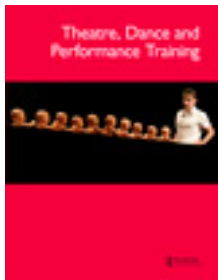


This article was downloaded by: [University College Falmouth]

On: 11 March 2014, At: 04:01

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office:
Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Theatre, Dance and Performance Training

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rtdp20>

Look right through: intention and accident in performer/audience training

Joanne 'Bob' Whalley & Lee Miller

Published online: 16 Apr 2013.

To cite this article: Joanne 'Bob' Whalley & Lee Miller (2013) Look right through: intention and accident in performer/audience training, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 4:1, 102-112, DOI: [10.1080/19443927.2012.755468](https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2012.755468)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2012.755468>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Look right through: intention and accident in performer/audience training

Joanne ‘Bob’ Whalley and Lee Miller

This article considers the interplay between bodies – the bodies of performers and the bodies of their audiences. Drawing upon the authors’ training in acupuncture and Ashtanga yoga, the article explores the role that the physical understanding of a performance action might have upon engaging with work. Using the fiction of the ‘ur-body’, an original (and impossible) physicality from which questions about training in relation to the role of witness might be developed, this article asks an attendant question about the intersubjective terrain that lies between bodies. By questioning an embodied receiving and reading of the work of body-based performance artists, the article seeks to open up a conversation about the role training might play for an audience.

Keywords: acupuncture, anatomy, Ashtanga, audience, body, yoga

With one exception, each piece of writing we have published has made explicit use of our conjoined status. The dual nature of our research and writing practice has been writ large in both form and content. That one example was our attempt to engage with the bodies of others, the bodies of 14 performance artists whose work we attempted to respond to in the catalogue essay ‘Disorderly Looking’ (Whalley and Miller 2010). In our attempt to respond to the bodies we had encountered, we found ourselves occupying the first person singular strategy of ‘I’, a strange device given that both our names were clearly attributed to the writing.

What follows will occupy that same strange singular.

We wish to return to bodies, to performance art, to the concept of training and its implication for both looking and the receiving of said gaze. And before we depart from this doubled-selfhood that ghosts our writing, perhaps there might be some value in pausing briefly to consider the value of the term ‘we’. Often employed to suggest some wider communal landscape of which ‘we’ are all part, it might exclude as often as it includes. Usually, the ‘we’ we offer is of a slightly different order. Although we have yet to publish anything that explicitly addresses the intersubjective territory of conjoined research practices, this is something that was a considerable focus of our

doctoral research, and as such ghosts much of our post-doctoral output. Thus 'we', while not a deliberate exclusion, does refer to us, to the two people responsible for the writing of this article; Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller.

However, in this instance, in the deliberate foregrounding of bodies, this doubling feels curiously out of place. Already we are trying to navigate the intersubjective in the moment of witness, and the inclusion of the already problematic 'we' feels a navigation too far. Instead we intend to employ the singular first person, to offer 'my' perspective, rather than to offer 'ours'. The idea of a portmanteau persona causes us no real concern, and perhaps had we been writing this article even six months ago, we might have struggled to commit to such a large undertaking through what is doubtless a fictive frame. That being said, and borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari (1988), the inherent plurality of the self already makes a fiction of the singular in any first-person account. So the result is that we have chosen to embrace this fiction, and whilst this article comes from two individuals, it has already been filtered and mediated by a range of body-practices that will make more sense for the reader to be housed in one fictional body, the *ur*-body that perhaps any writer invokes when they commit 'I' to the page. Eliding the potential suggestion of primitive that the term carries with it, I invoke 'ur' here as a way to suggest an impossible body, an originary referent from which we might all attempt to draw an understanding, yet still being offered in the knowledge that it does not, it cannot, exist. Rather, the *ur*-body is a fiction, functioning as a way in to the subjective, or perhaps the situated readings that follow from any use of the first person singular employed by a writer who stands in as an interlocutor between the work and the reader.

I promise that the rest of this article will begin soon, and I apologise for slowing you down with my strange and convoluted contexts. But in a sense, this is part of the training I've been undertaking for the past few years. What I refer to here is not the training of a performer, but the training of an audience member. Since mid-2009, I have been, albeit unintentionally, training how to witness, with one of the central planks of this training having been the slowing down of my body. This process has been something of a revelation; in part because the 'training' has been accidental, not a contract deliberately entered into, but also because it has thrown me into an increasingly unknown territory, albeit a territory deliberately sought.

