Provocative and Transformative Performance

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For

Kris Needham, Keith Needham, Keir Needham

and Joe Synnott
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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.
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Abstract

What tools do performers use to provoke their audiences to change?
What is the nature and potential extent of this change?

Provocative and Transformative Performance looks at the potential of performance to provoke attitudinal and behavioural change. Through a combination of theoretical and practical research, the project attempts to locate specific characteristics of performances that may be both provocative and transformative.

Although previous research has interrogated the efficacy of performance, this project attempts to interrogate the nature of attitudinal and behavioural change through performance in a new way. The approach is triangulated, shifting perspective from performance maker to audience member to performance theorist. Bodily, a solo performance investigating body image issues, was created both as a response to this research and as a performative tool for generating research data. The Bodily data arises from a personal response to the performance and from focus groups conducted with audience members of the piece. The performance is integrated as a necessary part of this research, as it illuminates the process of a provocative performance maker.

Alchemy permeates this thesis, weaving through the analysis as a metaphor for transformation. An alchemist undertakes the quest for philosophical gold through several complex processes. The alchemical moment of ‘projection’ is particularly significant; this is the climax, the final operation before gold is achieved. The thesis is written in a multi-vocal style, incorporating the analytical voice, the poetic alchemical metaphor, personal responses to performance and a performance development journal.

The research project is a methodological and evaluative engagement with provocative and transformative performance, taking into account the intention of the performer, the instrumentation performers employ in order to provoke and transform their audiences, and the potential illumination of an issue for the audience through performance. Through this theoretical framework, the thesis aims to throw light on the ways in which performance can provoke transformation.
Part One:
Introduction

‘Its father is the sun’:
Introduction and Calcination

We should always start at the beginning. At the Earth. A site for the impulse, the seed and source of all life. Planting flowers in a garden bed, pushing the germ through the dark, loose soil and brushing the soil back over the top. Patting down the brown earth... hopeful. Pick up the can, and out comes the Water, nurturing the seed and giving it enough love to grow. Emotional, tears roll down cheeks and into the soil, the extra love needed from the personal. Next, flowers. Blooming, stretching their heads upwards into the Air. Heads that think, plan, know the right moment to unfurl their petals and slowly, shyly, turn them towards the sun. Live in glory for moments, or years. Until the Fire swells up from within, invisible and sinister. The Light becomes too bright, and before the heads can reach it they stop. It is too strong, too bright, hot and fiery. Causes petals to shrivel up, bow their heads. Trying, using all willpower to hang on, to keep connected. But it must drop, float towards the ground and settle there with an elderly sigh. The petal is enveloped by the earth and dragged down, deep into the soft dark brown granules. Absorbed again by the roots, ready to become a seed once again.¹

¹ Author (2006), Bodily (process journal).
Introduction

I began this research project wanting to understand how performance can change the way people think and behave. Anecdotal evidence, my own experience and some academic discourse\(^2\) all say that it is possible for performance to effect change in both performers and audience members. However, there is a lack of research that interrogates the ways in which performers provoke their audiences to change and the nature of this change. My research therefore became an investigation into the links between provocative (agitating an audience to change their attitudes or behaviours) and transformative (resulting in a change of attitudes or behaviours) performance. This investigation takes into account the intention of the performer, the instrumentation performers employ in order to provoke and transform their audiences and the reported changes experienced by the audience. These elements comprise a framework for provocative and transformative performance that is explored in this study.

As a performance practitioner and researcher, I can provide some triangulation to this inquiry. Firstly, I explore the literature and case studies relevant to the research questions, and from these construct ideas and theories about the nature of provocative and transformative performance. Secondly, I interrogate the experiences of writing and performing a practical work emerging from this theoretical research. Finally, I investigate the reported experiences of the audience of this work. This combination of performance and research is a complex meeting-point of contexts, disciplines and perspectives. This thesis draws on traditions that can be identified as structuralist, but without engaging with or claiming to advance post-structuralist thinking. The aim of the research is to open up new questions on provocative and transformative performance, through engaging with performance studies and psychological discourses. This chapter introduces

these discussions, establishing the key concepts of the argument and outlining the chapters in the thesis to follow.

My interest in this project stems from my introduction to the ancient art of alchemy. Alchemy and performance are profoundly interrelated, and the crux of this relationship is the notion of projection: a term with various definitions relating to throwing, transferring and illuminating. I propose that transformation of attitudes and behaviours can occur through provocative and transformative performance. The concept of projection is a key to my interrogation of this transformation through provocative performance. Alchemy serves as a poetic strand woven throughout the thesis, operating as a metaphor for transformation.

Alchemy

I remember the exact moment I was introduced to alchemy. It was September 1999, a stiflingly hot week in London for the ‘Wisdom of Shakespeare’ course at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre. It was the uncomfortable, sticky kind of heat. I was under the impression that this kind of heat did not exist in London, that greyness and bleakness were all that existed. This was proved wrong by sweat patches in inappropriately heavy clothing, and by Mark Rylance, the artistic director of the Globe. He was not perturbed by the heat. In fact, he seemed to feed on it, as a much greater inspiration than the typical London dreariness. Along with Peter Dawkins, an author of various works on ancient and sacred philosophy in Shakespeare, Rylance engaged the ancient elements as a support to teach the two-day course. Rylance and Dawkins used the alchemical underpinnings of *Antony and Cleopatra* (as this was the current play in the season at the Globe) as a doorway into a discussion of Shakespeare’s underlying mystical and spiritual themes.
Definitions and key concepts

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines alchemy as “the medieval forerunner of chemistry, concerned particularly with attempts to convert common metals into gold or to find a universal elixir.”³ It is said that the word ‘alchemy’ comes from the Arabic ‘al-kimiya,’ a reference to the black, fertile soil of Egypt.⁴ However, Jungian analyst Jeffrey Raff has a different interpretation:

The term alchemy itself comes from two roots: *al*, which is Arabic for “the,” and *chemeia*. It is unclear what *chemeia* actually means. There were two forms of the term in Greek: *chemeia* and *chymia*. The former refers to the process of extracting juice, while the latter has to do with deriving metals from ore. For both forms, the transmutative processes comprise the common element, the transformation of a given substance into a higher one. We might, therefore, think of alchemy as the art of transmutation.⁵

The different definitions of the term ‘alchemy’ illustrate the complex and enigmatic nature of the alchemical discourse. This is by no means a concrete body of knowledge, but one that is subject to interpretation. Only a simplistic definition of alchemy entails merely the physical process of attempting to convert base metals into gold, and a search for an elixir or the fountain of youth. A more complex definition is concerned with the philosophical idea of personal purification, through a spiritual transmutation. Historian William Leo notes:

Gold is not just a shiny, valuable metal; it is a symbol for spiritual perfection... “Transmutation” did not refer to metals alone, although its techniques could be applied to the changing of one stone to another; but to the transformation of a man’s spirit, so that it leaves the world of the commonplace and ascends to a higher world, where, supposedly, man walks with the gods and understands the great secrets of the Universe.⁶

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Also, much about alchemy is so secret, that, as Leo believes, “there never has been and never will be an accurate history of alchemy.” Legend suggests that the true practitioners of alchemy were often sworn to secrecy about the nature of the work. Art scholar Richard Brown describes the manifestation of this secrecy, and Roob cites an ancient alchemical text that mysteriously states: “Wherever we have spoken openly we have (actually) said nothing. But where we have written something in code and in pictures we have concealed the truth.” This secrecy has led to misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of alchemy, as art historian Arturo Schwarz notes: “The misunderstanding about alchemy is as old as alchemy itself. An Ancient Chinese alchemical text denounces the most common and widespread fallacy about alchemy in these words: ‘They believe that [alchemy] means to transform stones into gold: isn’t that crazy?’”

It is apparent, then, that practising alchemists were not concerned with the fast accumulation of material wealth, but were connecting with the spiritual realm and using it as a way to interpret and understand life. The alchemists seek philosophical gold, or the knowledge of the true nature of matter and life, not the shiny and precious metal alone. Carl Jung concurs: “the alchemist ... will assure us that the gold he is seeking is not - as the stupid suppose - the ordinary gold (aurum vulgi), it is the philosophical gold.”

Historian Frances Yates makes a similar point: “Though we connect alchemy with the specific aim of making gold, it was concerned with the scientific problem of the transmutation of substances as a whole, and this included, for the pious alchemist, spiritual and moral transformation.”

One of the main principles of alchemy is the maxim: ‘As above, so below.’ Leo outlines this principle: “everything we see around us is in its basic

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7 Leo Alchemy, 1.
8 Richard Brown (2003), 'Alchemy, mimetics, immersion and consciousness.' MelbourneDAC, the 5th International Digital Arts and Culture Conference, School of Applied Communication, RMIT, Melbourne, Australia.
composition merely a carbon copy of something larger and something smaller.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, Raff says: “anything that happens on one plane of reality produces a corresponding effect on another level of reality.”\textsuperscript{14} The four elements earth, water, air, and fire are the key elements of alchemy. Art scholar Alexander Roob outlines Aristotle’s discussion of the four elements: “the \textit{prima materia} conjoins with the four qualities of dryness, coldness, moisture and heat, thus developing to form the four elements.”\textsuperscript{15} Philosophical writer Patrick Harpur suggests that the \textit{prima materia} is a “fire which does not burn” and a “water” which “does not wet the hands.”\textsuperscript{16} Harpur also discusses the role of Mercurius, which is the essence of alchemy: “Mercurius is imagination - which also works, according to Plotinus, ‘like a mirror so that by means of it the reflection of consciousness takes place.’”\textsuperscript{17} As in performance, imagination and reflection are integral to the alchemical experience.

In order for transmutation to take place, the qualities of the elements must be manipulated, changing the proportion of elements contained within certain materials. The first stage of the cycle, Earth, is the site of the seed or impulse, the initial genesis of inspiration. The next stage, Water, is the nurturing of the impulse, the site where love and desire fertilise the seed. The third stage is Air, the blooming of the seed, and this is where thought and planning come into the cycle. The final stage is Fire, the willpower and action that emerge at the end of the cycle. I am also extending my understanding of the cycle to include light, which Aristotle called the ‘fifth element.’ The alchemical cycle of earth $\rightarrow$ water $\rightarrow$ air $\rightarrow$ fire $\rightarrow$ light, through which an alchemist must travel in order to transmute, serves as a macrocosmic and microcosmic structure for many aspects of life. Light is only achieved once the cycle has been successfully completed, and is the link between the basic cycle and the transmutation to the next level. Light is often called the fifth element, or ‘quintessence,’ and is sought by all alchemists. It is only through undertaking

\textsuperscript{13} Leo Alchemy, 47.  
\textsuperscript{14} Raff Jung and the Alchemical Imagination, 177.  
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 143.
the cycle of elements, either on a macro level (over a whole life) or on a micro level (the course of an hour), that the alchemist can reach the quintessence.

The cycle of elements, as it was used in the Wisdom of Shakespeare course, also included Light as the culmination of the basic cycle:

![Diagram of the cycle used in the 'Wisdom of Shakespeare' course.](image)

Figure 1: my notation of the cycle used in the ‘Wisdom of Shakespeare’ course.

While this was the interpretation used in the Globe course, many alchemists over time have reinterpreted the cycle of elements in different ways. One such alchemist was Robert Fludd, who created coded, illustrative diagrams. The following illustration was drawn by Fludd, and gives a more complex and symbolic version of the cycle:
This style of drawing is typical of alchemical art, which uses highly symbolic images and colours to illustrate the cycle. Indeed, it was said that alchemists only revealed the truth of their work through code and pictures. The various representations of the alchemical cycle, therefore, have added layers of complexity to the central enigma.

In the Wisdom of Shakespeare course, we connected with how Shakespeare used the alchemical cycle. This prompted artistic inspiration in a way that has had significant impact on my life. The course focussed on alchemical

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18 Roob Alchemy & Mysticism: the hermetic museum, 9.
rituals and symbols instead of accepted constructions and deconstructions of Shakespearian language and idiosyncrasies. We discussed Shakespeare’s structural and thematic relationship to the five-part alchemical cycle at length, and participated in various ritualistic exercises. One such exercise involved thinking about an event that had happened in our lives that we perhaps needed to overcome, and applying this event to the cycle of elements in order to work it through in a logical way. Mark Rylance and Peter Dawkins set up a small circle in the centre of the room, with a bucket of mud symbolising ‘earth,’ a bucket of water for ‘water,’ flowers for ‘air’ and a lit candle for ‘fire.’ We were invited to move around the cycle at our own pace, opening up to any thoughts, emotions and actions that came to the surface. My choice was to think about the trip that I was undertaking, to travel to Europe alone at age seventeen, away from my family and home for five months. Following the rite, I first visited the ‘earth,’ or impulse of my decision to embark on the trip. Once I had dwelt on that, I moved on to the ‘water,’ the emotions behind the trip. After water was ‘air,’ the thoughts and reasoning about the event, and then ‘fire,’ the action, or decisive undertaking of the trip. I found that I allowed myself to surrender completely to the experience of the ritual, and felt an overwhelming calm and peace once I had completed it. From this, I understood that the alchemical cycle does not necessarily have to occur outside the body, but can be a process of mind and memory. The experience of undertaking alchemical rituals put alchemy’s philosophical and esoteric interpretations into practice.

From these alchemical rituals, we developed our own offerings: found objects collected, combined, and imbued with the mysticism of our own personal meanings. We then moved outside into nature, to a park with unnaturally green grass and sunlight beating down on our backs. Marking a makeshift cycle on the ground, we physically, as well as emotionally and spiritually, moved from element to element. Direct connection with nature brought this alchemical ritual further into my frame of understanding, as I surrendered to the emotion of the ritual. The application of the alchemical cycle to aspects of our lives seemed so simple and natural to me, that I
became overwhelmed with emotions. I could never have predicted the tears that rolled down my face upon completion of the course, releasing offerings back into the source of Shakespeare’s inspiration, the Thames.\textsuperscript{19}

Since the course, I have been interested in discovering more about the nature of alchemy. Although the truth about alchemy is shrouded in mystery, philosophers, scientists and artists have dealt with its themes. By looking at these works, it becomes clear that alchemy has varied origins in many different countries. In addition, alchemy has different personal meanings for everyone, and the theory and practice of it is largely dependent on the mindset of the executor. Thus, there is a precedent for appropriating alchemy’s concepts.

\textsuperscript{19} Author Bodily (process journal). op cit.
It is therefore appropriate to discuss the concrete, chemical practice of alchemy and the psychological alchemy as one and the same. This means that alchemical texts must be read “in a double way.” Alchemy scholar Stanislas Klossowski de Rola says: “alchemy is a rainbow bridging the chasm between the earthly and heavenly planes, between matter and spirit. Like the rainbow, it may appear within reach, only to recede if one chases it merely to find a pot of gold.” The culmination of the Great Work, as Schwarz sums up, is transformation: “The alchemist is a dreamer who knows what he wants: to transform the world to change life, and hence liberate man to transform the world.”

Alchemy and projection

_Halfway through this performance of In Our Name, I am already feeling so much sorrow for the Al Abaddi family. The circumstances and events leading up to their imprisonment at various immigration detention centres in Australia have been enacted on the stage, but I have yet to come to terms with the shocking truths of what this family has had to endure. Then, in a visually provocative moment, a child’s drawing is projected onto the detention centre backdrop, and the actors hold up white placards so certain sections of the drawing are emphasised. I see drawings of unhappy parents standing with unhappy children, and caged birds unable to take flight. Next appear drawings of caged children, looking every bit as dismal as the birds who echo their incarceration. These raw and expressive images, when combined with the action of the piece, add enormous emotional depth. The images are real, drawn by one of the many children subjected to the brutal conditions of detention. This reality hits me hard. All at once, this is not just a play about a family. It has become a story about what happens in this_
country behind closed doors, about the atrocities our government is still committing in our name.

In 2004 I was an audience member for Belvoir Company B’s production of In Our Name. The play, written and directed by Nigel Jamieson, is based on the story of the Al Abaddi family: an Iraqi refugee family who spent several years in Australian detention centres before their applications were rejected, ultimately receiving visas for New Zealand. In this performance, the power of the projected image became clear. Like performance practitioner Bertolt Brecht’s use of projected images depicting the real-world events relating to the play’s action, Jamieson’s audiovisual projections of children’s drawings in In Our Name reminded the viewer of the social and political reality of the play’s content.

I have been experimenting with audiovisual projections in performance since studying Brecht’s work, especially his use of projections and placards. However, the term ‘projection’ also has applications in alchemy, and projection is therefore a point of connection between performance and alchemy.

The cycle of the Three Works is a representation of the complete process of alchemy, as the alchemist completes three levels of the basic cycle. All circumstances must be in place, and the cycle completed successfully, for the alchemist to pass to the next level. Projection is a crucial moment, as it occurs at the culmination of the Three Works. In most texts, this is the moment when the Philosopher’s Stone or tincture is “thrown over the base metals to transmute it into silver or gold.”

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In his book *Alchemy: the secret art*, de Rola includes images of the alchemist’s flask through each stage of the cycle. These images are highly symbolic, and represent the symbols of the Great Work. The image for alchemical projection is a broken flask, symbolising that the cycle has been completed, and transformation achieved:
As depicted in the above image, projection is a powerful moment of crisis, where the alchemist’s vessel is broken. This moment of crisis is where the results of the cycle become apparent, and the success of the alchemist is seen. Another depiction of projection in alchemical art shows the King projecting onto his subjects, who “personify the base metals.”24 An alchemical vessel stands in the foreground:

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24 Ibid.
Figure 6: A representation of projection. (Abraham (1998), Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.)

Historical scholar Johannes Fabricius states that projection is “the instrument by which the alchemist recovers the primordial stone, the goal of his work,” while historian Peggy A. Knapp says:

Alchemical treatises share a few basic ideas: that alchemy speeds up processes already at work in Nature, that gold represents the perfect balance between the elements of earth, water, air, and fire toward which Nature is heading, and that alchemy could hurry the lower metals toward gold through ‘projections’ involving mercury, sulfur, and furnaces.

In his writings on psychology, Jung shows a particular interest in alchemical projection. He notes that “it is indeed remarkable that the alchemists should have picked on the term proiectio in order to express the application of the

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philosophical Mercurius to base metals,”) indicating that the term projection (or proiectio, the ancient form) has significance not only in alchemy, but also in the realm of psychology. Jung says:

The real nature of matter was unknown to the alchemist: he knew it only in hints. In seeking to explore it he projected the unconscious into the darkness of matter in order to illuminate it. In order to explain the mystery of matter he projected yet another mystery - his own unknown psychic background - into what was to be explained: Obscurum per obscurius, ignotum per ignotius! This procedure was not, of course, intentional; it was an involuntary occurrence.”

In fact, Jung believed that the chemical changes alchemists witness in their experiments were projections of the unconscious. The alchemist believes that they are seeing chemical changes, whereas these changes are merely projections of their unconscious selves – and being unconscious, the alchemist does not realise what they truly are. This view negates any possibility of objective verification for alchemical transmutation. However, Jung’s idea of alchemy and the unconscious must be qualified by some of the critical discussion of his views. Jung’s writings are complex and interpretive, as Richard Noll clarifies in his book on the widespread popularity and cult status of Jung. Additionally, Principe and Newman discuss extensively the problems with Jung’s views on alchemy. Doubts over his entire concept of the ‘collective unconscious’ (which Principe and Newman describe as “an outgrowth of nineteenth-century occultism”) and his belief that alchemy hinges on the projection of the psyche, have somewhat devalued his ideas. One writer whose views slightly differ to Jung’s is Fabricius. When making a connection between alchemy and psychology, he says that the alchemist may employ psychological projection consciously, rather than the unconscious projection Jung proposes: “If an inner part of oneself is felt to be evil and

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28 Ibid., 245.
dangerous, one may save oneself by splitting off this part and ‘casting it away,’ that is, by projecting it.”

In the example of Jamieson’s piece *In Our Name*, the audiovisual projections of a child’s drawings, combined with my understanding of the issue of asylum seekers, affected me emotionally. When I saw the projections of children’s drawings, combined with the subject matter of the play, I became upset by the real-life scenario this represented. Experiences such as these suggest that there is a link between audiovisual and psychological projection, and in turn, the emotion I was feeling made me identify with the issues presented.

There are many other forms of projection that are relevant to this project. Later in this chapter, I go into detail about these different types and modes of projection.

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Alchemy and performance

Shakespeare is one of many artists and scholars who have explored alchemy, or the alchemical metaphor. This connection with alchemy has been discussed in several texts. For instance, theologian Beryl Pogson discusses the embodiment of the alchemical cycle by Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

Having played her part on earth, in the body, she has “immortal longings” and calls for her robe and crown, the symbols of a higher plane. Leaving Caesar master of the material world, she answers the call of her spiritual bridegroom, and, with the aid of the Nile Serpent, a very high symbol of transmutation, she sheds her body of earth and water, giving these elements back to baser life, and invokes Antony, saying: ‘Husband, I come. Now to that name my courage prove my title! I am fire and air.’ Thus

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31 Fabricius Alchemy: the medieval alchemists and their royal art. op cit.
she withdraws into her subtle bodies to ascend to the spiritual world.”

This interpretation is useful as an example of the many ways in which Shakespeare can be interpreted through the language and symbolism of alchemy. Pogson’s ideas and writings also served as a foundation for the analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Wisdom of Shakespeare course.

Shakespeare used alchemy to give his work depth and a mystical undertone, as well as to subtly rebel against the religious repression of the time. Shakespeare’s plays can then be read on another level, as “theatrical parables for esoteric communication.” In 2005, I saw a production of *The Tempest* by Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London, directed by Mark Rylance. In the programme notes, Rylance discusses the alchemical underpinnings of *The Tempest*, in particular referencing the book *Prospero’s Island* by psychologist Noel Cobb. Cobb says that *The Tempest* is about “the vital necessity of earthiness as a counterbalance to intellect.” He continues: “In the Western world we have no vessel in which to contain our often warring opposites except perhaps the little known coniunctio of the alchemists.” Theatre historian Charles Nicholl, in his book *The Chemical Theatre*, also makes connections between Shakespeare and alchemy. In particular, he describes the alchemical cycle as a “pulse,” saying that the alchemical “rhythm of division and healing is one we discerned in *King Lear*, the alchemical pulse of *solve et coagula*.” He also notes: “The play, as dream made visible, is perhaps not so far from that ‘spirituall fixt thing’ that the alchemist sought to witness in the theatre of his vessel.” According to Nicholl, the alchemist’s vessel was

35 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 239.
[a] glass O, an amphitheatre of strange and tonic revelations, like the ‘wooden O’ of the playhouse. And what we see revealed there, the alchemist and dramatist both insist, is something hidden inside ourselves. At the close of his revel-ending valediction, Prospero says: ‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on.’ He includes us all. We are the Raw Stuff out of which these dream-plays are drawn, like the Mercurial spirit out of matter. If we wonder why we keep on coming back to Shakespeare, this last little alchemical flourish is perhaps his own explanation.38

This tight reading of alchemy and Shakespearean theatre has been inspirational for my views on how the alchemical metaphor can be applied to provocative and transformative performance. Nicholl further suggests:

The alchemist was a ‘speculative’ - literally, watching - chemist: the changes he witnessed in the glass theatre of his vessel became a mirror for changes inside him. Is this the kind of theatre to which Shakespeare aspired in these last plays: a ‘chemical theatre’ of transformations enacted and received?”39

Other performance studies writers have also talked about the connections between Shakespeare and alchemy, for instance Peggy Munoz Simonds,40 Robert Weimann41 and Michael Mooney.42 Lyndy Abraham echoes Nicholl’s description of the comparisons between the alchemist’s vessel and the theatre building itself, noting:

The alchemists viewed their alembic as a theatre in which the miniature creation of the Stone imitated the creation of the greater world in microcosm. The alembic was the theatre in which the cycle of solve et coagula, beheading and renovation, melting and recasting, was faithfully re-enacted.43

Similarly, Harpur suggests that “the Work takes place in a realm intermediate between mind and matter. It is a diamonic process, a ‘chemical theatre’ in

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 231.
42 Michael E. Mooney (1990), Shakespeare’s Dramatic Transactions, Durham, Duke University Press.
43 Abraham Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, 199.
which material processes and psychic transformations interpenetrate.”

These comparisons between the alchemical work and the theatre itself have also been inspirational for my own creative practice, allowing me to visualise the theatre space in a new way.

Arturo Schwarz takes a different approach, looking at comparisons between traits of the artist and the alchemist:

... since artists and alchemists are the archetypes of the rebel, one will not be surprised when one finds in the works of certain artists such a large number of correspondences with alchemical symbolism: artists and alchemists unconsciously find their symbols in the same collective and archaic sources.

Schwarz’s ideas are relevant to this study, as he ventures into the realm of the “rebel” in art and alchemy. I see this idea of the rebel as tied in with being provocative, as many of the provocative and transformative performances discussed in this thesis stage an opposition or a rebellion against some aspect of politics or society. Theatre scholar Bettina L. Knapp, in her book *Theatre and Alchemy*, outlines the similarities between alchemy and the work of the playwright. She says: “Alchemy is a science, a psychology, and a metaphysics. It is also a theatre ... The dramatist projects his yearnings and fantasies onto his play (his double) and, in so doing, alters their form and reality.”

Knapp’s vision of the alchemical artist is therefore more delicate than the image of the staunch rebel, and encompasses a slightly Jungian style of unconscious projection.

In addition, various theatre practitioners have embraced alchemical ideas in their work. For example, Antonin Artaud had a particular fascination with alchemy:

All true alchemists know alchemical symbols are chimeras just as theatre is a chimera. And this eternal reference to the fundamental principles and objects in theatre, found in almost all alchemist texts ought to be understood as a feeling (the

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44 Harpur *The Philosophers' Secret Fire* : a history of the imagination, 141.
45 Schwarz 'Alchemy, Androgyny and Visual Artists.' 59.
alchemists being extraordinarily conscious of it) of the similarity there is between the level on which characters, objects, portrayals and in a general way everything which makes up theatre’s *virtual reality* develops, and the purely assumed, dreamlike level on which alchemist signs are evolved.\textsuperscript{47}

He suggests, therefore, that “if the original idea of theatre is not to allow us to attempt psychological operations similar to those attempted by alchemy in the hollowed out, empty excavation of the stage, that is, a small scale liberation of powers we forcibly constrict, it has no reason for being.”\textsuperscript{48}

However, as historian Ann Demaitre notes, “Artaud never undertook to develop fully his theory on the identity of alchemy and the theater even though there are many references to alchemy scattered across his writings and correspondence.”\textsuperscript{49} Artaud’s interest in alchemy, she argues, has connections with Jungian psychology:

The Artaudian interpretation of the ‘double’ as ‘Essence’ bears a striking resemblance to what Jung described as the unconscious projection of the alchemist who perceives ‘the invincible Spirit as a mirror-image which is the root of all corpora needed in the alchemical process or which emerges in its course.’\textsuperscript{50}

Artaud did apply some alchemical principles to his art, considering all elements of the mise-en-scène as forming a “tangible mass in which the creative essence of the theater is embedded.”\textsuperscript{51} This idea had resonance for me in creating my own performance project, as I employed alchemical imagery in the aesthetics and design of the piece. Further, Demaitre created a chart which summarises the similarities between the alchemical and Artaudian methodologies\textsuperscript{52}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 111.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Ann Demaitre (1972), ‘The Theater of Cruelty and Alchemy: Artaud and Le Grand Oeuvre.’ *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33, 239.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 241.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 247.
\end{itemize}
Other contemporary performance makers have expressed an interest in the metaphors and symbols of alchemy. For example, Richard Foreman said:

What attracted me specifically to alchemy was its notion of taking a very simple, primary material, and reworking it again and again in the belief that if you dedicate your purest self to this process of continual repetition, something unexpected would happen to the gross matter you labored over. A universal force, or the force of your unconscious, would project into the worked material so that it would rise, it would lift, it would transform itself into something else.\(^{53}\)

Performance maker Enrique Pardo, in his organisation Pantheatre, also uses alchemy and myth to create performance. According to his website: “For him it is not a spiritual discipline... Alchemy is the depository of an extraordinarily broad-minded wisdom on the creative process: how matter is allowed to speak metaphorically, to transmute its 'self'; how imagination creates, transforms, experiments.” Pardo runs workshops and develops performance around myth and alchemy, extending these metaphors into an image-based style of theatre.

Alchemy can also be useful in discussing the liminal or ‘in-between’ space of theatre. Performance theorist Susan Broadhurst suggests one definition: “the liminal performs to the edge of the possible, a scene of immediate aesthetic intervention with an indirect effect on the political ... the liminal mirrors and is an experimental extension of our contemporary social and cultural ethos.” There are also links between alchemy and classical philosophies. The alchemical idea of ‘as above, so below,’ can be related directly to Plato’s theory of forms and archetypes in Republic, as the alchemists also believed that there was an external world where perfect forms existed. However, where Plato believed that Forms and copies were static, the alchemists believed that matter was moving towards perfection. Plato’s story of the cave describes a projection scenario as an allegory to the practice of philosophy in life. The projected image is central to this allegory; it serves as an appropriate metaphor for the philosophical and perceptual realms.

The tradition of using alchemical themes in discourses and practices of performance and transformation is relevant to this thesis. I based my performance project Bodily on the cycle and metaphors of alchemy, as I felt that alchemy could represent the struggles for bodily transformation in the piece. The alchemical voice also weaves through the weft of the thesis, adding colour and poetry. I am not using alchemy as a mode of explanation for any part of the practical operation of provocative and transformative

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performance, but rather as a metaphor for transformation that lends an ethereal and poetic atmosphere to discussion of transformation, which is in itself an often-intangible concept. This is aligned with the way these other performance practitioners have used alchemical concepts, as a creative muse, a structural guide and imagery. My use of alchemy, in both the thesis and in *Bodily*, is therefore predominantly stylistic. Sparked by an interest in the way other artists have used alchemical metaphors in their work, I became fascinated in the common threads I could draw between alchemical transformation and transformation through provocative performance. As transformation is a slippery concept, the use of the alchemical metaphor helps to give it a stylistic frame. The function of alchemy in this thesis should therefore be seen as poetic and metaphorical. The argument can be made and read without this alchemical thread, but I believe that it makes for a more complete and engaging read.

To highlight this alchemical thread, I have chosen to follow the alchemical story in text boxes throughout the thesis. This is a poetic voice that, rather than sitting within the argument, weaves through it as a thread of reference and a glossary to alchemical symbols and metaphors. These text boxes encapsulate the key terms and concepts of alchemy, bridging alchemical scholarship with the discourses of performance in the thesis. Alchemy therefore becomes a literary aesthetic device, permeating the discussion through a meta-text of chapter titles and text boxes to emphasise and provide commentary on the metaphorical connections between alchemy, performance and change.

In addition to the text boxes, I have used different font styles throughout the thesis to indicate different source material or different registers of tone. Broadly speaking, these font changes add to the ‘woven’ concept of the thesis, as they bring together more tonal strands to add layers of context. These fonts are outlined in the table below:
Table 2: Font styles and their uses in the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Font</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>For main body of the thesis. This is the analytical and theoretical voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>For various succinct quotes at the beginning of sections, my performance journal entries and my responses to various performances. This is the contextual and emotional voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>For the text boxes. This is the alchemical voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>For excerpts from the script of my performance project, <em>Bodily</em>. This is the performative voice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Provocative and Transformative Performance**

I am using the terms ‘provocative’ and ‘transformative’ to describe the types of performance with which this study is concerned. I have visualised the study with a simple schematic:

![Figure 7: A diagram of the relationship of this study to provocative and transformative performance.](image)
As shown in the above diagram, this thesis does not look at all provocative performance, or all transformative performance, but at performances encompassing both these areas: provocative and transformative performance. The term ‘provocative’ is aligned with the intention of the performer, whereas ‘transformative’ refers to the reception of the audience, and the effect of the performance on audience or performer.

I am using the term ‘provocative performance’ to describe performance that attempts to incite a reaction from its audience. Usually, the performers of these works want their audiences to question something they may have experienced in their own lives. The reaction that is sought may be subtle and short-lived, such as crying or laughing, or significant and long-term, for instance a change in attitudes and behaviours. ‘Provocative performance’ is a broad signifier, and this study therefore limits it with another one: ‘transformative performance.’ This term describes performance that affects its audience or performers in a way that changes something about their attitudes or behaviours, as distinct from performance that entertains or informs. Performance that is both provocative and transformative falls into this study. The following section reviews the literature and performance that are included in this definition, mapping a field of provocative and transformative performance from which the project emerges.

**Key terms**

There are various terms used in the literature to describe the type of performance this study questions. This section charts the rationale behind each of the key terms, their history and nomenclature. My interest in these terms determines how I write my way through the continual evolution of interpretations.
• Provocation

I am using this term to refer to the aim of the performance practitioner, and the methods they employ in order to elicit a certain type of response from their audience. “Performance” is a term here used in its broadest form, to include theatre, dance, music, film, public speech, television, and other forms. Scholars have used other terms to refer to the aim of performers to provoke or educate their audiences. These include political theatre, didactic performance, applied drama, or, specifically to educate, Theatre in Education. “Political performance” emerged as a useful term at the beginning of this study. However, the research is interested in performance that provokes and galvanises change, but is not necessarily tied up with practical politics and the field of knowledge surrounding political performance.

Provocative performance may be about politics, culture, personal lives, or social issues, but it operates on a personal and psychological level, rather than a social-based political level. It does not only indicate performance that angers people, though this may be one of its effects. Provocative performance may elicit different reactions from different people, but in the way I am using the term I refer to performance that is intended to evoke a reaction that is strong enough to encourage change. It incites people to do something, to agitate changes in attitudes and behaviours not only of audience members, but also sometimes of the performers themselves. The style of performance usually foregrounds the interrogation of an issue, rather than its representation, and refers to the aim of the performer in a more general sense. Provocation is also defined by its reception, in that the responses that people have to provocative performance could be annoyance, excitement, or disturbance of some kind. A performance is provocative if an audience member is provoked to critically engage with a particular concern, and the performance maker intended for this.

• Transformation and change

I use the term ‘transformation’ in this study to discuss the degree to which people are changed by a performance. Others have talked about similar concepts using terms like ‘change’ and ‘efficacy.’ While ‘change’ is a useful
term for describing attitudinal and behavioural change as a result of a performance, I am using ‘transformation’ in this context to suggest a link with alchemical transformation. I am not using the term ‘efficacy’ as it describes specifically desired effects, for example its use by performance theorist Richard Schechner to describe a counterpoint to entertainment.\(^{56}\) In contrast, this study covers various forms of transformation that arise as a consequence of provocative performance, even if they are not anticipated or desired by the performance maker.

In addition, I am not specifically taking into account the notion of ritual, as discussed by Schechner and performance theorist Victor Turner,\(^{57}\) even though these scholars have discussed ritual as being transformative. Similarly, performance theorist Barbara Myerhoff talks about transformation, adopting Schechner’s understanding of the transformation of consciousness through ritual.\(^{58}\) I am not discussing ritual because for me, ritual suggests performance traditions in different (and often distant) cultures. I am more interested in performance encountered on a daily basis, in particular performances occurring in the context of popular culture. This does not exclude ritualistic performances, but rather place emphasis on those that are located within contemporary Western culture. I have limited the study in this way because these are the performances that I am most familiar with, and therefore my research and performance has been largely influenced by contemporary performance.

Another understanding of transformation comes from education theory, in particular the strand of transformative learning discussed by theorists such as

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\(^{56}\) Schechner talks about a continuum from efficacy to entertainment, aligning efficacy with ritual and entertainment with theatre, in Richard Schechner (2003), *Performance Theory*, London; New York, Routledge, 130.


\(^{58}\) Barbara Myerhoff (1991), 'The Transformation of Consciousness in Ritual Performances: some thoughts and questions.' In Schechner and Appel (Eds.), *By Means of Performance: intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
as Jack Mezirow and Edmund O'Sullivan.\textsuperscript{59} Says Mezirow: “Transformative learning is a way of problem solving by defining a problem or by redefining or reframing the problem.”\textsuperscript{60} Transformative learning emphasises critical reflection on the underlying assumptions in the content, process or premise of problem solving. Transformation can also occur through a reframing of your own or others’ assumptions. This reframing and reflection can then lead to improved operations.\textsuperscript{61}

Therefore, the term ‘transformation’ has been used in various contexts. This research project is interested in the ways in which performance can change the attitudes and behaviours of both audience members and performers. Although my definition is informed by a variety of different understandings of ‘transformation,’ it is also influenced by alchemical understandings of transmutation and enlightenment. The study limits transformative performance in terms of its provocative intention, as it is primarily concerned with performances that are both provocative and transformative. This transformation can occur on various levels, as various types, and operate in different ways, but is limited in this research to that which occurs as a result of the intention to provoke by the performance maker, and the tools of performance they employ. While not necessarily life-changing, this transformation is nevertheless profound and empowering. It is discussed through critical reflection on experience, subsequent testing through discourse, and through intuitive and reflective processes.

- Projection

The term ‘projection’ in this study is used in a complex way. It is a term used in many fields, such as cartography, acoustics, the military, science, psychology, technology, alchemy, graphics and philosophy. I became interested in the term when thinking about projected images and videos in live performance, and on further reading discovered its use in psychology and
Alchemy. A common definition of projection is the throwing or casting of something; this can be seen in live performance, where the projected image throws light, and a projected voice is thrown out to the audience. The phenomenon of ‘projection’ therefore applies to various situations. For instance, I employ the use of audiovisual projection in my practical performance work, which is one sense of projection. Also, psychological projection relates to audience members seeing something in the performance that relates to their own life. This is a type of projection that can be manipulated to an extent by the provocative performance maker. On a metaphorical level, I am interested in the alchemical use of projection, especially as it refers to the final action before illumination is achieved. Various modes of projection are therefore relevant to this study, and projection becomes a useful concept to understand the nature of provocative and transformative performance. The later section “Projection as a tool of performance” goes into my use of projection in greater depth.

**Provocative performance**

From more overt examples such as demonstrations and protests, to more subtle examples such as mainstream theatre and films, the definition of ‘provocative performance’ is largely subjective. Depending on the individual audience member’s tastes, culture, education and experience, many performances can be called provocative. As such, there is no easy way to conclusively define this concept. Therefore, I am using a combination of the stated intention of the performer and the experience of the audience to determine which performances are provocative. If a performer describes his or her intention as trying to change people’s attitudes or behaviours, make them question attitudes and behaviours, or make them aware of an issue, then this can be seen as provocative performance. This is a type of provocation that employs certain instrumentation, and one which metaphorically projects its intention in a certain direction. Projection is therefore an important link between provocation and transformation.
Transformative performance

Anecdotes abound in ordinary conversation about the transformative power of performance. I have often heard people say that a certain performance has ‘changed my life,’ or that a performance has influenced them to think differently about some issue. Performance maker Barrie Kosky, for instance, said: “I think one of the reasons people love going to the theatre is because it’s a live experience. There’s surprise, delight, emotion, thought and retrospection afterwards. It’s transformative.” It is my aim in this project to interrogate the notion of transformativity in relation to performance, and to investigate elements through which the transformative potential of provocative performance can be analysed. In the thesis, transformation is gauged in a number of ways: personal anecdotes, testimony from online message boards, structured focus groups, and questionnaires. Transformation therefore relates to the reception of a performance, and the effect it has on the audience. Richard Brown suggests that in alchemy, transformation occurs “through an identification of and resonance between key internal and external processes.” This is also applicable to this study of transformative performance, as I am interested in the internal experiences of the audience, and how the external process of performance can affect these.

The terms ‘provocative’ and ‘transformative’ work in relation to each other in the thesis, as the area in which they overlap is of primary concern to me. I have identified elements of both provocation and transformation in the performances analysed in the thesis. Therefore, in this thesis I am concerned with performance that is both provocative and transformative, discussing various performances that include provocative and transformative elements.

63 Brown ‘Alchemy, mimetics, immersion and consciousness.’ op cit.
Projection as a Tool of Transformation

Projection is an important multifaceted concept for this study, as it ties together various fields. There are four main modes of projection significant to this study: audiovisual or electronic projection, psychological projection, metaphorical projection, and alchemical projection. The following points outline each of these modes, therefore should be considered an articulation of the limits within which I am using these terms:

Audiovisual projection

This refers to the scenographic use of a film or data projector in a performance, casting images onto the stage area. The use of projected images and video in performance is a growing trend, especially in provocative performance. Perhaps this is a symptom of post-Brechtian attitudes about the layering of information made possible with projections, especially the ability to make explicit links with the contemporary social context. Audiovisual projections are often loaded with signs, symbols and meanings in performance, and each performance presents a different complexity.

Psychological projection

The use of the term ‘projection’ in psychology can be linked with the concept of identification in performance. In psychology, the term was first outlined by Sigmund Freud, and then developed by Anna Freud.\(^64\) Carl Jung discussed the concept in similar terms, developing Sigmund Freud’s theories of projection\(^65\) along with countertransference.\(^66\) Both projection and transference have similar meanings: a defence mechanism involving the unconscious shifting of attitudes, fears, feelings, desires or fantasies onto someone else. A basic example of psychological projection might be when a

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\(^65\) As noted by John Boe (2005), ‘Metaphor, Thought, Projection, and Archetype.’ *Psychological Perspectives*, 48.

\(^66\) Jung, Read, Fordham and Adler *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. 
husband thinks of having an affair, then unconsciously projects these feelings onto his wife, accusing her of being adulterous. The husband therefore blames his wife for having thoughts that he actually has. In performance studies, the psychological mode of projection could describe elements of audience reception, where audiences might transfer the message of the story onto their own lives, or may read into the performance themes that are relevant to them, but are not apparent to others.

The psychoanalytic phenomenon of countertransference is related to projective identification.\textsuperscript{67} It is a phenomenon in which an analyst can be said to over-identify with their patient, resulting in feelings of sympathy or empathy with the patient. In extreme cases, the analyst can take on the suffering of the patient. It is generally accepted that countertransference occurs in all psychoanalytic treatments, however attitudes towards it have changed over time. When it was first talked about, it was treated as an undesirable side effect of the therapeutic process.\textsuperscript{68} There is therefore a lack of writing about it from this time. Eventually, as psychoanalyst Douglas Orr notes, more began to be written about it, but opinions are still divided about its benefits.\textsuperscript{69} I am interested in how countertransference can operate in provocative and transformative performance, and there will be further discussion of this later in the thesis.

Psychological projection in performance is therefore also linked with ideas of identification and empathy. If an audience member can project themselves and their situation into the performance, the piece could have more resonance for them. I go into these ideas further in Chapter Six.

\textsuperscript{67} Carol Holmes (2004), \textit{The Paradox of Countertransference: you and me, here and now}, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 17.
Metaphorical projection

This mode of projection arises as a metaphorical description of a projective moment. One example of this is using projection to describe throwing. The metaphorical use of projection serves as a reminder of how often the term is used in various modes of discourse.

For instance, psychologist John Boe talks about the links between psychological projection and metaphor:

> The roots of the two words are remarkably similar: projection = throwing, metaphor = carrying across. In both cases we are bringing the unknown idea to a known image, discovering the inner idea by throwing onto it or carrying to it something we already know. The psychological act of projection, like the rhetorical act of metaphor making, explains the process of creative thinking.\(^{70}\)

Boe extends this into a discussion of archetypes, saying that the world of the archetype is only accessible through projection or metaphor.\(^{71}\) This reveals another important metaphorical link with projection, that of Plato’s cave metaphor. In the metaphor, prisoners in a cave are subjected to shadow projections as a substitute for reality. When the prisoners are released, they realise that what they were seeing was not reality, but merely its representation. This story is an early example of projected light casting images, however in this case the projections serve as an illusion to defer enlightenment, rather than move towards it.

Another metaphorical use of the term “projection” relates to theorist Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulation and the simulacra. The simulacra occurs when a representation of the real is substituted for reality itself. The representation has more power than the real, and is therefore metaphorically projected beyond the real as a more desirable, or even a more “true,” version. Chapter Three includes a more in-depth discussion of Baudrillard’s simulacra in provocative and transformative performance.

\(^{70}\) Boe ‘Metaphor, Thought, Projection, and Archetype.’ \(^{72}\).  
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 80.
After working through the cycle, all the elements, the Stone is held by the alchemist. It is cool and rough, but with an inner warmth and smoothness. The alchemist throws the Stone onto the base metals in one swift action. Projected with the Stone is an involuntary casting of thoughts, experiences and knowledge into the mystery of matter, in order to illuminate it. This is the projection, the instant exaltation, the augmentation of the base metals and the final operation. The casting of the Philosopher’s Stone onto the base metals is the moment of held breath before illumination, before Gold.

EXAMPLE: LAURIE ANDERSON AND KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO

- Laurie Anderson

Figure 8: Laurie Anderson. (From Anderson (1986), *Home of the Brave*. 90 min. VHS. U.S.A.)
Laurie Anderson appears on the side of the stage, wearing a white suit and holding a microphone. A spotlight encircles her, casting a sharp silhouette onto the backdrop. Beginning to pace back and forth on the stage, she tells a story in a relaxed, contemplative voice:

“What Fassbinder film is it? The one-armed man comes into the flower shop and says: ‘What flower expresses: days go by, and they just keep going by, endlessly pulling you into the future?’”

She is moving her free hand up and down, back and forth, slowly.

“... Days go by, endlessly ... endlessly pulling you into the future ...”

Mesmerising, meditative.

“And the florist says ...”

She stops, hand outstretched, leg sticking out to the side, toes flexed up.

“White Lily.”

She exits, leaving behind a negative image of her silhouette-shadow. The shadow now holds a flower in its outstretched hand, whereas Anderson’s own hand was empty. Only the shadow-projection remains as an imprint of her on the stage behind where she once was.
I was in Krakow, Poland, in late 2005. Winter was just beginning, and, rugged up in a huge coat, I was out for a walk. I dawdled along the edge of the garden-ring Planty, as the snowflakes started to float downwards. Turning the corner, I noticed an art gallery with a large banner outside. The only word I understood out of the string of Polish was ‘projections,’ and I was immediately interested. Partly out of curiosity, and partly to get out of the increasingly uncomfortable cold, I went inside.

The exhibit was of Krzysztof Wodiczko, a Polish visual artist whose recent work consisted of a series of “public projections.” Five projections, which were documented in the exhibition, originally took place in five different cities around the world. Each one was developed with members of the local community, and dealt with provocative and locally-relevant subject matter. Projected onto monuments and buildings, the videos mainly told stories of hardship. In each case, only a select portion of the storyteller is seen. In Hiroshima, the gesticulating hands of atomic bomb victims accompany each

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person’s story, projected on the city’s Atomic Bomb Dome. In Saint Louis, a building is personified, given projected hands on either side of the entrance, to which audience members are directed to ask questions. In Tijuana, the performers wear cameras on a headdress, so only their distorted and close-up faces appear illuminated on the Centro Cultural Building. In Boston, storytellers’ heads and torsos are projected high on the Bunker Hill Monument, and in Krakow, the clock tower is transformed into a face and hands.

When I first saw the film of performance artist and musician Laurie Anderson’s stage show *Home of the Brave*, it radically altered my perspective on the use of audiovisual projection in live performance. Anderson’s work showed me things I had never seen before; a blending of live and recorded space that, for me, enriched the meaning of the work. For me, the juxtaposition between live and recorded space was more than merely a clever aesthetic device, bridging a gap between literal and symbolic spaces. The pre-recorded images referenced a world outside the theatrical space, and through placing these together Anderson created a tension between the representation of America, and the experience of everyday life. The potential and impact of this technology overwhelmed me. Similarly, seeing visual artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s projections for the first time had significant impact on me. He also uses audiovisual projection to comment on social and political issues, but in his work the projections work in tandem with architecture, rather than the live performative element of Anderson’s work. To see his work, then, was to be made aware of a different mode of working with projection as a tool for provocative performance.

Laurie Anderson’s and Krzysztof Wodiczko’s work both have elements that fall into the four identified categories of projection in performance, and therefore their work illuminates the multifaceted concept of projection. For instance, they both employ audiovisual projection. Anderson in particular

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exemplifies how technology can enchant the viewer, and draw them into the work:

Electronics have always been connected to storytelling. Maybe because storytelling began when people used to sit around fires and because fire is magic, compelling and dangerous. We are transfixed by its light and by its destructive power. Electronics are modern fires.74

Performance theorist Phillip Auslander discusses Anderson’s use of technology, saying that she uses it to distance herself from her audience.75 However, this has not been the case for me as an audience member. Like performance writer Henry M. Sayre, my experience of Anderson has been “the sense that we are in it together, that her strategy of subversion is potentially, at least, our own.”76 Anderson’s use of audiovisual projection makes the experience richer, as performance scholar Silvija Jestrovic notes: “the configuration of real and filmed space, live and recorded sound, live and projected image creates a constant tension between presence and absence.”77 Audiovisual projection is also integral to Wodiczko’s work, as it consists solely of projected images cast onto buildings and monuments. The essential elements of his work are “a projected image, a chosen site, a particular issue.”78

The work of both performance practitioners also invites psychological projection from the audience, as they deal with controversial issues. In Anderson’s work, as performance scholar Woodrow B. Hood notes: “What the audience gets is an apparently free association of juxtaposed images and ideas; the responsibility of finding meaning in the juxtapositions is placed solely upon the audience.”79 Both performers invite their audiences to create meanings relevant to them. As Anderson says: “In all of the work I’ve ever

77 Jestrovic ‘The Performer and the Machine: Some aspects of Laurie Anderson’s stage work.’
78 Derek May and National Film Board of Canada. Roland films on art; 666. (1991), *Krzysztof Wodiczko projections*. Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 53 min.
done, my whole intention was not to map out meanings but to make a field situation. I’m interested in fact, images, and theories which resonate against each other, not in offering solutions.\textsuperscript{80}

In the work of both performers there is also metaphorical projection, as they project stories and personalities from the local community onto the viewer. For instance, Wodiczko’s audiovisual projections on buildings and monuments transforms them into witnesses who metaphorically project into the past, testifying to the events that took place in that location.\textsuperscript{81} Wodiczko also uses his projectors in a metaphorical sense to discuss the impact of his work:

\begin{quote}
I can’t believe that my work can successfully alter the way things develop. All that the work can do is help those people and groups and institutions, and also larger sections of critical society, to retain a level of criticism and understanding of what’s happening. It is a very small contribution. ... As soon as my work reaches the level of power of the forces I question, I will turn my projectors against themselves.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

In addition, the participants in the projected videos transform the building or monument into a “manifestation of their presence,”\textsuperscript{83} metaphorically speaking for the social issue hidden from view.

Of course, alchemical projection is not easy to locate in Anderson and Wodiczko’s work, as it is a difficult concept to apply neatly to provocative and transformative performance. However, I believe that in the work of both practitioners, a kind of exaltation or illumination is achieved through a combination of other elements: their aesthetics (including the casting of the ‘Philosopher’s Stone’ of audiovisual projection) and the political subject matter they tackle. When these elements are combined with the psychological projection of the audience member (in this case, me), transformation can be

\textsuperscript{80} Sayre \textit{The Object of Performance: the American avant-garde since 1970}, 148.
\textsuperscript{82} May and National Film Board of Canada. \textit{Krzysztof Wodiczko projections}. op cit.
\textsuperscript{83} Smolak and Gadomska (Ed.) \textit{Krzysztof Wodiczko: Public projections 1996-2004 (exhibition catalogue)}, 83.
achieved.

Chapter outlines

Each chapter of the thesis builds a story of the journey of this project. Beginning with my interest in alchemy and projection in performance, the thesis charts the various research strands I have undertaken. As alchemy is an overarching metaphor for the project, each chapter title reflects the concerns of a certain stage of the alchemical process. This device is also used by Bettina L. Knapp, in *Theatre and Alchemy*. Knapp divides her discussion of various plays into sections based on the three alchemical phases of *nigredo, albedo* and *rubedo*. She says about the division that the plays’ “ruling principles or prevailing dominant motivated [her] positioning of them.”

