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Mobilizing the Score:

Generative Choreographic Structures, 1960-Present

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Alison D'Amato

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Mobilizing the Score

Generative Choreographic Structures, 1960-Present

by

Alison D'Amato

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Susan Leigh Foster, Chair

Since the late 16th century, choreographers have documented their work using notated scores, many of which rely on standardized codification to facilitate accurate choreographic reproduction. This dissertation focuses on scores developed in the last fifty years, which, by contrast, suggest notation's generative potential by deploying indeterminacy, audience participation, and non-reproductive documentation. Not only do such scores reconfigure roles for choreographers, performers, spectators and readers, but they also elucidate how schematization lends choreographic material increased mobility. That is, while the scores addressed in this analysis might record and represent choreographic material, they also render that material responsive to change by welcoming unpredictable instances of application and reception.

With respect to generative scoring, New York City's experimental arts community between 1960-61 stands as a touchstone, giving rise to a wealth of unconventional scores by choreographers, composers, writers, directors, and visual artists. This investigation examines scores from that period (Simone Forti's writings in *An Anthology* and Jackson Mac Low's *The*

Pronouns), as well as later works that draw on key concepts and strategies of the time. Recent examples include: Deborah Hay's *Solo Commissioning Project*, William Forsythe's *Synchronous Objects*, Ralph Lemon's *Geography Trilogy*, and dances by Yvonne Meier, Ishmael Houston-Jones, and Julie Tolentino. Such works illustrate the enduring influence of early 1960s innovation while attending to the ways in which contemporary choreographers continue to push the score in new directions.

In each case, I emphasize the rootedness of the score within a clearly defined choreographic practice. I also use concrete examples to reflect upon broader theoretical questions that come to the fore in light of the shift toward generativity: specifically a constellation of issues concerning textuality, participation and the archive. By focusing on the score as a concrete manifestation of choreographic thinking rather than its residue, I approach the representation of dance as a creative act that dovetails with physical practice in distinct, and sometimes surprising, ways. My goal is to supplant theoretical generalizations about the relationship between dance and textual representation by attending to the many ways in which contemporary choreographic practices revel in their intertwining.

The dissertation of Alison D'Amato is approved.

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Introduction

Written or oral, graphic or language-based, detailed or sparse, contemporary choreographic scores distill and transmit information in as many different ways as there are dances. A dance's score might be tacked to the wall in a rehearsal room, comprehensible only to those who have been trained to parse its representational codes. It might be hidden away in a choreographer's notebook, a cryptic and personal visualization of the structures being fleshed out by dancing bodies. Conversely, it might be much more widely legible, perhaps even shared with a dance's spectators so that they might better follow along with its action or understand how it was made. A score might bear words or images, conveying spatial patterns, timing, or movement ideas. It might even represent the shape of a dancer's thoughts, containing the images or principles that govern her attention over the course of performance. In short, a score might be any document, object or statement that conveys choreographic structure. In doing so, scores occupy a territory between concept and event. They mediate and translate, standing somewhat apart from dancing to materialize choreographic structure in language and code.

Though scores fulfill any number of practical purposes – perhaps mapping a choreographer's ideas in the first stages of a creative process or serving the performer as memory aids further along – they also manifest deeper conceptual and ideological frameworks, particularly those that shape various forms of engagement with the dance. Scores address potentially responsive dancers, spectators and readers; they likewise delineate, and sometimes shift, choreographic labor, giving rise to shared vocabularies that open up the work (and

pleasures) of dance making. In what follows, I hope to illuminate the principle functions of an array of scores in the context of contemporary American dance, placing particular emphasis on the forms of engagement that they facilitate. I do so in order to signal, and to investigate, a number of profound changes that have taken place in the last fifty years with respect to choreographic scoring. These changes highlight an overwhelming tendency among late-20th and early-21st century choreographers to conceive of scores as firm structural frameworks that nonetheless create space for multiple modes of enacting, perpetuating, and responding to dances. Moreover, I contend that this tension – between structural fixity and abundant possibility – represents a key, and thus far neglected, ontological feature of the movement score: namely, its dual capacity to codify, generalize, and apply constraint (on the one hand) and to accommodate particularity, idiosyncrasy, and innovation (on the other). The dances featured in this analysis illuminate a range of ways in which bodies and subjects respond to, interact with, and affect choreographic structures; they also reveal how scores furnish opportunities for those interactions while at the same time staking a dance’s conceptual and formal claims. Ultimately, they speak to the benefits of meaningfully including scores in critical assessments of choreographic practices and works, especially where such inclusions provoke new insight into how dances, and the people who create them, make meaning.

At present, no comprehensive theoretical model exists to address the multitude of uses and functions for the movement score, with “score” here defined as any schematization of choreographic structure rendering the central principles of a dance communicable. Due to the breadth of the field of inquiry, any attempt to establish basic parameters runs the risk of hopelessly broad generalization failing to do justice to the very practices it means to shed light on. Yet this abundance also points to an urgent need to unravel some of the basic problematics of

the choreographic score. Such a pursuit seems especially productive insofar as scores tend to invoke several of the most consistently and tenaciously troubling theoretical issues in dance scholarship. A short list of these would certainly include: dance's complicated relationship to textuality and inscription, its persistent association with ephemerality, and its capacity to model complex forms of participation, mobilization and agency. I want to use this investigation as an opportunity to take up these theoretical issues, and especially to think through the ways in which my own approach to the score might propel longstanding debates about the dancing body in some new directions.

I address the aforementioned theoretical issues alongside concrete examples that serve not so much as paradigmatic case studies but rather as points of departure, provocations from which to outline some of the basic practical and conceptual contours of contemporary scoring. Because I have used these theoretical issues to guide my selection of scores, and to orient my analysis of them, this project does not cohere as a chronological or genealogical summation of late 20th century scoring. That is, I do not attempt to link dominant trends in scoring with particular moments within an overarching historical scope, nor do I highlight scores or dances that seem unusually successful from an aesthetic or conceptual standpoint. Rather, I have chosen examples that allow me to illustrate how specific choreographic scores inform broad theoretical discussions in ways that are rich, complex, and novel. Throughout, I address how various approaches to scoring impact choreography, performance and reception, though each chapter skews slightly toward facets of engagement that the chosen scores, and the accompanying theoretical discussions, insistently forefront.

I hope this discussion might offer a useful theoretical grounding with respect not just to the dances populating my analysis, but to the full range of choreographic practices – particularly

evident in the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st – that centralize the score in dramatic ways. As I move from theoretical overviews to close readings of scores and dances, I return to a series of key questions. For example: what does it look like when choreographers disperse the responsibilities of dance making, endowing dancers, spectators and readers with heightened generative input as a dance moves from score to enactment, and sometimes back again? What roles for dancers, spectators, and readers emerge when choreography becomes communicable and thus shared, perhaps over-spilling the boundaries of the moment of performance? How do existing conceptions of dance-making and choreographic production shift when choreographers bring scores to the forefront in process or presentation stages of a work, perhaps even publishing them in print or digital formats? And finally, how do these shifts help us read scores not only as vehicles for structure and stability, but also as agents of change and expansion, exhibiting a radical openness to engagement in thought and action?

Before tackling these questions, it may be helpful to identify (and perhaps trouble) a few basic terms and distinctions. Thus far I have used the term “score” without referring to dance notation. My own elision reflects a generally accepted tendency to designate more open-ended schemas as scores, implicitly suggesting their opposition to notational models that claim relatively tight representational correlations between symbols and movement. As I will discuss in further detail, I hope to work against that opposition by incorporating open-ended, highly generative scores into the legacy of notation stretching back to the late 16th century. Thus, in many cases I use the terms “scoring” and “notation” interchangeably, especially where I am dealing explicitly with strategies for inscription that effect relationships between text and specific movements (as opposed to broad choreographic structures). However, I do think this distinction deserves attention at the outset insofar as it impinges upon my central proposition: that

contemporary scores confer upon dances not just structure and identity, but flexibility and porousness. From an historical perspective, the conceptual and semantic shift from dance notation to scoring reflects a significant epistemological rupture whereby score-facilitated flexibility begins to overshadow notation's capacity to establish choreographic work-identity and facilitate authenticated reproduction. As I will also discuss in much further detail, this shift urgently needs to be located within a specific historical moment – namely the very early 1960s – when experimental models for musical notation meaningfully intermingled with choreographic production. In fact, the term “score” does not arise in the context of dance until this moment of interdisciplinary encounter, and when it does, it clearly begins to connote a new approach to recording that emphasizes process over product, pliancy over stabilization.

As a result, choreographers and performers tend to use the term “score” to refer to guiding principles behind improvisational dancing rather than templates for “set” works. This undoubtedly reflects how scoring has come to be aligned more with uncertainty and perpetual change than pre-established vocabularies, with notational prompts referencing ranges of possibilities rather than more specific movement outcomes. In fact, many of the scores represented in my analysis work this way, with structural precepts giving rise to spontaneous decision-making or, at the very least, significant variation over time. In many ways, though, I have resisted placing too much emphasis on the improvisational nature of these practices, instead focusing on the choreographic operations (communicated through scores) that enable various forms of spontaneity, innovation, and interpretive variation.

