; she investigates the postcolonial and bicultural dilemmas within the country. She, like Cruz Banks (2011), discusses Māori dance company Atamira. In their dance work *Ngai Tahu* 32 she describes the Māori dancers’ bodies as “implicitly come to reveal and embody the effects of colonisation: ritual dance suppressed by the aesthetic” (2007, p. 291). Mazer (2007) implies that we can see colonisation embodied through the power-

play between Māori performance practices and the Western contemporary aesthetic in Atamira's dancers. She suggests that this kind of "working between cultural forms" (2007, p. 291) is powerful because it highlights identity tensions facing our society. Mazer (2007) articulates the importance of landscape for Māori identity, saying, "From a Māori perspective, to locate one's whakapapa in a file is not quite the same as recalling it from the land itself" (2007, p. 291). These words once again signal how Māori identity is interwoven with the Aotearoa landscape.

Jack Gray (2010), a founding member of Atamira Dance Company reflects on global mobility and on how it can affect our embodied experiences and understandings of dance. He describes his connection with the Australian landscape during his time at the 'Indigenous Dance Laboratory 2', in Broome, and called Australia an "unbelievable Dreamtime landscape of ochre red dust, rock, green Indian Ocean, the crispest blue skies, the abundance of life" (2010, p. 3). As a Māori choreographer/dancer Gray describes how dancing in the foreign environment affected his somatic sensibilities. How the body accommodates environment, such as local flora and fauna can be felt by dancers on a profound and somatic level.

Together Gray (2010) and Mazer (2007), like Royal (2007), Cruz Banks (2011) and Nepia (2012) earlier, indicate the implications of identity and landscape for an Aotearoa dance worldview. The authors allude to a Māori worldview wherein the universe is conceived as multi-faceted, dynamic and in continual process; physical and temporal realms are derivative of higher spiritual and eternal planes of cosmic process (Marsden, 2003, pp. 178-179). Such a perspective of reality can surely stimulate distinctive insights into the body and dance. For example Gray's (2010) above attention to how physical embodiment is integral to experiencing the world signals that place is understood through the body's wisdom. Mazer (2007) too identifies the strong

connection between people and landscape in her discussion. However she also highlights bicultural tensions for dance in Aotearoa.

Pākehā choreographer-dancer and scholar, Carol Brown (1998) discusses cultural translation when researching, dancing, and transferring choreographic work between Britain and Aotearoa. She sees herself as both an expatriate in England and a “visitor” in Aotearoa, dwelling in a place of “in-between-ness” (1998, p.140). Brown points out that Pākehā do not belong to the land in the same way as Māori. She says, “Though the Māori are *tangata whenua* (of the land), the *Pākehā* as *Manuhiri* (visitor) is not” (1998, p.140, Brown’s italics). She links her cultural identity to the feeling of not connecting to any place, saying “the *Pākehā* belongs, in a foundational sense, neither here nor there” (1998, p. 140, Brown’s italics).

Being Pākehā myself, Brown’s reflections resonate with my own feelings of belonging. I have one English-born and one Australian-born parent, and I grew up in Ōtepoti/Dunedin as a first generation New Zealander. Like Brown, I feel somewhat unsure of how I sit between my Australian, British, and New Zealand ties. Ōtepoti/Dunedin is my birth-place, and the landscape resonates within me deeply, yet I like Brown have an awareness of the problematic way the British have engaged historically with Aotearoa’s land and people, and I have a strong respect for Māori wisdom. I feel the need to engage my identity with the local environment as a way of connecting with this place and understanding more deeply who I am as a dancer and a New Zealander. BW has inspired this investigation.

For example, the following somatic portrait of dancing in Aramoana, a beach near my hometown of Ōtepoti/Dunedin in the South Island of Aotearoa, explores this theme. It provides an example of how my BW-inspired practice is a way of connecting to self and homeland.

*When I was standing in the water or crawling over the rocks, I felt like I was listening to a harsh landscape. Somehow, I was aware that this land was so familiar and comforting -I had grown up playing here and it felt ingrained in my body- yet paradoxically it also felt hard and unforgiving. Something was uncomfortable about being out there by the water early in the morning. My connection felt somewhat forced or tense. I wanted to let go of any judgements and hear the land speak for itself. I attempted to soften my body and listen to the rhythms of the place. I honed my senses on the presence around me.*

My personal practice and research into BW engages with the themes from the Aotearoa dance literature discussed above. As the literature shows, dance in Aotearoa responds to specific parameters wherein issues of belonging, identity, and landscape are pertinent and interwoven within the political, social, and cultural landscape. The somatic implications for dance in Aotearoa are about engaging with natural phenomena as a way of identifying with the landscape and understanding how we belong here as dancers and as human beings. Therefore dancing in Aotearoa using BW approaches engages me in a personal re-questioning of my assumptions about dance, my identity, and the landscape where I live.

My own identity and dance genealogy illustrate the importance of global to local contexts and processes within and outside of dance. My practice brings implications of colonial power imbalances that need to be questioned, which in Aotearoa involves addressing Treaty of Waitangi obligations. Dancing BW implicates me as a Pākehā dancer not only in the translation of practice here, but also in the reconfiguration of this knowledge in terms of our socio-cultural landscape. This means a process of making sense of BW in relation to these situated implications. Chapter four reveals this

discussion; firstly however the following section explores transnational translations of BW and butoh in other international contexts.

### **Transnational and Intercultural Translations of Butoh and Body Weather**

This section looks at historical and current butoh and BW discussions that stretch across the globe. The somatic particulars of these Japanese-rooted movement practices are specific to their historical contexts, yet they have also been more recently influenced by transcultural translations and developments as practitioners and audiences have negotiated new dance paradigms.

Regarding butoh's early days, Judith Hamera (1990) notes that it was customary in Japan for new art to be accepted only once it had received international recognition. Butoh dancers therefore performed in America prior to the dance being accepted back home. Hamera (1990) posits that cross-cultural exchanges between Japanese butoh dancers and American viewers affected the aesthetic of butoh. She suggests this may have played a part in butoh's transformations from a violent and rebellious dance to a more controlled dance, which was "lyrical, emphasizing minute, attenuated gestures" (1990, p. 55).

Further, Hamera (1990) suggests that butoh was often viewed by Westerners through an Orientalist gaze, in which viewers saw "real or perceived stylistic differences from, or mutations of, a Western performance tradition", rather than viewing butoh in reference to its own meanings (p. 59). She notes that this "cross-cultural gaze" was in affect during American readings of butoh, since viewers did not understand the cultural context from which the dance arose. Instead, they related butoh to their own understanding of dance and focussed on that which American dance lacked at the time (Hamera, 1990).

Hamera (1990) suggests that one element American artists were “drawn to, and ultimately perform[ed]” (1990, p. 59), was the concept of *ma*: the liminal space between things that can hold great meaning. It is linked to Japanese religio-aesthetics and the embodiment of something potential, spiritual, or spacious. She describes *ma* in terms of *butoh* below:

Instead of movement and meaning coinciding, the minuteness of many of the gestures and the length of time over which they are executed leads me to suggest that, in work of this type, “meaning” and “opportunities for reading” exist at least as much in the “spaces between” actions as in the actions themselves. (1990, pp. 56-7)

The author implies that there is potential for meaning in the space between movements as much as in movements themselves, and this is prominent in *butoh*. She suggests that at this time American dance was lacking in, and sought, such a conceptualisation (Hamera, 1990).

Bonnie Sue Stein (2001) also discusses *butoh*’s introduction to American audiences. Her article quotes Japanese *butoh* instructor Nakajima, author Kazuko Kuniyoshi, and New York Times dance critic Anna Kisselgoff, to highlight the need for American 1960’s modern dance to move away from abstraction and towards incorporating everyday gesture, narrative, and the imagination.

Stein notes *butoh* was born from a post-war Japanese context, surrealism, and wider art movements. She also discusses the cultural politics that contributed to *butoh*’s aesthetic. For example, *butoh* aims towards reaching *satori* (Stein, 2001). This is about pushing beyond the individual’s boundaries in order to increase physical, mental, and emotional capacity, until: “the body and mind are exhausted, self-control is abandoned,

and there is nothing to interfere with spontaneous learning” (Stein, 2001, pp. 379-380). The author illuminates this concept with her own personal experiences of learning kendo, saying:

I would become so involved in the practice that I did not notice my tired body. The room –and time- would disappear. There was a great deal of elation following this feeling, and somehow it seemed the only place for growth. (Stein, 2001, p. 380)

In *butoh*, too, the focus must fiercely reside on the practice in order to push beyond an individual’s limitations.

Stein’s notion of *satori* can be likened to Hamera’s (1990) description of *ma*, since both *ma* and *satori* are about creating space in the body for potential change to happen. These conceptualisations are arguably intrinsic to the aesthetic and practice of recent *butoh* morphologies, where dancers in global locations interpret *butoh* in individual ways.

Significant to this transcultural process is what Fraleigh (2010) brings to light; the difference between traditional Western frameworks for thinking about the body and Japanese contemporary philosophy of the body. Fraleigh articulates *butoh*’s phenomenological underpinnings, which view the body as unlimited and immaterial whereas Western dance phenomenology is about “mend[ing] the perceived body-mind split” (2010, p. 67). Each phenomenological perspective has grown out of its particular context, and the significance for intercultural dance practice is that such paradigms of the body are ultimately embedded in daily living and cultural movement practices. Learning another cultural practice therefore entails not only learning dance steps, but actually embodying a new way of thinking and being.



Tatsumi Hijikata's notion of the "weak body" provides an example of one somatic conceptualisation in butoh (Fraleigh, 2010). This body is the body that does not know and questions "linear rationality and absolute knowledge" (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 64). Sondra Fraleigh (2010) argues that being this way, the butoh body calls for support from community for metamorphism and transformation beyond individual egoism. She describes how the common movement of the squat can facilitate this:

The butoh body is one that "has not been robbed". . . . This means that one acknowledges a native body living beneath the skin of society; such a body sheds the clothes of convention and societal construction. . . . Such a body squats and displaces the ego-bearing expansive chest. In squatting, the chest and the whole torso must soften and descend, or the squat won't happen. (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 65)

Fraleigh's words suggest that the movement of squatting requires the body to soften and release, losing the embodiment of "ego" and bringing the focus inward to a somatic experience of the body. Fraleigh (2010) shows how the butoh worldview provides a means for questioning the nature of our bodies and selves in relation to others by looking inward to our own experience of the body, and allowing receptivity with the world around.

Similarly, when I studied butoh in Tokyo with company Dairakudakan (2006) "letting go" of ego and self-consciousness was valued. The following portrait describes one incident where this perspective was highlighted for me.

*The teachers told us to have a body that was "stupid" and not responsible for itself. Although language was a barrier in class I could see through their bodies that this meant being comfortable in your own skin and being able to move in varying ways. We were given the task of "being crazy" for two minutes without stopping. One company*

*member demonstrated with vigorous movements such as shaking, jiving, and writhing erratically and uncontrollably in every way conceivable. When I tried, two minutes of doing this seemed to stretch for a very long time. Afterwards I had injured some muscles in my neck and I felt disorientated. Another company member, Yuko, told me she knew I was crazy “underneath”, insinuating that there was a hidden part of me that I had not yet revealed. She encouraged me to show this part of myself more and not hold back. Although she had suggested that I had not fully engaged in the task, my movements had felt extreme and vigorous to the point of causing pain. How much more could I do? I wondered.*

In the above reflection, I understood a “stupid” body and being “crazy” conceptually, but I did not know how to embody this concept in feeling or movement. I was shy and embarrassed to relax fully in the context of a public workshop. The interception of my established dance assumptions collided with the philosophy of butoh, and uncertainty and self-judgement hindered me. In hindsight I realise I needed to relax and soften my body to move with more somatic awareness to reveal my own sense of organic movement.

In sum, Fraleigh (2010), Hamera (1990), and Stein (2001) articulate the politics and poetics of butoh, showing how concepts such as *ma*, *satori*, and the “weak body” are integral to understanding the dance. The authors and my own experience show that butoh challenges some traditional Western notions of the body and dance by providing a viewpoint distinct to butoh. Nevertheless, the literature also reveals that butoh morphs as it moves across international geographies and through time: new translations and interpretations are evident when butoh encounters other worldviews and paradigms for conceptualising the body and dance.

Similarly, practitioner-scholars Orr & Sweeney (2011), Taylor (2010), Grant & de Quincey (2006), and Snow (2006) in collaboration with Van de Ven are engaging in processes of translation and transplantation of Body Weather. They combine Japanese-rooted somatic, aesthetic, and philosophic qualities with other systems for moving and thinking about dance. Developments by BW practitioners in Australia and others performing “all over the place” (Snow, 2006, p. 228), portray fluid processes of transplantation distinctive to these individuals and their local contexts. These practitioners look to ecology, geography, indigenous knowledge, and performance improvisation for their research. They collaborate with other disciplines and theories to engage in broad practices that seek to understand dancers’ subjective and embodied relationships with local environments.

First, “site-responsive” artists Marnie Orr and Rachel Sweeney (2011) use BW as part of their practice, arguing for an interdisciplinary relationship between the fields of ecology, geography, and dance. Orr & Sweeney (2011) use “an interdisciplinary live research approach. . . . Focusing on environments both internal and external to the body, and exploring, dialoguing and naming the nature of the multitude of relationships existing between those environments” (2011, Synopsis section, para. 2). They work with BW principles and collaborate with scientists, with “local land knowledge holders” (2011, Residential Research Intensives section, para. 1), and with artists from varying disciplines in order to create a community where disciplinary boundaries can be dissolved. They focus on communication and documentation, creating a “shared language” (2011, Rationale section, para. 4) to articulate the body’s somatic relationship with specific geographical sites. Their work can be seen as an intercultural and interdisciplinary practice with ecological values.

Moreover, these artists draw on perspectives of land from indigenous Tiwi (Northern Australia) and Arrente (Central Australia) tribes (Orr & Sweeney, 2011). The authors use the notion of land as a living being that begs for a “symbiotic” relationship with the body. In practice, they develop their relationship with land by working for extended periods of time, experiencing the immediate and specific elements of the environment around them through their senses and through improvisational movement. The authors show how, by working across and between cultures of practice and forms of knowledge, BW can build relationships with the natural environment, place, and community for generating new kinds of knowledge.

Another site-based performer, Gretel Taylor (2010) discusses the key concept of “emptiness” in BW and butoh training. The process involves emptying the “self” of habits and societal constructs so that a dancer may invite things from the “outside” in. She suggests this enables the dancer’s body and mind to be receptive to the environment around (2010, pp. 77-79). However, Taylor argues that to “empty” the body is both an impossible and inappropriate concept for her as a non-indigenous site-specific dancer in the post-colonial Australian context. This is because historically “emptiness has been a false premise underscoring dispossession and genocide” (2010, p. 85) in Australia. She describes how British colonisers came to Australia and saw an “empty” un-inhabited land when in fact distinctive Aboriginal communities lived there. Taylor suggests these indigenous communities were overlooked because they did not fit into the British framework of what it means to live in a place: what followed was a denial of their existence (Taylor, 2010).

While BW strives to deconstruct the body of its social inscriptions, it also de-genders and de-culturalises the body (Taylor, 2010). Taylor writes, “Aspiring neutrality or emptiness is fictitious, at best, and problematic” (2010, p. 80), she points out that skin

colour and sex are undeniable inscriptions on the body. Questioning these assumptions in BW, Taylor seeks to find an alternative vocabulary and practice in relation to dancing the land in which she lives. Using feminist theory as a framework, she introduces the idea of bringing her “whole self/body to meet with the Australian site” (2010, p. 86), where neither land nor dancer are at the forefront of the dance, but both are allowed their full presence through a kind of relational encounter. She advocates bringing full histories and identities to conversations between body and landscape, rather than erasing or “emptying” any part of the place or of her dancing self. To do this Taylor (2010) uses what she calls “locating” - a practice whereby she locates herself through listening to and noticing the nuances in the environment that she is in, and responds accordingly, dancing from a “permeable” body.

Stuart Grant and Tess de Quincey (2006) also discuss BW in relation to the Australian landscape and its indigenous peoples. The authors ruminate as non-indigenous artists working with the land and ask, “How to stand in Australia? By falling down?” (2006, p. 258). They ask how they can relate to the bicultural realities of Australia in this era of “post” colonialism. Grant says, “I am not entirely comfortable with the knowledge that the prosperity which I now enjoy is built on a foundation of theft and murder” (2006, p. 266), and he discusses the meaning of “dwelling” as a non-indigenous Australian. He points out the ethics involved, and suggests a constant revisiting of his position due to the ghosts of colonising ancestors.