In this thesis, the chapter titles are taken from what Frances Yates calls the “bible” of alchemists: the Emerald Tablet. Yates notes: “Alchemy was always called a Hermetic science; many of the early alchemical treatises were attributed to ‘Hermes Trismegistus,’ including the famous *Emerald Table* ... which gives the Hermetic philosophy of nature in a mysteriously compact form.” Hermes Trismegistus was a mythical figure linked to an Egyptian pharaoh. I have named the chapters in this manner as their content relates to the symbols and processes of each phase of the Emerald Tablet. According to *The Hermetic Library*, an online repository of writings and artworks on spirituality and alchemy, the Emerald Tablet says:

> Truly, without Deceit, certainly and absolutely -
> That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, in the accomplishment of the Miracle of One Thing. And just as all things have come from One, through the Mediation of One, so all things follow from this One Thing in the same way.

> Its Father is the Sun. Its Mother is the Moon. The Wind has

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84 Knapp *Theatre and Alchemy*, 16.
85 Yates *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 16.
carried it in his Belly. Its Nourishment is the Earth. It is the Father of every completed Thing in the whole World. Its Strength is intact if it is turned towards the Earth. Separate the Earth by Fire: the fine from the gross, gently, and with great skill.

It rises from Earth to Heaven, and then it descends again to the Earth, and receives Power from Above and from Below. Thus you will have the Glory of the whole World. All Obscurity will be clear to you. This is the strong Power of all Power because it overcomes everything fine and penetrates everything solid.

In this way was the World created. From this there will be amazing Applications, because this is the Pattern. Therefore am I called Thrice Greatest Hermes, having the three parts of the Wisdom of the whole World.

Herein have I completely explained the Operation of the Sun.  

Journalist Dennis William Hauck extrapolated seven stages of transformation from the Emerald Tablet. Richard Brown described these stages as “the processes the alchemist must undergo in order to achieve transformation and realise a phoenix-like rebirth.” The Emerald Tablet has also been depicted in much alchemical art, for instance Matthieu Merian’s engraving entitled Tabula Smaragdina (‘Emerald Tablet’). The engraving includes many alchemical symbols to illustrate the Great Work. Seven concentric circles in the centre of the image relate to the seven stages of transformation:

References:

89 Brown ‘Alchemy, mimetics, immersion and consciousness.’ op cit.
I have constructed a tabulated summary of Hauck’s seven stages of transformation from the Emerald Tablet. The table shows the symbols, colours, elements and processes involved with each stage, highlighting the links between psychological and chemical processes. It provides the basis of my chapter structure:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Chemical process</th>
<th>Psychological process</th>
<th>Emerald Tablet</th>
<th>Element/Substance</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Planet</th>
<th>Metal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcination</td>
<td>Heating a substance until it is reduced to ashes</td>
<td>The humbling process, including the destruction of our attachment to material possessions</td>
<td>“Its father is the Sun”</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Magenta</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolution</td>
<td>Dissolving the ashes in water</td>
<td>Immersion in the unconscious, letting go of rational control</td>
<td>“Its mother is the Moon”</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Light Blue</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Tin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Filtration of the liquid, discarding unwanted materials</td>
<td>The rediscovery of our essence and reviewing of parts of our personality, deciding which parts to discard</td>
<td>“The Wind carries it in its belly”</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Orange-Red</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Recombination of materials that were not discarded into a new substance</td>
<td>Union of the different sides of personalities into a new consciousness</td>
<td>“The Earth is its nurse”</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermentation</td>
<td>Growth of bacteria in organic solutions</td>
<td>Inspiration of the re-energising spiritual power</td>
<td>“Separate the Earth from Fire”</td>
<td>Sulfur</td>
<td>Turquoise</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distillation</td>
<td>Boiling fermented solution to increase its purity</td>
<td>Raising the psyche to the highest level of purity</td>
<td>“It rises from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth”</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Deep Blue</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coagulation</td>
<td>Precipitation of purified ferment</td>
<td>Release of the Philosopher’s Stone</td>
<td>“Thus you will obtain the Glory of the Whole Universe”</td>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Two- ‘Its mother is the moon’: Dissolution and Review of Methodology, Literature and Context

Chapter Two reviews the methodology, literature and contexts relevant to the project. The key terms and concepts relating to the project are defined and reviewed, along with various methodologies integral to the research process. Literature on performance and social change is also discussed. Examples of performers and performances that fall under the category of provocative and transformative performance are outlined, to understand the practical applications of the theory. As I am engaging in a performance as research methodology, these performative examples are referred to as the ‘context’ of the study.

The chapter is entitled *Its Mother is the Moon*, referring to the second stage of the Emerald Tablet. This stage of the cycle relates to water, which dissolves the base metals. Dissolution correlates with this chapter because it is about allowing feelings to rise above thought. I see this chapter as a release of the literature and knowledge connected to the project, dissolving and swirling around like water. It is also about dreaming and letting inspiration guide. This chapter tells the story of the prima materia, the base metal of the project, in particular the discourses aligned to the work.

Chapter Three- ‘The wind carries it in its belly’: Separation and Case Studies of Merlin Luck and Michael Moore

In Chapter Three, I discuss two case studies, chosen for both their impact on me, and for the way they exemplify the concerns of provocative and transformative performance. These build on the examples of performers and performances outlined in Chapter Two. Housemate Merlin Luck’s 2004 eviction from the Australian *Big Brother* reality TV show, and filmmaker Michael Moore’s 2003 Academy Award acceptance speech are two instances through which provocative and transformative performance can be discussed. Both the eviction and the speech were performative protest actions where the protocols of an event were disrupted. I look at the performative
nature of both performances, their attempts to provoke, and their transformative effects. Through an in-depth study of these events, a theory of provocative and transformative performance begins to emerge.

This chapter refers to the next stage of the Emerald Tablet, and is called *The wind carries it in its belly*. The third stage is related to air, where the alchemist filters the liquid, getting rid of unwanted materials. This is a phase of reflection - a conscious reviewing of parts to determine which should be kept. It is also concerned with a rediscovery of the essence of the matter, so this chapter uses case studies to rediscover the essence of provocative and transformative performance.

*Chapter Four- ‘The Earth is its nurse’: Conjunction and Practical Performance Journal*

Chapter Four is a discussion of the development of my practical performance work *Bodily*. I chart the research, planning and writing process of the work, and how it relates to the theories discussed in the thesis. The methodology for the construction of the piece is discussed, alongside an interrogation into female body image. Also outlined is the content and form of the performance: from the initial inspiration, through the writing and development process, to the finished product. The main purpose of this chapter is to document a performative approach to the research.

This chapter is called *The Earth is its nurse*, as this is the stage of the Emerald Tablet when the materials are recombined into a new substance. This process is analogous to the development of *Bodily*, as I recombined the elements that had previously been separated. Drawing on theoretical and contextual research, I create a new performative substance.
Chapter Five - ‘Separate the Earth from Fire’: Fermentation and Practical Performance Outcomes

The outcomes of my performance Bodily are discussed in Chapter Five. Mainly, these are the results of focus groups I held with audience members after each performance, and related follow-up questionnaires. These focus groups interrogated responses to the performance, focussing in particular on the transformative effects experienced by audience members. My personal response to the performance is also integrated, triangulating the response along with discussion of a professional review of the performance. A key finding of this chapter is the variety in types and degrees of transformative effects, and their relationships to the provocative intention of the piece.

This chapter is entitled Separate the Earth from Fire, as it relates to the next stage of the Emerald Tablet: Fermentation. This step is concerned with the growth of bacteria in the substance, and is therefore about growth and development. Accordingly, Chapter Five looks at the expansion of the performance project data, moving outwards to discuss the surrounding responses and reactions of the audience.

Chapter Six- ‘It rises from earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth’: Distillation and Discussion

Chapter Six draws the emerging theory together with the performance case studies of Chapter Three, Four and Five. It combines the intentions of the performers, the instrumentation they employ, and the research findings of potentials for illumination through performance.

It rises from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth is the title of this chapter, as it relates to the sixth stage of the Emerald Tablet. This stage is concerned with the distillation of the substance, increasing its purity. I am engaged in a similar practice in this penultimate chapter, as I distil the findings of the research down to a theory of provocative and transformative
performance. Throughout this process of distillation, I take care not to lose the magic and elusive qualities of illumination, as Harpur says:

> Electricity was at first identified with this light of Nature. But the closer science came to harnessing it, the more its elusive volatile nature became, as alchemy says, fixed. Its mystical properties were distilled away, leaving only the dross of ordinary light. Illumination, we might say, was literalized into mere light, whose profane brightness and crassness were inimical to the dim, secret and sacred light in which true enlightenment occurs.90

Illumination is manifested in the Plato’s cave allegory, which highlights the unreality of our normal perception of the world. As Harpur notes, to turn around and see the source of light is one thing (this is mistaking light for enlightenment), but the true philosopher goes further and leaves the cave to see the Otherworld.91

*Chapter Seven- ‘The Glory of the Whole Universe’: Coagulation and Conclusion*

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the thesis, drawing the threads together and projecting forward into the potential applications for the research.

It is called *The Glory of the Whole Universe*, as it refers to the final stage of the Emerald Tablet, where the Philosopher’s Stone is released and the alchemist is illuminated. This chapter therefore attempts to illuminate the theory and provide a new perspective on provocative and transformative performance. As Fabricius states: “the darkness was finally ‘illuminated’ by the groping psyche of the laboratory worker which projected its contents into the smoking retorts of his laboratory.”92

91 Ibid.
92 Fabricius *Alchemy: the medieval alchemists and their royal art*, 10.
Conclusion

This thesis, therefore, contributes to the body of knowledge on performance and change. It aims to shed a new light on the discourse of provocative and transformative performance, through a discussion of both the theory and practice of such performance. Using alchemy as a poetic metaphor for transformation, I take into account the performer’s intention and instrumentation, as well as the illumination of the audience. Intention, instrumentation and illumination therefore become the foundational concepts for engaging with provocative and transformative performance.

In the next chapter, I outline the methodological traditions, literature and performance contexts informing the study.

_The quest is more important than the rewards. As a matter of fact, the quest is the reward._93

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93 Schwarz 'Alchemy, Androgyny and Visual Artists.' 58.
‘Its mother is the moon’:
Dissolution and Review of
Methodology, Literature and Context

Introduction

As this research project is located across, between and through disciplines, there is a wide range of relevant literature and contexts. The methodologies informing the study are outlined in this chapter. Several areas in which the relevant literature lies are also identified, with a view towards investigating the performance context from which the study emerges. Various types of texts are canvassed, highlighting the importance in this study of a focus on practice as well as theory.

The first part of the chapter looks at an assortment of methodologies that informed the study, in particular the qualitative research methods of autoethnography and researching lived experience. It also looks at discourses of creativity, practice-based research and performance documentation. This range of methodologies was necessary to the study as there was no one particular method that I felt fitted the project completely. A mixed methods approach therefore seemed most appropriate, although this does not come without limitations, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The next part of the chapter deals with the literature and performance contexts specifically, focussing on: a definition of the key terms in the study,
some of the literature surrounding performance and social change, issues surrounding the significance of the body in provocative and transformative performance, different connotations of projection, audience reception, and audience data collection methods. As performance theorist Brad Haseman suggests, I am including contextual examples of performances as part of the literature review to “transform ‘the literature review’ into a more layered and rich analysis of the contexts of practice within which the performative research operates.”

Throughout this chapter, various examples highlight the performative context from which this research emerges. These examples have been chosen for their connection to my life at various stages, and their relevance to me throughout the course of researching this project. Throughout the course of this research in particular, I have had a heightened sensitivity to performance that has transformative potential. This chapter is therefore an idiosyncratic review of the relevant performative tradition, highlighting examples of performances that have inspired my own.

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**Prima Matería**

This chaos, this “fertile black soil of Egypt,” is the base metal. These are my experiences, my problems, attitudes and behaviours: my dissonance. Among other things, I am Mercurius, the existential chaos, the pure state of the soul. This is the origin of everything. I must apply imagination and other instruments of creativity to this *prima materia* to approach reconciliation.

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Methodology

This section outlines the combinations of methods used in the research, namely the qualitative research methods of autoethnography, lived experience, creativity, and practice-based research. I also look at the range of methods for studying audience response, and modes of performance documentation.

Qualitative research methods: autoethnography and researching lived experience

Theorists Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln define qualitative research as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.  

Many different types of qualitative research methods could be appropriate to this study, and an assortment of methodological tools has therefore been applied at various occasions. For instance, in teasing out the phenomenology of the transformative moment in performance: “It is to the extent that my experiences could be our experiences that the phenomenologist wants to be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings.”

Other modes and

methods informing this study are self-portraiture, creative non-fiction,\textsuperscript{4} fictocriticism and personal essays.\textsuperscript{5}

In particular, I was drawn to autoethnography, as it allows for the inquiry through subjectivity, lived experience and personal narrative of a broader and more universal experience. Denzin and Lincoln define autoethnography as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text, as in the case of ethnography.”\textsuperscript{6} Autoethnographers use highly personal narratives to illustrate experiences, show a unique side to an issue and as a form of research in itself. Qualitative researchers Carolyn S. Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner remark: “It’s amazing how much impact personal stories have, isn’t it?”\textsuperscript{7} According to their definition of autoethnography, which “wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate,”\textsuperscript{8} autoethnography is inherently provocative and performative.

Although “many sociologists feel repelled or threatened by the unruly content of subjective experiences,”\textsuperscript{9} theatre and film reviews, weblogs, immediate emotional responses, and other forms of subjective response to performance are plentiful in the discourse of performance studies. While such subjective responses are usually elicited from audience members who are not researching the performance in a more rigorous way, these techniques can also be useful for performance researchers. Through using the tools and language of subjective responses to performance, the researcher can connect with performance in a way that draws the reader in, as well as present them with a familiar mode of expression. As performance theorist Tami Spry suggests, autoethnographic texts have a more engaging voice due to

\textsuperscript{4} As discussed by, for instance, Lee Gutkind (1997), \textit{The Art of Creative Nonfiction: writing and selling the literature of reality}, New York, Wiley.
\textsuperscript{5} For instance, Phillip Lopate (2001), ‘Writing Personal Essays: on the necessity of turning oneself into a character.’ In Forché, Gerard and Associated Writing Programs. (Eds.), \textit{Writing Creative Nonfiction: instruction and insights from teachers of the Associated Writing Programs}. Cincinnati, Ohio, Story Press.
\textsuperscript{6} As discussed in Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997), \textit{Auto/ethnography: rewriting the self and the social}, Oxford; New York, Berg, 9.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 433.
\textsuperscript{9} Carolyn Ellis and Michael C. Flaherty (1992), \textit{Investigating Subjectivity: research on lived experience}, Newbury Park, Sage, 1.
“emotional texturing of theory and its reliance upon poetic structure to suggest a live participative embodied researcher.”¹⁰ In addition, as Ellis and theorist Michael C. Flaherty note:

Subjectivity is situated such that the voices in our heads and the feelings in our bodies are linked to political, cultural, and historical contexts. Emotional and cognitive responses to our bodies, for example, are conditioned by prevailing definitions of health, beauty, and stigma.”¹¹

Subjective methods are therefore appropriate for studying a discipline where subjectivity flourishes.¹²

Denzin says that lived experience research is “lived through the subject’s eye, and that eye, like a camera’s, is always reflexive, nonlinear, subjective, filled with flashbacks, after-images, dream sequences, faces merging into one another, masks dropping, and new masks being put on.”¹³ In this spirit, I am drawn to the idea of the *bricoleur*, defined by Denzin and Lincoln as: “The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study... best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.”¹⁴ This concept of bricolage also ties in with creative writing practices and the discourse of creativity in research. Storytelling, for instance, allows experience to reveal meaning, which in turn allows the researcher to move beyond their own story to claim authority. Denzin says: “I seek a dramatic, performative poetic, a form of performance writing that includes excerpts from personal histories, official and unofficial government documents, scholarly articles, and popular culture texts,”¹⁵ and further discusses the different types of creative writing practices for the “creative analytic

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¹¹ Ibid., 4.


¹⁴ Denzin and Lincoln 'Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.’ 5.

ethnographer.”16 Similarly, feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti calls on Deleuze’s idea of the “nomadic subject,” a metaphorical myth allowing for movement against patriarchal structures of academic discourse, opening up the vacuum between ways of thinking by travelling across them.17 Further, Spry champions the autoethnographic method in performance research as it “provides a space for the emancipation of the voice and body in academic discourse through breaking the boundaries of stylistic form, and by reintroducing the body to mind in the process of living research.”18 Performance writer Ronald J. Pelias also supports creative inquiry methods: “The artistic or poetic report... may possess a kinship, commensurate with, but distinct from, the phenomenon under study.”19 However, I am aware that autoethnography has its shortcomings, for instance the authority placed on the researcher’s own voice can come across as narcissistic. Throughout this research I have been aware of the potential problems this can create, however I have made an effort to balance my voice with that of others. A mixture of autoethnography with other approaches, such as psychology-informed audience response methods, has seemed the most appropriate strategy for this study.

Therefore, a bricolage of creative inquiry methods is relevant to this study. Autoethnography operates as the primary methodology, along with the tools for researching lived experience. However, another useful methodology, allowing a link between sociological methods and performance studies, is that of practice-based research.

16 Ibid.
18 Spry, op cit., 198.
Practice-based research and being a performer-researcher

Practice-based research is an emerging and constantly evolving field of research methodology. Therefore, the “definitions are often vague.” Different terminologies are used to describe related concepts, such as ‘performance-based research,’ ‘performance-led research,’ ‘practice-led research,’ ‘practice as research,’ and ‘performer-researcher,’ all of which refer to similar concepts. All definitions of practice-based research involve a combination of theory and practice, and foreground the use of artistic or performative tools to interrogate a research question. As arts scholar Graeme Sullivan notes, the common thread is “the attention given to rigor and systematic inquiry, yet in a way that privileges the role imagination and intellect play in constructing knowledge that is not only new but has the capacity to transform human understanding.” The central concept of the methodology is “experience as it is lived, felt, reconstructed, reinterpreted, and understood.” Brad Haseman also discusses practice-based research, identifying a strand of “performative research” as separate to quantitative and qualitative research. He says that the main difference of performative research is the “way it chooses to express its findings.”

Practice-based research has strong ties with action research and participant research, as in both of these methods, the researcher is also a subject of research. It therefore has a connection with autoethnography, as both are involved with the study of the researcher’s life. Qualitative researcher Ross E. Gray, for example, writes in a first-person form about research-based performance. These definitions of practice-based research in performance include the work of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal, as both of these practitioners developed theories which were then used in further practice.

22 Ibid., 96.
24 Ross E. Gray (2003), ‘Performing On and Off the Stage: the place(s) of performance in arts-based approaches to qualitative inquiry.’ Qualitative Inquiry, 9.
Perf ormance researcher Jonathan Kalb, in his investigation of solo documentary performance, also made a connection with practice-based research:

Among its many other motives, documentary solo performance is a search for a freshness and unpredictability that carry the force of gossip, for powerful topical narratives that are not easily dismissed or second-guessed, and for performance circumstances in which Verfremdung becomes a living concept again because the reality of the performer-researcher has been made an active part of the art.25

Contemporary practice-based research increases the emphasis on the evaluation of the outcomes of practice. Rather than merely focussing on developing a performance work as an outcome of research, practice-based research methods often employ performances as research tools, and integrate them into research projects. An example of this is the Practice as Research in Performance project (PARIP), directed by Baz Kershaw. This project was carried out from 2001 to 2006, with the objective of investigating and defining practice-as-research issues in theatre, dance, film, video and television. The PARIP project had many outcomes, such as publications, creative projects, conferences and databases.26 Many of the concerns of the project are continued by research groups such as the Performance as Research working group of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR).

In undertaking this project, I have taken a necessary position of privileging the perspective of the performer. I believe this was a necessary path to take for several reasons. Mainly, as I am both performer and researcher, the performance project Bodily and the thesis are inextricably linked. The use of a personal voice throughout the thesis therefore links it to the tone of the performance, enhancing the idea of the project as a whole, and the

26 Some published articles from the project are Roberta Mock (2004), 'Reflections on practice as research following the PARIP conference, 2003.' Studies in Theatre and Performance, 24, Angela Piccini and Baz Kershaw (2003), 'Practice as Research in Performance: from epistemology to evaluation.' Journal of Media Practice, 4.
continuously weaving threads of performance to written work.

Various models of performance-based PhDs are discussed by academics Barbara H. Milech and Ann Schilo. They describe an approach that investigates a research question as the ideal method of performance-based PhDs, when compared with “Context” and “Commentary” models. The “Research-Question Model,” where the creative and written portions of the thesis are integrated to form a whole, is the way I have approached this project. I am investigating a specific research question, both in the performance and in the thesis, and therefore have privileged the perspective of the performer as researcher. Autoethnography also justifies the privileged position of the performer/researcher, as it is a research method that allows for the researcher to examine their personal experience. Although the critique of autoethnography points to tendencies for an overly subjective approach, and critics may question it for providing accounts of a self-indulgent or narcissistic nature, in this project, it was important to retain and foreground the practitioner’s voice. As my performance, and the thesis overall, deals with personal subject matter, I felt it necessary and appropriate to position myself at the heart of the dissertation. This positioning also helped to create a flowing narrative, and autoethnography provided a method for weaving together the complex strands of research.

In addition, privileging my personal perspective in this research project has allowed me to advance the conversation about the potential for transformation through political performance. I can speak from the perspective of a creator as well as an audience member of provocative performance, and this dual role means that I am in a unique position to speak from personal experience about the effect such performance has. A performer is a suitable person to be undertaking this research, because, as performance researcher Paul Clarke notes, “the practitioner-theorist remembers the appropriate practical knowledges, embodied in the time and space of

However, this intimate knowledge of performance can work against the practice-based researcher, as “they are unable to disentangle themselves from the practitioners’ intertwining behaviours in order to place themselves at a distance from which to speculate.” In the context of this project, I do not see this as a disadvantage. In contrast, my subjectivity as the performer is related to the methodologies I am employing, and to the outcomes I desire. I use performative tools to explore an issue in a way that cannot be achieved through other methods. There are, however, certain limitations to this study that should be noted. For instance, the qualitative nature of the research means that there is no ‘control group.’ Like others before me, therefore, I am engaged in the ongoing tension between subjectivity and objectivity as a performer-researcher. My approach supposes that provocation, transformation and projection can shed new light on this tension.

**Audience response methodologies**

There are a multitude of possible approaches to collecting and analysing data from audiences. These methods range from questionnaires, interviews, and discussion groups with audience members, to statistical demographic studies, and the use of PDA devices to map audience reactions in real time. Much of the audience response discussion in the thesis comes from online sources such as weblogs, message boards, mail groups and public forums. There is limited reference to these sources in qualitative research literature, most of which focuses on setting up online forums specifically for the aims of the research, rather than ‘dropping in’ on established communities. As media scholar Henry Jenkins notes, these groups

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29 Ibid.
... allow us to observe a self-defined and ongoing interpretive community as it conducts its normal practices of forming, evaluating, and debating interpretations. These discussions occur without direct control or intervention by the researcher, yet in a form that is legitimately open to public scrutiny and analysis.\textsuperscript{32}

The random nature of the Internet, however, means that it is difficult to have a systematic approach to gathering these sources. Also, Jenkins says, we must keep in mind the social settings and demographics of those who participate in online forums, as we cannot assume that they are a general model for audience reception.\textsuperscript{33} Nevertheless, the ever-changing nature of these sources suggests that the information is up-to-date, and therefore useful for a study of ongoing audience response.

One of the most common methods for gathering data from audiences is through post-performance discussion. Post-performance discussions, often called ‘theatre talks’ or ‘Q and A sessions,’ are useful because they gather a large amount of responses from an audience in a short amount of time. Theatre researcher Eugène Van Erven notes that in some radical theatre, “every performance is invariably followed by a discussion between actors and spectators about the play’s topic. New insights that emerge from such informal exchanges of opinions are incorporated in subsequent performances.”\textsuperscript{34} This is one direction audience response can take, which mirrors action research methodology, as audience researcher Matthew Reason also discusses in his study of young audiences of live performance.\textsuperscript{35} However, Theatre theorist Linda M. Park-Fuller comments on the difficulties inherent in questioning audience members after a performance:

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\textsuperscript{32} Technology, 38, Storm A. King (1996), 'Researching Internet Communities: proposed ethical guidelines for the reporting of results.' The Information Society, 12.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{35} Eugène Van Erven (1988), Radical People’s Theatre, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 133.
\end{flushleft}
How do we ask audience members to articulate changes in awareness about social issues as they view a given production without, on one hand, prejudicing them through language that may lead to a presumed response or, on the other, resorting to simplistic questions that prompt only a “yes, no, or sort of” response and tells us very little? This is a valid concern with the audience research methodologies. My approach tries to deal with these issues by embracing them, and realising that it is beyond the scope of the study to do a qualitative survey that can guarantee unbiased responses. With these issues in mind, I chose to use focus group methodology to survey the audiences of my performance for this study, as this allows for discussion between participants to emulate unmonitored post-performance discussion as closely as possible, in a loose but directed manner. In Chapter Five, I go into more detail about the processes I employed when devising focus group questions to try to alleviate this concern. I also outline some of the problems I encountered with the focus groups in practice.

EXAMPLE: FAHRENHEIT 9/11


36 Park-Fuller 'Audiencing the Audience: playback theatre, performative writing, and social activism.' 290.
Michael Moore’s film Fahrenheit 9/11 generated a large amount of publicity. Moore was at it again, this time with a film that ostensibly exposed the Bush administration as hypocritical and inept in its response to the September 11 terrorist attacks.

After seeing Fahrenheit 9/11, my family and I went home, and discussed the film over the dinner table. Talking about the film with others made me think about the effect this can have on the reception of a performance. Noticing these aftershocks, or what I have termed the ‘dinner-table effect,’ was a turning point in my thinking about transformation through performance. With some performances, audiences leave the performance space disturbed and provoked. They may then choose to discuss their response with others, and this post-performance discussion can itself become part of the transformative process. Through expressing opinions and having those opinions affirmed by others, audience members may form insights and reactions to the piece that they might not have otherwise reached. The idea of using focus groups with the audience of my performance Bodily came from this concept of post-performance discussion. In many cases, as I discuss later in the thesis, these focus groups had the effect of confirming and solidifying audience impressions of the piece.

Performance documentation

In documenting a performance, it is necessary to remember that the aim is not to recreate the performance in another medium, but rather to preserve a copy of the performance for future reference. With this in mind, I sought to create a good quality representation of the live performance of Bodily.

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without worrying about making it a self-contained filmic performance. On one night of the production, Bodily was filmed by two miniDV video cameras. One was a stationary camera at the back of the auditorium, which was also recording audio from the sound desk. The other was operated by a person sitting in the front row of the auditorium, with the aim of picking up close-ups and spoken dialogue. The footage from these two camera feeds were then edited together in the Final Cut Pro 5 HD 5.0.4 software package, taking care to mix the two sound recordings together to recreate the audio experience of a live audience member as closely as possible. Once this editing process was complete, the video was exported to the Apple iDVD 5.0.1 package and authored along with still images and biographies of key artists involved with the production.

Therefore, the included DVD (inside back cover) was created with the intention to represent the live performance accurately, rather than with a view to the video being a substitute for the live theatrical experience. The process of editing the work also had a noticeable effect on my own reflection and analysis of Bodily, as seeing the clips over and over again and deciding on cuts and cross-fades brought a new level of understanding to the performance creation process.

EXAMPLE: FAT PIG

The house lights came up, and I was sobbing. Quite openly. Tears rolling down my cheeks. The friend I had brought with me was looking at me nervously, not sure if it was better to get me out of the theatre, or to allow me to sit there for awhile to compose myself. I had not expected this reaction.

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39 This example has been presented as a conference paper: Author (2007), 'Fat Pig as Provocative and Transformative Performance.' Paper presented at the *International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR/FIRT) Conference*, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, July.
at all; I have read the play before, and I know how it ends. But Fat Pig’s subject matter is so close to my heart, that I was incredibly affected, viscerally and emotionally.

I am still haunted by this play. I feel a lasting connection to it and its memory is not sitting well in my body. There is something deeply disturbing about the way it ends, and it has affected me profoundly, viscerally and emotionally.

Neil LaBute’s play *Fat Pig* is a contemporary example of provocative and transformative performance, as well as an example of a creative response to the issue of body image. In the Sydney Theatre Company’s 2006 production, Helen (Katrina Milosevic) is the “fat pig” of the title. She meets Tom (James Saunders), who finds himself surprised by his attraction to her. They start
dating, though Tom keeps her secret from his work buddies for fear of what they will say, and how they will judge him. The obnoxious body fascists Carter (Ed Wightman) and Jeannie (Felicity Price) work with him at the office. Despite the provocative title, *Fat Pig* actually focuses more on Tom’s journey. He is at the heart of the story, a well-meaning character caught up in a very real conundrum; caught between his attraction to a fat woman, and how his friends (a metonym for society in general) will judge him.

LaBute said in newspaper interviews that the title “had a real sense of confrontation and impact,”\(^4^0\) and: “I always wanted to keep the audience involved, engaged, and provoked.”\(^4^1\) These statements provide evidence that the intention of the play was to provoke audiences. He had given similar comments in many other interviews, as well as statements about the autobiographical genesis of the piece. Also, the programme for the Sydney Theatre Company production was populated with articles and citations about the weight-obsessed culture: another form of provocation through directing the audience to the larger body of literature.

The final scene of *Fat Pig* is a company beach picnic, where Helen confronts Tom about his reluctance to be seen with her in public. After a long and rambling explanation of why he thinks they should live in different cities, the following interchange takes place:

**Tom:** I’m a weak and fearful person, Helen, and I’m not gonna get any better. Not any time soon, at least...

**Helen:** But that’s... it’s something we could work on, right ... can’t we, Tom? Right?

**Tom:** ...No. I don’t think I can.\(^4^2\)


\(^4^1\) Stephen Applebaum (2006), 'More than a misanthrope.' *The Australian*, 26 September.

This final line of the play fiercely hit me, both when I read the text and when I saw it performed, resulting in the uncontrollable sobbing I mentioned earlier. In both instances, I felt a visceral reaction to the ending. After reading it, I felt as though I had been punched in the chest, my breathing shallow and my mind racing, and when I saw the performance, I had a similar intense reaction. Others have also mentioned the physical reactions experienced by audience members, saying that the audience “groans and sighs with recognition” and that “we’re squirming right along with the main character.”

Many reviewers believed that the ending was predictable. However, as reviewer Ben Brantley said: “as mechanically predetermined as the plot of Fat Pig might be, you still feel a pang of personal loss when the inevitable descends with a thud.” In an interview, LaBute discussed the nature of the ending, especially that some people had a problem with the way he raised questions in the play, and did not answer them at the end. He said: “that’s the nature of questions. You don’t necessarily ask them if you have the answer.”

Some reviewers added that although the ending may be predictable, this does not prevent an audience member being affected by it. Jason Blake said: “Anyone who knows LaBute’s work will know what to expect, but might find themselves moved by the outcome.” In an interview, Milosevic lamented that playing Helen is “rough and I have to do it every night until November.” Reviewer Philippa Wherret saw Milosevic visibly upset during the final bows, and said:

So not only did the audience witness the impact of discrimination against overweight people through the dramatisation of the play, they also witnessed firsthand the

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45 Ben Brantley (2004), 'She’s Fat, He’s a Man. Can They Find Love?' The New York Times, 16 December.
47 Jason Blake (2006), 'Peer pressure on a large scale.' The Sun-Herald, 1 October.
effect such attitudes have on a real person. It brought the play’s message home even more powerfully.\textsuperscript{49}

Milosevic’s emotions about the issue were therefore clearly seen after the play ends, and this blurring of character and actor had an impact on the reviewer.

\textit{Fat Pig} had significant impact on me, as someone who has been researching and experiencing body image issues for a long time. I felt a deep connection with the piece, and this connection resulted in an alteration of my attitudes on the body image issue. I identified with Helen, and my empathy resulted in a transformed attitude to social expectations. By contrast, reviewers in major newspapers, and even the friend I brought with me to the performance, did not share my emotional reaction.\textsuperscript{50} The nature of this non-resolution is one of crisis, where the audience member experiences crisis and must make a choice between the various opportunities arising. Psychotherapist Verena Kast says about the psychological state of crisis: “We can emerge from a crisis with new behavioral possibilities, new dimensions of self-experience, and new ways of experiencing the world, maybe even with a new perception of meaning.”\textsuperscript{51} According to her, if someone in a moment of crisis has knowledge about the range of possible transformations, they are then able to actualise this transformation.

So, although the example of \textit{Fat Pig} illuminated some aspects of provocative and transformative performance, it appears that the degree to which these are effective depends on the experience of each person involved.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Verena Kast (1990), \textit{The Creative Leap: psychological transformation through crisis}, Illinois, Chiron Publications, 3.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Literature and Context

Individual and social change through performance

Many scholars and performance practitioners have tackled the question of whether performance can effect individual and social change. This section outlines some examples of this line of inquiry, and reviews the literature surrounding the nature and phenomenon of change through performance.

Historically, performance scholars have been hesitant to state the potential of performance to instigate social change. Performance theorist Baz Kershaw laments that “there has often been a widespread nervousness among theatre historians and critics about making claims for the efficacy of performance.” He attributes this nervousness to the “bugbear of empirical conclusiveness,” and goes on to suggest a new mode of analysis for such performance. Kershaw theorises the efficacy of theatre, particularly “the potential that theatre may have to make the immediate effects of performance influence, however minutely, the general historical evolution of wider social and political realities.” The word “minutely” is interesting here, because many performers claim that even if they reach and affect one person, then what they are doing is effective. Emphasis is placed on the degree of transformativity, as it is necessary to outline the extent to which someone is transformed. Performance writers Kristina Schriver and Donna Marie Nudd raise the notion of a “continuum of efficacy,” which “moves from a simple awareness that some type of disruption has occurred to effective media coverage to a fundamental change in current policy.” Another challenge is then presented because, as Kershaw notes, the longer-term effects a performance has on its audience or community “are notoriously difficult to

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53 Kershaw The Politics of Performance, 1.
54 Kristina Schriver and Donna Marie Nudd (2002), 'Mickey Faust Club's Performative Protest Events.' Text and Performance Quarterly, 22, 203.
However, he does point out that “theatre which mounts a radical attack on the status quo may prove deceptive. The slow-burning fuse of efficacy may be invisible.” In addition, he stresses that “the context of performance directly affects its perceived ideological meaning,” and says that “audience members always have a choice as to whether or not the performance may be efficacious for them.” Further, Kershaw invokes a question of ideology, expressing the difficulty of ascertaining the effect of performance on its audience:

To have any hope of changing its audience a performance must somehow connect with that audience’s ideology or ideologies. However, the longer-term effects- ideological or otherwise – that a performance actually might have on its audience, and their community or communities, are notoriously difficult to determine.

Performance theorist Jill Dolan agrees that performance can inspire change. In her weblog, she states: “I believe... in the transformative power of performance,” and describes the feeling of community when an audience experiences performance together. In a journal article, Dolan discusses the denial of empathy in Bertolt Brecht’s theories, positing: “Maybe political change does happen through empathy as well as through Brechtian alienation. Perhaps this emotional awareness is what our culture needs to even begin to see the limitations of our democratic ideals.” Dolan has also continued a discussion of the idealistic potential of performance to incite change in her book *Utopia in Performance: finding hope at the theater:* "I believe that being passionately and profoundly stirred in performance can be a transformative experience useful in other realms of social life."

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55 Kershaw ‘Performance, Community, Culture.’ 21.
56 Ibid., 28.
57 Ibid., 33.
58 Ibid., 29.
61 Ibid. Accessed
Richard Schechner takes a different approach in his discussion of ritual and transformative performance, focussing primarily on the performer:

I call performances where performers are changed ‘transformations’ and those where performers are returned to their starting places ‘transportations.’ ‘Transportation’ because during the performance the performers are ‘taken somewhere’ but at the end, often assisted by others, they are ‘cooled down’ and reenter ordinary life just about where they went in.64

Theatre theorist Helen Nicholson shares Schechner’s ideas about transportation and transformation as descriptors of applied drama.65 Applied drama, like Schechner’s philosophies of ritual, involves transforming participants in a significant way. This definition leads Nicholson to express her scepticism about performance necessarily inspiring positive transformation.66 However, I am not using the terminology of applied theatre or ritual. This study looks at the transformation of attitudes and behaviours through performance, and not the transformation of performer into character. Schechner’s understanding of transformation differs from my own, not only because he is talking only about performers, not audiences, but also because he does not believe that transformation can occur to performers who re-enter life afterwards. In contrast, this study values even the slightest degree of transformation. The performer may not even be aware of this, but it may affect his or her attitudes and behaviours. I am not using his term “transportation,” as it insinuates that performers have merely been shifted to another place temporarily. This study is more aligned with scholar Doug Paterson’s view of provocative performance:

A theater in which information, emotions, and ideas are presented so as to create a condition in which if people wanted to change their ideas or emotional orientations, they could. But the objective is not to change but to invite certain kinds of change.67

66 Ibid., 82.
67 Doug Paterson’s section in Tony Kushner, Linda Frye Burnham, Doug Paterson, Archon Fung, John O’Neil, Roberta Uno, Holly Hughes, Peter C. Brosius, Caron Atlas, Dorrine Kondo, Ruben Martinez,
Discussing change as an ‘invitation’ is a necessary step in approaching the debate over the effect of performance. Park-Fuller also calls for a shift in the way theatre efficacy is discussed:

We need to get past the question of whether or not ... theatre empowers audiences, or whether it empowers performers over audience members, and more productively consider how each contributes and where we fail in contributing to the flow of it, where we succeed and why.  

Therefore, I am following Park-Fuller’s lead, attempting to productively consider the nature and extent of transformation through performance.

• Brecht’s Epic Theatre

_In Berlin in the summer of 2004, I am at the tail end of a round-the-world trip. I decide to go to Bertolt Brecht’s apartment, where he lived at the end of his life. This is now set up as the Brecht-Weigel-Gedenkstätte, a kind of museum, with every room set up as if he still lived there. The tour guide takes a small group through each room, and we gaze around at the bookshelves, the photos, the furniture. It sounds absurd, but I feel a presence, as if Brecht really is still here, sitting in his favourite chair and watching us. Watching us watching him. The most overwhelming moment is seeing the bedroom where he died. The bed still made, the day’s newspaper still folded on the bedside table. I feel tears welling up, and then they spill over, a quiet and special moment I have with him._

_One reason Brecht wanted to live in that apartment was so he could look over to the Dorotheenfriedhof cemetery next door, where philosophical_
greats such as Hegel are entombed. He felt that he could draw inspiration from their spirits, an idea I could completely understand after my experience in his bedroom. Brecht himself is now buried in this cemetery, so after the museum experience, I visit his grave. I feel an overwhelming connection to him, a connection to his work and to the messages he was trying to give to his audiences. Being around the places he lived, worked and died gives me something of a spiritual sensation, a deep-seated echoic association, a sensory visceral connection with place and landscape. I would not have otherwise felt this bodily connection, especially not from all the way home in Sydney.

Since I first studied the work of Bertolt Brecht, I have been interested in his theories and style, and how these translate to the message of his political performance work. His aesthetics and ideals have had a major influence on me, especially his theories on the use of projected images in live performance. Many of my ideas about projection come from reading about Brecht’s techniques while he was collaborating with theatre practitioner Erwin Piscator at the Berlin Volksbühne theatre, circa 1927. An example of Brecht’s use of audiovisual projection while at the Volksbühne was the depiction of characters starving onstage while stock market figures were projected behind them. Like Brecht, I have been particularly interested in juxtaposing projected images against onstage action in order to provoke the audience to draw connections between the two performative zones. This approach necessitates some ambiguity. As he said: “the sense of my plays is immanent. You have to fish it out for yourself.”\textsuperscript{69} Inspired by Piscator, he created audiovisual projections which might have seemed to be unrelated to the onstage action.\textsuperscript{70} These forced the audience to read the live and recorded texts together, thus creating meanings about the work that may be relevant to their own lives. Once the audience can link the events onstage to their own

\textsuperscript{69} Bertolt Brecht (2001), \textit{Brecht on Theatre: the development of an aesthetic}, London, Methuen Drama, 14. The use of \textit{immanent} here should be distinguished from the similar word \textit{imminent}. The 1982 Concise Macquarie Dictionary definition of \textit{immanent} is: “remaining within; indwelling; inherent.”

\textsuperscript{70} As shown in images in Ibid.
experience, the meaning created is far more powerful and resonant than if they could not relate to the performance, or if the performance explicated the meaning too narrowly. As theatre theorist Susan Bennett notes, “the technical apparatus [of projection] was clearly identified as potentially effective in a more rigorous examination of social structures.”

Piscator’s use of audiovisual projection in his theatrical works was often for immediacy, to bring real-world events into the theatre as both living scenery and to create depth and authenticity to the events depicted onstage. Brecht built on Piscator’s aesthetic, further developing the projection tools of epic theatre and using them for a variety of purposes. Most famously, he used projected text and images to juxtapose the onstage action, causing his desired Verfremdungseffekt. As Broadhurst notes:

For Brecht, feelings during a performance are allowed only as long as they do not interfere with or obscure social issues. Instead, Brecht argued, respectable art should always entertain while leaving the viewer’s intellect intact, giving him or her the option to agree or disagree.

To achieve this effect, the images projected by Brecht were of real-life social or political events happening outside the world of the play. This was meant to provoke the audience to consciously or subconsciously relate onstage events to situations in the real world. This juxtaposition was intended to allow the audience to view familiar events and situations from a new critical and detached perspective. Another way Brecht used the projected image was to project captions, outlining what would happen next in the plot of the play, so there were no surprises to distract the audience from relating the play to their own lives. Elements of Brecht’s work are found in many contemporary theatre and multimedia artforms, as many scholars observe.

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72 The Verfremdungseffekt, as used by Brecht perhaps needs a brief explanation. Often mistranslated as “alienation effect,” Verfremdungseffekt more specifically refers to “estrangement,” or the making strange of familiar things. The premise of this effect is that we need to be estranged from the things we are familiar with in order to view them more critically.
74 For example, James Roose-Evans (1984), Experimental Theatre from Stanislavsky to Peter Brook, New York, Universe Books, Broadhurst Liminal Acts: a critical overview of contemporary performance and theory, 155.
While Brecht’s main purpose in the use of audiovisual projection was to achieve this detached *Verfremdungseffekt*, I use projection to add a greater depth of emotion and meaning to performance, in order to draw the audience in. Like Jill Dolan, I believe that political change happens through empathy as well as through Brechtian alienation. Audiovisual projection can therefore be used both as a *Verfremdungseffekt* and as a tool to heighten emotional engagement, depending on the intention of the performer. Either response is potentially transformative, depending on the inclination of the individual audience member. Brecht said that he is not against empathy, but that it is best placed at a certain stage of rehearsal, before it is moved beyond. He believed that empathy itself is not sufficient to inspire change, and something must be added to it. Brecht was differentiating himself from Stanislavski in this regard, saying that while Stanislavski starts from the work of the actor in empathy, he instead starts from the play itself, and the messages it holds.75

One way of understanding Brecht’s use of audiovisual projection is through performance theorist Colin Counsell’s discussion of the earliest ceremonial and medieval theatre.76 In this theatre, there often existed two registers: the *locus*, or symbolic space, and the *platea*, or concrete space. These registers allowed “theatre to function in two ways, both as a mimetic representation of reality [platea] and as a ritual which was dance-like, offering no such illusion [locus].”77 In his description, the locus is the site of illusionist performance, and actions in this register were depicted on a raised platform upstage. In this register, high-born characters and serious issues were presented in a symbolic or abstract way. The upstage placing of the locus meant that the audience was physically and conceptually distanced from action, and it could therefore illustrate a removed place and time. In contrast, the platea presented concrete, everyday concerns and issues. This register recognised the performers as actors, and was therefore devoid of the illusion of place or character. The platea was not a signified or symbolic space, and “its views

77 Ibid., 17.
were not abstract but partisan, told by a discernible teller.”  When discussing audiovisual projection, then, it becomes possible to relate the idea of the locus with the space images are projected onto, and the platea with the stage area on which live performance occurs. The platea is particularly a location for performance such as a sporting match, where there are no characters presented. However, it can also relate to Brecht’s performance where the actors denied empathy and were stripped of artifice. But this distinction is by no means simple or concrete, as Brecht’s performers often employed an empathetic characterisation for the purposes of contrast with the distancing of character from performer. There is a strong connection between the two registers, as Counsell notes. He implies that the two registers deal with essentially the same content, presented in different ways: the locus as ritual, and the platea as mimesis.

- Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal is another performance practitioner whose work is relevant to this study. I have not seen any of Boal’s performances, however the numerous critical texts he has written have been integral to my understanding of performance and social change. His Theatre of the Oppressed, including Forum Theatre and Invisible Theatre, starts from a strong belief in the power of performance to change people. He describes theatre as a mirror, in which vices and virtues are reflected. In the Theatre of the Oppressed, the mirror can be entered, and the performer can rehearse social change. Through “transforming the fiction, [the spectator] transforms herself into herself.”

He says he has the “intention to democratise the stage space - not to destroy it! – rendering the relationship between actor and spectator transitive, creating dialogue, activating the spectator and allowing him or her to be

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78 Ibid., 20.
transformed into ‘spect-actor’.”\textsuperscript{80} The concept of the spect-actor is a revision of the traditional role of the spectator, which is merely to watch a performance. In Boal’s theatre, the spect-actor actually takes part in the experience, and this is the crucial element of his performance that Boal believes is conducive to social change. The spect-actor aesthetic creates an environment in which change is possible, as it “is propitious to discoveries. And the person who discovers or is discovered, is transformed.”\textsuperscript{81} Boal’s theatre, therefore:

... has two fundamental linked principles: it aims (a) to help the spect-actor transform himself into a protagonist of the dramatic action and rehearse alternatives for his situation, so that he may then be able (b) to extrapolate into his real life the actions he has rehearsed in the practice of theatre.\textsuperscript{82}

According to Boal, Aristotle taught that catharsis could be experienced through tragic plays, giving audiences emotional cleansing which would therefore benefit the individual and society. However, the very notion of catharsis has been called into question by scholars in the field of psychology, as one study in particular has shown that viewing tragedy does not purge the viewer of anger or negative emotion.\textsuperscript{83} Boal is critical of Aristotelian catharsis (which he calls a “coercive system of tragedy”\textsuperscript{84}), as he believes that performances which allow catharsis do not provoke transformation. In cathartic theatre, he argues, when the heroes fall, “the spectators are afraid, and submit to catharsis. They purify themselves of their desire for transformation since, in the fiction of the performance, they have already experienced that transformation.”\textsuperscript{85} According to Boal, catharsis allows viewers too easily to fall back into the status quo, rather than to question

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{84} Augusto Boal (2000), \textit{Theatre of the Oppressed}, London, Pluto, 32.
\textsuperscript{85} Boal \textit{The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal method of theatre and therapy}, 71.
what they are feeling and why. He therefore promotes “anti-catharsis” in his work; a narrative trajectory aimed at unsettling the audience.\(^8^6\)

- Persuasion and cognitive dissonance theories

Questioning audience response and social change led me to the large amount of research in psychology about attitudes and behaviours. Some of these concepts of attitudinal and behavioural psychology are beneficial to the study of audience response and transformation. Persuasion and cognitive dissonance theories are two such areas where useful connections can be drawn between psychology and performance studies.

Psychologist Leon Festinger first identified cognitive dissonance, an emotional state that occurs when two beliefs that we hold are inconsistent with each other, resulting in an alteration of one or both beliefs.\(^8^7\) Other scholars have continued this thinking, and have since connected changes in behaviour with changes in attitude.\(^8^8\) Cognitive dissonance is relevant to this study, because it has potential as a motivational tool that can be applied to provocative performance. Audiences bring certain expectations and experiences with them to a performance and therefore may experience a dissonance with the perspectives presented in the performance. In this moment, according to Festinger, they will try to reduce the dissonance, often by altering their own belief to come closer to the presented one. Festinger’s theory describes this moment, which can seen as the impulse or motivation for transformation: “... dissonance, that is, the existence of nonfitting


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relations among cognitions, is a motivating factor in its own right."\(^{89}\)
 Provocative performers can use cognitive dissonance to their advantage, for instance by violating conventional performance as a confusion technique. This state of confusion can bring about new possibilities for the trajectory of a performance. Similarly, persuasion theory talks about ways to influence people to change their attitudes or behaviours around a certain topic.\(^{90}\)

Journalist Malcolm Gladwell’s book *The Tipping Point* makes valuable observations that can be applied to the study of transformation. Gladwell discusses the nature of social trends that spread like wildfire. He identifies three characteristics of epidemics: “one, contagiousness; two, the fact that little causes can have big effects; and three, that change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment.”\(^{91}\) The name he gives to this dramatic moment is the “Tipping Point,”\(^{92}\) the moment when critical mass is achieved, and the social phenomenon crosses over into the realms of an epidemic. An interrogation of, and a reaffirmation for, the potential for change in society, *The Tipping Point* stresses that for change to be possible, it is necessary to believe that it is possible: “Look at the world around you. It may seem like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push - in just the right place - it can be tipped.”\(^{93}\)

These psychological concepts of persuasion, attitudinal change and behavioural change can shed light on the discussion of change through performance. Through looking at these theories, possibilities about the nature of transformation in audience members can be evoked.

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\(^{92}\) Ibid.
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 259.
Examples of individual and social change through performance

The notion of provocative performance has arisen in diverse contexts. One assumption is that performance makers have a responsibility to provoke discussion on certain issues. For instance, US politician Al Gore’s film An Inconvenient Truth is an example of provocative performance that uses not only audiovisual projection, but also a metaphorical projection of looking into the future. The film ignited interest in the urgency of climate change, which is being reflected in governmental policies worldwide. The impact of this film in particular has been the cause of much debate, but most writers have agreed that the film has affected attitudes and behaviours towards climate change. For instance, editor of the (sydney) magazine Kirsten Galliot wrote about her experience:

Say what you will about Gore’s politics or his methodology, he has nonetheless done something very few people in the world have the ability (and the passion) to do – create global change. The messages and images in the film – including a graphic of Manhattan under water and a cartoon of a polar bear drowning as he grapples for ice – have stayed with me. Despite concerns from some scientists that he has oversold the dangers of climate change, it is a rare person who would view this film and not be compelled to change his or her life in some way.

The Irish rock band U2 has a long history of political activism, and as such their live concerts often provoke audiences to change the way they act. For example, at one point in their 2006 Vertigo show in Sydney, words from the UN Declaration of Human Rights appeared on the large rear screen, along with pictures of local politicians. At another point in the concert, U2 frontman Bono encouraged the audience to send mobile text messages in support of one of the charities he speaks for: Make Poverty History. The band have also been vocal about their belief that “rock and roll can change

94 Guggenheim (2006), An Inconvenient Truth. USA: Paramount, 100 min.
95 Kirsten Galliot (2007), ‘Editor’s Letter.’ the (sydney) magazine, 48. 7 April, 14.
96 U2 (2006), Vertigo tour. Telstra Stadium, Sydney, Australia, The Next Adventure, RZO Productions, Michael Coppel Presents,
the world,” referencing Bono’s ability to get audiences with the Pope and the US president on issues such as debt relief and poverty.

There are numerous examples of performances that instigate measurable social change. Public health researchers Andy Howe, Vicci Owen-Smith and Judith Richardson, for instance, looked at the impact of a storyline on the enduring British soap opera Coronation Street. On the program, a character was diagnosed with cervical cancer, and the storyline followed through the treatment of the illness. After these episodes were aired, a spike in the numbers of women having pap smears in Britain was observed. This led the researchers to conclude: “We have demonstrated a large impact of a soap opera story line on the cervical screening programme.”