This strategy stems in part from an attention to the ways in which choreographers think and talk about their work – how, for example, some artists resist the label of improvisation even where their direction invites unpredictability and variance. This resistance seems to me not so

much a rejection of improvisation as a conceptual category, but evidence of an expanded notion of the choreographic in which a dance's self-identifying properties reside in "originating ideas" rather than "external forms" (Rubidge 2000, 213).¹ On the other hand, where choreographers have been clear about identifying the improvisatory nature of their work, I have stressed how spontaneity stems from clearly established parameters – not only those communicated by the score, but also as solidified through physical practice. Of course, I am not the first to stress the fact that improvisation and choreography need not form an "overly simplistic" opposition, nor am I the first to point to the rigor that so often undergirds improvisational play (Buckwalter 2010, 5).² These remain crucial points. Yet from my perspective, thinking through the ways in which scores make space for improvisational dancing does not go nearly far enough, as it fails to uncover how scoring approaches spectators, readers, and non-dancing "users" (in the case of emergent, interactive digital formats). By and large, then, the topic of my investigation is not so much how scores invite spontaneous dancing, or even dancerly decision-making, but how they make choreographic principles available to these multiple, and ever-expanding, audiences.

To explore this topic, it is necessary to go into some detail regarding the various ways in which scores convey choreographic structure – in other words, I want to note very specifically how scores function as representational technologies, and how key features shape various forms of engagement. Though each example suggests a different answer to this question, I deploy some categorical terms throughout that deserve introductory elaboration. One central distinction involves the difference between prescriptive and descriptive scoring. Does a choreographer or notator devise a score to "capture" pre-existing movement, or does the score serve as an

¹ See Rubidge (2000) for a productive discussion regarding the problem of establishing work-identity in the case of more "open" choreographic works – i.e. dances in which "variations in each performance may be so great that it becomes difficult for audience members to recognize multiple performances of an open work as performances of the same work" (205).

² See also Albright and Gere (2003), Caines and Heble (2015).

initiating impetus, a provocation, an invitation? The former function correlates to descriptive scoring while the latter correlates to the prescriptive. Jonathan Burrows reinforces this separation when he posits that notation “divides into two kinds: the various attempts at a complete system to write down work that already exists; or the score as a notebook, a tool to find something new” (2010, 30). While Burrows and I point, in fact, to the same useful distinction, I disagree that it necessarily manifests in “two kinds” of scores. Some scores, of course, are solely prescriptive, never meant to capture but only to trigger, stimulating movement but not precisely denoting it. Others remain purely descriptive without carrying the intention to prescribe – these scores capture movement or choreographic information, though not toward the eventual goal of reproduction. Others, though, combine prescription and description: perhaps a score has been designed to capture movement, and also to serve as a template for reproduction (standardized forms of notation, in fact, often work this way).

A second crucial distinction concerns the intricacies of the determinate versus the indeterminate sign. Though I discuss indeterminacy more fully in the next chapter, positioning it as a lynchpin of interdisciplinary exploration in the 1960s, I will take this opportunity to flesh out what the indeterminate, or “open,” sign entails with respect to movement. Since I borrow the term from musicology, though, I will also borrow the caveat that “all notations are indeterminate in so far as they fail to give a complete specification” for performer action (Cole 1974, 137). That is, no notational sign can be said to be perfectly determinate by excluding all individual variation, whether interpretive or merely functional. This becomes especially obvious in the context of dance – we move from different bodies, after all. Yet in the context of determinate choreographic notation, the notator wants to maintain a standardized correlation between sign and enactment that ensures relatively minimal, and often nearly imperceptible, deviation from

established norms. Indeterminate notation, on the other hand, explicitly courts difference, leaving a degree of license to the performer in order to increase the range of physical possibilities. Often determinacy hinges on practice: consider the difference between asking a ballet dancer to “plié in first position” and to “bend the knees with the heels together.” Such a dancer knows how to reproduce the normative plié not just because the prompt is more precise, but because she has undertaken years of codified physical practice. This is also not to say that the second prompt would necessarily lead to a lack of physical specificity; it merely leads to a range of potentially unforeseen differences with respect to enactment. Though not all of the examples in my analysis concern indeterminate scoring, indeterminacy remains a conceptual touchstone insofar as the opening of the notational sign dramatically increases the scope of possibility with respect to dance’s representation and schematization.

Finally, I want to address a concept that I use to frame my investigation as a whole, going so far as to include it in the title: namely, the category of the “generative.” In some sense, I use “generative” as a catchall term, useful as it is to encompass indeterminacy, prescriptivity, and all manner of notational strategies aimed at accommodating differentiated experience and response. Just as all signs can be said to carry some degree of indeterminacy, all scores can certainly be said to be substantively generative. All choreographic scores prompt (or at least can prompt) the production of dances, even if that production is geared toward repetition and re-iteration. I certainly do not mean to exclude reproduction from the sphere of production, nor am I blind to the danger of implicitly suggesting a hierarchy that privileges the new over the (imperfectly) returning. Yet it seems to me that so much of what happens within and after the sea change of the early 1960s has to do with generativity, even where scores might (by exhibiting particular autonomy) exhibit a maddeningly ambivalent stance toward enactment. In fact, any dance or

choreographic practice that insistently emphasizes its score dwells particularly on that generativity: on the ripple effects of instructional language and symbolism, on what the blueprint engenders that it somehow cannot contain. On a practical level, this means that none of my examples focus on accuracy with respect to choreographic reproduction, and none set the stage for reproduction that hinges on exclusion to ensure sameness and self-identity. Rather, my fundamental orientation toward generativity signals an attention to how contemporary scores tend to welcome the irreducibility of the body and, just as importantly, acknowledge the capacity of choreographic thinking to cross medial boundaries.

Project Overview

Thus far, I have argued that the contemporary score, and especially the contemporary generative score, deserves more substantive theoretical grounding. I have also suggested that it warrants historical contextualization, and specifically with respect to notational innovations of the early 1960s. In the next chapter I consider two artists who produced forms of choreographic notation emblematic of that period's experimentation: Jackson Mac Low and Simone Forti. With *The Pronouns: Forty Dances for the Dancers* (1974), Mac Low supplies a series of chance-produced "dance-instruction poems" that explicitly invite individualized physical response. Though *The Pronouns* appear in many published forms between 1964 and 1979, they derive from a work entitled *Nuclei for Simone Forti*, originally composed in 1961. I rehearse a brief history of that work's development, emphasizing Mac Low's overarching interest in poetry as action or event, and elucidating how these choreographic prompts advance the emergent ideal of

authorial nonintention. By categorizing the dance-instruction poems as examples of indeterminate language scoring, I discuss how Mac Low anticipates and welcomes interpretational variation. I also stress, though, how he establishes normative standards and practical constraints, thereby giving rise to heightened performer responsibility alongside interpretational flexibility. Ultimately, I look to *The Pronouns* as a model for how that period's nonintentional compositional methods leverage the score to shift authorial and performer roles.

By contrast, when I approach a group of Simone Forti's scores dating from 1960-61, I focus on how the texts themselves accomplish a curious form of enactment, lending notational writing a degree of autonomy as an aesthetic product, and implicitly including the writing practice within the scope of choreographic production. Forti's scores appear in a vitally important compendium of early 1960s score culture, *An Anthology*.³ Like many of the artists contributing to *An Anthology*, Forti illustrates how the inscription of a work can reveal and mobilize a core conceptual framework, thereby extending the artist's reach to a broader reading public. Unlike Mac Low's open-ended language, Forti's terse, unadorned depictions of movement scenarios do not explicitly address potential interpreters; rather, they address readers who might gain access to the work solely through what is presented on the page. Here, I stress the connections between language scores such as Forti's and later developments in minimalism, conceptual art, and Fluxus, noting the emerging possibility that the "work" might actualize in the mind of the score's receiver. Just as Mac Low's scores loosen representational correlations between sign and enactment, so too do Forti's scores raise new possibilities for enactment, with the score entering into representational economies that circumvent traditional modes of live performance. Forti's exemplifies how a score might be resolutely descriptive (undertaking

³ The full title is: *An Anthology of chance operations concept art anti-art indeterminacy improvisation meaningless work natural disasters plans of action stories diagrams Music poetry essays dance constructions mathematics compositions* (1961/63). I will hereafter refer to the volume as *An Anthology*.

movement's capture) but also wholly generative, lending succinct choreographic proposals flexibility in transmission and circulation.

