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A HANDBOOK OF SITUATED MAKING

SOPHIE FETOKAKI

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield
June 2021



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A note on the text

Non-English words are not italicised. Single quotation marks are used for emphasis and double quotation marks are used for direct quotes. Translations with no credited translator are my own.

Abstract

This thesis explores the restoration and cultivation of mutually constitutive relationships between technique and identity. I begin by establishing the framework of practice that will be used throughout the thesis, in which I define practice by the methodological conditions of open-endedness, repeatability, intuition, situatedness and autonomy. I critique the practices of classical vocal pedagogy, the field of my own training and one about which critical scholarship is distinctly lacking. I argue that these practices effect a violent separation between technique and identity by means of the fetishisation of technique, ideologies of transcendence, structural whiteness and the reification that structures spaces of training and practice. I establish a theoretical framework, grounded in the work of Ben Spatz, for understanding the relationships between the repetition and sedimentation of technical knowledge and the always ongoing formation of identity, and explore the defetishisation of technique and the objects and practices in which it is encoded both in the university's practice-as-research context and in the work of two artists and collaborators, Ragnar Kjartansson and Monia Sander Haj-Mohammed. Grounded in an intertextual reading of philosophies of immanence, philosophical pragmatism and feminist epistemology, I articulate the notion of *situational emergence* in processes of technical development and explore the broader scope and significance of lifelong transformation through technique. With this basis, I give an account of the works in the portfolio, exploring methodologies of defetishisation and situated making, and highlighting the ways that forms emerge in and through durational processes that are always specifically situated in time and place.

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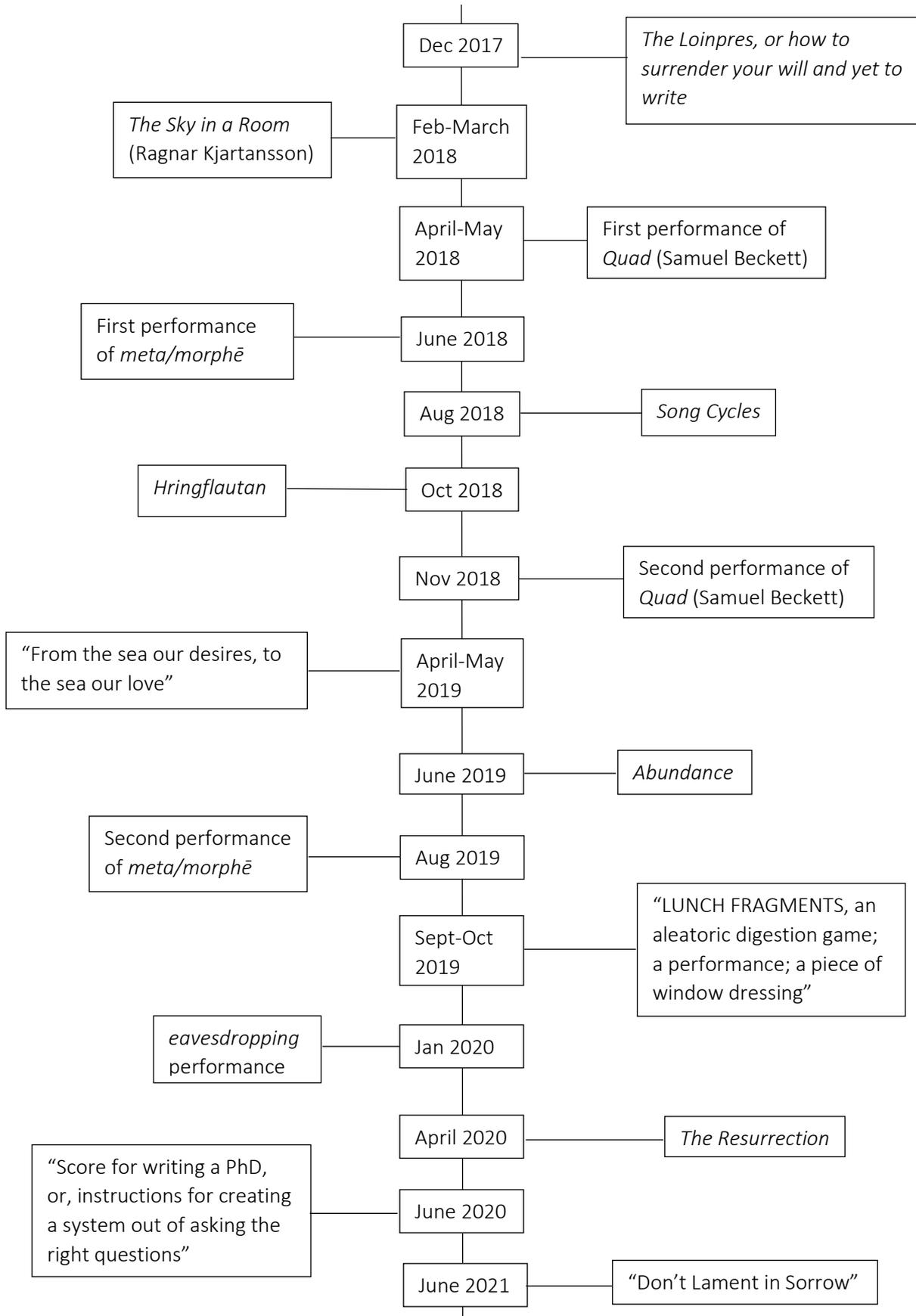
I am grateful to Giorgos Venizelos, whose love, companionship and tireless reproductive labour have been the foundation and the frame of this last year of my life.

I am grateful for the moon, which will rise full today in the gathering dusk. I am grateful for the sun, that restores me. I am grateful for the sea, that holds me. I am grateful to the plants, for helping me to look deeper and to think slower, and to the trees, for reminding me that I am only human.

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Timeline of Works



Write what you wish for!

— Esperanza Spalding quoting Wayne Shorter

Introduction: why practice?

In combination with a portfolio of works, this thesis constitutes my practice-as-research (hereafter PaR) doctoral submission. The disciplinary context prescribed by the University of Huddersfield is ‘music performance,’ and I situate myself in relation to this and the PaR context in a number of ways. In a sense, I have reflected separately on those four words: practice, research, music, performance. I have asked what each word means to me, and what relations exist or can be forged between them. I have excavated the field of each term, each mode of being, and what I have found there has differed according to the duration and depth of my relation with the terms. I have an old, deeply stratified and sedimented relation to ‘music,’ and to ‘performance.’ ‘Practice’ and especially ‘research’ are newer terms, newer areas of becoming. The repeated and cyclical movement back and forth between these different rooms is what has drawn this thesis out into its current form.

I have had many different experiences within the field we call music, and over the years have studied and internalised aspects of musical traditions as disparate as 17th century Italian opera, Wolof Sabar from Senegal, electroacoustic composition and Brazilian bossa nova. Classical singing was the field in which I received my most sustained training, initially as a teenager in Cyprus and later with a teacher at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (2004-08); in a two-year programme at Trinity Laban Conservatoire (2008-10); at the Conservatoire of Amsterdam, where I completed a bachelor’s in voice (2010-14); and subsequently with private teachers in Vienna and London (2014-16). This led to the short-lived development of a career in the field, which involved a few years of freelance singing, chiefly in contemporary and early music, which came to a kind of breaking point in 2016 when I sang a small role in Louis Andriessen’s *Theatre of the World*, a job in which I worked with opera director Pierre Audi and the late conductor Reinbert de Leeuw, performing at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles with the L.A. Philharmonic and at Carré Theatre in Amsterdam with Asko|Schönberg. I never had a comfortable relation to the field of classical vocal performance, and by the time of the Andriessen project I was also organising interdisciplinary performance nights in Amsterdam and had just begun to receive funding for them. The fork that was opening in my path was exemplified on the day of the dress rehearsal for *Theatre of the World*, when I scrambled out of my corset, thigh-high boots, lobster helmet and make-up to race over to the venue where I was hosting a performance event called “Text // Beyond Text,” exploring “the relationship of text to music, of performance to voice, of voice to repetition, of composition to writing” (Doorkruising 2016). It was not clear to me until sometime later that the reason I was able to find the energy to host and perform in a night that I had curated after a day of rehearsing and performing a full-length opera was because the opera had been suffocating me, and I needed the

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experimental performance nights to feel like I could breathe again. By the time I entered the PhD I had left the path of pursuing a career in classical singing, but my feelings about the whole matter were so conflicted and painful that I was hardly singing at all. In place of the pursuit of a career in classical singing, I began to build relations of kinship with individual artists and with communities of artists in the various places I lived, travelled to and worked. Over time, these relations coalesced into a network, with nodes in The Netherlands, Cyprus, and the U.K., and later in Iceland, Finland, Denmark and Ireland.

When I began the process of writing this thesis almost one year ago, I did not want to write about my background in classical singing. I wanted to consider that chapter closed, and to pick up where it had ended. But as I began to write, I realised that there was so much about my training and professional experience in classical singing that was still unsaid, both by me as an individual and within the field. I also began to see the causal relationships between the restrictive structures in my training and professional practice as a singer and the kinds of open-ended, situated practices I was cultivating in my artistic practice during the course of the PhD. Rather than ending when I finished making work, the practice-based research process transformed into the writing process, moving forward with a force that blew away the debris and dust that had settled on my relation to music and revealed to me the ground on which I had been standing. I began to see that the problems of classical vocal pedagogy and practice had resulted in a violent separation between my technique and my identity, and many long-term restrictions in my artistic practice. This in turn revealed that what I had been researching in my practice during the course of the PhD was the *relationship* between technique and identity, and methodologies of restoration that could repair the alienation of the one from the other. The writing process continued this research by uncovering the particular *ways* in which the separation is effected in the field of classical vocal training and certain areas of music pedagogy more broadly, and teasing out and contextualising, in retrospect, the knowledge of alternative modes of learning and creation that I had been generating in my practice.

As my PhD submission as a whole explores situated methodologies, situating myself in relation to certain events of 2020 was a necessary and deeply significant aspect of the early stages of my writing process in the summer of that year. The COVID-19 outbreak and global uprisings against systemic racial oppression and police violence caused me to pause and reconsider my work in light of what the moment was teaching me. I simply could not begin a year-long writing process that expediently blocked those lessons out. So I began to dive into new literature, including theories of social reproduction, gendered and racialised labour, critical race studies, whiteness studies, Black radical theory and practice, Black feminism, feminist epistemology and intersectionality. The knowledge I was acquiring

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precipitated an explosion of what had already been boiling under the surface during the course of the PhD, namely the realisation of the many ways in which my gendered experience of music learning intersected with my exposure to musical practices characterised by transcendent hierarchies, the abuse of power, whiteness and cultural colonialism, and that this concoction had effectively been poisoning my relationship to music for decades. In acquiring a deeper structural understanding of the causes of my own alienation from my voice and my musical body, I was also able to move towards a deeper sense and practice of solidarity with others, not only because I was becoming more informed about specific systemic injustices, but because my ability to *imagine what I don't know* was also expanding, and the notion of difference and incommensurability as a starting-point was beginning to sediment itself in my body. This process revealed a new research horizon beyond that concerned with the relationship between technique and identity, namely the question of the relationships that exist or can exist between knowledge and transformation.

I did not feel that the discipline of 'music' as I knew it could hold all of this, and my troubled connection to the field meant that seeking a framework deeply rooted in it would involve a lot of time wasted on overcoming my own resistance. This was at times difficult, and in the beginning of the research process I regularly confessed guiltily to my supervisors that I wasn't really interested in music as such, and my sources were rarely drawn from that field. In 2019, a particularly exhausting and financially impoverishing summer of work (both my own projects and freelance gigs) coincided with my discovery of the "Documents of Contemporary Art" anthology series, in particular the volume *Practice* (Boon and Levine 2018), and with my deepening engagement with the work of my supervisor Ben Spatz, in particular *What a Body Can Do* (2015). As my sense of the inadequacy of 'music' as a disciplinary framework was compounded by my frustration with the oppressive, alienating concept of professionalism and 'work,' 'practice' emerged as a framework that could hold everything I was diving into and pushing against, excavating and discarding. Practice gave me the framework within which to theorise all my seemingly disparate concerns, the technical, the individual and the cultural, identity, labour, work, training, neoliberalism, agency, power, knowledge, spirituality, research, song. Suddenly I had a means of deciding which books I would and would not take away with me on writing trips. It all began to fit together, and I had a conceptual framework inside of which I could begin to build.

But why practice? It was the durational dimension of practice as a framework that allowed me to draw together my research into the relationship between technique and identity and my developing ideas around the relation of knowledge to transformation. Conceptualisations of practice as open-ended revealed more complex, dynamic relationships between means and ends than I had encountered in the

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field of music scholarship and performance, which so often, even in experimental circles, seem to be haunted by the various teloi of musical ontologies. Likewise, the repeatability of process that characterises theorisations of practice allowed me to release my conceptualisations of technical development from fixed outcomes and notions of mastery. With the framework of practice and duration I could easily draw in reflections and theorisations from beyond the field of music, relating processes of artistic production to identity formation and other modes and timelines of becoming. It also gave me the theoretical means to move away from a central focus on the works, something I had been wanting to do since the beginning of the research process. I was engaged in *situated making* long before deliberately exploring the notion of the situation or of situatedness, and as such I was always primarily concerned with the many different threads of duration that wove together into any particular act of making. A focus on the works as moments in which I applied and developed my knowledge about artistic production seemed from the very beginning deeply alienating to me. It felt like getting it backwards.

Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold explore this notion of a “backwards reading” of cultural practices in their introduction to *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (2007), where they are speaking to the anthropological notion of creativity as “innovation” and “radical disjuncture” (2007, 2–3). Hallam and Ingold resist this reading, arguing that creativity is much better understood as ‘improvisation’ than ‘innovation’ and that the difference between the two terms “is not that the one works within established convention while the other breaks with it, but that the former characterizes creativity by way of its processes, the latter by way of its products” (2007, 2). Their critique of creativity as innovation articulates the same concerns as those that motivated me to embed my acts of making within a wider matrix of meaning, both situational and durational:

To read creativity as innovation is, if you will, to read it backwards, in terms of its results, instead of forward, in terms of the movements that gave rise to them. This backwards reading, symptomatic of modernity, finds in creativity a power not so much of adjustment and response to the conditions of a world-in-formation as of liberation from the constraints of a world that is already made. It is a reading that celebrates the freedom of the human imagination – in fields of scientific and artistic endeavour – to transcend the determination of both nature and society. In this reading, creativity is on the side not only of innovation against convention, but also of the exceptional individual against the collectivity, of the present moment against the weight of the past, and of mind or intelligence against inert matter.

(2007, 2–3)

The resistance to neoliberal individual exceptionalism that underlines these arguments has become so sedimented in my own research and practice that I have little use for the concept ‘artist’ anymore,

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unless it is to be redefined as a particular kind of healer, a person who makes concentrated use of relational form-giving techniques to create rituals in which the many hardened barriers of our social lives can be made porous for a moment. But this came *through* the PhD. During the PhD I was engaged in a methodology of deferral – of the form of the works, the form of the thesis, the framing of the questions, the boundaries of the project – designed to avoid commodifying and fetishising my activity for the sake of an authority that would tell me in advance what it was to become.

This begs the question of the relationship of the submitted works to the thesis and of the practice to the research. As someone who easily moves between what we might term ‘modes’ of acquiring and sharing knowledge, this question has always seemed something of a red herring, or a false problem. It is a consequence of the university’s privileging of text over every other form of archiving, a problem that arises not from a state of affairs but from a too-narrow statement of terms. An account of these kinds of false problems, and of the importance to philosophical methodologies of the uncovering and stating of true problems, is given by Deleuze in *Bergsonism*, Deleuze’s explication of Bergson’s notion of intuition as a method of philosophical inquiry. Deleuze writes:

We are wrong to believe that the true and the false can only be brought to bear on solutions, that they only begin with solutions. This prejudice is social (for society, and the language that transmits its order-words [*mots d'ordre*], "set up" [*donnent*] ready-made problems, as if they were drawn out of "the city's administrative filing cabinets," and force us to "solve" them, leaving us only a thin margin of freedom).
(1988a, 15)

The ontological problem of practice and research, of portfolio and thesis, is this sort of a ready-made problem, the condemnation of which is given by Bergson as the first act that determines the rules of the method of intuition – the second being the discovery of “genuine differences in kind” (Deleuze 1988a, 14). This leads to my next observation, namely that what the university asks of us is to engage in incommensurable activities, to straddle “divergent epistemic worlds” (Spatz 2015, 45) – and then to defend that position, to show by some feat of hermeneutic gymnastics that perhaps these worlds are not so incommensurable after all. During my Master’s in literary studies I had plenty of practice reading the world through theory, of folding experiential phenomena into schematic structures, of constructing what I came to call ‘if-ladders,’ in which entire castles in the sky are built on propositions that work perfectly well as sentences but not as accounts of existing in the world as a social, temporal creature. I was keen to avoid this kind of ‘application’ of theory to practice, or even of theory *in* practice. If the fields are incommensurable then so are the practices and methods that construct them, and it will not

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do to simply translate practical methodologies into scholarly methods, or *visa versa* – or worse, to affix scholarly arguments to practice, as if the latter needed justification.

A path through this impasse is indicated by the third step of Bergson's method of intuition. It is the apprehension of duration, and the stating and solving of problems in terms of time rather than space (Deleuze 1988a, 31). The step brings us back to the beginning of Bergson's method, to uncover a deeper layer of what we established through step one. The principal "false problem" of philosophy identified by Bergson, and on which Deleuze is commenting, is derived from "badly analyzed composites that arbitrarily group things that *differ in kind*" (Deleuze 1988a, 18). Deleuze cites Bergson's example of "the problems of nonbeing" to claim that

when we ask 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' or 'Why is there order rather than disorder?' or 'Why is there this rather than that (when that was equally possible)?', we fall into the error of mistaking "the more for the less [...], as though being came to fill in a void, order to organize a preceding disorder, the real to realize a primary possibility.

(Deleuze 1988a, 17–18)

The "badly analyzed composite" in this case consists of arbitrarily grouping different moments of being together. This view takes durational phenomena to be objects in space - space that, since it is "quantitative homogeneity," "never presents anything but differences of degree" (Deleuze 1988a, 30). Deleuze unpacks Bergson's argument that there are differences in kind between being and nonbeing, and that seeing 'less' being in nonbeing is the result of the confusion of differences in degree and differences in kind. In fact, there is

more in the idea of nonbeing than that of being, in disorder than in order, in the possible than in the real. In the idea of nonbeing there is in fact the idea of being, plus a logical operation of generalized negation, plus the particular psychological motive for that operation (such as when a being does not correspond to our expectation and we grasp it purely as the lack, the absence of what interests us).

(Deleuze 1988a, 17)

Mirroring Hallam and Ingold's "backwards reading" of creativity, this reasoning performs

a "retrograde movement of the true," according to which being, order and the existent are supposed to precede themselves, or to precede the creative act that constitutes them, by projecting an image of themselves back into a possibility, a disorder, a nonbeing which are supposed to be primordial.

(Deleuze 1988a, 18)

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Perhaps this can be brought to bear on PaR and the notion that the practice needs *more* knowledge to validate it or contextualise it – that the practice needs a written component in order to be able to contribute to knowledge, and thereby to distinguish itself from artistic practice that is somehow *not* research. I have taken a very different starting point in this thesis, specifically Ben Spatz’ compelling argument that practice is research structured by knowledge in the form of technique (2015); that, for example, traditional Neapolitan song is a site of extensive embodied research that has taken place over centuries, generating new techniques over time. To write an extensive theoretical treatise on Neapolitan song would not be to *add* knowledge to it, but to generate different *kinds* of knowledge, knowledge that would exist in an epistemic world far removed from that of Neapolitan song. What connects these words is not if-ladders or thought-bridges but technique and the bodies that acquire it. Bodies are those malleable material beings that can *practice*, that can learn, through cultivating the necessary techniques, to move from one world to another. Through duration, these bodies can differ in kind from themselves. They can become bodies that alternately practice incommensurable disciplines or can contain those disciplines inside them. Taking Spatz’ notion of technique as a unit of knowledge opens the theoretical way to this kind of movement, as *individual* techniques that structure any given field of practice are not necessarily incommensurable but can be aligned much more closely and be used as steppingstones from one discipline to another. This is the reason I have chosen the framework of practice, in order to be able to state and solve my problems in terms of duration and transformation. It also answers the question of the relation between the works and the thesis, or between the practice and the research: they are incommensurable forms of knowledge, and they are each the result of specific techniques I have spent *time* cultivating. In following this line of thought, the value of PaR really begins to appear. It is not about making artistic practice recognised in the academy, nor about the contributions the arts can make to knowledge, but about the *transformation of bodies* – and therefore, at least potentially, of communities of bodies – enabled by the durational moving in and out of incommensurable fields of knowledge.

By way of final illustration of what I am articulating here, I offer an anecdote. Today is June 3rd, 2021. Yesterday evening the YouTube channel *Warehouse Diaries* released my song “Don’t Lament in Sorrow,”¹ a song I wrote last December when I was in the process of untangling the web of emotions that amassed after my mother’s very nearly fatal heart attack on September 28th, 2020. Wanting to ritualise the moment of the release, I wrote to several people who are dear to me and who knew about my mother’s near-death, to tell them a story about the song and to invite them, from wherever they

¹ Documentation code DLiS.

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are in the world, to watch the premiere with me on YouTube. The premiere was ritualised in a number of other ways, including the physical presence of friends who live in Cyprus, a special meal, and so forth. This morning my friend Vassilis called me to share some of what had opened up for him after hearing my song. We spoke for over an hour, sharing anecdotes, theories, memories and associations, our conversation always somehow returning to the central question of art-making as a relational mode of finding and sharing ontological knowledge, that is knowledge *about our durational nature*. We spoke about the problem of the incommensurability of different fields of knowledge. We spoke about the relationship between spiritual and artistic practices, a subject I always enjoy discussing with Vassilis, who is not a practising Christian but whose father is a Greek Orthodox priest. We hypothesised that spiritual and artistic modes of knowing are perhaps similarly engaged in creating forms and practices that attune us more deeply to the nature of our durational existence. Vassilis told a story, as he often does, to analogise my song and his experience of it: he said it was as though we had gone into a forest, and after wandering off on my own I had returned to tell him about some beautiful flowers I had found, which caused him to project himself into the possibility of seeing those beautiful flowers, and of finding other beautiful flowers himself. In other words, the song was an invitation to enter his own durational experience with a certain kind of attention and perception. As our conversation continued, we travelled far from our starting point of the song, but another story of Vassilis' brought us back to where we had begun. He told me about a trip he once took with a friend to see the Σπήλαιο των Αγίων Σαράντα, the



[Figure 1] Σπήλαιο των Αγίων Σαράντα, the Cave of the Holy Forty

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Cave of the Holy Forty, a small shrine built into a cave near Protaras, in the south-eastern cape of Cyprus. He said that during the long walk to the shrine, he and his friend had been talking, laughing and telling silly stories. When they arrived at the cave and entered the shrine they suddenly fell silent, although they did not realise until they had emerged from that place that they had not said a word to each other while inside. And together, Vassilis and I connected all the dots of our conversation, finding our way to the idea that the shrine, like my song, was an invitation to *enter into* one's own duration with a certain kind of perception. The shrine and the song are unified by this invitation, by this relational gesture, and they are unified by virtue of a certain metaphysical sameness, that is, that they are both undergirded in every sense by duration. But they are also incommensurable, because the one is built in stone, and the other in what we call music.

The same can be said of the knowledge I present here. Some of the knowledge is built in words and can be readily accessed in these pages. Other parts of it were built in other kinds of materials – sound, relations, wood, other words, actions in space – and can be accessed here by virtue of traces (the way that the shrine can be accessed by the photograph above) as well as by new word-structures that I have built to expand the transmissibility of the knowledge. The reason I have chosen the framework of practice and focused on the cultivation of technique (rather than choosing a narrower framework of a sub-discipline of music) is in order to be able to ask the right questions, that is, to be able to investigate the ultimate durational aim of all of the processes I archive here: that of the cultivation of methodologies of transformation. The reason I have chosen to eschew, as much as possible, all notion of 'works' is not only to resist historical musical ontologies, but to avoid being misled by the finiteness of a material object or the length of a performance into thinking that I am dealing with objects rather than situations, with spatial rather than durational phenomena. Instead, I want to uncover all the ways in which "form is bound up with duration" (Stewart 2011, 112), and to cultivate an understanding of the ways in which all forms, even those contained in memory, are "subject to the vicissitudes of materiality" (Stewart 2011, 111). This thesis is an archive of how I went about getting to these realisations, how I was transformed along the way, and how others might follow their own path of transformation through situated making and a situationally emergent approach to technique.

The thesis is structured as follows. "Part I: Practice and Identity" begins by clarifying some key terms that I will use throughout the thesis and that relate to my practice, and to the notion of artistic practice that I am working with here. In "Bel Canto pedagogy and the separation of technique and identity," I situate myself in the field of music by way of an account of the structural problems of classical singing pedagogy, focussing on histories of cultural colonialism, whiteness, universalism, ideologies of

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transcendence and abusive teacher-student dynamics. I analyse written discourse and pedagogical practice separately, due to the lack of critical scholarship on the latter, and draw on my own experience both as student and an educator. I also take a wider look at the field of classical music, analysing problematic practices in music education and professional singing practice that are related to or stem from foundational problems reproduced in pedagogical institutions. I argue that classical vocal pedagogy effects a violent separation of technique and identity, carried out by the paradoxical means of overspecification of the kind of identity that is welcomed or recognised within the field delimited by the practice, as well as the conflation of technical with moral goals, and the universalising manoeuvres stemming from the structural whiteness of the field. This produces structural impediments to the development of practice as I define it here. I also argue that in the field of classical vocal music, the voice (as distinct from the person making sound) is a fetishised object that conforms in many senses to Marxian commodity fetishism, and which in turn reifies social relations within the spaces that classical vocal technique is cultivated and practiced. In “Towards defetishisation: the relation between technique and identity,” I explore a theoretical approach to technique, grounded in the work of Ben Spatz, that is broad enough to encompass so-called specialised techniques and those of everyday life, and can accommodate the relation of technical practices to kinship and place.

In “Part II: Methods of Defetishisation,” I begin by situating myself in the PaR context, giving an account of the autonomy it affords and the ways in which it has enabled the development of practice as I define it here. I also show various ways in which the university is complicit in the reproduction of precarity and the commodification of knowledge and theorise distance from the institution as a method of cultivating situatedness. I then proceed to situate myself in the context of professional artistic practice, by way of an in-depth analysis of what I read as methods of defetishisation in the practices of Ragnar Kjartansson and Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed, two artists with whom I have collaborated and who have had a defining impact on me and on my own practice. I draw on Richard Schechner’s theories of “selective inattention,” the “integral audience” and “restored behaviour” (Schechner 2000; 2004) to support my reading of the ways in which Ragnar and Monia engage in the defetishisation of artistic practice and the alignment of technique and identity to create situations that afford transformation on a number of levels. I conclude Part II with a philosophical account of transformation through technique grounded in philosophies of immanence drawn from Deleuze and Spinoza, Donna Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges (1988), and an intertextual reading of Deleuzian philosophies of immanence and pragmatist philosophies, drawing out the ways in which both areas of knowledge argue for the ontological primacy of process and the relation of works of art to lived experience.

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In “Part III: Making,” I present the portfolio of works as sites of my research into the relationship between technique and identity, and practice and transformation. I show the many ways in which the acts of making in the portfolio emerged situationally from the practice as I define it here and give accounts of how each situation was a site of research into the thematic areas explored in Parts I and II. The works are grouped into four (non-chronological) categories, defined by the specific ways that forms emerged in and through durational processes. The works are cited using documentation codes that correspond to the digital portfolio, and a full table of the codes can be found in “Appendix I: Documentation codes.” For ease of reference, all the works of the portfolio are catalogued in “Appendix II: Chart of works,” and a timeline of works is also included on page 9. Not all the works in the portfolio are discussed in “Part III”; some, such as my performance in Ragnar Kjartansson’s *The Sky in a Room*, are discussed extensively elsewhere in the thesis. These works can therefore be found in the “Timeline of works,” in appendices I and II, and in the digital portfolio, but not in “Part III” of the thesis.

As part of my *duration-grounded* approach, I have woven a number of short texts written at different stages of the research process into the various sections of the thesis. In order to illustrate the immanence of the process I have retained these texts more or less exactly as they emerged, with occasional footnotes providing clarification. I have marked these departures from the more conventional scholarly prose of the thesis with wider margins and grey text. I call this technique ‘voicing,’ following the musical meaning of the spacing and ordering of the notes of a chord to facilitate voice-leading and create a particular harmonic colour. It is my intention that they will create, along with the other components of this submission, a rich sonority of meaning.

There are necessarily gaps in my engagement with all of the fields I venture into in these pages. I consider this to be a case of, in the words of social psychologist Claude Steele, “praying to the disciplinary gods with one eye open” – the practice of bringing whatever tools one has at one’s disposal to a central problematic, but doing so in a manner that neither adheres devoutly to the reasoning and methods of a given discipline, nor rejects or flees them entirely, but rather maintains an “agnosticism” about what is workable and what might be fruitfully brought together (Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. 2019, xiv).

Part I: Practice and Identity

Practice: a working definition

As 'practice' is a broadly polysemous term, my use of it here requires some initial specification. In the context of this thesis, I understand practice as *the articulation of the free-flow of lived time*, and acts of making as *punctuations in the open duration of practice*. This definition is not grounded in the materials of my practice or my objects of study, but rather in the relationship of the practitioner to their surroundings and to the many nested durations of their work and existence. The definition I am working with here grew out of my own practice over the three years of practical research. It emerged in and through each of the works contained in the portfolio and discussed in Part III, and it is also a conceptual framework within which to consider and engage with those works. My definition of practice is also a framework for understanding the diversity in content and form of the works in the portfolio; because what I was researching was not a specific medium or technique but rather *methodologies of transformation* in and through practice, engaging with a range of forms, media and situations allowed me to encounter that central problematic again and again in different ways, thereby deepening my understanding of what situated making might be, and what kind of practice might sustain it.

The works contained in the portfolio were created and performed using certain methodologies that were consistent across a range of disciplines and contexts. As is often the case in practice research, I was already quite deeply engaged in the cultivation of these methodologies before they became nameable to me, and before I understood the way in which they structured the practice as a whole. These methodologies are: open-endedness, repeatability, intuition, situatedness and (relational) autonomy. Together, they create a context in which practice can articulate the free-flow of lived time, unfolding in relation to other ongoing processes of identity growth and formation. In this context, acts of making are relocated from the status of *telos* to that of a punctuation (or an effervescence) in the open duration of practice. My account of these methodologies is not intended to indicate a superior form of artistic practice to which others should aspire; rather, it is one of many possible roadmaps out of states of alienation resulting from the multiple interlocking restrictions practitioners face in pedagogical institutions and professional environments – restrictions I will discuss at length in the specific context of classical music in “Bel canto pedagogy and the separation of technique and identity.” It is here, in the relationship of practice to the social and disciplinary contexts in which it is embedded and to which it responds, that the broader theoretical value of my definition lies. I will define practice first by drawing on the many common uses of the term, and then by delving more deeply into my own definition of the five methodologies of open-endedness, repeatability, intuition, situatedness and (relational) autonomy.

Practice: a working definition

A very brief archaeology of practice

The term 'practice' is used to describe the exercising of a profession, as in 'legal practice'; the sense of practice as individual self-improvement through ongoing commitment to a specific activity, as in 'yoga practice'²; the sense of "socially routinised" behaviours, as in 'cultural practices' (Frese 2015); the sense in which the term is used in the field of visual art, whence it was imported to other artistic disciplines, of the materials, tools, skills and methods that constitute an artist's activities – a sense that is often entangled in discourses of professionalisation, marketisation and branding (Boon and Levine 2018); the many philosophical senses of practice (or *praxis*) stemming from Aristotle, which have in common the notion of conscious, principled action and the synthesis of theory and practice within a social framework; and the specifically Marxist notion of revolutionary praxis, defined by Marx in the 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach* as "the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change" (Smith 2002).

From these many usages I draw threads to weave together my own definition. The sense of 'legal practice' is useful not only because many of the activities of the practice I am defining here are also constitutive of my profession, but also because of a certain degree of open-endedness signified in the expressions 'legal practice' or 'medical practice.' This open-endedness is attested by the etymology of the word, which has roots in the Attic Greek *πράττειν* (*prattein*), meaning "to do," "to act," "to manage," and *πρακτικός* (*praktikós*), meaning "of or concerned with action," "effective."³ These origins give to the English term its sense of the application of knowledge in embodied activity. But just as the Greek word did not denote a specific form of activity, professionalised or otherwise, the English sense of "to pursue or be engaged in (a particular occupation, profession, skill, or art)" was also not always limited to the group of specialised professions it now encompasses. Historically, the term described a range of activities, as evidenced by an example from Shakespeare:

SECOND FISHERMAN____ Canst thou catch any fishes, then?
PERICLES____ I never practised it.

(*Pericles* 2.1.68-70)

² Here I am referring specifically to marketised postural yoga, or "transnational yoga" (Singleton 2010) and, more broadly, to the adoption of "Eastern movement forms" as "body-self transforming cultural practices" (Brown and Leledaki 2010).

³ Unless otherwise specified, definitions and etymologies of English words are taken from the OED and those of Greek and Latin words from the Perseus Digital Library of Tufts University.

The etymology and history of the term indicates that the professionalised sense of 'practice' in English has retained the open-endedness of previous usage in the aspect of temporal continuity but not in the nature of the activity. 'Legal practice' is open-ended because it denotes the temporally ongoing practice of certain skills and knowledge through similarly ongoing encounters with patients. That is, while the skills and knowledge of the practice are typically not open-ended, the specific instances of their application are, as they occur in a framework of temporal open-endedness.

The sense of 'yoga practice' brings into play the notion of repetition as a methodology of change and growth. There is open-endedness here too, as the discourse around yoga practices is often rooted in the notion of ongoing growth rather than the attainment of goals, and of spiritual transformation that is practiced *through*, but is not entirely reducible to, the study of the embodied techniques of postural yoga. This reveals something of the complexity of the term that has played out in my own research, namely the dynamic relationship between the acquisition of specific, embodied knowledge – reflected in Peter Sloterdijk's definition of practice as "any operation that provides or improves the actor's qualification for the next performance of the same operation" (2013, 4) – and open-ended, ongoing processes of growth that are not reducible to the acquisition of that knowledge. Perhaps more fundamentally, the concept of practice poses the question of the relationship between repetition and change – of the capacity of repetition to both open or close⁴ areas of knowledge, or to open some areas while closing others. The nature of the relationship between repetition and change depends not only on the specific practice in question, but also on the needs and ideologies that determine its context.

The sense of 'cultural practices' carries the notion of the slow accrual over time of specific practices in which beliefs and principles are instantiated in various situations and media, a sense in fairly close alignment with 'artistic practice.' Crucially, 'cultural practice' also contributes the notion of improvisation, defined by Hallam and Ingold as the generative, relational, temporal way that cultural practices emerge, persist and change (2007, 1–24).⁵ 'Artistic practice' contributes the notion of autonomy, or of a mode in which one has the scope to determine the frame and the methods of the investigation. In this sense, 'artistic practice' is very much like research, if the latter is understood as an

⁴ The terminology of 'closed and open objects' is taken from Ben Spatz' *What a Body Can Do* (2015). Spatz uses these terms in the context of embodied technique to distinguish between a technique that has been mastered, that is "accessed and enacted unquestioningly," and technique as an "epistemic object"; an "object of knowledge and enquiry" that is explored through processes of "development and discovery" (2015, 62). For more of Spatz' work on epistemic objects, see their eponymous article (2016).

⁵ Conceptualisations of cultural practices vary greatly, and this is by no means the agreed-on approach in the field of anthropology. Hallam and Ingold's introduction to *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, cited above, provides background on the range of theoretical approaches to cultural practices.

investigation in which the frame and the methods are determined by the researcher. While in reality this autonomy is always impacted by a range of forces, the notion (at least in principle) of autonomous exploration into specific areas of knowledge is a core aspect of practice as I am defining it here. However the various ways in which 'artistic practice' is entangled in notions of professionalisation and branding mean that, paradoxically, this particular usage is also quite far removed from my notion of practice. Using terminology that resonates with Spatz' 'open and closed epistemic objects,' theorist and curator Irit Rogoff describes the "closure" effected by branding in the visual art world, specifically highlighting the restrictions on the development of technical, practice-based knowledge:

The concern regarding the closure effected by branding [...] is a concern with the inability to sustain a process for long enough to actualise itself before declaring it to be this or that named phenomenon — a move which allows consumption to take place even before the innovative process has been fully articulated. This form of branding allows the market to enter the world of art beyond its preoccupation with material objects, for branding produces an economy of scale and value that materialises processes by giving them a graspable circulatory value within cognitive capitalism.

(2010, 44)

This phenomenon is by no means limited to the art market, and the concern with notions of the marketability of an artist's practice or output are so pervasive that most practitioners will be shaped by it to some degree. But the closing of the epistemic objects of practice is an effect not only of the market but also of the ways in which disciplinary boundaries are enforced and reproduced. During the course of the research I began to understand how disciplinary boundaries made it difficult to think and speak about my practice, since it involves, beyond so-called specialised skills, elements of everyday life and practices not typically referred to as artistic. It was not until I began to work with Spatz' notion of technique as a basic unit of analysis that I began to see that the analytical constraints of disciplinarity constituted another false problem, another too-narrow statement of terms. For these reasons I avoid, for the most part, the qualifier 'artistic' or 'creative,' and choose instead to speak simply of 'practice'.

Praxis brings the sense of the synthesis of theory and practice and transformation through making and doing, both of which are core components of practice as I define it here. The situated, durational nature of revolutionary praxis means that, while its aims might be determined in advance, at times with forceful clarity, this does not close the research process that is understood to lead towards those ends. Revolutionary praxis is full of open research objects, as articulated by Audre Lorde in "Learning from the 60s," a talk Lorde delivered at the Malcolm X Weekend at Harvard University in 1982:

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Revolution is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change in established, outgrown responses; for instance, it is learning to address each other's difference with respect.

(1984, chap. 12, par 24)

Similarly, Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), speaks about praxis as dynamic, as “opening up choices among various ways of being within any given situation” (Glass 2001, 16). The definition of practice I am working with here draws together certain strands of these various usages and contributes others drawn from the fields of process philosophy and feminist epistemology.

A working definition of practice: open-ended, repeatable, intuitive, situated, (relationally) autonomous

Practice as I define it is *open-ended*, both in the sense that it is temporally ongoing, and in the sense that I seek to open the epistemic objects with which I engage – to uncover new knowledge and new technical and relational possibilities. As is evident from the range of works to be discussed in Part III, this involves a methodological deferral of the question of discipline, form and certain situation-specific methods, all of which are uncovered by attuning to the specific needs and parameters of each situation. It also involves an open-endedness of outcomes, meaning that the acts of making that occur within any instance of practice will not have a pre-determined form. I define practice as *repeatable* primarily in the aspect of process, not outcomes. I understand repetition in practice as a means of peeling back layer after layer of experience to reach ever-expanding epistemic depths. Understood in this way, practice is our answer to the problem of duration that is never the same, that never repeats – duration that “is endowed with the power of qualitatively varying with itself” (Deleuze 1988a, 31). The repetition that organises practice is touched everywhere by this qualitative variation, that is, by difference. I also define practice as *intuitive*. As the ordinary use of this term is not what I intend with it and there is no suitable body of knowledge from which to draw a workable definition, I will devote the next few pages to defining my use of the term in the thesis and its relation to the definition of practice I am working with here.

A definition of intuition requires something of a rehabilitation of the term, which is typically understood as an immediate, non-reflective knowing or ‘gut feeling.’ Surprisingly, historical meanings of the word denoted various forms of regard or contemplation, and etymologically it is derived from the Latin *tueri*, “to look at,” “gaze upon,” “behold,” “watch,” “protect.” *Tueri* is also the root of the English *tutor*,

historical meanings of which include “guardian,” “custodian,” “protector.” The etymology of the word seems to suggest *care* or *careful* beholding, a kind of faithfulness to something or someone. Malcolm R. Westcott, writing in the field of psychology, has written the only cross-disciplinary history of the term that I have come across, entitled *Toward a Contemporary Psychology of Intuition: A Historical, Theoretical, and Empirical Inquiry* (1968). Westcott identifies a broad philosophical tradition in which the term refers to a direct route to a deeper or ultimate reality. Patricia E. Conners, in her article “The History of Intuition and Its Role in the Composing Process,” based on Westcott’s own text, identifies the term’s usage in scholastic philosophy to refer to the contemplation of God, and in Kant to refer to the “nonreceptive, nonsensory perception” by which we can know things in themselves (1990, 73–74). Although far too expansive a matter to fully enter into here, it seems reasonable to assume that this opposition of intuition to reason (even if intuition is understood as a more direct or even, as in Spinoza, *superior* form of knowing than reason⁶) participates in the much broader sedimentation of gendered and racialised binaries of emotion/logic, feeling/thinking, experience/reflection, nature/science, primitive/civilised, and so forth. In their article “Knowing Otherwise: Restorying Intuitive Knowing as Feminist Resistance” (2019), Mozeley and McPhillips explore intuition as a “more-than-rational” way of knowing. By “exploring intuition through its relational processes,” Mozeley and McPhillips redefine intuition as “a socially produced form of knowing that is embodied and integrative,” and use theoretical, empirical and narrative-based research methods to argue that “intentional intuitive knowers live out critical, reflexive and creative forms of feminist resistance and transformation to build inclusive ways of knowing and being in the world” (2019, 844). I find these formulations very compelling, but I would not describe intuition as “more-than-rational.” Rather, were intuition taken seriously as a mode of knowing, and properly encouraged and cultivated alongside other modes of knowing,⁷ we would probably find that there is a durational, rather than an essential or quantitative, difference between what we term intuitive and rational knowledge. That is, it might not be possible to give a precise account of intuitive processes *in the moment they are taking place*; but, if intuition as a method is deeply cultivated alongside other methods that *do* lend themselves more readily to precise accounts in

⁶ See the work of Sanem Soyarslan, such as her article “The Distinction between Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza’s Ethics” (2016) and dissertation “Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza’s ‘Ethics’: Two Ways of Knowing, Two Ways of Living” (2011).

⁷ Interestingly, Pauline Oliveros wrote on precisely this question in an essay entitled “The Contribution of Women as Composers” (1984). Although the historical specificity of Oliveros’ arguments makes the text too complex to unpack here, she does pick up on something I have also come across, namely the broad tendency to think of intuition as a phenomenon that strikes and then vanishes, rather than as a method. Oliveros cites reflections on the creative process from journal entries and letters by composers and scientists, noting that “[t]here is recognition of the intuitive mode but no conscious effort to promote the proper conditions for its presence” (1984, 134). Oliveros comes to the conclusion, as I do, that this is the result of the feminisation and marginalisation of intuition as a mode of knowing.

language or other media, then it should be possible to give a precise account *later on*. This also highlights the role of documentation, namely, to allow the event to be present in some form at a later date, so that intuitive methods can be analysed, better understood and more deeply sedimented. This, more or less, is how I would describe this submission – as many intuitive processes that I have sought to thoroughly unpack sometime after they took place.

In carving out my own working definition of intuition, I will draw out aspects of Bergson and Deleuze's writing on the subject, specifically *The Creative Mind: an Introduction to Metaphysics* (Bergson 2007) and Deleuze's explication in *Bergsonism* (1988a). Bergson's account rests in many ways on his own articulations of the binary oppositions I mentioned above, in his case intuition/analysis,⁸ but his account of intuition and Deleuze's explication of it in *Bergsonism* nonetheless offers a very useful framework for sketching out a working definition of the term for my purposes here.

I define intuition as *unfolding durational knowledge of what can become over time*. I have come to this definition through my own cultivation of practice as I define it here, but also through the many instances of making that punctuate that practice. As I will argue below, the term applies equally well to both levels of magnification. To begin with, I focus on the aspect of duration, which is fundamental in Bergson's method of intuition: "Intuition," writes Deleuze on Bergson, "already presupposes duration" (1988a, 13). Bergson's philosophical method of intuition is the method of knowing the "lived realities and experiences" of duration and memory, which do not themselves give us a means of knowing them with precision:

We might say, strangely enough, that duration would remain purely intuitive, in the ordinary sense of the word, if intuition - in the properly Bergsonian sense - were not there as method. [...] And without the methodical thread of intuition, the relationships between Duration, Memory and *Élan Vital* would themselves remain indeterminate from the point of view of knowledge.

(Deleuze 1988a, 13–14)

⁸ Bergson lays out the differences between the two at great length in *The Creative Mind*. See, for instance:

We call intuition here the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, common to that object and to others.

(2007, 189)

In a sense, this is what I intend with the notion of practice as *articulating the free-flow of lived time*. Just as, for Bergson and Deleuze, the method of intuition determines the relationships between duration, memory and *Élan Vital*, the method of intuition I am working with here weaves together the many threads of identity and lived experience, such as relationships to place; sexual and racial identities; relations of kinship; the cultivation of techniques; relationships to language; one's material conditions; experiences of trauma; and countless others. Intuition is the method that *takes up* these threads into the practice. It is a method of determining which will be woven into the practice and in what way, and in which relation to the other threads. As well as a method of articulating lived experience on the level of practice, it is also a method of way-finding towards a form in the acts of making that punctuate the practice. In this sense intuition demonstrates the "fractal" nature of practice, namely the ways in which the same nested structures are to be found on the level of practice as on the level of technique (Spatz 2015, 44). The application of Bergson's three "rules" or steps of the philosophical method of intuition provide a good glimpse into the operations of intuition and its relation to the practice as a whole, and I will briefly describe this application here.

(1) "First rule: Apply the test of true and false to problems themselves. Condemn false problems and reconcile truth and creation at the level of problems" (1988a, 15). This involves the recognition of red herrings such as that I discussed in the Introduction, namely the ontological relationship in PaR of practice to research. Similar false problems are the extremely common "Am I doing what I am *supposed* to be doing?", where "supposed" signifies the boundaries of a given discipline. Problems of this kind occur constantly in the practice as well as in individual acts of making. Recognising them and posing true problems that are formed through one's intuition, that is, durational knowledge of the relationships between the various strands of a practice, is a key method of intuition as I define it here.

(2) "Second rule: Struggle against illusion, rediscover the true differences in kind or articulations of the real" (1988a, 21). For my purposes, this takes the form of uncovering and implementing knowledge of the multiple (but limited) pathways that open up following any particular act or moment of study. It means recognising *what it is* that you are doing; it means being able to move with the always emerging implications, consequences and possibilities of your actions, along the short scale of making, or the long scale of practice. An image of this is given by Esperanza Spalding in a discussion with Anna Deveare Smith, shortly after the release of Spalding's album *Twelve Little Spells*. Smith alludes to the similarities between creative practice and laboratory sciences, namely that they both involve "being patient enough to allow mother nature to reveal herself to you" (Spalding and Smith 2019, 31.14-31.20). Smith asks Spalding to say something about that patience, and she responds:

What's coming up is like the sensation of a specific kind of trust. When you get a little hit of a musical idea, I always believe it's like the corner of a T-Rex skeleton, and if I just stay there with the brush eventually this pattern that *must* be that, it's not going to be *another* thing, [...] even if this bone starts over here and that bone's over there, eventually it'll be like, oh, okay I see, they go like this – there's a certain *inevitability* that I experience in the creative process, but it's slow as hell.

(2019, 32:23-33.03)

This feeling around the edges, the knowledge that it “*must* be that – it’s not going to be *another* thing,” exemplifies what I mean by knowing *what you are doing*, what *kind* of a thing it is you are doing or making, and staying close to that unfolding knowledge. Spalding usefully imagines this knowledge as a haptic activity – which it very often is, in the case of song writing – one that “already presupposes duration” because the precise attention to each emerging edge of each piece of bone is always *already* in relation to the larger structure that is being uncovered over time. This also accounts for Spalding’s sense of “inevitability,” a quality that I have also remarked on in my own practice: it is inevitable because the form is in a sense given, but it is given durationally, not spatially. That is, it is not transcendent, not given from ‘elsewhere’ or ‘above,’ but from the act itself, and the pathways – multiple but limited in number – that open up from each tiny item that is uncovered, each new technique, each word written, each phrase sung, each chord, each gesture, each idea, each interaction, each bit of the skeleton.⁹ The method of intuition is rooted in the knowledge of and openness to the limited number of pathways that can emerge from each of those moments, and in the selection of which pathways to follow according to the needs and demands of the particular instance of situated making. This can be understood in terms of *situational* constraints, which include the constraints of one’s own knowledge and technical trajectories:

It's just [...] a bone of this shape, there's only so much dirt around it, I only have the tools that I have, so I'm just gonna keep brushing until the thing comes out, and I can see what other bone it goes with – and just *trust*, maybe it's a small animal, maybe it's a large animal, but if I just stick with that it will be clear what it wants to be.

