

Politicising performances of ‘care’: Dance theatre by and with Australian artists with disability

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Summary

In this thesis, I discuss performances of ‘care’ that materialise in the development and presentation of three professional dance theatre works. These contemporary Australian performance productions are Murmuration’s first major work by Sarah-Vyne Vassallo with Dan Daw, *Days Like These* (2017), Force Majeure’s collaboration with Dance Integrated Australia, *Off The Record* (2016) by Danielle Micich and Philip Channells, and Dianne Reid’s collaboration with Melinda Smith, *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)* (2015). This research neither prescribes nor proscribes, but documents traces of Australian contemporary dance practitioners turning towards incorporating the aesthetics and lived experiences of disability.

In Part One, I introduce my project, sitting at an intersection between dance, theatre and performance studies, and disability and Deaf studies. Reviewing theoretical discussion of dance and theatre practice by and with disabled practitioners, I call for disability performance theory to engage critically but explicitly in care. I mobilise a tension identified by care researcher Christine Kelly (2016) between feminist calls to reattribute value to care and disability perspectives which regard care as a masquerade for oppression, and argue this tension presents a generative framework for exploring the instances of care surfacing in my fieldwork. I apply this tension inherent to care to James Thompson’s (2015) ‘aesthetics of care’ and suggest an extension to his theory – a ‘feminist disability aesthetics of care’.

In Part Two, I examine my ethnographic observations of dance theatre spanning rehearsal and performance spaces, supplemented by semi-structured interviews with directors, key artists and an audience group. I distil particular materialisations of care from acts of disclosure, a Deaf–hearing world confrontation and live performance encounters. I politicise these distillations of care by drawing on the tension inherent between feminist care ethics and disability care politics. Finally, I consider these politicised performances of care in my proposal of a ‘crystal of care’, an irregular and hard-edged heuristic comprised of three facets – intimacy, attentiveness and aesthetics.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The research project – reference no. 5201500342 – has received approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee ((HREC) Human Sciences and Humanities)) 3 July 2015 and as an amendment 16 September 2015.

(Signed) _____ Date: 11 December 2017

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Chapter One: Introduction

In Sydney in late 2013, Accessible Arts NSW, the peak body for arts and disability, delivered its professional development program Catalyst for emerging dance artists with disability across Australia. As part of the program, I acted as a support artist for poet and performance artist Georgia Cranko. Georgia is also an activist, writer and founder of Alternative and Augmentative Communication Voice (Cranko 2017). She is non-speaking and uses other methods to communicate. She had recently written a poem – *Second skin* – which became the name of the dance theatre performance that we and a team of fellow artists presented at the end of Catalyst.

Quickly, I had to learn the one-hand manual signs of Georgia's own finger-spelling alphabet. Sometimes, she opted for her iPad or lightwriter (a text–speech communication device where messages are typed, then displayed or played aloud) and I got to have a break. It was as exhausting as it was invigorating. Through the visceral experience of co-embodying Georgia's voice – interpreting each letter before its completion as a word, a phrase, a sentence, orally reading her hands and acting as a vehicle for her speech, all in real time – I developed a deep curiosity about her shrewd and creative form of expression. Being part of Georgia's voice felt like a dance. As movement, her voice travelled between and across our bodies, vibrating out of my mouth or into and through her digital devices. Its content seemingly originated from a single source – Georgia – though undeniably transmuted in acts of translation, reclaimed by my breath or by computerised cadences. More than this, in experiencing this alternative interaction with Georgia, I sensed an immense richness in the particular creative process. With a pole dancer who had one arm, where instructions were repeated in different ways and in discussions which saw questions and comments that were as much fantastical as they were astute, my experience unravelled any preconceived ideas I held about what it was – what it meant – to make dance and theatre.

I present this anecdote about my perceptions from within the performance-making process of *Second skin* to contextualise my own arrival at this research. This phenomenological experience being part of Georgia's voice in a revamped creative process led me to some questions. How does an artist with different communication enrich the creative process? What are the aesthetic implications of this richness for spectators? And what does it mean to make dance theatre for artists whose bodies are intimately bound to other bodies?

Overview

In this chapter, I introduce my doctoral research, straddling dance, theatre and performance studies, and disability and Deaf studies. I outline the research aims. I explore the interdependent makeup of the 'new dance ecology' (Benjamin 1995) within the Sydney dance sector embracing disability. I discuss my principally ethnographic methodology. Finally, I critique my own positionality in relation to the project. Here, I highlight my fraught position in this research and the particular strategies that I have deployed in order to address this. In de-emphasising my own perspective, I explain how I have used a mixed method of ethnographic observation and interviews with artists and spectators. At the end of this chapter, I provide a detailed outline of the following chapters in this thesis.

Research aims

My research responds to dance practice in what is recognised, in industry vernacular, as the Australian 'arts and disability' sector (Arts Access Australia 2017). The focus of my study is on Australian dance theatre practice by and with artists with disability. With this focus, my research explores the work of independent Melbourne-based dance practitioners Dianne Reid and Melinda Smith, a recent collaboration between Force Majeure, led by Danielle Micich, and Dance Integrated Australia, led by Philip Channells, as well as an inaugural production by Murmuration, led by Sarah-Vyne Vassallo. In turn, my research contributes to theoretical discussion of dance practice involving artists with disability in what disability theatre scholar Yvonne Schmidt (2017) refers to as the subfield of disability performance studies.

This dissertation has two aims. First, it aims to explore an emerging contemporary dance theatre performance practice by and with Australian artists with disability from creative development through to public performance. As Austin and collaborating authors (2015) reveal, there has been limited documentation of theatre and dance performance by practitioners with disability in Australia. Hadley (2017, p. 315) has similarly remarked on the dearth of theoretical attention to this practice, noting recent exceptions including, most significantly, a collection of essays responding to *Back to Back's* canon edited by theatre scholars Helena Grehan and Peter Eckersall (eds 2013). To this, I would add disability performance scholar Dave Calvert's (2016a) response to *Back to Back's* body of work. In dance specifically, however, no scholarly attention has been paid to contemporary practice by and/or with performers with disability since Anna Hickey-Moody's (2009a) philosophical study of Adelaide-based Restless Dance Theatre in the

1990s, a company comprising dancers with intellectual disability. Importantly, this thesis is by no means an exhaustive attempt to engage with the multidimensionality of dance theatre performance involving artists with disability. Rather, it is based on the particular artistic practices I observed as part of this research project.

Second, this thesis aims to distil the fraught acts of what I will claim to be 'care' that transpired in my observations of this practice and in my interviews with artists and an audience group. These acts of care include disclosing, creating a 'safe space' and politicising agency, and are fraught due to an overarching tension, which also surfaced in my fieldwork, between a disability politics of care and a feminist 'ethics of care'. This thesis thus explores the tension particularly as it plays out in the milieu of Australian dance theatre practice by and with artists with disability. I will define these terms and elaborate on this research aim in my review of care theory in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Disability in contemporary Australian dance theatre practice

This thesis presents a partial effort to address a dearth of research on creative output, aesthetic strategies and artistic processes of Australian dance theatre work embracing disability. In an industry review of the Australian disability arts industry at large, Sarah Austin, Chris Brophy, Eddie Paterson, Lachlan MacDowall and Winsome Roberts state 'the disability arts movement in Australia has not been adequately documented, researched, evidenced or supported' (Austin et al. 2015, p. 44). In their review, the authors found:

Even more limited is published critical thinking around how arts and disability practice might innovate contemporary creative practice in Australia ... critical discourse that surrounds the creative output and aesthetic strategies ... [and] ... also a documentation around the methodological approach to creation of new work by Australian arts practitioners with a disability (Austin et al. 2015, p. 44).

It is understandable that recently founded Murmuration has received no scholarly attention to date, being a relatively new addition to the Australian dance industry. What is surprising is that there has been no theoretical examination of Philip Channells' significant contributions to the sector as a former director of Restless and founder of Dance Integrated Australia, nor of Dianne Reid and Melinda Smith's ongoing collaborative practice, aside from Reid's own accounts

(2015, 2016) as an artist researcher and my own work, comprising this thesis along with a previous publication (Maguire-Rosier 2016). Likewise, the work of Kate Champion, founding director of hallmark Australian dance theatre company Force Majeure, Australia's equivalent of Lloyd Newson's renowned DV8 Dance Theatre in the UK, has not been discussed in performance literature. In her work, Champion has engaged in disability representation, aesthetics and lived experience. For example, in her 2008 production *The age I'm in* she collaborated with disabled dancer Dan Daw. More recently, Champion's piece *Nothing to lose* (2015) featured a cast of larger bodied, plus-sized performers and explored 'fat' (LeBesco 2015) embodiment and identity. However, this artistic work has received no scholarly attention except for a pointed but brief critical response by Australian dance scholar Amanda Card (2015).

I turn now to review particular contributions from the Australian contemporary dance theatre world embracing disability. I explain how the Sydney local scene has been influenced by AXIS and CandoCo. I highlight the sector's Australian – now international – pioneers, Caroline Bowditch, Marc Brew and Dan Daw. In other words, I turn to reviewing an Australian 'new dance ecology' (Benjamin 1995; see also Smith 2005, p. 75). This emerging ecology shapes the context in which works examined in this thesis have been made. Benjamin frames this inherent revision of dance:

if the word ecology demands anything of us it is the responsibility to review our connections with each other and our environment, and this includes the environments we choose to place each other within, and exclude each other from (1995, n. p.).

With his call for a 'new dance ecology', Benjamin encourages a deeper engagement with access between environments and people in the dance industry. Implementing, sustaining and improving access for and to artists with disability certainly takes many forms.

Hadley (2016) might subdivide this ecology according to distinct social purposes, for example 'therapeutic' (in which she curiously places Sydney's disability-led theatre company Ruckus and justly locates Can You See Me? Theatre Company) and 'post-therapeutic' (in which she rightly categorises Geelong's Back to Back). I recognise the value of conducting a survey of the Australian theatre 'sector ecology' (Hadley 2017) which incorporates disability for artists wishing to distinguish themselves from people with disability simply doing art. However, I am

hesitant to attribute strict classification to the Australian dance sector, where therapeutic and professional aspirations often overlap. Ruckus, for example, is a theatre and dance company co-led both by practitioners with intellectual disability such as Gerard O'Dwyer (a participant in my research as a performer in *OTR*) but also by its nondisabled theatre director, Alison Richardson, and choreographer, Dean Walsh, who has 'lived with dance for the past 26 years' and also happens to be 'living with autism' (Walsh 2016, p. 49). Besides this, another reason for my hesitation to apply Hadley's schema is that I do not wish to maintain an exclusive distinction between dance as therapy and as something entirely other than therapy.

Rather, I align my approach with performance scholar Melissa C Nash's (2005) insightful study of London-based dance group Entelechy. She states that companies 'are moving beyond purely therapeutic paradigms' (Nash 2005, p. 190). The key term here is 'purely' – it is not necessarily exclusively therapy nor exclusively post-therapy but, equally, both/and. Indeed, these paradigms are perhaps more than therapy or post-therapy. Dance performance work might also have a political and/or artistic objective. To use Hadley's codification, I propose this practice can be at once 'therapeutic' and 'post-therapeutic', not only for practitioners with disability but also for those without. For example, Janice Florence, co-founder and director of Weave Movement Theatre, notes that 'Veering between the categories of "community" and "professional" has been a constant tension' (2013, p. 21). It is precisely this tension between inclusion and therapy on the one hand, and professionalism and artistry on the other, which I choose to retain in my account of dance practice embracing disability.

Australian professional dance practice engaging with disability has been largely championed by Adelaide-based Restless – currently led by Michelle Ryan¹ – but it has been slower to arrive elsewhere in the country. In Melbourne, Weave Movement Theatre, a disability-led inclusive dance company, was co-founded by Caroline Bowditch and Janice Florence in 1997, followed by performance company Rawcus led by founder Kate Sulan (a former director of Back to Back) in 2000. In recent years, 'integrated dance' groups have flourished across the country. In 2013, choreographer Philip Channells, a former director of Restless and founder of Dance Integrated Australia, noted 'a spike in dance activity' by artists with disability in NSW (2013, p. 5). Companies like Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre established in 2012 in the NSW North Coast

¹ Michelle Ryan danced with Lucy Guerin before assuming the artistic direction of Restless following a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. For an artistic account of her journey through this transition, see Meryl Tankard's film *Michelle's story* (2015).

region received industry recognition at the Australian Dance Awards.² In Victoria, Rawcus received critical, government and industry acclaim³ and (albeit limited) scholarly attention (Donahoo & Andrusiak 2004; Paterson 2016). Tasmania's physical theatre group Second Echo was established in 2005. Similarly, the Delta Project co-founded in 2012 by UK-born Deaf dancer and choreographer Jo Dunbar and Australian Deaf dancer Anna Seymour collaborate with hearing performing artists.

In Sydney specifically, the 2015 inception of the city's first 'integrated dance' company, Murmuration, and initiatives such as Carriageworks' New Normal strategy enabled by an extension to the *NSW Arts and Disability Partnership* (Ageing, Disability and Home Care & Arts NSW 2012) between state government departments Arts NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) clearly have not occurred in a vacuum. Since 2010, Beyond Technique workshops initiated by Phillip Channels have aimed to facilitate dance theatre performance-making derived from lived experiences and continue to be pitched at emerging practitioners. In 2011, the inauguration of Catalyst, a national dance program produced by peak funding body Accessible Arts NSW (discussed in Chapter One) addressed a 'need to provide high quality skills development and training for dance practitioners, teachers, choreographers and dancers with and without disability currently working or interested in working in inclusive practices' (Accessible Arts 2017). Sadly, the Catalyst program saw its final year in 2016 (ed Vassallo 2016a), begging the question of where else Australian emerging dancers with disability can train and be mentored at a national level. Catalyst pioneer choreographer Sarah-Vyne Vassallo conducted international industry research in order 'to cultivate and advance the professional development of integrated dance in Sydney Australia' (Vassallo 2014, p. 2). Visiting both the USA and the UK, she found there was an Australian-specific need for both 'higher-level artistic opportunities for people with disability' as well as 'training and higher education pathways for dancers with disability' (Vassallo 2014, p. 2). This initially saw her set up Catalyst at Accessible Arts NSW in 2011. Then in 2015, Murmuration was conceived, heavily modelled on CandoCo and AXIS.

² Sprung!! was shortlisted for an Australian Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dance for *Encounters* choreographed by Michael Hennessy with original compositions by Fred Cole and backdrops and video by John Rado (Sprung!! 2017) and yet the organisation is officially a registered charity.

³ For an impressive list of awards, see Rawcus (2017).

Consequently, Murmuration is nestled in a particularly interdependent ecology. Significantly, the Sydney dance sector engaging with disability merges community and professional practice. Individual practitioners such as Vassallo, Margot Politis and Anthea Doropolous have nourished community development within the local independent dance scene. Vassallo and Politis both travelled to the USA and the UK, Politis with an Australia Council Cultural Leadership Grant charged with exploring what she labelled as 'inclusive practice', and Vassallo with a Churchill Fellowship to research choreographic practices for dancers with and without disability (Vassallo 2014). Both practitioners visited companies such as *CandoCo* and *AXIS*.

The influence of British and American 'integrated dance' companies cannot be denied in the Australian setting. Notably, classically trained dancer Marc Brew has recently been appointed as *AXIS*' new Artistic Director following his artistic success heading his own Glasgow-based company in the UK, the Marc Brew Company, as well as working with numerous other UK companies including *CandoCo* (Brew 2017). In the 2016 Catalyst program, Brew returned as a guest artist to choreograph for emerging Australian dancers with disability.

The dance and disability sector is thus interconnected globally as well as locally. In Sydney, Doropoulos took the reins of community dance organisation *DirtyFeet* established by dance artists attending Ausdance NSW (peak body for national dance funding) classes for professional contemporary dancers. Following her international research, Vassallo was instrumental in creating *DirtyFeet*'s program the Right Foot Project, which gave emerging dancers with disability the opportunity to perform in public shows. Thus, the particular ecology of the Sydney independent dance community embracing artists with disability is and remains closely knit. In highlighting this interdependent ecology, my aim is to describe Sydney's 'new dance ecology', weaving disability into its already delicate supporting infrastructures (Card 2006; see also Throsby & Petetskaya 2017).

This research responds to what I regard as a watershed moment for dance and disability particularly in Sydney, but also throughout Australia. In the footsteps of performance companies *Back to Back Theatre* and *Restless Dance Theatre*, Australian dance theatre practice involving disability by way of content (subject matter informed by lived experience) and form (disabled embodiment) is blossoming. In Australia today, there is a burgeoning contemporary performance scene by and with artists with disability. Recently, Australian disability theatre scholar Bree Hadley stated 'The sector is in many ways poised at the point of a boom in the

volume, variety, and quality of practice’ (Hadley 2017, p. 317). In view of the federal government’s austerity measures under which arts funding has decreased (Stone 2016), Hadley underlines the precarity of this ‘poised’ moment for the variegated performance scene largely built on the back of an Australian disability rights movement.

In the state of New South Wales, new funding initiatives and a new dance company constitute precursors to this prospective boom. Sydney’s foremost contemporary performing arts venue, Carriageworks, commissioned Sydney-based dance theatre companies Force Majeure and Dance Integrated Australia to produce *Off The Record* (hereafter *OTR*) as part of its national strategy New Normal, an initiative to fund work focusing on diversity, and expressly on inclusive practice, originally launched in January 2015. Carriageworks’ New Normal strategy is part of a curated program of new work also including a collaboration between Erth and Studio A, *Birdfoxmonster* (2016–2017), Urban Theatre Projects’ *Simple infinity* (2016) and Back to Back’s *Lady eats apple* (2017). Fortuitously, the name of the strategy, New Normal, echoes formative disability studies scholar Lennard J Davis’ statement in a seminar paper that ‘diversity is the new normalcy’ (2014). The strategy was announced as part of an extension to the NSW Government’s Arts and Disability Partnership between Arts NSW (now Create NSW) and Aging, Disability and Home Care (now Department of Family and Community Services) ‘to promote a culture of inclusion in the arts and cultural sector for people with a disability’ (Arts NSW 2012, p. 5). The extension provided \$100,000 support for Carriageworks to commission two major new works developed by artists with disability in 2015. Like these funding initiatives, the recently founded Sydney-based Murmuration, NSW’s first ‘integrated performance’ company, has been proactively engaging the local performing arts scene in disability (Murmuration 2017).

Nonetheless, funding cuts have caused concern. Two companies that participated in this doctoral research faced funding issues during the time I conducted the research – Force Majeure and Murmuration. In May 2016, Australia Council announced Force Majeure would be federally defunded from December that year (Force Majeure 2016; Stone 2016; Taylor 2016). This was a shock for the company, prompting critic Keith Gallasch to note in the conclusion of his review of the final show in August: ‘Off the Record is a promising start for a new era for Force Majeure, one in line with the company’s distinctive dance theatre, issues-based model, with a new edge and defiant in the face of inexplicable defunding by the Australia Council’ (2016). Similarly, Murmuration was unsuccessful in securing funding at the time of this research. For Murmuration, funding was such a focal point throughout its development that

this emerged as a theme in my analysis. A fundraising campaign that the company subsequently launched to address the impending gap in financial support is discussed further in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Methodology

In this section, I outline my methods of research. My study has drawn extensively on ethnographic methods, especially those applied to the relatively recent area of rehearsal studies by pioneers Gay McAuley (1999, 2012) and Kate Rossmanith (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). I observed the rehearsal practice of two new works (Force Majeure and Dance Integrated Australia's first collaboration and Murmuration's first major work) and live performances of an established group (Dianne Reid and Mel Smith).

McAuley (2012) has most recently stressed that the rehearsal process constitutes theatrical labour. I thus refer insistently to the dance theatre I observed at all stages of production – including, I would add, live presentation – as 'work'. In observing the rehearsals and presentation of work, my approach follows McAuley's (2012, p. 9) assertion that the most generative applied technique from anthropology to rehearsal studies is anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1994 [1973]) 'thick description' method. I too refer to Geertz for guidance. As he himself proclaims, 'ethnography is thick description' (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 314). According to Geertz (1994 [1973], p. 318), there are four characteristics of 'ethnographic description': First, it is interpretative; second, it interprets the 'flow of social discourse'; third, the process of interpretation aims to 'rescue the "said" of such discourse'; and finally, it is 'microscopic'. Of 'thick-description ethnography,' he writes about engaging 'exactly with complex specifics' in order to determine 'very densely textured facts' (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 321). In undertaking my study, I understood that what I was doing was highly subjective and hence have differentiated between my own terms and those of the artists I observed. I further understood that interpretation began in the process of observation as soon as I decided what to take note of and what to dismiss (Rossmanith 2009). I also took note not just of uttered words, but also of the time of day, the temperature, smells in the space and other 'microscopic' details of the direct experience at hand.

At the analysis stage, I inferred themes from within discrete case studies, following Geertz's (1994 [1973]) advice not to generalise across different cases. Here, I need to clarify that it was

not my intention to focus on disclosure, 'safe spaces' or politicised agency. Rather, they represent emergent notions deduced from key themes that surfaced after the completion of my fieldwork, in my field notes and therefore at the stage of analysis. Geertz writes further, 'the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible' (1994 [1973], p. 320). Throughout my analyses, I sought to privilege the 'experience-near' (Geertz 1974, p. 28) concepts that emerged from each particular case of dance theatre practice in my observations. At all stages of interpretation, the most vital ingredient to ethnography, in my view, was Rossmanith's (2008a, p. 146) particular piece of guidance to 'interpret the practitioners' own interpretations of what they are doing; that is, to understand their work on their own terms'.

As a means of opening up lines of enquiry from fieldwork relating to creative developments, I use sociologist Robert Emerson's (2004) 'key incident' method of analysis. In some cases, a key incident is not an 'out-of-the-ordinary, dramatic or 'critical'' (Emerson 2004, p. 431) event in the creative development. At other times, however, it is dramatic. For example, in Chapter Four my discussion traces three key incidents which would not necessarily have been salient for the performance-makers, but resonated with one of my key themes (disclosure), whereas in Chapter Five I focus on one particularly dramatic exchange which also stood out for the performance-makers. Here, my analysis is acutely microscopic. In these two cases where I use key incident analysis (Chapters Four and Five) the method, as Emerson suggests, provides 'niggling prods of interest and possibility' (2004, p. 431) for my discussion. Framing events as key incidents has thus helped me to pry open the fieldwork and so most effectively understand what it is that the practitioners think they are doing (Rossmanith 2008a, p. 146). In order to retain the intimacy of direct observation, I use the first names of performance-makers, a term I use to describe the artists – both performing and directing artists – whose work I observed.

Ethnography presents a promising methodology for disability research, according to key disability theorist Mike Oliver, but has four key problems: first, an assumption that 'providing a faithful account of individual experience is enough'; second, that 'the researching of collective as opposed to individual experience' depends on a sole human agent; third, the question of 'who is entitled to research experience' in the first place, especially when researchers do not experience the work in the same way as research participants; and finally, a failure to commit to an 'emancipatory theory or praxis' (1999, pp. 186–7). A preliminary step towards mitigating these concerns is to admit that, following Oliver, this thesis is a product that benefits mainly

myself as a researcher. Crucially, then, I have interrogated my own actions throughout the processes of observing, analysing and writing.

To supplement my primarily ethnographic approach to this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with directors, international artists, a programmer (in one case) and spectators (in another case). Furthermore, as a counterpoint to Australian work, I conducted supplementary fieldwork at the Hijinx Unity Festival, an international disability performance festival in Cardiff, Wales. I interviewed practitioners such as Jessie Brett (Jessie Brett Dance, Wales), Addisu Demissie (Destino Dance, Ethiopia), Esmarelda Valderamma (Danza Mobile, Spain) and Benjamin Pettitt-Wade (Hijinx Theatre, Wales). These interviews helped me amplify the voices of artists themselves. In facilitating a group discussion with an audience group, I used Willmar Sauter's (1986) 'Theatre Talks' method. These interviews offered me a means to privilege other voices aside from my own. Following audience researcher Matthew Reason (2010, p. 15), I too claim that a theatrical event must account for its spectators and that, in the theatrical event, there exists a 'direct empirical relationship to actual lived experiences'. Additional perspectives garnered from myriad artists, a presenting body and an audience group have accounted for not only my own interpretation of practice, informed by both ethnographic observation and theory, but also those of others, mainly guided by specific lived experiences.

In applying Oliver's deliberations, the specific version of my ethnographic method changed in accordance with each distinct group of performance practitioners. In the chapters that discuss in detail the work of each of these groups – Chapters Four, Five and Six – I explain more thoroughly these shifting methods of observation and analysis. For example, while in *Murmuration's* case (Chapter Four) I privilege the words uttered in an interview by artistic director Sarah-Vyne Vassallo, in my discussion of *OTR* (Chapter Five) I focus more on an isolated dramatic incident that occurred one day during the creative development, and thus privilege my own description. Different again, in Dianne Reid and Melinda Smith's case (Chapter Six) I distribute my attention across my field notes (my observation), their artistic intention (individual interviews) and the response of an audience (group interview). The way in which I have interrogated my own methods in these three cases differs insofar as the datasets that I analysed differed. I treat Sarah-Vyne's words differently to my words, and I also treat artists' (informed) accounts differently again to audiences' (lay) expression. Importantly, I bring more self-reflexivity to my own words, whereas I bracket artists' and audiences' words with the assumption that they mean what they say (Sauter 2014 [2000], p. 177).

Following Oliver, I aimed for a liberatory praxis for all the artists involved in this research. This is paramount. With this, I strived to bring a particular sensitivity to artists with lived experience of disability as they are, more often than not, in more vulnerably political positions than others who do not identify with disability. In my recognition of these 'real differences' (Henze 2000, p. 248), I came to observe the work of all three groups decisively *not* 'intellectually empty-handed' (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 321) but, instead, with an 'open mind' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 65). Social scientist Ian Dey (2005 [1993]) makes an important point in this regard. He writes 'the exhortation to beware of bias should not be interpreted as an injunction against prior thought' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 65). He explains:

there is a difference between an open mind and empty head. To analyse data, we need to use accumulated knowledge, not dispense with it. The issue is not whether to use existing knowledge, but how. Our problem is to find a focus, without committing ourselves prematurely to a particular perspective and so foreclosing options for our analysis (Dey 2005 [1993], pp. 65–6).

There are several insights in Dey's thoughtful guidance which I have applied to my own methodological approach in this research. First, I conducted extensive reviews of disability performance literature prior to any contact with artists, let alone any observation of their work. Moreover, I had 'insider' knowledge (Merton 1972, p. 12) insofar as I am a trained dancer but have also had experience working in rehearsal contexts as a director and a director's assistant for student, community and independent productions. Yet in the context of rehearsals, I acknowledge that researchers such as myself are considered 'outsiders' (McAuley 2012, p. 229). All this was my 'existing knowledge' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 65).

Second, in my interpretation of artists' work, my focus shifted in response to what I observed. I thus did not 'commit [myself] prematurely to a particular perspective' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 66). For instance, following up on the emergent themes and my initial analyses of observations and interviews, I returned to artist Matt Shilcock to enquire further about the particular theme of disclosure stemming from my fieldwork with Murmuration (Chapter Four).

Third, at the analysis stage I was able to rely on 'accumulated knowledge' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 65) from my theoretical knowledge base prior to, during and after fieldwork. I hence mobilised

my 'existing knowledge' (Dey 2005 [1993], p. 66) in direct response to my observations. In sum, my study is empirical and this thesis should be regarded as a grounded theory account, albeit interpreted by, and thus subject to, the bias of a sole researcher – myself.

Importantly, I did adopt a deeply consultative approach in my study of practitioners' work. I prepared information and consent forms in easy read so that participants with intellectual disability could better engage in the question and process of consent. Where participants had hesitations, I provided summaries of my work in progress as far as it related to the corresponding group of practitioners. For some interviews, participants requested to see a transcript, then they provided feedback and I made changes accordingly.

Critical positionality

My positionality is complex but, I argue, valuable. Undeniably, my position in relation to this research is fraught. Disability performance scholar Collette Conroy cautions:

The academic study of disability is “essentially parasitic”, and its practices are colonialist and exploitative ... Who is included, and who is excluded? How does one know if one is a part of this field of activity? (2009, p. 4).

In the field of disability studies, a recent collection of essays by Pamela Block and collaborators (eds Block et al. 2015) addresses the ethics and politics involved in disability research through an exploration of the concept of 'occupation'. In the theatre too, the purportedly harmful employment of artists with disability is so topical that renowned choreographer Jérôme Bel recently made a piece of theatre on this topic with Zürich-based Theatre HORA, *Disabled theater* (2012), triggering theoretical debate on the dilemma of theatre as a site of emancipation for people with disability (eds Umathum & Wihstutz 2015). In dance practice specifically, UK disabled dancers and artist researchers Kate Marsh and Jonathan Burrows recently state that the 'so called field of “dance and disability” is insufficiently understood to account for the much wider debate of who is actually included' (2017, p. 7). This politics of inclusion is a major issue regarding my own position within this research project.

As a disability researcher, I am prospectively implicated in the system of oppression I seek to criticise: 'we designate disabled people as inferior by our actions, regardless of our intentions'

(Oliver 1999, p. 184). This research, perhaps *naively* (Shakespeare 1997, p. 187), aspires towards an 'emancipatory research paradigm' (Oliver 1999) that values, as opposed to objectifies, Australian artists with disability. As Oliver states, it is impossible to produce the world without 'taking host' of subjects, which in the case of disability research implies that 'disability researchers are parasitic upon disabled people' (1999, p. 184). Oliver argues that this paradox – 'for without the host body (disabled people) there would be no disability researchers' (1999, p. 184) – is not a question of identifying with disability or not but, rather, a call to address the 'objective structures of oppression and ... the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups' (1999, p. 184) and a question of 'where we position ourselves between the social and material relations of research production' (1999, p. 187).

It is fundamental to a disability setting that I frame my relationship to this research in terms of Oliver's 'parasite people'. Dance and disability performance scholar Alicia Grace (2009) adroitly draws on prominent fellow disability dance theorist and practitioner Petra Kuppers' (2003) reversed application of Oliver's 'parasite people' in relation to American dance artist Bill Shannon. Grace writes that Shannon, who dances with crutches and a skateboard, "'takes host'", drawing on Kuppers' term, 'of his audience's responses of good intention, rather than being *subjected* to them' (Grace 2009, p. 23, original emphasis). At every point in this research I have resisted an otherwise ubiquitous tendency to objectify artists with disability. This presented a challenge. I had no experience working in the disability sector, no friends or family with physical impairment. In the cultural domains of disability, I was an outsider.

Although an outsider in disability contexts, I began this research as a dancer and a spectator. My 'sitpoint,' to borrow feminist disability scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's nonableist teasing critique of feminist methodologies from her phrase 'sitpoint epistemology' (2002a, p. 21), was shaped by aligning myself with the Australian and global disability rights movement, and by possessing a strong respect for all artists and their work.

I believe my particular positionality as outsider is valuable. Like philosopher Chrissie Rogers, a mother to a woman with intellectual disability, 'I feel a little like an outsider and not quite worthy of writing about disability' (Rogers 2016, p. 19). In spite of my grandmother's teenage experience of polio, due to which her frequent falls ever since are now disguised by old age, and in spite of living with family members whose acts are seasoned with the quirks of various mental disabilities, I also cannot help but feel at times inadequate as I write about disability. I

do not experience ‘courtesy stigma’, as sociologist Erving Goffman (2009 [1963], pp. 30–1) describes the effect on those without visible stigma in the company of, for instance, those with a socially stigmatising impairment. Rhetoric scholar Brent Henze offers insight into this status:

Outsiders wishing to support the liberatory work of the oppressed must form responsible and imaginative alliances – alliances grounded in appropriate reconceptions of their experiences in relation to others. That is, we should not work toward imaginary identifications of ourselves with others, in which we make claims about our “sameness” without regard for the real differences in our experiences and lives; rather, we should work toward imaginative identifications of ourselves with others, in which we interrogate our own experience, seeking points where common ground or empathy might be actively constructed between us while remaining conscious of the real differences between our experiences and lives (Henze 2000, p. 248).

The risk of eliding difference is omnipresent in identifications with disability, and Henze’s balancing act of alliance, between interrogating our own experience and seeking commonality, is critical. In the realm of disability, Rogers adds:

I do not feel strongly about the fact that simply because I experience something, such as disabling conditions, exclusion, prejudice, pity, and so on, it does not mean others are unable to reflect, write and research about private troubles or public issues; something unfamiliar to their own personal experiences (2016, p. 20).

While I reflected, wrote and researched about disability, I learnt about unfamiliar experiences. In this process, I aligned myself with Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price’s sceptical view of radical disability politics (a subsection of the disability rights movement) and its establishment of an ‘exclusionary/othering process which is usually attributed to the dominant – the “non-disabled” – group alone’ (1998, p. 235). This binary makes it tricky to practise alliance. Here, I follow feminist disability scholar Margaret Price’s guidance about practising alliance by ‘[s]itting with a mistake [which] is not the same as fixing a mistake... [and] not the same as doing nothing’, listening which is painful but eschewing the privilege of culpability (2011a, p. 17). It is no simple task to sit with the oppressive histories inflicted on disability communities, a task necessitated by any step into the rich fields of disability and Deaf studies.

My position thus carries biases, experiences, worldviews and personal values, which are brought to bear on this research. In my role as ‘support artist’, appearing and identifying as a woman without disability, I was in many ways cast as the ‘female caregiver’, as care researcher Christine Kelly also admits (2013, p. 791). Arguably as a researcher too, I appeared and identified with the same identity markers and thus was cast again as the female carer. This role curiously reflects those of nondisabled dance artists, unsurprisingly mostly women. They too are, at times, cast as the ‘one caring’ (Noddings 1984, p. 175). In bracketing the gendered implications of this casting, rather than glossing over these allusions, this position helps me include artists without disability in this account of Australian dance and disability. This inclusion is surely valuable.

Chapter outline

In Chapter Two, I review the two predominant fields of research across which this research stretches – disability and Deaf studies, and dance, theatre and performance studies. I map the trajectory this research follows from an exploration of ‘disability’ as an evolving concept, identity category and cultural lens, through to the performative implications of ‘disability’ as theatrical expression. In two main sections, I first review literature in disability studies and qualify the keywords used in this thesis. More precisely, I identify disability as an intersubjective phenomenon. I identify a lack of scholarly attention to hidden disability due to the attendant experiences of pain or emotion undermining the logic of the prevailing social modelling of disability. I present the anxieties hovering around the language of disability. Finally, I place value on a relatively recent feminist disability concept proposed by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, ‘misfitting’ (2011).

In the second section, I present disability in the contexts of everyday as well as staged performance. Specifically, I address the performance of disability as inextricable from a politics of visibility, highlighting disability’s unique point of difference, namely that, in everyday life, disability becomes paradoxically both invisible (socially marginalised) and hypervisible (socially stigmatised). I introduce disability arts scholar Tobin Siebers’ theory of ‘disability aesthetics’ (2005, 2010), as well as Deaf studies scholar H-Dirksen L Bauman’s parallel notion of a ‘deaf aesthetic’ (2008) and explore their implications in the setting of dance performance. I end the chapter with a turn to dance practice by artists with disability marked most visibly by the

presence of new dancerly aesthetics shaped in part by different 'bodyminds' (Price 2015), but also by a particularly intimate relationship with technology – prostheses.

In Chapter Three, I make a case for the vitality of this research by calling for the need to consider 'care' in relation to dance practice by and with artists with disability. Here, I continue the review of literature presented in Chapter Two but with a specific focus on care theory. I begin by staging care as a critical cultural practice which has traditionally been devalued as a gendered, classed and racialised construct tainted by the prospect of dependency and body work. I review scholarship at the intersection of disability and performance studies inflected by both a feminist embrace of and a disability resistance to 'care'. I present a meaningful (and groundbreaking) theoretical foray of care theory into performance studies, namely, an 'aesthetics of care' of applied performance scholar and practitioner James Thompson (2015), which presents challenges from a disability perspective. I canvass forerunning debates in theory and contemporary practice pertaining to dance and disability, highlighting a somewhat striking absence of the consideration of this practice explicitly in terms of care. Finally, I explore recent and contemporary practice constituting the dance and disability sector across the globe, noting the formative and continued influence of the UK and the USA on Australian work. Ultimately this chapter argues that, in the context of dance practice by and with artists with disability, a political and ethical interrogation of care offers a fruitful way of understanding anew this particular artistic movement on the cusp of contemporary dance and the disability arts scene.

Following Chapter Three, my discussions thereafter emerge directly from my fieldwork. Chapter Four responds to the creative development of Murmuration's work *Days Like These* (2017), a work which went on to premiere in July 2017 in Cootamundra, NSW. I argue that acts and attitudes of 'care' materialise in a particular interplay between visibility and disclosure. At first it seems that self-disclosures of artists with visible disability tend to align with a disability care politics, while those of artists with hidden impairments are more adequately addressed by feminist care ethics. I explore how artists with disability oscillate between explicit visibility, default visibility and careful invisibility. I outline three 'key incidents' (Emerson 2004) wherein artists self-disclose a little, nothing at all and then a lot. Only one artist – Matt – explicitly (verbally) self-identifies with disability, sharing a medical diagnosis. Another artist – Jianna – does not utter any reference to disability, but involuntarily discloses. Elsewhere in the creative development, there is no explicit mention of 'disability'.

Several tensions thus arise. First, Matt's acts and attitudes superficially and consciously express a disability politics of care. However, on deeper examination, his immediate explicit self-disclosure, validated by the medical label of his impairment, can be interpreted as an act of self-care, of him passing on shared responsibility to his peers, and an attitude more reminiscent of a feminist 'ethics of care' underscored by notions of interdependence. Second, I question what it means for me to disclose on behalf of Jianna, who does not verbally identify with disability. Finally, I explore director Sarah-Vyne Vassallo's disclosure in light of a paradoxical reliance on, and oppression by, words associated with 'psychiatrisation' (LeFrançois, Menzies & Reume 2013, pp. 1–7), arguing that her disclosure requires the interpretative framework of a feminist care ethics.

While Chapter Four considers the politics of disclosure and visibility in performance-making, Chapter Five turns towards the single 'key incident' (Emerson 2004) of a D/deaf and hearing world encounter that occurred in the creative development of *Force Majeure and Dance Integrated Australia's* collaboration *OTR* (2016), directed by Danielle Micich and Philip Channells. In the incident, Deaf actor Alex Jones and (hearing) actor Gerard O'Dwyer are responding 'yes' and 'no' in Auslan (Australian Sign Language) when O'Dwyer is directed to elaborate by fake-signing and another hearing performer to fake-interpret. At this point, Alex voices a concern that hearing people fake-signing would be offensive to Deaf spectators. Curiously, Alex navigates the incident as an opportunity to share the cultural sensitivities of Deaf culture. His response echoes Price's theory of 'kairotic space' comprising a spontaneous occasion for expressing access needs with potential high professional impact (2011b, p. 61). I argue that Deaf actor Alex becomes an expert educator as he navigates 'kairotic space' and that his actions accord with a disability, or in effect a Deaf care politics. In turn, I claim the directors assert responsibility for their Deaf cultural offence, an act which, by the same coin, correlates most strongly with feminist care ethics. As such, I distil specific manifestations of care as an attitude, theatrical labour and aesthetic value in the 'hidden world' (Cole 2013 [1992]) of the rehearsal studio – off the record, so to speak. Most significantly, I interpret the ethically and politically fraught concept of 'care' produced in this particular encounter in relation to Thompson's (2015) notion of an 'aesthetics of care'. I conclude that a rich feminist disability refraction of Thompson's care aesthetics is produced in this exchange.

Where Chapters Four and Five respond to the private site of creative development, Chapter Six accounts for the public context of the live performance itself.⁴ I explore Dianne Reid's *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)* (2015), a structured improvisation incorporating digitally projected imagery and computer voices. The 'live screendance' (Reid 2016, p. 16) was performed by Dianne and collaborating artist Melinda Smith as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. Acknowledging the scholarly interest in the radical virtuosity of the disabled dancer, which frequently negates ableist aesthetics (discussed in the next chapter of this thesis), I advance disability literary scholar and poet Michael Davidson's (2008, p. 2) suggestion to explore aesthetic strategies. I thus deduce particular aesthetic strategies from key emergent themes from my field notes as well as a semi-structured interview with a small sample group of spectators and individual interviews with both practitioners. These strategies are: an intermittent visibility of disability and maturity; a dynamic dialogue between bodyminds and environments; dispersed presence across data and bodies; a motif of slowness; and a cultivated mindfulness. I argue that these strategies engender care as relational, generating materialisations of care as encounters between bodyminds and place.

Following my empirical and theoretical examinations of three dance theatre works in Chapters Four, Five and Six, I turn in Chapter Seven to hold a mirror up against the project. In so doing, I perceive a refraction, a 'crystal of care'. While earlier chapters distil particular politicised performances of 'care,' this chapter reflects the effects of these materialisations. I imagine this process as crystalising the instances of care that have sedimented through my study. I propose a crystal of care, a heuristic device and a conceptually multifaceted metaphor comprising intimacy, attentiveness and aesthetics, for understanding the acts of care distilled in this research. It is sharp-edged, bearing the potential for harm, concrete or new materialist but also precious, drawing on influential cultural theorist Judith Butler's 'precarious life' (2006). A crystal of care is also precious because it fluctuates between pain and potential, personal and impersonal registers of experience, as well as traditionally negative status and radical aesthetic possibilities.

⁴ An earlier version of this material appears in an issue of *Australasian Drama Studies* published in October 2016, edited by Mick Douglas, Bree Hadley and Meredith Rogers. I would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their feedback and I would also like to acknowledge the publisher of the material (Maguire-Rosier 2016).

Summary

In this introductory chapter, I have circumnavigated the contents and context of this thesis. I began by outlining my own arrival at this research project as a support artist. I charted the two research objectives of this dissertation, first to explore this practice from creative development through to public presentation, and second to distil acts of 'care' according to the fraught tension between a disability politics and a feminist ethics of care. This tension, I reiterate, will be explicated in Chapter Three of this thesis. I presented the significance of this research on dance practice by and with artists with disability at this particular watershed moment in the Australian arts and disability scene. Here, I painted a picture of the 'new dance ecology' (Benjamin 1995) in Sydney within the local dance community's move towards disability, pinpointing the influence of AXIS and CandoCo and the interconnectedness of this global and local dance community. In so doing, I highlighted a tension that exists between the therapeutic, artistic but also political intentions of dance practice involving artists with disability. I shed light on the mixed-method research design adopted in this predominantly ethnographic study. While I have privileged rehearsal studies' 'thick description' method for examining the private space of creative development and even the public space of live performance, I have supplemented my observations by interviewing key artists and in one case an audience group. I then turned to elucidate my own precarious position in relation to this study as a nondisabled researcher. In the next chapter, I will delve more deeply into demarcating this study by reviewing the two overarching bodies of research – disability studies and performance studies – united in this thesis.

Part One

Chapter Two: Presenting and performing disability

Where the previous chapter has offered some significant bearings for this dissertation, this chapter begins to explore why the intersection between dance performance and disability is important: Why care about disability and dance performance? In many ways, this chapter is an extension of my introduction; however, here I navigate the theory and practice pertaining to, more precisely, Australian dance theatre practice by and with performers with disability. Throughout the chapter, I define and qualify the evolving language of both disability and performance. Divided into two, the chapter first explores the concept of 'disability' and second presents 'disability' in the context of performance. Before launching into these sections, I map the makeup of the Australian dance industry as well as the Australian arts and disability sector, which the practice explored in this thesis bridges. I start the chapter with a note on the vexed position of spectators and audiences in the context of performance by and with artists with disability. This note follows my own precarious position in relation to this research as discussed in the previous chapter.

Specifically, the first half of this chapter canvasses the conceptual framework of my study. In so doing, I discuss forerunning debates and key issues pertaining to the interdisciplinary theory of dance, theatre, performance studies, disability and Deaf studies, as well as the industry practice to which this research responds. The disabled body, I claim, is not simply produced societally or individually but, rather, is a complex matter of location. I therefore question where disability is located. Rather than attempting to impose any stationary definition of 'disability', I sketch certain chronological developments in the various intellectual efforts to remodel disability. In my discussion here, I identify a gap in the disability studies literature addressing artistic practice, that is, the case of disclosure, specifically for artists with hidden disability. I end this chronology of conceptual models with what I regard as a fecund new materialist theory for disability, that is, Garland-Thomson's (2011) critical concept of 'misfitting'.

Like gendered bodies, the disabled body is performative, especially in as much as it deviates from normalcy. The second half of the chapter broaches the politics of visibility in relation to the disabled figure, notably the appearance and presence of disability in everyday versus 'heightened' performances (Schechner 2013 [2002], p. 55). I explore the theatrical production of disability as a source of social anxiety threatened by othering processes, with particular reference to Siebers' notion of 'disability aesthetics' (2005, 2010). I further attend to germane ideas from disability studies such as 'narrative prosthesis' (Mitchell & Snyder 2000) espoused in a performance setting by Ann M Fox and Joan Lipkin (2002) as 'dramaturgical prosthesis'. I then

address disability critiques of the 'cyborg' (Mitchell & Snyder 1997; Parker-Starbuck 2011; Reeve 2012) as a means of reattributing 'prosthesis' to the disabled body (Sobchack 2006). Lastly, in accounting for nonhuman matter like, for example, a lightwriter, I motion towards pivotal new materialist theory such as Mel Y Chen's concept of 'animacy' (2012) and disability and media scholar Mara Mills' (2011a) argument that digital data is always already embodied.

Australian dance theatre by and with artists with disability

I adopt the phrase 'dance theatre' from the industry vernacular used among practitioners. Dance theatre is characterised by movement as well as speech, thus somewhat uniting both dance and theatre traditions. Performers in this project joked about themselves as 'dactors', that is, an intermingling of the words 'actors' and 'dancers'. Dance theatre typically corresponds to contemporary life and is inflected by the lived experiences of real people. At its core, this practice is 'performance' that is 'an action executed by artists as well as the result of this action' (Pavis 2013, p. 34). I position dance theatre under the umbrella of dance in line with performance scholar Andy Lavender's assertion that theatre performance is above all comprised of action: 'Words, in the theatre, are not a matter of exquisite literary provenance but are part of the larger machinery of performance, which is movement-based' (Lavender 2003, p. 82).

In the 1990s, artists like Sydney-based company One Extra and Melbourne-based Meryl Tankard presented dance theatre performances on Australian stages. The particular style of Force Majeure's dance theatre is directly influenced by London-based DV8 Physical Theatre, which is motivated by a strong social justice agenda. After her involvement with DV8, Kate Champion founded Force Majeure in Sydney in 2002. Dance Integrated Australia and Murmuration formed in 2012 and 2015, respectively. Like other contemporary performance, dance theatre work is usually devised according to a task-based model of performance-making, whereby performers respond to issued creative tasks from which artistic material is generated. This counters the staging, or 'mise en scène' as theatre scholar Maurice Pavis (2013, pp. 34–5) defines it, of a pre-existing text or choreography created by a single director. Dance theatre is thus highly collaborative and produced throughout the creative development stage, rather than prior to a 'rehearsal' stage.

Dance theatre, as a particularly experimental art form, has courted disability in relation to its aesthetics, performers and lived experience. Such courting, for some, fits with what is known as ‘disability arts’ (for discussion, see Hadley 2014, 2017; Johnston 2012; Kupperts 2014), that is, a movement within broader arts industries or running counter to so-called ‘mainstream’ arts. Yet this category can be limiting. A malleable definition of this artistic movement emerges in disability performance scholar Jonathan Meth’s proposition:

I would like to suggest a view that draws on the paradox of Schrödinger’s cat, where something can appear to be both itself and its opposite. Sometimes disability arts might need to be seen as a single entity – a movement rich in diversity. At other times it might need separating out, for example when delving into the aesthetics of the work of some learning disabled artists, where the discourse might need to develop differently than that which has already evolved around work made by some artists with physical and/or sensory disabilities (2015).

I suggest this expansive definition of an evolving and very young artistic tradition is helpful in positioning ‘disability arts’ as, at once, a developing series of distinct processes, skills and imagination stemming from disability as a cultural resource (Garland-Thomson 2002a), but also diverging at times from direct experiences of disability. For instance, UK disabled dancers Kate Marsh and Jonathan Burrows explain:

Disabled artists might be expected to have a particularly nuanced approach to tackling disability, drawing from both lived experience and critical reflection, but artistic treatment of disability should not necessarily be limited to disabled people. Mainstream venues should focus their curatorial attention on redressing an historic lack of artistic engagement with disability (2017, p. 28).

I discuss examples of nondisabled artists and companies that have incorporated treatment of disability later in this chapter. While Meth’s expansive concept of ‘disability arts’ accounts for contributions from nondisabled practitioners, I believe it also accommodates practitioners with disability such as Australian, now Glasgow-based dance artist Caroline Bowditch (2016), who recently refers to herself simply as ‘artist’, dropping a previous qualification, ‘disabled’.⁵ For

⁵ Interview with Caroline Bowditch, 10 March 2016.

Bowditch, while she is visibly disabled and moves in and out of a wheelchair, this fresh label liberates her to make art that is not about disability per se and, moreover, leads to mainstream recognition as a dance artist.

A variation on the term 'disability arts' is 'arts and disability', the preferred industry term in Australia (Arts Access Australia 2017) due to a perceived need to differentiate people with disability doing 'amateur' art recreationally from 'professional' artists doing work. This need arises from the Australian disability arts movement having emerged from therapeutic practice. As Hadley notes, 'The disability theatre in Australia that has evolved from community theatre does still sit alongside an even larger group of therapeutically oriented theatre programmes, groups, and projects' (2017, p. 310). This, in turn, problematises the term 'professional' in the global disability arts scene. An attempt to eradicate this tenuous and at times irrelevant binary of amateur/professional practice surfaces in popular terms such as 'disability-led' practice. This term distinguishes itself from 'integrated' or 'inclusive' practice, which not only involves nondisabled practitioners but is, in many cases, led by artists without disability. In contrast, 'disability-led' practice pledges artistic control and authorship to the artist with disability.

In dance, critique of the ubiquitous assumption that therapy is more important than art reappears throughout theoretical discussion of practice by artists with disability, beginning with dance scholars Ann Cooper Albright (1998, p. 14) to Michele Powles (2007) and Alexandra Kolb, Hahna Briggs and Motohide Miyahara (2012). While such critique does mirror industry attitudes, a focus on dance as therapy appears uncritically in some industry publications: scholar and critic Jenny Stevenson (2012, p. 6) writes of New Zealander dancer Melissa Fox, 'Where she was once dependent on using a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy, Melissa is now able to support herself out of the chair and as she describes it "do things I didn't know I could do, like lying on the floor and pushing myself round in a circle with my feet"'. Paradoxes like this are a cornerstone of art by and with practitioners with disability.