As part of this investigation, Grant & de Quincey (2006) discuss their research that has taken place through BW practices. Their projects include *Triple Alice 1, 2 and 3* (1999-2001), which were interdisciplinary, intercultural, practice-based laboratories in the Australian Central Desert. Participants engaged with the landscape by attempting to research its history and significance to local Aboriginal people, but Grant concludes that

the indigenous knowledge specific to this area “remained largely hidden and silent” (2006, p. 254). Dance research involved what Grant & de Quincey call “Omnicentral Imaging” in which dancers took on “images” from the surroundings to transform the body into a site for performance. De Quincey talks of places entering and inhabiting people and Grant distinguishes their work from other site-based performance, stating that “In Body Weather place performs bodies as much as bodies are in place” (2006, pp. 267-268). He explains, “. . . the hidden workings of an ever present dimension of experience - the ways in which the places we inhabit make us who we are - is revealed and laid open” (2006, pp. 267-268). The authors point to BW’s ontological assumption that the somatic body and its surrounds are inextricably linked; performance is about revealing this relationship.

Last, Peter Snow (2006) traces his collaborations with Amsterdam-based dancer Frank Van de Ven, beginning when the two met at a BW laboratory in Japan with Tanaka. Their performance series, named “Thought/Action”, is about the intersection between Snow’s speaking improvisation and Van de Ven’s moving one. They investigate “places as a mode of being in performance” (2006, p. 228), rather than place being used as a frame, provocation, or performance itself. The author suggests that embodied experience can be used as an improvisational performance tool. He explains that their process engages three elements, “observing”, “reflecting” and “becoming”, which are a triad of “interweaving processes” (2006, p. 235). They focus on and utilise their embodied experience as it constantly changes, relating to one another and to the performance situation.

The above BW literature shows how site-based artists, dancers, and performers explore situated identity and somatic embodiment in relation to place, situation, landscape, or site through fluid processes of transplanting and translating BW. Practice

for Grant & de Quincey (2006), Taylor (2010), and to a lesser extent Orr & Sweeney (2011), can be seen as a method for understanding their own situated identities in relation to their socio-cultural environment. Researching local land-knowledge and understanding indigenous forms of knowledge is a way of addressing bicultural issues important for the Australian postcolonial context. These dancers weave values from local Aboriginal communities into their work, and try to understand the enormity of experiences held within the places they live and dance in. One example of this can be seen above, in Taylor's (2010) culturally appropriate adaptation for practicing BW. In general, the authors implicitly or explicitly show how BW can be used to build ethical relationships with environments, landscapes, places, and with others; between cultural and disciplinary boundaries. BW allows such artists a deeper understanding of situated identity and somatic embodiment.

### **Implications of the Literature and Research Rationale**

The above-cited literature considers current debates about broadening and rethinking Dance Studies. It weaves together concepts such as rethinking our conceptions of technique; how dancers are evolving and self-styling training practices; the value of somatic approaches to dance, movement, and the body; the acknowledgement that somatic experience is culturally-specific; how powerful global forces and dance are intertwined; and Aotearoa's dance tendency toward embodying identity, *whakapapa*, and landscape. The transplantation of butoh and BW through time and across geographical locations and cultural perspectives brings up issues of re-interpretation and translation. The literature points out that transplanted dance needs to be made relevant and appropriate within its new context. The review shows the need for reconsidering dance histories, including more diverse dance perspectives, and acknowledges that dance is part of wider socio-cultural and geographic landscapes.

BW itself is tailored to the needs of contemporary practitioners, for example the above review shows that European and Australian BW artists are working collaboratively and valuing knowledge-systems beyond their own for generating diversity and innovation across cultural and disciplinary territories. Seeing how others engage in the transplantation of BW elsewhere inspires me to question my interpretations of BW in Ōtepoti/Dunedin. As the BW authors above suggest, the practice can be a way of orientating ourselves somatically and deepening our understandings of homeland environments. Following on from these practitioners, it seems pertinent to deepen my understanding of how I am situated in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Indigenous knowledge here has its own ecological approaches for engaging relationships between human beings and the landscape. For example, Royal's (2007) words below highlight how an indigenous culture:

. . . among other things, ritualises its relationship with the natural world on the basis that the world is imbued with wisdom and the trees, the mountains, the birds, and ocean and so on, are the best teachers. In traditional Māori culture [for example], the transformation of humans into birds through donning korowai, is but one way in which this relationship with the world is ritualised. (p. 204)

Cruz Banks (2011), Mazer (2007), Gray (2010), and Nepia (2012) implied this earlier too in their discussions of engaging somatically with elements of the natural world, and embodying a Māori worldview in various dance contexts. As Pākehā dancer-researcher these perspectives inspire me; however the following chapter explores important ethical implications for researching in Aotearoa's bicultural context.

The rationale for this study is about the articulation of BW fluidly translated and transplanted within Aotearoa/New Zealand and the situation of this practice within dance and somatic literature. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, BW and butoh



influence in Aotearoa contemporary dance has been ill documented although a strong undercurrent of these practices and their philosophies exist. However, in neighbouring Australia, where admittedly BW has a greater following (partly due to a greater population), BW debate and research is much more prolific (see Anderson, 2011; Grant & de Quincey, 2006; Snow, 2002; 2006; Taylor, 2010). Along with Becca Wood's (2010) dissertation,<sup>5</sup> this appears to be one of the first instances of BW mentioned in NZ research contexts. With a longer history and larger following, butoh has been investigated more extensively in this country, although to my knowledge still by only a handful of scholar-practitioners (Franco, 2008; Seifert, 2011; Van Dijk, 2011). Therefore this study begins the examination of BW in Aotearoa/NZ, and adds to the broader discussion of how Japanese-derived performance practices such as these have been transplanted and adapted in the Pacific region (see Marshall, 2001).

The study contributes to Dance Studies scholarship in Aotearoa which is currently an exciting and growing field, signalled by the newly established journal *Dance Research Aotearoa* (July, 2013). It is a journal that provides emergent and established dance researchers opportunity to share their work, as well as being a “much-needed local resource” (Barbour, 2013, p. 3). Maufort (2007) more broadly points out that the Aotearoa performing arts scene is underrepresented in scholarship, although it is highly prolific. This study therefore contributes to establishing the documentation of dance and performing arts history, knowledge, and dialogue in the country. Most importantly, it provides a fresh and necessary Aotearoa perspective to existing international butoh and BW discussions.

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<sup>5</sup> Visual design and dance artist Becca Wood cites Tanaka's work as an influence on her spatial design work. See her thesis: <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/945>.

As mentioned above, this study situates BW within the fields of dance and somatic practices, but also makes links with existing BW and butoh literature, and with Māori scholarship. Notions such as technique, the senses, space, “somatic fluency”, and collaboration are key to my analysis. Like in the above-mentioned recent NZ butoh studies, I articulate a subjective practitioner viewpoint of BW providing information *from* dance rather than *of* dance (Bacon & Midgelow, 2010; Whatley, Alexander, & Garrett, 2009). In this way, the study balances traditional, historical researcher standpoints with a more experiential rendering of dance (Bacon & Midgelow, 2010).

In the following chapter, I outline the methodological approaches chosen for this research project. I detail data collection methods for the study; approaches to and issues in analysing dance; the significance of phenomenology in dance studies; and point out some of the current challenges in dance research. I further specify the ethical considerations for researching dance in Aotearoa/NZ, and position myself as the researcher.

## **Chapter Three: Methodological Approaches for Researching Body**

### **Weather in Aotearoa**

舞踊というものが一体どこまで人間社会に関わっているのかという問題は、僕には自分の踊りをまっとうするためにも必要なことだ。それは世の中のこれから踊りが好きになっていく人の為にも大事なものだろう。

In order for me to thoroughly take responsibility as a dancer, it is essential to discern to what extent dance is involved with the human society. The question is probably significant for those who may become interested in dance in the future.

(Tanaka, 2012b, “In Order For Me”)

This chapter reviews and highlights the qualitative methodologies employed in this study. In response to the question, “What cultural and philosophical perspectives were gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka’s Body Weather farm?” the inquiry blends approaches of dance ethnography and practice-based research to unearth somatic and cultural knowledge from BW experiences in Japan and Aotearoa. The two guiding sub-questions considered are: (a) What conceptualisations did I, the researcher, bring to the experience? (b) How does knowledge from the experience in Japan inform my current practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin? The chapter also discusses the challenges inherent in dance research, the limitations of this study, the implications of researching within the Aotearoa bicultural context, and my unique research stance.

Qualitative research is valuable because it assumes that there are multiple truths in the world (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1997). The approach validates and celebrates the subjective and distinctive views people have of the world; it affirms that groups of people and individuals have unique experiences of social contexts

that affect their lives in different ways (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1997). Rather than adhering to the “assumption that the perspectives of powerful people are more valid than those of the powerless” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1997, p. 9), qualitative research seeks to find “the meanings people attach to their lives” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1997, p. 7), regardless of their societal status. This lens believes all perspectives are valid sources for study, including the perspective of an individual dance practitioner such as myself. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (2011) state that qualitative research can be done through conducting interviews, collecting oral history, ethnographic methods, content analysis, unobtrusive methods, case study, a mixed methods approach, or through emerging approaches which draw from artistic tools.

Practice-based research is one such emerging approach that offers ways in which the experienced artist can research through their art-making (Barrett, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Pakes, 2009). Estelle Barrett (2007) demonstrates that practice-based research in the arts is “a new species of research” (p. 1). She says it is “generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to expand frontiers of research” (p.1). The author suggests that by researching through practice, we can find knowledge that would not otherwise be found. Anna Pakes (2009) agrees, and discusses practice-based research in terms of dance-making and choreography. She states that it privileges the experienced dance practitioner’s process, saying, “The experienced artist’s knowledge *how* [emphasis added] would be embodied in her conduct of the creative process” (2009, p. 12). In other words, researching through dance-making generates specific information that can only be found through engaging in the practice itself; the act of dancing brings about understanding that is different from other means of researching dance. I have chosen to draw on this approach for retrospectively examining dance experiences from Japan, and

for examining my emerging Aotearoa practice. The details of the data and analysis are provided later in this chapter.

Coupled with the above-mentioned practice-based approach, I have chosen to utilise research tools from dance ethnography. Dance ethnography aims to understand dance and movement by looking at its meaning as it interfaces with wider socio-cultural contexts (Frosch, 1999; Kaeppler, 2000; Sklar, 2001, 2000). Deidre Sklar notes that dance ethnography “postulate[s] that cultural knowledge is embodied in movement, especially the highly stylized and codified movement we call dance” (as cited in Frosch, 1999, p. 259). It also “attempts to reveal cultures as dynamic processes” and “demonstrate[s] the multidimensional texture of the subject of study” (Frosch, 1999, pp. 259-260). In other words, ethnographic research in dance brings to light the complexities and specifics of research situations, recognizes the way in which dance is deeply embedded within its contextual landscape, and acknowledges how it is implicated in forces of social change.

Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) affirm the flexibility and overlap of qualitative research methodologies, describing the field as “an exciting interdisciplinary landscape” (2011, p. 4). Recent studies in dance research have often been carried out by practitioners who are also researchers, or researchers who also dance (see the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* and *Choreographic Practices* for examples). These studies articulate the importance of writing from an embodied position, rather than from outside of practice (Bacon & Middelw, 2010). Researchers in these fields are melding methodologies in order to accommodate the complexities of research phenomenon, the people involved, and the worlds in which research happens that studies seek to articulate (for example see Legrand & Ravn, 2009; and Ylonen, 2003 for methodology melding in dance research).

I have chosen to draw from practice-based research and dance ethnography in order to generate a strong method that values both the creative process involved in practicing dance, and the detailed context surrounding my encounter with BW in Japan. Both methodologies value the experience of the dancing body as a tool for researching: in practice-based research, dance-making tools such as choreography, performance, somatic understanding, and improvisation are ways of exploring and generating knowledge through the act of dancing (Pakes, 2003, 2009; Markula, 2006; Ylonen, 2003). In dance ethnography, dancing is a form of participant-observation, where performance and dance-learning situations are informed by looking to wider social and cultural knowledge-systems (Frosch, 1999; Sklar, 2000; Kaeppler, 2000; Ylonen, 2003). However, this study draws from these methodological lenses and their tools rather than strictly being either dance ethnography or practice-based research.

Both methodologies accommodate the somatic nature of this investigation which utilises a first-person experience of the body. For example, Sklar (2000) explains that in dance ethnography there is a relatively recent move towards “seek[ing] a deeper understanding of movement itself as a way of knowing, a medium that carries meaning in an immediately felt, somatic mode” (2000, p. 70). She suggests that dance ethnography can describe cultural meanings of dance and the body-politics embedded within it by drawing on subjective and embodied experiences. In addition, dance as a method of inquiry uses the body’s everyday and somatic intelligence (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003) as a means for storing and making sense of information in “an ongoing hermeneutic process that alters interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction” (Ylonen, 2003, p. 565). Researchers who take subjective, embodied positions can therefore deepen understandings of self, others and the world through dancing (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003; Ylonen, 2003).

This study provides an account of BW somatic dance experiences at Tanaka's farm from my own subjective practitioner-researcher perspective. In addition, I reflect on how these experiences inform my current dance-making practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin. The following section articulates the details of the research context in these two distinct situations: Japan and Aotearoa.

### **Dancing and Memoires: The Research Context and Data Collected**

From May 2006 to September 2007 I lived, worked, and studied dance in Japan. However, the bulk of this study focuses specifically on my time at Min Tanaka's BW farm at his *Body and Environment* workshop. The dates for this event were July 16 to August 31 (six weeks) in 2007. The primary data collected for this part of the research was retrospectively carried out through reflecting on my participation and experience at Tanaka's farm. This information has been translated into "somatic memoires", which depict dance experiences from my first-person embodied perspective. They highlight proprioceptive, sensory, and kinaesthetic experience, as well as cognitive and emotional reflections. These recollected memoires are of daily life on the farm, movement training, and performance presentation. The data draws on personal insight from informal discussions with Tanaka and others at the farm, documentation from my time at the farm, and embodied knowledge of the practice.

My ongoing dance practice in Aotearoa/NZ revisits and develops knowledge gained from Tanaka's workshop. This practice has taken the form of further BW training, studio and outdoor practice, solo and group explorations with local Ōtepoti/Dunedin dancers, and performance. The most significant events for establishing and expanding my insights were attending Frank Van de Ven and Peter Snow's BW workshop (February 2012, Auckland); the choreographic process and performance of two dance works "*sky, bird, earth, and tree speak*" (a work-in-progress, February, 2013), and "*Breathing Cold*

*Air: Fragile Skins*” (March, 2013); and my short dance-film “*Aramoana: Pathway to the sea*” (2012). This practical exploration has contributed to the study by triggering embodied memories, deepening understandings of BW philosophy and practice, and developing my own choreographic voice. For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to examine only the above-mentioned dance-film based at Aramoana as part of the data set. This exploration in Aramoana looks at elements of that particular landscape through improvisational and somatic dancing that is informed by Tanaka’s work.

Examining my experiences of Tanaka’s workshop retrospectively has been difficult, since at the time I was unaware that I might use them for future study. Due to that aspect of the study I have drawn heavily on memory, activating past experience through practicing (as mentioned above) and through documentation from my time there. Ness (2001) suggests that memories are the basis of ethnography, and we can access these memories through triggers such as ethnographic field notes. Field notes are representations of our experiences, written in order to keep “memories from dying” (2001, p. 67), rather than fully illustrating memories or taking their place (Ness, 2001). In my case, there are no ethnographic field notes, but there are documents which I have used to spark memories in the same way. These consist of written personal communication, photographs, journal notes, and looking at the events on either side of the BW workshop. In addition, reflecting with dance colleagues and others who studied at the farm, and revisiting Tanaka’s tasks in Ōtepoti/Dunedin has aided the access of somatic experiences stored in my body since 2007. The following section articulates the analysis processes for writing, interpreting, and analysing the somatic memoirs, and discusses the presentation of this study.



