

Moving Sites explores site-specific dance practice through a combination of analytical essays and practitioner accounts of their working processes. In offering this joint effort of theory and practice, it aims to provide dance academics, students and practitioners with a series of discussions that shed light both on approaches to making this type of dance practice, and evaluating and reflecting on it.

This edited volume combines critical thinking from a range of perspectives including commentary and observation from the fields of dance studies, human geography and spatial theory in order to present interdisciplinary discourse and a range of critical and practice-led lenses through which this type of work can be considered and explored. In so doing, this book addresses the following questions:

- How do choreographers make site-specific dance performance?
- What occurs when a moving body engages with site, place and environment?
- How might we interpret, analyse and evaluate this type of dance practice through a range of theoretical lenses?
- How can this type of practice inform wider discussions of embodiment, site, space, place and environment?

This innovative and exciting book seeks to move beyond description and discussion of site-specific dance as a spectacle or novelty and considers site-dance as a valid and vital form of contemporary dance practice that explores, reflects, disrupts, contests and develops understandings and practices of inhabiting and engaging with a range of sites and environments.

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DANCE

Sophie Williams in rehearsal for *1000 Lovers*
Choreographed by Carol Brown
Photo by Carol Brown

MOVING SITES
Edited by Victoria Hunter

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MOVING SITES
Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance

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Tabor-Smith, who all work in the San Francisco Bay Area in northern California. Notions of mobility, surveillance, permission and control encountered within the super-modern city scape are explored in Melanie Kloetzel's chapter in which she provides a reflective account of her performance work *The Sanitastics* (2011), performed in the Calgary Skywalk System. In her discussion of the process she utilises archaeological examinations, critical commentary, and sensory experiences, and considers how site-specific performance fosters scrutiny of and revelations about human–environment relationships. Kate Lawrence's chapter explores the work of site-dance practitioners Susanne Thomas and Willi Dorner and reflects on their engineering of performer–audience relationships. Through her discussion of particular performance works she considers how, in this type of work, a new set of rules of engagement are employed providing fresh opportunities for artists to engage with the public in different and unconventional ways. In the concluding chapter Katrinka Somdahl-Sands employs a theoretical framework informed by autoethnography and non-representational theory to reflect on the work *Go! Taste the City* by dance artist Olive Bieringa of the BodyCartography Project performed in Minneapolis (2006). Through a reflective account of her own experience as an audience member witnessing the unfolding work she reflects on how this performance proposed a psychogeography of an urban street by transgressing the assumptions about how we move in city spaces.

11 City of lovers

Carol Brown

In Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *The Map-Woman*, a woman's skin is inscribed with a map of the place she grew up (2002: 3). For her, geography is an indelible pattern she cannot escape. In researching urban choreography I was drawn to this poem for its mixture of fact and fantasy in attending to how we are physically inhabited by the places we come from and identify with.

As a dancer and choreographer I am a mover, perpetually interested in and curious about the process of moving through and with space, in and out of time. How we understand and perceive/conceive the space we move through is culturally and psychically specific to the physical environment we inhabit, our memories and associations with that environment and our corporeal potential to be present.

In late 2009, after the arrival of my second child, I shifted my choreographic practice from the transnational potentials of a London art scene and moved 'home' to Aotearoa New Zealand. In the antipodes, my attention has shifted from the specifics of Western European contexts for performance – through touring circuits, festivals, commissions and events – with my company, Carol Brown Dances, to the possibilities for a place responsive critical choreographic practice immanent to the part of the world where I now live.

As choreographer with MAP Movement_Architecture_Performance¹ I have since 2009 been involved in a cycle of works that have been staged on foreshores, on reclaimed land and alongside significant bodies of water where urbanisation and utility infrastructures have redefined the meanings, significance and presence of water. Each of these works involved knowing and accidental audiences participating in ambulatory events through becoming enfolded into the spatial dramaturgy of a performance landscape. All of these works have involved mobile audio-visual technologies that envelop the knowing audience in stories, sounds and images that imaginatively re-tell the (pre)history of each place. Making felt that which is unseen and unspoken, the intention is to reorient the participant towards perceiving their environment differently, in particular by drawing attention to what is hidden, lost and written over by urban development and ecological imperialism.

These projects are part of my research into how choreography can be politically and aesthetically activated in public and civic environments. In this writing I seek to probe the potentials for a practice of charting the contested ground of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, through tracking displacements that open alternative emotional topographies to the dominant narratives of a settler city. In this work, performance echoes pre-colonial, colonial and post- or neo-colonial narratives of encounter.

'Places', as Paul Carter states, 'are made after their stories' (Carter, 2009: 7). The concept of an urban landscape is not just the buildings and infrastructure that compose the city, but the belief systems we invest in it, our evocations of its energies, its flows, its patterns, its life forces, its stories, sedimented histories and invisible subterranean fluids. In acknowledging indigenous Māori understandings of place, or land as *whenua* (a term meaning ground, country, after-birth and placenta) and in working with local Māori, Pacific Island and Pakeha (European New Zealand) performers, I seek a parallel discourse that invests psychic and spiritual values in place and resists the abstractions of the colonial surveyors' pegs and the settlers' white picket fence (Ryan 1997: 372).

Typically, as Nick Kaye (2000) proposes, site-specific dance is understood as a performance of place, but as I have discovered the Western concept of 'site' is inadequate for opening a dialogue with bicultural practice and indigenous ontologies of place in New Zealand as it undergoes a process of decolonisation. Performance events that are 'site specific', while aesthetically, politically and socially 'framed' by the site, remain primarily architecturally and spatially determined (Gotman, 2012). The cultural, historical and spiritual associations of the location generally perform an accidental rather than central part in the performance. And yet, for indigenous peoples one's body is part of the land rather than on the land, like Duffy's *Map-Woman* (2002), the indigenous body is continuous with place and belongs to it.