Dance theatre overlaps with what is known as 'integrated dance'. In following a common industry understanding that 'inclusive' or 'integrated' dance is *not* a genre but, rather, simply dance, it seems to me that the main problem with deploying the terms 'integrated dance' and 'inclusive theatre', and derivations thereof, is that these terms do in fact connote a genre. They contain dance involving artists with disability within a *category* that catalyses and perpetuates the supposition that it is a genre. UK disabled dance artists have voiced fear of the ghettoising

nature of 'integrated dance' (eds Marsh & Burrows 2017). Significantly, I hesitate to use any one term to denote the context of art-making both with and without disability for fear of interfering in the debates on authorship or ghettoisation (Kuppers 2014, p. 33).

I hesitate also to use the term 'disability-led' as is currently trending in public discourse on arts and disability, and as advocated by Marsh (2016a). Somewhat neutrally, Hadley has questioned whether certain theatre companies are 'disability led' (Hadley 2017, p. 311) by categorising groups as 'therapeutic' or 'post-therapeutic', based on Giles Perring's (2005) similar taxonomy, in her recent survey of the Australian disability and theatre 'sector ecology'. Elsewhere, European disability theatre scholars including Switzerland-based Schmidt (2017) and UK-based Matt Hargrave (2015) have begun to navigate the precarious terrain of artistic direction by practitioners with intellectual disability whose contributions depend on access granted by and through the work of 'creative enablers' (Schmidt 2017). As I see it, the term 'disability-led' is certainly inadequate in the context of performance practice by artists with intellectual disability who, as touched on in the previous chapter, are dependent on artists without disability for access. I will return to the inadequacy of the descriptor 'disability-led' in the next chapter and also, in relation to hidden impairment in chapter four and in relation to authorship by a practitioner who does not identify with disability in chapter six.

Further, terms that bring dance and disability into being problematically accord with a 'hierarchy of impairments' (Deal 2003) which posits certain physical impairments as ideal. Aware of pioneering company *CandoCo*'s 'preference for a very able, "dancerly" body, be it in a wheelchair, on crutches or on two legs', its founding director, Adam Benjamin (2010, p. 118), meditates on mainstream contemporary dance's turn to disability:

the wedding of dance and disability resonates with a view of the world that recognizes the importance of (bio)diversity over uniformity, and insists on the interconnectedness of things, even when these connections may not be immediately evident. The value it places on the individual and on differing notions of time and action is written (literally and metaphorically) into its DNA, for the work is inevitably made with individuals who are unique and irreplaceable (Benjamin 2010, p. 117).

Elsewhere in the world, dance and disability are referred to in terms such as 'physically integrated dance' championed by US dance company AXIS, 'disabled dance' or 'disability dance'

as written by Koppers (2014, p. 114 and p. 121) and ‘inclusive dance’ as described by Stevenson (2015) in relation to New Zealand company Touch Compass. It strikes me that these terms forecast good ‘Samaritanism’ to draw on Hadley (2014, p. 90) due to an implied therapeutic, applied or educational intention. Further, the terms ‘integrated’ and ‘inclusive’ appear to reproduce the rhetoric of ‘inclusion’ criticised by Stella Young (2014) in an Australian cultural setting for paying mere ‘lipservice’. Yet these terms resound across industry, in media coverage and through scholarship. In light of these concerns, I prefer ‘dance theatre’, with the qualifying tagline ‘by and with artists with disability’.

The vexed position of theatre audiences

I am not the only one in the subject matter of this study to occupy a fraught position. Audience groups and individual spectators find themselves too, knowingly or not, in a challenging situation. Theatre audiences are too often assumed to be nondisabled by attendant scholars, practitioners, presenters and even the spectators themselves. The word ‘audience’ itself is an audist term highlighting the aural elements of theatre attendance that exclude Deaf cultures (Bauman 2008). The ocularcentric term ‘spectator’ also sits awkwardly in a disability setting, but not only for its exclusion of those who are blind or with vision impairment. Underlying the word ‘spectator’, the notion of ‘spectacle’ overemphasises the act of looking, permits the prurient gaze and invokes the ritual of the freakshow, which has irrevocably damaged perceptions of people with disability (Mitchell & Snyder 2005, p. 11).

Not unrelated to the parasitic dilemma of disability research, social encounters with disability are complex. I recognise the traditional representations of disability in theatre and performance as freakshows, monsters, signs of the divine and objects of fetish, exoticism or pity (for discussion, see Garland-Thompson 1997, 2002b) and I acknowledge the pathologising representation of disability in diagnostic medical theatres (see, for example, Marshall 2016). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that sideshows and circuses were also places of refuge for performers with disability, an alternative to institutions and an opportunity to live independently in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Durbach 2009).⁶ This is not to say the freakshow was not exploitative or did not cause cultural damage – it was and certainly did

⁶ See also Todd Browning’s hallmark film *Freaks* (1932), which was banned for thirty years following its brief release in American cinemas. Supplementary footage addresses the performers with disabilities who essentially play themselves in the film, highlighting how their careers as entertainers in sideshows enabled them to live independently and effectively saved them from institutionalisation.

(Chemers 2016 [2008]; Garland-Thomson 1996; Mitchell & Snyder 2005), just like Jean-Martin Charcot's neuropathological experiments manipulated bodies by transforming them into 'stage property ... closely directed, functioning within a complex set of other dramaturgical devices' (Marshall 2016, pp. 10–11). Consequently, people with disability perform within what Marxist philosopher Guy Debord calls a 'society of the spectacle' (2012 [1967]). Cast as spectacles, on stage and off, people with disability are compromised by a culture of commodity fetishism, colonisation and market-driven economies, wherein the artistic work of performers with disability risks being perceived in terms of 'fashionability' (Hadley 2017, p. 317).

In social encounters with disability, this element of spectacularising is pronounced. In the context of everyday life, Kuppers clarifies the performance of disability:

Performance in the sense of creating a meaningful intervention in the flow of time and space is taking place in many social encounters focusing on disability: telling a story of one's life, marrying the everyday to the extraordinary, is as much a performance as ordering symptoms for a doctor to see, or a social worker to assess (Kuppers 2003, p. 9).

Clearly, the cultural spectacularising of disability or, in simpler terms, staring, as 'a kind of potent social choreography that marks bodies by enacting a dynamic visual exchange between a spectator and a spectacle' (Garland-Thomson 2005, p. 31), cannot be denied. Likewise, dance scholar Sarah Whatley proposes the idea of a 'Passive Oppressive' viewing position, which reinscribes the disabled dancer on stage with notions of the 'carnavalesque' or the 'grotesque' (2007, p. 18).

In spite of the ableist terminology used to depict individuals and groups experiencing a theatrical event, I opt for 'spectator' and 'audience' and use both terms interchangeably. To negate their problematic associations, I describe theatre spectatorship as 'audience experience' and spectators' acts of listening and looking and their 'otherhow' knowledges (DuPlessis 2006, p. 95) in terms of 'perceiving'. I deploy 'audience' remaining aware of its connotations of a collective macro-level experience and 'spectator' connoting individual micro-level experiences (Freshwater 2009).

Locating disability

This research is informed by a disability lens, what Garland-Thomson (2002a) introduces as the cultural resource of disability. She argues for ‘integrating disability as a category of analysis, an historical community, a set of material practices, a social identity, a political position, and a representational system’ (Garland-Thomson 2002a, p. 28). Curator and scholar Amanda Cachia refigures this idea: ‘what if disability could become an epistemic resource and an embodied cognition embedded with politicized consciousness? Or, more simply, a way of knowing the world?’ (2012, n.p.). I steer this research with these ideas of disability as a cultural resource, by conceiving of disability as not only a cultural identity and group, but also a cultural perspective, a critical lens.

In this thesis, I follow the lead of many Deaf studies scholars who conflate the experience of d/Deafness with that of disability (for example, see Davidson 2008; Davis 2016). Attending to dance performance, practitioner and scholar Kaite O’Reilly likewise subsumes Deaf under disability (2017, pp. 78–89). Thus, where I use the term ‘disability’ in isolation, I also imply ‘D/deafness’. The concept of cultural Deafness is grounded in the Deaf community, which regards itself as a subcultural group rather than one with disability or impairment. That said, cultural Deafness as a critical lens too can be applicable. For example, Deaf performance scholar Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren’s theory of the ‘third ear’ proposes a way of ‘hearing’ differently ‘across perceptual domains’ (2006, p. 188). Nevertheless, I generally incorporate a Deaf perspective within my reference to a disability lens, echoing Meth’s opinion that sometimes the discourse of disability arts needs separating out according to the specific experiences represented. I will return to Deaf culture later in this chapter. In relation to bodies and individual identities at a micro-level, however, disability presents a dilemma of location and environment. According to Marsh and Burrows (2017, p. 27), ‘Locating disability in the arts, be it as a specific phenomenon or considering disability arts as a separate sector, suggests that it requires a separate framework of understanding’. In this section, I identify the anxious nomenclature around ‘disability’ as it pertains to the work documented in my study.

As a means of maintaining elasticity in ideas denoted by terminology, I intermingle identity-first language (preferred in the UK) and people-first language (preferred in Australia and the USA) in referring to both ‘disabled people’ and ‘people with disability’. Where UK commentators refer to ‘learning-disabled performers’, I interchange their term and the Australian standard –

‘performers with intellectual disability’ – in order to preserve the terminology associated with those performers specific to the UK but also to recontextualise their terms in an Australian context. In turn, I understand intellectual disability to be subsumed under ‘mental disability’ along with emotional, psychological and social disability, as Price (2011b) does. Artists represent disparate experiences of disability in this thesis. Some medical labels associated with artists’ respective impairments are cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, osteogenesis imperfecta, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. To a certain degree, I have chosen to disregard such labels in favour of focusing attention on respective lived experiences. Yet, as Siebers (2010) cautions, regarding disability as solely a social construct discounts vital political and medical regimes of support because, without biological claims to ‘impairment effects’ (Thomas 1999), people with disability are unable to secure social rights and access to work, living support and participation in all areas of society.

Global disability communities have famously located disability in the environment. This is recognised as the social model of disability. Social modelling of disability rooted in British activism (Oliver 1990) diverges from medical modelling – wherein ‘disability’ originates from the individual – by resituating ‘disability’ in the environment. As performance artist and disability scholar Liz Crow perceives, ‘impairment is the functional limitation(s) which affect a person’s body, [while] disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities resulting from direct and indirect discrimination’ (1996, p. 208). As such, the environment either enables or disables agency, and produces disability or not. Without delving further into minority models of disability, which have been exhausted elsewhere (Davis 2013; Goodley & Hughes 2012; Shakespeare 2006), I highlight critiques of social constructivism, of which key disability sociologist Tom Shakespeare has described himself as a ‘critical friend’ (2006, p. 4).

Problematically, the social model of disability reinstates body–mind dualisms. As disability scholar Bill Hughes (2009, pp. 399–401) explains, the body itself is social, and the inverse is also true, that is, the social is bodily. Therefore, rather than the ‘body’, throughout this thesis, I deploy what Price (2015, p. 271) calls the ‘bodymind’, that is, the ‘sociopolitically constituted and material entity’ produced by both ‘disability’ and ‘impairment’. In so doing, I negate the Cartesian body–mind split, nod towards Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theory of embodied perception (2013 [1962]), account for the possibility of mental disability and gesture towards intersubjective perception. I return to a more detailed discussion of phenomenological experience later in this chapter.

Bodyminds are produced in and by dynamic relation with their environments. Perception, as part of this relationship, is problematic in the domain of disability even among insiders. Significantly, as feminist disability scholar Carol Thomas (1999) contributes, there is a key difference between what she calls 'impairment' and 'impairment effects'. She states, 'the fact that I cannot hold a spoon or saucepan in my left hand is an effect of my impairment and does not constitute disability' (Thomas 1999, p. 43). However, she continues, the two are not mutually exclusive:

this restriction of activity may become the marker of *other* restrictions of activity which do constitute disability if, for example, people in positions of power decide that because I cannot perform such actions then I am unfit to be a paid care worker, or a parent, and should therefore be denied employment, or the privilege of becoming a mother (Thomas 1999, p. 43).

She therefore concludes that 'Impairment effects *may* become the medium of disability in particular social contexts' but that 'Care must always be taken ... not to mistake impairment effects for what are, in fact, disabilities' (Thomas 1999, p. 43, original emphasis). The idea that impairments and their effects are contingent and fluctuating is meaningful in the context of my research. In not accommodating them, Thomas claims, they become 'disabilities', that is, in lay terms discrimination or, more precisely, ableism. Thomas' linking of disability to discrimination may cause confusion given that disability is otherwise a source of pride as a positive identity marker (e.g. 'people with disability'). Similarly, Marsh and Burrows muddy the concept of 'disability' when they claim 'disability is not something people have (we are not people with disabilities), but is something done to people with impairments' (2017, p. 28). Their negative associations with disability appear to conflict with American disability activist Lawrence Carter-Long's recently launched social media campaign to '#saytheword', that is, the word 'disabled' (King 2016). Notwithstanding these confusing connotations of derivations of the word 'disability', Thomas makes an important point that the effects of an impairment (a functional limitation) can be perceived mistakenly as the impairment when it is actually discrimination.

Disability as an intersubjective phenomenon

Intersubjectivity is central to this project and my treatment of disability. Disability is defined by the World Health Organization as a 'complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives' (WHO 2017). Yet disability scholar Simi Linton notes:

The liberal arts, particularly the humanities, have barely noticed disability beyond the models they accept uncritically, handed down from the sciences and medicine. The tools for inquiry in the humanities have, until recently, rarely been applied to understanding disability as a phenomenon (1998, pp. 147–8).

In this section, I explicate disability as an intersubjective phenomenon and, following my emphasis on the phenomenological interplay of a bodymind with its environment, as a new materialist experience in which the agency of matter is redistributed.

In this thesis, I situate the slippery concept of 'disability' in feminist epistemologies. As part of a somatic turn away from liberal humanism (Hughes 2009), I regard the body as fundamentally intersubjective. In particular, I approach what feminist philosopher Margrit Shildrick (1997) has coined as 'leaky bodies', building on philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's (1994, p. 34) claim that women's bodies are 'inscribed as a mode of seepage', a heuristic which bears the 'limitations and possibilities of a corporeal ethics' (1997, p. 11). According to Shildrick, 'The capacity to be simultaneously both self and other in pregnancy ... is the paradigm case of breached boundaries' (1997, p. 35). Where disability as relational has previously been understood in terms of the mother–child relationship, this research focuses on professional, nonfamilial relationships and, more exactly, artistic collaborations.

Intersubjectivity, and this thesis at large, are guided by neomaterialism, a radical redistribution of affective relations, animate matter and agency. Theories of affect are navigated through a dance and disability context specifically in relation to Deleuzian philosophy by Hickey-Moody (2008, 2009a, 2009b). However, the notion of affect, although a central concern in dance and disability generally, is beyond the reach of this project. Alternatively, as one point of departure I use Chen's theory of 'animacy', that is, 'a craft of the senses', which 'endows our surroundings

with life, death, and things inbetween' (2012, p. 55). Chen builds on germinal political theorist Jane Bennett's theory of 'vibrant matter':

Encounters with lively matter ... can chasten [our] fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common material of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests (Bennett 2009, p. 122).

Pivotal, the incorporation of nonhuman matter in Chen's 'animacy' welcomes theoretical discussion of the extended embodiment granted by prosthetics experienced by many people with disability, particularly dancers. For instance, disability philosopher Julia Watts Belser's (2016) autoethnographic study of herself as a wheelchair dancer recasts the dance artist equipped with a prosthetic device as possessing complex relationality. It is such relationality that redistributes agency, rethinks all matter as animated and reshapes the wheelchair dancer as interdependent (Watts Belser 2016, p. 5). 'Animacy' then helps unleash the humanist disabled subject described by disability scholar Ingunn Moser as 'discontinuous, bounded and detached' (2006, p. 383) beyond the limits of a bodymind and towards intersubjective experience.

With this intersubjective realignment, bodyminds are no longer the central source of control and autonomy. Rather, agency is dispersed and interdependent, shifting from one context to the next. As Watts Belser points out, this conception of agency differs to what many performers with disability aim for and, I would add, what their attendant scholars focus on, that is, an emphasis on 'the agency and capacity of those whose lives are often cast as pitiable and powerless' (2016, p. 5). In the same vein, Moser claims 'technology opens positions of agency and subjectivity' (2006, pp. 375–6). Echoing Bruno Latour's actor-network-theory (2005), she explains that nondisabled people are seen to express 'a given natural agency' (2006, p. 383):

Disability, however, is constituted as a breakdown of this normal order of the body, undermining the capability to act. As such disability is seen to constitute dependency, and the disabled body to be unbounded and continuous, at best relying on a network of relations that enables one to act (Moser 2006, pp. 383–4).

Her argument is that agency is always already mediated and that disabled people merely make visible this mediation process. Subjects, disabled or not, are rather continuously enabled – or in

fact, disabled – by practices and environs, which disperse and confer on them agency. Indeed, the descriptor ‘disabled’ acquires more precision in this case than the qualifier ‘with disability’, thus offering another reason why I oscillate between the two descriptors.

Flows of alive, agentic matter through bodyminds and their environments implicate prosthetic devices like Watts Belser’s wheelchair too. Prosthetics can also take the form of digital data, like Cranko’s lightwriter. Mills’ (2011a) contemplation of digital signals as ‘embodied’ negates a social assumption that digital information is disembodied, as famously propagated by postmodern literary theorist Katherine Hayles (2008 [1999]). Likewise, postdigital theorist Florian Cramer (2015 [2014], p. 18) argues that the idea of a colloquially ‘digital’ understanding of ‘the flow of electricity in a circuit’ is in fact, ‘analog’ and thus ‘continuous’. Through continuous flow, the prosthetic device as agentic matter, be it a for a wheelchair, redistributes disability and visibilises this process of distributed embodiment.

Pain, emotion and hidden disability

Indeed, recent efforts to define disability experience by such disability scholars as Tanja Titchkosky (2011), Elizabeth J Donaldson and Catherine Prendergast (2011), Alison Kafer (2013) and Margaret Price (2015) reflect this intersubjective approach. While Crow found social modelling of disability liberating, she also expresses that it ‘present[s] impairment as irrelevant, neutral and, sometimes, positive, but never, ever as the quandary it really is’ (1996, p. 208). Moreover, this quandary is notoriously regarded as ‘suspect’ (Cumings 2016, p. 153; see also Montgomery 2001). As Kafer tellingly yields, ‘I am not interested in becoming more disabled than I already am’ (2013, p. 4). The lived experience of pain, emotion and other hidden impairments, including intermittently apparent ones such as deafness, presents a specific site in this study on the work of artists with disability. I use the term ‘hidden’ in light of disability theorist Cal Montgomery’s (2001) critique of ‘invisible disability’ where the focus is on disability or impairment conceived as visual. The lack of cultural awareness of such experiences means hidden impairments are frequently misunderstood and devalued within the disability community. In social spaces where these lived experiences fail to be perceived, very different issues arise. In this section, I attend to issues of access, pain, vulnerability, safety and disclosure as they dramatically change in the case of hidden disability.

Rethinking access is a strategy to productively address hidden disability. Titchkosky offers a fresh approach, a new orientation to disability. She centres her focus not on bodyminds but on 'access':

Access – it sometimes seems as though some people have it and some don't. But what if access is much more than such an individual state of affairs? What if access is much more than a substantial, measurable entity? What if it is more like a way of judging or a way of perceiving? ... taken-for-granted conceptions of who has an access issue, and what access means, influence how people perceive these issues and act upon them ... Access, in this sense, is an interpretive relation between bodies. In this conception, we can explore how people wonder about and act within social space – and discover how we are enmeshed in the activity of making people and places meaningful to one another (Titchkosky 2011, p. 3).

I believe Titchkosky's idea of access as an 'interpretive relation between bodies' is fruitful. In her conception of access, as in the social modelling of disability, responsibility shifts from the individual to the collective. She reconsiders access as an 'act of perception' which 'is intimately tied to evaluation that guides interaction' (2011, p. 5). Significantly, Titchkosky's approach is useful for broaching the subject of the work of artists with any disability experience.

Issues of pain and vulnerability undermine social constructivist approaches to disability. Such experiences, in Hickey-Moody's words, comprise 'the viscerally intense, complex and laborious nature of the lives of people with disabilities' (2010, p. 509). For artists with hidden disability, this means their links to the political movement heralding the social model of disability, on which the disability arts sector is largely founded (Hadley 2017), are somewhat severed. Feminist disability scholarship has critiqued the silence of experiences of pain and vulnerability in social model accounts of disability. For Price:

The problem is one of judgement: We wish to celebrate difference, or at least to avoid saying that one manifestation of personhood (being disabled) is worse than any other. Yet, at the same time, merely by positing desires, we *a priori* cannot help mapping the undesirable (2015, p. 276, original emphasis).

Through a disability lens, the predicament of pain is precisely that it – like vulnerability and shame – is undesirable. This inescapability of the undesirable can only be resolved if disability desires its undesirable subject – pain. Price stresses the importance of responding to another's experience of pain as 'real', present and necessary. Similarly, disability performance researcher Arseli Dokumaci's call to 'accommodate pain' (2013, p. 112) when interacting with one's environment treats pain as something to embrace, not reject.

Consequently, an 'emotional turn' in disability studies has taken place. According to Donaldson and Prendergast, the idea of emotion itself is relatively new in disability theory; 'since Joseph Shapiro's *No Pity* in 1993, there is definitely no crying in disability studies' (2011, p. 129). They state that 'the presence of emotion has been pathologised' in the medical institution of psychiatry (Donaldson & Prendergast 2011, p. 130). For mad studies scholar Bonnie Burstow, 'the significance of words in the battle against psychiatry' is therefore crucial (2013, p. 79). From a feminist angle, emotion undermines masculinised rational thought and has strong ties to key feminised concepts such as 'vulnerability' (for discussion, see Mackenzie, Rogers & Dodds 2014). As such, feelings, emotions and sentiments are traditionally associated with women-only issues, for instance hysteria. Emotion is similarly trailblazing in disability performance studies in light of assertions that, for example, 'There is little place for sentimentality in a disability dramaturgy' (Grace 2009, p. 20).

Regarding hidden impairments and this emotional turn, certain aspects of disability experience come to the fore, especially the supposed need to feel safe. Indeed, the notion of 'safe space' has arisen in a particular situation in this research. Questions about who is safe, what they are safe from and so on have surfaced for the artists involved. As a 'burn survivor', Kafer points to the dilemma between a 'failure to engage in the traumatic effects of disability' (2016, p. 1) in the face of a societal thirst for, and exploitation of, the 'what happened to you stories' (2016, p. 6). Kafer questions the possibility itself of 'safe spaces', extending Price's previous observation that 'safer' rather than 'safe' spaces (2011b, p. 100) are more helpful and that access needs can, at times, butt heads. Kafer (2016, p. 17) sees 'safety' as unhelpful insofar as the rhetoric of 'safe spaces' can exclude certain people. Rather, she advocates for 'thinking through the rubric of access' as a means of forging terms that have yet to be articulated (Kafer 2016, p. 12). Peripheral to the celebratory agenda of mainstream disability studies, she thereby encourages the formation of disability theories of trauma, loss and mourning as valid cultural sites within which to explore the concept of disability.

Elsewhere in disability studies, a call for scholars to disclose a 'relationship to disability' (O'Toole 2013) has urged those in the field to self-identify as with or without disability or in professional or familial relationships. In line with the protocols of American disability activist culture, disability and queer theorist Corbett Joan O'Toole (2013) calls for disability studies scholars to self-identify in public disability contexts as 'disabled' or 'nondisabled'. O'Toole, who describes disclosure as sharing a 'relationship to disability', has influenced my subsequent deployment of 'disclosure'. According to O'Toole, the invitation to share 'opens possibilities that are shut by the binary "Are you disabled?"' such as "mother" or "colleague"' (2013, p. 3). As I discuss in Chapter Four, such a call to disclose has particular implications for performance practitioners with hidden impairments who find themselves in the public domain. In early 2016, reverberating across social media sites the world over, activist Lawrence Carter-Long launched the campaign #SayTheWord as a way of encouraging more public presence, conversations and coverage of disability issues, but also pride among disabled people (for discussion, see Brown 2016). This 'coming out' (Samuels 2003) discourse is thus a vexed debate in the diverse landscape of disability.

The field of disability studies has explored acts, reasons and implications of disclosing in academic contexts (Burke & Nicodemus 2013; Kafer 2016; Kerschbaum 2014; Matthews 2009; O'Toole 2013; Samuels 2003). Significantly, however, there has been no research in the specific context of disability arts bar meditations carried out by Hadley with Rebecca Caines (2009) and Koppers (2009). Helpfully, Koppers' poetic exploration emphasises that 'disclosures are in time and space' and 'are traces of life' (2009, n. p.). Koppers also includes a cursory mention of disclosure (2014, pp. 7–12) in an instructional guide for tertiary students. While Koppers raises some pertinent aspects of self-disclosure, for instance that it can be a choice, that it is also about dealing with 'other people's discomfort' (2009, n. p.) and that there are privacy and safety concerns, she does not explore the particular case of the artist with *hidden* impairment. Indeed, none of these scholars explicitly address the case of the artist with hidden disability faced with the choice to disclose or not. Here lies a gap in disability theory addressing the artist who does not visibly 'perform' disclosure (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 59).

Disclosure can be a confronting task for the artist with hidden disability, who may have experienced past or ongoing trauma, like Kafer. Yet I suspect the anxieties around disclosing are not restricted to those with hidden impairments. Those with experience of physical, sensorial,

neurodiverse or neuroatypical, acquired, chronic as well as emotional, psychological, social, psychosocial or cognitive learning or intellectual impairments – including mothers, siblings, colleagues, friends and others in close relationships – may all well experience hesitation about disclosing for fear of shame, negative reception, and stigma or discrimination.

One theoretical proposition comes in the concept of ‘kairotic space’ (Price 2011b). Kairotic space refers to opportune times and places to express access needs, which are paramount for people and groups identifying with disability. I believe Price’s concept of kairotic space, although conceived in education contexts, emphasises the crucial issues of access in other professional spaces including the rehearsal studio for live performance productions. Derived from the classical rhetoric term *kairos* meaning ‘opportune or appropriate time’ (Price 2011b, p. 60), ‘kairotic spaces’, Price explains (2011b, p. 63), are understudied because ‘their impact tends to be underestimated by those who move through them with relative ease’. Kairotic spaces are characterised by the following criteria: ‘Real-time unfolding of events ... Impromptu communication ... In-person contact ... A strong social element [and] High stakes’ (2011b, p. 61). Whereas Price relates her concept to academia and ‘mental disabilities’, I propose that her concept is equally valid in artistic settings, intersecting with all sorts of lived experiences of disability, because both scenarios (education and the arts) share the ‘*pairing of spontaneity with high levels of professional ... impact*’ (Price 2011b, p. 61, original emphasis). I draw on her theory here even though it is grounded in mental disability because the concept of kairotic space enables more careful disclosure and expression of access needs. The common definitive element to both educational and artistic settings is, indeed, professional context.

Nondisclosure spills into artistic representations of disability. A filmic representation of nondisclosure and the impairment hierarchy appears in Rolf de Heer’s film *Dance me to my song* (1997). Responding to the portrayal of Julia, a woman with disability, played by writer and star actor Heather Rose (also with disability), Hickey-Moody explains that the story explores the ways in which ‘people in Julia’s life grapple, or fail to grapple, with their own transcendent beliefs relating to disability’ (2010, p. 506): While Julia experiences a ‘nightmarish relationship’ (2010, p. 505) with her carer Madeline, who in fact lives with undisclosed hidden mental disability herself, neither Julia nor Madeline demonstrate respect for each another. Here, I follow Price’s (2011b) term ‘mental disability’ to refer to emotional, psychological and social impairment. In the film, as Hickey-Moody points out, ‘the relationship clearly positions Julia as the better person’ (2010, p. 505). Moreover, the hidden ‘psychological’ impairment (Hickey-

Moody 2010, p. 506) of Madeline remains unrecognised by Julia and other characters. In its nondisclosure of hidden impairment and, in its place, clichéd construction of the ‘hysterical woman’ (Hickey-Moody 2010, p. 505), the film’s narrative yields a refusal to recognise what Bruno Starrs identifies as ‘emotional disability’ (2008, p. 4), ultimately reinstating a subtly greater validity of physical impairments over hidden ones.

Naming disability

If conceiving of disability is anxiously governed, naming disability is all the more apprehensive. For those who do identify as disabled, new terms are invented or reclaimed, and thus the liberatory language of disability ebbs and flows. In this section, I return to discuss Deaf culture, I share my own preferences about terms to convey disability and, finally, I address the oppressive culture of ableism.

It is here that I clarify a point mentioned earlier in this chapter, that Deaf communities do not regard themselves as with ‘disability’ or ‘impairment’ but, rather, as a subcultural group, hence ‘Deaf culture’ (for discussion, see Brueggemann 1999; Davidson 2008; Lindgren, DeLuca & Napoli 2008) and the birth of concepts like ‘Deaf gain’ as a counterpoint to audist discourse about ‘hearing loss’ (for discussion, see Bauman & Murray 2010). As such, I capitalise the term ‘Deaf’ to portray experiences as cultural, not medical. Alongside concepts like ‘Deaf gain’ sit culturally empowering terms for disability such as ‘crip’ and ‘crip pride’ (for discussion, see Cosenza 2010; Davidson 2016; Kafer 2013; Lewis 2015; McRuer 2006; Price 2015; Reeve 2012) and ‘desire’, that is, desire for or of disability, as well as sexual desire of disabled people (Sullivan 2008). These terms redress presumptions of disability as lack.

Another strategy for redressing deficit connotations of disability is to admit that we are all vulnerable to the possibility and, some would argue, the inevitability of disability in terms of ageing. Yet, rather than using ‘temporarily able-bodied (TAB)’ to portray disability as a spectrum, in this thesis I intermittently qualify people who do not identify with disability as ‘nondisabled’, ‘without disability’ and even ‘able-bodied’. To be clear, I prefer to describe people without disability not as ‘able-bodied,’ which reinforces a fictive binary, but as TAB, which I understand is a term from the American disability rights movement. I prefer this term because it points towards the possibility, following cultural theorist Nancy Fraser (1989; Fraser & Gordon 1994) and Susan Wendell (1996, p. 60) and feminist disability scholars, that everyone

needs varying levels of support at various stages of life. Here I do not intend to elide real differences between nondisabled and disabled people, in light of David Mitchell's recent calling out of 'strategies of inclusion that discount, universalize, and normalize disabled people on behalf of claims to social integration' (Mitchell & Snyder 2015, pp. 15–16). It is vital that I acknowledge distinct individual experiences of disability respective to each bodymind. Too often in cultural theory, disability is excluded from the debate, if not accidentally, frequently intentionally, as disability concerns over neoeugenics debates attest (Wolbring 2013). Indeed, in performance theory too, as I discuss later in this chapter, disability has only relatively recently entered scholarly debate. The current socio-political climate wherein the term 'disability' has been described as the marginalisation of the marginalised, the rhetorical force of uttering 'disability' overrides my personal preference for TAB.

It is worthwhile to shed some light on this marginalisation. The oppression experienced by disabled people is most commonly referred to as 'ableism' (for discussion, see Campbell 2012, pp. 212–28). At its most basic level, ableism is the discrimination and social prejudice experienced by disabled people, further elaborated on by Linton (1998, p. 9) as the imposed characterisation of someone as defined by their disabilities and, consequently, inferior. There are certain derivations of the concept such as 'disablism' (Campbell 2012, p. 213) and 'cognitive ableism' (Carlson 2001). Many disability projects respond to ableism, such as Siebers' seminal observation that Western culture perpetuates an 'ideology of ability' (2008, pp. 7–11). In a dance context, this idea extends to notions of ableist aesthetics such as a disabled dancer adhering to the aesthetic of a lean, graceful, athletic classical dancer, reflecting a broader societal push to conform, as observed by disability and queer studies theorist Robert McRuer, to 'compulsory able-bodiedness' (2006, pp. 1–2) or 'ablemindedness' (Price 2011b, p. 57 and p. 104).

Disability 'misfitting'

Under the pressure to conform with a pervasive 'ideology of ability', disabled people are the ultimate social misfits. As I argue in this section, their failure to fit is generative. Amid all the anxious nomenclature of disability is a priority – empowerment. But where and how is disability located to that end? Is it more in the body (the medical model) or more in the environment (the social model)? I believe Garland-Thomson's fecund concept of 'misfitting' edges closer to a promising answer. She postulates this materially discursive feminist critical concept of

‘misfitting’ (Garland-Thomson 2011), in extending Butlerian ideas on the social constructionism of matter (Butler 1993). According to Butler, for instance, gender becomes a constructed performance in which an individual actively participates. Garland-Thomson’s theory also resonates with that of feminist theorist Karan Barad on the performativity of matter (2003, p. 803), where any matter is ‘an active participant in the world’s becoming’. Underscoring this string of feminist theory, of course, is Merleau-Ponty’s theory of bodily perception. In his theory, Merleau-Ponty describes ‘being-in-the-world’ (2013 [1962]) as an interaction in which a body cannot be separated from the world. While the body is the source of this interaction, the body is situated and thus affected by the material world. I find ‘the down-to-earth quality of phenomenology’ (Albright 1997, p. 47) particularly useful in relation to dance and, like Albright, I also find valuable the work of feminists such as Garland-Thomson who have taken up and extended Merleau-Ponty’s theory.

Garland-Thomson explicates that ‘Misfitting as an explanatory concept lets you think through a particular aspect of world-making involved in material-discursive becoming’ (2011, p. 592). She elaborates:

Misfitting serves to theorize disability as a way of being in an environment, as a material arrangement ... The dynamism between body and world that produces fits or misfits comes at the spatial and temporal points of encounter between dynamic but relatively stable bodies and environments (Garland-Thomson 2011, p. 594).

Within this definition, the key notion of ‘materiality’ is described as ‘constituting relationship between flesh and environment’ (Garland-Thomson 2011, p. 594). Thus, there is a clear emphasis on the discursive and dynamic link between body and environment. Her concept dovetails in performance contexts with theatre scholar Thomas Welton’s ‘conceiving the dynamic exchange between the body and environment as a locus of meaning’ (2011, p. 12).

In disability contexts the value of ‘misfitting’, Garland-Thomson contends, is in its explicit shift away from the overdiagnosed disabled subject. While still focusing on the material and hence not eliding the body, ‘misfitting’ moves towards a focus on external factors that, rather importantly, determine and label impaired subjects as ‘disabled’. In its overt materiality, Garland-Thomson’s term tends to show bias towards physical impairments instead of mental disabilities. To demonstrate the concept’s broad applicability, she considers Deaf culture:

Deaf people ... should not be made into hearing people through technology such as cochlear implants and high-tech hearing aids but rather should have access to communication with both the hearing and the deaf through sign language and other forms of non-verbal communication that create a fit between them and their world (Garland-Thomson 2011, p. 597).

Here, she applies a figurative interpretation of 'misfitting' in terms of incompatibility and aligns it with Deaf people whose visual-based languages fail to fit into mainstream aural-based languages. In a very tangible sense, if the disabled person cannot fit into either the physical or cultural environment and infrastructure, then access is denied and they are prevented from participation in society.

Garland-Thomson's concept is a step towards rethinking and expanding the concept of 'disability' as not exclusively originating from a body and person. Its figurative application helps us conceive of non-physical discrimination such as negative social attitudes and perceptions, yet also accounts for pain, vulnerability and functional limitation, as Price (2015) recently reflects. In the art world, Cachia's (2012) call for 'access as creative methodology', that is, incorporating accessibility within an artwork itself, gains traction here. Cachia's call echoes practice already happening in Australian performance around the same time. For instance, Gaelle Mellis in her 2012 live performance *Take up thy bed and walk* incorporated 'accessibility features into the core aesthetic of the work' (Austin et al. 2015, p. 39). As Mellis herself puts it:

The idea was you take those access elements like audio descriptions, captioning sign language and you put them in to the work so the work becomes accessible to everybody and so that people with sensory impairments in particular can come to any show they want ... You can incorporate it into the work and it can add to the work. It can add texture and layers and different experiences (cited in Austin et al. 2015, p. 40).

Both theoretical and practical or, more aptly, artistic and creative, applications of 'misfitting' therefore appear in recent cultural activity advancing the liberatory praxis of disability.

Presenting disability and performance

So far, I have discussed the concept of disability as a spectrum (and hierarchy) of alternative functionalities, mobilities, ways of communicating and perceiving, an identity category, a cultural resource and an intersubjective phenomenon typified by concepts such as 'misfitting'. Here I turn to presenting disability as theatrical expression. In the context of performance, Hickey-Moody comments in response to the work of Restless: 'When experienced by an observer, sensation produced by integrated dance theatre is a site of multiple processes of becoming-other which involve renegotiations of viewers' subjective limits' (Hickey-Moody 2009b, p. 70). This empirical research critically seeks to find other means of conceiving the performer with disability which negate a static, pathological, voyeuristic or humanist portrayal of the disabled figure. In this section, I explore how the presentation and performance of disability overlap and are, in many ways, inextricable.

I am wary of 'theoretically diagnosing' (Mitchell & Snyder 2001, p. 382) the artists with (and without) disability who have participated in my project. In variations on the phrase 'artist with disability' (e.g. 'performer/actor/dancer/practitioner/director/performance-maker with disability'), I refer to an actual professional performance artist who identifies with disability. By 'disabled figure', I imagine a fictional artist or person with disability in the act of performing on stage, in a rehearsal studio or in everyday life. In this chapter, I thus oscillate between 'performer with disability' and 'disabled figure' in order to distinguish between practising artists who have participated in this study or are working in Australia or overseas, and the idea of this figure. In effect, the disabled figure is precisely at the heart of this project, but it is important to note that the body *as a site of research* is not the focus of this study. Therefore, while I deploy phenomenological methodology informed by embodied perception, the site of this research rests within the interpersonal relationships between artists, their prosthetics and their audiences.

Like disability, the concept of 'performance' is expansive. For performance studies pioneer Richard Schechner, 'to perform' can involve 'being ... doing ... showing doing [or] explaining showing doing' (2013 [2002], p. 28). In this thesis, my qualification of the term 'performance' is elastic. Performance variously becomes an apparent state of being or a 'being' in Schechner's taxonomy, the execution of an act or a 'doing' (e.g. an operation by a doctor), a public display or a 'showing doing' (e.g. a politician's speech), an event on TV (e.g. a live sports broadcast) or

what is perhaps most commonly associated with the term, a staged or theatrical event in a social space (e.g. a live performance of *Swan lake*). The last category in Schechner's taxonomy, 'explaining showing doing', is demonstrated by this very document – an explanatory thesis on performance practice. Applying Schechner's foundational work, influenced in turn by Victor Turner's anthropological ideas of ritual, I use the terms 'disability performance' and 'performance of disability' to refer to, at once, disability presentation – social 'everyday' performance (Schechner 2013 [2002], p. 52) of the disabled figure – and disability representation – theatre 'heightened' performance (Schechner 2013 [2002], p. 55) by the disabled figure.

Feminist performance theory has influenced the subfield of disability performance. This is largely thanks to application of the idea of performing gender to disability. Ricocheting throughout cultural theory in what constitutes the 'performative turn', notions of performance have fashioned Butler's theory of 'performativity' (1988). Significantly, the work of feminist performance theory has greatly decoded metaphors within which representations of women operate and are thereby limited by. As such, feminist theories of performance have been especially helpful precursors to considering disability performance, because representations of disability are also trapped by metaphors. Influential feminist performance scholar Rebecca Schneider once stated that she wrote for 'those of us still bearing bodies, still trying to turn' (1997, p. 10). Like Butler, Schneider wrote in the context of gender, as fellow performance scholar Peggy Phelan did before her:

Performance uses the performer's body to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body *per se*; performance uses the body to frame the lack of being promised by and through the body – that which cannot appear without a supplement ... In employing the body metonymically, performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor, and the metaphor I'm most keenly interested in is the metaphor of gender (Phelan 1993, pp. 150–1, original emphasis).

Schneider's extension of Phelan's work in the politics of performance and visibility is also worth noting:

The effect of inscribing women as "other" with a nature which cancels nature is to exile women to the paradoxical realm of a reality which is always already fantastical, a really

unreal – or, a reality which cancels a woman's status as "real" in favor of her service to performativity, masquerade, representation (Schneider 1997, p. 50).

Such theory foreshadowed subsequent interpellations of the performance of disability.

Disability performance theory, in turn, has certainly been influenced by disability studies itself. To redress mainstream normative consciousness and present alternative ways of thinking about the abnormal or, in a word, 'normalcy' (Davis 1995), influential disability literary scholars David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have called for a 'phenomenology of the body':

Although the language of deficits, limitations, and pathologies saturates the social vocabulary that brings disability into being, an ableist culture's discourse must be mastered while, simultaneously, a radical transformation of the relationship between materiality and meaning is engaged (2001, p. 385).

As Mitchell and Snyder identify, the problem for disability is the very *representation* 'that brings disability into being'. Thus, the project of those working in disability-related fields is twofold: to become fluent in harmful ableist discourses, and to attend to the abnormal body and the meaning that we ascribe to it. This latter concern, Mitchell and Snyder rightly argue, is the purview of the arts.

Notably, disability literary theory has contributed to the scholarly foundations of disability performance theory. From Davis' critique of the novel to critiques of other art forms including photography, film, theatre and dance, problematic representations of disability have sparked contemporary debates. Davis writes that 'Characters with disability are always marked with ideological meaning, as are moments of disease or accident that transform such characters' (1995, p. 49). In a parallel vein, Mitchell and Snyder's concept of 'narrative prosthesis' (2001), that is, the use of physical deviance as metaphor for overcoming, has been applied to numerous critical analyses of cultural texts. I note here that, although disability scholar Julie Smart (2001, p. 138) distinguishes between 'difference' as positive and 'deviance' as 'socially undesirable', I maintain both as positive or negative depending on their deployment.

Performing disability, a politics of visibility

The performance of disability must also be understood in terms of a politics of visibility. My discussion in this section is underpinned by Phelan's theory (1993) emphasising that bodies in performance are transient, which is especially helpful in the case of dance and hidden impairment. I turn here to defining visibility in the social performance of disability, considering the visibility of the disabled figure on stage, as perceived by a particular dancer with disability, and, finally, the enabling or disabling role of technology in relation to the visibility of performers with disability. I argue here that the disabled figure is caught in a particular disability politics of visibility.

My use of 'visibility' comes from disability performance theorist and practitioner Carrie Sandahl's description of the concept as 'the condition of being apparent' (2003, p. 54) or, I would add, *becoming* apparent. The 'visibly' disabled figure, to draw on Albright's qualification (2013, p. 300), is simultaneously invisible and hypervisible in social everyday circumstances and, in turn, exudes default 'heightened' presentation in framed theatrical events. Sandahl reflects on the role visibility plays in performance contexts generally:

For queer performers, visibility often means proclaiming an otherwise invisible sexuality onstage; the task is different for disabled performers, whose visible impairments often lead to social invisibility. Here I mean social invisibility both metaphorically (as in nondisabled people's lack of regard for disabled people) and literally (as in disabled people's lack of access to public spaces). Social invisibility extends to academic theater training programs, most of which base admission on a young person's "talent," by which they mean the ability to enact a set of virtuosic physical and verbal skills. Many programs are dubious of disabled people's talent or simply do not recognize it (2003, p. 30).

Significantly, Sandahl goes on to note that 'the concept of visibility itself relies on a metaphor that assumes able-bodiedness' (2003, p. 54). Central to her point here is that, for people with disability to be noticed in public spaces, assumptions of ability urgently need to be challenged. Seeing a performer with visible disability on stage or elsewhere in the public domain therefore disrupts a mainstream 'ideology of ability' (Siebers 2008, pp. 7–11). In terms of societal visibility, then, people with disability are paradoxically invisible and hypervisible. 'Invisibility', according to disability scholar Susannah B Mintz, 'refers to the absence of disability from the

conversations and activities that establish the way a society functions, encompassing social relationships, intellectual and artistic work, and politics' (2015, p. 113).

On stage, live performance by a disabled figure can be confronting for an expectant audience. Here, more importantly, I place spectators in 'bodily co-presence' (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p. 44) with performers. Siebers notes that performers with visible disability, unlike 'neutral bodies', are always visible and 'positing' (as cited in Schmidt 2015, p. 230).⁷ In a statement by scholar and dance-theatre maker Catherine Cole for her performance *Five foot feat* (2004) (co-created with Christopher Pilafian), a similar tendency materialises:

I became disabled over two years ago when I lost my entire left leg to cancer. As I adjusted to my new body circumstances, I became interested in the public spectacle of disability. Going about on crutches with one leg, I became a walking performance art piece, with people stopping to stare or avoiding eye contact all together. But whether people looked or didn't look, I was a performer, a performer in a script I didn't write. So in creating *Five Foot Feat*, I was interested in working with that spectacle, the energy of people's visual interest in my body. I felt that by giving people permission to look, and to look on my terms, we could move beyond awkwardness to something more interesting. That's why I begin *Five Foot Feat* by taking off my prosthetic leg. The opening moment of the show is a way of saying, "Here's what my body looks like. Feel however you feel about that, and now let's move on!" (as cited in Sandahl & Auslander 2005, p. 4).

Interestingly, Cole's removal of her prosthetic suggests the view that technology can be inhibiting and that bodies can do without and simply function in different ways. For disability communities, technology enacts at once a liberatory praxis as well as an agenda to fix, cure or eradicate.

In a performance setting, technology can enable and disable the presence of the performer with disability. A wheelchair catalyses movement which is different to that of a nondisabled performer and a lightwriter facilitates speech. Yet, as Mills has recently commented, 'the lack of access to technological systems, especially those required for the performance of citizenship

⁷ Siebers' publication is in German here so I use a secondary source presented in English by Schmidt.

– from workplace architecture to municipal infrastructure to telecommunications networks – is a principal source of disability’ (2015, p. 176). The relationship between performers with disability and technology which enables or disables presence is particularly fraught.

In terms of performance studies’ theoretical fascination with presence, the live presence of the performer with disability in a theatre production is bound up in a politics of visibility. By ‘live’ I allude to performance scholar Philip Auslander’s (1999) famous provocation that the purportedly pure presence of performers’ physical bodies is contaminated by digital media. This provocation has been thoroughly refuted in performance theory addressing intermediality, multimedia performance and cyborg theatre (Causey 1999; Chapple & Kattenbelt 2006; Dixon & Smith 2007; Kilch & Scheer 2012), a body of scholarship that I refer to in this thesis as ‘digital performance’ theory following Steve Dixon’s definition in his seminal book of the same title (Dixon & Smith 2007). I point out here, nonetheless, that a disability lens has not figured to any substantial degree in theoretical discussions of digital performance work. Feminist digital performance scholar Jennifer Parker-Starbuck’s (2005, 2011) discussion of the figure of the cyborg in relation to performer with disability Cathy Weiss and Sandahl’s (2001) likening of the threat of robots to the threat of HIV are notable exceptions. In disability contexts, the politics of visibility is often intimately tied to the ‘live’ *and* ‘mediatised’ (Sone 2010) presence of performers with disability who intimately use various technologies to move, speak and act. I will elaborate on this scenario later in this chapter in a discussion on prostheses.

The ‘literal’ (Power 2008) presence, in contrast to a prospective future *absence* (or indeed current absence), of a performer with disability acquires a heightened sense of politicisation in debates on biotechnology, that is, the manufacture and modification of tissues, organisms or life processes (Mills 2015, p. 176). In an interview, Back to Back Theatre Director Bruce Gladwin reflects on performers with Down syndrome performing in *Soft* (2002):

We made a play about prenatal screening but the fact that as soon as the play starts there’s three actors that walk on with that genetic condition – that’s a fairly strong form of advocacy and we don’t even have to open our mouths (as cited in McHenry 2013, p. 46).

In identifying the purpose of performance by artists with disability, Kupperts highlights the political imperative in an assumption that the focus of a given show is:

aimed at the disabled person doing the performing, not the wider community. The performance is “authentic”: it connects to the “true being” of the performer. Then on the other side the performance is seen as a political intervention, aimed at the whole community (2003, p. 61).

She goes on to say that the next step is the possibility that ‘The disabled performance can be seen *as* performance: challenging dominant notions about “suitable bodies”’ (2003, p. 61, my emphasis). For performers with visible disability, inevitable politicised representation often is instantaneous with their appearance on stage.

Staging ‘disability aesthetics’

In considering the ethical implications of performers with disability appearing on stage, we arrive at the artistic possibilities that these performers harness. From performing disability, I thus move to regarding what these performers do. In this section, I discuss notions of disability and Deaf aesthetics. I also examine what it means to mobilise such aesthetics as an artistic choice empty of the actual presence of artists with disability themselves. Finally, I link the trend of deconstructionism in postmodern dance, itself fascinated with failing physicality, to the turn to embrace disability.

In the place of excavating philosophical interpretations of ‘aesthetics’, I proceed from two particular disability-specific inflections. Contemporary theatrical representations of disability are steered by radical aesthetic frames and strategies. Siebers (2005, 2010) reveals how disability has shaped modern aesthetics, especially in visual art. Davidson echoes Siebers’ idea when he imagines: ‘How might the aesthetic itself be a frame for engaging disability at levels beyond the mimetic?’ (Davidson 2008, p. 2). Siebers argues that disability has actually become an aesthetic value. Echoing Kantian philosophies of valuing the world in and of itself, as opposed to valuing the world as a means to an end, Siebers elaborates:

No object beyond the figure of disability has a greater capacity to be accepted at the present moment as an aesthetic representation. Disability is not, therefore, one subject of art among others. It is not merely a theme. It is not only a personal or autobiographical response embedded in an artwork. It is not solely a political act. It is all

of these things, but it is more. It is more because disability is properly speaking an aesthetic value, which is to say, it participates in a system of knowledge that provides materials for and increases critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel. The idea of disability aesthetics affirms that disability operates as a critical framework for questioning aesthetic presuppositions in the history of art and as a value in its own right important to future conceptions of what art is (2010, pp. 19–20).

Here, Siebers constructs disability as an aesthetic value, an artistic resource and a defining tenet of art in modernity. In parallel, Bauman explains a ‘deaf aesthetic’ (2008, p. 167) by drawing on William JT Mitchell’s (1980, pp. 566–567) words that ‘the great virtue of perceiving spatial form in literature is ... to see the fiction, like the life it criticizes and represents, as an ecosystem, an organism, a human form’. A Deaf aesthetic requires apprehending sign language not only in terms of content, but also multidimensional form. Kochhar-Lindgren provides a perceptive description of a Deaf aesthetic:

This synaesthetic engagement creates a sensorial to-and-fro in numerous performances that promulgate a deaf aesthetic. Unmoored from being solely the instantiation of an identity politics, these sensibilities create a type of sensorial playing field. Consequently, identities can be moved around, reimagined, and recast. The need to articulate clear identity politics, for very real and important political reasons, can reinforce fixed notions of the body as well as fixed categorizations of art, particularly performance poetry. While I agree that there are limits to identification, I would argue that there are also multiple ways to build empathy, to transfer body perspectives, and to consider the positionality of another (Lindgren, 2006, p. 425).