Psychologist Matt Sanders undertook a study into the impact of a reality television series, Driving Mum and Dad Mad, on disruptive child behaviour and family adjustment. The study concluded that the series significantly changed attitudes and behaviours of parents. Another example is the Indian Bollywood film Rang de Basanti, which, according to director Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, affected Indian youth through provoking their patriotism and senses of justice. The film tells the story of an English filmmaker who goes to India to make a documentary based on the freedom fighters mentioned in her grandfather’s memoirs. When an unfortunate incident happens, the students she recruits to play roles in her film are disturbed. The actors plot to kill the defence minister, emulating the freedom fighters they play in the film.

Mehra comments that the film is often screened in public places, and has become a symbol of protest. For him, making the film was “like giving a voice to the people for them to get up.” He says that there is now a phenomenon among Indian youth called the “RDB (Rang de Basanti) syndrome.”

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effect,” whereby people recreate a candlelight vigil scene, complete with music from the film, to protest or show remembrance for certain events. Following the film’s release, the government reopened the case depicted in it, and the guilty party was sent to gaol.\textsuperscript{102}

These are examples of individual and social change being motivated by performance. Some of these changes have been reported by the particular audience members or observed as a social phenomenon, whereas others are supported by studies.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The Great Work}

The alchemists say that every element longs to be pure, to be Gold. Some say that art completes this movement, through representing the perfect, ideal form. This art is mirrored in the Great Work, which accelerates matter towards its natural goal: Gold.
\end{quote}

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\textbf{EXAMPLE: ANI DIFRANCO}

\textit{The look of Ani DiFranco’s film Render is often grainy, though the political messages come through clearly. This is no ordinary music documentary. It has become something more, a portrait of an artist who is not only in touch with political issues, but is actively doing something about them. From the stage to the street, DiFranco makes her presence felt, and as a result, my emotions surface. I am watching someone I completely identify with. I am touched by her music, and I feel a deep connection to her lyrics and her actions.}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
An intertitle shows the words “Southern Center for Human Rights,” and I am quickly thrust into a story about the death penalty in the USA. I watch in horror as DiFranco exposes the injustices of the system. I never realised it was like this. Her documentary-style exploration of the issue culminates in footage of her onstage at a concert, telling another story to her captive audience. She speaks about a woman who was raped, and then falsely identified the perpetrator in a police line-up. DiFranco injects potency and wisdom into this story, wondering aloud at a system that counts on unreliable eyewitness testimony to put people to death.

My rage is sparked. I never knew anything about this issue before, but now I am compelled to find out. I borrow books, I watch films, I research to find out more. DiFranco’s film has changed me, educated me, informed me, and inspired me.
Render, a film by musician Ani DiFranco, is one example of a provocative performance that transformed my attitudes. The film follows DiFranco’s life making music and touring, as a portrait of her life “in her own words, on her own terms.” One section in particular, about the death penalty, caught my interest. The death penalty was not something I had thought about before this, perhaps because it is no longer applied in Australian law, and therefore not close to home. But this segment on the DVD struck me, and transformed my attitude towards the death penalty from apathy to outrage.

The rest of DiFranco’s work has also been inspirational and transformational for me. She is a performer who is passionate about standing up for what she believes in politically. So why did this film in particular have such an effect on me? Perhaps it was the fact that this was a film about a solo performer and that it was told through her eyes. Maybe my long-standing fascination and admiration for DiFranco influenced the way I received the work. I began looking at DiFranco’s entire body of work, with which I am familiar, in a different light. What is it about her art that speaks to me, provokes me and transforms me?

Most discussion of DiFranco’s work has been in articles in popular magazines, though there have been a few research projects. Some of these articles she has written herself. She says: “I fear the laziness or false security of just preaching to the converted and periodically accept the position of trying to explain myself to the society at large.” These, and her own writings, were the main sources I used to formulate an idea of why she is so influential. One aspect could be the use of intensely personal experiences

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105 Carla A. DeSantis (1999), 'Ani DiFranco: growing her own label.' Rockrgrl, March/April,
106 Ani DiFranco (1993), 'On Writing Women’s Music.' Sing Out!, 37, 4, Feb./Mar./April, 56-57.
in her songs, as she deals with politics on a personal level. Music scholar Robyn Jane Ginsburg notes:

Songs contain meaning that is projected by the artist concerning the interpretation of his/her message which is how the artist communicates to the audience. For example, Ani DiFranco uses self disclosure in her lyrics to send messages to society. She sings about injustices that occur in society and her own personal struggles with intimate relationships. In addition, she sends messages to her fans concerning the nature of her relationships which have affected her life, in hopes of helping other women with the issues in their life.108

Ginsburg’s comment about disclosing personal information to serve a community-forming purpose is relevant. She says that “DiFranco discloses in an effort to empower women.”109 I have felt this empowerment as I metaphorically project DiFranco’s words and music onto my own life experiences and find comfort in the fact that I am not alone. This is linked with the perceived role of artists in our culture. DiFranco says: “I realize that I’m a symbol for a lot of people, for whatever it is they project onto me, what they need me to be.”110 The bond this metaphorical projection forms between audience and performer is important, as there is a degree of trust that is fostered. Through trust, the performer can not only inspire and provoke audiences, but also comfort and support them. As journalist Ellen Papazian notes, it can be “comforting to individuals to know that ‘you are not alone.’ Listening to a musician who sings about problems that a person can relate to advocates or justifies certain behavior and ideologies.”111

109 Ibid., 8.
Another important facet of provocative and transformative performance is the appearance, use and effect of the body. It is easy to marginalise the body in performance, or consider it merely a counterpoint to the text, the concept, or the meaning of the piece. However, the bodies of performers have an integral role in provocation and transformation through performance. The body is a significant catalyst for provocation and transformation, and theorisations of how the body is used in performance form a critical part of this investigation.

EXAMPLE: HONOUR BOUND AND WAGES OF SPIN

I saw Nigel Jamieson’s Honour Bound and Version 1.0’s Wages of Spin in August 2006. The temporal proximity of these performances is significant because it prompted comparison between the two. However, it was not just their timing that invited comparison; they also both dealt with similar political subjects and production techniques. One affected me much more than the other, and I attribute this difference largely to the treatment of the body in both.
An impersonal steel cage stands imposingly on the stage. Its gridlines are stark, definite and uncompromising. Six performers enter this cage and systematically dress themselves in six neatly laid-out sets of orange jumpsuits, white socks, white sneakers, and black hoods. A performer is set spinning in the air, and I am simultaneously spun into this intensely physical work. The work incessantly demands my visceral involvement. I feel my body heavily implicated and involved. My breathing quickens as the
performers fly through the air, and curls in torture as they slide along the floor. They are nameless, they are characterless, they are voiceless. They could be anybody, they could be everybody. They could be me.

Another moment. A performer runs up the scrolling text of the Geneva Convention, only to repeatedly fall back, Sisyphus-like, to the stage. Each crash reverberates through me, and I feel the seesaw of frustration and hope. The insistent, haunting and beautiful score resonates within my body, and my emotions swell. These are bodies in stress, trembling, thrown around in despair. Bodies whose characterisations flow seamlessly, and significantly, between the interrogator and the interrogated. Floodlights sweep upwards, momentarily blinding me, implicating me as the interrogated.

The prisoners eventually become worn down, ending up stripped of clothing. Their naked, hooded and vulnerable bodies mirror those familiar images of Abu Ghraib’s political prisoners, which are projected behind them. Familiar images, yes, but never have I felt such a physical, emotional involvement in them as I feel right now, with these live bodies in front of me. History collapses onto the stage and I am reeling and disorientated. I feel as though I am also stripped naked, ripped raw with emotion, empathy, horror.113

Honour Bound was a dance piece staged as part of the adventures in the dark program at the Opera House Studio. It was directed by Nigel Jamieson and choreographed by Garry Stewart, and was based on the reported experiences of alleged Australian terrorist David Hicks in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba. Featuring six performers dressed in orange boiler suits, and a set comprised of a large cage, the piece used highly physical movement, including aerial work. It included interviews with Hicks’ father

and stepmother, along with various documents relating to the Guantanamo Bay facility, as its source material. Jamieson said that the documents used “can be quite dry reading so we wanted to find a way of presenting these principles in a living way.” Video projections and voice-overs were used to explicate some of these materials literally, however the performers themselves were mute. Suspended on wires, they spun, crawled and flew around the cage in a representation of the experience of an inmate.

• Wages of Spin

Danger is imminent. A hooded performer, being directed to walk along a plank of wood, is stepping through a minefield of upturned nails. A bland voice tells him: “foot up, left, left... toe down, shuffle forward... shuffle forward... heel down.” The tension in the room is palpable, with the performer often standing on just one foot, slightly wobbling. What happens if he loses his balance, if he has to put his foot down quickly? A camera, wheeled along just inches from the performer’s feet, projects a large image of them onto the screen at the back of the stage. I am forced to watch this horror up close, this slow-motion car crash that seems to have no end. I find my breath stuck, as my fixed stare moves between the screen and the performer. Simultaneously, another performer begins to question the first about the semantics of interrogation. I feel myself willing him not to step on a nail, willing the talking performer to stop distracting him. I have walked right into this, right into the middle. The middle of danger and immediacy. The middle of a body in distress.

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Another moment. A camera is pointed at the audience, and our images projected onto a giant screen. A performer addresses the projected audience, rather than the live audience. I feel a bodily disjointedness, watching myself being watched. Performers run on the spot while delivering lines, and their growing exhaustion feeds my own. In this race, the truth never catches up to the spin.

By the end of the performance, I am somewhat numb from an overwhelming amount of facts, figures and evidence. Although these facts are shocking, I have become somewhat desensitised to them, and need the bodily connection to bring them home.¹¹⁵

Wages of Spin was a theatrical performance staged initially in 2005, and re-staged in 2006, at the Performance Space in Redfern. It was devised by Version 1.0, a Sydney-based performance group. The piece was a “performative enquiry into the [2003] Iraq war,” and used a wide range of source materials to highlight the lies, spin and half-truths told by politicians when going to war. It interrogated Australia’s engagement with the war, and contrasted the war with other cultural events and personalities. Video also featured heavily in this piece, as it was staged to look like the taping of a television show. A stationary bank of monitors, some portable monitors and a large projection screen comprised the barrage of images. Three performers became a wide variety of famous and not-so-famous people in this verbatim theatre piece.

These two performances, which had similar themes and stylistic elements, had different impacts on me. I felt much more bodily and emotionally connected to Honour Bound. It may be that the reason for the different reception was in the use of the body, as bodies were treated differently in each performance. In Honour Bound, the body was in a central position as the location of pain and torture. Not only were bodies writhing and flying around the space, but also much of the projected and spoken text dealt with the implication of the body in human rights. There were moments in Wages of Spin in which the body was implicated as a location for emotion, however the performance was overwhelmingly cerebral, concentrating on facts, figures, and verbal storytelling. For me, the physical storytelling mode of Honour Bound was far more effective in the piece’s resonance, and therefore its impact was more profound. Performance theorist Peta Tait notes that:

An emotional aesthetic in theatre is contingent ... not just on acting the emotions of a performing ‘body-text,’ but also on its reception by the spectator’s bodily knowledges, and both are
contingent on cultural difference and previous exposure to variable social performances of emotions.\textsuperscript{116}

Others have commented on the physicality of these specific pieces. Nigel Jamieson spoke at length on his decision to foreground the physicality of \textit{Honour Bound}, saying that he was “exploring the experiences of human beings pushed to the very limits of human endurance and in a sense asking our performers to find a way of making a parallel journey themselves.”\textsuperscript{117} He also said that the first image he had for the performance was visualising Hicks as a “human figure spinning and turning in a void,”\textsuperscript{118} and that the primary objective for the production was to make their discoveries about Guantanamo “more visceral than what it is when reported in the media.”\textsuperscript{119}

Terry Hicks, talking about his willingness to collaborate on the project, noted that artists “can get the message out in a very physical way,”\textsuperscript{120} bringing to mind his own physical protest over his son’s detainment, where he locked himself in a wire cage on a New York street. Many reviewers also commented on the use of the body, in particular remarking on the shocking and exhilarating “extreme physical language”\textsuperscript{121} of the work.\textsuperscript{122} Even Queensland Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett, in his weblog, commented that \textit{Honour Bound} “humanises rather than politicises the situation.”\textsuperscript{123} Many reviewers mentioned the moment when a performer runs up the text of the Geneva Convention, one saying that the image is “one of the most impressive marriages of visuals and human movement you’re likely to see.”\textsuperscript{124}

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\footnotetext{116}{Peta Tait (2002), \textit{Performing Emotions: gender, bodies, spaces, in Chekhov's drama and Stanislavski's theatre}, Aldershot; Burlington Vt., Ashgate, 154.}
\footnotetext{117}{Sydney Opera House (2006), \textit{Honour Bound} programme notes.}
\footnotetext{118}{Kathy Marks (2006), \textit{Sydney confronts 'barbarism' of Guantanamo}, news.independent.co.uk/world/australasia/article1214510.ece. Accessed 20 September, 2006.}
\footnotetext{119}{Phillips \textit{Honour Bound} director Nigel Jamieson speaks with WSWS. Accessed}
\footnotetext{120}{Sydney Opera House \textit{Honour Bound} programme notes. op cit.}
\end{footnotes}
Reviews of Wages of Spin do not focus on the physical to nearly the same extent. Instead, commentators tend to focus more on the research base of the work, as well as the prevalence of the spoken word. Version 1.0 state that the piece has a “meticulously researched script,” and that one of the work’s strengths is its “clever re-contextualisation of official public documents, television interviews and even raves from columnists and bloggers.”

Many classify it as “research based political theatre,” and talk about words and images dominating the performance. The use of technology is also mentioned, sometimes when it is related to physical affect. For instance, one reviewer comments on “a heightened sense of the physical anguish of torture through intrusive camera angles,” and another says: “the production assaults the unsuspecting audience with aural and visual imagery.”

Almost every reviewer mentioned the beginning of the performance as a standout moment, for instance saying that it uses “a sort of abstract physicalisation,” and that “Hill’s tortuous hair-splitting is accompanied by an equally disturbing visual analogue.”

Both performances also used audiovisual projections. Honour Bound projected filmed interviews with David Hicks’ father and stepmother, as well as text from political documents, pictures of David, a tour through the family home, and other abstract patterns. Wages of Spin’s main projection showed close-ups of certain parts of the action, the television-style display of performed interviews, previously taped vox pop footage, and other war-related images and videos. On this level, the performances were quite similar, though the interaction between the projected images and the performers’ bodies differed. In Honour Bound, the performers and audiovisual projection


129 "Eeyore" Putting a Spin on Spin. Accessed


131 Woodhead The Wages of Spin (review). Accessed
were often intertwined: performers’ bodies running across, crashing into, and mirroring the projected images. In *Wages of Spin*, the projection was addressed more directly, like another character in the performance. Sometimes a performer would address the projection, and sometimes it became a mock-up current affairs program, superimposed with spinning logo. In the opening of the performance, the projection showed the over-sized image of feet stepping over nails. For me, *Honour Bound*’s integration of the projection was more organic, and often more ambiguous than that of *Wages of Spin*.

The costuming and positioning of bodies in the performances is also noteworthy. In *Honour Bound*, the performers were costumed as prisoners, in orange boiler suits synonymous with those used in the Guantanamo Bay facility. *Version 1.0*, however, chose to costume the *Wages of Spin* performers in military camouflage. This difference in costumes is significant. In *Honour Bound*, the prisoner costumes signified victims, and therefore encouraged a sympathetic reading from the audience. In contrast, the military uniforms of the *Wages of Spin* performers signified the perpetrators of violence, and therefore seemed to encourage an adverse perception. However, these costumes were not indicative of the characterisations for the entire length of the performances. While at times the *Honour Bound* performers were prisoners, they had a plasticity that meant they could also become guards, or other characters. Likewise, the performers in *Wages of Spin* were not always cast as military or political characters. While these characters were present, there were also many others, including celebrities and victims.

The costumed bodies in both performances, no matter which role they were playing, threw themselves in and out of danger. In *Honour Bound*, it seemed that the danger was more tangible, more immediate and certainly more affecting. The bodies were often in agony, incredibly vulnerable or terrifying. Bodies were positioned differently in *Wages of Spin*, as spoken dialogue was also used to convey the story. Much of the time, the body was positioned as a speaking one, often standing or sitting in one place. The focus of the
provocation of anger in the piece therefore seemed to be literal, as the content relied on verbal text to carry its message. However, there were moments of bodily danger in which my own body was also affected. Especially clear in my memory are the moments of several performers running on the spot, together but isolated, and the initial interrogation scene. However, words were still important in these moments, as they seemed to add other dimensions of danger and bafflement. For me, the moments when the performing bodies were in immediate danger were the most interesting, affective and emotional. In these moments, I empathised. I became the characters. I could feel the tension in my own body, holding my breath, curling my toes, stiffening my neck. Sometimes they moved me to tears, and sometimes to anger.

All of these differences may seem quite trivial, and could largely be put down to aesthetic performative choices, but they were integral to my reception and affective transformation as an audience member. Psychologists Gleitman, Fridlund and Reisberg say that “our bodily state changes when we are emotional,” and that “emotion involves changes in how we think and also how we act.” Honour Bound has lingered in my memory more than Wages of Spin. The high degree of stress and emotion portrayed by the performers in Honour Bound had an immense impact on me. My body felt physically transformed while experiencing the performance, for instance holding my breath and stiffening my body. The effect I felt as my body experienced the piece was immense, and directly related to my reception of the issues of the performance. As one reviewer said about Honour Bound, “it’s the way [it is] executed that will resonate most.” This bodily effect was integral to my engagement with Honour Bound, and therefore had significant impact on its potential to transform my attitudes.

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132 Gleitman, Fridlund and Reisberg Psychology, 476.
133 Ibid., 469.
134 Anonymous Honour Bound (review). Accessed
Throughout this research process, I have often been reminded of the importance and significance of my personal experience as an audience member. My experience drew me to research this topic in the first place, and sparked my interest in the potential of performance to galvanise change. My personal experience becomes part of theorising about provocative and transformative performance. I am also curious about the reactions other people have to performances, and whether they experience any kind of transformation as a result. However, as Park-Fuller notes, “many find it especially presumptuous to speak for audiences.”135 Auslander echoes these apprehensions.136 In this study, I incorporate the experiences of individual audience members, which appear in locations such as Internet forums, or can be extracted from the focus groups I convened as part of my practical research.

Susan Bennett’s book *Theatre Audiences* includes many useful observations on audiences. She notes that in much contemporary theatre since Brecht, theatre audiences have taken an “increasingly productive role.”137 By contrast, in theatre in the realist tradition, such as that by Henrik Ibsen, “an audience can only learn/ask questions about that particular situation, and does not explore any relationship between this slice of life and their own social reality.”138

Tait also looks at audience response through an interrogation of emotions. For her, emotional response is integral to the way an audience responds to performance:

... emotions include (emotional) feelings and bodily sensations in the present (momentary), which are linked to previously

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135 Park-Fuller ’Audiencing the Audience: playback theatre, performative writing, and social activism.’ 291.
138 Ibid., 24.
experienced (remembered) voluntary and involuntary patterns of responses and a cognitive system of interpreting these; they are indivisibly acquired within and expressed in a social context.\textsuperscript{139}

Kershaw looks at audience reception in terms of the entire performative event: “How the audience gathers for a performance, and disperses when it is over, may be as important to its ideological reception of the show as, say, the style of performing itself.”\textsuperscript{140} Another way to approach an understanding of reception is through the discourse of performativity, such as that discussed by performance scholar Elizabeth Lee-Brown: “performativity also offers a way of understanding reception as an active process that may or may not contribute to political efficacy.”\textsuperscript{141}

EXAMPLE: \textit{SUPER SIZE ME}

Figure 16: \textit{Super Size Me} film still. (From Soefer \textit{Super Size Me}. Website. Super Size Me official website www.supersizeme.com.)

\textsuperscript{139} Tait \textit{Performing Emotions: gender, bodies, spaces, in Chekhov's drama and Stanislavski’s theatre}, 16.
\textsuperscript{140} Kershaw ‘Performance, Community, Culture.’ 23.
My stomach is churning, twisting around, trying to lurch out of my body. I watch as Morgan Spurlock shoves yet another burger into his mouth, pushing the final bit of bun in with his index finger. He pauses, unable to go any further. Unable even to sip his Coke and wash it all down. And then it happens. He leans out of the window, just in time to save the car’s upholstery from being splattered with his entire meal in reverse. I suppress a gag reflex and watch in horror as this man’s body rejects everything he has been putting it through.

Super Size Me,\textsuperscript{142} a 2004 documentary film by Morgan Spurlock, is not for the faint-hearted. Spurlock puts himself through incredible torture, in the form of three McDonald’s meals daily, for a month. The viewer can only watch, in horror, as Spurlock’s body transforms from healthy to morbidly unhealthy (his doctor tells him he is “pickling” his liver and urges him to stop). Seeing him treat his body in this manner, to make a point about the dangers of fast food, is both grotesque and courageous. Spurlock outlined his intentions for Super Size Me, saying that his aim was to make people think:

\begin{quote}
The goal for me was not to create a film that was going to be preachy. You know, I create a film that makes you think. And when you walk out of this film, you walk out thinking, ‘Wow, what am I doing? How am I living my life? How am I eating, or how am I not exercising? You know, what kind of role model am I to my kids?’\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

My experience of watching Super Size Me made me consider how other people may have received it. In addition to speaking from my own experience, I can also gather responses from other audience members. For instance, in many online forums, people discussed the changes they have made since seeing the film.\textsuperscript{144} Some said that they had given up hamburgers

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
forever, although others said that the movie actually made them want to eat McDonald’s. Speaking about the film in these forums provoked more intense discussion about morals, education and the effects of advertising. This was an interesting effect of the film, as it made people question their values, and think more deeply about the issue than they might have otherwise. Internet forums, when surveyed in this manner, then become part of the method for gathering audience reports on performance.

Other responses and references to the film have appeared in newspapers and magazines. In New Scientist, for example, journalist Kate Douglas talks about a Swedish experiment based on the movie Super Size Me. The participants had variable results, for instance some lost weight, some gained weight, and some lost or gained muscle. The article also outlines several responses to the movie. Some of these are other documentary films, whereas some are experiments mirroring that undertaken by Spurlock in the film. Many of these, as Douglas notes, are “designed to vindicate the fast food industry.”

One example is Bowling For Morgan, an online short documentary film which claims to discredit Super Size Me. Rather than destroy confidence in Super Size Me, these responses demonstrate how provocative it was, as the film inspired people to make their own responses to it. Another film, Inspired: The Movie, portrays Super Size Me as an example of a film that uses scare tactics to try to get people to change. Inspired: The Movie posits that this is not an effective tactic, and they try to inspire change in a different way - through portraying stories of people who have lost weight. Looking at clear changes after performances is another way of gauging audience response. For instance, after Super Size Me was released, McDonald’s launched a rebuttal ad campaign promoting their new salad menu. Also, the super-size option disappeared from USA McDonald’s stores.

Conclusion

There are many avenues of literature, context and methodology through which this research project developed. This project links together discourses of performance and social change, the body in performance, projection and audience studies. It is therefore located across, between and through these discourses. The thesis approaches the question of transformation through performance from a new methodological perspective. A combination of practice-based research methodology, autoethnography and other qualitative methods is used. The study engages with the literature and case studies to discuss performances that make claims of transformative impact, suggesting that this transformation comprises the intention and instrumentation of the performance maker as well as the illumination of the audience.

The next chapter looks at two case studies of provocative and transformation performance, interrogating the intention and instrumentation of the performance makers, as well as the transformative outcomes of the performances.

Secrecy

Though notated as science, alchemy is mysterious, secret and enigmatic. It is expressed through codes, symbols, images and diagrams. It resembles a labyrinth, only solved by people who enter with the right goal - those who can transcend the intellect and rely on intuition. It is fluid, slippery, flexible and ambiguous. The Gold can only be found by those who do not seek it.
Part Two: Case Studies

Image from Klossowski de Rola (1973), Alchemy: the secret art. London, Thames and Hudson.
‘The wind carries it in its belly’:
Separation and Case Studies of Merlin Luck
and Michael Moore¹

Introduction

Two examples of performances that fall into this study’s definition of
provocative and transformative performance are Merlin Luck’s performative
protest following his eviction from the reality television series Big Brother,
and filmmaker Michael Moore’s Best Documentary acceptance speech at the
Academy Awards. A joint analysis of these case studies helps to illuminate
some areas of this study. In particular, I discuss the stated intention to
provoke, some of the tools used to provoke, and transformative effects.

Common elements appear in both of these case studies. For instance, both
performers subverted the protocols of an event, for a moment causing
confusion and transforming the event into a political protest. Both
performances raise the issue of the replacement of the real by simulacra, an

¹ This chapter began as two separate conference papers: Author (2005), ‘Reality TV and Projected
Reality: a case study of Australian Big Brother’s Merlin Luck.’ Paper presented at the International
Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR/FIRT), University of Maryland, USA, 28 June. and Author
(2005a), ‘Fiction, Non-fiction and Dissent: a case study of Michael Moore and the Academy Awards.’
Paper presented at the College of Arts, Education and Social Science conference, University of Western
Sydney, Australia, 9 October. Both papers were later published as: Author (2005b), ‘Fiction, Non-
fiction and Dissent: a case study of Michael Moore and the Academy Awards.’ College of Arts,
Education and Social Science conference, University of Western Sydney, Australia, 9 October. and
In Borowski and Sugiera (Eds.), Fictional Realities/ Real Fictions. Cambridge, Cambridge University
Press.
idea theorised by cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, where a representation of the real becomes so divorced from this reality that it becomes “hyperreal.”

In these studies, the protocols of an event were subverted, bringing into focus the hyperreal nature of these scenarios. The performers attempted to subvert one reality by metaphorically projecting another reality onto it, layering real and hyperreal as a tool to provoke audiences to change their attitudes and behaviours.

Through an analysis of these two case studies, I demonstrate some common elements of intention, instrumentation and illumination. This approach examines the objective of the performer, the tools of performance they employ to provoke their audiences, and the impact the performances had on these audiences.

**Setting the Scene: Merlin Luck on Big Brother**

*Channel 10, Sunday 13 June 2004.* The camera swoops down over a large, cheering and chanting studio audience. Some people in the audience are holding up homemade signs, emblazoned with the name of a housemate or a loved one at home. The camera glides up the ramp that leads through the audience to the eviction stage, as a car pulls up at the top. The audience is chanting enthusiastically, and the host of Australian Big Brother, Gretel Killeen, is waiting on the stage.

Audience: Mer-lin! Mer-lin! Mer-lin!
Gretel Killeen: Would you please welcome evictee number five: Merlin!

Merlin Luck emerges out of the car and jumps around, encouraging the audience to cheer louder. After a couple of seconds, he holds his finger to his mouth and gestures with his other hand to quieten them down. As he begins to walk down the ramp through the audience, we see him fumbling with something. It becomes clear that he is holding a piece of fabric. Pulling a

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piece of black tape from the fabric, he then holds it up and we see that it is a sign. He quickly sticks the black tape over his mouth, and holds the sign up as he completes his walk to the stage. It eventually becomes readable: “FREE TH REFUGEES” (we later learn that the “E” from “THE” had fallen off). Throughout, the crowd are screaming, cheering, but as they slowly realise what he is doing, some start to boo and jeer. Luck walks past Killeen and sits on the couch, and she turns around and goes to sit beside him. He is still holding the sign up in front of his chest, and his legs are jiggling with nervousness. He stares straight ahead, ignoring Killeen.

Gretel Killeen: Merlin... Merlin... Merlin... are you going to speak? (to audience) Shush! Shuuuush... Hey! Everybody sit down and be quiet! Merlin, can I ask you a simple mathematical question... this segment is five minutes long... are you going to speak at all?...

More jeering from the audience.

Gretel Killeen: ...Well, what... what I’ll do...

*The audience’s cacophony grows louder.*

Gretel Killeen: No, be quiet please, we’ve got business to do...

*The camera shows an extreme close-up of Luck’s face. His laboured breathing and the intensity in his eyes become visible. With each nervous breath, the tape under his nostrils waves slightly. He is looking around at the audience and faintly nodding.*

Gretel Killeen: I’m sure we’ve all had plenty of time to absorb Merlin’s message, which is a valid message, and may I say, a good opportunity to express it. Well done.

*She claps and the audience cheers. We see a shot of the audience, including Luck’s father, clapping enthusiastically.*

Gretel Killeen: And now, I will fulfil some of my obligations, which are to present the prizes... let’s have a look at the package.

I was sitting at home in the comfort of my pyjamas. Watching this young man on television in an uncomfortable position, making a major statement about Australia’s policy of mandatory detention of asylum seekers. He was shaking and jiggling his legs, betraying the emotion behind the protest. I was stunned and excited by the intensity, the danger, and the impending effect of Luck’s actions. I felt a sense of connection, of immense empathy with his lone dissenting voice. A voice that, although silent, was speaking for detained refugees who are denied words. However, not everyone shared my reaction of empathy and excitement. The live audience, for instance, did not appreciate the fact that Luck was not speaking. The host, Killeen, and the producers of the show had to work fast to calm the audience down and get Luck to say anything, and save dead air time. After a while pleading with

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him, Killeen showed Luck his prizes, then the show crossed back to the house and told the rest of the housemates what had happened. When the eviction stage was shown again, Killeen was alone and saying that she thought Luck’s stance was “aggressive” and that she “felt the point had been made.” She also said that the audience was disappointed because they had come “for a show.” She then suggested that he might donate his prizes to charity.

Setting the Scene: Michael Moore at the Academy Awards

*The Academy Awards television broadcast, Sunday 23 March 2003.* After a montage of the nominees for the Best Documentary Oscar, the camera swoops in on presenter Diane Lane, who is swathed in a shimmering gown and holding a white envelope.

Lane: And the Oscar goes to....

She sighs as she opens the envelope.

Lane: ...Hm! *(she smiles)*... Bowling For Columbine...

The crowd starts to cheer and applaud as she shouts out the names:

Lane: Michael Moore and Michael Donovan!

Cut to Michael Moore helping his wife and the producer of the film, Kathleen Glynn, out of her seat in the audience, as the orchestra starts to play. Moore gestures to some of the people seated around him to stand up and come to the stage as well. Various members of the audience congratulate them as they walk down the aisle: Martin Scorcese, Kurt Russell, Brendan Fraser, Michael Caine, and Julianne Moore. Others - Daniel Day Lewis, Cameron Diaz and Chad Lowe - are giving standing ovations and smiling warmly at Moore and Glynn. When they reach the stage, Lane gives the statues to Moore and Glynn and we see more
applauding celebrity close-ups, this time Harvey Weinstein, Renee Zellweger and Meryl Streep. Moore humbly nods and gives little waves at the crowd, thanking them for their reaction. He then passes his statue to Glynn to make his acceptance speech, which he begins with a shaky voice and slightly nervous fidgeting.

Moore: On behalf of our producers Kathleen Glynn and Michael Donovan from Canada, I’d like to thank the Academy for this. I have invited my fellow documentary nominees on the stage with us...

The crowd cheers, and the camera pans across the faces of the other nominees.

Moore: ...and we would like to... They are here in solidarity with me, because we like non-fiction. We like non-fiction and we live in fictitious times. We live in the time where we have fictitious election results that elects a fictitious president.

A mixture of claps, cheers and loud shouts of “no!” and “boo!” from the audience.

Moore: We live in a time where we have a man sending us to war for fictitious reasons.

The camera shows Adrian Brody, Chad Lowe, Martin Scorsese and Nicole Kidman, among others, all looking unimpressed.

Moore: Whether it’s the fictionation (sic) of duct tape or the fictitious (sic) of orange alerts, we are against this war, Mr. Bush. Shame on you, Mr. Bush, shame on you.

The clapping and booing gets louder, enhanced by the sound of the orchestra starting to play. The noise almost drowns out the end of his
speech, although Moore moves closer to the microphone and raises his voice to be heard.


Moore: And any time you got the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against ya, your time is up. Thank you very much.

He applauds the audience, turns around and leaves the stage, followed by the other nominees and Lane.4

The war in Iraq had just begun. Amid speculation and controversy, it was decided that the Academy Awards ceremony would go ahead, albeit a toned-down version. Although the link between the war and the Oscars is not inherent, there was much discussion in the lead-up to the ceremony over whether anyone would use it as a forum for responses to the war. One image shows snipers on a roof near the ceremony, highlighting the feeling of insecurity and fear at the time:

![Snipers on a roof near the Oscars ceremony.](image)

Owing to the time difference between Australia and the USA, I was watching the broadcast on Monday night, the 24th of March. Throughout the day prior to the screening, as the ceremony was unfolding live, I heard the news that Moore had said something controversial, so I was eagerly awaiting the announcement of his award. Moore had subverted an otherwise banal
certainly warranted an award of its own. Most Over-the-Top Event Trying to be Under-the-Top."

Some of the other winners had made slight references to the war, but none was as overtly political as Moore. The live audience’s reaction to Moore noticeably changed as the speech unfolded, as he “became the first man in history to receive a standing ovation on his way to the Oscar stage only to be soundly booed off it.” Strategic close-ups showed various celebrities’ disgusted, shocked faces and turned-up noses. However, although the noise was getting louder, the selective footage did not actually show anyone booing. Caroline Overington noted that “in the auditorium, it seemed the audience was split between those who supported Moore and those who thought it was wildly inappropriate.” The orchestra soon struck up and drowned out the speech, forcing Moore from the stage.

Although Moore was the only winner to use the Oscars stage for political means on the night, he is by no means the first winner to make politics of their speech. The trend began in 1973, when an actress named Maria Cruz accepted Marlon Brando’s best actor award for *The Godfather*. Cruz was dressed in traditional Native American dress, and commented on behalf of Brando against the treatment of Native Americans by the film industry. 1975 brought messages about the Vietnam War, 1978 Palestine, 1993 Haiti and Tibet, and various winners in other years made comments relating to the political subject matter of their films. Steve Martin was also not the first person to make an on-stage comment after such a speech. Various hosts, presenters and other winners have expressed their opinions about political Oscar speeches, screenwriter Paddy Chayevsky in 1978 even going so far as to say: “I would like to say that I’m sick and tired of people exploiting the Academy Awards for the propagation of their own personal propaganda. A simple thank you would have sufficed.” What Moore did, then, was not unprecedented, however the level of antagonism towards him from so many people was perhaps unique.

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Provocative Intention and Instrumentation

An important aspect of this inquiry into provocative and transformative performance is the intention of the performance maker. This can generally be gathered from sources such as interviews, programme notes, published theory, and play texts. In the case of the performances of Luck and Moore, interviews were the main sources of statements of intention. The performative tools and instruments used by performers are also significant, as both performers conveyed their messages in similar ways.

Both performers chose a provocative location for performance. Not only were both protests staged within the boundaries of a televised event, but also both events were televised live. This is significant because both sets of audiences - those in the live audience and those watching the live broadcast in their homes - were experiencing it at the same time. The live nature of these performances also meant that the performers minimised the chance of being censored by the producers of the programme. The choice of place and space for provocative performance is therefore related to its transformative potential, and is an aspect I have included in this discussion of provocative and transformative performance.
Luck and Moore both wrote follow-up articles in major newspapers talking about the reasons behind their protests. In these, they mentioned their belief that silence is wrong when something is happening that you don’t agree with. Also, both performers were speaking for people who did not have a voice. This message was conveyed by Luck’s silence, while Moore employed a technique of appropriating political language. In addition, both performers talked afterwards about the moment when they experienced dissonance between their experience and what was happening with the issue in society.

Journalist Alex Broun alludes to Luck’s dissonance as the disjuncture between the contemporary treatment of refugees, and Luck’s own migration from Germany to Australia. Similarly, journalist Gary Younge describes Moore’s moment of dissonance. In the article, Moore says that since September 11, he now “believes defending democracy against Bush is a far greater priority than revitalising it through a third-party candidate.” The events of 11 September 2001 therefore seem to have been the turning point for him and the Bush administration’s response contributed to his dissonance.

Both performers were conscious of the image they were trying to project. Luck had planned his costume and props carefully in order to present his information in the most shocking way. Similarly, Moore decided to invite the other documentary nominees on stage to present the image of a united front against the war and the president.

Another major area of overlap between the case studies is the way they engage with the problem of simulation in a context where signs of the real are substituted for the real itself. According to Baudrillard, simulation in the contemporary world is where a model or a representation of the real becomes divorced from the represented real, or is generated without apparent origin or reality: a hyperreal. In the case of Big Brother, this

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9 Merlin Luck (2004), ‘Somehow, we need to make politics cool again.’ The Age, 1 September. and Michael Moore (2003), ‘I’d Like to Thank the Vatican …’ Los Angeles Times, 27 March.
12 Baudrillard Simulacra and Simulation, 1.
simulacra is the show itself, the projected reality of life inside the house. Dean Bertram, writing for *The Australian* newspaper, said “what we see on *Big Brother* is a simulation, a copy of something that does not really exist.”¹³ The housemates worry about camera angles, and about the way they are being portrayed to the audience. What is positioned as reality has actually become hyperreal. In *Big Brother*, this simulacra is a metaphorical projection as well. The projection of reality takes on a power of its own, becoming more and more divorced from the real, until it actually supersedes it. This is delivered as a reality to be desired, higher and more important than everyday life. After all, this is the reality that projects its participants into the realms of fame. The producers of the show turn so-called ordinary people into superstars, projecting their images and their television lives into our living rooms. Baudrillard says about *Loft Story* (the French version of *Big Brother*) that it is “both the mirror and the disaster of a society wholeheartedly caught in the race toward insignificance, swooning over its own banality ... The immanence of banality, more real than real, is complete reality.”¹⁴

Moore’s speech subversively presents real life in contemporary USA as hyperreal. While pronouncing our times “fictitious,” he champions his own documentary representations of these events. The film then becomes the reality, and the real-life events become the constructed, or metaphorically projected, hyperreality. The Oscars ceremony displays the so-called reality of celebrities’ lives, showing the usually fictitious actors playing themselves. Ironically, however, this projected reality has actually become the hyperreal, a simulation of a reality that does not exist. For the Oscars, as for *Big Brother*, this simulacra is a projection of reality which eventually supersedes the real.

Therefore, each case study presents an instance of simulacra, where the projected reality of the situation is subverted. This subversion is the catalyst

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¹³ Dean Bertram ‘Merlin Luck’s *Big Brother* protest showed just how lacking in reality is reality TV, argues Dean Bertram.’ *The Australian*, June 15 2004, 11.
¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard (2002), 'Telemorphosis.' In Weibel, Frohne, Levin and Zentrum Für Kunst Und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe (Eds.), *Ctrl [space]: rhetorics of surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*. Karlsruhe, ZKM Center for Art and Media, 481.
for the exposure of the simulated reality. Both protests incited polarised reactions, further highlighting the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy. Image also played an important role in the simulacra. During the Big Brother eviction show, images of the housemates and evictee were projected onto large screens on the stage. These were being processed live, and graphics added to them, effectively mediating the supposed real. In Hollywood and the Academy Awards, the simulacra that projects the lives of celebrities as real is so powerful that we are no longer sure if what we are seeing is the projection of reality, or reality itself. We buy countless magazines in order to glimpse a piece of the lives of the rich and famous, because the projection of their lives is delivered as a reality to be desired, higher and more important than everyday life. These magazines also contribute to our perceptions of the ideal body size and shape, which are mostly exemplified through celebrities.

Merlin’s eviction protest and Moore’s Oscars speech are both examples of provocative performance that violates and subverts the protocol of an event. In both cases, the performers were expected to take a certain trajectory: Luck was expected to speak with Killeen about his time in the house, and Moore was supposed to offer his appreciation to the Academy and the people who worked on his film. Both performers subverted and transformed these trajectories, creating a state of confusion and a range of new possibilities for provocation. These expectations could also be seen as scripts for performance. Writer Jesse Larner, for instance, in his book on Moore, says that Moore “didn’t abide by the unwritten law of the tightly scripted, harshly time-limited Academy ceremony: thank your actors, your parents, God, and be gone.”¹⁵ Luck and Moore both transgressed this script, improvising and moving into unscripted territory. This forced the creators of the event to contain the improvisation. In both cases, the event was contained so the protests were just minor disruptions, and the structure and form of Big Brother and the Academy Awards continues. The dominant discourse of the expected script was therefore only momentarily transformed.

Baz Kershaw’s discussion of spectacle in performance is also a suitable frame here. He identifies spectacle as becoming a “force for change,” as it “seems always to transform the human, however conceived, into something more or less than itself.”16 Within Kershaw’s framework, the performances of Luck and Moore fall under the category of “deconstructive spectacles,” which “work paradoxically to open up new domains for radical revisions of the way things are. They are therefore an especially powerful potential force for progressive activism.”17

Various modes of projection can be seen in these case studies. The performers metaphorically projected certain personae in order to convey their messages. Also, the projected, hyperreal nature of both the Big Brother live eviction and the Academy Awards was thrown into stark contrast with the social contexts of the protests. The issue with the projection of Big Brother is that it continues to “offer the promise of ‘real-life’ television.”18 Similarly, awards ceremonies like the Oscars promise to show us the real lives of actors, outside the usual context of playing a role. However, the over-the-top and hyperreal nature of these ceremonies means that the actors are still playing the role of themselves as celebrity. The line between these projected realities and the reality of our lives then becomes blurred. We are no longer sure if what we are seeing is a projection of reality, or reality itself.

I am framing these two events as performance, as they display much the same characteristics as their theatrical counterparts. Luck and Moore each made a conscious decision to subvert their respective events through performance, knowing that the live audience would increase the impact of the message. Luck said: “I saw an opportunity for a culture jam that would really make an impact.”19 Indeed, the protest was a definitive example of a culture jam, where a medium’s method of communication is used to produce

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16 Baz Kershaw (2003), ‘Curiosity or Contempt: on spectacle, the human, and activism.’ Theatre Journal, 55, 593.
17 Ibid., 599.
commentary about itself. Their images were carefully constructed, from the designs on Luck’s t-shirt to the peace pin on Moore’s designer suit. They performed in front of enormous audiences, both live and over television, exchanging the glory of their celebration for a different type of fame, one which would link them with a cause. In Moore’s case, this was to be expected, as his previous body of work had demonstrated a tendency toward overt political messages. However, for Luck this was an event with no precedent, and one which took its audience completely by surprise.

An important theme developing from the reactions to both protests was the idea of appropriateness. When is it appropriate to make provocative performance, and what is the responsibility of performers to provoke? Merlin said "if national television is not the place for debate about an issue about this magnitude then that’s a sad reflection on our nation’s priorities." Even Killeen spoke of the appropriateness of his protest at the time, saying that it was “a good opportunity to express it.” However, she also commented on the fact that the “E” had fallen off Merlin’s sign, allowing a barrage of criticism about the simple misspelling of the sign. Similarly, at the Oscars, Steve Martin’s immediate comment diffused Moore’s protest, making way for the snide remarks to come.

A Google search reveals the diversity of contexts for the Internet discussion of these two events. From boards primarily dedicated to discussing Big Brother and panning Michael Moore, to general political, social, and gaming forums, it seemed many people had an opinion about one of the performances. The majority of people across these forums attacked the personalities of Merlin and Moore, rather than the message they were projecting. This ad hominem approach seems therefore to be a common reaction to certain political performance.

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Merlin Luck on Big Brother

Shortly after Merlin Luck’s protest on Big Brother, the media were already covering the story. Also, opinions were overwhelming various Big Brother mailing lists and Internet forums. Some of these displayed racism (against Luck’s German nationality), as well as ignorance about the issue in question. The most interesting comments for this study, which I have selected based on their exemplification of dominant themes in these conversations, were based around the appropriateness of the chosen location for the protest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skooby</th>
<th>I’m all for freedom of speech (or in merlins case, freedom of non-speech), but there's a time and place for everything. He could of used his position as an evicted housemate to get his opinion across to a much wider audience by using the media on an ongoing basis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>homer2028</td>
<td>Wouldn't the refugees in detention benifit more from the issue by Merlin using his 'celebrity' to raise their issue in a professional and mature manner? What will everyone remember more? The message or the manner of protest? I dare say that the message will be quickly forgotten, but silent Merlin will be remembered for longer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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23 Here, as with all quotations in the thesis containing spelling and grammar errors, I have preserved the original speaker/writer’s words as spoken/written. This is to convey the original intention of the quotation as closely as possible.
25 Ibid. Accessed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Username</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>I think that his Protest wasn't in the time or place in doing it, the eviction show is supposed to be fun, and he stuffed that up, he was so clouded with passion he didn't think of what it might do to other people (eg. The Audience, Gretel and the BB Crew Members)²⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>areu</td>
<td>his extreme views indicate you can take the german out of germany but not the nazi out of this german... the behavior of merlin and his father seems to indicate that there is still a problem with extreme thinking amongst some german people... we should never forget that hitler was an extremist.he was the leader of a socialist party with extreme views about the environment.sound familiar?... not saying merlin is like hitler but i do wonder about the similarities..²⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nufan121121</td>
<td>What an idoit, i cant beleive he did that, thats just stupid, he cant say that when his not an australian, i could understand some1 from like new zealand doing it coz we are neighbours and stuff. Man i could get really angrey.²⁸</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Selected reactions to Merlin Luck’s protest.

When Luck appeared on the *Big Brother* nomination show the following night, he spoke about the protest and about the reactions he had encountered in the previous twenty-four hours. He announced that he had decided, under this pressure, to back up his actions with proof of his sincerity by becoming an Australian citizen and donating some of his prizes to charity. He apologised for any negative effects of his protest on the live audience, but held that he did not regret his actions. Later, he discussed

comments made by Killeen about the protest, saying that he “was amazed afterwards that Gretel said this was ‘reality television’ and wasn’t the place to make statements like I did. Then when is?”

Luck appeared on the ABC show *George Negus Tonight* four days after his eviction. On the show, he explained his reasoning behind the protest, and spoke about the very definite image he was trying to create:

> It was a silent protest to symbolise the fact that refugees in Australia don’t have a voice. And they feel that desperation and that helplessness to the point where they stitch their lips together... information isn't shocking anymore. It's the way you present information. And that's why I was very focused on creating a powerful image. The sign stated the cause, the tape made it powerful. My T-shirt, with the faces that had their eyes masked out by red lines, it was all part of creating an image that would resonate and cut through.”

In an online chat after the event, he described his anxiety at smuggling the sign into the house, as security patted him down and searched his bags. Luck therefore had clear intentions with his protest, and would have had to plan and possibly rehearse the performance before he entered the house.

Luck’s protest demonstrated the fragility of the simulated reality of *Big Brother*. *Big Brother* claims to be more real than real, and when something happens to upset the formula, it is exposed for what it really is: a hyperreality. The media ritual of the eviction ceremony was subverted and destroyed by this political performance, bringing into question the purpose and nature of the show itself. In his essay about reality television, Nick Couldry says: “A basic point of *Big Brother* is to enact a transition for each housemate from ordinary person to media person; the eviction ceremony is designed to make that transition seem natural.” If the evictee cannot enact this crossing over ritual, the formula is thrown into chaos. Luck jammed this

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29 Broun *Free th refugees: Merlin interviewed*. Accessed
31 The online chat was transcribed in the *Big Brother Mailing List Archive*. Accessed
ritual, refusing to cross over into the predetermined mould of ex-housemate. He therefore became a media personality on his own terms, violating the show’s founding concept of being under the control of Big Brother. This causes various questions to arise about the nature of reality television. Is this reality only because it is defined in relation to television’s scripted, dramatic programming? What value do we give to the real? Do we accept this version of reality as authentic? Studies, such as those of media theorists Sam Brenton and Reuben Cohen, have shown that actually, viewers do not accept the presented reality of Big Brother as authentic. Rather, the appeal of the show is in waiting for the housemates to slip up and show who they really are. In the same vein, audiences seem to vote out those people they think are acting, rather than being themselves. In this sense, it falls to the viewers to validate the show’s promise of reality, as theorist Mark Andrejevic says: “If reality TV is supposed to be about ‘real’ people, then the people who contribute to reducing it to a contrived entertainment spectacle must be banished.” The idea of reality TV as entertainment spectacle is expanded upon by media writer Amanda Klein. According to her, reality show contestants “aren’t people, they’re characters… our understanding of these characters is constantly shaped by both narrative framing and visual and aural cues.”

Big Brother has become open to subversion, as displayed by Luck’s protest. Contestants on reality television are now so savvy to the formula that they can subvert it. In turn, the viewers have become savvy, a process partly fuelled by the twenty-four hour live feeds available on the Internet. As a result, Internet viewers can see how much the footage is manipulated to create the television show. Andrejevic says: “The access to the twenty-four hour feeds allowed viewers to play the Internet off against the television show, arguing that their direct access to the Big Brother house allowed them to see just how manipulative the television show was.” He also notes that

36 Andrejevic Reality TV: The work of being watched. op cit.
“paradoxically, the Internet ... allows access to the real: to the truth of its artifice.”37 This savviness flatters spectators because they think they really do understand what is happening in the show, as media scholar Justin Lewis says; “It’s TV; of course it’s not real. And our ability to be skeptical becomes a form of self-flattery, a measure of our own sophistication... it is neither clear what is meant by real life or how it is signified televisually.”38 The constructed nature of the show was again discussed by scholar John Corner, who said that “Big Brother operates its claims to the real within a fully managed artificiality... what people do and say is necessarily and obviously predicated on the larger contrivance of them being there in front of the camera in the first place.”39

Others have discussed the broader concept of reality television, pondering over the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy this form of entertainment involves. Patrick Harpur, for one, says “it is the form of television, the medium itself, whose naturalism falsifies reality.”40 He further states that we become addicted to television because it feeds us images which are not representative of reality (as demonstrated by Plato’s Forms). As we crave the connection to an authentic Otherworld, where these visions of reality exist, we are undernourished by the televised images and crave more. Performance theorist Philip Auslander compares reality television to linear, narrative-based television drama, saying that in fact, “so-called ‘reality television’ is the perfect example of how strong the force of traditional, linear narrative remains.”41 Controversial German theatre director Christoph Schlingensief initiated the 2000 project Bitte Liebt Österreich (Please Love Austria), a performance which satirised Big Brother by placing foreigners inside a shipping container near the steps of Vienna Opera House. Passers-by could then vote out people from the container, which would mean their deportation. The project drew on similarities between the eviction ritual of Big Brother and the eviction of outsiders by society. These are just a few

37 Ibid., 133.
40 Harpur The Philosophers’ Secret Fire: a history of the imagination, 186.
examples of the wealth of critical and performance work spawned by reality television, showing the impact these shows have on many types of discourse.

I am interested in Luck’s protest because it showed a crack in the projected reality of *Big Brother*. The way that the protest was dealt with by the show, the media and the general public revealed the lack of acceptance of such an event. Luck attempted two more protests on further *Big Brother* shows for the remainder of the season. On one show, Luck stretched out his arm and held it at an angle so the audience could read the web address for *chilout* (an organisation for getting children out of detention centres) written on his sleeve. At the end of the final show, he ran to the cameras at the front of the stage, and removed his hat to reveal the word “Sorry” (presumably in reference to the current Australian government’s refusal to apologise to the Aboriginal community for previous wrongs) written on his newly shaved head. On one hand, Luck’s further attempts lessened the impact of his original protest. On the other hand, they drew attention to the show’s attempts to dissuade these further on-air protests. For instance, the show would cut to another person, move the camera, or frame Luck out of the shot. Perhaps they wanted to restore some of the power Luck had usurped from them. Or perhaps they did not think this was good publicity for them, even though the ratings for the show skyrocketed after his eviction. In addition, various commentators made light of the protest, diffusing its potency and undermining its impact by making reference to it. For example, television talk-show host Rove McManus made a joke about Luck during his monologue at the beginning of his show, holding up his own version of the sign, which read: “free the housemates”.