(2019, 33.06-33.35)

In the course of the research, I have begun to note that intuition operates the same way on the level of acts of making that punctuate the practice as on the level of practice itself. I understand this through the analogy of muscle memory: when improvising, my body knows how much breath is needed to carry

⁹ For an extended account of the following of these pathways or “lines,” see Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006).

a phrase that I have not yet sung, and this knowledge is acquired neither through reasoning nor through its supposed opposite – ‘gut feeling’ – but instead through the slow proliferation over time of correlations between different techniques. *The sedimentation of these correlations constitutes unfolding durational knowledge of what can become over time.* In this particular case, intuition is not only working on the level of the breath, but on every other level of the act. Intuition on the level of the practice works in the same way; it is a means of knowing that similarly relies on the always ongoing establishing of correlations between different technical strands of the practice and of the practitioner’s situatedness in specific times and places.

(3) State problems and solve them in terms of time rather than of space (1988a, 31). For the sake of brevity, this can be summarised by Bergson’s example of the lump of sugar. Here it is as explicated by Deleuze:

Take a lump of sugar: It has a spatial configuration. But if we approach it from that angle, all we will ever grasp are differences in degree between that sugar and any other thing. But it also has a duration, a rhythm of duration, a way of being in time that is at least partially revealed in the process of its dissolving, and that shows how this sugar differs in kind not only from other things, but first and foremost from itself.

(Deleuze 1988a, 32)

This can be applied quite simply to practice as I define it here, but it is a simplicity that “does not exclude a qualitative and virtual multiplicity” and “various directions in which it comes to be actualized” (1988a, 14). This simple application is related to Spalding’s notion of “trust” – specifically, trust in the qualitative variations of duration, in the “rhythm of duration,” in the inevitability of differing in kind from yourself. The methodological approach that emerges from this trust, which also emerges from the first two “rules,” is a kind of deferral of certain judgments, such as I have practiced throughout the course of the PhD. A grounding in duration and in the certainty of change also brings together all the other methodological strands of practice as I am defining it here. Change necessitates open-endedness of forms, which means the repeatability that structures the practice must exist on the level of process not products. By cultivating intuition, open-endedness and repeatability of process, I have been able to trust in the emergence of forms – and to resist over-reliance on predetermined forms and old modes of operating – even when I have been in a state of confusion and unknowing.

The last two central and fundamentally interconnected elements of practice as I define it here are autonomy and situatedness. Following the work of feminist epistemologists, specifically those writing on ethics in medical care, I understand autonomy specifically as *relational* (or *contextual*) autonomy.

Relational autonomy resists the notion that autonomy is “an achievement of individuals” (McLeod and Sherwin 2000, 259). Instead, the notion of relational autonomy is grounded in “explicit recognition of the fact that autonomy is both defined and pursued in a social context,” and therefore that properly engaging with possibilities of exercising autonomy requires the exploration of “an agent’s social location” (McLeod and Sherwin 2000, 259–60). With regard to practice, I understand autonomy as a contextual phenomenon: autonomy is a set of conditions that afford the cultivation of situated knowledge; of relations of kinship not primarily defined by or rooted in one’s discipline of training; of intuitive practices; of open-endedness; of the relationships between technique and identity.

Relational autonomy’s notion of “an agent’s social location” and the specific interlocking restrictions they experience is very much grounded in standpoint theory, situated knowing and intersectionality, as they appear in the fields of feminist epistemology and Black feminism (Davis 1981; Hartsock 1983; Rose 1983; D. Haraway 1988; Kimberle Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 1991; S. Harding 2004; Gumbs 2010; Mackenzie 2019; Thayer-Bacon et al 2013; Stanley 2013). When I speak of ‘situatedness’ or ‘being situated’ I am grounding myself in the methodologies of feminist epistemology, which have enabled me to begin to see and to critique the interlocking restrictions that arose from, as I have outlined in the introduction, my gendered experience of music learning and my exposure to musical practices characterised by transcendent hierarchies and cultural colonialism. I argue that the cultivation of situated knowledge is a central process that shapes practice as I define it here, as the strands of that situated knowledge are taken up from lived experience into the practice and woven together with strands of technical training and other modes of knowing. In this way, practice is the methodology of a transformation that happens through the mutually constitutive relationships between technique and identity, in which situated knowledge is key. The concept of epistemic injustice, defined by Miranda Fricker as “a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower” (2007, 1), is also a central component of feminist epistemology and strands of social epistemology concerned with social justice, and I draw on it here as a framework for understanding the violent separation of technique and identity in the field of classical vocal pedagogy, to which, after a brief sidestep, I now turn.

A song in a room

It is July 29th, 2020. I arrived in Athens yesterday, after two days in Thessaloniki and four months on the island of Thasos – the place, and the period of time, which finally gave shape and articulation to the concern that had always been driving my research project, namely, a turning of the theorisation of practice towards transformation. As my score¹⁰ stipulates, I am sitting on an armchair (a fold-out chair that appears to be a repurposed item of hospital furniture), writing at a small table mounted on castors; drinking pomegranate juice; facing east. To dedicate the space, I sing the Cypriot lullaby *Αγία Μαρίνα τζιαι τζυρά* / *Saint Margaret, lady Margaret*.

On the first day I began using this score to organise my writing, it made sense to me to sing the dedication standing behind the chair I would be sitting on, with my hands resting on its back. This is probably an appropriation of the position of the father in historical family portraiture, standing behind the seated woman or other members of the family, a sturdy hand on the shoulder indicating firmness, authority and control. I chose this gesture without hesitation on that first day, with an immediately clear sense that in my appropriation of it, it signified stewardship (of the work), care and blessing (for and of the space) and grounding (of my body in this specific spatiotemporal location). I added *Αγία Μαρίνα* to the score yesterday, as well as a number of other adjustments that would enable me to perform the score in a new space. Today is the first time I sing *Αγία Μαρίνα* for this purpose, and it is also the first time I have sung in this tiny studio flat on the roof of an apartment block in Kipseli, the space where I will work, sleep, eat, shower, etc., for the next three weeks. As soon as I begin to sing, I feel the by now familiar yet always surprising electrification that song can effect. I hear the particular resonance of this small, spare apartment, with its bare walls and tiled floor. There are hardly any belongings here. The owner, who regularly travels, as I do, between the U.K., Greece and Iceland, has decided that this dwelling will be functional, uncluttered and extremely efficient – “like a sailboat,” he says.

Αγία Μαρίνα και τζυρά, που ποτσοιμίξεις τα μωρά...

Saint Margaret, lady Margaret, who lulls the babes to sleep...

I know these things in a very particular way when I sing into this room. I hear the bareness of the walls, but I don't only hear it, I feel it. The bareness of the walls has

¹⁰ The score in question is entitled “Score for writing a PhD, or, instructions for creating a system out of asking the right questions” (documentation code S), after John Cage’s “Theatre Piece” (1960). I created the score as a means of organising into manageable portions the extremely long-form duration of writing the PhD thesis, and as a means of cultivating a relationship to the work as primarily durational, i.e. as a process of becoming over time, rather than as the fulfilment of a requirement, or the instantiation of an abstract form. The score served the specific purpose of weathering the transition from the three-year period of researching through making into the year of writing, during which time the form of the thesis was in the process of emerging, and the enormity of the possibilities of what it could become was at times completely overwhelming. As I moved into the autumn, I began to have a firmer grasp on the shape of the thesis, and it was no longer necessary to use the score.

A song in a room

a tactile quality in my throat as I work my way into, through, around, the delicate, tender turns of this Cypriot lullaby. The quality in my throat is bright, but more than bright. It has a silver patent leather kind of shine to it. I don't start singing with the intention of hearing the space, but the acoustic impression is inseparable from the physical effort of producing the sound. I don't intend to do it, but it is not a simple matter of choosing or not choosing. My technique constitutes "a form of deeply sedimented agency" (Spatz 2015, 52), that is not reducible to conscious choice.

ποτζοίμησ' το κορούδιν μου, το πιο γλυτζιήν τραούδιν μου...
lull this little boy of mine, sing him your sweetest song...

The feeling of ceremony, of event, is immediately palpable. As I continue to sing, I hear the song in relation to the wind outside, to the distant street noise below. This song is the first vocal sound I have made that day, and there is a strand of breath woven into the texture – the intimate breathiness of morning voice.

τζι' ύπνε που παίρνεις τα μωρά πάρε τζι' εμέναν τούτο...
sleep who takes the babes away, take this one from me...

The caressing of the ornaments is smooth and fluid. Each little tendrillar turn carrying so much, now. In this moment. This is the second time I have been to Athens this year, and since my arrival yesterday I have already begun to feel a sense of being 'back,' of having returned. This is part of a long, slow cycle of return, filled with many nested loops of returning along the way. I have always been coming back, but there is a sense of arrival to this particular return. But then, I am not really 'back'. This is my father's homeland, not my own. And the language I am singing is Cypriot, not Greek. It is in some ways phonetically closer to Turkish, the language of that place towards which I am now singing, as I stand facing east.

μικρόν μικρόν σου το 'δωκα, μεάλον φέρε μου το...
as a little one I give him, a grown one bring him back...

Saint Margaret, Lady Margaret, who lulls the babes to sleep. Yesterday afternoon, I was greeted by the previous temporary inhabitant of this space who, almost immediately, entrusted me with the story of her process of harvesting her eggs to improve her chances of conceiving her own biological child. She narrated this story to me as she bustled around the small space, cleaning and wiping things, apologising for not having the place prepared for my arrival. I assured her it didn't matter, that I had just spent the last four months barefooted, with dirt under my fingernails and twigs and insects in my hair, and that my standards of cleanliness were not difficult to meet. After a long and meaningful conversation, in which she generously and open-heartedly gave me the opportunity to bear witness to her story, which involved some painful events, we parted ways, agreeing to meet again soon.

A song in a room

*επάρ' το πέρα γύρισ' το, τζαι στράφου πίσω φέρ' μου το...
take him away, take him around, then return, and bring him home...*

Later that evening I spent many hours researching radical doula work. I watched an interview with practitioner, writer and activist Miriam Zoila Pérez, and bought a digital copy of their book *The Radical Doula Guide: A Political Primer for Full Spectrum Pregnancy and Childbirth Support* (2012). On page 1 of the introduction, I read Pérez' reference to a 1986 study by Klaus, Kennell, Robertson and Sosa, that showed, to quote Pérez, “that the simple presence of another woman (even if she was sitting quietly alongside a birthing mother) improved birth outcomes; reduced C-section rates and improved maternal satisfaction” (Pérez 2012, 1).

*να δει τα δέντρη πως αθθούν, τζαι τα πουλιά πως τζελαηδούν...
let him see the trees in bloom, and hear the birds singing...*

I learned this lullaby from my friend Vassilis Philippou, who loves to sing it, and has recorded and released two versions.¹¹ Vassilis is a maker of exquisitely beautiful songs, poems and much else, with a rich, velvety, ecclesiastical voice. His father is a priest in the Greek Orthodox church, and as such has a deeply embodied technique of liturgical singing, a technique that shaped Vassilis' own vocal character.

*να δει του Μάη τριαντάφυλλα, τ' Αούστου μήλα κότσινα...
show him the roses of May, and the red apples of August...*

My friendship with Vassilis is part of a long, melancholically beautiful process of reclaiming my connection to a language, culture and heritage from which I have been alienated as a result of migrations, both fro and to, and my parents' limited ability to educate me in these matters (and their sense, at least in my childhood, that a private school, English-language education would be of more value).

*τζια Παναγία Δέσποινα που ποτσοιμίζεις τα μωρά...
and holy lady, who lulls the babes to sleep...*

I sang this song recently for a lover from Cyprus, who listened teary-eyed; whose mother, like many Cypriot mothers (but not my own) used to sing it for him when he was little. I sang it in January, at a performance in London at Juliet Fraser's *eavesdropping* series. In this performance, I found myself looping the last half-untranslatable words –

*νάννι ναννά ναννούδκια του τζι' ύπνον εις τα μματούθκια του...
nani nanna nanouthkia tou, and sleep to his little eyes...*

¹¹ With guitarist Alexis Kasinos in their duo Larva <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q98QyAVoO3U>; and with violinist Michalis Kouloumis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQk3KmnF2c>.

A song in a room

a play on the baby talk word for sleep, *nana*, expanded into *nani nana*, followed by the plural rounded with a diminutive, *nanouthkia*, and the possessive pronoun, *tou*: *nani nana nanouthkia tou, and sleep to his little eyes*. This end in repetition, in circular, dreamy spiraling through the sleep language, was a change I retained, and incorporated. And in this repetition, the waves of who I have been, and who I am now, and where I am now, and where I have been, and whom I might become, and whom I might bear, merge together in the sound of this moment, in the silvery reverberation of this room, leaving their sediment to settle now, in these lines I write.

Bel canto¹² pedagogy and the separation of technique and identity

In the following section I will explore the violent separation of technique and identity in classical music pedagogy and vocal training in particular. My analyses of the pedagogical literature and practices of the field demonstrate the ways in which the training can often induce a state of alienation and stultification in student-practitioners, closing pathways of connection to their own identity and to other forms of practice that are constructed as technically or aesthetically inferior. Part III of this thesis explores a number of works that were engaged, in a range of ways, in undoing states of alienation and stultification that resulted from my training. While the problems of classical music pedagogy are significant to those works, their focus was not the critique of the field of classical music but rather, the restoration of a mutually constitutive relationship between technique and identity through acts of situated making. The purpose of the following section is to offer the critique of classical music that was immanent at the time of creating and performing the works in the portfolio. It is also intended to contribute to the theoretical argument of the thesis, which concerns the role a defetishised understanding of technique can play in the cultivation of methodologies of transformation in and through practice. It also makes a broader contribution, given that, as I argue below, the critique of the pedagogical and professional practices of classical music would greatly benefit from more – and more diversely situated – research.

Despite numerous reform initiatives, classical music education is still overwhelmingly characterised by the separation of theory and practice, as well as widespread ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism (Bull 2019; Campbell, Myers, and Sarath 2014; Holder and Annesley 2020; Ewell 2020; Koza 2009). In the field of classical vocal training and performance in particular, there are a range of pervasive issues

¹² I use 'bel canto' and 'classical singing' interchangeably. The former, a historical term literally meaning 'beautiful singing,' originated in reference to solo vocal music of the Italian courts in the late 16th century. The term did not become more generally widespread until the mid-19th century, when it was revived as a means of distinguishing Italian styles of singing from the developing Wagnerian style (Duey 1951; Stark 1999). The term 'classical' is similarly rooted in historical attempts to elevate its referent above other areas of cultural production, and it is a term I use reluctantly and only because the alternative – 'western art music' – is far worse. Actual definitions of the term 'classical music' are rare. Practitioners and scholars alike tend to be far too invested in articulating the ideology of the practice, as is evident in a definition by Leonard Bernstein: "[...] music written in a time when perfect form and balance and proportion are what everybody is looking for – music which tries more than anything else to have a perfect shape – like a beautiful ancient Greek vase" (Bernstein 1959). Anna Bull's book *Class, Control and Classical Music* provides an excellent definition of the term by means of defining the actual practice to which it refers (2019, xvii–xviii). I have chosen on the whole to circumnavigate the terminological minefield of the term 'classical.' I use 'bel canto' and 'classical singing' interchangeably, the need for two terms arising from the fact that, while there is significant attachment to and professional usage of the term 'bel canto,' there is no professional or scholarly consensus on its precise meaning (Jander 1980; Zeller 2021). It is therefore important to use it, and in doing so to refer to the historical weight and concerns that accompany it, but also to qualify it with the more generic term 'classical singing.'

connected to discourses of technique and practices of technical training. These discourses and practices interpellate practitioners and student-practitioners, requiring of them that they assume the identity mandated by the discourses of the technical training. In conflating technique with identity, the discipline in fact violently separates the two, since the formation and development of both technical knowledge and identity will always be far too plural and complex to withstand such conflation without extensive dissociation and exclusion.

Any analysis of these issues must focus considerably on verbal and colloquial discourse, as this is the primary means by which the field is reproduced. There is no body of critical theory that takes bel canto as its subject, and what writing does exist either does not address or actively reproduces many of the field's problematic ideas and foundational myths. These texts have a lineage that can be traced back to early musical treatises written by composers, singing teachers and music theorists. These early treatises, which typically cover a range of subjects and contain more or less extensive sections on vocal technique and the practice of singing, include Giulio Caccini's *Le nuove musiche (The New Musics)* of 1602; Lodovico Zacconi's *Prattica di musica (Musical Practice)*, consisting of two volumes published in 1592 and 1622 respectively; Pier Francesco Tosi's *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni, o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* usually translated as *Observations on the Florid Song* (1743); *Pensieri e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato (Practical Reflections on Figured Singing)* by Giovanni Battista Mancini (1774). In the 19th and early – mid 20th centuries significant monographs were written that offered systematic analysis of and exercises for the development of bel canto technique. For some bel canto scholars and pedagogues, these texts are still considered foundational,¹³ and I found this corroborated in my own training. These include *Le Tecniche del Bel Canto (The Technics of Bel Canto)* by Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1905); Manuel Garcia's *Traité complet de l'art du chant (A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing)*, compiled in various stages throughout the 1840s; and Mathilde Marchesi's *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method*, originally published in 1887 and reprinted many times, notably in 1970 by Dover Publications. In the last forty years, books on classical vocal pedagogy have emerged that combine this lineage of technical knowledge with the insights of laryngology, phoniatrics, acoustics and neuroscience, as well as historiographical approaches. These books include Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (1986); James Stark's *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (1999); Janice Chapman's *Singing and Teaching Singing:*

¹³ James Stark wrote in 1999 that Manuel Garcia's treatise on singing from the mid-19th century "must be reckoned with in any serious study of the history and technique of singing" (3).

A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice (2006); and David Jones' *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing: Concepts of the Swedish-Italian and Italian Singing Schools* (2017).

The strong historical legacy running through these texts is the basis of the self-conscious ideology that undergirds the technique and practices of classical singing, an ideology that grounds itself in universalising concepts of the body, articulated through evocations of the 'healthy' and the 'natural'. In this ideology, the techniques and practices of classical singing, and the bodies that reproduce them, stand in a hierarchical relation to other techniques, practices, and bodies. These attitudes and structures demonstrate the logic of whiteness, in that the technique is constructed as being universally correct, healthy or natural, while others are engaged with only insofar as they are understood to deviate from and to be in some way 'less than' classical vocal technique. In other words, the favoured technique is invisible and unmarked (Ahmed 2007; Dyer 2017; Frankenberg 1993; Garner 2007); it is the "absent centre against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation" (Ahmed 2007, 157). This invisible background of whiteness is constantly being reproduced through music education, a fascinating account of which is given by Loren Kajikawa in his article "The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music" (2019). Melanie L. Marshall explores the specific ways in which whiteness is reproduced in relation to the historical lineage of classical singing and early music in particular in her article "*Voce Bianca*: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality" (2015), in which she demonstrates the alignment with whiteness of the notion of vocal "purity," a discursive construct that operates as a naturalised and invisible background against which other tone qualities emerge as 'other'. Kira Thurman, whose analysis of the foundational whiteness of classical music runs along similar lines, argues that classical music, "like whiteness itself, is frequently racially unmarked and presented as universal – until people of color start performing it" (2019, 832).

These phenomena are strongly rooted in the pedagogical and technical discourses of the field, which, in naturalising and universalising a specific embodied technique, also render invisible the mechanics of power – and the resulting separations, alienations and negations – by which that technique is transmitted. A thorough analysis of the unmarked whiteness of the field of classical vocal music is well beyond the scope of this thesis, but I draw attention to it here in order to highlight the ways in which the field demonstrates that whiteness is a matter of "knowledge and practice," specifically "a universalist approach to training or technique that examines the differential capacities and affordances of embodiment without situating these in relation to social and political power" (Spatz 2019c, 35). This universalist approach to technique is constitutive of the "world" of classical vocal pedagogy and

practice, “a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual’s arrival” (Ahmed 2007, 153). Coming to terms with and resisting this ‘givenness,’ in its many social and bodily manifestations, has given rise to my theorisations of the interconnectedness of technique, identity and transformation, and their structural relation within practice.¹⁴

The discourse that reproduces the universalising foundations of classical music is evident in the texts on classical vocal technique mentioned above, as a brief selection of quotes easily demonstrates. My objective here is not to assess their efficacy within the context of vocal training, but rather to draw attention to the ways in which the discourse around technique takes as a fundamental starting point the notion of a universal, non-specific body, as well as the tendency to endow the historically localised phenomenon of classical vocal music with universalised value and hierarchical status. G.V. Lamperti’s *The Technics of Bel Canto* opens with the statement, “The true method of singing is in harmony with nature and the laws of health” (1905, 5). Mathilde Marchesi writes that “the attitude of the pupil, in singing, should be as natural and easy as possible.” Although she maintains that “the body should be kept upright, the head erect, the shoulders well thrown back,” this should be done “without effort” and “all muscles” surrounding “the vocal organs [...] should be completely relaxed” (1970, 12). Elsewhere she writes that coordinated onset exercises should avoid “all jerkiness as well as effort” (1970, 25). In more recent texts, the concept of the ‘natural’ tends to be rearticulated as “well-formed” (Miller), “elegant” (Stark), or “primal” (Chapman). In Richard Miller’s contribution to this naturalising and universalising discourse, “Western” – natural, unmarked, white – bodily aesthetics are compared superlatively to “non-Western” – ‘physically maladjusted,’ marked, non-white – notions of beauty. This explicitly racialised account of the superiority of classical singing is framed as a pedagogical argument and appears in his chapter “Pedagogical Attitudes: The Aesthetics of Vocal Timbre.” Miller argues that “the functionally complete specimen who can engage in physical action with a physically optimal body continues to represent the artistic norm in art and action in the Western world.” He sharply defines this criterion of ““The Beautiful”” against what he categorises as non-Western practices of “physical maladjustment,” citing Polynesian tattoos, foot-binding and neck elongation as examples of the latter. This argument is then applied directly to the voice:

¹⁴ I must acknowledge here the extensive work of my supervisor Ben Spatz in the relation of technique to identity, specifically through songwork but also in practice more broadly. Archives of this work can be found in Ben’s article “Molecular Identities: Digital archives and decolonial Judaism in a laboratory of song” (2019b), and in the project it reports on, namely *Judaica: Embodied Laboratory for Songwork*, which is archived audiovisually on the Judaica Project page of the Urban Research Theatre’s website (Spatz n.d.). My encounters with this work have undoubtedly shaped the direction of my own practice and research.

Vocal timbre that results from the well-formed, well-coordinated instrument, without maladjustment of any of its physical parts or functions, stands the best chance of qualifying under the artistic criteria for tonal beauty, as found in Western culture. The human body is the vocal instrument; its most freely produced sounds (the result of functionally efficient coordination) most closely adhere to the Western ideal of beauty.

(1986, 205)

The ultimate purpose of Miller's explication is the pedagogical argument that "a singer's timbre concept must accord with the natural laws of vocal acoustics and physical freedom" (1986, 206) – in other words, that this racialised account of beauty be internalised and embodied to the extent that it is constitutive of the pupil's own subjectivity. It is precisely here, in the nexus of the discursive, the technical and the pedagogical, that the reproduction of the bel canto field through an insidiously separational and hierarchising interpellation is at its most explicit.

Similar constructions of classical vocal production as the finest use of the universalised human body appear in James Stark. Writing over a decade later than Miller, Stark claims that "there is a paradigm of good singing that can serve as the reference point for discussions of voice, song, and expression," and that this paradigm is "most often associated with 'classical' singing styles, extending from the early Baroque period to the present." Invoking the scientific to reinforce an argument that bears obvious resemblance to Miller's 'functional efficiency,' Stark writes that "[v]oice scientists, too, recognize that classical singing techniques offer the most elegant and sophisticated use of the voice, and that these techniques provide the reference point for understanding other forms of vocal usage" (1999, xii). In keeping with the practices in the field, no voice scientist is cited in support of this claim and no attention whatsoever is paid to "other forms of vocal usage." The discursive requirements of the field are satisfied by the construction of the hierarchy between bel canto and Other, and the invocation of 'science' or 'health' by way of substantiation¹⁵.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Emilio Aguilar, whom I met when we were both students at the Conservatoire of Amsterdam, for his critique of the books of both Miller and Stark in his unpublished article "Ethics and Translation in the Bel Canto Tradition" (2018). I am not aware of any other piece of writing that takes such an extensive look at the dynamics of power at play in classical vocal pedagogy. In his article, Emilio explores first-hand knowledge of the pedagogical practices of the field in relation to pedagogical writings, submitting these to exacting discourse analysis that draws out philosophical insights of deconstruction and postcolonialism from Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. An experienced voice teacher and certified Feldenkrais instructor, Emilio also offers concrete suggestions for alternative approaches to classical vocal pedagogy grounded in his philosophical analysis and teaching experience. Our years of continuous discussion of the topics explored here have been deeply beneficial in creating a discursive space strong enough to stand as an alternative to that of our shared training.

Janice Chapman's vocal pedagogy is based on the idea of the "primal sound" – a sound that "cannot be achieved without the *natural* interaction of body, mind, and spirit" (2006, 4, emphasis added). Again invoking the Other to substantiate this notion, Chapman gives a brief account of hearing a Kenyan choir singing at a music education conference in Innsbruck. She writes that the music was "unmemorable," but the singing was "holistic, natural, earthed, emotionally connected, and intensely moving" (2006, 4). No interest is shown in the specificity of the bodies performing the technique, or how or why their embodied technique impacted Chapman in a way she describes as "seminal". The reference is simply a variation of the discourse that constructs classical vocal technique as 'natural' and 'healthy,' this time appealing to the Other as the possessor of a non-descript original authenticity that, being "natural" and "earthed," needs no specifying or situating.

In Chapman's vocal pedagogy, the "primal sound" is coordinated by the "emotional motor system." This term, introduced by neuroscientist Gert Holstege (G. Holstege 1992; Gert Holstege, Bandler, and Saper 1996), refers to a "specific set of parallel motor pathways, governing somatic, autonomic, and endocrine motor responses" and was developed to account for the fact that individuals who had lost access to voluntary motor control systems due to lesions could still maintain facial motor control during spontaneous emotional responses (Gert Holstege, Bandler, and Saper 1996, 3). Chapman's examples of the kinds of sounds that she considers to be organised by the emotional motor system include "crying, howling, wailing, laughing, groaning, calling, spontaneous joyful exclamations, grunts" (2006, 17). The accuracy of these claims is not at issue here, rather the fact that, in practice, this method involves a performative exchange between pupil and teacher, in which the pupil must perform these 'spontaneous' exclamations on command (*Primal Sound from Singing and Teaching Singing* 2016)¹⁶. The use of this method interpellates the pupil, who is being asked to access the muscular coordination of highly specialised embodied technique through recourse to "primal" bodily behaviours that they might not experience in the way the instructor does. In other words, the concept of the "primal" repudiates the "countless layers of sedimented technique" that make up any individual body's behaviour, as well as the ways in which that technique is "complexly interwoven with agency" (Spatz 2015, 57). The practitioner must leave all that at the door.

Despite the interdisciplinary, research-oriented nature of Chapman's work,¹⁷ it often reveals the same universalising attitudes towards the body. The desired technical outcome is still often constructed as a matter of health, as in the distinction between undesired "breathy phonation" and desired "healthy phonation" (2006, 87). Here again, the undesired technique is marked as possessing a specific quality, while the desired technique is naturalised. The concept of the "primal" sits quite well with that of the 'natural' or the 'healthy,' and does not problematise or destabilise the hierarchical and universalising attitudes that have historically constituted the field. In fact, these are frequently reinscribed by appeal

¹⁶ This method is quite common and was well-established before Chapman's use of it.

¹⁷ Chapman's book *Singing and Teaching Singing* features contributions from practitioners with specialisms in fields including phonetics, osteopathy, psychotherapy, counselling, speech therapy, audiology and otorhinolaryngology.

to 'science.' In an interview with the YouTube channel *Opera Show*, Chapman is asked, "Can you sing Opera without being physically active?" (2018, 3:59). Her reply immediately moves into territory of comparison, namely between opera and what she vaguely frames as 'not-opera,' a distinction articulated by appeal to "neuroscience":

Not opera singing, certainly. If you're going to sing with a microphone, or you're going to sing *some styles* of music, you can get away with not being fully connected physically. Nowadays [...] neuroscience is telling us that these emotional connections have got a lot going on in the brain that we really need to understand, and sort of singing from the neck up is always going to be very tiring. I mean the more we can engage our bodies in an athletic way, the less wear and tear there is on the vocal mechanics.

(2018, 3:58-4:43)

There is an explicit contrast between, on the one hand, the "fully connected," "athletic" body of the classical singer, and, on the other, some vaguely understood other body which is assumed to not be "fully connected physically," to lack "emotional connections," yet somehow managing to "get away with" having less of what is deemed – even by neuroscience – to be necessary. This reasoning pervades the discourse and practices of classical vocal training at every level, and its structures of hierarchy and separation call on the practitioner to accept the interpellation as a precondition of technical development. This gives rise to a double bind for the many practitioners who do not fit comfortably in the identity being bestowed by the interpellation, but who still wish to acquire the technical knowledge to which those with power hold the keys. Often, the response to this double bind is to comply with the forceful separation of embodied technique and identity, either until this separation is consolidated via the comprehensive unlearning of other modes of identity formation, or until a later date when the interpellating force of power has waned, and one recognises the nature of the double bind and is able to critique it.

While the texts referenced above offer numerous illustrations of the discourse that reproduces the field of classical vocal music, they are not the principal source for pupils and practitioners in the field. Classical vocal pedagogy is oral and practice-focused, and consequently – among singers, at least – its discourse thrives in the rehearsal room and other social contexts where classical singers gather (Callaghan 2000; Aguilar 2018). Teachers often secure their positions at conservatoires on the basis of a degree of success in their performing careers, and their knowledge of pedagogical literature of any sort tends to be at best casual (Welch et al. 2005; Aguilar 2018). On many occasions I witnessed both teachers and pupils discouraging too much engagement with written sources, typically in support of the hierarchical dualisms of emotion-intellect and feeling-thinking that are very common in the field.

Predominant pedagogical methods are based in imagery, metaphor, gesture and kinaesthetic suggestion¹⁸ and palpation¹⁹ (McCoy 2014; Welch et al. 2005), which function as the means by which the discourse is introjected and embodied. Due to the relatively poor documentation of classical vocal pedagogy (Welch et al. 2005, 226), I will frequently rely on my own observations and experience for my analysis of the practice-based reproduction of discourse.

In the practice room, bel canto technique is frequently sanctioned as the “healthiest” kind of singing, while other approaches to the voice are either characterised as “unhealthy” or “damaging,” framed as inferior, misrepresented and oversimplified, or not known or addressed at all. My years of experience as a student, performer and more recently as a teacher in conservatoires and universities have shown me that this view is very much the norm in the field. It effects a violent separation between the technique being taught and other techniques, causing classical singing students to become increasingly distanced from other ways of using their voice. This divide often becomes so deep as to lead to an equation of singing with classical technique, and I know from my own experience as well as discussions with numerous others from the field that quitting classical singing initially feels like quitting singing – until one eventually unlearns the dogma and accepts (or remembers) the notion of a singing voice other than the one that was produced through the training. Performance anxiety is rarely addressed directly and the ample literature on the subject, much of it located or grounded in the field of sports psychology,²⁰ is not recommended to pupils or widely known. The language used by instructors often conflates the technical with the moral within a goal-oriented framework, meaning that, for example, obstacles in the search for “freedom”²¹ or “spin”²² are frequently attributed to the singer’s lack of generosity or inability to “let go”. This particular framework can lead to intrusive, abusive or humiliating situations, when instructors become dogged in their pursuit of what they construct as ‘freedom,’ ‘release,’ or any number of other technical goals framed as individual virtues, and this risk is greatly intensified by the one-to-one model of instrumental and vocal training in classical music. Research into

¹⁸ See, for example, David Jones’ instruction to ‘open your back rib cage with the slight shape of a cobra head’ (2004), and Barbara Bonney’s “It’s like you have a big, big, big... watermelon? – orange, an orange. You have an orange in your hand, a big, bright orange, and it’s going zzzzzzzzzzz! – out there. Not inside your throat” (松岡 茂雄 2013).

¹⁹ The practice of using hands to receive feedback about a singer’s breath support and other aspects of the technique. It is commonly reciprocal, i.e. students will place their hands on instructors’ rib cage, diaphragm, abdomen, or neck while the instructor demonstrates, and instructors will use palpation either to assess a certain technical operation or to stimulate engagement with specific areas of the body via kinaesthetic sensations of touch and pressure. For an example, see Janice Chapman in “Primal Sound from *Singing and Teaching Singing*” (2016).

²⁰ See for example, *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey 1997), *Performance Strategies for Musicians* (Buswell 2006) and *Mindset: a Mental Guide for Sport* (Reardon 2018).

²¹ A word used to describe a sensation of lack of constraint while singing.

²² A word that refers to the rate of air release and consequently the speed and width of vibrato.

abusive dynamics in the field of classical vocal pedagogy in particular is virtually non-existent, and there is little discussion of the phenomenon beyond the realm of anecdotal sharing of practitioners (see Anonymous 2002; D. L. Jones 2000). In her book *Class, Control and Classical Music* (2019), Anna Bull reaches the same conclusion with regards to music education more broadly:

Surprisingly, while a body of research on one-to-one music teaching is now being built up [...], there is almost no research evidence on abuse in music education, either sexual, emotional, or physical abuse, across classical or other genres of music education, as compared to over twenty-five years of research and policy innovations addressing abuse in sport education [...]. This suggests a denial of the problem within classical music more widely. While there is no reason to believe that there are higher levels of abuse within music education than within any other field of activity, there are likely to be *distinctive ways in which abuse occurs and is enabled* [...].

(2019, 90, emphasis added)

As I argue below, the fetishisation of technique is precisely one of these *distinctive ways*, acting as the fortified centre that holds together a web of poor practices across the pedagogical and professional realms of classical vocal music. I argue, moreover, that the notable lack of research into the subject speaks to the depth and tenacity of the fetishisation, as well as to what Bull also recognises as entrenched discourses of bodily transcendence and cultural and systemic whiteness, both of which cause practitioners to eschew ‘messy’ questions of politics and embodiment before they even arrive at the point of considering them (Ahmed 2006, 15).

There is a similar dearth of research explicitly dedicated to the phenomenon of coercion and indoctrination by means of technique in performing arts training. From the field of music, Anna Bull’s book, while its focus is not predominantly on coercion, makes a much-needed contribution to the subject by examining power and authority in relation to the practice-based reproduction of raced, classed and gendered hierarchies of value within the pedagogical and professional spheres of classical music.²³ The power relationship between actor and director has been explored in Ben Spatz’ “This

²³ Bull’s early trajectory bears certain notable similarities to mine: she comes from New Zealand, which, like Cyprus, is a bicultural island nation and former British colony. We both passed through the standard channels of classical music training in our own countries before further study and professional practice in the U.K. Continuous experiences of the many-layered and complexly interwoven problems in classical music practice eventually led Bull to stop playing altogether (Bull 2019, xi–xii). This is a painful trajectory of alienation that I share, although I did eventually begin singing again. The fact that our similar experiences have given rise to a relatively rare form of critique of classical music – one distinguished by the framework of practice rather than text, a focus on the mechanisms by which identity and ideology is reproduced through training, and considerations of the wider socio-cultural implications of these practices – speaks to the value of situated knowledge in expanding the discourse around the institutions and practices of classical music.

Extraordinary Power” (2019c) and feminist scholars and commentators have engaged critically with the legacies of the Stanislavski System and the Method (Derr 2019; Gainor 2002; Malague 2011). In the field of dance, authoritarian and abusive pedagogical techniques have been addressed in the contexts of ballet training (McEwen and Young 2011), and Matthew Remski analyses cult dynamics and sexual abuse in a number of popular yoga traditions using the psychological framework of attachment theory (2019). Robin Lakes’ “The Messages behind the Methods: The Authoritarian Pedagogical Legacy in Western Concert Dance Technique Training and Rehearsals” (2005) offers a detailed account of manipulative pedagogical methods, putting technique into focus and examining the relationship between technique and teaching methods. Lakes also makes essential connections between pedagogical practices in contemporary dance and the influence of “Stanislavski-based acting methods” (14). An expanded study that takes a similarly broad look at the endemic problems of performing arts training would certainly be of great value. In order to stand any chance of recognising how the abuse of power is systemically enabled in and through technical training, such a study would need to be interdisciplinary. An excellent example of this kind of work is *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines* (Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. 2019), a book that uncovers the common denominator of colourblindness in the reproduction of racial power across disciplinary contexts.

Problematic practices in both the pedagogical and professional realms of classical vocal music are also reproduced through, and reflected in, the limitations of critical reflection and discussion. Examples are abundant. On more than one occasion and in more than one respected institution, I have witnessed teachers and pupils claiming that women should not sing Schubert’s song cycle *Winterreise*, because the poem’s speaker is assumed to be male. While I was a student, a colleague of mine, an ethnic minority among the student body, was told that racism in the opera industry was not an appropriate topic for her master’s research. Not surprisingly, this attitude is reflected in the professional world of opera, where critical engagement with issues of whiteness, appropriation and racism in canonical opera works is often lacking. The popularity of opera in the 19th century and the prevalence of Orientalist operas made the art form a site of the creation and perpetuation of “national and racial stereotypes that have proved to have a long cultural life,” and which are still at the root of “manifestations of coloniality” in the modern opera field (Ingraham, So, and Moodley 2016, 21). Blackface and yellowface have historically been a matter of convention in the opera house (Elliott 2016; Lee 2019) and controversies on the matter continue to arise, just two recent examples of which are the 2019 scandal around soprano Tamara Wilson’s refusal to wear blackface makeup for her performance of the title role in *Aïda* at the Arena di Verona (Lunny 2019), and the Paris Opera’s decision to ban blackface – in

February 2021 – after an open letter against racism signed by almost a quarter of staff (Pentreath 2021). In spite of these high-profile controversies, the issue is frequently met either with hostility or liberal arguments that overlook questions of power in favour of unsituated ideas of freedom of expression and a generalised fear about ‘where it will end’. In “CSTV Spotlight – Fergus Shiel and the Irish National Opera” (Shiel 2020), sixth-year²⁴ student Marianne Ni Dhochartaigh interviews INO artistic director Fergus Shiel, raising the question of yellowface in productions of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. While Shiel recognises that the opera is problematic (he has eschewed the practice in his own productions) his response essentially bemoans the potential censoring of opera on the basis of concerns such as these. His argument runs along conventional liberal lines, taking an unsituated and generalising approach to the problem. Recognising the Orientalism of the opera (though not naming it as such) he asks, “but does that mean that if you were to write a novel you could only write it about a female protagonist because you’re female?” (07:10-07:18). This common manoeuvre sidesteps the particular, situated significance of yellowface practices and performing *Madame Butterfly* in contemporary Ireland, sticking instead to unsituated, generalised, and more or less incontrovertible ideas of freedom of expression – which are not at issue. Shiel continues, “I wonder where it’s going to end, because operas are full of people who do dreadful things [...]. Opera is full of villains, if you start censoring them it’s a slippery slope” (08:19-08:40).²⁵ This conveniently sidesteps the problem again, and conflates the combatting of persistent racism in the modern opera house with very vaguely constructed notions of censorship on the basis of propriety. This relentless dissolving of specific, situated problems into a general and non-differentiated background is a clear example of one of the many ways in which whiteness reproduces itself discursively.

Powerful ideological underpinning of these disavowals is rooted in notions of classical music as somehow universal and transcendent. Foundational ideologies of transcendence have a long history in classical music (Goehr 1992; Born 2010; Bull 2019), and the legacies of these ideologies are especially prevalent in educational contexts, which, rather than being spaces of research and discovery, often

²⁴ The sixth year in the Irish school system is the final year of secondary or high school.

²⁵ Ni Dhochartaigh’s reflections far exceed Shiel’s in their nuance. Without missing a beat, she answers:

Of course, but there is a difference [...] between seeing people do dreadful things in opera in a way that is understanding of the human condition and seeing a caricature of a person in opera. You know, for instance if I saw that someone in London has written an opera about the Irish life without ever having been to Ireland and that we were all potato eating drunks, [...] firstly I would find that offensive, but secondly, I would feel that that was not a great [...] way to write about Ireland, because it doesn’t make a lot of coherent sense. And it seems to me [...] that in *Madame Butterfly*, *Madame Butterfly* herself is a bit of a stereotype of the submissive Asian woman, I mean she’s this 15 year-old waiting for an American to come home to her.

(08:45-09:23)

function as “containers of pedagogical history” (Anttila 2012), preserving and reproducing ideologies by means of the interpellation of the student-practitioners. Many of the commitments of the transcendent ideologies of classical music are exemplified in music scholar Julian Johnson’s *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (2002). In the following extract, Johnson derives the assumed-to-be universal value of classical music from its “formal patterning,” a quality which, following convention, he imagines classical music to be in privileged possession of. These arguments are grounded explicitly in the notion of bodily transcendence:

Classical music projects a content that exceeds the materials from which it begins: it projects something that arises from the patterning of its sounding materials, a form [...] that is itself an intangible, ungraspable idea. The music is a process of thought that takes off from the tangible but is not restricted by it nor reducible to it. In this it mirrors ourselves, which we also conceive of as exceeding the bodily conditions of our being. [...] This is the humanist position from which classical music begins: its essence is found not in the physical but in the content it projects beyond its physical elements by means of their formal patterning. In doing so it elevates us from the bodily, [...] precisely to celebrate our twofold nature, the tension of spirit and body that defines us.

(112–13)

It is easy to see how the notion that an embodied practice “takes off from the tangible but is not restricted by it” might make the practitioners of that practice impervious to cultural materialism and socio-cultural critique. Likewise, the notion that music is “a process of thought” precludes sophisticated discussion of the dynamics at play in the embodiment of specific musical practices, in specific bodies, at specific moments in time. References to “ourselves,” “our bodies,” “us,” “our twofold nature” reflect an unsituated, dehistoricised universalism, a key mode of thought that undergirds claims to superiority and transcendence and sustains practices of cultural imperialism. Such striking universalisms and dualisms are not only a scholarly position, but a powerful organising force in the field as a whole; they govern the field’s characteristic practices of bodily restraint and acquiescence and contribute to the reproduction of whiteness by marking as ‘other’ musical practices perceived to be less restrained or less ‘serious’.²⁶ One of the most blatant and pernicious practical applications of these dualist ideologies of transcendence is exemplified by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. There is much to be critiqued in the organisation as a whole, but I will draw out the two interrelated aspects of (1) unsituated pedagogical practices and mind-body dualisms in ABRSM’s approach to music theory and

²⁶ See Anna Bull’s chapter “Rehearsing Restraint” for discussion of this phenomenon, most notably her analysis of the ‘racialized dichotomies’ evident in a classical choir’s performance of European vs. non-European music (2019, 100–102).

aural skills in particular, and (2) the organisation's colonial origins and continued colonisation of music cultures around the world.

ABRSM operates in over 90 countries around the world with over 650,000 candidates sitting exams each year.²⁷ The organisation claims their exams “are designed to offer a framework for motivating and recognising achievement, rather than a curriculum for teaching” (‘FAQ’ n.d.), but in practice this is simply not the case. ABRSM is one of the U.K.’s largest music publishers, publishing yearly syllabi for every area and level of assessment. Their exams are frequently indicated as benchmarks for applicants’ eligibility for music degrees and principal study modules at UK conservatoires and universities. While ABRSM does not itself provide teaching, they do offer exams for teaching qualifications. The organisation is so embedded in the field of music training that, in practice, the exam syllabi very much *are* employed as a curriculum for teaching, and the organisation’s publications can be found in classrooms, studios, and libraries around the world. Through ABRSM’s scope and geographical reach, the same universalisms and dualisms that Johnson promotes in his book are reproduced and transmitted, not only through assessments – which the organisation would suggest are its principal aim – but through the specific forms of knowledge and practice that it ordains and disseminates. When ABRSM claims, “we believe that everyone, wherever they're from, should have access to high-quality music-learning” (‘About Us’ n.d.), what they mean, or what they are doing in practice, is continuing a program of cultural colonisation that would have young children, parents, teachers and schools all over the world believe that “high-quality music-learning” is synonymous with the study of Western classical music,²⁸ and that musical development is therefore best measured by subjection to a centralised, colonial authority.

The separation of theory and practice, which students study separately in order to pursue “Theory Grades” and “Practical Grades” respectively,²⁹ is an example of the body-mind dualism at the core of

²⁷ Unless indicated otherwise, all ABRSM information, including statistics, terminology and information regarding syllabus and examination procedures is from the ABRSM website <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/>.

²⁸ The organisation also offers jazz exams; however, this pathway is notably more contained in scope. It is offered in the U.K., and while statistics are not available on the website, a search through the international versions of the site reveals that it is not offered in China, Cyprus, Ghana, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, or South Africa. Where it is offered, there are only five possible grades, as opposed to eight in the classical pathway. I reached out to ABRSM to inquire about numbers of students who sit jazz exams yearly, as well as information regarding the countries in which these exams are offered, but at the time of completing the thesis the information has not yet been shared with me.

²⁹ A certain level of attainment in theory examinations is a requirement for progressing to the upper grades of the practical exams, but this does not constitute an integration of theory and practice.

classical music pedagogy and the ABRSM.³⁰ This practice continues at conservatoire and university level, where it is very common for students of classical music to have separate “theory” and “aural” classes – a curricular arrangement which I felt to be severely restrictive to me as a teacher, and to be pedagogically analogous to teaching students to read by means of one class for learning the *shape* of letters, and another for learning their *sound*. James Gutierrez of Northeastern University in Boston has done extensive research into these problems, which he characterises as “the obstacles that attend a legacy of Cartesian thought underlying conventional theory curricula” (2019, 1). Gutierrez’ own work is based in 4E³¹ music cognition, through which he problematises “the Platonic binary of *theoros/praktike* on which the curricular separation between music theory and practice is fundamentally based,” and articulates “a more complex, dynamic account wherein practice and theory are mutually transformative” (2019, 2). Gutierrez states that his own students’ alienation as a result of the mind-body dualisms inherent in music theory learning caused them to relegate music theory to the status of “an object to be attained, rather than a process in which they participated and through which they might be transformed” (2019, 2). The stress Gutierrez places on transformation is key, and my extensive experience as both a student and teacher of music theory in the ABRSM and conservatoire style confirm his critique of the impediments to transformation posed by theory curricula. For music learners in the U.K., the notion of music theory as “an object to be attained” is powerfully reinforced by the attainment-focused ABRSM system, such that it is very common to hear conservatoire and university students speaking about their knowledge of music theory in terms of which grades levels they have “gotten.”

The “aural skills” component of the ABRSM practical examinations comprises a short section of the instrumental or vocal exam, in principle allowing the student to demonstrate their ability to implement theoretical knowledge. However, one example serves to illustrate that “aural skills” suffers from the same ‘Cartesian legacy’ evident in theory curricula. One of the standard tasks in the “aural skills” portion of the exam is for the student to clap the rhythm of a musical phrase played to them by the examiner.

³⁰ Here I am discussing the study of music theory as it is pursued in ABRSM and through the early stages of higher education in music – that is, as a component of musicianship, not as an academic discipline in its own right. However, even within the academic field of music theory, cases have been made for the need to address mind-body dualisms. See for example Suzanne G. Cusick’s “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem” (Cusick 1994). A similar development in music theory and critical race studies has come to prominence more recently, with Philip A. Ewell’s “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame” (Ewell 2020). Ewell does not address mind-body dualisms specifically, but his critique of whiteness in music theory, characterised in part by the ahistoricity or “transcendent immutability” of music theories, speaks to a foundational separation of theory and *praxis*, or of theoretical knowledge and the social context from which it emerges and in which it is embedded.

³¹ The 4E model posits that cognition is embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended. For more, see Richard Menary’s introduction to a special issue on 4E Cognition in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2010) and *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition* (Bruin, Newen, and Gallagher 2018).