For Kochhar-Lindgren, sensory experience has the liberating effect of uprooting representation itself. This ‘sensorial playing field’ resonates with art historian Caroline A Jones’ thesis on the ‘mediated sensorium’ through which perception is ‘shifting, contingent, dynamic, and alive’ (Jones & Arning 2006, p. 8). This uprooting of representation itself is what renders the mere presence of the disabled figure on stage powerful. The ‘unmoored’ representation, enabled by a ‘synaesthetic engagement’, is reflected in sign poetry, an art form which is, in many ways, a danced poem written on and by the body. Deaf scholar Brenda Brueggemann states: ‘In signing space, images come to life – and not just figuratively’ (1999, p. 217). A more recent instance of what might be read through the lens of a ‘deaf aesthetic’ where ‘hands are messengers of our

feelings and passages of our thoughts' (Haiping 2013, p. 36) is Michèle Anne De Mey and Jaco Van Dormael's *Kiss & cry* (2015) by Belgian theatre company Charleroi Danses in which dancing hands feature in a close-up live feed of an otherwise miniature stage design.

A certain disability aesthetic, I argue, is pronounced in Alain Platel's recent work *C(h)oeurs* (2012) (a pun on the French words for 'choir' and 'heart') with his company, les ballets C de la B. At one point, dancers begin to shake seemingly uncontrollably. One male dancer bends his wrist, mimicking the gimp physicality of people affected by spasticity. They look as if they are undergoing a perverse involuntary urge to remove clothing, to dress themselves only to fail, to play with undergarments, to intimately touch themselves apparently cognisant of the audience's gaze. It is as if they have been struck by an epileptic seizure, Parkinson's disease or, perhaps most clearly, a curious case of a long-lasting orgasm (accentuated by the choir's majestic high notes). With facial expressions denoting an extremity of emotions – transcending trepidation, agony and elation – their constant physicality of trembling produces a distinctively disability aesthetic in contemporary dance (Platel & Mortier 2016).

I explore this as a possible appropriation of a disability aesthetic. As Fox and Lipkin warn, 'the use of disability as a dramaturgical device tends to erase the particularities of lived experiences' (2002, p. 15). And yet, as Burrows and Marsh suggest, treatment of disability should not be restricted to those with direct lived experience (2017, p. 28). For me, this provocation by a pioneering European contemporary dance company appears to be an example of Siebers' 'disability drag' (2008) or 'cripface', a tokenistic cultural appropriation reminiscent of Mitchell and Snyder's concept of 'narrative prosthesis'. 'Cripface' has been used to describe nondisabled performers, especially nondisabled actors in film, who play disabled characters. Recalling 'blackface', where white performers played the roles of black characters by donning black makeup, 'cripface' usually refers to particular physical characteristics and quirks such as palsied movement or speech impediments.

Alternatively, is Platel's choreography a culturally productive depiction of disability where 'kinesthetic stuttering', as André Lepecki (2006, p. 1) might describe it, is admired – indeed staged – for its visceral beauty? Is it producing a 'critical anxiety' (Lepecki 2006, p. 1), that is, 'the betrayal of the bind between dance and movement' characterising dance's new politicising approach to subjectivity? Lepecki's argument correlates 'stuttering' and even 'tics' – notably all acts of disabled experience – as disruptive aspects to dance that ultimately steer it in the

direction of a revaluation of its certainties, for example, a dancer's 'correct posture' (2006, p. 1). 'In-ability', Susanne Foellmer comments, citing Xavier Le Roy's *self unfinished* (1998) – a hallmark of contemporary dance's disfiguration of the body – 'serves as a motor in order to gain access to new aesthetic experiences' with the caveat 'though usually presented by well (postmodern) trained bodies' (Foellmer 2017, p. 90–91). While such European and North American perspectives may be enticed by independent Australian dancers with disability Joshua Pether (2016, 2017) and Matt Shilcock who, like Platel, create 'a hiccupping in choreographed movement' (Lepecki 2006, p. 1), their (and other Australian disabled dancers') contributions to dance remain peripheral in the Australian mainstream dance sector. In stark contrast to the celebration of Platel's choreographic stuttering, they report not being able to find a 'fit', to draw on Garland-Thomson's (2011) concept of 'misfitting', with the Australian contemporary dance scene.⁸

Dancerly prosthesis

For some artists, prosthetics are not simply an aesthetic choice. Canadian b-boy Luca 'Lazylegz' Patuelli, American dance and skateboarding artist Bill Shannon, American interdisciplinary performance artist Lisa Bufano (who garnered attention in her role in the Gimp Project produced with Heidi Latsky Dance in New York) and Scottish dance artist Claire Cunningham have each developed their own unique style of dance specific to their respective movement vocabularies, with which their prostheses are 'entangled' (Salter 2010). Another notable instance of disability aesthetics in dance can be seen in Marie Chouinard's *boDY-rEMIX* (2005). I would argue this work is 'disability drag' (Siebers 2008) put on by dance performance. In the work, pointe shoes are repurposed as a sort of prosthetic and dancers crawl with crutches (Foellmer 2017, p. 92). For many artists with disability, however, prosthetics are an unflinching reality, to recall phenomenologist Vivian Sobchack's critique of the abundant use of the concept of 'prosthesis' by cultural theorists (2006).

Yet, this apparent reality, at times, becomes an unobtainable ideal. High-profile amputees Aimee Mullins and Heather Mills, equally equipped with advanced prosthetics, epitomise the 'superhero' disabled figure. As disability literature has shown, the 'supercrip' character in cultural texts delivers a disservice to disability communities as a problematic all-too-commonly

⁸ Interview with Matt Shilcock, 3 March 2017.

perceived 'inspiration' (Young 2012).⁹ The problem lies in the inaccessibility and exclusivity of a certain way of life. These women – Mullins and Milles – are white and Western, ostensibly have financial access to advanced prosthetics and choose to pass as 'normal' or, in these particular cases, 'supercrip' (Quinlan & Bates 2008). In this sense, they progress the enhancement versus normalisation debate.¹⁰ Interestingly, they personify cultural theorist Donna Haraway's (1991) cyborgs, as Siebers points out:

Haraway's cyborgs are spunky, irreverent, and sexy; they accept with glee the ability to transgress old boundaries between machine and animal, male and female, and mind and body ... Haraway is so preoccupied with power and ability that she forgets what disability is. Prostheses always increase the cyborg's abilities; they are a source of new powers, never of problems. The cyborg is always more than human – and never risks to be seen as subhuman. To put it simply, the cyborg is not disabled (Siebers 2010, p. 63).

As Siebers stresses, Haraway's consideration of the disabled person as cyborg is unquestioningly positive and productive. Mitchell and Snyder comment that Haraway only mentions disabled cyborgs in a footnote (1997, pp. 28–9). As disability theorist Donna Reeve points out, this oversight is remarkable considering Haraway's father used crutches (2012, pp. 93–4). And yet, as Sandhal points out, 'many people with disability are cyborgs not only in the metaphorical sense but in a literal sense, as many of us are literal hybrids of human and machine, flesh and steel' (2001, p. 59). In theoretical accounts of the disabled cyborg, however, Reeve reveals that debate is confined to 'how technology either restores functionality or normalises the person with little discussion of the cultural/social implications of prosthetics, or of the lived experience of body and prosthetic' (2012, p. 94). An exception is Parker-Starbuck's response to dancer with disability Cathy Weis' (1999) work, *Monitor lizard*:

Watching her dance with both brace and technological image I was taken by the beauty of her movement; Weis's techno-dance sweeping through the image-saturated space transformed narratives of the "abject" or "disabled" body into ones of "extraordinary" strength (2011, p. 75).

⁹ See also Young's celebrated Ted Talk introducing her idea of 'inspiration porn':

<https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much>.

¹⁰ For a vivid overview of this debate, see *Fixed: The science/fiction of human enhancement*: <<http://www.fixedthemovie.com/>>.

Her feeling of being ‘taken by the beauty’ reveals her emotional reaction to Weis’ work. Importantly, Parker-Starbuck’s response, rather than adhering to binary distinctions between the purposes of prosthetics, recognises their part in the power of Weis’ movement.

Glasgow-based disabled dance artist Claire Cunningham also moves with prosthetics – crutches. As a practitioner, she is notable not only for her explicit embracing of disability identity but, moreover, for her intimate relationship with her crutches, with which she continues an ongoing artistic enquiry. In this relationship, notions of care and animacy come to the surface. What is most arresting about her practice is the gentle treatment of her prosthetic devices. As if part of her own body – an extra pair of limbs, so to speak – her crutches are literally absorbed into her physicality and complicate her embodiment. In an interview I conducted with her, she dwells on her approach to her crutches:

and there’s a cradling maybe to how I pick them up. So when I’m dancing or working, you would never see me do that [demonstrates clenching the metal pole with a tight fist] like that, unless I’ve specifically created something where I’m choosing for them to do that but I would always be kind of – they would have a liveness to them – and there’s a gentleness, a softness ... It’s quite interesting to go, “Why did my vocabulary evolve the way it is in relation to the crutches?” And I recognise that probably it’s ‘cause I made this weird choice at some point to treat them as if they were human beings, or that they were people, or that they were alive or something, which means that I don’t – okay, I do treat them as separate objects, absolutely. But there is something that’s quite careful and tender in the way that I handle them that’s maybe specific to the vocabulary.¹¹

Certainly, Cunningham’s relationship introduces an explicit caring relation between herself and her prosthetics, which she describes as ‘alive’, reminiscent of Watts Belser’s theory of animacy in her experience as a wheelchair dancer. Cunningham’s remark speaks to Parker-Starbuck’s insightful claim that ‘live’ presence is most valuably described as a ‘process of technology’ (2011, p. 10). Where she describes them as ‘separate objects, absolutely’ she imagines her crutches as intersubjectively produced by her touch. Furthermore, the words she uses to portray this touch are expressly caring – ‘cradling ... a gentleness ... a softness ... quite careful

¹¹ Interview with Claire Cunningham, 20 March 2016.

and tender'. It seems to me that, for Cunningham, her crutches sustain her life, like any other part of her bodymind. In her dance practice, she implicitly recognises this and noticeably cares for them. In an email after the interview, she commented that that was the first time she had spoken about her crutches in this way. It is interesting to note that unearthing the care already present in her practice was new for her.

Summary

This chapter began by introducing the vexed position of audiences in relation to perceiving performers with disability on stage. I then explored the concept of disability, problematising disability as a neomaterialist mattering of location and stressing the experience of disability as fundamentally intersubjective. I attended to the prospects of pain and emotion, especially in relation to hidden disability, where the significance of words becomes paradoxically both liberating and oppressive. Here, I identified a gap in the literature pertaining to disability and dance regarding the disclosure of artists with hidden disability in particular. I then presented the concept of 'misfitting' as a valuable way of understanding disability. In so doing, I defined and qualified key terms in this thesis such as 'disability', 'disclosure', 'access', 'misfits', 'disability aesthetics' and 'deaf aesthetics'.

In the second half of the chapter, I reoriented to the context of performance. I traced the helpfulness of feminist performance theory for disability performance theory. I explained the significance of a politics of visibility, noting the difference that disability adds – another paradox – its social invisibility and simultaneous hypervisibility. In response to contemporary performance work, I illustrated recent instances of staged disability aesthetics. Finally, I addressed the implications of dancers who use prosthetics, marking the distinction between dancers who need them and dancers who are deploying them to aesthetic ends. I ended with a discussion of 'care' in relation to disabled dancer Claire Cunningham's particular relationship with her crutches. In the next chapter, I address exactly what I mean by 'care' and why care theory is valuable in relation to disability and dance performance.

Chapter Three: The tension of 'care' in dance performance and disability

In the previous chapter, I located disability and its evolving performance in today's cultural climate. Building on the gaps identified in Chapter One, namely a dearth of scholarship on Australian contemporary performance work by and with artists with disability, I identified an additional gap in disability performance theory: little attention to the politics of disclosure for artists and no attention to artists with hidden impairments specifically. In this chapter, I continue mapping the theoretical backdrop to this research. Here, I call for 'care' in the context of dance and disability. I argue care is a key issue missing from current theoretical debates within disability performance theory. Importantly, I address care throughout my discussion in direct response to the acts of care that have emerged from this empirical research.

Unexpectedly, in an interview just before *OTR* was set to premiere, Force Majeure's Artistic Director Danielle Micich commented that she had directed the performance-makers in the performance piece with a 'sense of care'.¹² Her comment recalls a statement by nondisabled Theatre Director of Sydney-based Ruckus, Alison Richardson, about the director's role in relation to performers with Down syndrome: 'There needs to be sensitivity and a careful playing out of how a director manages this on stage and within the process' (Richardson 2017, pp. 41–2).

Likewise, in a conference paper UK performance scholar Dave Calvert (2016b), whose work is influenced by various European theatre companies working with learning-disabled performers, has recently pinpointed the director's responsibility of 'care' for performers with intellectual disability. Significantly, Calvert's contribution represents the first effort by a performance scholar responding to theatre work involving artists with disability to frame this work explicitly and emphatically as 'care'. In his paper, he rethinks theoretical discussion (Umathum 2015, p. 108; Wihstutz 2015, p. 45) of Swiss company Theatre HORA's collaboration with choreographer Jérôme Bel, *Disabled theater* (2012), to find that exploitation issues such as auteurship and agency are controversial precisely because they suggest that the artistic oeuvre has 'not shown care for the Theatre HORA actors' (Calvert 2016b, n. p.). In another example, he discusses a production by UK theatre company Mind The Gap, recounting a scene where performer Charli Ward tells a raw emotional story:

¹² Interview with Danielle Micich and Philip Channells, 27 July 2016.

As she struggles to regain control, the performers move caringly towards her, an act of care which itself establishes the foundation that allows Ward to recover agency within the aesthetic (Calvert 2016b, n. p.).

Calvert concludes that, in both cases of theatre by and with actors with intellectual disability, 'Care is not just an intuitive human impulse in this moment, but the very mechanism by which theatre is maintained' (2016b, n. p.). Invoking the politics of visibility both in theatre and in the realm of disability, he goes on to comment that this idea of care as theatre's sustenance 'is another illusion of *Disabled Theater*' (Calvert 2016b, n. p.). As this recent paper indicates, Calvert is inviting a turn towards care in disability performance scholarship.

I claim that care theory captures the work involved in Australian dance theatre practice by and with artists with disability. This practice is labour made possible by 'caring' relationships which do both harm and good. As this chapter reveals, disability communities resist care frameworks. Consequently, activities involving disability communities have not been theorised in terms of care. Theoretical discussion of performance practice involving disabled artists is just one example. In Australia, no scholarly work responding to dance or theatre practice incorporating disability has focused on care. Herein lies another gap. My PhD project therefore presents a study of contemporary dance theatre performance practice by and with practitioners with disability theorised within a conceptual framework centring on care. I argue that a care paradigm accounts for the complex activities involved in the dance theatre practice explored in this thesis. Concepts of care address the various intersubjective positions of Australian dance artists with and without disability, as well as their encounters with audiences.

The idea of 'caring relations' (Held 2006) pinpoints my conceptualisation of care. Care is the process of sustaining relations. A focus on this process reveals the interdependencies that sustain these relations. Care means many things. It is a relationship, relational embodied labour, a relational attitude and a value. In not focusing on care, disability studies and performance studies neglect the relationships that underpin lived experience – this is what neither field of research can explain in any sufficient amount of detail or nuance. Yet these ontologies of care characterise it in positive terms only. Care theorist Sara Ruddick (1998) also believes, as I do, that 'care' is provocative. I believe disability studies can mobilise 'care' as a provocation, as Kelly (2011, 2013, 2016) advocates, in order to highlight the continued lack of justice, sensitivity, access, attention and capacity or, more extremely, the presence of abuse

and violence done in the name of 'care' within disability contexts. It is this complexity in the conceptualisation of care, as simultaneously positive (vital) and detrimental (harmful) to disability communities, that is eluded by disability studies' resistance to care and, more specifically, disability performance theory's studious avoidance of the word 'care'. My claim, following Kelly, is that both the positive and the negative valencies of care in disability contexts make for a complex, fraught and nuanced conceptual framework.

My argument in this chapter is that the tension between a disability resistance to care and a feminist quest to embrace care offers a valuable frame of reference to account for the caring acts distilled from my fieldwork. Specifically, I introduce the germinal role of care ethics as it dovetails and butts heads with mainstream disability politics, what Thomas calls 'malestream Disability Studies' (1999, p. 2). First, I extend a recent effort to apply feminist care ethics to performance practice, Thompson's recently proposed theory of an 'aesthetics of care' (2015), by presenting its richness and its challenges from a disability perspective. Second, I trace theoretical discussion of dance practice involving artists with disability and identify specific gaps in scholarship to date. I note the absence of approaching this practice as acts of care. Third and finally, I explain why the term 'care', as opposed to alternative concepts such as 'help', 'support' and 'assistance', is valuable in engaging more deeply with this dance practice.

Throughout my discussion, I identify gaps in theoretical discussion of disability performance, in addition to the three gaps identified so far: first, a dearth of scholarly work which focuses exclusively on contemporary Australian dance and theatre practice embracing disability; second, little theoretical discussion of disability disclosure for artists, especially those with hidden impairment; and third, the presence of, yet lack of explicit utterance of, 'care' in disability performance studies. Elucidating the significance of this latter gap is the central focus of this chapter. Three more gaps surface. First, dance theory responding to this practice has, to date, only concentrated on visible impairments, as illustrated in the ubiquitous phrase '*physically* integrated dance' (my emphasis) originally used in both British and American dance and disability contexts. Second, as Australian disability and media scholar Gerard Goggin (2009) has said, more analysis of the hearing–Deaf encounter is needed. Third, the productive implications of prosthetics as a key part of atypical embodiment by dance artists with disability have not been explored. My discussion will continue to highlight the ways in which care has not been explicitly applied to theoretical debates of performance practice by and with artists with disability.

Why 'care'?

In the emerging subfield of disability performance studies, reimagined concepts of care have not been broached. Rather, theoretical discussion of performance practice involving artists with disability has centred on issues such as reclaimed agency, ambiguous authorship, radical virtuosity, new aesthetics, the affect of the disabled performer and reconfigured spectatorship. Indeed, these issues are pertinent in addressing contemporary performance practice, not only practice incorporating disability. Throughout this dissertation I will reiterate this point, that disability, as a category of cultural critique, generatively makes visible and valorises important cultural issues, not only in performance contexts but in cultural, political and social theory and practices more broadly.

For instance, the conception of dance and theatre performance as labour is made visible by a disability lens. In dance specifically, an important recent issue in disability and performance theory is authorship (Waelde et al. 2016; Whatley et al. 2015), particularly practice involving performers with intellectual disability (Ames 2016). Who creates, owns and is making the decisions in the processes of producing work? In theatre too, performance groups incorporating artists with intellectual disability are spurring scholarly debate about artistic control and processes (Hargrave 2015; Schmidt 2015, 2017).

I believe these recent theoretical discussions implicitly explore 'care', avoiding the term itself for political reasons. Yet Calvert (2016b) presents a significant exception. In studying the practice by and with artists with intellectual disability at Swiss company Theatre HORA, Schmidt proposes 'a working model to enable better understanding of the position of disabled directors as they negotiate between autonomy and supporting structures' (2017, p. 447). Drawing on philosopher Eva Feder Kittay's 'dependency theory' (Kittay & Carlson 2010; Kittay 2011), she writes about 'the politics of (in)visible support' (Schmidt 2017, p. 447). In effect, Schmidt orients towards a politically and ethically fraught concept of care in order to address negotiations in making theatre which is being directed by artists with intellectual disability in a way that offers radical shifts from previous practice.

Notably, Schmidt (2017, pp. 449–51) discusses a role she calls 'creative collaborator'. In her discussion she draws on performance scholar Michael Atchman, who reports that a similar

term and position, 'creative enabler', was created by Graeae Theatre. Achtman comments, 'One of the most challenging aspects of the creative enabler role is maintaining the boundary between access support and artistic input' (2014, p. 36). However, Schmidt (2017, p. 451) points out that 'There is no either/or, good or bad, and many variations. Sometimes two positions are combined'. Thus, Schmidt gestures towards the varying roles of support artists involved in theatre practice by and with performers with intellectual disability.

Likewise, when Hargrave compares Back to Back and UK-based Dark Horse's performance works, he too is implicitly (although arguably explicitly) turning to feminist disability concepts of interdependence to interrogate 'society's – and theatre's – overwhelming preference for whole, independently functioning, rational-minded persons' (2015, pp. 9–10). In a similar way to Schmidt, he conceives of British theatre by artists with intellectual disability, for instance in Mind the Gap's theatrical processes, in terms of 'dependency work' (Kittay 1995) and Shildrick's 'critical disability studies' approach (1997; see also Hargrave 2015, pp. 13–15). Hargrave comes close to claiming the work investigated in his book as 'care' when he states:

Theatre involving learning disabled actors evokes such issues [as "dependency work"]; it places representatives of a societal group *defined by* diminished agency (dependents) on stage as seemingly autonomous agents (actors) (Hargrave 2015, p. 15, original emphasis).

He goes even further, tentatively describing the 'nondisabled practitioners involved' as 'dependency artists' (Hargrave 2015, p. 15).

However, neither Schmidt nor Hargrave imagine these ideas as operating within an explicit care framework. This thesis thus sets the scene for a more explicit paradigm shift to 'care' in theoretical discussion of performance practice involving practitioners with disability. I argue that this paradigm shift is applicable not only to performance practice by and with intellectual disability, as Schmidt, Hargrave and Calvert have shown, but to disability in all its variegated forms.

Like any performance practice, dance and theatre practice by and with practitioners with disability is care labour, to echo Calvert's description of theatre as sustained by care and Hargrave's critique of theatre as notoriously assumed to be made by independent individuals.

Work with disabled artists highlights the labour already inherent in performance practice. This labour is described by Schechner as a set of stages: 'rehearsal, training, workshop, preparation, performance, cool-down and post-show' (1985, p. 19). Theatre scholar Nicholas Ridout is more explicit in associating theatre with work when he describes it as 'political grievance' (2006, p. 101). Moreover, McAuley (2012) made a statement by famous playwright and director Bertolt Brecht, 'Not magic but work', the title of her recent book discussing the rehearsal practice of Sydney theatre productions.

The need to view practice involving artists with disability as work is typified by the loaded term 'professional' (Conroy 2009) in disability arts contexts as a defence against the 'therapy ghetto' (Hadley 2014). However, in using the word 'professional' to qualify artistic practice by and with artists with disability, there is an assumption that the arts workers are anxious about their art work being perceived as therapeutic, recreational or communal. At the same time, in not using it, the work risks being perceived unquestionably as therapy.

This dilemma is certainly not unique to Australia. Conroy in her former position as Associate Director of the UK's Graeae Theatre reports that for the 'professional programme' (2009, p. 7) the company had to sacrifice artistic exploration for the sake of 'quality' and traditional aesthetics, a by-product of which meant excluding learning-disabled performers. Most recently, AXIS Dance Company's Judith Smith has pointed out that company members are still being perceived through a therapeutic lens as "'overly courageous," "brave," "special," or "superhuman"' (Smith & Killacky 2017). Dance performance where bodies are at the fore only seems to justify these disenfranchising perceptions.

Yet the distinction between amateur and professional is not binaristic, in my view, but a spectrum, as Hadley (2017) agrees. One way to reconfigure this perception is indeed to refer to professional practice as work for all involved, no matter what the purpose. For example, Hickey-Moody's (2009a) project as a participant observer of Restless Dance Theatre in the late 1990s explores the company's working method. Since Restless was founded in 1993, many other performing groups have surfaced but have, in the past, been therapeutic as opposed to artistic in intention (Austin et al. 2015; Hadley 2017). I suggest, following McAuley (2012), that professional performance work, whether it involves practitioners with disability or not, needs to be valued as labour.

Imagining a feminist disability aesthetics of care

How might care theory, in particular feminist care ethics and disability care politics, shed new light on performance practice embracing disability? I find much potential in Thompson's (2015) pivotal essay merging the two fields of care studies and performance studies. In this section, I review his recent endeavour to bridge performance practice with feminist care ethics in his concept of an 'aesthetics of care'. I offer a reconsideration of the concept refracted by a disability lens. He imagines, on the one hand, performance as 'caring' or 'careless' and, on the other, 'care' as a craft. I demonstrate that a cross-pollination of his theory and a disability politics of care enables mutually beneficial critical perspectives. I explain the value of imagining a *feminist disability aesthetics of care*, an extension of Thompson's theory, which I use to refer to the struggle between a disability politics and a feminist ethics of care in the context of producing live performance. In what follows, I first define care aesthetics. Second, I evaluate care aesthetics in disability contexts. Third, I flag the potential hostility of disability communities towards care aesthetics. Lastly, I propose how care aesthetics itself might be refined by a disability perspective.

First of all, what constitutes Thompson's proposition? An aesthetics of care rethinks care ethics by calling for 'an aesthetic turn in care studies' (Thompson 2015, p. 432). Thompson departs from the premise of a socially inattentive society in which 'Carefree as a social good has meant that careless (in all senses) has become a defining value' (2015, p. 435). An aesthetic turn thus offers an opportunity to revalue care.

Of aesthetics, Thompson writes: 'Aesthetic value is located in-between people in moments of collaborative creation, conjoined effort and intimate exchange: these are new virtuosities of care' (2015, p. 438). He describes care aesthetics as a series of values, namely, affect, intimacy and inter-human relations, taking place in the '*preparation, execution and exhibition*' (2015, p. 437, original emphasis) stages of performance practice:

An "aesthetics of care" is then about a set of values realised in a relational process that emphasise engagements between individuals or groups over time. It is one that might consist of small creative encounters or large-scale exhibitions, but it is always one that notices inter-human relations in both the creation and the display of art projects ... It would not pretend to a distinction between a process and an outcome because both

might stimulate affective solidarity between people – perhaps participant to participant or performer to audience ... While care might be exhibited fleetingly, it is more likely that care aesthetics would be realised in more enduring, crafted encounters between people. Seeking to overcome widespread social indifference implies commitment to deep and extended processes (Thompson 2015, p. 437).

An aesthetics of care hence pertains to each development stage of dance practice, because it accounts for a performative encounter between human actors. He continues:

An exhibition in the mode of an aesthetics of care would involve an invitation, a dialogue and an opportunity for reciprocity, with an aesthetics built in the sensations stimulated in the particular moment, specific to the differences of each audience or spectator, and not located in the assumed pre-ordained power of the art work itself. The aesthetics of care is realised in affective connection between those participating in the whole event of the performance or show – in the sensations of mutual regard and respect (Thompson 2015, p. 439).

He elaborates, drawing on care ethicist Joan Tronto, that ‘attentiveness’ (Tronto 2013, p. 34) is both at the heart of the creative process and the outcome of it: ‘An aesthetics of care is, therefore, a sensory ethical practice’ (Thompson 2015, p. 437). In effect, his emphasis on ‘sensory’ characteristics reflects care ethics’ focus on concrete activities. Thompson expands the focus of care ethics by building on care theorist Fiona Robinson’s view, which ‘reject[s] the notion of care as a feminist or women’s morality, arguing instead for a relational approach’ (1997, p. 119).

Most importantly, Thompson foregrounds the relational qualities of his concept. He qualifies his deployment of the term ‘aesthetics’ by accentuating the role of human relations, writing ‘The shape and feel of the relationships at the heart of the project are its aesthetics’ (2015, p. 439). The seedling of his care aesthetics manifests in the aesthetic term ‘beautiful’. Thompson and his wife, independently of each other, observed the relationship between a carer and a Congolese colleague, Antoine, who had been injured during a massacre in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and whom they had subsequently invited into their UK home to recover. He and his wife both described this relationship as ‘*beautiful*’ (Thompson 2015, p. 432, original emphasis). He clarifies: ‘We, thus, both used aesthetic criteria to judge the exceptional in this

example of care ... using a language more usually associated with artistry' (Thompson 2015, p. 432). Thompson's theory is thus rooted in his experience 'caring for and observing the care for Antoine' (2015, p. 430).¹³ His position of superiority and control should not be dismissed, especially not from a disability perspective.

Second, how might a disability lens enhance an aesthetics of care? From a disability perspective, how is an aesthetics of care valuable or, equally, how is it oppressive or lacking? Thompson's care aesthetics stem from an applied theatre setting apart from which many artists with disability seek to distinguish themselves, as evidenced by Conroy's anecdote from Graeae theatre company at the beginning of this chapter. Thompson's concept was sown in the context of an explicitly unequal set of human relations (a European scholar and his family from the global North, a probably paid care worker and a foreigner from the global South). In a disability worldview, the comment 'beautiful' to describe such caring relations translates as potentially condescending, despite important contextual differences (e.g. Antoine is *temporarily* injured and is cast here as a victim of war, thus with *refugee* status).

All this said, disability assumes some valuable space in Thompson's theory. When he writes that 'Decisions about accessibility ... are not mundane organizational matters, but crucial ethical propositions' (2015, p. 438), he points towards his theory's potential to account for a broader range and more complex types of access such as attitudinal barriers. However, this is not new. For example, contemporary UK and Australian performance practice engages in what is recognised in industry variously as embedding access, an 'aesthetics of access' (created by Graeae Theatre) or an 'ethic of accommodation' (Galloway, Nudd & Sandahl 2007, p. 229).

What Thompson's theory does offer disability and performance theory is a deeper engagement with the very process of performance practice. His theory pays attention to processes of performing, audience needs and the idea of performing care in care industries like nursing. His broadening of performance echoes Dokumaci's consideration of performances 'that appear in biomedicine and contemporary health care' (2014, p. 14). I interpret care aesthetics to valorise the process – what Thompson calls the '*execution*' or the '*reciprocity of gradual creation*' – above and beyond 'the single-minded voyage towards the first night' (2015, p. 438, original

¹³ The entire story is too detailed to retell here and Thompson also does not provide much of an account. His main point in sharing this deeply personal anecdote is that the challenging experience working with, then acting as carer for, a Congolese male co-worker led to the birth of his theory.

emphasis). This valorisation of process is important for dance and theatre practice incorporating artists with disability precisely because creative development processes necessitate ethical considerations such as access.

Thompson's rather specific suggestion about not prematurely casting audiences is valuable, especially for disability performance theory. He explains that performances stitching care aesthetics into their methodological fabric 'might need to move from a suspicion of the audience, to one where the range of life experiences of the spectators is not assumed' (2015, pp. 438–9). He continues:

Caring for an audience means thinking hard about *their experience and needs*. This is not to say they should witness insipid unchallenging presentations, but an event should model a caring insight into the *different conditions of engagement* (Thompson 2015, p. 439, my emphases).

Thompson's attention to different spectators' needs clearly points towards the applicability of care aesthetics in performances by and with disabled artists wherein accessible productions become an ethical priority. While Thompson situates his theory in the terrain of 'applied theatre, community-based performance and participatory arts' (2015, p. 432), I argue his theory remains valuable for professional performance embracing disability.

Thompson notes that care aesthetics is achieved as a '*demonstration* of mutual regard' (2015, p. 437, my emphasis). Here, 'demonstration' constructs 'performance' like Schechner's 'showing-doing' (2013 [2002], p. 28). The idea of demonstration also connotes what Dokumaci calls performances that appear as 'an action (or function) where the actor could be either human or non-human' (2014, p. 14). An initial extension of Thompson's concept is thus that a theory of care aesthetics can be applied beyond human actors, for example to the treatment of prosthetic devices, and hence encounters in which there are not-so-clear opportunities for reciprocity, a basic tenet in care ethics pioneer Nel Noddings' 'relational caring' (1984). Beyond this, I believe there is much more potential value of care aesthetics in performative encounters with disability, whether one is a disabled/nondisabled artist or a disabled/nondisabled spectator.

Third, how might disability communities, specifically artists with disability and their attendant scholars, be antagonistic towards care aesthetics? From a disability perspective where care literature is 'conceptually contaminated' (Kröger 2009, p. 399), Thompson's theory is provocative. He does mention that disability, specifically disability access, is a 'crucial ethical proposition' (2015, p. 438) and he does give some space and weight to considering the political implications of his theory. Further still, drawing on theatre scholar Shannon Jackson, Thompson declares that care aesthetics is 'unafraid' (2015, pp. 437–8) to expose and value the 'supporting infrastructures of ... living beings' (Jackson 2011, p. 39). Here, Thompson is implicitly responding to a prospective reluctance for such exposure. His stance certainly corresponds to that of disability scholars working on dependency who are keen to diminish care as a prosthetic for independence (Kittay 2011, p. 50).

Tellingly, he commends feminist care ethics for its politics, in his words, for 'insisting on a vision of politics that asserts a contract of mutual regard that extends far wider and demands a more fundamental realignment of human relations' (Thompson 2015, p. 436). What Thompson experienced in observing the care of and caring for Antoine – namely, the 'intervention of the professional into [his] personal life' (2015, p. 432) – can be likened, I put forward, to what many people with disability experience daily. This political realignment in a disability context is typified by Mitchell and Snyder's proclamation that 'For disability studies, *the impersonal was political*' in the light of 'cultural efforts to medicalize and domesticate disability' (2001, p. 377, original emphasis).

What is highly pertinent in Thompson's theory is therefore its overlapping of private and public spheres. Of this overlapping, he argues that the category of 'the "professional" cannot be sustained ethically without a commitment to the potential for it to blur dynamically with the personal' (Thompson 2015, p. 432). For example, '*Preparation* is, therefore, paradoxically part of the *exhibition* within this mode of artistic project' (Thompson 2015, p. 438, original emphasis). This commitment to the personal in order to sustain professional status is often palpably present in work by and with disabled artists.

Crucially, however, what is missing from Thompson's care aesthetics is a more complex assessment of care from a disability rights perspective. He highlights the criticality of a political interrogation by emphasising Tronto's contributions to the ethics of care literature, notably her 'realm of caring' (2013), which extends care ethics to the public domain. However, he omits

disability voices who are critical of this literature, such as Anita Silvers (1995), Jenny Morris (1991, 1993, 2001) and Tom Shakespeare (2000, 2006, pp. 145–52). Contra Tronto's (1993) political argument for an 'ethic of care' which expounds on the inevitable inequalities of any caring relationship, Silvers comments that 'far from vanquishing patriarchal systems, substituting the ethics of caring for the ethics of equality threatens an even more oppressive paternalism' (1995, p. 40). 'In the public domain' where performance presentation takes place, writes Shakespeare, 'the stress on interrelationships and interdependencies seems welcome' (2006, p. 145). However, in the private sphere, he continues, 'the contribution of the feminist ethic of care would surely be resisted by those who come from a disability rights perspective' (Shakespeare 2006, p. 145). Both Silvers and Morris are sceptical about the care ethics theory on which Thompson's care aesthetics relies.

My project presents somewhat of a dilemma in that it spans both *public* performance and *private* rehearsal contexts. Yet, overall, the 'professional' status of the performance practice explored in this thesis would seem to veer towards a more 'public' category even in the seemingly private space of the rehearsal studio. Henceforth, following Shakespeare, I maintain that a focus on care in the communal and public spaces of performance is promising. Thompson's argument for an aesthetics of care thus lacks an oppositional consideration of care from a disability worldview.

Fourth and finally, how might a disability lens advance an aesthetics of care? What Thompson's theory does retain is a sustained insistence on the importance of attentiveness and caring relations. Thompson acknowledges care ethics for its decentring of the autonomous individual, citing care philosopher Virginia Held, for whom a 'caring person will cultivate mutuality in the interdependencies of personal, political, economic, and global contexts' (Held 2006, p. 53; Thompson 2015, p. 433). As Thompson notes, feminist care ethicists regard 'autonomy as partly illusionary' (2015, p. 433).

Yet a disability feminist politics of care accounts for a deeper interrogation of autonomy and dependency, but he does not refer to this body of research. For example, Kittay's dependency critiques (1991, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2011, 2015a, 2015b) are an important trajectory which is absent from Thompson's discussion. He situates a feminist ethics of care as a turn away from a preoccupation with the autonomous self, moving towards 'an account of our lack of autonomy as a source of drawing universal claims from the interpersonal' (Critchley 2007; Thompson

2015, p. 435). Feminist disability scholars view autonomy as increasingly vital within dependent relationships (Carlson & Kittay 2010). For instance, Kittay and philosopher Licia Carlson write 'It is thought that only *persons* can make autonomous decisions and ought not to be treated paternalistically' (2010, p. 4, original emphasis). They argue that these assumptions perpetuate the idea that people with intellectual disability do not have autonomy. They claim this problematic line of reasoning leads to the belief that the autonomy of people with intellectual disability needs no protection, for it does not exist. For Kittay, who has an adult daughter with intellectual disability and thus some key insights from personal experience, autonomy needs not only confirmation of existence so as to secure the personhood of those with intellectual disability, but also further safeguarding. The multifaceted issue of dependency hence requires careful deliberation in Thompson's theory.

I take the opportunity here to qualify my use of the words 'careful' and 'caring' in this thesis. By 'careful' I do not refer to the tension of care. My use of 'careful' does not necessarily refer to 'care' meaning a 'longing for goodness', as Noddings originally defined her 'ethical caring' (1984, p. 2). My qualification further contrasts to what Rogers calls 'care-full' and 'care-less' (2016) spaces because she does not consider a disability rights perspective. Rather, my use of 'careful' conveys more a sense of vigilance in a given environment, a meticulousness of process and a consideration of others, in this case disability communities. In contrast, by 'caring' I do refer to the tension of 'care' as argued in this chapter, precisely because 'caring' connotes the very kindness and charity that disability rights perspectives oppose.

Being careful, perhaps, is not only the work of scholars, but also, I suggest, that of artists. I argue that there are new and radical 'virtuosities of care', to borrow Thompson's apt phrase (2015, p. 438), in the domain of dance theatre performance by and with artists with disability. In performance-making contexts, Hargrave notes that the support structures of practitioners with intellectual disability are often invisible (2015, p. 100). Schmidt, however, argues that such support structures are not necessarily hidden but, rather, enmeshed in 'a politics of (in-)visible assistance' (2017, p. 448). Citing Kittay's (2011, p. 51) recent call to mobilise care (or as Schmidt cautiously words it, 'assistance') in tandem with autonomy rather than as opposing options, she provides two examples. First, Schmidt (2017, p. 448) writes that the audience's perceived 'failure' of a performer with intellectual disability who noticeably uses a script on stage because she forgets lines illustrates Siebers' 'ideology of ability' (2008 pp. 7–11). Second, she states that spectators' 'feelings of unease' as they watch this 'are based on the assumption that artists

without disabilities are *not* in need of support' (Schmidt 2017, p. 448). This assumption, she explains, negates theoretical discussion on the interdependency of artistic performance-making (Jackson 2011; Schmidt 2017, p. 448). Here, the politics wrought by the subjugating rubric of ableism – that these performers are 'failing' or that only these performers need support – are significant insights which, I argue, can enrich Thompson's account of care aesthetics.

Dance performance theory's response to disability aesthetics

I now review dance theory which considers the difference that disability makes in dance theatre practice. In this section, I trace dance practice by and with practitioners with disability and the scholarly responses it has so far ignited. To date, dance theatre research on the disabled figure in live performance contexts has circulated within conversations of pedagogy (see, for example, Whatley 2007) and community practice (see, for example, Kuppers 2007, 2017) but, most prominently, aesthetics. Given that the site of my research is within dance, theatre and performance studies, and that my project's focus is on the production and presentation of dance theatre work,¹⁴ I concentrate here on literature which attends to the aesthetics produced by performance practitioners. The most notable gap, as I will show, is that such new aesthetics – and the creative processes that generate them – have not been conceived in terms of 'care'.

Since the 1980s, dance theatre performance practice by and with practitioners with disability has emerged with a strong fascination about physical, corporeal difference. For example, the ageing body has been the subject of dance work ever since choreographer Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* was originally presented in 1978 (for discussion, see Climenhaga 2008, pp. 69–94). Yet, for its revolutionary incorporation of ageing bodies in an art form traditionally associated with youth and agility, it has only received relatively recent theoretical attention (Mangan 2013, p. 234). Significantly, dance studies has been addressing the disabled figure on stage since Raimund Hoghe, greatly influenced by Bausch, began his career as a performance-maker in 1989 after being a key member of Bausch's foundational Tanztheater Wuppertal from 1980 to 1990. Soon after, dance theory began to enthusiastically engage in work by disabled artists (Albright 1997, 1998; Benjamin 1995, 2013 [2002]).

¹⁴ My focus on professional practice is in spite of the unclear distinction between professional and community practice by and with people with disability, a point captured by the mere publication of the UK's leading integrated dance company CandoCo's co-founder Adam Benjamin's (2017) recent chapter contribution to *An introduction to community dance practice* and a point that I expand on in the next chapter of this thesis.

In the past, disabled and Deaf bodies instilled a primarily visual aesthetic in dance performance practice integrating disability. For example, in the late 1990s London-based *CandoCo* Dance Company was gaining scholarly attention, albeit by its co-founder (Benjamin 1995) at the same time that *Restless Dance Theatre* was attracting research in Australia (Hickey-Moody 2003, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) and *Cleveland Ballet Dancing Wheels* was impacting on mainstream dance research in the USA (Albright 1997). All three companies were known as ‘mixed-ability’ or ‘physically integrated dance’ groups because they incorporated dance artists with and without visible disability. It is important to note that these trailblazing companies were producing aesthetics forged on the appearance of physical and visible difference.

This focus on visible bodily difference is most obvious in the contact improvisation (hereafter, CI) methods famously used by *AXIS*, methods which, of course, accommodate movement with differential embodiment (Davies 2008). Albright (1997, 2013) and Kupperts with actor and playwright Neil Marcus (Kupperts & Marcus 2009) similarly note the aesthetic and political value of CI for dancers with disability. Undoubtedly, CI characterised by shifting weight distribution, continuous movement and in-the-moment creative decisions accommodates people with incongruent experiences of disability.

I propose that what is missing from literature on CI by and with practitioners with disability is its value in terms of not only politics and aesthetics, but also care. It is not surprising that this dance technique has attracted disability scholars and dance practitioners with disability alike. CI is viscerally interdependent, where bodies variously lean against or bear the weight of each others’ bodies (for discussion, see Albright 2013, pp. 230–6). In observing as well as practising CI, bodies enact an almost literal kinaesthetic metaphor of supporting structures. To my eyes, CI exemplifies a tangible practice of care. Yet dance scholars attending to dance involving practitioners with disability have not discussed CI explicitly as ‘care’, for example, in terms of dependency structures.

Since early scholarship, a number of international scholars have devoted consideration to the movement within the contemporary dance establishment by and with artists with disability (Ames 2011; 2012; Cheesman 2014; Davies 2008; Kupperts 2003; Matos 2008; Middelw 2010; Mohamed & Shefer 2015; Smith 2005; Whatley 2007). These recent considerations have detailed the shift away from classical movement virtuosity as epitomised by romantic

ballerina Marie Taglioni (Albright 1997, pp. 56–7) towards focusing on how the disabled figure rethinks dance as an art form through examinations of identity politics (Kuppers 2003; Matos 2008), a politics of visibility (Cheesman 2014; Midgellow 2010) and looking (Davies 2008; Whatley 2007, 2010), notions of reconceived virtuosity (Ames 2012; Foellmer 2017; Whatley et al. 2015) and new aesthetics (Ames 2011; Smith 2005). As performance scholar Owen Smith announced in his essay exploring the effect of such radically different aesthetics in the resistant British mainstream contemporary dance scene and its hesitant critics, ‘The movement to shift the aesthetic [was] underway’ (2005, p. 83). Elsewhere, documentation of the processes of particular independent practitioners and groups such as New Zealand’s Touch Compass (Powles 2007) and rural Welsh company Cyrff Ystwyth (Ames 2013) or instructive manuals for practitioners such as Benjamin’s comprehensive text *Making an entrance* (2013 [2002]) offer more practical understandings of this practice.

Following Albright, contributions by Smith (2005) and Whatley (2007) are perhaps the clearest reflections of the shift away from the dance world’s preoccupation with the ‘ideal’ dancerly body and traditional aesthetics. According to Smith, CandoCo’s ethos was ‘to reinterpret dance in order to widen potential ownership of the art form’ (2005, p. 74). For Whatley (2007), viewers bring a ‘presumption of difference’ and particular spectatorial strategies to perceive the dancer with disability. Most recently, Welsh choreographer and disability performance scholar Margaret Ames (2015, 2016) theorises her collaborative practice with practitioners with intellectual disability such as Adrian Jones, proposing radical ideas about professional dance including positioning the learning-disabled choreographer as ‘expert’.¹⁵

Interestingly, the integration of sign language into choreography has impacted on the development of dance practice embracing disability. In the UK, Common Ground Dance Theatre, founded in 1986, was one of the first companies to incorporate Deaf aesthetics in movement (Benjamin 2010, p. 114). While this integration is somewhat logical considering both dance and sign languages share common ontological foundations as kinaesthetic, spatial and visual forms, it is surprising that little scholarly attention has been paid to this relationship, with a recent exception from O’Reilly (2017). Importantly, ASL literary scholar Heidi M Rose (1992, p. 157) states ‘Dance is sometimes referred to as a “language” because of its ability to

¹⁵ Such a strategy is not unlike Theatre HORA’s latest project *Freie Republik HORA* whereby artists with intellectual disability are supported as directors of work (Schmidt 2015, 2017).

communicate ideas and emotions but, again, it does not possess linguistic structure’.

Prominent Deaf studies scholars such as Bauman (2006a, p. 107) thus vaguely acknowledge that, in American Sign Language, the ‘movement path line conjures relations with dance and performance perhaps more than with painting’. That said, in the foreword to a collection of essays on sign poetry (eds Bauman et al. 2006), Gallaudet sign language linguist William C Stokoe comments, ‘ASL poetry reunites dance and artistic utterance’ (2006, p. xiii).

In my view, Deaf aesthetics, like sign poetry and other signed language literature, undeniably has movement qualities that share parallels with dance. Dance artists with visible disability and Deaf dance artists, such as Denise Armstrong in the UK and Melbourne-based Anna Seymour in Australia, both powerfully make present the body. According to O’Reilly, these dance artists forge ‘alternative dramaturgies’, that is, ‘processes, structures, content and form which reinvent, subvert or critique “traditional” or “conventional” routes and representations’ (2017, p. 80).

Yet Deaf studies scholars have tended to resist such comparisons with dance. Rightfully, Deaf scholars prefer to emphasise the language, that is, both the linguistic qualities and the meaning derived from the communication exchange. One of the first Deaf studies scholars to consider the prominent role of the body in signed languages following Rose (1992, 2006) is Kochhar-Lindgren (2006). She turns to performance studies in her project, ‘hearing difference’. She proposes her theory of the ‘third ear’ to perceive ‘hearing across perceptual domains’ wherein, as she comments, ‘dancing voices awaken our own dancing voices’ (Kochhar-Lindgren 2006, p. 188). Her exploration of interactive, embodied and multimodal acts of perceiving Deaf expression is a helpful resource for considering the sensitivities and cultural specificities of Deaf–hearing encounters. In a parallel vein, Goggin calls for more research on ‘sign language, where the encounters between deaf and hearing cultures and languages remain largely invisible and unexplored, yet are surely an important part of understanding contemporary society’ (2009, p. 490). Herein thus lies another gap which this research seeks to address. As Kochhar-Lindgren justly claims about this dearth of scholarship on Deaf–hearing cultural exchange, ‘The call is an ethical one; as we comprehend the implications of perceptual difference and its connection to cultural identity, a new politics unfolds’ (2006, p. 188).

This thesis proceeds, in Chapter Five, to explore a Deaf–hearing encounter in the particular context of making dance theatre. My navigation of this encounter is necessarily careful. I

acknowledge that even in dance groups that work with Deaf performers and Deaf cultural consultants, issues of tokenistic portrayals of signed language, the risk of exploitation and other cultural insensitivities abound. For instance, Company Chordelia's *Lady Macbeth: Unsex me her* (for discussion, see Turner & Richardson 2017) was compellingly critiqued for its purported cultural appropriation of Deaf culture by British Sign Language linguists Graham Turner and Michael Richardson. They argue that the show was promoted as accessible for signing Deaf audiences. Advertising material specified that the work 'uses British Sign Language as an integral part of the choreography' (as cited in Turner & Richardson 2017) but, the authors claim, the work failed to interpret or appropriately represent aural features of the live dance theatre performance. Examination of these Deaf–hearing exchanges in the context of dance is therefore timely, not only in an Australian setting but, it seems, in a UK and thus perhaps an international setting.

In sum, dance theory has responded to the primarily visual aesthetic of dance incorporating Deaf and disabled figures on stage. More recently, theoretical discussion of dance embracing disability has turned away from a sole focus on the visual. Scholarly attention to the work of dance practitioners with intellectual disability is a case in point, for example in Ames' (2015) placement of the learning-disabled performer as 'expert' and issues of authorship, direction, intention, exploitation, identity, ability and the ontological and epistemological status of the theatre itself in Bel's *Disabled theater* (eds Umathum & Wihstutz 2015). Yet this dance practice by and with disabled artists has not been studied in terms of care. Although dance theory has ably and carefully considered dance practice embracing disability, theoretical discussions have not yet imagined this practice within a conceptual framework centred on care. As such, I argue, scholarship is lacking a critical, politically provocative lens.

This thesis newly attends to dance practice involving artists with disability in terms of care. Moreover, as I will claim in Chapters Five and Six, one of the manifestations of care from dance practice observed in this project is aesthetic response. I propose theatre spectatorship can be reconceived as caring response. For example, scholarly discussion of audience experience imagines what *receiving* care might be like in works such as Bel's *Disabled theater* (2012) and Back to Back's *Small metal objects* (2005). In these discussions (eds Grehan & Eckersall 2013; eds Umathum & Wihstutz 2015), the overwhelming focus turns to spectatorship. As Noddings suggests, 'we feel, perhaps rightly, that the receptivity characteristic of aesthetic engagement is very like the receptivity of caring' (1984, p. 22). While she speaks of this engagement in relation

to artists engaging in their work, I would add that aesthetic engagement is also what spectators perform during a live performance.

Yet, unlike what Noddings prefigures as a romantic view of the caring encounter, as I will explain later in this chapter, I regard such care receiving in politically resistant terms corresponding to the disability community's aversion to the very idea of care. In disability contexts, a tension thus arises with the prospect of care. Calvert recognises this struggle around care when, in response to *Disabled theater*, he states that 'artistic endeavour and, by extension, audience judgement are both troubled and nourished by an imperative to care in the face of disability' (2016b, n. p.).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Calvert (2016b) is the first disability performance scholar to figure care into theoretical discussion of practice. I agree with his politically amplified approach to care inflected by a critical disability lens. In his paper, he compares the formal structures of Bel's *Disabled theater* to Mind the Gap's 2015 production of *Contained* directed by Alan Lyddiard in an explicit framework of care:

In *Contained*, alternatively, the thematic content is explored through more conventional storytelling, supplemented by song, video and the constant assembling and disassembling of the set. In addition, a supporting figure also offers apparently live direction and assistance. The performance culminates with the supporting figure telling her own story, which repositions the learning disabled performers as reciprocal providers of support. I argue that this enacts a redistribution of care that destabilises the binary of disability and non-disability (2016b, n. p.).

In this 'radical distribution of care' Calvert identifies a reversal of the usual power imbalance of support structures involved in devising and presenting performance work with practitioners with intellectual disability. Curiously, Mind the Gap's work, as recounted by Calvert, recalls a similar reversal of power roles in a scene from Back to Back's *Food court* (Gladwin et al. 2008) which saw fuller figured performers with Down syndrome bully a slim performer/character for being 'fat'. This reversal too, can be, and I argue should be, considered in relation to the violence affiliated with care in disability contexts. I return to explicating such radical rethinking of care in the final section of this chapter.