To introduce these examples, I undertake a much broader overview of the artistic community in which Mac Low and Forti participated actively between 1960-61. I note first of all the – likely unsurprising – connections between these artists and John Cage, along with his New York School contemporaries such as Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff. I pinpoint how the experimental strategies for musical notations pioneered by these artists gained traction outside of music proper, influencing an interdisciplinary group of peers working intimately and concurrently in downtown New York City. Along with Mac Low and Forti, artists like La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, George Brecht, and the participants of Robert Dunn's 1960 composition workshop contributed to a wave of "post-Cagean" production that explored scoring outside of typical disciplinary conventions. By insisting upon the importance of movement exploration in this context, I underscore how dance practice influenced the slightly later art historical developments of minimalism, conceptual art and Fluxus. I hope to make the case that choreographers did not just absorb the period's notational innovations, but rather worked as active pioneers alongside artists of varied disciplinary affiliations.

I also want to suggest how a score-centric reading of these few years in the early 1960s might destabilize linear dance historical accounts of Cage's influence that proceed from Cage to Merce Cunningham through to the Judson Church concerts. With respect to this dance historical timeline, the revolutionary approaches to choreographic production emblemized by the Judson Church concerts (between 1962-1964) have been amply historicized, yet the years just prior to the Judson activity perhaps less so. I train my focus on interdisciplinary, pre-Judson, post-Cagean score culture in order to emphasize the ways in which methods of scoring developed in

this period laid the groundwork for important changes to come. Thus, while only two of my examples date directly to the period, all of the scores bear witness to the profound and enduring impact of the models of composition, reception, performance, and transmission that emerged from the early 1960s. These models endowed notational processes with a radical openness, using instructions and directives not to establish unchanging boundaries but to render structural frameworks accessible and responsive to continual application and re-application.

Following my discussion of Mac Low and Forti, Chapter Two specifically concerns how indeterminate, prescriptive language scores place dancers in a position of heightened responsibility when confronted with carefully devised provocations. I address two very different examples – Deborah Hay’s Solo Commissioning Project (1998-present) and Yvonne Meier’s *Brother of Gogolorez* (2011) – that model distinctly different approaches to writing for the body. By highlighting dancers’ interpretive faculties, these scores suggest how a dance can be defined by the accumulation of iterative difference, how the very openness of a work can constitute a key identifying feature. In Hay’s case, I explore the transmission of her solo choreography to a group of adaptors learning in an intensive setting, gaining proficiency not just with the score, but also with an accompanying physical practice that supports its enactment. Both the score and the practice involve the application of language prompts that locate much of the work of adaptation in the cultivation of embodied consciousness. I look closely at the relationship that Hay forges with her adaptors, which comes about through sustained person-to-person mentorship, the schematization of choreographic structure represented by the score, and a contractual agreement regarding the solo’s rehearsal and presentation. As choreographic material shifts from Hay’s body to the bodies of her diligent adaptors, the Solo Performance Commissioning Project

suggests how scores have the potential to effect an interplay between language and movement that does not resolve in fixity or the suppression of difference.

With respect to Yvonne Meier's *Brother of Gogolorez*, I also focus on the physical practices that support performers' enactment of a generative language score. Where Hay does not regard her dancers' work as improvisation, though, Meier embraces the term, calling upon preparatory techniques like Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement to cultivate explicitly improvisatory approaches to physical interpretation. Moreover, Meier's rehearsal practice differs starkly from that of Hay insofar as she does not ask dancers to repeatedly enact the score, growing more familiar each time with the intricacies of its language. Rather, she develops improvisational skills in rehearsal, and then applies an unfamiliar sequence of prompts with each instance of performance. She delivers these prompts in person, joining her dancers onstage and taking up a strategic authorial persona. By stepping into the frame of the performance to issue her choreographic instructions, Meier slyly critiques her own authority, a critique that is further exacerbated by the dancers' unhinged physicality and clear interpretive license.

I focus on these two examples in order to explore how indeterminate language scores might productively shift some of the parameters of broader discussions surrounding the relationship between dance and textuality. I preface my discussion of Hay's and Meier's work, then, with an overview of the ways in which dance practice has historically been alienated from – or conversely, compared to – writing, noting how these positions have impinged upon the theoretical purchase that dance has had on meaning-making. Not surprisingly, scholars pursuing this line of thought often assume that notation lends dance stability or an increased penetrability. Scores can then be figured as perpetually inadequate, raising questions about the feasibility of any symbolic system to convey the complexity of a body in motion. More troublingly, though, de

facto confluences of symbolization and capture also support the notion of writing as fundamentally repressive, at odds with the bodily evanescence that some see as so central to performance's critical and subversive potential.

This line of thinking finds a clear corollary in claims leveled outside the field, particularly by Western philosophers, where dance often serves as a potent conceptual stand-in for irrepressible bodily vitality. Here, theorists analogize dance with lightness and play, an inherent enemy to the overburdening forces of logocentrism. Interestingly, the poststructuralist turn that most strongly reinforced these views also supported a sea change in critical dance studies, in which scholars used the critical expansion of the notion of textuality to de-naturalize choreographic production and emphasize dance's legibility. For decades, these developments have given rise to a wealth of invaluable scholarship on the relationship between dance and textuality, yet research remains sparse concerning the actual texts that choreographers produce and forefront over the course of their practice. My analysis aims to redress this gap in the literature, producing detailed accounts of specific practices that reveal scoring as both a manifestation of choreographic thinking and an invitation for subjective bodily response.

Though my analysis of Hay in Chapter 2 concerns her choreographic practice in the late 20th – early 21st century, Hay clearly connects to the interdisciplinary score culture of the early 1960s, having been an active participant alongside Mac Low and Forti. My discussion of *Gogolorez* effects a clear transition toward more recent work, a focus that I strengthen in Chapter Three with a discussion of dances by Ishmael Houston-Jones and Julie Tolentino. With an emphasis on these artists, I turn my attention to participatory scores, discussing two dances that highlight the importance of spectatorial engagement. Both Houston-Jones in *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest* (1996-ongoing) and Tolentino in *Raised By Wolves* (2013) address their audiences

directly, asking spectators to respond by meaningfully contributing. Both artists use scores to not just to foster spectator-produced content, but to embed spectatorial response into a dance's very choreographic structure, thereby opening up the dance-making process to uncertainty and constant iterative evolution. Houston-Jones does this with an orally delivered score that sets up a dynamic, audience-led system of call and response. He places his dancing body on the line, allowing vocal spectators to control his movement, speech, and vision. As in my previous chapter's analysis of Yvonne Meier, I stress how Houston-Jones's score sets up a critique of choreographic authority, though here that comes about through his own vulnerability, especially where he probes the limits of his own compliancy. Placing himself in the hands of his audience, Houston-Jones illuminates the inherent power conferred on those looking and those looked-upon in the context of dance performance, shifting modes of spectatorship away from optics and toward an acknowledgement of desire and capacity for action.

Tolentino, by contrast, facilitates a participatory experience that comes about through self-awareness, heightened intimacy, and unspoken connection. She invites small groups of spectators into a gallery space by appointment, presenting her dance within a larger landscape of object and installation work (that resonates deeply with the spectator's corporeal experience). Recalling my own experience as an audience member, I focus on the network of relationships that Tolentino finely draws between audiences, the gallery space, the objects, and her own dancing body. With respect to the dancing, she structures her work with a modular collection of scores: audience members select one or two, determining an overall choreographic sequence that changes with each performance. Since Tolentino represents choreographic material using abstract graphic images in the scores, spectators do not necessarily perceive representational correlations, but they do keenly perceive how tightly they have been drawn into the work's

development, and how inextricably Tolentino has woven their experiences with her own to render those affective connections substantive choreographic material.

As I argued in previous chapters, I contend that scores by Houston-Jones and Tolentino invite diverse contributions through their openness, while also stressing the constraints and increased accountability that come with such involvement. Here, though, I take a different theoretical point of departure, contextualizing these dances within a discussion of the embedded politics of choreographic production. I begin by noting how the conventional theatrical separation of performer and spectator has been largely addressed through discussion of the spectatorial “gaze.” I want to address the value of critical perspectives on spectator gaze while also suggesting how these might be limiting when confronted by the situations generated by participatory scores. Additionally, I frame my discussion of Houston-Jones and Tolentino with a brief gesture toward art historical accounts of the relational visual art practices that theorize engaged reception as a counterweight to social alienation. Throughout this introductory interlude, I cite Lawrence Halprin’s important theorization of the score as developed through his *RSVP Cycles* (1969), where he makes a compelling case for choreographic events to constitute social formations rather than autonomous and single-authored products.

Finally, I address the function of the score that has perhaps received the most scholarly attention: documentation. To those unfamiliar with the diversity of uses for the term “score” pervading contemporary dance practice, it might seem surprising that documentation represents a priority for only some choreographers, in some contexts. I want here to draw some attention to explicitly descriptive scores – scores that inscribe in order to capture and preserve movement material. I also, though, want to emphasize their generativity by attending to the ways in which they open up new avenues for articulating and extending choreographic research. Spotlighting

Ralph Lemon's *Geography* book trilogy and William Forsythe's digital *Synchronous Objects* platform, I demonstrate multiple ways in which choreographic documentation extends and manifests choreographic thinking beyond live performance.