Of course, training is not an entirely alien concept to me. I've been studying performance since 1991, and I suppose, even if only by default, I must have acquired some skills. Over the past two decades I have been to countless workshops, and worked with practitioners of all stripes and colours from around the globe. I've been paid to act (perhaps not well, but paid to do it nonetheless), I've been funded to make durational, site-specific performance, and trained to offer coherent reflection. Necessarily, I have had to acquire certain skills to serve these various ends. And perhaps that is, in part at any rate, the problem. In those two decades my approach to training has lacked consistency. Rather than focus on a deep, sustained and sustaining discipline, my approach has echoed that of a drunk man at a wedding buffet. Rather than committing to a single course, I have loaded my plate with everything that I liked the look of, gorged on some things, spat others out, and eventually abandoned my own plate in favour of someone else's.

Perhaps it is this inconsistency that has allowed me to ignore my body for the best part of my 'training'. Certainly, I have picked up bits and pieces, worked with dancers and gone to various workshops, but this has only ever been on a project-by-project basis, and any skills I might have developed, have been forgotten the moment I no longer needed them. They don't apparently live in my body, they have not accrued any more than the beats and tasks of Stanislavsky, another skill-set I seemingly learned only to forget.

In my own practice I've mostly lived inside my head, developing linguistic skills, discursive strategies, ways to think into a piece; primarily driven to write and talk my way into it. My body has always been present, but it has been little more than a brief material pause, the thing that carried the ideas out of my head and into the world. There has been discipline to be sure, but I'm not sure that the body felt any of it. Which presents certain anxieties, given that in my day job I have tried to hold to the concept of embodiment, spent a good part of my academic career encouraging students to recognise those tensions that arise when the body is discounted in favour of the mind. All the while those same tensions have been housed in my own bodymind, even when I have been ignorant of its existence.

Perhaps frustratingly, this is all offered as a preface. And this preamble is offered only as an attempt to locate the reader alongside my body, a body that is not offered because there is any particular value in approaching work from its perspective or autobiographical landscape. Rather, this body, my body, the ur-body within the narrative offered here functions as analogy; a way to begin to think about the status of training within the manifold practices that are forced to cohere under the term 'performance art'. Perhaps my chosen terminology might add to the frustration offered by my reticence to begin, given that the term could easily cause the reader to bridle, to question why I have chosen 'performance art' over the equally valid, and perhaps preferred, 'live art'. What follows is in no way intended to untangle these conjoined territories, nor is there any intention to attempt to map a terrain, or outline a lineage of trainings. Inevitably, key practitioners (or at least practitioners who may feel key to the writing) will be forgotten or ignored, a caveat offered in advance, not as apologia, nor as an attempt to mask lacunae in research (although both might be accurate), but rather to offer a certain 'psychic drag', to continue to delay the inevitable start.

And this slowing down, this deliberate delaying, echoes my first consideration of training within performance art. The idea that performance art as a tradition might eschew training processes is certainly something that exists anecdotally, but as with any attempt to generalise from the specific of one performer's process, it throws up scores of accounts that contradict. Certainly there are bodies that train, and bodies that don't. The training undertaken often seems to be functioning ad hoc rather than as the adoption of a pre-existing system, driven as much by the needs of the practitioner as it is by their practices.

However, my initial thoughts about training came not from the preparation of the bodies of the performers, rather from training targeted at those intending to witness them. During the summer of 2009, I spent 17 days in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. Occupying a gallery emptied out of all its material artefacts, my presence there was professional, as I was contributing an essay reflecting upon each of the pieces installed as part of *Marina*

Abramović Presents, itself part of the wider Manchester International Festival. I had decided to witness each of the 17 performances, not out of any external requirement, but as part of my attempt to understand something of the duration experienced by each practitioner. As Balshaw and Poots observe in their essay 'Creating Holy Ground' (2010, p. 91), there were specific rules for the artists:

first, and most importantly, four hours each day for 17 days. Artists had to agree to this as an absolute commitment and we saw each of them struggle with the physical, emotional and intellectual strain of this through the 17 days.

Given this fixed rule, I felt that my role as a witness should require no less of me. Already wedded into my engagement with these other bodies was an attempt to reference their discipline while recognising that my experience could in no way replicate it.