The tension of 'care' in performance practice involving artists with disability

I turn now to an evaluation of care theory as discussed in feminist care ethics and disability care politics. Departing from my evaluation of Thompson's 'aesthetics of care' (2015), I aim now to evaluate what the broader significance of care might mean in performance contexts. Rather than focusing on aesthetics as I have earlier in this chapter, I turn specifically to the ethical and political implications of care for dance theatre performance practice embracing disability. How is care applicable to performance practice by and with artists with disability? I thus indicate ways forward for current theoretical discussion of this practice gesturing towards care (Calvert 2016b; Hargrave 2015; Schmidt 2017).

I begin with Kelly's (2011) call for 'accessible care' which abandons neither a disability nor a feminist inflection (Kelly 2016, p. 28). Her concept of 'accessible care' does not necessarily seek to settle conflict but, rather, allows for 'irreconcilable insights' (Kelly 2011, p. 575). Identifying conflicting values might be the first step in understanding what Fraser has declared a 'crisis of care' (2016a). This crisis, according to Fraser, is caused by an inability to sustain social relations due to the demands of what she calls the 'current, financialized form of capitalism' and 'neoliberal feminists' (Fraser 2016b) that cast women simultaneously as burdens and possessions. In her words, 'capitalism's orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilise the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies' (2016b, p. 100). This reproduction she describes as 'free rides' of care-giving (both paid and unpaid) that restrict social interaction in gendered and racialised ways (Fraser 2016b, p. 101). In valuing care, however, one admits dependence, something the disability movement has long strived to disavow.

Like Kelly, I critique feminist efforts to instil politics in a feminist 'ethics of care' as discussed by Tronto (1993, 2013; see also Sevenhuijsen 1998) because these efforts, except for that of Fiona Williams (2001), fail to include disability contexts, in which caring can wreak havoc. I outline dependency trajectories within care ethics theory led by Kittay (1995, 1999) which stress care as an inevitably unequal relationship. All the while, I centre the person with disability in my project as a member of the more marginalised group in any given encounter. I examine my theoretical use of care with disability feminist voices, who initially critiqued care ethics scholarship not only for its dismissal of disability but also for its oppressive representation of disability (Morris 2001; Silvers 1997; Thomas 2007).

Disability's absence and oppression by feminist care ethicists led Thomas to declare that the 'paradigms clash irreconcilably' (2007, p. 11). 'Care' thus becomes both hurtful and vital in my theoretical framework for this thesis and, in turn, requires cross-examination through both disability political and feminist ethical lenses. It is precisely this tension which I claim is valuable for the issues emerging from the dance practice observed in my project.

The development of this tension around care led Fraser to call for 'discourse bridges' (1989, p. 11) between feminist critiques and a broader social terrain. Feminist care ethicists whose work was based on a romantic image of the carer sought a middle ground with disability scholars whose work (indeed, whose very discipline) grew out of principles associated with the independent living movement. In my opinion, the most robust bridge between the two variously hostile (for example, Morris 1993) and sympathetic (for example, Shakespeare 2006, pp. 144–5) disability perspectives on care is Kelly's (2011) theory of 'accessible care'. Kelly does not idealise the caring role, nor does she essentialise the idea of women as carers, as Shakespeare criticises other care researchers for (2006, p. 144). Rather, Kelly uses the idea of care cognisant that it 'stings' (Kelly 2011, p. 578) in disability contexts. She draws on Titchkosky's notion of 'access' as not merely concerning concrete accommodations, but as an orientation, 'an interpretative relation between bodies' (2011, p. 3; see also Kelly 2013, p. 789). I argue that we need to consider these bodily orientations as care.

In this section, I explain why the concept of care itself accommodates a deeper engagement in dance practice by and with artists with disability. Specifically, I politicise care and present a feminist ethics of care counterpoint to explicate why care facilitates an enlightened understanding of Australian dance practice incorporating disability. Caring is complex, but it is this complexity which is, I contend, valuable. In my critical use of the term 'care', I focus on the problematic association with care as gendered, and not as racialised or classed. The participants in this study were mostly white and middle-class, trained and educated at high levels or from positions of comfortable socio-economic status.

Disability scholars avoid the word 'care' for good reason. In the UK, Hargrave (2015, p. 26) points out that 'care' has repeatedly failed the disability community, where the process of deinstitutionalisation called Care in the Community did not achieve better living standards, and the Longcare scandal in the mid-1990s, 'involving the systematic rape and torture of residents',

led the government to ‘re-think the entire system of care and representation’ in a project known as Valuing People. Here, the shift of terminology in the naming of these government initiatives – from ‘care’ to ‘valuing people’ – is certainly not coincidental. As Australian disability scholars Goggin and Christopher Newell assert, ‘The history of institutionalisation is not as remote as it seems’ (2005, p. 127). According to the authors, it oppressively ‘persists, albeit in new ways – shaping, creating and perpetuating disability’ (Goggin & Newell 2005, p. 127) and ‘To even begin to question the benevolence of institutions for the disabled may be unsettling for some’ (Goggin & Newell 2005, p. 123).

In Australia, the language of care in relation to disability continues. Most recently, the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is promising ‘a better life for hundreds of thousands of Australians with a significant and permanent disability and their families and *carers*’ (NDIA 2018, emphasis added). Terms including ‘personal care’ and ‘long-term disability care’ trickle through official NDIS media kit documents (NDIA 2018). Indeed, many critics attest to a lack of care in the rollout of the scheme (see for examples, Dowse et al. 2016; and Macdonald & Charlesworth 2016).¹⁶

Through a disability lens, the term ‘care’ is spoiled by limiting (and often violent) affiliations with medicalised, governmental and charitable views of disability. Terms such as ‘medical care’ and ‘healthcare’ awkwardly align the concept of care with the medical modelling of disability and its agenda to cure and fix. Garland-Thomson detects the political sensitivity around the concept of care, which she remarks is too readily perceived through such an ‘ideology of cure’ (2002a, p. 14). She fears this ideological association quickly lapses into the ‘ostensibly progressive socio-medical project of eradicating disability ... through such practices as forced sterilization, so-called physician-assisted suicide and mercy killing, selective abortion, institutionalisation, and segregation policies’ (Garland-Thomson 2002a, p. 15).¹⁷

To avoid the word itself, and its traumatic connotations for readers affected by the violence perpetrated within systems of care, disability scholars thus use substitutes including ‘help’

¹⁶ Yet, according to Hadley, the NDIS signifies ‘change in the disability theatre landscape in the coming years’ (Hadley 2017, p. 306), especially in light of increased disability funding (Miller & Hayward 2017).

¹⁷ Such a segregation policy is evident in performance venues which require audiences to not be disruptive. The point of commonality between excluding certain people from going to the theatre and the arguably more urgent issue of selective abortion is that these putatively ‘progressive’ steps in Western social settings are not only accepted, but are viewed as beneficial.

(Shakespeare 2000), 'support' (Finkelstein 1998, p. 34), 'tending' (Parker 1981) and 'assistance' (Watson et al. 2004, pp. 336–7). Of care labour, Kelly acknowledges that 'Naming this ambiguous work is still an ongoing debate' (2011, p. 563). She continues:

This type of support has been (or still is) referred to as care, care work, caregiving, caretaking, home care, nursing, helping ... and more recently in disability circles, support work, attendant care, personal support and personal assistance (2011, p. 563).

However, at times such avoidance has strayed towards a denial of the need, indeed the very existence, of caregiving, which has in turn been criticised by Kittay for representing care 'as a sort of prosthesis that permits one to be independent' (2011, p. 50). For example, Richard Wood claims people with disability 'have never demanded or asked for care' (1991, p. 199). The attempt to eradicate care from the project of disability studies and disability arts steered by preferred concepts of independence, choice and control is, I claim, dismissive. I maintain that interdependent relations are at the heart of performance practice involving artists with disability.

In disability arts contexts, the idea of care is also tainted, although in less extreme ways. I suggest the presence of the disabled figure on stage is politicised in light of the association with systems of care. The theatrical event puts spectators at a safe distance for 'caring about' (Tronto 1993, p. 139) the disabled figure. Theatre audiences do not need to engage in the practice of 'taking care of, care-giving' (Tronto 1993, p. 109). The dilemma in the disability arts sector is that participation, especially in the 'performing arts', as Dan A Goodley and Michelle Moore note (2002, p. 4), 'is seen as an exciting alternative to traditional care provision'. The 'good-samaritanism' (Hadley 2014) of many Australian disability arts initiatives sees 'professional' practitioners wittingly (but also unwittingly) practise community, therapeutic or applied theatre. As Hadley (2016) reports, this remains a point of controversy in the arts scene today.

This is most noticeable in the work of companies like Can you See me? Theatre run by Australian charity Cerebral Palsy Alliance. This company's performance work juxtaposes professionally trained actors without visible disability against amateur performers with cerebral palsy in the prestigious location of the Sydney Opera House. The company's works are directed by artists without disability, which is problematic for a disability arts community that heralds

and pushes for 'disability-led' practice. It seems to me that such practice undermines and stalls the work of fellow practitioners with disability, who, as I will discuss in Chapter Four in the case of Murmuration's *Days Like These*, are striving to articulate their negation of disenfranchising discourses of disability.

I suggest that the appearance of amateur artists with disability performing at the esteemed Sydney Opera House is disenfranchising for the disability arts sector. The palpable gaps in performance skills between amateur artists with disability and NIDA-trained actors without disability establish a hierarchical setting. Deficit representations of disability where people are in need (of charity) are enacted. I claim this enactment is patronising for the disability community, especially the disability arts community. Such well-intended efforts to include people with disability doing art mobilise disability's own 'subjugating effect of [its] oppressive system to deprecate [its own] people' (Garland-Thomson 2002a, p. 8). These '*caring*' (Hadley 2014, original emphasis) efforts result in damaging the reputation for artistic quality of fellow disabled artists and companies. Arts critics (if they attend) fail to identify the exploitation of people with disability in such cases. This is ironic considering arts critics are otherwise quick to decry exploitation in response to theatre productions involving trained performers with disability (Genzlinger 2017). UK comedian Liz Carr and performer Matt Fraser (as cited in Hargrave 2015, pp. 38–9) point out the damage of allowing amateur art on professional stages. Fraser elaborates, "'They" think what we do isn't art at all but is in fact angelic therapy' (as cited in Hargrave 2015, p. 39). More broadly, then, the idea that such work is condescending is not new. My claim is slightly different, though. I argue that there is a need for a more explicit politics centred on care to critique disadvantageous representations of disability in the arts.

In disability performance theory, the extermination of people with disability is a topic briefly touched on in the context of dance by ageing bodies by Kuppers (2017). Indeed care, from a disability perspective, is associated with eradication. Hadley also broaches this topic in her analysis of Liz Crow's work *Resistance on the plinth* ('Liz Crow reached *The Guardian's* "Top 10 from Trafalgar" list' 2009) in which she dressed up in a Nazi uniform. In the work Crow, in her wheelchair perched on a raised platform, provoked passersby to consider eugenics, euthanasia and assisted suicide. Hadley writes:

What if people support the idea that the concrete logistics of living with disability are so difficult that a *caring* society would put disabled people out of their misery without

delving deeper into the cultural ideologies that cause them to think the difficulties are insurmountable in the first place? (2014, p. 126, my emphasis).

Indeed, Hadley rhetorically continues to mobilise derivations of the term 'care' to emphasise cases of misplaced good intentions. For instance, she writes with implicit reference to Mitchell and Snyder's 'narrative prosthesis' (2000) that US television series *Glee*'s character of Artie Abrams 'prop[s] up a cultural script in which disabled people *need to be taken care of*, cured, supported to overcome' (Hadley 2014, p. 170, my emphasis). Understandably, then, disability scholars and artists are reluctant to even mention care uncritically for fear of being condescending at best or, at worst, triggering past and present traumas.

In a performance setting, care is performed by audiences in their reception of work. Whereas Hadley states, 'the teratological or diagnostic gaze thus does violence to people with disabilities' (2014, p. 8), Ames has recently suggested transforming the pathological gaze to the benefit, not the detriment, of performers with visible disability (2016, p. 110). For artists with hidden impairments too, this 'gaze' can liberate. Medical labels can liberate people who otherwise have not understood what is happening to them, as articulated by Sydney choreographer Dean Walsh 'living with dance' and autism (Walsh 2016). In the UK, the pervasiveness of the medical model in audience awareness and critical responses has led Marsh to announce that a new language is needed to explore the disabled body in performance (Harmon et al. 2015, pp. 66–7).

I propose that the language of care offers a political framework within which to rethink performance involving artists with disability. Crucially, I regard the language of care as political following Tronto's scholarship on a political 'ethic of care' (1993, 2013). In her model, she identifies four moral qualities: attentiveness or 'caring about', responsibility or 'caring for', competence or 'care giving' and, finally, responsiveness or 'care receiving' (Tronto 2013, pp. 34–5). She makes three distinctions between rights discourse and care ethics. First, the 'ethic of care' is based on responsibilities and relationships, whereas rights discourse is premised on rights and rules. Second, an 'ethic of care' surfaces from concrete situations, not from rights or rules. Third, an 'ethic of care' relies on activity, whereas rights discourse depends on principles. Most meaningfully for disability communities, the key premise of her political 'ethic of care' is that every caring relationship is unequal.

I further root my approach to conceiving care within Tronto's 'realm of caring' (2013), which moves the process of caring away from the private to the public sphere following a similar move by Noddings in her latest book *Starting at home* (2002). Tronto explores contemporary societies where care is professionalised (2013, p. 2). Tronto's political care ethics, which extrapolates inequalities and critiques the professionalisation of care, is pertinent for disability communities. In disability contexts where, as care researcher Teppo Kröger states, 'care has not received a place within the social model' (2009, p. 404), Tronto's theory enables disability performance theory to engage *critically* in care. As Kelly warns, 'uncritically using this term "care" does not acknowledge the oppressive legacies nor the potential for abuse, and frankly, keeps care inaccessible to people with disabilities' (2011, p. 569).

More than this, care theory provides a particularly rich landscape for performance involving artists with disability because of its attention to the multidimensional issue of dependency. This is not to cast or assume artists with disability as dependent but, rather, to say that the disabled figure makes visible (Moser 2006) this complex issue which touches all lives. For Kittay, dependents 'are our children, our parents, our siblings, our companions, and, at some points in life, ourselves' (1995, p. 12). In my opinion, her 'dependency critique' (Kittay 1995) makes space for a recognition of care within the social model of disability because she figures dependency as a set of relations. She highlights a social need to accommodate '*the secondary dependence* of the dependency worker and the contribution of even the most dependent to the fabric of human relations' (1995, p. 12, my emphasis). These dependency structures are important considerations when analysing the power imbalances of certain caring relationships. In accommodating the caregiver and conceiving her as a 'secondary dependence', thus dependent herself, Kittay advocates for social policy which 'recognizes a public responsibility for dependency care' (1995, p. 9) extending disability political concerns for access and simultaneously valorising the contributions of 'the most dependent' among us. Certainly, disability communities cannot afford to dismiss dependency work involved in care labour.

Accounting for the explicit interconnectedness of dance practice by and with artists with disability, dance and disability scholars Kharnita Mohamed and Tamara Shefer have recently mobilised disability feminist theory. According to the authors, there are 'very few studies of disability from a feminist or gendered perspective' (2015, p. 3). Beginning with the statement 'disability prefigures, modifies, and codifies possibilities and regulates everyday life', the authors argue that 'disability discourse therefore affects everyone' (Mohamad & Shefer 2015,

p. 2). Considering racial and ethnic implications of South Africa, Mohamed and Shefer complicate the interdependence debate by commenting that, in their neighbouring Botswana, people consider themselves already interdependent (2015, p. 4). Drawing on disability scholar Julie Livingston (2005, 2006), the authors demonstrate that disability studies is mostly theorised from the point of view of the global North by specifying that, for instance, 'Batswana believe impaired relationships produce misfortune which becomes disability' (2015, p. 4). Such an edifying belief in sustaining interdependent relations to minimise the production of disability certainly prioritises the practice of care and, by illustration, invites disability studies to learn from other locales and perspectives.

Summary

In this chapter, I have mapped my call for care in the context of dance and theatre performance by and with artists with disability. I have argued that the tension between a feminist ethics of care and a disability politics of care is a valuable starting point in my thesis. Through my discussion, I have canvassed the theoretical backdrop to my interdisciplinary project with reference to key practice and artists. In the first section, I explored insights offered by Thompson's 'aesthetics of care' (2015) but also its challenges from a disability rights perspective, extending his theory into what I have termed a 'feminist disability aesthetics of care'. Unlike Thompson's concept, a feminist disability aesthetics of care resists 'caring' encounters (Hadley 2014, p. 126) that are objective, patronising or abusive. In the second section, I highlighted recent ventures in dance theory to rethink virtuosity through a disability lens, noting that this practice has not been articulated in terms of care. Finally, I explained why the term 'care', as opposed to alternative concepts cautiously used in disability studies such as 'assistance', is purposeful in this study of dance theatre practice by and with artists with disability.

In this chapter, with reference to theoretical discussion by Schmidt, Hargrave, Calvert and Ames of attendant performance work, I have shown that the purchase of care in the theatre is clearest in the practice of artists with intellectual disability: Here, care becomes an important frame of reference for exploring the support structures relating to dependency. As my thesis will continue to show, the disability community's resistance to care – as exemplified by Hadley's comment that a 'caring society' can mean one that eliminates people with disability – offers critical insights into the practices of care itself, including dance theatre practice by and

with artists with disability. As Thompson's 'aesthetics of care' shows, a conceptual framework based on care is furthermore useful in this ethnography of dance theatre intersecting with disability cultures because care implicates important ethical propositions.

Part Two

Chapter Four: To disclose or not to disclose?

So far, this thesis has introduced my research project and reviewed the academic literature in which it is situated (disability and performance theory) and on which it draws (feminist care ethics). This chapter turns to examine the first case of dance theatre practice in my ethnographic study. In this chapter, I identify three 'key incidents' (Emerson 2004) that emerged in my observations of the first-stage development of dance theatre work *Days Like These* (2017) (hereafter, *DLT*) by 'integrated performance' company Murmuration and directed by Sarah-Vyne Vassallo (hereafter, Sarah-Vyne). Importantly, the key incidents are not necessarily 'dramatic' (Emerson 2004, p. 431) for the artists. Yet, across the incidents, key themes of visibility and 'medical labels' indicate an overarching thematic of disability disclosure, which became significant in the course of my analysis, especially my interview with director Sarah-Vyne. In what follows, I delve into specific instances of disclosure such as Jianna Georgiou's (hereafter, Jianna) default performance, Sarah-Vyne's private sharing of her experience and Matt Shilcock's (hereafter, Matt) use of medical terms. In these acts, disclosure variously appears and, indeed, disappears across the creative development of *DLT*, in artists' interviews and in their practice. This chapter is guided by a question which arose following an interview with Sarah-Vyne: What is at stake for the Australian artist with hidden impairments faced with the choice to disclose?

By 'disclosure', I refer to the sharing of information regarding personal 'relationships to disability' as defined by O'Toole (2013) and informed by recent theoretical discussion, notably O'Toole's call to disclose. The call to disclose is not limited to academia. Similar initiatives are sprouting up within the disability community (for example, see King 2016) and theoretical discussion of disability and performance (Hadley & Caine 2009; Kupperts 2009), as discussed in Chapter Two. In considering the implications of claiming disabled identity in the arts, one may easily interpret the frequently resounding aim for disability-led practice (Marsh 2016a, 2016b, 2017) as another call to disclose. In exploring the implications of disclosure, throughout this chapter I refer to disability literary researcher Stephanie Kerschbaum's 'performance of disclosure' (2014) and disability and queer theorist Alison Kafer's due attention to disclosing hidden impairments (2016). I complement my analysis with excerpts from semi-structured interviews with Sarah-Vyne and Artistic Associate Dan Daw (hereafter, Dan).

I will claim that acts of disclosure, throughout the creative development of *DLT*, constitute acts of care. Following disability and queer theorist Ellen Samuels' insight that 'Discourses of coming out and passing are central to visibility politics' (2003, p. 244), I argue that there is a particular

interplay between disclosure and visibility which is interwoven in specific manoeuvres towards and away from care. As this chapter claims, the particular ways in which, as well as the possible reasons why, artists do and do not disclose propel consideration in terms of a disability politics and a feminist ethics of care.

In this chapter specifically, I outline the key incidents including first, the artists' introductions, second, a day set aside for students that the performance-makers referred to as 'Education day' and third, a day towards the end of the creative development dedicated to making a film for Murmuration's crowdfunding campaign called '#ItsPossible'. I then address what it means for Jianna to disclose by default and, in turn, what it means for me to disclose on her behalf in this research. Following this, I arrive at the heart of the question guiding this chapter and evaluate what it means to disclose for artists with hidden disability, rooting my discussion in Sarah-Vyne's disclosure. I consider her disclosure as an iterative process of care. I subsequently turn to explore why Matt uses medical labels to describe his relationship to disability. Next, I shed some light on the 'therapy ghetto' (Hadley 2014) in the context of Australian dance and disability, which I suggest is more vexed than in other art disciplines. After this, I explain how these artists enact disclosure as an agentic and creative expression. I further link agency to a feminist ethics of care. I then propose that, in many senses, the outcome of this process – a public performance – constitutes public disclosure. To draw my discussion to a close, I discuss the issue of dependency departing from Jianna's enabled disclosure in the crowdfunding film.

Introductions

At Shopfront Theatre in the southern Sydney suburb of Carlton over a period of five weeks from 8 February to 9 March 2016, I observed nine days of the creative development of *DLT*, Murmuration's first major work. The development was led by Sarah-Vyne with Dan. The six performing artists were Melinda Tyquin (hereafter, Melinda), Brianna Kell (hereafter, Brianna), Matthew Shilcock, Jianna Georgiou and Karen Veldhuizen (hereafter, Karen), as well as an individual who did not provide consent. The creative team was Composer Ekrem Mülayim (hereafter, Ekrem), Apprentice Cameron Landsdown-Smith, Digital Media Artist Imogen Cranna and Scenic Artist Stephen Metcalf. The team was supported by Murmuration Projects Manager Ana Welsh (hereafter, Ana). (In the final 2017 production of the show, Brianna would be replaced by dance artist Elle Evangelista.) The performing artists are Australian freelance dance practitioners and hail from Adelaide (Matt and Jianna), Melbourne (Karen) and Sydney

(Melinda and Brianna). Adelaide-born Dan Daw was and is London-based, but returned to Australia to work as an ‘outside eye’ on *DLT*. Significantly, Matt, Jianna, Karen and Dan are all artists with various visible disabilities.

I cannot ethically identify the artist who did not provide consent, but I purposefully mention this artist’s nonparticipation – here was a choice not to self-disclose. This nondisclosure, this nonparticipation, points to the current and historical predicament of people with disability who have been objectified, be it medically, socially or professionally, and who have been theoretically examined for the purposes of research by ‘parasite people’ (Oliver 1999). Mitchell and Snyder observe that philosopher Michel Foucault was one of the first to highlight that the ‘professional scrutiny of bodily differences threatens to overwhelm material bodies through its microscopic breakdown and perpetual analysis’ (2001, p. 374). For this nonparticipant, the choice not to partake in this research figures as a choice not disclose and represents a moot point skirting methodology. Who am I to conduct this research? Moreover, why do I focus on disclosure? While I reiterate that disclosure was an overarching theme that arose over the course of my fieldwork, notably in my interview with Sarah-Vyne, I more importantly highlight a necessary intention to interrogate my own methods of analysis as this chapter unravels.

On the first morning of development, Sarah-Vyne welcomes the artists and invites them to introduce themselves. Here is the first key incident I identified in my fieldwork with *Murmuration*. The majority of artists do not disclose any information about disability, including that (if?) they do not identify. During this time, I also do not identify myself as either with or without disability. I will later return to this point, that most artists – as well as myself – do not identify as either with or without disability, because O’Toole (2013) warns that nondisclosure suggests embedded ableism. I later analyse this introduction session by focusing on two instances of disclosure – Jianna’s performances of disclosure (corresponding to an emergent theme from my field notes, ‘visibility’) and Matt’s verbal sharing of his diagnosis (corresponding to the emerging theme ‘medical labels’).

‘Education day’

In the middle of the creative development, the creative team runs a full-day workshop for high school students consisting of a warm-up, group activities and a work-in-progress showing, followed by a Q&A panel discussion with artists. This was the second key incident in my

ethnographic observations of making *DLT*. This day illustrates the potential community outreach of this new and small company, in this case its influence on the NSW secondary dance curriculum. On 'Education day', I record only two indirect references to disability. The first is made by panel moderator and invited guest artist Sue Healey (Sydney-based dance practitioner and dance filmmaker), who praises the work-in-progress. She expresses admiration: 'afforded with a diversity of bodies – you know, having two sticks and one leg – it's amazing what you can do!' Significantly, she does not say the word 'disability'. She opts instead for a term which emphasises the advantages – 'diversity of bodies' – perhaps a political move to negate the idea of disability as lacking. Her attitude resonates with the social modelling of disability, reinforcing concepts such as *crip pride* (Sandahl 2003) and *disability or Deaf gain* (Bauman et al. 2014; Garland-Thomson 2013). Here, I draw attention to the positive emphasis she places on the artists' possibilities 'afforded' by their different bodies.

The second reference to disability is made by a schoolteacher some moments later as part of the panel discussion. In response to a duet presented by Melinda and Matt, who dances in his wheelchair, she comments that 'the duet with the wheelchair was "emotionally charged ... it wouldn't have been the same without the dancer you have"'. She is referring to Matt, who happens to dance in this particular piece (and move in the world generally) in and out of a wheelchair. While she does mention the word 'wheelchair', she does not explicitly link 'wheelchair' to either person in the duet. The wheelchair is actually separate until she ambiguously connects it to 'the dancer you have'. Matt is visibly disabled, with or without the presence of his wheelchair. Like Sue Healey, this teacher does not utter the word 'disability' and, further, hesitates to explain what she means by saying 'it wouldn't have been the same'. The implication is an unsaid, semi-conscious mutual understanding that 'it wouldn't have been the same' without the dancer with visible disability and his wheelchair, but her hesitation to explain her response to the duet is telling and symptomatic of the end of a day when conversations about disability are absent.

Does this day constitute a lost opportunity for enriching dialogue around, for instance, preconceptions of disability and the notion of an 'artist with disability'? Does it suggest a broader reluctance or hesitancy towards disclosure? For instance, Caroline Bowditch feels it is 'inappropriate' for her to identify as a 'disabled artist' given that her home environment is

accessible (Bowditch 2016; Harmon et al. 2015). However, on tour in Sydney she recently commented, 'I am far more disabled in Australia than I am in the UK'.¹⁸ She elaborates:

my body doesn't change at all, which is supposedly the thing that disables me. And I always think that's a really interesting thing to talk about when I'm doing training too. Depending on where I am in the world, I am either more or less disabled and nothing about my physicality changes. But the built environment, the attitudes, the responses that I get from people, my sense of equality – all of those things – they are the things that impact. They are the things that make me feel more or less disabled – nothing about my physicality. And if we could start to talk about that more, that would be brilliant. 'Cause it's just, like, that's the thing that makes people go "Oh fuck, I haven't really thought about that".¹⁹

Indeed, for a very different reason, Sydney-based performance artist Mike Parr also chooses not to identify as disabled, let alone as a disabled artist (Galvin 2016). Parr reports:

I feel no reason why I should be identified as disabled ... In fact, I feel exactly the opposite. My experiences of being different have deeply inflected my work but my work is not a form of victimhood, it is a tremendous self-assertion and a tremendous struggle for clarity and communication (as cited in Galvin 2016).

Certainly, Bowditch and Parr have dissimilar understandings of 'disability'. Bowditch models her interpretation on social constructivism, whereas Parr reads 'disability' as ultimately tragic and thus within a medical model. The irony here is that both artists would likely agree with each other that their lived experiences of difference have fundamentally shaped their artistic practices and that their experiences of living with impairment have been mostly enriching. Returning to the scarcity of references to 'disability' during Murmuration's 'Education day', does this nondisclosure reveal something else again? Is the absence of discussion around 'disability' reflective of a hesitancy to self-identify in a cultural context where, as Parr's understanding of 'disability' indicates, mainstream social perceptions are at best naïve and at worst discriminatory towards those with disability?

¹⁸ Interview with Caroline Bowditch, 10 March 2016.

¹⁹ Interview with Caroline Bowditch, 10 March 2016.

Perhaps the lack of explicit discussion of disability is indicative of what literary and disability scholar Ato Quayson (2013 [2007], p. 202) has called ‘aesthetic nervousness’ whereby ‘the dominant protocols of representation ... are short-circuited’ at the level of the art work between nondisabled and disabled characters, but also at the level of perception of that art work between nondisabled respondent and art work. (He acknowledges his supposition that his theoretical readership is nondisabled.) I suspect that the social anxiety hovering around the disabled figure is exposed on ‘Education day’ in a collective reluctance to utter the word ‘disability’.

#ItsPossible crowdfunding campaign

On the second last day of the development, artists participate in the making of a film as part of Murmuration’s #ItsPossible crowdfunding campaign. In the process, artists are invited to share personal experiences of exclusion, many of which – but not all – reveal specific relationships to disability. Dan’s story of exclusion depicts an oppressive relationship to disability epitomised by the otherwise plausible possibility of being ‘institutionalised by the age of ten’. As a child, this meant ‘there’s no point’ in Dan attending school. Jianna does not disclose anything except her wish to be accepted as ‘normal’. Karen is inquisitive, even receptive to the filmmaking process, but later expresses that she feels like ‘inspiration porn’. Nondisabled artists in the studio are shocked by what they hear. Ekrem is confronted by something that happened to Matt. At another point Mel is similarly shocked, exclaiming, ‘Who are all these people? Where are these dickheads?’ Such stories and attendant reactions call forth a disability politics of care. Nondisabled performance-makers here are effectively enacting their disgust in the face of these stories of negative discrimination experienced by their disabled peer artists.

Meanwhile, Sarah-Vyne pays attention to Jianna to ensure she is sharing something that is her own conception; they together produce the phrase, ‘I can do anything! I don’t want to be seen as having a disability. I’m just me!’ In this respect, Jianna with Sarah-Vyne in the role of ‘creative enabler’ (Achtman 2014, p. 36) enacts a ‘performance of disclosure’ (Kerschbaum 2014) insofar as Jianna’s rhetorical agency is prioritised. Jianna is in control, control that is facilitated by Sarah-Vyne. In Kittay and Carlson’s terms (2010), Jianna’s autonomy is being assisted by Sarah-Vyne. I assert that this enabled disclosure brings forth a feminist ethics of

care. I later discuss this disclosure in the context of the film in a reflection on Jianna's dependency.

As artists disclose in the context of making the film, the disclosures themselves assume a less central role. The focus of this filmmaking process, rather, is of course making the film. The sharing of stories is directly linked to making the film, which in turn will function as promotional material. The disclosures are thus framed with comments like 'so not word for word' or desires to open the film with something 'quite confronting'. The disclosures are in effect being 'coaxed' (Poletti 2011) or coerced by the filmmakers as stories, phrases and ideas are workshopped under the guidance and direction of Ana, Sarah-Vyne and cameraman Hugh.²⁰ Media scholar Anna Poletti deploys the concept of 'coaxed', developed by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, because it 'allows us to consider the relational function of life story, a feature of autobiography which is central to the digital storytelling movement' (2011, p. 76). I use it here in response to the artists being asked to share personal experiences to suggest that 'versions of their life are being coaxed or coerced' (Poletti 2011, p. 76). The scripting of the film is in fact so key that, at various points, I find myself uncertain if phrases have been issued to the artists to read aloud in front of the camera or whether the phrases signify their own personal story. For example, at one point I am unsure whether Brianna's statement – 'I don't cry because I'm a woman, I cry because I feel' – is her own comment or one that has been given to her. My understanding is that scripted phrases are being mixed with or inspired by lived experience: At another point, I observe Dan say to Matt, 'We've got one more line for you'.

Performing disclosure

I turn now to artists' specific performances of disclosure. Former *Restless* choreographer Ingrid Voorendt's (2010) description of performing artist Jianna Georgiou as 'a gorgeous young woman with Down Syndrome, who is a beautiful, quite voluptuous dancer' justly portrays her as a 'proud disabled woman'.²¹ When Jianna presents herself to the group, she recounts recent projects. In so doing, she discloses by default. I write in my field notes:

²⁰ Ana prepared a script in consultation with Sarah-Vyne for the film. Sarah-Vyne directed a lot of the action in front of the camera. Hugh was present in the studio for a number of days throughout the development and his presence, as well as that of his cameras, undoubtedly influenced the unfolding of events because he brought a noticeable energy to the space – a big smile with a voice of encouragement, noisy equipment and an efficient working pace. However, acknowledging his impact in any further detail is beyond the scope of this project.

²¹ I realise the preferred term is 'Down syndrome' – without the capitalised 's' – however, I cite it exactly as it appears from the source here and do not flag it as 'sic' because the term was spoken in an interview and thus most likely transpired as a transcription error, probably by the interviewee 'Chally' (as cited in Voorendt 2010).

Gianna talks about Restless, Michelle Ryan, Philip Channels and uses the word “whatnot”. Her eyebrows are raised and she appears quite relaxed. Her legs are crossed and she wears leggings and a jumper around her waist with converse shoes. Gianna is thinking as she speaks “me and Philip ... last time I was with him I had to do workshops all the time ‘cause I’m a performing artist, as always”. Sarah-Vyne prompts her, “What about your most recent work?” “Yeah”, she says, “we did a show called *Touched* and we been performing and we got new people coming and we been performing and we been working together”. She repeats some things without seeming to realise. She says she’s been working with someone called Lachlan but I don’t know who that is.

My field notes here strongly identify Gianna as disabled. Publicly, Gianna herself is promoted as a ‘dancer with exceptional talent’ (Georgiou 2014). In my own writing, I document particular idiosyncrasies that risk unduly infantilising this artist. I write: ‘She appears to be very busy’. It is as though I am surprised, consider it necessary to say ‘appears’ as if I cannot take her word for it alone and that I am incredulous she is busy in the first place. In many ways, this is unconscious bias at work in my writing. Gianna is indirectly (and arguably unconsciously) disclosed to some degree by myself in my verbatim documentation of her words wrought with grammar mistakes. I say ‘arguably’ here because one could agree or disagree with the idea that I intentionally observed and then documented information about Gianna’s performance of disability in my field notes. On the one hand, I deliberately wrote her words, capturing her exact phrases to reflect her word choices, sentence structure and so on. On the other hand, I did not do this with the conscious intention to *reveal* her disability. My intention was to describe and capture as best as I could the action – including her speech – as it passed in the moment. These are indeed the ‘hard surfaces of life’ that Geertz (1994 [1973], p. 323) warns ethnographers not to overlook in his formative essay on ‘thick description’.

It is interesting to note that the only visual aspects that I described are ‘her blue nail polish that matches her hair’ and my observation that ‘Silver rings and a necklace make me think she expresses herself as quite feminine’. I interpret this as interesting because, importantly for the purposes of this discussion, Gianna is visibly disabled. However, I choose not to describe other physical features but, instead, focus on those which she actively produces – her blue nails, hair, feminine style and the words she utters. Most certainly, she did not consciously present herself with Down syndrome explicitly or verbally.

Kerschbaum, who identifies as 'deaf', explains that 'for many people, including [herself], physical presence is one way that disclosure is performed' (2014, p. 57).²² Precisely like Jianna, Kerschbaum performs her disclosure. Yet, what does it mean for me to disclose Jianna, albeit indirectly, as disabled in my field notes? For Kerschbaum, self-disclosure in academic writing is difficult and, again, inevitably performative. Indeed, she refers to such actions as 'performances of disability disclosure' and meditates at length on the role that rhetorical agency plays when 'people read and respond to written disclosures, and these responses constitute a kind of interaction around disability and disclosure that informs subsequent acts' (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 57). Kafer similarly points to how a specific history is present in her own disclosure: 'What I want to discuss is not this history per se, but rather the way this history, my history, underlies my present' (2016, p. 5). Such a statement, I argue, is unique to the experience of visible disclosures and vividly recalls palimpsestuous stories already etched on the bodies of performers with visible disability (Garland-Thompson 2009).

Kerschbaum poignantly recognises that disclosures are fraught: 'When I am asked to address my deafness in my scholarship, I know that I am being asked to do so based upon another person's perception of my disability' (2014, p. 57). Jianna is distinct from Kerschbaum in that Down syndrome is not 'intermittently apparent', thereby disallowing Jianna's (occasional) choice to disclose and denying her the opportunity to 'pass' (Siebers 2008).

The most obvious point of difference, though, is that Jianna is not writing about her disability here – I am. I am 'another person' and my disclosure of Jianna becomes 'another person's perception of [her] disability' to use Kerschbaum's words. Siebers reminds us that '[People] ... rarely acknowledge the violence of their perceptions' (2006, p. 174). Does my perception here reveal such violence? Can it lead to such violence? Price (2015) reflects on the harm caused by value judgements of 'bad' behaviours. Do I make such value judgements in my writing? What happens after I have disclosed, not only Jianna's disability but others' too? Kerschbaum identifies three purposes of self-disclosure in academic writing around fostering community, personal insights and identity claims (2014, p. 60). What purpose do I have? My additional challenge is that there are no academic scholars with Down syndrome and so there are no self-

²² Kerschbaum identifies as 'deaf' with a lower-case 'd' in her writing without explanation but refers to her deafness as 'my disability' (2014, p. 57).

reflexive self-disclosures of artists with Down syndrome to inform my account. Moreover, in live performance artists with visible disability do not necessarily need to navigate such contested terrain because their bodies speak for themselves. In academic scholarship, however, I must.

Jianna's 'performed disclosure' (Kerschbaum 2014) presents an epistemological dilemma and a grave methodological concern in my research. It is unavoidable that I verbally represent Jianna on her behalf, unlike Matt, for example, who has recently written about his work (Shilcock 2017a) and attends in detail to his diagnosis and its implications for his dance practice. I have made the deliberate decision to highlight my disclosure both in my field notes and in my analysis in this chapter on the basis of my application of O'Toole's (2013) call for disclosure to artists. I view this call, like O'Toole, as a gesture towards relinquishing control to those with disability.

Henceforth in this chapter, however, I veer away from O'Toole's particular call in light of the difficulties in disclosure that I observed, especially for those artists with hidden impairment. As Samuels, who lives with an 'extremely limiting and life-changing health condition' (2003, p. 248) pointedly observes, people with hidden impairment 'must still make decisions about coming out on a daily basis, in personal, professional, and political contexts' (2003, p. 237). In the rest of this chapter, I explore these decisions for artists in this same predicament.

To disclose or not to disclose?

But what is at stake when an artist self-discloses as disabled, if they have the choice? While artists with visible disability do not have the choice to disclose and thus consider this choice an asset for those who do (Samuels 2003), I point out that for those who do (e.g. artists with hidden impairments), this choice can also be a hindrance itself. As nomenclature is a key challenge for critical disability studies, so it is for the disability arts industry, especially in Australia's current climate of austerity (for discussion, see Hadley 2017).

Significantly, Sarah-Vyne does not disclose any specific relationship to disability in the group setting throughout the creative development that I observed. In this setting, the only inference comes from the script for the crowdfunding film that mentions Murmuration is 'disability-led'. In a later interview, however, Sarah-Vyne discloses her particular relationship to and

experience of disability. Throughout our conversation, Sarah-Vyne states that she experienced ‘burn out and then major depression’, ‘mental illness and chronic disease’ and ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’. Notably, the act of disclosing is new for Sarah-Vyne and she points out that she’s ‘only just starting to talk more publicly about mental illness’. As she speaks in the public domain, she is perhaps conscious of her recognition by the disability community, with whom she readily identifies: ‘Oh, this is so my tribe. This is my language, you know?’²³ At a later stage, in an industry publication, she states that she identifies with ‘invisible disabilities’ (Vassallo 2016b, p. 6).

It is perhaps unsurprising that, unlike Matt, who has a visible disability including the quintessential signifier of disability – a wheelchair – Sarah-Vyne does not share specific details. As O’Toole (2013) points out, when disability is argued to be a source of pride, then why is there resistance to claiming the label?

I argue that one’s relationship to disability is important public information within Disability Studies. Our choice to maintain a professional/public stance versus relationship to disability/private mentality is problematic. If we, as a profession, tout that “disability as an identity is never negative” (Siebers 2008, p. 4) then why would we want individual relationships to disabilities to be private? (O’Toole 2013, n. p.).

As O’Toole identifies, there is a disjuncture at work here which, I claim, necessitates an application of feminist and disability care theory. Along a similar trajectory, Kafer stresses that the ‘refusal to engage with such stories is itself a product of ableism’ (2016, p. 11). In response to O’Toole, Kerschbaum points out that, at least for academics, the stakes are indeed high and the decision to disclose occurs over time through a ‘sea of interactions with others’ (2014, p. 57). Like Kerschbaum, Samuels before her notes that ‘Such anxieties open up larger questions regarding the shifting definition of disability’ (2003, p. 248). I too believe that self-disclosure refigures disability. Further, it is revealing what people choose to do – embrace, reject, disclose or not (if they have the choice). I contend that the stakes are high for artists.

It is important to recognise that not passing as ‘normate’, as in the cases of Jianna and Matt, where individuals do not pass as ‘ablebodied’ but instead perform by default the potentially

²³ Excerpts from Sarah-Vyne interview, 23 March 2016.

stigmatising label of ‘disability’, means they are rendered simultaneously invisible (socially, as Sandahl puts it) and hypervisible (performatively, as Butler (1993), Garland-Thomson (1997) and Sandahl (2003) see it). It is vital to clarify that the consequent demand of ‘stigma management’ (Goffman 2009 [1963]) is real and persists for those with visible disability. However, it is also vital to explore the problematic implications of performing disclosure for *both* those with and without visible disability.

For those with hidden impairments, the ‘coming out’ experience, as Samuels explains, has surfaced as a ‘highly vexed, profoundly challenging concern’ (2003, p. 244). For instance, Burstow (2013) explores the struggle between relying on and being oppressed by ‘psychiatrisation’, as Brenda A LeFrançois, Robert Menzies and Geoffrey Reaume describe the experience of institutional psychiatry (2013, pp. 1–7). Specifically, Burstow explains that the terms ‘consumer’ and ‘survivor’ are used by those who are affected by medical and political support systems specifically for ‘mental illness’ (2013, pp. 79–90). Corresponding to Sarah-Vyne’s disclosure, Burstow pointedly flags the significance of words:

psychiatry is what is before us. What faces us at this moment in history, moreover, is unprecedented – an ever-growing industry, which is worldwide and which manufactures progressively more labels and captures more and more people in its net. What we have – and this is rendered invisible when we look at nothing but the perhaps kindly doctor or nurse facing the patient – is a government-entrenched regime of ruling mediated by texts. There are simple texts such as the “patient’s chart.” There are higher-level governmental texts such as mental health laws (which, among other things, enable people convicted of no crime to be incarcerated). There are professional texts such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which establishes “diseases” and “diagnostic criteria” and whose words govern lower-level texts. With all these texts and the ruling so clearly mediated by words, words cannot be seen as innocent; words could not matter more (2013, p. 81).

In effect, the social currency of mental disability is wrested from spoken and written words. However, the same applies beyond mental disability. Verbal disclosures for people with hidden impairments thus acquire a more politically precarious position.

In the context of dance practice, Adam Benjamin effectively acknowledges the 'impairment hierarchy' (Deal 2003) when he recognises *CandoCo*'s privileging of those with physical disability and, further, the company's paradoxically ableist desire for 'physical accomplishment' (Benjamin 2010, p. 118). In turn, what if artistic value is compromised by the social stigma that taints artists with disability? Sarah-Vyne wonders in the interview, 'Why isn't the Sydney dance sector showing up [to shows]?' On top of her concern that her impairment is 'worth less', to draw on a recent study of Zionist ableism erasing those who 'perform' (visibly) an overcoming narrative in Israeli wheelchair dancing (Broyer 2017), Sarah-Vyne seems concerned that she is not being accepted by the local dance sector. Worse still, for Samuels a 'focus on visuality and the "gaze" sometimes leads me to question if my extremely limiting and life-changing health condition really qualifies as a disability according to the social model' (2003, p. 248). In effect, Sarah-Vyne risks self-sabotaging at every turn – to speak of mental disability purportedly incriminates oneself as 'ill', admits placement on the lowest rung on the hierarchy ladder in the disability community, as well as in the context of both 'integrated' and mainstream dance practice.

Significantly, O'Toole's reasoning does not consider artists with visible disability who prefer not to identify with disability, such as Mike Parr. Nor does it account for the political challenge of labels particularly exacerbated in lived experiences of mental disability. The problem of nondisclosure has led O'Toole to wonder: 'Are we equating the need for Disability Studies to be taken seriously in the academy with a desire to distance ourselves from our activist roots?' (2013, p. 3). I note the critique of an elitist hierarchy at play in this line of reasoning, where O'Toole is suggesting that the field is trying to 'pass' as a legitimate field of study, which means being apolitical and thus disregarding political biases.

Disclosure is more complicated than O'Toole's reasoning suggests. The critique of disability studies effectively passing in order to be 'taken seriously' in fact supports Samuels' perception that 'coming out is generally valorized while passing is seen as assimilationist' (2003, p. 244). In contrast to O'Toole, Samuels is critical of the 'assumption of a direct relationship between visible impairment and political identification with disability rights' (2003, p. 24). Undermining this assumption and supporting Samuels' point, feminist philosopher Susan Wendell, who lives with 'an illness whose symptoms vary greatly from day to day', feels both the need for recognition of her difference but simultaneously the privilege to 'pass' as nondisabled (1996, p.

76). With such precarious balancing acts to perform, disclosing certainly necessitates a careful approach.

Disclosure and care

Disclosure is both potentially threatening and liberating for artists with mental disability. If the intention is to unveil psychiatric discourse, the act of disclosing is politicised. If the intention is to care for others and oneself by expressing needs or warnings, then disclosing becomes an ethical act. Therefore, disability disclosure, no matter the impairment – be it visible or hidden – compels a feminist ethics of care.

What happens after self-disclosure for artists? In many ways, this chapter begins an effort to trace the practice and attendant politics of disability disclosure in the arts, particularly in dance practice by and with artists with hidden disability. In dance, artists work largely in the visual kinaesthetic form of movement. The opportunity to disclose hidden impairment in dance is hence less straightforward and, in certain cases such as that of Sarah-Vyne, simply not available. Drawing on cultural philosopher Elaine Scarry's *The body in pain* (1985), Mintz describes pain as 'the ultimately empty signifier' (2011, p. 255). Professional industry journals such as *Critical Dialogues* provide a platform for artists to explore such issues in verbal format (see, for example, ed Osweiler 2017; ed Vassallo 2016). However, such journals remain of interest to peers, not necessarily audiences. Where can hidden disability find public visibility in dance then? Should artists consider disclosing in program notes, or to their creative or production teams during research and development phases, at industry conferences or to funders?

For the performing artist with hidden impairment, representing not only oneself but an entire community of others, this responsibility weighs heavily. As Kerschbaum continues, 'disability self-disclosure is not the representation of a single life but of the communities and social worlds of which those lives are a part' (2014, p. 60). For hidden impairments, the social worlds and communities are all the more reliant on terminology. When Sarah-Vyne utters the term 'mental illness' she is 'performing [her] designated role in the work of psychiatry ... activating it ... helping it to exist' (Burstow 2013, p. 82). Significantly, it could therefore be argued that Sarah-Vyne's self-disclosure here counts towards 'undermining one's own ethos' (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 69).

Above all, disclosures by artists with disability, especially hidden impairments, are constructed by acts of reciprocity, responsiveness and reflection, calling forth core aspects of Noddings' 'ethical caring' (1984). Clearly, then, feedback is part and parcel of any act of disclosure. Kerschbaum explains that 'Claiming an identity is not a singular accomplishment; it is a mutual accomplishment performed by speakers *and* audiences' (2014, p. 62, original emphasis). A rather clear parallel between the act of disclosure and that of performance emerges here in her phrase 'speakers *and* audiences'. The live performance – the ultimate outcome of all the works examined in this thesis – can be regarded as public disclosure.

I position Sarah-Vyne – as I would Jianna and Matt – as 'experts of their own experience' (Knox Mok & Parmenter 2000, p. 26) and I firmly believe, as Burstow clarifies, 'individuals have a perfect right to identify how they wish' (2013, p. 86). Nonetheless, as Burstow advocates, words, despite their intention even if negating 'the shrink within' (e.g. 'psychiatric survivor' from the antipsychiatry movement versus 'madwoman' from the mad movement), can still 'either assist or jeopardize that fight, depending on the analysis behind them and the care with which they are deployed' (2013, p. 85). Notably, Burstow explicitly uses 'care' here to articulate her argument. Following Burstow, my own response to Sarah-Vyne's private disclosure is crucial in its subsequent significance. Crucially, I intend to carefully analyse her relationship to disability. I emphasise the need to practise care that is against my complicity in any harmful narrative of psychiatrisation, in any future deployment of her and my words.

For an artist with hidden impairment, there is not only the choice to disclose, but how to and to what end. The hindrance comes in the multiple choices of how to disclose. What terms can or should the artist use? The hindrance comes in relation to what purposes the artist has in disclosing. Is the point to align with a community? Or is it to demarcate one's artistic practice? A shrewdly ableist interpretation might detect a purpose for such an artist to equip oneself with 'crip credentials', the way disability theorist Susan G Cumings (2016, p. 130) fittingly analyses American dance artist Bill Shannon's playful satisfaction of an expectant audience's appetite for his self-disclosure in a 'popcast'. Whatever the case, it is paramount that 'we accept that individuals' identity differently; and that as sensitive, caring human beings, we diligently respect their right to do so' (Burstow 2013, p. 89). Yet at the same time, rather than accommodating language, although that is important, there is a need to interrogate language for its insights, both helpful and detrimental (Burstow 2013, p. 89). I suggest that these choices

are faced by artists whose impairments depend on a relatively recent movement in the field of disability studies and who have, in turn, no choice but to confront an iterative process of trial and error and learning.

Again, it is not accidental that Burstow uses the word 'caring' here alongside 'right'. She invokes Shakespeare's criticism of a feminist ethics of care. He understands the disability rights view which maintains that rights, not care, are required in interpersonal private relationships: 'the fundamental need is for the application of the ethics of rights to the social relationship of care' rather than 'being dependent on care or kindness' (2006, p. 145). In future, the shifting context of disclosures by artists with hidden disability, like Sarah-Vyne, between private and public spaces will likely impact on the reception of others. In turn, the degree to which an ethics of care or a disability rights perspective is a suitable framework within which to manage and respond to acts of disclosure will vary.