## **Analysis and Interpretation**

In the research approach for this study, I have sought to describe dance experiences, interpret meaning from these experiences, and abstract meaning in order to produce tenets for future practice (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This could be articulated as an “interpretive-descriptive” model for analysis that also considers theory (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 122). Analysis in qualitative study such as this does not seek to prove hypotheses, but rather allows meaning to emerge from within research phenomena (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

In the written autobiographical somatic memoirs I draw on the ethnographic analytical tool used for participant research known as “thick description” (Ponterotto, 2006). The term “thick description” was first coined by Clifford Geertz (1973), but he borrowed from Gilbert Ryle’s 1949 and 1971 work (Ponterotto, 2006). Thick description “involves accurately describing and interpreting social actions within the appropriate context in which the social action took place” (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542). It is a tool to describe actual events and also interpret the meaning behind events without severing them from their wider context (Ponterotto, 2006). Thick description therefore conveys “emotionality and self-feelings” (Denzin in Ponterotto, p. 540), such as thoughts, feelings, voices, and relationships with others to create a rich, interpretive description which readers can identify strongly with (Ponterotto, 2006). The idea is that the reader will have “the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience the events being described” (Denzin as cited in Ponterotto, pp. 542-543). The memoirs in this study thereby seek to engage the reader in the integrity, meaning, and importance of the events and the research phenomena through the use of this layered tool (Ponterotto, 2006).

Memory is subjective and shapes our perspectives of events, yet the body can be a storehouse for past experiences. Mary Beth Cancienne and Celeste Snowber (2003) note

that “deep listening to life” (2003, p. 248) can be used as a method for thinking, feeling, and reflecting on experience from a somatic standpoint. Movement, breath, voice, rhythm, and emotion are important embodying dance in writing (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003). The somatic and personal accounts of dance experiences in this study attempt to connect to everyday understandings of the body (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003), and illuminate somatic and cultural knowledge gained from my experience of Tanaka’s farm.

Re-reading, editing, and re-articulating interpretations has been a cyclical and “dialectic” process, meaning that analysis has been a development of interpretation that happened throughout the research process (Agar as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 301). This interwoven conversation between data collecting and analysis is reflected in the structure of chapter four, where the “data” and the analysis, or discussion have been integrated within the same chapter. Delving deeper into the memoirs has enabled me to see the experiences in multiple ways, thanks to peer and supervisory feedback that encouraged me to look deeper and sharpen my analysis. Two research themes emerged from the analysis process: *Engaging with Nature* and *Searching for Somatic Fluency*. These interwoven themes emerged from my study of BW as a cultural and philosophical practice under Min Tanaka’s guidance. They are but one system for organising the data, and a way of presenting the information in a manner that translates into a readable, understandable body of knowledge (Denzin as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The need for analysing dance in culturally sensitive ways is made clear in Sklar’s (2001) five concerns. She states: (a) movement knowledge is also cultural knowledge; (b) dance is conceptual and emotional, not just kinaesthetic; (c) movement knowledge is connected to other cultural knowledge-forms; (d) researchers need to look beyond movement to find its meaning; and (e) “Movement is always an immediate corporeal experience” (2001, p. 31). These foundation principles suggest that drawing from

different knowledge sources and perspectives will enable a fuller picture of dance phenomena. Adrienne Kaeppler (2000) agrees that dance research needs to encompass the breadth of people's lives. Additionally, she notes that culturally appropriate ethical research practices for dance ethnography entail research processes that build on epistemologies from within a dance context rather than imposed from outside (Kaeppler, 2000).

Sklar and Kaeppler's arguments, stated above, have directed deliberate analysis choices for this study. In order to respect Tanaka and his philosophy where possible, I have looked to his own words and ideas for elucidating BW's intention (Tanaka, 2002, 2006, 2012). In addition, I have drawn from intensive BW researcher Peter Snow's doctoral dissertation, *Imaging the in-between: Training becomes performance in Body Weather practice in Australia* (2002). Tanaka's, Snow's and other BW literature (Cardone, 2002; Grant & de Quincey, 2006; Taylor, 2010), have balanced my own experiences with conceptual, philosophical, and practitioner-based insights. In addition, I have looked to Japanese contemporary philosophy (Kasulis, 1987; Nagatomo, 1993; Yuasa, 1987), and sought relevant dance-scholars with extensive knowledge of the Japanese social and dance contexts for my analysis (Crump, 2006; Fraleigh, 2010; Hahn, 2007; Hamera, 1990; Stein, 2001). Choosing to draw from those who deeply understand aspects of BW and its original context directed my analytical understandings.

My analysis has been cross-checked with supervisor Dr Ojeya Cruz Banks and dance colleague Sofia Kalogeropoulou to ensure academic rigour and to gain valuable expert insight. In addition, the dissemination of preliminary research findings helped greatly in gaining insight into the nature of the study. Presentations at the Contemporary Ethnography Across the Disciplines (CEAD) Hui at Waikato University (November, 2012), and at the Shin Somatics Symposium/Conference at the University of Otago

(February, 2013), allowed practice for me in articulating early ideas and enabled me to receive valuable feedback. This cross-checking was important for informing the development of the research and facilitated the analysis process.

Presentation of the findings for this study is in the form of this written document, accompanied by a DVD of the Aramoana dance-film. This edited footage sits against the final somatic memoir in chapter four, which as previously mentioned describes my somatic experience of dancing at the Aramoana mole. The presentation of information in non-traditionalist creative ways is recognised by Leavy, who discusses Arts-Based Research and says, “Emerging tools adapt the tenets of creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined” (as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 357). Artistic presentations have the potential to disseminate knowledge to wider audiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Markula, 2011; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003). Disciplines such as dance can be used as tools to present research outcomes by embodying alternative forms of knowledge such as the kinaesthetic and poetic that might not otherwise be accessed (see Markula, 2006). The dance-film attached is therefore a creative presentation of knowledge to supplement and support the written text; it is a snippet of creative practice.

The following section discusses cultural sensitivity, the ethical considerations for research in Aotearoa, and my position in the research.

### **Cultural Sensitivity for Researching in Aotearoa**

From a sociological perspective, Martin Tolich (2002) notes that Pākehā student researchers often face “Pākehā paralysis” when faced with researching Māori. His discussion reveals the need for research to fulfil Treaty of Waitangi obligations, and recommends that Pākehā student researchers address this and act in culturally sensitive ways when engaging with Māori. His advice reflects on incidences where misconduct

and misunderstanding Māori values in Pākehā research has happened historically. For example, past studies have analysed Māori inappropriately through Western lenses (Tolich, 2002). Jahnke and Taiapa advise that anyone researching Māori must have an “in-depth understanding of Māori values, attitudes and mores necessary for a successful outcome, as is the probability of an understanding and willingness to abide by a Māori system of ethics and accountability” (as cited in Tolich, 2002, p. 170). Tolich offers ways in which to approach research for Pākehā in order to respect Māori. He suggests having an awareness of one’s own cultural heritage, of one’s agendas and research intentions, and states that being sensitive to cultural differences is crucial (Tolich, 2002). For myself as a Pākehā researcher it is therefore appropriate to make transparent the intentions of this research. Although this study does not use Māori research participants, it does deal with Māori perspectives and therefore appropriate care is necessary.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) discusses indigenous perspectives to research and the challenges involved, and advocates for new perspectives in research. She provides hope towards achieving indigenous values in research contexts, and discusses the difference between a colonial approach “to know and define the Other”, and a native view about research: the desire to be “self-defining and self-naming” (2005, p. 86). She suggests that the native perspective seeks freedom, an escaping of definition, and the space for growth and change. The native research paradigm also seeks to turn existing structures in research around to “privilege indigenous knowledges, voices, experiences, reflections, and analyses of their social, material and spiritual conditions” (Rigney as cited in Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 87). She points out that to de-colonize research, one must not only re-shape existing structures such as qualitative research methodologies, but must actually go to the core of the underlying “institution of research” (2005, p. 88).

In light of the above considerations and as part of the requirements for undertaking research at the University of Otago, I have communicated with the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee for this study. On consideration of my study, they noted that the research was “of interest and importance” (consultation letter, 17 July, 2012). However, the committee also pointed out that engaging in dialogue *prior* to the filming of “Aramoana: Pathway to the Sea”, rather than *after* the filming was the normal and respectful procedure. Their point brought home to me the importance of building relationships before acting, and of not rushing into action without taking proper care. The committee requested a report of the research findings and recommended providing a copy to Te Rūnunga o Ōtākou, the southernmost of the three Ngāi Tahu tribal councils in the region of Otago (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 2010).

Dr Anne-Marie Jackson, University of Otago Physical Education academic staff member, also facilitated my awareness of cultural sensitivity toward Māori. She encouraged me in my research journey towards engaging in Māori perspectives, pointing me to the writings of Rev. Māori Marsden and his significant book *The Woven Universe* (2003). His work is drawn upon for the analysis of the Aramoana section in chapter four.

**Research position.** As a Pākehā student researcher, I have personally experienced the challenges that Tolich addresses above. However, I am using this project to move beyond these fears and engage with the Aotearoa bicultural heritage and with Māori knowledge, in order to deepen my relationship to my homeland and locate new viewpoints for dancing. Learning my *mihimihi* (introductory speech) with the help of Frank Edwards of the University of Otago’s *Te Huka Mātauraka* (Māori Centre) was one step on this journey. *Mihimihi* “involve individuals standing to introduce themselves by sharing their whakapapa (genealogy, ancestral ties) and other relevant information. It is important for Māori to know and to share their whakapapa - to know one’s whakapapa is

to know one's identity" (Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori/The Māori Language Commission). Although I am not Māori, through the process of learning about my father's family migrating from England to Australia and both my parents moving from



*Figure 2.* Cleaning the grit from my teeth after dancing in the dirt. Hakushu, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan, 2007. Photo: Dave Hall

Australia to New Zealand, I gained a deeper awareness and stronger connection with my ancestry. I considered the places and landmarks (mountain, river, and ocean) with which I affiliate from my parents' hometown and in my birthplace, Ōtepoti/Dunedin. This history informs who I am and learning about it has enabled me to better connect to my own identity and my relationship with Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Using somatic and autobiographical data is one way of taking an indigenous approach to research, as Tuhiwai Smith suggested in the above discussion. Instead of

attempting to be an objective researcher examining a subject outside of my own experience, I prefer to examine my subjectivity and employ the insights gained from this lens to better understand my own dance practice. My own embodied experiences are therefore the subject for this research, in order to deeper understand the social and cultural weight embedded within them. Other ways this study resonates with the native approach is by allowing the research themes to emerge from within the research process in an organic manner, and by engaging with indigenous scholarship.

Coe & Strachan (2002) importantly point out, “positivist research suggests that social reality is objectively constructed and that there is one “true” reality that can be discovered by the researcher standing back from, and being uninvolved with, those being researched” (2002, p. 502). However, qualitative researchers see this to be untrue, and instead acknowledge multiple truths and perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1997). Coe and Strachan (2002) advocate new meaning and knowledge through and with the body, rather than “colonising” the body and its knowledge systems by enforcing a universal truth. They suggest that since the body is fundamental to our identity and sense of self, as dance-researchers we need to be particularly careful not to re-instantiate unhelpful paradigms. This study employs an approach that looks critically at potential biases, roles and intentions of the research.

As a dancer, I know that dance knowledge is a transient and shared form of knowledge; as Pakes (2003) points out, it is impossible to determine ownership over embodied, kinaesthetic knowledge. Dance is therefore fluid in my body, since I pick up knowledge from teachers, collaborators, colleagues, and students which continually transform my understanding of dance and my relationship with my body and movement. In this way, personal dance experiences and cultural identities provide a lens through which we view the world. It is important to acknowledge these lenses since they shape



our seeing. They also construct the worlds that we research (Ylonen, 2003). Ultimately, the impetus for this study is about deepening and refining my own somatic, embodied sensibilities and for examining my fluid relationship with the landscapes and environments I encounter. However, this study has not come without challenges and limitations.

### **The Challenges for Dance Research**

From a feminist standpoint, Brown (1997) notes that dance research has been traditionally excluded in “androcentric constructions of ‘proper’ intellectual activity” (1997, p. 132). She addresses issues of authority in the academic world, and advocates for the intrinsic and unique knowledge found through dance research. Importantly, she reminds us that dance is of the body, when traditionally the mind has been central in research paradigms (Brown, 1997). Counter to such traditional paradigms, this study, like many recent dance studies, focuses on the body as a positive, fertile site for knowledge-gathering and knowledge-synthesising.

Phenomenology is important for dance research since it values the first person voice and provides a means to articulate “the lived body” (Fraleigh, 2000, p. 55). Fraleigh points out “the validation of personal and shared experiences” (2000, p. 55) and “dancing as a way of knowing” (2000, p. 55) for imperative phenomenological development. Karen Barbour (2005) further exemplifies the phenomenological approach for dance research, advocating for the inclusion of dancers’ voices; dancing itself as method; narrative, poetic, written descriptions of lived experience; and the questioning of dominant Western paradigms (Barbour, 2005).

This study does not explicitly use a phenomenological lens, but both Fraleigh and Barbour’s arguments are applicable because of the autobiographical, poetic, and narrative nature of the forthcoming somatic memoirs, as well as the use of dancing as a tool for

data collection. In this sense this study challenges traditional research methods, and unsurprisingly, has come across hurdles in the academic setting. The fundamental fact that the bulk of the study is in written form has posed many questions for me, since dance is kinaesthetic and experiential by nature.

Indeed, Dorothy Coe and Jane Strachan (2002) note that “writing dance” (2002, p. 497) is not easy since it involves expressing bodily or somatic particularities of movement experiences in words. Coe asks, “How to explain in academic writing, these artistic experiences?” (Coe & Strachan, 2002, p. 499). The authors explain that dance or movement “writing” is a way of both presenting and in fact analysing data, because researchers must translate what was found in the dance data in order for it to be read by academics not involved in the research process.

In agreement with the above authors, I have discovered that transforming dance experiences into the academic parameters of the written page is not straightforward. It is a creative process in itself. For example, word choice, rhythm of prose, and the imagery used needed careful selection in order to accurately embody the essence of an experience. In addition, due to the word limit, only five memoirs from the BW farm have been analysed. The memoirs are all dance experiences, although somatic understandings were also largely informed by farm work and daily life. However, I have included a description of the farm environment and daily living routine in order to signal how this broader context informed dance insights. The choice of the five memoirs has therefore determined the data set and research outcomes. In addition, the format of the memoirs determined and limited the information presented. For example, often exercises were practiced repetitively rather than once, and over time memory has melded individual instances together meaning that memoirs may depict fragments of more than one event.

It is for these reasons that I struggled with presenting the memoirs as singular and linear events. They are therefore reconstructed accounts and reflect my own bias.

The six week workshop was short and I acknowledge that longer study would deepen my understanding of BW. On-site journal-writing, additional visits to the farm, further training, and communication with Tanaka or other dancers would have aided my understanding of BW and this study. In addition, instructions were translated into English since the majority of workshop participants, including myself, did not speak fluent Japanese. This meant that I would not have gained the same insight into BW's philosophical and cultural underpinnings as a Japanese speaker or someone more familiar with the cultural context. However, I still feel that I gained valuable knowledge from the workshop, which was intensive and immersive. This research process has enabled me to deepen these understandings, especially through examining documents such as other practitioner's accounts of BW and interviews with Tanaka. Likewise movement exploration since has enabled the development of my own BW transplantation.

In the following chapter I present the data for this study. I portray the BW farm as the context for research in Japan, and offer a selection of reconstructed dance experiences from Min Tanaka's *Body and Environment* workshop in 2007. Lastly, the chapter discusses my translation of BW through current Ōtepoti/Dunedin-based practice, and questions how BW might relate to Māori perspectives of land and identity.

## Chapter Four: Tanaka's *Body and Environment* Workshop

白州へ来て、老人たちが立ち止まってじーっと田んぼを見て いる姿とかを美しいとおもってしまう人間だから、それを自分が実践する。自分が感動したものを自分のものにするわけです。

I moved here, to this rural village of Hakushu. I find beautiful those old people when they are just looking at the rice paddy doing nothing. I want to be like that. If I am moved by something, I want to be the same as that. (Tanaka, 2012b, “I Moved Here”)



Figure 3. The main farmhouse at the Body Weather farm (rear view). Hakushu, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan. August, 2007. Photo: Miriam Marler

Tanaka's words above reveal his keen interest in how human beings relate to their landscapes. He suggests that the rural environment has the potential to affect our consciousness and somatic embodiment in profound ways. This chapter examines my reflective experiences at the Body Weather farm guided by Tanaka, in order to deepen understanding of his work and elicit tenets for transplantation in Aotearoa/NZ.