My own rules of engagement with the practice were determined before I had made the journey to Manchester. This fairly arbitrary decision (an imposition that was in no way demanded by the editor or publishers of the text I was contributing to) led to my experiencing 17 slowings-down. Each day before the gallery proper was opened to the spectators, we were called to order by Abramović. Seated on fold-up camping stools, we all sat before a makeshift stage running the length of the space. Itself a borrowing from Ingo Nierman, Abramović's *Drill* offered a certain discipline, a kind of delayed gratification, where we as audience were held in stasis, schooled in how to slow down, to watch, to witness and to resist the 'normal' mode of gallery attendance which sees spectators spending an average of 27.2 seconds (Smith and Smith 2001) in front of each art work. In preparation, a simple act of drinking a cup of water was sustained over 10 minutes, with those assembled attempting to find the meditative potential of thoughtful sipping in a concentrated and comfortable silence. We were ordered to turn to the person next to us, to look at them, to really see them. The inevitable giggles of embarrassment were tolerated at first, and then quickly began to irritate, first Abramović, then the gallery attendants, and eventually those audience members who had managed to resist the urge to laugh. The white coats we had been given might well have been intended to function as a symbol of experimentation, but they also served as a uniform, a way of levelling out the physical appearance of the individual, robbing us of certain markers, making us a mass, a mob, a gathering unforgiving of transgression. The rules of engagement thus established, we walked slowly out of the space, with Abramović intoning the same mantra over the PA, over and over. 'Lift, stretch, touch, move, lift, stretch, touch, move'. There is no winner in this race, but I felt a palpable sense of wanting to please, of trying to walk more slowly, of trying to be the last person in the space, of being the best, most attentive spectator, and to communicate this to Abramović, to let her see how well I had done. But inevitably, when I was the last in the space, she had already left, and there was no witness to my achievement. I remember reflecting that in this urge to please, I might have missed the point.

In a sense, I'm doing the same here. I'm unnaturally stretching your engagement, trying to slow you so that my thesis will be better communicated. But, again, I'm probably missing the point. I've already

invoked Deleuze and Guattari, so I know that all bets are off in terms of how to engage with a piece of writing. And although I wanted to be the last in the room, to have Abramović validate my witnessing, there was equally someone else who wanted to be the first one out. Now that I have slowed you, forced you, perhaps frustratingly, to pause, or perhaps simply offered you more text to skim over, to skate rhizomatically across, where best to start?

There is no point making my way doggedly through my memory of what happened when I left the space; not just because I did it 17 times, each a different engagement, but because what followed then is not necessary to re-engage with the accidental training I began. Instead I'll go straight to the east staircase of the gallery, watching as the naked body of Kira O'Reilly slowly 'fell' down the stairs. The contrast of the naked figure, the apparent duress and the small, but significant presence of the leather gloves she wore triggered a range of responses. Were it not for the gloves, I might want to rescue her, comfort her. Maybe I should impede her progress; would the intersubjective exchange allow me license to engage, to compete? In the moment of witnessing, of capturing some of these ideas in the small orange notebook I carried with me, I recognised that although my readings would not be definitive, they would be something I could explain. I would be able to access language, through either lexical or linguistic strategies. The means of communicating my responses were available to me, the opportunity to contextualise and frame any emotional response possible and repeatable. Afterwards with friends I would do just this, I would talk about how the work made me feel, what it made me think. I would argue my readings against their readings, I would sharpen my responses and eventually I would write these for publication.

But there was another response, a shadow engagement that I didn't speak, couldn't initially because I didn't have the tools. Or rather, I had the tools, but was still in the process of learning to master them. And even with mastery comes no real certainty that these shadow responses could be/can be communicated. Witnessing a descent some four hours in duration, it was impossible not to think of the training process undertaken to allow this to happen. Watching as the skin pulled tautly across a strongly defined musculature slowly mottled, picking up the accretions of the various cold stone stairs it slid down, I found myself thrown back into my body in a way quite unlike any of my previous experiences as an audience. Although there is room to revisit the work of neuropsychologists like Daniel Glaser who have explored the role mirror neurons play for the expert audience in the response to watching virtuosic practices, this potentially occludes consideration of semi-expert audiences, or practices that might fall outside the codified structure of ballet. Instead, I return to my subjective gaze, watching a performer who occupies a body, one that made me acutely aware of my own materiality.