Taking care of medical labels

So far, I have argued that Jianna's visible disclosure implicates a disability politics of care while Sarah-Vyne's tentative disclosure reflects fundamentally a feminist ethics of care. I have suggested that these categories are not mutually exclusive, but I have not yet demonstrated this. In this section, I trace Matt's self-disclosure, revealing its oscillation between a disability politics and an ethics of care. In so doing, I note that he is conscious of the politics, but an ethics of care remains unconscious. I argue that this tension between an explicit disability politics and an implicit ethics of care is reflected in a broader dilemma, unleashed by Matt's disclosure, concerning dance by and with artists with disability as therapeutic. First I argue that, while it may be problematic to admit, Matt's practice constitutes both therapeutic and professional work, which I regard as both 'caring' (e.g. self-care) and 'care-full' in terms of Matt's efforts to preserve disability justice by way of a political ethic of care (Hamington 2004; Tronto 2013). By admitting it is therapy, I do not mean to be careless from a disability rights point of view because I claim therapy does not (or should not) forcibly reduce the quality of or the status of art. Second, I suggest that Matt's disclosure of medical information can be understood in terms of asserting agency over his otherwise out-of-control visible expression and lived experience of disability. Finally, I propose that an unconscious and thus invisible ethics of care underlies his disclosure, which is effectively visibilised in his artistic practice. Throughout this section, I

compare Matt's disclosure with those of other artists and companies who similarly 'perform disability' (Sandahl 1999).

On the first day of the creative development, when Matt introduces himself, his posture strikes me before his words. I write: 'He talks about a work called *The likes of me* and his gaze is downcast, legs in front, feet in first position'. In this moment, I at once describe him as seemingly reticent but also as a dancer in a classical 'first position'. Perhaps this description is revealing of my own identity as dancer – dancer seeing dancer. Certainly, his reticence makes sense in light of his following words that I document:

and within seconds says, "I have a condition called osteogenesis imperfecta ... where my bones are quite weak ... so this leads me to have a lot of recurring injuries and I regularly relearn how to use my body ... that's what the work explores" and sometimes he gestures to Sarah with his right hand.

Matt's rather sudden sharing of his diagnosis and his experience of his body can easily be read as an upfront declaration for the sake of his safety. In this logic, care becomes an ethical responsibility for others to be careful with him. Matt's disclosure on the first day of creative development of *DLT* is thus best understood within a care ethics paradigm. Sharing responsibility for himself with others is an anticipated act of relational caring. In a basic way, he is simply asking for help. However, in a subsequent interview he mentions a frustration with overprotection and a need to acknowledge the 'elephant in the room'.²⁴ Complicating things further, while he states he does not identify with his condition, a strong case for his dance practice to be construed as therapy persists in his public profile.

The 'therapy ghetto' of dance and disability

Dance performance carries much potential to exploit the medical model of disability arguably to both negative and positive effect. I address Matt's introduction as a springboard to point towards a dilemma in this research project, as well as in dance practice with and by artists with disability more broadly: Participants in this study report that their bodies grow stronger as a result of their dance performance practice. Significantly, the 'therapy ghetto' (Hadley 2014) is not a new problem but it is ongoing and, as I argue here, is deepened in the context of dance.

²⁴ Interview with Matt Shilcock, 16 March 2017.

The therapeutic experience of movement even becomes the subject of performance work, as I will show in the example of Matt's previous work. Matt couches his diagnosis in the context of talking about his previous work: 'that's what the work explores'. Here, Matt is relaying his past performance piece which investigates this particular disability experience in his life.²⁵ As for many dance performers, Matt's kinaesthetic experience informs his art work. However, in the context of disability and dance, the idea of relearning movement evokes a process of rehabilitation and, in turn, presents a tension between conceiving his art as therapy or as professional work.

Regarding the ostensible purpose of art as being of prime benefit to the artists, I suggest Mitchell and Snyder might agree that 'such a goal is too small and often solidifies the unchallenged desirability of normative lives' (2015, p. 6). It seems to me that a therapeutic purpose espouses McRuer's (1999, 2006) notion of 'compulsory ablebodiedness'. In dance by performers with disability, Kupperts identifies the audience's perception of an 'opportunity' for performers to realise themselves as 'able' (2003, p. 56). The difficulty, following Kupperts, McRuer, Mitchell, Snyder and other disability scholars (see, for example, Ames 2016; Hargrave 2015), is that such publicised experiences of therapeutic benefits encourage a medical gaze from onlookers and, in doing so, the view that art benefits predominantly the artists (with disability) and not their audiences.

The ubiquitous assumption that, whenever people with disability produce art it is forcibly a therapeutic exercise, is not new, a point raised in the introduction of this thesis. Compared with less physical forms of art, in dance practice this assumption is especially fraught. Dancing does improve physical mobility and psychological wellbeing (Oliver & Lycouris 2017) – it is an art form that indeed nurtures one's entire bodymind. Dancing has reaped health benefits not only for Matt, but also for Melinda Smith (hereafter, Mel), who only a few years ago could not stand and now intends to walk. Dianne Reid, commenting on this notorious assumption applied to Mel, laughs: 'There's a bit of a dilemma in that everyone applauds the therapeutics value of

²⁵ I attended one public presentation of *The likes of me* (2015) directed by Matt Shilcock and Dean Walsh at the Sydney Underbelly Arts Festival, but I do not analyse or share my own ideas about the work here because it would detract from the focus on Matt's disclosure; see Shilcock (2015) and Walsh (2016).

this. That is true – it’s therapeutic for me too’.²⁶ (I extend this discussion on the ‘therapy ghetto’ in Chapter Six of this thesis.)

The contested dilemma which these artists find themselves literally embodying is summed up in the words of Mat Fraser, a British rock musician, actor, writer, martial artist and performer who also has phocomelia of both arms (due to his mother having taken Thalidomide during her pregnancy):

Please let me be clear by what I mean: I really love any disabled person having a go at performance, I love material that will only be interesting to the Disability Arts insider’s crew and I will always support people’s attempt to have a go, as long as it IS only for the aforementioned Disability Arts insiders. However, I know of no other group that so allow untalented people onto a public stage to entertain and indulge their inability to perform. And I don’t think it’s healthy, sorry. Why I am so harsh? Because dammit, “they” – the normal people, the mainstream, the misunderstanders of what we do – all think we’re crap. “They” think that what we do isn’t art at all but in fact angelic therapy to calm our traumatised bodies and minds from the torture of impairment, etc. etc. etc. Watching crap people be shit on stage is only going to reinforce that view! (as cited in Hargave 2015, p. 39).

Here, I do not mean to make an implicit judgement that neither Matt nor Mel make ‘good’ art. Instead, I highlight the link between Fraser’s frustration regarding two apparently incompatible views – that disability arts is not (only) therapy, and that Matt and Mel experience therapeutic benefits from their practice. Hargrave goes on to say that, originally, similar frustration about a lack of artistic quality in performance work by disabled artists was voiced by disabled filmmaker Sian Vasey, who stated that too much effort was spent providing opportunities for ‘acts which are never likely to be any good’ (as cited in Hargave 2015, p. 39). Fraser and Vasey felt frustrated about amateur performances by disabled artists.

Matt (Shilcock) offers another perspective in a Facebook post as part of the backlash campaign against government funding cuts to Australian arts announced in May 2016:

²⁶ Interview with Dianne Reid, 1 October 2015.

#istandwiththearts and sit. Occasionally.

My journey in dance has taken me further than I ever could have imagined (metaphorically and geographically!)

Dance has been a way for me to recover and rehabilitate my body, again and again, from a broken form (physically and emotionally) into something and someone I can feel proud about being.

Dance has in many ways given my life reason, drive, passion. Reason to get up in the morning. Reason to better myself. Reason to be active. Reason to live a healthier lifestyle. Reason to connect with other human beings.

My practice in dance has been the very vessel that has allowed me to transition from a full time wheelchair user to walking on my own two feet.

If not for the arts, in all disciplines, I would have allowed myself to ruin and decay, long ago. I would have given up on life.

Life can get stagnant, but it's our arts and culture that allow us to breathe new energy, life and essence into our beings.

I don't just stand with the arts, I stand because of them! (Matt "Shillie" Shilcock, 2016).

This autobiographical account of his experience with dance begins playfully, making a politically correct pun out of the hashtag for the campaign #istandwiththearts 'and sit. Occasionally'. He declares that 'the arts, in all disciplines' have saved him writing, 'I would have given up on life'. His final statement – 'I don't just stand with the arts, I stand because of them!' – is telling because it directly and explicitly states that the arts, that is, his dance praxis, constitutes his redemption. For Matt, his practice therefore goes beyond therapeutic value; it is the reason he still lives. Here, Matt enlists qualities pertaining to an ethics of care, that is, a recognition of his dependency on the arts.

Matt's comment gives cause for Fraser's and Vasey's frustration because it risks perpetuating the narrow purpose of the arts and disability that they are critiquing – to ostensibly help people with their 'traumatised bodies'. Significantly, Matt makes no clear reference to artistic quality aside from vague ideas of 'new energy, life and essence'. However, by viewing Matt's comment in conjunction with his explanation of *The likes of me* from my field notes, I ascertain that it is his condition – his 'changing bodily landscape' (Shilcock 2015) – that intrigues him and inspires his artistic projects. Matt's practice therefore undermines a simple dialectical either/or

between the descriptors therapeutic/professional. His work, indeed his artistic identity, is a dialogic both/and: Matt's art is both therapeutic and professional.

Matt's artistic line of enquiry stems from his impairment and his 'impairment effects' (Thomas 1999) in relation to both himself and his audiences. As Australian performance artist Stelarc is interested in the augmentation of his body, and fellow Australian performance artist Mike Parr is *not* interested in his apparent disability (he has one arm but does not identify as disabled), Matt appears to be attracted to exploring his 'capacities of incapacity' (Mitchell & Snyder 2015, pp. 180-202).

I suggest that Matt muddies the professional/therapeutic bifurcation. Like Matt, Welsh company Hijinx, with whom I conducted some supplementary fieldwork, does not position itself as either therapeutic or necessarily artistically excellent. As Matt's program notes for *The likes of me* outline, 'Shilcock's practice in dance is a totem to his achievements in spite of being born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta – a brittle bone disorder which is, as this performance challenges, an "undesirable trait in the human gene pool"' (Shilcock 2015). The contradiction here is that, simultaneously, Matt portrays himself as overcoming his condition ('in spite of') while also challenging negative perceptions of it ('undesirable'). However, his statement is only contradictory in the context of a medicalised understanding of disability, which Matt provides perhaps in order to facilitate others' understandings but also perhaps because these are the terms in which he conceives of himself too. Indeed, Matt's therapeutic and professional work recalls Mitchell and Snyder's notion of disabled subjectivities 'productively failing' (2015, p. 28).

Disclosing as agentic, creative act

I have so far argued that Matt's disclosure of medical information presents his practice as at once therapeutic and professional. Here, I turn to my second point and argue that medical information enables him to exercise agency over his bodily performance of visibility and over his otherwise out-of-his control lived experience of disability. I suggest that Matt's reliance on and artistic interest in medical information can be understood in terms of his exploratory negotiation of his lived experience of disability.

Disclosing becomes a default way of keeping himself safe (even if Matt does not explicitly acknowledge this) but also of making sense of his body – on and off stage. Importantly, his

therapeutic benefits do not align Matt with 'able-disabled' or 'hyper-prostheticized' individuals 'who leave the vast majority of disabled people behind' (Mitchell & Snyder 2015, p. 12). Yet Matt is curious about a felt and lived experience of his body in what queer theorist Jasbir K Puar (2009) might call its 'incapacity' or its 'debility'. In a strange sense, Matt fails to acknowledge the contradiction of his own remark that he is performing the overcoming narrative while challenging the assumption that his condition is undesirable. Again, 'the capacities of incapacity' offer helpful ideas (for discussion, see Mitchell & Snyder 2015, pp. 180–203).

Mitchell and Snyder write:

Here, then, and in the parlance of new disability materialisms we might say that within neoliberalism, disability ... unveils *the capacities of incapacity* that disability embodies as a key strategy in the antinormative novel of embodiment's neomaterialist revelation of imperfections as a creative, biological force (2015, p. 182, original emphasis).

Herein, I find a contradiction in Mitchell's argument that focusing on impairment is unhelpful but 'imperfection' becomes 'a creative, biological force'. Matt embodies such 'imperfection' and, undeniably, focuses on both his impairment and its imperfect effects, to draw on Thomas' important distinction, as sources of creativity.

Similarly, Bowditch explores her precise genetic condition in an imagined encounter with future viewers in her dance film *Proband* (2008), in which she narrates through both movement and speech her extremely rare condition, coincidentally also osteogenesis imperfecta (like Matt), but accompanied by an additional genetic mutation which affects only one other person in the world – 'some woman in San Francisco' as she shares in an aside during the film. The film concludes with Bowditch commenting: 'It's one of those seemingly random, cellular, microscopic events. And here I am. Here we are. So, the chances of me crossing your path are very unlikely indeed' as a mocking, quasi-nonsense male voice sings accompanied by cabaret piano chords: 'This osteo-thingy imperfecta, well you're quite correcta 'cause we're none of us in any shape or form, size, weight, height, am or norm, quite perfecta' (Bowditch 2008). While she is intentionally parodying the medical terms associated with her body, she is nonetheless focusing on her condition here as content in her art.

Bowditch's subsequent rejection of the label 'disabled artist' then is perhaps the most radical embrace of the social model of disability and, in turn, the most decisive rejection of a medical

gaze from a woman whose very visibility as a dance artist with differential embodiment challenges us not to associate her with the word ‘disability’. Here is where Bowditch’s dance practice differs from Matt’s own artistic interest – Matt does experience challenges and admits in our interview that he is not coping. He reports feeling affected by personal health problems and by a marked contrast between his experience on the one hand, in dance workshops with nondisabled artists who frequently get frustrated with him, and on the other hand in ‘integrated dance’ workshops where ‘it’s all happy but there’s no ongoing development’.²⁷

Similar to Bowditch, Bill Shannon equally resists labels including the term ‘dancer’ for, as he argues in *CRUTCH!*, a trailer for a documentary exploring his work but also his stage alias, he has simply adapted technique and style to moving about in his environment. Nevertheless, Cumings’ analysis of the trailer notes that the short four-minute segment opens with an assortment of Shannon’s affiliated medical labels:

Bill Shannon
has a bilateral hip deformity.
A result of
Legg Calvé Perthes,
A disease which affects
1 in 1200 children (Cumings 2016, p. 138).²⁸

Cumings elaborates that deploying medical terminology, which she describes as ‘medical validation’ or ‘crip credentialing’, recalling Siebers’ ‘disability masquerade’ (2008), not only unveils the otherwise secret answer to the viewer’s confusion on viewing Shannon, but also validates his status as an artist with disability (Cumings 2016, p. 138). Furthermore, she points out that this move is not unlike a previous public talk by Shannon in 2007:

This is the same act of “medical validation,” the same “crip credentialing” Shannon himself undertook in his Poptech talk, and like Shannon’s validation, Cunningham offers it very early, presumably again to fend off distrust or confusion that would otherwise overshadow a viewer’s ability to take in the rest of the video. The language includes the

²⁷ Interview with Matt Shilcock, 16 March 2017.

²⁸ The format here is taken directly from Cumings’ own formatting, which seems to mimic the groupings of text as they fade in consecutively in the short film.

effect of the condition (a bi-lateral hip deformity, presumably explaining the use of crutches) and the medical diagnostic term, Legg Calvé Perthes, unfamiliar and drawing on the “authenticity” of medical discourse to “authenticate” Shannon’s status as disabled (Cumings 2016, p. 138).

For Bowditch and Shannon, therefore, a desire to resist the medical labels seems to cause friction with the viewer’s professed desires. Yet this is not a clear-cut conflict of interest. As Cumings acknowledges, people with disability:

are already suspect, subject to scrutiny because they might be faking in order to collect some benefit to which they aren’t entitled. Their pain is suspect, as are their capacities (Cumings 2016, p. 153).

Such impulsive suspicion compels many artists with disability to address their respective impairments via some public means and deploy medical terminology to justify themselves in the process. For performers with visible disability, like Matt, there is perhaps a continuous need to reconcile these conflicting desires to use medical jargon but facilitate an understanding of their condition on their own terms. Sometimes, after all, Shannon feels like ‘an artist trapped in a human-interest story’ (as cited in O’Driscoll 2007).

Effectively, the perpetuation of oppressive grand narratives of disability is what is at stake in disclosing, but also in *not* disclosing. If left unattended, such prurient, ableist objectifications of people with disability remain unchallenged, reinstating O’Toole’s warning that nondisclosure (can) represent embedded ableism. As Shannon perceives, this is the paradox that artists with visible disability face. The value of disclosure for artists with visible disability, not only hidden, therefore also becomes vexed and subject to debate.

Matt’s manifestation of and need for care

In turn, I contend Matt’s reclamation of control – his agentic action underscoring his specific disclosure of medical labels in the studio and his series of previous disclosures elsewhere – is most productively understood within a politics of care paradigm. As he states, he is frustrated by overprotection. In applying medical language to work with his body and produce art, he asserts control over his body and others’ perceptions of it, he claims a right to safety and he

negates the need for questions which might justify the ubiquitous social refrain that disabled lives are worth less.

Matt's disclosure informed by medical jargon reasserts himself as the one in control. Disclosing medical labels constructs him as the one who has surmounted difficulties (although this can be construed as ableist in its allegiance to the overcoming narrative). In his artistic work such as *The likes of me*, in using the language of the medical world he also uses popular lay terms and familiar terminology in order to challenge the ideologies that repress others' perceptions of him. This is Matt's particular manifestation of care.

Simultaneously, I also argue that his disclosure requires a feminist ethics of care. The Australian contemporary dance sector, governed by what I regard as a highly athletic and conceptual aesthetic (e.g. Australian Dance Theatre, Chunky Move and Lucy Guerin Inc.), is competitive, especially in light of a history of being chronically underfunded (Card 2006; see also Throsby & Hollister 2003). Articulating lived experience, which for Matt is embroiled in his artistic practice, presents not surprisingly a challenge: how 'to navigate the world in devalued differential embodiments' (Mitchell & Snyder 2015, p. 16). Australian Indigenous dancer with disability Joshua Pether voices similar concerns in a recent talk (Pether 2016) and a corresponding publication about his place in the contemporary Australian dance scene: 'my concept of my dancerly body is not my own, but instead, a highly sanitized version of what has become palatable within the norm of dance conventions' (Pether 2017, p. 57). In a subsequent interview with Matt he states, 'I don't identify with my condition'. How might Matt communicate this to peer artists – nondisabled and disabled – while his body continues to 'perform disability' (Sandahl 1999)? Fitting into Australian contemporary dance, it seems, is still a current challenge that these artists face. It is unsurprising that disabled dance artists have been attracted to the UK.

Significantly, it could be argued that this frustration from others and this self-sanitation is due to attitudinal barriers in the Australian dance sector. For Joshua Pether, this ableist thinking has even infiltrated his own concept of a dancerly bodymind. Such attitudinal barriers necessitate a considered and thoughtful navigation of the sector, especially in relation to when, how and what to disclose. For instance, Kerschbaum writes:

Over time individuals learn ways of managing discourses, motivated by past experiences as well as by their short- and long-term goals for identity construction and social interaction. In this way, disability self-disclosures can be understood as the culmination of recurring processes in which past experiences are brought to bear on a present moment as individuals recognize opportune moments for action (2014 p. 63).

Matt's explicit self-disclosure to the group, as well as his Facebook status, are both part of the iterative process of sharing his lived experiences of disability but, importantly, as Kerschbaum goes on to argue, with *agency*.

For Matt, like other disability artists whose practice is inspired by personal lived experiences, his artistic practice is an extension of his self-disclosure. For Kerschbaum, who points out that the stakes are high for disability disclosures in a reality where they are notoriously met with 'infantilizing responses, dramatic changes in attitude, and negative repercussions ... denial, resistance or ignorance' (2014, p. 57), agency over that disclosure is critical, particularly agency over choices of when, where, why and how to disclose. She also points out that 'no matter how skilful, no matter how familiar the context, disability self-disclosures do not always accomplish desired effects' (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 62). For O'Toole (2013), disclosure is highly beneficial to strengthening disability communities, agreeing with Siebers, who claims that sharing lived experiences 'guide[s] life choices and a community in which to prosper' (2013, p. 281).

With Mat Fraser's critique in mind, while it is jolting for Matt to use medical reasons for his artistic practice in all instances of self-disclosure here, his use of medical terminology to disclose his relationship to disability reinforces his professed opinion that dance's therapeutic benefit is the reason why he practises. This is somewhat awkward considering that the objective of professional practice is to produce high-quality work. In his practice and his metacommentary about his practice (Facebook status, program notes), Matt finds himself implicated in a tension between asserting control and realising he works in at times an unaccommodating environment in which he is not coping.

Artistic practice as disclosure

Matt's revelation that he is not managing moves us away from a disability care politics paradigm and closer to a practical need to care. In relation to Matt, I have made two

arguments. First, I have claimed that Matt's disclosure – in both his specific utterance and presence in the rehearsal studio and his iterative disclosures surrounding that singular event – offers medical information which shapes his practice as simultaneously therapeutic and professional. Second, I have argued that he does this in order to assert control over an otherwise uncontrollable condition, which is indeed a politics of care, if only in disguise. I turn now to presenting my third argument regarding Matt's disclosure, that his artistic professional practice extends his disclosure and makes visible a particular ethics of care.

As discussed earlier, Matt's disclosure comes in the form of recounting his previous work *The likes of me* inflected by his lived experience of disability. More broadly, Matt has termed his practice 'osteogenuine' (see Shilcock 2017b). On his website, he explains:

Osteogenuine is a choreographic scoring system informed by a body of living with Osteogenesis Imperfecta. The focus is on generating movement that is safe and developmental to a body affected by the condition (Shilcock 2017b).

Clearly, his intention is to be vigilant, 'safe' and rehabilitative, 'developmental'. His practice hence attends directly to his own self-care. By naming his choreographic practice after his medical condition's diagnostic label, he is presenting his artistic interest in his medical condition to a cultural space which is, on many fronts, fighting against the pervasive and, in many ways, detrimental medical model of disability.

At first glance, Matt's intention may seem at odds with that of an Australian arts community making identity claims and reclaiming rights as equal citizens, and to resurrect a narrative where 'Disability needs to be cured, concealed, closeted or otherwise controlled' (Hadley 2014, p. 6). Similarly, it could be argued that Matt is, in effect, 'staring back' (Sandahl 1999, p. 509) to the medical establishment in his practice of 'osteogenuine', especially by 'exploring the philosophies of negative eugenics' related to his condition in *The likes of me*.²⁹ His linguistic distortion of the term supports this latter interpretation. I suggest his practice expands and nuances the clinical space that surrounds his bodymind. I argue that an undisclosed, unconscious and so otherwise invisible ethics of care arises from the practical concerns of his lived experience and his artistic enquiry into this experience.

²⁹ See <<https://mattshilcock.com/new-index/>>.

Most recently, after a year of health challenges Matt has broken his hip.³⁰ In accounting for Matt's resulting frequent and unpredictable 'impairment effects' (Thomas 1999) caused by such impairments, I argue his practice presents an extended act of disclosure. Like the practice of many other dance artists with disability before him, Matt's practice illustrates Dokumaci's (2013) 'affordance creations' and, more fundamentally I claim, an ethics of care. In valuing that which is interdependent and relational, feminist care ethics emerges in 'the redemptive possibilities of dwelling on the ground' (Albright 2017, p. 72).

An ethics of care is perhaps most palpable in Matt's earlier work *:Fragility:* (2013), which is the first work to explore 'osteogenuine' by choreographing the movement his body affords. At one point, Matt's body falls to the floor and struggles to get up as if defeated by a relentless electronic score, a thumping heartbeat which sees his frame curled into a foetal position on the floor, his back pulsating until a final moment when his body becomes still. Dokumaci writes that 'There are times when things literally fall onto the ground; times when they, as the etymology of the word suggests, "fail"' (2013, p. 109). I would suggest Matt's fall here is an instance of his body 'productively failing'. Dokumaci goes on to suggest, 'another way of reading falling ... than the one defined by a valueridden vertical axis: falling as a path to creation' (2013, p. 115). She terms this performed, creative act an 'affordance creation' (2013).³¹ Albright (2017) similarly meditates on what she perceives to be the alternative aesthetic frames of the 'dual practices of mobility and gravity' and falling.

Here, I argue, Matt's practice itself becomes an iterative disclosure. This disclosure in turn is underpinned by a tension between a disability care politics and a feminist care ethics. In *The likes of me* Matt's mere presence on stage becomes a disability manifestation in confrontation with neoeugenics. In the powerful image of a fall in *:Fragility:* Matt demonstrates a failing body, which requires 'caring', that is relational embodied care labour (Held 2006) and careful attention from others.

³⁰ Interview with Matt Shilcock, 16 March 2017.

³¹ Her notion is rooted in James Gibson's (1983 [1966]; 1986 [1979]) sociological theory of affordances.

Rehearsing dependency

I return here to Jianna's disclosure. In *DLT*, particular performances of care surface in the treatment of Jianna, a performer with intellectual disability. When Jianna explains in the film that she wishes to be seen as 'just me', she does not come up with this phrase on her own, which is significant. While many disability theorists, activists and artists alike wish to foreground qualities of agency, autonomy and independence, feminist care ethicists, and disability feminists in particular, instead underline the interrelational dynamics that enable and sustain agency and autonomy. I argue here that the directing artists Sarah-Vyne and Dan perform specific theatrical labour that is both professional training and care work.

Jianna often receives special attention from Sarah-Vyne and Dan in order to mould her behaviour into the 'professional' conduct expected by a competitive Australian arts industry. For example, Jianna has private meetings with Sarah-Vyne and Dan (which I do not attend) and receives frequent comments concerning appropriate food for dance practice (e.g. the amount of coffee to drink and when). I do not regard this attention as patronising 'supervision', but as professional development training. Rather than 'protect' or keep Jianna 'safe', Sarah-Vyne and Dan attentively respond to Jianna's actions which might otherwise render professional practice unattainable for emerging artists like herself. Significantly, Jianna receives this attention not because she has Down syndrome, but because she is an emerging artist.

Yet this attention is also attentive to Jianna's particular access needs and I do view Sarah-Vyne and Dan's acts here as 'dependency work' (Kittay 1995). In the rehearsal studio of *DLT*, the care practised between the directing artists and Jianna borders on paternalism where professional artistic interactions seem to be 'childlike and beyond criticism' (Hargave 2015, p. 10). Yet I do not believe these interactions are condescending. Hickey-Moody reveals that social interactions teach us to react to people with intellectual disability in certain ways: 'paternalistic care, fear, pity' (2009b, p. 165). In precluding Jianna from my academic (critical) observation, I would be infantilising her as a result and, even worse, 'protecting' her (the very thing I am trying not to do). That said, as Perring foreshadows, practitioners, and I would add academics and others alike, 'should take care lest an individual's construction of his or her self is undermined by labels that originate among the nondisabled' (2005, p. 185).

Like Ames' (2016, p. 110) advice not to criticise one's pathological framework, I do not wish to interrogate the possibility of paternalism which is shaped by a prospectively inflammatory social model lens. Rather, I accept this possibility. The social model lens is problematic in this case because it can presume that, just because Jianna is receiving different treatment which could easily be read as patronising in a disability context, paternalism is forcibly a problem here (Hargrave 2015, p. 237). A more generative approach which allows me to 'interpret the practitioners' own interpretations of what they are doing; that is, to understand their work on their own terms' (Rossmanith 2008a, p. 146) is to propose that the directors' treatment provides *access* to Jianna so that she can partake in the creative process and be mentored. Indeed, Sarah-Vyne commented in our interview that the company had its 'eye' on another artist with intellectual disability to be leading future company workshops.³²

I regard the direction and modification of these attentions towards these practitioners with intellectual disability in particular, as care work. As Rossmanith finds in one instance of observing theatre practitioners rehearsing another Australian independent piece of theatre, one of the directors:

worked more closely than with any other actor, and this was partly because she saw the character ROY as a kind of link between the production and the audience, and partly because the actor was so inexperienced (2006, p. 86).

Similarly, in *DLT* the directors worked closely with Jianna for training, but also for the purposes of developing artistic material. Often, these two purposes were indistinguishable. What is certain, as Rossmanith evidences, is that directors do generally work more closely with inexperienced performers, whether or not, I argue, the performer in question has a disability. This is just what occurs in contemporary professional performance practice. Such professionalism of course requires time and effort on the part of the directors and effort in particular ways (e.g. modifying communication to be simple and clear) and it is this continuous modification responsive to the particular needs of Jianna which I wish to bring to the fore as care.

³² Interview with Sarah-Vyne Vassallo, 23 March 2016.

The study of creative processes involving performers with intellectual disability specifically, undermines the autonomy myth identified by care theorists such as Kittay or, as she puts it, the fiction of our independence: 'I worry that the emphasis on independence extols an idealization that is a mere fiction, not only for people with disability, but for all of us' (2011, p. 51). As discussed in Chapter Three, in the context of a live performance towards which the rehearsal process is geared, a 'societal group *defined by* diminished agency (dependents) on stage [become] seemingly autonomous agents (actors)' (Hargrave 2015, p. 15, original emphasis). Schmidt has termed this the 'politics of (in)visible support' (2017, pp. 447–8). Jianna's dependency unveils what Shildrick and Price call 'becoming-in-the-world-with others' (2002, p. 72). Her dependency reflects the nonhumanist lens of intersubjective embodiment (see, for instance, Hughes et al. 2005). While disability performance theorists position this dependency work in relation to direction, authorship and creation of artistic material, I interpret it as explicitly care work and, in the context of *DLT*, bespoke professional training.

Importantly, this care work is not necessarily more or more difficult labour, but it requires an attentive and dynamic shifting of gears as performance-makers respond to the surfacing variegated access needs throughout the process of performance-making by and with practitioners with disability. Indeed, artistic dependency work I suggest extends beyond practitioners with intellectual disability, not just to all artists with disability, but to all artists generally, as in Rossmanith's anecdote of an emerging actor. Here again, the cultural lens of disability makes visible the dependency structures inherent to performance-making writ large.

Significantly, Ruckus theatre director Alison Richardson (2017) identifies a critical lack of such professional training opportunities for artists with disability in Australia after conducting industry research on British models of performance training for adults with intellectual disability. Such a lack of opportunity for professional development and mentoring for emerging artists such as Jianna renders the efforts of Sarah-Vyne and Dan precious, unique and instrumental and, in Australia, today, *vital* for the short-term future sustainability of performing artists with disability and their attendant valuable work. I thus highlight that dependency work is at the core of professional development for artists with intellectual disability.

Summary

During my fieldwork with Murmuration, care materialised as various acts of disclosure. The thematic of disclosure was born out of the three key incidents that emerged during my observations of Murmuration's creative development of *Days Like These*, as well as from an interview with Artistic Director Sarah-Vyne Vassallo. These acts were strikingly different from one another. My discussion began and ended with acts of nondisclosure in the form of an artist who did not participate in my research and the enabled nondisclosure of an artist with intellectual disability as 'just me'. I navigated my argument through a primary focus on three particular artists disclosures, those of Jianna, Matt and Sarah-Vyne.

Specifically, I argued that Jianna's nondisclosure or, rather, her choice to mention anything about 'disability' in her introduction at the beginning of the creative development, demonstrates a disability politics of care. Yet I have argued that her 'disclosure is performed' (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 57). In addition, an absence of explicit disclosure presents me as the researcher with the methodological dilemma of disclosing on her behalf in my field notes and in this dissertation. For Jianna, it is completely understandable that she chooses not to identify with disability – she must resist repressive perception of her default visual performance all the time. My disclosure of Jianna in this research remains troubling and connotes the 'irreconcilable insights' about which Kelly writes (2011, p. 575) in arriving at incombtable views between disability rights politics and feminist care ethics.

In contrast, I claim Matt's upfront verbal disclosure reflects both a tangible disability care politics and a subtle feminist ethics of care. For Matt, his safety demands disclosure. Furthermore, Matt's deployment of and artistic interest in medical labels complicate the 'therapy ghetto' (Hadley 2014) dilemma in that they construct his artistic practice as both therapeutic and professional. The presence of medical labels further enables Matt to enact a manifestation of care. Medical information provides Matt with the agency required to assert control over and above his otherwise out-of-control bodily experience, and gives him the tools to challenge harmful ideologies that directly touch him as a person and practising dance artist with osteogenesis imperfecta. I thus note an extension of his disclosure in his performance work itself. As such, Matt's disclosure illuminates that the paradigms of both a disability political and a feminist ethical view of care can indeed be intertwined.

Where both Matt and Jianna ‘perform disability’ (Sandahl 1999), Sarah-Vyne must negotiate choices that risk oppressing her. For Sarah-Vyne, terminology itself renders her disclosure deeply vexed. Significantly, the stakes are high for artists with hidden impairment who must negotiate the burden of choices about when, how, what and why to share personal information considering not just themselves, but an entire community. Therefore I argued that Sarah-Vyne’s tentative private disclosure necessitates a feminist ethics of care in its reception, that is, in my subsequent account. Any accidental self-sabotage (tainting of oneself with stigmatising terms) can negatively impact on future professional trajectories.

In sum, ‘care’ manifests here as acts of variously verbal, visual, artistic, public, private, wilful and/or resistant disclosure and nondisclosure. This chapter ultimately claims that the acts of disclosing and the choices about when, how or whether to disclose are acts of care themselves. In the next chapter, I turn to the second case of dance theatre practice by and with Australian disabled artists recounted in this thesis.

Chapter Five: Aestheticising care on/*Off The Record*

This chapter turns to the second case of dance theatre practice that I observed in my ethnographic study. I discuss a dance theatre piece, *Off The Record* (hereafter, *OTR*), a collaboration between companies Force Majeure (Artistic Director, Danielle Micich) and Dance Integrated Australia (Artistic Director, Philip Channells), which premiered in Sydney in August 2016. At Sydney's revered contemporary performance venue Carriageworks, over a period of 11 days in December 2015, I observed some of the first-stage creative development of the work, which was inspired by the lived experiences of its cast and its theme, 'revealing'. In Australia, this was the first time that a major independent dance theatre company (Force Majeure) collaborated with an 'integrated dance' company (Dance Integrated Australia). While the previous chapter in this thesis has considered the politics of disclosure and visibility in performance-making, this chapter shifts its focus to a particular encounter between Deaf and hearing worlds. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Deaf-hearing encounters 'remain largely invisible and unexplored' (Goggin 2009, p. 490).

The encounter takes place during the creative development in the private space of the studio. This period involved warm-up classes at the beginning of each day with guest facilitators, two daily creative development sessions where performing artists responded to a series of highly prepared task-based exercises and, finally, an open studio showing where the work's stakeholders were invited to sample a work-in-progress – a collection of about ten scenes and sequences combining spoken word, movement, projected text and structured improvisation. The creative team involved co-directors (Danielle and Philip), text dramaturg Zoë Coombs Marr, performing artists Gerard O'Dwyer, Alex Jones, Marnie Palomares and Jana Castillo, access support specialist and understudy Anna Healey, Auslan interpreters Jasmine Rozsa, Dalia Rozsa-Brown and Neil Phipps, the last of whom became a co-performer in the piece, and stage manager Brooke Kiss. Executive producers Bec Allen and Colm O'Callaghan also made appearances in the studio space now and then. Given that these arts workers acted as gatekeepers in relation to my research, I tend to idealise them. I acknowledge from the outset that they henceforth emerge at times as more 'ideal' than 'real' in my discussion.

Another limitation to my interpretation is that, precisely because I am hearing, I often found myself looking down at my notebook during the fieldwork itself. This means most of my field notes are quotes of what people said, rather than what their bodies did. On these multiple occasions when I was looking down, I would miss crucial visuals and movement of bodies,

including those in this largely embodied key incident. I am thus unable to provide a corporeal account of this incident and so miss an integral part of this verbal/signed exchange.

As in the previous chapter, I draw on Emerson's (2004) 'key incident' method of analysis. Unlike the previous key incidents discussed in Chapter Four, the particular key incident here is 'out-of-the-ordinary, dramatic or "critical"' (Emerson 2004, p. 431) in the context of *OTR*. The dramatic incident sees Deaf actor Alex Jones (hereafter, Alex) and (hearing) actor Gerard O'Dwyer (hereafter, Gerard) perform a task issued by the directors. Beyond this incident, Alex communicated throughout the creative development of *OTR* in both Auslan (with the assistance of a team of sign language interpreters) and spoken English (accessed by hearing aids, lip-reading and Auslan interpretation). Notably, Gerard also has Down syndrome but his status as a hearing person in this incident is of primary relevance.³³ This is not to dismiss Gerard's experience. Significantly, in addition to audism, issues bordering on 'cognitive ableism' (Carlson 2001) are present in this incident and the creative development at large. However, such discussion is beyond the scope of my analysis.

In the incident, Alex and Gerard are responding 'yes' and 'no' in Auslan when Gerard is directed to fake-sign and another hearing performer, Jana Castillo (hereafter, Jana), to fake-interpret. Alex raises a concern, addressing the hearing group in Auslan. He signs: 'Hearing people fake-signing is offensive to Deaf audiences'. Importantly, co-directors Philip and Danielle respond. Danielle takes ownership of the harm caused. Her response is extended by the directorial decision to transform this impromptu encounter into artistic material and, ultimately, a scene entitled *Offence vortex* in the final performance.

Months later, in the midst of the final stage of creative development, Danielle is struck by her realisation that she would not treat other nondisabled or hearing artists with the same 'sense of care', as she puts it.³⁴ I contend that Danielle's attitude can be understood in terms of Noddings' 'relational ethics' wherein caring is 'rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness' (1984, p. 2; see also 2013). In rehearsal, Danielle and Philip intuitively strive towards performing what Kittay calls 'good care' (1999, 2011). They recognise the sensitivities

³³ My disclosure of Gerard's relationship to disability is vexed. He does not verbally associate himself with Down syndrome in the public domain. Yet in the context of the rehearsals and public performances of *OTR*, 'disclosure is performed' (Kerschbaum 2014, p. 57). I address my vexed disclosure of Gerard here as a means of not losing 'touch with the hard surfaces of life' (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 323).

³⁴ Interview with Danielle Micich and Philip Channells, 27 July 2016.

of these artists revealing their personal experiences of disability, not only privately in the studio, but publicly for aesthetic ends. I henceforth consider this incident in terms of Thompson's 'aesthetics of care' (2015).

My discussion begins by retelling the Deaf–hearing encounter which I described in my field notes as Alex's warning. I then attend to the emergent themes produced in this encounter derived from the performance-makers' terms – 'safe space' and 'crossing the line'. Following this, I explain the significance of Alex's political retort to this incident. In response to the incident, I explore the directors' 'attentiveness' (Tronto 1993, 2013) and argue that it counts as theatrical labour, which ultimately seeds the process of aestheticising the fraught acts of 'care' produced in the incident. Next, I question whether this attentive care is 'professional', given the expressly professional status of *OTR*. After this, I investigate Alex's reciprocity in this encounter by delving more deeply into his expert and evidently rehearsed navigation of the incident in what Price (2011b) calls 'kairotic space'. I then elaborate on *OTR*'s priority for access, shedding some light on how this influences attendant aesthetics. I interrogate the aestheticisation of Alex's signed communication by me in my field notes, including not only the pitfalls but also the benefits for both Alex and the hearing group. Finally, I address the ways in which this encounter forged an aesthetics which would later be exhibited in the public performance. Aestheticising care at first is controversially seeded in the private 'safe space' of the rehearsal studio, before being collaboratively sown into the public show before actual audiences, Deaf, disabled and otherwise.

Alex signs a warning

What happened 'off the record' that is, in the private rehearsal studio during the creative development of *OTR*? In this section, I introduce the performance-makers who play a key role in the incident. I frame and recount the Deaf and hearing world encounter when Alex signs a warning in Auslan to the otherwise hearing group.

I first encountered Deaf actor Alex on the second day of *OTR*'s creative development in December 2015. Below is an excerpt from my field notes:

Tanned, muscular, blue-eyed, Alex's presence was strong and relaxed in the space, commanding our attention with bravado and an entertainer's glint in his eyes. He had a wholesome squeaky laugh that triggered everyone in the group.

Alex was always comfortable in the space. My highly gendered description of Alex, not without prejudice, is perhaps idealistic but captures a certain authority with which he conducted himself throughout the creative development. As for hearing actor Gerard, I observe:

When Gerard speaks, he says words like "my colleague", "charisma" and makes well-spoken posh word choices time and time again with a pace like a leader who preaches to a public – with great rhetoric.

On the first day, performers have been requested by Philip and Danielle in advance to bring in artefacts from their pasts. I write:

It's Jana's turn. "Alright well". Her voice is strong, wholesome, her pronunciation clear, her expression dynamic as she starts to explain her childhood ... As Jana speaks, she makes eye contact with everyone in the circle ... Suddenly, Jana slips in, "As most of you know I have a neurological TIC disorder ... I was diagnosed three years ago". Something shifts upon mentioning this latest piece of her past. "I lost my speech. I started convulsing, seizures, blackouts, extreme fatigue, loss of control of the legs".

As with Gerard, in the creative process of *OTR* an exploration of Jana's broader role and experience as a performer with a relatively recent and complex experience of disability here is beyond the scope of my discussion. That said, her personal relationship to impairments was brought to bear on the unfolding of this Deaf-hearing encounter and certainly on the wider creative development process and public performance of *OTR*.

One day near the beginning of the creative development, in the middle of a structured improvisation task hearing actor Gerard is asked to fake-sign Auslan and hearing dancer Jana to fake-interpret. Gerard creates nonsense gestures from which Jana voices a fantastical interpretation. In response, everyone observing the interaction laughs out loud. Abruptly, Alex interrupts and signs a warning in Auslan that hearing people mocking sign language is offensive.

Alex's warning is translated into spoken English for the hearing group by the Auslan interpreter, Dalia. Then, in English, Alex states, 'It is a safe space ... You can play with it, but that's no go'.

In his warning, Alex chooses to 'speak' (Brueggemann 1999) in Auslan. His warning, I suggest, constitutes a political manifestation of care in response to the directors' ethical performance of care. The directors had been trying to embed sign language in the process of generating artistic material for the show, an aesthetic strategy known in arts and disability circles as embedding access (discussed in Chapter Three). From the outset their efforts are ethical because creating accessible art is justly regarded as a morally right thing to do, especially in productions encompassing artists with disability. The directors were arguably 'Caring for an audience' (Thompson 2015, p. 439), a Deaf audience. Yet, performing care is not a simple process: It presents a complex provocation in Deaf and disability contexts. As Kröger puts it, for many disability scholars, artists and activists, care is 'conceptually contaminated' (2009, p. 399).

On the next day of the creative development period during the daily morning check-in circle, Danielle (Dank) reflects further. I write:

Dank reports having lots of thoughts over "taking the piss over someone else's language ... owning that ... bringing that forward to the audience ... it did impact me ... maybe I should do something about that ... that's what came up for me in the last day".

Danielle's reflection is open, serious, and she takes responsibility for this ethical slippage in the performance-making process by commenting about 'owning that' and 'maybe I should do something about that'. I would describe Danielle's reaction as exhibiting an 'affective solidarity and felt sense of justice' (Thompson 2015, p. 432), thus it is an ethical and *sensorial* alliance with the performing artists of *OTR*. Her comments vividly echo the 'I must' feeling of responsibility in Noddings' 'ethical caring' (1984, p. 81). Indeed, as this chapter reveals, with co-director Philip and fellow performance-makers, Danielle does do something about it.

A 'safe space'

Alex mentions that it is a 'safe space' in his warning. But what does this mean? What is a 'safe space'? Performance scholar Mary Ann Hunter (2008) asks the same question in relation to an applied performance project with youth from various multicultural backgrounds. While

Hunter's insights are similar to those relating to *OTR*, as I will show the context of a community arts setting with multicultural youth differs to the professional context of *OTR* with disabled and nondisabled artists. What then do I interpret from the performance-makers' shared idea of 'safe space' in *OTR*? How does this idea shape the key incident and the creative process? In this section, I contextualise the private studio creative development as a 'safe space'.

The term 'safe' is initially uttered by Anna on the second day during the daily check-in circle. The group sits on the floor and she reflects on the previous day, when all the performing artists disclosed extremely private information about themselves; 'what stuck with me was we were all so open so soon in the room' and that she felt 'safe'. A few minutes later in the same conversation, her remarks are reinforced by Philip; 'Just a reminder, this is a very sacred space ... it protects us, it protects the work and our integrity'. The phrase 'safe space' is then voiced by Alex within the key incident as we know: 'It is a safe space', he says. Likewise, on the final day of development Jana comments: 'I felt the space was held and respected'.

The phrase Alex uses – 'safe space' – powerfully evokes a feeling of caring and being cared for. The term 'safe space' with connotations of *mutual* care thus denotes a reciprocal interrelationship. I acknowledge the vagueness of the term 'space', especially in a theatrical context, which has led McAuley to propose a 'taxonomy of spatial function in the theatre' (1999, p. 25). Rather than interpreting the term 'space' within an abstract theatrical context, I consider the full term and concrete concept 'safe space' as the performance-makers do – as a popular lay term with apparent roots in psychological wellbeing, comfort and confidentiality, but also artistic experimentation. It is noteworthy that this space was private. Such 'private space', Thompson writes, 'is a crucial site of ethical behaviour, and the public realm needs to include attention to the importance of the caring relations between people' (2015 p. 433). Indeed, there were particular stories to which I was privy but for which the directors requested confidentiality. Of one such story, Philip advises that it 'doesn't go outside the people in this room'. Incidentally, this spurred a running gag for the performance-makers – 'Is it on the record or off the record?'

An ostensible 'safe space' is set up structurally in the creative development by having daily check-ins where performance-makers can air their thoughts, needs and ideas. The idea of 'safe space' was not only facilitated by the directors, but also constructed by artists' disclosure of extremely personal information, as indicated by Jana in the previous section. This involved the

five performance-makers bringing in artefacts from their lives – medical records, school reports, newspaper clippings and so on – representing stories, both traumatic and triumphant, which generated much of the creative content for the creative development. Thus, for arguably all the performing artists, there was also a sense of being cared for in the ‘space’ or ‘in the room’, as the performance-makers themselves commented.

In the creative development of *OTR*, I suggest, the term ‘safe space’ refers more precisely to the principle of respect and the practice of care. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, notions of ‘safe space’ appear and reappear in community and education contexts for myriad marginalised groups. In Chapter Four, I align my argument on disclosure with that of Kafer (2016), who proposes that ‘safety’ is a tricky idea because it is contingent: What is safe for one is not necessarily safe for another. Now, I claim, the term ‘safe space’ as used by performance-makers in fact does not refer to the concept of ‘safety’ per se. It is tempting to argue that a ‘safe space’ is always illusionary (Anzaldúa 2002; Henry 1994; Stengel & Weems 2010, p. 505). In the Deaf–hearing encounter, Alex, Danielle and Philip all demonstrate a caring and respectful attitude. In turn, Alex acknowledges the respectful and caring working environment, and implicitly this is attributed to Philip (and Danielle), to whom he directs his statement. Alex’s words ‘You can play with it, but that’s no go’ reveal simultaneously that he is not about to judge or reprimand anyone, and that he is encouraging the group to continue to experiment, just not down the same path.

Further, the idea of ‘safe space’ in the creative development of *OTR* presents tensions. Curiously, ‘safe space’ in terms of freedom to play in order to generate artistic material means essentially that anything goes. Alex’s warning carries the idea in a rehearsal context that performance-makers must ‘feel safe to experiment’ (McAuley 2012, p. 6). This signification, in relation to other meanings of the term – for example, where ‘safe space’ is mutually recognised as others being sensitive, careful and respectful of others’ feelings – is contradictory. Hunter comes to a similar insight:

In the creative development of new performance, safe space is conceptualised through rules of engagement that scaffold the creation of new work and, somewhat paradoxically, invite a greater degree of aesthetic risk. The experimentation encouraged to happen within this kind of safe space therefore becomes a product of the dynamic tension between known (safe) processes and unknown (risky) outcomes (2008, p. 8).

In a performance-making setting, as Hunter observes, 'safe space' is paradoxical. Precisely, the question about 'safe' meaning 'risk-averse' or 'risk-attractive' (Hunter 2008, p. 9) comes to the fore. In *OTR* the term also straddles antithetical attitudes, as both a resistance to and a valuing of the containment of people's feelings. In effect, the term is metonymic for my argument in this thesis: A 'safe space' carries the tension inherent in care.

In the context of dance theatre involving artists with disability, this paradox, I suggest, is even more evident. The idea of safe space is antithetical in some disability contexts too. As Price points out (2011b, p. 22) a 'safe zone' is used to protect 'normals' from 'the violent incursions of madness'. In the particular context of performance practice, Schmidt (2017, p. 454) draws on the concept of 'safe container' from applied theatre scholars Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton (2016, p. 17). Discussing Theatre HORA's recent experimental project called *Freie Republik HORA*, which seeks to establish company artists with intellectual disability as directors themselves, she writes that project guidelines including 'no violence' and 'no destruction of other's property' function as a 'kind of protective structure'. She continues:

Artistic creation, however, is characterised by the necessity of a risk. On the one hand, orders can serve as a vehicle to break the rules, on the other, orders can be disabling in themselves, as they regulate the creative process. Herein lies one of the principal paradoxes of the experiment. In line with the order of Freie Republik HORA, the breaking of rules and the discovering of new thinking are welcomed by the inventors of the concept. At the same time, the order – the "Regelwerk" (guidelines) – permanently performs itself during the process (Schmidt 2017, p. 454).

The concept of 'safe space' thus resolutely poses a dilemma for both artistic and disability sites. How does this environment of paradoxically 'safe' spaces impact on the artistic risks of devising *OTR* and the specific aesthetics of *OTR*? Does the 'no go' zone that Alex warns the group about inhibit these risks and limit this aesthetics? Or does the paradox of 'safe space' enrich the creative process of *OTR*?

‘Crossing the line’

The phrase ‘crossing the line’ is spoken by Danielle, who uses it to describe the group’s ethical slippage.³⁵ In this section, I explore what this ‘line’ is. How do I interpret the utterance and act of ‘crossing the line’, as Danielle puts it? I understand crossing the line as an accidentally insulting act of albeit well-intended care. Kelly explains, ‘we must acknowledge the realities of care in order to avoid obfuscating oppressive experiences of care and to enable new visions of the future’ (2016, p. 35). I conceive ‘cross-*ing* the line’ (my emphasis) as a process which is, following Kelly, potentially both beneficial and oppressive.

From Alex’s point of view, the act of ‘crossing the line’ is political. From Deaf perspectives, the phrase ‘crossing the line’ more fundamentally invokes border zones. The trope of the ‘inbetween’ or, as Brueggemann phrases it, ‘be-tweenity’ (2009, p. 9), is prominent in Deaf scholarship and arts (for examples, see Brueggemann 1999, pp. 50–80; 2008, pp. 30–43; Lindgren 2012). Deaf scholar Kristin A Lindgren stresses that exploring contact zones:

enables authors to negotiate these dual affiliations; their narratives bear the traces of both Deaf and hearing worlds. Distinctive thematic preoccupations, aesthetic strategies, and counter-narratives emerge when signing Deaf people represent self and culture (2012, p. 343).