In the context of 'site dance' the performance work discussed in this chapter emerged through a recognition of the limitations of postmodern discourses that are bound to Western concepts of space and subjectivity.

The performance cycle, *Tongues of Stone* (developed in collaboration with performance designer Dorita Hannah, sound artist Russell Scoones and dancers from STRUT Dance, Perth) explored place memories as bound to stories that hold a sense of deep time. Fed by the flow of stories that emerge from past events, dialogues with local residents and consultation with indigenous experts, *Tongues of Stone* vocalised (through sound) and embodied (through dance) hidden narratives and spaces (through design). Making urban space speak through performance, it mobilised city architectures constructed by corporate and industrial networks as poetic spaces. Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *The Map-Woman*, was a conceptual trigger. Premiered in April 2011 this work launched Perth as a *Dancing City*, part of the *Ciudades que Danzan*, an international network of 32 cities that



Figure 11.1 Sophie Williams in *1000 Lovers*.

Photo by Carol Brown



Figure 11.2 *Tongues of Stone*, Perth CBD.

Photo by Christophe Canato

promote dance as a vehicle for urban expression and civic and cultural regeneration. Subsequently it has been adapted for Auckland through three events: *Blood of Trees* (World Water Day 2012), *1000 Lovers* (Auckland Arts Festival 2013) and *Tuna Mau* (Oceanic Performance Biennale 2013). Using headphonic sound these performances invited the public to question the role of the past in shaping the present and to envisage in what kind of a city they want to live in the future.

Outside

If theatrical space is a concentration of space, focusing inwards from an outside, site-responsive dance is concerned with a more open relational space that takes us literally outside. Contemporary dance, as an art form is most often practiced in the solipsistic site of the dance studio with its paradigmatic flat floor and bare, empty volume of space. Taking dance outside, into the open air reveals the limitations of a practice detached from a physical world of forces and other species. Outside, we are able to witness the variable rhythms, patterns and vibrations of the natural world.

Working in Auckland in a semi-tropical climate permits working outside on a regular basis encouraging an attunement to the weather and to flows of energy in the environment. Working safely and ethically outdoors, however, requires a lot more than a good nose for rain and a thorough assessment of potential physical risks. For developing a feeling for this place demands also paying attention to its cultural and spiritual associations.

In developing choreography on the Auckland harbourfront we sought to cultivate a reciprocity between colonial settler and indigenous ways of telling place. As a non-Māori working in a place of contested cultural values, I was conscious of the need to listen and to be guided in our performance research by local experts. This required becoming a learner.

The stories, myths, embodied memories, names, histories and spiritual values of places, as held in the bones of the living and the dead, form a resonant affective archive. It is, as Levinas states, the reciprocity of these encounters that sustains us as 'all real [*wirklich*] life is meeting' (Levinas, 1993: 36). Levinas's call for an ethics of encounter that is weighted, rhythmic and culturally positioned could be said to align with indigenous Māori values of reciprocity.

The principle of *ako* meaning to both learn and to teach in te ao Māori, affirms the value of coming to know and understand through a reciprocity of exchange between teacher and learner. It recognises and acknowledges the way that new knowledge and understandings can grow out of shared experiences (Alton-Lee, 2003). Walking and talking with Ngāti Whātua adviser Malcolm Paterson along the waterfront, I came to know something of the pre-colonial history of Tāmaki Makaurau (the Māori name for Auckland) and the Waitemata harbour differently from my first-hand experience. He shared stories of the *taniwha* (supernatural creatures often

depicted as serpents or dragons), of the meanings of the harbour's name, *Waitemata* as sparkling obsidian and the more than a thousand years of Māori occupation and use.

In this situation I became particularly concerned with how movement can be politically and aesthetically activated in public and civic environments by making visible that which is invisible and making audible that which is no longer heard. In this writing I seek to probe the potentials for a practice of charting the edge of the land, an indeterminate and fluid site and a place of contact at the limits of what is known, through performance. Like the tidal edge of the land where earth and sea meet, these navigations imagine a reciprocity of contact between human and non-human life; between colonial settler and indigenous ways of telling place; between history and the present; and between performers, audience and passers-by.

As 'site dance' this work dances in dialogue with the forces of the world in a sensuous urban terrain and civic site. Whilst it invites multi-sensate experiences of place and an affective attunement to environment, it is also deeply implicated in the embedded stories, stratifications and tensions of history.



Figure 11.3 *Blood of Trees*, Silo Park.

Photo by James Hutchinson

Moving, placing, storying

Art... is political insofar as it frames not only works or monuments, but also a specific space-time sensorium, as this sensorium defines ways of being together or being apart, of being inside or outside, in front of or in the middle of, etc.

(Rancière, 2006)

Urban space is in a continual process of production, involving imaginations, embodied memories and narratives of space.

In post-settler cities like Auckland, indigenous understandings of place co-exist with Western conceptions of space and geography although these may be suppressed, under-acknowledged or ignored by the dominant stakeholders in urban development. Alternatively they may be embraced through artistic interventions.

A recent motorway project in Auckland City, one of the largest of its kind in Australasia involved visual artist Lisa Reihana being commissioned to incorporate Māori motifs into the design. She described how this collaboration was part of a wider conversation between the local iwi or tribe, Ngāti Whātua, and the city council to create a deeper understanding of the stories from this place. She described this experience as informing the work she subsequently made:

It was really great as an artist of Māori descent being able to walk around Auckland today and really get a sense of what it used to be like. I understand what was going on down there before industry developed.