Both the playing and the repeating are performed alone, without reference to a pulse or another musician, meaning that, effectively, no serious rhythmic knowledge can either be displayed or assessed. Due to the assessment-dominated nature of the organisation and the general lack of sophisticated pedagogical approaches to rhythm in classical music training, these exam questions are often used as exercises, without any discernible pedagogical method behind them by means of which the student is supposed to be able to achieve the goal of the assessment. The broader lack of techniques of embodied time-keeping in classical music pedagogy and practice presents an obstacle to the development of a deeply embodied understanding of the relation of rhythm to pulse and to the underlying grid of subdivisions, causing difficulties in learning rhythmically advanced or polyrhythmic musical material. It also causes difficulties in phase-locking and playing with other musicians in a manner organised primarily by a 'felt'³² (rather than a written or visual) sense of pulse. To put the matter in terms of a theorisation of technique and practice: music theory, in the way it is studied by most children or higher education students following performance training in classical music, is inseparable from practice; there is no aspect of the music theory or aural skills studied in the ABRSM curriculum that is not concretely connected to and instantiated in practice in complex ways, from rhythm to harmony, part-writing, chord analysis, transposition, and so forth. The separation of theory and practice, that is, the study of theory exclusively as a system of signs, and of practice exclusively as a set of embodied techniques, impairs the sedimentation of musical knowledge, which in turn prohibits the cultivation of techniques of improvisation,³³ composition, arrangement, analysis, and so forth. The lack of access to many forms of deeply embodied musical knowledge effectively engages the students in their particular area of the field, and by compromising the breadth of their technical agency, restricts their capacity for transformation in and through their craft. This, in turn, prevents the cyclical motion from outside to inside, that process by which a musician can learn to embody and adapt music they have encountered. This is painfully evident in the countless renditions of jazz or pop songs by classical musicians that entirely miss significant aspects of the music, perhaps the most ironic of which being the distinct lack of swing in Renée Fleming's rendition of "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" (Fleming 2015). The separation of theory and practice in classical music training prevents the sedimentation of certain kinds of embodied musical knowledge, preventing cyclical processes of far-reaching autonomous growth from taking hold, and keeping the practitioner contained within the boundaries of their discipline. What transformation is possible is therefore always determined by those boundaries,

³² For a musical and scholarly context around this term, see Vijay Iyer's *Microstructures of Feel, Macrostructures of Sound: Embodied Cognition in West African and African-American Musics* (1997) and "Embodied Mind, Situated Cognition, and Expressive Microtiming in African-American Music" (2002).

³³ Classical musicians' fear of improvising is a commonplace, and references to it can be found in countless blogs, articles and discussion forums (Nahum 2014; Hogarth 2016; Murimi 2016).

which are imposed on the body at the very earliest stages of the technical training. Underlying the separation of theory and practice in classical music performance training is a structural assumption that students who study classical music will not improvise, compose, arrange, analyse, swing – in short, they will not make their own music, they will not engage with the music they play in any other way than to perform it as it is written, and they will not depart from the repertoire that defines their field. That the pedagogical approaches of classical music serve the field itself reasonably well does not mean that they are well-developed or properly grounded in deeply cultivated knowledge. The global exportation, under the banner of “high-quality music-learning,” of pedagogical and assessment programs that enshrine this relative lack of knowledge in curricula and teaching practices amounts to a form of what Jacques Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* calls “enforced stultification” (1991, 7), and what I gloss as an epistemic injustice in the form of a structural prohibition of the sedimentation of specific kinds of musical knowledge, and therefore of autonomy and open-endedness in the development of practice. Specifically, I understand the separation of theory and practice and the structural prohibition it results in as a form of *hermeneutic injustice*, or a “gap” in “interpretative resources” that prevents the subject from making sense of their own social experience (Fricker 2007, 1). The “gap” is located where what Guterrez calls the “mutually transformative” relationship between theory and practice should be – a relationship that is key to the sedimentation of technical musical knowledge, and the resulting agential technical interaction in and beyond the world of music-making that is grounded in that sedimentation.³⁴ The *separation* of theory and practice in ABRSM and classical music pedagogy therefore constitutes a “hermeneutical gap” – a gap in resources for the sedimentation of specific kinds of musical knowledge, resulting in that knowledge remaining, in some significant way, *unintelligible* to the musical body that acquires it. The specific harm being done here is the restriction of the depth and scope of the transformative relationship that can exist between technique and identity. If, following Spatz, we understand technique as knowledge, then the harm is being done to the student “specifically in their capacity as a knower” (Fricker 2007, 1).

ABRSM exports their assessment-dominated music learning to 93 countries, and along with it, the myth that their pedagogical techniques are “high-quality” – when in many areas they are demonstrably inferior to those of the local musical cultures in which ABRSM implants itself. Expansion is a key part of the organisation’s agenda, and its aim since its founding in 1889 to promote “the cultivation and dissemination of the art of Music in the United Kingdom and throughout the Dominions” is proudly advertised on the ABRSM website (‘About Us’ n.d.). At the end of 2020, sensing the possibility for

³⁴ See “Sedimented agency” in *What a Body Can Do* (Spatz 2015, 50–56).

further international expansion (Cobb 2021) – and consequently, greater income³⁵ – ABRSM began to offer “Performance Grades,” which are structured just as the “Practical Grades,” but are assessed via video and do not include scales, sight-reading or aural tests. This new pathway claims to assess “communication” and “performance as a whole,” but no mention is made of an audience, besides a passing reference to the possibility of one being present (‘FAQ’ n.d.). The examination is replete with regulatory requirements regarding the frame and composition of the image, the close-up display of various identificatory documents to the camera, and numerous other protocols (‘Performance Grade Guidelines’ n.d.). It is evident that in the Performance Grades as elsewhere, the organisation’s stated aim conflicts with their actual practices. These new exams – which the organisation are calling “radical,” presumably because they are submitted by video (‘News’ n.d.) – will continue the organisation’s colonisation of music practices, and will instil in the minds and bodies of a new generation of children around the world the notion that performance is an unsituated, solitary activity characterised by control, assessment, regulation and execution.

The performance grades contribute to the already existing unsituatedness of the Practical Exams, which are far removed from more broadly socially embedded practices of music-making. Besides the brief presence of an accompanist, the performance exams entirely remove the social relationality integral to music-making, replacing it with a one-to-one relationship between student and examiner, characterised by strict hierarchies of age, knowledge, and power, but also, in many cases, of race and class (Kok 2011). In both the practical and performance grades, students cannot choose their own pieces, but must select them from syllabi compiled and published by ABRSM.³⁶ These syllabi have been the subject of ongoing calls for increased diversity and wider representation (Holder 2020), and a study by Austin Griffiths in July 2020 found that, of 3,166 pieces for examination across 15 instruments and all 8 grades, 98.8% were by white composers (2020, 3). While this is clearly unjustifiable and more diverse representation is obviously urgently needed, the whiteness of the organisation is not confined to the race or ethnicity of the composers in its syllabi but is also rooted in its colonial origins and aims, embedded in its structures, and reproduced by way of practices of technical training. The complex ways in which colonial practices operate at every level of the organisation’s activities have been the subject of research by U.K. and international scholars. In her article “Cultural colonialism, academic rigor, or

³⁵ ABRSM draws over half of its income from international exams, which in the 2017-2018 financial year accounted for 57% of the Board’s net income of £49.7 million (Zhang 2019, 4).

³⁶ Part of the “radicality” of the performance exams is that students play four pieces instead of three and can choose the fourth piece themselves (although the organisation’s website suggests that they might also choose the fourth piece from the syllabi).

both? A study of ABRSM examinations in Northern China,” Zhang argues, as I do here, that ABRSM’s cultural colonialism is not reducible to the lack of ethnic diversity of the composers in its syllabi:

[ABRSM] supports a form of cultural colonialism, impacting music education wherever in the world the exams are held (from Anguilla to Luxembourg, Macau to Zambia), propagated by its Western-style approach, syllabi, and examiners’ musical worldview.

(2019, 4)

Erin Grace Johnson-Williams takes a broad look at British practices of musical accreditation in her doctoral thesis “Re-Examining the Academy: Musical Institutions and Empire in Nineteenth-Century London.” She argues that London in the 1890s saw an “unparalleled growth in the fetishization of musical accreditation” (2016, 11), and that the birth of the ABRSM organisation was a key moment in the emergence of a “panopticon-like system of musical examinations” which functioned “as a means of hegemonic graded and controlled prestige” (2016, 1). Echoing Gutierrez’ observation that pedagogical practices of music theory have relegated it to an “object to be attained,” Johnson-Williams argues that the fetishisation of musical accreditation that gradually became “sedimented within British culture” was also the basis for the “exportation and reinforcement of British musical authority” and its “tangible manifestation in the graded certificate” – an object that effectively transformed musical ability into “a commodified sign of certification” (2016, 12). Johnson-Williams also highlights the ways in which the organisation’s practices have become hegemonic. She writes that

the ritualized function of the ABRSM or similar other graded examinations has become so ingrained within British culture today that many parents feel that their children will never make it to university if they have not passed the gold standard of their Grade 5 Piano examination [...].

(2016, 13)

Johnson-Williams argues that the entrenchment of the fetishisation of musical accreditation within the core of children’s relationship to music is generative of identity conflicts later on in life, and contributes to the lack of research on the subject:

Historians and musicologists have often shied away from examining the social and institutional roots of musical authority in Britain, perhaps partly because so many of us who grew up as musical children within Britain or the Commonwealth are a part of this legacy, this narrative of standardized control, this belief that all of the scale practice, the nerves, and the cost of the examinations would in the end be truly worth something.

[...] To take this a step further in terms of the cultural meaning of examinations: if one's parents paid for it, it must be meaningful.

(2016, 11)

The origin and persistence of hegemonic colonial practices of music learning is the subject of Eric Akrofi and James Flolu's co-authored chapter "The Colonial Influence of Music Education in Ghana and South Africa" in *Music and Identity: Transformation and Negotiation* (2007). Akrofi and Flolu claim that the system of music education in these two countries, both of which were British colonial territories and are currently among the 93 countries in which ABRSM examinations are offered, was inherited "from Western European countries through the combined activities of Christian missions, merchants and colonial governments," and that this legacy has been "inadequate in fulfilling the educational needs of the continent" (2007, 143). Echoing Johnson-Williams' arguments about the complexity of disentangling oneself from legacies of the fetishisation of musical accreditation, Akrofi and Flolu claim that despite widespread agreement that

present Western-oriented music education programmes need to be transformed, music educators' efforts in this regard are obstructed by their conservative philosophical pride in Western scholarship coupled with *the fear of their not being uniform* with the education system of other countries.

(2007, 144, emphasis added)

Akrofi and Flolu and Johnson-Williams' analyses of the reach and intractability of British colonial practices of music learning and accreditation are echoed in Roe-Min Kok's compellingly situated account of the complex ways in which cultural colonisation sediments itself in and through the body by way of technique and technical training:

I am the product of a colonial music education—a set of policies formulated a world apart (literally and figuratively) from that in which it was delivered and received. The policies formed an arc of cultural power that extended from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in Great Britain to a child in Malaysia, a former British colony and currently an independent, multicultural Muslim nation in Southeast Asia. As a result of ideas about Western classical music transmitted from the former and received by the latter, my cultural identity was aligned over the course of my childhood and early adolescence to identify with colonial concepts for the colonized.

(2011, 74)

It is clear from these analyses just how successful ABRSM has been in contributing to the ongoing colonisation of music learning around the world. It is also of particular interest that these authors have

remarked on the persistence of these colonial practices, and the various ways in which they remain impervious to change or even critique.

In seeking to understand why this might be the case, it is helpful to understand the practices of ABRSM and those of classical vocal pedagogy that I have critiqued above as a Foucauldian enunciative field regulated by principles of exclusion, in which knowledge is deeply entwined with the exercise of power (Foucault 2002). The purpose of invoking Foucault here is not to point simply to the presence and exercise of power in standardised musical accreditation or classical vocal pedagogy, but rather to highlight the “truth games” operative in these fields (Foucault 1988, 15) and to submit its claims to discourse analysis. As Foucault stated unambiguously, the binaries of liberation vs. oppression or freedom vs. domination often obfuscate the complex workings of power: “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’ [...]. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (1995, 194). Judith Butler builds on the notion that power forms the subject and provides “the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire”. “Subjection,” Butler writes, “consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency” (1997, 2).³⁷ Within this framework, the active separations and denigrations that construct and reproduce any field of enunciation become more visible, as do their specific consequences for practitioners’ capacity to imagine possible relations between embodied technique and identity.

Many who have been through training in classical vocal pedagogy have a wealth of examples of what I am calling Foucauldian statements that construct the field of enunciation, and through ensuring denigrations and exclusions of what is outside the field, enact the subjection of the student-practitioner. As a student I often felt that there was not much space for critical engagement with the institutions and sources of knowledge that were shaping me – that my teachers often required me to be mirrors. The feeling of a suggestion, image or technique ‘working’ seemed to be dependent in large part on the enthusiasm generated through my agreement with the instructor, and my reflection of their beliefs. My resistance to performing this function frequently led to bemusement, conflict, or the all-too-common admonition “You think too much”. This incitement to destructive self-critique is a common method used in training the student to reflect the institution and to embody its values.

³⁷ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it would certainly be fruitful to examine the processes by which power in the field of classical vocal pedagogy is exerted on a subject and comes to be, through the ambivalence of that same power, *assumed* by the subject, becoming generative of agency and formative of identity (Butler 1997).

This particular working of power, in which the subject's failure to reflect the status quo is understood as an essential failing, is explored compellingly by Angela Davis in "Political Prisoners, Prisons and Black Liberation" (2016). Davis cites the notion of "*a priori* culpability," a theory of the Third Reich legal theorist Carl Schmitt, demonstrating the way it operates in the U.S. criminal justice system. In her essay, written in imprisonment in 1970-71, Davis examines the historical precedent for the political nature of the guilt of Black revolutionaries, increasingly common in the context of rising New Right Conservatism in the U.S. (Hall 2005). Davis argues that there is a "deep-seated ambivalence" in the "official response to the political prisoner," an ambivalence that on the one hand claims that the criminal has committed a crime, and yet on the other hand insists on an *a priori* culpability, the culpability of one "who seeks to overthrow oppressive institutions" (2016, par. 11). This form of generalised culpability is not necessary for the operation of the criminal justice system, but it is necessary for the preservation of the status quo. However, in order to function successfully, it must remain invisible; to expose it would be to reveal that the status quo is in need of preservation, and therefore that it is contingent and mutable.

While I acknowledge the stark difference in scale and stakes, this is the only theoretical formulation I have come across that has helped me build an account of the relation between the introjection of guilt in performer training and the reproduction of the institution through the somatic training of practitioners. In training contexts, representatives of the status quo demonstrate a similar ambivalence as Davis describes in relation to their role as educators. While the judge says to the political prisoner, "you are guilty of committing a crime, and you are also *a priori* a criminal," the abusive educator says to the student, "you have failed to produce a sound that I characterise as "free," and you are also essentially restricted"; or "you have failed to demonstrate the proper agreement with me, and you are also essentially constrained by overthinking." Just as the political prisoner's crime is against the law but their guilt is political, the student has committed a technical error but is guilty of having failed to embody the values of the status quo. It is not possible that the political prisoner or the student might have been trying, or might possess the capacity, to resist the status quo, or to pursue courses of action that would lead to the cultivation of other systems, other realities. The guilty party's actions are seen entirely in terms of what they are *not*, that is, in terms of the ways in which they fail to meet the expectation or demand of the authority figure.

This is something I have encountered as much in the profession as in institutions of training. On one occasion, while rehearsing for a new opera, I requested a minor adjustment to the director's rehearsal process. Since it was a relatively small production, the adjustment conveniently only concerned me

personally and would not have affected any other members of the production, nor would it have necessitated any changes to the schedule. The director responded aggressively, and the conversation descended into argument almost instantly. She resisted the *validity* of my request in a variety of ways, initially by means of misrepresenting and generalising it, and, with the same rhetoric demonstrated by Fergus Shiel, avoiding the specificity of the request at hand, and framing it as the beginning of a slippery slope toward some vaguely constructed notion of disorder. After my repeated attempts at clarification, she began to inquire whether I knew “how these things work,” and when I had finally succeeded in communicating to her the minor and specific nature of my request, she resorted to simply stating repeatedly, “I find it really strange that you’re saying that.” This perceived *strangeness* is key to the operation of maintaining order and authority; the objection cannot be legitimised for the same reason that *a priori*, generalised culpability must remain implicit – in order to preserve the status quo as an immutable state of affairs not subject to challenge and not in need of validation. Needless to say, when the adjustment I requested was eventually put in place, there was no other damage than to the director’s sense of the self-evidence of her authority.

The Foucauldian field of enunciation is reproduced through pedagogical and professional practices such as these, and the practitioner or student-practitioner’s participation in, submission to, indoctrination into the ‘enunciative field’ happens *by way of technique and of technical practices*. This indoctrination operates as a dogma affixed to the performance training and suffused throughout the spaces of professional practice. The damage is long-term; while students and practitioners are still willing participants in the interpellation, their ability to find nuanced ways of relating to the practices in the field are significantly restricted, and repair and healing can only begin long after the years of intensive training have passed, or the practitioner has moved into an adjacent, less coercive field of practice. In my discussions of these matters with others trained in the institutions of classical music, I have heard again and again some version of the claim, usually uttered in a melancholically tone, while gazing into the distance: ‘I don’t know anyone who wasn’t damaged by conservatoire training.’

Bringing technique back into a deeper relation with identity has involved examining the nature of the value of technique in my own life and practice and expanding my understanding of embodied technique to comprise the actions of everyday life. In order to move through these processes, it was necessary to liberate technique from its place in the circular teleology of bel canto practice, in which technique is always in service of “the music” or a “composer’s vision,” and yet somehow the goal always remains just out of reach. This elusiveness masks the real fixation – that of technical achievement itself. The process of technical development is ostensibly directed towards the goal of “the music” to which it is

discursively claimed to be in service, but the elusiveness of the goal warps the teleology into a circular rather than a linear trajectory, one in which technical means are in service of technical ends. This fixation is a widespread phenomenon that many successful and established classical singers have commented on, a prevalence demonstrating that it is not a matter of individual perfectionism. Again, discussion of the phenomenon is limited to the anecdotal. Internationally celebrated singer Kiri te Kanawa's comments, a year after retiring from her illustrious career as a soprano in opera houses around the world, are particularly poignant: "I never really achieved perfection of the 100% that I would have liked to. I never actually came off stage saying, "I've really nailed it." Never. I always thought there was a mistake in it. I was constantly analysing through the whole of the performance what I'd done" (R. Jones 2017). What logic reproduces this kind of perpetual alienation?

In the bel canto training I experienced, vocal technique is a deeply fetishised object that conforms in many senses to Marxian commodity fetishism. Our belief in the value of the fetishised object of technique causes this object to assume a primary position in an obscure hierarchy of value, in which the sound product is valued as an object distinct from the body producing it. In Marxian terms, the value of the technique-qua-commodity is displaced from the very material labour of the body that generates it, and is understood instead to inhere in the object, whence, at least partly, the object acquires its tenaciously enigmatic character (Marx 2013, 47; Lewin and Morris 1977). This phenomenon of displacement is evident in the discursive objectification of a classical singer's voice, which is frequently referred to using the definite article ("the" voice) rather than the possessive pronoun ("their/her/etc" voice). According to Marx, "a commodity is [...] a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of [...] labour appears [...] as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour," leading to "the definite social relation" between individuals taking on "the fantastic form of a relation between things". The value that is understood to inhere in objects, and through which the social relation takes on the form of a relation between things, is expressed as a quantity, leading to the quantification of the whole social world: "what is real under capitalism, in the sense of having significant effects on the world, are those quantities and the laws that regulate them, not the concrete qualities of individuals and things" (Feenberg 2015, 493). Of course Marx developed this theory in the context of the widespread "deskilling of labour" that was a fundamental part of the industrial revolution (Feenberg 2015, 494), but it appears that, today, these capitalist paradigms subsume even highly specialised labour such as classical vocal performance. The interaction of this phenomenon of fetishisation with the cultural imperialism of the classical music tradition more broadly, and the capitalist-oriented and market-driven nature of the profession, creates a system in which vocal

technique carries an enormously teleological and goal-oriented weight, resulting in extreme reverence and blind devotion to the many dogmas expounded in the field.

The wider phenomenon of reification – *Verdinglichung* or ‘thingification’ – takes place by way of commodity fetishisation. The concept was not prominent in Marx’ own work, but was taken up in the early 20th century initially by György Lukács and later more broadly among the Frankfurt School. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács writes that reification is the mechanism by which

a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom-objectivity,’ an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.

(1990, 83)

In philosopher Andrew Feenberg’s reading, this contrast between social relations and things implies a deeper argument about the relation of structure to agency: “Reification provides structure for determining a specific type of practice that stabilises and reproduces the institutions.” Within the world of those practices, reified objects “appear,” and are understood ““immediately”—that is to say, without critical awareness—from a reified standpoint. This standpoint is derivative of the practices, not of their origins, but the standpoint contributes to the reproduction of the world that the practices sustain.” From this reified standpoint, the complex of relations that constitute an institution such as a conservatoire or an opera house appear “as a solid and substantial thing like a natural object” (2015, 490). Political theorist Anita Sridhar Chari similarly argues that the concept of reification offers an account of the relation of capitalist structures to subjectivity. Chari writes that a reified subjectivity “is a form of subjectivity that is unable to grasp its own practice within the context of the social totality.” It generates a particular stance toward society in which institutions and structures – a conservatoire, or the economy – exist as “separate, self-grounding and autonomous” realms of social life, “operating in a way that is seemingly independent of human will” (2015, 5). If reification is the ‘thingification’ of social relations then dereification, like defetishisation, is the dismantling of that state of affairs; the recognition of the socially contingent and relational structure of institutions and practices, and the exploration of the consequences of that realisation. Dereification involves “another type of practice with the power not only to penetrate the illusion of reification but to transform the structures it establishes” (Feenberg 2015, 490).

The fetishisation of technique is a key means of shaping identity under the aegis of technical training. In its ideological transcendence of the specific, situated body, the fetishised technical object stands in

a relation of mutual reinforcement with the mechanisms of whiteness that construct the favoured technique as 'natural' and conflate its attainment with virtue. This causes identity and technique to be collapsed in a manner that forecloses meaningful connection; rather than being seen as mutually and creatively constitutive, identity is measured along a spectrum that is mapped directly onto the target-driven lines of the technical-aesthetic training. The interpellation excludes, or seeks to destroy or excise, aspects of the student-practitioner's identity that do not comfortably fit inside the disciplinary framework. By processes of reification, this phenomenon also structures and reproduces the institutions of training and performance. The collapse of social relations into relations between fetishised objects results in systematic conflations – or “homologies” (Bull 2019) – between technical life (understood in the narrow sense of specialised training) and social life; conflations of technique and virtue, technique and health, skill and identity, technical achievement and social status, and so forth. Following these pathways brings one further and further away from the possibility of a *transformative* relationship between identity and technique, and exchanges the possibility of such a relationship for the prize of belonging within, or at least access to, the pedagogical and professional institutions reified through practices of technical training. Repairing the collapse of identity and technique has been a core pursuit in the course of my PhD, one that has involved arduous processes of *defetishising* technique. In liberating technique from structures of alienation, I have sought to build a transformative relationship to technique rooted in *love* rather than *fetishisation*. It is through this process of repair that I have come to restore and forge new connections between different areas of my embodied technique, and to understand the relationship between technique and identity as an area of research. In this research, I engage in a situated, epistemic manner with technique (Spatz 2015), an engagement that grounds and gives rise to acts of making, and consequently shapes the development and structures the activity of my practice.

Dialogue II³⁸

I: What are you doing?

F: I don't know exactly.

I: How are you going to work it out?

F: I suppose the same way I work out most other things.

I: Which is how?

F: Through a combination of waiting, writing and trying things.

I: Is that a kind of method?

F: In a way, yes. Also not doing anything. Or doing something else. That's an important part of the method.

I: Does the method always work?

F: The method basically always works, yes.

I: Basically?

F: Well... it depends on how you define 'working'. Sometimes the method leads me to something other than what I initially wanted or planned. So in that sense it has not worked. But for me it has worked, because what it leads to is always better.

I: How do you know if it's better?

F: Because it comes. I don't have to battle with it. I have to work at it, of course. But I don't have to fight it.

I: So the method has two phases, the first consisting of waiting, writing, trying things and doing nothing; and the second consisting of work?

F: Sort of. It might become necessary at any point along the way to stop again. To wait some more. To write something else.

I: And why is that?

F: Well... whatever it is you're doing is going to grow into something, right? I mean it might not, you might discover somewhere along the way that it isn't what you wanted at all, or that you don't yet possess the necessary knowledge to continue, or

³⁸ Written on April 14th, 2020 in Thasos, Greece. This is one of three dialogues with an imagined other, informed in part by the essay-dialogues that Maurice Blanchot weaves through his book *L'Entretien Infini (The Infinite Conversation)* (1993). The dialogues were an aspect of the intuitive method as I define it in "Practice: a working definition." In this case, the method was applied to the writing of the thesis: through the dialogues I sought to reject false problems and uncover true problems, to uncover the form of the thesis as a whole by choosing among the limited pathways that emerged at each step of the way, and above all to understand the making of the form of the thesis as a durational, transformational phenomenon that, once complete, would be archived but never fully contained in that form. By staging and performing my thought, the dialogues gave me a way to move through that process.

Dialogue II

there was a false precedent somewhere along the way. But that's another case, and there are different methods for dealing with that. Let's take the case where you are making something that you want to make and that you have the ability to make.

I: OK.

F: Well. At some point in time, in the future, that thing is going to be made, or done.

I: Yes.

F: And then it will have a certain shape, a certain relationship between the parts and the whole.

I: What do you mean?

F: I mean that there is going to be a certain correlation between some small material aspect over here, and some large conceptual framework over there. Between, say, a moment that is taking place – an interaction between participants or an instance of performance – and the space you occupy together. There is also going to be a correlation between whatever underlying and in some way lifelong needs you have as a maker, and whatever is manifesting in that particular moment or location.

I: What kinds of correlations are you talking about?

F: Exactly!

I: *(laughs)* What exactly?

F: That is exactly what the method is all about. Making space for different kinds of correlations to emerge, finding out what they are. The correlations are everything – they are the marrow. And they must be truthful, otherwise I am just making for the sake of it.

I: Truthful is a big word. What do you mean by that?

F: It's actually quite simple. I don't make things just because I'm an artist. If I have nothing to make, I don't make anything. 'Having something to make' means that I have found certain correlations between a place in which I find myself, a technique I have acquired or am acquiring, an object, an intersubjective relationship, etc. etc. etc. I can't write the correlations, and I can't invent them. They are either there or they are generated in an encounter. The method has emerged through trial and error as the best way for me to see them and cultivate them. It also helps to prevent me from getting in the way.

I: OK. But you still haven't told me what kinds of correlations you're talking about.

F: Well there are so many. It's like asking what kind of green is there.

I: But surely you can give me an example of one kind of green?

F: Yes. I am lying down in a sauna in a log cabin in Finnish Lapland. I have been in the sauna for over an hour. I am thoroughly tenderised. There are two others with me, one a dancer from Norway and the other a Finnish ecological artist. They are both many other things as well. We and five other artists are living together for a month.

Dialogue II

Our art-making is going terribly, but cooking and walking and forest bathing and weaving and lying naked in the sauna together are going wonderfully well. Mari, the ecological artist, is also an expert sauna practitioner. She has brought dried bunches of birch, juniper and oak leaves with her, and she shows us how to whip each other and ourselves with them and press them to the soles of our feet. She also teaches us about covering our heads with the oak bushels when the water goes on the coals. That way the temperature around your head stays relatively cool, so you can endure and benefit from the heat without getting light-headed.

It's dark, and the three of us are breathing slow and long together. I start to quietly sing a song. It is the song of that moment. It gently binds our attention, while still leaving plenty of room for us to continue to experience the heat, the darkness, the quiet, our bodies, the moon hanging languidly above the field outside the window.

The song has no words. It is repetitive, it begins by unfolding a small and intimate melodic space, which slowly expands through each repetition. There is plenty of silence in it, because the room is already full of so much.

Although I am carrying out some kind of emergent form, I am not performing the song in the sense that is often intended by the verb 'perform.' I treat the song as a space to occupy, just as I occupy the room.

As I sing, I can feel my breath support: my transverse abdominals, my lower abdominals, my rib cage and my intercostal muscles. I can feel the expansion and contraction of my diaphragm and lungs. I know how long each breath is going to last me, and this gives me a phrase-by-phrase frame within which to make my song.

The sauna is full of the gentle sounds of bubbling, sizzling and dripping. There is also the breath and occasional movement of other bodies. As I make my song, I listen to these sounds. I improvise around them, supporting them and responding to them. I don't try to imitate or mimic them. I just try to share the moment with them, in duration and in space. I know that my song will end, and the other sounds will continue. It is momentary.

There are many correlations here, and the situation is the ground of them all. The situation is not only a set of facts, but also a duration-bound phenomenon. It is this place we have arrived at together, through this particular instance of sauna practice. Behind that, of course, are the many days we have already spent together. And behind that there is always more, immeasurable living.

If I speak only of myself and focus on this particular act of making a song, I can outline a number of fields of knowledge from which I draw. There is my knowledge of repetition as a time-bound methodology of making. I learned this from working with a particular artist, from his practice of synthesising the methodology of repetition with an acute sensitivity to space, atmosphere, and the phenomenon referred to in certain music scenes as 'vibe'.

Then there is the field of knowledge of modal improvisation, such as exists in a number of Ottoman-influenced musical traditions from Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. In these traditions, there are techniques of creating musical forms

Dialogue II

out of small gestural cells or modules, expanding them as it were from the inside out.

Another field of knowledge is comprised of Bel Canto singing techniques. There are many other disciplines from which one could learn to feel and manipulate one's breathing apparatus, but this is the field of knowledge from which my particular technique derives. I have assimilated this technique deeply enough so as to be able to put it into practice in a manner akin to that in which I perform a number of daily acts. It is a reliable and even in some way automatic technique, but I can choose to use it actively.

Then there is my knowledge of Pauline Oliveros' practice of Sonic Meditation, in which small, ephemeral sound acts are carefully placed within a particular environment.

In my particular body and in the particular moment of making we are discussing, techniques from these various fields of knowledge meet one another, or correlate. My Bel Canto training correlates with my improvisational technique when I use the arch of my breath to explore the small spaces of vocal ornamentation that don't belong to Bel Canto but are synthesised from various Eastern Mediterranean musical traditions. Techniques of modal improvisation belonging to these traditions, in which melodic units are gradually expanded, correlate with Ragnar Kjartansson's method of using repetition to stretch out and saturate the colours of a given situation. That is, both of these particular practices are invested in constructing forms based on repetition, fluctuating difference and incremental growth. Then there is the correlation between site-specific methods of making and what I feel I have learned from documentation of, say, Jean Ritchie's ballad singing (although there are many other examples). There are many correlations there, much knowledge that has emerged from this particular intersection. One thing that comes to mind is my movement away from an affect-centred performance of song and towards the discovery of song as an object or space to be inhabited. The field of site-specificity also correlates with the field of Bel Canto technique, as I take and time my breath in accordance with the space and the mood in which I find myself. We could go on like this for a long while, drawing out correlations, intersections, influence.

Over time, and through repetition, these correlations are built and strengthened. There are many, many more, of course. As they strengthen and consolidate, they form a practice that is particular to me – particular but not unique, since, like all other practices, it is grounded in transmissible techniques. In fact, these days I am very interested in similarities, or non-uniqueness. I am finding it increasingly fulfilling to make something that sounds or feels as though it belongs somewhere.

Although these correlations occur in me – are a result of my particular, situated embodiment – they are also in a sense given. I don't invent them in the moment of making or singing a song, and I don't decide to put them into effect, at least not in the way I decide to make a sandwich because I'm hungry. What I decided to do, in this particular case, was to sing a song for and with the moment. As a way of inhabiting it, and as a way of gently accentuating our togetherness.

Towards defetishisation: the relation between technique and identity

Treating the relationship between technique and identity as an area of research has not only involved becoming aware of and able to critique the ways in which the two are collapsed during processes of technical training; it has also involved replacing the fetishistic approach to technique with one in which technique and identity are understood to be in an evolving and mutually constitutive relationship. Shifting the theoretical frame of technique from the disciplinary to the epistemic has been a key step in that process. Within an epistemic frame, anything my body *knows how to do* can be incorporated into the practice and can be brought into relation with other technical knowledge. Technique becomes a “basic unit of analysis,” one that can be used just as productively in the studio or rehearsal space as in theoretical argumentation (Bowman and Spatz 2020). In my practice, this theoretical focus on technique enabled the dismantling of disciplinary frameworks that organise the possibilities of embodiment into prefigured relations that always determine in advance what one does (sing, compose, write, etc). This in turn unlatches techniques – or possibilities of embodiment – from their fixed positions within the disciplinary structures of training, so that a new training becomes possible – one in which you train to be a future self whom you do not yet know and cannot yet name. In this conceptualisation of technique, I seek to train and to practice in a manner that preserves the mutually constitutive relationship between technique and identity. I recognise that identity formation is open-ended and subject to ongoing transformation, as my body discovers and rediscovers possibilities of what it can do (Grosz 1994; Spatz 2015). If identity and technique are in a mutually constitutive and open-ended relation, and if this relation structures practice, then practice is not a disciplinary but a temporal matter. The endlessly evolving and ceaselessly generative relation between technique and identity is an open-ended process of situating that takes place within the free-flow of lived time, and is articulated through a practice that takes up certain of those techniques as structuring elements. This practice is punctuated now and then by acts of making that are grounded in an epistemic engagement with technique that is situated in response to specific contexts.

In their book *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (2015), Ben Spatz presents the central thesis that “[t]echnique is knowledge that structures practice” (1), and that it does so “through an epistemic engagement with the relative reliability of material reality” (42). This account does not draw a fundamental distinction between what might be called ‘skilled action’ and the actions and behaviour of everyday life. Such a distinction, derived from categorisations of embodied actions on the basis of their supposed aesthetic or artistic nature, would be largely arbitrary, as these categorisations have no significant epistemological value within the framework of embodied technique

as knowledge. In other words, singing is an area of technique in just the same way as are “walking, cooking, and swimming,” “child-rearing, politics, farming, negotiation, banking and recreation” (Spatz 41). *Practice* is the specific, situated embodiment and transmission of these techniques (Spatz 41), and there are practices of singing traditional Cypriot songs to activate the writing of PhDs, just as there are practices of walking in the Yorkshire Dales, practices of cooking baklava in Istanbul, countless practices of child-rearing in communities around the world, and so on and so forth. Gender, too, is an area of technique – perhaps among the most “deeply sedimented,” as training in this particular area of technique “begins at birth” (Spatz 199). In engaging with the question of gender as technique, Spatz paraphrases Judith Butler in saying “there is no subject that precedes technique; the subject is formed through the sedimentation of technique” (Spatz 200). This notion of subject formation plays a central role in the theoretical grounding of the notion of practice I am working out here; if there is no subject that precedes technique, then *who I am* and *what I do* (or *what I make*) must be considered together as a relational unity, rather than as two distinct fields, or as background and foreground, personal and professional. The realisation of this inextricable link is what motivated my experimentation with performance as a social situation in which parameters are put in place, but outcomes are only loosely determined, so that whatever is generated is a product of social relations that take place in the context of a group’s exploration of a specific object or practice. The notion that there is no subject that precedes technique also grounds my exploration of the transformative affordances of autonomously and intuitively practiced technique. as a tool of creative transformation. Furthermore, following Spatz’ compelling argument that technique is transmissible knowledge and as such can be the subject of research (2015), the horizon opens for the development of methods of creative transformations through relations to technique that are collective and political.

The relation of technique to practice is explored in extensive detail in *What a Body Can Do*. Spatz defines embodied technique as “transmissible and repeatable knowledge of relatively reliable possibilities afforded by human embodiment” (16), a definition that can bring discussions about painting, walking, BDSM, music and gender all into the same framework. The frame here is the interaction of the body and the materiality of which it is a part and through which it moves and knows itself. Within this conceptual frame, I can treat practices of banana-bread baking in the same way as I can treat my singing practice; as being organised and enabled by techniques that I embody or develop in the service of baking the bread or singing the song, but also as a means to create or explore a relational situation. This understanding of technique as structuring practice has enabled me to move beyond the framework of artistic interdisciplinarity, which often performs a kind of “backwards reading” of creativity (Hallam and Ingold 2007, 3) by taking reified disciplines as a starting point from which a practice of crossing disciplinary boundaries is back-engineered. The notion of technique both as a basic unit of analysis and

as “a network of fractally branching pathways that vein the substance of practice” (44) is a much more fine-toothed comb with which to disentangle what *actually* goes on in any instance of, say, music-making, than is the by far more familiar framework of disciplinarity. If technique structures practice just as it structures making, and, if I am thinking of technique as the knowledge my particular body cultivates and is capable of cultivating, then anything my body can do can be incorporated into the practice, without having to adjust the conceptual frame.

Of course, my body is not capable of everything, nor will it ever cultivate all the techniques that it is capable of embodying. The development of any technique opens up particular pathways for further development while foreclosing others, and in this way anything we do constrains, modulates and directs what we can do next, and therefore who we are becoming.³⁹ But this constraint is not necessarily one that would keep a practitioner’s development limited to the boundaries of any given discipline. Any musical technique I might chose to learn is connected in numerous ways to what we might speak of as extra-musical techniques⁴⁰, such that singing a plaintive shape-note hymn opens up pathways of technical development that might lead to other epistemic fields, such as meditation; transmitting this hymn to others opens up pathways to the epistemic fields of ceremony, pedagogy and holding space; and so forth. As well as the ways in which purportedly musical techniques constantly sprout offshoots from other fields of knowledge, the defetishisation of technique discussed above means that the embodied techniques I cultivate within the flow of my lived experience may at any moment take up a structural place in the practice, acting as a grounding gesture by means of which different areas of knowledge gather into a nexus of meaning. This can include techniques of baking banana-bread (as in *LUNCH/HÁDEGISVERÐUR*, 2019), speaking Spanish (as in *The Loinspres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write*, 2017), and so forth. In other words, the techniques I choose to cultivate are not limited to those techniques that belong to the field of ‘music,’ since there is no such specification on the level of the cultivation of embodied technique. Grounding my practice on this level of embodied technique rather than on the level of disciplinarity, which always comes *after* technique, has brought the relationship between technique and identity into clearer focus, and led to the understanding that practice is the articulation of that always evolving relationship.

³⁹ Spatz addresses this from various perspectives, among them Alva Noë’s “varieties of presence,” or the variations in our experience of the world as determined by differences in “the way we go about achieving access to what there is” (qtd. in Spatz, 45), and Sara Ahmed’s phenomenological analysis, from *Queer Phenomenology* (2006): “When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. [...] [W]e do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not “on line.” The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there” (qtd. in Spatz, 45–46).

⁴⁰ This is a basic premise in much of ethnomusicology, and can be found in foundational texts such as John Blacking’s *How Musical is Man?* (Blacking 1976) and Christopher Small’s *Musicking* (1998).

It was this understanding that finally resolved the problem of how to relate the many and disparate works in the portfolio – primarily by showing that problem to be one of those Bergsonian “false problems,” created in this case by disciplinary reifications. The epistemic engagement with technique, in which the cultivation of technique is in a mutually constitutive relationship with the unfolding of other strands of identity formation, was also a key basis for the decentring of specific instances of artistic production, and their relocation from the status of *telos* to that of a punctuation (or an effervescence) in the open duration of practice. Finally, it was this decentring and relocation of acts of making that gave rise to the four *durational* – rather than aesthetic, disciplinary or thematic – categories that structure the discussion of the portfolio works in Part III.

Part II: Methods of Defetishisation

Autonomy without situatedness, or practice-as-research and the university context

Technique is fetishised not only through discourse but through practice, so that in defetishising technique, I also had to defetishise the many objects and practices through which it is encoded and fixed – scores, scripts, certain hierarchical relations, and so forth – that so often direct the cultivation of embodied technique by structuring and stratifying creative practice. I think of these objects and practices, following Eugene W. Holland, as “transcendent instances of command.” In “Nomad Citizenship and Global Democracy” (Holland 2006), Eugene W. Holland applies Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadology to music-making practices. In this context, Holland makes the (admittedly heuristic) distinction between the symphony orchestra and the jazz band, arguing that the former is characterised by a “transcendent instance of command” while in the latter, “coordination arises more spontaneously and in a manner *immanent* to the group activity” (2006, 195).⁴¹ The account that follows focuses on principles of performance that encourage and foster such immanent coordination, drawn from my relationship and collaboration with two particular artists. Before situating myself in these contexts of professional practice, I will give an account of the research context of the university, in which I theorise distance from the university context as one of my methods of defetishisation.

I have argued that fetishisation in the case of classical vocal pedagogy is fundamentally tied to the practices and beliefs that reproduce the field, and that the hindrances to deeply sedimented, autonomous, intuitive practice as I am defining it here are to a large extent derived from the separations and dissociations on which the field relies. During the course of the PhD research I uncovered the need to cultivate approaches to performance, to technique and to making that were not constrained by the disciplinary context I had experienced as alienating and epistemically violent. The PaR framework allowed me to exercise autonomy in this process because it differed in many significant ways from the disciplinary context of performer training in classical music, that former being oriented explicitly towards generating new knowledge, however that might be understood or defined, and the latter towards technical mastery. Although many of the PhD cohort came through the educational channels of classical music practice or scholarship, there were no singers, meaning that I was at a safe distance from the *particular* technical fetish at the centre of classical vocal pedagogy and practice, and from the reification by which the disciplinary framework exerts its interpellating force. The emerging direction

⁴¹ This is taken up by Laura Cull in *Theatres of Immanence* (2013) in the context of exploring the application of philosophies of immanence to the structures and practices of the theatre. I will engage further with Cull’s reading and application of this concept below, in “*Situational emergence: a philosophical account of transformation through technique.*”

of my practice was validated and framed by the long-term relationships with my supervisors and other lecturers and professors. These relationships were invaluable, and definitely constituted the kinds of correlations that are a part of the web of situatedness. Validation and framing was also given in the form of the cultural capital of doctoral degrees in general, by the university and, by association, the Centre for Research in New Music. These firm structures enabled me to research autonomously, since, without them, my methodological deferral would often have been too destabilising, and the transformation I was seeking would have left me very vulnerable. In this sense, the PaR framework and the Duncan Druce scholarship afforded me autonomy by releasing me, at least to a degree, from dependence on freelance work, a context in which it is often difficult to take risks or change directions.

The autonomous conditions were not compromised by the substantial requirements of the PhD, partly due to my own ease with traditional methods of scholarship, and partly due to the flexible attitudes around how the requirements could be met. As is the case in some other U.K. universities, the University of Huddersfield has embraced the “diversity and ephemerality of performing arts practices” and the challenges they present “to ideas of fixed, measurable and recordable ‘knowledge’” (Nelson 2013, 4). Submissions in music PaR programs at Huddersfield take a wide range of forms, and, at least in principle, nothing seems to be out of the question. The status of the written text in relation to the submitted works is generally treated as a subject of exploration. Practitioners are not required to have a stable or easily categorisable identity, and it is generally agreed upon that making, performing, composing, recording, etc, are all intimately interconnected practices, no one of which can be said to hold or communicate the whole complexity of the knowledge being developed. When I applied for the Duncan Druce Scholarship, I knew that I would require a very high degree of autonomy and open-endedness to undergo any project spanning three or four years, and so I applied explicitly as a maker and argued for the necessity of moving freely among the different components of my practice. This proposal was generously welcomed, despite the fact that the scholarship is nominally intended for “music performance.” In the early months of my research, I practiced my commitment to open-endedness by resisting prompts to articulate research questions. I continued to resist formalising the shape of the PhD submission until the very final stages and did not ‘write-up’ any works I created or performed until the final year, beyond what was required for yearly transition procedures. Part of the purpose of this bracketing or deferral was to create the space for reflection on the practice to genuinely take place. Although I did not write much text explicitly for the PhD, I was nonetheless constantly writing, returning again and again to my writing practice to situate myself within the research and more broadly. It was intuitively clear to me that there would be a coherent way of speaking about the things that I do, and that a framework that could encompass them all was the only option for the knowledge

I wanted to offer – which is why the thesis that finally emerged is as substantial as the portfolio of works it accompanies. My approach was met with consistent trust and patience from the professors and lecturers I had direct contact with, and this trust and patience were essential in creating an environment in which I could develop autonomously.

My approach of open-endedness, of bracketing or deferral, is not unique. On the contrary, it is an approach that comes up frequently in discussions of PaR in the university context and of the status of knowledge and research in the arts as compared with other fields with longer-standing positions in the academy. Anthony Gritten, scholar, organist and head of undergraduate programmes at the Royal Academy of Music, suggests that artistic PaR is a form of *ars vitae*, an art of life, in which

[t]he practitioner's aim is to become receptive enough to encounter events as events [...], and this means becoming patient and attentive [...]. Cultivating an *ars vitae* involves a willingness to wait: a mixture of patience and resistance. It involves a persistent, soft-edged, and hard to phrase feeling of resisting Ideas of practice and research (which still at this stage in the evolution of APaR [artistic practice as research] often means, at some epistemological level, resisting words), of resisting the system's desire to rationalise what lies on each side of the boundary.

(2015, 85)

Gritten argues that patience “is not inactivity or the relinquishing of responsibility,” and that resistance “is not the same as rejection, since becoming aware of the limits of Ideas happens only in the selfsame movement in which they are embraced” (2015, 85–86). This practice of waiting enables the practitioner to do justice “to the incommensurability of all the ways of reflecting on the relationship between practice and research” (2015, 86). Gritten also points towards open-endedness in stating that doing justice to this incommensurability means that “the rules for connecting the practice within APaR to its research [...] are created in response to each individual case, rather than determined wholesale from prior experience” (2015, 85–86). I do not align myself with everything articulated here and with the broader arguments of Gritten's chapter, which tend towards a mystification that can be readily cleared up by, as I have done following Spatz, understanding technique as knowledge and therefore practice as research. But what these excerpts do illustrate is that deferring certain questions, in particular those that concern the structure of the submission or particular fields with which one will enter into discussion in writing, is a well-discussed approach and one that has been offered as a solution to the ‘problem’ of PaR methodology (although Gritten himself does not speak of methods). Another way of thinking this deferral is articulated by Walter Benjamin in the frequently cited opening to convolute “N” of his *Arcades Project*: “In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning

flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows” (2002, 456). While I understand the generating of knowledge through practice to be an altogether messy affair, and not a singular “flash,” the notion of a time delay between the events and the subsequent unfolding of what is to be learned from them, as well as the notion that this unfolding has a much longer duration than the events themselves, succinctly encapsulates the research process that led, eventually, to this thesis.

Although the PaR context afforded autonomy, it did not afford me the full range of correlations and relationships, to people and to place, that would constitute situatedness in the sense I define it here. I have been left with a sense that the university is somehow always trying to catch up with or retrospectively address a lack of situatedness that, because it lies in its foundations, is always beyond it somehow. This is a matter I can only point to, because it opens onto critiques and reimaginings of the university that I am not yet able to speak about.⁴² But what I can say is that a cohort of PhD students does not necessarily equal a community; that PhD projects are hyper-individualist in nature, a fact that no degree of emphasis on collaboration can fully remedy; that the disciplinary organisation that is foundational to the academy is an impediment to transformation because it reproduces the divide between the personal and the professional; that the inclusion of the cohort in certain decision-making processes does not equal an immanent mode of organisation; that differences in the material conditions of lecturers and professors and PhD cohorts mean that the two are often situated in considerably different ways; that the notion of “knowledge production” is already capitalist (Jafri 2017, 131).

Although I was at a safe distance from the disciplinary fetishes of the field of classical singing, there was still the risk of substituting one set of disciplinary restrictions and fetishes for another, and thereby continuing to instrumentalise my body and my practice, this time for a different set of aims. While the PaR context is not built around a central fetishised product, many of the people in my cohort came from musical backgrounds of training and fetishisation adjacent to my own, meaning that, effectively, in place of one web of fetishisation in which I was deeply embroiled, I found myself among a range of fetishisations I was somewhat related to. While there was definitely a shared awareness of disciplinary fetishisations, it never amounted, for me, to a solution to the problem, and the responses I found to the dilemma always tended too much towards well-intentioned apathy or a kind of foundational irony and self-referentiality. While I did not feel at risk of fetishising scholarly methods, processes or outcomes (I had negotiated a relationship to those that worked for me), I was at risk of fetishising

⁴² For current work in this field, see *The Undercommons* (Harney and Moten 2013), “Intellectuals Outside the Academy” (Jafri 2017) and “Earthing the Laboratory: Speculations for Doctoral Training” (Spatz forthcoming).

scores, recording equipment or processes, or a range of approaches to performance understood as socially or artistically radical because they emerge out of and in resistance to the extremely circumscribed field of classical music. I did not want to push at the boundaries of the field from the inside, to make work that poked fun at, commented on, or critiqued the field – I wanted to undergo a transformation that was radical in the etymological sense of an uprooting, of a reckoning with the aspects of the field that I had internalised, and the thorough dismantling of what I no longer wished to continue reproducing.

My need to seek out or put together situations in which I could follow this path led to my keeping a certain distance from the university. This was not so much consciously decided; rather, my research into situated methods tended to take me elsewhere, to places where the gathering of people was not determined by institutional cycles and framed by disciplinary contexts, but rooted in longer-term artistic relationships, relations of kinship, and attachments to place. On many occasions, this involved international travel,⁴³ as I continued to cultivate my relationships to place and to artistic communities in the various places I had lived, worked and travelled to. As a performer negotiating bicultural identity and complex layers of dissociation both in my relationship to my home country and the discipline of my training, going to these places and studying the embodied techniques of identity gave me a meaningful sense of situatedness that is archived in the making that unfolded there. A story from my residency trip to Vatnasafn (Library of Water) on the west coast of Iceland neatly encapsulates the ways in which situatedness is in part about finding correlations, about discovering, through immanent modes of exploration, what connects you to people and to places; about an openness to the vagaries of coincidence, and about relationships that grow out of desire rather than out of transcendent instances of command. It also encapsulates how, in its current form, the university cannot offer the full range of conditions that constitute situatedness, but it can offer the autonomy with which to seek out those conditions.