.......

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Michael Moore at the Academy Awards

Reactions to Moore’s speech did not end at the jeering of the celebrity audience. The live broadcast gave the media the power to report the speech immediately, as polarised opinions were voiced on various Internet message boards and weblog sites. These ranged from expressions of support, to extreme criticism of the speech and of Moore himself. However, the supporting comments were less abundant than the disapproving. Several websites were very harsh in their criticisms of the speech and of Moore himself. They argued that Moore was not educated about the issue at hand and that *Bowling For Columbine* is filled with lies. Most importantly, an argument also surfaced that the Oscars was an inappropriate stage for such a protest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Username</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sherry</td>
<td>What Michael Moore did was rude and inappropriate. I'm glad he was booed off the stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ric</td>
<td>I think the Oscars took the right tone but it was not the place to make political statements. We need some happiness and smiles in this world at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed kasper</td>
<td>The winners should have left their personal opinions at the door. This was an awards show, but Hollywood and their big egos cannot resist the urge to make political comments on such a giant stage. What a shame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mooresuks</td>
<td>What a piece of sewage Moore is for this one....booed off the stage with his rants of fallacy and anti-americanism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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43 Ibid. Accessed
44 Ibid. Accessed
what a dork... it’s entertainment Michael... it’s not a political forum.”

Table 5: Selected reactions to Michael Moore’s protest.

The reactions were not confined to Internet forums and the media. For instance, my mother, and doubtless many like her, was so inspired by Moore’s speech and the reactions to it that she felt compelled to write him a letter of support.

Moore’s film *Bowling For Columbine* is said to “ostensibly blame the Columbine High School massacre on the U.S. military-industrial complex.”

The DVD of *Bowling For Columbine* includes a special feature about the Oscars. As Moore could not secure the rights to show the footage from the night, he instead recalled the moment in an intimate piece to camera, sitting outside at a table next to the trophy. In the piece, Moore discussed the night of the Oscars, the speech and the reactions it attracted, all with a twinkle in his eye. His remarks gave an insight into the impetus behind the speech, and the revelation that it was close to not happening at all:

> I gotta be honest, I mean, there was a moment there where I just thought, I could just stand here and soak up all the love, and just blow ‘em a few kisses and say thank you and walk off ... Have my great Oscar moment, but I had this damn conscience, it’s always telling me: ‘No, you must do your job!’

He then continued to paraphrase the speech, and talk about the mixture of noises that could be heard from the audience:

> It just developed into this cacophony of noise ... and you know, looking back on it now, what feels really great about it is ... that’s one of the wonderful things about living in a free society.

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... that’s the noise of democracy, that’s the noise of a free people ... it was one of those profound moments... you wish that we had more of those in our society, you know, that people actually cared enough to feel one way or another about anything.49

He summed up his discussion by saying: “at the end of the day, you know, I’m Michael Moore... what else was I gonna do?”50 In an article in the Los Angeles Times, he further defended his decision to create the controversy: “I made a movie about the American desire to use violence both at home and around the world. My remarks were in keeping with exactly what my film was about.”51 He also argued that he was voicing the concerns of the community, such as a story he told about his first flight after the Oscars. The flight attendants on the plane told him about their terrible working conditions: “They said they were telling me this in the hope that I would tell others. Because they, and the millions like them, have no voice... Who will speak for them if I don’t?”52 This led him to make the observation that: “It’s not just Michael Moore. There are millions who think like I do. They just don’t know where to go or what to do yet.”53 Moore sees himself as a voice for the people, enhancing his down-to-earth image as someone who can be counted on to stand up for disillusioned citizens. Although he believed that it would have been “irresponsible”54 not to voice his feelings about the situation, the speech had a negative impact on Moore. He said that he was treated badly by some people after the Oscars, for instance people would come up to him in the street and voice their disgust about what he did. One man refused to sit next to him on a plane, and his home in Michigan was vandalised.55

On the Internet, opinions were divided between those who supported what he did, those who disagreed with the choice of forum, and those who disagreed with his point of view entirely. In an Entertainment Weekly article, Daniel Fierman summed up these disparaging responses, saying that

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Moore 'I’d Like to Thank the Vatican ...' op cit.
52 Ibid.
53 Younge 'The Capped Crusader.' op cit.
54 Overington 'Oscar Protests: War in Iraq.' op cit.
55 Younge 'The Capped Crusader.' op cit.
“Moore was blasted by both camps - righties who think he’s a windbag and lefties who think he’s an off-message windbag who turns their political positions into cartoons.”\textsuperscript{56} The authenticity of \textit{Bowling For Columbine} itself came into question after the speech, inciting a debate about what constitutes documentary and reality. An extreme example of this is a call to the Academy to revoke Moore’s award, because the film did not adhere to the documentary guidelines. The site says that “the anti-gun film is a work of fiction instead of non-fiction,”\textsuperscript{57} and that “Moore invented facts, fabricated events, staged scenes or doctored the depiction of what actually happened.”\textsuperscript{58} Further, it called on the Academy to revoke Moore’s award:

\begin{quote}
The Academy can reward propaganda, if it pleases. It can reward anti-Americanism, if it pleases. But its own rules establish that it cannot reward fiction as ‘best documentary.’ We call upon the Academy to enforce its own rule ... ‘Bowling’ uses deliberate deception as its primary tool of persuasion and effect.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

There were others supporting these claims, such as Academy Award nominee Dan Gifford, who “called on the Academy to investigate whether Moore ‘fabricated scenes and video of real people that has been edited to manufacture a fictional reality intended to mislead viewers.’”\textsuperscript{60} Lawyer David T. Hardy created whole web pages devoted to debunking facts presented in \textit{Bowling For Columbine}.\textsuperscript{61} Therefore, the majority of opinions were broadcast on the Internet, making it the chief location for both encouraging and disparaging opinions of the protest.

The mass media, in particular the press, further portrayed the extent of polarised opinions. In an article in the \textit{Boston Globe}, Harvard student Daniel Lyons wrote an opinion piece slamming Moore, saying that “on Oscar night,
it seemed that the only fiction was Moore’s smug moral superiority,” and “even those who supported Moore’s stance were shamed by his antics, as evidenced by the boos.” He further opposed Moore’s “divisive and opinionated” speech, saying: “there is a time and a place for such antics: the Oscar ceremony is not a downtown street protest. Several celebrities managed to make antiwar statements without provoking public ire as Moore did.”  

This article sparked a counter-attack by Molly Lanzarotta, noting in her letter to the editor that “this time the violence and death aren’t an action movie served up for our entertainment. What’s happening is real, and Moore has always been one to point out unpleasant realities.” Further analyses in the press brought up the idea that the celebrity audience may have had ulterior motives for their reactions. For instance, journalist Jim Keogh thought: “it appeared much of the celebrity audience was sitting on its hands for fear of being caught on camera reacting one way or the other.” This is significant in the context of this case study, as the supposed reality of the Oscars is called into question not only by Moore himself, but also by implication through the various criticisms of his speech. Moore’s use of a fiction/ non-fiction dichotomy invited a barrage of criticism that slipped easily into this polarised mindset. Thus, the media was also a site for divided reactions, as well as a forum for the cultural, communal, and political analysis of the speech.

Therefore, media discussions, analyses and opinions helped to illuminate the extent of the impact and importance of the speech. These not only served to further deconstruct the characteristics of the protest, but also to investigate the responsibility of artists to react to the political sphere. The media discussions focussed especially on the political climate of the night, as well as the implications of the speech for the “vaulted liberal leanings of most of Hollywood,” and indeed of most of America: “If his speech on Oscar night tells us a lot about Moore, the response to it tells us even more about the political mood in America, particularly shortly after the beginning of the

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64 Jim Keogh (2003), ‘Ups and Downs of Wartime Oscars.’ Telegram & Gazette, 27 March.
65 Ibid.
war.” Most analysts agree that Moore did effectively sabotage the night’s celebrations, and exposed the pretence of “the public’s polite discourse on war, which tolerates dissent but ardently seeks a middle ground where nearly everyone agrees on getting the troops home quickly and safely.” This middle ground seemed to be precisely where the ceremony was located. There were very few who were willing to be controversial, and as the *Boston Globe* noted, the “chorus of boos suggests that the Hollywood establishment thinks edgy is OK on film— but not in person and not during a war.”

Significant cultural and political discourses therefore arose from the event, illuminating an investigation into the perceived responsibility of the arts to respond to political events.

Moore’s work fits into the definition of provocative performance because he uses many tools to create his personal style and technique. Much of the criticism following the Oscars was aimed at Moore’s personality and appearance rather than at his work. This is perhaps owing to the amount of himself that Moore puts into his film and television work, something that increased after his film *Roger and Me*. In subsequent films, especially *Bowling For Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, he appears frequently as the orchestrator of the piece, both visually and sonically. This supports his projected persona of ‘Mike,’ which helps him relate to the average viewer. His is an Everyman image, complete with oversized shirt, baseball cap, jeans and sneakers (not to mention ample girth, a favourite point of discussion of many of his detractors, one in particular describing him as “overweight among the professionally thin”). He deals with people in a friendly and laid back manner, often making cheeky jokes against the establishment to appeal to the viewers’ sensibilities. Also, he uses an irreverent sense of humour to fight fire with fire, subvert society’s rules and make people uncomfortable, a style which has been called “ambush journalism.” His films and television show have been called “‘agit-prop’ documentary essays.” ‘Agit-prop,’ or agitation

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66 Younge 'The Capped Crusader.' op cit.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 John C. Tibbetts (2004), 'An Interview With Michael Moore.' *Film & History*, 34.
71 Ibid.
propaganda, is art that serves as a vehicle for political propaganda, although the term is not necessarily used with negative connotations. It is commonly used to describe art that tries to influence political opinion, or push a certain ideology. As film reviewer Kerry Bashford writes, Moore “is an entertainer, a polemicist and a propagandist and should have no problem admitting this.”

The speech is therefore an important part of his agit-prop body of work.

As was the case with Luck, there were various commentators who made light of Moore’s speech. When actor Steve Martin, the host of the evening, returned to the stage, he made light of the situation by saying that “it was so sweet backstage, the Teamsters are helping Michael Moore into the trunk of his limo,” diffusing the impact of Moore’s protest. By turning it into a more digestible and funny situation, Martin gave way for others to make remarks about the speech.

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**Coniunctio**

Some see alchemy as the chemical marriage of soul and spirit, Sol and Luna, feminine and masculine. The four elements are reconciled through the perpetual cycle, the *coniunctio*, symbolised by the Ouroborous serpent eating his own tail in a never-ending perpetuity. Alchemy therefore entails a marriage of opposites, a chemical wedding.

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73 Horvitz *The 75th Annual Academy Awards*. 
Transformative Effects

These performances had transformative effects on their audiences, which were related to the stated intention and instrumentation of the performers. To gather reported changes in attitudes and behaviours as a result of the performance, I have canvassed Internet message boards, forums, and media items regarding the performances. I have also reported on my own experience, paying particular attention to any ways in which my attitudes or behaviours have been changed.

Merlin Luck on Big Brother

The fall-out from Luck’s protest served to demarcate the boundaries of the Big Brother simulacra. As the reality-making machine of Big Brother stepped in to take control of the breach, the artificiality of the show was thrown more acutely into view. Killeen, normally suave and in control, swiftly attempted to calm the audience while receiving instructions from the show’s producers in her earpiece. In a panic, the show cut back to the house to see what was happening, again desperately replacing the real with the hyperreal. The prevailing reaction of the housemates was that Luck was just “keepin’ it real.”74 This was an idiosyncratic catchphrase employed by the housemates, throughout their time in the house, to describe the supposed authenticity of their actions. The phrase ties in with the conflict between the projected reality of Big Brother and our lives. However, the housemates never question what this reality is, just that they were “keepin’ it real” by supposedly being themselves in the house. By commenting on how real they were being in the house, the housemates were inadvertently highlighting the boundaries of the simulacra, as Luck claimed: “If people want reality television then this is reality.”75

74 Endemol/Southern Star/Channel 10 Big Brother Live Eviction. op cit.
The reactions of the *Big Brother* audience further delineated the boundaries of the simulacra. People debated what Luck should and should not have done, effectively debating appropriate behaviour for the projected reality. Dean Bertram noted the irony in the audience’s reaction, saying:

> What was most shocking about Luck’s protest was not the message that it carried but that it was delivered within the medium of a reality TV show; a place where the audience apparently neither expected nor desired to see that unfolding of a real, uncontrolled event.\(^{76}\)

On the Internet forum, the reactions included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Username</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cosmogirl5094</td>
<td>politics and entertainment are completely different fields, as they should be. I just don’t think it’s appropriate or clever to mix the two - they have nothing to do with each other.(^{77})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richy</td>
<td>It was great that he had an opinion, but he should have talked it over with Gretal and the nation, instead of look like a dumb wit that doesn’t know how to spell, or speak.(^{78})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>perhaps he shoulda sewn his lips shut like all them ignorant dickwits.(^{79})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nofx_gal_au</td>
<td>Any protests and riots from now on can be said to have been caused by him. So many people watch Big brother and I wouldn’t be surprised if other jerk-offs start copying him, and rioting because of his actions.(^{80})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Selected negative reactions to Luck’s protest.

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\(^{76}\) Bertram 'Merlin Luck’s *Big Brother* protest showed just how lacking in reality is reality TV, argues Dean Bertram.' op cit.

\(^{77}\) *Big Brother Mailing List Archive*. Accessed

\(^{78}\) Ibid.Accessed

\(^{79}\) Ibid.Accessed K was referring to the issue of people in Australian detention centres sewing their lips together in protest.

\(^{80}\) Ibid.Accessed
Although these are negative reactions, they are in keeping with what Luck stated his intention to be: “I didn’t do it to be popular. I did it to get people talking. So the fact that people disagree with what I did is part of the reason why it was effective.”\textsuperscript{81} Luck’s protest did, however, affect some people in a positive way. On the same forum, some people were supportive about his actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyberkitty3001</td>
<td>I saw Merlin’s protest and it inspired me to get off my ass and get informed about the situation... I have to say my position has now changed entirely and I’m feeling a hell of a lot more passionate about freeing the refugees... If it did nothing but change one person’s opinion then he’s done his job.\textsuperscript{82}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V*nessa</td>
<td>I didn’t realise how little my 9yr old and 12 yr old new about the issue even though I thought we discussed most issues. The silence was the key...they wanted to know why asylum seekers have no voice.\textsuperscript{83}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristy Hoy</td>
<td>even though he cannot vote, Merlin got my office of 30 'voters' talking about children in detention centres.\textsuperscript{84}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Selected positive reactions to Luck’s protest

\textsuperscript{81} ABC George Negus Tonight. op cit.
My personal experience was similar to this. I soon noticed conflict between my approval, and other people’s criticism, of the protest. When talking to a friend about the incident, I realised that she did not support the protest as much as I did. I had a heated conversation with her, which soon evolved from talking about whether what he did was appropriate, to the topic of the mandatory detention of refugees. She asked me to back up a claim I had made about the statistics surrounding refugees, and while searching for them I found the website of an organisation that works with refugees in detention centres. The conflict with my friend had galvanised me into finding out about the ways I could help, and I signed up with the organisation as a volunteer. While the basis for my transformation was already there, in my pre-existing opposition to the mandatory detention system, Luck’s protest provoked me to change my behaviours and become more active in my support for refugee’s freedom. The transformative potential of identification and affirmation is further developed in the discussion of provocative and transformative performance in this research project.

There were some larger transformations following his protest. Bertram said: “Regardless of Merlin’s intentions, the insight that his protest offered was just how lacking in reality reality TV usually is. His unscripted actions appeared in sharp contrast to our expectations of this kind of programming.”85 One change, however temporary, is the numbers of viewers who tuned in to watch Big Brother after the protest. Broun reported: “Luck’s post-eviction interview dragged in an extra 150,000 viewers and articles about Luck’s action had been the highest viewed on the Sydney Morning Herald web site.”86 He was also listed as number 16 in a newspaper column on the “Top 40 Popular Culture Events That Changed Australia in the past 50 years,” the theory being that everything on this list was “historically significant or symbolised social change”87 (this was later responded to and challenged by many people in an online forum88). It is possible that, as journalist Clare Buttner mused, subsequent seasons of Big Brother were

85 Bertram ‘Merlin Luck’s Big Brother protest showed just how lacking in reality is reality TV, argues Dean Bertram.’ op cit.
86 Broun Free th refugees: Merlin interviewed. Accessed
affected by his protest. Buttner discusses how in the following season of *Big Brother*, contestants made their political alliances clear, and her belief that: “It is possible that *Big Brother*’s inclusion of all this political talk was inspired by the publicity generated when last year’s contestant Merlin Luck staged a political protest in support of refugees on his eviction night.”

In addition, since the protest the immigration policy has been altered to allow families with children in detention to enter the community. This alteration is a significant loosening of the immigration detention laws, which have previously seen detainees held for several years while their cases for visas are processed.

These reactions to Merlin’s protest demonstrate that he was a positive transformational and motivational force for some. As journalist Natalie Hanman notes:

> Cynics may argue – and many have – that Merlin’s actions were neither appropriate nor effective. But you cannot argue with those figures, or the fact that Merlin became a leading news story on most Australian TV channels that night and earned immediate public responses from senior politicians... Could Merlin’s protest, then, signal the beginning of a new wave of DIY activists, media-savvy enough to exploit the reality TV format for their own political or social ends?”

*Michael Moore at the Academy Awards*

Through transforming the awards show format into a political platform, Moore exposed the Oscars and the Hollywood machine as being a facade, a metaphorical projection of reality. This transformation became evident not only through the speech itself, but also through the reactions it provoked. Moore’s protest was therefore a subversion and inversion of a constructed reality, encouraging the questioning of what reality and truth really are. From

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89 Clare Buttner (2005), ‘Political edge to BB5.’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May.
90 Prime Minister of Australia (2005), *Immigration Detention.*
91 Natalie Hanman (2004), *Reality Check: Young Merlin did DIY magic through Aussie Big Brother.*
the immediate cacophony of the audience and the personal attacks on Moore himself, to the political discussions within the media, the speech incited a broad range of reactions which transformed an otherwise ordinary event. Evidenced by but not limited to websites, the larger community was also affected and transformed by Moore’s political performance.

Personally, I was inspired by what Moore did. His speech reminded me that there is still a public voice of dissent, however derided that voice may be. In these times of increasing violence and conservative governments, Moore’s speech made me realise that I was not alone, and that my opinions did not exist in isolation. My attitudes towards the issue were therefore affirmed by his protest, and through this experience affirmation became an important part of the discussion of provocative and transformative performance. Gallup polls show that public opinion in the US about the war in Iraq has changed significantly since the war began.92 Also, George W. Bush’s approval rating has dramatically decreased. Although these decreases have been caused by many factors, they indicate that Moore’s speech did actually anticipated a transformation in public opinion. Therefore, the speech demonstrated that a provocative performance such as this could be a forerunner to attitudinal transformation.

**The Alchemy of Luck and Moore**

The *prima materia* is in place: a climate of social and political injustice, experienced as dissonance. The performer/ alchemists Merlin Luck and Michael Moore metaphorically project themselves through interpretation, gesture and public protest. They enact a *coniunctio*, marriage of certain issues with the methods of performance, to achieve gold. This is the gold of transformation, rather than the fool’s gold of commodified images of reality. However, both performers ultimately subvert the promise of this gold, showing a glimpse of it before concealing it again through lack of resolution.

They leave it up to their audiences to make the final leap, the projection that will lead to the true gold.

**Conclusion**

Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious.\(^\text{93}\)

In conclusion, both Merlin Luck’s *Big Brother* protest and Michael Moore’s Oscars speech are examples of provocative and transformative performance. Through looking at the stated intentions of the performers and the instrumentations they use, I have interrogated the performances’ provocative natures. Both events demonstrate a concern about the concealment of political reality by simulacra, and expose the fictional contexts they were part of. Metaphorical projection also plays an important role in the case studies, as much in the idea of the persona as in the notion of presenting an alternate version of reality. The performers subverted expectations by rejecting the script of performance, and in both case studies, the suitability of the performance to its context was foregrounded. Both performers argued for the appropriateness of their protests, and accepted protesting against something wrong as their responsibility.

Alongside the intention and instrumentation of the performers, I have also looked at the attitudinal and behavioural change experienced by select audience members. These performances pre-empted a gradual change in public opinion and policy surrounding the issues they highlighted, and were a catalyst for attitudinal and behavioural transformation in some people.

In the next chapter, I discuss the research, writing and development of my practical performance work *Bodily*. This work was informed by some of the outcomes of the Luck and Moore case studies, as well as by contemporary performance making tradition.

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‘The Earth is its nurse’:
Conjunction and Practical Performance
Journal

It’s a terrible thing
Being so open: as if my heart
Puts on a face and walks into the world.

Introduction

This chapter is an exegetical inquiry into the creation of a performance work, outlining the processes of creation and development of the solo performance *Bodily*. It incorporates a background study of body image, and a review of textual references used in the piece. *Bodily* is a third case study, to be read alongside the Merlin Luck and Michael Moore studies in Chapter Three. It is also framed as a tool of research, for data to be generated and processed. The performance functions both as an outcome of research into female beauty and body image and as a springboard for research into audience


2 Author (2006), *Bodily*. For a full script, see Appendix A.
transformation. This chapter is established around the first-person narrative of researching and creating a performance work, and is compiled in a way that highlights the cut-up nature of Bodily. Some of the text of the performance piece was appropriated from other sources, and placed in the script with a view towards juxtaposing different angles on the issue. Performance theorist Susan Broadhurst discusses William Burroughs’ use of cut-ups, saying that he was employing this style as a means to break down the “Aristotelian construct” of narrative structure. This chapter echoes the cut-up technique of the script, citing sections of my performance process journal, along with sources such as popular songs and poems, to give a sense of the rhythm and construction of the performance work.

Studies of each of the five characters of Bodily are also interspersed throughout the chapter. Accompanying these are investigations into the methodologies and foundations of the piece. The main subject matter for the performance is female body image and society’s thinness ideal, a topic explored in this chapter. Alchemy and the alchemical metaphor played an important part in the formation of the piece, and will also be discussed here. For example, each of the five characters in the piece was developed according to the colours, symbols and processes of the alchemical elements. The form of the monologue or solo performance is outlined in this chapter, along with a discussion of the major influences on the style of the work. In addition, the set, costume and sound design are discussed in light of their intention and how they developed. Finally, the desired effect of the production of Bodily is interrogated, leading into the discussion of its outcomes in Chapter Five.

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Neutral/ Mercurius

I awoke, still dreaming...
The people I was in these fragments
Are no longer alien and strange.

I played Mercurius.
Mixed the four elements into parts of me -
Parts of you.4

Mercurius is the alchemist, the creator, the subject and the centre of the alchemical Great Work. Mercurius is therefore a figure of much mythological, alchemical and philosophical significance. Previously depicted in such characters as Prospero in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Mercurius embodies all the elements and contradictions internally. Carl Jung describes Mercurius as a complex concept: “[Mercurius] is God, daemon, person, thing, and the innermost secret in man; psychic as well as somatic. He is himself the source of all opposites, since he is duplex and utriusque capax ("capable of both").5

In Bodily, I wanted the Mercurius character (whom I called ‘Neutral’) to be the eye of the storm, but also the shape-shifter who transforms into different characters throughout the piece. Mercurius is the throughline and the thread that pulls all the elements together. The realistic struggle and contradiction between the elements is evident in all the different characters, but is

4 Author Bodily
especially seen in Neutral. She is able to step back and talk about the body image conflict from a more detached, analytical standpoint.

Methodology

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

The metaphors and structures of alchemy are one methodological tool I have used in the development and research of this performance work. However, other performance practitioners have researched their own work in a variety of ways. For instance, Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal created theories of structure, acting and audience relationships that carried through into their practice. I am indebted to the pioneering research work of practitioners like these, and their work is a starting-point for this study.

The social science methodology of autoethnography lends some useful tools to inquire into performance practice. Autoethnography allows for the incorporation of personal stories as an evocative strand of research, which is appropriate for the highly personal creative work. I see the autoethnographic model of research as aligned with the storytelling mode of Bodily. The integration of personal stories in the performance is vital in order to evoke emotion and to affect the audience viscerally. In this chapter, therefore, I seek to create a parallel experience. In The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity, Kim Chernin argues for the use of personal stories as a political reclamation of the writer’s body from the property of the public. In a sense, I am reclaiming and restating my own body in this research, which is articulated through personal stories and narrative.

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As stories, poems, scripts and songs come into this chapter, then, my autoethnography is augmented with elements of pastiche and bricolage. Various songs, poems, and other references have surfaced through the development of this show. These elements are included as representations of different sides of the issue. They operate as evidence of other past and contemporary artists who are exploring similar issues in their work. This is a common technique in autoethnography, used for example by autoethnographer Lisa Tillman-Healy, in her interrogation of her experience of bulimia.8 Writer Wendy Chapkis also uses this method of interruption of personal stories and snippets of other texts to enhance the more technical or serious discussion.9 The use of poetic language in academic discourse has also been discussed by feminist theorists, for instance Judith Butler says about Julia Kristeva: “In effect, poetic language is the recovery of the maternal body within the terms of language, one that has the potential to disrupt, subvert, and displace the paternal law.”10 In addition, ethnographer Bronwyn Davies says about women’s stories that:

Women’s desires are the result of bodily inscription and of metaphors and story lines that catch them up in ways of being/desiring from which they have no escape unless they can reinscribe, discover new story lines, invert, invent, and break the bounds of the old structures and old discourses.11

The use of pastiche and bricolage in the autoethnographic form is therefore as much a creative literary device as a method in itself. My approach to this study has largely been organic, as I am constantly looking for new ways to present issues.

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9 W. Chapkis (1986), Beauty Secrets: women and the politics of appearance, Boston, South End Press.
10 Judith Butler (1990), Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity, New York, Routledge, 80.
Female Body Image and the Thinness Ideal

Why make my performance about female body image and the thinness ideal? I have been passionate about the issue of female body image for about as long as I can remember. Like many women, I have long been very aware of my own body and its place in society. Though by no means something that is exclusively aimed at women, the myth of the ideal body is something which has permeated life during and since my formative years. Perpetuated by the media, peers and people in older generations, this myth can be very dangerous to women not just in extreme cases, manifested by anorexia and bulimia, but also in more subtle ways, in the enjoyment of life in general. I remember reading girl’s magazines when I was a teenager and studying every word, trying to work out who I was and how I should live my life. Longing to be a woman, to be experienced, and, most of all, to be skinny. Just as feminist

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12 No Doubt (2004), Beauty Contest. Santa Monica, CA: Interscope Records,
writer Susan Douglas recalls about quizzes in girls’ magazines: “We were desperate to know which type we were, to know ourselves, and we looked to the mass media for answers.”

I remember reading interviews with boys where they were inevitably asked what they find most attractive about girls. Nearly every time, their first answer would be “sense of humour.” Followed by “breasts” or “legs.” I would always lament the fact that I had no sense of humour, in hindsight probably desperate to find a reason why boys were not interested in me, and why I was feeling awkward in my body. I did not start to become aware of the size of my body until later, perhaps when I started putting on weight noticeably. It seemed that there were messages about bodies everywhere. What we should eat, what we should wear, how we should exercise and how attractive we would be if we did. These messages were playing on my vulnerabilities, and I know now that I was slowly internalising them. Skinny celebrities seemed to become the norm, and if there was an actress who was slightly larger, she was singled out as being different. I do not remember hearing any alternative voices about body image, or if I did I would block them out, ignore them because that wasn’t how I felt about myself. These messages have not changed since I was a teenager. If anything, they have gotten more insidious with an increasing celebrity-obsessed culture, and growing interest in plastic surgery. A survey of more than 4000 girls aged 11 to 18, published in Dolly magazine in 2007, showed that 2% of this sample had already had some form of plastic surgery, while more than half of the girls surveyed are not happy with their body weight.

I am a few years older now and a lot more comfortable with my body, but I still encounter these moments of internalising messages about the ideal body. Sometimes they last days, sometimes hours, sometimes seconds. Moments when I feel huge, fat, disgusting, and unattractive. In these moments, I make a vow to stop eating, to start exercising, to once and for all lose these

kilograms that weigh me down. Any thought is possible, from the most bizarre to the most disturbing. My imagination concocts ideals and preconceptions and myths and then applies them, however inappropriately, to my own life.

It is these moments that I wanted to talk about in Bodily: how someone can be intelligent, healthy, and educated about all the dangers and ills and feminist debates surrounding body image, but then still have moments of regression: visceral, affective moments where the image of the ideal body takes over even if it is not physically possible. I wanted to deal with this in a performance that will encourage a sense of community, as I believe that other women struggle with the same issues, and there is not much said about it.

Like Merlin Luck and Michael Moore, I experienced dissonance between my personal experience of an issue, and how the issue was framed in society. This dissonance became apparent when I noticed a paradox between being aware of all the dangers and debates surrounding body image, and still being worried about how to achieve the ideal body. I started to think that other women must struggle with the same issues. This dissonance was the prima materia, the motivation that led me to create my performance. The alchemical metaphor is particularly relevant to the issue of body image, as the alchemist torments the prima materia. In much the same way, there is something deep-seated in our cultural history that makes us want to destroy the body. This abject feeling of the body being matter under torment is therefore a potent one in our culture. One reason I make performance is that I believe through identification with the performer and the issues presented, people can change their attitudes and behaviours.

To encourage this sense of community, I hope that the audience integrates their experience of the performance with their own culturally formed experiences. I have often reconciled my own experiences with messages from performers, and this has made me feel empowered about certain issues that I am facing. I have always found it powerful to recognise something in a performance as a problem or a feeling I am encountering in my own life. The
audience therefore interprets the performance through a frame of their own morals, experiences and values, which are inherently defined by the social and personal conditions of the time. I see this as a form of projection, since the audience are metaphorically projecting through their existing experience or dissonance.

On the other hand, the performer is also metaphorically projecting a certain character or persona in provocative performance. In the case of Bodily, I am performing myself, as each character is part of me. Not only are there many different opinions and attitudes towards body image, but these viewpoints can all be experienced by the same person, and at the same time. This is the paradox and the dissonance I am exploring in the piece. This notion of performing the self has interesting ramifications for self-image, as I have asked myself many times why I want to perform myself. Is it just a form of vanity? A manifestation of my own self-image? A way to learn about myself? Or is it based on a need to connect, to form this community of experience I am talking about?

In Bodily, I looked to highlight and embody the dysfunctionality of body image, the place where it has transgressed. I tried to highlight this dysfunctionality in a physical and visual way, as well as through the structure and spoken text of the performance. There are many dysfunctions, and most of them are paradoxical. First, we worry so much about making our bodies thin and healthy that this worry has a physical toll on us and we end up making ourselves unhealthy. Second, the image of the anorexic as disempowered through the loss of her body shape, hair, and menstruation, among other things. Through extreme weight loss, she is actually becoming less of a woman. Other women also become disempowered, through the amount of time, effort and money spent on worrying about the way our bodies look. Journalist Courtney E. Martin’s book Perfect Girls, Starving Daughters articulates a dichotomy present in people with disordered eating, making a connection between girls and women who are on the one hand

hand, trying to be perfect, and on the other hand, starving themselves of food. Martin’s hypothesis is that the energy, power and control invested by these women into their bodies could be harnessed and channelled into changing the world. But the main paradox, the main dysfunction I see with this issue, is the one between the rational and the emotional. Rationally, many people can see through the ideal, we can analyse and condemn these images. Emotionally, however, there is something so embedded in us that we still feel guilty when craving certain types of food. In the performance, this paradox is evident in all the different characters, but is especially seen in the recurring Neutral character. Bodily is therefore about the contradictions inherent in body image discourses, on both a large scale and a small scale. One actor is playing all characters, though each character in turn has internal contradictions in his or her own views on the topic. These contradictions and paradoxes are explored in the thesis, as part of the instrumentation used by provocative performers.

It was just a normal, run-of-the-mill shopping trip. In Woolworths to get the weekly groceries. As usual, I wander around when my systematic aisle-travelling routine fails to find a product I had no doubt passed four times or more. I move fast in the supermarket, beelining down aisles, around corners and across shelves. Eyes constantly moving, searching, scanning the place for products, specials, fellow shoppers. A trolley or basket only slows me down, curbing my usual efficiency.

But on this particular trip, I was careening around the corner of an aisle, past the checkouts, where’s the bloody tomato paste? My sweeping gaze fell upon the magazine rack near the checkouts, and I slowed momentarily. My usual practice of scanning the covers, chortling at headlines, eyes rolling. Sweeping, sweeping. Wait - what was that? A close-up of a celebrity face, zoomed in on a couple of near-imperceptible blemishes. Adorned with the screaming line - ‘Facial Disasters!’ or ‘Celebrity Skin Shock!’ or maybe ‘They’re Human, Too!’ I stop. I look around me. Women are standing next to
the magazines, lined up in the gauntlet-style passage of impulse purchases and trashy reading that comprises the checkout line. For some reason, this scene is profoundly affecting me. The women in line transform into products on a conveyor belt, surrounded by tempting gold. I feel tears slipping and sliding down my face, but the women do not notice. All they know is that their supermarket lives are much more boring than the women in the glossy images in front of them.

An easy solution, if you can call it a solution at all. To succumb to the fool’s gold, the fake glitz and glamour of the simulated reality that is celebrity. A leech, feeding off the misery, objectification and humiliation of others. They do not see it, but I know there must be another type of gold. One which is infinitely more valuable. To say: “No!” To see through the simulacra and to subvert it. To gain enlightenment not through buying into the falsity of the simulacra, but precisely through not buying into it.16

... ... ... ... ...

Literature and Contextual Review

This section is separated into two parts. First, I outline the literature on body image, taken from various books and articles on the topic. Second is a contextual review of body image, taken from artworks, plays, songs, and other performative and cultural examples of the creative field I am positioning myself in.

Literature Review

There is a significant body of literature on the subject of body image, eating disorders and the culture of thinness. Rather than focussing solely on the medical or sociological analyses of these issues, this literature review looks at

16 Author Bodily (process journal).
more personal experiences of body issues. I have found many of the messages in this literature consistent with my own experience of the pressure to achieve the ideal body. Women’s magazines, advertising, fashion, television shows and movies all portray an ideal of women’s bodies. We are told that we must be thin and tall, with large breasts, long hair, full lips and bright eyes. Anything that deviates from this is seen as edgy, weird, abnormal and certainly less desirable. Even further, the worth of women is determined by these external factors, more than internal factors. Therefore, “a woman’s appearance is valued above everything else, which again focuses the woman on her body and its imperfections and suggests that if she does not possess her culture’s ideal body shape, then her worth as a person is essentially nonexistent.”17 Also: “Success, beauty, wealth, love, sexuality and happiness are promoted as attached to and depending on slimness.”18 Butler also touches upon this in her examination of gender:

If the body is not a “being,” but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, then what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment, gender, that constitutes its “interior” signification on its surface?19

As a result, our bodies become “projects,” as feminist writer Joan Jacobs Brumberg observes, and we define and express ourselves through them.20 Comedian and cartoonist Kaz Cooke’s book *Real Gorgeous* is a comedic interrogation of the beauty ideal, dissecting why we are told to be skinny in society, and why food is the enemy. She talks about dieting and exercising fads and also offers advice to women, encouraging them to reject the ideal. She believes that “body hatred is fashionable ... Part of being a woman is projected as specific self-loathing in the face of evidence to the contrary.”21

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19 Butler *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, 177.
This societal obsession is often passed off as being a harmless concern for women’s sexuality or health, however as feminist theorist Naomi Wolf says, “If our culture’s fixation on female fatness or thinness were about sex, it would be a private issue between a woman and her lover; if it were about health, between a woman and herself.”22 The result of this is that:

Female fat is the subject of public passion, and women feel guilty about female fat, because we implicitly recognize that under the myth, women’s bodies are not our own but society’s, and that thinness is not a private aesthetic, but hunger a social concession exacted by the community. A cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty but an obsession about female obedience.23

This pressure begins as a girl, in the delicate formative years of high school and adolescence. Younger and younger are the girls who are being affected by advertising and celebrity culture, to the extent that they become more focussed on the way they look than on academic or sporting achievement. Ethnographer Elizabeth E. Heilman says: “Girls’ legitimate need for self-esteem and for economic and academic success is exploited through the advertising of beauty products.”24 Numerous studies have been undertaken that link media consumption with eating disorder symptomatology and poor body image in women,25 and men.26 Writer Mimi Nichter says:

It is clear from these girls’ narratives about their lives at home and at school that they have deeply internalized these beauty ideals. These ideals are reinforced by media messages that blatantly link thinness with an enhanced sense of well-being and, ultimately, a ‘more perfect’ life.27

22 Naomi Wolf (2002), The Beauty Myth: how images of beauty are used against women, New York, Perennial, 186.
23 Ibid., 187.
26 For example, Ida Jodette Hatoum and Deborah Belle (2004), ‘Mags and Abs: media consumption and bodily concerns in men.’ Sex Roles, 51.
However, the ideal continues to haunt us through adulthood, as increasingly homogenous images of women are shown. Writer Wendy Chapkis argues that when women are more subjected to this scrutiny than men, it can result in a cycle of control: “While men are busy conquering and controlling nature and woman, women are obsessed with controlling their own bodies. Man believes he survives through his enduring achievements. Woman is her mortal body.”  

Chapkis further introduces the concept of the “Cult of Thinness”:

Being female is the primary criterion for membership in the Cult of Thinness. The object of worship is the ‘perfect’ body. The primary rituals are dieting and exercising with obsessive attention to monitoring progress - weighing the body at least once a day and constantly checking calories. The advertising industry and the media provide plenty of beautiful-body icons to worship. There are numerous ceremonies - pageants and contests - that affirm the ideal.

I can relate to the thinness ideal of beauty, because this is what I have struggled with all my life. I have tried and tried to fit into society’s version of what an acceptable body shape and size might be, even though I am critical of the ideal itself. Tillman-Healy, in her autoethnographic account of bulimia, also experiences this conflict between what is known and what is done. She says:

Before I began this project, I couldn’t understand why ‘someone like me’ - bright, educated, feminist - would binge and purge. I have since looked long and hard at the family and cultural stories that surround(ed) me. In the context of these stories - stories that teach all of us to relate pathologically to food and to our bodies, stories told and repeated at home, at school, and in the media - bulimia no longer seems an illogical ‘choice.’

This conflict is also voiced by an interviewer of anorexic girls:

Sometimes, when I’m reading Vogue or Elle, I have this scathing critique running through my mind of how women are represented. I get really angry when I see how skinny the

28 Chapkis Beauty Secrets: women and the politics of appearance, 15.
30 Tillman-Healy ’A Secret Life in a Culture of Thinness: reflections on body, food, and bulimia.’ 104.
models are, and I remember how girls have said that they want to look just like them! But later that same day, I’ll catch myself picking at my food because I’m concerned with my weight! I get so annoyed at myself for thinking one way and acting another!\(^3\)

This brings up the issue of eating disorders, especially anorexia and bulimia, which appears in numerous psychological, medical, feminist and cultural texts. Writer Matra Robertson discusses the role of the anorexic in society: “The so-called anorexic is not simply a person with a problem about dieting and eating. She is part of a culture that, socially and symbolically, has made eating a problematic transformation of nature by culture.”\(^3\) Feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz sees anorexia as “a form of protest at the social meaning of the female body. Rather than seeing it simply as an out-of-control compliance with the current patriarchal ideals of slenderness, it is precisely a renunciation of these ‘ideals.’”\(^3\) I believe that many women hold the same ideals and beliefs as those with diagnosed eating disorders, although some may not display the same level of extreme behaviour.

Countertransference is another issue written about in the field of eating disorder psychology. As I discussed in Chapter One, this is when the counsellor of an eating disorder patient experiences some of the same symptoms of the disorder. Psychologist Janice L. DeLucia-Waack says: “female counselors (sic) may overidentify with their clients who have eating disorders, which may interfere with therapeutic progress.”\(^3\) This is also related to psychological projection, as: “One understanding of this process is that the patient, via the mechanism of projective identification, has successfully deposited discomfort and pain within the therapist.”\(^3\) One counsellor says:

I weigh myself every day and I experience negative feelings if I gain weight. What is dysfunctional and what is not? Am I

\(^3\) Cited in Nichter Fat Talk: what girls and their parents say about dieting, 182.
\(^3\) Matra Robertson (1992), Starving in the Silences: an exploration of anorexia nervosa, North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 21.
\(^3\) E. A. Grosz (1994), Volatile Bodies: toward a corporeal feminism, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 40.
\(^3\) DeLucia-Waack ’Supervision for Counselors Working With Eating Disorders Groups: countertransference issues related to body image, food, and weight.’ 379.
\(^3\) Ibid., 173.
dysfunctional because I think and do some of the same things this client does? Will I ever resort to some of the behaviors this client has (behaviors that sometimes shock and disgust me) in my efforts to control my weight?"36

This mode of countertransference is similar to what I experienced when researching pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites. Although I found what people were saying about their experiences shocking, I also began to wish that I could be as strong as them, and restrict my eating. This was a form of countertransference, but also a form of attitudinal change. The concept of countertransference has not been talked about in the context of performance studies, but could be relevant in much creative work that involves in-depth research of a psychological issue. In particular, it may be a phenomenon that is common when researching an issue that the researcher is already vulnerable about, as is the case for me with body image. Countertransference then becomes a key concept in this study, as my experience with the pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites has shown that it can have a significant effect on the researcher/performer.

Even if a woman achieves an unwavering acceptance of her body, she may not be released from the ideal, for “a fat woman who accepts her body must still live in a society that hates it.”37 So what can we do? How can we inspire this transformation? Hesse-Biber believes: “Working for a new femininity, based on integrating the mind and body, and creating a society that values women— that is the best antidote to the Cult of Thinness.”38 Some suggest that the way forward is to refuse to adhere to the standards of external identity set by society, as Heilman notes: “Identity must be created rather than received to be authentic, healthy, and potentially transformative.”39 Writer Jean Kilbourne blames advertising, saying that it affects “our self-images, our ability to relate to each other, and effectively destroys awareness and action

36 Ibid., 383.
38 Hesse-Biber Am I Thin Enough Yet?: the cult of thinness and the commercialization of identity. op cit.
that might help to change that climate." Advertisements have the further 
effect of promoting competition between women, and these messages are 
internalised from a very young age, making them even harder to uproot.

**Contextual Review**

In addition to a review of the literature dealing with female body image and 
the thinness ideal, it is also relevant to look at current societal and creative 
trends relating to the issue. Increasingly, alternative discussions and 
portrayals of female body image have been appearing in the cultural forms of 
theatre, film, music, and visual arts. It is clear that standards of beauty have 
shifted throughout history, and this is evidenced by a long tradition of art 
that depicts the female form. Older artworks portrayed a very different ideal, 
for instance, the curvaceous form of the woman in Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* 
painting, or Ruben’s famously curvy subjects. The thin ideal has since been 
introduced through the consumerist fields of marketing and advertising, 
rather than into more traditional artforms. It is important to place *Bodily* 
within this field and tradition of art.

Songs from pop stars and groups like Pink and No Doubt have addressed the 
issue of female body image. The video clip for Pink’s song *Stupid Girls* 
features the singer parodying the current trend of skinny celebrities who act 
stupid to be attractive. No Doubt’s song *Beauty Contest* talks about the 
“lemming” nature of the beauty industry. Even *Harry Potter* author J. K. 
Rowling wrote about the celebrity culture of thinness in her online blog. Closer to the form of *Bodily* are other performances dealing with body image. 
For example, Neil LaBute’s play *Fat Pig* features a large woman in the lead 
role, as the other characters struggle with their acceptance of her looks. Eve 
Ensler’s play *The Good Body* is her attempt to celebrate her body after

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41 Dave Meyers (2006), *Stupid Girls (video)*.
42 No Doubt *Beauty Contest*. op cit.
44 Labute *Fat Pig*. 

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visiting various tribes and cultures across the world.\textsuperscript{45} Wendy Harmer’s play \textit{What is the Matter With Mary Jane?} deals with a personal experience of coming through anorexia and bulimia.\textsuperscript{46}

In 2004, beauty product company Dove launched a major campaign with the stated aim of increasing female self-esteem. The campaign began with a photographic advertisement featuring a variety of sizes, shapes, and colours of women wearing white underwear, and has now exploded into television commercials and Internet advertising. One commercial shows a time-lapse version of a young woman being styled for a photo shoot, then that photo being retouched and displayed on a billboard. Naomi Wolf, with her organisation The Woodhall Institute, is one of the advisers to Dove’s Self-Esteem Fund. The fund is linked with the campaign, and it supports various educational programs to raise self-esteem and positive body image in young people.\textsuperscript{47}

Another example is television talk and current affairs shows, such as \textit{Sunrise}, \textit{Today Tonight} and \textit{60 Minutes}, where segments on female body image and anorexia have appeared. Their discussions feature anything from statistics (“68% of teens think they’re less beautiful than average”\textsuperscript{48}) to a discussion of the causes of poor body image (the media, parents, models and celebrities\textsuperscript{49}). One program suggested that it is a problem to follow our mother’s example, as many of us have grown up listening to her say she needs to lose weight. Another confronting segment featured a young anorexic girl who said: “I don’t want to die, but I realise that it is a possibility.”\textsuperscript{50} However, those same television stations and media outlets project ideal body images in other areas of operation. The current affairs programs are therefore compromised by their involvement with advertising sponsors. This proliferation of conflicting messages about body image on Australian television, and the media in general, means that we are exposed to an array of images and opinions.

\textsuperscript{45} Eve Ensler (2005), \textit{The Good Body}, New York, Villard.
\textsuperscript{46} Wendy Harmer (1996), \textit{What is the Matter With Mary Jane?}, Sydney, Currency Press.
\textsuperscript{47} Naomi Wolf disclosed her involvement with the Fund during her Sydney Writer’s Festival appearance in 2006.
\textsuperscript{48} Channel Seven (2005), \textit{Weekend Sunrise}. Australia: 60 mins. 15 May.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. and Channel Seven (2005), \textit{Today Tonight}. Australia: 30 mins. 17 May.
\textsuperscript{50} Channel Nine (2005), \textit{60 Minutes}. Australia: 60 min. 18 September.
Actor Jamie Lee Curtis had “before and after” photographs published of herself in the September 2002 issue of *more* magazine, to expose what celebrities can really look like before the magic of hair styling, makeup and retouching.51 Other exposés on photo retouching are on the Internet, where users can flick between the original and the retouched versions of photographs. These demonstrations of the technological modification of reality expose the workings of the hyperreal, as hair, makeup and retouching present a modified version of reality. Plastic surgery continues this falsity, as women choose to augment, reconstruct, and enhance their breasts, chins, noses, thighs, and stomachs. As feminist writer Susan Bordo notes: “Today, all that we experience as meaningful are appearances.” We all know that so many celebrities have plastic surgery and are airbrushed but, “in the era of the ‘hyperreal’ (as Baudrillard calls it), such ‘knowledge’ is as faded and frayed as the old map in the Borges tale, unable to cast a shadow of doubt over the dazzling, compelling, authoritative images themselves.”52

Many women have changed their bodies via plastic surgery. However, some women have taken this to the extreme, for example, performance artist Orlan and author Cindy Jackson, who have reconstructed their bodies in the forms they choose. Cosmetic surgery is therefore relevant to many of the issues of the body image discourse in general, but it is a much larger issue and not immediately relevant to this study.

*Bodily* is positioned within this performative context, as one small part of a larger field of work. Much of this work is in protest against the thinness ideal, or at least is critical towards it. When interrogated as a group, therefore, the performances can be seen to have increased transformative potential.

51 Amy Wallace (2002), 'Jamie Lee Curtis: true thighs.' *more magazine*, September,
52 Susan Bordo (2003), *Unbearable Weight: feminism, Western culture, and the body*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 104.
Earth

Earth is the impulse, the initial seed. The alchemist asks for the underlying questions, the problems and issues that need to be addressed. This is the symbol of naïvety, but the alchemist is becoming wiser simply through investigating the impulses.

Earth

I express my wish
To take up less space
They don’t say: “No! No! No!”

I’m... uh... violated.  

The first character in Bodily was named in the script as ‘Earth,’ as this is the first stage of the alchemical cycle. I depicted Earth as the young eating disordered woman because it is a naïve element in some ways, yet worldly in other ways. Throughout the piece, images of Earth recur and bleed into the other elements, as the swirling parts combine to form a whole. She is driven by her body. She is forced to walk to the scales and weigh herself each morning, to keep a food diary and to obsess over her appearance in the mirror. After weighing herself, Earth shows the audience her food diary, in which she writes every piece of food she eats and its calorie count, along with constant reminders to herself about how fat she is. She then catches sight of herself in the projected mirror and prods, pokes and squeezes her extra flesh, willing it away.

The character of Earth was largely based on my research into the plethora of pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites. I lost myself in the world of ‘Ana’ and

53 Author Bodily
‘Mia’ (as the diseases are nicknamed on these sites) for longer than I probably should have. I browsed various sites dedicated to these two diseases and their personification as best friends of the eating disordered girl. In the process, I came across many disturbing practices. For instance, some websites include lengthy lists of tips for those wishing to improve their skills in throwing up, restrained eating or clandestine bingeing. This practice directly informed the diary section of Bodily, where the spoken text is a list of these tips. The forums on these websites were equally disturbing, as young women out-starved each other and continually posted achievements like losing two pounds after a day of drinking only water and doing three hours of strenuous exercise. These forums informed the audiovisual projection of the ‘diary’ section in Bodily, which replicates the writing of these anorexics and bulimics. The sites proclaim that the rest of the world is not strong enough to starve themselves, their creators and participants championing themselves over those with no self-control. In the tips on these sites, the link between eating disorders and the prevalence of thin celebrities is made clear. For instance, one site advocates turning on the TV to see “skinny, gorgeous actresses/models. It’s a definite way to curb an appetite.”

The anorexic, as portrayed by these sites and through stories in magazines and current affairs shows, strikes me as dismal. Her eyes gaze out from sunken sockets, she has lost her body shape, and her menstrual cycle has stopped. The anorexic is “dying quite literally due to the starvation and therefore all cognitive functions such as concentration, thinking, problem solving and listening is severely impaired.” She is disempowered, controlled and occupied with something other than her potential for academic or professional greatness. Aspects of her woman-ness have also evaporated, as her body desperately tries to fight starvation. But how could I portray this effectively in Bodily, as my own body looks far from starving? The answer was through alchemy as a stylistic metaphor for the anorexic’s struggle for transformation. A typical thought of an eating disorder sufferer is: “I thought

that if I carefully controlled what I ate, I could be transformed.” These attempts at transformation are somewhat ceremonial, and therefore can be related to the ritual, secretive and transformative nature of alchemy. In addition, the deception apparent in cases of eating disorders mirrors the deception of alchemy – both are secretive and complex. Earth is also about being grounded and primal, and therefore I wanted to present the anorexic as this element. She is the character who is most overtly disordered, yet at the same time she is the fertile ground for new inspiration and action to grow.

It was a balmy London evening in July 2005. Again, I found myself at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, this time to see a production of The Tempest. This would be Mark Rylance’s last performance as artistic director of the theatre, and as a parting gesture he has taken on four roles in the piece, including Prospero. In fact, this production uses only three main actors playing all parts, with an additional chorus of three dancers. The production is powerful and rich. Every phrase, every couplet takes on a new significance when performed in this space.

In the lengthy production notes accompanying the piece lie numerous references to alchemy, in particular Noel Cobb’s book Prospero’s Island: the Secret Alchemy at the Heart of The Tempest. As explained in the programme: “The book looks at The Tempest through Carl Jung’s psychological interpretation of the renaissance philosophy of alchemy, as it is manifested in Shakespeare’s play.” Cobb’s book is cited at length in the programme notes, and I feel a mixture of relief, wonder and excitement for Rylance, as he has finally been able to bring his alchemical vision explicitly to the stage.