Hakushu village is about two hours by train north-west of Tokyo, my time there was during the six-week *Body and Environment* workshop, from July 16 to August 31, 2007. As explained in the previous chapter, I present dance recollections, or somatic memoirs, that draw from memory, documentation of my time there, and from ongoing dance practice that revisits Tanaka's work. The somatic memoirs are a first-person practitioner perspective; they are detailed descriptions of embodied knowledge. A search for a new approach to dance is inherent within the memoirs, and they highlight a tension between my prior assumptions about dance and the new perspective introduced to me at the farm. It is important to note that these experiences are a small glimpse of my time at the farm and do not provide a full account of my experience there. Similarly, I do not seek to compile a list of BW "exercises". It is important to remember that because I rely heavily on memory, the accounts are reconstructed to provide a logical and rich narrative.

The first section of this chapter begins with a reflection of the farm: the living quarters, sites for dance, and the daily routine. This is important information because Tanaka's dance philosophy is deeply interwoven with the landscape and everyday living. Following, is an articulation of Tanaka's BW worldview. Then I present five different dance experiences from the workshop that include training, somatic exploration, collaborative work, and performance. They are times when my notions of dance were challenged and when the possibility for new understanding was potent. Based on these somatic memoirs I have chosen to focus on the following two themes: (a) Engaging with Nature, and (b) Searching for Somatic Fluency. The last section examines how my BW practice translates into the Aotearoa/New Zealand context by applying the principles of BW at the Aramoana mole in my Ōtepoti/Dunedin hometown. The Aramoana exploration has been documented in the attached DVD for viewing. The dance experiences analysed are indicative of new values for conceptualising and practicing

dance in terms of my own practice. The final discussion articulates a new epistemology for dance that is grounded in Japanese BW but it also makes links to Aotearoa's ecological and somatic possibilities. Through the interpretation and analysis of my somatic memoirs, this chapter explores the research question: What cultural and philosophical perspectives were gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka's Body Weather farm? The two guiding sub-questions were: (a) what conceptualisation did I, the researcher, bring to the experience? (b) How does knowledge from the experience in Japan inform my current practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin?

### **The Body Weather Farm**

I had been studying and living in Tokyo for almost 13 months before sending away an application for Tanaka's workshop in May, 2007. I was delighted to find I was successful, and made plans with a NZ friend to travel from Tokyo to the farm in the rural village of Hakushu. It took us a couple of hours by local train. When we arrived, we were picked up from the Yokote station by resident farmer Keishi in his truck. I had the sense that he knew the area well as he drove us through the streets to the main farmhouse. The village was huddled in a valley surrounded by breath-taking forested mountains. Bright green rice paddies traversed the lower hillsides, and the roads were quiet and meandering, bordered with deep gutters that guided the irrigation system in a constant chatter of water.

When we met with Min Tanaka, he spoke to us in English and Japanese. Bilingual workshop members helped with translation throughout the six weeks, as most of the participants including myself were not fluent in Japanese. We were told that the land where we were to live and work had been borrowed from local farmers who would rather have it used than leave it stagnant. Farming was now less popular than it had been and there was plenty of unused land in the country. During my stay I noticed that

harvests were often exchanged with farmers as gifts; a portion of the vegetables would be put aside for them, and on one memorable occasion we were given some horse meat that was prepared raw like sashimi and surprisingly delicious. Not owning the land is “a kind of social movement”, Tanaka says (2006, “You Started A Farm”, para. 1). He explains, “It is an important prerequisite that we don’t possess. We don’t want to” (2006, “You Started A Farm”, para. 1). His words suggest that not owning the land is an alternative to contemporary mainstream consumer culture, a way of strengthening community, and respecting the landscape.

The BW community consisted of resident farmers/dancers, visitors, and volunteers. Workshop members had travelled from the Netherlands, Philippines, India, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Russia, Canada, the USA, Australia, other parts of Japan, and three of us were from Aotearoa/NZ. During my stay, we cultivated crops of zucchini, cucumber, tomatoes, potatoes, beans, tea, mushrooms, corn, and rice which we sold at the local markets, exchanged with other farmers, and ate ourselves. Gardens were scattered on different plots of land throughout the village, and there were animals such as goats, chickens, and a donkey kept on the farm.

At the farm, I lived a communal lifestyle away from the city with limited outside communication. The style of living was unfamiliar due to my urban NZ upbringing, and it invoked strong emotions in myself and in others over the weeks, from frustration and loneliness to elation and camaraderie. However, we learnt about one another’s characters quickly and I became aware of the importance of balancing the needs of the group with my own. We worked together during meal preparation, construction work, vegetable handling, and often in dance exercises; I had to find ways of negotiating and adapting my habits with those of the group.

The main farmhouse was where we ate and socialised. Daily living was outdoors as much as indoors. The outdoor area at the front was where we packed vegetables in preparation for taking to local markets, where we washed clothes, stored bicycles and vehicles, showered, and toileted. The toilets were composting, traditional-style toilets requiring you to squat. The thin doors meant not much separated you from the environment outside. At the rear of the building, there was a large communal outdoor eating and cooking area with long wooden tables for preparing food and eating. Inside it was dark and cool. The kitchen was jam-packed full of food, cooking implements, and pots and pans. There were office-like rooms nearby that I saw little of. The large upstairs loft was sunny, piled with futon mattresses, and used for communal sleeping. However, there was not enough space for everyone so many of us slept in houses throughout the village.

The daily routine consisted of early rising to begin work at around 5.30am; cultivating, harvesting, and packaging produce for sale at the local markets; breakfast; more work; and dancing after lunch. Over time, I became responsible for the wellbeing of the cucumber plants and learnt how to care for them, harvest crops, and plant new seedlings. Other work consisted of constructing and preparing performance sites, building paths, decorating and cleaning for the upcoming Hakushu Art Festival which was in conjunction with the BW farm,<sup>6</sup> and tending to the animals.

Meals were simple, modest, mostly vegetarian, and in my opinion utterly delicious. We mostly ate miso soup, steamed rice, vegetable dishes, eggs, and very

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<sup>6</sup> This event drew together a community of national and international artists, university students, families and children, volunteers, critics, and a documentary filmmaker to the area. The vibrant festival consisted of performances, workshops, presentations, and community events that happened on the BW farm, at sites through Hakushu village, and in the surrounding environs.



occasionally fish or meat; meals were prepared and eaten communally. In the afternoons, we had hours of dance training until evening when we walked back to the main farmhouse, stimulated and exhausted. There we ate, relaxed, and discussed the day. Once or twice Tanaka showed us some of his old films where we saw documentation of the water well he had dug using only a simple pulley-system to haul the earth up out of its deep hole. We also saw old footage of MB sessions, and watched his recent documentary about travelling and exploring Indonesia through dance. At other times there was impromptu storytelling, do-it-yourself karaoke, festivities, and sake-drinking.

Dancing happened in the dirt field, in the river, navigating the orchard, at Tanaka's mountain-residence, in the glasshouse, and treading the hot village streets. However, mostly the training took place at the "forest stage", a handmade series of two or three sturdy wooden platforms a metre or so from the ground. The stage was sheltered from the sun by the surrounding tall trees, which occasionally came up through purpose-built holes in the floor. Dancing entailed negotiating these trunks and traversing the platforms of varied levels. On fine days, cicadas droned tirelessly from the branches above us, and when it rained a canvas was unfurled and attached to the trees opposite, acting as a roll-out roof. Other performance sites included a "water stage", an "earth stage", and an "underground cinema" dug into the clay.

The BW farm immersed me in the landscape and community in a way that I became saturated with experience. I learnt to focus deeply and to work hard, and by the time I left, I felt my thinking and dancing had been profoundly shifted.

### **An Articulation of a Body Weather Worldview**

The upcoming somatic memoirs of dance experiences demonstrate Tanaka's dance philosophy. Unlike many theatrical dance traditions, his dance is not about mastering and executing technique, but about understanding self and body in relation to

the rural lifestyle and landscape, and negotiating ordinary life. As signalled above, dance at the BW farm is not separate from everyday life; it is a whole way of life. The philosophy speaks of the importance of grounding dance in daily living to experience one's corporeality. Tanaka's research is about living with the land, working with it, and dancing or embodying it.

Tanaka inherently values self-directed dance explorations, working together communally or in groups, has a deep respect for nature, and does not believe in separating dance training and performance with everyday living. He led us into situations for exploring our own reasons for dance through improvisational tasks and provocations for guiding work from a somatic stance. I found this allowed me to explore my own meanings for dance, rather than following prescribed objectives or being immersed in competitiveness. However, I sometimes felt confused or unsure of how to dance because of this. Tanaka would often tell us to follow our own interests, or challenged us to do anything we liked. These provocations confronted me to think more broadly about what dance could be beyond theatrical performance or mastery of technique, to trust my own instincts, and to allow the learning process to unfold of its own accord. Belgian dancer Alissa Cardone's (2002) experience of the BW farm illustrates this clearly too:

On Body Weather Farm no one, not even Min [Tanaka] as workshop leader, told me what I should or shouldn't feel in the work. Exercises were meant to be individually interpreted. Min was more inclined to say things like, "There is no limit here. You have a big chance to feel. . . . It is up to you to find out what the work is." (2002, p. 16)

Both Cardone's experience and my own signal how Tanaka values interpretation of practice in multiple ways and its development by individuals.

In fact, Tanaka (2012b) has stated: “Dance emerges in the time and place, and it is something one pursues without an end. It escapes as soon as you define it in definite words” (“Dance Emerges In The Time”). He suggests that dance cannot and should not be classified or seen as a fixed entity, because it is an emergent organic process. This may be the reason why he did not explain the objectives of many exercises during the workshop. Instead, he would leave tasks open-ended, and discuss philosophical ideas for us to reflect upon or interpret on our own. His facilitation was about helping us to become more aware of our own limitations for conceptualising dance, and to steer us towards sensing and feeling new approaches. For me, his method cultivated deep listening to my soma, refining self-awareness, and building a sense of autonomy in dance. These qualities are revealed in the somatic memoirs that follow. The two recurring themes that emerged from the memoirs are *Engaging with Nature* and *Searching for Somatic Fluency*.

### **Engaging with Nature**

Encounters with the natural world were integral to my experience at the BW farm. As stated above, dance practice and lifestyle were in close proximity with the outdoor elements and natural landscape. The approach drew my attention to the diverse environments around, such as the cold turbulent river we floated on and fought against, the solid dry dirt paddock we leaped and rolled on, the cool shadowy forest where we felled logs, and the blinding hot rice paddy where we sang and weeded that left my legs aching and lower back blistered. These situations challenged me greatly, but as I became more accustomed to working outdoors I felt myself quieten and relax, and I began to appreciate what the landscape might offer me.

Tanaka alludes to his relationship with nature in an interview with Belgian dancer Petra Vermeersch in 2000. Nature is “deeper than the human”, he states, and “if you can

see the beautiful sky, rather than my own dance, it's my big pleasure" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 25). Through these words, we can see that for Tanaka nature is in fact more important than himself or his choreography. Dancing is therefore about bringing attention to nature, and about drawing from it for its somatic movement potentials. Tanaka's great respect for nature suggests that through observing and engaging with it, people may learn a great deal. The following two somatic memoirs are instances when he led us towards understanding the importance of the natural environment for the body and dance.

**Buried sensations.** The task was to dig a large hole and totally bury each participant under the soil, one by one. I felt excited and a little anxious, and wondered how we would negotiate breathing. Tanaka stressed the importance of standing back to allow the person underground some time "alone", in order for them to experience a contemplative state without being disturbed. We formed groups of about five or six, and each group was given some tools and an area where we could begin digging.

*We were gathered together in a shady spot under some trees, not far from the forest stage. The ground felt spongy underfoot and we got to work digging the hole. At first it was hard work: there weren't enough tools for everyone, so whenever we grew tired we took a rest, passing our tool on to someone else. I enjoyed the challenge, and soon began to feel the muscles in my arms and shoulders heating up and sweat forming on my skin. My legs and back heaved under the strain each time my shovel dived into the ground and brought up heavy earth. Again and again we repeated this action rhythmically, until slowly it became more familiar, seeping into joints and flesh. My body grew supple and wet, there was a feeling of relaxation from the hard work, and I started to feel satisfied. We stopped when the hole was deep enough and one volunteer and clambered into the hole. The soil was soft and cold in our hands as we piled it up and over them. Carefully, we covered their head with a bucket so they could breathe and once*

*their whole body was underground, we quietly moved a few meters away to allow them some quiet time. I tried to imagine what that person might be experiencing. After a few minutes we came back and uncovered them. They were eager to get out and told us that they had almost run out of air. When Tanaka's came by he suggested that next time the buried person should keep a few fingers poking out to wiggle in case they needed air in a hurry. That way we could spring to action and dig them out safely.*

*Each person had a turn being buried, and we each approached the task slightly differently from one another. When it was my turn, I told the group that I'd like to keep my nose and mouth exposed to the surface rather than run out of air. I discarded my outer clothes and carefully stepped into the earth. Lowering down, I folded myself into the hollow. My entire back surface came into contact with the cool soil, imprinting and compressing it with the contours of my body. Rich earthy aromas filled my nostrils and cold clumps of soil tickled my neck and hair as I lay in the ground. People began covering me and I felt the cold weight bearing down on my arms, chest, stomach and legs as the soil piled up on me. When they got to my face they put a cloth around my ears and I felt some little crumbs of dirt fall into my ear passages and the cool texture envelop my forehead, eye sockets, and the sides of my face. My eyelids grew dark and weighted and only the area around my nose and mouth was left at the surface, uncovered.*

*As the group retreated I could hear their footsteps growing quieter, and I began to focus on the feeling of my body more intensely. The weight of the soil on top of me felt cool and very heavy in places. Each inhale required a greater effort than usual to draw in air; breathing became slower and deeper. However, I felt peaceful and safe; it was very quiet and still under there. My body lapped up the rare sensation, it was a chance to just experience without having the pressure of achieve anything. I felt no tension in my face or neck, and my thoughts quietened. Soon, I began to hear tiny scraping sounds*

*somewhere near my ears. I imagined minuscule insects navigating the underground terrain: “scratch-scratch, scrabble-scratch, scrabble-scrabble-scrabble”. I wondered what they might look like and what their life might be like. My breathing ebbed and flowed like the tide and I felt like I could stay buried there for a long time, invisible to the world above.*

*The group started coming back. I could hear the sound of their feet on the ground reverberating through the earth. “Time’s up already”, I thought, disappointed. Soon, the soil began moving above me and I felt the weight lessening on my chest. Arms delved under and helped me out of the thick cool substance, the soil fell away from my body, and behind me the hole swallowed up as I rose. Climbing out of the soil and into the sunlight I was once again at the surface. I peered down at my arms and noticed my skin was brown and crumbly with dirt. Blinking in the sunlight, I felt as if I had awakened from a deep sleep. I felt different from when I’d entered: more at home in my body, more peaceful and rejuvenated, more grounded.*

In the above memoire, I moved beyond everyday consciousness where thoughts, worries, and expectations were no longer prominent and entered into a less familiar, sensual experience of my body. Not having sight was important for heightening the other senses (Tanaka, 2002), and facilitated a shift in my awareness from the visual world to tactile, aural, and olfactory experiences. I became aware of the tiny scraping sounds, the sensation of the texture, weight, smell, and temperature of the soil, and the gentle movements caused by breathing. The simplicity of the exercise and the use of stillness meant I did not feel I had to achieve anything other than sensing and feeling, which allowed me to relax without expectation. It was an experiential exercise for listening to soma and earth, which resulted in feeling profoundly rested and rejuvenated.

As chapter two discusses, stillness between movements in dance can be conceptualised as the Japanese notion *ma*, a kind of liminal space which is full of potential. This potentiality is further described by Tomie Hahn (2007) a Nihon buyo (classical Japanese dance) scholar and practitioner. She says, “Aspects of ‘negative’ space and time are not believed to be empty, but are considered to be expansive and full of energy” (2007, p. 53). She continues, “Artists employ *ma* as a vehicle to arouse a contemplative state, an awareness of expansive space and time” (2007, p. 53). Hahn’s



Figure 4. Buried under the soil during an exercise at the Body Weather farm. July, 2007. Photo: Dave Hall

words suggest that *ma* can be employed in the body for altering dancers’ experience of time and space, allowing contemplation and the unknown to arise. Being buried, my body was at rest between movements, and lying in a liminal place beneath the surface of the earth.