Lindgren uses Mary Louise Pratt’s oft-cited essay ‘The arts of contact zones’ (1991) as a means to explore the transcultural zones of Deaf and hearing worlds. Even though Alex’s communication is not literary in his warning, he is communicating to a hearing group in a ‘language that inscribes rather than voices’ (Anglin-Jaffe 2011, p. 33). His response to ‘crossing the line’ is a political act.

Through a critical Deaf lens, ‘crossing the line’ invokes, most vividly, Christopher Krentz’s point of meeting but also point of separation in his concept of ‘the hearing line’ (2007). For Krentz, such a Deaf–hearing cultural clash effectively depicts a familiar comic episode from a literary Deaf–hearing encounter which ‘relies on a bond between hearing author [co-directors] and

³⁵ Coincidentally, a disability international theatre project is named *Crossing the line*, suggesting the political sensitivities unearthed in my project are part of broader politicised representations of disability on stage (Crossing the Line 2017).

hearing reader [audience]' (2007, p. 198). Their shared laughter 'is the laughter of reassurance' (Krentz 2007, p. 198). Krentz elaborates:

while much of the pleasure stems from seeing the hearing line transgressed, boundaries and identities challenged, and the social order disrupted, by the end of [the] episode order – and hearingness – seems to have been restored (2007, pp. 198–9).

In this incident, though, neither hearingness nor order is restored. Rather, by the end Auslan and Deafness interrupt the joke and it is the hearing order that is removed. Krentz pinpoints the compromised nature of a position like Alex's:

This deaf-related comedy also reveals the hearingness of the authors. Significantly, we never witness meaningful communication between deaf and hearing characters in nineteenth-century American literature by hearing writers. In these fictions, the hearing line is never erased, as the gap always exists and deaf characters frequently come out as deficient. As we have seen, when hearing characters transgress the hearing line, they may appear silly, but they invariably wind up with more power. Conversely, when deaf characters try to act hearing, they always seem oblivious, childlike, foolish; they lose power. In writing about deaf characters, these authors are performing a sort of deaf impostor act of their own. They are ventriloquizing their hearing attitudes through deaf bodies (Krentz 2007, p. 199).

Although Krentz writes in the context of nineteenth-century American literature, his description of the cultural impoverishment effected by hearing authors narrating Deaf lives is still pertinent. When the hearing directors cross the line, the 'hearing line', meaning the authority of phonocentrism, contrariwise remains intact. Gerard and Jana (the fake-signer and fake-interpreter, respectively) collectively put on a comical Deaf masquerade. The laughter of the rest of the group points to the complicity between hearing members and also, Alex's exclusion. Indeed, the hearing group is 'ventriloquizing their hearing attitudes through deaf bodies', in this case at the expense of Alex's language and culture.

Alex's manifestation

I argue that Alex expertly navigates the aftermath of the group's 'crossing the line'. Partly this is because, while the incident is perhaps a rare learning moment for hearing performance-makers, it is probably a familiar experience for Alex. Indeed, I realise he is well-rehearsed, clear, succinct, direct and, importantly, reciprocates, to recall a key surviving tenet of care ethics in Noddings' (1984, 2013) relational caring, a point I return to later in this chapter. Alex is unafraid of showing weakness and is not resistant to sharing his thoughts – on the contrary, he clearly seems compelled to do so – and he does not express hesitation when he signs his statement. Rather, in his instantaneous manifestation of the incident, he is clearly annoyed but expresses his political statement to the hearing group in a way which opens up dialogue. In this section, I explain the significance of Alex's manifestation and frame it as care.

The act of 'crossing the line' is not only frustrating for Alex. It also proves generative. It gives him the opportunity to share Deaf cultural concerns about Auslan and sign languages generally. Responding to Philip's question about the sham interpreter at Nelson Mandela's funeral,³⁶ Alex explains the scandal was, in fact, beneficial to the international Deaf community because it gave exposure to the idea that sign language is indeed a language. The existence of sign languages and Deaf cultures around the world is under threat (Bauman & Murray 2010). Technological developments are controversial in the signing Deaf community (Mills 2011b), resulting in a situation where 'questions about the morality of curing, abating or preventing hearing loss abound' (Burke 2008, p. 74). In Australia, signed-language linguist Trevor Johnston's notion of 'w(h)ither the deaf community' (2006) illustrates the contributing factors endangering Auslan. Johnston predicts 'an eventual decline' of the Australian signing Deaf community due to factors such as early mainstream education for children who have free universal access to hearing aids and subsidised access to cochlear implantation (2006, p. 169). Alex's communication in sign language emphasises his Deaf identity in belonging to this progressively threatened international community. Indeed, the group knows of Alex's difficulties endured at school as a child. On the first day of development Alex shares that his English was 'quite delayed', school 'was awful' and 'university was very difficult'.

³⁶ In December 2013 at Nelson Mandela's funeral, Thamsanqa Jantjie sparked outrage when he appeared to fake the sign interpretation of world leaders' speeches during the televised service.

Alex's actions are further understood in considering his prominent status in the Australian Deaf community. Alex is not only an actor. He is also an advocate for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Most significantly, he co-founded AIMedia (Access Innovation Media), a Sydney-based organisation which delivers alternative or supplementary communication access for deaf and hard of hearing people. The organisation's launch of a live captioning service in 2010 sparked a public debate on sign language versus captions. Critics expressed a 'fear that captions will kill Auslan' according to AIMedia CEO Tony Abrahams (2010). In the 2015 creative development of *OTR*, Alex is perhaps still ready to defend the integrity of Auslan. 'Crossing the line' therefore gives him the opportunity to address Deaf cultural sensitivities for the hearing group, not only out of solidarity with the Deaf community but also, perhaps, to safeguard his professional stake therein.

Furthermore, soon after the premiere of *OTR* Alex presented a paper (Jones 2016) as part of the national Australian disability arts industry conference. As an advocate and an actor, he addressed the problem of ill-qualified or incompetent interpreters signing songs in online videos. He explained that these sham interpreters do not adhere to the linguistic protocols of sign languages. Alex's ongoing defence of sign languages enhances the significance of his warning in the context of the creative development of *OTR*. Clearly, his statement in direct response to the incident in *OTR* is intentional and politically strategic.

I claim his statement is a political manifestation of the directors' failed attempt to 'care about' embedding Auslan in *OTR*. In signing, Alex's silence possesses 'rhetorical agency', as Kerschbaum (2014) puts it. In the silence, I propose that Alex enacts a 're-visibilization that restores the body to the aesthetic while representing the biopolitical regimes that erase it' (Davidson 2013, p. 2). By signing, Alex firmly situates himself in a 'Deaf aesthetic' that comprises hybrid identity and polymodal communication, according to Lindgren (2012, p. 343). Most importantly, he signifies a prevailing audist culture.

The choice and form Alex's warning takes and his return to English in order to clarify and emphatically reiterate his message in the group's familiar mode of communication – spoken English – are pivotal in the analysis of this Deaf–hearing encounter. As Goggin reminds us, 'much work is still required to trace exactly how this occurs – for instance, in which circumstances someone whose native language is Auslan (Australian sign language) chooses or needs to speak (if they can), to interact with a hearing person' (2009, pp. 495–6). Alex does end

up speaking at the end in response to the directors. His choice to speak is emphatically political: He is accepting their apology.

Artists' attentiveness

Certainly, Philip's, Danielle's and Alex's reactions to this incident are based on a sense of shared and mutual respect, but especially respect for Alex as a member of a marginalised group in this situation. In *not* speaking but opting to sign, Alex 'thematizes the authority of hearing culture' (Davidson 2008, p. 87). In this section, I explain the various ways in which the directors but also fellow performance-makers attentively respond to Alex's warning. I argue that the artists' 'attentiveness' to Alex and vice versa (Alex does respond to Philip's interest in the incident at Nelson Mandela's funeral) constitute theatrical labour.

My discussion here is steered by Tronto's definition of 'attentiveness' in her political 'ethic of care' (1993). For Tronto, 'attentiveness' is a key tenet of care ethics (2013, p. 34). Interestingly, for Thompson (who draws on Tronto's definition), attentiveness 'is both at the heart of the creative process, and the outcome of it' (2015, p. 437). Danielle and Philip listen, respond to and take ownership of their oversight in directing Gerard to fake-sign and Jana to fake-interpret. Here, Philip and Danielle aim for what Kittay calls 'good care' (1999, 2011), that is, practising care with an attitude of good faith.

In response to the warning, I suggest that Philip and Danielle listen differently to Alex. Australian non-indigenous media scholars Penny O'Donnell, Justine Lloyd and Tanja Dreher write of 'relinquishing our positions as principal "knowers", the ones in search of better explanations, in order to attend fully and critically to the accounts of Indigenous "knowers"' (2009, p. 430). Here, I do not mean to compare Indigenous Australians with artists with disability. As Eli Clare eloquently notes, 'gender folds into disability, disability wraps around class, class strains against race, race snarls into sexuality, sexuality hangs onto gender, all of it finally piling into our bodies' (2003, n. p.). I mean, rather, to highlight the act of listening to marginalised groups of people. O'Donnell, Lloyd and Dreher's use of the term 'attend' is a reminder that 'listening' as a concept is flawed, and this is especially true in a Deaf context. Indeed, 'listening' is another audist term. Hence, I shift away from this idea of deeper listening to the act of being attentive. This is what I suggest guides both directors' responses in this key incident.

Both Philip and Danielle remain attentive throughout the unfolding of the key incident and its aftermath. While this is unremarkable in itself, given that performing artists' sense of attention is powerfully cultivated through years of training, rehearsing, creating and presentation (Card 2006; Rossmanith 2008a), the directors' attentiveness here, I put forward, is governed by 'a sensitivity and sense of priority for care' (Kittay 1995, p. 25). Extending Schechner's understanding of performance as process, briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, I consider the care demonstrated by the directors' attentiveness as analogous to the 'political grievance' (Ridout 2006, p. 101) of performance-making. Critically, I do not mean to cast Alex as a burden here, but I do mean to emphasise the directors' attentiveness throughout the creative process as a deep-seated part of their theatrical labour. I note also that their attentiveness is intensified by the strict time frame of 11 working days and that 'the risks and energies at play in a workshop, especially one that is being observed and documented, are also intense' (McAuley 1999, p. 13). My presence throughout this first-stage creative development undoubtedly impacted on the creation of *OTR*: My request to return to observe the second stage of the creative development was rejected, possibly due to the intensity added by my attendance.

The directors attend not only to the present unfolding moment beyond themselves, but also to their own thoughts and feelings. In their reactions to Alex, I propose that they engage in their own 'politics of wonder', that is, 'a wondering about that which organizes bodies and social spaces and their worlds of meaning' (Titchkosky 2011, p. 15). For instance, after Alex's warning, when Danielle immediately following the incident regrets that what happened was like mocking any disability in the room, she is instantaneously reflecting out loud and interrogating her own actions and thoughts in real time. The daily check-ins seemed to encourage and facilitate self-reflexivity and in turn helped catalyse such attentive reflection. This process of attentive reflection further impacted on the aesthetic development of *OTR*. When Danielle returns after the weekend (the incident took place on a Saturday and the cast returned on the Monday) she illustrates that, as McAuley comments:

the creative process is not confined to a particular place and time but can be bubbling along in a subliminal way even when the artist is doing something else, including being on holiday (2012, p. 11).

I thus observe that Danielle engages in a 'politics of wonder' also when away from the site of the rehearsal studio.

Significantly, this dynamic process of reflection, wonder and expression of regret is not limited to the directors. Immediately after Danielle's comment, I note Jana's attentiveness to the incident:

Jana shares something similar: Jana reflects, "I had a similar thought-pattern about that" and reflects on the intent of people who are patronising: "It comes from a place of love ... I try to treat everyone the same but everybody's different – how do you do that?"

While I surmise that Jana refers to encounters beyond that of Alex's warning, I interpret her reflection, for the most part, as resulting from Alex's warning, as Danielle's most certainly does. Importantly, Jana's retrospective insight about her struggle 'to treat everyone the same' reflects the tension in the practice of caring, that is, the conflict between a 'longing for goodness', in Noddings' (1984, p. 2) words, or coming 'from a place of love' in Jana's words, and a resistance to purportedly caring attitudes. In response to Jana, Danielle wonders – and the line between ethics and aesthetics becomes blurred – 'Maybe there's a way of saying that visually'.

The seed for the aestheticisation of Alex's warning is thereby watered. Danielle's artistic approach to *OTR* is aesthetic as much as it is 'caring'. As Noddings describes the artist at work: the directors – and all the performance-makers – are 'present to the work of art as it is forming: listening, watching, feeling, contributing' (1984, p. 22). Significantly, Danielle's reflective response 'it did impact me' therefore blurs the boundaries between aesthetics and care. What I interpret her to be exhibiting here is care aesthetics. I argue that the group discussion builds the first cyphers of an 'aesthetics of care' (Thompson 2015).

However, in the attentive collective reflection here, Thompson's aesthetics of care falls short. I depart from his theory because it does not account for a disability politics towards care in the context of devising *OTR*. The group's discussion signifies, rather, the tension inherent in a feminist disability aesthetics of care, namely, the fine line between caring and patronising treatment of others. In response to Jana, Philip says, 'My response to that is dignity', to which

Gerard adds, 'and respect' before drifting towards thoughts about the late activist Stella Young not wanting people with disability to pity themselves. Gerard then affirms, 'I don't feel sorry for myself' and Philip enquires whether he would be happy to share that in the show. Importantly, I understand this is Gerard's way of expressing solidarity with Alex. It should not be dismissed here that all the performance-makers who played a role in accidentally mocking sign language are the ones to contribute thoughts to this particular conversation – the directors, Danielle and Philip, and the performers Gerard and Jana. Such attentiveness to their own and others' emotions and thoughts in the aftermath of Alex's warning is thus brought to bear on the creation of *OTR*. I put forward these hindsight in response to the incident having nourished the aesthetics in *OTR*.

Professional care?

I could describe this attentiveness as voluntary but professional caregiving, because Danielle and Philip are employed and paid and thus have professional stakes in their actions. However, the idea of 'professional care' is provocative in the context of work by and with artists with disability, perhaps all the more so for Deaf artists like Alex. Everyone is being paid, including, of course, Alex. Caregiving is not officially part of this transaction. This absence of explicit caring responsibilities in many ways allows the artists to break free of the paradox outlined by Kittay (2011) that care is necessarily both a transaction *and* a relationship. Yet caring responsibilities are undeniably present in the creative process of *OTR*. In this section, I argue care is above all a relationship (Held 2006; Williams 2001). I focus on the directors' attentiveness, involving their acknowledgement of the sensitivities of the performers, which is not necessarily part of their 'professional' roles (producing a live performance). I claim that their attentiveness enacts a performance of care above and beyond the 'professional' call on these directors to make a theatre production.

Caregiving is not explicitly part of these artists' job descriptions, yet I claim it is required. In *OTR* the directors' role is almost the opposite of Kelly's 'frien-tendant' relation to her friend Killian; for Kelly, 'The frien-tendant is only sometimes paid, always a friend, and sometimes does not perform any physical support work at all, and [both] maintain that the self-manager should be generally in charge' (2013, p. 793). Most importantly, Alex is not 'with disability' nor would he ever currently desire 'physical support'. The only assistance he has is interpreters who support him in communicating with others in English. Rather, in this situation Alex and the directors are

all paid and the directors, in many ways, are 'in charge' of the performers but, as Kelly negates in relation to her friend Killian, the performers are absolutely not the 'charges' or 'dependents' (Kittay 1999) of the directors, nor are they the 'cared-for' as per Noddings' (1984) caring framework. This point is crucial. I argue here that the directors' professional responsibilities do not include, yet do necessitate, acts of care.

The closest explicit expectation of care is suggested by Anna's job title, Access Support Specialist, and her role to provide assistance to Gerard (although, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Anna had an active artistic role in the development as an understudy too, thus muddying her status as merely 'one-caring', as Noddings describes). Here, I deliberately conflate care with access as in Kelly's (2011) 'accessible care'. As care is undertaken beyond the professional duty of performance-makers in this context, I conceive care therefore as a relationship. For Held, 'Caring is a relation in which carer and cared-for share and interest in their mutual well-being' (2006, pp. 34–5).

Furthermore, I posit that the reason why caring relations in this creative development grow strong and are sustained is because a disability politics of care enables artists to 'treat people justly, as if we were liberal individuals agreeing on mutual respect' (Held 2006, p. 41). Indeed, the very implicitness of care frees the directors to feel responsible for performers without being intimidated by an explicit professional responsibility for them. As Held writes, 'The goal of being a caring person can certainly and should be a matter of autonomous choice' (2006, p. 49). Despite the professionalism of *OTR* and despite this disability context, the directors' performances of care are thus not professional per se, but voluntary. Voluntarism thus distinguishes *OTR* from other disability settings where 'for many people caring for others and being cared for is part of our lives, whether we like it or not' (Williams 2001, p. 483). Relational acts of care throughout the creative process were often implicit and fluctuated according to others' resistant receptions.

Alex's rehearsed reciprocity

In response to the Deaf–hearing clash, I have thus far claimed that care appears in Alex's manifestation as a disability politics of care, the other performance-makers' regret and their relational attentiveness. Here I propose Alex's continuous navigation of 'kairotic space' (Price 2011b) in this incident is both an act of reciprocity and, beyond the incident, constitutes

theatrical labour for Alex, something he performs expertly. In his reaction to the directors' immediate regret about mocking Auslan, Alex is not only political. He is caring and careful. At first his statement would appear to foreground his political manifestation, which I do regard as an act of care, as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, on closer inspection an ethics of care undergirds his navigation of this incident. Alex is implicitly caring for the performance-makers by protecting them against an impending outcry from Deaf audiences. In this section, I return to Alex's sensitive reciprocity in the encounter. I argue he is in fact educating the hearing group about Deaf culture. I claim his reciprocity illustrates the dynamic relations of care unfolding in the aftermath of the Deaf–hearing encounter in *OTR*.

Following the directors' expressions of regret, Alex reciprocated by providing full non-judgemental access to a Deaf audience's potential reaction. This, I claim, is a caring act. I argue this is owing to his 'fluency in kairotic space' (Price 2011b, p. 112), that is, his smooth navigation of a spontaneous and opportune moment. At other times outside the key incident discussed in this chapter, I note that Alex often made specific requests, seemed very comfortable and picked up things like names easily and quickly. On the first day of the creative development, for example, I write:

Alex asked him to move so he can see better ... Alex clarifies by signing and speaking English simultaneously. Philip goes again. Alex asks to be skipped to let him reflect a bit ... Alex clarifies, "I want to clarify". He laughs, "there's uncomfortable and LET'S BREAK THEM!" he says loudly. Alex, relaxed, leaning on his elbow like a model posing for a shoot, looks at Philip, "I'm picking on you!" The interpreter Neil arrives at 12.30 pm and we introduce ourselves, awkwardly, around the circle. I choose to sign my name. Alex pays little attention to my efforts. He already knows my name and I am impressed – I overheard Bec introducing me earlier so he must have taken note.

Clearly, Alex was attentive himself and proficient in expressing his needs. Price notes: 'Access means designing spaces – including kairotic professional spaces – in ways that are flexible, multimodal, and responsive to feedback' (2011b, p. 130, original emphasis). Thanks to Alex's assertive warning in conjunction with his continued requests for whatever he needed, this space was made accessible for Alex. His requests, by implication, alerted the group to anticipate the needs of prospective Deaf spectators.

Significantly, Alex did not necessarily always move through the space of the creative process of *OTR* with relative ease. In Deaf cultures, 'space' is a powerful concept. 'Deaf spaces', writes Bauman and Murray, gesture not only to architectural design but also 'toward an understanding of the urgency that Deaf communities may be strengthened by gaining control over the spaces where deaf individuals live' (2010, p. 219). In my reference to 'space', I draw a link here between access to and within social space and a Deaf person's access to their cultural identity.³⁷ Price explains that the value of kairotic space is evident for a person, like Alex, who may be able to 'hear only scraps of a conversation held among a group sitting at a table, or who needs more than a few seconds to process a question' (Price 2011b, p. 63). Indeed, Alex often participated in conversations by virtue of the Auslan interpreters. During breaks, Alex would often isolate himself, perhaps to give the interpreters a break or simply to give himself one. The few times Alex sat with the group, he participated in discussions via lip-reading in conjunction with hearing aids and so, effectively, could 'only hear scraps' (Price 2011b, p. 63). I am not able to pass judgement on Alex's particular ability to lip-read here. What I wish to highlight is that, as someone who did not necessarily move easily through the phonocentric creative development, Alex remained an expert in '*experiencing and navigating kairotic spaces*' (Price 2011b, p. 74, original emphasis).

In kairotic space throughout the creative development of *OTR*, I argue Alex's requests for access were acts of care. His requests were caregiving in that he was demonstrating a need as a signing Deaf person and thus, by way of example, educating fellow hearing performance-makers about Deaf access and the cultural criticality of 'Deaf spaces' (Bauman & Murray 2010). Equally, I regard his requests were also carereceiving insofar as they were done in frequent conversational asides with the directors as well as his Auslan interpreters. For example, he frequently asked the interpreters to reposition themselves in his line of sight so he could see them more easily. Requests for access perhaps should be regarded in terms of self-care. As Price's concept indicates, access is a continuous effort of communication, spontaneity and adjustment.

Alex's access in the creative development of *OTR* is inherently relational, that is 'between the self's actions and those of others toward the self' (Tronto 1993, p. 67). In Tronto's definition,

³⁷ See 'Encountering the aesthetics of Deafness' (2011) for discussion of Deaf space and aesthetics by Bauman and fellow Deaf studies scholars.

Alex's actions would be reciprocal. She writes that 'Reciprocity deepens through the ability of an individual to assume different roles' (1993, p. 71). Alex is a defender of Deaf culture but also a cheerful artistic contributor in *OTR*. I maintain Alex's elaboration of a Deaf perspective about mocking sign language is an act of reciprocity through which he cares about the integrity of the production of *OTR*, the professional integrity of the artists involved and, of course, future Deaf audience members.

Accessible aesthetics

Following Thompson (2015), caring relations become the aesthetics of the performance project. Catalysed by the Deaf–hearing exchange, caring relations underwent a paradigm shift in the creative development of *OTR*. Both the aesthetics and the care of the performers needed to be accessible. In this section, I argue the directors, as Price writes, 'care deeply about access' (2011b, p. 233).

In the aftermath of the public performance, access was a hot topic. It arose as a key subject at a subsequent Australia Council talk, 'Maximising your audience' in May 2017, where Danielle presented on the process of making *OTR* 'a completely accessible show' (Micich 2017). (As an uncaptioned promotional video of the work accompanying her talk illustrated, the show was perhaps not 'completely accessible' as Danielle says.) Specifically, she explains they worked with an audio describer and 'investing with artists in a different way to make sure what we were saying was getting across' (Micich 2017). Most importantly, she explains 'What the best thing was, was letting the artists lead us', referring implicitly to herself and Philip. Indeed, rather than 'caring for' the artists, as Kelly criticises (2011, p. 478), the directors were attentive to their needs. Danielle gives the examples of Neil (originally contracted as an Auslan interpreter) becoming tired from not only interpreting throughout the creative development, especially at the second stage which I did not attend, but also devising his character in the show as a fellow performance-maker. She elaborates, 'It was extremely taxing on his body – it ended up being quite intense ... we learnt to slow down. My pace changed. We learnt how to operate at a different level' (Micich 2017). Here the directors were attending to Auslan interpreter-cum-co-performer Neil who performed the role of 'dependency worker' (Kittay 1995) in the creative development of *OTR*.

This attentiveness to a perceived need – to slow down – grated against a tight production schedule in which little time was available, but the team adapted. What Danielle describes next was a series of creative responses to meet the needs of Neil, Alex and their attendant Deaf spectators. She speaks about having to construct a different time line, enlisting the help of Accessible Arts for further funds to acquire an Auslan support worker to help them ‘strategically insert jokes for their Deaf audience’ (Micich 2017), in turn putting forth that such compromises align with what Kelly terms ‘accessible care’ (Kelly 2011, p. 564). Danielle, after all, offers a tip: ‘Never to assume something – as soon as I assumed something, I was pulled into line’ (Micich 2017). It is no coincidence that she uses the term ‘line’ here: In effect, I interpret her to be referring directly to Alex’s warning. Clearly, attention to access was a primary concern for the directors. The aesthetics of *OTR* were achieved on ‘common ground’ (Kröger 2009) between a disability resistance to (being pulled into line) and a feminist ethics of care (attending and responding accordingly).

Aestheticisation of Alex

So far, I have explored the incident in terms of key themes such as ‘crossing the line’ and ‘safe space’ (terms spoken by the performance-makers). I have discussed Alex’s expert reciprocity to the directors’ instantaneous responsiveness and addressed the performance-makers’ ongoing attentiveness following the incident. I then questioned whether the directors’ attentiveness constitutes professional care and shed light on the priority for access in the aesthetics of *OTR*. I have argued that acts of care arise as theatrical labour. In this section, I analyse my own *prior* aestheticisation of Alex during an artistic task set by the directors earlier on the same day as the incident. I use the term ‘aestheticisation’ here provocatively in order to invoke Walter Benjamin’s critique of fascist regimes with his concept of the aestheticisation of politics (2008 [1935]). As such, I ‘introduce aesthetics into political life’ (Benjamin 2008 [1935], p. 1239).

Significantly, the key incident marks the second time Alex has chosen to ‘speak’ (Brueggemann 1999). Earlier the same day as the Deaf–hearing encounter, all the performers are given the task to create a ‘movement response’ to images in glossy magazine cut-outs of weight lifters, sports models, body builders and body sculptors. I describe Alex’s movement response:

Demonstration time and Alex goes first. His face expression is exquisite. Greek God poses. Trembling postures – a revelation of endurance. After, he explains his decisions

and, unexpectedly, his superb facial expressions continue: This is the first time Alex has chosen to speak to us in sign – Dalia’s voice embodies his words, interpreting seemingly seamlessly, the English equivalents of Alex’s bodily gestures. Where two bodies merge in stepping stones of communication, this is a poignant moment to observe. Alex’s movement response to the images was perhaps so physical for him, he began thinking, and still is, in another realm – Deaf world – which privileges the body, the image and appears to render emotions, somehow more raw, more intense, more powerful. As we get a glimpse of this parallel universe, this alternate way of thinking, spectators to another paradigm, the silence of his loud bodily expression, is deep.

I engaged with the form of Alex’s particular movement response to the task, including his metacommentary immediately after it. At the beginning, he is dancing and his gestural movement reminded me of sign poetry that I had viewed and read about during preliminary research prior to fieldwork (eds Bauman, Nelson & Rose 2006; Brueggemann 1999; Davidson 2008). After the task, however, Alex proceeds to address the hearing group in Auslan. This step from dance to sign language is unexpected, although for Alex entirely logical. It is here where I wonder if my reaction to Alex’s expression is repressive.

The terms I use to describe Alex’s communication, ‘poignant ... raw ... intense ... powerful’ reveal that my own engagement was overall aesthetic. What are the implications of my aestheticisation of Alex? Kochhar-Lindgren (2006) states that Deafness functions not in binary opposition to hearing but as a multisensorial experience, spatialising speaking and hearing. She argues such a performance can ‘heighten the visual, spatial, and kinaesthetic components of theatre work in order to create a new space for the Deaf performer and aesthetic’ (Kochhar-Lindgren 2006, p. 435). Alex’s offering then demonstrates, indeed catalyses, other ways to hear, reconfiguring terms of engagement.

The concept of ‘other’, however, assumes a fragile linchpin in my argument here. I access Alex’s artistic contribution here on a formal level only. Definitively, my interpretation is limited. I cannot access the linguistic elements or subject matter pertaining specifically to Auslan or any other sign language. (I attended two introductory Auslan courses over the course of 2015 but remain a novice.) In not understanding Auslan, I am limited to appreciating Alex’s gestural movement as dance.

Given that dance and sign languages share an ephemeral, spatial and visual ontological foundation (as discussed in Chapter Three), it is perhaps worth speculating here that dance theatre offers an accommodating art form for Deaf actor Alex. Importantly, however, signed communication is not dance. According to Deaf performance scholar Heidi Rose, sign poetry must produce 'referential signs that have meaning created by a community' (2006, p. 13), which of course choreographing a dance does not necessarily involve. Through a critical Deaf lens, if signs fail to be understood by Deaf audiences in dance performance that claims to incorporate sign language – known variously as 'live sign dance performance' (O'Reilly 2017, p. 80) and 'signdance' as Australian performing artist Andy Dexterity calls it (as cited in Levy 2015) – such performance is irresponsible and insensitive (Turner & Richardson 2017).

Admittedly, I was transfixed by the spectacle of watching someone communicate in sign language. My engagement reflects Garland-Thomson's idea, in relation to disability photography, that 'Staring ... choreographs a visual relation between a spectator and a spectacle' (2002b, p. 36). According to Garland-Thomson's discussion of dynamic staring, my mode of engagement constituted the 'rhetoric of the wondrous' (2002b, p. 58), which 'capitalizes on physical differences in order to elicit amazement and admiration' (2002b, p. 59). An example of this appears in Charlie Swinbourne's film *The kiss* (2014) in which a Deaf signing couple retaliate to a hearing person's description of their communication style as 'beautiful'. For Garland-Thomson, such fetishisation, or in more contemporary terms 'inspiration porn' (Young 2012), disqualifies personhood, conjuring in its place 'the monsters of antiquity, who inspired awe, foretold the future, or bore divine signs, and freaks, who were the celebrities in nineteenth-century dime museums and sideshows' (2002b, p. 59). My response risks exoticising Alex and excluding a Deaf perspective.

As a researcher, it is unwarranted territory for me to embark on such a romanticising trajectory. This is because, as Haraway puts it, 'here there also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions' (1988, pp. 583–4). Where I claim to be perceiving 'a glimpse of this parallel universe', I risk by default claiming Alex's own subject position. More critically, from a Deaf perspective 'It is equally disconcerting' write Shirley Shultz Myers and Jane K Fernandes, 'that today we sometimes see ... hearing people who romanticize deaf people and sign language as exotic or noble' (2010, p. 34). By aestheticising Alex's contribution, am I othering him, or am I 'remaining conscious of the real differences between our experiences and lives' (Henze 2000, p. 248)?

Herein are the potential pitfalls in my own methods of observation. My aesthetic response potentially positions Alex as *other* and, in turn, prospectively delegitimises Auslan as a language with its own grammatical systems. This delegitimation is, of course, precisely what Alex protests in his response to others fake-signing and fake-interpreting.

Yet I do not feel my comments realise Garland-Thomson's 'rhetoric of the wondrous' exemplified by the hearing person's (typical) response to seeing sign language in *The kiss* – 'beautiful'. The interpreters translate by giving sound and words to Alex's bodily gestures. His position, as intersubjectively expressed through Auslan interpreter Dalia, a process I describe as 'stepping stones', resonates with Shildrick and Price's (2002, p. 62) notion of 'becoming-in-the-world-with others'. I suggest this liminal space between Deaf actor and interpreter is politically and ethically charged. From my perspective, Dalia's representation of Alex here rendered herself somewhat invisible next to his powerfully animated physicality.

Importantly, my understanding – like any interpretation – is partial and fragmented but, I assert, not redundant. In effect, my perception of the world is tainted by phonocentrism, that is, 'the unquestioned orientation that speech and hearing are the only fully human modalities of language' (eds Bauman, Nelson & Rose 2006, p. 1) . However, I do question this orientation, as this chapter evinces. I would add that my orientation to the hearing world has been decentred by my experience as a dancer, where the focus is visual and kinaesthetic and for which training cultivates spatial awareness. Alex's warning retrospectively foregrounded my aesthetic response to seeing him sign. Effectively, my aestheticising comments label Alex's communication style as (albeit patronisingly) 'beautiful'.

However, instead of dismissing my experience, I hold it as another 'irreconcilable insight' (Kelly 2011, p. 575). The more radical claim here is that, prior to his warning, I was touched by Alex's communication, just as dancer Andy Dexterity was when he first witnessed Auslan: 'It was love at first sign ... I was hypnotised by its ability to display such raw, honest human emotion during an information exchange' (as cited in Levy 2015). In my exploration of the process of aestheticising Alex's communication, I do not negate my response, but hold it in tension with a Deaf politics.

Perhaps, then, my aestheticisation is valuable. Siebers' 'disability aesthetics' offers an alternative framework for interpretation: He convincingly argues that disability has always been

present in the history of artistic representation (2010, p. 2). I liken Siebers' disability aesthetics to a 'deaf aesthetic' as proposed by Bauman (2008). Rather than an apparent sense of 'beauty' with which I perceived Alex's 'movement response', for Bauman (2008, p. 167) a 'deaf aesthetic' enables us, in Mitchell's (1980, p. 566-567) terms, 'to glimpse what Gaston Bachelard (1994) describes as the "transsubjectivity of the image" a language of vision which may tell us things about ourselves and our poems that words alone cannot touch'. I suggest then that, in perceiving a deaf aesthetic, 'It is the "realness" of disability [Deafness] that is always present ... that makes them inextricable from each other' (Henderson & Ostrander 2008, p. 3). Albright puts it another way:

the disabled body insistently refuses to be neatly packaged as metaphor. It is hard to abstract disability, the reality of its status "as is" breaks through the theoretical gloss to confront whomever is writing about it (1997, p. 60).

A Deaf aesthetic thus enables perception because content and form merge in sign language. Although I require a deeper understanding of sign language in terms of both content and form, I ultimately sensed a Deaf aesthetic, albeit just a *glimpse* (as both I and Mitchell coincidentally put it). Sieber's disability aesthetics 'about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel' (2010, p. 20) is important because it defends my observation that Alex's visual, spatial, kinaesthetic expression is powerful and that my description does not trivialise a mode of communication I do not understand. I recognise on a rather primitive embodied level that Alex's creative expression here matters politically, ethically and aesthetically. I contend that the problems and the potentials of my aestheticisation are equally valuable. While aestheticisation points to the concerns of Deaf cultures and the somewhat compromised position of Deaf actors in the context of dance theatre, it uncovers further my albeit partial response that I 'care about' (Kelly 2011, p. 576) the richness, vitality and fundamental expressions of Deaf culture.

Aestheticising care

In this chapter, I have explored the Deaf-hearing encounter by looking at emergent themes, Alex's protest, the hearing group's attentiveness and, in turn, Alex's reciprocity. I have further explored the priority for access in this creative development and the implications of my own precarious aestheticisation of Alex's expression. Throughout my discussion, I have recognised various performances of care. For example, I have claimed Alex's protest is a manifestation of

care and the performance-makers' attentiveness is care labour. In his warning, Alex's transition to engaging in spoken English represents an act of care reception, or more precisely reciprocity, as he accepts their apology.

In this section, I identify what led to aestheticising this Deaf–hearing encounter in the public performance of *OTR*. I henceforth delve into the fulcrum of this chapter – aestheticising care in the context of devising *OTR*. For Thompson, 'The emerging connections between individuals coalescing in this process have an aesthetics – a shape, feel, sensation and affect' (2015, p. 438). I thus begin this section by attending to the key moments where the particular aesthetics of *OTR* are cultivated. First, I explore the immediate prelude to this incident in which communication between Alex and Gerard momentarily seems to break down. Second, I review the incident in light of Danielle's statement – months later – that she approached the creative process of making *OTR* with a 'sense of care'. I end the section with a meditation on the role of care in the creative process writ large and frame it in a way that privileges Alex's perspective as a Deaf person: I claim he is incited to care. In so doing, I elucidate the influence of this Deaf–hearing clash on the private-cum-public aesthetic of *OTR*. Ultimately, I explain how a feminist disability aesthetics of care transpires in the creative process of *OTR*.

I propose that Alex's actions are emotionally driven. I do not mean to imply that Alex's warning is an outburst, but I do propose to frame his political manifestation as emotional. For Price, 'the "meaning" of an emotion or reaction is never stable' (2011b, p. 81). I doubt Alex would see it thus because he remains visibly calm throughout this incident but, as I have argued, his reason for making the statement is ultimately political. Alex does not have access to the phonocentric humour of the joke, which also (and thus) demeans him. I contend it is also emotional in that, as a Deaf person, Alex is insulted, excluded and unable to exist in this space as a hearing person. More controversially, however, given his professional stakes, I regard his response as not forcibly impassioned but somewhat emotive.

I suggest that conflict is a precursor to the Deaf–hearing encounter. Emotion and touch play a dual role in this conflict which occurs in the lead-up to the incident. This previous exchange just before Alex's warning perhaps influenced his desire to make his statement. The conflict involves Gerard's slightly provocative treatment of Alex leading up to the fake-signing. As aforementioned, Gerard is an actor with Down syndrome and his intention to be provocative is unclear. The two performance-makers are given the task to answer personal questions inspired

partly by the idea of checking boxes off on a government application form. They are to answer on behalf of the other about what they are good at or not. They must respond with a 'yes' or 'no' in Auslan, a shake or a nod of a clenched fist. Whether or not they are responding genuinely remains unclear (as is usually the case in generating artistic material in the task-based model of performance practice) but, from the outset, it appears that Alex is replying as a friend might. Gerard, on the other hand, appears to be performing the role of Alex's foe. I write:

Gerard is responding negatively to all items, tarnishing Alex's abilities. He often copies Alex's signs without knowing them. Or they argue "Yes" or "No" emphatically for a short while. Alex, on the other hand answers in Gerard's favour: "Poor hand-writing" to which Alex's hand shakes, "No". When an item about "intimacy" comes up, Alex reaches out to touch Gerard on the arm demonstrating that he is actually good with intimacy.

To prove that he is good with intimacy, Alex seems to intuitively reach out to Gerard and touch him. I understand this gesture as Alex's intention either to help Gerard understand the task (which has been doubtful up to this point) *or* as Alex's covert frustration at Gerard's apparently negative perception of him. On the other hand, Gerard may be understanding the task and just playing – role-playing, improvising, provoking and so on – as is expected in such artistic tasks.

Gerard's ambiguous intention resonates with my discussion of Jianna's dependency on directing artists in the previous chapter of this thesis, but is beyond the reach of my discussion here. Whatever Gerard's intention, Alex uses touch to attempt (in or out of character) to show Gerard (in or out of character) that he is good at intimacy. Rossmanith writes:

For actors, the lived metaphors of interiority, inner complexity and emotionality are lived, in part, through the body ... During these moments of touch, it seems that actors are not experiencing themselves as sites of rich semiosis, wondering, for example, how a potential audience might "read" or "interpret" their actions; rather, perhaps they are experiencing their skin as an extension of deep, individual interiority. This in some way accounts for ... how this negotiation further figures actors as vessels or conduits for intimate (and, by extension, "true") emotion and feeling (2008b, n. p.).

I contend that whatever Alex's intention was for touching Gerard, in character or out of character, to help him or to play with him, for Alex and Gerard this connection became a moment where 'perhaps they are experiencing their skin as an extension of deep, individual interiority' as Rossmanith imagines. Feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray imagines a similar scenario in her discussion of the caress:

The internal and external horizons of my skin interpenetrating with yours wears away their edges, their limits, their solidity. Creating another space – outside my framework. An opening of an openness (1993, p. 59).

Perhaps, in turn, Alex's gesture forges a stronger bond between the two performance-makers, priming him to respond to Gerard's (imminent) fake-signing sensitively, that is, with an ethics of care. I regard Alex and Gerard's exchange as an 'intimate negotiation' (Thompson 2015, p. 438) which thereafter fashioned the aesthetic development of *OTR*.

It is clear that the 'intimate negotiation' throughout the creative development became, as Thompson writes, 'the aesthetics of the project, and not merely an unremarkable preparatory period' (2015, p. 438). In *OTR*, the care instigated by the presence of the Deaf performer and performers with disability reverberates with the 'shape, feel, sensation and affect' (Thompson 2015, p. 438) of the rehearsal process.

Six months after the first-stage creative development, another aspect of the aesthetic cultivated in the making of *OTR* arose in my interview with Danielle and Philip. Interestingly, it came to light that, for both directors, the process was valued. From the preparatory period through to the public show, they safeguarded and, as Thompson encourages the 'end of effect' (2009) and a refocus on '*preparation, execution and exhibition*' (2015, p. 437, original emphasis), prioritised the creative process:

Danielle: Yeah, it's been a really great process, like seriously.

Philip: Yeah.

Danielle: I've been, again, on other shows where the process has been a nightmare and nightmare outcome or nightmare and a great outcome but, you know, like painstakingly. But this has been a good process and it will be a brilliant outcome.

Philip: And do you know what? I think if we hadn't had people like Gerard, Alex, Jana in the mix, we probably wouldn't have been so ... thoughtful? I dunno, so concerned about making this a great process.

Danielle goes on to report that she felt a 'sense of care' for performing artists in *OTR*, something she did not feel for other artists with whom she was working on another performance production. Likewise, Philip suggests they would not have been so 'thoughtful'. Absolutely, the directors are referring not only to their encounter with Alex, but further to confronting situations where Jana experienced a seizure in the rehearsal studio and often erupted into Tourette ticking episodes. However, my discussion here is limited to the specific encounter with Deaf culture represented in Alex. It is curious that the directors perceive caring differently for performers with disability as important. In the interview, Danielle visibly ponders why this is and for a moment is quiet and takes some time to think. Her comment about a 'sense of care' in the creative process of *OTR* indicates a heightened level of responsiveness. Her openness might well be described in terms of 'being seized by the other's projects or plight' which she "'hears" without words having been spoken by the other' (Noddings 1984, p. 22). Certainly, Danielle's previous attention and acts and her subsequent self-reflexive engagement negate the personal tragedy narrative of disability which would determine the 'accommodation' of Alex and others' 'impairment [as] squarely their responsibility or that of their families' (Quayson 2013 [2007], p. 2).

While positioning Alex as 'other' in this context is problematic, as I have discussed earlier, caring reception is aesthetic, as Noddings (1984, p. 22) points out. Like aesthetic engagement, I observe here, as Noddings does, that caring reception paradoxically both liberates and limits – my own aestheticisation of Alex is a testament to this. Disability, or in this case Deafness, foregrounds the conflicting terms of this caring and aesthetic encounter. These terms are conflicting because, on the one hand, to draw on Jana's words, caring aesthetics 'come from a place of love' and, on the other, they can be patronising.

Thus, I claim, beneath Danielle's and Philip's responses to Alex lies a feminist disability aesthetics of care. In the rehearsal studio of *OTR*, it is the professional colleagues of these artists who accommodate them and, as I have revealed in this chapter with the example of Alex's access requests, they accommodate them on their terms. At the centre of the development process lies what Kafer (2016) calls a 'rubric of access' and, more precisely, as I

have argued earlier in this chapter, an ‘accessible care’ (Kelly 2011). Thompson draws on Robinson to suggest his care aesthetics involves ‘not only learning how to be attentive and patient, how to listen and respond, but also how to rethink our own attitudes about difference and exclusion’ (Robinson 1999, p. 164).

All performance-makers learnt from Alex, who made Deaf culture available to them. As Danielle revealed in her talk at the Australia Council, she underwent a learning process during the creative process of *OTR*. Indeed, in the talk her repeated use of the word ‘learn’ evidences that she is conscious of this learning herself. As perhaps the only nondisabled artist in the space aside from Anna, Neil and the other interpreters,³⁸ Danielle also brings inexperience of working with disability contents to the development.

In a perhaps radical reversal of the power imbalance in the rehearsal studio of *OTR*, Danielle is possibly the one who, ironically, needs the most access. Beforehand, Danielle was apprehensive about the project. Her anticipation perhaps resonated with Quayson’s concept of ‘aesthetic nervousness’, that is, ‘a mixture of guilt, bewilderment, and denial on the part of the nondisabled’ (Quayson 2013 [2007], p. 3).

In my interview with Welsh nondisabled choreographer Jessie Brett, she stresses the importance of not feeling restricted by various social protocols when working with artists with disability: She explains that in the UK, ‘we’re very polite ... I mean, like, “Ooh can we do this? Can we do that? Ah! Ooh! Eeh”’, whereas, she continues, in Ethiopia:

they’re just like, “We’re doing this and we’re doing that and like we’re gonna lift these people over and we’re gonna roll and we’re all just gonna” and it’s really refreshing, because they probably very much prefer it that way to just be, like, thrown in – if you can’t do it, you can’t do it, you move on.³⁹

³⁸ In my fieldwork studying *OTR* I asked Danielle and Philip what their individual relationships to disability were, but neither of them disclosed a direct identification with disability. I did not ask the other performance-makers if they identified with disability. As such, who identified as disabled is uncertain. In Keith Gallasch’s (2016) review of the show, he describes Marnie’s ‘impairment’ as ‘psychological’ and, months after the show, in 2017 in Miriam Cosic’s feature article profiling many of the artists involved in *OTR*, she reveals Philip is ‘HIV positive’. Importantly, the disclosure of specific identifications is not the focus of my analysis of the creative development of *OTR* as it came to be in that of *DLT*.

³⁹ Interview with Jessie Brett and Addisu Demissie, 4 July 2016.

Bracketing Brett's bifurcation of an 'us (able-bodied people) and them (disabled people)' mentality⁴⁰, I suspect Quayson, who has chronicled the historical pingponging of social responses to the disabled figure from 'tolerant charity' to 'subliminal fear and moral panic' (2013 [2007], pp. 8–14), would be glad to know of Brett's approach to her dance practice, which is only enhanced by the relatively relaxed social protocols in Ethiopia in comparison to those in the UK.

Danielle describes a similar approach: 'If I feel like I don't have the skills, then I don't have the skills as a human being to communicate to someone else'.⁴¹ For these artists, then, the task is simple. It is pragmatic but – and this is something neither of them assert directly – it is also reciprocal and responsive, echoing again Noddings' relational care ethics (1984). Like what Robinson asserts, 'by focusing on care, we focus on the process by which life is sustained; we focus on human actors acting' (Robinson 1999, p. 31), Danielle and Philip are focused on making art within the allocated time frame and, in the particular context of making *OTR*, with a 'sense of care'. The aesthetics of *OTR* are thus produced with precarious acts of care unsettled – and indeed invigorated – by a disability and Deaf politics.

Finally, I turn to a concluding remark. In conceiving care in the creative development and live presentation of performance work where artists identify as Deaf and/or disabled, it is not sufficient to frame care in a self-congratulatory way. Rather, I conceive of the effect of Alex's comment as *inciting* care. I have argued throughout this chapter that care ethics materialises primarily in tension with disability or, specifically, Deaf politics in the first-stage creative development of *OTR*.

Care, as this key incident reveals, must be interrogated. By 'caring for' Deaf audiences – and I use that term critically, remembering it 'stings' (Kelly 2011, p. 478) – in experimenting with ways to embed Auslan into the production, the directors unintentionally oppress Deaf culture and offend Alex. The incitement comes in the form of Alex's retort to this accidentally 'bad care' – as opposed to Kittay's 'good care' (1999, 2011) – which provokes Danielle and Philip to critically respond to the damage of the incident. About labour, Ruddick states:

⁴⁰ I bracket this bifurcation because I also suspect it is easy to make and accidentally uphold. I believe it is not necessarily a product of people's attitudes towards disability but rather, a problem of language.

⁴¹ Interview with Danielle Micich and Philip Channells, 27 July 2016.

The “ethics” of care is provoked by the habits and challenges of the work, makes sense of its aims, and spurs and reflects upon the self-understanding of workers. The ethics also extends beyond the activities from which it arises, generating a stance (or standpoint) toward “nature,” human relationships, and social institutions (1998, p. 20).

Ruddick’s term ‘work’ applies to the care labour in *OTR*, which I have described as theatrical labour. In her response to the Deaf–hearing world confrontation, Danielle embodies relational caring, that is, effectively an ethics of care, as Ruddick states. It is this care ethics paradigm, according to which Danielle acts, which is provoked. In turn, Alex is incited to care enough to ‘speak’ (Brueggemann 1999). His ‘body speaks’ (Davidson 2008, p. 1), all the while ‘not only staring back, but also talking back’ (Sandahl 1999, p. 13). The rising feminist disability care aesthetics that appears as a result of the Deaf–hearing encounter stems directly from the tension of care.

Summary

As a result of this key incident in the first-stage creative development of Force Majeure and Dance Integrated Australia’s dance theatre work *OTR*, I have argued that care materialises variously as a laborious act, an artistic creation and an aesthetic response. I understand these materialisations to be the particular care aesthetics of *OTR* that permeate the preparatory, rehearsal and performance periods of the production. I have also argued that the directors’ feminist care ethics is intertwined and in tension with Alex’s Deaf politics. The tension between the two care paradigms is reflected in the performance-makers’ collective rhetorical construction of ‘safe space’ as paradoxically an imaginary sense of containing feelings and also a liberatory condition for enabling artistic experimentation.

Specifically, I view Alex’s immediate response to ‘crossing the line’ as a disability manifestation of care. In turn, I place the directors’ response within a ‘realm of caring’ (Tronto 2013) where Danielle is affected. Noddings’ idea of ethical caring – ‘I must do something’ (1984, p. 14) – is indeed embodied in Danielle’s self-reflexive reaction. Throughout the incident and in its aftermath, the directors display an acute level of ‘attentiveness’ (Tronto 1993) that permeates subsequent interpersonal dynamics in the creative development. The directors reciprocate and assert responsibility for their actions in part by responding to the incident aesthetically and transforming the event into a scene in the public presentation.

By articulating the happenings of Alex's warning and my prior aestheticisation of his signed expression in terms of care as a political, ethical, aesthetic and relational practice, I shed light on how particular encounters, in the context of making dance theatre, matter differently for Deaf and hearing social actors. Specifically, I consider the ways in which my aestheticisation of Alex's movement response (a task issued by the directors) conflicts with the cultural sensitivities around sign language. However, while cognisant of the condescending effect of my perception, I defend it as my personal experience and regard it as an 'irreconcilable insight' (Kelly 2011): My response is in tension with the frustration expressed by the Deaf community towards hearing people calling sign language 'beautiful'.

This incident illustrates an extension of Thompson's (2015) notion, that is, a feminist disability aesthetics of care. In part, what a feminist disability extension of care aesthetics enables are 'vigilantly critical approaches to access and accessibility' which can 'help us explore the constant evolution of the meanings of varied embodiments' (Kelly 2016, p. 34). The particular aesthetic of *OTR* is nuanced by antithetical paradigms of care. These conflicting paradigms are exemplified in the tensions unearthed in my discussion, for example, Alex's politics and the directors' ethically caring responses, the paradoxical idea of 'safe space' and, finally, between my precarious claim of aestheticising Alex's expression and its subsequent mockery. I conclude that it is these tensions that animate a feminist disability care aesthetics.

In the next chapter, I turn attention away from the private preparatory period of dance theatre practice and towards the public site of live performance. In effect, the striking difference between these cultural sites replicates the paradox of disability experiences as both private and public, simultaneously invisible and hypervisible.