(Reihana, online 2013a)

Walking in the steps of the ancestors is not only to repeat what happened but also to participate in making something new (Carter, 2009: 13). Journeying together, knowledge is discovered in the landscape and one takes up a position in relation to it. Moana Nepia describes the importance of being able to first position oneself in relation to Papatūānuku (the powerful mother earth figure), before one can have a standpoint (2012: 39). In this way knowledge itself emanates from a situated perspective, not in a fixed way but as part of a process that relates to genealogy or what Māori term *whakapapa*, the primary way that one's rootedness in the world is shaped. Walking the land is a form of sense-making. Heidegger (1993) similarly proposed that by walking we allow the territory traversed to be the guide to both exploration and thought.

In the conditions of settler cities like Auckland undergoing processes of decolonisation, negotiations between the concept of Māori *tikanga* and Western European notions of site-specific choreography, demand cultural sensitivity and a process that engages with cultural advisors. In these conditions a layered sensibility emerges that can be likened to a palimpsest,

not so much one place after another but one place entangled within another (Kwon, 2004).

During my research for *1000 Lovers*, I was invited to think about the drying of fish at the edge of a park once a beach, the pathway of Tuna Mau a stream plentiful with eels now flowing beneath Freemans Bay suburb, and the presence of *waka* (traditional Māori canoes) in a city harbour now known as a 'city of sails' as well as a lost namescape that once marked the value of the surrounding environment for Māori but became supplanted by a roll call of colonial patriarchal administrators.

I argue here that this reshaping and renaming of the land through ecological imperialism projects the spatial thought of another part of the world, Western Europe, onto the watery isthmus of Tāmaki Makaurau in the southern Pacific. This spatial lexicon divorced space from time and regulated the fractal geometry of the coastline by cutting straight lines to form harbours and wharves.

Negotiating rights to place

The founding document of New Zealand signed by representatives of the Queen of England and Māori Chiefs in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi, made a political compact to found a nation state and build a government in New Zealand. However two different versions were signed, Māori understood that they were either retaining the substance of the land in return for the protection of the British crown or they were holding the shadow of the land in exchange for the rights of British citizenship.² Either way, the ongoing debate about the significance of the Treaty and its meanings reveals the gap in thinking about space between a nineteenth-century Western European concept of measurable property determined by fixed points and trigonometry, and an indigenous sense of space that is connected with time, journeys, spiritual values and access to resources. Deleuze seemed to recognize this difference when he stated in relation to Oceanic space:

Does not the East, Oceania in particular, offer something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the Western model of the tree?

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 18)

Contemporary New Zealanders' understandings of space, place and nation are entangled with post-Treaty political, social and cultural debates. These have brought ongoing contestations of land ownership, debates about rights to resources and compensation claims for stolen land. In the context of site dance this context is important because it means that any discourse of place-making that attends to the right/rite to perform is also involved in a negotiation with the resonances of both a pre-European and colonial past.

Rather than being 'post-colonial', New Zealand is in a process of decolonisation. Māori scholar of indigenous methodologies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes five dimensions to this struggle: firstly, awakening critical consciousness of the persistence of hegemonic structures and realising action; secondly, 'reimagining the world' and a Māori sense of the world through creative work; thirdly, a tactical deployment of intersections between disparate ideas, practices and events in the historical moment; fourthly, 'movement or disturbance', destabilising the status quo; and the fifth addressing the underlying code of imperialism, through attending to structures that determine power relations (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 201). It is the second of these, 'reimagining the world', that choreographic intuitions can attend to.

A new thinking (and drawing) practice does not abandon the line but goes inside it. The line is always the trace of earlier lines. However perfectly it copies what went before, the very act of retracing it represents a departure.

(Carter, 2009: 9)

As Paul Carter observes, to reduce the world to an algebra of points and lines opens up 'abysses in both thought and nature' (2009: 8). For the area of Tāmaki Makaurau, the spatial authority of empire deemed the line important because it provided the measure of space and the boundary of site determining the limits of ownership (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 55). But what if these lines at the edge of the land are imagined differently through site-dance performance? If they are no longer blunt edges but stages for directed movement that is affectionate, reciprocal, re-routable and mutable. In the performance cycle *Tongues of Stone* we sought to destabilise the geometry of the line, through a spatial dramaturgy that is porous, dispersed and de-centred.

Paths that reach into the past

It makes you fall in love with your city again.

(Michelle Hine, Audience member, *1000 Lovers*)

If the labour of dance involves turning and returning through multiple dimensions and layers of time and space, it is also a practice of reconfiguring space and what is posterior (behind) in relation to what is anterior (in front); in other words it is a continuous process of reconvening the relation of the past, present and future as simultaneous nodes that reconfigure the space-time sensorium.

Tongues of Stone is a project about deep maps, vertical time and the sedimented spatial histories of place. The work interlaces eras, locations and cultures in response to each particular site within which it takes place.

Shuttling back and forth between history, mythology and the lived present, four mytho-poetic figures (Procne, Philomel, Blind Bride and Widow in Perth; Hine, Slosy Woman, Bride and Tuna in Auckland) and two choruses (five furies and six river runners in Perth; three furies and five elvers in Auckland) perform to a listening public or incidental audience of bystanders, guided on a fragmented journey. The experience is either as a knowing audience immersed in a soundscape (downloaded through soundcloud and received through headphones), or as witness and passer-by to a seemingly spontaneous collision of dance and architecture, where daily distraction is replaced by a spectacle that transforms the particular setting in which it is created and presented.