In so doing, I contest the assumption that scores necessarily index dance's ephemerality, proposing an alternate reading of descriptive scores that replaces economies of loss and disappearance with those of radical dispersion and abundant possibility. As in each chapter, I lay the groundwork for close readings of my examples with a broader theoretical overview – in this case, the question of performance's longstanding association with ephemerality and a resulting tension with the archive. I gather perspectives not just from dance studies, but also from performance studies and visual arts criticism where the latter has meaningfully grappled with the dancing body. My summary addresses the many productive vantage points from which performance's ephemerality has been considered, yet it also reveals how infrequently that question has been taken up with respect to choreographic notation. Ultimately, I will argue that choreographers are forging ahead with approaches to documentation and archival practices that cannot be properly accounted for as technologies to combat loss. Thus, rather than championing or refuting performance's essential ephemerality, I hope to make the case for practice-specific investigations for how and why choreographers document their work, often insisting on that documentation as a meaningful component of the work itself.

In Chapter One, as mentioned, I discuss how artists of the early 1960s conferred an unprecedented degree of autonomy upon scores, which in turn gave them access to new modes of transmission, distribution, and exchange. Lemon and Forsythe extend this legacy in surprising ways. Where Forti's writings distill choreographic concepts to a bare minimum, Lemon approaches documentation as a radical expansion, connecting scores to a network of thoughts

and ideas spanning years of research and lived experience. By pairing three theatrical works with three books that archive disparate and nonlinear materials, Lemon upends the hierarchy that subordinates documentation to the ephemeral moment of the live, revealing that documentation as itself a consummately creative practice. Forsythe likewise illuminates the creative potential of documentation, though in the case of *Synchronous Objects*, he uses the score to generate “data” that will then be put to use by artists working outside of dance. That is, the score at the heart of this interactive website distills choreographic structure so that it can be quantified, translated, and re-mapped to produce extra-bodily results. In both cases, scores and documentation abstract choreographic research from the body, though I will ultimately argue that this is not to marginalize corporeality, but rather to reveal how choreographic material can be articulated through multiple modes of inscription and transfer.

Methodology

Due to its tri-partite focus on the representational specificity of scores, the forms of engagement that they promote, and the theoretical questions that they trigger, my investigation necessitates a methodological framework flexible enough to approach performance, text, and existing scholarly dialogue with equal rigor. As I have illustrated, I begin each chapter with an introduction designed to explore a set of questions that I deem integral to any substantive theoretical account of the contemporary, generative score. Within these introductions, I address a range of perspectives coming from inside and outside of dance studies, and then suggest where my own analysis might extend, shift, or complicate existing parameters of the discussion. These

introductions lay the groundwork for close readings of scores and dances, setting the stage for choreographic practice to enrich ongoing theoretical debates. To support my analysis, I draw upon documents, performances (live and recorded), oral interviews, and insights culled from my own experience as an observer or participant. In each chapter, then, I move from theory into practice, supporting my investment in admittedly broad sets of issues by grounding those issues in the historically, culturally, and practically specific.

When addressing the scores, I juxtapose contrasting examples that nonetheless speak to a shared overarching issue, bringing out different vantage points from which to consider common notational aims and functions. Wherever possible, I interweave textual analysis of the scores with choreographic analysis of enactments, stressing their interrelatedness. In this sense I have taken a methodological cue from interdisciplinary treatments of the language score such as John Lely's and James Saunders *Word Events*, which evaluates language scores from the late 1950s through the present. The authors discuss compositional strategies while also providing historical contextualization, parsing grammatical and semiotic structures as well as investigating the practical implications of these authorial choices. My project demands a similar approach insofar as scores and their realizations represent closely connected, though not isomorphic, entities – ones that establish and participate in a network of co-existing discursive and corporeal effects. I attend to the ways in which choreographers offer compelling evidence for a mutually constitutive relationship between notation and action, allowing us to see the body not just as a site for inscription but as a dynamic starting point for the negotiation and renegotiation of codes. Ultimately, I am looking for ways to best identify what a score sets into motion, and to elaborate its causes and effects without necessarily seeking neat reconciliation between the two.

By stressing its capacity to instigate and sustain various forms of engagement, I suggest the generative score as a unique point of entry through which to appreciate how choreographers, dances, spectators and readers co-produce meaning. This methodological stance finds support in the claims of various dance studies scholars who have long argued for the relevancy of notational systems beyond the preservation of dances. Suzanne Youngerman, for example, argues for Laban Movement Analysis as a “conceptual framework” rather than merely a system of recording, asserting that any symbolization of movement necessarily entails rigorous processes of perceiving, analyzing, and cataloguing movement (1984). Likewise, Claudia Jeschke has claimed that notations as “texts of performative knowledge” bear traces of body and action, thus going far beyond preservational concerns and into the territory of constructing and contextualizing the dancing subject (1999). Scholarship along these lines encourages me to avoid evaluating notational systems within a rubric of success or failure, narrowly focusing on the benefits and drawbacks of each approach. Instead, I note how each method of schematization coherently establishes conditions of possibility that shape perceptual, intellectual, and physical engagements with choreographic structure.

Similarly, I contend that scores evidence the relevancy of choreographic strategies to broader ideological, social and cultural forces. Here, I am supported by research that largely focuses on dance notation prior to the latter half of the twentieth century, such as Susan Leigh Foster's comprehensive analysis of several 17th and 18th century notational systems in *Choreographing Empathy* (2011). Foster demonstrate the extent to which strategies for symbolizing, recording, and transmitting dance support aesthetic and cultural value systems. Like Foster, Linda Tomko argues for the potential of notation to speak not only to choreographic concerns, but also to historically specific modes of dance production, circulation and

consumption (1999, 2). My own contribution to this line of thinking concerns the extent to which notational constraints not only reinforce modes of knowledge, but propose surprising – and sometimes subversive – possibilities for the dancing subject. Thus I very explicitly reject the notion of scores as subsidiary “traces” of action, insisting upon various forms of notation and schematization as themselves integral components of efficacious choreographic practice. In so doing, I work against the tendency to figure scores as supplementary or shadowy, fleshless and bloodless traces of the properly corporeal.

Despite my convictions regarding the substantive efficacy of scores, the fact remains that one of the primary methodological challenges with respect to this project concerns notation’s often private nature. Many choreographers simply do not make scores available to the public, considering them part of choreographic processes, not products. Rather than attempting to confer visibility on otherwise hidden or personal documents, however, I focus on artists that have situated scores at the center of either construction or presentation phases of their work. Like Myriam Van Imschoot, I am particularly interested in examples wherein “the score is not a hidden recipe, the 'obscure' blueprint that secretly steers and determines once and for all the 'thing' – a Wizard of Oz, behind the curtains” (2005, 13-14). By focusing on works that take this approach, I establish a methodological distinction between choreographic structure (as a broad conceptual category), and scoring practices that explicitly and self-consciously cultivate a relationship to schematization. Many of the artists I discuss – including Jackson Mac Low, Simone Forti, Deborah Hay, William Forsythe, and Ralph Lemon for example – have made their scores available to the public, either in print or online. Other choreographers in my analysis – Yvonne Meier, Ishmael Houston-Jones, and Julie Tolentino – situate the score at the very heart of the work's presentation, continually reminding their viewers that the enactment relates to a

pre-determined structure. This methodological criteria has been a major force leading me to the selection of examples, and the conspicuousness of scores in their work in turn shapes the methodological impetus for my analysis as a whole.

I am certainly not alone in my desire to bring critical attention to scores, especially where they elucidate creative aims and point up dominant paradigms or trends in artistic processes. Sally Banes, for example, incorporates several scores in her seminal analysis of postmodern dance, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. These emerge less as objects of analysis for their own sake, though, than to delineate the choreographic concerns that Banes characterizes as emblematic of the postmodern (1987). While Banes' inclusion of the scores encourages an appreciation of the structural and stylistic information they bear, the scope of her research does not include close textual analysis. In fact, scholarly treatments of contemporary scores remain relatively rare, for some of the reasons I outlined at the outset (including the breadth of the field and the ever-present danger of generalization). This is not to say that choreographers themselves have not reflected upon the role of scoring within choreographic practice. Throughout my analysis, I mention notable examples that I do not discuss in great detail – namely, *Changes* (an aggregation of Merce Cunningham's scores), *A Choreographer's Score* (documentation of several dances by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker), and a collection of scores on Jonathan Burrows' website. Particularly in the fourth chapter, I also address emergent digital platforms that take an interactive approach to the score, including: Forsythe's *Motion Bank*, Siobhan Davies' *RePlay*, and Emio Greco's *Notation Research Project*. While it is beyond the scope of this project to take each fully into account, it is in no small part due to this relatively recent proliferation of artistic activity that I perceive the present investigation to be especially needed.