As I found myself watching her slow descent, the materiality of her flesh, her musculature, her skeleton, her fascia, her tendons, were all incredibly present to me. Without meaning to, my focus was drawn time and again to her psoas. The psoas, or the iliopsoas as it is also known is the muscle (or rather, the grouping of muscles) that allows us as a species to walk upright. It is the muscle that brings the leg towards the body and the body towards the leg. Arguably one of the most significant evolutionary shifts (at least posturally speaking), it effectively allows the human species to defy gravity, to live

upright. When a dog walks on his hind legs, he does so only momentarily; certainly there are dogs that have perfected this party trick, and can fool their audience into thinking this is the most natural thing in the world, but without a functioning psoas the dog will always drop down to all-fours and let out a relieved sigh as soon as he is no longer the object of the amused gaze of his audience. As humans, we have perfected the trick to the point that not only can we live upright, we can also stand on one leg, we can reach out arms over our heads and drop our hands to the floor behind us, catching ourselves in a backbend. The psoas allows us to pop back up and find ourselves standing again, having executed a party trick no less impressive than that of the dog.

Perhaps it was the knowledge that O'Reilly's is a body crafted through Iyengar yoga¹ and Kum Nye,² but more likely it was driven by the recognition that my own body had begun a similar 'crafting', in my case through the discipline of Ashtanga yoga.³ Watching this deeply contained group of muscles, the psoas major snaking down from the lateral surfaces of the vertebral bodies of thoracic 12 and lumbar 1 to 5, perhaps being followed by the psoas minor, which if O'Reilly is in the 40% of the population for whom this muscle is present, originates at the transverse processes of lumbar 1 to 5, and finally the iliacus, starting its journey at the top of its own staircase in the iliac fossa of the pelvis, watching as they assert themselves, draw focus from the range of other muscle groups working to keep O'Reilly in the semi-stasis of her delayed fall, I found my fingers creep under the waistband of my trousers, push down the elastic of my underwear and trace the outline of the same muscles I was watching work so hard in front of me. I was taken back to a workshop in which an Ashtanga yoga practitioner had espoused the importance of these muscles in the execution of a backbend, how *urdvha danurasana* lived in the front of the body as much as it did in the back. That the interplay between the psoas and the quadriceps would allow me to find a way to move out of my lower back, where all the pinching and discomfort seemed to live. He pulled his shorts down, so the waistband sat below his hips and rested on the bottom of his pubic bone, he called us forward to watch as he isolated his psoas, encouraging us to find the area with our fingers and engage the same muscles.

This moment of intimacy with a semi-stranger, this sharing of his body, and the conjoined offering back to us of ours was reignited as I watched O'Reilly, my fingers hidden in the waistband of my trousers. And in the two years since this moment, my knowledge has deepened, not simply because I have used this narrative as a faltering attempt to communicate something about embodiment, but also because I have spent a year learning about anatomy, taking exams, taking workshops as yet another layer of training accrues as I begin a slow movement towards becoming an acupuncturist.

It feels significant that the body I write from is not only trying to navigate an understanding of the interiority of the body, an understanding mapped from the inside out, but also an understanding drawn from encountering the bodies of others. Although this is something I have done countless times as an audience member, my relationship is no longer purely ocular, replaced instead by an engagement which is conceptual, but also felt. I have learnt where the greater trochanter is not as an abstract concept, but a marker from which I can navigate to other points.

1. Iyengar yoga is a method of teaching popularised by B.K.S. Iyengar, a student of Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya. This school of yoga emphasises the need for alignment and precision, often utilising props for the safe execution of asanas (postures).
2. Kum Nye (or sKu-mNyé, both pronounced *coom yay*) is a term used to describe a range of Tibetan meditative, spiritual and body-based practices. It is used here to refer to a physical practice that shares territory with yoga, t'ai chi and qigong.
3. Ashtanga yoga is a form that uses vinyasa (breath and movement) to link asanas (postures) to create a dynamic flowing sequence. Developed/popularised by K. Pattabhi Jois (also a student of Krishnamacharya), it uses a fixed series of increasingly challenging postures that the practitioner moves through at her own pace.