Furthermore, as seen in chapter two Batson & Schwartz (2007) note that subtle changes within the body come to the fore of one's attention when the motor nervous system makes way for active observation of the body in rest. These authors point out that somatic movement practices such as Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement (ATM), Alexander Technique, and Body-Mind Centering (BMC) all balance rest with activity. They note that "pausing relieves the nervous system from its organisational processing in order to integrate (neurologically) new details of a person's self-image into the pattern of action" (Batson & Schwartz, 2007, p. 50). In other words, rest allows recalibration to occur between movement executions and can facilitate somatic awareness that informs future activity. My experience of calm, feeling "grounded", and a sense of renewal may have been partly due to having the space to rest in an alert state where subtle kinaesthetic and proprioceptive activity could be felt in my body. Actively resting can therefore be used to cultivate self-awareness and bring about a kind of "deeper embodiment" (Batson & Schwartz, 2007, p. 50), similar to my feeling of rejuvenation, peace, or being more "at home" in my body.

The palpable experience of being buried in the heavy, cold, organic soil enabled me to take note and sense my self as part of something larger. My awareness was drawn to the nature of my soma as an organism that is alive and responsive to its environment (East, 2011). Alison East (2011), drawing from Naess as well as Deleuze and Guattari, describes "a merging body, an open circuit with fluid boundaries. . . . [that] can evolve and transform; it can merge with the landscape" (2011, p.79). Her suggestion that the body or self is not static but is permeable and changes according to environment validates my experience. Experiencing my self widen to become permeable with the surrounding landscape was therefore facilitated by being buried under the earth. This principle is fundamental to the ontology of BW practice too. Snow articulates how BW



“institute[s] change as a methodological and ontological principle” (2002, p. 76), suggesting that it deems bodies and their “weather” or environments to be in perpetual change.

**Exploring terrain, deepening senses.** Tanaka led other contemplative practices such as taking blind walks outdoors. In this second example, I explored the orchard blindfolded, while my partner actively watched and followed to ensure my safety. Tanaka once more suggested we keep a respectful distance from our partner in order to experience the landscape in an alone-space, and to avoid distraction. He described this as being synonymous with the feeling of having no-one else around.

*We were to work not far from the forest stage again, this time beneath the medium-sized trees in the orchard. The ground was covered in lush green grass and looking around I became aware of the possible obstacles in the area: trees, other people, wooden benches, and other objects. My partner covered my eyes with a blindfold and secured it tightly behind my head. He grasped my shoulders firmly and turned me around several times so that I lost my sense of direction. After stopping, the momentum lurched in my stomach for a while before settling. I could no longer remember which direction I was facing. As I began walking, I noticed how tough it was to balance on one leg, so I moved slowly. Moving blind felt uneasy in my body, I felt stiff and bulky as if wearing an over-sized padded suit. Feeling awkward and self-conscious, I realised I needed to relax and sense my surroundings in order to feel more comfortable.*

*My ears began to prick up to the sounds around me, like a dog's. I could hear cicadas somewhere to the right, the sound of bird's wings beating the air above, quiet footsteps behind me, and further away people were talking. When I noticed the chickens clucking to my left, I realised which direction I was facing: “If the animals are to the left then I must be facing away from the glasshouse with the trees ahead”, I thought. Tanaka*

*and the others must have been to my right. I was able to orientate myself roughly in the space by identifying these familiar sounds.*

*As I moved forward, I noticed the grass underfoot was thick, damp, and cool as it got tangled in my toes. Sometimes small sharp stones rolled underfoot as I scuffed them. A sudden sting to the arch of my foot surprised and irritated me, and my stance automatically responded. I was aware of how sensing the ground underfoot was integral to the rest of my structure remaining relaxed. My feet were being my eyes and my shoulders and hips trustingly rode above, guided by the tactile information in my feet. The experience reminded me of the trust involved in riding a horse, where you can proprioceptively sense the negotiation of footing underneath you as the horse tests the terrain with its feet. My walk became a dance of minute adjustments as I tested and felt my way forward.*

*After some time, I noticed I became more relaxed. I was not holding onto so much tension, and moving became less stilted. I enjoyed the simple yet unusual experience of orientating myself through ways other than with my eyes. I noticed the details such as the acidic smell of the grass, cool air moving across my collarbones, and warm sun on my sculp. Different surfaces affected my body in different ways; textures and sounds resonated in my body, each in specific ways. As I became more adventurous, I explored different levels, speeds of moving, and using different parts of my body to negotiate the surroundings. Near the end of my walk I arched my head upwards to the light and my blindfolded eyelids met with an even darker dark shadow. I felt a cool sensation on my face, stopped, and then inched forward slowly as my cheek came into contact with a raspy, uneven surface. I smelt a subtle woodiness of bark and sensed it cooling my skin. I explored this surface, pressing my cheek into it and experiencing its density and texture. I traced the mass as it curved off to the side and felt a branching into smaller sections.*

*With eyes open later, my partner helped me to locate the tree and we re-enacted my movement pathway.*

The above memoir illustrates how much information can be absorbed without sight. Being unsighted, the task required me to slow down and sense predominantly in non-visual ways in order to orientate myself and move through the environment. I found that I could draw on information such as the direction of familiar sounds; tactile sensations such as shapes, textures, and temperatures; subtle kinaesthetic and proprioceptive information such as tension and movement; smell; and prior knowledge of the area for moving through the site. Engaging in the above sensory-based exploration of the terrain, I was able to move more fluently with time, and to feel increasingly comfortable and confident.

The task relates to Hijikata's concept of the "weak body, living in your own body" (Hijikata in Fraleigh, 2010, p. 66), the notion of moving from one's inner somatic capabilities (Fraleigh, 2010). Being unsighted creates a state of unknowing or vulnerability where the body cannot rely on its chief capability of sight. However, moving without sight also offers the potential for us to expand our capacities (Buckwalter, 2010). Relaxing, and honing in on other, more subtle sensory information was necessary for my negotiation of the orchard. A readiness for change, flexibility, suppleness, and focussing on the internal sensibilities makes walking unsighted more fluent. In time, this kind of exercise can lead to gaining deeper somatic awareness and can cultivate a yielding, more permeable body (Snow, 2002; Taylor, 2010). Dancing with this awareness would be beneficial for efficiency and ease of movement, as well as for generating a stronger sense of self for the dancer (Eddy, 2009).

The negotiation of movement without sight is described by improvisation dancer and writer, Melinder Buckwalter (2010). Describing Lisa Nelson's work in relation to unsighted choreography, she says:

Sound, touch, smell, the kinaesthetic sense, and memory all come into play. The activity of composing the body from sensory information usually happens so reflexively that it goes unnoticed. But with less familiar senses involved in this practice, this level of composing is brought to awareness. By working with the eyes sometimes open and sometimes closed, the dancers gather further information about how they make choices via the interplay of the senses. (Buckwalter, 2010, p. 53)

Buckwalter's words suggest that training the non-dominant senses such as touch, the kinaesthetic sense, sound, and smell, along with memory can bring about a deeper awareness of how we make movement decisions. In this way, exercises such as Tanaka's blind walk can promote awareness of how our less-dominant somatic capabilities such as aural, tactile, olfactory, kinaesthetic, and memory-based understandings are utilised in dance contexts and in everyday moving. I have since found that balancing sight with the utilising non-visual modes of sensorial feedback for "listening to" and responding to my environment opens up a deeper awareness and receptiveness in my body, enables a greater sense of orientation, and generates more confident moving. Using a variety of senses for movement orientation promotes a more balanced and responsive approach to the body which can enable us different and refreshing experiences for dance and everyday living.

In sum, both experiences depicted in the above two memoirs confronted me with the somatic and environmental landscapes I often disregard, by requiring me to engage in direct physical and sensorial contact with nature. In other words, I found the exercises

simultaneously brought about greater awareness of my own somatic capabilities as well as more consideration of my surrounding environment. The tasks enabled me to feel and respond to elements of the outdoors such as soil, insects, sun, wind, trees, and grass on an intimate and somatic level, and deepened my connection with and respect for these environments I engaged with. The experiences signalled to me the value of cultivating subjective relationships with the natural environment through the body and dance (Stewart, 2010).

Appreciation and respect for the natural environment is pertinent since the predominant Western paradigm sees the self as divided and life “unrelated and separate, individualistic and self-serving” (East, 2011, p. 79). East suggests that this perspective deems people to be separate from, and more important than, their surroundings. Tanaka’s work, like other ecological movement practices (see East, 2011; Poynor, 2009; Stewart, 2010) facilitates an “organic, living relationship between body and environment” (Rogers, 2012, p. 63). BW practice and the overall lifestyle during the workshop could therefore provide a method for the “re-evaluation of humanity’s most basic assumptions about its relationship with the other-than-human world” (Stewart, 2010, p. 32). In other words, BW holds potential for shifting unhelpful self-centred attitudes, and forming more symbiotic relationships with natural world.

### **Searching for Somatic Fluency**

Searching for somatic fluency was not easy. *Somatic fluency* is a term that has come out of this study, and for me means finding fluency of movement from a first-person or somatic perspective. As discussed in chapter two, a *somatic* approach to dance involves being receptive to internal experience including “physical awareness, cognitive reflection, and insights from feelings” (Eddy, 2002b, p. 119). However, I find it equally important to be aware of my relationship to the environment consisting of people, place,

and landscape for informing a fluid somatic experience. Such internal and external environments are of course in constant flux. At the farm, I struggled to find somatic fluency at times, while at other times I had breakthroughs. I was determined to understand what I had felt and seen in Tanaka's Tokyo performance the previous year, believing his knowledge about somatic fluency was integral to understanding the BW philosophy and technique.

Nevertheless, Tanaka has urged that rather than intentionally establishing a "technique of physical movement", he believes that searching for what is new and original in dance will inevitably reveal how the body works (Cardone, 2002, p. 23). In other words, Tanaka prefers to allow technique to emerge from an open-ended inquiry into movement training. For example, at the farm he told us every action had its own technique, we just had to find it. BW therefore provides an alternative perspective of technique; it highlights Tanaka's strong view about not "fixing" practice into a set style or genre and instead allows the potential for extensive exploration and development. However, Tanaka did suggest approaches to movement at the farm. For example, he encouraged us to use less brute strength and focus on an easier way of working in manual labour and when lifting heavy objects. This concept can be applied to dance practices to encourage moving more efficiently and using less effort while maintaining a first person perspective of the body, therefore achieving somatic fluency.

**Giving the body new experiences.** Providing the body with "new experiences", or "stimulation", was a prominent theme in Tanaka's work. We spent many hours examining how to carefully follow a partner's movement or touch with a soft, inward focus or with closed eyes. One such exercise involved working in groups and initiating movement for one participant who had their eyes closed. Tanaka stressed the importance of observing the recipient, telling us to always observe the body we were working with

and not to get distracted, in order to give the recipient a good experience. He suggested that watching the recipient's breath and the way their spine moved, engaging our whole body with theirs, and imagining their experience would help. His instructions stressed the importance of visual, tactile, and kinaesthetic feedback to cultivate awareness of another's experience. The memoire below is an example of this partner work.

*I lay down on the wooden floor, eager for the experience. Three other participants waited as I made myself comfortable, closed my eyes, and settled down. I noticed my breath deepening and felt the weight of my body sink into the cool floor beneath me. Soon I sensed the warm touch of people's hands as they touched my legs, arms, and head. They waited for a while as if listening through their hands and after some time they began to move me, slowly at first. Each person had a different sense of touch and it was interesting guessing which hands were whose. One person lifted my arm at the wrist and elbow and began to move it curiously around my face in a wobbling and wavering motion. This continued as my legs were grasped firmly and forcefully stretched away from my hips. I felt how the other person had to lean away in order to provide a strong stretch. While this was happening, a third person lifted my lower ribs up from off the floor which tilted my pelvis forward, creating a large gap between my lower back and the floor. In my abdomen, the skin stretched over my bones and muscles and I could feel my lungs expanding in my chest. I took in deep breaths and then two hands strongly grasped my ribs on either side and firmly compressed them towards the floor, pushing out all the air from my lungs. I was surprised and astounded by how far my body could be pushed in this position.*

*Soon, lots of movements were going on in my body all at once. I had a fast, shaking movement happening in my feet and legs, a slower rocking motion at my head, and at the same time someone was awkwardly trying to bring my torso up to a seated*

*position. I struggled to keep relaxed so that all this information didn't overwhelm me. I focused on being patient with my partners, and I practiced releasing into their touch, staying positive, being receptive, and trusting my partners. With time the group gained momentum and I was taken into more extreme positions and configurations.*

*Near the end of the exploration I was lifted up off the floor and carried through the air. I felt disorientated and unsure of where the ground was and who was holding me, but I enjoyed the feeling of weightlessness. I had to allow my body to be moved without keeping track of what was happening, and found that at times it was as if I was seeing the scene looking down from one of the nearby trees. In my mind's eye I could see the scene below: the group moving me around the stage. My perception shifted between viewing myself from this outside perspective and identifying with the experience from within it. When I was told I could open my eyes, I was propped up in a tree some distance from where we had begun. I peered at my group standing around me with surprised and amused eyes. I found I was disorientated, yet I felt happy and enlivened by the experience.*

In this portrait, my body was explored through movement and touch by the group, in a kind of collaborative manual manipulation. My awareness was brought to the structural materiality of my body such as subtleties in weight, density, texture, rhythm, and movement quality, the task pointing out my physical limitations and capacities for yielding to movement beyond my control. I had to process multiple layers of tactile and kinaesthetic information, trust my partners, and let go of tension and inhibition in order to remain relaxed and comfortable.

Interestingly, Snow (2002) names this exercise “dead bodies”, and de Quincey names it “bag of bones” (as cited in Snow, 2002, p. 250). These names highlight the corporeal and even mundane treatment of the body. I agree with Snow (2002) that these



experiences can be painful and uncomfortable at times, or pleasant and sensual, depending on the circumstances. When I was shaken, twisted, rotated, and lifted into a number of different positions I found I had to “let go” of the way in which my body was used to moving, and trust the experience. The material treatment of the body links to Tanaka’s words: “At least once, a dancer should try to put his body there as an object, not only for himself” (Tanaka, 2002, p. 25). This statement suggests there is value in making one’s body available to others. The above exercise enables me to experience my soma with the aid of others’ touch. The task is about sensing my inner workings and also about how I respond to the physical contact of the group.

Touch in this exercise can be used for practicing receptivity toward influences on the body. Bannon and Holt (2011) discuss the ways in which touch can benefit dance, saying, “Touch that stimulates awareness, excites curiosity, and increases a facility to form accessible active knowledge . . . ideally heightens our awareness of our lived body, of our ‘self’ as part of the world and . . . informs and forms our work as communicating artists” (2011, p. 216). They point out the potentials for touch-based work to enliven the body’s senses, to bring about greater orientation, and to relate more deeply and creatively with the world. The employment of touch in Tanaka’s above exercise is valuable for exploring receptivity towards others and cultivating what Snow (2002) and Taylor (2010) call a more “permeable” body. In other words, this task encourages receptiveness, sensitivity, and self-awareness for responding to and engaging with others and the environment.

Tanaka’s task can be likened to experiential anatomy explorations, which are used in BMC and other somatic practices for deepening understanding of the structure of one’s soma from a first-person perspective (Eddy, 2006; Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Poynor, 2009). Dancers sense their organs, bones, muscle structures, fascia, breath, and

skin through a series of deep meditation-like practices which involve movement exploration and use image (Eddy, 2006). It is kinaesthetic sensing that generates a deeper embodied understanding of the soma (Eddy, 2006; Batson & Schwartz, 2007; Poynor, 2009). Tanaka's touched-based collaborative exercise above promotes awareness of one's own physical structure and one's thoughts and emotional responses.

Sharing the decision-making for movement meant I had to yield and give up any preconceived ideas about what I wanted to happen. The Buddhist ethics of release, detachment from the body, and compassion toward others are valuable for this exercise (Crump, 2006). They facilitate patience, non-judgementalism and less need for ego. The task challenged my need for control and pointed me towards letting go of tension and trusting others. Fraleigh (2010) imparts how butoh is about a loss of individual ego and connecting to the group. She says it "asks less of originality, thus more of community and transformative potentials" (2010, p. 65), suggesting that with time, these kinds of embodied experiences can deepen somatic awareness and lead to a more communal notion of self and soma.

**Mind body/muscle bone/music body (MB).** Another challenging experience was MB. This training was done on the forest stage, and it was the only time music was used throughout our training. This training also stood out because for once Tanaka led movement patterns for us to follow. The session was about one and a half or two hours of intensive, exhaustive training. We moved in twos, following the pair in front of us and circling the stage continuously repeating a movement pattern. The following memoir describes one such session.