As the above list of artists suggests, this heightened interest in the score has certainly not been limited to choreographic production in the United States, although my investigation does take the North American context as its geographical focus. Of course, North American and European contexts overlap with respect to creative influence and exchange, and my narrowing of the field partly represents a practical necessity that should not reflect too significantly on the wider applicability of my conclusions. Since I focus on the importance of midcentury notational experimentation as it unfolds in the downtown New York context, though, I find it reasonable to address artists working in close geographical and cultural proximity to this cultural center.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge my neglect of notational practices flourishing outside the limited frame of North American modern and postmodern dance. Many contemporary dance practices that I do not address would undoubtedly stimulate rich reflection on the nature of instructional language or symbolism. In particular, I am thinking about the importance of language prompts within *Butoh* or the ongoing centrality of the *Natya Shastra* as a codified manual for *Bharata Natyam* performance. This bias is informed by the current limits of my own practical and scholarly expertise; I do perceive the question of generativity to be pertinent within these contexts, though, and it is one that I hope to take up.

Looking Ahead, Looking Back

By looking closely at 1960s score culture, indeterminate language scores, participatory scores, and non-reproductive documentation, I hope to illuminate how scores abstract choreographic structure not for the sake of abstraction, but to forge resilient conceptual

containers accommodating the contingent actualities of practice. Thus, the scores treated here do not distance dance from bodies; rather, they place dance in the hands of multiple readerships, allowing choreographic ideas to unfold through varying, and even wildly disparate, iterations. Unlike those who insist upon the importance of dance notation from the standpoint of historically accurate preservation, I argue that this iterative quality should not be seen as the root of degradation and loss. Instead, I emphasize how interpretive and physical differences shape dances, not endangering them but making them what they are. These scores facilitate dance making as a deeply open-ended process, often undertaken in ways that accommodate radical differences precisely through the judicious application of constraint. Held together by their scores, the dances in this analysis appear more as complicated relational assemblages than fixed cultural products. In this context, thoughts or actions that overspill the boundaries of the score do not so much signal the inadequacy of score or performer as reinforce the surprising possibilities that abound in the trajectory between schematization and enactment.

While I construe the notational experimentation of the early 1960s as signaling a significant epistemological break, I also hope to address the idiosyncratic movement scores of the last fifty years in a manner that perpetuates a sense of continuity with the scores of the last five hundred. Just as there can be said to be as many functions and mechanisms for scoring as there are dances, existing records of movement notation going back to the late 16th century attest to a constantly evolving backdrop of choreographic research finding expression through various forms of schematization. I see value in incorporating more recent, and often experimental, examples into this substantial legacy. In so doing, I hope to stress the ongoing validity of scoring as itself choreographic research, where writing or verbalizing a dance's structure constitutes an important component of dance making rather than merely mirroring or supporting that process.

For this reason, I contend that contemporary scores help us revisit notational models of the recent and distant past with a fresh perspective. By and large, efforts to notate dance have been marked by the elision of difference between script and enactment, and have thus been easily categorized as mechanisms to suppress that difference. Despite the fact that the contemporary scores in my analysis do not aspire to the often much broader scope of frameworks developed prior to the mid-20th century (systems that often applied themselves to whole swaths of physical practice, or indeed, movement itself) they nonetheless share the primary goal of illuminating the principles that shape clear physical praxes. They also, like notational systems of the past, extend the reach of a dance beyond its temporary confluence of bodies and into the realm of perpetuation, re-animation, and re-interpretation.

With respect to incorporating present models into the legacy of notation stretching back to the 16th century, the question, for me, really becomes: what do scores of the present as well as the past have to offer in terms of envisioning multiple possibilities for how bodied subjects engage with codes and constraints in ways that do not suppress difference? How have scores always espoused clear choreographic principles – excluding some possibilities and encouraging others – while at the same time beckoning participants who will undoubtedly materialize those principles in individual or unforeseen ways? How do scores furnish the tools for bodily reading in the same moment as they beckon to new readerships, establishing a dance’s identity while simultaneously opening it up to transformation? I use the scores in this analysis to demonstrate how a dance’s self-identity can be established not through the eradication of difference, but in the very open-ended multiplicity of iterations that reflect the specificity of individual engagement. Moreover, when scores are validated as instantiations of choreographic research, it becomes possible to consider forms of engagement with a dance that are not necessarily

dancerly, and enactments that are not necessarily danced. I hope to suggest how scores can transform dancers into readers and readers into participants, how they bear witness to integrity of works not by consolidating sequences of visually similar movement but by initiating gestures of inclusion and accommodation. In the analysis that follows, I address the representational and relational specificity of scores, considering the possibilities that they create, and puzzling over precisely how they create them.

Reworking the Score, 1960-61: Jackson Mac Low and Simone Forti

By most historical accounts, the series of Judson Church concerts between 1962-64 stands as an undisputed watershed, an irrevocable turning point with respect to possibilities and problematics of 20th century choreographic practice. Yet even as Sally Banes identifies the first Judson concert (taking place on July 6th, 1962) as “the seedbed for post-modern dance,” she also rightly identifies Robert Dunn’s composition workshop as its precursor (Banes 1983, xi). Indeed, Dunn’s class, initiated in the fall of 1960 at the suggestion of John Cage, certainly stands out as a crucial – and even earlier – moment in which the seeds of choreographic postmodernism were sown. Of course, all origin stories intimate the possibility of endless recursion, and my goal here is not to dispute the importance of the Judson concerts to the development of 20th century dance. Rather, I want to expand upon a point that Banes touches upon only briefly in her discussion of that pre-Judson experimentation:

that the “*writing* of dances - the ‘-graphy’ in choreography – was crucial to the composition process Dunn outlined for his students, not necessarily in the sense of permanently recording what the dance was, but in order to objectify the composition process. (6-7)

By drawing attention to this remark, I hope to emphasize how the period’s emergent developments in choreographic practice were intimately tied to concurrent developments in

scoring. In fact, in the years between 1960-61, artists in downtown New York— not just in Dunn’s class, but equally and much more broadly across disciplinary boundaries – radically revised practical and conceptual approaches to the performance score. Noting Dunn’s interest in the score as a tool for composition rather than preservation, Banes pinpoints a very significant aspect of this revision.⁴ In what follows, I focus on two prominent examples from this historical moment – Jackson Mac Low’s *The Pronouns* and Simone Forti’s contributions to *An Anthology* – in order to more fully explore the epistemological rupture that lent scores of the time unprecedented centrality and visibility. Establishing the years between 1960-61 as a historical turning point for the profound changes in scoring that manifest up through even the most contemporary examples in my analysis, I will highlight the importance of this narrow slice of time, which tends to be de-emphasized in dance historical accounts of the 1960s that take the slightly later Judson concerts as their central focus.

Throughout this chapter, and indeed throughout my analysis as a whole, I focus not only on how scores impact composition, but how they impact modes of performance, reception and transmission. In general, I consider scores that expand rather than limit the purview of the choreographic work, suggesting how structure can be schematized in ways that enable reproduction and transmission while accommodating variation and individuality. In the case of *The Pronouns*, Mac Low offers chance-derived poems as scores in order to disrupt the correlation between composition and authorship, thereby instituting a model for generative choreographic scoring that endows the performer with significant interpretive leeway alongside heightened responsibility. Forti’s contributions to *An Anthology*, on the other hand, address a readership beyond potential performers; or perhaps more precisely, they blur distinctions

⁴ Interestingly, Banes cites an interview in which Dunn compares his mobilization of the score to Rudolf Laban’s graphic notation system, a comparison that emphasizes the generativity (i.e. prescriptivity) of Laban’s system over and above its capacity to accurately record (Banes 1983, 7).

between reading and performance by distilling choreographic thinking to a series of proposals flexible enough to manifest practically or conceptually. Both instances of choreographic writing highlight a pervasive tendency, coming strongly to the fore in the early 1960s, to treat scores as valid manifestations of artistic practice rather than mere support systems undergirding live performance. Locating *The Pronouns* and *An Anthology* within an historical context where an interdisciplinary group of artists reveled in notational experimentation, I trace a constellation of key epistemological shifts that intensify in the early years of the 1960s but reverberate strongly through the present. Using scores to establish a work's parameters while also lending it flexibility and mobility, Forti and Mac Low (alongside likeminded peers) set the historical precedent for scores that summon unforeseen readerships, thereby expanding the realm of possibilities surrounding notational inscription.