Chapter Six: Moving ‘misfits’

This thesis arrives at the point of exhibition. In this chapter, I discuss *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)* (2015) (hereafter, *DID*), which is the third and final case of dance theatre practice in this thesis. I observed here not the creative development of the work but, rather, its live public performance.⁴² Devised by Dianne Reid (hereafter, Dianne) and performed by Dianne and collaborating dance artist Melinda Smith (hereafter, Mel), the live promenade-performance, a structured improvisation and 'live screendance' (Reid 2016, p. 16), was presented in September and October 2015 as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. Both performers are mature dancers and Mel moves with the marks of physical disability, namely, cerebral palsy. The work thus subverts conventional notions of virtuosic movement and the traditional dancerly body. As addressed in Chapter Three of this thesis, much scholarly attention has been given to discussion on notions of radical virtuosity displayed by the dancer with disability (Albright 1997, 2013; Ames 2012; Benjamin 2010; Cheesman 2014; Davies 2008; Sobchack 2005; Whatley 2007; Whatley et al. 2015). Davidson, however, calls for researchers to respond to contemporary artistic representations of disability by focusing on aesthetic approaches and effects (2008, p. 2). While 'the idea of exhibition can still be part of an aesthetics of care' according to Thompson (2015, p. 438), my focus in this chapter widens to encompass a more comprehensive and multiperspectival account of the live performance work.

I suggest *DID* mobilises particular aesthetic strategies. These strategies include the intermittent visibility of disability and maturity, an interplay between physical bodies and their environments, distributed presence across digital data and human flesh, a motif of slowness and the cultivation of mindfulness. First, I argue these aesthetic strategies reveal a perceived politicised agency which can be articulated through the notion of Garland-Thomson's 'misfitting', that is, a 'material-discursive becoming' (2011, p. 592). Second, I argue these strategies in turn produce particular manifestations of care as acts, attitudes and encounters. I conclude that care materialises as ultimately relational in *DID* and in Dianne and Mel's collaborative practice generally. What is unique about their practice is that both performers produce an ethics and a politics of care for and on behalf of one another.

I deduce the aesthetic strategies from the key themes emerging from my empirical study, namely, notions of maturity, pain, autonomy, respect, mindfulness and slowness. The performers' refined bodies exhibiting a wealth of life experience, knowledge and skills become

⁴² As noted in the introduction of this thesis, this chapter develops material that I have published elsewhere.

both the subject and object of exploration in the performance, giving rise to a reconceived notion of maturity. The theme of pain is born out of past traumatic experiences such as Mel's painful but purportedly therapeutic procedures as a child. The performers variously resist and claim representation on their terms, constituting their shared autonomy. The theme of mindfulness arises in spectators' experiences, including my own, as a heightened attentiveness to sensory perception. The theme of slowness develops from Mel's physicality in particular, but also from a disregard for traditional conceptions of virtuosity.

In a seemingly non-virtuosic dance performance where slowness and care appear to trump athleticism and risk, we witness 'visibly disabled' (Albright 2013, p. 300) performer Mel, also a wheelchair-user, stand, balance and kneel precariously as she moves freely with distributed agency, shared autonomy and aliveness through the space. For Mel, movement is executed on her terms, which enables her to 'go further' as she herself states.⁴³ Yet this is far from therapy. This perception of going further echoes Davidson's remark that the experience of disability, 'far from limiting possibilities of design or performance, liberates and changes the terms of composition' in attendant creative work (2008, p. 3). Rather, the audience senses an aesthetic moored in the politicised agency of deviant bodies. Indeed, spectators readily stake claim in what Moser (2006, p. 379) calls a 'demonstration of active and independent agency' (discussed briefly in Chapter Two) and conceive Mel's movement as independently agentic.

At a critical distance, this chapter is my specific, empirically and theoretically informed account of *DID* which I support with responses from fellow observers – spectators – and the experience and intention of the performance-makers, Dianne and Mel. All these bodyminds, as Price (2015) now imagines subjectivity, have been affected in various ways by *DID*. In an effort to consider others' perspectives, I draw on a mixed array of data from individual semi-structured interviews with the two practitioners and a group interview with four audience participants, as well as my own ethnographic observations. It is worth noting that my reliance not only on myself but on the performers' and spectators' accounts reflects a recent theoretical development in care theory whereby 'care', if defined in its reception, circumvents any potential impulse to be controlling, patronising or protecting (Kittay 2016).

⁴³ Interview with Melinda Smith, 28 September 2015.

Radical virtuosity

As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, contemporary practice by dance artists with and without disability has long interrupted conventional notions of virtuosity as dynamic, athletic and technical. In turn, theoretical discussion in response to such practice has considered the value of new and expanded definitions of virtuosity. *DID* contributes to this practice, dismantling the problematic either/or paradigm between disability and virtuosity, and reacting to and defying what Siebers describes as an 'ideology of ability' (2008, pp. 7–11).

As the performers wrestle with tasks in 'difficult bodies', a 'living screendance', as Dianne (Reid 2014) has referred to her practice, projects images on moving bodies, objects, walls and floors. For spectators, the result is a deeply immersive, visceral experience. The work is split into two parts (as its title '*... a diptych*' suggests). It spans temporarily and spatially two venues – the Red Train, an old wooden train carriage resting in the middle of gardens in the CERES environmental park in inner northern Melbourne, and a hallway at the Abbotsford Convent – the two venues connected by the Yarra River and separated by a two-hour interlude in the performance.

The first part of *DID* explores a lone woman, 'her body a vintage carriage and she, the passenger on it' (*DID* Program notes 2015). Immediately, a feminist inflection sets the scene as Dianne's poetic words recall feminist philosopher Moira Gatens' description of gendered embodiment: 'The female body, in our culture, is seen and no doubt often "lived" as an envelope, vessel or receptacle' (1995, p. 41). In the second part, two women in a convent corridor perform a duet exploring movement possibilities. The focus of my examination is on the second part of the work set in the convent. In the two-hour break between the two parts, the audience is invited to walk along the river. Of the convent, I write:

Moving into the space with its connotations – the Convent – suddenly represented an institution for me last night, a cold, regimented setting for esteemed virtue (and virtuosity – excellence in all and anything endeavoured!) and it hit me – the enforced and systematic institutionalisation of people with disability up until the 1980s. I had just read a newspaper article about it an hour before, reminding me of this ... so it rested fresh in my mind. The sterile starched white uniforms, the blank veils in which the performers began neatly dressed and polished, clean and used as a working outfit in

which they were feigning cleaning ... High ceiling reaches upwards and I noted the good acoustics. Superiority. Hierarchy of levels. Control. Order. Regulation. Rules.

Benjamin's statement that 'dance has never had such an immediate dialogue with public attitudes, architecture and social policy as when it embraced disability' (2010, p. 112) indeed rings true here. For Hadley, the disability rights movement and disability arts are in effect 'mutually informative' (2014, p. 8). Likewise, Johnston reminds us of 'disability culture's connection to other human rights and minority movements of the twentieth century' (2012, p. 6) and the convent, as the above excerpt illustrates, bears connotations of Australian institutionalisation of people with disabilities, a system marred by ongoing cases of child abuse, giving the space a palpable, pressing presence in the piece.⁴⁴

I suggest what distinguishes *DID* from the work of other practitioners (including those thus far represented in this thesis) is its integration of 'post-digital' (Cascone 2000) aesthetics created by projected imagery and computer speech (from a lightwriter). I thus classify *DID* as 'digital performance' (Dixon 2007 & Smith) – or, rather, 'postdigital performance' (Causey 2016) – because 'computer technologies play a key role in content, techniques, aesthetics [and] forms of delivery' (Dixon 2011, p. 41). Connotations of the digital are usually slick, blue and high-fi but, according to Cramer, the term 'post-digital' refers to 'a media aesthetics which opposes such digital high-tech and high-fidelity cleanness' (2015 [2014], p. 16). Like *DID*'s subverted notions of maturity, disability and virtuosity, 'post-digital aesthetics' rejects 'progress' and 'perfect' representation (Andrews 2002). *DID* is certainly messy and relatively low-fi, and rejects conceptions of progress by privileging what performance scholars Peter Eckersall and Eddie Paterson call 'a turn to the slow' (2011, p. 179). Dovetailing with this new postdigital aesthetics, I propose, is Eckersall and Paterson's proposition of 'slow dramaturgy', meaning 'an apparent new aesthetic sensibility of slow time' (2011, pp. 178–9). I return to a fuller discussion of *DID*'s motif of slowness later in the chapter.

In dance theory and praxis, as in disability studies, there is a general consensus on the centrality of the material body. This body is only enhanced in digital environments (Birringer 2004, 2007; Broadhurst 2006; Kozel 2007; Whatley 2009). For dance scholar Susan Broadhurst, dance work incorporating digital media, as forecast within Grosz's framework where 'External objects,

⁴⁴ For recent Australian ABC news investigative report about this issue, see 'Fighting the System' (2017).

implements and instruments become, while they are being used, intimate, vital, even libidinally cathected parts of the body image' (Grosz 1994, p. 81), is most definitely 'not an abandonment of that body' (Broadhurst 2006, p. 145). As I argue in Chapter Three, dance has traditionally embraced disabled bodies more so than theatre. This embrace of the impaired body with postdigital aesthetics, I argue, is part and parcel of *DID*'s particular radical virtuosity.

Deviant dancerly bodyminds

I situate *DID* within a sector of the Australian arts industry known as disability arts. However, *DID* unsettles a seemingly neat categorisation within this sector. Both Dianne and Mel present 'deviant bodies', a term which I borrow from disability studies vernacular to convey bodies which deviate from, following Garland-Thomson, the 'normate' (1997). In an attempt to portray lived experiences of disability as part of a continuum, I enlist Albright's qualifier 'visibly' (2013, p. 300). As such, Dianne becomes 'visibly nondisabled' and Mel 'visibly disabled'. In an individual interview, Dianne disclosed that she experienced rape as a young woman but, significantly, this remains hidden from audiences.⁴⁵

As Dianne, the deviser of the work, presents as visibly nondisabled and does not identify explicitly with disability, the work is therefore not definitively 'disability-led'. As such, Dianne and Mel's practice does not 'fit' with the contemporary push to give leadership opportunities to disabled dancers, as advocated by such artists as Caroline Bowditch, Claire Cunningham and Kate Marsh. Dianne is the creator and Mel the collaborator.

This is not to say Mel does not contribute in both the process and presentation of their work. Their work is collaborative, largely improvised and, as Marsh points out, referring to her collaborative practice with fellow disabled dancer Welly O'Brien in the UK, 'The relationship between the dancer and authorship of their performed work is complex' (2016a, p. 19). I would argue that Dianne and Mel's creative partnership beginning in 2010 is similarly complex. Marsh reflects, 'Observing myself centrally located within the development of the dance gave me a strong sense of the work belonging to myself and Welly O'Brien' (2016a, p. 19).

⁴⁵ Interview with Dianne Reid, 1 October 2015.

Likewise, it is logical that for Dianne and Mel, 'It "feels" highly personal and it "feels" like ours' (2016a, p. 20). Dianne visibly deviates from dancerly expectations insofar as she identifies as a 'mature dancer':

but also as a mature dancer I'm looking at my own virtuosities. And it's not a taking away, it's just a refining, a magnification ... It's more the improvisational moment which is really important working with Mel 'cause you know, you cannot predict ... She has a very fluid process. So, I feel that it's shifting and changing, not that it's erratic and unpredictable, just that it's changing. We're working in a different, slower trajectory – that idea of re-patterning the pathways which is really happening. You know, when we started working she couldn't stand. She walked seven steps a couple of days ago. She's intending to be walking.⁴⁶

As a dance artist, Dianne is fascinated by the experience of ageing. In this interview excerpt, she proposes an expanded conception of maturity as a fluid notion, which undermines existing narratives of loss (Mangan 2013; Marshall & Lipscomb 2010; Nakajima & Brandstetter 2017), emphasising instead an accumulation, a wealth of knowledge – 'virtuosities' – an increase of functionality, a richness, a 'refining, a magnification'. As performance theorist Michael Mangan writes, 'gerontideology is not monolithic' (2013, p. 234). Like prolific choreographer Pina Bausch's remounted *Kontakthof* (2010), originally presented in 1978, *DID* 'was able to deconstruct the unspoken association between dance and youth in ways that made the older body of the dancer culturally visible' (Mangan 2013, p. 234).

Aligning with Dianne's comments about Mel's increased functionality, for Mel too maturing as a dancer and being able to improvise instead of adhering to predetermined or strict choreography has made her feel: 'My ... body ... works ... better'.⁴⁷ This is not to say Dianne and Mel's collaborative process is only therapeutic for Mel and Mel only, as Dianne laughs: 'There's a bit of a dilemma in that everyone applauds the therapeutic value of this ... [but] it's therapeutic for me too'.⁴⁸ As Davidson cautions and as I have elucidated previously in this thesis, notably in Chapter Four, limiting cultural representations of disability to therapeutic regimes risks diminishing people to their impairments (2008, p. 6).

⁴⁶ Interview with Dianne Reid, 1 October 2015.

⁴⁷ Interview with Melinda Smith, 28 September 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview with Dianne Reid, 1 October 2015.

Conceiving their deviance as ‘misfitting’, it is curious to consider the connection between Mel and Dianne’s mature bodies as not ‘fit’ according to the competitive demands of a mainstream contemporary dance ideal (e.g. Chunky Move and Sydney Dance Company). Nevertheless, the women are exceptionally ‘fit’ in the context of their biologically and chronologically determined age. Either way, ‘fit’ in this sense becomes meaningless in *DID*. Among other connotations, as I show in what follows, ‘misfitting’ here rather depicts Dianne and Mel as outcasts of the mainstream dance world, insistently moving together with deviant dancerly bodyminds.

‘Misfitting’

So far, I have argued that *DID*’s radical virtuosity is its coupling of the impaired bodymind with postdigital aesthetics. I have claimed that its deviance is not only represented in Mel’s obvious lived experience of disability: Mel and Dianne’s practice conveys a ‘misfit’ in mainstream dance as mature dancers, which arguably differs from the life experience of living with impairment, in Mel’s case cerebral palsy. It is also important to highlight that, as *DID* was devised by Dianne, it ‘misfits’ with the disability-led agenda of the local and international disability arts sector. This section extends my discussion of ‘misfitting’ from Chapter Two, placing it in dialogue with *DID*.

I suggest that *DID* animates Garland-Thomson’s ‘misfitting’ and that the concept illuminates, in turn, the aesthetic strategies of *DID*. In a broad sense, the improvised interaction between human flesh, objects and environments is itself an aesthetic strategy of *DID*. The usefulness of misfitting, as Garland-Thomson claims, lies in its shift away from the overdiagnosed disabled body (and the impossibility of significant change to public perception) towards a focus on external factors that, rather importantly, determine and label impaired subjects as ‘disabled’. For example, we see Mel negotiate the hard floor and I observe:

When Dianne lifted Mel up, Mel gasped and grunted, to which Dianne reciprocated with similar groans and bodily noises and spasms as if, or rather in an attempt to erase or disguise Mel’s involuntary “disabledness”. But as Mel grinned and grunted, held up in the air, Dianne’s feet on her hips, her body stretched in joyful appreciation – straight – and she laughed.

Here, Dianne establishes a 'fit' between her body and Mel's. Dianne makes noises and squirms, echoing Mel, harmonising with her expression. Nonetheless, later we watch Mel, with seeming instability, balance on her knees, her limbs holding her up, her body shaky on the hard floor. With this threat of an impending fall, Mel edges closer to becoming a 'misfit' in relation to her environment.

My attention to 'misfitting' stems from its dynamic relationality. An important critique of misfitting has been made by Price (2015), who applies the concept to mental disabilities where the 'fit' is not so clear. Misfitting, for Price, is 'a function of relations of power' (2015, p. 271). Although Garland-Thomson mentions the ubiquitously perceived association between people with disability and madness thus cast as 'outcasts' (2011, p. 594), Price points out that Garland-Thomson surprisingly does not discuss mental, psychological, social or emotional instances of 'misfitting' (Price 2015, p. 272):

The adaptability and resourcefulness of the misfit are directed ... towards projects whose affective value is clear, at least to a feminist and justice-orientated audience. Misogyny, whites-only spaces, natural disasters – these are marked as *bad*. But what if the affective dimension of the situation is murkier: for instance, the misfit wants to injure himself for no reason other than being compelled to do so? (Price 2015, p. 273, original emphasis).

While this critique is not readily applicable to Dianne and Mel's performance, it is worth bearing in mind the limitations of misfitting in terms of its emphasis on the physical or the sensorial (readily applicable in *DID*). The figurative potential of misfitting is restricted by the same problems that haunt the disabled figure – social stigma, deficit narratives and negative value judgements. Similarly, Albright claims the body with disability rejects its perception as metaphor (1997, p. 60), as noted in the previous chapter.

My interest in misfitting is firmly grounded in what Price identifies as its 'shapeshifting nature', which depends not *only* on 'the physical metric such as the height of a step, but on the *affective response* of those who observe and interpret it' (Price 2015, p. 272, my emphasis). It is with this 'affective response' that caring relations enter the conceptual frame of my discussion, because a human affective response also lies at the heart of the caring encounter (Noddings 2013, pp.

3–4). It is also with ‘misfitting’ that my discussion dispels the myth of autonomy and attributes agency to all matter, as I show later in this chapter.

As dance artist and researcher Jaye Hayes (2015) perceives in his poetic response to *DID* below, exploring a ‘fit’ – be it physical, emotional or otherwise – between bodies, place, objects, images, sounds and even spectatorial gazes appears central to Dianne and Mel’s practice:

cross-dissolve
unbecome the other
breathless on the threshold of cool austerity
seclusion/inclusion
authority meets flesh
devotion undone
the singular geminated
this dis-order of being, sisters of support
a mutual knowing under the skin
the walls whisper.
the bodies howl.
beneath habitual movement there is a quivering strength.
eviscerated effigies
memory callipered to bone
death is dancing here
reaching out to touch my skin
witnessing. moving. traversing the length of a lifetime.
i am sliding out of the way. i am becoming a point in space, a point of contact
(or am i just getting in the way?)
she makes my body hers
rising
falling
standing on the edge
something’s burning
the leap into space
into waiting arms
into gravity’s certain embrace

At one point in *DID*, Dianne dances holding a portable projector that sweeps the space with small or lifesize images of still illustrations – a heart, a skeletal foot, another heart. Objects external to the physical bodies of Mel and Dianne morph into their embodiment, creating cyborgian presences. Dianne (Reid 2015) draws on videographer and CI practitioner Lisa Nelson’s focus on ‘reading and responding to the scripts of the environment’ (2003, p. 2). This literal and metaphorical relationship to the environment resonates profoundly with a ‘misfit’, that is, a disjuncture, and a ‘fit’, a marriage between matter determined by the surrounds.

A politics of care animated in a wheelchair

In this section, I review the performance of the wheelchair in *DID*. I propose that Dianne’s treatment of the chair positions the prosthetic device as part of Mel’s ‘bodymind’. Here, I argue, is an aesthetic strategy which is politically careful. Equipped with such careful treatment, in many senses life and agency are attributed to the wheelchair.

On entering the convent, the audience files in and discovers a silent, still space. We are greeted by the spinning wheel of a wheelchair lying on its side, as though someone has just fallen out of it, although it mysteriously lies at a fair distance from Dianne, standing on a window sill, and Mel, crouched on the floor:

The checkered floor’s black-and-white squares were spread along the hallway about 20m long. Mel, beside her wheelchair with a suspiciously spinning wheel, was on the floor seeming to be miming scrubbing.

Like Mel’s wheelchair for moving or her communication device for speaking, Dianne uses ‘the actual instrument of the camera as a prosthetic for “seeing” in her live screendance practice’ (Reid 2016, p. 20). Indeed, I perceive Dianne’s conception of the camera here as her ‘embodied “sense-ability” of the prosthetic’ evincing ‘a *dynamic* connection between *the* prosthetics as a topological figure and [*Mel’s*] prosthetic as a material but also a phenomenologically lived artifact’ (Sobchack 2006, p. 18, original emphasis). I regard Dianne’s iteration of ‘prosthetic’ to align with the call of Sobchack (who happens to have a prosthetic leg) ‘for a greater apprehension of “response-ability” in its discursive use’ (2006, p. 19; 2010, p. 52), as definitively rooted in lived experience. This experience is informed by Dianne’s *and* Mel’s explorations of

Mel's wheelchair and lightwriter, not by abstract cultural criticism which diminishes the phenomenological salience of 'prosthetic' for people with disability, as Sobchack notes disparagingly. For instance, in an interview with me Mel reports that Dianne treats the wheelchair like another body in the space:

Mel: We wanted to be the body, be a body in my dance.

Kate: You wanted to bring in a body in your dance?

Mel: Be a body.

Kate: Oh right, the wheelchair as a body.

Mel: Another body.

Kate: So the other wheelchair as another body.

Mel: And we wanted to ... about

Kate: So you wanted ...

Mel: [?]

Kate: White?

Mel: Create...

Kate: Right.

Mel: ... barriers ... between ... wheelchair ... wheelchairs ... and ... bodies.

Kate: Okay. Okay.

Mel: Some of my friends.

Kate: Some of your friends?

Mel: [?]

Kate: Weren't ... wouldn't get in?

Mel: Are ... not ... comfortable.

Kate: Ah, comfortable.

Mel: ... with ... getting ... in ... my ... wheelchair ... wheelchairs ... and ... I ... absolutely ...
[birds chirp] ... love ... the ... way ... Dianne ... naturally ... does ... it ... and ...

Kate: And loves it!

Mel: Yeah ... beautiful ... beautifully ... and ... also ... crazily [laughs].

Kate: Yeah, absolutely.

Mel: I love it! I love her body – it is amazing.

Kate: Yeah, you're right, she just gets into it, doesn't she? Like, no hesitation. Launches herself into it – she does treat the wheelchair like a body, which is interesting.

Mel: And there are points when she is so sensitive.

Kate: Sensitive?

Mel: Yeah.

Kate: Yeah, that's right, to what she's doing?

Mel: Yeah. Beginning to understand why she does that.⁴⁹

Interestingly, the slow pace of Mel's interview resonates with the motif of slowness in *DID*, a point to which I return later in the chapter. From Mel's statements here, I understand Dianne and Mel's artistic intention was to attribute 'body' to Mel's prosthetic device – her wheelchair – as a response to Mel's friends' unease around it. In somewhat of a contradiction, they also intended to create barriers between themselves and the wheelchair.

This contradictory artistic intention is (perhaps unsurprisingly) analogous to disability's fraught relationship with technology, which in the case of *DID* demarcates a politics of care.

Dianne's sensitivity to Mel's prosthesis, I contend, is a bedrock of their practice. I observe that Dianne intuits the chair as an extension of Mel but negates its static vulnerability, which determines Mel's friends' hesitancy and discomfort around it: Indeed, Dianne is unafraid to treat Mel's chair 'crazily'. Dianne's variously 'beautiful' and crazy treatment of Mel's chair, I argue, is politically careful. On the one hand, Mel loves how Dianne 'naturally' gets in her wheelchair 'beautifully ... and ... also ... crazily'. On the other hand, Mel reflects 'there are points when she is so sensitive' and she is 'Beginning to understand why [Dianne] does that'. I did not follow through and ask Mel why she believes Dianne does that. Still, what I infer from Mel's statements here is that Dianne treats Mel's wheelchair in the same way that she treats Mel's body.

More than this, in Dianne's interaction with Mel's wheelchair an 'aesthetics of care' (Thompson 2015) materialises. Perceiving one moment, I write:

The piece returned to another ambiguous tune and it ended with Mel being assisted by Dianne back into her wheelchair and Mel rolling around in a circle with more ease than any other movement she had performed up to that point ... Dianne moved back into that same starting spot, then somehow leaned on Mel in one final position.

⁴⁹ Interview with Melinda Smith, 28 September 2015. Note: the misunderstandings are due to my deciphering Mel's speech or voicing the lightwriter's projected words. Question marks reveal words I did not decipher. Ellipses indicate the pauses between the letters Mel types.

This final scene of *DID* epitomises care aesthetics because, in this instance of CI, Dianne seems to be empowering Mel with a most primitive tool – her physical body. Dianne is not simply being caring, that is, caregiving. She is literally leaning on Mel, who in turn is supporting her. Her movements are playful and resourceful as she creatively distributes her weight against Mel's body. Once Mel slides into the wheelchair, she moves with more facility than she has expressed thus far. Both performers here rely on each other's physical bodies to support themselves, hence portraying a very palpable aesthetic metaphor of the multifaceted issue of dependency. This example thus complicates care aesthetics because it tacitly distils dependencies. I interpret Dianne and Mel's interdependency as a reflection of their – and indeed everyone's – 'inevitable dependency' on each other (Kittay 1991, p. 646). For Kittay, caregivers, conventionally imaged here (although reluctantly) in the figure of Dianne, are themselves 'vulnerable' and at risk of being undervalued (Kittay 1999, pp. 33–7). The unpredictable dependencies that arise throughout the improvised performance of *DID*, moreover, convey the reconceived notion of in(ter)/dependency as an unfolding continuum (Fine & Glendinning 2005, p. 612).

At the same moment of the show, one spectator perceives Dianne's treatment of Mel and the wheelchair (which she readily qualifies as Mel's) as 'naughty' and 'transgressive':

I find a lot of pleasure, I sometimes think it's so naughty, when Di sits on her chair and Mel's kind of there in her physicality and she just rolls off on Mel. I kind of love that. I know she's not ... You know, it does something. It does something transgressive for me, in that freedom.⁵⁰

Implicit in this spectator's comment is that she is expecting Mel, given 'her physicality', to be cared for and given the 'special' attention ostensibly warranted by the figure with disability. This expectation is not met, thus giving rise to yet another case of misfitting. Here, the misfit lies between the spectator's (expectant) gaze and Dianne's seemingly rough treatment of Mel. The fascinating aspect of this misfit is the spectator's pleasure in the unanticipated surprise.

⁵⁰ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

Herein lies the care aesthetics. Echoing Garland-Thomson's claim that 'misfitting' leads to emancipatory politics (2011, p. 597), this spectator takes pleasure in seeing Mel, an apparently vulnerable physical presence, treated in a carefree way. This incident illustrates a feminist disability aesthetics of care because it is underscored by a disability care politics. Mel escapes the deterministic effects of care frameworks which produce 'special', pitiful or patronising treatment and is instead liberated by, refreshingly, being roughly handled. Significantly, it is not simply '*beautiful*', as Thompson describes his response to caring treatment. It is, as the spectator discerns, transgressive.

At this point, it is important to note that Mel's wheelchair is symbolic not only within the world of *DID* but also in their practice more broadly. Its name is 'Robbie', as Dianne shares with me one day. In *DID* Robbie also has an occupant, but its occupant is not Mel. I write:

The ghost performer sitting in "Robbie" (Mel's wheelchair) I later became acquainted with, with her long arms, lifeless suit and stuffed head and hands, who only danced with Dianne from memory, not Mel. A strange character, an empty soul. A costume. An image. A representation. A metaphor – for/of what? A third character. Mel's old self? Dianne's past self? Pulled, prodded, pushed, held, shaped, moved, stuffed, turned, stretched. Done *to*.

This curiously anthropomorphic treatment of prosthetic devices resonates with Chen's (2012) notion of 'animacy'. For Watts Belser, 'animacy' offers a reconception of the ubiquitous 'association with deadness ... to the disabled body, but also to the physical artefacts of disability' such as, as she elaborates, prostheses (2016, p. 6). As Watts Belser combats 'the (in)animacy assumptions of dominant culture', she amplifies the liveliness of wheelchairs in similar ways as *DID* amplified my observations the first time I experienced *DID*.

Here I return to the 'suspiciously spinning wheel' seen on entering the convent. The wheelchair appeared to have a life of its own as it was positioned at a fair distance from both Mel and Dianne. Indeed, it seemed animated, to draw on Chen's theory. Watts Belser is not alone in identifying the problematic coupling of deadness to prostheses. Technology in particular has (not unproblematically) been associated with death in comparison to live physical bodies

(Causey 1999; Coniglio 2005; Kozel 2007).⁵¹ The same has applied to disabled bodies, triggering, according to Titchkosky, a 'plethora of discourse that regard disability as a living death' (2011, p. 18).

With reference to wheelchair dancers, Watts Belser examines the rising 'intimate relationality' between 'wheelers' and 'their wheels', pointing out that, contrary to popular imaginings, 'wheelchairs are rarely experienced as inanimate objects' (2016, p. 6). Claire Cunningham, in an interview, similarly describes her relationship with her crutches:

it's quite interesting to go "Why did my vocabulary evolve the way it is in relation to the crutches?" And I recognise that probably it's 'cause I made this weird choice at some point to treat them as if they were human beings, or that they were people, or that they were alive or something which means that I don't – okay I do – treat them as separate objects absolutely. But there is something that's quite careful and tender in the way that I handle them that's maybe specific to the vocabulary.⁵²

Indeed, Cunningham's reflection supports Watts Belser's claim that 'liveness' is embedded in the prosthesis or, as she puts it, 'wheelers tend to highlight our chairs' animacy and aliveness' (Watts Belser 2016, p. 7).

What is also present in Watts Belser's, Cunningham's and Chen's ideas about this new materialism is care. As I propose in Chapter Two, Cunningham's 'cradling', 'gentleness' and 'softness' and her demonstration that she would never clench her crutches with a tight fist reveal an intimate and sensitive attitude towards her prosthetic device.⁵³ Her treatment, like Dianne's, is illustrative of a particular feminist ethics of care. The cared-for in these cases, to use Noddings' original terms, is clearly not human: It is a prosthetic device.

I suggest that the care performed with these devices ultimately imbues the perceived-to-be inanimate objects with a sense of aliveness and unveils the fiction of agency. Without Mel's physical presence in the space, this liveness and fictive agency would not be so obvious. As

⁵¹ For example, Mark Coniglio states: 'Digital media is wonderful because it can be endlessly duplicated and/or presented without fear of the tiniest change or degradation, but it is this very quality (the media's "deadness") that is antithetical to the fluid and ever changing nature of live performance' (2004, p. 6). See also Causey (1999).

⁵² Interview with Claire Cunningham, 20 March 2016.

⁵³ Interview with Claire Cunningham, 20 March 2016.

Moser (2006) reveals, disabled individuals make visible enabled and attributed agency, while it remains invisible and disappears into the background with nondisabled users. Her revelation resonates, by the same token, with comments from Kittay (2015b, pp. 54–6) drawing on Oliver (1989, p. 8), who identifies that disability hypervisibilises the ‘social problem’ of dependency. In effect, this politically careful treatment of the wheelchair in *DID* (and crutches in Cunningham’s practice) establishes a ‘fit’ between the bodyminds of Dianne and Mel (and Cunningham in her practice), a fit which surfaces as a pleasantly ‘naughty’ and ‘transgressive’ surprise, for one spectator responding to *DID*.

Hearing an absent voice

In this section, I propose Mel’s computer-generated voice ‘misfits’ with spectators’ conceptions, which fail to dissociate Mel’s personhood from the sound of the synthetic voice coming from the other side of the room to Mel’s physical body. I suggest her subsequent muteness is reminiscent of feminist theory where muteness rhetorically gestures towards an unequal exchange, and ultimately politicises my and other spectators’ caring responses. Notably, Dianne does not speak in the convent either, but does speak in part one of *DID* at the Red Rattler. In contrast to Mel, she does not express muteness and so does not factor into my discussion here.

Mel’s voice is paradoxically present and absent. During my interview with Mel, I felt the time pass as she took time to respond to my questions with a mixture of electronic words, partially formed speech and noises of agreement or expression. With each letter that she pressed (using one finger) on her lightwriter, a resounding beep, almost like a life-support machine in a hospital, reverberated through the otherwise silent space. In the process of transcribing the recording and analysing its contents, I noted how the laborious and time-consuming process of her polymodal communication (Lindgren 2012) at first seems to limit the quantity of her contributions, but later I realised this had forced Mel to speak pointedly. I regard her resulting expression to be calculated, deliberate and extremely precise.

Indeed, as Causey suggests, ‘it seems as if now, in a postdigital context, a more intense though limited model of identity is being performed’ (2016, p. 43). In relation to Mel, I would add to Causey’s comment that her identity is *perceived* to be limited. It is the longwinded communication style of Mel’s everyday reality that powerfully instils in *DID* ‘a dramaturgical

awareness of time as an aesthetic-corporeal medium of expression' (Eckersall & Paterson 2011, p. 183).

Furthermore, in *DID* the computerised voice is not one but two voices – a male and a female voice. These voices were not intended to be associated with Mel. Mel's voice is therefore both present and absent in more ways than one: Off stage, she is non-speaking (absent), yet speaks (present); and on stage, she is non-speaking (absent), yet appears to speak (precariously present).

Emanating from this empty soul sat in the wheelchair came a voice. In *DID*, performer and spectator, form and content, merge. Spectators become performers and so too carry and offer meaning, because 'the medium is the message' as formative media theorist Marshall McLuhan put it (1964). All bodies are arguably discursive in this improvised promenade-performance. The extension of the performers' physical presence by digital images and sound elucidates Mills' (2011a) claim that even digital information is material. Her argument that the desires of early users are 'embedded in the design of electroacoustic objects' (Mills 2011b, p. 339) defy what Hayles (2008) suggests, that technology is disembodied. Mel's distributed presence through bodies and data is one such aesthetic strategy that I propose *DID* mobilises.

Not dissimilar to my previous example of Mel's prospective fall to the floor edging towards a 'misfit', for me Mel's voice within the environment presents a 'misfit', a grinding presence. At various points, computer speech recites disjointed words, prose and once a poem about Mel's painful childhood memory of recurring mistreatment:

Wooden box

Each day, I had to stand for 2 hours in a standing box ...

It was a wooden upright closed-in box on castor wheels.

There was a flat tray in front for my school books.

There was a lock on the door for security ...

my legs, feet would ache terribly after 30 minutes of standing. I could barely concentrate on anything, other than trying to relieve the pain by lifting my feet, by pushing down on my hands, when the teacher was turning the other way⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Excerpt from poem *Wooden box* by Melinda Smith used in *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, original formatting, viewed 4 August 2016, <http://www.hipsync.com.au/diannereid/text-used-in-dance-interrogations-2016/>

Echoing my discussion in the previous chapter regarding Deaf actor Alex's signed expression, the sound of this computer speech is, perhaps, more notable than its meaning. Significantly, Mel's disembodied voice denotes an absence – Mel's organic voice – recalling theatre director and artistic researcher Gorkem Acaroglu's (2014) understanding that 'non-presence' in mediatic systems exposes what is absent through that which is present. Listening, I note:

Yet the voice resounded at a distance from the bodies. Emanating from the wheelchair itself of all places. We watched Mel try to stand as we listened ... The electronic accents of the voice again felt out of place. They didn't gel with the organic human flesh of the performers nor the heritage stone structure from a time past. A strange paradox ... a disconnection not only formally in the gaps between flesh, stones and digital data but also in content, "words, words, words" the synthetic voice projected into the space. This voice didn't connect with a body in the room. We all, perhaps, assumed it was linked to, or representative of, Mel's experience but its location in the space was about ten metres away from Mel, "Robbie" [nickname for Mel's wheelchair] and his empty passenger, and Dianne. Perhaps, we all did put two and two together and make the decision the words were in fact Mel's – detached, distant and electric.

Spectators also identified the computer-generated speech as 'Mel's voice'.⁵⁵ Of the disembodied voiceover on screen, film scholar Mary Ann Doane writes, 'There is always something uncanny about a voice which emanates from a source outside the frame' (1980, p. 40).

I propose that this voice is both Mel's and not Mel's because, while they are her words, the sounds of the words emanate from her computer device, a lightwriter, and not her organic voice. In effect, this is what Mel and Dianne intended – to treat the computer voices, one female and one male, as separate characters in the piece. Writer and sociologist Anne Karpf accidentally delegitimises the computer voice when she stipulates that if:

theorists lose contact with the fleeting nature of the physical voice, if its tones and cadences aren't ringing in their ears, how can they hope fully to comprehend the extent

⁵⁵ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

of the shift that's occurred, how can the voice they track be anything more than a simulacrum, a model as inert and flattened as they feel the text to be? (2006, p. 206).

Karpf is speaking in the context of the marginalisation of the voice in an ocularcentric Western culture, which is very much valid. By focusing on the 'physical voice', however, the theorists discount the computer-mediated one. 'Yet,' she continues, 'although the voice is made of sound, it's also more than sound – it's charged sound, revved by a private, bodily engine' (Karpf 2006, p. 206), whereas Mel's voice is necessarily 'revved by a private bodily engine': the computer voice is revved by a digital computer. Mills may in fact be in agreement with Karpf in pointing out Mel's voice *is* revved by the various other bodies who shaped the design of her lightwriter – all data is embodied.

In my interview with Mel, another bodily engine materialises in the form of me reiterating her organic, hard-to-decipher speech and her synthetic speech. Mel does produce sounds and indeed is partially speaking, but does not speak in the course of the piece. Perhaps most importantly, being on the other side of the space from Mel's body, and thus literally becoming another being in the piece, the digital presence of her computer voice destabilises any preconceived notion of Mel's *singular* unified entity.

Rather, she exists quite literally through the space, her 'stage presence' (Goodall 2008) distributed, vague, jarring, othered and over there – distanced. Mel's distributed presence, following theatre scholar Cormac Power's (2008) modes of theatrical presence, is both literal and auratic. Her voice is plainly detached and thereby assumes its own performative status in the piece – indeed, its female and male counterparts forge further co-present characters in the space.

Yet in *DID* the notion of the uncanny and the very idea that Mel's lightwriter is animistic – or possesses independent agency – is not realised because spectators cannot disconnect the machine from Mel (even if that was the artistic intention). In contrast to what the interpretation offered by this audience participant indicates, Mel in fact does not press play on her lightwriter during the performance. The voice is prerecorded and it is actually Dianne who presses play. For one audience participant, Mel's voice is enhanced:

'Cause it's *her*. It's her words. It's her speaking for her. Even though it's electronic, it's what *she* says and *she* hits the button and that's what she says. 'Cause when someone else talks for you and even says the words that another person without speech types, it's not powerful. The electronics make it powerful ... on so many levels it was them saying they didn't understand *me*.⁵⁶

For this spectator, Mel's presence is deeply personal. This spectator, as came to light, works with Mel at Mel's day job. As Titchkosky comments about the cultural performance of disability, 'representations have real consequences for real people' (2003, p. 134). In line with digital performance theory regarding mediatised presence in live performance, for this audience member the presence of the computer voices – one male and one female – enhances the live presence of Mel's physical body (Causey 1999; eds Chapple & Kattenbelt 2006; Dixon & Smith 2007; Kilch & Scheer 2012). For this spectator, Mel's electronic voice renders not only her live bodily presence powerful, but also her agency, language and personhood.

Furthermore, this spectator is clearly keen to stress her *respect* for Mel's communication style. This respect stems from a strong political regard for Mel. For with a phonocentric view of subjectivity wherein, as Bauman laments, the 'constitutive role of the voice results from the self-presence created by hearing-oneself-speak' (2006b, p. 356), Mel's agency may be diminished.⁵⁷ This spectator seems to apprehend Mel's seemingly threatened agency.

In her efforts to rescue Mel's agency, I propose that the spectator emphatically enacts a disability care politics. While the computer voice is authoritative, it clashes with the organic movement of Mel's body. Mel's resonating presence recalls media researchers Nicole Matthews and Catherine Simpson's discussion of Australian disabled writer and actor Heather Rose in Rolf de Heer's film *Dance me to my song* (1997), a film mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.⁵⁸ Rose, and her character Julia, use a digital communication device to speak, just like Mel.⁵⁹ Attending to Julia's computer-mediated voice, Starrs theorises that Julia's carer

⁵⁶ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

⁵⁷ Bauman's perspective discusses Jacques Derrida's critique of phonocentrism, but Bauman's account is ahistorical according to Myers and Fernandes (2009) and Hannah Anglin-Jaffe (2011). A discussion of Derrida's philosophies is beyond the scope of my discussion. However, I foreground Bauman's view because it is in line with how I interpret the spectator's comment.

⁵⁸ I recognise that there is some ambiguity regarding authorship of this film (Starrs 2008) but follow both Matthews and Simpson's (2012) and Anna Hickey-Moody's (2010) attributions to de Heer.

⁵⁹ See Hickey-Moody (2010) for further theoretical discussion of this film, in particular its formation of new sonic bodies and its casting of the audience as primarily listeners, or 'aurators'.

Madeline 'soon realizes Julia's strength is in her voice machine' (2008, p. 4). It could be argued that this spectator recognises the same with regards to Mel in *DID*.

Like Alex's political act in the creative development of *OTR*, the voice as a politicised form of expression prevails in *DID*. Mel's voice off stage, like Julia's voice in the film, is out of sync. Matthews and Simpson (2012, p. 149) cite feminist film scholar Shohini Chaudhuri: 'The moment such a voice is synchronized with its speaker's moving lips it loses its power' (2006, p. 52). In turn, the out-of-sync voice of a puppeteer comes to mind here and, of course, the figure of the cyborg. For example, Parker-Starbuck (2011) applies philosopher Julia Kristeva's notion of the 'abject' to her discussion of the body and technology within the figure of a cyborg. She conceives that 'an abject body abject technology meeting might be illustrated by a puppet on stage, both a forerunner and continuing colleague of the cyborg' (Parker-Starbuck 2011, p. 42). Mel, likewise, appears unfamiliar to herself as her very identity materialises as fractured. Thus, the spectator eager to emphasise Mel's power, in alliance with the disability community, is in fact seeking to address the perceived identity crisis conveyed by the figure of Mel in *DID*. In many respects, this spectator is 'seeking a narrative that puts their disrupted world back in order' (Garland-Thomson 2005, p. 31). In doing so the spectator, I claim, is performing a disability politics of care.

Mel's presence constitutes a 'misfit,' a disjuncture in form, a clash between digital and fleshy presence, and yet her presence is empowered because her synthetic voice heightens our perception of her physical body. Mel's empowerment reflects Garland-Thomson's suggestion that a misfit 'can also foster intense awareness of social injustice and the formation of a community of misfits that can collaborate to achieve a more liberatory politics and praxis' (2011, p. 597). Perhaps then, simply in sensing misfits we are better able to perceive injustice, just like the spectator. The spectator's insistent desire to attribute the voice to Mel – 'Cause it's *her*. It's her words. It's her speaking for her' – suggests a political desire to amplify the aliveness of not only Mel's lightwriter and the sounds emanating from it, but Mel as a person and an artist. As such, the bias and attitude inherent in this particular spectator's response are respectful indeed.

Conversely, I argue that this spectator's perception of Mel's voice, inflected by a deep concern for Mel's agency, demonstrates her caring regard for Mel. According to care theorists Michael Fine and Caroline Glendinning (2005, p. 612) 'to recognize "independence" is not to deny but to

acknowledge relations of dependence'. This spectator is effectively acknowledging her own sense of responsibility in the theatrical (and social) contract between herself and Mel, or what she understands to be Mel's dependency on her. Care philosopher Grace Clement (1996, p. 24) argues 'relationships, and specifically caring relationships, are a necessary precondition for autonomy'. I interpret this spectator to believe she is willing Mel's autonomy. In turn, in identifying Mel's supposedly autonomous utterance as a result of perceiving unfair inequality (that Mel often relies on a lightwriter to communicate while many others like herself do not), I suggest this spectator delivers 'justice that is caring' (Kittay 2001, p. 576).

I suggest the spectator indirectly detects something more – Mel's silence. I view Mel's expression of muteness as part of a cultural trend to situate 'the issue of muteness in the broader context of feminist discussions about exchange, language and representation' (Zarzosa 2010, p. 403). Within this lineage, wilful muteness (as seen in the character of Ada McGrath – played by Holly Hunter – in Jane Campion's film *The piano* (1993) or default muteness (as seen in Mel both on and off stage) is privileged. Cultural critic Susan Sontag comments, silence is the 'artist's otherworldly gesture' or it might suggest, she writes, 'termination ... a zone of meditation, preparation for spiritual ripening, an ordeal that ends in gaining the right to speak' (1969, p. 183). Indeed, muteness becomes a rhetorical force, like speech itself. Film scholar Agustin Zarzosa describes the rhetorical function of (wilful) muteness in *The piano*:

This muteness, I believe, does not refer to the desire (and inability) to express all, but rather calls attention to the imbalance that founds exchange. *The Piano* suggests that muteness in melodrama might not simply express the loss of the moral occult; instead, it calls attention to the injustice that exchange necessarily involves. What is central to melodrama is not the desire (and inability) to express all, but rather the process by which an illegible injustice becomes legible (2010, p. 405).

The imbalance of a given exchange to which muteness in *The piano* points also presents a misfit because it uncovers the root cause of this wilful silence – injustice. Muteness here is misfitting with its environment. Yet misfitting extends Zarzosa's point insofar as it 'definitively lodges injustice and discrimination in the *materiality* of the world more than in social attitudes or representational practices, even while it recognizes their mutually constituting entanglement' (Garland-Thomson 2011, p. 602, my emphasis). The particular materiality of the world in the case of Mel's default muteness is effectively non-sound. Mel has all her senses – sight, hearing,

smell, touch, taste and spatial awareness – which her dance practice grounded in improvisation absolutely cultivates. She is nonetheless dependent on (or liberated by?) her lightwriter because she is partially speaking, partially speechless, and so requires the device to communicate.

Mel's speechlessness is therefore a discursive aspect of her expression in the piece. It foregrounds the presence of an unequal relationship between herself and speech-full others. In *DID*, I interpret her partial muteness in the form of her intentional separation from her lightwriter as a defiant political act of care. An important part of her intention to distance her physical body from her computer voice was to demonstrate herself without it, much as dancers Catherine Cole and Lisa Bufano removed their prosthetic legs in their respective live performances *Five foot feat* (2004) and *Five open mouths* (2007). As Mel dances, she does not use a prosthetic to move or to communicate – she uses only her bodymind, which sometimes converses with Dianne's.

Slowing down

In this chapter, I have claimed that *DID* deploys various aesthetic strategies such as the intermittent appearance of disability and maturity constituting *DID*'s particular radical virtuosity, an ongoing series of emergent 'misfits' between bodyminds and their environments, and Mel's distributed presence across data, through space and rooted in her physical mute body. I have argued that these strategies expose the politicised agency of all material presented in *DID*, which is accentuated by Mel's literal presence in the space inhabiting a body with impairment. In turn, I have distilled instances of care that materialise throughout *DID*'s spontaneous relational encounters. For instance, I reveal that Dianne's and Mel's conversant bodyminds, bearing each other's weight, reify a reciprocal interdependent relationship. I argue Dianne's treatment of Mel with her wheelchair is politically careful in its transgression from being only 'sensitive' and I have identified a spectator's caring defence of Mel's agency.

I turn now to exploring a penultimate aesthetic strategy of *DID* – its slowness. According to Eckersall and Paterson, 'the rise of the slow can also be seen as a dramaturgical trend visible in recent performances' (2011, p. 180). While the authors situate their discussion in relation to ecological-political contexts, their theory of 'slow work' (Eckersall & Paterson 2011, p. 186) is valuable. 'A slow dramaturgy', they write, 'encompasses moments of listening to and organising

theatrical space and overtly showing dramaturgy as a connective tissue' (Eckersall & Paterson 2011, pp. 186–7). Most significantly, like Eckersall and Paterson I associate the 'evolution of the slow' (2011, p. 178) with a rejection of neoliberalist politics: *DID*'s slowness illustrates this rejection.

Dianne embodies control. Her powerful expression is evidence of her ability to care for Mel, should she ever need it. I write:

Dianne's movement is characterised by a contained and dynamic flow of energy exhibited in bursts of evenly distributed weight transfers ... Her supple body echoes yogic postures – at one point she executes a textbook handstand against the wall.

Mel, on the other hand, moves more slowly and with audible effort, but her vastly different physicality holds its own power. She maintains or dismisses the gaze of her audience, as I write:

Mel, on the other hand was low. Always lower than Dianne. Slow and slower (than Dianne) too. Her blonde-streaked hair cut into a stylised pixie crop framed her face and big blue focused gaze. She breathed heavily, audibly. Her effort always perceptible with each inward wheeze and outward huff as though shaking her whole body. Her folded body, bent at crooked angles, moved in immense contrast to her female counterpart. She crawled, sat at my feet, at one point on my boot, lightly. She was smaller than Dianne. Her head wandered with her eyes following and meeting my own, for a split fleeting second passing without her (convincing) recognition.

In contrast to Dianne, Mel moves much more slowly. Juxtaposed against one another as they are throughout their impromptu duet, these two bodies create a misfit, an unlikely pair. As Hadley points out, 'The disabled body is the extreme edge or margin that allows the non-disabled body to define itself in relation to what it is not' (2014, p. 6; see also 2008). As spectators, we cannot help but continuously compare the two. It is not only the performers connecting to their audience, but also the spectators accommodating the performers – we hold a piece of fabric, we support Mel and we take the weight of Dianne's head on a shoulder.

Slowness is produced by both Dianne and Mel. Dianne's swiftness serves to bring to the fore Mel's slower pace. Significantly, Garland-Thomson explains her concept of misfit by drawing on American medieval scholar Caroline Bynum's (1999) notion that 'shape carries story', which:

introduces temporality into encounters between body and world, in a narrative that by definition connects moments in space into a coherent form we call story [and] suggests, then, that material bodies are not only in the spaces of the world but that they are entwined with temporality as well (Garland-Thomson 2011, p. 593).

Slowness happens, then, in contrast to Dianne, as Mel navigates the space at a different pace.

Slowness presents a political statement in *DID*. Grace observes that the fast pace of contemporary life highlights the urgency of understanding disability as a product of social systems: 'In a culture valuing the speed of production and communication, and control of the body, the Social Model of Disability has become a critical resource' (Grace 2009, p. 24). Davidson has, however, recently critiqued such recourse to the social construction of disability for its neglect of the body: 'While it is important to think of the ways social stigma, medical science, and the physical environment reinforce disability, we must remember the ways it is embodied' (2013, p. 7). In another study, feminist disability scholar and dance practitioner Julie Cosenza constructs slowness as a response to 'dominant notions of "ablebodied" destabilizing the cultural value of slow' (2010, p. 5). In *DID*, part of the cultural value of slowness is its defiance of a neoliberalist agenda built on Fordist ideals, most obviously that of high speed. Indeed, Garland-Thomson's misfit highlights the temporal aspect of disability embodiment.

Yet, when one moves slowly, the expectation is that one will move with more control, but control is not readily apparent in Mel's movement. This lack of control, in turn, disobeys what McRuer has coined 'compulsory able-bodiedness' (1999). Rather, Mel is 'productively failing', as Mitchell and Snyder might view her precarious movement and limited mobility (2015, p. 28). For the authors, nonproductive bodies 'allow a more active reading based on refusals of normative modes of production that operate with respect to compulsory able-bodiedness as their unspoken foundation' (Mitchell & Snyder 2015, p. 28).⁶⁰ These ableist expectations of high

⁶⁰ I align my reasoning here with disability's vehement resistance to secular utilitarian approaches to ethics such as those advocated by Australian philosopher Peter Singer. For example, the (Australian) Blind community's status as 'exemplary listeners' (Goggin 2009, p. 491) elucidates not definitively an ability or resource, but a value and a

speed and productivity thus 'misfit' with Mel's slow moving body. Rather, I 'smile at Mel trying to stand' and at her 'own crookedly elegant poise'. Her meandering movement meditation conversely fits with the site of the convent. The religious space as well as the performers' wimples, worn on their heads to depict them as catholic nuns, activate a motif of slowness in which one may pray, contemplate and make penance.