*On the first day we did MB, Tanaka had a sound system set up and was playing loud Japanese pop music as we arrived at the forest stage. The energy was excited and impulsive: I anticipated something quite different from the previous quiet work we had*

been doing. Tanaka called the work “jumps”, and told us to pair up. He led a simple repetitive stepping movement in time with the beat, along the right-hand side of the stage. We followed behind with our partner, and to my surprise he led us right off the edge of the stage and onto the lower stage without missing a beat. We circled around the far end of the lower platforms and continued looping back along the other side, up onto the main higher platform again in a big circle ending where we had begun. He immediately continued moving through the space following the pathway he had made around the edge of the stage again, but this time he changed the movement pattern slightly. This cyclical floor-pattern was followed ceaselessly throughout the entire session. At the beginning of a new loop Tanaka would often introduce a different sequence. As I settled into the repetition, I concentrated on keeping in time with the music, executing the movement properly, and making sure I was moving with the group.

The patterns Tanaka gave us were fast and multi-directional. On one rotation, we kicked our heels to our buttocks and slapped the sole of each foot with the palm of one hand as it whipped behind our backs, like an extended version of hopscotch. We did various versions of this one after the other, testing our co-ordination and concentration. We did the same hand and foot, opposite hand and foot, same hand and foot behind, and then opposite hand and foot in front. This pattern took some time to get used to since it was so fast, and I didn't master it on the first day. I found I had to be alert and flexible as I tried to adapt to all the unfamiliar patterns. We reached out, up, down, left, and right. We twisted, leapt, jumped, squatted, and turned. Sweat began pouring out of us and my muscles began to burn. As we grew tired, our movements became clumsy and people lost their footing. Patterns grew muddy and timing lapsed. Sometimes people almost collided as they lost awareness of the space around them. Getting down and up between the stage-levels became more difficult and cumbersome.

*When we did large travelling movements Tanaka began calling out individual instructions. He yelled things like “Keep the rhythm!” or “Bigger movements!” As I passed, he shouted “Don’t save your energy!” which I interpreted as work less conservatively, move more. I forced myself to use more space by exaggerating my movements and covering more ground, which was utterly exhausting. I felt panic rise as I wondered if I could last the session and my muscles screamed out in agony.*

*When we jumped three-quarter turns clockwise and anti-clockwise, I became very dizzy and struggled to focus. Tanaka told us to make sure we faced the trees for orientation. For the next jump, I consciously focused on the tall thin trees standing all around the dance platform. Each time I changed direction, I faced a different side of the stage and practiced feeling connected to those trees. This helped me greatly, it seemed to open my awareness out so that I could sense a wider space around me with which to orientate. It was as if the trees served as compass points, directional references. With this new tool I found I could balance and focus much better.*

*Another time, Tanaka told us to keep going with the movement pattern we were working on, but also to recite personal details like our name, age, nationality, and birth date. As I started speaking, I noticed my movements began to lack clarity, and were completely forgotten at times. I had to concentrate very intently in an attempt to carry out both tasks at once. I tried to separate the two tasks so that they could both carry on regardless of one another without interfering.*

*By the end of the session it seemed that the group had created a kind of whirlpool momentum by moving round together for such a long time. The pull of this momentum allowed me to relax and just follow. Moving this way was easier, I felt like I was carried by the group on a wave, movements became easier to execute and my concentration*

*improved. I felt lighter and happier in my body and felt like I could keep going for a long time at this pace.*

As this memoire signals, MB training challenged my ability to perform multiple, complex movement patterns, extended my capacities for spatial orientation, brought the group-dynamic to the fore, and challenged my endurance, physical strength, and fitness capacities.

With practice, I have found that generating a sense of spaciousness or isolation is necessary for simultaneously executing multiple movement patterns. For example, if my knees move in circular motions, arms circle opposite, and head moves up, down, left and right, I must identify and isolate these patterns individually in order to carry them out correctly. Frank Van de Ven posits that we can choose to work from one centre, or create multiple centres for initiating movement within the body (Van de Ven & Snow, 2012). Tanaka's complex patterns required me to acquire the skill of moving from multiple centres in my body at once. They provided me with an alternative method of concentrating on more than one part of my body at once, rather than moving predominantly from one core centre, as I was more accustomed to. Skinner, Davis, Metcalf, & Wheeler (1979) describe dancing this way as "the ability to move autonomously" (p. 10). Discussing the somatic practice of Skinner Releasing Technique, they state that moving "autonomously" enables freedom in other areas of the body and can lead to more economical and released dancing (Skinner et al, 1979). MB training similarly required me to extend my co-ordination capabilities and execute complex movement patterns in dance.

In addition, orientation in space is significant in MB (Van de Ven & Snow, 2012). In the above memoire, I learnt to use the trees as compass points or references, and working in the studio, compass points can be translated onto the walls or corners of the

room (Koroneho, 2009). This is similar to the practice of “spotting” in ballet, but in MB referencing seems to be about using the whole body to connect, rather than only using the eyes to spot. I have found that facing the trees or walls gives me time to reconnect with my own structure and calm down in the momentary pause between movements. It is a kind of kinaesthetic and visual “matching” experience with the surrounding parameters. I see this as a way of deepening my embodied orientation and opening out my awareness to the environment beyond.



Figure 5. The forest stage (right) where MB training took place. July 28, 2007. Photo: Miriam Marler

In the above memoir I felt both physically and mentally exhausted initially, but I moved beyond this barrier and felt spontaneity, clarity, ease of concentration, and fluency of movement. My experience can be likened to Stein’s (2001) discussion of *satori*, as seen in chapter two, which enables practitioners to move beyond their individual limits and reach a state where true learning happens. This state can be reached through extended durations of practice, and involves relinquishing self-control and increasing

physical, emotional, and mental capacities, resulting in focus and calmness in the body and mind (Stein, 2011).

In this memoir, the challenges of MB forced me out of my comfort zones and the group held the potential for me to expand as an individual. MB challenged me to reconsider my notions of responsibility to myself and to the group; the group of workshop participants all moving together seemed to generate a kind of “group-body” which had its own impetus and swept me along. The focus is in the group, not on the individual for MB (Van de Ven & Snow, 2012); this approach suggests awareness can be in the collective, and points to the potential for shared responsibility in cultural movement practices. Working in a large group enabled me to be both led by it and to contribute to it; I found ways of moving within the set framework which resulted in “tuning in” to the group and calming down my own energy levels.

**Performance experimentation.** Solo performances were held most Friday afternoons, and Tanaka would assign us a farm or village animal to study throughout the week leading up. The first week we were instructed to observe a chicken, the second it was a goat, then a hawk, and lastly one of our own choice. We researched all week individually; Tanaka told us to notice the qualities of animals rather than trying to imitate them. He offered that if we were not ready to perform we did not have to, however, each week everyone performed. In the memoir below it was the final week for the animal solos. I chose a resident farm cat to study which I found lounging in the loft upstairs.

*I practiced embodying the feeling of the cat, sensing it come into play and drop away again, exploring details of the head, spinal movement, limbs, and tail. I imagined my nose flat and moist, irises narrow, and invisible whiskers protruding from each side of my upper lip. I imagined I had thick fur and powerful hind legs, a long horizontal spine, and my tailbone extending out behind me to a curved tail. Each time I visited the*

*cat, I imagined what it would feel like to be this cat using sensorial explorations and through visualisation. I was determined to allow movement to come of its own accord in performance. Unlike the previous weeks, I decided I would improvise from this catlike state rather than choreographing movement sequences for the performance.*

*On the performance afternoon, we were gathered at an alternative side-stage that had been recently renovated for the upcoming art festival. It was situated among the trees across from the forest stage, and we all sat on wooden benches erected for the audience. When we were ready, we got up one by one to dance. When I got up, I made my way to the right upstage corner and curled up on the floor. I began to re-enact what I had in the loft, attempting to embody the cat by visualising and sensing its qualities in myself. My nose began to feel flat and wet. I imagined my irises narrowing, my neck lengthened as I imagined upward-pointing ears, and my skin prickled as I sensed thick fur covering me. However, I became aware that I was not moving: from the outside during this process I remained still.*

*In performance, feeling myself transform into a cat seemed much harder than when I was alone. I realised how strongly I needed to concentrate on imagining and feeling in order to successfully embody the cat, and perform movement from this transformation. Tanaka had said that images must be “felt” in your body, not just imagined in the mind’s eye. I understood this idea but could not grasp or feel it in practice. During performance, I began to doubt myself and lose conviction. Time seemed to stretch as I grappled with the challenge I had set for myself. I began to lose focus, my thoughts shifted to the audience’s perceptions and judgements of my non-moving body. My heart was soon pounding in my chest as I felt paralysed by my inaction, yet I still felt determined not to move unless I could embody the animal in the way I had imagined.*



*There seemed to be an abundance of energy inside me, yet from the outside I had hardly moved. In time, I was signalled to leave the stage by Tanaka.*

This was the first attempt at consciously performing improvisation from sensation rather than form. The memoir highlights my struggle to perform in this new way and the experience prompted me to consider why using imagery and feeling for performance was so difficult. In retrospect, I see how the above experience confronted my own assumptions about performing and watching dance; it highlighted myself-expectations and perceptions of the audience's expectations. I was used to carrying out rehearsed, structured, form-based, choreographed performance, rather than concentrating on feeling and embodiment on stage. I was used to hiding my feelings behind predetermined dance routines rather than revealing them.

In addition, the experience highlights the importance of somatic awareness. I believed I should take up the opportunity to perform regardless of how mentally and physically prepared I was for the performance. I pushed myself into an uncomfortable situation which hindered my ability to explore and enjoy the improvised performance process. This notion of stoicism or staunchness is arguably embedded in British-derived Pākehā culture (Herron Smith, 2010). Growing up in Aotearoa/NZ I was oftentimes expected to “toughen up”, “get over” something, or give something “a go” regardless of feeling to the contrary. I distinctly remember dreading much of the compulsory Physical Education activities at primary and secondary school because of this staunch attitude embedded within the school and national culture. We were expected to keep up if we were slow in the swimming pool, push ourselves to reach the end of the hall during the automated “beep” test, and be competitive in team sports such as rugby, soccer, netball or hockey. Non-competitive approaches to physical education were less common. In my dance training too the focus was on reaching ideal standards of ballet technique, and

annual examinations measured our success. I found these to be gruelling and fraught with anxiety. The somewhat exaggerated expectation to for no hair to be out of place highlights the strict expectations upheld by my teachers and examiners. These childhood experiences seemed to have become internalised attitudes towards physical activity including dance, which lent themselves to being forceful with the body for competition or achievement purposes, rather than for deepening self-understanding, exploration, or creative possibilities.

My performance experience highlights how using image involves focussing, perceiving, sensing, and feeling for generating movement in a performance situation. These skills are techniques in their own right that take time and practice to develop. In time responsiveness, suppleness, spontaneity, and alertness may be cultivated in performance. Since this time, I have learnt that using image for movement impetus is not easy and requires steadfast concentration and the monitoring of sensory responses in multiple areas of the body. Skinner, Davis, Metcalf & Wheeler (1979) state that images in Skinner Releasing Technique are used as “metaphors for kinaesthetic experiences” (1979, p. 9). Similarly in BW and butoh, images can be used to generate new experiential states in the body and inform improvised movement.

Importantly, finding eloquence with image requires extensive practice (Skinner et al, 1979; Snow, 2002), so it is not surprising that my initial struggle to perform this way was a disaster. In hindsight, I see that I became distracted from the experiential state I was attempting to create, which resulted in the inability to engage with the cat image during performance. However, the experience has enabled me to see performance from a new vantage point where it is possible to use somatic experience to advantage rather than negating it in performance; the use of image can encourage dancers “to work *with* the body rather than in spite of it” (Skinner et al, 1979, p. 10, original italics).

I have found it interesting to consider what dance might achieve beyond its stereotypical aesthetic and virtuosic expectations. Tanaka (2002) argues against performing in the institutionalised theatre, calling it “all illusion” and “like a public service”, where “people can reserve a seat and people can reserve the time and people can forget easily” (2002, p. 26). On the contrary, he prefers dancing in less convenient places, and expresses dissatisfaction with the way society sees performance as superficial entertainment (Tanaka, 2002). I agree that a reconsideration of the ethics of dance performance should be re-examined to question how dance might support the wellbeing of our communities in meaningful ways as Williamson (2009) proposed in chapter two. Rather than viewing performance as a commodity, I wonder if it might be a vehicle for self-reflection, learning, and for healthy participation within the community.

In sum, the three portraits above reveal how finding orientation, gaining somatic awareness, using touch, collaborating, autonomous movement, and using image were part of my search for somatic fluency. Looking back, I see how Tanaka’s approach is distinct from much of my prior dance knowledge; it challenged and supplemented my notions about space, orientation, performance, and collaborative work. The experiences immersed me in interrelational and sensory-based dance explorations that drew my attention to balance self-awareness with community interdependence and environment (Williamson, 2009).

### **The Emergence of a New Understanding of Dance**

The above somatic memoirs illustrate how experiences gained on Tanaka’s BW farm broadened my perspective of dance. The following values emerged:

1. Interrelation between daily life and dance.
2. Deep somatic attentiveness leads to orientation, greater self-awareness, and confidence in movement and dance.

3. Landscape can situate and inspire profound somatic understanding.
4. Practice is not only for performance, and performance is also a practice.

These tenets of dance-making now guide my current practice. For a long period of time I have been unsure about how to employ a practice informed by BW in Aotearoa/NZ where I have returned to live. The aim of this study has been to make sense of this new understanding and integrate the philosophies more deeply into my dance practice.

I agree with Tanaka's philosophy that both finding one's own way in dance and continually evolving practice is necessary for maintaining development and integrity in dance. Tanaka has been critical of the people who have disseminated BW as if it were a codified technique, saying, "I never wanted to work with them to establish a method. I always wanted to work with them for development [purposes], for 'the next'. They don't have to follow the system; they have to develop more for themselves" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 31). In this sense, what Tanaka teaches does not seek to settle at a final resting point for distribution, but he believes it should be continually researched in new ways. Naturally, each dancer will find her or his unique direction for research, informed by her or his interests and context of practice.

As noted above, Tanaka believes dance should be "always a process" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 27), not adhered to a style or genre. For example of butoh he has said, "I'd rather like to smash down the tendency to believe as though there exists a genre of dance called butoh" (personal communication, May 8, 2007). Likewise yet more recently he has disowned BW, stating that he would rather not be associated with the name (Tanaka, 2012a). "If you fix your movement and build your butoh dance on this, it is like an object for selling. You should have the courage to throw this away" (Tanaka, 2002, p. 23). Tanaka's philosophy for dance is thus one of moving forward in "continual revolt" (Barba cited in Cardone, 2002, p. 16). In other words, dance can be used as a vessel for

moving beyond established knowledge and genres to explore and push boundaries within one's self, one's dance, and within society.

Drawing from Tanaka's ideas about dance, I now search out my own direction which arises from his training. Nearly six years after my experience on Min Tanaka's BW farm, I practice in Ōtepoti/Dunedin as a way of connecting to the place I live in and making sense of my situated identity. My practice is informed by Tanaka's teaching philosophy, yet as the memoir in the next section illustrates, it also departs from his work. The distilled concentration and rigorous outdoor lifestyle at the BW farm cannot be replicated in my current urban setting where I live a lifestyle that juggles study, work, dance, family, friends, and travel. My living context incorporates new social and cultural landscapes that I must negotiate, and my exploration of outdoor environments consists of experimenting with vegetable growing, camping, tramping, and dancing. Training currently involves MB and other movement practices including contemporary classes, yoga, and running. My improvised outdoor practice investigates the relationship between myself and local landscapes. It draws from somatic sensibilities such as sensory information, thoughts, memories, and feelings. Performance-making has become a structured improvisation approach which uses images sourced from familiar, pre-examined elements from outside such as the rhythm of trees shaking in the wind, the atmosphere of a particular Ōtepoti/Dunedin alleyway, or the movement of kereru/woodpigeon, and plotting them into choreographic structures within the studio.

However, my practice is emerging, in its beginnings, finding its footing, and unsure of exactly what it is. It is inevitably affected by Tanaka's work which profoundly affected me, but it is also influenced by prior dance knowledge, somatic practice, improvisation techniques, other butoh training, contemporary dance training, and years of ballet technique. It is also affected by my own identity and cultural understandings as

situated in Aotearoa, which is discussed in the following section. The section looks at my current New Zealand-based dance practice as it relates to local landscape and cultural context, drawing from the BW farm experience.