In a way, I feel that my alchemical awakening has come full circle. After initially being introduced to it in 1999 by Rylance in the Wisdom of

56 Catherine J. Garrett and University of Western Sydney Nepean. Women’s Research Centre (1992), Anorexia nervosa as personal and social ritual, Kingswood, N.S.W., Women’s Research Centre University of Western Sydney Nepean, 1.
Shakespeare course, he has now been able to fully integrate it into an interpretation of a Shakespearean play at the Globe. He is ending the era of his career here, while I am gaining momentum and being influenced by him yet again. The next day, I go the British Library and look up Cobb’s book, which has now informed much of the alchemical basis of this thesis.

Alchemy

“In the Western world we have no vessel in which to contain our often warring opposites except perhaps the little known coniunctio of the alchemists.”

Alchemy and alchemical metaphors presented themselves to me throughout the process of creation of Bodily. When developing the script, I started with the base metal of my own experience, and through research arrived at a performative and provocative gesture. My research is integral to the journey of script creation, so in a sense, I am performing my research. In addition, the research outcome of Bodily is inherently alchemical in its process as well as its content.

When creating Bodily, I wanted it to reflect the alchemical cycle because it is a useful structure to emulate natural cycles. In the Wisdom of Shakespeare course I discussed in Chapter One, we worked with a version of the cycle which was useful for our purposes. I have reused this four-part cycle for Bodily, creating a character for each of the elements, Earth, Water, Air and Fire. To tie these pieces together, the alchemist also must be included, as this is the catalyst which enables travelling from one stage to the next. The Neutral character therefore became the alchemist, or Mercurius. The alchemical elements were crucial to the writing process of Bodily, and I use them as dramatic archetypes. However, the characters themselves were not

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57 Cobb Prospero’s Island: the secret alchemy at the heart of The Tempest, 13.
intended to be identifiable to the audience as these elements. The fifth element (Light), which is often referred to in alchemical texts, is not present in the work itself. Instead, my intention is that after the audience leaves the performance, they are illuminated through conversation with other audience members, in combination with reading the performance through a frame of their own experience. This Light is the transforming agent, given transformative potential through a questioning of the issues in the piece. This in itself is a psychological projection, because the audience member is projecting his or her own experience and consciousness onto the persona and subject matter portrayed on stage.

Alchemy is also concerned with the reconciliation of opposites, and these contradictions arose many times throughout the research for Bodily. I found contradictions in my own behaviour, as I abhorred the pro-anorexia websites at the same time as being seduced by their messages. I began to notice more contradictions in the media, as magazines, films, and television send mixed messages about what women’s bodies should look like. Noel Cobb discusses the imbalances in our world, and how The Tempest is about “the vital necessity of earthiness as a counterbalance to intellect.”58 I feel much the same about Bodily, as I wonder if alchemy could correct the imbalances inherent to the thinness ideal, and bring them into harmony, rather than discord. Alchemy has also been adopted into new-age literature as a means of healing. This brings another dimension to alchemically informed performance such as Bodily, as the overarching alchemical metaphor could also have ramifications for the process of eating disorder healing.

In addition, feminist literature can adopt an alchemical tone, for instance in some of feminist theorist Hélène Cixous’ writing:

> We live outside of ourselves, in a world whose walls have been replaced by television screens, a world that has lost its thickness, its depths, its treasures, and we mistake newspaper

58 Ibid.
columns for our thoughts. We are imprinted daily... We are lacking earth and flesh.”

Naomi Wolf also says: “‘Beauty’ is a currency system like [the] gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact.”

The mention of gold here emphasises the importance of commodity in the culture of thinness, and for me, also evokes the alchemical metaphor of the quest for gold. Indeed, the story of the anorexic can be seen as alchemical, as both are about moving towards a higher, more spiritualised vitality. Both are inherently transformative, and in both cases the protagonist (alchemist/anorexic) experiences a powerful drive towards purification and spiritual transformation. The anorexic uses the body as the site for transformation and purification, whereas the alchemist’s work is focussed on the intellect (in the psychological manifestation), the spirit (in the spiritual manifestation) and the alembic (in the physical manifestation). This relationship between the journey of the alchemist and the anorexic was interesting to me in the development of Bodily, and I wanted this connection to underscore the entire piece.

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**Water**

Next, the alchemist moves to Water, the element of emotions. Without emotion, nothing seems urgent, so it is through the investigation of this element that the desire to change arises. Sobbing, the tears of the alchemist drop to the soil and liquefy it. The soil is running now, dissolving and becoming watery earth. The alchemist must move through this serpentine flow of emotion, to move on.

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60 Wolf The Beauty Myth: how images of beauty are used against women, 12.
Water

It was never like this,
Tasting the bitterness between my teeth.
The suspicious neatness.
The incalculable malice. Every. Day.
The loneliness, the sorrow
How shall it soften them, this little lullaby?61

The second character in Bodily was named after the element ‘Water,’ as this is the second stage of the alchemical cycle. Water refers to emotion, nurture and love, so I depicted her as the mother character. This mother character is subversive, as her nurturing and loving is conditioned by, and manifested in, body fascism and judgments. Water tells a story about being in the fitting room and trying on jeans. This story is punctuated by reference to her daughter, requests to the audience for reassurance, and a primping ritual. She meditates on how her life would be better if she had a “tiny bum,” then laments that life was not always like this. She sometimes switches into defensive mode, saying how she tries to teach her daughter the right thing, but it’s hard when she herself is stuck in the thinness mentality.

The character of Water is mainly a caricature of an obsessive mother. She was based on my research into what people say about others’ bodies and the judgments that are made about people based on their bodies. I looked to women’s magazines, in particular the headlines and bitchy photo captions that pepper each issue. While these operated as a backdrop of public judgement, Water personifies the more subtle body fascism that occurs on a daily basis between friends, family members, or even in someone’s mind. Her inherent body fascism, her obsession with the bodies of other people, is also a reflection on how she feels about herself. This is another form of projection, as she is externalising and psychologically projecting her own insecurities onto other people. Water is also about flowing and adapting into new forms

61 Author Bodily
and therefore this character is malleable. Sometimes she is in one frame of mind about body image, and sometimes she shifts completely.

Tied in with the notion of body fascism is hypocrisy, and in the character of Water I was interested in exploring the mother-daughter relationship through this frame. Nichter62 makes the point that mothers cannot teach their daughters body acceptance when they have not come to terms with their own shape, and this is something I have also experienced in my own life. Whether a mother, relative, friend, or even a complete stranger, it can be difficult to teach someone about body acceptance when the teacher has not accepted his or her own body first. This is an important theme of Bodily, because as creator and performer of the piece, I have not yet come to terms with my own shape.

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62 Nichter Fat Talk: what girls and their parents say about dieting, 1.
lights down
and silent you
await
spot.light
column of white whiteness
on a glimmering girl
you know - beautiful on the inside
delicate shadows sculpt
featured bones of curved strength
(and the sadness)
she sees a mirror’s reflection
too bright and naked
(though bodily swathed)
large unwieldy shapelessness
props towering
torso of tumultuous expectations
–don’t.look.up-
above and unbeknownst
gutted
organs on display
in a gruesome rotation of meat
girl staring and yes, hating
viewer becomes voyeur
you see into
her essence63

63 From Author Bodily (process journal).
The Provocative Monologue

What I fear most, I think, is the death of the imagination ... If I sit still and don't do anything, the world goes on beating like a slack drum, without meaning. We must be moving, working, making dreams to run toward; the poverty of life without dreams is too horrible to imagine.64

There is a long tradition of monologue performance in Western culture. Styles range from dance and mime to slam poetry, stand-up comedy, and storytelling. These performances can also take the form of speeches and protests. Performance theorist Jonathan Kalb writes: “Solo artists turn the mirror into a political tool ... They provide the audience with opportunities to identify with the other through a transformed single individual and thus bring the power of the mirror to the representation of otherness.”65 Not all monologue performance is provocative, in the sense of agitating and inciting a transformative effect on the audience, but in this study I am concerning myself primarily with performance that is.

Although provocative performance does not have to take a monologue form, there are notable differences between monologues and performances with more performers. The main difference is that monologues lend themselves to directly addressing the audience, thereby giving more opportunities for confronting the audience. Because monologues focus attention on one performer, they are often intense experiences. In addition, the monologue form encourages the use of non-narrative and non-linear structures, as it is not reliant on dialogue between performers. It therefore includes the audience as another performer, implicating them in the action of the performance. Feminist writers Frances Bonner and Lizbeth Goodman say:

65 Kalb 'Documentary Solo Performance: the politics of the mirrored self.'
Feminist performance may instigate social change through the transformation of the relationship between performance and audience. Like other feminist activity, including feminist criticism, such transformation aims to produce active spectators, able to question their positioning by texts.66

The main reason I choose to create solo performance is the opportunity for the direct, powerful, and provocative implication of the audience. Also, the solo form allows for one performer to play multiple characters,67 and this was a useful tool in Bodily to portray the inner struggle of body image. The script evolved from pieces of poetry I had written about the culture of thinness, and the idea to have one character portraying each stage of the alchemical cycle. The poetic mode of the script allows for direct address of the audience, and for using metaphors relating to body image without being too literal. I was aware of not being too obvious about the meaning of the piece, and of allowing room for the audience members to bring their own experiences and expectations to the theatre. Also, the research work for Bodily exposed the way poetry is associated with females, so I thought it would be an appropriate writing style for a piece dealing with female experiences.

I am interested in the idea of self-portraiture and I have drawn on this artform to create Bodily. Self-portraits encourage the artist to create, perform and engage in self-criticism, as they evoke the reflection and refraction of self-image. Painter Frida Kahlo said: “I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best.”68 Likewise, my piece is about me because I know myself the best. Also, I know myself better the more I perform. I agree with the saying that the ‘personal is political,’ as I hope personal experiences assist people to relate to me. The nature of these personal stories is that: “They feel personal, and their details are personal, but their broad texture and character, and especially the limits within which these evolve, are largely systemic.”69 The ‘personal is political’ motif haunts

67 This form is also discussed as “monopolylogue” in Michael Peterson (1997), Straight White Male: Performance art monologues, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 14.
68 Quoted in Antonio Rodríguez (1945), 'Frida Kahlo: Una pintora extraordinaria.' Así, 17 March.
the body image debate, as Germaine Greer notes: “The personal is still political. The millennial feminist has to be aware that oppression exerts itself in and through her most intimate relationships, beginning with the most intimate, her relationship with her body.”

A storytelling mode of self-portraiture is a common form of monologue performance. Personal stories can be provocative in a more subtle way, as they invite the audience to relate without explicating the issue too much. I believe that a provocative performance can be more effective when the audience contribute to the meaning-making process, as the piece will have more relevance to them in a personal sense. To enhance the storytelling nature of the piece, I chose to create a personal anecdote for each character. Most of these came from events that had happened to me, so I hoped they would not only be easy to relate to, but would also highlight the fact that the characters are all parts of me. Or as writer Phillip Lopate puts it: “My “I” is not me, entirely, but a character drawn from aspects of myself.”

The piece was constructed from a variety of fragments of text. Most of these were written by me, however some were taken from other texts. I looked especially for references to the alchemical elements, dreaming and myth, as these contribute to the esoteric level of the performance. I was also interested in speeches, songs and other texts that related to the topic of body image and the thinness ideal. This postmodern pastiche of texts has the effect of building a multiplicity of layers, adding richness and ambiguity to the performance.

One text I used was Sylvia Plath’s poem Three Women. I have always been drawn to Plath’s work, and have been reading her work through a feminist lens for the creation of Bodily. One example of a line taken from this poem is “I watch the men walk about me. They are so flat! There’s something about them like cardboard.” I thought that the tone of Plath’s writing suited Bodily, 

70 From The Whole Woman, cited in Catherine Redfern (2001), The Personal is (or) isn’t political (or is it?). www.thefword.org.uk/features/2001/05/the_personal_is_or_isnt_political_or_is_it. Accessed 1 February, 2006.
71 Lopate ‘Writing Personal Essays: on the necessity of turning oneself into a character.’
as it describes women, dreams, and madness. It also often has a melancholic tone that I felt matched the Earth character. Surrealist writer André Breton’s book *Earthlight* also influenced parts of *Bodily*. I first noticed Breton’s work through my research into alchemy, as he was interested in using alchemical imagery and metaphors in his poems. Parts of his poems resonated with me, for instance the *My Woman* poem, which I used in the voiceover for some transitions into Neutral. One unexpected source for a section of text in the piece was a speech by Bobbie Houston, a co-creator and senior pastor at Hillsong church. In the speech, she said: “Always ask the question, you know, you might be happy with your weight, but is your husband happy with your weight?” I was immediately drawn to this as a brief but pointed example of a conservative religious standpoint on the female body. I wanted to include this in the performance exactly as she had said it, so I would not affect the disturbing nature of the original statement.72

Academic texts also influenced the process of writing *Bodily*. Sometimes I used entire lines from a book, for instance the first line of the Air character was based on Joan Jacobs Brumberg’s book *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*. In it, she talks about a girl writing in her diary, who wanted to “be the skinniest person in my [dormitory] room. So I will be a changed and better person outwardly - to fit my inner self.” Later, however, the same girl wrote: “That’s bull shit. I just want to be thin so I can stop thinking about it.”73 I was so touched by this sliver of a story that I decided to incorporate it into my piece, where it became: “I want to be the skinniest person. I will be transformed. A better person outwardly, to fit my inner self... Actually, that’s bullshit. I just want to be thin so I can stop thinking about it.”74 Similarly, I was influenced by Sharon Hesse-Biber’s book *Am I Thin Enough Yet?: the cult of thinness and the commercialization of identity*.75 The title of this book became the first line spoken by the Earth character, as well as informing the underlying theme of the “cult of thinness.”

74 Author *Bodily*
75 Hesse-Biber *Am I Thin Enough Yet?: the cult of thinness and the commercialization of identity*. 

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Some chick says
Thank you for saying all the things I never do
I say the thanks I get
Is to take all the shit for you
It's nice that you listen
It'd be nicer if you joined in
As long as you play their game girl
You're never going to win

Somebody do something
Anything soon
I know I can't be the only
Whatever I am in the room
So why am I so lonely?
Why am I so tired?
I need backup
I need company
I need to be inspired*

* Ani DiFranco (1994), *Face Up and Sing*. Buffalo, NY: Righteous Babe Records,
Air

I found a sinkhole. I found that little area of suction, that black hole. I get near the lip, it draws me in. I desire it. I want it. Just ... to occupy less space. To have the willpower. Voices calling me from the dark and muddy depths. Happily calling to my deepest desires.\footnote{Author Bodily}

The next character in Bodily was named after the element ‘Air,’ as this is the third stage of the alchemical cycle. In alchemy, Air is the element of thought and planning, and I depicted her as a young idealistic student or professional. Air is the character who most embodies the paradox between intelligence and emotion in the piece, and presents the most internal struggle of all the characters. She thinks a lot about the evils of the beauty ideal, but as she has so deeply internalised it, she still finds herself succumbing to this ideal. I saw her as closest to my regular personality, as she shares my constant struggle with the ideals of body image in our culture. Air is also an element that brings to mind flight and weightlessness. This is another contradiction inherent in her character, then, as she oscillates between feeling light as a feather and feeling pulled down by her own insecurities.

Air begins by voicing a belief of anorexics I found through research, that being thin would make her happy. I felt that this was an important statement for her because it immediately sets her up as being confidently contradictory about her own body image. She then tells a story about being in line at the supermarket and seeing the magazines placed at the end of each checkout. Describing how one of the magazine covers affects her corporeally, she begins to cry even though she is not sure why. She feels a connection between the printed body and her body, as if they are both on display, lamenting the cruelty of making people wait in line while torturing them with these images. Trying to transform herself by curling up as small as possible, she wills...
herself to disappear into the floor completely. She then voices her feelings of envy at the skinny people, and how this envy is making her feel a disconnect between her mind and body. Air then becomes a newsreader, voicing the bitchy comments made by the tabloid media about women’s bodies. These segments are punctuated by moments when she is in agony about her journey through the harsh landscape of portrayals of women. She then directly and frankly addresses the audience, voicing her experience of the contradictions in a somewhat desperate way. It seems as if this self-analysis will result in a positive outcome for her, although she is once again trapped by the ideal. She believes that once she changes her thighs, she will be able to change the world. This thought, although portrayed comically, is actually a bleak moment in the piece for me. I thought it would be a sad, but very real, portrayal of this character to have her go back to her insecurities at the end. She shows the potential of escape to the audience, but knowledge of the downside to the ideal is not enough for her, and she is overcome by her obsession with altering her body.

Which idiom is that?
The one where our current puzzle Seems solved by ancient minds And the serpentine garden Has just one entrance And one exit

*Author Bodily (process journal).*
Design

Warhol ... was only replicating what he saw around him; he took in the images of culture and spit them out again.\textsuperscript{79}

The design of \textit{Bodily} grew organically, in response to the various needs of the piece. I took on the role of designing the production myself, as my original creative vision already encompassed many design-based ideas. I created all the projections and designed the set and costumes. This section outlines the design choices made, which artists I was influenced by stylistically and how design elements came together.

I have been interested in using projected images and videos in live performance since studying Bertolt Brecht’s use of placards and films to juxtapose with and enhance the meanings of his works. With this technique, the audience relate to and draw meaning from another layer of information. As the projections were an integral part of the message of the piece, they were positioned as a second performer onstage, for the live performer to interact with. I wanted the projections to show another angle of the onstage action, a related thought or concept that would add to the pastiche effect of the work. This patchwork method is echoed in performance maker and theorist Richard Foreman’s work:

I want a theatre than can treat [this basic self-contradictory nature of the human psyche], not through suggestion, but through the play of the concrete sign-systems of the theatre (bodies, props, light, sound, word), so such conflicting possibilities are made to dance, both in word and action.\textsuperscript{80}

Foreman’s interest in the systems of the theatrical mise-en-scène to create conflicts impacted upon the way I thought about the audiovisual projections in \textit{Bodily}. As well as providing a contradictory frame or level, the projections

\textsuperscript{79} Critical Art Ensemble (2000), 'Recombinant Theatre and Digital Resistance.' \textit{The Drama Review}, 4, 156.

\textsuperscript{80} Foreman \textit{Unbalancing Acts: foundations for a theater}, 51.
are also enlargements, showing something larger than life. They therefore have the effect of enhancing things that might otherwise have been insignificant or lost in a sea of other symbols.

Most of the ideas for audiovisual projections came to me spontaneously, and some were influenced by the work of other artists. For instance, the initial image of the spinning scale, the second image of the diary and the mirror-image were all enlargements, or different angles, of something happening onstage. The projected magazine headlines, news desk icons, ‘cult of thinness’ skeleton image, and the images of anorexic women juxtaposed with celebrities were all intended to create a richer layer of meaning on top of the live action. Sometimes they were intended to clash with the spoken text, and sometimes to enhance the imagery of the text. In addition, these are images that many people are familiar with and I wanted to subvert their current understanding by re-framing and re-contextualising them in a provocative performance. The video of the disembodied hands was influenced by Krzysztof Wodiczko’s public projection works. Wodiczko’s videos often involve disembodied hands or heads of storytellers, projected large-scale onto public monuments. I was fascinated by the idea of highlighting just someone’s hands as they talk, isolating them from their face or body language. Wodiczko’s work also influenced the projection of my disembodied head, however this was also informed by the aesthetic of films such as Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, where lighting, film speed, and graininess are manipulated to create a disturbing effect. All projections were created using a combination of the Adobe Photoshop CS, After Effects 6.0, and Final Cut Pro HD 5.0.4 software packages. They were then collated in Keynote, where transition effects were applied to them. A dedicated audiovisual operator ran them directly from Apple Keynote 2.0.2 during the performance.

Musician Tori Amos is one artist who discusses the link between the spiritual realm and the artistic realm in her work. In her book *Piece By Piece*, she talks about her complicated lyrics and musical themes, and how many of these come from her research into mythology:
I dug [the idea of white] because if the lone woman missteps, then there is nowhere to hide all that blood on such a pretty white dress. I found that expression more in the vein of Artemis, if you're looking for an archetype. Artemis - the lone huntress, who finds other women to help her achieve what must be achieved as she tries to protect those creatures that she cares for.81

This comment about Artemis was one source of inspiration for my choice of a white dress costume. A further reason for my choice of the colour white was my desire to project images onto the costume. For example, I could project an image of another body onto my clothes, to symbolise the desire to be someone or something else. White is also a symbol for innocence and purity, as well as a plain and striking base for splashes of different colours.

Costume designer Chrissie Powell’s main role was to construct the white dress that would be the base costume. The other costume elements were influenced by my conceptualisation of each character and the colours their elements related to in alchemy. For instance, the Earth character, symbolised by the colour brown, was soft and naïve, so I decided on the brown sash and white slippers. The Water character was the older, more mature mother character. Her alchemical colour is blue, manifested by her blazer, and she had an adult hairstyle and stockings. Air, symbolised by the colour green, personified the intelligent character who still succumbs to the thinness ideals. I therefore dressed her with her hair pulled back and wearing a green tie.

Fire, whose colour is red, wore heavy boots as a nod to the stereotype of the angry feminist, as well as a scarf to symbolise fire. I used a tube of bright red lipstick as a device to link and carry over between characters. I chose lipstick because it is a metonymic symbol of the beauty ideal in our culture, and each character has a different relationship to it. To Earth, the lipstick is something to be revered, and something she looks to as a sign of maturity. Water uses the lipstick as one part of a disguise or cover-up that enhances her sexuality. Air treats the lipstick with contempt, as it is a symbol of her mother, whom she partly blames for her dysfunctional body image. Fire, on the other hand,

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detests the lipstick as a beauty symbol, and instead converts it into a symbol of war before discarding it.

The set of *Bodily* was mainly simple and functional, with a table and chair creating another visual layer for performance. Although in the development stages I thought about using vertical blinds, gauze, or other unusual materials to project on, in the end I decided on a simple screen, which was stretched across the back of the set. I chose this because I did not want the screen material to impose on the set, and I wanted to be as versatile as possible with the relationship between the live and recorded spaces in the piece. At the beginning, the individual character costume pieces were scattered around the set, as I wanted to convey the impression that this was someone’s bedroom. Having the set mimic a personal space was important, as the topic of the piece is also very personal. A suitcase lay open on the stage, and the performer places every costume piece into the suitcase after she is finished with it. I was inspired to use this device by Leah Purcell’s performance piece *Box The Pony*, where she hangs costumes on a rack after using them.\(^2\) One reason for using the suitcase device was to create a false expectation in the audience that the performer would close this suitcase and take it with her at the end of the piece, somehow solving all of her problems or taking her baggage with her. Through creating this expectation, I could then subvert it by leaving the suitcase on the stage at the end of the piece, along with the question “Do I look OK?” hanging in the air.

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**Fire**

*Fire,* often symbolised as a candle, is the element of action and willpower. The anger, the spark to action, rises, requiring coherence and rigour for reconciliation. The alchemist must find the gold within the self, while projecting it onto others. Fire shows a glimpse of solution, a way through action.

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\(^2\) Scott Rankin and Leah Purcell (1999), *Box the Pony,* Sydney, Hodder Headline.
Fire

I am accused. I dream of massacres.
My body has failed me
I wage war, war, war.\(^{83}\)

The final character in *Bodily* was named after the element ‘Fire,’ as this is the fourth stage of the alchemical cycle. Fire is the element associated with action, and in the piece is shown as the stereotype of the angry feminist. While she starts as the semblance of this stereotype, she is the character who discovers true gold. I was interested in portraying a stereotypical feminist character not only because this is who I am sometimes, but also because I believe that many people think immediately of that type of character when any women’s issues arise. In a sense, I wanted to play off that stereotype, but at the same time to portray her straight, as a character who is frustrated, angry, and disillusioned with the system. She was mainly informed by my research into feminist texts about body image, as well as my personal experience of women who express their feminist views in a forceful manner. Fire is also associated with making light, and therefore I wanted her to be the character that comes closest to illuminating the heart of the issue, showing a new possibility for change.

Fire’s journey begins with her renouncing the symbol of beauty, the lipstick, by using it to create warpaint marks on her face. She then tells the story of waiting in line at the supermarket again, however this time the story is more forceful. She notes how the magazines prompt her to look at the other people in line in a different way, as if they are also commodities. As she makes her way through the “gauntlet” of celebrity magazines on one side, chocolate and junk food on the other, she overhears a conversation between another customer and the cashier. Their conversation increases in volume and intensity as they discuss a woman on the cover of a magazine. Fire finds herself disgusted at this, although there is something inside her, a “demon,”

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\(^{83}\) Author *Bodily*
that forces her hand to the magazine rack to pick up one of the dreaded items. She believes this commodity to be the gold, and is intoxicated by its power. However, as she sees her hand passing the magazine to the cashier, she has a sudden change. Instead of buying it, thereby buying into the commodified illusion of gold, she realises that instead she must throw it out, to cast it, as the Philosopher’s Stone. After throwing it back on the rack, she experiences a profound release, and finds herself feeling an incredible calm.

... not strong enough to find what she stands for and rise for it still envies the swish-swish of denimed thighs the girls on the bus in semi-naked icecream prostitution or the girl on your fridge whose stick-legs wink at me every time i reach in to get the bread (i don’t eat butter anymore)(84)

...
**Desired Impact**

The theatre formalizes every movement, every insignificant detail, every word, every silence; it is no good at all when it comes to suggesting solutions, at most it is good for playing with contradictions.85

Throughout this project, I have thought about the effect I hoped it would have. My hypothesis is that some people, but perhaps not all people, are transformed by performance. This transformation may take on many different forms, and it may be conditional on many factors unrelated to the performance itself. My research project attempts to interrogate the nature of this transformation.

I am intrigued by the idea of building or encouraging a community through performance. I have seen this occurring when people identify with the themes, issues or characters presented in my piece. Baz Kershaw discusses the idea of community as “the conceptual lynch-pin which links the experience (and action) of individuals – including that of performance – to major historical changes in society.”86 I am interested in creating this link between my performance and the audience, which has the potential to snowball with other experiences and actions to impact upon societal currents. I hope that the audience will empathise with the characters and themes of *Bodily*, making connections between the events presented in the piece and their own lives and society. Through these connections, audiences may achieve new realisations or create new theories. I hope they discover through these connections that perhaps they are not alone in specific feelings or thoughts about their world, and through this realisation gain comfort and strength. Ultimately, I want them to become open to new possibilities in the way they act in society, and to think more critically about the information presented to them by the media. These may sound idealistic, but they are the

86 Kershaw ‘Performance, Community, Culture.’ 29.
hopes I brought with me into this project, and have formed my interest in this topic. I created Bodily not just out of a desire for the audience to experience these things, but also as a performative inquiry into the attitudes people have, and the way they behave. This line of enquiry is therefore crucial to my understanding of myself and my culture.

The research has suggested that certain elements can enhance the transformative potential of a performance. Provocative performance must address current issues and communities, and also be artistically interesting, whether through music, multimedia, costumes, language, or humour. This type of performance, I find, also needs to be followed by audience input and participation. Transformation can occur on various levels, from slight change to more significant and longer-lasting change. For instance, an audience member might leave the theatre with an altered attitude about the issues presented; this transformation is at one end of a transformative continuum. At the other end lies alchemical transformation, which is usually absolute and physical. These degrees and extents of transformation are taken into account in the provocative and transformative elements of performance identified in this study.

One provocative aspect of the Merlin Luck and Michael Moore case studies in Chapter Three was that neither performer offered a solution to the problem he was addressing, thereby denying the audience a resolution to the performance. It is possible that this lack of resolution contributed greatly to the amount of discussion and debate surrounding both performances, as people were frustrated and enraged that they were not presented with a solution. Lisa Tillman-Healy says: “It may frustrate some that I close without revealing ‘what it all means.’ But, as Robert Coles ... tells us, ‘the beauty of a good story is its openness - the way you or I or anyone reading it can take it in, and use it for ourselves.’” An episode of the animated television series The Simpsons, in which 8-year-old Lisa struggles with her own body image, also refuses to resolve the issue. At the end of the episode, where life usually returns to the status quo, her father Homer flippantly asks her if everything is

OK. Lisa responds that she, like many women still obsessed by weight, has a long way to go. To test this idea, I chose to leave my own performance unresolved, hoping it would frustrate the audience and force them to interrogate the issues presented. I wanted to see how this lack of resolution would affect the potential transformations brought about by the performance, showing the audience the gold, only to subvert their expectation. This was embodied in the performative moment of throwing out the magazine, which symbolised the character of Fire making a positive action to feel better about herself. However, she regresses shortly afterwards, asking the audience for affirmation about herself. At the end, she leaves the stage without the enlightenment that was promised.

**Conclusion**

My solo performance work *Bodily* developed alongside research into other provocative performances. It was created from research, and is also a tool for further research through the focus groups conducted after each performance (these will be discussed in Chapter Five). Research into alchemy, female body image and performance styles informed the performance, which was devised and developed through written text and a series of workshops. My interest in autoethnographic methodologies also informs *Bodily*, as the use of self-portraiture testifies, as well as my analysis of the creation of this performance work. As the development of *Bodily* suggests, the effect desired by the

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performance maker is crucial to an understanding of provocation through performance.

In the next chapter, I analyse the outcomes of Bodily, including the focus group data and my personal response to the performance. The potential for attitudinal and behavioural change through the work is also explored.
‘Separate the Earth from Fire’:
Fermentation and Practical Performance Outcomes

I’ll give you the skinny on this... cut it down to size.

Introduction

From the 19th to the 22nd of April, 2006, Bodily was performed at Sidetrack Theatre, Marrickville NSW. Over these four days, there were four evening shows and one matinee. Relatively speaking, the show was produced on a small scale: 112 audience members saw the show over the season (an average of 22.4 people per night), and the piece had an overall budget of AU$5000. The object of the creation of Bodily was twofold: one, to make a performance that would be an interesting and effective method of engaging with the ideas under investigation in this thesis, and two, to create a case study to be read alongside others in the formulation of these theories. The piece is intended as a case study within this thesis, to be positioned alongside the case studies discussed in Chapter Three. As well as being a professional work, my aim was to use Bodily as a research tool. It is positioned as a case study within the context of this research project, however I am in the privileged position of

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1 Parts of this chapter have been presented as papers at two conferences: Author ‘Bodily: conjunction and fermentation.’ and Author ‘Performance as Research in Bodily.’
2 Author Bodily
being able to explore it from many sides. As creator, I explore the creative process and how this was informed by research. As performer, I look at the phenomenon of performing. As researcher, I study the responses to the performance, and as theorist I fit all these perspectives into the theoretical framework of the research. The combination of these four perspectives results in the performance itself becoming a method of inquiry, a form of research adding complexity to the project.

This chapter is a discussion of outcomes and responses to the performance season of *Bodily*. In the previous chapter, I outlined the process of creating the performance, including the relevant research and methodologies. In this chapter, this analysis continues post-performance, as the initial aims and hopes of the performance are weighed against its outcomes. The chapter also discusses the data generated in the nightly focus groups, and the related follow-up questionnaires. *Bodily* had one professional review, on the website *Sydney Stage Online*, and this is also placed in the context of a discussion of outcomes.

There were many aspects of audience reception I wanted to explore. I was interested in the particular moments that stood out for audience members, especially the themes and concerns they identified with and psychologically projected onto the piece. As the possibility of change through performance is the main concern of the thesis, I wanted to gather responses not only about the possibility of performance to transform, but also about the potential of *Bodily* in particular to encourage changes in attitudes and behaviours. Different modes of transformation became evident through the process of gathering responses. The practical work is therefore embedded in the research project both as an outcome of research - an experiment to test a theory - and as a method of generating data for further analysis and re-integration with theory.
Every night as the lights came up on my body, stretched out on the table, their warm buzz made me feel alive. Moments before, people had filed into the space, across the front of the stage and into the auditorium. There was an exciting energy in the air, which I am sure I was contributing to by beginning the performance onstage. The incessant noise of low-flying aircraft coming into land at nearby Sydney airport uncannily ceased for the exact duration of almost every performance. Except for the final night, when a particularly loud engine roar occurred at the perfect moment in the show to be humourously incorporated. As I rose from my position on the table and lowered my feet, I felt every millimetre of my soles connecting with the wooden floorboards. The sensation of an audience of eyes watching me from the darkened auditorium for the next hour was brilliant, energising and exhilarating.

I am able to chart my own transformation throughout the process of creating, performing and researching the outcomes of Bodily. My research and development of the piece took me into certain places and mindsets that had a profound impact on me, and I experienced attitudinal and behavioural changes. By transforming into the different characters in the piece, I exposed different facets of my personality. These were complex and ambiguous transformations, as in many ways the characters could not be separated from myself. Since the performance, I am no longer interested in buying women’s magazines, and I remain incensed at the pressures placed on women to conform to the beauty ideal. Through this process, I also experienced physical transformation. I intentionally lost around ten kilograms of body weight over this period, visibly transforming my body. Sometimes I feel hypocritical about the weight loss, considering the subject matter of my performance. Some friends even commented on my weight loss to me after the performance, perhaps because they experienced a dissonance between the resistant content of the piece and the change in my physical appearance. I do not have any easy explanation for this, except that as I hoped Bodily would suggest, I am still caught up in the thinness ideal. My own weight loss is
semiotically apt, as a physical demonstration of the conflict portrayed in the piece. No matter what my weight is or becomes, I will still feel the same amount of passion about changing and challenging the thinness ideal.

Always ask the question, you know, you might be happy with your weight, but is your husband happy with your weight? Is your mother?

(She breaks out of her expression and addresses the front row of the audience confidentially)

...How was my hair? (She lightly touches her hair) Was my hair OK? How was my hair?3

Methodology

It is a rare performance that stays with me for a significant time after it finishes. Only some performances are so affective that I talk about them afterwards, as they haunt me and hover around and through my consciousness; they arise and link themselves to other life encounters. I wanted Bodily to have this effect on my audience. I wanted them to be talking, thinking, mulling over the performance for days, weeks, even months to come. I wanted them to go home that night and sit around the dinner table, talking about the issues raised, the perspectives they were shown, and their opinions of them. More than that, I wanted to be privy to what they were talking about, to document their discussion. So I needed to find a method through which I could simulate this post-performance discussion. Rather than holding individual interviews with audience members, I wanted

3 Ibid.
people to feed off each other’s ideas, to agree, disagree, and be influenced by what others were saying about the piece.

Looking over methods for gathering audience response it becomes clear that most studies employ similar models. Called, variously, ‘post-performance discussion,’ ‘theatre talks,’ ‘symposiums’ or ‘forums,’ these models are usually framed as a privileged look behind the scenes of the performance. Instead, I wanted to use forums to gain an insight into audience response to the issues raised in *Bodily*, so I felt that a different approach was required. While some post-performance discussion types are modelled as facilitated discussion, most often the facilitator is the director or a cast member. In the case of audience research for *Bodily*, I felt it was important for the interviews or discussions to be facilitated by someone external to the piece. This, I hoped, would minimise the likelihood of questions from the audience about the process and meaning of the performance. As I wanted to simulate natural discussion as closely as possible, I looked towards focus groups as a possible method for gathering audience responses to my performance. Qualitative research theorists Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey state that focus groups “apply to a situation in which the researcher/interviewer asks very specific questions about a topic after having already completed considerable research.” This method is different to the audience response methodologies used in the Luck and Moore case studies, as in those cases I lacked the ability to ask specific questions, and therefore the samples were quite random. However, I believe it has some similarities as it allowed me to gather opinions from a range of different audience members in a relatively short amount of time. The focus groups handbook by researchers Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey is a useful guide to this method, suggesting three distinctive characteristics of focus groups. These are: that focus groups involve similar kinds of people in a social interaction, that the purpose of focus groups is to collect qualitative data from a focussed discussion, and that

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focus group interviewing is a qualitative approach to gathering information that is both inductive and naturalistic.\(^5\)

Focus groups are used in many different social research contexts, and are useful in researching how people influence each other’s opinions, as noted by social researchers L.-C. Hydén and P. H. Bülow: “The interaction in focus groups may also be analysed to learn more about how attitudes and opinions are created and sustained through interaction with others.”\(^6\) Focus groups theorist David L. Morgan agrees: “The comparative strength of focus groups as an interview technique clearly lies in the ability to observe interaction on a topic.”\(^7\) The act of convening the focus groups was inherently provocative, as it forced the participants to think critically and engage with the issues presented in the performance.

My mother, Dr Kris Needham, is an experienced and internationally recognised facilitator of focus groups, working primarily in a secondary education context. The decision to seek her assistance as facilitator could be seen to have negative implications for the integrity of the data, however I am confident that it was a good decision. It was through conversations with her about her practice that I decided to use focus groups to gather data, and therefore the choice of her to facilitate them was logical. She wrote about her aims in using focus group methodology:

> The aim of a focus group is to encourage the exchange of ideas and perspectives. It is important therefore for the facilitator not to judge either the participants or their ideas, but to probe and develop responses. While a well considered question route will direct the discussion, there is often the need to be flexible in order to explore the possibilities that arise spontaneously. Participants bring their own set of expectations to the group, even sometimes a prepared response to what they expect to be

discussing. Somewhere between the facilitator’s purpose and the participants’ expectations is a meeting point that can be rich and informative when explored appropriately.

In my experience facilitating focus groups, participants approach the situation positively, if sometimes a little apprehensively. My personal goal is for each participant to leave the group feeling that his or her voice was heard and to feel that the discussion was worthwhile for them.

She also outlined her process for beginning the focus group sessions:

I like to have a strategy for opening up the discussion. For the Bodily groups, it was decided to present participants with a series of images that may represent a way of looking at the performance. A collection of free postcards of the kind readily available at coffee shops and cinemas was used as a resource. In offering these cards to the focus group I ask participants to choose one image that says something to them about the topic being studied. When all participants have chosen, I ask them to show the group the card and explain why they chose it. This process achieves two things. It opens up the concept of different interpretations of the topic being studied and it also ensures that each person enters the discussion. Participants are often quite imaginative in articulating the connection between the image and the topic and this can assist the facilitator build a relationship with the group and also encounter each group’s interpretations without a pre-conceived view that might stifle the debate.

The facilitator aims to connect with the participants and to build trust so that the discussion is genuine. The seating of the group, the immediate environment, the welcome and the body language of the facilitator are vital supports for the question
route. In the case of this series of groups, the theatre stage was a somewhat different ‘feel’ for the location as it offered a privileged glimpse of an empty theatre after the show, possibly conducive to participants debriefing on their experience as audience. Food and beverages were offered. To some extent, the privacy of the groups was threatened by the presence of observers and note-takers, so the chairs were drawn closely together in a circle and as facilitator I endeavoured to hold the attention of the group within the circle.

To begin the discussion, I like to introduce participants, to explain why they are there and to set out some ‘rules’ for the discussion, for instance that I want everyone to have their say and that each participant can build on others’ ideas. In this instance I also explained how the data would be used, introduced the note-takers and observers and ensured that all participants had signed the Consent Forms.

Dr Needham further outlined the structure and nature of questions posed to the focus group participants:

Although a question route is predetermined, in this case in collaboration with Tessa, in practice, as mentioned above, it is often the case that a later question may be addressed as part of an earlier one, or that a particular issue emerges that deserves special exploration. For this reason considerable flexibility can be exercised. A balance needs to be reached between aiming for some consistency of approach across groups while at the same time allowing adequate development in the way participants describe and evaluate their responses in the context of a particular group interaction.

In summation, she reflected on her perspective on the range of responses and reactions to *Bodily* in the focus group sessions:
The facilitation of the focus group therefore involves being an active listener who is totally ‘present’ for the group, is curious and non-judgemental, is comfortable in allowing pauses and wait time and who above all develops the trust of the group. In the case of these groups, the topic of body image was treated as potentially sensitive. As expected, there were participants who reflected on their own experiences with eating disorders or those of someone close to them. There were also participants who expressed strong opinions about people who are easily influenced by the media. It was therefore important to facilitate the group in such a way as to ‘normalise’ the range and plurality of positions and to be particularly aware that for some participants the focus group discussion could arouse some unresolved previous experiences that might need further counselling.

The focus group questions are provided as Appendix B.

The *Bodily* focus groups were run after each of the five performances. The University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee approved the focus group study. All focus group participants were volunteers, and were signed up to participate immediately before the performance began. After each performance, the stage area was set with a circle of chairs, a table of refreshments and two audio recording devices. Four sessions took place from about 9.15 pm on the 19th to the 22nd of April, 2006, and the fifth began at around 3.15pm on the 22nd of April, 2006. The average duration was approximately fifty minutes, and average group size was 7.6 participants.

The focus groups turned out to be an effective method of gathering the required data, as they encouraged participants to interact with each other and with the performance. There were inevitable distractions off-topic, but interesting discussions and points of view surfaced. Two weeks and then six months after the performance season, follow-up questionnaires were sent out
to focus group participants. These were intended to gauge the nature and longevity of change, as well as to interrogate the use of the focus groups themselves.

This chapter also includes data from outside the focus groups. I found that many of my friends who went to see my performance commented to me about it afterwards, whether they were in the focus groups or not. This may have been at social gatherings, or even immediately after the performance. I wanted to include some of their comments as data in addition to the focus group data. Although these may be biased comments, because they were addressing them directly to me, sometimes their observations and comments were pertinent to the study.

It must be recognised that using focus groups and personal comments means that the results tend towards subjective and idiosyncratic responses. The mere presence of a certain emotion or thought by one focus group member does not necessarily mean that every audience member experienced this as well. This problematic, however, is integral to the nature of performance, and art in general, as each participant will bring different behaviours and attitudes to the work. Additionally, my personal responses to the performance are tempered by my proximity to the creation of the piece, and therefore have an inherent and permanent bias. Thus, I am aware that there are different scales, degrees and extent of responses to this performance, and that not every audience member’s experience may correlate with the findings of the focus groups. The use of focus group methodology for this study therefore has limitations in that the participants were responding to a personal and highly subjective stimulus. In addition, the relatively small scale of the budget and numbers attending need to be taken into consideration. If I could undertake this study again, with unlimited resources, I would endeavour to attract more audience members to the performance, in hopes of gathering data from a more broad demographic. Also, I would try to hold a second follow-up session, where ideas and issues that were raised in the first session could be discussed, and the participants would have had some time and distance from the piece. Whilst in my study, I sent out follow-up
questionnaires to participants, I feel that some more interesting issues may have been discussed had the group met again. The findings are therefore unreliable as a means for making broad generalisations about experiences as an audience member. They are, however, reliable as an indication of a variety of responses to Bodily, and the different degrees and types of reactions possible in such a performance.

Therefore, this chapter is a synthesised report of the focus group results, including some other spontaneous audience comments. A report of the focus group outcomes was sent to each participant and is included as Appendix F.

**Data Analysis of Focus Groups**

Data analysis consists of examining, categorising, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study.\(^8\)

Surveys for demographical purposes were filled out at the beginning of each focus group session (see Appendix C), which were then collated and summarised. Each focus group was audio-recorded on digital tape, and handwritten notes were also taken as a backup. The tapes were summarised and every comment coded manually, from which point I selected important moments for further transcription. The thematic codes used were: Media, Politics, Significant moments, Performance, Projection, Transformation, and Resolution. The frequency of these codes across each of the five focus groups was:
Table 8: Frequency of thematic codes in focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Code</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant moments</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These codes developed somewhat organically from the nature of the data, as well as the areas of interest to the study. Some codes, for instance ‘projection’ and ‘transformation,’ were drawn from the prior research I had undertaken. Other codes, for instance ‘media’ and ‘resolution,’ came directly from the focus group responses. Different codes could have been selected, had the research a different hypothesis or different aims. However, these thematic codes were chosen and developed because they categorised responses across the different sessions in relation to the developing focal points of the study. I transcribed selected sections, and drew together quotes from the same codes across sessions. Quoting from the focus groups in this chapter is therefore highly selective, as I chose the comments and discussions that best highlighted or illustrated my argument. I am using this manner of selective quoting as my aim is not to provide a general overview of the different discussions, but to look at the specific points made that related to the study. The representation of the focus group data in this section is therefore not a general cross section, but I endeavour to cite every participant at least once.

Each focus group participant was also coded so I would be able to refer to individuals without using their names. These numbers were generated randomly, according to the order of the participant’s consent form. This
system gives a sense of the spread of responses both across the different focus groups, and within each group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance and session day</th>
<th>Day code</th>
<th>Participant code</th>
<th>Gender code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>m, f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>m, f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>m, f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday matinee</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>m, f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday evening</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>m, f</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Participant code construction

So, for instance, the participants in the Friday session were coded C1f, C2f, C3m, and so on. Input from the focus group facilitator was coded ‘F.’

Considering a variety of guidelines from Krueger and Casey,\(^9\) I began to analyse the focus group data. Throughout this process, I kept an open mind about the data I might find. Although I was looking for specific references relevant to this study, in general I was also interested in any reaction people may have outside of this.

Demographical Data Gathered at Focus Groups\(^10\)

I gathered demographic data via a survey at the beginning of the focus groups to get an idea of the age range, sex, and performance experience of the participants. This was to support the qualitative data with some broad statistics about the kinds of people who were participating in discussions. There are some significant outcomes here, for instance, 76% of participants fell into the 15-35 year age group, which is also the group to which I belong.

\(^9\) Derived from Krueger and Casey Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research. Specifically, to compare and contrast the different sessions, as well as the people within each session; look at how much weight to give certain themes: judge by frequency, specificity, emotion, extensiveness; write a descriptive summary for each question then look across questions for themes; and use quotes as evidence.

\(^10\) The sample for this data was everyone who attended the focus groups over the performance season: n=38.
There was an approximate 3:1 (female : male) gender breakdown, so this needs to be taken into account, especially as the performance was quite gender-specific. The majority of participants were theatre-goers, with 77% going to the theatre between one and five times a year. Unsurprisingly, the majority of participants had heard about the performance through word-of-mouth, and the majority had seen similar contemporary performance before.

Interpretations and Significant Moments of the Performance

There were multiple interpretations of the themes of Bodily, revolving around similar issues. Themes of beauty, the body, judgement, weight, acceptance, happiness, obsession, control, and the media were among those most raised. Symbolic elements of the performance were also discussed, for example, the meaning of the lipstick, suitcase, and costumes. In addition, many significant moments from the performance were discussed. These often overlapped across the different group sessions.

I have control and can transcend this form to create the perfect physical version. (she walks around to the back of the table again.) First: thighs. (she steps onto the stool) Next: world. (she steps onto the table)\textsuperscript{11}

Audience members connected with the struggle of self-image, especially with how it related to specific performative moments. For instance, E2f remarked on “how empowering it seems to be to her to have conquered her thighs, that she could conquer the whole world, I just thought ... I liked that idea, but it’s very sad, as well.” D5f commented that “a lot of us are like that, we just think that one change will completely ... transform.” By the end of the performance,

\textsuperscript{11} Author Bodily
as E3f noted, there was a realisation that the character's self-image was developing: “she was getting to a point where she realised she was beautiful, but there was always a qualifier to that.” E8f’s comment on this theme indicates a development between seeing conflict portrayed on stage, and relating it to her own life: “I even felt myself looking at Tess, going, she’s gorgeous, how can she be acting this way ... it’s quite confronting thinking that your mind does that, subconsciously.” This is a powerful affective response, because the participant was experiencing a metatheatrical disconnection between her perceptions of the performer and character on stage. In viewing me as performer and character at the same time, she made a connection with her own experience and behaviour.

There was some discussion, especially in focus groups C and D, about the media as a strong recurring throughline of the performance. For D6m, the performance “really highlighted for me how absurd the whole thing has gone,” especially, according to B1f, as “it all came down to a magazine, which embodied so much more than just a magazine.” The casting out of the magazine was also chosen as a high point by A4m, who thought it was interesting “to actually throw it away, rather than put it back on the shelf,” because “conceptually, it was a new option ... so it kind of had that release.”

I aimed to provoke the audience to question the conundrum of knowing the ridiculous nature of the embedded ideal, but still being drawn into it. This provocation would, I hoped, encourage a deeper analysis of these issues by the audience. “The struggle that she expressed between, on one hand knowing how ridiculous some of those urges felt, but still feeling very connected with the experience” was highlighted by C4f as something enjoyable about the piece. This conundrum was also described by C7f as “that dialogue between the internal struggle that she was going through, and also the external struggle: ’I don’t want to be involved in this, but I can’t help it.’” E2f offered her own experience of this struggle: “I absolutely abhor those magazines but somehow I’m drawn to just having a look when they’re on the table.” This conflict suggests that the portrayal of contradictions widens and broadens possible interpretations of meanings.
The repetition of words, phrases, images and gestures was another tool I used to provoke audiences. My aim, through repetition, was to highlight and emphasise certain aspects of each character, to make audiences recognise something specific about them. For instance, in repeating the supermarket checkout scene, I wanted to extend the story of standing in the queue into a larger metaphor about the abundance of everyday images of the ideal. There was some discussion, especially in focus group C, about the effect of repetition in the dialogue. As C3m mentioned: “Sometimes when you repeat words or phrases they can take on different meanings.” The repetition of scenarios and images was also commented upon by B9m: “the first time she did the checkout scene, it was kind of a ‘ha-ha-ha’ moment, yeah I recognise that, it’s silly thinking but we all do it ... and then going back to that situation a second time with those images was very unsettling.”

*The Body in Performance*

A major issue that arose in the focus groups, and in my later conversations with various audience members, was the treatment of the body in the performance. For me, this was a significant issue, and one that demonstrates the importance of the placement of *Bodily* as a research tool. In the development of my script, and right through the production season, I was not concerned much with the way my body was portrayed in performance. Apart from the usual performative decisions of costuming, movement on the stage and gesture, I neglected to consider that people would be reading my body as another site of meaning. My bodily presence was integral to the body image theme of the performance, but somehow in the development I did not consider this. It was only through some comments in the focus groups that I began to consider the impact of the presence of my body on the provocative potential of the performance. In not foregrounding the body in the piece, I created a disjunction between my performance and the issue of body image. The performance tended towards the cerebral, whereas the subject matter was inherently visceral. Bodily responses to food - abjection, self-denial and shame - were largely absent in the presentation of the issue. As a result, the
performance failed to foreground the body, causing disconnection for some audience members. In particular, A6f mentioned in the focus group session that she felt my body was “absent” from the performance. One example she used was the projection of my head, jerking around crazily.

![Figure 20: Two stills from the projection of my head. (Author (2006), Bodily. Sydney.)](image)

She said that for her, this projection was not in keeping with the subject of the performance, as the issue was about my whole body and not just my head. E4f also mentioned this disjuncture. She said that for her, my body and voice
grounded the performance in reality: “there’s the rational experience and the emotional experience, and they’re quite different things ... her voice actually brought it back to the fact that this could just be a real person that we’re talking about.” This comment reinforces the importance and immediacy of the interaction between audience and performer in live performance. There is a certain empathy or identification that is specific to the body, and this stems from the embodiment of emotion, as discussed by Peta Tait: “In theatre, emotions are inferred momentarily in delivery - perhaps they are perceived bodily, as well as seen - rather than specified as they might be in literary exposition about the subject.”

The way the body is treated in performance, and the transformative potential of this, is an important aspect of the discussion of attitudinal and provocative change through performance developed in this study.

Another aspect of the body in performance is related to gender and sexual difference. I looked into this subject at the end of the project, after the performance of Bodily was complete.