Vatnasafn is a former municipal library turned installation gallery, perched on a promontory in the sparsely populated town of Stykkishólmur. This visit, and my connection to the place, was part of a deeply complex web of relational and existential significance that had been developing since my performance in *The Sky in a Room*, more than a year previously. Although there were not many people in Stykkishólmur at that time of year, and no one I knew, my situatedness in that place was determined by what I carried there with me and what I had thrown ahead towards my being there. It was a location

⁴³ Enabled by and facilitated by my possession of both EU and UK citizenship.

where Anne Carson had spent time writing, and I had already carried an image of Stykkishólmur in me for many years, since reading her poem “Wildly Constant,” written in residence there 10 years earlier. And so, when I met Stykkishólmur, I did so at least initially through Anne, and with her as a guide. As Anne did, I spent my time in a tiny apartment whose windows all looked westward, over the sea and into the setting sun. Directly above me was Roni Horn’s installation of glacial water columns, housed in the former library space which, due to its unusual shape and complete emptiness (except for the water columns) had a rich resonance and an extremely long reverb. One day, while writing words about song and the wind and the sea, I heard long, deep vocal tones coming from the gallery above. I wrote for hours to the sound of these tones, eventually venturing up to meet the body producing them, hoping to still find it there. And this is how I met another Anne, Anne Bourne. We spoke for hours about love, music, poetry, connection. I discovered that part of Anne’s practice involved playing the cello and making field recordings, and that she had worked with Pauline Oliveros and was an acquaintance of my Huddersfield colleague Linda Jankowska (who was at that time covering my teaching back in the U.K.). Anne and I were brought to Stykkishólmur for similar reasons and engaged with our being there in similar ways. Both of us were following traces; clues left by other practitioners that had marked the spot. We went there autonomously, not by institutional requirement, but in my case that autonomy was enabled by the university. We explored our situatedness there through durational embodied practices; writing, singing, walking, collecting (she sounds, I desiccated fragments of animal remains), listening, observing, staring at the horizon, lying in hot springs through the long sunsets of Icelandic late spring. Our relationship has generated and continues to generate traces, as we send back and forth text and sound objects made for the other or shaped by our encounter. At least two of the pieces are mutually intertextual, namely this one and Anne’s “You can’t separate the wind from the sea / symbiotic listening” (Bourne 2020), both of which archive our meeting. Eight months after our encounter, Anne published her piece in the first issue of the online journal *the Mass*, created and co-edited by my Huddersfield colleagues Maria Sappho and Henry McPherson. And so, as a result of my encounter with Anne, I felt myself – or at least a trace of myself – to be meaningfully situated in Huddersfield, through practices that took place over a thousand miles away.

What this cycle of events demonstrate to me is that being *situated* is not the same as being *located* (Gallagher 2006, 293), the latter suggesting a “more objective embeddedness, a condition that is less open to alteration or choice” (Simpson 2002, 8), while the former, in the definition of practice I am working out here, denotes a condition arising from affective and reflective processes that *respond* to one’s locatedness. It also involves being receptive to states and unconscious events (dreams, moods) that are a core part of the affective and reflective processes. This practice of situating is not always

possible and is frequently impeded by the structures of work and material living conditions that curtail the exercise of autonomy, intuition, repetition and sustained embodied investigation. To the extent that one is able to carry out practices of situating, one does so as a form of exploration and research. Situating, as I propose it here in the context of artistic practice, is an engaged *praxis*. Scholars working in feminist standpoint epistemology have argued that the feminist standpoint and the knowledge it produces is not claimed, but acquired through practice (Rose 1983; Hartsock 1983), through committed engagement with “the intellectual and political struggle necessary to see nature and social life from the point of view of that disdained activity which produces women’s social experiences,” and it is in this respect that a standpoint differs from a perspective (S. G. Harding 1987, 185). A situation differs from a location in a similar way: I may be somewhere, may even have chosen to be there, but to be situated in that place is to be able to carry out certain processes that bring that ‘being there’ into relief; to cultivate relations of kinship, to weave together threads of lived experience and to take these up into the practice, and to do these things in a way that responds specifically to the dynamics of place and of the moment.

I have argued that the PaR context could provide elements of situatedness but not the whole web of correlations, and that it most definitely did enable the autonomous cultivation of situatedness outside of the university. But the university is not a simply a benign space-holder of autonomous exploration, and it is important to highlight the ways in which it is complicit in the reproduction of precarity and the commodification of knowledge. The material conditions of being a PhD student with a scholarship that is not the equivalent of a living wage meant that I had to seek paid work elsewhere, work which was by necessity outside of Huddersfield. I was obliged to enter into living situations in which bodies are brought together not by shared purpose, commitment, or love, but by the expediency and atomistic interest of neoliberal logic, one that, it has been theorised, denies the anxiety generated by circumstantial precarity and subserviates the broader concerns of the material circumstances in which one lives to the exigencies of institutional employment or study (Neilson 2015). This is part of a chain of causality in which professional precarity produces broader instabilities, turning labour “*against existence*” (Crépon 2019, 81) to create a “precarity of life arrangement” (Motakef 2019). In their intersectional analysis framed by feminist political economy, Clement et al. similarly argue that precarity is much broader than employment, arguing that “precarious lives include precarious employment and the social conditions in which it is embedded,” including “household structures, kinship networks, and access to welfare services” (Clement et al. 2009). My time in Huddersfield was marked by such as cycle of precarity, in which financial problems, an insufficient social network, poor housing conditions and lack of access to mental health services interlocked in complex ways. The

university did not offer substantial or sustained mental health support, and what was available was not easy to access. Mental health support outside of the university was even less accessible, owing to years of neoliberal austerity policies in the U.K. (Cummins 2018; Mattheys 2019).

The extensive reach of neoliberalism in the U.K. is also prominent in the institution of my part-time employment, as it is in most higher education institutions (Radice 2013; Maisuria and Cole 2017). At this institution, knowledge was treated as a commodity to be sold to the student-client (Lawson, Sanders, and Smith 2015), an ideology into which students have been so thoroughly inducted that they themselves often object when this transaction is not as systematic and straight-forward as they expect. The lack of situatedness generated by marketised environments of education is further exacerbated by the precarious nature of the employment itself. Hourly-paid terms of employment mean that income is not entirely dependable from one year to the next, and lesson-planning as well as administrative and safeguarding work are systematically underpaid or altogether unpaid. These working circumstances are part of the broader sweep of casualisation of academic labour in higher education in the U.K., itself part of a much broader phenomenon of the precarisation of work (Peetz 2019). With regard to the particular case of higher education in the U.K., it has been argued that casualisation results in a short-term mentality that adversely effects educators themselves and the teaching they are able to provide (Loveday 2018; Leathwood and Read 2020).⁴⁴

The sum set of circumstances that characterised my experience as a PhD student demonstrate the complicity of the university apparatus in reproducing the precarity that increasingly defines our age, in variegated ways, both in the Global North and South (Lazar and Sanchez 2019). While an extensive analysis is well outside the scope of this thesis, I draw attention to this phenomenon here in order to illustrate that the university PaR context as I experienced it does not foster or afford the full range of conditions that would enable the cultivation of situated artistic practice as I define it here. What it *does* offer is the autonomous framework within which to engage in the labour of seeking out those conditions oneself. The university as I encountered it was a kind of conceptual container of this activity – a frame in my mind, within which I could decide what was and what was not the way forward towards a more situated practice, one in which the various modalities of existence are brought into meaningful

⁴⁴ It is important to note the well-documented fact that social, health and employment precarity are not only interconnected but intensify along racialised lines (Strauss 2020; Gore 2020). This fact has become ever more evident throughout the Covid-19 crisis, in which Black and minority ethnic workers, who are far more likely to be precariously employed, have also experienced higher mortality rates ('Covid-19 and Insecure Work' 2021). For a broader historical picture of the relationship between racism, colonialism and the development of capitalism, see Satnam Virdee's "Racialized capitalism: An account of its contested origins and consolidation" (2019).

relation with one another. By way of both a final commentary on unsituatedness in contexts defined by disciplinarity and an introduction to the rest of “Part II,” I will give an account of why I choose to focus on and situate myself in relation to the practices of Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed and Ragnar Kjartansson, two artists who have informed my research in innumerable ways, but who are not located within the field of music.

Both artists come from a background of theatre, Monia by training and Ragnar by means of his family and upbringing. They both work in the field of visual/contemporary art, but do not primarily make objects. Writing extensively about their practice for the thesis brought me to another level of the spiral or coil trajectory that is understanding one’s own practice, as I began to see that I was drawn to these artists in part because of the complexity of their situatedness in relation to the disciplines they engage with. This need to take a non- or meta-disciplinary path, one in which I did not take the boundaries of a discipline for granted, showed up in the very early stages of the research. In November 2017, shortly after arriving in Huddersfield, I wrote a short essay about why I did not want to formulate research questions (in response to a prompt to formulate research questions). The text was entitled “Things,” and it began with a section entitled “Things that interest me”:

Questioning the given. This means not taking anything for granted. It means being interested in how and why a thing works the way it does (an instrument, a language, a technique, a form) rather than using that thing as a vehicle, or as a means (compositional 'material') to an end (the composition).

About the sources I had been reading at the time, I wrote:

They all tend to be engaged with etymology, as a means to interrogate the self-evidence of language use; [...] they tend to be engaged in the phenomenological, reflexive project of giving an account of how a thing feels when it plays out in the world, whether that thing be listening, conversing, being in time, composing, loving, observing an artwork, and so on.

What I now understand myself to be drawn to is a repurposing of disciplinary tools, a sort of pilfering or stealing (Harney and Moten 2013) or a pulling out; the pulling out of methods from disciplinary contexts, and their application elsewhere. The need to do this comes in part from the epistemic violence of interpellation in the disciplinary context of my training, and the alienation resulting from the strict demarcation of what is being trained from what is outside of the training. It came from a conviction, which I could not yet articulate, that the reification of disciplinary contexts has the strong tendency to marginalise situated knowledge, and thereby to enact epistemic violence against its

members. The research process had to remain at all times open-ended, in order to avoid repeating patterns of commodification – in order to avoid instrumentalising the practice for the PhD. I have chosen to write about Monia and Ragnar’s practices because I encountered methods in their work that I was able to apply to cultivating this open-endedness. I was partly drawn to their work because I felt they were doing something with the discipline of theatre that I wanted to do with the discipline of music, a discipline where I had not been able to find such models. Of course, this does not amount to saying that such models don’t exist; rather that my search for them was impeded by encountering transmutations of the fetish. Instead of the vocal technique fetish, I encountered, for example, the score fetish, the object fetish, the timbre fetish, the gear (equipment) fetish, the fetish of interdisciplinarity, and so forth. In order to avoid this repetition, I have needed to go in and out of disciplinary constraints, to oscillate between them, rather than situate myself firmly within or in relation to them, something I did not feel able to do without wasting energy resisting the various forms of fetishisation I encountered. The underlying reason is not simply to avoid modes which had been damaging in the past, but because out of that damage had grown the realisation that what I was seeking in practice, research, and study was transformation, not mastery. It is the relationship between knowledge and transformation that is of central concern across my practice, just as it is a unifying thread throughout my life.

Alongside Ragnar and Monia, I would place the work of Annea Lockwood and Pauline Oliveros, whose intensely situated practices offered an idea of what a defetishised musical practice might look like. Oliveros’ work is mostly something I reflected on and engaged with in my teaching practice, while Annea’s work is directly connected to my project *meta/morphē* (see “Part III”). Esperanza Spalding’s recent work *12 little spells* (2019) and *Songwrights Apothecary Lab* (2021) have shown me what a devotional musical and research practice in service of healing might look like. In the field of literature it is Anne Carson whose work has shown me how to turn the tools of language and literary criticism towards an excavational and transformative project, and I have been in dialogue for many years with her thoughts on topics such as metaphor, *mimesis*, error, memory, dream, desire, translation and much more. During the course of my research I was able to meet Anne and collaborate in the performance of some of her works, where I learned methods of extending the textual project into space and into a shared situation. In the field of contemporary artistic practice I returned again and again to Gordon Matta-Clark’s *anarchitecture*, his term for the transforming of buildings by means of a systematically studied and for the most part illegal practice of making mathematically complex, large-scale incisions into buildings of various kinds, creating new optical perspectives that completely transformed the spaces themselves and the body’s relation to them. In the field of pedagogy it is Paolo Freire and his

“pedagogy of the oppressed,” in which education is understood as a praxis grounded in dialectical materialism and aimed at the awakening of critical consciousness, a philosophy that has offered a new framework for critiquing my own experiences of pedagogical practices aimed at the formation through interpellation of the neoliberal subject.⁴⁵ These practitioners are all engaged in what I described over three years ago as “a phenomenological, reflexive project,” but which I might now call, following the work of Ben Spatz and feminist theories of situated knowledge, an *epistemological* project of researching identity, embodied relationships to place, and socio-political situatedness through artistic practices – or *praxes* – structured by open-ended engagements with technique. This project involves the pulling out of methods from their disciplines and applying them elsewhere, to processes of transformation still rooted in the training, but not constrained by the *telos* of that training as it is commonly practiced.

⁴⁵ For more on this subject, see for example: “Neoliberalism, the Knowledge Economy, and the Learner: Challenging the Inevitability of the Commodified Self as an Outcome of Education” (Patrick 2013); *Changing the Subject: Education and the Constitution of Youth in the Neoliberal Era* (Mitchell 2019); and “Becoming a Neoliberal Subject: Peak Neoliberalism” (Houghton 2019).

The Sky in a Room⁴⁶

Once I had played the song five or six times, I naturally began to abandon my active intention to perform it ‘well’. I began to experience a shift in mood from the poise and focus of a performance to something else, a mood that has something in common with a meditative state, but which still ripples with the tension of the performance of embodied technique and also, crucially, of relationality. The first thought that arose in response to this concerned the way that repetition undermines the teleology of form; a form cannot meaningfully be said to ‘lead’ anywhere, if, when it arrives, it always starts again. With no start and end, there is also no ‘performance’ as defined by traditional musicological ontologies – in which, along with ontological categories composer, score, audience (etc.), there are also the familiar practices of separating what is the work from what is not the work (by clapping, silence, seating that directs attention towards ‘the work’, and so forth). In the world of repetition, where these signifying frames have been dismantled, there is neither work nor performer in the traditional sense; without ‘the work’ there is no ‘interpreter,’ no agent who instantiates the token of the type. We are no longer listening to a song; instead, we are having an experience that has been *activated* by song⁴⁷. In this ontological context I am also an experiencing subject, like everyone else in the room. I am an essential part of the feedback loop *song – room – consciousness – song – room [...]*.

The link from ‘consciousness’ back to ‘song’ is a relational one. Once I had entered into the space of repetition, I began to feel extremely attuned to the presence and movements of the visitors around me. I was facing the organ and unable to look away without breaking both my attention and the balance of the piece, which relies heavily on a play of proximity between my body and other bodies; the visitors can come as close as they want, but the intimate and delicate activity in which I am engaged creates a barrier for the overwhelming majority of people. The conventional semicircle emerges: visitors tend to stay at or behind the limit of a circle circumscribing me as its central point. The question *can I get closer...? what will I see if I get closer...?* is an essential component of the atmosphere of the piece. This much I knew from previous performance experience and observation. What I did not anticipate was the other end of that relational dynamic. Once I had put aside my habitual notions of how to make musical decisions in a performance, and had opened myself to the phenomenological experience of repetition, my singing, playing and emotional state began to be deeply affected (perhaps even determined)

⁴⁶ The following is a reflection on my participation in Ragnar Kjartansson’s *The Sky in a Room*, which took place from February – March 2018. I began writing the following text shortly after the performance ended, and expanded it later, in July 2019. Documentation can be found under the code tSiaR.

⁴⁷ At the time, my use of this term was taken from Senga Nengudi’s *R.S.V.P.*, a performance-based sculpture series in which performers “activate” the work by entwining their bodies in several pantyhose attached to a wall, exploring its flexible materiality (see Bradley 2015; Budd 2018).

by the proximity of other bodies. I could only see the bodies that stood within the limit of my peripheral vision, and even then I was unable to discern details of dress, age or gender. Nonetheless, I experienced what I can only describe as the eruption and evaporation of countless miniature love affairs with the bodies around me. On the many occasions that one person would come and stand at the boundary of my semicircle, and remain there for a considerable period of time, I experienced a sort of opening from which a seemingly relentless flow of musical and emotional intentionality emerged. When the visitor finally moved away I experienced a miniature heartbreak followed by something like a pleasant boredom, which persisted until the next body approached and the whole exchange began again. In this way, we collaboratively completed the feedback loop –

song
enters into and opens
the room, which
enters into and opens
our consciousness, which
enters into and opens
the song, which
enters into and opens
the room [...]

Defetishisation through selective inattention and audience integrality in the works of Ragnar Kjartansson and Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed

In what follows I focus on the work of Ragnar and Monia, two artists whose situated use of repetition, staging and re-enactment, and the reframing of practices of artistic production have informed my own practice of dismantling transcendent instances of command in my practice and refocusing my attention on *specific* bodies and what they are doing in *specific* situations.⁴⁸ Working with these methods myself has constituted a liberating departure from classical vocal training, which is predominantly aimed at training the body (*any* body) to reproduce a set of technical operations in *any* given situation, and is discursively grounded, as I have argued above, in universalising attitudes towards the body and fetishised relations to technique. There is a powerful open-endedness to the performances resulting from Monia and Ragnar's practices, even when they employ given or pre-existing material. Their durational performances practices, in which the performance "develops its object in real time" (Scheer 2012, 1), constitute an investment in the situation created by bodies in space, engaged in activity together. In these spaces, pre-existing material is an *activator* of that space, rather than the transcendent work being performed. The relation between technique and identity takes on a different quality according to which level we are examining: Monia and Ragnar's *works* allow for the performance of technique to be in a complex, open-ended and reciprocal relation to the specific space in which it is embedded and to the specific bodies that share that space; on the level of their *practices*, the development of technique unfolds in dialogue with encounters with others, relations of kinship, worlds beyond the technical training and the techniques of everyday life. Far from effecting a devaluation of technique, defetishisation as it functions in the work and practices of these artists reassigns the value of technique to these capacities of connection. Defetishisation opens artistic practice to its context and dismantles the structure in which works of art make use of a context to instantiate themselves.

My encounter with the work of Ragnar Kjartansson was a key event during the course of my research, and one that in many ways determined the direction it has taken. The first encounter occurred through my performance in December 2017 – March 2018 in Ragnar's work *The Sky in a Room*, at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. During the performance, I sat at the museum's Williams-Wynn Wynnstay

⁴⁸ I will focus exclusively on these two artists rather than conducting a broader review of artists working with these methods. I do so both for reasons of scope and because my contact and collaboration with these practitioners has been a steady and deeply significant resource throughout my research and has undoubtedly shaped my practice more than my contact with any other practitioners.

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18th century organ for three hours day, singing and playing Italian songwriter Gino Paoli's love song *Il cielo in una stanza* roughly five hundred times over the course of ten days.



[Figure 2] The Sky in a Room, photo by Gareth Phillips

The piece grew out of Ragnar's encounter with that specific space and it consists essentially of a folding of the song into the space in many layered and nuanced ways: (1) The room contains a skylight, thereby connecting the room to the piece via the title, which is the English translation of *Il cielo in una stanza*; this title refers to the song's conjuring of the transformation of space:

Quando sei qui con me
questa stanza non ha più pareti
ma alberi
alberi infiniti.
Quando sei qui vicino a me
questo soffitto viola
no, non esiste più
io vedo il cielo sopra noi.

When you are here with me
this room has no walls
but trees
infinite trees.

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When you are close to me
this violet ceiling
vanishes
and I see the sky above us.

The skylight also has the effect of allowing lighting fluctuations in the room as the sun moves and is covered and uncovered by clouds; aside from creating richness and subtlety, there is also a parallel here with the phenomenon of live repetition, in which nothing is ever the same, and in which the salient feature is difference. (2) The room was prepared by the removal of all paintings, benches and other items, drawing attention to the pale blue damask wall lining and the room's centrepiece, the organ. (3) The organ itself is a component of the piece's site-specificity, again in a variety of ways: it is part of the museum's art collection, and the preparation of the gallery for *The Sky in a Room* draws careful attention to the organ and its elaborately carved casing; for regular visitors to the museum who might be acquainted with the organ as a visual object, and accustomed to seeing it shut and silent, the experience of hearing the organ could constitute a deepening familiarity and engagement with the space; the musical arrangement of the song was adapted for that organ's specific timbral capacities by organist Robert Court, who regularly plays the instrument, and who has co-founded an organisation that is responsible for most organ recitals in the area, and is a major force behind the restoration of local historically valuable instruments. Working and performing within this rich tapestry of relationality was deeply significant for processes of defetishising technique and dismantling transcendent instances of command in my practice. In order to demonstrate this significance, I will first draw out two themes – repetition and situation-specificity – and examine them in relation to the affordances they create for the audience and participants. I use the term 'situation-specificity' instead of 'site-specificity' to distinguish from the latter's long-established use in the field of visual art (Lippard 1977; Howett 1977; Kaye 2000; Kwon 2002). The term situation-specificity is also in use and refers to "a set of conditions in time and space," offered as "an alternative to the exhausted notion of site" (Doherty 2009, 14). I prefer to speak of situation-specificity because it is broad enough to encompass both the specificities of place and the situated knowledge and relationality that is specific to the situation, but, being embodied, is not specific to the site.

This was my first direct experience with a methodology of repetition applied on this scale, and it was nothing short of revelatory. In repeating the song so many times, my attention was drawn to the difference in each repetition, to the seemingly infinite variations in my singing and playing of it that arose from the specificity of the situation and my responsiveness to it. The experience of returning – to the song, each time, but also to the situation, each day – revealed to me ever more complex relations

between the song and the space, the way that the return of the seasons reveals ever more complex relations to a place one inhabits. The situation of *The Sky in a Room* restructured the performance situation so that embodied technique was no longer located within a transcendent instance of command and in service of a transcendent goal, but rather in a relation of mutual influence with the many other components of that situation. This showed me a way towards the defetishisation of technique – towards redefining my understanding of my voice as an affordance and an unfolding of my embodiment rather than a product of it. Within the transcendent structure of command, the fetishisation of technique is related to practices and objects in which it is encoded, and so the defetishisation of technique also consolidated my process of moving away from score-based performance as a paradigm – which does not preclude the use of scores, should they emerge as desired or necessary within a particular situation. It also led to my working with the practice of carefully situating the performance of embodied technique – and the objects and practices in which it is fixed and encoded – within a situation that I have devised, either alone or with others, and the deliberate opening up of that situation to outside influence. I began to see how technique could be pulled into a different kind of focus, one in which we can attune to the performative act itself and to the possibilities it affords. Repetition is an effective methodology for fostering this attunement, as it is flexible enough to both bring heightened attention to the performance, making it something “interesting to look at,” but also to create an immersive atmosphere, allowing what is being repeated to “just come and go” (Kjartansson 2018). This particular presence of technique – as a component of the performance situation that draws the attention but does not fix it – relocates the value of technique within the overall economy of the work. Significantly for the development of my practice, I found that this situated treatment of technique affords new possibilities for the audience; specifically, the possibility for a kind of inattention that transforms an accidental audience into an integral audience (Schechner 2004).⁵⁰

Richard Schechner’s term “selective inattention” (2004, 212–34) refers to the kind of alternation of attention and inattention practiced by audience members whose presence is integral to carrying out the *work* of the performance. An integral audience is a ritual audience, one who attends out of need or obligation – they have come “because they have to or because the event is of special significance to them” (220). As such, there is no need for them “to maintain, or appear to maintain, a single-focus

⁵⁰ I do not draw on wider range of more recent and in many cases more nuanced theories of the audience and the event because there is simply not scope to properly situate myself both in the field of music and performance studies or drama. I acknowledge that Schechner’s structural analyses risk over-schematising performance, and my drawing on these analyses does not imply that there are *only* two modes of audience (integral and accidental) and two modes of attention (selective and focused) into which all performances can be categorised – rather that these distinctions are useful in highlighting the pathways I was moving along on my way out of the disciplinary fetishisations and restrictions in the field of classical music performance.

high-tension attention” (223) such as is demonstrated by the accidental audience, who have seen the show advertised and have chosen to be there and bought a ticket.⁵¹ An integral audience “knows what’s going on” (221) and practices a kind of “selective discipline” (223) in determining what they want to hear or see and when they want to pay attention. Often the performance is too long to pay attention throughout, as is the case in many ritual events that “have a program to fulfil and cannot be fit in between supper and the 11 o’clock news” (222).⁵² This point about duration in particular calls to mind the Greek Orthodox liturgies I grew up with in Cyprus, specifically the Easter liturgy which began in the evening and continued well past midnight. The church was always overflowing with attendees, and a large crowd was always assembled outside the doors. Each person held a candle, which earlier in the liturgy had been lit by the flame passed from the priest’s candle to an attendee close to him and from there to every person in attendance. Standing outside in this sea of faces and flickering candle flames, people would chat and greet one another, the murmur of their voices adding to the sounds of the cantors’ chanting and the bells of the thurible coming from inside the church. Some years, my older brother and I were afflicted with bouts of uncontrollable and inexplicable laughter, which we fought, often unsuccessfully, to suppress. This diffuse and yet not lax atmosphere would suddenly crystallise into collective chanting when, past midnight, the priest began to intone for the first time the paschal troparion announcing the resurrection, and again each time it returned, as it does several times in the course of the remaining liturgy. In between refrains, attendees turn to their relatives to pronounce the words *christos anesti* (Christ is risen) to which the other replies in confirmation, *alithos anesti* (truly, he is risen). By being together in that way, late into the night, by inhabiting social relations as one of the principal dimensions of the event of performance, we were sharing not only the experience of the long

⁵¹ It is a well-researched fact that selective inattention was a consistent practice among 18th century opera audiences. Nicholas Till, for example, applies Schechner’s concept in a section of the *Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies* entitled “From selective inattention to absorbed listening” (2012, 75–80). Till writes that selective inattention was so much the norm that composers worked it into their compositions in the form of the *aria di sorbetto* (‘sherbert aria’), an aria typically sung by a minor character during which the audience could leave the performance space for drinks, a bathroom break or to engage in other activities that went on in the theatre (Till 2012, 77–78). That 18th century opera audiences behaved as an integral audience whereas now they neatly fit Schechner’s definition of the accidental audience speaks to the historical shift towards a stricter transcendent instance of command that makes the event of the performance an instantiation of the work and therefore subservient to it. In many ways this historical shift, now foundational to the discipline, has consolidated practices that turn away from integral audiences, since they rely on a very different kind of audience presence than that of the integral audience. This perspective sheds light on the perennial search for ‘new audiences’ that is common across many areas of classical music production and its consequents and exposes the lack of critical inquiry and introspection that would give rise to such a search. For more on this question, see the Introduction of Anna Bull’s *Class, Control and Classical Music* (2019).

⁵² When attending a performance of all six cello suites by J.S. Bach at Aldeburgh Festival many years ago – an event which I understood as a durational performance before I was aware of the concept – I was surprised and amused to hear fellow audience members grumbling that the interval between the first three and the second three suites was not long enough to have dinner. The expectation that it should be – that the performance should be neatly separated off from the needs and activities of everyday life – is an aspect of accidental audience practice.

Easter liturgy but, as Schechner writes in reference to durational performance, “the experience of experiencing it, and the experience of experiencing it with other resilient comrades” (223).

Durational methodologies and the selective inattention characteristic of integral audiences is as much a feature of Greek Orthodox rituals as *The Sky in a Room* – the difference is that the audience who attends the liturgy is *already* an integral audience, while the audience who attends *The Sky in a Room* is *transformed* – or “winnowed” (223) – into an integral audience by their experience of the work. When they enter the gallery, they are an accidental audience. They have likely heard of the show, seen it advertised, and decided to go. They attend “as individuals or in small clusters so that large crowd action is unlikely” (221). Unless they are familiar with the practices of Ragnar’s work, they are coming to the performance as “a thing in itself (accidental audience)” rather than “as a ritual experience (integral audience)” (222). But the methods of defetishisation, repetition and situation-specificity by which the performance is configured create a space in which it is not possible – due to the performance’s duration or its inexhaustible openness – to maintain a “single-focus high-tension attention.” The performance is deliberately open and relies for its efficacy on the correlations generated by that openness. And because the song is repeated, the audience have plenty of time to find their favourite bits of it, or their favourite place in the room, their favourite attribute of the performer, or their favourite momentary correspondence between light, sound, and gesture. In doing so they become capable of practising their own kind of “selective discipline”; in short, the situation *actively invites selective inattention*, and in doing so it transforms an accidental audience into an integral audience.⁵³ Being part of that transformation moved my practice into the direction of *seeking* integral audiences, as well as developing situational methods of transforming accidental into integral audiences.

By seeking integral audiences, I mean seeking places in which certain relations hold between public and place and between the public and the event. In this sense, my use of integral audience here refers both to situations in which the public are there out of ritual need (they are part of community that gathers at that place, for that event), and public places where there is no audience strictly speaking, but the public are there out of some other kind of necessity (for example, the place is on their way home from work). By developing situational methods of transforming accidental into integral audience, I refer to

⁵³ Practices of inviting a kind of integrality in a gallery public is not unique to Ragnar’s work, and part of what undergirds the practice is the interaction of artistic practices with different relationship to time; a gallery is a place for objects that are assumed not to be time-based, and introducing durational unfolding into that context creates the possibility of a range of activations. This is a well-established area in contemporary practice. See, for example “Performativity in the Gallery: Staging Interactive Encounters” (Wilder 2015) and “Play Dead: Dance, Museums, and the ‘Time-Based Arts’” (Lista 2014).

the process I underwent throughout the rest of 2018, during which time I devised or was involved in devising four works that took place in-situ. In these works, the transformation of accidental into integral audiences was a fundamental part of the creative process, taking the form of the cultivation of methodologies that might effect that transformation, including the defetishisation of technique; repetition and long or open duration; open-endedness of form; site and situation-specificity. During this time, my thinking about performance was undergoing a transformation that I am only now able to understand. I was aware that I had developed a distaste for *trying to get people to come* to shows. I was aware of the preference to not perform at all rather than perform with that reasoning. Without understanding why, I began to create secret performances for single individuals who were instructed to destroy all record of the performance. Only now do I understand that I was inviting them to become integral to the performative act by making them complicit in a necessary process that “had a program to fulfil.” As with technique, performance itself underwent a process of defetishisation as I began to understand that, in my practice, *performance happens in the presence of an integral audience*, or not at all. Since I am not a church cantor and do not have a congregation, I began, in my practice, to seek out where I might be able to build something like that kind of a relation, or to turn the techniques and methods of situated making towards encouraging the emergence of that kind of a relation in the situation of the performance.

One source of knowledge and experimentation in these processes was my relationship with Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed, whose practice is deeply invested in defetishisation, repetition and situation-specificity, and in the transformation of accidental audiences into integral audiences. I began to collaborate with Monia shortly before the start of the PhD and have been in close conversation with her and her work throughout my research. In 2016, I invited Monia to perform at a performing arts series I curated in Amsterdam, for which Monia devised a work called *M*. For this performance, Monia compiled a script consisting entirely of lines spoken by the character M in Sarah Kane’s play *Crave* (1998). Monia installed herself on a staircase in the basement of the venue for the duration of the evening (roughly three hours). She was surrounded by concrete sculptures she had made, partly in response to the character M’s reference to “concrete, paint and egg shells” (Kane 1998, 7). During Monia’s time in the basement she read her script from paper, while occupying and exploring the constrained space in a range of different ways. Monia’s performance was continuous and was livestreamed via her smartphone into the hall above, where we projected it before the other performances began and in between pieces. The audience was invited to visit M whenever they wished, and to interact with her however they chose. *M* intervenes directly into practices of script performance: rather than memorising and performing a script, Monia treated the script as a space to be dwelt in,

again and again. Repetition is key here; as the visitors to the room changed, so did the nature and extent of their interaction with *M*, bringing different resonance to the lines, like changes of light – a process that works on the audience as it does on the performer. By abandoning the performance of a memorised script, the conceit of fiction itself becomes a stage, on which the performer can occupy an intermediary space between spectator and performer, to play with the extent to which the performance is “matrixed” and with their position on a scale of ‘acting’ to ‘not acting’ (Kirby 1972).

This performance situation was made even more complex by the presence of the audiovisual body⁵⁴ projected in the hall above, which, being present in the upstairs space in the form of an ambient refrain, filled it with the potential of the performative exchange Monia was offering. To this audiovisual body the audience had no choice but to respond with selective inattention, since it was presented only when a number of other social and logistical exchanges were taking place. But there was also a deeper kind of selective inattention to Monia’s performing body, a set of complex layered dualities that took time to unfold, and slowly became generative of a kind of melancholy; knowing that Monia/M was downstairs meant that I knew that her audiovisual body was present to us on the condition of the absence of her physical body, and, contrarily, that her physical body was present to us in its absence, that is, in our awareness of it being somewhere else. On the one hand a presence as absence, and on the other, an absence as presence. Her physical isolation from the community gathered in the upstairs space, along with our witnessing of this isolation, was perhaps what gave these dualities of absence and presence a melancholy reverberation. Over the course of the evening these dynamics became more palpable, and the programme concluded with the bringing together of the activities of the upstairs and downstairs space, in the form of a piece entitled “Incidental music for *M*,” during which my friend and colleague Jochem Braat and I performed a set of free improvisation as incidental music for the end of the play *M*, with Monia’s audiovisual body present in the room with us. Although the performance of some kind of incidental music was decided in advance, it took shape in the moment itself, and I could not have predicted the many correlations that were generated by this complex and many-layered selective inattention. In part, the incidental music for the play *M* became incidental music for the character *M* and for Monia; it became songs to comfort her in her isolation, songs she could not hear – just as the characters in a play or film do not hear the incidental music – but that we could hear, gathered in collective, deliberate, and selectively inattentive witnessing. This short musical performance was so deeply entwined with many other strands of the ritual event, and it gave me an experience of something I now see that I was searching for, namely a way to practice sound-making as

⁵⁴ For a theorisation of the audiovisual body, see Ben Spatz’ “I am my audiovisual body” (2019a), and the work of the *Journal of Embodied Research*.

an offering, as a devotional act of contribution to a situation in which music is one of many relational strands. Perhaps for this reason, it remains one of my most treasured performance experiences.

In Schechner's theory of the ritualisation of aesthetic drama (222), selective inattention can be practiced as much by the performer as by the audience. The performer practices "a reverse kind of selective inattention" (227), a "graded and sometimes relaxed inattention" through which they can move in and out of characterisation, allowing for "a subtle infiltration of their everyday lives into the dramatic reality of the performance" (228). This movement in and out of characterisation is a movement along a technical spectrum from the performance of the techniques of self to the performance of the techniques of character, or, put another way, a movement between different levels of technical sedimentation (Spatz 2015). To this I would add the possibility of defining a role as selectively inattentive, that is as occupying different positions along the spectrum in the same body at the same time. In whichever way it is practiced, the selective inattention of the performer reveals to the audience the "double person of the performer, the "myself" and the "person-of-the-character"; it serves as a bridge between the audience and the performers" (228–29). This particular aspect of Schechner's theory calls to mind a period of time, over ten years ago, when I lived in London and regularly attended performances at Shakespeare's Globe. I was attending in search of something, an inquiry that was set in motion at the end of the first play I attended there, *Troilus and Cressida*, when the actors returned to the stage for the jig that rounds off most of the Globe's productions. I was transfixed by watching the performers somewhere in-between their characters and themselves, performing the songs and dances in a manner clearly infiltrated by their everyday identity. This fascination slowly sedimented over the years so that now, what I most seek out in performance, as a spectator or a performer, is that flexibility, that subtle infiltration that is a mark of ritualisation (222), that lets me know I am in the presence of work being done. When attending performances that do not have that flexibility, I often find myself most engaged, most attentive, when an accident or disturbance occurs.

Schechner relates the performer's selective inattention to the notion of presence. "Presence," he writes, "becomes a kind of absence, a lack of anything complicated to do" (232). It is through that absence that the everyday techniques of the performer become visible, can be perceived more or less 'loudly' than the techniques embodied specifically for the performance. What is *at work* in both the performer and the spectator's selective inattention, what makes it transformative, is movement; the performer's person moves through and into the role, just as the spectator's person moves through and into her role as attentive spectator. The end-of-play jigs that had captivated my attention at the Globe

are a perfect example of this; the movement taking place there is the collective release of tension after the long performance, and the movement of the performer's person, who is actually experiencing release, through and into their role, which is still present through the matrices of performance. Schechner writes that for performers to practice selective inattention as a choice and a mode of performance requires that the performers be "well-enough trained in both doing and not doing," able to "drop out of a performance with ease and skill" (234). To this I add the significance of the cultivation of technique and its role in structuring practice; for selectively inattentive performance situations to work requires that performers be engaged in an ongoing and open-ended practice of relating their "specialised" techniques with the techniques of their identity and of their everyday life. While very common in various ritual and performance situations, this is something that is specifically trained away in classical music practices, where 'expression' is very often spoken about as though it were something to be applied *onto* technique, like a kind of make-up. In my own practice, I was interested in drawing out the resonances between areas of technique, of *being in* many of them at once. This led me to focus on the devising or seeking of situations in which this can be brought out; in which the movement can take place without the situation falling apart, and in which the audience can be invited into their own mode of selective inattention, their own *movement through*, the specific nature of which varies according to the affordances of each particular performance.

My collaboration and relationship with Monia showed me how research into these methods could operate fractally, unfolding as much on the level of the practice as on the level of the works. Monia's performances with Alexander Mayah Larsen, which she later published as *Alexandertrilogien (The Alexander Trilogy)* (Sander 2019) and for which she won the 2019 Schade Literature Prize, provided me with an example of this. In these performances, Monia continued what I read as her practice of defetishising the many objects and practices in which technique is encoded and fixed and dismantling transcendent instances of command that subordinate the event of performance to the text. Each performance of *Alexandertrilogien* has its own script, and neither Alexander nor the audience have seen the scripts before the event of the performance. In performance 1, Monia sits with the audience and Alexander reads the script – a monologue written for him, with Monia's voice now and then moving through him, into lesser or greater gradations of presence. Through the course of the performance the audience gradually become complicit in the work that is being done; the words themselves, the energy of Alexander who does not know what to expect, who is at once acting and not-acting, Monia's reactions, the reactions of Alexander to her, and the reactions among the audience – all these palpable dynamics bring the audience in on the game, let them know 'how it's supposed to go.' Throughout the

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script there are stage directions, which Alexander is free to obey or to simply read. He chose to obey them, even until the final stage direction which states simply that Alexander kisses Monia.



[Figure 3] Alexandertrilogien, performance 1. Photo by Jon Stahn

In this performance situation, the audience has no choice but to be selectively inattentive in Schechner's sense; the techniques and behaviours of everyday life, and the words, actions and gestures stipulated by the script are all playing out at the same time, in the same body, and the audience must necessarily split their attention in order to attend to them both. At the same time, the performer, who has not seen the scripts before and could not possibly suppress every trace of this fact, is also selectively inattentive, occupying at once various positions on the spectrum of the performance of self to the performance of character. Monia's treatment of the parameters of theatrical performance – script, character, actor, space, audience – as sites of inquiry, fantasy, exploration, research, plays out in her practice and in the moment of performance; both the script-writing and the performance practices work together to productively disturb the binary between the fictive and the real and to forge complicity and uncover pathways to transformation through our collective and mutual witnessing of one another.

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When the scripts were being prepared for publication, Monia shared on Instagram that she had been secretly in love with Alexander:

By projecting my romantic fantasies and desires about the human Alexander onto the actor Alexander, and by enacting them as rituals, I passed through the different stages of being in love while opening up the possibilities of where love could lead me.

(Sander Haj-Mohamed 2018)

In this way, movement – a passing through, or a being led through – is what determines the practice as well as the performance situation, and in ritualising that movement, a pathway of movement is opened up for the audience, too. This recalls again the end-of-play jigs at the Globe, except that, instead of being a celebratory coda, in the practice I am exploring here the permeability of roles, or the tension of the duality, is sustained through the whole duration of the performance, becoming a *situation* rather than a moment of release. The practice that is punctuated by these situations of performance is characterised by the defetishisation of technique and the objects and practices in which it is encoded, which in turn enables a sustained openness to the correlations between different kinds of technical knowledge. In my own practice this has enabled the researching of identity through technique, and the restoration of their mutually constitutive relationship. I will now turn to a philosophical account of how this openness operates on the level of the practice, and the relations to and conceptualisations of technique that have helped me uncover the possibility of technical development as a practice of transformation.

Situational emergence: a philosophical account of transformation through technique

Taking seriously the notion that identity is manufactured, or performed, through the repetition of a set of acts (Butler 1999) or, in Spatz' terms, through "the sedimentation of technique" (2015, 200), has required me to dismantle internalised discourses of technique learned from fields such as that of my vocal training, in which this notion is unexamined. It is not that the field of classical vocal pedagogy and performance is less invested in the relationship between technique and identity than any other field of embodied technical development; it is simply that it does not treat that relationship as an area of exploration or as a field of research. It does not ask what subjecthood might grow from a sustained engagement with the techniques being transmitted and performed; rather, it assumes or expects a certain kind of subject to be formed, and when this does not happen, it is understood more or less simply as failure. By contrast, a situationally emergent approach to the cultivation of embodied technique is grounded in the understanding that the life-long formation of the subject happens through complex and plural processes of technical training and development.⁵⁵

Before offering a philosophical definition of situational emergence, I will offer an anecdotal one, of which there are many in Peter Korn's book *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman* (Korn 2013). Early in the book, Korn describes in extensive detail the situation that gave rise to his first furniture project – a cradle that would be a gift for two friends who were expecting a child. Korn gives an account of a number of practical factors that led to this moment; he had applied for the woodworking program of the Capellagården craft school in Sweden mostly to be with his girlfriend, who wanted to study weaving, and so thought he "might as well get some furniture-making experience" by making a cradle for his friends' baby (2013, chap. 2, par 38). He describes the season, the workspace, the process and duration of building the cradle, and the "mystery" of the approaching birth, the first birth among his group of friends. About the completion of the cradle, he writes: "After three days of intense focus, cold, and solitude, the cradle is complete – a miraculous birth in its own right. I have somehow transformed benign intent into a beautiful, functional object" (2013, chap. 2, par 40). This transformation of intent into materiality was also a transformation of the self and the body by means of technical research, and Korn regularly mentions this construction of a life and an identity in and through craft (2013, chap. 5, par 1). As it does in my own practice, Korn's focus on transformation

⁵⁵ This particular focus is also the reason I have not drawn substantially on the avant-garde musical practices of the 1960s and their legacies. While that generation was certainly engaged in the defetishisation of technique and the performance as event, this was not necessarily accompanied by an exploration of subject formation and the relationship between technique and identity, and the prevalence of the roles of the composer and the creation of works is too close to areas I have needed to remain distant from in order to do the work I have done here.

lends a distinctly pragmatic and autonomous bent to processes of technical training. Korn writes: “as my woodworking horizons slowly expanded, I designed each new project around whatever technique I wanted to learn next” (2013, chap. 2, par 42). Korn’s account of the transformative interrelatedness of making and technical training, and of the embeddedness of both within social relations of kinship, stands in many ways in direct opposition to the kinds of training I experienced and which I have critiqued here, in which the fetishisation of technique alienates practitioners and reifies spaces of training, in which training is violently separated from other areas of lived, embodied experience, and in which identity is bestowed through interpellation within transcendent structures of command.

In *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (2013), Laura Cull explores the application of philosophies of immanence to the structures and practices of the theatre. Early in the book, she takes up Holland’s notion of “transcendent instances of command,” and his distinction between immanent and transcendent modes of understanding creation, or “the production of form” (2013, 25) – a definition of making that resonates with my own categorization, in Part III below, of acts of making according to the durational practice from which they emerged. Cull writes that the ‘transcendent instance of command’ need not necessarily be a person, but “could equally be a different kind of body, like an idea,” a notion that applies well to the field of classical vocal pedagogy and performance, where the fetishised voice-object becomes a kind of idea, an abstract goal always, as I have argued and Kiri te Kanawa’s lamentation attests to, beyond reach and beyond the present moment. I understand these transcendent instances of command as the social expression of mind-body dualisms, in which the mind, or the “transcendent figure,” organises the activity of the body, or the “material bodies involved in the creative process” (2013, 25). The transcendent instance of command is itself an instance of a much broader philosophical dependence on transcendence and duality, as exemplified in the structures of forms versus appearances, God versus the physical world, and Kantian mind or human subjectivity versus things-in-themselves. The ethics of these ontologies further structure experience by arguing that we should reach for the transcendent.

As Cull writes, “it is not just that transcendence posits a fundamental dualism, but that this dualism institutes a hierarchy in which the subject becomes sovereign over all that it surveys” (2013, 26). I see in this surveillant sovereign an ontological version of Donna Haraway’s epistemological “god trick” and the myth of scientific objectivity – a perspective “promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully” (1988, 584). This “false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility” has been methodologically resisted by feminist epistemologies, which argue instead for an objectivity that is about “particular and specific embodiment” (1988, 582). Haraway also highlights the overlap

between transcendent ontologies, mind-body dualisms and the 'god trick,' and articulates the ethical consequence of rejecting these structures of thought:

[...] all Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see.

(1988, 583)

To extend the parallel between these ontological and epistemological arguments, I see in Haraway's situated knowledge and in standpoint theory an equivalence with Deleuzian immanence. If transcendent dualisms are the 'god trick,' then Deleuze's univocal Being, in which all 'things' are understood as "processes of ceaseless variation, change or creativity" (Cull 2013, 27), is the philosophical framework in which each being (or each 'thing') has an ontological primacy and a privileged perspective, and in which relations between beings have immanent sources of organisation. Following the Spinozanthology out of which Deleuze developed his concept of immanence, the notion that each creature is a modification of substance that is God and also Nature (Deleuze 1988b, 17), "one infinite being that expresses itself in infinite ways" (Lord 2010, 33), suggests to me an epistemology of difference; and if God (or substance, or nature) "is not a thing, but is the activity of actualising its being" (Lord 2010, 35), then this activity of actualising would be immanent in each of us in infinitely varied ways, and again in each of the forms we create. This ontology of difference and of immanence seems to me to be the philosophical correlate of an epistemology grounded in what Haraway described as "particular and specific embodiment" rather than the transcendent 'view from nowhere.' As Laura Cull writes, Deleuze's ontology of immanence "can inform our understanding of creation in an artistic context" (2013, 25), since one of the ways in which it manifests itself is "as a specific understanding of how new forms are created, with an emphasis on the ways in which material bodies organize themselves rather than being construed as moulded into an organized form by an external force" (2013, 29).

I drew from Peter Korn's book anecdotal demonstrations of what *situational emergence* might look like in practice, but Korn also asks questions that sit very well with the philosophical trajectory I am exploring here. In chapter 6, "Thinking with Things," Korn reflects on his writing desk, which he made when he was in his late twenties and in remission from Hodgkin's disease. He writes that, when he designed the desk, his goal was "to create furniture that manifested simplicity, integrity, and grace."

When writing his book at over 60 years of age, he claims that “as I have come to understand it since, [...] my underlying brief was actually to arrive at a vision of how life could and should be lived” (2013, chap. 6, par 1). Korn’s reflections articulate a shift of focus from the works as *objects* to the immanent unfolding of a life in and through the works as emergent *processes*. His “underlying brief” also recalls to me the Deleuzian question, *how might one live?*, a question that turns away from the predominant Western philosophical frameworks of the Socratic *how should one live?* or the Kantian *how should one act?* (May 2005). The question *how might one live?* is rooted in Deleuze’s philosophy of immanence, in the rejection of the transcendent hierarchies, in favour of an ontology of immanence and of difference. Similarly, in understanding my technical development as a practical exploration of the Deleuzian question, I turn away from the predominant pursuits of classical music pedagogy and performance, and instead understand technical development to be a situationally emergent process of engaging with the question, *how might I live?* As with the Deleuzo-Spinozan question *What can a body do?*, there is no one general answer, but “countless specific answers” (Spatz 2015, 1). Each new encounter, arrangement or combination reveals different capacities for affecting and being affected (Deleuze 1988b, 125), and the process by which I cultivate embodied technique is fundamentally entwined with these fluctuating capacities. Moments of study of singing, or baking, or walking, or relating with other bodies in ones or twos or dozens, all constitute the activation of specific potential in relation to the situation and in correspondence with the constantly changing “charge of affect” (Massumi and Zournazi 2002, 213). This activation can only constrain but can never exhaust the possibilities of the affective dimension – it constitutes “selecting from it, extracting and actualising certain potentials from it” (Massumi and Zournazi 2002, 215).