The process is a therapeutic one rather than one of passive reception and potential critique. As I watch O'Reilly fall, I am not just equating the arch in her spine to my own bending backwards; I can no longer ignore that this is a process that requires the spine to extend far beyond what is normally required of quotidian existence. The vertebrae groan and complain through all seven cervical, twelve thoracic, five lumbar points. Twenty-four moments of articulation, each moving beyond what is normally expected of them. And this is before I take in to account the fact that there are ribs and the spinous and transverse processes of the vertebrae to negotiate. I might understand the grumblings from the inside, but I know the names and the potential for injury and recuperation from the outside. I know that the psoas takes much of the strain, and, if injured, the mere act of standing, like that dog on its hind legs, cannot be achieved for long.

The layers like the fascia I'm looking at, looking through as I imagine her sustained yielding to gravity, layers that I stretch and penetrate, layers of training that remains accidental, but began in that hall with the intonation of a mantra hitting me through the speakers of the PA.

And as I sit here and type, with my hand sneaking off the keyboard and stealing under the waistband of my trousers, feeling through the layers of skin, adipose, fascia and muscle, I realise that the gaze I occupied in that moment, is not the gaze of the gallery. The moment I released her leather gloves from my optic grasp, the moment I ceased to concern myself with readings and the signifying space generated by her choice of costuming, I gave myself space to dwell instead within my flesh, and through extension hers. And as I encounter flesh, I experience finitude, a landscape in which the body I occupy and the body I observe will age, whither, die, rot and turn to dust. These are not new revelations, and I am doubtless borrowing the strategies of looking from Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic*, in which he observes that the emergence of the medical gaze allows:

Western man [to] constitute himself in his own eyes as an object of science, he grasped himself within his language, and gave himself and by himself, a discursive existence, only in the opening created by his own elimination ... it is understandable, then, that medicine should have had such importance in the constitution of the sciences of man – an importance that is not only methodological, but ontological, in that it concerns man's being as object of positivist knowledge. (Foucault 1986, p. 197)

And the moment that I see these bodies as finite and sites of ephemerality, not just in the condition of generating and receiving materials, but in and of themselves, I begin to reflect upon their machinic nature. Perhaps this is because in another staircase in another part of the gallery, another body is repeatedly banging a piece of cast brass against a rock, or perhaps the recognition of finitude allows me to reflect upon the replaceable nature of these bodies within the broader context of the capitalist structure under which we operate. And from this I am taken to another Foucauldian paradigm, the disciplined and docile body. True, both the bodies in my reflection are disciplined; one is engaged in an act of display, the other in an act of witnessing, but I am uncertain if these are the docile bodies of the larger corpus. True, there is a training, and this training is disciplined and can be located within

4. This term refers to a particular branch of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

a lineage, and observation has factored in their construction, at least at some point. But the gaze has not been panoptic; these bodies have not been subject to the gaze of the prison or the school. Indeed, the way O'Reilly writes about her training through her experience of the Aro lineage,⁴ the idea of guru to student or master to pupil communication of knowledge is something very different from the mass communication and observation required of the docile body, with her articulation seemingly resistant to an embracing of exterior witness:

[my] core practice is grounded in Theravada Buddhism and in Vedanta. Any art has arisen as the fruits of that practice . . . The core of it is attention to the facts of experience. With this as a basis my practice might be called 'art' one day, 'science' on another, and 'everyday life' on another. (In Chamberlain 2009, p. 55)

This plasticity of articulation makes my grasping at Foucault feel doubly problematic; that my embodied response is so quickly repositioned through my exteriority, and even with my fingers pressed into my psoas, I struggle to remain at the interface of flesh. But perhaps the docility is not hers, perhaps it is mine. The training that I see on the stairs in front me might be of a very



Figure 1 Routine 2009. Photo Simon Keitch.

different order to the discipline Abramović attempted to instil just minutes before. Has her attempt to slow us down, to encourage our 'real' engagement with the bodies of others only served to rob us of our individual engagement with our own, surrendering us to the wider machinic complex of the gallery, itself a panopticon in potentia?

To continue to dwell in my subjective experience, to continue to mine this particular speculative perspective on what might or might not be a cohesive training, runs the risk of missing the point a third time, and to dismiss the agentic drive in my embodied reception. That I underwent a form of training is not really in question. I have committed to a body practice, a process of more than two years and counting, a practice that sees me on my mat six days a week (I rest on Saturdays and moon days), completing a sequence that doesn't change, even though my attitude to it might well remain plastic. I have committed to learning more about the body in the abstract, in order that I might treat the bodies of others. Qigong, point location, tongue diagnosis, all gather as I move towards the completion of a BSc. These shifts in understanding build and abide as I continue to engage with the practice of body-based performance makers, and take on new meanings as I hold them against those extended moments of spectatorship.