I begin by tracing a very general history of dance notation, emphasizing how scoring practices post-1960 represent a continuation of existing strategies and concerns while also evidencing profoundly new approaches. I then turn my attention to developments in musical composition that set the stage for interdisciplinary notational experimentation occurring among a tight-knit group of peers. In order to illustrate how Mac Low and Forti participated in a shared movement to redefine the score, I consider *An Anthology* as highly representative and focus particularly on the practical and ideological conditions surrounding its production. I then undertake a sustained analysis of *The Pronouns*, incorporating additional historical context, close readings of the poems, and reflection on the relationship it proposes between writing and enactment. Ultimately, I emphasize how Mac Low establishes interpretive parameters around his notational poems, strongly linking the process of reading to his expectations for compliant realization. Finally, I address Forti's *An Anthology* writings, illustrating how the dances, when

presented in text form, manifest choreographic frameworks for a reading public distinctly from potential performers and performances. In both cases, I contend that the production of scores entails not only an articulation of the relationship between notational language and embodiment, but an assertion of the score's value as a published, transmissible, and widely legible product. Whether addressing potential interpreters or framing the act of reading as enactment, Mac Low and Forti represent a profound reorientation of scoring toward visibility and accessibility that will inform my evaluation of each of the scores treated in this analysis.

Precedents in Dance: Connection and Diversion

In order to fully appreciate the impact of choreographic scoring strategies that begin to emerge at the start of the 1960s, it is useful to note the extent to which dance notation had, at the time, long been associated with the goals of standardization, preservation and accurate reproduction. Most historians identify Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesography*, written in 1589, as one of the very earliest examples of dance notation as it memorializes collective knowledge in the form of the period's social dances. Arbeau's work underscores the connection between choreography and pedagogy by staging a fictitious dialogue between the author and his pupil, the eager law student Capriol. As their dialogue progresses, Arbeau moves from describing the foundational steps of various dances – *pavanes*, *galliards*, and *branles* – to their notation (or “tabulation”) alongside vertical renderings of musical staff notation. Arbeau writes dances for posterity, establishing standards for proper execution and defending dance itself against detractors, declaring the practice “essential in a well ordered society” (Arbeau 1967, 12). Pierre

Rameau makes a similar argument for the importance of dance to the social order in *The Dancing Master*, an early 18th century text that offers observations on everything from executing *battements* to “taking off one's hat and putting it on again” (Rameau 1970, 15). Like Arbeau’s text, *The Dancing Master* suggests dance as a normative response to existing laws and rules, identifying physical practice as an opportunity to stage the bodily performance of impeccable etiquette. In each text, the author conceptualizes dancing as a way to display a subject's inner qualities, inscribing them on the surface of the social body. Both texts suggest the early conflation of dance with discipline, but they also reveal the tacit assumption of the score as tool to combat dance’s ephemerality, useful but subsidiary to physical practice.

This assumption prevails through the 18th century, especially with the advent of a graphic notational system designed to reduce the complexity of dancing to a series of essential components. Building on an earlier system devised by Pierre Beauchamps, Raoul Auger Feuillet publishes *Choregraphie ou l'art de dècrire la dance* in 1700, replacing linguistic tabulation with a graphic system that relies on elemental forms like lines, points, and circles. Feuillet’s “tables” occasionally make use of textual captions to elaborate the meaning of a symbol, but one of the system's most crucial innovations is, in fact, its elimination of language (Foster 2011, 20). Here, the notator compresses dances into unified visual images, meaningful only to someone specially trained in the system’s semiotics. Each dance's sequence unfolds along a “*chemin*,” or “track;” the track's central line indicates the overall spatial trajectory for the dancer, and supplementary symbols embellish that line to indicate positions, steps, jumps, turns, rises, and falls. By integrating a dance's sequence into a top-down, totalizing view, Feuillet's notation depicts movement in a crystallized and economized manner. It also renders dances portable; by condensing complicated spatio-temporal events onto a single page, Feuillet facilitates easy

transfer in the absence of personal instruction. Though Feuillet's system clearly enabled the wide dissemination of dances, scholars have also pointed out how this proliferation gave rise to the elision of regional and individual difference. Susan Leigh Foster (2011) and Jean-Noel Laurenti (1994), for example, both discuss Feuillet notation's capacity to unify and standardize regionally specific steps as a means of ultimately obliterating that specificity.

Toward the end of the 18th century, choreographic notation falls precipitously out of favor, a demise spurred partly by the advent of the story ballet, where narrative and plot come to determine choreographic structure (Foster 2011). As an interrelated consequence, choreographers working in an increasingly professionalized landscape encouraged heightened technical specialization for the performer, which as a result, shifted the emphasis of pedagogical manuals from the preservation of dances to the cultivation of the virtuosic body.⁵ Renewed interest in notation, however, marks the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly with respect to graphic notation systems equipped to capture the full range of movement in elegant symbolic systems. Like Feuillet's, these systems generally break movement's complexity into constituent parts and formulate standardized vocabularies. An early balletic example, Stepanov's *Alphabet of Movements of the Human Body*, appears in 1892. Though rooted in ballet pedagogy, Stepanov hopes to encompass "all movements of the human body" through a graphic structure that borrows its design from musical notation (Stepanov 1958, 17).

The desire to commit the full range of human movement to writing finds its fullest expression, however, with the early 20th century development of modern dance, and particularly in the work of Rudolf Laban. Laban's graphic system relies on the reduction of the spherical "kinesphere" around the body to a cube with 27 basic directional points "representative of the most important space directions" (Laban 1966, 18). Additionally, Laban characterizes the body's

⁵ See Blasis (1968).

quality of movement through space by designating a specific number of “effort” types that “have a definite correlation with the six fundamental directions in space” (30). Laban's assertion of these innate “harmonic” principles supports his belief in an unchanging and essential bedrock underlying all human movement. Similarly, the Eshkol-Wachman system, devised in the mid-1950s, claims a durable set of foundational principles by dividing all movement into three basic types: “rotatory,” “plane,” and “curved” (Eshkol and Wachman 1958, 6). Systems like these recall Feuillet’s desire to formulate notational models that express movement’s first principles, conveying underlying totalizing structures that – once committed to writing – render dance more objective, legible, and transmissible.

This overarching – though admittedly still partial⁶ – survey of notational models prior to the middle of the 20th century reveals both connection and disjoint with respect to the scores that populate this chapter. Arbeau’s focus on posterity, for example clearly contrasts with Mac Low’s openly generative notational model, while Forti’s scores, as I will demonstrate, negotiate a more complicated relationship between preservation and enactment. Similarly, as a large-scale descriptive codification of existing dances, Feuillet’s system, like Arbeau’s, contrasts with *The Pronouns*, where Mac Low explicitly writes dances with an eye to triggering sharply diverging enactments. Forti’s writings likewise enable significant performer choice, though in this case the openness tethers to discrete choreographic concepts rather than open notational signs. In both cases, the wide dissemination of scores in the 18th century parallels the emphasis on distribution and exchange evidenced by the appearance of Forti’s and Mac Low’s scores in published

⁶ I focus here on notation systems that aspire to various degrees of widespread applicability and standardization, and not on the idiosyncratic methods of recording that choreographers have long deployed to schematize and record their dances. See Sherman (1979) for examples of Denishawn notation or Guest and Jeschke (1991) for Nijinsky’s notations of *L’après-midi D’un Faune*. Additionally, various vocabularies coalesce around choreographic practices that spawn clear pedagogies, such as Lester Horton’s and Martha Graham’s. While these systems of recording lack any pretensions to universality, they are likewise oriented toward preservation and accurate reproduction.

formats, even as the 20th century examples clearly de-emphasize preservation and historically accurate reproduction.

The early 20th century universalizing models certainly address goals going far beyond the preservation of dance works, with Laban, in particular, evidencing a passionate desire to use graphic symbolism to cultivate an increased understanding of movement. Nonetheless, notational systems that seek to schematize the full range of movement, like Laban's, stand in sharp contrast to the scoring strategies of the 1960s. These, as evidenced by Forti and Mac Low, largely propose models for inscribing movement and choreographic structure specific to single works or a self-contained series. Finally, the examples in this chapter diverge perhaps most dramatically from earlier notational systems insofar as they promote increased visibility for the scores themselves. A major tendency in the early 1960s, as I have suggested, concerns aesthetic treatments that position scores as far more than practical aids for performance. As is vividly demonstrated by Mac Low and Forti, scores of the time diverged from most existing models by not only preserving or triggering movement, but by representing the continuation of choreographic practice through the very processes of schematization and inscription.

Precedents in Music: Midcentury Disturbance

I relate Mac Low and Forti to various examples of historically significant forms of dance notation in order to suggest how contemporary, and often idiosyncratic, scores can (and should) be incorporated into that broader legacy. Dance-based genealogies alone, however, do not quite adequately contextualize the preoccupation with choreographic writing that Banes pinpoints in

the early 1960s. To more fully draw out the historical and conceptual shifts underpinning these artists' approaches to scoring, as well as to supply additional salient reference points for all of the examples in my analysis, I must emphasize the degree to which Mac Low, Forti, and their peers were subject to the influence of profound changes occurring around midcentury in the context of experimental music. By 1960, the standardized Western staff had been thoroughly destabilized by emergent forms of musical notation, giving rise to developments that became particularly evident in the works of New York School composers such as John Cage, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff. Responding to a confluence of pressures arising both inside and outside the realm of music proper, Cage and his postwar contemporaries significantly refigured notational practices in ways that both problematized and highlighted the nexus of relationships between score, composition and performance. I proceed by turning my attention to these changes, and then by addressing their impact on the interdisciplinary art-making (and score-creating) community in which Forti and Mac Low played integral parts.