Thinking of this notion of Spinoza’s, taken up by Deleuze, of the body as defined by the affects of which it is capable (Deleuze 1988b, 125) – by “what it can *do* as it *goes along*” (Massumi and Zournazi 2002, 212) – helps me draw my attention to the continuity between different areas of my embodied technique, and to the inexhaustible complexity of the situations in which technique is embedded. This levelling of hierarchies of value in favour of an ongoing and situated approach to technique feels deeply *practical*, and leads me to describe my approach to the cultivation of embodied technique as philosophically pragmatic. Massumi and others have noted that in the conceptualisation of the body, as in other areas, there is much meaningful relation between Deleuze and American pragmatism. In a discussion with Mary Zournazi, Brian Massumi argues that in the Deleuzo-Spinozan concept of the body, the definition of the body is “totally pragmatic” and is defined “by what capacities it carries from step to step” (Massumi and Zournazi 2002, 212–13). In the same discussion, Zournazi proposes that Spinozan ethics is always situational, to which Massumi replies: “Ethics [...] is completely situational.

It's completely pragmatic. And it happens between people, in the social gaps. There is no intrinsic good or evil. The ethical value of an action is what it brings out in the situation, for its transformation, how it breaks sociality open" (Massumi and Zournazi 2002, 218). On the value of concepts, Paul Patton argues that, for Deleuze, the test of concepts is "ultimately pragmatic: in the end, their value is determined by the uses to which they can be put, outside as well as within philosophy" (Patton 2000, 6).⁵⁶ I find that the Deleuzian philosophy of immanence, characterized as it is by a philosophy of life, in which life is "variously conceived as ceaseless creativity and change, as the production of difference or novelty, as a proliferation of encounters between differing forces of affect, as a multiplicity of presents" (Cull 2013, 3), has much in common with the pragmatist centering of process and experience found in, for example, William James' notion of pure experience in which process is ontologically primary – "a real, potentially inexhaustible source of subsequent descriptions" (Duvernoy 2016, 437).

The notion of the body as defined by its relational doings, by its capacity to be affected, is a useful one in reframing the cultivation of embodied technique, and the acts of making that arise from this ongoing cultivation, as a nuanced and complex response to situated need and desire, rather than as "training." When combined with the ontological primacy of process characteristic of pragmatism, I see the many moments of making that effervesce from practice as part of a continuity; in place of the notion of a disinterested aesthetic attitude,⁵⁷ I cultivate a practice that repairs what pragmatist John Dewey describes as the divisions and separations by which "art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human⁵⁸ effort, undergoing, and achievement" (Dewey 1995, 3). For Dewey, the philosopher of art has a similar task to the "geographer or geologist." He writes that "mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They *are* the earth in one of its manifest operations." He claims that it is the "primary task" of a philosophy of the fine arts "to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are

⁵⁶ For more recent scholarship that explicitly considers Deleuze in light of American pragmatism and visa versa, see *Deleuze and Pragmatism* (Bowden, Bignall, and Patton 2015), and *Deleuze, Education and Becoming* (Semetsky 2006).

⁵⁷ The legacy of this notion, originating in the work of 18th century British Enlightenment philosophers and developed extensively by Kant, can be found in the work of prominent 20th century aesthetic theorists such as Jerome Stolnitz and Roger Scruton. These philosophers define the aesthetic attitude by disinterestedness, and distinguish aesthetic objects from non-aesthetic ones (see Stolnitz 1961; Fenner 1996; Rind 2002). These ideas, which are part and parcel of dualist notions of art as an autonomous realm, emerged in the historical period from which the synecdochic term 'classical music' is derived, and are intimately linked to its history and practice.

⁵⁸ To this I would add "and non-human" (Gumbs 2020b; D. J. Haraway 2006; Hird and Roberts 2011).

universally recognized to constitute experience” (Dewey 1995, 3–4).⁵⁹ I perceive a resonance here between Dewey’s notion of the intensified experience and the everyday event and what Massumi describes as the ‘actualization of certain potentials’ from an overall capacity for action. Similarly, the relations of technique to practice and of practice to lived experience demonstrate the Deleuzian notion of the “immanence of the virtual within the actual” and of the virtual as inhering “within identifiable forms as the motor of their becoming” (Cull 2013, 189). Thinking in terms of the virtual and the actual, of the immanence of all that could become inside any moment of technique or relating, is a pathway towards the restoration of a continuity often obfuscated by disciplinary frameworks, continuities between technique and identity, between the mountain peak and the earth. Because of the fractal nature of technique, it is also a pathway towards restoring continuity between different levels of practice – between techniques of singing a song, and techniques of relating; between making a small, bounded form now, and the unfolding of a future years ahead. I have sought this restoration in my practice and research, and I argue, following Dewey, that it constitutes an aim to which PaR can orient itself. What I propose here is a framework and a methodology by which this can be achieved.

The situationally emergent approach to the cultivation of technique is characterised by the convergence of the theories and philosophies of process that are a point of reference throughout this text; by the ontological primacy of process those theories and philosophies develop, and through which, for example, I understand the song an unfolding in the situated moment of singing; by the pragmatist rejection of traditional aesthetics and the dismantling of the ‘realm of art’ and the disinterested aesthetic attitude, and the mirroring of this in the expansion of embodied technique to include ‘private life’ and kinship relations that function as core impulses and contexts for its acquisition and cultivation; by a privileging of difference, in which I understand the song to be actualising potentials from the inexhaustible fabric of possibilities and associations; by close attention to the relationship between the embodied technique of, say, singing, and a range of other embodied techniques I cultivate, perform or witness; by the capacity of technique to continuously form identity, by virtue of the relation between the repetition necessary for its acquisition and my body’s fluctuating capacity to be affected by each new encounter, each new arrangement of experience. In the chapter that follows I give an account of several specific processes of creating forms, by means of which this methodology emerged.

⁵⁹ Casey Haskins and others have noted that in images such as these, Dewey’s language can be read as bearing the mark of the “doctrines of traditional aesthetics,” and that a reading of Dewey’s work as an attempt “to replace the compartmental imagery of aesthetics with the decompartmentalized image of aestheticism” would therefore perhaps be too simple (Haskins 1992, 221). While I do not disagree, I find that Dewey’s thought can make a valuable contribution to the notion of practices grounded in embodied technique as a form of practice-based process philosophy – whether that technique is typically practiced in contexts understood to be within the ‘realm of art’ or elsewhere.

Part III: Making

perform⁶⁰: from Old French *parfornir* “to do, carry out, finish, accomplish,” from *par* “completely” + *fornir* “to provide”; Middle English *performen* could be used to mean “to construct, to bring about,” or “to come true,” as in dreams. The theatrical and musical sense is not attested until c. 1600.

Let’s go a step farther.

perform: from Middle English *performen*, *parfournen* “to perform,” from Anglo-Norman *performer*, *parfourmer*, alteration of Old French *parfornir*, *parfurnir* “to do, carry out, finish, accomplish.”

Now a step to the side.

fornir: from Frankish **frumjan* “to accomplish, furnish”, cognate with Old High German *frummen* “to do, execute, accomplish, provide,” Old Saxon *frummian* “to perform, promote,” Old English *fremman* “to perform, execute, carry out, accomplish.”

Now lean forward.

par: from Latin prefix *per*, used to form verbs that are completive, conveying the idea of doing something entirely or all the way through. From Latin preposition *per* “through, by means of, during.”

A word like ‘perform’ is not retained in the modern Romance languages, where we find instead specified vocabulary for different acts of ‘carrying through.’ In these languages, the concept ‘perform’ (in this case in the musical sense) is referred to synecdochally: *jouer* (fr) “to play,” *tocar* (es) “to touch,” *suonare* (it) “to sound,” etc.

The relation of *perform* to *parfornir* is of interest. At some point, somewhere in Norman Britain, the word *parfornir*, “to do, carry out, finish” met the word ‘*forme*,’ with all its complex philosophical and aesthetic baggage, and made ‘*parfourmer* – *performen* – *perform*.’ This is what is referred to as an ‘alteration.’ One word leans on another. Moves it. How much is contained in that one phonemic change from *n* to *m*, in that slight withdrawal of the tongue, that closure of the lips. A form, drawn into durational being.

⁶⁰ This text was written in July 2019, on a day when the writing of my second-year progress report was going nowhere. As I often did in those situations, I decided to turn back to the basic words and their etymologies, in this case writing a prose-poem about the word ‘perform.’ This helped to reveal the relationship between duration and form that now constitutes the structure of this chapter.

Four durations: translation, composing (a situation), throwing (pottery), being thrown

I have been articulating the central significance, in my research, of the relationship between technique and identity and between practice and transformation. In what follows I will continue to examine these relationships through the lens of specific acts of situated making and performing that took place over the course of the three-year practice research period. This will involve particular attention to form and duration.

‘Form’ here is understood broadly. A song is a form, but so is a performance or a ceremony. There are conceptual forms (like books or albums), and also physical forms (like pianos). Among others, making a form can involve technical, aesthetic, logistic and professional parameters – but its underlying concern is relational. We could say, with Nicolas Bourriaud, that “the work of every artist is a bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum” (1998, 22). But this would still be to ascribe a degree of transcendence to *the work* and *the artist*. The kind of making I am outlining here is concerned with a more specific form of relationality, namely a kind of complicity. I have spoken about complicity and audience integrality in relation to Richard Schechner’s theories and the performances of Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed. To these references I now add the voice of a performer from another durational form-making practice, Esperanza Spalding. In a 2017 discussion with Vijay Iyer and Dr. Charles Limb as part of the latter’s ongoing neuroscientific research into musical creativity and improvisation, Limb asks Spalding whether she likes her playing. Spalding answers that she simply doesn’t think about it: “self-expression and everything is wonderful, but ultimately you’re hoping for complicity.” She says that when she is performing improvised music, she is “really just worried about the other people”: “I’m trying to sense the complicity. I’m trying to gauge how much it’s activating the attention of the people in my midst” (The Kennedy Center 2017, 53:30-54:45). It is worth noting the stark contrast between this attitude to performance and Kiri te Kanawa’s own emphatic claim at retirement age that she always came off stage thinking about her mistakes. Notwithstanding commonplace and simplistic claims about the relative ‘freedom’ of jazz or improvised music compared to classical music, I find the striking difference between these two highly specialised technical performers to be very revealing, namely of the differences between their performance practices; one organised around the execution of a transcendent ideal, and the other in search of complicity with others in the moment of performance.

A growing focus on the complicity forged in the shared duration of bodies gathered together is the trajectory that gave rise to the forms in this portfolio. Taking seriously the link between technique and identity and practice and transformation gave rise, in the following practices, to an open-ended attitude

Four durations: translation, composing (a situation), throwing (pottery), being thrown

towards form; to a deferral of judgments about the form. In all the items in the portfolio, I sought a situational relation to form – to stretch out a form into a situation, to defer judgments of form in order to be able to sustain a durational inquiry, and to maintain an open-ended attitude towards which forms might emerge. This is a core part of my intuitive method and it is also a philosophical position on artistic production, one that concerns the relation between acts of making and the practice; acts of making are moments in which the focus on form-giving intensifies, but the capacity for that intensity is only possible because of an ongoing practice that includes, but is much broader than, attending to forms. Acts of making are like plants, and to study them without always also studying the soil, the changing environmental conditions, the surrounding vegetation, the insects and animals, will not amount to more than taxonomy. Like plants, acts of making are temporal, durational phenomena that emerge under certain conditions, flower, fade, and return to the soil. Or, to follow Dewey's metaphor, they are the mountain peaks that also "*are* the earth in one of its manifest operations" (1995, 3). But they are not mountain peaks in the proverbial sense of pinnacles of achievement, value, or aesthetic refinement. They are concentrated practices of form-giving, moments in which the techniques of the situated making of forms are practiced more consistently and intensely. These moments of heightened intensity punctuate the practice and are part of what distinguishes its open duration from the free-flow of lived time.

These premises have resulted in a plurality of forms, and that is what is to be found in this portfolio. The various methodologies and underlying concerns discussed in depth in the first sections of the thesis are to be found in each of the items, and so, rather than being organised thematically according to approach or material, they are categorised by the specific ways in which the forms arose in and through durational processes, which, for me, is what most fundamentally distinguishes them. These ways fit loosely into four categories. The items in the first and second categories are in chronological order. They come first because they all followed directly from *The Sky in a Room*. The items in the third and fourth categories are not in chronological order. For a chart cataloguing all the works, with dates, locations and names of co-creators, collaborators and participants, see "Appendix II: Chart of works." Documentation of every item discussed in "Part III" can be found in the documentation folder, using the codes in "Appendix I: Documentation codes."

1. Translation: in this case a pre-existing form is given (a piece or composition), and the durational practice is the drawing out of this pre-existing form into a situation. This involves a process of defetishisation through which the piece becomes a situation to be inhabited rather than a transcendent form to be executed. The relations that hold between performs and spectators

Four durations: translation, composing (a situation), throwing (pottery), being thrown

and between spectators and place are key considerations. I understand translation to be by definition repeatable because it involves dwelling in a pre-existing form, which can be repeated iteratively as many times as is needed or desired. I will give one substantial example in this category, that of my performances of Samuel Beckett's *Quad*, a project which consisted of five iterations in the spring and winter of 2018.

2. Composing (a situation): in these projects I created or co-created a situation set up for the unfolding of a durational practice centred on a specific object treated epistemically (a piano, a song). Composition (a situation) involves open-endedness with regard to the forms that emerge from the situation. Instances of composing (a situation) are by definition repeatable, since the form of the situation is defined by a set of parameters that can be reiterated as many times as needed or desired. I will give two examples in this category: (1) *meta/morphē* (2018 & 2019) a durational project involving the dismantling and transformation of a piano along with a group of artists from a range of disciplines; (2) *Song Cycles* (2018), a community project engaged in the collection, transmission and archiving of song in a village in Cyprus.
3. Throwing (pottery)⁶¹: in these projects the situation was given by an invitation to perform or submit a work, with the durational practice unfolding prior and leading up to the event. In these projects the situated nature of the event is key, and it can only function as an activator of the practice if the invitation permits of autonomous, open-ended, intuitive methods. It is like throwing pottery because the specified time, place, duration etc, of the event constrains the durational practice so that it builds with relative speed towards a specific moment in time. Whatever comes out of the practice is made while the wheel is in motion, and major changes cannot be made once that motion has stopped. Repeatability here is on the level of the practice, and while it is possible to repeat live performance forms created in this way, I have never felt the desire to do so. I will give three examples in this category; (1) *The Loins, or how to surrender your will and yet to write* (2017), a 30-minute solo performance for Perdu Poetry Institute in Amsterdam; (2) *Abundance* (2019), a studio album; (3) *The Resurrection* (2020), a short sound piece of sound art made for an end-of-season playlist for Juliet Fraser's *eavesdropping* series.
4. Being thrown: in these projects a situation is composed by someone else, or by an organisation. The durational practice can either unfold during the performance itself, as in composing (a situation), or it can lead towards a performance, as in throwing (pottery). What is particular about this category is that I am thrown into a situation and a durational practice that I did not

⁶¹ This metaphor is borrowed from Monia, who sometimes uses it to describe her writing practice.

Four durations: translation, composing (a situation), throwing (pottery), being thrown

design. I will give three examples in this category: (1) "From the sea our desires, to the sea our love" (2019), a collection of texts that I wrote at my residency at Vatnasafn (Library of Water), and which were subsequently published by Two If By Sea press; (2) "LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game; a performance; a piece of window dressing" (2019), a score/text piece that accompanied a performance entitled *LUNCH / HÁDEGISVERÐUR*, both of which were developed in the Northern Creation residency in Kaukonen, Finland, organised by the Northern Network of Performing Arts; (3) *Hringflautan* (2018), a devised gallery performance for Cycle Music and Art Festival, Iceland in which I worked in a trio with Þráinn Hjalmarsson and Brynjar Sigurðarson. Each of these projects receive a brief treatment, focusing on the difficulties and affordances of working in an unfamiliar environment in processes I was not involved in designing, and ending with an account of what I have learned from these and other projects about the complexities of group practice.

Translation⁶²

The current sense of the word “translate” derives from the Latin *translatus*, the past participle of *transferre*, “to bring over, carry over, transport,” from *trans* “across, beyond” + *lātus* “borne, carried.” The Latin usage of this word in relation to speaking and writing was a specific and figurative usage. The same was true in English, in which there existed the now chiefly historical meaning “to move a person or thing from one place, position, etc, to another,” with one specific usage referring to the movement of a significantly symbolic material or immaterial object, such as the relics of a saint or the seat of government. The same pattern can be traced in the German *übersetzen*, from *über* “over, across” and *setzen* “to set, to put,” which, as well as referring to linguistic translations, is still used both transitively and intransitively to refer to the relocation of people or things across a river, and which in its Old High German form *ubarsezzan* meant simply “to carry or bring from one place to another.” In other words, *translation* combines the material sense of relocation with the figurative sense of re-articulation in a new language. It is defined here specifically in relation to form, namely: the movement, from one specific location to another, of a complex pre-existing form that organises embodied activity. The practice of translation is defined as site-specific, requiring careful analysis of both the source and the target site, through which the affordances of the two sites and of the work are brought into dialogue.

⁶² This text was written in February 2021, before the completion of “Part I” and “Part II” and before beginning the rest of “Part III.” It archives the process of making sense of the notion of performative translation, or performance as translation, which I had been working with during the performances of *Quad* in 2018 and which recurs in the portfolio in *The Loinpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write*.

Translation

Samuel Beckett's *Quad*

(March – May 2018 and November 2018)

The *Quad* project began immediately after *The Sky in a Room*. Through it, I carried out processes of sedimenting the methods I had learned from working with Ragnar and imagining how they might develop further in my own practice. Specifically, this involved researching site-specific and durational approaches to performance. At the time, I framed this research in terms of the 'opening up of a pre-existing work to outside influence' – to the influence of places, circumstances and people that are not written into the work. I was exploring the notion of 'expanding' or 'unfolding' the work, with a focus on the parameters of site-specificity and duration. The sparse, precise world of *Quad*, created for the tightly controllable environment of the television studio, was appealing because of the contrast between its original situation and the situation I would introduce it to – car parks, a town square, and a university lobby. This contrast presented ample opportunity to examine the results of the expansion or unfolding with which I was engaged. Long after the performances were over, it became clearer that the deeper purpose of this research concerned the epistemic engagement with the objects and practices in which performance techniques are encoded, and that my performances of *Quad* were a bridge out of fetishised relations to form, both those that already exist and those I create. *Quad* in particular, with the very score-like quality of its script, provided me with the opportunity to conduct this research in a field adjacent to music, without having to face the full range of complex and difficult responses that would undoubtedly have surfaced if I were working with musical notation. After *Quad*, my practice research began to move more decidedly towards the creation (or composing) of situations that centred epistemic engagement with the techniques of performance and form-making. As part of this turn, I began to realise that the performance of 'pieces' often blocked or prevented those situations of epistemic engagement from developing. The complementary insights that arose from my performances of *Quad* prepared the ground for *meta/morphē*, a project that took place very soon after; in *meta/morphē*, I stepped out of the structure of the 'piece' altogether in favour of a situation centred on collective action (in this case, the dismantling of a piano). But the meticulous unfolding with which I had been engaged in *Quad* gave me a deeper understanding of the parameters and matrices of performance situations, which I could then use to create moments of heightened performativity within the ongoing durational situation of *meta/morphē*. The current that ran underneath all this was the restoration of the relationship between technique and identity, specifically the relocation of performance technique from the status of something to be attained or mastered to that of an *immanent capacity* that could be activated in relation to a particular situation and in service of a specific transformation.

Quad also presented something of an opportunity to wipe the slate clean. The piece had always attracted my attention because of the way it seems to boil down a vast range of possibilities to one action that is repeated, echoed, transformed into a canon. Anne Carson described the piece, in an essay in her book *Decreation* (2006), as a “little factory of clear marks” that Beckett “drained off the exasperated, clumsy, cruel antics of Malone and Molloy and Mildred, of Mag, Moran, [...] and so on” (2006, 119). Similarly, *Quad* seemed to propose to me: *What if it all just went away? What if the exasperation and cruelty of training, all the fetishised worship of mastery, just went away? What if all that was left was walking endlessly within a circumscribed space of endless repeatability?* In my performances of *Quad*, I repeatedly stepped into, traced, and inhabited that conditional, learning something new each time about duration, technique, performance, relationality, repetition, memory. Here again, the restoration of the relationship between technique and identity was underway, specifically in the taking up of a pre-existing form in order to ask not how I could best execute it, but *what it could do for me*; how it could help me move in a certain direction, what it would enable me to reclaim, restore and redirect in my relationship to performance and to form.

There is a considerable literary and theoretical dimension to my analysis, due to the field of my source material and the fact that I encountered it through my reading of Anne Carson’s *Decreation* and Gilles Deleuze’s essay “The Exhausted” (1995). I have included certain performative question/answer passages from Carson’s essay in text boxes. These contain ideas I was carrying around with me before and during the work with *Quad*, and I engage with them directly in the text but also include them because of the resonance they provide. I also include my own continuation of Carson’s question/answer structure, which I used as a method of approaching what I wanted to say. As with my dialogues, the clarity came in the performative writing. The rest of the text is the “long roll of thunder” that followed (Benjamin 2002, 456). In a sense, I am continuing to perform *Quad* here, this time in the form of a written text that performs intertextual readings of Carson, Deleuze and Beckett alongside remembering, making sense of, and continuing to work with my own performances of *Quad*. I will begin with an analysis of the piece and its sources, followed by a reading of what I perceive the work to be enacting. I then give an account of how I expanded the work and end with a close-reading of each of the five performances.

Step 1: what is being translated?

Samuel Beckett's *Quad* (1981) is a television play made for the German broadcaster Süddeutscher Rundfunk (Text und Bühne 2012). Because *Quad* was made for television and filmed in a studio, any translation into a live event would introduce a number of parameters not present in, or constrained by, the apparatus of television or film production. There is no single authoritative source text for *Quad*; although there is a script, its endnotes detail significant deviations from the text during the realisation of the performance. . For example, the instruction that four sources of differently coloured light be focused on each of the four players respectively is amended by an endnote that reads: "Abandoned as impracticable. Constant neutral light throughout" (Beckett 2010). Where the script stipulates a right turn at the centre, in the video the players turn left. Much bigger changes also resulted from the situation of performance: it is a widely cited anecdote that Beckett happened to see the technicians doing a test playback on a black and white monitor, and responded "marvellous, it's 100,000 years later" (Brater 1987, 109). This led to the addition of a black and white second 'act,' in which only the first quarter of the whole sequence is performed at a much slower pace, without percussion. The originally planned first 'act' was called *Quad I*, and the slow 'movement' *Quad II*. These and other amendments and additions clearly suggest a situational approach to *Quad*, with pragmatic and creative adjustments made in response to the constraints and affordances of the situation. As such, and because there is only one documented production directed by Beckett himself, I took my source to be both the script and the 1981 Süddeutscher Rundfunk transmission.

This complexity of sources in Beckett's later work is not unique to *Quad*. Beckett scholar Stanley E. Gontarski theorises the notion of 'performance as text,' noting in relation to *Quad* the changes made during staging and recording, and the fact that the addition of *Quad II* is reflected in the title of the Süddeutscher Rundfunk transmission – *Quadrat 1 + 2* – but not in the script of the play, which is simply titled *Quad*, with the extra 'act' referred to only in an endnote and further clarification provided in a nested endnote. These details lead Gontarski to conclude that Beckett's videotaped production "remains the only 'final' text for *Quad*" (Gontarski 1998, 142), and that *Quad*, along with a number of other later works developed in a similarly situated manner and without much bother about the accuracy of the written document, demonstrates Beckett's embracing of the theatre not just as a medium, but as "the major means through which his theatre was created" (Gontarski 1998, 131).

In my own performance, the lack of a "final text" and the existence of only one documented performance in which Beckett was involved was part of what drew me to *Quad*. There were very specific

affordances in the complexity of the relationship between the audiovisual document of the performance and Beckett's printed text, with its amendments, its reflexive tone, and its openness. It offered me the opportunity to engage with the piece as an act of deciphering (as distinct from 'interpretation'), to follow clues and traces the way I had done in my trip to Vatnasafn. This was part of a broader movement toward a pragmatic and situated approach to making, the defetishisation of form and the dismantling of internalised ontologies of the 'work'. In retrospect, I think it was important to make this step using a pre-existing piece, rather than stepping straight into a phase of the practice in which I was not working with pieces at all. The traces of *Quad* revealed in themselves a defetishised approach to form, and I was most likely initially drawn to the piece, before the start of the PhD, out of a sense that even Beckett – a treasured icon in the cult of the artist – was open to coincidence and was responding to the constraints of a specific situation; that he was approaching his texts pragmatically, adjusting them situationally, and then moving on, without even returning to 'correct' the script. The specific ritual work I was doing consisted of the continuation of that movement, of taking Beckett's already somewhat defetishised form and unfolding it even further, opening it up to outside influence. *Quad* was a pathway towards working with form as a space and a situation to be inhabited, and the permutational structure of *Quad* afforded an intense and plural kind of repeatability that enabled me to dwell in that process, and to keep carrying it out.

Step 2: what is the piece doing?

how does it begin

Begins on a thinness – thin as the plate of reality that you climb back up over (from behind) when waking out of a too bright dream – and thinly on the plate Beckett has balanced his little factory of clear marks. Clear marks tilt and run on the plate never exasperated, never clumsy, never cruel. All the clear marks that he drained off the exasperated, clumsy, cruel antics of Malone and Molloy and Mildred, of Mag, Moran, Macmann, Mercier, Minnie, Winne, Worm and Watt and Christ and so on (I guess) ended up here, saved for study, motioned into a picture.

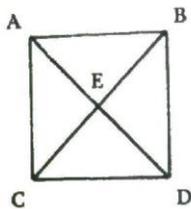
(Carson 2006, 119)

The form of Beckett's *Quad* is the result of a compositional procedure that permutes solos and ensembles of players, each of whom pace identical geometric trajectories across the sides and diagonals of a square space (Figure 4). Each player begins in their own corner of the square. They enter the square by pacing along the side to their right, then at the first corner they turn left and pace the diagonal – making a sharp turn at the centre to avoid collision. They continue in this way until all four sides and all four diagonal trajectories have been exhausted and the player arrives

back at their corner – at which point their course has been completed. Each series consists of

permutations of the four players' courses as specified by the table in Figure 4. The series are structural palindromes in which one player is added at a time until all players are present, and then one player taken away until there is only one left, who begins the subsequent series. In the rehearsal process we invented the term "circuit" to refer to each vertical column of Beckett's table (Table 1). A circuit is one "round" of the square, or one circuit of the players' courses. This term became necessary so as to be able to specify starting points during rehearsals, and I will continue to use it here in order to be able to refer to specific points in the form.

A piece for four players, light and percussion.
 The players (1, 2, 3, 4) pace the given area, each following his particular course.
 Area: square. Length of side: 6 paces.



Course 1: AC, CB, BA, AD, DB, BC, CD, DA
 Course 2: BA, AD, DB, BC, CD, DA, AC, CB
 Course 3: CD, DA, AC, CB, BA, AD, DB, BC
 Course 4: DB, BC, CD, DA, AC, CB, BA, AD

1 enters at A, completes his course and is joined by 3.
 Together they complete their courses and are joined by 4.
 Together all three complete their courses and are joined by 2.
 Together all four complete their courses. Exit 1. 2, 3 and 4 continue and complete their courses. Exit 3. 2 and 4 continue and complete their courses. Exit 4. End of 1st series. 2 continues, opening 2nd series, completes his course and is joined by 1. Etc. Unbroken movement.

1st series (as above): 1, 13, 134, 1342, 342, 42
 2nd series: 2, 21, 214, 2143, 143, 43
 3rd series: 3, 32, 321, 3214, 214, 14
 4th series: 4, 43, 432, 4321, 321, 21

Four possible solos all given.
 Six possible duos all given (two twice).

[Figure 4] (Beckett 2010, 451)

The script gives clear instructions that the percussion should be treated in the same combinatorial manner as the other parameters of the work. There is one percussionist assigned to each player, each with an instrument of distinct material – "say drum, gong, triangle, wood block" (Beckett 2010, 452). The percussion is to sound when the player enters, continue while they pace, and cease when they exit. The percussion identifies the players, the way they are identified by the colour of their costume. In *Quad II*, "100,000 years later," these marks of identification have faded, and there is no more colour and no more sound, except that of the shuffling of feet. The percussion was intended to be "pianissimo throughout" (2010, 452).

In practice it is quite a lot louder, although there is still a furtive quality to the rhythmic language and hairpin gestures. There are other elements to the musical performance that are not specified in the script, such as the pitched nature of all the percussion instruments, three of which have loose skins whose pitch fluctuates when pressured is applied. There is also a notable hairpin gesture each time the players approach the centre.

Despite the symmetry of the original structure, in practice Beckett did not choose to begin the sequence at the beginning, or end at the end. In the 1981 production, *Quad I* begins at the end, halfway through the final diagonal of series 4, circuit 6, and ends abruptly as it approaches the end, halfway through series 4, circuit 4. The cut from and to the titles at the beginning and end is done with quick, abrupt fades, giving the impression of a ‘snapshot,’ or a cutaway from something much larger. These decisions result in the suggestion of continuity – of repetition, of a loop. A loop that extends long into the future, when the colours and sounds have faded, and the bodies have tired and slowed. Like *Quad I*, the directing decisions in *Quad II* suggest the same loop, the same fading away; *Quad II* begins at the end, in series 4, circuit 6, and ends after the end of the first series, in series 2, circuit 2, and both the beginning and the end are marked by slow fades, as though the whole apparatus is tired.

why save clear marks

[...] once you have decided to save clear marks, you may hope to find yourself “beyond that black beyond” where everything clear, not marked, just goes away. Going away is key. Even the clear marks seem to be trying to go away.

(Carson 2006, 119)

The tendency to repeat into disappearance is therefore set up in the compositional structure of the work. It is a repetition not ad infinitum but ad exitum, to the end, until it goes away. And it does go away; it goes away by fading. The motion set off in *Quad* is not infinite, not eternal; instead, it is a purposeless driving forward to an end. And in its purposelessness, it is inexorable. If the driving forward is without purpose then it cannot be persuaded by a cause, it is impervious to pleas, is not exorable (*exōrābīlis*, “easily entreated or moved”; *ex*, “out” + *ōro*, *ōrātio*, “to pray,” “prayer”). The players move inexorably towards their exits and then return again. Eventually – in 100,00 years, perhaps – they will have completed their task, but that is far away and no one is thinking about it. What they are thinking about is the machinery in this “factory of clear marks”. What they are thinking about are muscular mnemonics and numbers and colours and lines by which the possibilities of the space are exhausted. What they are thinking about is left, right, left, left, right, left, left, right, left, left, right, and again. With green you walk, without green you walk, with green you do not walk, without green you do not walk. The inexorability of exhaustion is the subject of Deleuze’s essay “The Exhausted” (1995), originally published as an afterword to the first French edition of four of Beckett’s television plays, among them *Quad*. In our

	Circuit 1	Circuit 2	Circuit 3	Circuit 4	Circuit 5	Circuit 6
1st series	1	13	134	1342	342	42
2nd series	2	21	214	2143	143	43
3rd series	3	32	321	3214	214	14
4th series	4	43	432	4321	321	21

Table 1 Circuits

do they go away

Yes but they come back then go away again and it ends amid exits. It ends in time, I mean stranded.

(Carson 2006, 119)

ordinary mode of action, writes Deleuze, we “realize some of what is possible [...] in relation to certain goals, projects and preferences: I put on shoes to go out and slippers to stay in.” The goals and preferences are the exclusionary method by which the possible is realised, and “these variations, these substitutions, all these exclusive disjunctions” – (slippers/shoes, staying in/going out) – are tiring (1995, 3). *To exhaust*, however, is different from *to tire*. *To exhaust* is to draw out all the possible, until it comes to an end (ex, “out,” + *haurio*, “to draw up or draw out”); it is to expend the supply of what is possible. To do so “you combine the set of variables of a situation” in a manner that renounces “all order of preference and all organization of goal, all signification. [...] You no longer realize, even though you accomplish. In shoes you stay in, in slippers you go out” (Deleuze 1995, 4). These are “simple games that time plays with space, now with these toys, now with those” (Beckett 1988, 71). With blue you walk, without blue you walk, with blue you do not walk, without blue you do not walk. This going away, or going beyond, is a matter of translation as I am defining it here – of movement, of sliding off into another place or another language, “afar away over there,” (Beckett 2004, 114), where your well-rehearsed forms are out of reach and in order to say anything you must stumble. “It is indeed getting more and more difficult, even pointless, for me to write in formal English” writes Beckett in 1937 (in German), in a letter to Alex Kaun. “And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it” (Beckett 2009, 518). Writing in a language other than one’s native language is one way of getting at what lies behind the veil; another way is to be a ‘logoclast,’⁶³ to write “a ruptured writing, so that the void may protrude, like a hernia” (Beckett 2009, 521). This is the writing in *A Piece of Monologue*, published in 1979, two years before the first production of *Quad*, and written in response to a request by actor David Warrilow for “a work on death” (Lyons 1983, 169). It is spoken by a character named “Speaker,” and begins with the lines “Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few. Dying too. Birth was the death of him” (Beckett 1979, 1). But this monologue, too, goes away, and by the end the two central preoccupations – birth and death – have faded into one, now gone “[b]eyond that black beyond”:

[...] Stands there staring beyond at that black veil lips quivering to half-heard words. Treating of other matters. Trying to treat of other matters. Till half hears there are no other matters. Never were other matters. Never two matters. Never but the one

⁶³ This is a translation of Beckett’s ‘wörtenstürmerei,’ from the same letter to Alex Kaun. The word was used in the expression “Wörtenstürmerei im Namen der Schönheit,” which is frequently translated as “word-storming in the name of beauty.” Leland de la Durantaye writes that ‘logoclastism’ is the better translation of Beckett’s term, as the original was a play on the German word for iconoclasm, ‘Bilderstürmerei’ (De la Durantaye 2016, 14).

Translation

matter. The dead and gone. The dying and the going. From the word go. The word begone.

(Beckett 1979, 4)

And shortly thereafter away goes Speaker, and the light from the globe that illumines him. These are the verbal “antics” from which Beckett drains his clear marks, arranging them on the “thin plate” of *Quad*, a space that “has no other determinations than its formal singularities” (Deleuze 1995, 12). *Quad* is what is beyond these tricks of folding language into itself by pun or repetition, from which only a few clear marks have been drawn out, and placed not even on the bare stage of the Speaker, with “diffuse light” and a “standard lamp” (Beckett 1979, 1), but in “a closed, globally defined, any-space-whatever” ceaselessly traversed by “any-protagonists-whatever” (Deleuze 1995, 12).

what is Quad doing
exhausting

what is Quad doing
extenuating the possibilities of space

what is Quad doing
clear little marks
quick, quick
go away

what is Quad doing
insisting, even as it tries to go away

Step 3: how do I keep doing what the piece is doing?

Exhaustion and inexorability are the qualities that I held to in translating *Quad*. I sought, at each turn, to extend its inexhaustibility and inexorability, by expanding on the variables it presents and permutes. This is an approach that I think of as proliferatory.

Quad has four sides and four corners, four players, four colours, four percussionists, four series, four courses – and to this catalogue I added four rounds, so that *Quad I* is performed from beginning to the end a total of four times, before finishing with *Quad II*, once. In this way the piece lasts roughly an hour. This expansion acts on a number of factors. It expands the numbered universe of the performance, allowing scope for the immersion of the players and adding an extra variable to the muscular mnemonics whereby they track their location in time. It intensifies the tiring, extending a while into the

imagined duration between *Quad I* and *Quad II*, a duration in which the players fade to white and the musicians one by one abscond. It also gives the inexorable action of the players time to fold itself into its situation, to slowly develop a relation to its surroundings. Finally, it adds countless new variables of countless other systems that could, in principle, be submitted to exhaustive permutation.



[Figure 5] The Stage



[Figure 6] (Text und Bühne 2012, 1:01)

To the catalogue four sides, four corners, four players, four colours, four percussionists, four series, four courses, four rounds, we added four locations, each with their own particular lines of sight. This was intended to extend the perspective of the 1981 production, in which the camera was placed in a “raised frontal” and “fixed” position (2010, 453). Recreating this vantage point would not entail translation, since the performance would have to take place either in a theatre or in some similarly controlled space.

Translating the piece out of the theatre meant, necessarily, changing or extending the sight lines. The sound was another element expanded and proliferated by the non-controlled locations, each one contributing both new, non-controllable sounds and different qualities of resonance. For this reason the controlled, focused approach to the percussion would have been ineffectual, and we opted instead to involve percussionists who were experienced improvisers, inviting them to bring whatever set-up they wished and to play however they chose,

while adhering to the permutational structure. In discussion with the percussionists, I also proposed the idea that they think of themselves as independent of one another, and of the pairings being between each percussionist and their allocated player, rather than between the percussionists themselves.

Being an any-space-whatever, *Quad* can be translated simply using the hopscotch method, that is, by drawing the space onto the ground with chalk (Figure 4). This method also has the effect of suggesting the colour and quality of the surface in Beckett's production (Figure 3) – the chalky-grey-whiteness, the appearance of an inner square around the central point, a thin, attenuated precision, and the trace of the walkers' trajectories on the ground (made now by chalk, instead of dirt). We also found ways to translate the square to a place where it could be in dialogue with other geometric markings on the ground (see performance 2) or to a place that already had a perfectly-sized square, and a nested square in the centre (see performance 3).

Gaia Blandina, one of the performers, managed to acquire costumes modelled on those used in Beckett's 1981 production from a colleague in York who had performed the piece in the 1990s. In the initial series of performances, we decided to retain the costumes, rather than choosing to treat the variable as one to be expanded upon and proliferated. The reasons centred on the matrixing of the performance, and my desire for the scripted action to be marked as such. I was interested in folding the piece into its surroundings in a way that did not cause its edges to dissolve completely, and costumes were a useful way of achieving this. They are also useful in retaining the element of ceremony that both the structure of the piece and the cowls strongly suggest. These aspects were intended to be central, and there was no intention to either present a situation of everyday users of public space using that space for the practice of some particular embodied technique (as with skateboarders, for example) nor, on the other end of a spectrum of visibility, to create an "aha!" moment in which passers-by suddenly realise that something they did not register as scripted behaviour was in fact scripted.⁶⁴ Rather, I was interested in embedding the scripted behaviour of a particularly insistent performance situation into a space not marked as a conventional site for it, and to see what would be generated there. In addition to passers-by and users of the public spaces, a small invited audience was also present at each performance.

⁶⁴ See, for example, a performance by students of the Alliance Française in Liberec, Czech Republic (*Quad 2008. Wmv* 2010). In this performance, the players are dressed in everyday clothes, each holding a prop and pacing the sides and diagonals of the main square of Liberec. Besides the scripted nature of their pacing, the only marks of performance are the absurd quality of the props of two of the players – a potted plant, and a pull-along toy. The other two hold, respectively, an umbrella and a small suitcase. These two more absurd props, along with the everyday clothes worn by all four players, the large size of the square, and the practice of walking across it (a very common one in a city square) allow the players to blend into the general activity taking place in their chosen site. In fact, this can be understood as a reversal of Kirby's "received acting"; here, the strong, persistent and mutually reinforcing matrices (Kirby 1972, 5) are those belonging to the everyday life of the square. The "received acting" in this case would apply to the performance of being an everyday user of this public space. Consequently, the public have to engage to a certain degree of depth in order to identify the behaviour as scripted, and the situation as a performance.

Translation

Through this comprehensively proliferatory approach, I was taking steps toward dismantling the transcendent instance of command that scripts and scores commonly instantiate. The durational component allowed us to dwell in the piece, turning the execution of a transcendent form into a situation to be inhabited. The site-specific element opened that situation up to outside influence – to the influence of factors ‘outside’ the form, that were invited to dwell there too. In certain ways, my research in the performances of *Quad* grew out of my experience of *The Sky in a Room*. I followed what I had learned from Ragnar’s practice in treating *Quad* as an opportunity to discover and practice methods of situated making, in which I searched for the correlations that would embed a form into a specific place in order for a situation like *The Sky in a Room* to emerge. I also moved towards my search for an integral audience as I defined it in “Part II”; there was no accidental audience in the sense of spectators who bought tickets and did not have a pre-existing relation to the place, the work or the performers. Our audience members were (1) the small group who was invited and was integral by virtue of their relation to the place, to the work we were doing, and to us; and (2) the inhabitants of the town who were users of the public spaces, who were integral in the sense that most of them (those who live there) had a multi-layered and sedimented relation to the place and were, in that sense, integral to it and integrated into it. Through these methods I staged my open-ended research question – *what would happen if I put Quad in the street/in a parking lot/in a town square?* – and treated our ad hoc ‘stages’ not as a medium but as the site where we would find answers to the question together.

Performance 1⁶⁵

The first performance took place in the car park on Fitzwilliam street beside the imposing façade of St George’s Warehouse, which has stood empty since 1979 (Lavigneur 2019). It was viewable primarily from the opposite train station, by people on platform 8 who were on or waiting for a train (Figure 7, Figure 8). This situation maximised one particular sight line – that of the platform to the parking lot – while minimising others, which could only be realised by passers-by who were in or at the entrance to the parking lot, or walking along Fitzwilliam street, where, at a certain point, the wall is low enough to permit a view to the parking lot below. This meant that this particular translation retained the principal sight-line of the 1981 production – “raised frontal” and “fixed” (Beckett 2010, 453). The proliferation of sight lines is achieved through the movement (of passengers on trains and pedestrians on Fitzwilliam street), as well as the generally transitory nature and changing composition of the principal audience.

⁶⁵ Documentation for each of the performances is labelled with the code Q followed by the number of the performance.

Translation

In a reversal of the “any-protagonists-whatever,” the performance of the ‘going away’ is now carried out by the audience.



[Figure 7] Sight Line 1



[Figure 8] Sight Line 2

Translation

Performance 2

The second performance, which took place on the fourth floor of Market Hall car park, was somewhat more clandestine. Although we made sure that it would be visible from a certain place on the street below, the location was chosen mostly for the peculiar resonance, literal and metaphorical, of the space. The fourth floor was mostly empty, and the traffic noise from the A62 ring road below reverberated ceaselessly. There was a palpable sense of excess, inexorability, and decay to the space, making it a suitable context for *Quad*.⁶⁶ There were also various architectural and graphic details that seemed to comment on or complement the *Quad* space, such as the various squares and rectangles marked on the ground in white paint (Figure 9), the “turn right” arrow painted on the ground (Figure 10), the low ceiling, the rectangular ‘windows’ created by the pillars that support the structure, and the generally rhythmic repetitiveness that is a feature of multi-storey car parks. The architecture of the space allows for a number of removed or secluded points from which to view the action, many of which are framed by square or rectangle structures (Q2b1 for more images). The performance began shortly



[Figure 9] Turn Right

⁶⁶ The sense of decay turned out to be fairly accurate. The carpark was closed abruptly in February 2020 amid safety concerns, and, as I write, is currently undergoing demolition (see Q2b2).

Translation

before twilight, so that our backdrop, a south-facing view of the Huddersfield skyline on an early May evening, transformed from an overcast white to a deep, cool blue (see Q2b1, “Evening light”). This accentuated the passage of time that is so central to the action, as well as adding a parameter to the imaginary extension of the action over the course of 100,000 years; after a certain number of repetitions, the exact moment of sunset (for example) will have fallen in each of the 24 circuits.

Multistorey car parks – like supermarkets, shopping malls, and airports – are a quintessential ‘any-place-whatever.’ Following the work of Marc Augé⁶⁷, these places have come to be understood in the fields of human geography and philosophy of place as ‘non-places’. These are “interchangeable and homogeneous sites,” transitory places primarily traversed in order to arrive somewhere else, or set up in such a way as to preclude the formation of enduring relationships with them (Trigg 2017, 129). They are places of “solitary individuality,” where human practices are organised and perpetuated by the “non-human mediation” of notices and signs (Augé 1995, 118). The concept of a non-place is useful in giving an account of the criteria that determined our selection of sites, and it applies most fittingly to the first and second *Quad* performances, both of which took place in car parks. It was particularly for



[Figure 10] Car Park Geometry

⁶⁷ See *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995).

the sense of non-place that these locations were desirable; it made a poetic kind of sense to me that inside the non-place of Market Hall car park, unbeknownst to the tens of thousands of motorists whizzing along the A62 ring road below, eight mysterious figures would gather in secret ministry to execute their inexorable and purposeless play.

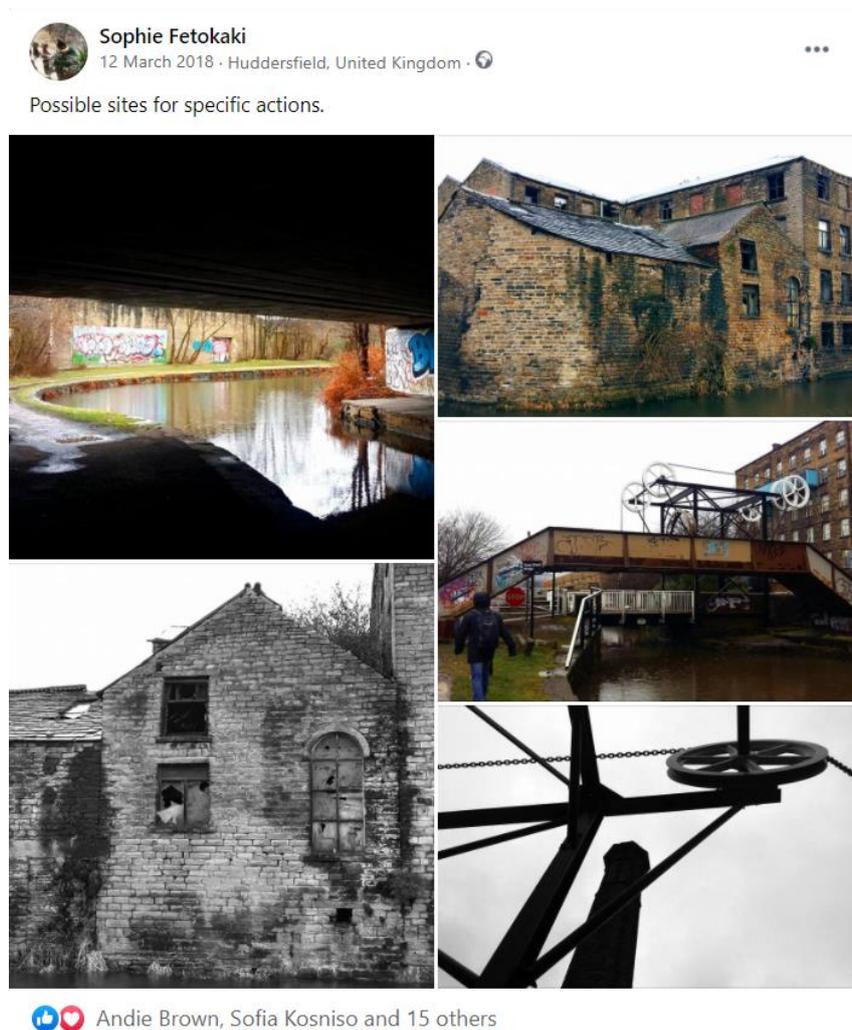
But there is an obvious contradiction in the concept of non-place, namely the fact that in using a non-place for organised group activity, it ceases to be a non-place. The car park was no longer a place of transit – we went *there* and stayed for over an hour. We also carefully surveyed the site in order to integrate ourselves into its various features. We brought other bodies to the site, and we documented our action there. It acquired for us the structural meaning of being one in a series of four locations. Essentially, we formed some sort of attachment to the site. This contradiction is illustrative of Dylan Trigg’s phenomenological critique of the concept of non-place, namely that rather than inhering in a site, the sense of place is something that “appears and disappears” for us. It is not “fixed in place, but instead dynamically structured by our affective mood, our pragmatic needs and our intersubjective relations” (2017, 128). Trigg’s critique of the place/non-place dichotomy grounds itself in Merleau-Ponty, in particular the notion that spatiality is not simply a container which can be separated from the subjects that occupy it, but rather “an active field of force” (2017, 132) – “not the milieu (real or logical) in which things are laid out, but rather the means by which the position of things becomes possible” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 253–254; cited in Trigg 2017). To put this in terms of affordances, Market Hall car park was furnished with excellent affordances for the embodied action we wanted to carry out there, just as it may have suitable affordances for those wanting to practice driving stunts,⁶⁸ or seeking a secluded location for various activities that might require one. Following this line of thinking, we could argue, with McConnell and Fiore, that the concept of place is actually a relation, one “between the environment and those who perceive and act within it.” More specifically, “place is the collection of all affordances that exist as relations between a given environment and any species inhabiting it, at least to the extent that such affordances are perceived and used” (McConnell and Fiore 2017, 270).