Perhaps it is because this body I inhabit, fictional though it may be, is in construction, a body slowly being built from a range of practices accidentally brought together, that I turn to the work of Francesca Steele.

Her practice is likewise concerned with the building of a body, but rather than coming together from the assorted practices that have accidentally accrued, it is brought into being from the destruction and re-growth of muscle fibres and tissue. Her practice is not about arrival, it is not about the moment where her body meets the floor at the bottom of a staircase, rather it is a process of becoming. Her fall is extended, held in the continued stasis of an unfulfilled promise, or perhaps an impossible task worthy of Goat Island. And watching, holding this practice in my vision becomes equally impossible.



Figure 2 Routine 2010. Photo Simon Keitch.

It is not just in those moments where I can see my body, feel my body reflected back to me in the work of others that this strange reticulation occurs. Some time after I shared the staircase with O'Reilly, I find myself in an abandoned warehouse, standing on a dais, nose to nose with the naked and awesome body of Francesca Steele. My muscles are not hers; they are not worked to the point of failure. My muscles are lengthened, not built up. The privations I go through to support my newly emerging body (in keeping with the principle of ahimsa I have switched to a vegetarian diet) are of a different order to the massive amounts of protein consumed during the bulking process, or the dieting that precedes competition preparation in which as much fat as possible is stripped away to make the muscles appear more defined or 'cut', a process as debilitating as it is dangerous. Although there are superficial equivalencies to the training processes being undertaken, and while the bodies undergo change, the rationale is significantly different.

What is interesting about the work of Steele is that the use of the term 'training' is absolutely foregrounded in how she articulates her practice. Whereas my training is heteroglossic, aimed at multiple targets, utilising a



Figure 3 Routine 2011. Photo Simon Keitch.

range of discursive and embodied strategies, hers is singular in focus. The interesting tension comes from her training *becoming* her practice, rather than *servicing* her practice. Training, the endless and unrelenting need of serving a body that is determined to create mass, becomes the end as well as the means, with the daily becoming extra daily not just through repetition (because the repetition is built in) but through the framing and naming of this training as an arts practice. Tehching Hsieh, Linda Montano, Chris Burden and Abramović, to name a few, have already ruled so much into what might be articulated as performance practice that Steele's addition offers no surprise, except perhaps in what it reveals about training that becomes an end in itself.

Perhaps it is through the work of Steele that I am encouraged to think about the distance between training and practice. The performances of Steele and O'Reilly, Hsieh, Montano et al. capture a thing in the midst of itself, the audience gathered around, punctuating an event mid-process. Suspended in my own relentless practice, I am bound and determined, obdurate and hard-nosed, and wonder what is learnt in the repetition. In the panic and delight of having embarked on an abiding practice I find myself somewhere between the Taoist concept of Wu-Wei 'action without action', and Ashtanga yoga founder Sri K. Pattabhi Jois' insistence that 'practice and all is coming'.

The slowing down I thought I was offered by Abramović was perhaps, upon reflection, nothing of the kind. Rather I think I was offered a sort of punctum, a rupturing of my experiential engagement; and discomfiting though this might have been, what it offered was an opening. And, ultimately, an opening is all I can offer here, because a return to our bodies takes time, and sweat. I am training in-becoming.

References

- Balshaw, M. and Poots, A., 2010. Creating Holy Ground. In: P. Orrell, ed. *Marina Abramović and the Future of Performance Art*. London: Prestel, 88–93.
- Chamberlain, F., 2009. Playing with Post-Secular Performance. *Performance Art Journal*, 31 (1), 54–67.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. trans. Brian Massumi. London: The Athlone Press.
- Foucault, M., 1986. *The Birth of the Clinic*. trans. A.M. Sheridan. London: Routledge.
- Smith, J.K. and Smith, L.F., 2001. Spending Time on Art. *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 19 (2), 229–236.
- Whalley, J. and Miller, L., 2010. Disorderly Looking. In: P. Orrell, ed. *Marina Abramović and the Future of Performance Art*. London: Prestel, 94–99.