### **Evolving Body Weather Practice from Japan to Aotearoa**

The question of how one might dance a place continues to preoccupy me long after Tanaka's workshop in Hakushu. What does it mean for *me* in *this* place? How has the knowledge gained been transformed in the five or more years since the event? The next memoir relates to a recent experience dancing at a local spit called Aramoana, near Ōtepoti/Dunedin, in the South Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, first I will provide a brief description of the area pointing out some of its significant social history and geographical features.

In Māori, Aramoana means “pathway to the sea”, referring to its situation at the mouth of the Otago harbour. The beach faces out towards the Pacific Ocean, where early settler ships sailed past on their way to Port Chalmers, beginning with the *John Wickliffe* in 1847 (Dunedin Public Libraries, nd). Māori habitation of the Otago or Otakau region is said to have existed in some areas from approximately 1000AD (Dunedin City District Plan). Waitaha was the first *iwi* to dwell in the area, followed by Kāti Mamoe some 550 years later, and lastly Kai Tahu (or Ngai Tahu; Dunedin City Council, n.d.). Due to bloodshed and later intermarriage the three *iwi* eventually amalgamated into what is now known as Kai Tahu *whanui* (or greater tribe). Aramoana, along with much of the Otakau Harbour region has been known as a site for traditional Māori food gathering practices such as the gathering of *kai moana* (sea food; Royal & Kaka-Scott, 2013; Waitangi Tribunal, 2012). *Mahika kai* (food gathering areas) were up until recently considered a source of “personal sustenance” as well as having important “tribal purposes”, and the practices “shaped the daily and seasonal pattern” of people's lives (Waitangi Tribunal,

2012, p. 10). However with the arrival of Pākehā settlers, land confiscation, and pollutants, many of these sites are no longer usable (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012). At Aramoana we can still collect *tuangi* (little-neck clams) which are in abundance on the Te Ngaru side of the spit, and mussels can be found on the rocks at the western end of Big Beach.

In the 1970's Aramoana became famous for contention over a proposed aluminium smelter near the village, potentially causing severe environmental damage and community upset. Outcry against the smelter proposal through the Save Aramoana Campaign drew the attention of poets such as Ian Wedde, Cilla McQueen, Hone Tuwhare, and the well-known printmaker/installation artist Ralph Hotere. These artists protested against the smelter through their often collaborative work, raising concerns about the smelter's impact on the land, sea, plant, animal life, and how local lives might be affected (see Shewry, 2011). In more recent times, the coastal settlement of Aramoana experienced a tragic mass murder in November 1990, whereby thirteen people –four of whom were children- were killed by local estranged resident David Gray. The event shook up the community and the country profoundly, and it remains in the minds of people today. However residents of Aramoana are keen to move on (The Press, 2009).

These historical events mean that Aramoana is culturally loaded; however focussing on the stunning natural environment is one way of moving forward and of celebrating what Aramoana has to offer. The harbour-side of the spit is now a protected wildlife reserve, a salt marsh which is “a haven for kingfishers, godwits and other wading birds, and a habitat for plants that relish the salty environment” (McKinnon, 2012, “A Natural World” section). The ocean-facing side has a windswept beach with interesting rock formations, while the sand dunes host gulls and seals. The beach is divided by a man-made mole acting as a barrier against tidal sand drifting into the harbour channel

(Davis, 2009), raised above the water it acts as a literal pathway pointing toward the ocean, a metaphorical crossing between land and sea.

The sculptural installation “Pathway to the Sea- Aramoana” (1991) by artists late Ralph Hotere and Bill Culbert, celebrates this land and seascape (Hotere & Culbert; Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2011). The artists’ deep personal connections with Otago harbour are said to be reflected in the work (Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2011). Similarly, Hone Tuwhare’s poems often signal a deep bond with the land and seascape. In the documentary *Koha* (1981) he attributes this relationship to being Māori. Speaking fiercely about the proposed smelter at Aramoana in the 1970’s, but also referring to a wider connection to the natural world in general, he says, “it’s soul thing with us. . . Mother Earth, it’s somebody, it’s real, it’s not some inanimate sort of being or thing. It’s that feeling, it’s a living thing” (Leslie, 1981).

Inspired by these attitudes, my dance practice seeks to strengthen my own relationship with the landscape by exploring and delighting in the Aramoana environment along the mole. Through somatic movement investigation I pondered how my movement might transform as I engaged with plant, animal, land, sky, and water. Prior to this exploration I made some somatic studies of the area, focussing on my senses to determine which elements of the place I wanted to explore. My intention was to connect somatically, allowing movement responses in relation to the natural phenomena along the length of the mole. The short dance-film attached to this thesis documents the following experiences where I explored elements of the site: rocks, seaweed, water, gulls, waves, and open space.

*We arrived at Aramoana mole just before sunrise in winter. It was cold, quiet, and dark as we pulled up near the beach. I wanted to catch the sun coming up, the slow dawn light permeating the sky and changing the colours of the landscape and our skin. I*



was accompanied by my friend and documentary filmmaker, Rachael Patching, who had agreed to film my improvisation.

*I noticed the rocks were reddish-brown and splattered with interesting layers of cream-coloured bird droppings. I put on a brown hat, like the rocks, and light clothing like the bird droppings. I lowered my weight to the level of the rocks in order to feel them better. My pelvis, head, and arms shifted as I crouched on all fours. Like an animal I imagined myself blending with the terrain. The surface beneath my palms and feet was sharp, hard, cold, uneven, and rough. I moved slowly, trying to remain light, and wove around the varied slopes of rock, following patterns of bird dung. I heard waves rising and falling nearby and felt my body rise and fall with the rhythm as I traversed the rock surfaces. My spine twisted above my limbs, my weight sank, and my pelvis rose and then lowered again. My palms and soles of feet trod softly on the sharp rocks, feeling the surface beneath them as they found their balance.*

*I clambered down the rocks at side of the mole. I was wearing a blue dress, full, with buttons up to the collar, reminded of what the early colonial settlers might have worn when they first arrived here. They would have passed this place en route to the port, starting new lives in an unfamiliar landscape. I stepped carefully into the ice-cold water and immediately took a sharp intake of breath, holding the air high in my chest as the water engulfed me. I planted my feet securely between the slippery rocks, and began to take in the rhythms of the water in the silvery morning light. Dark kelp floated like eels around my legs and my skin tingled. I became transfixed with the water and the heavy bowl of my pelvis slowly began to mimic the curve of seaweed rising and lowering in the sea-swell. Soon, my arms joined in and began to stir the water, cyclically sweeping it up into the air, and creating figure-of-eight pathways. I could feel the motion of the heavy water and weed in my body. It evoked for me an image reminiscent of daily chores, like a*

*woman bent over washing or cleaning in a continuous loop. My skirts became heavy at the hemline, cold water lapped at my calves and my breath synchronised to the dance.*

*Dancing along the mole I celebrated the wide open space around me. My body felt small and insignificant as I worked my way along its length. As I grew tired I slowed my pace, and when I reached the far end of the mole I felt a powerful presence. I remembered how as a child I had almost been knocked over by a huge wave on these very rocks, and how my mother had always warned, “Never turn your back on the sea”. I choose a red dress to contrast with the blue around me, and to match the feeling of strength in that spot. A large flock of birds was perched near the water and from time to time they suddenly became disturbed and circled the area noisily in a flurry of wings and cries. One bird would set off the others, like dominos, and as I focussed more intently my arms flew up with them, elbows pointing outwards and scapula circling, I became part of their dance. I leapt, feet in the air, stamping down on invisible rocks, and threw my arms and legs out in many directions. The flapping and crying of the birds was energetic, exciting, and chaotic. My dance felt wild and protesting.*

*After exploring the gulls I stood in stillness, taking in the waves below. I listened to the aural soundscape and watched bird formations gliding quietly over the water. I felt my body calm down- I felt expansive, as if I were the sky and water reaching out towards the horizon. Slowly I began to move, sensing the vastness of the place. I traced the line of birds, my dance was gentle and subtle, lilting in my chest, along the line of my arms, and gently rippling into my torso.*

*My awareness shifted to the slow currents drawing towards the rocks from a distance. I felt the tension of their movement in my hands and ribs. The closer waves seemed fast and the ones further away moved more slowly. The closer currents crashed into the rocks below intermittently, first building up momentum and then charging*

*inward toward the land. I threw my shoulders, pelvis, head and arms strongly away from the rest of my body as if I was the waves or being flung by them. I moved sideways as if drawing the sea into my right hip and being pushed over as it crashed upon me. My dance turned into leaping and turning as I looked up to the sky and felt energy from the warm sun and bright blue sky fill me.*

My attentiveness to natural phenomena is largely influenced by Tanaka's philosophy and work. The natural outdoor Aramoana environment is used as a site for dance engagement, through the process of "listening" or "tuning" my awareness to elements of nature. I studied the environmental nuances and honed my bodily attention on the following:

- The high energy chaos of the gulls, the quietly gliding flock of birds, the expansive wide open space, and the strong blue sky were felt as *kinaesthetic atmospheres* in my body, determining movement quality and state.
- The curl of seaweed, the arch of a flock of birds over the water, and the colour of bird droppings on rocks are examples of *visual markers* that informed my movement pathways.
- The *aural rhythms* of waves breaking, water swelling, and birds cawing seeped into my consciousness and informed the rhythms of my movement patterns.
- Sharp and uneven rock surfaces were felt as *tactile information* in my hands and feet when transferring weight. The piercing cold water surrounding my feet shifted the rhythm of my breath in the chest.

The memoir highlights how my body had to adapt and orientate itself in different ways from those used when working in a dance studio. There was a sense that I could explore sensation and movement through improvisation that responded to the immediacy

and stimulation of the environment. I specifically responded to the sounds, rhythms, textures, kinaesthetic activities, and visual information from many of the elements that compose the mole environment. For example, Sklar (2001) discusses kinaesthetic identification between dancers, or “kinaesthetic empathetic perception” (p. 31), as a way of understanding and embodying another’s movement. Similarly, my bird movements seemed to be transmitted through kinaesthetic perception with the birds, as if arising automatically through identifying with their movement. In my experience, this kind of kinaesthetic identification can be practiced with human and non-human moving elements, such as water, cloud, wind, bird, and seaweed. Tanaka’s workshop informed this perception because he brought my attention to noticing and responding to the environment through sensorial and somatic perception.



*Figure 6.* Dancing at Aramoana mole in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand (video still). Winter, 2012. Image: Rachael Patching

My approach of “listening to” and responding to patterns in the environment is a way of building a sympathetic relationship with the landscape. Cultivating sensitivity and sensorial responsiveness to the surroundings is a mapping of my “internal” somatic landscape with the “external” surroundings. It has become a method for situating and

integrating self within place. With time and practice the landscape resonates within me; I can sense the place within my body. Grant describes the experience of a BW dancer, who is:

All the time, mapping, measuring, naming, finding sense, analysing elements of the place. . . . With time, abiding in the dwelling with sustained attunement, she finds the place in her body, her body is in the place. The place leaves its footprints, its residues, in her flesh, vibrates her, making her something else. Someone she wasn't. (Grant & de Quincey, 2006, p. 256)

Grant's words suggest that actively developing awareness of place, landscape, environment, or site through bodily sensibilities changes somatic embodiment. In my experience, this is about expanding my sense of self beyond the material boundaries of my body in order to feel the landscape in my body and experience being part of the place.

Discussed in the literature review, Grant & de Quincey (2006) and Taylor (2010) draw from BW to investigate the bicultural and postcolonial implications of their identity and landscape. I too dance to understand how I sit within my local landscape and in relation to its history. Ōtepoti/Dunedin is significant as it is my place of birth and it resonates in my body deeply. Engaging in a responsive somatic movement practice, dancing here means engaging with the landscape I was born into, yet it also brings up Aotearoa/New Zealand's problematic colonial past. I seek to honour my own ancestry and not negate Pākehā and Māori history.

In chapter two, Brown (1997) suggested that as Pākehā, she finds herself in an indeterminate state of belonging, due to her ancestry from elsewhere and living in Aotearoa. Similarly, Adriann Herron Smith (2010) notes that Pākehā identity engages

“the pull between connections and displacement” (p. 68). In art,<sup>7</sup> she notes that Pākehā identity is frequently expressed by employing elements of the Aotearoa/NZ landscape as sources of inspiration, by reflecting on ancestry from elsewhere, and by making relationship with Māori (Herron Smith, 2010). Concurrently, by tuning into somatic information such as memory, thoughts, and the senses, my movement exploration at Aramoana reflected aspects of the area’s colonial history and elements of the natural landscape.

Practitioner-authors Grant & de Quincey (2006) and Taylor (2010) examined in chapter two suggested that one way of addressing the ghosts of a colonial past is to revisit one’s relationship with homeland. Along with Orr & Sweeney (2011), they note the importance of engaging with indigenous perspectives for ethically addressing cultural imbalance. The following subsection engages BW in conversation with indigenous perspectives of Aotearoa/NZ, looking to respected Māori scholars for insights into a Māori worldview.

**Japanese BW meets Māori worldview.** This kind of reciprocal relationship between body and place appears to be an underlying principle both in Māori perspectives and in BW. These perspectives focus on the interrelationship between elements in life, rather than their independence. Both worldviews look to the natural environment not only for inspiration, but as a real and powerful source of knowledge beyond our human capacity (Royal, 2007, 2009; Tanaka, 2007, 2002). For example, as chapter two shows Royal (2007) and others (Cruz Banks, 2011; Mazer, 2007; Gray, 2010) suggest that from Māori perspectives, the embodiment of landscape in dance can facilitate understanding of

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<sup>7</sup> Herron Smith (2010) discusses Lynne Pringle and Kilda Northcott’s dance theatre work *Fishnet* (2005), Chris Blake and Stuart Hoar’s opera *Bitter Calm* (1993), and Gary Henderson’s play *Homeland* (2005), as studies for examining Pākehā identity on stage.

our somatic and spiritual identities. We have also seen some of Rev. Māori Marsden's (2003) insights into Māori perspectives and an articulation of a Māori Worldview. These scholars enable me to question if dance might be a process through which to develop an understanding of *mana*: "spiritual authority and power. . . lawful permission delegated by the gods to their human agent to act on their behalf and in accordance with their revealed will" (Marsden, 2003, p. 174). These words suggest people do not own *mana*, but are conduits through which to receive this knowledge from greater sources. Perhaps dancing through ways such as BW might draw us closer to accessing and understanding the *mana* of the landscape: "higher knowledge" that must be harnessed from the natural world for dissemination, and part of the task of life itself (Royal, 2009).

Similarly, contemporary Japanese philosophy also sees humanity to be profoundly intertwined with nature (Nagatomo, 1991/1993; Yuasa, 1987). Yasuo Yuasa explains that people are "*ecological*, receptive being[s]", and "the human being is originally a being born out of nature" (Yuasa as cited in Nagatomo, 1993, p. xxxiv, original italics), suggesting a fundamental identification with the natural world that informs spirituality and creativity (Matsunobu, 2007). For example, Hijikata's famous statement, "I was born from the mud" (Viala & Masson-Sekine, 1988, p. 71), indicates butoh and BW's essential connections with the earth. Tanaka too has demonstrated his deep bond with the landscape through his lifestyle and dance practice, which this thesis partially describes: this chapter so far has shown how life and dance at the BW farm are intimately embedded in the soil, plants, animals, water, mountains, and skies of Hakushu.

Identification with the natural landscape can be seen in Hiniri Moko Mead's (2003) writing on *Tikanga Māori* (Māori values). He states that a Māori relationship with land is not about owning it, but it is about "bonding to the land and having a place upon which one's feet can be placed with confidence" (pp. 272-273). This concept of

belonging to land, rather than owning it, is not dissimilar from Tanaka's practice of borrowing disused plots, and refusing to buy land by principle. Similarly in his dance practices, Tanaka led us toward becoming receptive and empathetic towards the landscape through immersing ourselves in outdoor environments. These practices seem a process by which to embody what Māori health pioneer Sir Mason Durie tells us, that from a Māori perspective "human identity is regarded as an extension of the environment, there is an inseparability between people and the natural world" (as cited in Royal, 2009, p. 113). Being buried in the soil and walking blind through the orchard, for example, were experiences by which I could sense the natural world more strongly in my body, and generate greater understanding of my own connection to the landscape. As Mead (2003) notes, landscape and its resources must be regarded and handled in a way that respects the earth and benefits the community, rather than any individual person. As this chapter has illustrated, Tanaka too prefers to share collective responsibility for land.