During the time I spent in Huddersfield, a sense of place did not, to use Dylan Trigg’s formalisation, ‘appear’ very often or very easily to me. Much of Huddersfield, but the town centre in particular, felt to me like a non-place, full of sites that did not invite me to dwell or linger. The specific embodied practice of performing *Quad* in locations around Huddersfield grew out of the situated need to engage

⁶⁸ For some time during the performance in Market Hall car park we could hear the sound of car engines and skidding tyres, with one red car coming up to the fourth floor and passing too close for comfort. Not having any knowledge of this particular car culture, I do not know what they were doing. Practising stunts is my best guess.

Translation

with a town to which I found it persistently difficult to form an enduring relationship; the experience of placelessness and lack of attachment met the specific form of *Quad* that had drawn my attention since I first encountered it one or two years earlier in Anne Carson's *Decreation*, and the correlations that arose between the piece and my experience of Huddersfield gave rise to the need for an act of situated making, in this case an act of translation, that would help a sense of place appear to me through deeper engagement with what was inexorable and placeless about both *Quad* and Huddersfield.



[Figure 11] Searching for non-places

Translation

Performance 3



[Figure 12] Duration

The third performance took place in St. George's Square. In contrast to both preceding performances, this one was intended to be in plain sight, to be embedded in a public space that people traverse and linger in with a wide range of reasons and objectives. The location offered sight lines passing through every angle and point along the sides of our square, making it the performance which moved entirely to the far end of the spectrum of 'fixed' to 'unfixed' points of view. The Yorkstone paving of the area outside the train station is arranged in patterns of adjacent squares, with square light fixtures in the centre. The squares happen to be just about the right size, so on this occasion we had no need of a chalk square drawn on the ground, but instead paced along trajectories already given by the space. The dramatic transformation of light as late afternoon turned to evening was effected not only by the sky, but also by the yellow lights of the train station portico that became steadily more pronounced as it grew darker, and by the various light fixtures that turn on in the evening – those of the squares on the ground that periodically change colour, the water fountains, and the lampposts along the perimeter of

the square as a whole. Lastly, we were in the company of the walking Harold Wilson statue (picture), that prime minister who faded into the “dark ages” of the British 1970s (Morgan 2017), and who lamented to his policy advisor Bernard Donoughue at the end of his second term in 1976, “I have been around this racetrack so often that I cannot generate any more enthusiasm for jumping any more hurdles” (Crines and Hickson 2016, 41). We were, then, in good company. While the vast majority of the public using the square either passed us by or stopped, some for considerable lengths of time, taking pictures or just watching, there was a group of three who showed their interest more actively. I will call these three “the inquiring trio”.

I had the strong impression that the inquiring trio were or had been drinking. Roughly halfway through the performance they began to intervene, walking and running through and across the square, weaving along trajectories in the negative space between the four players (Q3a, 33:50). Shortly afterwards they began asking what we were doing. We did not answer. Our agreement for such circumstances was to keep going; not to entirely ignore inquiring passers-by, but not to do anything that would break the scripted action. I interpreted this as permitting eye-contact, which I made periodically, when they stood very close. I also gave what I intended as knowing smiles – a smile of complicity, intended to bring these curious interlopers into the action. To involve them. But when the moment came for me to step back into the square, I had to do so. This led to a member of the trio shouting that I had “walked away from him” (Q3a, 36:03) – which was a fair accusation. The inquiring trio then turned their attention to the percussionists. The four percussionists were distinguished from the players by their everyday clothes, and their being seated casually on the ground. In Kirby’s terms, they were “non-matrixed performers” – not acting, “not imbedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place and time” (1972b, 4). They were identified with the matrixed performers by virtue of their being “part of the visual presentation” (1972b, 3) but they were not doing anything to reinforce that identification (1972b, 4). Perhaps finding it easier to approach the non-matrixed performers, the inquiring trio sat with the percussionists for some time, continuing to question them about the nature of the situation. When once again they received no verbal replies, the member of the trio who had shouted at me became increasingly persistent in his efforts to elicit a response from us. After speaking for a moment to another member of the trio, he handed his jacket him, and, taking a running start, proceeded to do a handstand flip through the centre of the square. He didn’t quite stick the landing though and returned to the same spot to try again. On the landing of his second attempt – in round 4, series 3, circuit 3 – he collided straight into Gaia (Q3a, 38:58). After regaining her balance, she returned immediately to her corner of the square. Eleanor continued in the scripted trajectory for one full circuit then stopped, two circuits short, in her corner. David paced the perimeter of the square three times in

total disorientation, now and then pausing bewilderedly. When he finally returned to his corner, I picked up in series 4, circuit 1 – the circuit I do on my own and as such the recognisable beginning of the fourth series. On my first pass of Gaia’s corner I ask if she is ok, and she nods. We continue.



[Figure 13] The Collision

Immediately after the collision, our Huddersfield colleague Linda Jankowska, who had been monitoring the developing situation with the inquiring trio, approached and began to speak to the handstand flipper. Her back is turned to the camera and her words are inaudible, but it is clear from what is audible of her tone, and her hand gestures and body language, that she is trying to explain something to him. Because he is facing the camera and speaking loudly, we hear his responses. He repeats several times, as though in his defence, that we were not talking to him:

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: “They won’t even talk to me.”

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: “I’ve asked them for ages and they won’t even talk to me!”

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: “But they won’t talk to me!”

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: “Well can you tell them not to be ignorant and talk to me.”

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: *speaking inaudibly*

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: “They could still talk to me.”

Translation

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: "I want them to talk to me."

Linda: *speaking inaudibly*

Audience member: *Nodding*. "Ok. Ok. Ok. Sorry."

Offers Linda his hand. They shake hands and walk off camera.

(Q3a, 39:03-39:49)

It seems that this audience member was objecting in particular to the quality of inexorability. His actions were not really destructive in nature, and if destruction or violence was his aim, he had ample opportunity to achieve it. Rather, he seemed to be motivated by a desire to break through the wall of inexorability. He had registered that these were "unaffected protagonists in an unaffected space" (Deleuze 1995, 12), and his tactics were aimed at forcing us to become affected. The longer our intransigence persisted, the more interventional his tactics became. After accidentally causing harm, he was subdued and did not intervene into the performance again. He and the rest of the inquiring trio stayed until the very end, and after the performance we had a conversation. Our interaction confirmed to me that this was a case of a situation gotten out of hand, and that the handstand flipper's actions were not intended to cause harm.

According to Deleuze, the inexorability and purposelessness of *Quad* lies in its calculated avoidance of the event of collision, which remains only a potentiality of a space set up precisely to carry out that fastidiously choreographed avoidance. The centre – where the players could collide, but do not – is the place where the protagonists "accomplish and exhaust" – where they accomplish the exhaustion of the many differently permuted avoidances of collision. The collision of the protagonists "is not an event among others, but the only possibility of event--the potentiality of the corresponding space." To exhaust that space is therefore "to extenuate its potentiality through rendering any meeting impossible" (Deleuze 1995, 13). In translating this closed and inexorable system from the studio to the town square I was embedding one system, one situation, into another, and exploring what might flare up at the edges of that nested situation, the line where the "thin plate" of one reality meets the dense cacophony of the other. It was evident from the outset that the closed universe of *Quad* would be disturbed in some way, and this was precisely what that I was inviting – and the reason for my choice of this especially inexorable work, as opposed to, for example, one that could more easily accommodate or even invite participation or intervention. Seen in light of Deleuze's commentary, this audience member's intervention was nothing less than surgical; he registered the inexorability, and the fact that the negative space of the square was the engine of that inexorability. Placing himself into that negative space, he began to flirt with the prospect of a collision, eventually choosing a bisecting trajectory for his running start and handstand flip, a line that cut the square in two and passed right through the

centre. He seemed to have registered the fact that avoidance of the centre, the only place where collision could occur, was the tension that kept us balanced “thinly on the plate,” and he set out to test that balance, in that way that children test boundaries, pushing further and further, without knowing when the breaking point will come, without a plan, out of that relational urge to locate an edge that can only become perceivable once it has been transgressed. In this way he and I were similarly engaged in the exploration of edges, and his realisation of the possibility of collision was an answer to the question posed by our translation of *Quad*, an answer to my research question, *what would happen if...?*

Performance 4 and hcmf// shorts performance

Both the last of the four spring 2018 performances and the November 2018 performance at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (hereafter hcmf //) took place in the Richard Steinitz Building (then the Creative Arts Building) at the University of Huddersfield. In this translation we explored the sight line that begins above the space of the square, which is afforded by the atrium’s two galleries running along its three sides. The floor-to-ceiling glass on the west-facing wall created a view directly through the square for those watching from the ground floor, with a view of walking passers-by. The view from the first and second floors and the documentation taken from the second floor was compelling for the clarity of the vertical site line which, without the element of depth to obscure distances, emphasised the geometricity of the space, the players’ trajectories, and the circumnavigation of the centre point (see Q4 and Qhcmf).

In the translation for hcmf // shorts, we did not use the same costumes. The situation was already highly matrixed by the programme, the fixed schedule, the context of the festival, and so forth, and there was no need to add any other marks. On the contrary, we had to remove some of the marks in order to be able to continue ‘insisting, even as we try to go away.’ In the spring performance, it was the audience that went away, and so we needed the costumes in order to make the situation of *Quad* insistent enough to counteract that going away. In the hcmf performance, the audience do not go away – they come on time, observe the performance quietly and respectfully, according to the conventions of contemporary music concerts, and do not leave until the concert is finished. In this instance it is the players who have to go away, and we did so by selecting every-day clothes in a mostly grey colour scheme (keeping the hoods), and by beginning and ending the piece with all eight players standing dispersed among the crowd. We also performed the piece only once, as in Beckett’s 1981 production. This was a constraint of the “shorts” programme, in which the performances must have a maximum

Translation

duration of 20 minutes, but it was a decision I would have made in any case, because I did not see the need for repetition in such a focused environment.

how can I keep doing what the piece is doing
you can fold this bit of exhausted space into another system, or into chaos

how can I keep doing what the piece is doing
you can fold this closed and inexorable system into the cyclical and transitory disorganisation
of rush hour, of ring roads, of train stations

how can I keep doing what the piece is doing
you can draw the chaos in as through a vortex and twist it and drain it out

how can I keep doing what the piece is doing
go on
begone

Composing (a situation)

Composing (a situation)

meta/morphē (June 2018 and August 2019)

Song Cycles (August 2018)

After *The Sky in a Room* and *Quad*, I spent much of 2018 working with others in situation-specific projects that explored or attempted to approach group practice in a variety of ways. These projects combined ideas gleaned from site-specific visual art and performance art, and my readings of Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998). In working this way I was implementing the methodology I encountered in Ragnar's work, namely the creation of performance situations in which simple ideas give rise to a durational situation in which correlations can be uncovered and explored. I wove this strand together with those of my own practice and its many threads of unfolding inquiry. In *meta/morphē*, I continued my practice of instrument disassemblage, in a sense staging my negotiation with the field of music and inviting others to trouble and contribute to that process with me. *meta/morphē* receives substantial treatment because, like *Quad*, it constitutes a kind of centrepiece in the portfolio; it took place one month after *Quad* and explores many of the same methodologies of defetishisation. It is also the only work, besides *Quad*, that I performed more than once. In order to assist in navigating the density of the text I have included thematic subheadings. *Song Cycles* took place two months after *meta/morphē* and the two projects were conceived almost simultaneously and shared many aims and points of departure. For this reason I will give only a brief account of that project, showing what further contributions it made to the development of the practice.

meta/morphē

meta/morphē I, Reykjavik, Iceland: methodologies

meta/morphē was my first experiment in composing a situation specifically for a practice to emerge. In this sense it was a very different process to, for example, *The Loinpres* (see below). While the making of the latter performance was like throwing pottery, an act that took place with a certain velocity, in certain conditions and within a certain durational frame, and bore the marks of all of those phenomena, *meta/morphē* was like sourcing the clay and building the potter's wheel, so that some durational, situated activity might then emerge. It is primarily in this sense that *meta/morphē* is situated; it is itself a situation and a set of materials. Other forms of situatedness are also part of the experiment. The performance took place in an open-studio format, with the public able to witness and participate. The sustained togetherness of the practitioners also has the capacity to build situatedness and to establish relations that are not delimited entirely by professional practice but rather, because of the open-

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endedness of the activities and the long periods of time spent together, are necessarily rooted in a broader range of shared experiences.



[Figure 14] Early Days

In terms of outcomes or aims, *meta/morphē* is the most explicitly open-ended project in the portfolio. The aim was the metamorphosis of the piano into any other object or situation. “Object” was broadly understood, including physical objects as well as audio and video recordings and poetry, and situation was understood as a set of relational circumstances with the durational phenomenon of the transitioning piano at the centre. The following, written in April 2019, 10 months after the first performance of *meta/morphē*, is a text that defines the nature and purpose of the open-endedness both through etymological reflection on the title:

meta/morphē: “after the form,” from Greek *meta* (prep.) “after,” “along with,” “beyond,” “among,” “in pursuit of” + *morphē* (noun) “shape,” “form,” “appearance,” “figure,” “outline,” “kind,” “sort.”

and by way of a set of research questions, formulated in retrospect:

meta/morphē is an act of collaboratively transforming a piano into something else. If the piece had a score, it might read: “Carefully disassemble a piano over a period of time with the assistance of fellow artists and the public. Use the disassembled

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parts to make new things.” Behind the act is a central question: *what comes after the form?*

meta/morphē is an inverse Argo. Instead of replacing each piece of the ship until it is entirely renewed, without having changed either its name or form, here the ship is gradually taken apart and the pieces are used to create new forms. Again, the question: *what becomes of the name, after the form?*

More nuanced statements of this question might be: *how do we relate to the object during and after its transformation? How does the transformation help us to know our relationship to the (former) object?*

The open-endedness of the project was supported and enabled by its being operationally autonomous, which itself was ensured by the material conditions of the situation. In the first performance, the piano was donated by Icelandic musician Samuel Jon Samuelsson, and our performance space, Iðnó theatre and culture house, was offered to us free of charge. The project was funded by Nordisk Kulturfond (Nordic Culture Fund) and Reykjavíkurborg (the City of Reykjavik), and with this money, we were able to pay the participants and ourselves, and purchase the tools we needed. We also ensured autonomy from potential expectations of the funding bodies, by stating in our proposal that the outcomes would not be determined in advance. In this way, we would not be beholden to any expectations coming from outside the framework and duration of the practice. In the primacy of practice and the bracketing or deferral of concrete outcomes, *meta/morphē* echoes my approach to the wider project of the PhD and was an essential step in the process of uncovering the framework and formulations of the thesis.

The performance was a space for intuitive processes to unfold. Since the framework is so unfamiliar (only one participant/performer, Einar Torfi Einarsson, had any experience dismantling a piano) those processes are problematised. A deliberately problematised intuitive process gave us the opportunity to research the adaptive nature of the method of intuition, to see if it could graft itself onto the obstacles set in its path, or otherwise grow over and around them. This research generated some striking results, as well as a lot of insecurity and doubt. I felt that the transformation of the piano into new configurations of its material parts was an important aim, and I felt very connected to the poeticism of that act. My collaborator María Arnardóttir did not always share this priority. Part of the tensions at play there concerned the relation of open-endedness to intuition; I felt the need for the two to be calibrated, feeling that too much open-endedness impeded processes of intuition. If intuition is the sense of material possibilities over time, then the field of what is possible must be narrow enough for intuition to find the edges of a form and dust away at the earth and sand until it emerges. I believe María felt that this narrowing compromised the open-endedness that was an essential component of

the performance, and which she needed to remain broad in order to carry out her own processes of sense-making. Ultimately there was no resolution to this tension, but the situation was composed in such a way as to be able to accommodate it, and María and I were able to proceed while leaving the question open.

In some senses, the performances of *meta/morphē* were festivals of selective inattention. Much of the activity took place on the pavement area outside the theatre. A few days into the performance we bought a small marquee to set up on the pavement so that we could work in any weather. Passers-by can and did join us to hear small impromptu performances (MM2a, 12:08), discuss what was going on, and also try out the piano. Due to the flexibility of the matrixing, selective inattention was the primary mode of audience presence and participation. It was also the primary mode of our own participation in the performance. The integral audience practices selective inattention because they are 'in the know,' they know 'how it's supposed to go' and therefore do not have to pay careful, focused attention. In *meta/morphē* and other performance experiments in 2018-19, I was exploring whether the same could apply at the opposite end of the spectrum; that is, where everyone is 'in the know,' but what is known is that nobody really knows what is supposed to happen. This shared unknowing was what created a sense of integrality, in which the artist participants were as much integral audience members as the public. Indeed, we often performed for each other, and would often exchange roles and become the audience, when the situation called for it. There was also a lot of sitting around together, wondering what to do next, listening to the piano sounds, trading massages, smoking cigarettes, and drinking coffee (MM2b). We tried to cultivate an integral audience where there was none, to shape our own social relations around the situation so that we could flexibly and selectively embody roles of spectatorship, participation, and performance, while also sharing the 'work' of fulfilling the ritual program (Schechner 2004, 222), which, in this case, was to figure out what that program was.

It is clear in retrospect that defetishisation and dereification were my primary aims in making *meta/morphē*. At the time I framed this in terms of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*:

The form of *meta/morphē* itself is the combination of the piano and the situation of its disassemblage and transformation. This form constitutes a relationship to the world.

The form of *meta/morphē* embraces the piano itself, the time of its disassemblage, the social space in which the disassemblage took place, the multiplicity of shoots that sprouted from the work (existing as text, audio, photography, the audio-visual, the interactive, the sculptural, etc.) and so forth. Within this form are sets of

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relations – between each of the artists; between each individual and the piano; between the various things that are the plethora of the piano; between the piano as it begun and the various artefacts into which it transformed; and so forth. In this way, *meta/morphē* instantiates Nicolas Bourriaud’s notion that the form of an artwork is a relation to the world.

meta/morphē is performed by a group of individuals who spend long stretches of time together, remaining open to the inclusion of passers-by. It takes as a departure point the notion that an artist produces “relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects” (Bourriaud 1998, 42).

[...] The piano is the ‘aesthetic object’ by way of which we create relations between one another, and between ourselves and the world. It is the axel of our activity, but it is also merely the occasion for it.



[Figure 15] The Water Lily

I now understand the notion of artistic practice as the production of “relations between people and the world” to be a precursor to the framing of defetishisation and dereification. I did indeed seek in *meta/morphē* to produce relations between people and the world, but I was seeking to do so not “by way of aesthetic objects” so much as by way of a situation involving *the dismantling of a specific cultural object*, which is embedded in the discursive fields of classical music and is therefore, among many other things, a key object in the practices of cultural colonialism, technical fetichisation, reification in

institutions of training and the reproduction of transcendent instances of command. These situated concerns, emerging from specific, situated knowledge, are a counter-weight to fetishisation; a relational aesthetic is no guarantee of situatedness, and works without such a complex set of needs and questions to be addressed can easily tend towards the fetishisation of aestheticised relationality. In *meta/morphē*, the relationality of the artists and the public, and between all participants and the piano, was part of what constituted the porous, flexible, and indeterminate *situation* in which to explore the defetishisation of technique and the dismantling of reified structures and social relations that are reproduced by it. The presence of many artists, each with their own backgrounds of training and practice, ensured a proliferation of ways in which this dismantling could take place. The framework of open-endedness ensured that this plurality was mirrored in the variety of outcomes (objects, events, texts, and practices) that emerged from the project.

Disassemblage versus destruction and the relationality of form

The relationship of situatedness to defetishisation is also the reason I wanted to dismantle rather than smash or destroy the piano. Violent destruction is too monolithic – an event rather than a process or a practice. This is where *meta/morphē* departs from the legacy of Fluxus works of instrument destruction such as Al Hansen’s *Yoko Ono Piano Drop*, George Maciunas’ *Solo for Violin* or Nam June Paik’s *One for Violin Solo*. In place of a singular, impactful event, I was searching for a process slow and methodical enough to allow me to examine my relationship to the instrument, and to allow myself to be troubled by that relationship. In its temporal extension and process-based nature, *meta/morphē* has more in common with Annea Lockwood’s *Piano Transplants*, which I was not aware of at the time, than the Fluxus works referred to above, with which I was very familiar. All four of the pieces in *Piano Transplants* call attention to the gradual processes of disappearance and decay resulting from the interaction of the materiality of the piano with that of fire, water, soil, climbing plants and other forces. In a sense, the performances stage the gradual disappearance of the piano *as piano* – the gradual diminishing of its affordances for highly specific forms of sound production. This is evident in the wording of the text scores, each of which ends with a reference to this diminishing affordance: the last line of “Piano Burning” reads “Play whatever pleases you for as long as you can”; “Piano Garden” ends with the line “Do not protect against weather and leave the pianos there forever”; “Piano Drowning I” ends with “Take photographs and play it monthly, as it slowly sinks”; “Southern Exposure” ends simply with “Leave it there until it vanishes” (1968):

Composing (a situation)



[Figure 16] Piano Burning. Photo by Geoff Adams⁶⁹

⁶⁹ All of the following images can be found on the artist's website, where permission is given to download them.

Composing (a situation)



[Figure 17] Piano Garden. Photo by Chris Ware

Composing (a situation)



[Figure 18] Piano Drowning. Photo by Richard Curtin

Composing (a situation)



[Figure 19] Southern Exposure (with Ross Bolleter). Photo by Heuchan Hobbs

Composing (a situation)

In April 2019, I had the pleasure of meeting and having a conversation with Annea when she came to London for a residency at I OTO. Annea and I discussed *Piano Transplants*, exploring the difference between destruction by means of directly impactful acts of human agency and the kind of disappearance, submersion, and consumption that Annea staged and probed in her own performances. During and after our conversation, I jotted down several ideas in my notebook. I wrote that Annea referred to the *Piano Transplants* as “an unfolding,” and that she felt it was “kinder on our bodies and our minds” than more direct, impactful acts of instrument destruction. Just two days before our meeting, I had witnessed Annea’s *A Sound Map of the Housatonic River* (2010), a 4-channel installation piece lasting almost one hour. I connected the unfolding and the kindness that Annea referred to with the notion that compositional form is a relational concern, an idea that had partly grown out of my reading of Bourriaud and that I was working with at the time. I proposed this idea to Annea, and it was restorative for me to hear that she agreed and identified with it. In reading about Annea, I later found she has also referred to similar ideas herself. In the following, from a 2013 interview, Annea responds to a question about the temporal dimension of her work, and in doing so, explores the interconnected ideas of duration, compositional form and relationality:

Time and the transience of sound is so much the fundamental parameter of our work that awareness of it is also fundamental when one’s composing. I try to gauge how long a listener might stay engaged by the sounds of a particular site, in a *Sound Map* for instance, by the acoustic details and her body’s reactions to the sounds.

Musical time has long been duration, for me, not meter. A particular pleasure is working with silences; I sometimes push the length of a sound event or a silence in an attempt to calm the body [...]. Time is a wonderful medium and the action of natural forces over time is the point of the *Piano Transplants*, as you suggest.

(Lockwood 2013)

This attention to the listening and experiencing body, shared of course to a great extent by Pauline Oliveros and John Cage, is the core of what drew me to *Piano Transplants*, as well as the key feature that distinguishes the work from the wider repertoire of works of instrument destruction. I sensed in this work, as well as in Annea’s “Sound Maps,” a concern for and attending to the situated bodies that participate in it; a form of care both for the situated body that makes and performs, and the situated body that is or will be on the other end of that act. In much sound art practice these experiences are merged into the same body, as Annea herself says in the album notes of her 1989 release of *A Sound Map of the Hudson River* (1982): “Since 1970 I have recorded rivers in many countries, not to document them, but rather for the special state of mind and body which the sounds of moving water create when one listens intently to the complex mesh of rhythms and pitches” (2003). This “special state of mind and

body” was what I was searching for in *meta/morphē*, and the traces of that performance situation, the many objects and events that emerged from it, are in a sense clues with which to work backwards from the object to the situation, or portals by which a person who was not there might experience some small aspect of the specificity of the situation.

meta/morphē was a ceremonial breakage, a sustained act of destruction that staged both the transformation of the piano and the dismantling of the reified structures I had introjected over years of training and professional practice. In order to do this, I needed certain methods, and *meta/morphē* showcases these: situated making, autonomy of framework, open-endedness, duration, layers of repeatability, and the defetishisation of objects and technique. In this sense it is a centre-piece of the portfolio. The two performances of *meta/morphē* generated an enormous amount of both digital and physical material. The physical objects are distributed over three or four countries, and I can no longer say who is in possession of what. There is a vast amount of audio and visual material in both raw and edited form. Speaking for myself, I can say that the reason for this was that I did not know what I was looking for at the time. So I documented as much as I could, motivated by the vague sense that it would all ‘become something’ later on. That something would ‘come of it’. Some people who listened to the audio material told me enthusiastically that I should ‘do something with it’. I am uneasy with all of this. It reflects a transcendent hierarchy in which the object is superior to the situation – in which whatever ‘comes of it’ must come in a form that is already given. I believe that the weight of ‘what would come’ also created a sort of generalised anxiety in the situation itself. But the desire is relentless; even now as I sift through the material, I cannot help but feel the inclination to ‘do something’ with it. The truth is, I am glad to be done ‘doing things’ with it. It was a difficult and painful process, one in which I felt the same fear I confessed to Monia six months earlier, this time drawn out over the duration of the performance and revived whenever I engaged with the project later on. Even now it is difficult, and the days of writing these words are marked by clear signs of subconscious disturbance, both in waking and in sleep. It was difficult, and it is difficult to remember it, because it involved a necessarily violent transformation. Something drastic had to be and was done. And it is in light of this that I now understand why, in my notes on *meta/morphē* from the spring of 2019, I returned to these words which, almost two years earlier, I had lifted from Artaud’s *The Theatre and its Double* and inserted into *Svioloncello*,⁷⁰ my first performance of instrument disassemblage:

des objets à forme et à destination inconnues (1938, 104)
objects of unknown form and purpose

⁷⁰ With Brice Catherin and Robin Jousson: <https://youtu.be/y57ngPglip0>

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de faire sauter le carcan, de rompre une bonne fois l'armature (1938, 108)
to destroy the iron collar, to break the frame once and for all

la cruauté est avant tout lucide, c'est un sort de direction rigide, la soumission à la nécessité
(1938, 109)
cruelty is above all lucid, it is a sort of strict command, the submission to necessity

These words were important to me in 2017, and I spoke them over the sound of a cello being disassembled by a professional luthier while it was being played by a professional cellist, in a conventional performance setting. Everything that was done to the cello was done using the techniques of lutherie and was entirely reversible. Each night for four nights, Robin Jousson, the luthier, put the cello back together again so we could repeat the performance the following night. *Svioloncello* was a first step, the first testing of the water. When *meta/morphē* came, there was no turning back. No reversibility. No professional pianist, no professional piano-maker, no conventional performance setting, no 'piece.' While *Svioloncello* was named using the Italian prefix *s-*, meaning un- or dis- (as in *fare/sfare*; *make/unmake*), *meta/morphē* was named using the prefix *meta*, which in loanwords from Greek means 'after' or 'beyond.' It was a step beyond the form, beyond the structure. What 'came of it' was transformation. But it didn't come in those days in Iðnó in Reykjavik in 2018. What really 'came of it' came later, and the objects – what should 'come of it' – came before. They were not the telos of a process but the augurs of an arrival, and within this order, the idea that I should 'do something' with what is left of the material is very difficult for me to relate to. The transformation that came of *meta/morphē* came not out of the performance itself, not out of the documentation, not out of the 'works' that emerged from the performance, not out of the 'writing-up,' but out of the sum of all of these things, out of their transformational role in the practice, and the transformational role of the practice in my life.

meta/morphē was difficult, laborious, but it was also melancholic, poetic, wistful and playful. The stakes that I have described here were not the same for the other artists, and each artist brought their own qualities to the performance as they explored the affordances of the situation of dismantling the piano in their own way. We worked in pairs or small groups, but the predominant mode of exploration in *meta/morphē* was what I understand as *parallel play*, a mode of toddler's play that emerges situationally to navigate the transition from individual play to social play (Bakeman and Brownlee 1980). Sandra Harding, in giving an account of the emergence of feminist epistemology, refers to parallel play as the method used by scholars during the 1970s women's movement to move from the epistemological concerns of their individual disciplines towards a feminist epistemology and a feminist theory of the

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standpoint (2016, 3:00-4:00). Similarly, I understand parallel play in *meta/morphē* as a methodological approach for transitioning from the situated knowledges of my own solo practice towards an understanding of what is needed to build a collaborative practice. *meta/morphē* was a key experiment in this research, and I learned from it that creating a collaborative practice is far more complex than I had thought. I realised that even just a few years in the spin-cycle of arts funding machines had caused me to absorb the jargon and develop an unsituated and oversimplified understanding of what collaboration is – one that the experience of *meta/morphē* very much helped me to begin dismantling.

Portfolio items

Below is a selection of things that resulted from both performances of *meta/morphē*. I have chosen these particular things partly for practical reasons (a full portfolio of the documentation would constitute a PhD in itself) and because they crystallise something of the situation in which they emerged.

MM2a is a 23-minute documentary video of the 2018 performance of *meta/morphē*. The video gives an idea of the atmosphere and the breadth of the activities that took place and introduces some of the artists involved by means of clips from the “confession booth,” a room in the upper floors of the theatre space where we recorded our daily individual confessions. During these confessions we would reflect on our aims, the activities of the day, what others were doing, and ruminate on the significance of the piano to us both individually and as a cultural object.

The following are two of my favourite images from the performance. Thelma took on the project of transforming the piano’s action mechanism into ceremonial jewellery and a headdress, which she used in a final ceremony on the last day of the performance. The headdress is made of the wippens of the piano’s action mechanism, and along her hairline is a garland made of a piano string and the green key felts from the front rail of the key bed. The necklaces are made from the piano keys, hammers and the let-off regulating buttons, all strung together on piano strings. Other than the very spare usage of black tape (to hold the black-key necklace higher than the others), every piece of material in Thelma’s jewellery and headdress is taken from the piano. It was a highly repetitive and fiddly process, which she worked on mostly alone (for video documentation see MM1a). The lights were also Thelma’s idea. She wanted to turn the emptied body of the piano into a stage, and so she and I spent the penultimate day of the performance drilling five cylindrical holes into the frame and attaching light fixtures, to create the effect of stage footlights (for video documentation see MM1a, and for a close-up image of the light fixtures see MM1b).

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[Figure 20] The Final Ceremony

I am very fond of “La Beata Thelma,” which I took myself. The pale blue wall of Iðnó’s theatre space in combination with Thelma’s remarkable halo-like headdress, blue jean jacket and layers of clothing made me think of Catholic, Italianate representations of the Virgin Mary. As we played around with taking the photo, I suggested Thelma hold this pose, head slightly tilted and hands in prayer, reminiscent of Virgin Mary iconography from Early Renaissance paintings such as Fra Filippo Lippi’s “The Virgin Mary Adoring the Child” to uber-kitsch shutterstock images such as this one, by Kiselev Andrey Valerevich:

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[Figure 21] La Beata Thelma: Thelma Marín Jónsdóttir



[Figure 22] From early Renaissance to shutterstock

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In my sound-based exploration I seemed to have had the same idea as Annea did in her *Piano Transplants* – I played whatever pleased me for as long as I could. For convenience, I can divide my playing into two categories, each grounded in different forms of repetition. In one type of playing I was improvising, specifically exploring the new sonorities of the piano that were being opened up by its transformation and by our increasingly interventional forms of piano preparation. I explored these new sonorities by means of new techniques that could only be practiced and developed in relation to a piano in the kind of state that ours was in. With more keys, dampers and hammers being removed as the days passed, space was made in the action mechanism of the piano to manipulate parts of the mechanism not previously accessible, and to prepare the piano by inserting objects and material removed from other areas of the instrument. One particular technique that I practiced repeatedly was to use a severed hammer in my right hand to strike the nails and screws inserted between the strings as well as to play the strings from above, while reaching into the action mechanism with my left hand and pressing on the wippen assembly to cause the hammers to strike the strings from underneath (for video documentation see MM1a, “Improvising new techniques”). My embodied relationship to the instrument heavily influenced the musical structures that emerged, as the techniques and sonorities lent themselves very easily to percussive, groove-based improvising. I practiced this more or less daily, and while the practice was repeatable in this way, the results were always different, as the instrument was in a constant state of transmutation. “Moving through” (MM1c) is a track I made by combining material recorded during these improvisation sessions as well as at other times when we were detuning and removing strings. The editing is spare, with an extremely light compositional touch. There are only two tracks in the DAW project, and recordings of the improvisation sessions and work sessions are retained mostly in their entirety, with automated adjustments of volume for balance between the tracks. What I like about the track as a whole is the way that it presents itself as a kind of puzzle. There is a palpable sense of exploration in it, which acts like an invitation or a question mark, asking the listener to extend themselves into the situation of the soundscape. Like the recorded material, the palpable sense of exploration has two sources. The slow unfolding of the improvisation, the repetition and pulsation, create space for the listener to carry out their sense-making, while certain sounds, such as the erratic, metallic, scratchy, grating sound of the removal of strings, the occasional unintended striking of a still-strung string by a string being removed (such as at 14:50), the conversations in the background, and the glissando caused by detuning (such as at 08:45) are all clearly situational, clearly indicative of a specific activity taking place that does not have the production of sound as its sole intention or outcome. These sounds are a kind of Foley; they are the sounds of the action that is taking place. The purpose of combining the sounds of improvisation with the ‘Foley’ sounds was to crystallise in a static object something of the fluid, metamorphic nature of the situation itself. The intention, as I referred to above

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with respect to my discussion with Annea Lockwood, is to create a compositional form in which relationality is a central concern. The recording is clearly of a piano, but the sounds do not present themselves as having a self-evident and already known source and means of being produced, and so the listener must in a sense mirror the activities in their own embodied imagination, to puzzle out the origin of the sounds. This requires a kind of two-way activity on the part of the listener; both extending their curiosity into the sound object, to ask the question, and introjecting the sound into their own body, to imagine an answer. This is the kind of relational sense-making that was taking place in the moment the sounds were recorded, and which I wanted to carry itself over into the track and into the experience of the listener.

The second category of playing consisted of folk songs and notated compositions. I chose these pieces because they were what came to mind, or because I found the sheet music at a friend's house. I repeated them more or less daily, attending to the changes in the song as the piano changed. I sang the British folk song "The snow it melts the soonest," which I know primarily from Anne Briggs' 1971 recording, the Neapolitan song "Lo Cardillo," which I know primarily from Roberto Murolo's 1956 recording, and "My dear someone" by Gillian Welch, from her 2001 album *Time (The Revelator)*. All of these can be heard in "*meta/morphē* documentary video" (MM1a). I also played the Aria from J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Selected recordings of my daily practice of playing this piece are linked together in "Four arias for a disappearing piano" (MM1c). It begins with an earlier recording of the aria, in which the several keys are already missing, strings have been detuned and the action is beginning to feel stiff, and moves to a later recording, in which the odd out-of-tune pitch sounds here and there but mostly we hear clicking and buzzing sounds, and the sounds of the outside world in the silences where the music would have been. My playing of the piece also gets slower over time, as the action becomes increasingly stiff due to our manipulations of the mechanism. My use of scores in *meta/morphē* is an instance of the situationally emergent approach to technique and the objects in which it is encoded, which is itself a part of the defetishisation of the same. The use of scores, as well as the use to which they were put, emerged directly from the situation. It also served that situation, as the repeated performance of a fixed musical composition enabled me to chart the transformation of the piano with a particular kind of clarity. The score did not come before the situation, and nor was it instantiated in it; its presence in the situation was not transcendent but pragmatic, and the audio document that resulted from its use demonstrates the methods of defetishisation I have discussed at length above.

In July 2019, prior to the second performance at the UNM festival in Piteå, Sweden in August 2019, the Icelandic contingent of UNM held an event at Iðnó and invited us to share something from the 2018

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performance of *meta/morphē*. For this event, I gathered a large amount of audio material into music for a four-channel sound installation, which was installed in one of the upstairs rooms of Iðnó. We installed three speakers in the corners of the room, while the body of the piano we had used in the performance took the role of the fourth speaker by means of a transducer microphone attached to the sounding board. This detail was a continuation of the poetic approach to the disassemblage; by attaching the transducer microphone, we were restoring by means of digital technology the affordance of resonance, an affordance previously activated by the manual technology now disassembled and dispersed.⁷¹ The soundtrack of the installation can be heard in its entirety in MM1c.

meta/morphē II, Piteå, Sweden

The Piteå performance was different in various ways; there were only three artists present, the duration was five days as opposed to fourteen, and we worked with an upright piano instead of the small grand we had in Reykjavik. All three of us shared a situational approach to the performance, and we were all taken by the surreal quaintness of the town of Piteå. The town had meticulously preserved buildings alongside tidy contemporary architecture, clean, wide, long streets, and an abundance of perfectly kempt flowerbeds. Piteå lies roughly 250km below the arctic circle, surrounded by the dense forests of Norrbotten and Swedish Lapland. Both the town and the surrounding countryside are overwhelmingly flat, and the small size of Piteå combined with the wideness of the streets somehow create a sense of extension, so that you are aware, when walking around the town, of the expanses that surround you. Norrbotten is the least densely populated county of Sweden, and this is absolutely palpable in the quiet, still atmosphere of Piteå. The town is also very colourful, due to the ubiquity of flowers and trees, and the variety of colours in the façades of buildings. Because of the wideness of the streets and flatness of the land there is always a lot of sky visible, which during our stay was mostly clear and blue. The blue contributed to the variety of colour and the sunlight intensified the vibrancy of the colours in the flowers and buildings. We also happened upon unlikely places that further contributed to the surreal picturesqueness of the place. There was Bergets Park, inspired by “Asian garden art” and landscaped according to the principles of “simplicity, harmony and seasonal variation” (‘Bergets Park’ n.d.); and the Missionskyrkan, a church of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, a building which, by some stroke of genius, was shared by the Pizzeria Blå Ängeln (Pizzeria Blue Angel), so that the red-brick façade

⁷¹ Sadly, I was not able to be there in person and my request for the installation to be documented was not carried out. As a result, the only documentation I have of this event is a 16-second video taken with a phone during the set-up (see MM2f).

exhibited a decorative semiotic ensemble consisting of an enormous crucifix, the words MISSIONSKYRKAN, an image of an angel serving a pizza, the restaurant's shop front sign, a colourful, flickering digital display that alternately displayed the words SALLAD (salad), A Lá Carté (à la carte with a renegade accent aigu) and pixelated images of pizza – and all of this without disturbing the atmosphere of ordered calm. In response to all this, Kristine began to gather video material of the town. This was her own situationally emergent process, in which her desire to explore this surreally quaint town met her desire to further explore techniques of filmmaking. As her work progressed we all felt enthusiastic about it, and it became clear that the primary output of this iteration of the project would be a short film (see MM2a). This was in itself a result of the situation, which did not leave us much time to do many other things. Our favourite material from Kristine's filming sessions were the static shots with very little and sometimes almost imperceptible movement within the frame, and so the film is composed entirely of these kinds of shots. I was practising a similar kind of two-pronged approach to repetition and audio documentation as I had in the first performance of *meta/morphē*, this time using the jazz standard "I'll Be Seeing You," originally a tune in the 1938 Broadway musical *Right This Way* by Sammy Fain and Irving Kahal, and Hildegard of Bingen's "Instrumental Lament." In the improvisation strand, I was exploring very simple prolation canons, mostly with melodies lasting just one cycle until the first beats of both metres align. All of this material can be seen and heard in the film, which also features footage of an afternoon session when a group of composers attending the festival came to join us – as we had invited them to – and participated by sawing, hammering and otherwise hacking at the piano, and also making various kinds of sounds with it. I felt that this approach perhaps resulted from the prevalence of Fluxus and Fluxus-inspired works of instrument destruction, with which these composers were most likely familiar, in which sudden, impactful acts are the primary methods used.

This film, as with all outcomes of *meta/morphē*, contains only certain traces of the event. Two other outcomes that are not documented in the film include two rudimentary hinged boxes which I made out of the piano wood, under the guidance of a young carpenter's intern called Isak Langsvens (see MM2b), and our conversation with Leyla, the former owner of the piano. I called these pieces "La Boîte-en-piano or Le Piano-en-boîte" ("The Box-in-a-piano or The Piano-in-a-box") in reference to Marcel Duchamp's "La Boîte-en-valise" ("The box-in-a-suitcase") of which he made several in the 1930s. These pieces were exactly what the title describes, and inside the box contained in the suitcase was a collection of photographs, colour prints and miniature replicas of Duchamp's own works. Although I did not pursue the line of research any further, choosing instead to focus on other fields, at the time of working on *meta/morphē* I was exploring the relationship of the Duchampian ready-made and assemblage to the aims and methods of *meta/morphē*, in particular the notion of the piano as both a ready-made and an

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assemblage, and the possibility of treating *meta/morphē* as a kind of rearrangement of the parts of the piano, and the creation of a new assemblage. In the case of the boxes, I am simply playing with the idea of the box in the material of the piano (in the sense of “La Vie en Rose”) and also and of the piano that, in some sense, is *in* the box.

Our conversation with Leyla took place one evening while the performance was ongoing. It was important for us to speak to the owners of the piano because we wanted to get a situated sense of the value of this specific object, and to try to relate to it as such. Leyla told us that she had donated the piano to the festival because it was simply taking up space in her home. She said that it was cumbersome and impossible to vacuum underneath, and since nobody played it anymore, she and her husband Peter wanted to get rid of it. This gives an interesting sense of material perspective to the attitude of sacred reverence that often surrounds musical instruments such as the piano. The notion that it is of inherent or great value is somewhat tempered when one considers that it is also a large, heavy object containing hundreds of kilograms of wood and metal, and that it is often very difficult to get rid of and expensive to move. Leyla also told us that Peter is the director of a funeral home, and our conversation wove its way around topics of death, graveyards, the difficulty of piano technique, what makes a home, the security of familiarity, and the Swedish concept of ‘lagom,’ meaning ‘in moderation,’ ‘just right,’ ‘just enough,’ and which Leyla used to describe Piteå. A transcription of some of our favourite quotes from the recorded conversation can be found in MM2c. The text is mostly in Swedish (Leyla switched a little now and then), and I have included my own loose translation. On the evening of the final performances of the festival, we screened our film, and, by way of introduction, read our text of selected quotations from our conversation with Leyla. The following gives a glimpse of Leyla’s own thoughts on different kinds of value, on waste, on attachment, on transformation:

It was just there, it just stood there, in the end. And I can’t play, no one plays, so it just takes up space. We decided we would try to give to away, we asked everyone in the circle of acquaintances ... Somehow one feels respect for this instrument, which has been very central and given us a lot. One doesn't want to just throw it away. But no one wanted to have it, and we thought in the end that we would have to drive it to the dump, we will have to throw it away. But then *you* heard about it... And then we also thought it feels a little strange that someone should take it apart and it will sort of disappear into pieces, but it was still better. Now it feels good that it was useful.

(Documentation folder MM2c)

Song Cycles

Song Cycles took place at Xarkis Festival in the village of Koilani, Cyprus in August 2018. Xarkis Festival is part of the activities of the Xarkis NGO, an organisation that works “with cultural agents and communities, involving people from diverse educational, disciplinary, professional, generational and ethnic backgrounds,” and employs “socially engaged practices” to create “site-specific projects that are inspired by the experience of everyday life in specific localities” (Xarkis n.d.).

The situated nature of the festival is cared for on many different practical levels. The artists in residence have comfortable and peaceful accommodation in the village and are often hosted by local residents. The artists in residence and staff of the festival eat together every day, and each night after the evening meal we would play music together, often learning new songs from one another. The head chef Anastasia Prokopi Taki, a versatile and widely skilled individual, would lead us in traditional dances. We were often joined by groups of children who had come to Koilani with their families for the August holidays to stay in their ‘patriko spiti,’ their family home. In the evenings, the children wandered around the village in groups, unaccompanied by adults. On one particular evening a group of young girls performed some traditional dances with us, and their skilled and dignified embodiment of movement and music was precious to behold. It was during these evenings that I bonded with Vassilis Philippou, which both enriched and deepened that situation and laid the groundwork for future situations. Of course, the situation was not free of trouble, and there was a fair amount of stress around intrusive and at times aggressive behaviour on the part of the boys and men of the village towards the female festival participants. This is a serious problem, but not something there is scope to explore in this context.⁷²

My participation in the festival was part of a gradual (re)turning towards Cyprus, which I discussed above in “A Song in a Room.” I chose to work situation-specifically, in such a way that my interaction with the inhabitants of the village and the participants of the festival was the primary method of the work, and these interactions coalesced around the sharing of songs, as they coalesced in *meta/morphē* around the disassemblage of a piano.

⁷² For NGO and UN reports on gender violence in Cyprus, including the particular forms of violence faced by the island’s large population of female migrant workers, see “Gender inequality and Gender based violence in Cyprus” (AEQUITAS 2018); a UN report by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2013); and “Stop violence against migrant women,” a statement by The Movement for Equality, Support, Anti-Racism (KISA Steering Committee 2019).

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The title of the project is both very literal and also a play on words. Firstly, I was interested in songs. Through the durational performance practices of *The Sky in a Room* I had begun to explore the possibilities of singing practices not embedded in a transcendent instance of command, and this enabled me to begin moving towards a defetishised relation to my voice *through* the embodiment of song. I was also interested in cycles. I was exploring the many interrelated forms that situated performance and situated making could take, and I wanted to link these forms together into a cycle that performed and articulated the transmission of folkloric song. Hence, *Song Cycles*. The title was also a play on words, contrasting the classical song cycle, which is a collection of interrelated *works*, with my own song cycle, which was a sequence of interrelated *practices* by means of which a song moved among bodies. The following is a text I wrote about the project shortly after completing it.

During Festival Xarkis 2018 I facilitated a community art project engaged with folk song, folk song transmission, and collective memory. The project had three principal stages:

(1) Gathering: during the first half of the residency I wandered around Koilani asking people to sing for me a song or songs of their choice, which I recorded (with permission) using a handheld recorder. Generally people were happy to oblige, inviting me into their homes for coffee and sweets, curious to hear more about the festival and about my project. Although most of the recording sessions began somewhat timidly, my hosts often began to remember more songs as they went along, each song summoning the next, recollected and performed by an effort involving the whole group. My project was not necessarily invested in the preservation of oral culture; in a way I was taking a snapshot of the village in song, and as such I was prepared to accept any song offered to me by the residents of the village. Nonetheless, the participants tended towards folk song and orally transmitted songs, and the recording sessions were often portraits of intergenerational memory, with adults asking their elderly parents to remember a song from their youth, and the grandchildren around also joining in. My simple question - *would you like to sing me a song?* - revealed just how much song is bound up with memory, the past and group participation.

(2) Learning: during the second half of the residency I learned the songs myself and put together a document with the lyrics of each song, in preparation for the workshop.

(3) Teaching and performing: during the festival weekend itself, I facilitated a workshop which was open to whomever wanted to participate. I taught the participants the songs I had gathered during the residency, thereby transferring a body of songs from the village residents to those visiting the village. At the end of

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the workshop, we went to the kafeneio⁷³ and drank coffee and sang all the songs together.

During the festival itself I noted down some reflections in my spare time, and these notes clearly demonstrate my wrestling with received musical ontologies. As I read them now, these notes reveal to me just how much the ritual work being done in *Song Cycles* centred on my own movement through and out of these ontologies, towards new pathways of engagement with song:

How can I, or is it important to, keep aspects of the performance, even if the phrasing/articulation etc isn't reproducible or not accurate/good enough to use?

Related question, what does it mean for it to be accurate or good? This doesn't refer to sound, timbre or any other vocal quality. It is about the clarity of the song material.

There are a couple of distinctions I'm making here which I need to consider, to decide if I really want to make these distinctions:

- The singing of a song is divided into vocal technique and song material.
- Consequently, 'song material' is limited to words; arrangements/series of pitches and their relationship to one another.

Is this a necessary distinction when working with/thinking about song transmission, collection, etc?

This distinction is essentially quite similar to the one that grounds the concepts of the 'musical work': a type-token relationship between work and performance. Do I want to get away from that model, and if so, why? I suppose I am resistant to the idea that the work transcends or exists outside of any instance of its performance, and yet to have a performance there must necessarily be something to perform, something to learn (the distinction is already deeply encoded in the language we use to talk about this subject). [...]

I am concerned with the song as a repeatable thing – as a transmittable thing, a thing that can be committed to memory – as well as in the process by which this repetition comes about. But I am also interested in the moment of the song, the space of the song; in the affective experience of both the singer and the listener; in the intersubjective relation between the two; in the social situation that occasions singing, and therefore enables the phenomenon of song transmission to exist in the first place.

I suppose it's for this reason that there are different parts to the project, in order to deal with these different aspects of song:

⁷³ A type of traditional café.