Within a strictly musical lineage, New York School notational experimentation is often framed as a reaction to Schoenberg's 12-tone serialism. Serialism garnered strong adherents both in Europe and the United States, and as a system of "total organization," offered composers systematic tools to generate musical structures that appeared to be fully internal to the work. As such, serialism instigated a preliminary conceptual shift from authorial intent to the application of objective procedures lending the musical work an autonomous formality. Not only did this shift affect the practice of composition, but it also changed the relationship between composer and performer. David Behrman contends:

Prior to the development of serialism, it was "taken for granted" that musicians could answer the technical demands of the score. The musician's real work was bringing his own interpretation to bear on the composer's intentions for the more intangible, expressive aspects of the music's execution. But serialism's complexity shifted the

performer's focus, often with technical demands that bordered on the unplayable.
(Behrman 1965, 58)

By occluding performer interpretation, serialism might seem diametrically opposed to aleatoric procedure and indeterminacy which, as we will see with Mac Low, render the task of performance anything but systematically technical. In its rigid prescriptivity, the serial composition has been read as a vigorous assertion of the composer's authority over subsequent realizations, while the “impulse” behind more open notation might seem to cultivate newly empowered performer (Hitchcock 1986, 387). Yet many have stressed the core affinity between serialism and the New York School notational play. Earle Brown, for example, points out that serialism and chance lead the composer to “similar poetics,” one that I would argue turns equally on a de-subjectification of the composer as well as a more self-consciously charged negotiation of the score on the part of the performer (Brown 1986, 180). Certainly among New York School composers, chance-derived, graphic, or indeterminate scores could border on the unplayable, though their complexity often highlighted the responsibilities associated with interpretation rather than eliding them. Similarly, in Forti and Mac Low, we will see how various degrees of “openness” within the score nonetheless dovetail with clear practical constraints.

In addition to serialism, midcentury composers also responded to technological developments in recording and sound production, not only represented by the nascent field of electronic music, but also by much earlier shifts in the dissemination of sound wrought by the phonograph and the radio (Kotz 2010, 14). Such technologies separated sound from its source, enabled perfect copies, and de-personalized production – all factors that complicated the smooth passage from artistic inspiration to score to interpretation and reception. Along these lines, Paul Griffiths emphasizes John Cage's works from the 1940s that introduced the prepared piano, which added an element of unpredictability to the most familiar of instruments. With the

prepared piano, Griffiths points out, “one may depress a key and hear a quite different pitch, or a thump without much sense of pitch at all, or a metallic rattle containing several different pitches” (Griffiths 1986, 7). Even though Cage's earliest pieces for prepared piano predate his aleatoric or indeterminate compositions, they initiate a regime in which notation “no longer represents the sounds that will be heard,” thus forcing a break “between the two functions of western notation, those of representation and of instruction for action (Griffiths 7). Taken together, these factors promulgate a perspective on notation that does indeed shift from representation to instruction, with a deeply destabilized notational mark now giving rise not just to sound, but to the much broader category of “action.”

As I will discuss more fully in relation to *The Pronouns*, this destabilization manifests concretely in strategies used to advance the ideological project of authorial nonintention, in which the artist seeks to rid the compositional process of subjective desires, goals, or expectations. Christian Wolff, a young but key figure in Cage's circle from the early 1950s onward, contextualizes this shift by emphasizing the feelings of postwar “detachment” that led composers away from political and social concerns – exemplified by the “left-wing populism” of the 1930s (2009, 431) – and toward experimentations with nonintentional working processes (434). For Cage in particular, striving for nonintention represented a pursuit deeply consonant with his investment in Zen Buddhism; his regular attendance at Daisetz Suzuki’s Columbia University lectures between 1949 and 1951, for example, encouraged him to “avoid the ego, likes and dislikes, and to instead welcome the moment without the intervention of intention or desire” (Fetterman 1996, 17). Cagean chance procedures, as exemplified in major works such as *Music of Changes* (1951), distanced the artist from the final product by randomizing

compositional processes, now geared toward a set of highly complex, ludic operations.⁷ Similar to chance procedures, indeterminate notations evacuated composer intent from final products by presenting signs that could be construed as “open” or generative, explicitly courting divergent interpretations.⁸ Indeterminate works in particular – defined by Cornelius Cardew as situations in which “the player (or players) has an active hand in giving the piece a form” (1961, 21) – heightened the stakes around performance, conferring a level of interpretive license while often simultaneously emphasizing the performer’s adherence to the score.⁹

As composers increasingly troubled the correlative relation between sign and sound toward the late 1950s, scores themselves begin to assume heightened importance and increased visibility. Liz Kotz writes:

By prying open the regulatory relation between sign and realization, Cagean indeterminacy repositioned writing as a kind of productive mechanism, thereby giving notation a functional and aesthetic autonomy – an autonomy that opened the door for the scores, instructions, or snippets of language to themselves be the work, while individual realizations occur as 'instances,' 'samples,' or 'examples' of it” (2010, 48).

Kotz points to the marked emphasis, in the context of indeterminate notation, toward prescriptivity, which in turn lends notation “autonomy” in the face of a newly expanded field of possible realization. That is, if a written score might produce highly variable iterations, then the score itself becomes newly charged and conceptually centralized. Paradoxically, the more open a work, the more important its instructional template and notational specificity.

⁷ William Fetterman points out a curious and unexpected predecessor to Cage with respect to aleatoric procedure, noting that “chance music was a brief fad in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries, the most famous work being Wolfgang Mozart’s *Musikalisches Würfelspiel* (“*Musical Dice-game*”),” in which a chance-produced sequence ultimately takes the form of a conventional waltz or minuet (37-38).

⁸ While Cage is widely recognized to be the key innovator with respect to chance procedure, Earle Brown “was the first to make notational images that were entirely open to the performers’ interpretation – what was later to be called graphic music” (Wolff 438).

⁹ As I will demonstrate with respect to *The Pronouns*, Mac Low’s scores exemplify both chance-based compositional strategies and notational indeterminacy. It is crucial, however, to distinguish between chance procedure and indeterminacy. Aleatoric procedures do not always give rise to indeterminate notational texts – in the case of traditionally notated music, for example, a chance-produced work written on the Western staff might still constitute a relatively determinate text by significantly circumscribing the possibilities for performer response.

Furthermore, this new emphasis on the score's autonomy certainly led to its wide application in working processes that challenged the boundaries of traditional disciplinary frameworks. After the introduction of the indeterminate score, the score's new purview over the broader category of action (rather than just sound or movement) proved amenable to artists with all sorts of disciplinary affiliations. In the early 1960s, then, the space between traditional artistic disciplines becomes a center of activity in its own right: in an interview with Richard Kostelanetz, Robert Rauschenberg attests to an erosion of disciplinary boundaries with his perspective on "working as a kind of involvement with materials" (Kostelanetz 1968 80). This notion of "involvement with materials" can, and did, encompass anything from object to sound to movement; it also, in a striking number of cases, involved instructional or prescriptive scaffolding in the form of a score. *An Anthology*, of course, clearly evidences a common interest in applying the discursive or symbolic mechanisms of the score liberally to the production of movement, sound, language or objects. Forti's contributions, in particular, demonstrate the score's striking autonomy, as well as its ability to extend choreographic thinking across textual and corporeal fields of production.

An Interdisciplinary, Post-Cagean, Score Culture

As scores by Forti and Mac Low will evidence, by at least 1961 the deeply serious notational play that had been going on for nearly a decade in experimental music was proving extraordinarily generative to an interdisciplinary community of artists who recapitulated aspects of the Cagean program while departing from it in significant ways. La Monte Young's early

career, in particular, exemplifies this tension. Jeremy Grimshaw points out how Cage's work and personal correspondence "exerted substantial influence on Young's thinking," but also how Young took Cagean procedures, particularly the aleatoric, in new directions (2011, 55).¹⁰ In fact, in a 1960 lecture delivered to Anna Halprin's summer workshop participants, Young seems to distance himself from Cage's influence by remarking: "It is often necessary that one be able to ask, 'Who is John Cage?'" (1965 79).¹¹ Henry Flynt proffers this lecture as evidence that "Young and his friends were forging an aesthetic radicalism which was meant to go beyond Cage, to annul Cage" (1996, 53). Indeed Halprin's summer workshop of 1960 stands out as a flashpoint in this process, with participants including Young, Robert Morris, Simone (Morris) Forti, and Trisha Brown relocating from the West Coast to New York slightly afterward. This influx of creative energy from the West Coast was so palpable that some figure it as a "messianic arrival" signaling a clear transition into a "post-Cagean aesthetic" (Forde 2013, 248). Though I will continue to draw lines of influence between Cage and the artists in this chapter – particularly Mac Low – it is important to note how the score culture I am describing did not just mimic experimental musical notation but developed new, trans-disciplinary scoring models. As such, I am concerned with the extent to which this "post-Cagean aesthetic" turned on interdisciplinary investments in notational writing.