The event has been accessed by an estimated 10,000 people (Perth CBD 7,600; Auckland CBD 2,400 people) through 19 performances and has involved more than 60 community and professional dancers as performers as well as 44 production and creative collaborators.

In both Perth and Auckland the urban landscape is a protagonist in the work as we attempt to 'make space speak'.³ In Perth the performance journey charted a pathway between the city and the river that attempted to 'mark' the site of invisible lakes whilst negotiating the laneways, public squares, private corporate buildings and roads and footpaths of a busy metropolitan city. In Auckland the journey moves from Waitemata harbour by Silo Park on Wynyard Quarter re-imagined as a primordial landscape to the industrial North Harbour and finishes with a movement into the urban metropolis at Karanga Plaza.

The long red dress that Nina Svraka (performing with a choreographic score based on *Philomela*) wears is both a *tongue* and a *snake*. Thirty metres long and made of red silk, the dress snakes through the city as she moves and is carried, hauled, hung and flown throughout the route of the performance, its metamorphic properties allow it to be variously seen as a river of red, a spectacular cut through the city, a banner/flag, a monstrous dress, a snake and a tongue.

The emotional topography of an ambulatory performance within the urban terrain might be said to propose an alternative mapping beyond the reduction of 'site' to a quantitatively surveyed plot with fixed dimensions. As Paul Carter states:

It does not matter how maps are redrawn unless they are drawn differently. Unless they incorporate the movement forms that characterize the primary experiences of meeting and parting...

(Carter, 2009: 7)

As Figure 11.4 reveals (part of the development of *Blood of Trees*, the first iteration of the project in Auckland), the white wriggling line is the shifting line of the pre-settlement coastline in Auckland City. Beyond it is the linear

outline of the wharf structures that have been built and continue to extend into the harbour since the early nineteenth century.

The natural contours of the land's edge are without fixed dimensions and are impossible to quantify accurately as they defy precise measurement and boundary. Standing at this edge we turn and re-turn at a threshold that is porous, changeable, indeterminate and the maps we have are inadequate to describe this experience. As island people in the southern Pacific, space is loosened from terrestrial centric thinking. Surrounded by the Pacific, the ocean becomes a corporeal and psychic relational vehicle for relationships that pivot around the moving body (Teaiwa, 2008). The ocean is Tangaroa, son of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, Sky and Earth. As an urban Pacific city and part of an island, Auckland is as much defined by the surrounding sea as the volcanic plateau on which much of it is built.

Perth as a coastal city in Western Australia offered a different set of challenges. In *Tongues of Stone* we sought to build a spatial dramaturgy that would resonate with the history of a settler city whilst acknowledging indigenous ontologies of place and the unspoken trauma of *ecological imperialism*. In paying attention to the resonances of disappeared wetlands, *Tongues of Stone* became a performance meditation on the invisible stories of place, reconceiving Perth through the unpossessable rhythms of nature; the flows, counterflows and currents of the city's subterranean fluids.

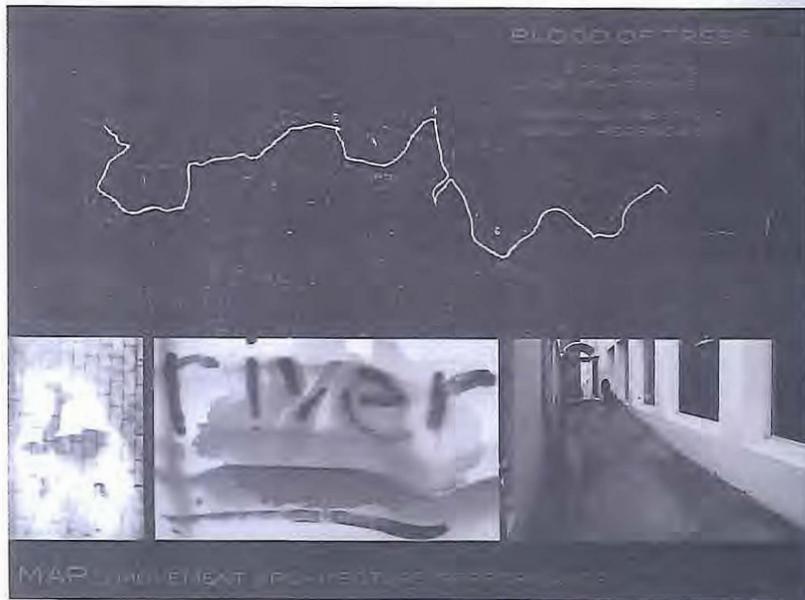


Figure 11.4 The original shoreline of Waitemata Harbour in white and wharves built out into the sea.

Created by Dorita Hannah

Anne Salmond (2012) has written about the challenge to Western conceptions of space through Māori and Pacific life worlds that are highly relational and exist as multi-dimensional webs of reciprocal relations. Like the vitalist tradition within Europe that existed during the Enlightenment, Māori and Pacific ideas of the cosmos see the world as dynamic sets of relations between different life forms expressed through genealogy and connection.

Salmond's thinking chimes with Kéline Gotman's (2012) concept of 'dancing-place', a relational understanding of the term 'site' that shifts it towards a more affective sphere; one where a place of significance becomes a crossroads for a community to reconfigure kinship through the intersection of relationships, histories and cultural memories.