*The Resolution of the Performance*

There were quite animated discussions about the resolution of Bodily. My intention was to deny a resolution, as the other studies of Luck and Moore showed the provocative impact of leaving a performance unresolved. I wanted to subvert expectations that I would offer a solution to the problem, or that any of the characters portrayed would solve their body image problems. People had various opinions about how it ended, and how they would have liked it to end. For instance, E6m said: “I suppose there’s that basic point that a play ... should end up on an uplifting note,” however the subversion of this in Bodily was the source of much debate. One discussion about the ending of the piece focussed on different interpretations of it:

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A4m: It was only at the end with the exorcism stuff, I identified with it from ... my own experience of media, wanting to cast it out of myself and I could actually get a bit of a cathartic moment there, so I felt trusting at that point, because I actually thought that something good might come out of this journey, that part of the journey.

A6f: She lost me completely at the exorcism moment ... I completely identified the whole way through, I was right in all these experiences, so there was just no way that was ever going to happen, I couldn’t go there, I thought it was too easy to have some sort of possibility of conclusion or hope, I didn’t see it, I didn’t think it should have been there.

A2f: Yeah, I found it too quick. There was a lot of setting up of the stuff, in such a way that the resolution was too fast.

A6f: I disagree, the resolution is completely impossible full-stop.

A5f: But was it a resolution? See, I didn’t think it was. I thought it was just one tiny little battle that she won, but not the war.

A4m: Yes, I didn’t interpret it as a resolution, it was merely ... it gave a new choice.

A5f: She’s going to go back home, she’s going to worry about the magazine she tossed, and she’s going to go back the next day and have the same battle again ... I don’t think you can resolve problems like that that quickly, that’s why I get frustrated.

A2f: I didn’t see it as being the end of a journey ...

A4m: I just saw it as an alternative, so it wasn’t meant as an end, I was just seeing it was a new possibility that she offered in that moment. I mean, she still hadn’t solved the chocolate problem. The chocolate’s still going to be there.
This conversation indicates that people read different things into the way the performance ended. Psychological understandings of projection (as discussed by Anna Freud,\(^\text{13}\) Carl Jung\(^\text{14}\) and John Boe,\(^\text{15}\) in particular) suggest people tend to see themes that are aligned with their own experience. This mode of projection was seen in the focus groups:

C3m: It didn’t take a position, I just felt, it was just a general discussion, and if that’s what it aimed to do, then it did it very well, it didn’t kind of come to a point and say: this is crazy, or ... this is how women, or people in general, should approach body image as an alternative, it was just like, this is just how it is.

C7f: I’m not sure you could take a standpoint with it, though, because it is such an individual thing with everyone, that ... I think more people would have a more adverse reaction to it, because they’d go, ‘how dare you say that’, and get angry about it, whereas because she’s taking a more general standpoint, people can take that information and reflect it and take their own meaning from it as well, like you might just ... alienate the audience ...

C1f: But she did conclude a couple of times that she was beautiful, which was a summation of all her thoughts, really, wasn’t it, that she didn’t have to go down that path of being pushed by society and the media.

C7f: But she also repeated it a lot, like she was trying to convince herself.

C3m: She followed it with: ‘do I look fat in this dress’ ...

\(\text{laughter}\)

D5f expressed a desire about the ending, saying: “I wish she would cry at the end, just to wrap it up, rather than just leave it.” This desire was further

\(^{13}\) Anna Freud (1937), *The ego and the mechanisms of defence*, London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis.  
\(^{14}\) Jung, Read, Fordham and Adler *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*.  
\(^{15}\) Boe ‘Metaphor, Thought, Projection, and Archetype.’
discussed in a conversation I had with D5f after the performance season had ended:

Me: So, thank you very much for coming to the performance and taking part in the focus groups. Your contribution is really valuable.

D5f: Oh, it’s no problem. Actually, I found the focus group really helpful because it made me discuss the piece with others.

Me: That’s great to hear.

D5f: But, there was something else, something that I said in the focus group and have been thinking about ever since.

Me: Oh?

D5f: Yes, in the session I said that I wanted you to cry at the end of the piece. I realised that I had felt this way immediately after the performance, but after the focus group I began to question more why I was feeling this. I discovered that I wanted a release of tension at the end, which I didn’t get, and I wanted you to cry, for me.16

Her reaction is an example of the psychological projection evident as a result of the performance. She projected her desire for release onto me, and was disappointed when she did not receive that release.

Arguably, the denial of resolution is therefore a part of the instrumentation used by a provocative performance maker, and integral to this study.

16 From a conversation with D5f at a BBQ on Sunday, 23 April, 2006.
Implications and Interpretations of Projection

There were various moments in the focus groups when the concept of projection arose. Mainly, the moments mentioned were about the audiovisual projections, however some responses also indicated a form of psychological projection. In a theatrical context, this relates to the audience member reading a dominant theme, stemming from their experience, into the performance. Many of the audiovisual projections in Bodily seemed to encourage psychological projection, as the images made people read that moment through a frame of their own life experience. For instance, B4f related to the projected video of the character’s mirror image, saying that it was “like any girl would just stand in front of the mirror, and all girls would have done at some point.” Another example is B3m thinking about his own behaviour when the “nobody loves a fat arse” text scrolled across the screen in the diary projection. In addition, there were moments when people saw themselves in the different characters, for instance D1f, who said “I definitely sympathise with the character, and can see myself in a lot of things that that character did.” An audience member who was not in the focus groups said: “The way the piece was written from four different perspectives was genius. I think anyone can relate to being torn in different directions by your own mind. I know that I have been each of the personalities Tess portrayed when I struggle with body image, depending on how sensitive, emotional, political, or strong I am feeling at the time.” The audiovisual projection therefore, at times, incited or encouraged a psychological projection through identification. This psychological projection may occur while the audience member is viewing the performance, or after the performance event.

The most discussed audiovisual projection was a sequence of images of models and celebrities juxtaposed with images of extremely anorexic women (see Figure 21).

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17 From a conversation on 17 May, 2006, with a friend who was in the audience on Wednesday, 19 April, 2006.
The purpose of this series of images was to show that there is very little difference between these two groups of women, but one group is glamourised and the other is abject. This sequence seemed to be the most startling of all. For instance, E3f said: “it wasn’t far in between seeing those slim celebrities to seeing those anorexic people ... they were very borderline anorexic, and

18 Author Bodily
that that is desirable to women, is very concerning ... the anorexic ones ... were quite disturbing, but some of the thin ones didn’t actually look that disturbing, and like something you’d like to look like.” D3f also noted: “The pictures of the anorexic ladies, they were so shocking, and then you look to the glossy photos of the models on the catwalks, and they’re almost skin and bones too, and you think, ‘how could we have missed that?’” Other participants echoed these responses, relating this particular slideshow to their own experiences of this problem. For instance, B4f said: “we’ll criticise a celebrity for being too thin, but secretly that’s what we want to be ... we’re imposing that on ourselves.” These comments suggest that the audiovisual projection of models and celebrities juxtaposed with anorexic women was effective not only for its shock value, but also in instigating audience members’ questioning of their own and society’s values about women’s bodies.

Another audiovisual projection that incited discussion was the screen becoming a mirror to the character’s actions (see Figure 22). For instance, A3m said: “She’s looking in the screen but, the screen’s like a projection, it’s not actually a mirror, and asking the audience all these questions, it’s like the audience becomes, all the different mirrors you find around yourself, the way you kind of have to constantly look at yourself, and ways that things are reflected back ... I think that’s an emotional response, because there’s a constant fear in life about how you look.”

For D5f, this translated into a question of approval, and how “a lot of people just can’t see themselves ... can’t see what they look like, they need approval from people around them ... she was seeing herself in the mirror but it was actually a projection ... our perception of ourself is dis-formed ... I think that was probably a reflection of that, how do you actually see yourself.” These remarks indicate that many audience members related the mirror image projection to their own lives and experiences, effectively experiencing psychological projection through audiovisual projection.
Other projections also caused people to look at the issue in a particular way. For instance, C5f commented that the projection of the anorexic’s diary (see Figure 23) was a common image of weight loss, “but I don’t think you actually realise it until you actually look at it in that way, when it’s all listed there, you go, OK, yeah actually, people do that: count.”

Figure 22: Two images from the mirror projection. (Author (2006), Bodily. Sydney.)
B3m connected this to his own life and behaviour, commenting about the diary projection that “you just sit there thinking, that’s just so shallow... it makes you think, that’s just ridiculous.” These results indicate that audiovisual projections in the performance caused people to think about the issue in a particular way, or to relate the issues presented to their own lives.
Discussions of Transformation and Influence Through Performance

Another area covered in this study was the potential for transformation and influence not only through *Bodily*, but also through theatrical performance in general. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that change through performance is possible, it is hard to be specific about the conditions for this change. This is a common problem encountered in performance studies, and has been discussed by many theorists. The focus group data indicates that there was some degree of change experienced by some of the participants following the performance. People identified with the performance and the characters presented in it, and in some cases people’s views and beliefs about a topic were affirmed by the performance. The participants commented on concepts such as the tension between rationality and emotion, especially where they could identify with personal stories and experience. The effect of humour on the message of the performance was also discussed. The nature of transformation was questioned, in particular the possible scale for such change, and whether it might better be classified as ‘influence.’ Some focus group discussions also centred on the longevity of change. Owing to the variety of transformative forms possible, certain questions need to be asked: What is the nature of transformation? Who is transformed through performance, and to what extent are they transformed? What is the longevity

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19 For example, Kershaw ‘Performance, Community, Culture.’, Schechner *Performance Theory*, Dolan *For “This I Believe”*... Accessed among others. For further discussion of the discourse surrounding performance and change, see Chapter Two of this thesis.
of transformation? What are the conditions for transformation, and where does the concept of projection fit into this? The term ‘transformation,’ then, is used here to designate levels of change, from slight to substantial. Change can be triggered by something on a minor or subtle level, such as identification with a character’s journey. These subtle influences can also spark changes on a larger scale, for instance an audience member thinking that they will change. Sometimes, these changes can lead to lasting attitudinal and behavioural change, for instance an audience member deciding not to buy women’s magazines anymore. Smaller influences, therefore, can provide the inspiration or the potential for transformation, and some of these were reported by the focus groups participants: a change in behaviours and attitudes, an affirmation of beliefs already held, provocation and confrontation by the performance leading to questioning, and experience of a particular perspective on a certain issue. These are all different ways of thinking about the degree of transformation that is made possible through performance.

I intended for the audience to feel discomfort, and to question the issues presented to them in Bodily. A4m said: “A production like this provokes in me: what are my values?” Some found the performance uncomfortable when the character asked the audience direct questions. This feeling of discomfort often manifested itself in emotion, as reported by A5f: “I felt really annoyed that we didn’t all contribute to make this poor girl feel more comfortable ... I got involved in that moment and I felt uncomfortable, I felt embarrassed ... And that was the moment that I really engaged.” It also became apparent that some people go into a performance desiring change, as they have already experienced dissonance with an issue that needs to be addressed. In this context, the audience member is highly receptive to images, phrases, and connections they can filter through their experience to create meaning. Other examples of transformative performance were also referred to, especially in focus groups C and D. These ranged from the television satire Frontline and the documentary film The Corporation, to Lars von Trier’s films and the

20 Working Dog Productions (1994), Frontline. ABC,
21 Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott (2003), The Corporation. 145 min.
Edward Albee play *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*.²² C2f said that after seeing Michael Moore’s film Fahrenheit 9/11, “it was a little bit: *God... Blinded by ignorance, I guess.*” The use of confrontation is an important aspect of provocative and transformative performance, and is a key finding of this research.

Over half of the participants commented that they identified with the character, themes or moments in *Bodily*. This identification is significant because it makes people realise that they are not alone in their thoughts and experiences. Identification can be experienced in just one moment, as B4f commented: “When she said ['is there something between my teeth’], he actually elbowed me and went, ‘that’s you’... It was sort of like, *snap.*” This can lead to attitude change, such as that reported by D1f: “I definitely sympathise with the character, and can see myself in a lot of things that that character did, and ... I’m here now and thinking, that I will change.”

As an audience member of other performances, I have also experienced this identification. Identifying with the characters or themes in the performance, then, can be potentially transformative, as it reinforces certain attitudes. An audience member who did not participate in the focus groups told me some months after the performance that she could “relate to some of the ideas expressed and it was reassuring to observe that other women also struggle with body image issues.”²³ A similar idea was expressed by A6f, who said that although she knew me prior to the performance, she had “no idea that those thoughts had ever gone through her head, thinking they’d only gone through mine, so it’s something about knowing you’re not alone, which I think *was* quite powerful ... and it’s a lot to take on, knowing that you’re not alone is a big thing ... it was just, something very simple, it was a ‘me too’ thing that can be quite big even though it sounds quite small.” A3m responded to this comment, saying that: “Just the idea of what you were saying, of the ‘me too’ thing ... where even if it doesn’t radically alter the way you think, as you were saying, it modifies the way you think, and that you see the prevalence of it.

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²² Edward Albee (2002), *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*

²³ From a conversation on 26 October, 2006, with a friend who was in the audience on Wednesday, 18 May, 2006.
The fact that it’s there gives you a feeling of acceptance.” The acceptance felt through an affirmation of held beliefs therefore becomes another important aspect of an engagement with provocative and transformative performance.

This “feeling of acceptance” has a strong link with transformation, as there is much power in affirmation. B4f said: “I think it was more just, affirming things that I had in some way experienced, but just putting them all on the stage, almost flashbacks at times.” One focus group discussion indicated the importance of emotion:

E5f: for artistic performances ... to be effective [there] has to be an emotional response, otherwise, what’s the point? ... If there’s something you’ve always been sitting on the fence, you don’t actually have one opinion or the other, then seeing a particular performance would go ‘OK, I’m no longer sitting on the fence, I’m going to sit on this side, or, maybe it will make you sit on that side, if there’s something you’re undecided against. If you’re already firmly on that side, I don’t think seeing a performance is going to shift to there, but if you’re already not sure...

E2f: ... It might give you a view from the fence though, it might help you see both sides ...”

This emotion was sometimes discussed along with the personal nature of the stories, as E1f said: “A lot of the struggle she was going through, I was sitting there going, ‘oh god, that’s me’... like, I think like that, I do that, even when I try not to be like that ... it felt ... very intimate, almost like chatting with a friend, that shared experience, and I found it quite personal.” E3f said: “I think personal stories are very powerful ... when you’re following a person’s life, then you can identify with parts of that yourself, and that could be quite transforming ... the theoretical can be quite rational in some ways, but with a performance, I think it can bring out the emotion and the humanity of the experience, which is something maybe that academia, or other forms, don’t do as well.”
The collected data indicates, then, that through an emotional response, it is possible to identify personally with a performance. This identification has the potential to incite change through the illumination of a topic, and through the affirmation of the audience member’s attitudes.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the key ideas I wanted to explore in *Bodily* was the duality of rationality and emotion. In the body image issue, this is manifested as knowing that the cult of thinness is destructive, but at the same time being unable to shake the desire to be thinner. E1f, for example, had a positive response to the presence of this paradox in the performance, and connected with the struggle: “You sit there and you look at it from a sort of theoretical intelligent perspective, and you can see the humour in the elastic band, but you can sit there also and go, ‘I’m kidding myself if I don’t think that’s me, and I’m still in that situation of trying to control eating habits and diet and looking thin’ ... I think for a lot of females there’s perhaps that intellectual side of us that’s quite aware of what’s going on, but again that emotional side that just takes over.” E3f also noted that a paradox was evident in the “bizarre ironies, like the chocolate and the magazines, so, for me in that way it was quite empowering, that was good to see that that, that is happening in the performance, and that we’re being connected so that people could see how ridiculous it is, and how constructed those images are.” In general, though, it seemed that the prevailing opinion was that of A5f: “If you’re affected emotionally, you will eventually be affected intellectually.” This suggests that, rather than emotions and intelligence being oppositional, they may actually have a causal relationship. The use of contradiction and paradox by the performance maker is arguably another element of provocative and transformative performance.

The challenge of making socially relevant and transformative performance was also discussed by B8m, who talked about entertainment as a “hook,” and said: “you really have to be emotionally engaged, you gotta get that hook in first, and then it may affect you.” As C3m commented, “the challenge is to
someday bridge that gap, and to make very political things so entertaining ... that people don’t actually get it ... so that ... the message can reach people.”

Presenting a particular perspective on an issue through performance can activate another type of transformation. This can mean that the audience member brings a current understanding about the issue and is shown a different side of it. Alternatively, the audience member may discover a new issue. Both situations require a re-framing of an issue, as D6m noted: “the more ideas you have or ways you have of looking at things, I think you make a better choice.”

Ideas about the role and responsibility of the artist to provoke the questioning and examination of social issues also arose in the focus groups. For example:

E2f: I think in a way it’s the role of the artist to do that, to constantly have people question the paradigms that they have, the way they see things, to look at it differently ... just plant a couple of questions in there ...
E4f: I think that’s all it is really, isn’t it, it’s not answers, it’s not solutions, it’s just creating a different lens, or a different set of questions.
E2f: ... usually they’re quite familiar things, something that the way that you’ve seen them happen in your everyday experience, and then to see that... it can be quite different if you look at it in another way.

This re-framing can also be conceptualised as an illumination of the issue, as B8m said about Bodily: “Throw a spotlight on, an explanation, or alternative point of view, to something that you’ve experienced, that you may not have thought of before, and I guess, being a man, and having a woman talk about the way a woman feels about that particular issue, and throw some different illumination on why they feel that way and what they feel.”
However, there are some adverse aspects of transformation through performance, and the focus group data has made me reconsider these. As D4 observed, there is a certain transience with performance where “at the time I’ll feel very passionate about it but I think that the longer I’m away from that performance, the effect dwindles, so something has to sustain it somehow.” This was discussed in many forms, including reports of transformation from Bodily:

E8f: With tonight’s performance, you can watch it, and ... you know that this happens, you know that you’re living this, but you still don’t do anything about it, you still continue to live that way, even though in your head you know it’s wrong, you think, ‘No, I’ll, you know, if I ever get to that point, I’ll stop.’
F: So you don’t walk out of here a convert?
E8f: No, you probably should, but I still know I won’t ...

This transience and erosion of transformation was not always seen as a negative thing, however, as one performance can still effect a shift, no matter how small. For instance, C6m said: “I come out of [different performances] having what I think are massively intense emotional experiences, that within a couple of days seem to have just passed completely, but I’m sure in subtle, almost imperceptible ways, they’re not entirely transient, they’ve got me thinking about something else.” This indicates the necessity of repeating performative messages in order to provoke lasting change.

One way in which the longevity of change was queried and assessed was in the distribution of follow-up questionnaires to the focus group participants. The data from these surveys are discussed in the following section.
Data From Follow-Up Questionnaires

General Comments

Follow-up questionnaires were sent to 37 focus group participants who had indicated they would like to receive one. They were sent via email, approximately two weeks after the performance season, and 29 were returned for up to two months after this. The surveys asked mainly about the participants’ retained memory of moments from the performance, and also about how they responded to the focus group process in general. Participants were also invited to comment further about Bodily. The questionnaire is attached here as Appendix D. In addition, a second follow-up questionnaire was distributed six months after the performance season. This questioned any lasting changes that may have been experienced as a result of the performance. This survey is attached here as Appendix E.

Generally, people seemed to remember visual elements, rather than spoken text. For instance, twelve participants specifically remembered the images of anorexic women intercut with celebrities. However, there were also certain lines from the performance that people recalled. For example, E9f remembered the line about wanting to “occupy less space,” and B4f mentioned the line “Do I look OK?” Questionnaire responses covered similar areas to the focus groups. This suggests that the focus groups had reinforced these ideas for them, making a longer-lasting impression on their memory of the performance.

Demographical Data Gathered From Questionnaires

The participants were questioned about their memory retention of specific moments of the performance, to try to gauge the longevity and impact of the piece. 97% of participants remembered ideas, images, themes and moments

\[24\] The sample for this data was every focus group attendee who completed the subsequent questionnaire: n=29. This data was collected via a survey administered via email two weeks after the performance season.
from the performance. Also, 94% of participants found the focus group process useful.

*Memory Retention of Concepts and Significant Moments*

Most focus group participants remembered the themes and concepts dealt with in Bodily. Their responses tended to be quite detailed and sometimes analytical, indicating that the focus group conversations strengthened their memory and scrutiny of the themes of the performance. One aspect mentioned was the struggle between rationality and emotion, in particular the contradiction between the character knowing about the dangers of the beauty ideal, yet still being caught up in the ideal. As C4f wrote: “The struggles within the character between knowing rationally that she is beautiful and shouldn’t be so influenced by images presented by the media and a compulsion to turn her body into something similar to those images.” E4f also noted the theme of body judgements, in particular “how our judgements of people are based on how people look, and how we make comparisons with ourselves,” and “how we constantly need reassurance that we look OK.”

The participants tended to comment on specific moments in the piece, rather than on general concepts. This could be because the theatrics of the moment appealed to them, or because the moment resonated with their personal experience. Most commented upon were, firstly, the episode about the dilemma generated by the proximity of the chocolate and magazines at the supermarket check-out, and secondly, the struggling movement and projection of the scales in the opening scene. B4f said that the projections “had more of an impact than if the play had been dialogue alone.” In particular, the projection of celebrities and anorexic women was remembered, for instance C1f claimed to be “haunted” by this projection after the performance. Other significant moments remembered were, as E9f wrote, the “lipstick turned into warpaint,” squeezing into jeans in front of the sales assistant, and the character asking the audience about her hair and teeth. The
resolution of the performance was also discussed through the questionnaires. Respondents found the ending ambiguous, allowing for multiple interpretations. For instance, it can be argued that C1f psychologically projected her own desire onto the resolution of the piece, saying: “I’m glad that you finally decided that you were beautiful. It’s something we should all believe of ourselves.” This comment in particular directly contradicts the ending I intended, as I did not want to convey the idea that the character had resolved her body image issues at the end of the piece. Comments such as these suggest that audience members are likely to reflect on elements of performance they found confronting or aesthetically striking. These may be more accessible due to a connection with personal experience, or through the theatrical impact of a certain moment.

Transformation and Influence

Some participants commented on the potential of performance to influence and change attitudes and behaviours. People wrote about their identification with the performance, for instance D1f said that she was “overwhelmed with empathy for the character during and after the performance.” She also said that another participant “described watching the performance and thinking that the character was completely crazy. I watched the performance and thought: this character is me.” B2f noted that the performance has stayed with her, and that “some of the aspects of the performance you see every day.” D5f said the performance made her “reaffirm that I am not alone with such issues.”

Some participants also reported that they had experienced transformation of some kind since the performance. This transformation could be quite subtle, with evidence of reflection on the issues of the work. For instance, E3f noted: “I have reflected on the personal/intimate nature of the performance in affecting the way I feel about body image, the worth of women and how I understand and make sense of other women I know, particularly those who have body image issues/eating disorders.” B4f reported a change in her
attitudes: “Daily I think or hear something that is about the female image. Frequently this reminds me of the play. I have found myself and others critiquing figures in the media and everyday life, often in a negative way.” E2f also reported such change: “As someone who works with young people in a therapeutic context I have become more attuned to the possible dynamics, ideas and thoughts they might have about body image.” E3f and E1f reported changes in behaviour, saying: “I have resisted looking at those horrible magazines since the performance!!” and: “The performance has made me question many of my beliefs about body image and my own eating habits. It has also made me more reluctant to buy women’s magazines.”

Focus Groups Experience

It is important to this study that the influence of participation in focus groups is cross-checked with the data being generated. The respondents were asked about their experience of being in the focus groups, and how the process may have affected their responses. In response, some commented and reflected on how the focus groups impacted upon their reception of the performance. In general, the discussion mode of the focus groups allowed participants to compare their opinions and ideas with those of others. A3m was one of the respondents who commented on the variety of interpretations voiced: “A lot of people misconstrued things in the performance, or were very much seeking to find what they wanted to be in it.” A6f suggested that this variety was due to the ambiguous nature of the piece: “Obviously this performance had significant layerings of meaning and modes of communication which allowed greater freedom of interpretation.” E3f and E2f both said that the focus groups affected their individual response in a positive sense: “The focus group enabled me to build on my understanding of the issues raised in the performance, by seeing how others were impacted on, and discussing further different responses,” and: “The focus group process was well-facilitated and enjoyable. It was not until I participated in the focus group and had that immediate chance to reflect on the performance that many aspects came to my attention.” These examples show a mode of affirmation occurring within
the focus groups, as participants affirmed their opinions against others’. A6f noted: “Having a focus group immediately afterwards was an interesting way of concretising certain experiences that are usually much vaguer. The disappearance part of the performance – its ephemerality – was somehow altered through being asked immediately to formulate an opinion. On the whole it means my recollection of the performance is much higher than it is for other performances that I have seen.” However, C6m’s interpretation was not affected by the focus group process at all: “I found the answers myself, rather than in collaboration with the group,” and neither was A2f’s: “I am not sure it helped me understand the issues any better, but it certainly made me think about it more.”

Second Follow-Up Questionnaires

A second round of follow-up questionnaires was distributed six months after the performance season. As I expected, the number of these that I received back (n=13) was significantly less than the total sent out (n=37). This was a return rate of 35%. The data was extrapolated from a relatively small sample, and therefore has limitations. If I undertook this survey again, I would try to get a higher return rate by following up more vigorously on the surveys, or giving participants a time limit. Another option would be to pay participants for their time, as this may highlight the importance of completing the survey in a reasonable amount of time.

The surveys questioned the lasting impact and influence of *Bodily* on the participants. Responses to the questions varied, from a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a lengthy, 100-word passage about change experienced. Out of the 13 respondents, 5 said that they believed their attitudes or behaviours had been affected as a result of the performance. 4 said they had experienced no change, and 4 others were unsure about the extent of change. However, 2 of the respondents also said that while they had noticed some change after the performance, they have now to some extent, as B4f wrote, reverted back to their “old ways.” Although the sample for this study is relatively small, it indicates a general spread of potential experiences of change through
performance. The chart below indicates a continuum of the degree of self-reported change experienced by these 13 respondents:

![Chart of reported change through Bodily](image)

Figure 24: Chart of reported change through Bodily.

These results suggest that there is an even spread of degrees of change reported by the participants, highlighting a complexity of modes and degrees of attitudinal and behavioural change. D6m, for instance, indicated a behavioural change: “I noticed I haven’t been looking at as many glossy magazines any more when they are lying around.” C4f reported that her change came about not so much through the themes of the performance, but through her relationship with me. She said: “Probably the change for me had less to do with the themes represented in the play and more to do with the fact that someone I had known as a child (that’s you) had put so much work into a fascinating production and was willingly putting herself on the line in front of all these people. It was very inspiring and shifted my perspective on beauty somewhat.”

Of all the questionnaire respondents, E1f reported the most significant changes in attitude and behaviour. She wrote:
I have found that I’m less likely to buy women’s magazines as I’m more conscious of the contribution magazines make towards the glamourisation and sexualisation of women to the detriment of ordinary women. In fact I have only bought 2 women’s magazines since the play and these were bought for particular articles, rather than who was on the front page.

I have also further explored the portrayal of women in mass media through reading The Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf and turning off the Miss Universe program when it was aired.

I am also more likely to speak up when with a group of women about how little attention is paid to a woman’s intelligence, success etc in comparison to her looks. Although I find I am still struggling with not meeting the so called ‘ideal’ in terms of body weight I am more conscious of when this comparison appears in my thoughts and will actively change those thoughts towards a more positive body image.

Although only one respondent experienced change to this degree, her response indicates that such change is possible.

Two respondents reported that they had experienced some change, but that this change has not been continuing. B4f, for example, noted a degree of attitudinal change in becoming more aware of societal labels and judgements. However, she also said: “To some extent I have returned to my old ways, critiquing outfits especially at awards shows.” Likewise, E4f noted an immediate change in her awareness of images in magazines, however “it isn’t continuing. I still pick up magazines and ‘wish’ even though I know that it is completely irrational/unhealthy!”

In addition, four participants indicated that they were unsure whether they had been changed by the performance or not. A3m said: “I was pretty much on board with the cause already. But the performance did increase my
understanding of a lot of things and gave me insights into others.” E2f also said she is not sure if her attitudes have changed, but she remembers moments from the performance when she sees a similar scenario in her everyday life. Subsequently, “those messages and ideas from the show have reinforced and fuelled my opinions about the destructiveness of these consumer pressures.” C6m was also doubtful about his own change, saying that “in many ways, at least some of the themes of the show already aligned with my feelings, attitudes and ways of behaving, and thus weren’t ever going to change them, but rather consolidate or validate them.” C3m said that: “I think that I was already aware of a lot of these issues, but having said that, it did really bring home how seriously and severely people were affected by these images/society’s standards, even people who externally seem like they aren’t. Which is the thing, because body image is something everyone deals with in differing ways and to differing degrees.” This degree of uncertainty indicates that other sources have contributed to the development of certain attitudes and behaviours about this topic.

B5f, A2f, and A4m all reported no change in attitudes or behaviours. A5f also said that she hadn’t experienced a change in her attitude or behaviour, but further reflected on the themes of the piece, saying that “Most of us, I believe, can intellectualise the correct thing to do but few of us follow our own good advice.” This indicates another degree of influence through the piece. Perhaps an audience member would not be noticeably changed after performance, however they could still remember and think about the issues presented in it.
Review

There was one professional review of Bodily, from the website Sydney Stage Online (see Figure 25). I wanted to use professional reviews in this study as they would give another perspective on audience response. Reviewer Melanie Horkan’s view was that:

‘Bodily’ is ultimately not a satisfying experience. The show suffers from not having anything different or enlightening to say on the subject of women’s relationships to their body image... There is no respite and the message seems obvious- something that many in the audience, particularly women are aware of. As women we know there are pressures in society imposed on us by glossy magazines and the media, but this show offers no new insight into how to come to terms with these issues.25

While I only have this one review, it is useful as evidence of audience reaction to Bodily. Horkan’s review suggests that she expected enlightenment and insight to come from the performance, and seemed frustrated that she did not experience these things. There were similar reactions from some of the focus group participants, for example D3f and D5f, who wanted my character to resolve her struggles with the issue at the end of the piece. Horkan’s review also asserts that there were things in the performance that were not new or insightful, “the message seems obvious,” and something that many are “aware of.” She experienced frustration at the lack of “new insight” from the performance, and also seemed to be frustrated at the lack of “respite.” As in the case studies of Merlin Luck and Michael Moore in Chapter Three, then, some people left the performance feeling disturbed and frustrated, as they were not presented with any solutions. However, some people may have left unsatisfied simply because they felt the piece did not succeed theatrically.


Reading this review alongside the focus group responses, it becomes clear that Bodily was effective to different degrees and extents for different audience members. The elements of provocative and transformative performance posited by this study are contingent on these various interpretations and responses. Another level of complexity is therefore added, as it may be difficult to ascertain or make claims about the reasoning behind different responses.
Discussion

... there has often been a widespread nervousness among theatre historians and critics about making claims for the efficacy of performance.26

The focus groups, and other data, illustrate a variety of outcomes from the production of Bodily. Broadly speaking, the outcome I would most like to focus on is transformation. As I discussed earlier, the term ‘transformation’ has complex connotations, and is applicable to various circumstances. Transformation may occur for a brief amount of time, and in only a small way, or it may be a profound change in a person’s attitude and behaviour over a long time. I posit that the nature and extent of transformation varies greatly, for reasons that are often beyond the scope of this study. The pre-existing attitudes and behaviours held by the audience are of primary importance, as is the degree of identification they have with the content of the performance. I also posit that both audience and performer have the potential to be transformed as a result of provocative performance. In addition, there are certain tools of performance that are conducive to transformation, such as the use of contradiction and paradox and the denial of a resolution. One way of unpacking the notion of transformation would be to look at different questions that could be asked about it, for example:

- Who is changed?
- What, specifically, provoked this change (for instance, reinforcement or affirmation of an attitude already held, identification with characters or themes in performance, or the role of projection)?
- What is the depth or degree of change?
- What is the nature of change (for instance, change in attitudes or behaviours)?
- What is the longevity of the change?

26 Kershaw The Politics of Performance, 21.
As previously discussed, a change occurred in me through the creation, performance and research process of Bodily. Similarly, moments of transformation are evident in the data collected from the audience. This transformation was prompted by various elements of the piece, including humour, confrontation, illumination of a new perspective, contradictions, affirmation, and resolution. Some focus group participants reported a change in attitude or behaviour since Bodily. One psychological perspective on attitudinal and behavioural modification comes from psychology theorists Fazio and Williams, who say that “the degree to which individual’s interpretations of information follow from their attitudes is a function of the accessibility of those attitudes.”27 Accessibility of attitudes can become apparent through the statements made, and the manner in which they are made. However, this is not always easy to ascertain. In addition, the transformative potential of Bodily may have been influenced by the act of participating in the focus groups themselves. Making comments, observations and conversations in a post-performance focus group means that more consideration than usual may be given to the issues presented in the performance. Kershaw says: “everything else which is done in preparation for, and in the aftermath of, the production is part of the performance and may affect its socio-political significance, and its potential efficacy, for the spectators.”28 For the participants, then, the focus groups may be considered part of the larger theatrical experience, and could be included as another performative element for consideration in the theory of transformativity. The change reported by some audience members and the change in my own attitude and behaviour through creating the work, demonstrate that transformation in both performer and audience is possible through performance. However, as seen in the case studies of Luck and Moore, provocative performance can also be seen as part of a larger expression of dissent that pre-empts noticeable social change. The longevity of this change is difficult to detect, however it should not be discounted entirely. Rather, small changes can be seen as potential points of influence in a larger trajectory of transformation.

27 Fazio and Williams 'Attitude Accessibility as a Moderator of the Attitude-Perception and Attitude-Behavior Relations: an investigation of the 1984 presidential election.' 505.
28 Kershaw The Politics of Performance, 22.
The Australian media reported extensively on body image throughout 2006 and 2007. Some of this coverage was of a positive nature, for instance reporting on changes made by the fashion industry. A fashion show in Madrid made headlines worldwide when it banned overly-skinny models from appearing on its catwalks. This move prompted similar policies to be implemented in other world fashion centres. Dove, a major international beauty products brand, introduced an advertising campaign in 2006 that was intended to expose the beauty industry’s manipulation of photographs to make them appear more beautiful. Dove’s “Campaign For Real Beauty” features a series of print advertisements (featuring women of many shapes, sizes, ages, and colours) and an education program aimed at young women. All of the facets of the campaign, therefore, are directed towards replacing one notion of beauty with another. The amount of publicity and discussion surrounding the campaign indicates that people paid attention to its positive body image messages. A 2006 issue of Who magazine featured slightly-larger celebrities in a feature article, proclaiming that there is now a “skinny backlash.” The body image issue has thus come into focus, and some media outlets have taken the opportunity to exploit it for their own advantage. This phenomenon, although perpetuated by a media culture that is notoriously fickle, has made me optimistic for the future of the debate. The banning of skinny models, and the shift in attention in the gossip magazines, are moments when the prevailing protocol of body obsession is broken. Like pentimento, cracks are appearing in the new images of the cult of thinness, and the older images of Rubenesque women are showing through. However, depending on the trajectory of this debate, and on the responses of the audience to the issues raised, the future is uncertain.

There are various limitations and shortcomings of the Bodily project in the context of the larger research project that have arisen during the course of research. For instance, it has been difficult to distance myself from Bodily.

This is one limitation of the performance as research methodology, as in more traditional modes of research the researcher has an inherent critical distance from the research topic. In this project, I became so entwined with the subject matter of the performance and the thesis that it became difficult to reflectively analyse the performance in the context of the arguments in the thesis. This meant that I could not witness the performance as an audience member, but instead had to rely on video footage to see what it looked like from the audience’s perspective. I was therefore unable to physically hold the space of both performer/researcher and observer at the same time. However, the time that has passed between the performance season and the completion of the project has allowed for a certain amount of detachment. I am now able to see some of the potential limits and shortcomings of this form of research, and to reconsider the work in light of some of the insights developed throughout the thesis.

One shortcoming of the performance itself may have been that it reiterated what some audience members already knew and felt about the topic of body image, and that performance elements such as the anti-cathartic ending actually shut down, rather than opened up, audience participation in meaning-making. Therefore, something I considered provocative and potentially transformative could have instead been read the opposite way, as oppositional to transformation.

Another limitation of Bodily as a performance outcome is the manner in which the transformative and provocative impacts were assessed. Although I tried to take an emotionally neutral approach to the focus groups, my reading of their results may have been affected by my emotional connection to the performance. This limitation could have been addressed through a different approach to the focus groups, for instance by employing someone else not only to facilitate them, but also to analyse the results in a more detached manner. Also, there could have been a more lengthy and thorough interview process with audience members after the Bodily season. In retrospect, I feel that I could have formulated some further questions that could have been asked, such as open questions about the specific effect of the ending on the
individual, and how the way they read various elements of the performance contributed to the meaning they created from it. Perhaps it would also have been effective to convene the focus groups participants again, some months after the initial session, to gain a broader idea of the piece's impact. However, this method would have generated a much larger amount of data, therefore resulting in a lengthier project.

I have also encountered some limitations undertaking performance as research in this study. In some ways, I have struggled to fit my vision for a practical performance that investigates provocative and transformative performance into the academic limits of a PhD study. This is where the use of autoethnography has been particularly liberating, as it allows for an alternative voice of scholarship which provides a space for the “emancipation of the voice and body from homogenizing knowledge production and academic discourse structures.” However, autoethnography is a relatively new methodology, and is by no means a silver bullet. For instance, it can easily be dismissed as narcissistic, as it requires the researcher to become self-involved. This criticism can be avoided to some extent by ensuring to continually relate the personal story with the world at large, and to involve other sources of data or analyses in the research. The validity of the personal story can be called into question in autoethnography, and this is certainly a limitation that I have considered while doing this research. This study’s key elements of provocation and transformation are, I decided, most effectively gauged by personal experience, and therefore I considered that these methodologies were appropriate in this specific project. However, this does not mean that all studies would benefit from these methodologies, or even that it was the only path I could have taken to arrive at some findings about provocative and transformative performance.

Equipped with this knowledge of the shortcomings and limitations of this type of research, I look towards the future of using autoethnography and performance as research methodologies in this type of research. Performance

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theorist Kristin Langellier offers three interesting “caveats for the future of personal narrative performance studies.” The first is to politicise the personal in performance. By this, she is referring to the use of the personal to make a political statement through performance, as “the personal gives bodily access to the political.” The second caveat is to problematise audience and situation, maximizing the effectiveness of the performance by catering to the audience demographic. One way of doing this is through “decontextualizing (sic) ... and recontextualizing (sic) a story for a particular audience.” Lastly, Langellier believes that we need to produce knowledge about personal narrative performance. There is a need to critique the effectiveness of this type of performance, in particular questioning what we can learn through its perspectives about the “workings of a practice most often conceptualized (sic) in terms of representation rather than embodiment.”

In light of this particular study, I would like to add a fourth caveat to Langellier’s list: the use of technology. How can provocation be carried out in the age of hyperreality? I have shown that certain technological techniques can enhance performance, and perhaps contribute to its transformative potential. While the use of the tools of technology is not a necessary caveat for the future of performance studies, I believe that it is an area that warrants more investigation, especially considering the increasing accessibility and use of technology and the mass media in performance.

The Alchemy of Bodily

In Bodily, the prima materia is the existing attitudes towards body image and the thinness ideal; the held beliefs and experiences of eating disorders. For instance, the anorexics obsessed with physical transformation and the

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34 Ibid., 210.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 211.
achievement happiness in the perfect body are on the path to fool’s gold. In this performance, I project my experiences, my writing and my body. As I project, I reflect, refract and reconcile. There were hints of the possibilities of light, of the option of casting out the assumptions and the ideals. *Bodily*, however, subverts this possibility of light, and denies the possibility of illumination, in hopes of provoking to action the audience member and myself.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, both audience and performer responses are integral to the assimilation of *Bodily* into the thesis. My perspective on the performance as creator, performer and researcher is central to the study as it gives a personal insight into the creation of performance as research. As a consequence, the analysis of the performance led to a deeper understanding of the potential of performance to transform audience members. Audience response data was gathered according to contemporary focus group methodology, an interview method that has the benefit of observing participant interaction in the discussion of key issues. Through these focus groups, I was able to generate knowledge and insights that I did not previously have. In this instance, certain elements of performance, namely audiovisual projection, humour, confrontation, illumination of a new perspective, contradiction, affirmation, and resolution appear to have an effect on the degree and extent of transformation. The longevity of this change and the correspondence between the instrumentation and the transformative effects of performance are more difficult to assess. These may then be possible directions for future research. Although it appears that some change may be occurring regarding public perceptions of body image, there remain contradictory messages about bodies. My own and audience responses to the performance form a multi-layered strand of data, supporting a theory of transformation through performance.
The next chapter synthesises the three case studies of Luck, Moore and Bodily, taking into account the intention and instrumentation of the performance makers, as well as the potential transformative outcomes of the performances. The chapter looks toward creating and analysing provocative and transformative performance.

Do I look OK?

Do I look fat in this dress?

She steps closer to the audience.

Do I look OK?

*She waits, looking at different audience members, as if expecting them to respond, for a long time. The silence is gradually getting more and more uncomfortable.*

Blackout.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{footnote}{Author Bodily}\end{footnote}
Part Three: Analysis

It rises from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth:

Distillation and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter attempts to draw together common aspects of the three case studies: Merlin Luck’s *Big Brother* protest, Michael Moore’s Oscar acceptance speech and my own performance, *Bodily*. I suggest that through exploring similarities and differences between them, their effectiveness as agents of transformation could be explored.

Though I am positioning my own performance, *Bodily*, as a comparison to the performative protests of Merlin Luck and Michael Moore, there are clearly some limitations to this comparison. Firstly, it is important to take into account the scale of these works, as Luck’s and Moore’s performances had a much greater audience than *Bodily*. In addition, their performances were seen by many more people than mine was, and by a much wider demographic. I am not judging the impact of each of the case studies based on the size and type of audience, but rather on individual experiences of audience members.

Theatre theorist Elizabeth Burns’ discussion of the conventions of performance also operates as a definitional framework through which to look
at the difference between these three case studies. Burns defines theatrical convention as a “mutual understanding about the meaning of action, which includes gestures and speech.” She breaks this convention down into two categories: rhetorical and authenticating. Rhetorical conventions are those which constitute an unspoken agreement between performer and spectator to enter into a fictitious world of the play. Authenticating conventions cover the modelling of social conventions by the actors, to create conviction and connection with the world outside the performance. The two pillars of convention work together to create a theatrical experience that is indicated both by the event itself, and by the manner of social relationships between characters. These conventions shape standard dramatic theatre through its composition, meaning that if actions in ordinary life seem composed, they appear theatrical. Conversely, elements of performance that do not abide by these conventions derailed the performance’s realism (having, for instance, the effect of breaking the fourth wall). In retrospect, I can see that Bodily adhered more to these conventions than did the performances of Moore and Luck. Bodily was set up as a theatre performance, so certain expectations were set up about the conventions that would be expected of both audience and performer. In contrast, Luck’s and Moore’s performances subverted the conventions they were expected to conform to. Both the Oscars ceremony and the Big Brother eviction had specific rhetorical and authenticating conventions attached to them, but each performer subverted these, meaning that the composition of the event was derailed.

The comparison between Bodily and the performances of Moore and Luck therefore has several limitations. However, the manner in which I am comparing them in this thesis is methodological, making connections between the intention of each performer, the tools used to provoke, and the manner in which each audience may have been illuminated.

This study covers not only the immediate audience response to performance, but also the ongoing effects of provocative performance. Audience responses,

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gathered through media articles, weblogs and message boards, demonstrate various attitudes towards transformation. Much literature on Internet forums as a research tool focuses on forums that have been set up by the researcher in order to gather specific project-based data. There is also another body of literature surrounding the ethnography of online communities. In contrast, my approach more closely resembles vox-pops, as I am collecting the reported attitudes and opinions of people who can be identified only by their screen name. Internet forums are a different medium to focus group conversations, but both mediums involve people’s public interactions being recorded. There are issues of privacy and truthfulness in Internet forums: on the one hand, people may not be telling the truth, as they are anonymous and therefore unaccountable. On the other hand, however, this anonymity may cause more honesty because people can impart privileged information without repercussions. The Internet is an ever-growing and changing resource that is difficult to explore systematically. As such, I used a random approach to gathering opinions from various people, in keeping with the nature of the medium itself. While it is difficult to track the actual transformation of behaviours through testimony alone, the Internet provides a useful snapshot of prevailing attitudes.

The discussion in this chapter is structured using a conceptual framework of transformation through provocative performance, comprising three main areas: Intention, Instrumentation and Illumination. Like the chapter titles of the thesis, I borrowed these terms from alchemy to describe the three areas. Intention is a straightforward term to describe the intention of the performance maker and the message they are trying to convey through their performance. Instrumentation could also be named ‘tools of performance’ as it deals with the specific instruments the performance maker chooses to convey their point of view. The term Illumination is the most overtly alchemical, as it implies a change in understanding. This area can apply to a change in either the performance maker or the audience member, or both. I

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2 For instance, Im and Chee 'An Online Forum as a Qualitative Research Method.', King 'Researching Internet Communities: proposed ethical guidelines for the reporting of results.'
3 For instance, Ellis, Oldridge and Casconcelos 'Community and Virtual Community.', Sade-Beck 'Internet Ethnography: online and offline.'
find this set of terms meaningful because they cover both the creative process and the reception of performance in a concise way.

**Conceptual framework**

There are many methodological avenues through which to discuss the intentions of and responses to performance. Bertolt Brecht discussed his intentions at great length, but spent little time looking at how successful he was at inspiring change. Augusto Boal talks more about how audiences interact in Forum Theatre and therefore provides me with a sturdier starting-point for my own analysis. This is the space into which I extend this research, to elucidate theories of transformation through performance.

**Performance as Research**

One of the main frames for this research is practice-based research methodology. As I outlined in Chapter Two, this is a new and developing methodological track for arts research. In my case, the performance of *Bodily* is offered as both an outcome of research, as well as a tool for further research. The Luck and Moore performances offer contemporary examples of provocative and transformative performance from diverse contexts. In reading these three case studies together, I suggest that similarities in Intention, Instrumentation and Illumination can be drawn.

Various qualitative research methodologies pave the way for the nature of data-gathering in this project, for example autoethnography, researching lived experience, practice-based research and focus group methodology. An intimate knowledge of the performance-making process is integrated through the use of autoethnography. The subjective nature of autoethnography here

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4 Brecht *Brecht on Theatre: the development of an aesthetic.*
5 Boal *Theatre of the Oppressed.*
6 For instance, as discussed in Reed-Danahay *Auto/ethnography: rewriting the self and the social,* Ellis and Bochner ‘Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography: an autopsy.’
allows for individual experiences to stand as evidence, much like the emphasis on the subjective experiences of focus group participants.\textsuperscript{7}

\textit{Cognitive Dissonance}

Psychology also offers some possible pathways for the analysis of transformation through performance. For instance, the theories of cognitive dissonance and persuasion provide some insights into how change can occur. In turn, they allow a discussion of causality in attitudinal and behavioural change.

Following on from the moment of dissonance can be a shift in attitude, and as has been demonstrated in some psychological studies, this often leads to a change in behaviour.\textsuperscript{8} Persuasion theorist Daniel J. O'Keefe argues that “attitudes are important determinants of behavior and, correspondingly ... one avenue to changing a person’s behavior will be to change that person’s attitudes.”\textsuperscript{9} In addition, “attitudes based on direct behavioral experience with the attitude object have been found to be more predictive of later behavior toward the object than are attitudes based on indirect experience.”\textsuperscript{10} The individual audience member’s memory of the issue may also have an effect on the attitude-behaviour dynamic.\textsuperscript{11} These concepts from psychology research inform my understanding of the way attitudes and behaviours operate with respect to transformation. This study looks beyond the moment of dissonance, interrogating the correlation between dissonance and transformation.

In the three case studies, differing degrees of dissonance can be seen. These can be observed in immediate audience reactions to specific instances, as for example when Moore first said the words “fictitious president,” or when Luck ignored Gretel Killeen’s requests to speak. In \textit{Bodily}, audience members

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{7} As discussed in Ellis and Flaherty \textit{Investigating Subjectivity: research on lived experience}.
\bibitem{8} See Gleitman, Fridlund and Reisberg \textit{Psychology}.
\bibitem{9} O'Keefe \textit{Persuasion: theory & research}, 16.
\bibitem{10} Ibid., 18.
\bibitem{11} Fazio and Williams 'Attitude Accessibility as a Moderator of the Attitude-Perception and Attitude-Behavior Relations: an investigation of the 1984 presidential election.'
\end{thebibliography}
reported reactions suggestive of dissonance to the juxtaposed images of anorexic women and skinny celebrities. People said that these audiovisual projections, which showed the similarities between glamour and abjection, shocked them. For instance, focus group participant Bom said: “That’s the image that I won’t be able to forget, because the particular order in which those images were shown, and the juxtaposition, was really quite shocking.” This comment suggests that moments such as these provoked some reconsiderations on something the audience member already had experience with.

Persuasion theory

Persuasion theory talks about influencing people through certain triggers. It is grounded in the practice of marketing, advertising and political campaigning, and there are some elements of the theory that are useful to this study. According to persuasion theorist Harry Mills, one valuable persuasive technique is to use questions rather than statements. Usually, these should be disturbing questions, or “implication questions” as theorist Neil Rackham terms them. Mills further outlines triggers and pointers of persuasion in the “winning people’s hearts” section of his book, including the use of examples, analogies, stories, and humour to support presentations, and using simple metaphors to explain complex ideas. When it comes to winning people’s minds, Mills suggests using contrasting examples, structuring the argument around a single theme, and emphasising the importance of the beginning and end of a presentation to get the main message across. For instance, he says: “Grab your audience’s attention with a dynamic opening. End strongly - call for action and spell out exactly what you want.” He also advocates presenting both sides of a case, to show respect for the opposition before voicing your rebuttal to it. He discusses the use of repetition of a message to stress the central point, but the importance of preventing boredom through using “fresh evidence and different packaging.” Of course, there are some uncertainties surrounding persuasion

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12 Spin Selling, 1988, cited in Harry Mills (1999), Artful Persuasion: how to command attention, change minds and influence people, Sumner Park, Qld., MG Press.
13 Ibid., 135.
14 Ibid., 160.
techniques, as they may not have the effects desired by the practitioner. This is especially relevant in performance, where audiences may receive a persuasive message differently depending on their own personal experience. This is tied to the attitude-behaviour relationship, as O’Keefe notes, “sometimes the task facing the persuader is not that of inducing or changing an attitude - the desired attitude is already present; instead, the job is that of getting the audience to act consistently with the existing attitude.”

Trance and Confusion

The states of trance and confusion can be seen as motivational forces for transformation through performance. Psychotherapist Robert C. Wright talks about the states of trance and confusion as “a special frame of reference characterized by a disconnectedness from one’s usual responses and a rising recognition of new combinations of responses possible in a given situation.” This notion refers to the experiences and contexts audience members bring with them to a performance. Their frames of reference can be disrupted, initiating a sense of confusion that can lead to transformation. Wright outlines the process of transformation through trance and confusion:

The purpose is to move the individuals out of their usual frame of reference by disrupting it with an action which is meaningful in itself but which evokes material from another context. This produces a search for both a sense of bearing and a response to the imposed frustration. This in turn forms within the person a need to respond uncritically or nonjudgmentally to the first comprehensible frame of reference made available. A new frame of reference is then introduced, replacing the disrupted context within which the action was occurring.

Therefore, the concepts of practice-based research, cognitive dissonance, persuasion, trance, and confusion combine to form a complex discourse in which to place the discussion of provocative and transformative performance.

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15 O’Keefe *Persuasion: theory & research*, 20.
17 Ibid., 72.
Intention

Progressing from this conceptual framework, I suggest that the framework of Intention, Instrumentation and Illumination can help ground these ideas in the discussion of provocative and transformative performance. In discussing intention, I am particularly interested in the apparent intent to provoke audiences, evidenced by statements from performance makers. The context in which the performance occurred is also taken into account, to gain different perspectives on the aims of the performance.