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- the gathering and recording deals with the aspect of song that is contained in the material and temporal present, in the individuality of the voice that sings, and in the social situations that give rise to and are the context for the act of singing;
- the learning of the songs, which will sometimes involve verifying with other sources, and which is principally concerned with transmission and reproduction, and invested in the notion of song as a work that underlies and comes before the performance;
- the teaching and performance, in which we return, as it were, to the beginning of the cycle.

Ultimately, I did not resolve these questions in the moment of the work itself, but I did move along another arc of the spiral, to come closer to where I am at this moment. From my current vantage point, I see that the problem in *Song Cycles* was the transcendent instance of command that I embodied as a 'collector' of songs. Although I complicated this role by also embodying other roles, the *a priori* authority of the collector was partly what gave rise to the reflections and doubts in my notes, as I wrestled with the proper way to fulfil the role. Although this did constitute a problem, it was also a necessary problem, and one that I had to face in order to realise that it was in a sense false; that the true problem was not *What do I do with less-than-perfect source material?* but rather, *Is the role of song-collector the best way to be with these people?*

Documentation as ceremony, practice as proliferation

In December 2018, the Xarkis team held an exhibition of works from the festival at Point Centre for Contemporary Art in Lefkosia.⁷⁴ The intention of this event was to regather those who had been at the festival and had made work and shared experiences there, and to use this situation and this integral audience to raise funds for the festival and to sustain its momentum. The exhibition involved audiovisual works from the festival, as well as live performances by artists in residence at the festival, one of which was a performance of songs by myself and Vassilis Philippou. I also created a simple audiovisual installation which displayed pictures of the project participants along with an audio recording of myself singing the songs I had collected. I made the audio recording on the morning of the event, seated on the ground among the shrubs and pines in the outskirts of Mathiatis, where my mother lives (SCd). This last recording, which came later and was not part of the performance that took place in August 2018, felt like a necessary arc of the cycle. With it, the cycle felt complete. This sense of completeness points

⁷⁴ For more on this event, see <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/xarkis-funraiser/> and <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=xarkisfestival&set=a.2249300465322001>

to a certain way of understanding documentation. Although I had already documented the event, and it was clear to me that the artwork was that event, which took place in August, among and between the people who generously participated in it, this last act of documentation was a necessary moment of internalisation, of autonomous introjection and autonomous embodiment of the songs, and, along with them, a place in the social relations that they structure – all of which I had spent years doing within a coercive framework structured by transcendent instances of command. In the act of documenting, this strand was woven together with the (re)acquaintance and (re)turning towards Cyprus, my practice-based answer to the Deleuzian question, *how might I live?* – entailing further exploration of the question, *how can I be affected by this new encounter, this new arrangement of experience?*

The phenomenon of documentation played a significant role here. Recording separates what I have been the calling the “free-flow of lived time” from practices that articulate that time. Documenting by means of audio or audiovisual recording creates a durational frame in which something with a clear beginning and end takes place. That frame is a constraint and is one of the many factors contributing to the creation of a situation, and to the feeling of situatedness. The particular act of documenting myself singing the songs I had learned during my residency at the festival was also embedded within a situation, that of the event that evening, in which I would also participate in other ways, and which would be a gathering of those people who had participated in the event of the festival, and an affirmation of the value of that experience and the integrality of our involvement in it. Being a type of field recording, it was also characterised by what Annea Lockwood referred to as the “special state of mind and body” that attended her field recordings of bodies of water. On this particular occasion as on numerous others, I suddenly began *to hear and see more* the second I pressed ‘record,’ to experience a sharper and more articulated presence in the situation. The activation of the frame brings the situation and its sensory and existential phenomena into relief, outlined against the background of always flowing, always continuing time. Seen in this way, documentation is a form of ceremony; not simply a practice of preserving in order to be able to recollect and analyse later, but an enactive, form-giving practice in its own right. When this practice takes place in a situated way, there is nothing to distinguish it from situated making; in each case we are dealing with a ceremony of relation-building through the creation of forms. The open-endedness of formal outcomes in the practice is crucial for this reason; if form is relational-building, then it must remain open in order for new relations to be discoverable.

Towards the end of her talk “A We That Requires No Other: a Sociopoetic Ceremony” (2020c), an audience member asks Alexis Pauline Gumbs to speak about how her work takes on a multiplicity of forms that exist “beyond the written word” (2020c, 42:20). Gumbs answers that “it is all ceremony,”

and that “different ceremonies are archived in different ways.” In reference to her book *Dub: Finding Ceremony* (2020a), which she was presenting at the event, Gumbs says:

[...] this book is the archive of a ceremony, of my daily practice of going to Sylvia Wynter, and looking at the emphasis, and seeing where it took me, and crying and falling apart, and relearning and unlearning my family, all of those things – and this is not that, this is not that daily practice, this is an artefact from it, which doesn’t include everything I even wrote in that practice, let alone everything else that happened in that long time of every day.

(2020c, 42:58-43:27)

It is in and through my relation to Gumbs’ work, which began at the very end of the third year of the PhD and the beginning of the intense phase of writing that lasted the duration of the final, fourth year, that I have begun to understand my engagement with formal pluralities and indeterminacies, as in *meta/morphē*, as well as my desire in *Song Cycles* to connect different forms into a sequence. The perspective rooted in the fetishisation of form and technique could account for this by saying that my work is ‘interdisciplinary,’ but to see things this way is to displace the form, to dislocate it from its situation and to perform an ontological reversal, or a “backwards reading” (Hallam and Ingold 2007, 3) whereby the form explains the practice, rather than the other way around; it is to create an ontology on the basis of what is immediately perceivable from the outside, what can be contained in an object, what is marketable, assessable. Gumbs’ “Black feminist metaphysics” (Gumbs 2018; Murillo III 2020) is not so much concerned with ontological or positivist questions of which forms or entities exist, and how they might be structured into hierarchies, but with what they *are*, with what they reveal to us and through us, and how they mediate between us. Paradoxically, there is a relationship between a metaphysical approach to forms and the deferral of those same forms; the practice itself is not structured around the creation of a form but in the asking of questions that generate situations, *of which* objects and forms are the archives. The question, as Gumbs phrases it, is:

[...] what is the ceremony that’s needed for the relation that I want to have, that does not exist within the rituals that currently structure my life or our lives or what we do, even though it still has to happen within whatever space I can move in that *is* still shaped and structured and limited by all of that?

(2020c, 46:30 – 46:55)

This open-ended questioning as a guide of practice is a form of creativity and of cultural improvisation (Hallam and Ingold 2007), and I find the same idea expressed by another Black female artist, Esperanza Spalding, when she speaks about the practice of musical improvisation. At an event held at the Kennedy

Composing (a situation)

Centre sharing Dr. Charles Limb's neurological research into the nature of creativity, Spalding speaks about the ways in which practice generates a kind of proliferation:

Let's say you practice the same ten things for five weeks, you get access to like twenty-five things, in addition to the ten things that you practiced. The study of improvisation unlocks your capacity to hear in real time way more than you actually put your hands on with intention in the practice room. A lot of that ability to improvise in real time just happened from stepping into environments of improvisation with what I had, and then hitting all the things I didn't have.

(The Kennedy Center 2019, 23:00-23:40)

In my own processes of dismantling fetishised attitudes towards technique I introjected over the course of my vocal training, I have begun to experience this phenomenon that Spalding describes. I have come to realise that the conditions of autonomy, situatedness, open-endedness and intuition are key conditions to *enable* the kind of proliferation that Spalding speaks about to occur. Out of curiosity, I recently (one afternoon in January 2021) performed the example Spalding proposed during the same event – to take a jazz standard and arpeggiate each chord from the seventh on an instrument, while singing the third of each of the chords (2019, 21:40-22:10). Although I have some familiarity with what can heuristically be described as the harmonic and melodic language of jazz standards, I have never really practiced improvising in that language. After performing Spalding's proposed task with guitar and voice, within a few days not only could I perform the task, but I had also memorised the form, harmony and melody of that tune and one other, had somehow unlocked the ability to improvise simple melodies that moved through and hit the notes of the chords in a way I had never been able to do before, and had written my own song that was far more harmonically and melodically complex than anything I had previously written. The PhD research and the theoretical writing in particular have convinced me that this kind of proliferation of outcomes both in the creation of forms and the cultivation of technique is severely restricted by the frameworks I criticised in "Part I," and is supported and enabled by frameworks of open-endedness, intuition, autonomy, and situatedness, and a focus on the repeatability of the *practice*, not the *product*. I am also convinced that my ability to carry out the task and to experience the proliferation of outcomes was directly connected to my research into and time spent cultivating these methodological approaches to my practice as a whole, and to my singing practice in particular. It would not have been possible without the preceding years of healing, protection, and restoration of my relationship to my voice, which I carried out by means of the defetishisation of technique and the cultivation of a *situationally emergent* approach to technical development.

Composing (a situation)

The proliferation I experienced with this improvisation exercise is of the same nature as that resulting from my documentation of the songs of *Song Cycle* in the fields near my mother's house on the morning of December 22nd, 2018. By practising this act of documentation, I not only created a form, an object to share with others and with which to contribute to situations that had also offered me so much, but I got the completion of a cycle I didn't yet know was still incomplete, and, through that realisation, the groundwork for an understanding of ceremony that would come over two years later – an understanding that has further expanded the horizons of possibility for the transformational role of technique in my practice, and my practice in the free-flow of lived time that is my life. This was one of many moments during this last year of writing when I began to experience and understand the fractal nature of technique (Spatz 2015); it became clear to me that the methodological approaches to practice that I have explored in detail during my PhD apply just as much to the cultivation of techniques of harmony, rhythm, song-writing and memorisation, as they do to the cultivation of the broader artistic practice that incorporates those techniques. I have learned that being a musical body has so much to teach me about time, about situatedness, about immanence. I have learned that carrying out forms as well as making them is a kind of future-making that reflects the ontological primacy of process I discussed in "*Situational emergence* [...]" – it is an actualisation from which "real, potentially inexhaustible" (Duvernoy 2016, 437) future forms and situations will emerge. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes in her own future-oriented work of "speculative documentary" *M Archive: After the End of the World* (2018): "we created the future in form" (2018, 12). It is in light of my increasing realisation of this future-making capacity, gleaned both through the practice and through subsequent repeated returnings to its artefacts, that the old disciplinary reifications have come to seem not only misguided but also stultifying and maladaptive.

Throwing (pottery)

The Loinpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write (December 2017)

Abundance (June 2019)

The Resurrection (April 2020)

There were several performances of the 'throwing pottery' kind during the course of the PhD, and in each case they were key moments in the development of my practice and the direction of my research. On these occasions, I was invited to by a person with whom I had some form of pre-existing relationship to create a form, either live or audio/audiovisual, with the only specifications being a durational frame and the lightest of curatorial touches. In each case I could also rely on an integral audience to receive the form. What I learned from this type of making was key in the movement towards formulating my ideas on situatedness and autonomy as integral components of my practice. Working in this way occasioned a radical shift away from fetishised technique, the transcendent instances of command and the 'work' concept, as well as a radical shift towards situation-specific practice, temporal frames as organisers of material and the performance as event. These occasions gave me the opportunity to observe what I would make if no one was telling me what to make, and how to perform if I did not fix the performance in advance. In each case, I found myself bringing together musical, literary and performance practices to steer myself and the audience along our durational course. During the situation-specific practice that preceded performance events I always kept the audience clearly in view, thinking about the situation of sense-making that I was offering them and carefully composing that situation. At other times I simply held them in mind, visualising the space, preparing my body for what I could not know in advance, the moment when the behaviour I had assembled for restoration would meet other bodies in a room. I will give three accounts of projects that fall into this category. The first is an extensive account of the creation of a performance work which, like *Quad*, is methodologically engaged with literature and explores performative translation. *Abundance* is an album of devotional songs. As it is a far too expansive project to discuss in detail, I give only a very brief account of the ways in which it demonstrates the transformational nature of practice as I define it here. I highlight reworkings of two pieces of classical vocal repertoire, which I approached using methodologies of defetishisation. *The Resurrection* is a short piece of sound art, of which I give a brief account that highlights the ways in which it exemplifies the relation of form to situated, durational practice in acts of 'throwing.'

The Loainpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write

On one of these occasions, I was invited to the literary foundation Perdu by Linda Carolien Veldman. I knew Linda already, and felt that she could see what I was searching for in my work. The invitation was to perform at an evening entitled Poëzie en Mystiek (Poetry and Mysticism). I was aware that a book by Peter van Lier called *Geachte Afwezigen (Dear Absentees)* would be presented, and that Nguyễn Nam Chi, a poet and acquaintance of mine, would also be performing. I knew the space and knew that I could rely on the presence of an integral audience; I myself had been a member of the Perdu community when I lived in Amsterdam, attending their performance nights and visiting the poetry bookstore. The foundation was well-known among my friends and among the community of writers and performers of which I was a part, and I had performed *Svioloncello* there three months earlier, in September 2017, together with my collaborators Brice Catherin and Robin Jousson. I also knew that my performance should last 30 minutes, and that I could use the technical facilities of the theatre space in any way I chose. One week before the performance date, I began a situation-specific practice in preparation for the event. This practice was open-ended (I did not know what sort of performance would result from it); autonomous (the invitation from the venue prescribed only frames – a date, a duration, a context – and a very broadly delimited field of inquiry); embodied (it involved bibliomancy practices as well as developing techniques of real-time transcription and translation, as I will discuss below); intuitive (it was grounded in processes of unfolding that rely on a durational sense of what can become over time).

The main part of the practice involved immersing myself in the works of Teresa de Ávila, Georges Bataille and Marguerite Porete, three mystics with whom I had been fascinated for a number of years. I first came across Teresa de Ávila through a presentation of Susan McClary's at a theory conference while I was a student at the Conservatoire of Amsterdam. She spoke about Gian Lorenzo Bernini's mid-17th century sculpture *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, now in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, connecting it with contemporaneous Italian and Italianate music, in particular Girolamo Frescobaldi's deeply sensual song "Maddalena alla croce" (1630) and Heinrich Schütz' "Anima mea liquifacta est" and "Adjuro vos, filiae Jerusalem." These two pieces are part of the *Symphoniae Sacrae I* (1629), which consist of settings of texts from the Song of Songs, and the latter of the two ends with an extended melismatic sequence on the phrase *quia amore languero*, [that] I am languishing with love (McClary 2012, 149).⁷⁵ I remained enamoured with this nexus of 17th century cultural production for

⁷⁵ Susan McClary's presentation was based on unpublished material that appeared shortly afterwards in her book *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (2012).

Throwing (pottery)

many years, and the autonomy and open-endedness afforded by Linda's invitation gave me an opportunity to immerse myself in the material and move deeper into my relationship with it. I first encountered Georges Bataille while in a house in the remote Valtablado del Rio in Spain, in 2008. I had gone there to stay for a while in isolation, as I used to do every year. The house belonged to the parents of a friend, and it was full of books. Once I had read all the books by Carl Jung, I came across *L'Histoire de l'œil (Story of the Eye)* by Georges Bataille, whom I had not heard of before. I discovered, through reading in my less-than-fluent French and without a dictionary, computer, or smartphone, that it was a pornographic novella. The experience of existing in and through this bizarre and disturbing book for a day or two, its content only partially perceptible to me, as though I was seeing it through a veil or a cloud of smoke, is imprinted on my memory. Much later, years after the Susan McClary lecture, I read Bataille's *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, originally published in 1957, in which there are passages that discuss Teresa de Ávila. From this book I also encountered the poem "L'Éternité" by Arthur Rimbaud, from which Bataille quoted the lines

Elle est retrouvée.
Quoi ? L'éternité.
C'est la mer allée
Avec le soleil.⁷⁶

to illustrate "the blending and fusion of separate objects," the dissolution and violence Bataille feels to be at the core of eroticism, through which we consciously refuse "to limit ourselves within our individual personalities" (Bataille 2012, 24). Eroticizing, for Bataille, like mysticism and poetry, blend and fuse together separate objects, so that we cannot tell if it is the sun that is gone with sea, or the sea with the sun, or the sun into the sea, or the sea into the sun. For Bataille, this blending and fusing shared by eroticism, mysticism and poetry, is an opening towards "the denial of our individual lives," which is also always an opening of the way to death (2012, 24). I encountered Marguerite Porete last, through Anne Carson's 2005 book *Decreation*, which contains an eponymous section entitled "Decreation: How Women Like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil Tell God" (2006, 155–83). Marguerite Porete was a 13th century mystic whose book *Le Miroir des âmes simples (The Mirror of Simple Souls)* posits that there are seven stages of divine love leading to the annihilation of the soul and oneness with God. Porete stages this experimental theology as a conversation, principally between Love, the Soul and Reason, with occasional contributions from Discretion, Faith, Hope, Charity, and other characters. The

⁷⁶ It is found.
What? Eternity.
It is the sea gone
with the sun.

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book led to Porete being imprisoned for heresy, and eventually burned at the stake in 1310 for refusing to denounce the book, withdraw it from circulation, or comply with various demands of the inquisitorial commission. In Anne's writing about Porete, Sappho and Weil, she comments on a tension that I too had noted in reading the works of European mystics:

When Sappho tells us that she is "all but dead," when Marguerite Porete tells us she wants to become an "annihilated soul," when Simone Weil tells us that "we participate in the creation of the world by decreasing ourselves," how are we to square these dark ideas with the brilliant self-assertiveness of the writerly project shared by all three of them, the project of telling the world the truth about God, love and reality?

(Carson 2006, 171)

This question became one of the fault lines that I traced, a fundamental and generative problematic that gave rise to the words and actions of my performance. A related problematic concerned my desire to approach certain limits of communication, and in particular what I experienced as the limits of the various technical capacities I was exploring. Four days into my process I woke up in a sort of crisis, feeling like I wanted to scrap everything I had prepared and put it all into a performance of physical exertion and extremity without any verbal material at all (I was thinking of having someone tie me up and suspend me from the theatre's fly system). I called Monia, asking for help. Monia asked what had drawn me to the writings of mystics in the first place:

SOPHIE What draws me to it is [...] the need to approach limits, limits of physical experience, limits of understanding...

MONIA Do you think that the performance situation can do that? With the audience? There are two sides to that, the acting part and the receiving part, so it's also a question of what happens in the audience.

SOPHIE Yea. I can't get rid of the desire to create that experience somehow.

MONIA Do you want to have that experience with the audience? Why is the audience important in that situation?

(SD-MS, 09:10-10:40)

I knew that clarifying my relationship to the audience was necessary in order for me to see more clearly where I wanted to take the performance. By way of an answer, I began to tell Monia about some ideas I had for composing the impossibility of the audience's total understanding into the performance, by means of pre-recorded cello material that was distorted and at times loud enough to obscure the reading, of combining live reading with pre-recorded reading, all in order to refract the audience's experience, to create a kind of polyphony of sense-making from which it would be impossible to emerge

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with a singular notion of what had happened or what the performance was. Monia suggested I stay with the complexity and allow myself to be troubled by it, to accept that I might not understand it in its totality even during the performance. Her advice was appropriately obscured by a failing internet connection:

MONIA You have a lot of very specific ideas that you don't know maybe why they're all there [...], a lot of different fragments that you intuitively want to do, and maybe you should just try to go with that and just trust that intuition and maybe you will not even understand it while you're doing it, maybe you'll feel horrible while doing it... [connection fails] maybe it will show you something [connection fails]...

(SD-MS, 15:00-16:10)

We discussed further the idea of offering the audience the experience of approaching a limit of some sort. This is where I began to think about something that, at the time, I constructed in terms that echo a mind-body divide, but which I now understand in terms of the incommensurability of the disciplines of my technical training:

SOPHIE I'm stuck in this distinction between doing and saying [...]. There's something on one side which is discursive, explanatory, let's say verbal, maybe, to some degree restricted or restrained, and on the other side there's the transgressive, the aural, the musical, the physical, and all this material about mysticism is kind of exactly that, that's exactly the conflict that they experience as well... they are equally pulled in both directions.

(SD-MS, 20:50-22:00)

Then I told Monia how I had been gathering fragments of text by the three mystics and had begun embedding diary-style fragments of my own text into that material. This led to the articulation of a fear I now understand to stem from the rejection of the transcendent instance of command; a fear of what would happen if I really followed through with the situational methods of making that I was experimenting with:

SOPHIE I guess I'm scared as well, I guess I feel like I'm in this void... I'm scared of doing something only halfway. Of giving a paper but then it's not a very rigorous paper, or doing a performance but then it's not a very committed performance... [connection fails]

(SD-MS, 22:30-23:00)

After talking to Monia I began to realise that allowing myself to be troubled by the basic problematic Anne Carson had written about, by the disparities of the various technical modes to which I had access, by my transgressing of disciplinary boundaries, by the unknowability of an event as event, as a singular occurrence which, while in principle repeatable, is not intended for reproduction but rather for

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breaking, as the crest of a wave breaks, a wave that had been building that week, a wave in an ocean that had been rising ever since I first laid eyes on Teresa in images of Bernini's sculpture, first heard Frescobaldi's music, first read John Donne's poetry, first encountered Juan de la Cruz' journey into unknowability in "Noche oscura del alma" ("Dark Night of the Soul"), and so on – moving with the momentum of that wave was the method. And there was nothing to do but follow through. In this sense *The Loinpres [...]* demonstrates, as *meta/morphē* does, the place of strands of inquiry into identity in the practice as a whole. I allowed myself to be troubled by questions of disciplinarity and incommensurability in *The Loinpres [...]* in the same way I allowed myself to be troubled in *meta/morphē* by my relationship to the piano and to everything it signifies.

I called the performance that emerged *The Loinpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write*. The first half of the title is derived from Le Loingprés, the Far-near – the name Porete uses to refer to God in the *Le Miroir des âmes simples*. The obvious contradiction of it spoke well to the problematics that had emerged in my process. I chose the second half as it became clear to me that this performance was something of an answer to the question, "how do you surrender your will and yet write?" By the end of the week I had gathered a collection of fragments comprised of excerpts from the texts I had been reading and short passages of my own writing (see LPc). The excerpts were in the original language, and also included in the collection were English translations of some but not all of the excerpts. I had a session of langue d'oïl pronunciation with Jean-Sébastien Beauvais, an early-music singer and acquaintance of mine, so that I could read the Porete fragments in the original language. I recorded Brice Catherin playing sustained overpressure cello tones and created out of them a musical composition that would serve as the 30-minute frame during which the action of the performance would take place. The composition was made by variously layering and manipulating the recording by isolating particular overtones and arranging this processed material into a 30-minute form. I recorded myself reading in Spanish the passage from Teresa de Ávila's *El Libro de la Vida (The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself)* in which Teresa gives an account of an angel piercing her heart with an arrow of divine love – the same passage that Bernini followed in the design of his sculpture. I decided that during the last moment of the performance I would carry out a performative translation into free verse in English, written by hand with a large marker pen, onto a piece of paper unfurled on the floor, which would cover the length and width of the stage (see LPa for video documentation⁷⁷).

⁷⁷ In the video documentation I played with layers and opacity, overlaying photographs of the texts and still photographs from the performance onto the moving image.

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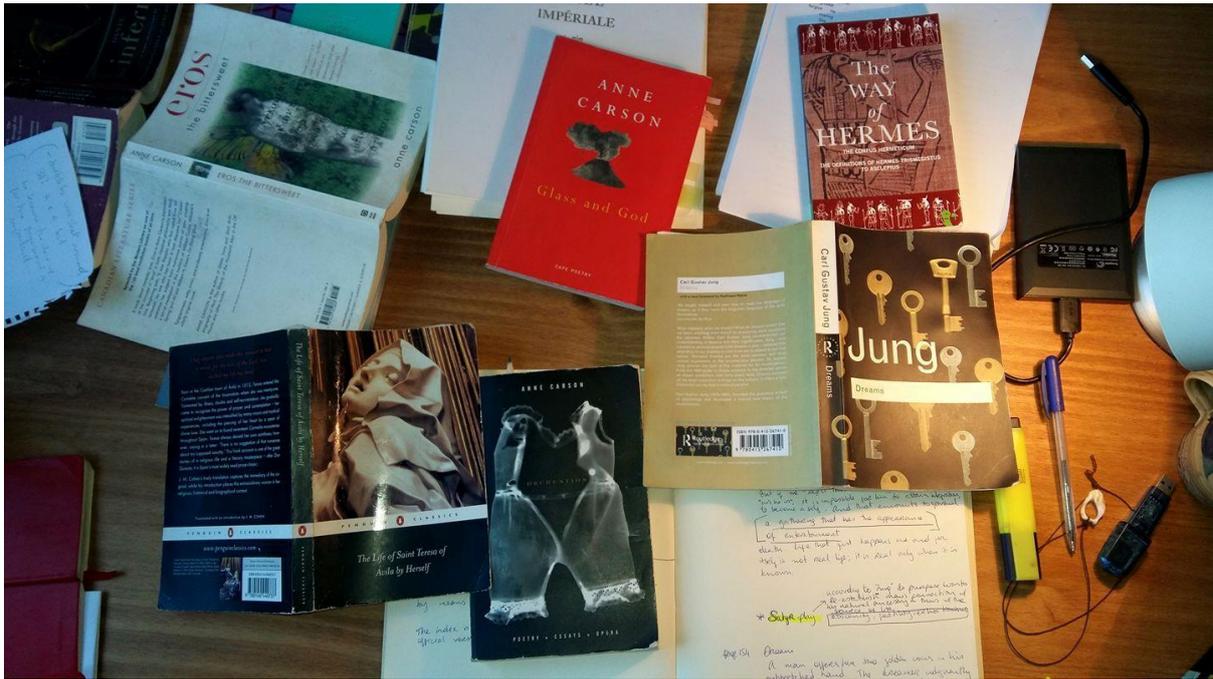
At the end of my week of situation-specific practice, I wrote a short introduction which I would read to the audience at the start of the performance, to invite them into the work that I was about to do. In that introduction I cited the texts I had been working with and spoke about bibliomancy, a method that I used to navigate them. Bibliomancy as a method of poetic divination, or as divinatory poetics, was something I had first encountered in an interview with the poet Bhanu Kapil, whose 2011 book *Schizophrene* I had read some years earlier. In this interview, Kapil responds to a question about embodiment in her writing:

Bibliomancy — the art of divination in libraries — had always been an instinctive part of my life, as it probably is for all writers. You close your eyes, ask a question, open the book, touch the page, open your eyes. That day, I let my hand drift, palm down — to sense through the palm, as in palmistry — the way I learned it. An under-art. The sense that it is never the line that holds the news of a life, but what flows beneath and through it. The “lines beneath the lines,” as my uncle used to say, “are where the images are,” as I would say it now. And this is proprioception: to come to the book through the vestibular function, an excess of attenuation: the dizziness of the body, alone in the flickering then timed-out, abruptly dark stacks. And at the limit of touch, to begin.

(Kapil and Luczajko 2011)

There is much resonance here with many of the concerns of my research. “What flows beneath and through” the line, “the lines beneath the lines,” recalls the philosophical inquiries of “*Situational emergence*,” in particular the notion of the differentiation of the virtual within the actual. It also recalls Spatz’ “network of fractally branching pathways that vein the substance of practice” (2015, 44); the notion that the interrelated techniques of reading, of writing, of researching, of touching, of divining, are all embedded in complex patterns within the substance of practice. I also find in Kapil’s bibliomancy a connection to my own sense, one that has strengthened through the course of the research, that writing is as much an embodied, situated practice as dancing or singing. It has its own pathways of embodied techniques which, like all technical pathways, open onto or sprout offshoots of other fields of knowledge, such as divination. The “limit of touch” also brings to mind a boundary between text as propositional content and text as material presence, and this notion sat well with the other problematics of my process, which were also invested in exploring boundaries between the different ways that experience and knowledge can show up for us.

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[Figure 23] Workstation

I used this method of bibliomancy both in the practice that led up to the performance and in the performance itself. For the performance, I printed all the text I had prepared onto translucent paper, an idea which arose from my thinking about the haptic, material qualities of text. Letting the light in and through the page, it emphasised the material quality of writing. But it was also part of my search for complicity with the audience, who were able to see the text from the other side, although it was of course too small for them to read it. Like the live translation, it was an act of embodied engagement with writing to which they were, just as I was, only partially privy. In the choice of the texture of the paper as elsewhere, I was seeking to perform the mystic's epistemological conflict between knowing in writing and knowing in the body, and, like the mystics, was trying to create a performative, self-conscious space that could somehow bring these ways of knowing together. With the exception of the introduction, which I kept intact, I cut up each fragment so that it appeared on its own strip of paper. I placed these strips into a brown paper envelope. During the performance, I sat at a table onto which I had placed two microphones with the gains turned up high, so that the sound of the paper would be audible. Contact microphones weren't available, and I used whatever the theatre had to offer. There were two dynamic mics already set up on the table with desktop mic stands for Peter van Lier's book presentation, so I used those. With the gains up high and the mic stands in contact with the table, the tactile sounds of the bibliomancy were clearly audible. At the beginning of the performance, I read the introduction, and then emptied the envelope of fragments onto the table, and proceeded to read them

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using the bibliomancy method, but also allowing for choice in order to regulate the alternation of languages. The cello track that was holding the space for this act occasionally drowned out the sound of my voice or caused me to have to raise my voice to be heard. I played along with its fluctuating dynamics, which I had not memorised. This led to many moments of conjuncture, such as when I read the words, by Marguerite Porete, “whoever preserved herself in freedom in this fifth state after this had befallen her and did not fall back into the fourth would find herself in great peace” and, just as I arrived on the word “peace,” the heavy overpressure sound gave way to an isolated overtone (LPa, 13:20). This form of semi-improvised counterpoint later became a key method for combining material. It always feels like dancing, like contact improvisation, moving against the weight of something that is reliable, not knowing exactly in which direction it will go, but knowing what is possible or likely, being able to anticipate and lean into its trajectory.

After roughly 20 minutes of this bibliomancy performance, I received a prearranged cue, perceptible only to me, from Bram Giebels, the sound and light technician. This cue informed me that the pre-recorded passage from Teresa de Ávila’s *Libro de la Vida* was approaching. At this point I asked a member of the audience to assist me in moving the table upstage. I then unfurled a large sheet of white paper that covered the length and width of the illuminated portion of the stage. I sat on the paper with a marker pen and faced the audience, present with them for a moment before my task began. When I heard my voice begin the narration, I began to translate the text into English in real-time, making sure to write letters large enough to allow the audience to see the words taking shape, even though they could not read them, because, from where they were sitting, the words were upside-down. The repeatability of this act had been carefully calibrated in advance: rather than memorising a translation, I had practiced the technique of translating the text in real-time. At first this was impossible, and I had to keep going back to the beginning and starting again. Only after several practice sessions was I able to translate the whole text. As I practiced, I was surprised to find that, while the task became more fluent with each repetition, I always felt as though I was working *from the Spanish I was hearing*, rather than from a previous iteration or “version” of the translation. The purpose of this practice was to stage the problematics I had been exploring and which were at the core of my performance. The situation of the mystic, that is the contradictory desire and need to put into words an experience that resists them, by virtue of its bodily and sensorial excess; the underlying contradiction that is the desire both for mastery (through language) and dissolution (through love); the corollary I had found in my sense of, and at the time frustration with, the incommensurability of the disciplines of my training; my desire to explore the outer edges of my technical capacities, not in the sense of virtuosity but of defetishisation, of looking for what I would find if I carried my technical training beyond the boundary of the discipline

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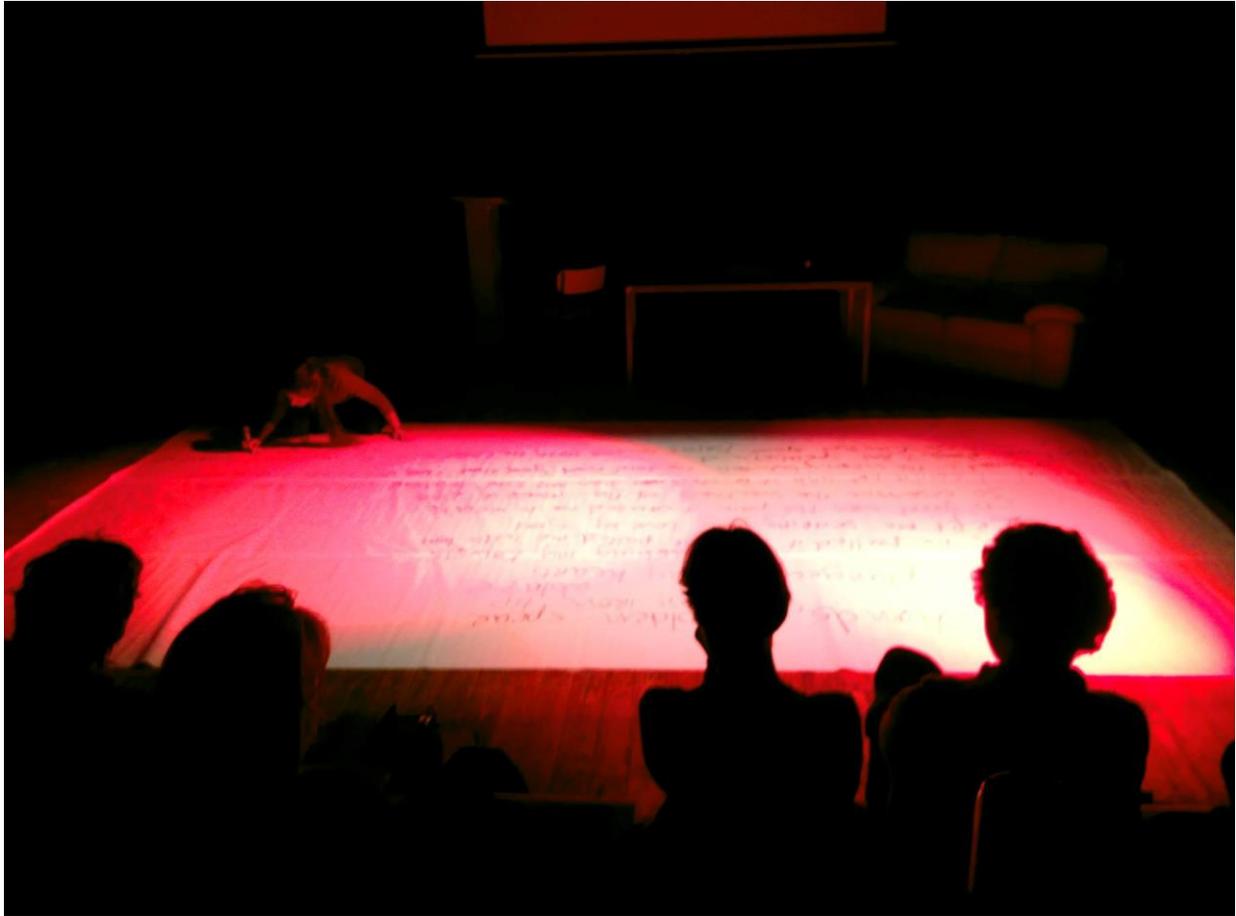
in which I acquired it; all this was enacted by the performative translation of Teresa's words, and their multiple movement from my voice making the sounds of Spanish prose, to my hand making the shapes of English free verse – in front of an audience whose process of sense-making was the necessary, integral context for this act.

The impossibility of a total understanding, a completely successful carrying over from one form to another, was also a central problematic of the piece. I composed that impossibility into the performative translation using the timing and pace of the pre-recorded narration. The reading begins at a comfortable pace for listening, but a slightly uncomfortable pace for my task. As the recorded text progresses the pace quickens and the gaps between phrases become shorter, causing me to have to move even faster. This resulted in the intensification of the physical labour as my gestures became faster and less controlled, as I leaned and scurried across the paper, running back towards stage left at the end of each line like a human typewriter carriage. I had deliberately not rehearsed this fully embodied translation act beforehand, and my practice had been only on a notebook-size page; in keeping with the aims of defetishisation, the point of practising was not to be able to precisely reproduce a specific embodied act, but to know that I had enough knowledge in my body to inhabit the situation *to the extent that I could discover something new in it, that something could be transformed by it*. I had arranged the situation so that there would be another state to discover in the moment of the performance, when I would be forced to leave even more things out, because of the extra time it would take to write the large letters; or otherwise to find, in the intensity of the moment, a turn of phrase that could condense the Spanish words into something I could manage to write before getting so behind the narration that the whole thing would fall apart. But I had practiced these skills to a degree in my notebook, and I knew this would afford me the possibility to go deeper into that practice in the situation of the performance.

In addition to the obvious, embodied tension of my task, palpable to the audience, Bram and I arranged for the faders of the red spotlights to rise over the seven minutes of the live translation, suffusing the space a steadily intensifying red light. The cello track likewise intensified, rising to a volume that I had set in advance of the performance; because the volume peaked at the end, the level in those last moments could be very high while the level during the performance was still at a comfortable volume for the audience. I set the volume of the track as a whole by sitting in the audience before the show and asking Bram to raise the volume until I could feel the bleachers vibrating – until the perception of the sound underwent a sort of metamorphosis, becoming perceivable by other organs of the body, just as the spoken words were becoming written, the Spanish becoming English, the prose becoming verse,

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the white light becoming red light. This mutability is what I have always taken from the writings of Christian mystics – not transcendence of the body, but rather a kind of radical corporeality in which the whole being becomes permeable and is carried to a pinnacle of somatic experience.

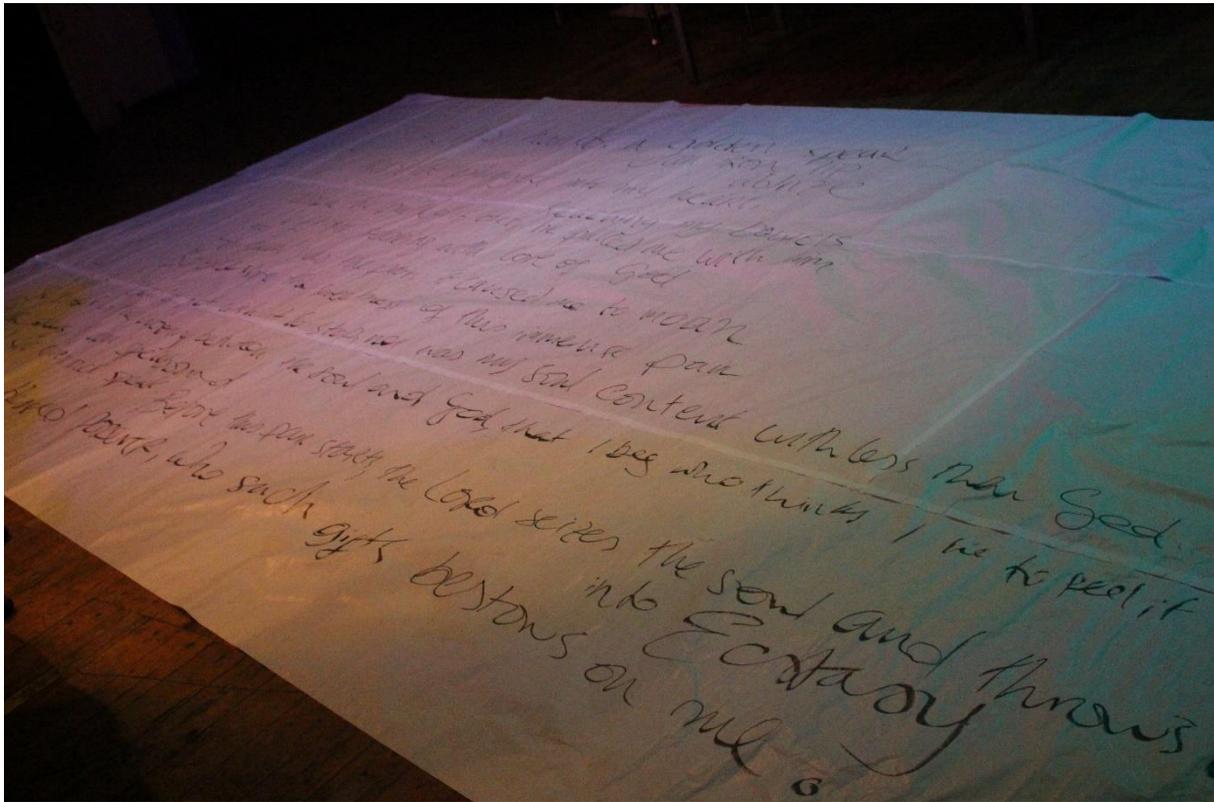


[Figure 24] At the edge of the word

At the very end, I had less than a minute (although I had not calculated that in advance) in which to turn the slippery, cumbersome paper around before the track stopped abruptly and the performance ended in a blackout. The purpose of this gesture was in a sense devotional. It was a last gesture of complicity, as if to say to the audience: *here, this was all for you*. But it was also to create, or propose, a transition into another form of being together; I knew that it was likely that some of the audience would be curious about what I had been writing, and when the lights came back up and the applause ended, several people did come down to the stage to read the text. It also remained there for a while as people were getting drinks and socialising, and since there is no separate bar area in Perdu, this all

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took place in the same space as the performance, giving the audience the opportunity to have a look at the text at their leisure. The sheet of paper is now wrapped up and stored in Perdu's archive.

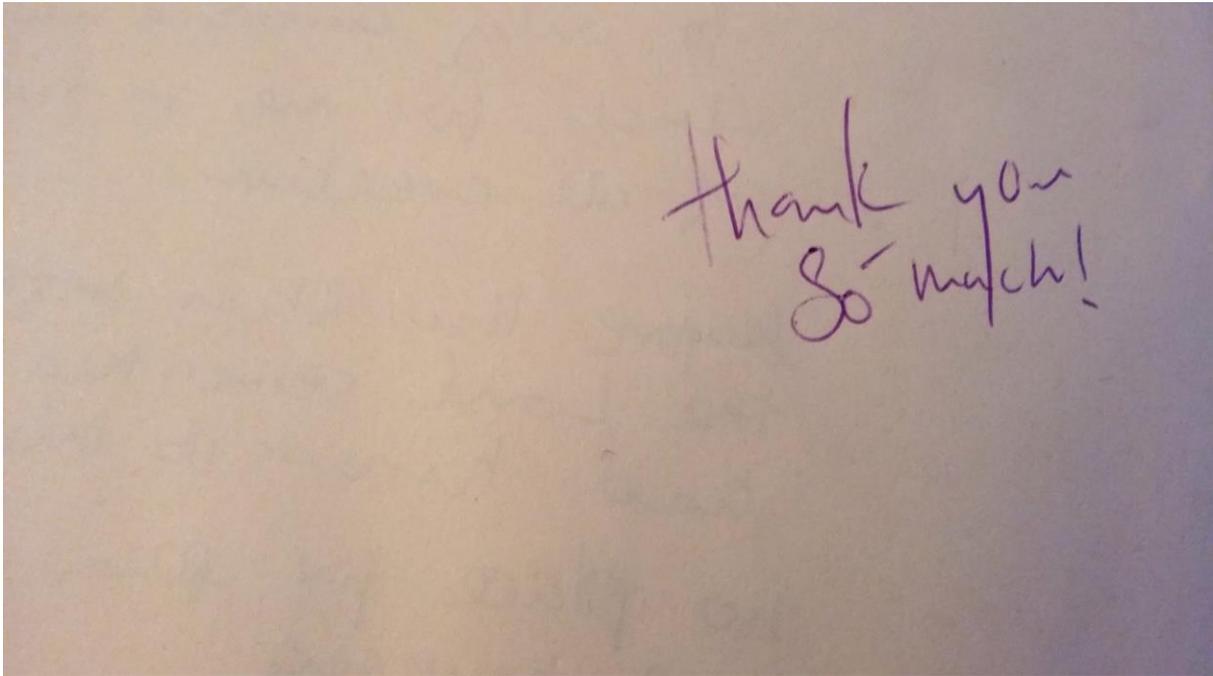


[Figure 25] Traces of the event

This was one of the first performances I made that ended with an act leading directly to a kind of coda, a moment of being together after the performance, when something can be learned or uncovered that was not possible during the performance itself. I was drawn to this because it offered the possibility of more meaningfully nesting the performance into its context, of continuing my flexibly matrixed presence, and of creating a situation of selective inattention, as some chose to attend to activities of the coda and others did not. It also furthers the audience's integrality, as it emphasises the ritual and social function of the performance itself. This practice affords that movement through, the appearance in one and the same body of the performer and what is beyond that particular matrix. In that sense it is comparable to the end-of-play jig that had captivated me in the Globe performances. But it was also important to me that the codas functioned as an organic Q&A; as a period of exchange and discussion that didn't have to be mediated by a host or an interviewer (because the mediation had already happened in the performance) and didn't require that the audience remain seated when most of them would likely be wanting drinks and a chat, or other activities that help dissipate the tension of the performance. At the end of the evening I realised I had left my notebook in the performance space (I

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had taken it out to copy my translation) and when I returned to retrieve it, I was touched to find that someone had left me this note:



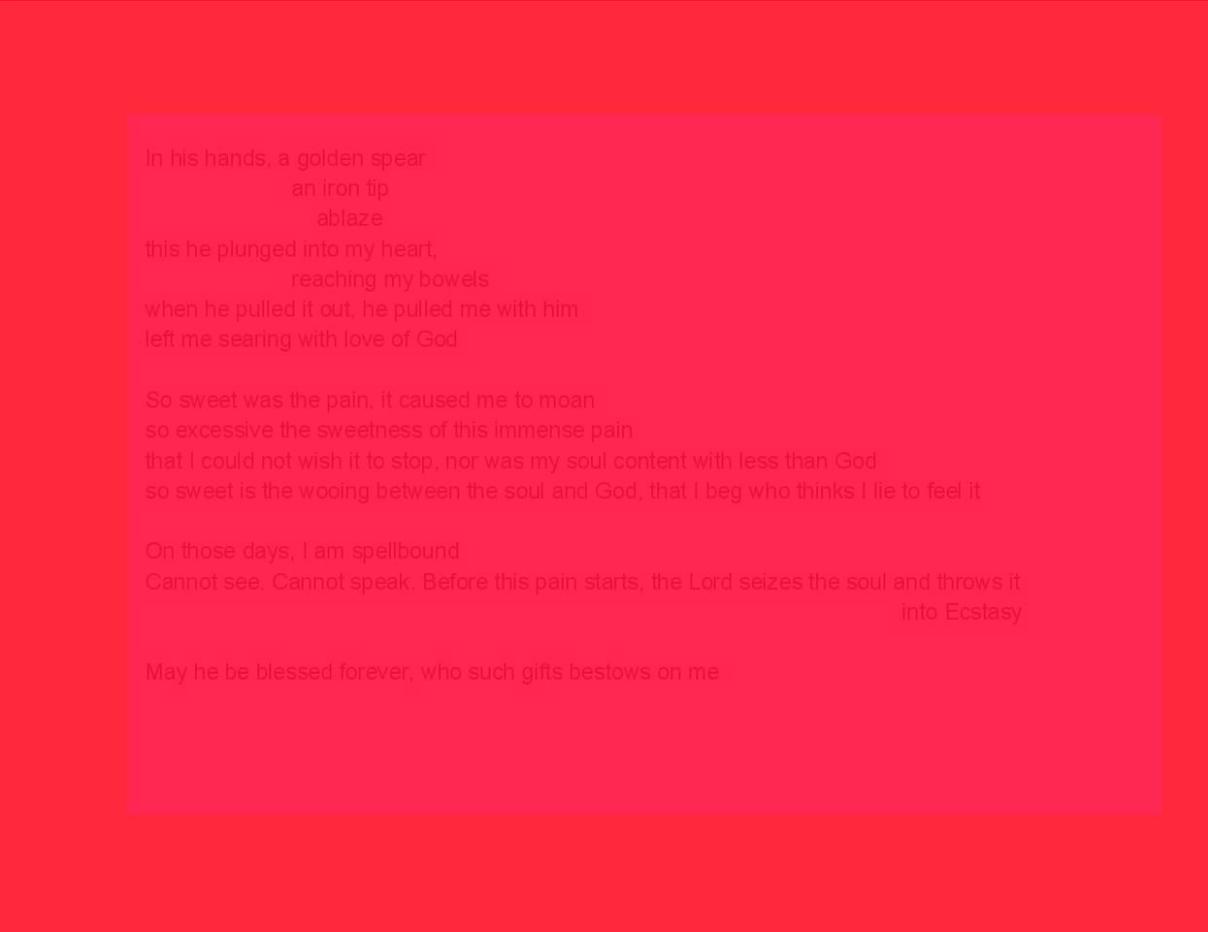
[Figure 26] Traces of Integrality

Some time after the performance, I typed up the translation and made the image below (), in which the text is obscured in a red cloud, and the eyes troubled by the reading of it, which asks the reader to reach behind the veil or through the cloud to get to the words.