Dancing-places

Gotman adopts the term 'dancing-place' from the work of the late cultural geographer Joël Bonnemaïson (2005) who coined the term to describe the choreo-spatial practice of a sacred ritual developed by the Tanna people of Vanuatu in the South West Pacific. According to Bonnemaïson the Tanna people liberated themselves by 'de-converting' from the Christian Missionaries who settled on their island from the 1860s. The neo-pagan ritual of *toka* is framed by a 'dancing-place' suggesting it could be a tactic of decolonisation. These ritual places are clearings in the forest at the place where a number of pathways meet. Each 'dancing-place' gathered several hamlets or kinship segments within the same area of social relation, becoming a micro territory for cultural enactment. As Gotman explains, at these sites the 'embedded past' thickly colours the present (Gotman, 2012: 10). Like 'crossroads dancing' in Ireland, the 'dancing-place' is literally an intersection where pathways and peoples meet and dance together. It is a geo-cultural and a geo-historical 'centre of gravity' a place with pull, weight and force and it acts contrapuntally in relation to the present (Gotman, 2012: 8).

In each iteration of the performance cycle *Tongues of Stone* (*Dancing City*, *1000 Lovers*, *Blood of Trees* and *Tuna Mau*) we sought to create a matrixial space that danced place through choreographing relations between the past and the present. In many regards this aligns with Gotman's concept of a 'retro-garde' practice that reaches 'back' to roots and draws attention to their role in the present construction of the event. However, aspects of Gotman's definition of dancing-place don't fully align with practices where spaces and histories of place are contested and unresolved such as in the context of post-colonial Perth and a decolonising Auckland.

In Figure 11.2 a man eating a hamburger pushes into one of the performers in *Tongues of Stone – Perth Dancing City*. Seemingly affronted by the sight of the female performers occupying a public zone outside the Murray Street Underground he attempted to disrupt the performance.



Figure 11.5 Carol Brown in *Tuna Mau*.
Photo by Emily O'Hara

Gotman proposes that through 'dancing-place' the past 'becomes theatrical' but I want to suggest that it can also disrupt the real, creating very real frictions and fissures in the fabric of daily life (Gotman, 2012: 10). In this sense it breaks with the illusion of the theatrical and a sense of gravity as a pull to a renewed sense of centre. Contrary to this, I suggest that ambulatory performances that reimagine the city as a journey through time operate horizontally, crossing boundaries, creating new folds and intersections, making tears and ruptures in the psychogeography of the city and the sense of the real. For real transformations occur through rupture and not just evolutionary change.

If the quality of a 'dancing-place' is historic and relational, performers and audience alike engage in a 'contrapuntal relation' with the past opening the potential for affective resonance. In this way the 'dancing-place' can become a locus for reconfiguring relationships, possibly even for repair of a damaged or alienated relationship to culture and environment. I would like to extend the idea of a 'dancing-place' through consideration of urban waterfronts as places of meeting, parting and historical conflict where Rancière's call for articulating opposing regimes of historicity (Rancière 2000: 35) might be felt in the performance of diverse spatial orders, species and relations of belonging and difference. Rather than place being defined by fixed points, I would propose that such a topographical mapping is inherently nomadic, and dispersed through rhizomatic pathways.

Wandering and wondering between city and sea

Choreography is a trace-work of feeling in time. Choreography is that which connects the animate to the inanimate, the air to the ground, the living to the dead.

(Heathfield 2013: online)

1000 Lovers played on the idea of return through a performative re-membering of the relation between the city and the sea: one that does not rely on mastery, control or discipline but on desire, recovery and survival. The title is drawn from Auckland's Māori name *Tāmaki Makau Rau*, which translates not only as 'isthmus of one thousand lovers', but may also be understood as the place of many lovers. *1000 Lovers* took place on a porous site on Auckland's waterfront, where the limits of the body and the contingent edge of the land meet and are negotiated by the shifting volume of the sea. The dramaturgy centred around the central figures of Hine, Tuna, black widow, blind bride and a crew of eel-women or elvers. These composite figures emerged from our research into the pre-European and colonial histories of the waterfront as well as through layers of mythical, genealogical and ecological storytelling acquired through walks with local Māori (Ngāti Whātua) as discussed earlier, waterfront workers, observations and recordings as well as the dancers' own embodied histories and family stories.