Merlin Luck was aware that the timing and context of his eviction performance had to be well-planned, saying: “to have an impact it had to be done on the eviction night ... without disrespecting the ‘Big Brother’ production team, they’re not looking to make a hard-hitting political debate.”18 When asked about his reasons for not taking the tape off his mouth, Merlin said:

... there was 3,000 people chanting “Loser!” in my face so it wasn’t really an appropriate forum to have a discussion about the issue I felt strongly about. And in reality, Gretel would have let me say two things and then asked me who my favourite housemate was.19

By performing his protest on an eviction night, Luck wanted to draw the maximum amount of attention to the protest, intending to transform public discourse around refugees in detention centres. He also wanted others to identify with him and to be encouraged to speak their beliefs.

Michael Moore also spoke about his intentions in the days following his Oscar speech. He was responding to the outbreak of the war in Iraq, as it was dissonant with his values and with the tone of the films he makes. He said:

I made a movie about the American desire to use violence both at home and around the world. My remarks were in keeping

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18 ABC George Negus Tonight.
19 Ibid.
with exactly what my film was about. If I had made a movie about birds or insects, I would have talked about birds or insects. I made a movie about guns and Americans’ tradition of using them against the world and each other. And, as I walked up to the stage, I was still thinking about the lessons that morning at Mass. About how silence, when you observe wrongs being committed, is the same as committing those wrongs yourself. And so I followed my conscience and my heart.  

In *Bodily*, one of my intentions was to inform people, who were not already aware of it, about the cult of thinness. I wanted to offer an insight into the way people with an eating disorder live, as well as inform people of the dangers of the cult of thinness. My intention was to create and convey a strong and memorable story, showing a new perspective on an issue that has already been covered in a variety of other ways.

When creating *Bodily*, I felt a dissonance between my experience and prevailing attitudes towards body image. My intention was to invigorate that particular issue, and offer my observations upon it. In particular, I wanted to draw attention to the paradox between being rational and being emotional about the topic, and to provoke anger and emotion in the audience. In my experience, I have felt the power of identifying with a performance and being transformed by the subject matter and the style in which it is conveyed. There were several performative tools used in the Luck and Moore case studies that I tried to emulate in my performance, as I had seen them as transformative for their audiences and I wanted to gauge their effectiveness with the *Bodily* audience. These tools are discussed in the following section.

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20 Moore 'I’d Like to Thank the Vatican ...’
Instrumentation

To provoke audiences, performers use many different tools. In the three case studies, and the other performances mentioned in Chapter Two, various themes have emerged as tools of provocative and transformative performance. These are discussed here as strategies ranging from the use of confrontation and projection to create provocative paradoxes, to the use of repetition, choice of location and resolution of performance. In each performance, these strategies were employed in different ways, each contributing to the performance’s transformative potential. This section concludes with a subsection outlining theories of the body and the political way it can be used in performance to provoke and transform.

One theme that runs through many of the performances discussed in the thesis is that of confrontation. For instance, Luck chose a confronting manner in which to convey his message. Not only was he silent, refusing to answer the questions posed to him by host Gretel Killeen, he was also clearly agitated, leading Killeen to later comment that she found his stance
“aggressive.” The close-ups showed that he was breathing through his nose so intensely that the edge of the gaffer tape could be seen to flutter, and his legs were jiggling up and down rapidly. This confrontational manner elicited immediate reaction from the audience, such as cheers and boos, adding to the intensity and significance of the protest.

Michael Moore is no stranger to confrontation, as his documentary films regularly employ strategies of confrontation to convey a specific message. Similarly, his Oscar speech confronted the audience with his combination of passionate polemic and contemporary references. For instance, the last line of his speech was “any time you got the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against ya, your time is up.” His choice of place for his protest was also confrontational, as evidenced by the number of people who believed the Oscars was no place for a protest of that kind.

Confrontation was also an important catalyst for the message of Bodily. For instance, I thought that by confronting the audience with the implications of popular images of women, I could make them see a different side to the issue. Another example of my use of confrontation was at the end of the piece, when I looked audience members in the eye to ask them if I looked OK. I wanted to make people uncomfortable in hopes that it would shock them into thinking about body image.

Another way I tried to shock people in the piece was through humour. As participant C3m said, “the kind of world we have now is that you need to be entertaining to get people’s attention, and that that doesn’t necessarily cheapen your message, but it’s just a way of blending these two things.” From my previous performance experience, I know how difficult it is to make light of a heavy subject. With Bodily, the first draft of the script was quite serious, so I needed to work on inserting lighter, entertaining moments. I was surprised to find that there was quite a lot of humour in the topic, especially in the absurdity of women’s magazines. I realised during the creation of the
work that lines I had previously written as tragic could be invested with an ironic and comedic twist. For instance, the scene where the girl is sitting and writing in her diary could have been incredibly tragic and depressing, but through giving it what I considered to be a vacuous presentation, I tried to inject it with some light humour. I hoped that by laughing, the audience would realise the absurdity of the situation. By humorously juxtaposing images and ideas, for instance the projected food diary next to the snapping elastic band, I felt that I could jolt the audience into seeing the issue in a particular light. The focus groups demonstrate that, at least in the case of one audience member, this was successful. For example, in the third focus group, C3m said that for him, the humour allowed him to “get into it more.”

Projection, in its many forms, is another instrument used by performers to provoke. The term could refer to an amplified voice, a projected image, or the psychological projection that is less tangible. Arguably, audiovisual projection can effect psychological projection, however audiovisual projection is not necessary to create the psychological link. For instance, in Honour Bound, Nigel Jamieson’s performance discussed in Chapter Two, the projected images and voice contributed significantly to the overall impact of the piece. I found that through these projections, I psychologically related to the piece, and there was a stronger connection between my body and the performance. The ambiguity of the audiovisual projection images in this piece, and the relationship between body and projection, affected my own body. Although these projections may not be necessary for creating a relationship with the piece, in my case I felt that they strengthened and defined this relationship. Similarly, in Wages of Spin, Version 1.0’s performance piece discussed in Chapter Two, the opening image of the man stepping through a dangerous terrain of nails was strengthened through the use of audiovisual projection, showing the foot in close-up. Without this projection, I do not believe that my psychological projection into and connection with the piece would have been as strong or as effective.

Although Merlin Luck did not initiate audiovisual projection in his performative protest, because of its television context there were various
examples of projection in his performance. Large screens on stage projected close-up images of him to the live audience, while television cameras projected the sound and images of the protest live to homes around Australia. Similarly, Moore’s speech was captured on television, and therefore as well as his image being shown on screens beside the stage, his voice and image were also projected live to television screens around the world. The effect of this televised broadcast was that two levels of reactions were elicited immediately. The immediate studio audience of *Big Brother*, and the mostly celebrity audience of the Oscars, reacted with cheering, booing, and clapping. In turn, television audiences in living rooms around the world reacted not only to the performer, but also to the immediate audience. A layered interaction was at work, creating a much larger audience and therefore the potential for stronger transformative outcomes.

In *Bodily*, I was inspired by the audiovisual projections of the Luck and Moore performances. I applied them in a theatrical format, using large video projections, voice-overs and a microphone. These projections were conceived as co-performers in the piece, adding new layers and levels of emphasis. The contrast between my live and audiovisually projected bodies, my live voice, my amplified voice, and my pre-recorded voice were intended to create a richer performative experience. However, I also wanted to use these projections to provoke a concurrent psychological projection in the audience. For instance, the line:

* (into microphone) I want to be the skinniest person. I will be transformed. A better person outwardly - to fit my inner self.

* (microphone off) Actually, that’s bullshit. I just want to be thin so I can stop thinking about it.*

In this line, I wanted to show the contrast between the public and private selves, by amplifying one line and having the other unmediated. My aim was

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23 Author Bodily.
for the audience to think about the difference between these two selves, to
internalise this and ask themselves if this is something they can relate to.

Contradiction and paradox can also be seen as recurring themes in many of
the performances discussed in this study. As I said earlier in relation to the
concept of cognitive dissonance, the presence of a contradiction or paradox
can motivate people to react more strongly. A strong reaction indicates that
there is increased potential for the transformation of attitudes and
behaviours. When an audience member has a certain value, idea, or belief
prior to a performance and this is contradicted during the performance, there
is the possibility to create a dissonant effect. Dissonance can cause people to
act, as they see something as wrong or not fitting and try to resolve it.

 Luck violated the protocols of the eviction show event through his protest, as
well as the rules of Big Brother by sneaking his sign into the house. These
contravened the prescribed format, and therefore the audience’s
expectations, of what should have happened in that event. By taking the rules
into his own hands, Luck revealed the hypocrisy of a reality TV that does not
want to show reality. He therefore had the potential to create dissonance in
the viewers through highlighting a paradox involving the real and the
hyperreal.

 Similarly, Moore violated the rules of the Oscar ceremony through his
protest. Although his body of work hinges on controversy and brash action, it
seems that many people did not expect him to use his acceptance speech for
such a protest. He therefore contradicted people’s expectations of how the
event would progress, as well as contradicting the prevailing discourse about
the war in Iraq. In so doing, he questioned the hypocrisy of the event’s
protocols, positioning himself at one extreme of public responses to the war
and to George W. Bush.

 In Bodily, one of the most important parts of the message I wanted to convey
was the paradox between the rational and the emotional aspects of body
image. Rather than subverting the protocols of the theatrical event, as Luck
and Moore did, my use of paradox was contained within the content of the piece. To show the hypocrisy and double standards inherent in the issue, I tried to illuminate the paradoxical nature of having an ingrained emotion in conflict with a rational response. My aim in demonstrating this contradiction and paradox was to create dissonance in audience members.

Repetition has emerged as another tool used by many of the provocative performers in this study. The repetition of images, words and ideas has been shown to reinforce a message, especially in areas such as advertising. However, for these repeated elements to be retainable, they need to vary in intensity so people do not get desensitised to them. For instance, in an Australian anti-smoking campaign involving graphic images of smoking-related diseases on cigarette packets, the groups of images are constantly rotated so people do not get used to one in particular. This particular campaign has been proven effective not only because of its graphic portrayal of the effects of smoking, but also because of the repetition of its message. Repetition is also a key element in contemporary and postmodern performance, for instance in Richard Foreman’s productions, where repetition is used variously as comedy, emphasis, or to make something seem strange. Luck, Moore, and Bodily also used repetition as an instrument of provocation.

Luck was aware of the images he was presenting. He said that he wanted to wear a particular shirt with images of people with their eyes blocked out on it as a reference to the tape on his own mouth. He also used silence in response to repeated questions to convey his message. These forms of repetition were intended to provoke his audience, in that they reinforced the same message in varied ways. In addition, he repeated his message many times in the days after the protest. He repeatedly defended the manner in which he protested, outlining reasons for the mode of performance.

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25 ABC George Negus Tonight.
Similarly, Moore repeated elements of his protest throughout his speech, and in the days following it. His repetition of the word “fictitious,” and the phrase “shame on you,” reinforced the main message of his performance, with each repetition further provoking his audience into reacting. He also repeated the message in various interviews after the event, having to defend the nature of the protest.

Through my exposure to contemporary performance and research into these two performances, I was made aware of the effect of repetition. This was a tool I employed in Bodily, repeating sections of text throughout the piece to draw together all the characters and the different angles on the issue. I often repeated words, playing with different variations and emphasising its meaning. For instance, Bodily focus group participant C3m noted: “Sometimes when you repeat words or phrases though they can take on sort of different meanings ... so if you say like ‘their bodies’ it’s like the three meanings of the word ‘their,’ ‘they are bodies,’ ‘their bodies,’ ‘there bodies.’” I was trying to achieve a distancing effect, caused by ‘riffing’ on a word to explore its possibilities. The word was repeated in an attempt not only to reinforce it, but also to explore different possibilities, directions and connotations of the issue.

The choice of place and space for performance is another avenue through which change can be provoked. Place and space can be provocative as they affect elements such as the performer’s proximity to the audience, size of the audience, layout of the space, and lighting. Luck and Moore both decided to stage their protests in particular venues and on certain important nights. They both needed to take into account the proximity of the audience, as well as the implications of the event they were subverting. For instance, Luck knew that his eviction would be televised, and his protest was therefore predicated on reaching a wide audience through a powerful message. However, there was also the live audience to contend with, in particular the very close proximity of Killeen not only as audience member, but also as an unwitting performer. Moore also involved participants in his performance: the other Bowling For Columbine filmmakers and the rest of the nominees
for Best Documentary. His audience was also both in the same auditorium as him, and simultaneously worldwide through television. His message also needed to be powerful and direct.

Since the original season of *Bodily*, I have performed extracts of the piece at conferences and seminars. These have occurred in different types of spaces to the original theatre it was performed in, and therefore the work has been received differently. I have found that when the piece is performed in a smaller, studio-style space, interaction with the audience is easier and more effective. This is an opposite experience to Luck and Moore, as they both performed to a large audience. My experience is more aligned with the contemporary performance tradition, whose works are often staged in more intimate venues. Use of place and space is therefore another instrument of provocation, as the choice of venue, and therefore size and proximity of audience, can affect the provocative potential of the piece.

The way in which a performance is concluded seems to have an impact on its transformative potential. Leaving a performance unresolved is strongly tied to transformativity, as audience members are unable to be relieved of their frustrations. The performances I discuss in this study deny Aristotelian catharsis, as they have opened an issue and left it in the mind of the audience member. Boal’s discussion of the denial of catharsis is a useful reference, as he articulated its effect. He says that his Forum Theatre “creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action.”

By denying the audience a neat ending to a piece, a performer can provoke further post-performance discussion. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the manner in which both *Honour Bound* and *Wages of Spin* were concluded supports this assertion, as I found the endings of both prompted further discussion. Similarly, the ending of Neil LaBute’s play *Fat Pig* affected me deeply. In some of these performances, particularly the main three case studies in this thesis, a form of catharsis seems to have occurred after the

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27 Boal *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 142.
event, whether in private conversations, monitored focus groups, weblog and online forum discussions, or in media coverage.

Both Luck’s and Moore’s protests concluded with them being sent off the stage. In the case of Luck, the producers of the show felt that they had no content if he was allowed to stay, so they asked him to leave. Moore only just finished his speech in the prescribed time, although many mistook this for him getting booed or played off the stage. Through the restrictions of television, then, both performances were cut short, leaving loose ends for the viewers to tie up through discussions afterwards.

Following the Luck and Moore performances, I decided to leave *Bodily* unresolved, and to gauge the reaction to and the effectiveness of this action. My piece ended with the character asking for the audience’s approval, and then looking at them in silence, focusing on every person. Like Luck and Moore, I wanted to open up a conversation about the issue, and then leave it open for the audience to discuss. Not everyone found this easy. Reviewer Melanie Horkan, for example, disliked the fact that I did not present a solution to the problem. E4f’s response indicated that she psychologically projected her own ideal ending onto the piece: “I’m glad that you finally decided that you were beautiful. It’s something we should all believe of ourselves.”

*The Body*

Chapter Two introduced a discussion of the two performances *Honour Bound* and *Wages of Spin*, to consider the transformative potential of the body as treated in performance. This can also be interrogated through the three case studies here, as all performers to some extent use the body to provoke. In each performance, provocation is facilitated through costuming, props, and the expression of character through the body. I have included the body as a separate section here, as it is an essential element of the instrumentation used by the performers in this study to provoke.
In his silent performance, Luck used his body as the site for protest. His body was costumed with jeans, and a T-shirt with images of faces with blacked-out eyes. He also wore a piece of electrical tape across his mouth. In combination with the sign he carried, saying ‘FREE TH[E] REFUGEES,’ the overall visual message was provocative and cohesive. He metaphorically projected a character of defiance (read by Killeen as “aggressive”), which was evident through the intensity in his eyes, his visible breathing and the agitation of his legs. He said:

Information isn’t shocking anymore. It’s the way you present information. And that’s why I was very focused on creating a powerful image. The sign stated the cause, the tape made it powerful. My T-shirt, with the faces that had their eyes masked out by red lines, it was all part of creating an image that would resonate and cut through.  

Although Moore relied more on words to convey his message than Luck did, his body was also an important part of the protest. The fact that he was clothed in a black suit was not only contrary to the anti-establishment nature of his persona, but presented an image of compliance with the protocols of the red-carpet event. During the protest, though hidden behind the podium, Moore used his body to emphasise his speech, initially using restrained gesticulation to point out the other people on stage, then progressing to the use of a closed fist to emphasise his points.

In Bodily, I was aware of how I used my body, and how my body contributed to the message of the piece. As the nature of the subject matter was visceral, I tried to draw attention to my body as much as possible. This, however, was limited because I am not comfortable with my body, a fact that is in keeping with the message of the piece. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, several audience members commented that they felt a disconnect between the message of the piece and how my body appeared on stage. However, many also conceded that this was the point of the message, and that no matter what your body looks like to others, you can still have body image issues.

Ibid.
Another aspect of the body in performance is related to gender and sexual difference. I looked into this subject at the end of the project, after the performance of Bodily was complete, and therefore have applied the theories retrospectively. I looked towards Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti and Judith Halberstam in particular for feminist frameworks through which to approach not only the way the body was used in Bodily, but also to contextualise the treatment of the body in contemporary discourse on embodiment.

Butler’s classic text Gender Trouble outlines her view of masculine and feminine genders as performances in which men and women may perform either gender. She sees the body as “a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated.”\(^{29}\) In this view, all indications of gender are created by repeated acts, constructing gender norms which then require repeated acts to subvert. Gender is never stable, but is constantly adjusting to inner and outer forces. The idea of gender as performance is consistent with Baudrillard’s simulacra, which I discussed in relation to Chapter Three’s case studies of Luck and Moore. Butler states: “the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin.”\(^{30}\) That is, we perform the act of gender based on stereotypes of what masculinity and femininity are, whereas these stereotypes have no basis in reality.

Judith Halberstam’s discussion of female and trans-masculinities also has links to Butler’s ideas of the performance of gender. In her book In a Queer Time and Place, she proposes an alternative to the heteronormative timeline including such milestones as marriage and children.\(^{31}\) This queer time and place is examined through representations of the transgendered body in various artforms. These trans images subvert stereotypical representations of the body through an “aesthetic of turbulence that inscribes abrupt shifts in time and space directly onto the gender-ambiguous body.”\(^{32}\) Halberstam also examines representations of the transgendered body in various artforms,

\(^{29}\) Judith Butler (1990), Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity. New York, Routledge, 177.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 175.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 107.
including a case study of *Boys Don’t Cry*, a film (based on actual events) in which actress Hilary Swank plays Brandon Teena, a transgender man who was raped and murdered in 1993. In her reading of the film, Halberstam sees Brandon as standing for a “different form of temporality.” By constructing a transgender gaze, director Kimberly Peirce evokes complex spatial and temporal relations climaxing in Teena’s exposure as transgender. Much of Halberstam’s analysis of the film is based on the cinematic language used to construct this gaze, including the point of view of shots, the speeding up and slowing down of time and the use of several fantastical sequences. A stylistic parallel could be drawn between this and *Bodily*, as I also attempted to disrupt a conventional theatrical style, opting instead for a narrative mode that conceptually traversed time and space.

However, I did not particularly consider gender when I was writing and performing *Bodily*. For me, it was a story coming from my life and the issues I see around me in the world. However, some male viewers may well have been alienated, and seen the story as not pertaining to them, as the corporeal subject matter tells a distinctly female story, enacted by a female performer (in the Butlerian sense, by a body performing the female gender). A comment from one focus group participant, A4m, confirmed this, as he noted: “I don’t know what it’s like to have that all the time around me, as a man.” At the time of the performance, I was not consciously trying to project or subvert any particular gender. This comment therefore raises a compelling issue about the kinds of narratives stereotypically specific to gender, and in particular those stories which are viewed as inherently ‘female.’

Another issue raised by these feminist texts is the relevance of sexual difference. The term ‘sexual difference,’ as used by these feminist scholars, is not necessarily about labelling the differences between males and females, but about questioning the relationship between biological and cultural genders. However, it is also a term that different theorists value in different ways. In *Transpositions*, Braidotti discusses the opposing arguments in

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33 Ibid., 77.
sexual difference theory as they relate to questions around Cartesian dualism. On the one hand, there are theorists who argue for a state of monism, where the question of sexual difference is not a problem. Other theorists stress the importance of retaining sexual difference as a productive and positive force. As Braidotti notes, the aim of putting forward an argument for the relevance of sexual difference “is not to affirm the feminine, but to open up fields of multiple becomings.”

Braidotti’s ‘becoming’ draws on Deleuze’s concept of bodies being constantly in flux, an idea that echoes Butler’s concept of the constantly adjusting performance of gender. Rather than a sense of self that is fixed as feminine or masculine, bodies can actually have the capacity to change between gender identities. Femininity as becoming, therefore, can appear as virtual, which again echoes the notion of the simulacra. This becoming is flowing, disruptive and potentially transformative, as it requires a constant openness to other potential states of being. In the context of Bodily, these theories of becoming and sexual difference allow for a freedom of movement in and around gender issues. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Braidotti’s sense of the nomadic subject allows for such movement across discourses, experiences and voices. Braidotti also develops Deleuze’s idea of the nomad, applying it to the female experience as a means to “think through and move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges.”

The nomadic metaphor is a form of bricolage, which subverts conventions and moves fluidly between discourses, experiences and voices in order to open up the space in between them. In Chapter Two, I employed this in my methodological use of bricolage. Here, in the discussion of the body, the nomadic subject takes on a broader meaning. It is conceptualised as a performative image, including notions of mimesis, parody and Butler’s idea of the performativity of gender. Braidotti names Laurie Anderson as a model of the nomadic subject, in particular her style of constant paradoxes and

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35 Exemplified in Braidotti’s work by Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens.
36 Exemplified in Braidotti’s work by Luce Irigaray.
reversals. She also addresses the loss of Cartesian certainty about the mind-body split, saying that the nomadic consciousness links “body and mind in a new set of intensive and often intransitive transitions.” This absence of certainty about the connections between the mind and body allows for the generation of many different discourses about it. Nomadic consciousness is therefore inherently creative, as it requires the ability to constantly adapt to different modes of thinking.

I respond to this idea of the female nomad, as often throughout this project I have felt like a wanderer, borrowing pieces here and there to try to form a coherent story about provocation and transformation through performance. In many of the areas I have addressed – psychology and psychoanalysis, alchemy, feminism, society and culture – I have been content to pass through, never taking on “the limits of one national, fixed identity.” In addition, many of the features of the style of nomadic consciousness outlined by Braidotti are relevant to this project, for instance transdisciplinarity, a mixture of voices and an equal approach to text from both high theory and popular culture. Therefore, notions of embodiment and sexual difference are applicable to Bodily and to this thesis, in the modes of writing and the production and reception of the practical work.

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 Resolution

In order to transmute to the next level, the cycle must be completed. If something disrupts the cycle, discord and dissonance will return, and potential elevation to the next level left unresolved. The alchemist can subvert the cycle, intentionally denying illumination; showing a glimpse of gold before throwing it away. The performer may deny the gold to encourage the audience to seek it out for themselves. This must be seen as a deliberate subversion; it incites others to complete the journey into Light.

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39 Ibid., 7.
40 Ibid., 31.
Illumination

... it is appropriate to treat seriously the possibility that alternative and community theatre may have managed to mount an effective opposition to the dominant culture, and may have modified its values, however slightly.42

An important goal of this study is to look at responses to performance, including any indication of a shift in attitudes or behaviours, in order to gauge the performance’s transformative potential. Although it is difficult to construct definite links between provocative instruments and their specific impact, it can be said that combinations of one or more instruments can influence a change in audience members’ attitudes or behaviours. I researched the reception of these three performances using various methods, depending on which was more appropriate. Audience reactions to the Merlin Luck and Michael Moore performances were accessed through the subjective reports of media reviews, weblogs, and online message boards. I see these online and interactive sources as a naturally occurring form of post-performance discussion. Audience reaction to my performance Bodily was gathered via the focus groups, which were intended as a structured form of post-performance discussion, and further data was gathered via questionnaires. Some similarities can be seen in audience reception across the three case studies. These can be discussed through affect, identification, affirmation and transformation.

41 Ibid., 33.
42 Kershaw The Politics of Performance, 6.
Affect

I have found that the immediate visceral or emotional affect of a performance has a strong link to the performance’s potential to transform attitudes or behaviours. An audience member is far more likely to be receptive when they are hooked-in to the performance. Ani DiFranco says: “if you can get people to laugh, to relax their stomach muscles and open their mouths and laugh, then you can put other things in there.” This statement relates to humour, but also to the physical effect a performance can have on an audience member.

Luck acknowledged that his immediate audience were affected. On the following night’s nomination show, he had to give a special apology to the children for “scaring them,” as well as an apology to Gretel for coming across as “aggressive.” In another interview, Luck said that since his performance, people had come up to him on the street and patted him on the back, thanking him for bringing the issue of refugees into the light again. He also said:

What I’ve felt is overwhelmingly positive. When I walk down the street, I get a hundred hugs and kisses and thankyou and tears and photographs for every glare. But that’s what I wanted. I didn’t do this to be popular. I did this to polarise people because that’s what sparks debate. Everyone got to work, got to school the next day and talked about it and that’s what I wanted. I didn’t do it to be popular. I did it to get people talking. So the fact that people disagree with what I did is part of the reason why it was effective.

Moore also affected his immediate audience, evidenced by a combination of cheers, boos and claps. He reported that after his protest, “there wasn’t a day went by without someone trying to pick a fight with me in the street, coming right in my face, screaming at me, calling me an asshole, telling me to fuck

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43 (1996), ‘Interview with Ani DiFranco.’ The Georgia Straight, May 16,
44 Endemol/ Southern Star/ Channel 10 Big Brother Live Nomination Show. op cit.
45 ABC George Negus Tonight. op cit.
However, he also acknowledged some positive reaction, saying that some people had thanked him for speaking on their behalf.

The Bodily focus groups and questionnaires also indicated that people were affected by my performance. Participants talked about moments when they gasped, laughed, or were moved to tears by the content of the piece, and said that these moments affected the way they received the performance. For instance, A4m said:

The high point for me was when she cast out the magazine, cause I really connected with that, because the gesture of it, and conceptually, it was a new option, cause a lot of the stuff prior to that was rehearsing things that were problematic and yet we see it repeated again and again, and this was a new possibility, so it kind of had that release, it was a real, it was a real kind of (gasp) what would happen if ... you did that?

I was also thanked by some audience members after the performance for conveying the message in the way that I did.

**Affirmation**

It is important to take into account the beliefs that people held prior to a performance, and therefore determine whether the performance affirmed or denied what they already thought about the issue. I have found that performance can transform my attitudes when it affirms my beliefs. In each of the three cases, there is evidence that the performance affirmed what some people were already thinking about the issue, giving them strength and validation.

Luck’s protest affirmed what I already thought about refugees, however the fact that he brought the issue into public discussion galvanised me to act upon my beliefs. Another type of affirmation came from the refugee community, from Iranian actor, playwright and asylum seeker Shahin Shafaei. Interviewed by *Green Left Weekly*, a strongly liberal publication,
Shafaei said: “What he did means so much for those of us on temporary protection visas and for others still in detention centres. It will help us a lot in our battle for understanding.” Moore affirmed what a lot of people were already thinking about the war in Iraq and George W. Bush. There was also some evidence from the documented responses to Bodily that the piece affirmed what some people already thought about body image. For instance, B4f said: “a lot of what Tessa included were things that I had experienced on some level or witnessed on some level.” E4f said: “I think I’m pretty clear about what my values are but it affirms what you do believe, and what you’re not seeing, elsewhere...”

Identification

The extent to which audience members identify with the characters or the situation of the performance is conducive to transformation. This relates to psychological projection, as the audience members can project themselves into the performed situations and therefore the performance can have more resonance for them. The psychoanalytical idea of countertransference (as discussed, for instance, by psychologist DeLucia-Waack48), where someone over-identifies with another person to the extent that they project their feelings onto them, has emerged as a possible finding of this study. While researching Bodily, I experienced a countertransference phenomenon when researching websites about the lives and techniques of people with anorexia and bulimia. Researching these websites stirred some feelings and insecurities that were temporarily dormant, nearly prompting me to act in a negative way upon these feelings. Countertransference, then, warrants further investigation as a side effect of in-depth research by a performer-researcher into certain social or psychological issues.

While the idea of countertransference is drawn from the field of psychology, similar concepts can be found in performance studies discourses on empathy.

47 Broun Free th refugees: Merlin interviewed. Accessed
48 DeLucia-Waack 'Supervision for Counselors Working With Eating Disorders Groups: countertransference issues related to body image, food, and weight.'
Many theorists have discussed empathy and identification as crucial to audience reception of performance, however these concepts have different connotations in different contexts. The differences between the terms ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’ is relevant here. While both relate to pathos, sympathy commonly refers to feeling sorry for someone, whereas empathy implies placing yourself in another's position. In an empathetic reaction, then, the feelings of the performer evoke the memory of the audience member's own experience. For instance, it was important to Brecht that his audiences were detached from empathising with his characters, and he tried to achieve this through the Verfremdungseffekt and gestus. Instead of empathy, what Brecht aimed for was a kind of sympathy, where audiences recognised the events of the performance, but did not become so emotionally involved that they would lose inspiration to act. A similar distinction is argued by Boal. For Boal, empathy is tied up with Aristotelian notions of catharsis, and therefore needs to be rethought as “an emotional relationship between character and spectator.”

For performance theorists and practitioners Konstantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg, empathy is an acting tool used to find emotional truth in a scene. The way I am using the term identification in this study is therefore aligned with empathy.

I identified with Luck while he was making his protest. I could see that he felt angry enough about an issue to stand up for it. His protest had an impact upon me, as I felt empathetically involved in what he was going through. I could almost feel myself up there on that stage, in front of all those people, with all those thoughts racing through my mind. Not only did this give me more respect for him, but it also meant that his message had more of an impact upon me. It seemed as if the person making this statement was someone I would be a friend with and this empathy made me pay more attention to him.

Similarly, Moore metaphorically projects an image of himself which encourages people to relate to him, and therefore to pay more attention to his message. He portrays Everyman, appealing to people and making them feel

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49 Boal Theatre of the Oppressed, 35.
as though he is speaking for them. Moore's story about the flight attendants, who asked him if he would speak for them because they felt they had no voice, is a good example of this. People relate to him, to the extent that they feel he is one of them. Moore says: “It’s not just Michael Moore. There are millions who think like I do. They just don’t know where to go or what to do yet.”

In the case of *Bodily*, some focus group participants said they identified with me on stage, and the performance therefore had greater significance for them. For instance, one participant said: “A lot of the struggle she was going through, I was sitting there going, oh god, that’s me.” Another participant related her identification with the character directly to transformation, saying: “I definitely sympathise with the character, and can see myself in a lot of things that that character did, and ... I’m here now and thinking, that I will change.” These reported identifications and transformations are significant, as they demonstrate the power of connecting with a character or issue in a performance. This connection, when combined with the other modes of illumination, is potentially transformative for the audience member. For instance, through identifying with the characters, themes or situation, they may be able to see a different side of a problem they are having, or be able to visualise a different path they could take.

Transformation

Various forms of transformation arise as a consequence of these performances. These range from reported statements about the moment when people’s attitudes or behaviours changed, to change on a larger scale, such as a change in corporate or government policy. However, definitions of transformation vary. Although O’Keefe says that “in assessing persuasive effects (whether attitude change or some other outcomes), assessments of actual persuasive effects are preferable to assessments of perceived or

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50 Younge *The Capped Crusader.* op cit.
expected effects,” the scope of this study only allows for attitudinal and behavioural changes reported by audience members. However, the larger type of change, where there is a significant shift in public opinion, corporate policy, or government policy, can be easier to ascertain. For instance, McDonald’s have changed a lot of their policies since the films McLibel, Supersize Me and Fast Food Nation. Al Gore’s film An Inconvenient Truth has accelerated the global push for climate change awareness, and political advances are now being made in that area. When combined with other modes of protest, and pre-existing attitudes, these performances therefore effected change.

Luck’s performance sparked people to report that they had been transformed. As I discussed in Chapter Three, the protest motivated me to act on my beliefs about asylum seekers, by signing up with an organisation that runs programs with children in detention centres. Also, people mentioned on online forums that they had been changed by Lucks’ protest, for instance, Cyberkitty 3001’s statement: “my position has now changed entirely and I’m feeling a hell of a lot more passionate about freeing the refugees.” Talking about who the “Big Brother generation” responds to politically, Neer Kron (director of Heartbeat Trends, a social and market research company) makes a connection between Luck’s protest and Michael Moore, among others. He asserts that people do not like protests, however he also says “We do like genuine people. That’s why we like Peter Garrett. He puts his money where his mouth is. That’s why they like Michael Moore, or the guy from Super Size Me, because these people go out and do stuff. Everyone else just talks.”

Moore has a well-established history of creating transformational performance. For example, a scene in Bowling for Columbine shows Moore accompanying two victims of the Columbine shooting to the K-Mart headquarters. As K-Mart was the shop in which the shooters bought the

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52 For instance, Cyberkitty3001, V*essa and Cristy Hoy on Big Brother Mailing List Archive. Accessed
53 Ibid. Accessed
54 Mark Coultn (2004), 'Big bother.' Sydney Morning Herald, 19 June.
bullets they used, Moore’s intention was to visit the head office with the
victims and talk to someone about stopping the sales of ammunition.
According to the film, they were eventually successful. Also, his Academy
Awards speech transformed the ceremony into a political platform (although
not for the first time, as discussed in Chapter Three). Gallup polls indicate
that support for the war in Iraq has fallen dramatically since it began, and
support for George W. Bush has also fallen.55 While it is impossible to suggest
that Moore’s performance alone affected these results, it is clear that it
generated a significant amount of discussion. As performance theorists
Kristina Schriver and Donna Marie Nudd say: “A single performative protest
event has little chance by itself to invoke change. However, an event that
sparks an ongoing dialogue becomes a story worth telling over and over.”56
When positioned as part of a larger body of dissent against the war in Iraq
and George W. Bush, then, Moore’s performance was transformational.

There have also been reported instances of transformation following the
performance of *Bodily*. In the follow-up questionnaires, sent two weeks and
then six months after the performance season, participants noted changes as
a result of the piece. Some of these were changes in attitude, for instance C4f
reporting that her perspective on the issues had shifted, while some related to
behaviour, for instance E1f saying that she longer buys women’s magazines.
This evidence supports my hypothesis that performance can effect changes in
attitude and behaviour, and can therefore be transformational.

**Discussion**

There is some evidence that performance pre-empted a shift in public
opinion in all case studies. A poetic understanding of this may be allied to the
butterfly effect in chaos theory, where many small changes and effects, when
repeated and multiplied, can have cumulative impacts. The elements

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56 Schriver and Nudd ‘Mickey Faust Club’s Performative Protest Events.’ 213.
discussed in this chapter form a theory of transformation through provocative performance. While this transformation may only apply to a very small percentage of audience members, it is noteworthy that it occurs at all. A follow-on issue is the longevity of transformation. Many of the changes that are experienced through just one performance may only be temporary. Therefore, strategic repetition of the performative message would be required, to ensure longevity. If the performer does not find a way to repeat the message, for example through a series of performances or follow-up discussions, the transformative effects may erode. Another linked issue is the question of success. If the transformative effects intended by the performer are the same as those experienced by the audience, does this make for a successful performance? Each performance had its own embedded goals and their success could be measured by what the practitioner sets up as the intended outcomes of the project.

Luck says that in his performance, he wanted people to talk about the issue of refugees in the time leading up to the election. He certainly achieved this, however many people were talking about the appropriateness of what he did, rather than about the message itself. Moore said that he wanted to speak out about Bush as a matter of conscience, but was tight-lipped about the impact he wanted to have on his audience. It is my estimation, however, that like Luck, he would have wanted people to talk and express their views about the issue. If that is the case, then he also achieved this, as people still talk about what he did, even years after the protest.57 In my case, the intention was to highlight the dysfunctions and paradoxes inherent in the body image debate, as well as make people more aware of the dangers of the prevailing cult of thinness. Judging from the focus group and questionnaire results, I achieved this to some extent, as there were some reported changes in attitudes and behaviours around the issue.

Conclusion

The performances of Merlin Luck, Michael Moore, and myself in Bodily, attest to the transformational potential of provocative performance. However, this potential is complicated. While the performers’ intent to provoke may be straightforward, their influence on the transformation of the attitudes or behaviours of their audience is not. These case studies show that provocative performance can be transformative, but does not necessarily inspire change in every person or every instance. Through looking at the concepts of practice-based research, cognitive dissonance, persuasion, trance, and confusion, the issue of transformation through performance can be approached.

This study is not conclusive on the link between provocative intentions and transformative effects, however I have attempted to report what people have said about their experiences of transformation through performance. Individual experiences, values, and pre-existing attitudes and behaviours can affect the nature and degree of transformation experienced by each audience member. It is therefore impossible to devise an unconditional formula for provocative and transformative performance. This thesis is one inroad for this discussion, as it looks at the stories of individuals through a methodology of researching lived experience, including that of the performer/researcher, to build theories of how provocation and transformation operate in performance.
Therefore, I have identified certain elements of provocative and transformative performance, which includes the performer’s intention, instruments of performance intended to provoke and transform audience members and the audience’s illumination through performance. Through this theoretical framework, it can be seen that provocative performance can be transformational.

The next and final chapter concludes the argument of the thesis, bringing together the threads in this examination of provocative and transformative performance.
‘The Glory of the Whole Universe’: Coagulation and Conclusion

Introduction

In this research project, I set out to interrogate the concept of transformation through provocative performance. I was interested in performances that can be considered both provocative and transformative. The study responded to a paucity of literature interrogating individual elements of performance and change, and the links between provocative and transformative performance. A broad range of literature and contexts has been covered, from performance theory and performative examples, to psychological theories of persuasion and cognitive dissonance. The research was based on autoethnography and practice-based research methodologies, triangulated through the perspectives of audience, performance maker, and scholar.

Provocative and transformative performance

To gauge transformation through performance, audience responses were gathered through Internet forums (in the cases of Luck and Moore) and through focus groups (in the case of Bodily). My own experiences as an audience member were also discussed. These methods allowed for a variety of audience feedback to be canvassed. While some of these audience
perspectives were less relevant, others were valuable; some experienced transformative effects as a result of these performances, whereas for others, the performances were not as powerful.

Through this combination of theoretical, case study, and practice-based research, I have identified certain elements that are present in provocative and transformative performance. These take into account the intention of the performer, the instrumentation used to provoke and transform audiences, and the illumination of an issue through performance.

While the thesis covers many examples of performances, the main case studies of Merlin Luck, Michael Moore and Bodily demonstrate how the identification of provocative and transformative performance elements can be put into practice. It is therefore not comprehensive or conclusive, but suggests a possible direction for the study of individual and social change through performance.

The diversity of interpretations of the piece, and the differing nature of responses, highlights a problematic area in research of this nature. The demands of applying rigour to performance research methodologies are complex, and throughout the course of the research I have found myself consistently coming across difficulties related to this. The subjective and idiosyncratic nature of the production and reception of performance means that it is difficult to generalise, categorise and extrapolate responses. In the end, this is an issue that is raised by this project, but ultimately remains unresolved.

Alchemy

At the Wisdom of Shakespeare course at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in 1999, I was introduced to the connections between alchemy and performance. This connection has carried through into the thesis research, and alchemy has been weaved through it as an overarching metaphor for the
process of transformation. The alchemical cycle of earth $\rightarrow$ water $\rightarrow$ air $\rightarrow$ fire $\rightarrow$ light has permeated this research in different ways. In many ways the discovery of light is unachievable, due either to the denial of a performative resolution (a conscious decision on behalf of the performer), or to the inability of the performance to illuminate (a failure of the performer to effectively provoke).

The alchemical idea “As Above, So Below” is integral to this research. Alchemy is about correspondences on different levels. Therefore, what happens in the alembic or theatre mirrors the internal processes within the alchemist. Alchemy, as performance, is therefore a process by which the internal and external processes of transformation can be undertaken.

**Conclusion**

Like many of the discussed provocative and transformative performances, this thesis lacks a definitive resolution. This is largely due to the elements conducive to transformation being complex and dependent on the individual. By telling my personal stories of transformation throughout the thesis, I hope I have opened a way to talk about transformation without being held back by uncertainty about speaking for others, as talking about personal transformation is one avenue towards speaking about generalisable experiences. The different elements of provocative and transformative performance discussed in the thesis can also be read as a toolbox for creating this performance. Through theorising and applying this theory to various cases, this research indicates that transformation is possible through provocative performance.
EPILOGUE

Spoken by Prospero

Now my charms are all o’erthrown,
And what strength I have ‘s mine own;
Which is most faint: now, ‘t is true,
I must be here confin’d by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardon’d the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island, by your spell;
But release me from my bands,
With the help of your good hands.
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev’d by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon’d be,
Let your indulgence set me free.¹

Appendices

Appendix A: *Bodily* script with photographs

Appendix B: Questions asked in focus groups

Appendix C: Focus groups demographic questionnaire

Appendix D: Focus groups follow-up questionnaire 1

Appendix E: Focus groups follow-up questionnaire 2

Appendix F: Focus groups report

Appendix G: List of publications
Appendix A: *Bodily* script with photographs

**Track 1- House music**

The stage is backed by a screen, which reduces the size of the space, and later becomes the site for various projections. In front of this scrim, and on an angle, is a large rectangular table. Behind the table is a stool. Also in the space are: a suitcase, and various props and costume pieces are spread on the ground as well- a brown wig, blue jacket, stockings, bright red lipstick, red scarf, brown sash, white fluffy slippers, green tie, boots, and a diary.

A girl, wearing a white dress, her hair in pigtails, lies fast asleep on the table. She is barely moving, and her arm hangs limply over the side of the table. Her face is turned away from the audience.

**Track 2- Music box and voice-over**

Voice-over:  ... Because we are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams...

**Track 3- Am I...?**

The girl (Earth) slowly awakens, (although still groggy with sleep), and lethargically gets up from her bed. She puts on white fluffy slippers from near the bed, and walks very slowly and slightly trembling towards far CSL. As she’s walking, she ties a brown sash around her waist. A square light slowly appears far CSL.

Voice-over:  (whispering and layered, getting slightly louder with each repetition) Am I....? Am I....? Am I...? Am I...........

When she reaches CSL, she steps onto the square of light as if it is a set of scales.

**Projection 1- Scales**

The dial of the scales whirs around. It finally comes to rest, and the girl looks to the audience.

Earth:  Am I... thin enough yet?

**Track 4- Earth drums**

She steps off the scales.

**Projection off**
Earth: I... uh, I...
I... I watch the men walk about me.
They are so flat, so flat!
There’s something about them like cardboard,
And... and now I have caught it, I have caught it.
I sit in my stockings, my high heels.
These are my feet, these mechanical echoes.
Tap, tap, tap, projected steel pegs.
I am... found wanting.
And there is this...

She retrieves a diary from the scattered props, and sits on the stool behind the table. She opens the diary, and she starts writing.

**Projection 2- diary**

Earth: *(into microphone)*
I’ll give you the skinny on this... cut it down to size.

You can force your body to transform, transform- any shape you choose.

Don’t swallow! Take a bite, chew, chew, chew, and spit it out.

Wear a rubber band on your wrist, when you’re tempted- twang, twang, twang.

You should measure how much you purge each time you throw up. You probably need to fill up two, two, two cups.

It’s important to exercise control, control, control over your hunger.

When you’ve nearly finished but can’t get the last bit out, punch, punch.

Use markers such as corn chips, so when you see the orange, you know everything is up, up, up.

Praise fat and no-one will never guess that you’re starving, starving, starving.

She puts the diary down and stands up.

**Projection 2 off**

**Track 4 ends**
Earth: I express my wish
To take up less space
They don’t say: “No! No! No!”

( into microphone)
I’m... uh... violated.

**Track 5- Mirror**

**Projection 3- Mirror**

A projection appears of her facing forwards, wearing the same clothes, as if the projection is a mirror. She slowly moves her hands over the parts of her body that she doesn’t like. When she turns away from the projection, it turns off.

**Projection off**

**Track 5 ends**

Earth: There is very little to go into my suitcase.
The clothes of a fat girl
I do not know.
My lipstick and hair bands.
There is an emptiness.
I’m... uh... vulnerable.

**Track 6- My woman 1**

Girl becomes Neutral throughout this voice-over, slowly taking the sash and slippers off, then becomes Water, putting on the stockings, jacket and wig.

Voice-over: My woman with her forest-fire hair
With her heat-lightning thoughts
With her hourglass waist
My woman with her matchstick wrists
My woman with rocket legs
Her hips an imperceptible pair of scales
My woman with her eyes of forests forever beneath the axe.
With her eyes of sea-level air-level earth and fire.

Neutral: ( into microphone)
She’s no longer a woman
She doesn’t bleed
Taking up less space
For minimal impact

I’m better off alone
Away from these elemental voices
Away from women’s choices
Away from my rejected reflection...

*The girl transforms into an older character (Water), by putting on a blue jacket, brown wig, lipstick and knee-high stockings. She moves and talks steadily, slowly and definitely.*

Water: I nurtured the seed with my water. I gave her the love to grow. Grow up, up, up to fall...

*(into microphone) Always ask the question, you know, you might be happy with your weight, but is your husband happy with your weight? Is your mother?*

*(She breaks out of her expression and addresses the front row of the audience confidentially)*

...How was my hair? Was my hair ok? How was my hair?

**Track 7- Muzak**

**Projection 4- Magazine headlines**

Water: *(into microphone)* Nothing has happened, Nothing that cannot be erased, ripped up and scrapped, begun again.

Look at her thighs! Did you notice? Did you notice her thighs? Did I tell you about this already? Oh! I would hate to have thighs like those! She looks awful! She's got a great body, doesn’t she? She’s very lean...

My daughter is deferring to reality. It is I. It is I--
I’m the one who walks into the clothing store. Only wanted pants. My fat arse wouldn’t fit. In the dressing room, struggling with this zipper. The sales assistant saw me: “Uh, maybe you should try ‘Big N Tall’?”

... I dream... I dream for the day I can walk back, walk back into that store. Transformed. Low-cut jeans and crop top. I'll shove, shove my tiny bum in her face, shove it into her face: “No ‘Big N Tall’ for me anymore!”

**Projection 5- Applause sign**
...Because that’s all I have. My tiny bum, tiny bum, tiny bum...
The dream-like disappearance of my bum into thin air

*She snaps her fingers.*

**Track 7 ends**

We are the music-makers  
And we are the dreamers of dreams

**Track 8 - Ghostly**

It was never like this,  
Tasting the bitterness between my teeth.  
The suspicious neatness.  
The incalculable malice. Every. Day.  
The loneliness, the sorrow  
How shall it soften them, this little lullaby?

...Is there something between my teeth...?  
I try and try.  
I stitch life into me like a rare organ,  
And walk carefully, precariously, like something rare.

*(into microphone)* I...I can’t remember a time when I didn’t have an eating disorder... Can you?

**Track 9 - I have tried...**

I have tried not to think.  
I have tried to be natural. I have tried to be unnatural.  
I have tried to give this to my little lullaby.  
I tried not to let my thighs get in the way.  
I try... I try...

*Girl takes off wig, jacket and stockings as she addresses the audience, and becomes neutral again.*

Neutral: Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,  
and sometime voices,  
That, if I them had wak’d after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds, methought, would open, and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak’d
I cry’d to dream again

The gold, the gold, the gold.
It called me from my dreams...

*She puts her hair up in a ponytail and puts on a green tie, becoming Air.*

Air: I learned it from her.

**Track 9 ends**

(*into microphone*)
I want to be the skinniest person. I will be transformed. A better person outwardly- to fit my inner self.
(*microphone off*) ... Actually, that’s bullshit. I just want to be thin so I can stop thinking about it.

**Projection 6- hands**

**Track 10- Muzak**

Air: The magazine rack at the supermarket. They put it right there. I’m just trying to innocently pay for my groceries. They want us to wait, to wait in that endless queue while we listen to musak, listen to musak. Who’s lost weight? Who’s gained it? Who’s pregnant? Who’s wearing no makeup? Their bodies, their bodies, their bodies.

I’m gripping the handle. Peering over at the headlines, like everyone else. A chemical reaction. The image of their bodies, and something inside my body, causes a chemical reaction. A ground-zero shockwave surges through my intestinal wall, catching in my oesophagus.

...Yes! They start to come! The salty remains of our collective pain. Their bodies cause my body to leak, to weep and sob... I’m crying in the fucking supermarket! Crying at the cruelty of it all! They make us wait, they make us wait... the torture of eight items or less, my own private hell...

I transform myself, as small as possible. (*She collapses slowly.*)

**Track 10 ends**
Imagine, trying to make something this size disappear!
I push my heels down, reaching for the other voices. Can they help me now?

Track 11- dis.en.gage

The girl lies down on the floor.

(into microphone)
It looks like a black hole
And tastes like steel
Feels like halls of mirrors
Like refracted envy
I don't look like them
When I'm walking... Do I?
Their wishbone thighs
And clavicle wells
My body submits
I dis.en.gage

(Projection 7- dis.en.gage)

She props herself up on one elbow, then pulls up into sitting position during the following:

I am detached from this body. A protective shell, padded and form-fitting around this vulnerable interior. It exists, though separate from me. A mind of its own. I'm trying to understand this day-to-day, mind and body, day-to-day dichotomy.

Track 12- News theme

She walks to the stool and sits down on it, behind the desk.

Projection 8- camera icon

She switches to a smug newsreader-type voice for the following. She is, however, interrupted by crazy music and projected text. During these sections the girl jerks about violently on the stool.

It is so satisfying watching a woman letting herself go, especially if it's illuminated by paparazzi flashbulbs.

Track 12 ends
Projection 8 off

Track 13- Crazy

Projection 9- Crazy 1

Track 14- News theme

Projection 10- Pregnant woman icon

Pregnancy agrees with many women, but it must be said she is not one of them. She has misunderstood the term yummy mummy and is sampling the delights of every fast-food chain within a 10 kilometre radius. (beat) If I was a person, I wouldn’t be a very nice one.

Track 14 ends

Projection 10 off

Track 15- Crazy

Projection 11- Crazy 2

Track 16- News theme

Projection 12- Magazine cover

'Woman’s New Monthly Idea Weekly’ speaks for all of us when it asks: "what happened to her boobs?" They are referring to this supermodel, who is often persecuted for being too thin. Happily, she seems to have gained weight - all of it on her bosoms, the lucky thing. Those supermodels, with their genetic magnificence.

Track 16 ends

Projection 12 off

Blackout

Track 17- Sinkhole

Projection 13- Sinkhole

Voice-over: I found a sinkhole. I found that little area of suction, that black hole. I get near the lip, it draws me in. I desire it. I want it. Just... to occupy less space. To have the willpower.
Voices calling me from the dark and muddy depths. Happily calling to my deepest desires.

(The light slowly comes up on the girl. She is crying, with her head down in her arms, which are folded on the table.)

**Projection 14- Cult of Thinness**

**Track 18- Cult of Thinness**

Voice-over: This cult of thinness has burrowed its way into my body. Into our bodies. It’s a way of life. The head knows we shouldn’t, but the heart has no choice... This is our contradiction.

**Projection 14 off**

Air: I broke my silence. Stopped talking in voice-overs, stopped talking in abstracts, stopped talking in the dark, stopped talking in the third person, stopped talking in the projection. Could only do it with you.

She stands up and walks around to the front of the table.

Air: I know what I’m doing. This is my dichotomy. I want to have their clavicle wells, their wishbone thighs. They achieve it. They achieve it. Powerful, strong women with control, control, control over their bodies. I have control and can transcend this form to create the perfect physical version. (she walks around to the back of the table again.) First: thighs. (she steps onto the stool) Next: world. (she steps onto the table)

**Track 19- I feel a lack**

She removes the tie and comes down from the table, becoming neutral again.