In terms of dance, these ideas suggest not only engaging the body closely with community and landscape, but also taking an organic, intuitive approach to movement and choreography. The concept of *mōhiotanga* - "internalised or embodied knowing" (Royal, 2009, p. 105), may be useful for exploring intuitive and organic dance impetus. Drawing from Marsden's (2003) words, Royal (2009) differentiates between intellectual knowledge, or knowledge of the head known as *mātauranga* (pp. 89-105); *māramatanga*, the illumination of understanding that happens after knowledge is gained (pp. 103-105); and the kind of knowing that cannot be transferred or learnt from another person, *mōhiotanga* (p. 105). *Mōhiotanga* is when the spirit, heart, or bodily consciousness understands of its own accord: "the movement of a leaf toward the rays of the sun, the knowledge of a bird to build a nest, [and] bracing the body when one is struck with fear" are all examples of this innate knowledge (Royal, 2009, p. 105). This process Royal



speaks of, by which we come to know intrinsically, can be likened to eliciting movement responses in dance practice through corporeal and somatic experience rather than from pre-rehearsed choreography. Tanaka, for example, claims his solos are improvised in response to a site, or if in a theatre setting, they arise from a “blank” mind<sup>8</sup> suggesting an improvisational, organic impetus for dancing (Tanaka, 2006, “How Much Of Your Dance”). Moments in my earlier mentioned Aramoana exploration may be likened to *mōhiotanga* too: my breath automatically adapted as my feet entered the ice-cold water, my arms responded to the movement of the birds without conscious deciding to, and I felt my pelvis rise and fall with the rhythm of the water. These corporeal responses to elements of an environment make up my site-based dance explorations informed by BW.

Perhaps a union between landscape and people can be facilitated by BW- inspired dance practice and informed by Māori perspectives. For example Mead (2003) reminds us that the Māori word for land, *whenua* also means “placenta”. Both the placenta and the land are life-sustaining, and after birth the placenta is buried in the ground in Tikanga Māori. He describes how “the whenua returns to the whenua” (p. 269), a metaphor signifying the importance of land for Māori identity. With this in mind, the dancing body comes from and returns to the earth. Tanaka’s task described previously in this chapter of burying the body in soil, for example, can facilitate our understanding of the connection between soma and earth. Conversely, Papatuanuku [Mother Earth] herself is conceived of as a body, in Marsden’s writing. He notes that,

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<sup>8</sup> He calls dancing this way, from a *tabula rasa*, as ideal. For further reading see the interview “Min Tanaka's butoh”, in *Theme Magazine* (2006, Fall Issue 7, J. Kim, Interviewer, & K. Kobata, Translator, New York).

Papatuanuku is a living organism with her own biological systems and functions. She provides a network of support systems for all her children who live and function in a symbiotic relationship. The different species and genera contribute to the welfare of other species and also help to sustain the biological functions of Mother Earth in their life and death. Her children facilitate the processes of ingestion, digestion and secretion. (Marsden, 2003, p. 68)

Such a perspective is useful for symbolising how landscape can be conceptualised as “alive”, functioning reciprocally with the elements of the world including people, animals, and plant life. It is a perspective which encourages an ethical engagement with the natural environment. Other writing takes this perspective further and describes how *te kahu o te ao* (the fabric of the universe) is interwoven in every aspect of life, an interconnectedness that should inform the conduct of our daily lives (Royal, 2003).

The abovementioned Māori and Japanese scholar perspectives embody themes of ecology and spirituality, and enable the conception of landscape as rich and intelligent in its own right, with unified systems that support and affect one another in the same way that our living body has its structural and metaphysical systems. In Aotearoa/NZ dance, it seems important to explore our relationship with the landscape since it is fundamental to our identities. In my practice, the previously mentioned responsive movement process at Aramoana is one way of cultivating what Nigel Stewart (2010) calls an ethical relationship with landscape through dance.

### **Implications of Research: Moving Epistemologies**

In this research, I sought to understand, “What cultural and philosophical perspectives were gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka’s Body Weather farm?” This question has been explored by examining somatic experiences at the BW farm, and by reflecting on how this knowledge has informed my recent Aotearoa/NZ

dance practice. The research findings offer insights about how dance might be transplanted into a new context, and explores the potential for landscape to inform somatic and spiritual dance understandings. It highlights a philosophy and practice drawn from Min Tanaka as a valuable perspective for identifying and refreshing our epistemologies of dance.

Nor (2009) shows how learning multiple and diverse dance forms is a way of challenging one's own biases and broadening cultural practice. Since dance involves the physical experience or embodiment of worldviews, learning another practice generates compassion, understanding, and respect toward the culture and people involved. Ness (2004) too discusses the embodiment of dance knowledge to "reinscribe", "internalise", or "encrust" "new modes of judgement into the researcher's being as a result" (2004, p. 139). In this way, cultural knowledge can be used to consciously inscribe new ways of thinking and dancing for researchers in order to gain insight into a particular worldview (Ness, 2004).

Learning another cultural practice such as BW can therefore be a methodology for gaining cultural knowledge and broadening notions of dance. It is important to embrace alternative and diverse views about the body and movement as Foster (2009), Savigliano (2009), Grau (2011), and Reed (1998) explained in chapter two. In Aotearoa/NZ, Burrows (2004) states that although we are considered a multicultural nation, Eurocentric-rooted values are only just beginning to make way for a wide-range of meanings and practices in physical education. She believes that notions underpinning physical education do not encompass alternative learning philosophies. Tanaka's philosophy and practice offer one alternative perspective for dance that has inspired and fed me creatively and spiritually, taking me on a journey of discovery. This new

approach to the body and movement enabled me to reconsider and broaden my notions of dance.

Born from a Japanese environment, BW contains knowledge specific to this “cultural sensibility” (Hahn, 2007, p. 1). Engaging new approaches to time-space, refining uses for the senses, engaging in collaborative work, alternative conceptualisations for performance, and challenging tasks for movement and orientation enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of dance, my body, and self. BW signals ecological and spiritual values which gave me fresh perspectives for experiencing movement, and I found I could access a deeper, more refined sense of somatic fluency while engaging with the Hakushu landscape.

Like Māori perspectives, Matsunobu (2007) notes that nature, spirituality, and artistic practice are intertwined in Japan. Artistic practice is seen as both a means for self-cultivation, and for uniting with the invigorating qualities of the natural world (Matsunobu, 2007). This understanding of the ecological relationship between all aspects of the world, especially between people and natural phenomenon profoundly affected me. I went to Japan to interrogate and refresh my established dance and somatic understandings, and was rewarded with a stronger spiritual connection with my homeland, and a deeper sense of somatic embodiment.

Scholars such as Cruz Banks (2010) and Lalitaraja (2012) discuss the idea of spirituality being informed by cultural landscapes and mindful practices. Cruz Banks notes that the body is a reflection of the mind and spirit, quoting famous somatic dance pioneer Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, who said, “If the mind is the wind and the body is the sand, you look to the sand to see how the wind is blowing” (as cited in Cruz Banks, 2010, p. 12). Somatic dance practices are implicated in self-awareness and mindfulness; they are mindful movement practices where self-actualisation is at the fore of dancing

(Lalitaraja, 2012). In such a way, I gleaned from Hakushu a perspective of the body as a living organism and dance as a reflection of organic relationships. Through intensive manual labour, focussed dance training, and profound engagement with nature I began to move beyond some of my limiting conceptualisations of dance, toward a deeper engagement with self and homeland. Therefore experiencing Min Tanaka's work in Hakushu opened up to new ways of thinking and being (Ness, 2004; Nor, 2009), challenging me to move beyond my comfort zones and providing me with another perspective for approaching dance.

Now back in Aotearoa, Māori perspectives on landscape, identity, and *whakapapa* lend valuable lenses for dancing my homeland. Such an outlook is important in today's current climate, Royal (2009) points out. He discusses how indigenous perspectives hold knowledge essential for today's global climate and ecological crisis. He believes that indigenous epistemologies provide alternative and positive approaches for tackling extreme global issues: "global warming, ecological crises, energy problems and overpopulation make it clear that the way human society relates to the natural world, to Planet Earth, requires considerable improvement" (Royal, 2009, p. 113). BW philosophy supports this thinking in its reverence toward nature: dancing in such a way can bring attention to the inherent qualities in our landscapes and strengthen the connection between people and the earth.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

私は自分の生きていること全体をダンスと呼びたくなってきていて、私はひとつのダンスです」 と言えたらいいなと思うんです。

I am beginning to feel like calling “dance” the entire reality of my living. It would be great if I can announce “I am a dance.” (Tanaka, 2012b, “I Am Beginning”)

The above quotation articulates a Body Weather worldview that suggests dance is not about learning steps or a particular technique; instead it is about deeply connecting to self and soma. In BW, dance embodies an ecological relationship to land, community, body, and personal identity. These attributes of dance reveal the cultural and philosophical perspectives I gained through dance experiences on Min Tanaka’s BW farm. This research has shown how my conceptualisations of dance have broadened and how the BW experience has influenced my practice in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context. The study highlights how intercultural perspectives of dance can enrich trajectories of theory, practice, and performance of dance.

Chapter one explained the impetus for this study and contextualised BW in relation to butoh and Min Tanaka. It also explored BW in the Aotearoa/NZ dance scene, a social history that is new research territory. Chapter two situated the research within relevant literature about expanding our dance notions in terms of technique, training, and the field of somatics. It discussed the effects of global processes for dance, the implications of Aotearoa’s somatic dance context, and butoh and BW’s transplantations across the globe.

The blended practice-based and dance ethnographic lens and tools used for this study were outlined in chapter three, in order to value both embodied dance knowledge

(Barbour, 2005; Fraleigh, 2000), and the detailed context from which it arose (Frosch, 1999). I explained the primary data contexts in the two different geographic locations; detailed the collecting, writing, examining, and interpretation processes of the dance experiences; and discussed how I received feedback and support from colleagues and mentors. I also presented a discussion about the ethical considerations for Aotearoa research (Tolich, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2007), articulated the difficulties implicated in researching dance, and stated my position as researcher.

In the fourth chapter I presented and interpreted BW memoirs and extracted tenets for approaching dance from a BW perspective. These tenets were about the interrelation between daily life and dance, the value of deepening somatic attentiveness, the somatic potential of natural phenomena, and the reconsideration of the correlation between practice and performance. My analysis of the data suggested that transplanting BW tenets to an Aotearoa/NZ dance practice is implicated in transcultural and trans-geographical debate. The chapter shows how BW has challenged and expanded my conceptualisations of dance, and how it can contribute to wider Dance Studies debates about broadening the notion of dance.

The research journey led to understanding BW practice as metamorphic, seeking to extend and utilise somatic capabilities. BW can also cultivate relationships with the natural environment and indigenous cultures, and does not fulfil conventional aesthetic, virtuosic, or entertainment requirements. It therefore challenges some fundamental Western European definitions and practices of dance, and values instead organic body wisdom and transformational processes. BW practice and philosophy has inspired dancers to investigate and perform outside of the studio where the body can encounter the outdoor elements and feel the awe of the natural environment.

BW focuses less on form and more on the unseen aspects of dance such as experiential and sensorial sensibilities such as imagining, orientating, co-ordinating, and diligent focussing. The approach examines not only our body-mind capacity but also our responsive aptitudes. The BW perspective builds and grows inter-relationships within self, community, and the environment; East states that engagement of these relationships in dance “is both an ecological and somatic ideal” (2011, p. 27). Further, Min Tanaka’s quotation above alludes that dance is an important part of understanding our human identity.

Concerning pedagogy, BW offers an intuitive open-ended approach to learning that could be useful for supplementing more established approaches to movement training. In Aotearoa/NZ, Eurocentric notions about learning generally dominate physical education situations (Burrows, 2004), and in contemporary dance institutional power plays a strong role which needs to make way for alternative perspectives and practices (Wilson, 2002). The BW perspective is one such alternative, being a unique approach to dance and movement. It is a kind of research tool valuable for expanding our collective knowledge capacities about the body, creativity, and engagement with local landscapes; sensing, feeling, orientating, and responding are integral techniques for learning about movement, self, and our relationships. Knowledge in BW is found through long-term practice and deep-focussed personal interpretation; the practice expects dancers to value their own insights and movement meaning and Tanaka embodies this way of dancing. I found his pedagogy or guidance facilitated agency and autonomy for individual dancer learning and thinking. Self-responsibility and self-motivation are encouraged through the BW approach.

The work of transplanting BW has led me to explore perspectives and knowledge unique to the cultural landscapes I live in and has deepened my understanding of



homeland and sense of identity. Cruz Banks (2013) notes that dance “frequently seeks to nourish and/or (re)develop somatic relationships with land, sea and ancestors” (p. 31). My responsive somatic practice seeks to strengthen these connections with homeland and self, however there is potential for further research in this area. The work at Aramoana could be developed, for example, to engage more strongly with Aotearoa’s postcolonial predicament, and more consciously explore what Brown (2013) calls dance as an “act of repair” (Brown, 2013). Although I have endeavoured to respect and understand the cultural landscapes that are important conceptions for Aotearoa/NZ because of its post-colonial and bicultural history, deeper understanding is needed on my behalf as researcher and dance-artist. Further research into Māori perspectives on Aramoana would deepen this discussion.

Since the 1970’s Māori sovereignty has been exerted in this country and there has been a relatively recent revitalisation of Māori dance and knowledge, leading to its increased incorporation into mainstream culture (Royal, 2007; 2009). Royal’s work with the modern the day *whare tapere* (2007) discussed in chapter two, and the growth of Māori contemporary dance in the country recently signal this (see the work of Atamira Dance Company, Okareka Dance Company, Kōwhiti Dance, and Louise Potiki Bryant, to name a few). Perspectives from Māori scholars (Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003; Royal, 2003, 2007, 2009) have shown me an ecological paradigm that is valuable for conceptualising self and soma as fluid and part of the natural world. This notion is shared by Min Tanaka’s BW, and by Japanese perspectives of spirituality and creativity. An underlying value that links the two worlds is that land is a rich catalyst for bodily knowledge and creativity, and a source of identity.

The research process has guided the development of my current choreographic practice; it has deepened my awareness of practice and engaged me with indigenous

perspectives. However, I acknowledge that my understanding is limited, and further deeper study into Body Weather's relationship with Māori perspectives should be undertaken. In particular, as suggested above a practical approach in collaboration with local communities would engage the work in a process of intercultural and interdisciplinary conversation. Miki Seifert's dissertation (2011) about her collaboration with a Māori butoh artist and writer Anahera Gildea examined the bicultural implications



*Figure 7. Dancing at Aramoana mole in Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand (video still). Winter, 2012. Image: Rachael Patching*

of their practice and thus provides a good springboard for additional research. Much of the butoh and BW lineage in Aotearoa/NZ has gone undocumented, however these stories are valuable for determining intercultural NZ dance histories, and how dance in this country intersects with the global and multicultural world.

In conclusion, the research has enabled reflection and growth for me as a dancer and dance researcher; it has informed my choices about BW translations in Aotearoa/NZ. I have learnt that BW needs to be deliberately made relevant to my community and

location. The process has enabled me a broader perspective of BW as it interfaces with global discussions and it has given me confidence for engaging in practice, choreography, and performance from a more realistic, aware, and ethical standpoint. I hope this thesis will provide insight into the experience of Tanaka's BW farm and provide an example of how BW work can enhance personal meaning in dance, self-understanding, and a sense of belonging to the places, landscapes, and communities within which we live. I hope it will inspire others to investigate fresh approaches for movement, the body, and dance so that these notions may be continually questioned and reconceptualised.

## Glossary of Māori Terms

**Aotearoa**- New Zealand

**Aramoana**- small coastal settlement near Ōtepoti/Dunedin, meaning “pathway to the sea” in Māori

**hapu**- sub-tribe

**iwi**- tribe

**kahu o te ao**- the fabric of the Universe

**kai moana**- seafood

**Kai/Ngai Tahu**- the predominant tribe of the South Island of Aotearoa/NZ

**korowai**- traditional feather cloak

**mana**- spiritual power or authority; also can be translated as prestige, power, or honour

**manuhiri**- visitor or guest

**māramatanga**- understanding

**mātauranga**- knowledge of the head

**mihimihi**- introductory speech

**mōhiotanga**- intuitive or embodied knowing

**onekura**- red clay or red earth

**Ōtepoti**- Dunedin

**Pākehā**- New Zealand European

**Papatuanuku**- Mother Earth

**tangata whenua**- people of the land/Māori

**taonga**- treasure

**Te Kore**- the void, nothingness, potentiality

**Tikanga Māori**- Māori values

**tohunga**- an expert

**tuangi**- little-neck clams

**whakapapa**- genealogy, ancestorship

**whanau**- family

**whare tapere**- pre-contact houses of entertainment

**whenua**- the land; placenta

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