



The Green Fuse

(The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower:

Dylan Thomas, 1933)

In Butoh class, we have done classic transformation cycles of growth, death and rebirth. At this time of year, with lush new growth all around us, this exercise looks more closely at the growing process. Plants don't have muscles; their shape and movement depend on the water pressure and turgor, or distension, in their cells.

Preparation

Begin with your preferred warm up. A good one to include is the 'wave', where water gradually rises through your body from the soles of your feet, filling your cells, until it pours out of your mouth and you are empty again.

Foot-breathing exercise: (You can do this in the garden or, to really get into it, in a larger open space where you feel OK moving very slowly.) Step forward with the right leg, placing the heel first, breathing out as the sole of your foot gradually meets the ground. Then, inhaling, as the weight shifts over the toes and the left heel begins to lift, allow the energy from the earth to flow up the front of your right leg to your centre. Then release it down the back of the left leg as it meets the ground. Now draw energy up again through the left leg as you inhale once more. Continue in this way, drawing up energy with each breath in and releasing it with each breath out.

Fist-opening exercise: Make a fist with one hand and hold it for about 2 minutes. Then slowly allow it to open, taking about 3 minutes to do this. Have no 'intention' about opening your fingers, simply observe the small movements they make as they gradually extend by themselves.

Exploration

Find somewhere in the sunlight, outdoors if possible, on grass or earth, or indoors in a patch of light with the window open. Let the sun warm you. Feel the breeze on your skin, dig your fingers and toes into the grass or earth (or carpet). Make yourself small, a seed or corm, or dormant plant. Wait for the energy to activate your body. (You can also experiment with beginning lying flat or standing up.)

Where in your body does the urge to grow begin? Elbow, chest, shoulder-blade, neck? (Think of how seedlings push the soil up with their strong necks, before lifting their leaves to the light.)

cont...

Where does the energy go next? Perhaps a tap root burrows down into the earth, seeking moisture, branching out into the dark, crumbly soil. Perhaps the paired seed leaves open and the delicate true leaves start to unfold. Or just a simple shoot stretching upwards. Experience the changing turgidity and resulting shape of each cell in turn!

What is the direction of growth? Vertical, horizontal? Does it go in a straight line or curve? (Think how climbing plants follow the sun to curl around their supports.) Is there more than one point of growth? What happens to the growing parts? Do they thicken, branch, twine, curl? Does the growth impulse flow through the centre like a fountain or stream out to the extremities? What shape is your mature form? How does it respond to the wind, to rain, to hail and storms, to sunshine and starlight, to a sudden late frost?

Do you flower? Where on your body are the buds? As their cells expand, in what way do the flowers open and close – spiral, radial? Gradually or explosively? What shape are the flowers and petals – cup, vase, star; smooth, ruffled, feathery, etc. Do they only open once or open and close in response to day and night? What is your flower's particular scent? Can you dance that?

You can stop here in full summer glory, or continue the cycle through fruit/seed, decay and eventual death and return to the earth.

For inspiration see these videos by Neil Bromhall: [time lapse iris](#), [time lapse sunflower](#), [time lapse dandelion](#). There are of course lots of similar examples.