When performing the translation, I was excited to see the way the lines were shaped by the pressures of the situation. The urgency and yet simplicity of “Cannot see. Cannot speak,” the pithiness of “an iron tip / ablaze,” the trochaic pentameter and consistent monosyllabism of “that I beg who thinks I lie to feel it” – these are traces of the situation of the performance, like tracks in the earth. They are marks that reveal the dynamic movements of the body that made them, and something of the environmental conditions in which the act took place. In the act of performative translation, I found an excellent example of how the techniques of a certain discipline might be opened to and become contingent on the situation in which those techniques are embedded. An example of how technique might be practiced not with the aim of reproduction but of alteration, of the discovery of something new. In this framework, practice (in the musical sense) is still vital – but it has two purposes that are altogether different, and not concerned with reproduction. First there is the situation-specific purpose of building a solid ground of sedimented technique that you can stand on so that, when your practice meets a

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situation in which others are present as witnesses and co-creators, you are able to honour that presence by taking a risk, moving yourself and the audience *through* something, and out the other side. The second purpose is transformation through situated, autonomous, open-ended technical development. This takes place over longer durations; it extends beyond the singular events of performance, relying on the repeatability not of the performances themselves, but of the practices from which they emerge.



In his hands, a golden spear
an iron tip
ablaze
this he plunged into my heart,
reaching my bowels
when he pulled it out, he pulled me with him
left me searing with love of God

So sweet was the pain, it caused me to moan
so excessive the sweetness of this immense pain
that I could not wish it to stop, nor was my soul content with less than God
so sweet is the wooing between the soul and God, that I beg who thinks I lie to feel it

On those days, I am spellbound
Cannot see. Cannot speak. Before this pain starts, the Lord seizes the soul and throws it
into Ecstasy

May he be blessed forever, who such gifts bestows on me

[Figure 27] The Translation

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Abundance



[Figure 28] Abundance

Over the years of this research and the processes it has given rise to, I have begun to develop an oracular relation to my vocal embodiment. An instance of the oracle in operation is archived in Part I of this thesis, in "A song in a room." Placing a hand on my chest and singing or improvising a song has become an intuitive, oracular methodology for finding out whether I am asking the right questions, what the pathways towards answering those questions might be, and where I am in the durational

unfolding of that process. I have become increasingly able to call on this oracular function when I need it, and am regularly astounded by the efficacy and clarity of the outcome.

This 'oracular voice' has emerged directly from the restoration of the mutually constitutive relationship between technique and identity⁷⁸ and it also demonstrates the cyclical and transformative nature of practice as I am defining it here, since it is now available to me as a method by which I can continue to cultivate situated knowledge and discover what wants to be taken up into the practice or woven into any particular work. *Abundance* (documentation code A) was a ceremony intended both to mark the transition towards and create further openings into this new terrain in my relationship with musical forms and with my voice. It is an example of a ceremony of transformation through devotional song, in which the ritual work was to bring intentionality to processes of sedimenting a defetishised relationship to my voice and to musical techniques.

I will expand on only two of the songs on the album, because of their direct connection with the field of classical vocal music. "Alte Laute" is a song by Robert Schumann and "Bist du bei mir" is an aria by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, often attributed to J.S. Bach because of its presence in *The Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*. In collecting the songs through which I would embody the transformation I was invoking, it became clear that these songs, these epistemic objects, had a significant place, and that engaging with them in an autonomous context would enable me to take steps towards exploring the defetishisation of musical scores. My reworkings of both songs are undoubtedly informed by Gyða Valtýsdóttir, whom I know has navigated similar waters as I in her relation to her cello training. Gyða's version of Schumann's "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai" (2017) assisted me through at least one grief

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that recent neuroscientific research into musical creativity has shown that musical improvisation is marked by a deactivation in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain controlling executive function, and that similar deactivation that has been noted in altered states of consciousness such as dreaming, meditation, and hypnosis (Landau and Limb 2017; The Kennedy Center 2019). Even more tellingly for the purposes of my research, Dr Charles J. Limb conducted an experiment in which he scanned the brain of Solomon Howard, a rare classical musician who sings both operatic repertoire and musics rooted in traditions of improvisation including jazz and gospel. Howard sang excerpts of opera arias and improvised on a C minor blues, and the fMRI showed pronounced activation of the prefrontal cortex while singing opera excerpts and pronounced *deactivation* of the prefrontal cortex while improvising. Limb goes as far as to describe the activity as "in some ways the opposite," and ventures a guess that this is related in some way to technique (The Kennedy Center 2019, 43:00-44:30). Other experiments by the same researchers have shown that the "functional connectivity" of the brain – the degree of coherence between different parts of the brain – is much higher when improvising than when performing memorised music. In describing this phenomenon to an audience, Limb says that "the improvising brain is deeply engaged with itself" (The Kennedy Center 2017, 1:29:00-1:30:00). While I acknowledge that the methods employed here are very far removed from those of my own field, it seems plausible that the 'oracular voice,' a practice of connecting my vocal technique with other kinds of knowledge and aspects of my identity, could function on the basis of the "functional connectivity" that I experience when improvising a song or freely inhabiting a folkloric song form.

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process, and is still my favourite recorded version of the song. My own reworkings were carried out mostly with Fred Thomas, with whom I have a relationship of fifteen years. We worked “Alte Laute” into a bluegrass song, and restructured “Bist du bei mir” with complex reharmonisations and adjustments to the form, weaving in recordings of pitchless noise from the piano action, and manipulating the layered recordings of me singing “zum sterben, und zum meine.../ to death, and to my...” that replace the second half of the aria’s original structure. “Bist du bei mir” was released by Nonclassical on volume 4 of their compilation album *Outside the Lines*, and a text I wrote for the release is included in Appendix III. The whole album will be released independently in the autumn of 2021.

It is important to briefly mention that my engagement with the infrastructure of album production and release, and the many layers of reification and alienation that characterise it, was a moment when my methodology of deferral met a very hard limit. My complete focus on the ceremonial nature of the event of recording meant that I did not reckon with the complexity of what followed. The substantial, archival nature of the album form made it the right one through which to archive the transformation of my relationship to my voice and to musical practices, and to collect songs that had carried and were carrying me through that transformation. But the intensely neoliberal and capitalist way in which the creation and distribution of that form is practiced is deeply antagonistic to intuitive, open-ended, and situated practice. There is not space to discuss alternatives to conventional practices of releasing music, but I can point to the video for “Don’t Lament in Sorrow” (DLIS), briefly referred to in the introduction, as a possible pathway. The video was made very much in the mode of ‘throwing (pottery),’ put together in one evening and released soon after. I want to continue working in this way, whereby I remove audio or audiovisual documentation from its status as the telos of musical processes, instead integrating it into the unfolding practice itself.

The Resurrection

The Resurrection (R1) is a piece of sound art I made during the first Covid-19 lockdown. I spent this period in Thasos, Greece. I had not planned to be there, but I was in Amsterdam for opera rehearsals in March 2020, and suddenly had to find somewhere to be for an indeterminate length of time. I could not stay in Amsterdam, having no long-term accommodation there, and could not return to the UK, since my situation there was fairly precarious in the first place, and I had no home there to go back to where I might comfortably and affordably spend many long and solitary months. Due to extremely stringent entry controls, even for citizens, it was also impossible for me to return to Cyprus. And so when a Cypriot friend who was in a similar situation invited me to join him on Thasos, where his family has a small house, I did. It was a strangely auspicious situation, as I had intended to move to Greece later in that same year and had spent a fair amount of energy trying to imagine how that would be possible, when suddenly, circumstances hurled me towards an impromptu and transitional answer to my questions. Having so suddenly found myself in Greece, my father's homeland, with a companion from Cyprus, my mother's and my homeland, gave rise to a complex process of meditating on my attachment to Greece and to Cyprus, and on my embodiment of various aspects of the culture of those places. I began to record my environment as a means of coming to grips with my situation, of deepening my introjection of the phenomenal beauty of the island, and of carrying out meditations on aspects of my cultural identity.

When Juliet Fraser wrote and asked if I wanted to submit a track to the *eavesdropping* end-of-season playlist,⁷⁹ I was already in the process of moving towards a form. Her invitation met all the conditions for situational emergence, and so the practices of form-making intensified and within a short space of time, *The Resurrection* was complete. The invitation worked well as an activator because it prescribed loose constraints that made room for a situated, intuitive process to continue to unfold without restricting autonomy or open-endedness. The frame of the invitation was mainly durational (maximum five minutes), with the content only very loosely specified ('a track'). The resulting work of sound art was made with an extremely basic piece of borrowed equipment. It features the cantors of the church of Saint Elias across the road from the house I was staying in, the church bells, sheep and sheep bells, and my own singing of "Βλέπω καράβια πο' ρχοντι (I see ships a-coming)," which I had sung at my performance at *eavesdropping* in January of that year. The song is a traditional from Thrace, and in the weeks of late 2019 that I spent pouring over the details of its ornamentation, phrasing and poetic metre,

⁷⁹ I had performed at *eavesdropping* in January 2020. Documentation of this performance can be found in the portfolio (documentation code E).

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I could never have guessed that I would find myself in that same region just four months later, sitting on its soil, amid its olive trees and sheep, singing a song that had grown out of the practices of the people who had lived and tilled there. When recording myself I sat at a distance from the recording device so that I and the sound of my voice could be nestled in with the rest of the animal and vegetal inhabitants of that place. The counterpoint between the sheep bells, the church bells, the singing of the cantors and my own singing both illustrates situated methods of making and was itself a moment of practising situatedness, of searching for what Annea described as the “special state of mind and body” that attends the caring documentation of place. The spare editing and compositional techniques I used were the same as those in “Moving through” (MM1c); *The Resurrection* consists of three recordings and besides selecting the passages I wished to use, the only edits were those to the church bell material, which were made in order to remove wind distortion.

The three recordings I used are mirrored in the last three paragraphs of the text below, which I wrote to accompany my track on the *eavesdropping* playlist:

Holy week on Thasos, an island just south of the Eastern Macedonian mainland. Since congregating is forbidden, religious services are held behind closed doors, delivered by two or three priests and amplified via megaphone speakers mounted on the outer walls of the church.

On Good Friday, the bells perform an exquisite work of durational performance art, pealing out the three tones of a minor triad, one tone every four seconds, for six hours.⁸⁰

On Easter Sunday, a shortened version of the liturgy, roughly one hour long, resounds throughout the village.

On Monday, I go to the hills.

The track was re-released almost a year later on March 12th 2021 by London-based label nonclassical, on volume 4 of their compilation album “I hope this finds you well in these strange times.”⁸¹

I had never made a piece of sound art before, or at least not since I had taken modules in electroacoustic composition over thirteen years previously at City University in London. The significance of *The Resurrection* to the practice more broadly was that it demonstrated the extent of the open-endedness,

⁸⁰ This is a practice of mourning the death of Christ. The bells ring for six hours because, according to the Gospels, this is the length of time Christ was on the cross.

⁸¹ See <https://nonclassical.bandcamp.com/album/i-hope-this-finds-you-well-in-these-strange-times-vol-4>.

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vis-à-vis the creation of forms, of situated methodologies. The circumstances arose in which techniques of recording were a suitable methodology to carry out my always ongoing practice of situating myself, and when this sense-making process met an invitation to create a form, I was able to take up those techniques into the practice, and use the same durational, intuitive methodologies I used in *The Loinpres [...]* to work my way towards a new form. This demonstrated to me the relation of forms to technique, identity and place, and showed me that methods of situated making can in a sense *keep up* with life, ensuring that the practice continues to transform and to move along with the anfractuosités of lived experience.

Being thrown

“From the sea our desires, to the sea our love,” Vatnasafn residency texts

(April – May 2019)

“LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game; a performance; a piece of window dressing”

(October 2019)

Hringflautan (October 2018)

The passive voice of ‘being thrown’ distinguishes it from the relatively solo practice of throwing pottery, in which I can more ‘actively’ engage with the process and its velocity towards performance or the creation of a form. In ‘being thrown,’ the situation and its durational framework are determined by others, and I am as it were thrown into that situation. Of course I am still thrown as myself, and still seek the same open-ended process, the same defetishisation of technique and of form. But when the situation is given by another or by others, this seeking becomes more of a negotiation. ‘Being thrown’ is also a reference to Heidegger’s *thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*), Dasein’s condition of always finding itself in a world that matters to it, of being dispersed in the world of others, in the “they,” (Heidegger 2013, 27: 167) and of projecting itself into that world. For Heidegger, projection is constant and open-ended; it is not a matter of “comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out” (2013, 31: 185), but rather, like thrownness, a core ontological component of Being. Heidegger writes that “any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities” (2013, 31: 185). The similarly ontological concept of *care* (*Sorge*) is related to thrownness and projection and is also an important component of this fourth category of ‘being thrown.’ Care is a “primordial structural totality,” and it comes before “every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘situation’ of Dasein.” Care lies *in* Dasein’s attitudes and *in* the situations into which it is thrown (2013, 41: 238). These interrelated concepts seem to me to characterise my experiences of what I call ‘being thrown,’ either into groups or into situations that I have not composed. In these circumstances, I cannot help but care, projecting myself towards the possibilities of the group or the situation as a basic condition and state of being there. At times this was very challenging. I will give three brief accounts of projects that fall under this category, outlining acts of making that arose in which intuition, open-endedness of outcomes and defetishisation of form were preserved and, to varying degrees, shared.

“From the sea our desires, to the sea our love”

Being thrown is not always a matter of being thrown into the “they.” My residency at Vatnasafn in Stykkishólmur in spring 2019 was an instance of being thrown into a place, into circumstances of isolation and seclusion. As I have given an account of the residency itself in “Part II,” I will comment here on the process of the texts in the portfolio, excerpts of which have subsequently been published by Two If By Sea press (see VS1 and VS2).

Upon arriving in Stykkishólmur I was astounded by the silence and the lack of human activity. Although there were people in the town, and I did go to the supermarket and the swimming pool on most days, it somehow felt as though there was so much *space* around us, that even the presence of people did not equate to a feeling of the place being occupied. I spent the first week or so singing a lot. I understood this to be a technique of situating myself, of filling my unfamiliar and temporary home with the sound of my voice, and in this way, finding my way through to writing. This was the first time I had relied so entirely and so comfortably on intuitive methods. My practice in the early days of the residency involved a lot of waiting, not-doing, observing, a kind of quiet listening, and a flexible movement between different kinds of activity. When the writing did finally come, it came in the form of a complete free verse poem that voiced with startling clarity the nature and underlying concerns of my being in that place. The writing that followed grew into a book-length manuscript, and it is far too expansive to go into in any detail here except to provide some context for the outcomes that are part of the submission. The writing was very much engaged with the sea, mapping the experience of desire onto the experience of islands and their perimeters, mapping the idea of the sea onto the experience of the Other, and exploring repetition and refrain as a way to understand the psychic death and dissolution that occur cyclically in and through intimate relationships. It wove theoretical reflections on these themes into the biographical, and I found myself, somewhat to my surprise, writing with a forceful urgency about Cyprus and Greece, about Cypriot and Greek, and about my mother and father. Orthodox Easter fell in the middle of my time at Vatnasafn, and I found myself engaging with the Easter ritual in the form of creative writing, as I have done here in theoretical analysis and in *The Resurrection* in sound. The items in the portfolio are two publications that emerged from my practice at Vatnasafn, both excerpts of the larger body of text I wrote there. They are both published in Two If By Sea press’ *Journal of Water*, a short excerpt in the online journal and a much more extended version in the print journal, which is forthcoming.⁸²

⁸² VS2 contains the latest draft of the text for the print edition.

“LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game; a performance;
a piece of window dressing”

This project took the form of a month-long “Northern Creation” residency in Kaukonen, Finland, organised by the Northern Network of Performing Arts (see NCC for photo documentation). It involved eight practitioners from different disciplines and countries, all of whom shared a particular interest in the “High North” (‘About’ n.d.). I am sure that all eight of us could give a different account of what the problems were during this project. For me, there were conflicting intentions on the part of those who composed the situation. Their desire to explore non-hierarchical, open-ended collaborations was what drew me to the project, but I found this desire to be deeply compromised by the selection of a director as one of the eight artists. While ostensibly there to facilitate and ‘hold space,’ in actuality this person insisted on a specific form of group practice that involved daily, scheduled meetings, with unscripted time confined to the weekends. While he was not the only person who wanted some form of recognisable structure, he was the only individual whose practice was primarily about organising other people, and this constantly resulted in transcendent instances of command arising as a matter of course. I found myself from the first day in conflict with this when, after a wonderful morning session of guided improvisation with objects, I wanted to take the afternoon to write, reflect, and further explore what had arisen in the group. When I voiced this desire, the director told me to “take 15 minutes,” as there was another group activity planned immediately afterwards. This recurring manifestation of transcendent instances of command as a matter of self-evidence rather than negotiation was one of the main sources of tension and conflict for me. The self-evidence appeared to derive from the transcendent structure of ‘the work,’ the argument being that if we were going to make a ‘piece’ together, we would obviously need some form of daily rehearsal schedule. It emerged only after the residency that the organisers were very open to the result not being a ‘piece’ at all, but this openness had somehow been obscured in the string of communication that went from them, through the director, to us. This was only one among many constant challenges during our month in Kaukonen. However, none of this could undo the value of the month we spent living together in a very remote and strikingly beautiful place, showing up day after day, navigating that portion of duration we were sharing. One of the relationships forged there has since become very precious to me, and I feel very fond of other members of the group as well. Above all, the project taught me a great deal about what *not* to do when trying to cultivate a group practice.

Ultimately, it seemed that having lunch was the only thing we could agree on. I noticed that our lunches became longer and longer, and that there was a conflict between those who wanted to contain them

and those (myself among them, of course) who wanted to simply let lunch keep expanding and see what happens. At some stage I proposed that we make a show in which we have lunch. I spoke about this with one other member of the group, who then proposed it to the group as a whole, during that day's lunch. It was agreed on almost unanimously (only one person felt ambivalent about it) and so we began to move in that direction. It did not solve the problem, however, as sooner or later 'lunch' turned into a 'show,' and the same problems arose. Rather than sabotage the situation, I went along with as much enthusiasm and commitment as I could muster. I took to baking banana bread for our lunches, and this eventually became incorporated into the performance – which we called LUNCH / HÁDEGISVERÐUR – as an offering to the audience, serving as a 'coda' that brought us together after the show and facilitated socialising and discussion.⁸³

Documentation folder NCd contains a document of my journaling on the group work, written over several days during the residency. This document shows the many pathways that were unfolding in the middle and early stages of the residency. In them, I reflect on our being together, on intersubjectivity, on the difference between solo and group practice, on the need to find a form, on methods of finding a form, on the place of training and technique, on duration, and on ritual and Jodorowsky's psychomagic. Ultimately the complexity of those pathways did not manifest in the work, and once we arrived in Reykjavik for the performance of LUNCH / HÁDEGISVERÐUR, I suddenly felt the need to gather the traces of those pathways into a form. So I spent the last day of the project baking 10 banana cakes and making "LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game; a performance; a piece of window dressing," a score that was a fragmentary map of our being together, but also a proposal for other moments of being together (see NCa). Making the score arose from a need to create a counterbalance to the fixity of the performance; to make a form that was not one thing or another, that did not have to start at the beginning and end at the end, and did not have to be precisely repeatable. It was important that the score was also "a piece of window dressing," because this 'composed' the ability to defer, or to refuse to play, into the work's ontology. Like my "Score for writing a PhD" (see S), LUNCH FRAGMENTS was made using the same principles as John Cage's *Theatre Piece* (1960), namely number ranges with allocated action and chance-based methods of combining action. And as with "Score for writing a PhD," the need for a score arose because of an open-form, long duration that was not consistently conducive to intuitive practice, and so the making of a form seemed to require loose principles of organisation drawn from outside of the process itself. I chose methods based on Cage's *Theatre Piece* mainly because they allow the gathering together of possible action in a manner that

⁸³ See NCb for a teaser clip the and NCc for photo documentation of the performance.

Being thrown

affords repeatability without predetermination. The text is very precious to me, and is comprised of utterances recorded during our rehearsals, lyrics of songs I sang or we sang together, dreams, (which I had asked the group to write down), podcasts-poems (made by one person who did not want to write down their dreams), fragments of my research into folklore and plants, instructions, questions, proposals, and small pieces of commentary. After the performance we handed out pieces of banana cake and copies of the score-objects as gifts for the audience.

Hringflautan

On the whole, I cannot say that I uncovered methodologies of group practice during the course of the PhD research. While the working process of *Quad* initially involved working with David Pocknee and later involved a number of other people, the situation was constructed in such a way as to not require a group practice as such. Rather, those who participated in it generously contributed their time, knowledge, and care to the experiment that I had proposed. *meta/morphē* was in a sense a step towards *Hringflautan*, which I will discuss below. It was a very early step along the way to uncovering a kind of group practice. It resulted, as I have discussed, in a group situation in which solo, duo and trio practices emerged, but not a group practice as a whole. While at the time I did desire this to give way to group practice, in retrospect I think it was a very good outcome as it was and can see clearly now how overly ambitious it was to try to step into a group practice in one go, without long preparatory processes of trial, error and chance. What I learned is that preserving the central concerns of autonomy, open-endedness, intuition and situatedness in a group context, and meeting these conditions for all involved, is extremely finely calibrated work. It requires an immense amount of critical thought and dismantling of assumptions, as well as planning and resources. But sometimes all that can be replaced by an immense amount of good fortune. *Hringflautan (Circleflute)* was the closest I came to this immense good fortune, and it remains one of my most treasured experiences of collaboration. It pointed the way to what a group practice might actually look like: porous, patient, affectionate, respectful, improvisatory, and characterised by the careful, fluid crossing of boundaries.

My collaborators Þráinn Hjalmarrsson and Brynjar Sigurðarson had already worked together on the *Hringflautan* project in 2016, so I was stepping into the extension of an existing situation and relationship. Our collaboration was centred on the “circleflute,” a unique four-player flute designed by Brynjar and his partner Veronika Sedlmair, built by French flute-maker Jean-Yves Roosen and produced by Fondation Galerie Lafayette. The flute was exhibited at Gerðarsafn Gallery in Kópavogur, as part of the exhibition of the 2019 Cycle Music and Art Festival, which was on display for the duration of the

festival. Our exhibition also included a number of other objects designed by Brynjar (see HFb), which he posted to me in Cyprus so that I could become familiar with them, and which I had had with me during while working on *Song Cycles*.

Práinn and Brynjar understood the performance as an extension of the instrument and Brynjar's objects, as a series of ephemeral moments that would emerge from the situation of the flute and the objects in space. Stepping into this approach to making was very fluid and easy, as it agreed very well with my own approaches of situational emergence, situated making and defetishisation. Our week of situation-specific practice was very much grounded in these principles, and it generated, as it did in the other projects in the portfolio, a range of formal outcomes. We created a number of miniature performance universes for me and the flautists to inhabit (see HFc for audio recordings). We also made a piece of text, a multilingual poem written in a response to our discussions about and interactions with the objects (see HFd). The text begins with verbs of motion and touch, moving alliteratively and associatively from one language to another. Although I wrote the text, it emerged from my relation to Brynjar's objects and was permeated by the thoughts and suggestions of both Brynjar and Práinn and adjusted and reshaped according to their input. The text then became two pieces of music, one for the circleflute and me ("Song for voice and flute," HFc) and the other a solo setting of the text, using just one pitch ("Scroll Song," HFc). This solo piece then became a new object, a miniature scroll on which we printed the score, and which I unrolled during the performance as I sang, the score thereby materialising the durational frame of the performance (a glimpse of the score can be seen in the teaser video, HFa: 0:11). This part of the collaboration was a beautiful cycle in which Brynjar made objects, in response to which I wrote poetry, in response to which Práinn composed music, in response to which we created a new object together. In *Hringflautan*, each step along the way to the creation of forms was open-ended and fluidly, plurally authored. Although we each came to the project with our own practices structured by our own specific technical knowledge, we were all equally invested in and curious about seeing where a tendril from one practice might reach out and coil around that of another to build a new structure. In this way, our respective disciplinary backgrounds could be present in the situation without reifying the relations between us or imposing transcendent instances of command on our time together. Divested of this restraining force, each person's specific, technical knowledge became a collection of departure points from which we could move among the society of things, material and non-material, that constituted our situation.



[Figure 29] New Pathways

Conclusion, and an archive of what might happen

PhD projects are long journeys. When I began mine, I was only latently aware of the significance of my training in classical music to the work that I was producing. While my critique of classical music pedagogy and practice became increasingly charged during the three years of practice-research, it was only when I began to write more intensively that notions of ‘situational emergence’ and ‘transformation through technique’ began to crop up, pointing me towards the wounds I had been seeking to heal, and the internalised structures I had been seeking to dismantle. It became clear that including a critique of classical vocal pedagogy in the thesis was necessary to explain the focus, in the portfolio projects, on open-endedness, intuition, situatedness, autonomy and duration. Researching and writing the critique also confirmed to me what I had already inferred, namely that the specific critique I was offering was lacking both in academic discourse on classical music, and in pedagogical and professional practice. In the process of writing, concepts of fetishisation, universal conceptualisations of the body, transcendent instances of command and unmarked whiteness emerged as vital to the critique of classical vocal pedagogy and practice, and framed the situation-specificity I was bringing to my own engagements with technique. Insofar as it supports the portfolio submissions, the critique of the violent separation of technique and identity that takes place in and through classical vocal pedagogy has a deeply personal significance for me. However, the colonial nature of institutions of classical music as well as its wide geographical reach mean that this is a problem I am far from alone in encountering.

The Marxist framework of commodity fetishism provided the theoretical grounds for unpacking the way the separation between technique and identity is reproduced in classical vocal training, specifically through the fetishisation of technique and of form, and the reification of social relations within institutions in which technique is taught and forms are reproduced. In creating works that would restore the relationship between technique and identity, I employed methods of defetishisation in which I approached technique primarily in terms of transformation rather than mastery, relocating technique from the status of an object to be attained to that of an *immanent capacity*. My relationship to forms adjusted correspondingly; no longer transcendent, no longer something that existed outside of the realm of the specific, situated instance of their performance, forms became, instead, something to make or take hold of *as an instrument of becoming*. The disciplinary frameworks within which artistic production often takes place also faded in significance as the creation of forms, and the cultivation of the techniques that give rise to them, was no longer limited by disciplinary boundaries, but occurred through processes of *situational emergence* that are always in some fundamental way intertwined with other unfurling strands of lived experience.

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The reification to some degree inherent to disciplinarity poses its own obstacles to these processes of integration. Although PaR contexts remedy this to a great degree by means of the autonomy they afford the practitioner, the university's complicity in the reproduction of precarity and the commodification of knowledge contribute in their own way to disciplinary fetishism and the separation of technique and identity, often reproducing a relation of mastery rather than transformation vis-à-vis the acquisition of knowledge. A methodological distance from the institution emerged as a component of practices of situated making, and a way to make best use of the autonomy afforded by the PaR context. In the thesis, I chose to situate myself artistically in relation to Ragnar Kjartansson and Monia Sander Haj-Mohamed, two artists whose trajectory reflects a flexible relation to disciplinarity, a radically defetishised approach to art making and a deeply attentive approach to the audience. I read their work in dialogue with Schechner's notions of selective inattention and audience integrality in order to draw out specific solutions I found to the problem of the transcendent instances of command I had internalised through practices of classical music production. I developed these ideas further in "Situational emergence," where I looked at the relationship of technique to identity, knowledge to transformation, and training to lived experience through the lens of Deleuze, Dewey and Haraway, and considered the interconnectedness of process ontologies, pragmatism, and feminist epistemology.

The move towards understanding acts of making as punctuations in the open duration of practice – as the momentary flowering of what grew out of and will return to the soil – led me to organise the works in the portfolio according to the specific ways in which the forms arose in and through durational processes. With this categorisation, I did not have to engage with the false problem of the 'thematic' difference between the works, and was able to focus instead on the methodological deferral of form, and the intuition and open-endedness vis-à-vis form that is at the core of situated making as I have sought to define it here. The four categories – translation, composing (a situation), throwing (pottery), and being thrown – accounted for four distinct types of, to borrow a Heideggerian term, 'being-towards' a form. In translation, the form is given in advance and must be unfolded in time, in a specific situation; in composing (a situation), the form is proliferated into a number of unpredictable outcomes that ensue from an open-ended situation; in throwing (pottery) the form emerges with relative speed, in and through a situated durational process of which it bears the marks, the way a vase bears the marks of the speed and pressure that formed it; in being thrown, the form is a result, or a trace, of processes of relational sense-making in situations the makers have not designed and do not control. In each of these 'four durations' I explored one to three projects, drawing out and contextualising situatedness, open-endedness, intuition, autonomy, defetishisation and dereification, the deferral of form, epistemic

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engagements with technique, and situational emergence as methods for writing (or playing, or making) what you wish for.

An archive of what might happen

Three distinct but interrelated pathways have opened up to me in this year of writing, and all clearly have their seeds in the practice of the preceding years. Because they are still in the early stages of intuitive becoming, I will speak about them mostly in a mode of speculation.

The Oracular Voice

In the account of *Abundance*, I mentioned ‘the oracular voice.’ This is something I would like to develop, and in my imagination I see two ways that this might take shape. The first is a return to the empty space, a return to the studio. It involves practising the oracular voice, that is, practising improvising or dwelling in songs, seated or standing, beginning with hand on chest. Maybe it involves entering the room with a question, or a few interrelated questions. *What do I need today? What do I want to open? What do I want to heal? What do I want to communicate to person X? What was that dream about?* Maybe it involves improvising or dwelling in songs while also holding these questions, and seeing how far that can go. I already know that there is a specific quality to that holding of space in my body for both kinds of questioning. I know it when it is happening, I can even keep in contact with it for a while, as though it were a hand leading me in a dance. I also know that I will not be able to speak about it in any more precise a manner until I have practised it more, until I have learned to know it better and am able to call on it more consistently. Maybe, in the studio, the oracular voice practice will involve continuing to follow the lead of that hand until I find a boundary, until I find myself beginning to move into thinking-up-clever-stuff-to-sing mode. And then pausing there. Learning to know that edge. (In other words, maybe it involves getting used to a deactivated prefrontal cortex.) Maybe it also involves studying the differences but also the relationships between the oracular mode and the ‘learning’ mode, the mode in which I study rhythm, move through chord changes, learn new modes (i.e. scales), cultivate new sound qualities. Maybe there are a set of questions there, too. *Can I bring these modes together? Do they need to be brought together? Do certain aspects of them need to be kept distinct?* The oracular voice practice would build on an understanding of the mutually constitutive relationship between technique and identity, and maybe one overarching question in that practice would be: *Can an epistemic engagement with the embodied techniques of singing be a methodology for finding access to and sedimenting other kinds of knowledge?*

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The second way I imagine the oracular voice taking shape is through opening it up to other bodies. This could be an 'oracular voice lab' in which we might conduct research into questions like: *How can we practice epistemic justice through singing practice? What would an epistemically loving pedagogy of singing look like? Can we learn to sing as a way of knowing who we are, what we're about, what our purpose is?* For me, and perhaps for others, this might also be a way of developing a singing pedagogy that could replace that of our training. It might be a way of sedimenting new pedagogical knowledge, which can only be done if by revisiting pedagogical situations or situations of knowledge-sharing and knowledge-transmission.

The Performance Doula

The 'performance doula' grew out of my work as musical director for the second performance of Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Sky in a Room*. In that process, I worked with seven musicians, from the audition and selection phase through to the opening of the performance. I had recently discovered the work of radical doulas, practitioners who integrate social justice work into the role of the doula,⁸⁴ and it occurred to me, as the project was ending, that 'performance doula' was a far more accurate term for the work I had been doing than 'musical director.' I had been engaged with the emotional, technical, practical, logistical and artistic needs of each of the seven performers, supporting them through the process of finding their individual pathway to delivering their performances. Effectively, I had been responsible for the 'social reproduction' side of the 'production' – a side that is so often entirely neglected. The role was deeply fulfilling, not least because I felt that I had finally found a single concentrated use for the broad range of practices and forms of knowledge that I have spent years cultivating. I did not have to leave any part of myself at the door in order to enter that room. In some ways, the 'oracular voice lab' and the 'performance doula' approach the same problems from opposite directions; while the former steps *out* of conventional spaces of artistic training and production, and asks: *How can we remake these practices?* the performance doula goes *into* spaces of artistic production and asks: *How can we reorient these practices?*

This is a role I have already begun to develop at Teater Momentum in Odense, Denmark, where Monia Sander Haj-Mohammed is currently artistic director for the season. I describe the role as similar to that of a dramaturge, but with the integration of the research framework of care and social reproduction,

⁸⁴ See *The Doulas! Radical Care for Pregnant People* (Mahoney and Mitchell 2016) and *The Radical Doula Guide: A Political Primer for Full Spectrum Pregnancy and Childbirth Support* (Pérez 2012).

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and the knowledge and experience of a professional performing artist. The ultimate purpose is to establish and embed methodologies of care within the theatre's apparatus of creation and production.

Collective Practice

This is the most speculative of my speculations. I imagine a place where the shared cultivation of mutually constitutive relationships between technique and identity can meet the shared cultivation of land. I imagine a place in which makers, tillers and healers might show up for one another and for the land in devotion and in service. I imagine a place where whole communities could transform themselves through practice. Finding pathways towards such a future will involve rooting myself in the intellectual and technical labour of others engaged in manifesting their own speculative collectivities. I think of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and her notion of community accountability in scholarship and artistic practice, of her understanding that her practice is guided by the question: "What is it that my communities need from me?" (John Hope Franklin Center 2017, 09:00-10:00). I think of Fred Moten & Stefano Harney's concept of 'study' as the practising of the conditions "that would allow us to hear something, or would allow us to see something or would allow us to be with some people that right now we can't be with right now we can't hear, we can't see" (Sorace 2021, 52:00-53:51). I think of Esperanza Spalding's *Songwrights Apothecary Lab*, a series of interdisciplinary research labs drawing on music therapy, neurobiology, psychology and song-writing, with the purpose of answering the question: "How do we respond? How do we show up and offer our goods?" (Valenti 2021). I think of Spalding's plan to dedicate her own "home-making practice" to "supporting the healing of people's connection to land, spirit, and each other" by building a BIPOC artist sanctuary in her hometown of Portland, Oregon, a sanctuary that will have a garden for growing vegetables, an eco-poetics reading room, a tea-bar and a recording studio (Spalding 2021). I think of Soul Fire Farm, an Afro-Indigenous centred farm where diverse communities cultivate their own self-determined revolutions through the practising and sharing of techniques of sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism and environmental justice (Soul Fire Farm 2021).

All three of these fractally connected speculations articulate a particular conclusion of this research, namely, that a defetishised, epistemic approach to technique can open up pathways towards *resituating* practice in frameworks not defined by disciplinary reification and professional ambition but by love, solidarity, and the search for self-knowledge and collective transformation.

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Appendix I: Documentation codes

Translation

Quad (Q)

Q1	(a) Video of the performance (b) Images <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sight line 1- Sight line 2- The stage
Q2	(a) Video of the performance (b) Images <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Performance pictures<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Car park geometry- Turn right- Evening Light- Sight Line 1- Sight Line 2- Sight Line 3- Sight Line 4(2) Demolition pictures<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Huddersfield Examiner 1- Huddersfield Examiner 2- Huddersfield Examiner 3
Q3	(a) Video of the performance (b) Images <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Searching for non-places- Duration- The collision
Q4	(a) Video of the performance (b) Images <ul style="list-style-type: none">- View from the ground- View from the top
Qhcmf	(a) Video of the performance (b) Images <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Centre- Corner- Side

Composing (a situation)

meta/morphē (MM)

MM1 (Reykjavik, Iceland)	<p>(a) Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chilling outside- Clip from 4channel installation set-up- Harp in the harp- Improvising new techniques- Marionetta- <i>meta/morphē</i> documentary video- The audiovisual installation machine- Thelma drilling holes for the piano-stage lights- Thelma making her headdress and necklaces- The snow it melts the soonest- Vertical potential <p>(b) Images</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Early Days- La Beata Thelma- Piano-stage lights- The Final Ceremony- The Water Lily <p>(c) Audio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4channel installation audio- Four Arias for a Disappearing Piano- Moving through
MM2 (Piteå, Sweden)	<p>(a) Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>meta/morphē</i> short film <p>(b) Images</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Composers at work 1- Composers at work 2- Composers at work 3- Composers at work 4- La Boîte-en-piano or Le Piano-en-boîte1- La Boîte-en-piano or Le Piano-en-boîte2- Our installation space at the Kaleido Gallery- Plank for the La Boîte-en-piano or Le Piano-en-boîte- The piano pre-metamorphosis- Through the eye of the piano <p>(c) Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Samtal med Leyla (conversation with Leyla)

Song Cycles (SC)

- SC
- (a) Residency (images, except “The participants”)
 - Gathering, being with
 - Leaving with my bag of gifted grapes
 - Participants-hosts-singers-performers-subjects 1 – 4
 - The participants (still images + audio of participants)
 - (b) Workshop (images)
 - Learning by the loom
 - Sorting through, transmitting
 - The workshop 1 – 6
 - (c) Performance (images)
 - The performance 1 – 6
 - (d) Point Centre exhibition (audio)
 - Xarkis songs

Throwing (pottery)

The Loinpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write (LP)

- LP (a) Video
- (b) Images
- At the edge of the word
 - Material text
 - The translation
 - Traces of integrality
 - Traces of the event
 - Workstation
- (c) Script

Abundance (A)

- A (a) Artwork (five sample images)
- (b) Music
- 1. Bright morning stars are rising (Appalachia, U.S.A)
 - 2. Hamlet's song (original)
 - 3. Το Αρωμα - The Perfume (Kos, GR)
 - 4. The Blackest Crow (Appalachia, U.S.A)
 - 5. As três Marias - The three Maries (Minas Gerais, BR)
 - 6. Almonds for the present moment (original)
 - 7. Alte Laute (Robert Schumann)
 - 8. Lu bello cardillo (Naples, IT)
 - 9. What wondrous love is this (shape note hymn, U.S.A.)
 - 10. Ηρθε ο καιρός να φύγουμε - The time has come to part (Epirus, GR)
 - 11. I tagli e i piaceri (original)
 - 12. Bist du bei mir (Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, attr. J.S. Bach)

The Resurrection (R)

- R (a) Audio file
- (b) Images
- The island
 - Church of the Prophet Elijah

Eavesdropping performance (E)

- E (a) Audio files (by John Croft)
- Am I born to die, Appalacian hymn, U.S.A
 - Come all ye fair and tender ladies, Appalachian ballad, U.S.A
 - What wondrous love is this, shape-note hymn, U.S.A
 - Αγία Μαρίνα τζιαι τζιυρά - Saint Margaret, lady Margaret, Cyprus
 - Βλέπω καράβια πο' ρχοντι - I see ships a'coming, Thrace, Greece
 - Το τέρτιν την καρτούλλας μου - My little heart's anguish, Cyprus
- (b) Images (by Nayari Cepeda)
- Warming up
 - Being-with through song
 - Talking about dreams

“Don’t Lament in Sorrow” (DLiS)

- DLiS - Video of live performance

Being Thrown

**Excerpts from “From the sea our desires, to the sea our love,”
a text written during the Vatnasafn residency (VS)**

- VS (a) Excerpts published in the online journal (image files of the webpage)
- (b) Proofs of excerpts published in the print journal

**Northern Creation residency and “LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game;
a performance; a piece of window dressing” (NC)**

- NC (a) LUNCH FRAGMENTS score and pictures
- (b) Video (teaser of performance)
- (c) Images
- (1) Pictures from Northern Creation residency in Kaukonen
- (2) Pictures of LUNCH / HÁDEGISVERÐUR performance
- (d) Text (journaling on groupwork during the residency)

Hringflautan (HF)

- HF (a) Video
- Hringflautan teaser
- The Fifth Flute (one-note improvisation)
- (b) Images
- Hringflautan1
- Hringflautan2
- Hringflautan3
- Objects1
- Objects2
- Objects3
- Objects 4
- (c) Audio
- Scroll Song
- Song for voice and flute
- The Fifth Flute (one-note improvisation)
- (d) Text
- Two Circular Poems

The Sky in a Room (tSiaR)

- tSiaR
- (a) Video
 - Short documentary video by Artes Mundi, Wales
 - Documentation of *The Sky in a Room* by Ragnar Kjartansson's studio
 - (b) Images
 - Photo by Gareth Phillips
 - Photo by Polly Thomas 1 – 2

“Score for writing a PhD, or, instructions for creating a system out of asking the right questions” (S)

- S
- Score
 - Durations 1
 - Durations 2
 - Durations 3
 - String-time-rulers

Supplementary Documentation

Discussion with Monia about *The Loines* [...] (MS)

MS - Audio file

Appendix II: Chart of works

Translation

What	When	Where	Context	With whom
<p><i>Quad</i></p> <p>Site-specific performances of a piece by Samuel Beckett</p> <p>co-produced with David Pocknee</p>	<p>April-May 2018 and Nov 2018</p>	<p>Huddersfield, U.K.</p>	<p>Independently organised and funded; Nov performance took place at and was partially funded by Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival</p>	<p>Walkers: Eleanor Cully, Gaia Blandina, Vera Goetzee, David Pocknee; Percussionists: Rodrigo Constanzo, Johnny Hunter, Fred Thomas, Maurizio Ravalico, James Jean-Luc Wood, Colin Frank, Alex Tod and Thomas Weideman; Documentation: Lynette Quek</p>

Appendix II: Chart of works

Composing (a situation)

What	When	Where	Context	With whom
<p><i>meta/morphē</i></p> <p>durational performance project centred on the dismantling and transformation of a piano</p> <p>co-created with María Arnardóttir</p>	June 8 th -22 nd 2018	Reykjavik, Iceland	Independent, with funding received directly from Reykjavíkurborg (Reykjavik city council) and Nordisk Kulturfond (Nordic Culture Fund)	María Arnardóttir (artist/designer), Einar Torfi Einarsson (composer/artist), Kristian Ross (composer/sound artist), Linus Orri Gunnarsson Cederborg (carpenter/musician), Rebecca Scott Lord (performer/painter/writer), Taylor Myers (director/performer/immersive theatre creator), Thelma Marín Jónsdóttir (artist/musician), Tinna Þorsteinsdóttir (pianist/artist), general public and passers-by
	Aug 26 th -Sept 1 st 2019	Piteå, Sweden	Festival Ung Nordisk Musik, Young Nordic Music Festival	María Arnardóttir (artist/designer), Kristine Bech Sørensen (artist), general public and passers-by, including composers, performers and participants of UNM Festival

Appendix II: Chart of works

Song Cycles

Community performance and documentation project centred on the gathering and transmitting of a body of songs

Aug 13th-19th
2018

Koilani,
Cyprus

Xarkis Festival, funding for travel from the University of Huddersfield

Local residents and festival attendees, in particular: Καλλιρόη Μενελάου, Μαρία Χολώ, Καλλιρόη Χολώ, Θέλμα Γεωργίου, Κώστας Γεωργιάδης, Μάρω Νικολάου, Νίκος Νικολάου, Κώστας Αγησιλάου, Γιαννάκης Αγησιλάου, Ηλίας Αγησιλάου, Nee Li, Νεόφυτος Μάγου, Ιωσήφ και Άννα

Appendix II: Chart of works

Throwing (pottery)

What	When	Where	Context	With whom
<p><i>The Loinpres, or how to surrender your will and yet to write /morphē</i></p> <p>Solo devised performance of navigating and translating the works of three Christian mystics</p>	<p>Dec 2017 (performance Dec 8th)</p>	<p>Amsterdam, Netherlands</p>	<p>Invitation by Perdu poetry institute</p>	<p>Solo, with the support of Monia Sander Haj-Mohammed</p>
<p><i>Abundance</i></p> <p>Studio album project and ceremony of defetishisation</p>	<p>June 2019</p>	<p>Lefkosia, Cyprus</p>	<p>Independent project in a commercial studio, partly funded by the Youth Board of Cyprus</p>	<p>Lefteris Moumtzis (electric guitar, mandolin, basses, synthesisers, vocals); Fred Thomas (piano, banjo, double bass, acoustic guitar, percussion, drums, harmonium, vocals); Odysseas Toumazou (electric guitar); Giorgos Kalogirou (laouto); Ewan Bleach (saxophones); Veronika Aloneftou (santouri); Eleni Era, Vassilis Philippou, Lefteris Moumtzis, Fred Thomas, Alexis Kasinos, Yionny F. Avraamides (vocals); Andreas Trachonitis (studio engineer and percussion); Ragnar Helgi Ólafsson (co-producer of artwork); Michael Kyprianou (photographer); Lydia Mandridou (scenographer)</p>

Appendix II: Chart of works

<p><i>The Resurrection</i></p> <p>Short field recording and sound art piece</p>	<p>April 2020</p>	<p>Thasos, Greece</p>	<p>Invitation by Juliet Fraser to contribute to the end-of-season playlist of <i>eavesdropping</i> concert series</p>	<p>Solo, with the support of Lucy Railton</p>
<p><i>eavesdropping performance</i></p> <p>Solo performance of folkloric song</p>	<p>Jan 2020</p>	<p>London, U.K.</p>	<p>Organised and funded by Juliet Fraser and <i>eavesdropping</i></p>	<p>Solo</p>
<p>“Don’t Lament in Sorrow”</p> <p>Solo performance of an original song</p>	<p>June 2021</p>	<p>Lefkosia, Cyprus</p>	<p>Independent, organised by Marios Takoushis for “Warehouse Diaries” YouTube channel</p>	<p>Marios Takoushis (sound engineer) and Giorgos Stylianos (camera and editing)</p>

Appendix II: Chart of works

Being Thrown

What	When	Where	Context	With whom
<p>“From the sea our desires, to the sea our love”</p> <p>Texts written in residence at Vatnasafn</p>	<p>April 24th - May 12th, 2019</p>	<p>Stykkishólmur, Iceland</p>	<p>Granted by application to arts organisation Artangel and their local representatives in Iceland; financial support from the University of Huddersfield</p>	<p>Solo</p>
<p>“LUNCH FRAGMENTS, an aleatoric digestion game; a performance; a piece of window dressing”</p> <p>Score of/for being together</p>	<p>Sept – Oct 2019</p>	<p>Kaukonen, Finland and Reykjavik, Iceland</p>	<p>Northern Creation residency, funded and organised by Northern Network of Performing Arts</p>	<p>Anni-Kristiina Juuso (Sápmi), Emma Langmoen (NO), Erlend Auestad Danielsen (NO), Jacob Zimmer (CAN / WHITEHORSE), Júlía Mogensen (IS), Mari Keski-Korsu (FIN), Riikka Vuorenmaa (FIN)</p>
<p><i>Hringflautan</i></p> <p>Series of miniature gallery performances centred on the four-player ‘circleflute’</p>	<p>Oct 2018</p>	<p>Kópavogur, Iceland</p>	<p>Funded and organised by Cycle Music and Art Festival</p>	<p>Práinn Hjalmarsson and Brynjar Sigurðarson</p>

Appendix II: Chart of works

<p><i>The Sky in a Room</i></p> <p>Work of durational, site-specific performance art by Ragnar Kjartansson</p>	<p>Feb – March 2018</p>	<p>Cardiff, Wales</p>	<p>Commissioned, produced and funded by Artes Mundi Wales; travel funding from the University of Huddersfield</p>	<p>Solo, in collaboration with Ragnar Kjartansson and Robert Court (organ instructor)</p>
<p>“Score for writing a PhD, or, instructions for creating a system out of asking the right questions”</p> <p>Score for writing a PhD</p>	<p>June 2020</p>	<p>Thasos, Greece</p>	<p>Independent</p>	<p>Solo</p>

Appendix III: Text

Text for the release of "Bist du bei mir" with nonclassical

∞

This little song was copied by Anna Magdalena Bach into her musical notebook, sometime around 1725. The song used to be attributed to J.S. Bach, but actually it is probably by the composer Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel.

∞

It is one of many songs and arias in the notebook that take death as their subject in a manner that expresses the Lutheran concern with the spiritual practice of *ars moriendi*, the art of dying.

∞

When Lefteris, Andreas, Fred and I gathered to record my album *Abundance*, I hadn't decided to put this song on it. But, being an album of ritual, transition, celebration and devotion, it made perfect sense when Fred suggested it.

∞

The song is about leaving this world with confident assurance of salvation in Christ. It begins, "If you are with me, I will go joyfully / To my death and to my rest."

∞

Since the time of recording, I have learned a deeper lesson about the importance of *ars moriendi*, of practising a relation to death, of preparing to greet death with a radiant and devotional gratitude for living.

∞

I feel that music is at its deepest level of sedimentation a devotional practice, a spiritual practice, and I've always been struck by the devotional power of this song. The absolute foreverness of those words.

∞

As with all acts of making, this version grew from many seeds. One of them is a birthday present I made for Fred many years ago, a layered recording made in my bedroom with the melody of the song woven into lines from Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*.

∞

Appendix III: Text

It was an afterthought, and we recorded it last, and it will appear last on the album, as it does here in this compilation. It is a final song, but not a song of ends. It is a song that passes into the other side of repetition.

∞

Bist du bei mir was recorded and mixed by Andreas Trachonitis at Studio eleven63, with additional recording by Alex Harker in Huddersfield.