Slowness allows us to ponder the presence of Mel's bodymind. As Eckersall and Paterson reflect, 'it is the very slowness of this dramaturgy that can prevent a kind of aesthetic reverie, a pause in the political' (2011, p. 190). To illustrate their reflection, Eckersall and Paterson analyse the 'slow dramaturgy' of performance work *apoliticaldance* (2006) by company Not Yet It's Difficult. In the work's program notes, Eckersall and Paterson note that artistic director David Pledger 'aimed to explore how ten years of neo-conservative rule in Australia was manifest in the body' (2011, p. 187). Likewise, the slowness of *DID* enables spectators to ponder the impact of the institution, which Mel experienced as a child on her body, as expressed vividly in her prose cited earlier in this chapter. Indeed, for me the institution also invoked by the religious institution is manifest in Mel's bodymind.

Elsewhere in theatrical and filmic representation of disability, the notion of 'crip time' (for discussion, see Kuppers 2014), the act of waiting (see, for example, Matthews & Simpson 2012, p. 143) and, to a lesser but still related degree, the experience of isolation for deafblind people (see, for example, Mundy 2017) emerge in parallel to the value of slowness. I put forward that the spectators are actively caring about Mel during this performance because her slowness, thanks to her need for control, performs a sense of vulnerability that, in turn, motions towards care. Unquestionably, this performative request for – and insistence on – care is on her terms because Mel's (albeit politicised) agency permeates the space for spectators.

A focus on slowness and thus Mel's particular physicality in turn summons disability performance theorists Margaret M Quinlan and Benjamin R Bates' discussion of the animal present in the figure of the wheelchair dancer. While:

sense. Indeed, Mitchell departs from this premise in order to privilege the cultural significance of disabled people as 'non-productive bodies' and as 'productively failing' (2015, pp. 27–8). In the same vein, in dance contexts, Ames critiques the notion of 'usefulness' as gendered drawing on Hannah Arendt (2016, p. 100).

This focus, this partial intensification of the animal component might make some advocates uncomfortable: they might see it as reducing a person living with disability to their animal being, just as a focus on assistive devices risks reducing a person living with disability to her mechanical being (Quinlan & Bates 2014, n. p.).

In effect, Kittay has motioned towards valuing the human above the animal (Kittay & Carlson 2010, p. 408), a curious point which Rogers also notes (2016, p. 4). I argue Mel's audible breathing calls attention to her 'live' animal state. When she sat on my foot, close to my body, I experienced Mel's breath, the warmth of her body, and the resonating effect was not unlike the opening scene of *Dance me to my song* which, to similar effect, amplifies Julia's breathing so as to pull viewers into her most intimate experience – hearing her life force move in and out of her body (Mathews & Simpson 2012; see also, Hickey-Moody 2010).

Mindful spectators

Projection beam streams.

Dianne sits in wheelchair as she shows us a skeletal foot projected from the portable device shining on her own live foot, bones in lifelike size against her white flesh.

A single piano note builds up a tension.

Cartoon ladybird, blood red, rich and clear in the space, makes its way across Mel's chest and across the wall behind her, as a bigger one.

A skull on Robbie, Dianne on Robbie.

Mel's wheelchair clicks.

Dianne projects onto her face.

Her projected doppelganger's eye seems to stare directly at me.

As this excerpt from my field notes evokes, for me and other spectators, *DID* is very much a cinematic experience. Digital performance theorists have articulated such work in terms of 'intermediality' to emphasise the relational aspects of mediated presence in space and time (eds Chapple & Kattenbelt 2006). One audience participant comments:

We were all there in the making of a film, we were there when this film was being played out on her body, you know, we were there ... across my toes with another image.⁶¹

This spectator feels as if she was immersed in the fictional yet real world of the performance. She was clearly transported into the world of *DID* and seems enchanted by an 'auratic presence' (Power 2008) where images and spectators' bodies converge. The cultivation of mindfulness is *DID*'s final aesthetic strategy, as deduced from the emergent themes of my empirical study. I argue that this strategy, too, visibilises recurring moments of politicised agency in *DID*.

What is striking about *DID* is how audience participants suggest they are mindful of their immersive experiences. Spectators are free to roam the space as they wish and, like the performers, must make decisions at any given moment, as co-performers or 'participatory spectators' (Jensen 2007, p. 175)⁶² creating an improvised reception per se or, in care ethics terms, 'completing' the acts of care to which they bear witness (Noddings 1984, p. 68). Such 'sensory immersion' (Kilch & Scheer 2012) means embodiment is altered as we continually experience the world through technology: 'Rather than being separate from the body, technology becomes part of that body and alters and recreates our experience of the world' (Broadhurst & Machon 2016 [2009], p. 9). Parker-Starbuck makes a similar claim in her notion of 'subject technology' which 'emerges when what has previously been considered solely tool, prosthetic extension of the body, or system begins to claim concepts of agency' (2011, pp. 40–1).

For spectators, there is a live and self-conscious embodiment of the relations between, across and indeed through physical bodies, theirs and others', extended by projected images. One spectator reflects, 'I had a whole different bodily experience', while another comments that 'there were so many dimensions happening all at once. It was completely thrilling to be in it'.⁶³ Another explains:

⁶¹ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

⁶² Amy Peter Jensen derives 'participatory spectators' from Susan Bennett's concept of a 'participatory spectator/actor' (2013 [1997] p. 19).

⁶³ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

In the first one I felt I was really there ... I felt a part of the work in some ways, really interesting, really cool. And I think it really transported you into that space really well. The use of the visual media component really drew you in and added an extra dimension to the dance and to the work, which I really enjoyed.⁶⁴

Projected digital imagery adds an important layer to the work because, much like the visibility of Mel's differential embodiment and her computer voice, projected imagery 'drew you in'. My experience is not unlike that of this spectator. In particular, the cinematic landscape enlivens 'space in which to engage with the technology themselves' (McLeod 2014, p. 213). The screened images touching the surfaces of live bodies, the floor and walls heightens the senses, accentuating the contact between bodies and environment. In effect these spectators, like me, are conscious of the experience of being transported into the work.

In this live and mediatised space, Dianne and Mel become more alive, and their statuses as living people thus more apparent. Parker-Starbuck draws on theatre scholar Alan Read's poignant figuring of 'live' presence as 'the phenomena of life itself' (2008, p. 100; see also Parker-Starbuck 2011, p. 9). Like Parker-Starbuck, in this live mediatised environment:

I cannot help but attempt to place bodies on stage as "lives," indeed "living" figures, perhaps conceptually mediatized living figures, but indeed living bodies as opposed to the cinematic or projected figures and technologies with which they co-habit the stage (Parker-Starbuck 2011, p. 9).

It is bodies that are at stake in *DID* too. Drawing on the variegated theories of Giorgio Agamben, Peter Brooks, Gilles Deleuze, Charles Dickens, Michel Foucault and Peggy Phelan, Read explains, 'It is the phenomena of life itself, "a life" and the "precariousness of each life lived" that matters' (Read 2008, p. 100). To mobilise Auslander's words, mindful spectators indeed 'make a claim' (2012, p. 7) to the lives presented here, particularly Mel's life, which represents in effect a purported questionable ability to fulfil itself, that is, an 'impersonal life ... that has thus far been pathologized as impairment' but which, I stress, in the context of *DID* actualises 'impersonal vitalism' (Overboe 2009, pp. 243–4).

⁶⁴ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

Spectators are conscious as they navigate their respective paths through the work, rendering their ‘imaginative collusion in the event’ writes Power, as ‘self-conscious “theatricality”’ (2008, p. 34). As they do they encounter misfits, not in literal material senses, as previously discussed in this chapter, but at the level of their expectations. Such involvement recalls a certain ‘politics of spectating’ theorised by performance scholars Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx (2010, p. 219) and described by performance theorist and practitioner Kimberly McLeod as an ‘idea of disruption ... in which hybrid, or both/and, nature of intermedial performance disturbs spectators’ sense and rattles their normative assumptions’ (2014, p. 206; see also Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt & Lavender 2010; eds Chapple & Kattenbelt 2006). Spectators’ attitudinal encounters with *DID* recall Titchkosky’s ‘politics of wonder’ because spectators are faced repeatedly with decisions of how to orient themselves in this space based on, of note, their experiences of time and sensation (2011, pp. 3–29). Furthermore, the mediatised environment means spectators are aware of their continuous negotiations and, thus, how they access *DID*.

Agency, dispersed and alive

As I have continued to establish in this chapter, agency is politicised in *DID*. Agency, especially Mel’s agency, is perceived as threatened but *DID* opens a different paradigm in which to meditate on agency. Reflecting on the interconnectedness catalysed by *DID*, one spectator shares:

The absolute insistence on being everything at once that, you know, started from Di’s piece at the Red Rattler and the use of *place*. Both such site-specific pieces. We all already have such different relationships with these sites. Even if you haven’t been at CERES, you’ve been on a train. So, all of that was there. I found the insistence on connection with each of us in different ways and the refusing to, you know, so we *had* to be ourselves – I found that very moving.⁶⁵

I interpret that, for this spectator, agency is interrelational and also animated by and through place and especially physical bodies. In response, I turn now to end this chapter with a critique of agency as a means of making space for care, indeed needing and desiring care. Through a reflection on sociologist James Overboe’s (2009, p. 241) theoretical concept of ‘impersonal life (without a self)’ which introduces a ‘different register for Disability Studies’, I dwell on the

⁶⁵ Group interview with four audience members from *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)*, 2 October 2015.

significance of the 'lives', in Parker-Starbuck's words, represented in *DID* in order to insist on the demand and longing for care in the context of this specific performance but also in Mel and Dianne's practice generally. I claim a 'care' framework sustains their interdependent, dynamic agency (and autonomy) without diminishing the integrity of their distinct bodyminds.

Gatens (1995, p. 32) worries: 'In stressing interconnectedness over separation, feminist theorists should take care not to throw the (whole) baby out with the bath water'. In effect, the spectator who feels interconnected with 'everything at once' also observes a certain 'connection with each of us in different ways'. She thereby, I argue, feels her bodymind affected within the space. As she states, 'we *had* to be ourselves'.

Where Ames concedes, in the context of dance practice with and by learning-disabled practitioners, 'I reify Edward Wadsworth as both disabled and as object of enquiry, thereby dismantling his own agency' (2012, p. 145), she alludes to her own control and unravels the myth of a singular, original source of agency (Ingold 2008). As I briefly outline in Chapter Three, directors without disability working with performers with intellectual disability occupy a fraught position. Ames does not profess to absolve the agency of learning-disabled artistic partner Wadsworth, but her admission, I argue, is a careful and respectful one because she acknowledges the impossibility of maintaining Wadsworth's agency. Rather, agency seems to be shared between Ames and Wadsworth as 'heterogeneous alliances' (de Freitas & Sinclair 2014, p. 36) to apply mathematics scholars Elizabeth de Freitas and Nathalie Sinclair's description of shared agency.

A crucial point identified by Moser, however, builds on Hadley's idea that disabled bodies define nondisabled bodies in relation to what they are not:

it is only the disabled body and person who is seen to be an actor produced in a network, with shifting boundaries, and to be dependent on agency that is distributed and delegated (Moser 2006, p. 384).

Whereas, she continues to state, 'The normal competent actor is seen to have natural, inherent and bodily bounded agency' (Moser 2006, p. 384). In effect, when Dianne presses play and Mel's voice resounds, Mel's dispersed agency is at the fore (even if one spectator prefers to

believe Mel – or indeed anyone – functions independently). Due to such assumptions as Moser and Hadley identify, it is a much harder task to notice Dianne's interdependent agency.

Returning to Ames, her admission of Wadsworth as 'object' recognises an impersonal 'register', to use Overboe's term, of their shared agency, thus moving beyond the individual bodymind towards a larger social body, an 'impersonal life' (Overboe 2009). For de Freitas and Sinclair, the 'movement of sensation across an entangled system sustains life – that is, "impersonal life" – as that which is shared and not individual' (2014, p. 169). This 'entangled system' vividly describes *DID* where the live bodyminds, of both performers and co-performing spectators, and digital imagery and sounds make perceptible the trajectories of life forces.

A tension arises between the mythically threatened singular agency of the performer with disability (Mel) and her 'liveness' (life forces). As social anthropologist Tim Ingold warns, 'the more theorists have to say about agency, the less they seem to have to say about life' (2008, p. 211). Therefore, vitally important, this tension corresponds to the struggle between a feminist ethics and a disability politics of care, wherein the suspension of disbelief of agency as singular ascribes a resistance to the need for care and yet life depends on the desire for care. As Ingold (2000, p. 200) previously specified, 'Our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world's transforming itself'. It seems we need to care less about agency and more about life itself. Yet must we insist on agency too? Following Ingold, in a precarious ecology of lives including, I advance, the lives of nonhumans, the impulse to care and subsequently act is all that remains and all that we can rely on.

Mel and Dianne illuminate the tension between a feminist ethics and disability politics of care because their artistic and personal relationship is forged on mutual attentiveness based on a cultivated long-term understanding of one another's personal and artistic needs and desires. What is unique to their collaboration is that, in contrast to other artists discussed in this thesis, the reciprocal recognition is either not present (e.g. the artists in *DLT*) or learnt 'on the job' (e.g. the artists in *OTR*). Dianne is aware of the politics just as Mel is aware of the ethics and they fundamentally support each other's awareness. Unlike the other artists who participated in this research, their collaboration stretches over several years.

As McAuley notes in the context of rehearsal practice, drawing on sociologist Randall Collins (2004), the idea of 'emotional energy' derived from Goffman's (2009 [1963]) work on interaction rituals underpins the creative process. She writes the process:

generates feelings of solidarity, group membership and social worth amongst the participants and functions to endow with particular value the objects and places that are at the heart of the activity (McAuley 2012, p. 10).

The strong bond between Dianne and Mel which has, for example, led Dianne to give value to Mel's wheelchair, is evident, I suggest, on and off stage. As such, it is in the freedom and possibility granted by the movement meditation that comprises their ongoing partnership that these dance practitioners sustain each other's lived aesthetic experiences of the world.

Summary

Care materialises as encounters between bodyminds, place and perception in Dianne Reid's *Dance Interrogations (a Diptych)* (2015), a 'live screendance' structured improvisation. Performed alongside Melinda Smith, the live performance produced themes that arose in my own ethnographic observations and spectator responses, as well as interviews with the two practitioners. I have articulated these themes in terms of aesthetic strategies and attended to them in dialogue with Garland-Thomson's (2011) concept of 'misfit', a materially discursive becoming. I have understood *DID*'s aesthetic strategies to unveil politicised agency, precipitating in turn caring encounters.

In my discussion, I have identified a radical virtuosity that surfaces in the deployment of 'post-digital aesthetics' (Cramer 2015 [2014]). I framed the performance, in effect, as a 'postdigital performance' (Causey 2016) forged in relation to the immersive cinematic environments created by digital imagery and computer voices. The virtuosities of *DID* further transpire in reconceived notions of maturity as culturally wealthy and enabling exhibited by the 'deviant' dancierly bodyminds of Dianne and Mel.

I have then expanded the concept of misfitting, arguing it illuminates the strategies of *DID*. Here I turned not only to the environment and actors in *DID* but also to the various misfits and fits of audience perception. I stressed the point that misfitting is productive insofar as it

excavates a felt sense of injustice, thereby triggering the need and desire for acts of care. To illustrate misfitting at the level of perception, I explored the response of a spectator being surprised to witness Dianne treating Mel transgressively. I claimed her reception uncovers a manifestation of care by Dianne: Rolling over and leaning against Mel, Dianne is enacting a manifestation of care on Mel's behalf.

In unearthing a political aesthetic animated in the wheelchair, I have recognised Thompson's care aesthetics (2015) in *DID*. When Dianne and Mel engage in CI, they rely on each other's physical bodies to support one another. Both performers here create a very palpable aesthetic metaphor for the multifaceted issue of dependency. In so doing, they engender a feminist disability aesthetics of care.

In the second half of this chapter, my discussion has delved into the presence and absence of Mel's voice. I considered the complexity of her voice in terms of ideas of live and mediated presence, and dispersed embodiment. I then highlighted Mel's partial muteness as a political manifestation of care because her voice is deliberately distributed across the performance space, located simultaneously in her physical body and in the sounds expressed by the synthetic voice. Although unintended, I explained how one spectator wrongly attributes this voice to Mel. I argued this attribution demonstrates an insistently respectful relationship with Mel, thus giving rise to yet another disability political act of care.

Towards the end of the chapter, I have located *DID*'s slowness within a post-Fordist moment, thus presenting another misfit with a surrounding social neoliberalist setting. I then linked the digitally immersive environment to fostering of the self-reflexive mindfulness of audience members. This chapter opened by linking my inclusion of artists' and spectators' accounts to a recent call to define care in its reception (Kittay 2016). I have drawn the chapter to a close with a brief meditation on the idea of agency as shared, dispersed and, like the bodyminds and objects through which it passes, ultimately relational and alive.

Most meaningfully, I distil a reciprocal exchange between the artistic partners. Dianne and Mel are caring on one another's behalf. For instance, Dianne is enacting a disability politics of care when she laments over audiences' perception of the therapeutic value of their practice for Mel only. In turn, Mel performs a feminist ethics of care where she praises Dianne's transgressive treatment of her in the wheelchair as 'sensitive'. Inevitably, their partnership evidences the

potential of moving with the struggle between a feminist ethics and a disability politics of care. As Price discerns, 'care means moving together and being limited together' (2015, p. 279). In the next chapter, I propose my own theoretical response to these distillations of care.

Chapter Seven: Crystallising care

In responding to dance theatre practice created by artists with and without disability, this thesis has made three general claims. First, in relation to disability disclosure I argue there is a correlation between visible disability and a disability politics of care and, in turn, hidden disability and a feminist ethics of care. Second, in response to a Deaf–hearing world confrontation, I argue that the caring acts of a Deaf actor are most valuably interpreted through disability care politics, whereas those of performance practitioners without disability correspond to feminist care ethics. Third, in the specific case of a long-term artistic partnership, I argue a practitioner without disability offers a disability care politics in response to her partner with disability, while her partner reciprocates with a feminist care ethics. While earlier chapters distil particular politicised performances of care, in this chapter I embark on a meditation of the care discovered in my study through the image of a crystal, to shed further light on these materialisations.

Proposing a ‘crystal of care’

I begin with a proposition of what I call a ‘crystal of care’. I account for this care crystal based on the specific materialisations of care distilled across my study, as: disparate acts of disability disclosure; theatrical labour, artistic creation and aesthetic response; and encounters between bodyminds, place and perception. Ultimately, these materialisations of care emerge in the relationships during all stages of the creative process – from rehearsal to performance.

A crystal of care reflects these caring acts. Geertz warns about putting forth ‘symmetrical crystals of significance’ as the result of ethnographic study:

To set forth symmetrical crystals of significance, purified of the material complexity in which they were located, and then attribute their existence to autogenous principles of order, universal properties of the human mind, or vast, a priori *weltanschauungen*, is to pretend a science that does not exist and imagine a reality that cannot be found (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 318).

To avoid ‘symmetrical crystals’ I explore the image of a crystal as an irregular, misshapen fusion. As such, I negate dualities and offer a spectrum of interpretations of the acts, attitudes and broader practices that I have observed. A crystal of care holds tensions between a care politics and an ethics of care, but resists binarisms. A crystal of care maintains a

complementarity between such ‘experience-distance’ ideas as a disability politics of care and ‘experience-near’ (Geertz 1994, [1973]) concepts such as ‘safe space’. Neither the higher order nor the lower order categories are mutually exclusive. For example, Matt’s disclosure traced in Chapter Four is understood in both paradigms of care. Likewise, the insider terms ‘safe space’ and ‘crossing the line’ explored in Chapter Five are knotted together. On a similar note, the conceptual process of crystallising instances of care aims to verify that these instances have not lost ‘touch with the hard surfaces of life’ (Geertz 1994 [1973], p. 323). In crystallising care, I seek to ensure that my theoretical discussion throughout this dissertation depicts an ‘enlargement of the universe of [the] social discourse’ (Geertz 1994 [1973] p. 316) relating to specific cases of contemporary dance theatre practice involving Australian artists with disability.

Before delving into my theoretical proposition of a crystal of care, I now briefly recap the cases surfacing from each group of artists explored in this study, which comprise Part Two of this thesis. In Chapter Four, with regard to Murmuration’s creative development of *DLT*, I have claimed care emerges as variegated acts of verbal and visual disclosure as well as nondisclosure. In the act of disclosing, artists with visible impairments enact a conscious disability politics of care, while those with hidden impairments convey an unconscious feminist ethics of care. It is not surprising that a care ethics is unconscious because, as Sarah-Vyne’s private and tentative self-disclosure illustrates, the terms have yet to be articulated (Kafer 2016, p. 12), especially to identify with hidden impairments like mental disability.

In Chapter Five, responding to Force Majeure and Dance Integrated Australia’s *OTR*, a powerful Deaf politics of care emerges in Alex’s warning. This spawns in turn the production of care as theatrical labour – others’ attentiveness, the directors’ palpable sense of responsibility, Alex’s reciprocity – and the group’s collective aesthetic response as the creative team transforms the encounter into an artistic creation. I have argued that, while Deaf actor Alex operates within a disability care politics, the directors respond in accordance with a feminist care ethics. The edifying encounter transcends the rehearsal space and is shared with audiences. As Thompson highlights, care ethicists have argued that ‘The private space ... is a crucial site of ethical behaviour, and the public realm needs to include attention to the importance of the caring relations between people’ (2015, p. 433).

In Dianne Reid's *DID* performed in collaboration with Melinda Smith, a postdigital aesthetic and deviant dancerly bodyminds, variously mature and disabled, misfit with a fast-paced social moment. In Chapter Six, I find care in relational encounters between performers, objects and audience responses. These encounters emerge, for instance, in a wheelchair animated with a disability politics, in a spectator's insistence that a computer voice belongs to Mel because she expressly respects and desires to empower Mel, and in the audience's enhanced attentiveness to their immediate environment, especially the lively and dispersed presence of the performers. *DID* cultivates a spontaneous interdependent exchange in which Dianne and Mel perform caring acts for each other. Without the struggle between a disability politics and a feminist ethics of care, such poignant caring acts would not be performed.

In what follows, I propose the concept of a crystal as a helpful means for considering the purified instances of care distilled over the course of this research. In this conclusion chapter, guided by Tronto's (1993) assertion that the political is inextricable from care ethics, I meditate on what I call a 'crystal of care' as a way of conceiving the material caring acts across the disparate cases which I have observed in this research project.

Defining a 'crystal of care'

I imagine this crystallising process as the instances of care sedimenting through my study. This crystal of care is conceptually multifaceted, comprising a tension between distance and intimacy, a contingent act of attentiveness and an aesthetic experience. This crystal is sharp-edged, symbolising the potential for harm. The crystal is concrete or new materialist, motioning towards the vitality of all matter but also positioning care not as a vague principle, nor as an abstract moral theory, but as a 'relational embodied practice' (Held 2006). The crystal is precious, resonating with Butler's 'precarious life' (2006). A crystal of care is also precious because it fluctuates between pain and potential, personal and impersonal registers of experience, as well as the traditionally negative status of 'care' and its radical aesthetic possibilities.

A crystal of care distinctly represents the fluctuations between feminist and disability perspectives but, unlike previous imaginings of care including that of Thompson (2015), this crystal fuses the aesthetics, materials and registers of experiential encounters with disability. Importantly, these encounters are not assumed to be performed by those who identify as

nondisabled. Instead, as artist Mary Duffy and Lindgren (2004) both recognise, people with disability encounter disability too. While Duffy does so by exhibiting her body with one arm in her work *My own monster* (as cited in Eisenhauer 2007, p. 15), Lindgren (2004, p. 155) does so by addressing her lived experience of disability as disease in terms of 'The Alien Within'.

By aesthetics, I refer to the affective and artistic qualities of these encounters. The point of difference between a crystal of care and an aesthetics of care is that Thompson's (2015) concept does not address the oppressive 'sting' (Kelly 2011) of care viewed through a disability lens. A crystal of care incorporates and refracts Thompson's '*beautiful*' care aesthetics. Here, caring acts effect different possible judgements and responses ranging from warmth to discomfort, and even rage (Tronto 1993, p. 143). A crystal of care further absorbs interrelational matter, echoing the critical feminist concept of 'misfitting' (Garland-Thomson 2011). Finally, a crystal of care carries the alternative disability register of an 'impersonal life' proposed by Overboe (2009) in a common preoccupation in sustaining lives that exist beyond the self or, as he puts it:

I argue that in the performativity of disability (or for that matter, of any other identity imposed or otherwise) there is a remainder, an absolute immanence that can be neither represented nor representable. It cannot be inscribed or re-inscribed because this vitalism exists on the register of an impersonal plane of absolute immanence, not the personal registry (2009, p. 251).

To illustrate the idea of an 'impersonal registry', Overboe (2009, pp. 251–2) provides examples first of himself as a premature baby possessing an unconscious will to survive and second of his encounter with a woman, a stranger, with dementia who smiled at him and touched his cheek. This caress, he argues, 'was not brought together through human agency, but willed through an event that emanated from an impersonal registry with neither self nor the trappings of personhood' (Overboe 2009, p. 252). Common to both examples, he argues, is a notoriously 'limited view of life [which] fails to affirm disabled lives that are simply expressed without cognition, intent, or agency' (Overboe 2009, p. 243). According to Overboe, drawing on Deleuzian philosophy, an 'impersonal life' rescues formerly pathologised lives by emphasising that different expressions of life do not necessarily make sense. This is perhaps a good example of Kittay's (2009) 'epistemic modesty', or knowing what we do not know. An 'impersonal life'

further echoes Price's (2015) emphasis that the need for care must not necessarily be understood, so much as recognised that it should be understood.

As Thompson (2015, p. 433) points out, the meaning of care shifts from its form as a noun to a verb. He reflects that, as a noun, 'care' appears to require qualification as in 'good care', whereas as a verb, he explains, 'to care' possesses positive value, for example 'I care'. Likewise, the meaning of 'crystal' transforms from its noun to its verbal form, 'to crystallise'. According to the Macquarie Dictionary (2017a), 'crystal' as a noun has several definitions: 'a clear, transparent mineral or glass resembling ice'; 'a solid body having a characteristic internal structure and enclosed by symmetrically arranged plane surfaces, intersecting at definite and characteristic angles'; and 'glass of a high degree of brilliance'. In its verbal form, 'to crystallise' is 'to form into crystals'; 'to give definite or concrete form to'; and 'to coat (fruit or flower petals) with sugar to give an attractive, edible finish' (Macquarie Dictionary 2017b). As adjectives of 'care' judge things as 'good', such as Rogers' (2016) notion of 'care-full' spaces and Held's (2006) idea of the 'caring person', the adjectival form of crystal as in 'crystal water' or 'crystal necklace' also qualifies nouns as 'good'. As an adjective, 'crystal' imbues positive value and notions of clarity.

Like Thompson, I argue here that the 'descriptive/normative ambiguity [which] enables care to be considered as a source for questions of ethics' (2015, p. 433) applies similarly to 'crystal'. As a solid object, a crystal is relatively neutral, as is the process of crystallisation (which also is an academic method of analysis which I acknowledge but provisionally bracket here), echoing Thompson's acknowledgement that 'care' as a noun is also neutral. Yet, 'crystal' as an adjective denotes something valuable, even aesthetic, reverberating with care theory's 'warm emotional sense of "caring about"' (Kelly 2011, p. 576).

Significantly, crystals and care have a lot in common. Crystals connote clarity and thus the hygienic role of care as in the management of bodily waste, of sanitising 'leaky bodies' (Shildrick 1997). Crystals, like care, evoke spiritual hygiene as well. Care's hygienic role is not only in relation to physical bodies but also apparent in the masculine imaginary of the carer constructed 'as charitable, altruistic, stalwart, saintly' (Hughes, Hopkins & Watson 2005, p. 268) and thus, I deduce, a vision of purity and goodness, also captured in the collective imagining of a crystal. In some belief systems, the physical presence of crystals goes so far as to purport to offer spiritual hygiene in the form of good fortune and purity of the heart, spirit, body, mind

and soul, echoing the reliance of ‘good care’ (Kittay 1999) on faith and hope or, as Noddings puts it, ‘longing for goodness’ (1984). Crystals are formed by environmental forces and in interactions with surrounding elements. Care too is practised in specific contexts shaped by external powers which predetermine available options. It is not surprising that liberal Deaf and disability studies have rejected saintly renditions of care as ‘contaminated’ (Kröger 2009, p. 399). In effect, the descriptor ‘contaminated’ evokes involuntary sanitisation, that is, the curing, abating or eliminating, of bodyminds considered to be lacking fitness, health or other so-called abilities. This contamination is present in naturally formed crystals weathered by oppressive elements and rendered murky, damaged or sharp-edged.

Given these overtones of the image of a crystal, I turn now to canvassing the specific makeup of what I term a crystal of care, sharp-edged, concrete but precious. I propose this somewhat peculiar theory – this crystal of care – because it accounts for the dynamic gap within the human–human and human–nonhuman exchanges depicted in the incidents detailed in this thesis. Fundamentally, a crystal of care offers the field of disability performance studies a critical metaphor for the caring relationship and the practice of care. This metaphor is inflected by the tension between feminist ethics and disability politics, informed by that which exists beyond the self and shaped by aesthetics. It is sharp-edged because caring encounters can be painful, even abusive – breathtakingly, as Price (2015) points out, sometimes necessarily abusive.

Caregiving and carereceiving are concrete practices in an affective sense because caring relationships sustain new material life and animate matter, and claim aliveness in their intention and their obligation. For Tronto, care:

necessarily involves an engagement with the concrete, the local, the particular and once inattentive to these actual practices of care, we lose our grasp of an adequate concept of care (1993, p. 142).

The concept of ‘care’ is thus highly contingent. It is precious in its delicate balance between intention and reception, its escape from cultural baggage as a devalued, gendered, classed and racialised concept in a Western worldview and, finally, its positioning as a free-floating detached and impersonal phenomenon. Drawing on Butler’s ‘precarious life’ (2006), Overboe’s ‘impersonal life’ (2009) and Thompson’s care aesthetics (2015), a crystal of care is indeed

fragile as it fluctuates between pain and potential, between registers of personal and impersonal and so unknowable experience, and between its historic negative value and radical aesthetic possibilities.

With my proposition of a crystal of care, I dwell on caring acts that take place in the cases of dance theatre explored in this research. The sharp edges of a crystal of care symbolise the ever-present potential for harm. In proposing this crystal, I attempt to integrate existing strategies for discussing disability performance into a new framework that pivots on care, especially a feminist disability political interrogation of care, captured in the feminist disability aesthetics of care proposed in Chapter Three.

I suggest that this crystal of care comprises three key facets: a tension between intimacy and distance; a contingent act of attentiveness; and an aesthetic experience. First, care materialises in and through intimacy with a fluctuating degree of distance – distance is also necessary. Second, acts of attentiveness are required for careful encounters with disability. Third, I contend that the encounters addressed in this thesis that are human–human (e.g. performer to spectator) and human–nonhuman (e.g. performer to wheelchair) are fundamentally aesthetic, especially given the art-making and art-presenting contexts. For, as Siebers reflects, disability ‘increases critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel’ (2010, p. 20). These three dimensions – intimacy, attentiveness and aesthetics – are not mutually exclusive but, instead, infused – crystallised – together. The three-faced crystal, indeed, does not make geometric sense – a pyramid form with three planes cannot exist. This impossibility invokes the unknowability to which Overboe (2009), Kittay (2009) and Price (2015) all appeal.

Intimacy

Intimacy is an important facet of the crystal of care. By ‘intimacy’ I refer to immediacy in time and proximity in space and what Read calls the ‘dynamics of intimacy’ or a ‘proximity of relations’ (2008, p. 1). I refer not only to physical or spatial intimacy, but also emotional intimacy. In a very literal sense, one has to be present in time or space, and ideally both, to be in a position to practise care. Intimacy is therefore a prerequisite to any caring encounter. For Thompson too, in discussing his ‘aesthetics of care’, ‘There is a sense that this aesthetics would value intimacy’ (2015, p. 437). Yet encounters with disability specifically necessitate particular intimacies and require a sensitivity to navigate at times necessary degrees of distance.

Intimacy, in many senses, is a proverbial blank slate. As cultural theorist Lauren G Berlant critically notes, intimacy is a condition where ‘no inevitable forms or feelings are attached’ (2000, p. 5). Intimacy therefore presents the conditions for care. In terms of dance, Bojana Kunst (2009) identifies ‘proximity’ as a key term in her discussion of dramaturgy, which she theorises in relation to, and as produced by, contemporary cultural and economic spheres. She argues ‘proximity’ is a definitive aspect of the role of contemporary dance dramaturg (Kunst 2009). With this argument, she shifts focus from objective essentialised knowledges to the processual encounter of work contingent on social *relations*. Thompson (2015) in his care aesthetics similarly advocates for the focus to be on process, rather than outcome. His term for the social relations of which Kunst writes is, indeed, an ‘aesthetics of care’. Likewise, I contend intimacy facilitates an intersubjective exchange that is open to the world. Intimacy as a key facet of a crystal of care thus conjures the dynamic and contingent relations between bodyminds, their environment and, I would add, objects.

As is often the case, a critical disability lens productively complicates matters. Bachelard’s concept of ‘protected intimacy’ (1994, p. 3) recalls the vexed notion of ‘safe space’ arising from the creative development of *OTR*, discussed in Chapter Five, as a paradox of protecting artists’ feelings and enabling artistic exploration. Bachelard’s concept also recalls the private – protected – space of an individual interview in which Sarah-Vyne discloses her specific relationships to hidden disability with me. Yet his concept also presages the paternalistic ‘sting’ (Kelly 2011) of caring for people with disability. In a disability context, the idea of intimacy further connotes at once desire and rejection. For some people with disability, physical intimacy is necessitated in caring encounters. This can be intrusive and so awkwardly negotiated in professional and/or personal relationships, as Kelly (2013, 2016) notes in her role as ‘frien-tendant’ to her friend with disability, Killian. Conversely, emotional and sexual intimacy surfaces as desire in, for example, the character of Julia in Rolf de Heer’s film *Dance me to my song* and a recent production by Restless entitled *Intimate space* (2017) directed by Michelle Ryan. Replete with such varied connotations, the role of intimacy in the disability community is ripe for artistic representation.

In the context of the live performance event, intimacy becomes a constitutive point of reference. Audiences in *DID* experienced intimacy with performers Dianne and Mel. Technology indeed fostered this intimacy and enhanced the immediacy of these performers. Performance

scholar Josephine Machon (2013) elucidates such effects of technology in her account of ‘immersive’ theatre practice, a contemporary tradition in which I situate *DID*. Reminiscent of the striking effect of Mel’s lightwriter on one spectator, Machon discusses the ‘intimate (im)mediacy of sound’ in relation to audio technology used by performers with intellectual disability in Back to Back’s *Small metal objects* (Machon 2013, pp. 166–70). Such enabled intimate spectatorial experience foregrounds the politics and ethics involved in careful encounters with disability at the site of a theatrical event inflected by lived experiences of disability. At this cultural site, the direct experience of intimacy forces spectators into a position where they must make ethical and political decisions in response to their perception of disability. Intimacy, as a facet of a crystal of care, is therefore a precursor to attentiveness and aesthetics.

Attentiveness

Intimacy enables us to be attentive. Attentiveness comprises another facet of a crystal of care. I define ‘attentiveness’ as paying close attention to another. Here, I draw on Tronto’s (1993) political and ethical concept of attentiveness in order to demonstrate that, even prior to the formation of an opinion or the act of a judgement, a spectator or practitioner intentionally senses what is happening. The concept of attentiveness responds partly as an alternative to, for instance, Lawrence Kohlberg’s project on moral development initially critiqued by care ethicist Carol Gilligan (1982) and dramatically extended by Tronto. For Tronto, ‘Except when confronted with a real, (hypothetical!) moral dilemma, there is nothing in Kohlberg’s theory that requires that humans be attentive to, or responsible for, others in their society’ (1993, p. 95). Following Tronto, I understand attentiveness comes before recognition and responsibility, and enhances perception. It is a focused, sustained and conscious openness towards another, ‘a difficult task, and indeed, a moral achievement’ (Tronto 1993, p. 127). Attentiveness is thus a political act.

In the context of professional performance practice – private rehearsals and public shows – how might acts of attentiveness shift? I suggest they do not. As Tronto cautions, ‘people of greater privilege take care of; they care about public and broader issues’ (1993, p. 115). From the outset, then, those paying attention are, by default, in privileged positions. I believe that the responsibility, or as performance scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann puts it, the ‘response-ability’ (2006, p. 185), for attentiveness falls on both the practitioners and their onlookers with and without disability. As Tronto clarifies, ‘The more serious aspect of inattentiveness is the

unwillingness of people to direct their attention to others' particular concerns' (1993, p. 130). According to Tronto the idea of responsibility assumes a separate category, but I argue it overlaps with attentiveness: Attentiveness begins with a sense of responsibility to pay attention to another and so is part of a willed, agentic act.

Others consider attentiveness differently. Specifically, in the context of live theatrical productions there is a performative element of disbelief as one attends to another. Tronto draws on philosopher Simone Weil to clarify that attentiveness is other-oriented and therefore involves 'suspending thought' (as cited in Tronto 1993, p. 128): 'One needs in a sense to suspend one's own goals, ambitions, plans of life, and concerns, in order to recognize and to be attentive to others' (1993, p. 128). I draw a parallel between this 'absence of will' (Tronto 1993, p. 128) required in the act of attentiveness and the suspension of disbelief required in the act of theatre spectatorship (in relation to the 'real' in theatre). More specifically, in a disability performance context attentiveness is an explicit and direct part of taking artists (and people generally) seriously, echoing a common refrain in the disability arts sector as seen in the name of a recent talk regarding the local Sydney disability arts sector – 'We're very serious: Taking artists with disability seriously'. With attentiveness, I maintain Tronto's supposition that 'care will be congruent with other aspects of social life that also require our serious attention' (1993, p. 154). A necessary task, then, is to remain attentive to the various metaphors, symbols and connotations of performances of disability and to carefully reflect on their implications. This task often places a lot of onus on the receiver herself and leads to differences in responses, as the small sample study of four spectators responding to *DID* illustrates. This is arguably why contemporary disability performance work has attracted so much attention in audience experience (for example, Calvert 2016a; eds Grehan & Eckersall 2013; eds Wihstutz & Umathum 2015; Zien & Dokumaci 2016) but especially in disability and dance, as I have indicated in my reviews of literature in Part One (Chapters Two and Three) of this thesis.

In my proposition of a crystal of care, theatre and especially performances of disability become aspects of social life, both on and off stage. Audiences experiencing a live production in a performance space, as well as artists creating a production in the studio, both pay attention and remain attentive to unfolding events about them. Care is embedded in these acts of attention because the acts aim to attend to the comfort, desires and needs of others. In attending to these events, audiences (and artists!) choose to 'care about' (Tronto 1993, p. 115) the performance work.

Aesthetics

The final facet of the crystal of care is aesthetics. A crystal of care formed in part by attentiveness and an experience of intimacy turns then towards notions of reception, judgement and recognition and so, I propose, aesthetics. Aesthetics also shares sharp edges with facets of intimacy and attentiveness because, with aesthetic experience, problems of exploitation, romanticism and prurient objectification arise again. In Perring's study of nondisabled artists' approaches to practice across a range of art forms with practitioners with intellectual disability, one respondent comments that art as a 'challenge to expectation' is exemplified by the presentation of art by people with intellectual disability (as cited in Perring 2005, p. 184). Siebers' 'disability aesthetics' is contingent on audiences (whom I do not assume to be only nondisabled, but whom I do assume to be mostly nondisabled due to myriad exclusionary issues including, most obviously, current inaccessible physical infrastructure of theatres themselves).⁶⁶ In other words, disability aesthetics necessitates a relationship in the context of dance practice between the artistic representation of the performer with disability and her audience or in the development of work within a group of practitioners variously performing and observing. Tronto asserts: 'That "others" matter is the most difficult moral quality to establish in practice' (1993, p. 130). Perhaps, then, how I propose aesthetics functions in this crystal of care is in its capacity to lay bare and reconfigure those who appear as other.

Certainly, these relational aesthetic encounters are not exclusive to live performance contexts. In the rehearsal process, aesthetic encounters occur in abundance. Ames considers her own efforts as a theorist to account for contributions from choreographer Adrian Jones, who has a learning disability:

If the body appears parallel to odd-sounding words because of disability's visual markers, as acoustically, visually and kinetically hovering, outside normative logos, my

⁶⁶ For instance, the Sydney Opera House, Australia's prime venue for live performance across genres, presenting local as well as international artists, has only 12 wheelchair-accessible seats in its main auditorium, the Joan Sutherland Theatre. Importantly, the venue has an Access Strategic Plan in place and is in the process of improving access, such as introducing relaxed shows for certain events, but aspects such as disability awareness training for staff urgently need to be implemented in order to adequately accommodate patrons with disability (Sydney Opera House 2017).

capacity to find adequate words to describe the cultural knowledge they express is drastically challenged (2015, p. 174).

Ames' self-reflexive questioning of her provision of 'adequate words' calls into question her own capacity to attend to such new artistic knowledge. In doing so, she is quite plainly caring about her particular aesthetic response. She is challenging her own specific insight as a choreographer (significantly) without disability collaborating with a choreographer (significantly) with an intellectual disability.

Responding to Bel's *Disabled theater* (2012), Wihstutz likewise identifies 'aesthetic judgement' (2015, p. 40) as significant. In many ways, the arguments made in this thesis have circumnavigated this fundamental tenet of the concept of aesthetics. Rather than digging into the philosophical terrain of the term, I limit my discussion here to a reflection on Thompson and his wife's aesthetic judgement of the relationship between their injured friend and his carer in their home in the UK – '*beautiful*' (2015, original emphasis). When this judgement is applied within a disability setting in which oneself or a friend might be indefinitely or permanently in need of such intense care, this judgement can be oppressive. The idea of calling care 'beautiful' can be construed as parochial, romantic – just like my initial aestheticising response to viewing Deaf actor Alex's signed expression – or even distracting from the perceived goal towards independence and empowerment. Further still, judging care as 'beautiful' potentially detracts from a collective concern to minimise dependency.

Yet knowing these risks, remaining aware of them as real limitations and retaining them still in the worst-case scenario as 'irreconcilable insights' (Kelly 2011, p. 575) surely rescues the value of aesthetics for disability cultures. With my earlier proposition of a feminist disability aesthetics of care I aim to keep hold of the tensions that well-meaning care can bring in disability contexts.

Directing artists' performances of 'care'

The theatrical labour involved in all three cases of dance theatre practice is, I claim, performances of care. As I conclude in Chapters Four and Five, however, such performances of 'care' are politicised in particular ways in the case of artists with disability, whose access to the creative process depends on other artists. Across all three cases of dance theatre addressed in

this thesis I have argued, notably in Chapter Four, that this labour comprises ‘dependency work’ (Kittay 1995). This type of care work ultimately paves the way towards empowering Gerard (in *OTR*) and Jianna (in *DLT*) with autonomy and agency and towards physically challenging Mel (in *DID*). This work is performed by the directing artists variously with and without disability, namely, Sarah-Vyne, Dan (*DLT*), Danielle, Philip (*OTR*) and Dianne (*DID*). I claim that the particular crystal of care distilled from the directing artists’ interactions with Jianna, Gerard and Mel is not sharp-edged (paternalistic) but, on the contrary, is formed by intimate, attentive and aesthetic acts that enable participation in the creative process.

In artistic settings, dependency work is perhaps harder to visibilise because the nature of art-making itself is collaborative, especially in dance and theatre. Yet I argue performing dependency work for artists with disability visibilises this collaborative activity and highlights this collaboration as both a virtuosity of theatre-making and a virtuosity of care (Thompson 2015, p. 438). Rather than ‘A display of singular creative expertise or virtuosity’, writes Thompson, ‘an evocation of an aesthetic experience in the encounter between those present’ (2015, p. 439) becomes the prime artistic pursuit. For example, Danielle and Philip praised, indeed reminisced over, the creative process in our interview, as mentioned in Chapter Five.

To shed light on the particular crystal of care produced by the directors’ treatment of Gerard and Jianna and also Mel, the crystal comprises acts of social intimacy, acute attentiveness and dynamic aesthetics. Intimacy is not limited to the ‘professional’ space of the rehearsal, creative development or public presentation, but extends to artists’ personal lives beyond the creative process. For instance, Sarah-Vyne would drive Jianna to and from the creative development, Philip (Channells) was in contact with Gerard on the phone, and Dianne and Mel are also close friends. As my discussion in Part Two (Chapters Four, Five and Six) of this thesis evidences, interactions between these artists are acutely attentive. Finally, as demonstrated in Chapter Five in particular in response to the Deaf–hearing encounter, these acts shape the particular aesthetics, that is, the ‘shape, feel, sensation and affect’ (Thompson 2015, p. 438), of the interpersonal dynamics that emerge between artists in the studio or on stage. I thus propose that the directors’ efforts provided access for Gerard’s and Jianna’s artistic contributions and even those of Mel.

Now and the future

This thesis asks the subfield of disability performance studies to critically and reflexively engage in concepts of 'care' in theoretical discussion of artistic practice. As Tronto (1993) clarifies, care is not limited to people who need support, it is a central concern of human life: Robinson similarly states, 'by focusing on care, we focus on the process by which life is sustained; we focus on human actors acting' (Robinson 1999, p. 31).

Within each case of dance theatre, certain acts of care hold specific contradictions. Such contradictions are located, for instance, in Matt's self-disclosure in *Murmuration's* study as at once ethical and political. Another dilemma surfaces in the *OTR* directors' effort to embed Auslan that subsequently backfires. In *DID*, one spectator's insistence on the power of Mel's voice presents yet another paradox in light of an artistic intention that the computer voice not represent Mel but other characters.

What are the lessons learnt from my project? Zooming out to a larger reflection on this research, I see that Australian contemporary dance theatre practice by and with artists with disability is, indeed, as Hadley (2017, p. 317) describes the Australian disability arts sector in general, 'poised at the point of a boom'. As she comments, this boom depends on whether the current climate of austerity limits or increases government and private forms of support for the sector. From my observations of the work of dance practitioners in this part of the Australian arts industry, I believe the sector requires higher levels and more complex forms of support. In Australia, I believe, the arts and disability sector depends more heavily on support and, as I reiterate, more support than its 'mainstream' counterparts, simply because of access. In order to meet access needs, performance practice relies on increased numbers of arts workers and therefore increased funding for salaries, more time generally, longer preparatory periods and more preparation, superior critical reflection in processes, a general knowledge base of disability cultures, a critical awareness of issues affecting local disability communities, increased levels of labour at all stages of producing artistic work, and access to resources and support (e.g. Auslan consultants). Curiously, the unchoreographed improvisation of Dianne Reid's *DID* illustrates this priority given to the creative process, reflecting Thompson's own call for an 'end to effect' (2009) reiterated in his care aesthetics (2015) as a focus on preparation and execution, as opposed to artistic outcome.

Crucially, access should never be seen as a burden, especially not in the arts. While it may depend on funding, access brings opportunities for employment, continuously refined work environments, and radical art-making processes and outcomes. In the arts, these opportunities, environments, processes and outcomes should be creative. As Cachia (2013, n. p.) proposes, 'access' should be considered 'creative methodology'. If accessibility is perceived as a work of art itself in the process of ongoing refinement, then access, as a phenomenon, needs to be regarded as a rich artistic resource for all arts workers.

In theatre and disability, Australia is recognised as a leader, particularly given the starlit status of the internationally acclaimed Back to Back. In terms of dance, however, practitioners have in the recent past been attracted outside the country and in nearly all cases towards the UK. Caroline Bowditch, Dan Daw and Marc Brew are just some of the Australian-born, now internationally renowned, pioneering disabled artists who have taken this step. The success of this step is only highlighted by these artists' respective successful careers. Brew, for one, was headhunted to assume the role of Artistic Director of the renowned AXIS Dance Company earlier in 2017. Deprived of such artists, the Australian dance sector as a result is experiencing a cultural deficit of leaders in dance and disability. As my study testifies, the national dance scene is nonetheless making substantial progress towards embracing work with artists with disability. Funding initiatives like the New Normal strategy are paramount if this progress is to continue. Yet homegrown, bespoke training, development and work opportunities for artists are necessary if these artists are to pursue their practice in Australia and not overseas. The discontinuation of Catalyst, a professional development and mentorship program for emerging Australian dance artists, is a considerable loss. In the future, I hope that Australian dance practitioners with disability as well as those working with peers with disability will not be 'included' in Australian arts, recalling the late disability activist Stella Young's (2014) hesitation towards the rhetorical lipservice paid to 'inclusion'. Instead, I hope that these practitioners will be valued as exciting artistic assets to the precariously thriving ecology of the Australian arts community.

I end this thesis with a brief reconsideration of Card's (2006) rehabilitation of dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster's (1997) 'body for hire'. While in her concept Foster emphasises the financial transaction of dancing bodies, Card rescues such bodies by stressing their artistic qualities, notably their versatility. Whereas Rossmann (2008b, n. p.) deploys Card's understanding of these bodies by focusing on their active state of being and what they 'can' do, I revisit this as a

point underpinned by subtle and most likely unwitting ableism. In focusing on what ‘bodies can do’, as Cachia (2012) has similarly done in a disability arts context, we miss what disabled bodyminds cannot do – what they fail to do – and this is certainly significant and, surely, valuable. By focusing on what bodyminds need in order to be sustained and live in the world, as care theorists commonly promulgate, we turn to interpersonal and technological support, and the resources of our environs. With this focus, we confront the desire and the provocation – for sometimes we do not have the choice, as Alex in *OTR* shows us – to care for one another. As Kittay points out, some forms of care are ‘not a matter of voluntarism’ (2015a, p. 287). And as Parker-Starbuck (2011) reminds us and Dianne Reid portrays in her sensitive treatment of Mel’s wheelchair, technology itself is already entangled in our bodyminds. As Mitchell and Snyder (2015) most recently advocate, in a neoliberal and ‘able-nationalist’ instant disabled bodies fail, and they do so *productively*. I argue that part of this productivity constitutes a vital return to cultural practices and social relationships of care. Fraser (2016), who depicts a current sociopolitical threat to caring relations, might agree.

In artistic practice, by attending to what practitioners with *and without* disability might need, we observe a need for care and thus the creative, edifying possibilities that that need unleashes. ‘Aesthetic value’, writes Thompson, ‘is located in-between people in moments of collaborative creation, conjoined effort and intimate exchange’ (2015, p. 438). In crystallising the care that has transpired in acts of intimacy, attentiveness and aesthetics, I place emphasis on the specific interactions within three Australian groups and shift focus away from the final outcome of ‘the singular display of self-honed skill’ (Thompson 2015, p. 438), that is, in a disability performance context, the exhibition of dancerly or theatrical ability. And yet at the final stage of public performance, in experiencing the exhibition of dance theatre work involving artists with disability, audiences too might dwell on the desires and provocations of care. They too might grasp the image of a crystal of care, these new virtuosities wrought by the disabled figure.

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