Neutral: This is what I create. These elemental voices. The turmoil of paradox That must resolve, must resolve, must resolve...

Now does my project gather to a head: My charms crack not; my spirits obey...

I see myself as a shadow, neither man nor woman, Neither a woman, happy to be like a man, nor a man
Blunt and flat enough to feel no lack. I feel a lack.
I am not ugly. I am even beautiful.
The mirror gives back a woman without deformity.
I am not hopeless.
I am beautiful.

*She ties a red scarf around her neck, puts on a pair of boots and becomes Fire.*

**Track 19 ends**

Beautiful as a statistic.
Here is my lipstick.

**Track 20- Lipstick?!**

**Projection 15- lying on table**

*She yells at the lipstick.*

Fire: Here is my... lipstick?!?!?

*She looks at the lipstick, horrified.*

(***into microphone**)
I am accused. I dream of massacres.
My body has failed me
I wage war, war, war.

*She draws army marks under her eyes with the lipstick, then throws it away.*

Fire: There’s nowhere to hide all that blood,
On such a pretty white dress.
A suspicious neatness?
I feel an incalculable malice.
I see myself in you
So strongly, sometimes...

**Projection 15 off**

**Track 21- Muzak**

**Projection 16- anorexic women and celebrities**

I’m waiting in line. Number 6. Checking out.
Checking each other out. It’s almost masochistic, an incalculable menace. I’m staring and staring, burning their images onto my retinas. Lined up on a conveyer belt, trundling through the gauntlet: models, and
chocolate. Lining up to be judged, to be scanned, priced and bagged. Seeking transformation into gold.

Down there, at the front, a little old lady. She’s ducking her head, trying to make it through, trying to slip the magazine through:

“Um, yes, and I’m buying this one.”

But the girl serving, swiping and bagging us, she breaks the rules.

“Doesn’t she look beautiful?”
(She’s increasing in volume)
“Can you believe the wedding?”
I can’t believe it! She’s hooked!
“Wasn’t she with that sports star?”
“Oh, I hate him”
“She gained weight too.”
They’re grinning at each other, as they climax in ecstasy, in pure light and gold.... Yes! We know! Did you notice? It’s so good!

Projection 16 off.

Track 22- Demon

The demon is inside me now, dragging me down, down, down. The magazine is in my hand, my hand is handing it to the sales assistant’s hand. I want the gold! Her mouth curls up at the edges. She’s about to scan me, price me and bag me... A sudden urge to throw it, just to cast the magazine out, a projectile flapping, flying through the air. This is the gold. The transformation. Throw it back, cast it, put it back. Back on the rack. Back on the rack. Back on the rack.

She is struggling with herself, almost violently, until finally she is thrown back onto the table.

Let go!

Track 22 ends.

O so much emptiness!
There is this cessation. This terrible cessation of everything.
These bodies mounded around me now, these polar sleepers—
What blue, moony ray ices their dreams?
Track 23- My Woman 2

Through the next voice-over, she takes off the red scarf and boots, to become Neutral.

Voice-over: My woman with her forest-fire hair
With her movements of clockwork and despair
My woman with her buttocks of springtime
With her gladiolus sex
My woman with her eyes full of tears
With her eyes of sea-level air-level earth and fire

Projection 17- clouds

Neutral: I awoke, still dreaming...
The people I was in these fragments
Are no longer alien and strange.

I played Mercurius.
Mixed the four elements into parts of me-
Parts of you.

I am beautiful... as a statistic.

It’s a terrible thing
Being so open: as if my heart
Puts on a face and walks into the world.

She looks up at the audience.

... Do I look OK?...

... Do I look fat in this dress?...

She steps towards the audience.

Do I look OK?

She waits, as if expecting the audience to respond, for a long time.

Projection 17 off

Track 23 ends
Appendix B: Questions asked in focus groups

1. Choose an image from the cards provided that you feel relates to your experience of the performance tonight. I am going to ask each person around the group in turn to explain to the rest of the group why you chose this card.

2. In the performance, what stood out to you as the main theme or issue?

3. Did you feel any particular emotions as a result of the performance? What were they?

4. Was there anything in particular about the performance that contributed to your understanding of the theme or issue? (Prompt: by this I mean costume, projection, lighting, script, acting, etc)

5. To what extent do you think our previous experiences with an issue impact on our awareness of this issue in a performance?

6. What views do you have about this theme and what formed your views?

7. Have you ever seen a performance (theatre, art, music, film, television) that has made you change your views or opinions about something? In your opinion, is performance capable of affecting a change in views or opinions?

8. Are there any specific performers who have influenced your values or the way you perceive the world? If so, who and in what way?

9. What moment in tonight’s performance had most impact for you in terms of your thinking about the main issue?

10. If you could change one part of the performance, what would it be?
Appendix C: Focus groups demographic questionnaire

Focus Groups Participant Survey

1. What is your age group? (Circle one)

2. What is your gender? (Circle one)
   Male         Female

3. How often do you see theatre? (Circle one)
   weekly/once a month/four or five times a year/once or twice a year/very rarely

4. How did you find out about this performance? (Circle one)
   word of mouth   flyer/poster   in the media

5. Have you seen other solo or multimedia performances like Bodily? (Circle one)
   no           yes, one or two    yes, several
Appendix D: Focus Groups follow-up questionnaire 1

*Bodily*

Follow-up Questionnaire for Focus Group Participants

Please highlight the option that you most agree with:

1. I found that my participation in the focus groups was useful for my understanding of the issues in the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. I have retained ideas, images, themes and moments from the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please insert your answers after each question:

3. Which ideas, images, themes and moments have you retained, if any?

4. Have you had any further thoughts about the performance?

5. Are there any other comments about the performance or the focus group process that you would like to add?
Appendix E: Focus Groups follow-up questionnaire 2

Bodily
Second Follow-up Questionnaire

Please insert your answers after each question:

1. Are there still ideas, images, themes and moments of the performance that you remember? If so, which ones?

2. Do you think that any of your behaviours or attitudes changed after the performance? If so, to what in particular would you attribute this change (for instance, images of magazine headlines, images of models, depiction of anorexia, characterisations, projected images, the exploration of the paradox between intelligence and emotion)? How long did the change last for, or is it continuing?

3. Are there any other further comments you would like to add?
Appendix F: Focus Groups Report

BODILY: FOCUS GROUPS REPORT
Prepared by Tessa Needham

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Overview

After each performance of Bodily, a solo work by PhD candidate Tessa Needham, a focus group was held to discuss it. The purpose of these focus groups was to investigate and research audience responses to the work, which would then be assimilated into the PhD thesis. This doctoral project is concerned with the transformation of attitudes and behaviours through performance, and therefore the focus group data was a vital contribution to the generation of knowledge.

This report outlines the range of responses received. It is mainly a raw account of what people said in the focus groups, with minimal commentary to contextualise each grouping. The focus group data results show not only a plurality of interpretations about the meaning of the performance, but also some interesting convergences in opinions. The responses have been organised into subheadings for clarity, but it is important to note that there is much overlap between these.

First, the demographical data gathered at each focus group is displayed in pie charts to give a summary idea of the data gathered. The report then outlines the various interpretations of Bodily, and moments that were discussed as being significant for the audience. These are broken up into subheadings depending on theme: Beauty and body image, Judgements and body fascism, Magazines and media, Obsession and eating disorders, Duality of intelligence and emotion, Embodiment and disembodiment, Repetition, Confrontation, Dreaming, and Other. Next, the discussion surrounding the resolution of the performance is outlined. This is separated into the subheadings of: Interpretation, Catharsis and fortification, and Desired Outcomes. The next section deals with the concept of projection, as this is an integral part of the research. The section explores the impact of audiovisual projections on the audience’s reception of the performance. It also looks at the relationships between audiovisual projection, internal to the performance, and psychological projection, external to the performance. Another key part of the research is the discussion of transformation through performance, and this is considered in the next section of this report under the following subheadings: Identification, Duality of intelligence and emotion, Affirmation, Entertainment, Another perspective, Transience, and Other.

This report then looks at the data gathered from follow-up questionnaires, which were sent to participants via email two weeks after the performance season. These are grouped into four sections, covering memory retention of the performance, resolution, transformation, criticisms and suggestions, and the focus group experience.
Data From Focus Groups

General Comments

The focus groups were run after each of the five performances in the season of *Bodily*. All focus group participants were volunteers, and were signed up to participate immediately before the performance began. After each performance, the stage area was set with a circle of chairs, a table of refreshments and two audio recording devices. Four took place from about 9.15 pm on 19-22 April, 2006, and the fifth began at around 3.15pm on 22 April, 2006. The average duration was approximately fifty minutes, and average group size 7.6 participants. Dr Kris Needham facilitated the focus groups.

Demographical Data Gathered at Focus Groups¹

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¹ The sample for this data was everyone who attended the focus groups over the five performances: n=38. This data was collected via a survey administered at the beginning of the session.
Gender of participants

- Male: 74%
- Female: 26%

How often do you see theatre?

- Weekly: 16%
- Once a month: 5%
- 4 or 5 times a year: 3%
- Once or twice a year: 32%
- Very rarely: 44%
How did you find out about this performance?

- 93% word of mouth
- 7% flyer/poster
- 0% in the media

Have you seen other solo or multimedia performances like Bodily?

- 56% no
- 26% yes, one or two
- 18% yes, several
Interpretations and Significant Moments of the Performance

There was a multiplicity of interpretations of the themes of Bodily, however most revolved around similar issues. Themes of beauty, the body, judgement, weight, acceptance, happiness, obsession, control, and the media were among those most remarked on. Symbolic elements of the performance were also discussed, for example the meaning of the lipstick, suitcase, and costumes. In addition, many significant moments from the performance were commented on. These often overlapped across the different group sessions. Some are discussed here, and others appear under different subheadings in this report, according to where they seem most appropriate.

These interpretations and significant moments are conflated here under the subheadings of: Beauty and body image, Judgements and body fascism, Magazines and media, Obsession and eating disorders, Duality of intelligence and emotion, Embodiment and disembodiment, Repetition, Confrontation, Dreaming, and a miscellaneous Other category.

Beauty and body image

“I think for me, there was a quote that she was saying about, ‘I’m beautiful, as a statistic’ ... cause I thought she was getting to a point where she realised she was beautiful, but there was always a qualifier to that ... so that was quite powerful in terms of women, and what defines beauty for women, and that notion that there’s always something nagging away ...”

“I also liked the mirror image thing, I thought that was a very, very clever theatrical effect, but I think the image that has stuck in my head is when she said, she sort of conquered her thighs, and next she can conquer the world, (laughter) ... how empowering it seems to be to her to have conquered her thighs, that she could conquer the whole world, I just thought ... I liked that idea, but it’s very sad, as well.”

Judgements and body fascism

“I think, what was very familiar, was ... in the beginning, when she was going, oh look at her, look, oh, isn’t ... (unclear) ... where, you find yourself doing that and you don’t want to, but you do, look at other girls, and go, ‘oh she looks pretty cool, she looks fat’ ... and it’s horrible to be that way, but it’s so hard to change, cause you are, you’re just conscious of it, and, you just can’t get, you can’t escape it, it controls you. And I even felt myself looking at Tess, going, she’s gorgeous, how can she be acting this way, (laughter) ... you know, how can someone like that ... I know she was playing a character, but I found myself even looking at her, and just saying, it’s like, every woman that’s on the screen in a magazine,
look at them, and say, oh, they’re great, they’re not ... it’s quite confronting thinking that your mind does that, subconsciously.”

Magazines and media

“I’ve known before this, say for the last 5, 10 years, that magazines were focussing more and more on body image, but that really highlighted for me how absurd the whole thing has gone.”

“The high point for me was when she cast out the magazine, cause I really connected with that, because the gesture of it, and conceptually, it was a new option, cause a lot of the stuff prior to that was rehearsing things that were problematic and yet we see it repeated again and again, and this was a new possibility, so it kind of had that release, it was a real, it was a real kind of (gasp) what would happen if ... you did that?”

“... She hit a wall, (laugh) really, and that was it all coming together, just all the emotions, and it all came down to a magazine, which embodied so much more than just a magazine.”

Obsession and eating disorders

“I thought the show was ... about obsessive thought patterns ... I think when you’re discussing anorexia or bulimia, if you’re on the outside of that experience it sometimes seems very easy to say: ‘look, this is crazy thinking, you need to eat or you’re gonna die ... you’re thin enough, stop, alright already.’ It’s very hard to get your head inside that obsessional quality of thinking, so that was something that, engaged me in the show, was trying to get a little bit more of a sense of the obsessionality of it all ... Because there’s the desire to control ... on the one hand, there’s this ... I think often in the show it was suggesting that the ideas in the magazines are there, it’s an external influence, but then there’s also this internal drive as well to try and control some aspect of one’s life.”

“Right at the beginning, when she moved from the table towards the light which was the scales, life seemed so hard for her and such a struggle just to move towards where she wanted to go ... I didn’t know, at the beginning I saw this light and I thought like she was moving towards something, she was aiming towards something, and that it was a real struggle to get there, and when she got there, there wasn’t much there, but it was actually the scales. But, that highlighted the whole thing for me, that life was such a struggle for this person, who through probably no fault of her own, had just got caught up in this whole media frenzy, and had just completely lost it, and life was such a struggle for her. I thought that the very beginning captured the essence of what it was about really, for me.”
“With the question ‘am I thin enough yet?’ it just makes me think of, for someone who is thinking that, when *would* be thin enough, when would they ever get to that, because I don’t think there is really a stage ... When are they ever going to be able to answer that question ‘yes,’ because I don’t think that question could ever be answered.”

*Duality of intelligence and emotion*

“... Something that I really enjoyed about the performance tonight was the struggle that she expressed between, on one hand knowing how ridiculous some of those urges felt, but still feeling very connected with the experience... the struggle and the tension ...”

“That’s what I found most interesting about the performance, was that dialogue between the internal struggle that she was going through, and also the external struggle of: ‘I don’t want to be involved in this, but I can’t help it,’ ... it’s just that reflection of what you’re dealing with, but also you’re having to cope with this completely other struggle that feeds off each other”

*Embodiment and disembodiment*

“Not just a self-hatred but a feeling of being dislocated from your own body, taking on a sort of dualistic idea of self and body and ... a distance from the other.”

*Repetition*

“There was a couple of lines that were repeated throughout it, like the fact that she didn’t want to take up space, and ... there was another one, I can’t think what it was, but she, they kept repeating throughout it, and whatever character she was being, it was always repetition of, she wanted to take up space, if she was angry about it, or she was sad about it, yeah I think the repetition of it, with the projections, just ...”

“There’s a lot of repetition in the dialogue, and... one thing that stands out is I think is there’s an opening, the first time text comes in, I’m not sure, I can’t remember if it’s spoken or recorded, there’s a question, “Am I, am I, am I?” It’s recorded isn’t it, “am I, am I am I?”... “am I fat?”, or “Am I thin enough yet?” *(laugh)*... I think was the question... And then that becomes turned around to “I am” sorts of statements, but it’s always, you know, seems to be going around “am I this, am I that, I am this, I’m not that.” So there’s that, and I suppose the music, often the same musical themes coming back, with a very repeated progression.”
“Sometimes when you repeat words or phrases though they can take on sort of different meanings ... so if you say ‘their bodies’ it’s like the three meanings of the word ‘their,’ “they are bodies,’ ‘their bodies,’ ‘there bodies’...”

**Confrontation**

“Confrontation. Every time she came forward, and when she was over near me, and she said ‘does my hair...?’ I said, ‘yes, yes, it’s lovely, it’s lovely’ because I felt that, and I felt really annoyed that we didn’t all contribute to make this poor girl feel more comfortable. And we didn’t ... I got involved in that moment and I felt uncomfortable, I felt embarrassed, I thought, ‘we should answer her, she’s talking to us.’ And that was the moment that I really engaged, because it brought out all of my maternal instincts, to say: ‘yes, you look lovely, you look fine, everybody, let’s say this, yes she looks good.’ ... And the other part, where she kept asking the audience, and it was on the other side and no one answered and I kept thinking ‘answer the woman.”

**Dreaming**

“I think the whole thing was very dreamlike, and therefore it was more the impression of what’s going on in somebody’s mind, rather than what’s going on in real life.”

**Other**

“I think the thing that’s lingered for me, the thing that came away from it was the crisis of being OK ... that’s the final image we had, the final words are: ‘am I OK?’ and there’s a real insistence, almost, well, I felt, asking the audience to actually yell out, ‘yes, you are,’ that I found the same moment of crisis in that because all the issues of construction of what is beautiful and what isn’t, sets up the ongoing problematic for me of, well, if I say you’re OK, you’re now dependant on me to tell you you’re OK rather than finding your own OK-ness, so for me that might be the dominant theme, or it was the thing that I got from it ... because there was much of her journey, that I could see she was genuinely experiencing it, and I found myself having difficulty entering into the fullness of that experience. Cause I don’t know what it’s like to have that all the time around me, as a man, or as my own person, to think that I have to look a particular way. I experience maybe another context of how I might behave in certain ways, so I could see an identity link there, but I did have a challenge throughout the performance of totally believing her, but finding my journey with her at times a bit of a struggle to stay with her.”
The Resolution of the Performance

There was often quite animated discussion about the resolution of *Bodily*. People had a multiplicity of opinions about how it ended, and how they would have liked it to end.

These discussions are discussed here under the subheadings of: Interpretation, Catharsis and fortification, and Desired outcomes.

**Interpretation**

“A: It was only at the end with the exorcism stuff, I identified with it from ... my own experience of media, wanting to cast it out of myself and I could actually get a bit of a cathartic moment there, so I felt trusting at that point, because I actually thought that something good might come out of this journey, that part of the journey.

B: She lost me completely at the exorcism moment ... I completely identified the whole way through, I was right in all these experiences, so there was just no way that was ever going to happen, I couldn’t go there, I thought it was too easy to have some sort of possibility of conclusion or hope, I didn’t see it, I didn’t think it should have been there.

C: Yeah, I found it too quick. There was a lot of setting up of the stuff, in such a way that the resolution was too fast.

B: I disagree, the resolution is completely impossible full-stop.

D: But was it a resolution? See, I didn’t think it was. I thought it was just one tiny little battle that she won, but not the war.

A: Yes, I didn’t interpret it as a resolution, it was merely ... it gave a new choice.

D: She’s going to go back home, she’s going to worry about the magazine she tossed, and she’s going to go back the next day and have the same battle again ... I don’t think you can resolve problems like that that quickly, that’s why I get frustrated.

C: I didn’t see it as being the end of a journey...

A: I just saw it as an alternative, so it wasn’t meant as an end, I was just seeing it was a new possibility that she offered in that moment. I mean, she still hadn’t solved the chocolate problem. The chocolate’s still going to be there.”

“A: ... it didn’t take a position, I just felt, it was just a general discussion, and if that’s what it aimed to do, then it did it very well, it didn’t kind of come to a point and say: this is crazy, or ... this is how women, or people in general, should approach body image as an alternative, it was just like, this is just how it is.

B: I’m not sure you could take a standpoint with it, though, because it is such an individual thing with everyone, that ... I think more people would have a more adverse reaction to it, because they’d go, ‘how dare you say that’,
and get angry about it, whereas because she’s taking a more general standpoint, people can take that information and reflect it and take their own meaning from it as well, like you might just ... alienate the audience...

C: But she did conclude a couple of times that she was beautiful, which was a summation of all her thoughts, really, wasn’t it, that she didn’t have to go down that path of being pushed by society and the media.

B: But she also repeated it a lot, like she was trying to convince herself.

A: She followed it with: ‘do I look fat in this dress’ ...(laughter)"

“... I liked the idea of the case, the way there was all these things in it but yet it looked empty, that you can have all these things in life but yet you could feel empty inside, I thought it was kind of a metaphor for that, which I liked...

B: Just with the suitcase though, I thought it was nice that everything kind of went into the suitcase afterwards, and it was all packed away neatly, kind of like her baggage, and I kind of would have liked to have seen her walk away with it, or somehow show that she was free from it.

A: Maybe she wanted to leave it behind, you know. That’s what I thought, I thought she was packing it all away and maybe she was getting over it, and leaving ... these things aren’t important...

C: ... but then in the end, it wasn’t.”

Catharsis and fortification

“I suppose there’s that basic point that a play ... should end up on an uplifting note, in which case it should end up with the: yes, I’ve come through it, and I’ve ... triumphed, or, closer to reality, from your experience in fighting that particular demon, no, you never really lick her, you can only control it.”

Desired outcomes

“A: It would have been nice to see her get to the point where she’s just beautiful, and not even use the word ‘beautiful’...

B: ... Accepting herself...

C: But does it actually ever really end?”

“I wanted her to cry at the end. I don’t know why ... I thought, because she got so intense, and so crazy, and she got so many characters, and ... some were looking strong, some were looking weak ... but they were all pretty unhappy, and they all had a goal that they couldn’t achieve, and at the end, I think the only think she wanted to do was crying, and I wish she would cry at the end, just to wrap it up, rather than just leave it...”
Implications and Interpretations of Projection

There were various moments when projections relating to Bodily were mentioned. The term ‘projection’ has many definitions, however only some are relevant to this research, as they deal with audience reception and performance. There is some overlap here with the section on significant moments, however this section is confined to those significant moments that involved projection.

Generally, the moments mentioned were about the audiovisual projections, however the other kind of projection of interest here is psychological projection. Psychological projection is defined broadly as a defence mechanism where someone ‘projects’ his or her own thoughts onto someone or something else. This relates to when an audience member who has a certain experiential background might read a dominant theme, stemming from their experience, into the performance. Interestingly, many of the observed instances of audiovisual projection seemed to crossover with psychological projection, as the images made people read that moment through a frame of their own life experience. In addition, there were moments when people saw themselves in the different characters, again projecting psychologically into the performance. The audiovisual projection often therefore incited or encouraged a psychological projection through identification.

Audiovisual to psychological

“When she had the [mirror] projection up, and she was going... who hasn’t done that, so I suppose I related to it going ‘god, I wish I didn’t have this, I wish I was thinner,’ or ‘I wish I could get rid of that bloody extra roll...”

“For me it was, cause you talked about the images of the models, some of them kind of looking kind of glamorous, others looking anorexic, inter-cut with what I can only assume are images taken off Internet sites or something, of young anorexic girls. That’s the image that I won’t be able to forget, because the particular order in which those images were shown, and the juxtaposition, was really quite shocking, and... it was revisiting a scene that had been quite light, the first time she did the checkout scene, it was kind of a ‘ha-ha-ha’ moment, yeah I recognise that, it’s silly thinking but we all do it, ‘a-ha-ha,’ and then going back to that situation a second time with those images was very unsettling.”

“In the images that she put up of what were anorexic people, and then stars that nearly looked anorexic, if they weren’t, but, how that’s so common now, and that’s actually desirable, for most people, and it never used to be, I don’t think ... Just that it wasn’t far in between seeing those slim celebrities to seeing those anorexic people, there wasn’t much in between, they were very borderline anorexic, and that that is desirable to women, is very concerning ... and I mean, I’m a victim of ... to me, that doesn’t look- oh, the anorexic ones, some of them did, were quite disturbing, but some of the thin ones didn’t actually look that
disturbing, and like something you’d like to look like ... I mean, you can see the anorexic images and say ‘OK, that’s too far,’ and then you see the very slim ones and say, ‘OK, I’d like to be that, but not be anorexic, but ... you don’t realise that there’s such a fine line, once you go that far, then you might lose control of your conscious thoughts and you might continue to become anorexic because you just get carried away with it...”

“I think you can empathise ... because the character wasn’t going through all the things in the extreme of going into anorexia, there were all the images of it, but it’s not so much the character was anorexic ... the character was talking about purging, and everything like that, but, at the same time it’s just like, you’re struggling with images of how you are supposed to be, even if you’re not ... it’s not particularly about weight, or anything like that ... I think it dealt a lot with images of how other people look like to you, and how you see yourself reflected in various places, so that’s something that I kind of took from it, was images of all the different mirrors we kind of have, she’s looking in the screen but, the screen’s like a projection, it’s not actually a mirror, and asking the audience all these questions, it’s like the audience becomes, all the different mirrors you find around yourself, the way you kind of have to constantly look at yourself, and ways that things are reflected back ... I think that’s an emotional response, because there’s a constant fear in life, about how you look.”

“I think it’s partly what we believe, deep down ... my sister and I, we’ll criticise a celebrity for being too thin, but secretly that’s what we want to be ... We were actually, when the images started to come up, commenting on how attractive the first image was, and then made it ... felt guilty that the next image was so dramatic, you’re sort of thinking, oh, we’re sort of putting that in ... we’re imposing that on ourselves, ’cause we’re the ones saying that you have this role in society because you look that way.”

“I thought it was very ironic that a lot of the media was used to emphasise all the points, and this is the enemy, well, maybe not, but ... we’re using it to criticise the points of what the enemy is doing to show us what’s wrong with them.”

“Just, it was saying things that she wasn’t saying, that the character didn’t have to be so explicit and obvious, because the projections were doing it for her...”

“I think it had moments of real life, almost when she had her back to us, and it was like she was looking in a mirror, standing there, feeling herself ... that to me was more like something that she would actually do at home, and ... I think it went in and out of that ... standing in the line, where she said at one point, looking at the other girls, looking each other up and down, things like that, that was almost like ... me talking to [my friend] saying something like, ‘oh, look at that girl, that-‘ ... So I think it had moments of real events, as well as the dream ... Yeah, like standing in front of the mirror, like any girl would just stand in front of the mirror, and all girls would have done at some point.”
“I liked the beginning, with the projector with all the calories and how it all came down ... it’s not actually being happy with what you eat ... if it does become starvation, you actually aren’t enjoying life, and it becomes like a formula, where you’re going, OK, these are the only things you can have, and if you don’t or you do something, and you over-eat or something, then it’s kind of like, what’s the point? ... Just the whole interaction of that, and her doing all the different ... It is [a common image of weight loss], but I don’t think you actually realise it until you actually look at it in that way, when it’s all listed there, you go, OK, yeah actually, people do that: count.”

“A: ... The most striking thing was the images at the end, I thought, the juxtaposition between the models and then the anorexic, or bulimic ... I mean, it’s definitely the most thing that stood out, the image that would stay in my mind from the production.
B: Especially when it started with the image of Giselle, who’s not, well, really underweight, and then there were ... celebrities who were showing ribs, so almost the juxtaposition, the gap narrowed, it went from Giselle to the really anorexic victim, but then there was ... I think it might have been Brittany Murphy, sitting down, and you could see her bones, and suddenly the line became a little bit blurred ... I thought that was really well done.”

“The most effective moments for me was when the projections ... stopped. When it was much more about direct address, when she snapped out of the more stylised performance and started talking much more conversationally. I hooked onto that instantly. I think maybe it was the fact that there was stuff going on before, that actually made me pay much more attention to it, but I felt almost a sense of relief when that happened, I just thought that was interesting ... I liked those bits ...”

“The pictures of the anorexic ladies, they were so shocking, and then you look to the glossy photos of the models on the catwalks, and they’re almost skin and bones too, and you think, ‘how could we have missed that?”

“... I suppose I found the standing on the scales very effective, because everyone’s done that, I mean, even if it’s just weighing a suitcase or something or other like that, but it did put you in the moment when you had the point of view on the screen ... I thought that really brought you in and it was a good setting up point for taking you into the rest of the performance.”

“... The text on the screen, ‘nobody loves a fat arse,’ that was the first thing I ... (unclear) ... and I straight away thought, yeah ... and we sit at the pub sometimes, having a couple of beers, and we’ll be seeing girls walk past, and we’ll be sitting there going: ‘look at the size of that...’ stuff like that ... (laughter) ... You know, when you watch that, you just sit there thinking, that’s just so shallow ... it makes you think, that’s just ridiculous, but we all sit there doing it, you sit there in a group of blokes, and they’ll sit there saying it ... (unclear) ... a skinny girl, or a well-proportioned girl will go past you and you go: ‘have a look at that,
boys,’ so ... but that’s exactly the same as a magazine, it just shows how we’ve all been ... our opinions have been shaped by that stuff.”

“I was thinking, especially when the words were coming across, it was exactly what [my students at high school] had written, and what they say to themselves...”

**Discussions of Transformation and Influence Through Performance**

This section looks at the discussions that were held in the focus groups around the possibilities of transformation and influence not only through *Bodily*, but also through performance in general. Although most people said that they had been changed by performance, it became evident that it is hard to be specific about the conditions for this change. Some possible conditions for change that arose from the focus groups might be when people identify with the performance or the characters, or when their views and beliefs about a topic are affirmed by the performance. Also, noticing things like the duality of intelligence and emotion present in the play could contribute to identification with personal stories and emotions, as could the exploration in performance of an alternate perspective on the issue. Also discussed was that how entertaining and humorous the performance is could affect the delivery of its message. The very nature of transformation itself was talked about, in particular the scale possible of such change, and whether it might better be classified as influence. Interestingly, many focus group discussions also centred around the longevity of change.

In this section, these discussions and comments are condensed under the subheadings of: Identification, Duality of intelligence and emotion, Affirmation, Entertainment, Another perspective, Transience, and a miscellaneous Other category.

**Identification**

“When she said ['is there something between my teeth'], he actually elbowed me and went, ‘that’s you’ ... It was sort of like, snap...”

“I think for me it was probably Tess in the shopping centre, in the supermarket, because that reaches everybody, everybody goes to the supermarket, and ... I know that I’ve been in the supermarket line, and you’ve got the pictures of the skinny girls on one hand, and the chocolate bars on the other, so, looking at the skinny girl, ‘oh god, I feel really depressed, I think I’m going to go for a chocolate’ ... (laughter) ... It’s that, it’s that cycle that hit home for me.”

“A lot of the struggle she was going through, I was sitting there going, ‘oh god, that’s me’ ... like, I think like that, I do that, even when I try not to be like that, and I was sitting there wondering, are other people having the same experience,
of that identification with what she’s going through? ... I guess that would make it more personal, it felt, as you were saying, very intimate, almost like chatting with a friend, that shared experience, and I found it quite personal, rather than some theatre performances, you’re very much watching a show, and entertainment; that was a real connection I felt...”

“It really does heighten it for sure. You could have past experiences of it, and this would just heighten it, or you could not have any experience of it, and this would bring it to your attention ... Her character didn’t make you feel stupid, either, because her character was showing you that paradox [of on one hand knowing the game, but on another level being sucked into it]. She really wanted the magazine as well, and she was aware of it, but she still tried to read it, so ... we could identify with it as well.”

“I think, specific to tonight, what was interesting was that, I think... knowing Tess as well, having no idea that those thoughts had ever gone through her head, thinking they’d only gone through mine, so it’s something about knowing you’re not alone, which I think was quite powerful, which was interesting because it was something that I didn’t know before about her, and I did notice, and it’s a lot to take on, knowing that you’re not alone is a big thing ... there wasn’t a sense of disengagement, it was just, something very simple, it was a “me too” thing that can be quite big even though it sounds quite small.”

“Just the idea of what you were saying, of the ‘me too’ thing ... where even if it doesn’t radically alter the way you think, as you were saying, it modifies the way you think, and that you see the prevalence of it. The fact that it’s there gives you a feeling of acceptance.”

“Yeah, definitely, I think lots of things that I’ve seen have, it’s just hard to articulate how and to what extent it does that ... This, this did, as well, to the extent that you connect a little bit more with the intensity of that struggle ... I mean, it’s sort of a gradual change, not necessarily a: ‘bang, wow, I’d never realised that’ ... so, yeah, I guess for me it’s happened in smaller ways than being slapped in the face and suddenly realising something.”

“... I feel like that today, as someone who struggles with weight all the time... now I’m feeling like ... I don’t want to be that, cause I am someone who spends a lot of time on my own, and I definitely sympathise with the character, and can see myself in a lot of things that that character did, and ... I’m here now and thinking, that I will change...”

“I think personal stories are very powerful, so a narrative about someone’s experience, you can connect to on a personal level, whether that be in a performance or on film, when you’re following a person’s life, then you can identify with parts of that yourself, and that could be quite transforming ... I suppose I was thinking immediately of the performance tonight, how it was quite personal ... and I suppose picking up what you were saying before about
how the theoretical can be quite rational in some ways, but with a performance, I think it can bring out the emotion and the humanity of the experience, which is something maybe that academia, or other forms, don’t do as well.”

_Duality of intelligence and emotion_

“A: I found too, when you were talking about having the sub-clinical eating disorders, where you sit there and you look at it from a sort of theoretical intelligent perspective, and you can see the humour in the elastic band, but you can sit there also and go, I’m kidding myself if I don’t think that’s me, and I’m still in that situation of trying to control eating habits and diet and looking thin’... I think for a lot of females there’s perhaps that intellectual side of us that’s quite aware of what’s going on, but again that emotional side that just takes over.

B: Yep, and the fact that you don’t actually see some of those images in magazines as being wrong, and it’s actually potentially quite desirable... that’s that thin line again.”

“Probably two things for me, cause one, I’ve got a very close family member who has anorexia, so for me, I found it quite helpful in terms of understanding a bit more about what that’s about and ... I see externally, and I try and understand it ... but I think that’s what really hit ... the feelings behind it, and the torture that people put themselves through, so on that level I suppose I got a lot out of it, but on another level, I suppose I’m also trying to always connect these things politically, to draw out the bizarre ironies, like the chocolate and the magazines, so, for me in that way it was quite empowering, that was good to see that that, that is happening in the performance, and that we’re being connected so that people could see how ridiculous it is, and how constructed those images are.”

“I think it’s obviously though, when you’re not actually in it, when you’re actually in that experience of bulimia, in my instance, for example ... at a theoretical level you can understand those interconnections and the structural issues and the political issues, but when you do have that voice constantly going inside your head ... there’s the rational experience and the emotional experience, and they’re quite different things ... I think it was brought out quite strongly. I think maybe, when you were talking before about when it went from sort of a play to a discussion or conversation, that her voice actually brought it back to the fact that this could just be a real person that we’re talking about, it’s not just about all that structural stuff...”

_Affirmation_

“I think that’s what I look to performing arts for, though, those marginal voices that aren’t heard in the mainstream, and that affirms maybe rather than helps
me decide on my values, cause I think I’m pretty clear about what my values are but it affirms what you do believe, and what you’re not seeing, elsewhere...

“I think it did more affirm ... a lot of what Tessa included were things that I had experienced on some level or witnessed on some level ... like the shopping centre, like the magazine articles, I was reading them today, I was looking at images today, standing in line ... I went to the football on Friday night, and girls were walking past, and we were critiquing them, it was just, it was more, affirming things that go on in my everyday life, or things that I’ve thought, or one of my sisters... some of the things that Tessa was saying and the way she was talking about herself is the way I know that she talks about herself. So, I think it was more just, affirming things that I had in some way experienced, but just putting them all on the stage, almost flashbacks at times.”

Entertainment

“The humour allowed you to get into it more...”

“I think from a personal point of view ... a performance has to engage you emotionally before it has any ... to change your point of view, if it’s something that’s just something you’re disengaged from, or something that’s just a logical presentation, it doesn’t really, it’s unlikely to really affect you, I think, you really have to be emotionally engaged, you gotta get that hook in first, and then it may affect you.”

“I feel manipulated by filmmakers when they reveal the apparatus to you, that they are just making you feel things when there’s nothing else ... The challenge is to somehow bridge that gap, and to make very political things so entertaining, that, it seems a bit insidious, but it’s like, so that people don’t actually get it ... nobody really goes out of their comfort zones to find these things, I think it’s more when something is hugely entertaining, and you don’t even realise, until later, you realise ‘oh wow,’ there was actually this whole, this whole message, this whole meaning behind it ... something quite entertaining, that’s, I mean, just accepting the fact that the kind of world we have now is that you need to be entertaining to get people’s attention, and that that doesn’t necessarily cheapen your message, but it’s just a way of blending these two things, so that ... the message can reach people, I guess ... the compromise there...”

Another perspective

“I think to some extent you can be shown something through a performance that you didn’t necessarily bring the understanding with you.”

“Yeah, I’m pretty much the same, if I do go and see something that’s a bit different, I’m looking for a different angle, some way I haven’t looked at it
before. It gives you a more holistic ... the more ideas you have or ways you have of looking at things, I think you make a better choice.”

“A: I think in a way it’s the role of the artist to do that, to constantly have people question the paradigms that they have, the way they see things, to look at it differently ... just plant a couple of questions in there, that you thought you were going along happily...

B: I think that’s all it is really, isn’t it, it’s not answers, it’s not solutions, it’s just creating a different lens, or a different set of questions.

A: ... to look at something from a different perspective. And usually they’re quite familiar things, something that the way that you’ve seen them happen in your everyday experience, and then to see that it’s actually, it can be quite different if you look at it in another way ... I’m not someone who will go to the theatre or a movie for some froth and bubble, for something that ... sometimes you need a feel-good, (laughter) but I think that’s one of the things you can get from art and from live performance that you don’t necessarily get in TV or music and stuff like that...

“Throw a spotlight on, an explanation, or alternative point of view, to something that you’ve experienced, that you may not have thought of before, and I guess, being a man, and having a woman talk about the way a woman feels about that particular issue, and throw some different illumination on why they feel that way and what they feel.”

Transience

“One thing I was thinking, is that sometimes I go and see a film or a piece of theatre, and I feel really changed about it at the time, and then, as time wears on, the effect can really dwindle, especially if I see ... I try so hard to be interested in politics, and I can’t make myself, but I’ll see political theatre, and I’ll get really revved up about it, and really passionate about it, and at the time I’ll feel very passionate about it but I think that the longer I’m away from that performance, the effect dwindles, so something has to sustain it somehow. So, with TV, that’s got a lot more to answer for, because that has the ability to really change you, if you’re watching say a television series or something like that ... so, I’ve definitely been changed by theatre, and then some of it is lasting, I can’t even think of any specific examples, but some of it is lasting, but then some of it is, I’m very passionate about it at the time, and then, the next week I’ve forgotten it.”

“A: See, for artistic performances, be it a play, or a film, maybe art itself, to be effective _has_ to be an emotional response, otherwise, what’s the point?... ‘cause just sitting there going: ‘oh, I need to fill in some time,’ why bother? ... If there’s something you’ve always been sitting on the fence, you don’t actually have one opinion or the other, then seeing a particular performance would go ‘OK, I’m no longer sitting on the fence, I’m going to sit on this side, or, maybe it will make you sit on that side, if there’s
something you’re undecided against. If you’re already firmly on that side, I don’t think seeing a performance is going to shift to there, but if you’re already not sure...

B: ... It might give you a view from the fence though, it might help you see both sides...”

“When we were sitting there admiring an image and then the next image was the anorexic, it almost made a wake up: ‘Oh, I really shouldn’t be thinking and admiring someone that’s that close to that,’ ... I think that, with body image, because it’s a female perspective, I might walk away and think, ‘Oh yeah, some of those - that’s what I think, that’s ridiculous,’ walk away, but I think it would be only short-term, that I would actually...”

“A: With tonight’s performance, you can watch it, and ... you know that this happens, you know that you’re living this, but you still don’t do anything about it, you still continue to live that way, even though in your head you know it’s wrong, you think, ‘No, I’ll, you know, if I ever get to that point, I’ll stop.’

B: So you don’t walk out of here a convert?

A: No, you probably should, but I still know I won’t...”

“In relation to all kinds of different performances ... film, music, theatre, all kinds of things, I come out of them having what I think are massively intense emotional experiences, that within a couple of days seem to have just passed completely, but I’m sure in subtle, almost imperceptible ways, they’re not entirely transient, they’ve got me thinking about something else, that I recall, and I might not always go back, (click) ‘oh, that was just the kind of thing that Tess was talking about...’ That might not happen, but it’s ticking over back there somewhere, it’s not always a really forward, really intense thing, but ...”

Other

“If you’re affected emotionally, you will eventually be affected intellectually.”

“I think it can act as a catalyst. If you make a conscious effort to investigate something further and push something or change, of course you can do it. But we’re so used to desensitising ourselves to violence or sex, or whatever is taboo, we’re used to seeing something and ... compartmentalising it and saying it doesn’t really affect me.”

“Perhaps performance is a very good medium of getting across a message, but if we perhaps can channel subtly more influential messages through that method, we can influence the way they think to a better method or a broader method of thinking, rather than just saying, well, they look great, that’s what I want to be, that’s the norm, that’s how we should be.”
“A: I think a filmmaker, maybe someone like Michael Moore, who does that sort of exposé media, almost allows us to visualise somebody in a particular light, I'm thinking of the one that he did on 9/11, to me, put George Bush in a very, very, very bad light, and I went away thinking, ‘my god, I can't believe we fell for it,’ but in actual fact, it is only really one person’s view, at the end of the day, but...

B: But you felt your views shift?
A: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Because I don’t particularly follow politics, I don’t particularly follow the US politics... but, after seeing that, it was a little bit: ‘God...’ Blinded by ignorance, I guess.”

Data From Follow-Up Questionnaires

General Comments

The follow-up questionnaires were sent to each focus group participant who had indicated they would like to receive one. They were sent via email, approximately two weeks after the performance season, and were received back for up to two months after this. The surveys asked mainly about the participants’ memory retention of moments from the performance, and also about how they responded to the focus group process in general. Participants were also invited to comment further about Bodily. The questionnaire was devised by Tessa Needham and Ronaldo Morelos.
Demographical Data Gathered From Questionnaires

I found that my participation in the focus groups was useful for my understanding of the issues in the performance.

- strongly agree: 17%
- agree: 60%
- mildly agree: 3%
- neither agree nor disagree: 3%
- mildly disagree: 3%

I have retained ideas, images, themes and moments from the performance.

- strongly agree: 34%
- agree: 53%
- mildly agree: 10%
- neither agree nor disagree: 3%
- mildly disagree: 3%

*The sample for this data was every focus group attendee who completed the subsequent questionnaire: n=29. This data was collected via a survey administered via email two weeks after the performance season.*
Memory Retention of Concepts and Significant Moments

The participants were questioned about their memory retention of specific moments of the performance, to try to gauge the longevity and impact of the piece. As shown in the pie graph above, 97% of people remembered ideas, images, themes and moments from the performance. Outlined below are some of the responses about the specific moments that participants remembered. These are divided into concepts remembered, and significant moments and aspects remembered.

Concepts remembered

“General perceptions of how we view people who are overweight. How our judgments of people are based on how people look, and how we make comparisons with ourselves.”

“I liked the humour you put in the play. It kept it light enough but didn’t distract from the message. It let the audience off the hook a bit and kept them interested and involved.”

“The struggles within the character between knowing rationally that she is beautiful and shouldn’t be so influenced by images presented by the media and a compulsion to turn her body into something similar to those images.”

“How we constantly need reassurance that we look OK.”

“The general theme of body image and the way in which the media influences that and the way in which we influence the media, it’s kind of like a vicious symbiotic relationship each of us feeding off each other.”

“The idea that body image is a fluid and oscillating construct and eating disorders as something that is never over, never ‘cured’.”

“I have also reflected on the ideas it raised and my own approach to body image. As a female, body image is something I find a struggle sometimes and often find myself sucked into looking at magazines that promote an ideal body image as thin, even though in theory I hate such ‘literature’!”

“I have reflected on the personal/intimate nature of the performance in affecting the way I feel about body image, the worth of women and how I understand and make sense of other women I know, particularly those who have body image issues/eating disorders.”

Significant moments and specific aspects remembered
There were a few moments that were widely cited as memorable, and these are noted with an asterisk at the beginning of the paradigmatic quote.

“I have retained the image of the character saying that she is beautiful.”

“The chocolate/magazine dilemma at the supermarket.”

“Squeezing into tight jeans in front of a sales assistant.”

“The opening image of the character crossing the stage in painstakingly slow movements towards the ‘scales’.”

“The image of the character in a triumphant pose on the chair and the line ‘first my thighs then the world’.”

“The character looking at a member of the audience and asking ‘does my hair look alright?’ or ‘Do I have anything in my teeth?’”

“The simple white dress which focused attention on the speaker’s face and was not distracting, the smearing of the lipstick which seemed to be a defiant act, the addition of a wig and blue jacket.”

“The lipstick turned into warpaint.”

“The suitcase – simulating both the baggage we collect in our lives as well as our different reactions in different situations.”

“The minimal difference between images of celebrities and the images of young women with an eating disorder.”

“The multimedia components have stayed with me- I think they had more of an impact than if the play had been dialogue alone.”

“The use of music/sound helped in creating different moods, the props were used cleverly and the visuals were used to good effect.”

“I still have a strong sense of the image of looking down at the scales that was projected on the wall whilst enacted by the performer.”

“The image of the central character looking in the projection and mirroring the movements of checking out her body.”

**The Resolution of the Performance**

Like in the focus groups themselves, the resolution of the performance was of
interest in the questionnaires. There were some comments about the resolution, and interestingly these somewhat conflicted. It seemed that given the relative ambiguity of the ending, people projected their own desires onto it.

“I’m glad that you finally decided that you were beautiful. It’s something we should all believe of ourselves.”

“I also think that it would have been nice for you to take the suitcase/baggage with you – your character didn’t seem to have resolved her issues and I personally thought it would be nice to see her take it, saying to me that she still was not free from her paranoia.”

**Transformation and Influence**

There were also some interesting comments in the questionnaires about the potential of performance to influence and transform. Here, these are broken down into identification with moments in the performance, and evidence of people having changed since *Bodily*.

**Identification with concepts and moments in performance**

“Too many, that’s good, that made me think! And reaffirm that I am not alone with such issue, very rare woman are not concerned!”

“I just thought it was really interesting to see how some of the aspects of the performance you see everyday. People reading magazines filled with people talking about weight and how easy it is to get caught up in it all.”

“I was overwhelmed with empathy for the character during and after the performance. I wanted to follow her out of the door when she left. When I saw Tess all bubbly and happy after the show I had trouble communicating with her and accepting her as herself. In the vulnerable state I was in, I wanted to talk with her character.”

“[Another participant] described watching the performance and thinking that the character was completely crazy. I watched the performance and thought: ‘this character is me.’”

**Evidence of change**

“In relation to statements that I have heard or said, yes. Daily I think or hear something that is about the female image. Frequently this reminds me of the play. I have found myself and others critiquing figures in the media and everyday life, often in a negative way.”
“I have also resisted looking at those horrible magazines since the performance!!”

“The performance has made me question many of my beliefs about body image and my own eating habits. It has also made me more reluctant to buy women’s magazines.”

“As someone who works with young people in a therapeutic context I have become more attune to the possible dynamics, ideas and thoughts they might have about body image.”

**Criticisms and Suggestions**

Also prevalent in the survey answers were some criticism and suggestions about the performance:

“I wondered about the fact that in the performance, there was not much mention of relationships and the way body image concerns impact on one’s interactions with romantic partners. Was this intentional? Although I do see women’s body image as an individual thing, a concept in her mind, and a construct of self, often this concept becomes mixed up with perceptions of what others (particularly males) find attractive. I guess one performance can not touch on every aspect of the issue.”

“I still believe that the message may get lost in theatrics.”

“Perhaps there could have been more examples of ways to overcome anorexia or thoughts that help challenge the idea of falling into that illness.”

**Focus Groups Experience**

It was important to ask about the participants’ experience in the focus group process, as this is a relatively new methodology in performance studies. There were some very helpful comments made about the process, especially those that reflected on how it affected their reception of the performance.

“Unsure, discussed it with others at length afterwards, it caused me to think a fair amount on a lot of different issues, some of those thing were a lot more my personal politics, and how they related to the performance, and ways in which I reacted to things that came up in the discussion afterwards. A lot of that was my feeling a lot of people misconstrued things in the performance, or were very much seeking to find what they wanted to be in it, rather than reacting to it as a separated point of view. But in most ways I accepted that as the point, that it is something to react to as well as a personal experience we’re able to witness.”
“After the focus group I have been considering the variety of interpretations of the performance. It became clear to me that the moments that were most crucial for me or worked best were often the inverse for other people I have spoken to. Obviously this performance had significant layerings of meaning and modes of communication which allowed greater freedom of interpretation.”

“I felt it was an extremely powerful performance and way to get across an important social and political issue, one that is not often pursed in mainstream society or in other art forms. The focus group enabled me to build on my understanding of the issues raised in the performance, but seeing how others were impacted on, and discussing further different responses.”

“I had high hopes that my participation in the focus group would answer some of my questions that arose in the performance. It did so only insofar as it caused me personally to think about the performance in greater depth, and with the intention of clearly expressing my ideas to others. I found the answers myself, rather than in collaboration with the group.”

“Having a focus group immediately afterwards was an interesting way of concretising certain experiences that are usually much vaguer. The “disappearance” part of the performance – its ephemerality – was somehow altered through being asked immediately to formulate an opinion. On the whole it means my recollection of the performance is much higher than it is for other performances that I have seen.”

“The focus group process was well-facilitated and enjoyable. It was not until I participated in the focus group and had that immediate chance to reflect on the performance that many aspects came to my attention. I wonder whether I would even have noticed or remembered these aspects had I not participated in the focus group. It was also very interesting to hear the perspective of others, who took different ideas away from their experience of the performance. My only critical comments are that the room was very cold, and that I felt slightly uneasy in regards to the 4 observers of the focus group, as I did not know why they were observing and whether they were paying attention to what we were saying, the group dynamic, the process or something else. Although they were acknowledged by the facilitator, it would have been good to know more about them and why they were there.”

“I found the focus group interesting as it opened me up to the ideas and interpretations of others. I do often find it difficult to express my thoughts immediately after a performance as it takes a little while to process everything in my own mind first, so it was great to hear other people’s perceptions while I was still mulling things over myself.”
Appendix G: List of Publications

Following is a list of articles, papers and chapters I have published during my PhD candidature:


2005 Fiction, Non-fiction and Dissent: a case study of Michael Moore and the Academy Awards. University of Western Sydney College of Arts, Education and Social Science conference, University of Western Sydney, Australia, 7- 9 October 2005. Published on conference CD-ROM.

List of Presentations

Following is a list of conference presentations I have made during my PhD candidature:

2007  *Performance as Research in Bodily*
       Critical Animals Creative Research Symposium
       This is Not Art festival, Newcastle, Australia
       28 September

2007  *Performance as Research in Bodily*
       College of Arts, Education and Social Science conference
       University of Western Sydney, Australia
       28-29 September

2007  *Fat Pig as Provocative and Transformative Performance*
       New Scholar’s Forum
       International Federation of Theatre Research conference
       University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
       10-14 July

2007  *Performance as Research in Bodily*
       Performance as Research Working Group
       International Federation of Theatre Research conference
       University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
       10-14 July

2006  *Bodily: conjunction and fermentation*
       ADSA conference
       Sydney University
       4-7 July
2005  *Reality TV and Projected Reality: a case study of Australian Big Brother’s Merlin Luck*

“(Post)dramatic text in theatrical context” Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research (FIRT/IFTR) and the Drama Department of the Jagiellonian University conference
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
17- 20 November

2005  *Fiction, Non-fiction and Dissent: a case study of Michael Moore and the Academy Awards*

College of Arts, Education and Social Science conference
University of Western Sydney, Australia
7- 9 October

2005  *Reality TV and Projected Reality: a case study of Australian Big Brother’s Merlin Luck*

New Scholar’s Forum
International Federation of Theatre Research conference
University of Maryland, USA
27 June- 1 July
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Education and Social Science conference,* University of Western Sydney,
Australia, 9 October.
Author (2005b), 'Fiction, Non-fiction and Dissent: a case study of Michael
Moore and the Academy Awards.' *College of Arts, Education and Social
Science conference,* University of Western Sydney, Australia, 9 October.
Author (2005), 'Reality TV and Projected Reality: a case study of Australian Big Brother's Merlin Luck.' Paper presented at the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR/FIRT), University of Maryland, USA, 28 June.

Author (2006), Bodily

Author (2006), Bodily (extract). Sydney University, ADSA (Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies) conference.

Author (2006), Bodily (process journal).


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