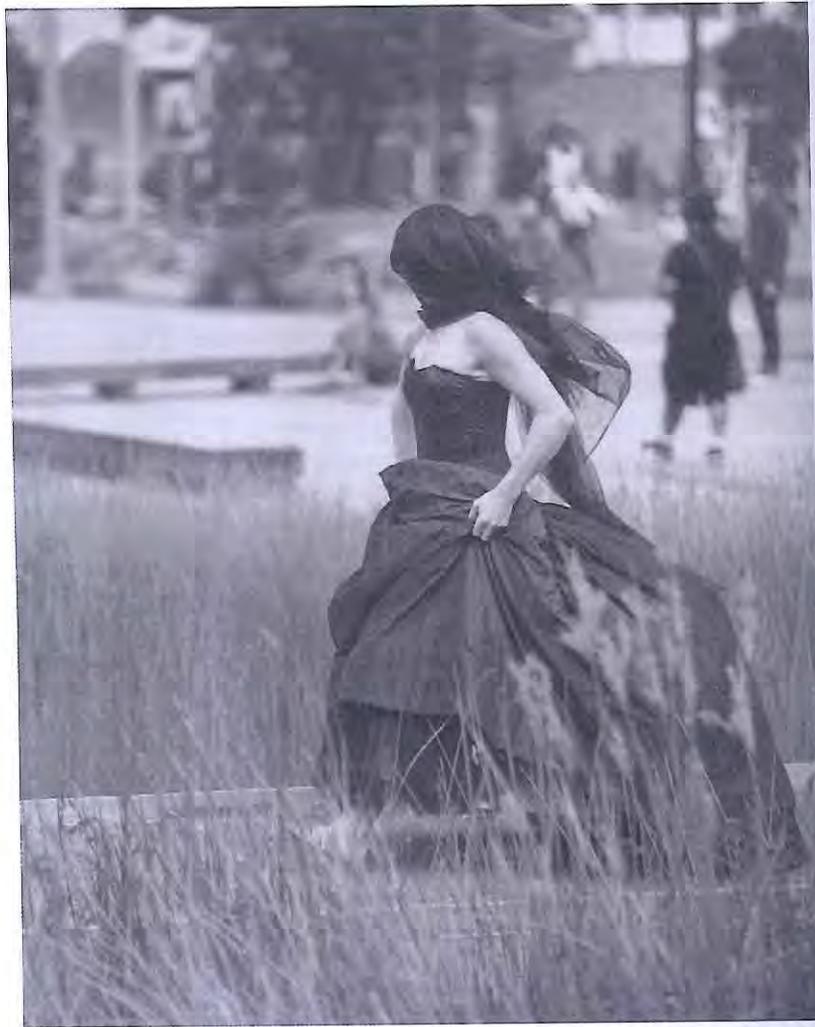


Figure 11.6 Carol Brown in *1000 Lovers*.
Photo by Dean Carruthers

What emerged from the research was a pattern of changing values and purpose attached to the harbour site through its pre-European, colonial industrial, marine and fishery and contemporary recreational uses. Some of these historical layers are embedded in the radical reshaping of this edge of land through the gradual extension of the wharf into the sea, the deep shafts of toxins beneath the industrial silos, the culverting of buried streams and the marine life that pushes beneath the wharf to find its instinctual

route.⁴ Other layers are to be found in the regular waka ama training that happens on the harbour, in the stories of the Taniwha that is said to swim beneath the harbour bridge and in the cultural memories of a once plentiful shellfish bed at the site of the nearby Victoria Park. Contemporary urban waterfronts are important heritage, industrial and commercial zones and figure prominently in urban planning, however they are also zones of encounter which recall and are embedded with memories of 'first contact' between peoples, between sea and shore and between interior and exterior. Chris Balme (2006) describes the cross-cultural encounter of colonialism in the Pacific as theatrical as much as economic, sexual or political (xii). In this context the body is perhaps the most complex site of exchange as it is the place where the transmission of culture was enabled. Given that the theatricalising of difference was arguably a prerequisite of colonialism, as both Pacific and European peoples used performance as a form of cultural negotiation, the shoreline, the place of first contact becomes a loaded 'site'.

As Paul Carter describes,

the coastline... is also the place where Western and non-Western people are suddenly exposed to one another. As an imaginary place, quarantined off from the normal comings and goings of social life, it incubates strange, and often fatal, performances.

(Carter 2009: 9)

In *1000 Lovers* as well as *Tuna Mau* I perform the role of the Black Widow. Veiled in black and wearing the silhouette of a colonial mourner I stand on the edge of the harbour and hover, 'like a black-gulled bird' (as fellow performer Moana Nepia described). My movements combine a gliding, skimming action as I move continuously across the surface of the harbour, over the paving stones, bridges, roads and under the silos, with cursive gestures that probe the air as if searching for thoughts that remain unfinished and float off in the wind-swept air. Along the way I meet and encounter other figures – Sophie Williams who performs the role of Hine, a Māori ancestress who is searching for the eel-man; Georgie Goater who defies expectation with her energetic punk moves in a colonial bridal gown; Moana Nepia who emerges from the harbour water to cross through the reedbeds to reach the city as an eel-man (Tuna); and a crew of young women who navigate the harbour, keeping watch on the other performers and moving across its surfaces and structures with strongly rhythmic bursts of action and still witnessing.

Eels formed a central motif within this work as we sought to develop a somatic language that was 'site-specific' without being anthropocentric. The movement patterns of eels as well as their migratory routes in crossing from freshwater to saltwater over vast distances shaped a spatial dramaturgy that involved thinking of the urban habitat as an eely place.

Trained in hip hop, kapa haka, Western contemporary and Tongan dance the performers in *1000 Lovers* possessed protean movement qualities which were well suited to exploring the possibilities of 'becoming eel'. This movement research was not about a mimetic representation of eel but rather an affective resonance *with eel*. Movement research began with a corporeal mapping, starting with the eyes and a sense of a fish spine. What do eels' eyes see? How do they look as they probe the shady banks of the local streams? How might a 'fish swish' pattern on the floor translate into a homolateral sinuous quality of movement? A series of movement motifs emerged including a swishing pattern of hips side to side, a rippling undulating pattern that moved backwards and forwards, and a somatic image of spine as a long tail that could carve through the air initiating from either tailbone or top of the neck. We also developed ensemble material that worked with the tangling and knotting behaviours of eels as they cluster and congregate. Performative hybrids – eel-women and eel-men – emerged from this research to inform the dramaturgy for a crew of elvers (or young eels).

A further layer to the process of the choreography involved working with the pan-Pacific story of Hine and Tuna. The myth tells of how Hine, the wife of Maui (half-man, half-god hero in Polynesian myth), seduces the eel-man, Tuna. After learning of her seduction the avenging god mutilates and dismembers Tuna's body, which forms different species of fish, eel, grass and the blood red stain of the native rimu tree. In our story an eel-man and five elvers (young eel-women) – unable to find their streams – emerge from the sea and intersect with parallel narratives of a colonial bride and widow before leaving the harbour to take on new roles in the city.

In *1000 Lovers* the story of Hine and Tuna forms a compass and architecture through which we navigate the shoreline as a place of strange encounters (Solnit, 2013: 3). For Māori, tuna (eels) are taonga (treasure) a food source and a cultural marker from Tangaroa (god of the sea). Within a Western imagination the sea is a place of passage, journeys, sport and recreation and eels are popularly regarded as slippery, slimy, even abject creatures. However, in working across two different varieties of eel knowledge, a somatic mapping of their movement patterns and a retelling of the story of Hine and Tuna through embodied narratives, we sought to open a dialogue with the shoreline that was layered and non-linear and moved beyond the privileging of the anthropocentric. Architectural and choreographic thinking combined, re-routing urban subjects in alignment with Hine's desire and the imagined movement of eels.

1000 Lovers invited visitors to co-define their relation to the city through participating in a 'lovers discourse' that charts the journey of Hine as she searches for her eel-man (Tuna) (Barthes, 1978). Charting the performance journey through an emotional topography of longing, desire and jouissance we choreographically sought to unsettle and unground the imperial project whose authority names and polices the waterways through extending the



Figure 11.7 Moana Nepia in *1000 Lovers*.

Photo by Dean Carruthers

colonial ground into the sea, cutting the coastline, culverting streams, polluting the harbour and denying a pre-colonial namescape. Through an ambulatory journey that crossed a linear strip of reclaimed harbour and in moving from sea to city, we activate embedded memories and invisible histories, referencing the once abundant kaimoana (seafood) and the now absent Tuna Mau (stream of eel) entangling the subterranean past with the over-written present towards a future that acknowledges the co-existence of primordial states, indigenous genealogies, diverse histories and meanings of place. The contemporary urban shoreline through the flows of bodies, the crossing, swimming, salvaging and surrendering of lovers, provides the place for a strange encounter through which we seek to recover and repair a sense of pastness in present, rather than reclaim or lament a lost pre-colonial landscape.

Ways of love

To love someone is to put yourself in their place, we say, which is to put yourself in their story, or figure out how to tell yourself their story.

(Solnit, 2013: 3)

The sense of the other's excess, experienced as wonder, is the primary condition of an ethical attitude. An ethical feeling *for* the earth, counters the instrumental view of the world as a resource for extraction. As we have seen, colonialism and global modernity have abstracted the particularities



Figure 11.8 Georgie Goater in *1000 Lovers*.
Photo by Dean Carruthers

and vitality of our geophysical environments, downgrading the history of local and indigenous relationships to the earth and replacing these with an economy of sameness as exemplified by the blandness of the term 'site' (Boetzkes, 2010: 56). As Mick Smith (2009) explains, the power of ethical feelings is found in the excess that transcends self-interest and refuses to force nature to fit into the categories of the symbolic order.

The disruption and de-familiarisation of public expectations about the purpose and function of a location has been an important aspect of my approach to place-responsive choreography. Together with my collaborating artists, including performers, we attempt to generate a *feeling for place* that loosens the coding of the location from its contemporary function and nomenclature.

As Mick Smith makes clear, emotions can be understood as events that 'take place in and through, the real world and real beings' and are amongst the most important ways in which we are both connected and disconnected from our world and mortality (Smith, 2009: 2). Rather than perform the celebrated role of flâneur as a detached observer in the city, this work is closer to Guy Debord's situations or moments of life in which we take an active part and where spectatorship is not an option (1957). Psychogeography becomes a strategy through which the specific effects of the geophysical environment create alternative maps for the unconscious imaginary. Rather than urban choreography expressing an 'intangible point of return' imbued with the imprint of the past as 'dancing-place,' how might a dance create a place for tangled memories that cast lines in different directions, that hold tensions, that tug at memories, that intertwine and bleed? Like Carol Ann Duffy's *Map-Woman*, how might a feeling for place be in our bones and not just written on our skins?

Shore line as continuous line

As a choreographer and performer situated in Aotearoa New Zealand, I am in continuous dialogue with the question of *how not to be imperial*. This task solicits from me the requirement to listen differently, to pay attention and to avoid the projection of a northern hemisphere cosmology onto a southern one.

How we conceive of the land we stand upon, that holds our weight and bearing in the world is historically and culturally determined and defined often in opposition to that which is ungrounded and fluid. If we consider 'land as the bruising medium of life itself' (Somerset, 2013: 34) rather than as a mere setting or backdrop for existence, we enter into a different form of dialogue with it and, potentially, way of performing place. The concept of a liquid ground that resists stability, fixity, centrality and linearity as theorised by Luce Irigaray is appealing in this context especially as it returns us to that place where our feet feel movement, exchange and interaction at the point of contact.

In me everything is already flowing and you flow along too if you only stop minding such unaccustomed motion, and its song. [...] So remember the liquid ground.

(Irigaray, 1991: 37)

If the West, as Irigaray claims, has taken the 'wrong path', if Western subjects are urged on by something their culture has deprived them of, if they have experienced a loss of sensory intelligence in their relations with nature and the other and are trying to find the *crossroads* again how might indigenous knowledges and practices from the edge of the world speak back to the 'centre'? How might we create a place through performance at the crossroads of cultures and the edge of the town?

Like 'crossroads dancing' in Ireland, the 'dancing place' is literally an intersection where pathways and peoples meet and dance together. It is a geo-cultural and a geo-historical 'centre of gravity' a place with pull, weight and force and it acts contrapuntally in relation to the present (Gotman 2012: 8). Although useful in reconceiving 'site dance' within the condition of a city undergoing decolonization, it is a term that is however locked into a terrestrial consciousness. In reframing 'site dance' for a watery isthmus, perhaps we could adopt Deleuze's term of liquid perception where movement, rather than being from one point to another as it is on land, is always between two movements (Deleuze, 2005: 82).

My interdisciplinary dance practice is concerned with a spatial poetics that *tracks* corporeal knowing through choreography that is intimately located within dynamic compositions of place-making. As interdisciplinary performances that attend to the sensate city this work is a form of creative re-remembering, a putting back together of things brought from elsewhere with the multiple layers and specificities of each site (Carter, 2004). It is a choreography written from the perspective of place that folds historical, ancestral and embodied memories through interaction in the local specific context. In this way it releases energy.

This work has evolved in part through conversations with indigenous artists and pacific thinkers whose ways of knowing transcend Western modernity alongside an ongoing preoccupation with choreography that attends to sensate life and the patterns that can be invented when nature and culture are in conversation.

Tuna Mau involved a development of the original production *1000 Lovers* through a more porous spatial dramaturgy that allowed audiences to congregate and cluster across a dispersed performance landscape. Theatre writer Jonathan Marshall described the choreography as a series of pathways defining 'an axial or lineal push or pull' as well as 'coils, spirals and elevations of various degree' as the women performers 'curve around the end of one or more of the lines which are created between them whilst other trajectories cross at right angles or parallel to such virtual corridors stretching from one distant actor to another' (Marshall, 2013). Attention to

the architecture and sight-lines of the site open the potential for connecting diverse zones. The performers draw attention to the long view, turning between what is historically and physically distant and lost and the here and now of the present. Standing on the gantry they peer towards the disappeared stream *Tuna Mau*, navigating the reedbeds they move forward towards the city, standing on the steps of the wharf they strip to their underclothes and face the sea.

Swampy thinking

To think through difference in performance and to site work that has emerged through pacific contexts and practices in a harbour city, is to forge connections and to open a space for re-imaginings of the past and the present. A place perhaps where an 'order of relations' reverberates with the generative force of memories, affects, sensations, ideas and dreams. A place that might include an interweaving, a reconciling and a complicating of the past with the present, the distant and the near, the antipodean and the European, the sea and the land (Salmond, 2012).

But I want to be cautious here. Any understanding of Māori and Pacific concepts should not have as its aim their incorporation into a predominantly Western dance practice. Rather, I would argue that knowledge of these differences carries the potential to open up the possibilities for new crossings, creative methods, collaborations, forms of practice and species of dance. Such practices can be considered localised interventions resistant to neocolonial globalism. As practices of encounter they vibrate at the edges, between inside and outside, performer and audience, releasing the global at the threshold of the local.

The choreography we create in these times of change is filled with intersecting lines and diverging paths that are constantly re-routing. These track messages of our commitments, our corporeal habitations and our positions on the future. Each becomes a figure of possibility rippling concentrically from a drop in the ocean and swelling into the plenitude of energies that surface spectres of the past as well as visions for the future.

Notes

- 1 Movement_Architecture_Performance was created by performance designer Dorita Hannah, sound designer Russell Scoones and choreographer Carol Brown in 2002.
- 2 Nōpera Pana-kareao encapsulated Māori understanding of the treaty based on promises from the British that it would control Pākehā settlers and protect Māori lands, saying, 'Ko te atarau o te whenua i riro i a te kuini, ko te tinana o te whenua i waiho ki ngā Māori' (The shadow of the land will go to the Queen [of England], but the substance of the land will remain with us). One year later he reversed his opinion, saying that the substance of the land had gone to the Queen and that Māori retained only the shadow.
- 3 See Brown and Hannah (2011).

- 4 Peta Turei described baby sharks and young eels finding their way up the pipes beneath the wharf and reclaimed land mass towards the now buried stream inlet of *Tuna Mau*.

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1000 Lovers www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSMdJ9t4P7Q

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12 Dancing the history of urban change in the Bay and beyond

Caroline Walthall

This chapter explores the work of choreographers who are inspired by social activism, community and neighborhood history, and the process of change. The choreographers surveyed include Joanna Haigood, Jo Kreiter, and Ana Tabor-Smith, who all work in the San Francisco Bay Area in northern California. These three women are contemporaries with intertwined histories of their own and with a shared interest in peeling back the layers of public life in San Francisco. This chapter looks closely at a range of choreographic approaches employed within a subgenre of site dance work that is both historically and socially oriented. Like a historical diorama, this subgenre, which I will refer to as “social-historical site dance,” (SHSD) takes documentary materials as its starting point. As the layers of stories and movement accumulate, social-historical site dance shares goals of embodying hope, paying tribute, defying limits, and activating critical thought through the audience–performer relationship.

Furthermore, my aim is to survey the methods used by social-historical site choreographers to achieve collisions in our sense of time and activate audience awareness of the processes of migration, displacement, and change. In San Francisco, SHSD work plays out on city streets containing ubiquitous branches of Starbucks and Forever21, and on some of the city's most blighted blocks. In these complex spaces of conflicting socio-economic agendas and experiences, the practice of signing calls people's attention to the deeper struggles beneath our future-oriented experiences of time. Haigood, Kreiter, and Tabor-Smith help peel back the layers of immediacy, commerce, and power which obscure the fact that cities are enormously complex palimpsests of communal history and memory (Lippard, 1997: 196).

Place and community are easily conflated, yet in densely populated environments where hundreds of groupings of like individuals converge, we quickly realize that common geography does not necessarily equate to common social experience. As the blueprint of each global city begins to look more and more like the next, dotted with familiar corporate brands and conveniences, the task of truly understanding the nuances of one's neighborhood history becomes increasingly difficult. Lucy Lippard, author