In the context of a 2013 exhibition at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid entitled *± 1961: Founding the Expanded Arts*, Julia Robinson discusses that "extraordinary year" by stressing a convergence of interest around mechanisms of scoring (2013, 15). She depicts a situation in which the "expanded arts" coalesced around "a common vocabulary" that relied on

¹⁰ In particular, Grimshaw (2011) stresses Young's interest in isolating musical "objects" (through strategies such as prolonged durations of a single note) versus Cage's interest in comprehensive musical "situations" that admitted unpredictable and ambient sounds.

¹¹ Ironically, Young's participation in the summer 1960 workshop was a result of Cage's encouraging suggestion that "the workshop might provide a receptive venue" for the young composer (Grimshaw 2011, 74).

schematization, prescriptivity, and a skewing of the conceptual center of works toward inscription (17).¹² Nowhere is this evidenced more vividly than in *An Anthology*, which illustrates a collective obsession with the score as a crucial point of intersection between programmatic concept and execution, with execution running the gamut between the serialized production and entirely imaginative thought experiments. On the one hand, many of the *An Anthology* contributions can be approached as prescriptive – that is, geared to enable corporeal engagement and performance. On the other, though, the volume approaches a potential readership as precisely that – a group of readers who are encouraged to appreciate scores in and of themselves. Moreover, the volume demonstrates how these artists used scoring to blur boundaries and elide disciplinary specialization: here, musical compositions might seem more like poems or paintings, instructions for sculpture-making require specific movement sequences, and choreographic “constructions” include specially-designed objects. Though I focus on many facets of the publication in the context of my analysis of Forti’s work, it may be useful to offer some preliminary details about how the collection came about in order to continue to flesh out the historical context that instigates profound epistemological shifts with respect to choreographic notation.

In March of 1961, George Maciunas launches AG Gallery and shortly thereafter hosts Mac Low’s “chance-generated play *Verdurous Sanguinaria*” (Mac Low 1993, 37). Just prior, Mac Low had presented his first full evening of work at Ono’s Chamber Street Loft as a part of Young’s extraordinarily influential six-month series.¹³ Mac Low recalls introducing Maciunas to much of the “younger New York avant-garde of that time” (37), including Young, who had been

¹² Running from June 19th-October 28th 2013, the Reina Sofia exhibition included artists such as Young, Forti, Mac Low, George Brecht, Henry Flynt, Walter de Maria, Richard Maxfield, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Terry Riley, and James Waring.

¹³ The series also included new musical works by Young Terry Jennings, and Toshi Ichiyangi, an installation by Robert Morris, and the first performance of Forti’s dance constructions.

compiling materials to guest edit an issue of *Beatitude East* (ultimately defunct before Young's issue could come to fruition). In pursuit of content, Young enthusiastically contacted "everybody who was doing what he considered new art, except for visual art that was neither conceptual nor dealt with verbally" (39). A graphic designer, Maciunas offers to format the publication, as well as to provide the necessary paper. After a significant delay exacerbated by printing disputes, limited budgetary resources, and Maciunas's flight to Europe under the burden of significant gallery-related debt, the trio release *An Anthology* in mid-May, 1963.¹⁴ Ultimately, Young is credited as the sole editor, Maciunas as the designer and Young and Mac Low as co-publishers. Ultimately, *An Anthology* serves Maciunas as the prototype for the first Fluxus publication – indeed, the publication for which he coined the term Fluxus.¹⁵ Though far outside the scope of this analysis, the long and complicated subsequent history of Fluxus attests to the significance of *An Anthology*, and particularly the significance of its emphasis on the score as a valid and autonomous manifestation of creative practice.

The historical context surrounding Mac Low and Forti between 1960-61 strongly indicates a profusion of activity with respect to notational experimentation manifesting through the composition, performance, and distribution of scores. From the perspective of dance historical inquiry, though, it also suggests a slight reorientation of the legacy of the 1960s as dominated by the narrow window of time surrounding the Judson Church concerts. Particularly by stressing Forti's strong connection to the other *An Anthology* artists, it becomes clear that the Judson concerts represent more a continuation than an origin, a localized and partial configuration of experimental activity rather than an overarching historical or ideological

¹⁴ *An Anthology* was officially released in May, 1963 on YAM Day: "a continuous two-day concert of new music, plays, happenings, simultaneities, poetry, dance, etc, organized by George Brecht and Robert Watts" (Mac Low 1993, 45)

¹⁵ See also Dezeuze (2002) and Smith (1998) on *An Anthology* as a model for subsequent Fluxus publications.

framework capable of encompassing the totality of choreographic production in the 1960s. This shift gives rise to a number of productive consequences, not least of which concerns the clarification of Forti's influence – substantial despite the fact that she did not participate in the Judson concerts at all. Again, my overarching objective is not to deny the importance of the Judson Church concerts or the artists that participated in them. Rather, I hope to enrich existing understanding of the early 1960s by training my focus on the years just prior to Judson, and specifically on interdisciplinary investments in the score that have thus far been an under-theorized component of the period's profound impact.

Looking closely at the pre-Judson years (and specifically the scores that begin to emerge around 1960-1961) will indicate, as Banes suggests, a return to the notion of writing's centrality with respect to choreographic production. The conflation of choreography and writing, evident as far back as Feuillet, re-emerges in the 1960s not to by locking dances into stable and totalizing systems but to offer multiple pathways between body and page, systematic schematization and particularized bodily (re)production. Importantly, these divergent pathways open up via a profound notational de-specialization, where essentializing symbols give way to language that provides either extreme openness or bare-bones simplicity. In fact, they demonstrate how language can be productively re-integrated into notation, as the goals of notation shift toward generative instability. Moreover, by centralizing the score, Forti and Mac Low model new forms engagement, summoning readers, performers, and spectators into choreographic structure through the heightened visibility of structure and compositional procedure. Finally, they propose new possibilities with respect to the perpetuation of dance, where archival processes take shape in response to those very engagements. This collection of issues threads through my analysis as a whole, informing not only my perspective on scoring strategies that date from the early 1960s

but on those that continue to develop in the early 21st century. By tracing so many of these epistemological shifts to the culture surrounding Mac Low and Forti in 1960-61, I hope to initiate a methodology for analyzing scores that appreciates their capacity to manifest individual choreographic objectives, and especially their capacity to render those objectives clear but ever responsive to the readers and dancers of the future.

Jackson Mac Low: Writing Dances for the Dancers

As early as 1954, after a series of conversations with John Cage at the upstate New York anarchist-pacifist community where Cage was then living, Jackson Mac Low began experimenting with chance procedures and indeterminacy in the production of musical works. Having long been engaged in poetry as well as music, Mac Low realized toward the end of that year that he might extend this Cage-informed experimentation to writing – that he might, in fact, “see what could be done by utilizing nonintentional methods of composition with *language*.” Shortly afterward he began working on a series titled “5 biblical poems,” rolling a single die to select and structure words from the Hebrew Scriptures. Since Mac Low also embedded indeterminate intervals of silence (to be filled by “any word the reader wishes to say to herself”), he eventually came to consider these works examples of “eventative verse,” a categorization that explicitly speaks to his interest in using unorthodox compositional procedures to blur expected boundaries between language and action, reading and performance (Zurbrugg 2004, 255).

Indeed, these early works prefigure Mac Low’s eventual, and even more assertive efforts to develop textual systems for provoking significant responsiveness in the moment of

performance. Within a few years, Mac Low began proposing single action words (or “nuclei”) as instructions for actors in his production of *The Marrying Maiden: A Play of Chances*, which premiered at New York’s Living Theatre in June of 1960 and featured music composed by Cage. These instructions, delivered live, offer imperatives with varying degrees of specificity (from executing a simple bend at the waist to doing “anything negative”). Mac Low fondly recalls these directions breaking the production’s flow as prescribed by Judith Malina’s direction, interrupting the narrative by triggering unpredictable performer response (Mac Low 1979, 70).

The “Action Pack” used in that production eventually gave rise to *Nuclei for Simone Forti* (1961), in which Mac Low “generalized” each action by shifting verbs into gerund forms (“kiss,” for example, became “kissing”) and including non-action words such as nouns and syntactical connections (Mac Low 1979, 70). The *Nuclei* were performed twice at George Maciunas’s AG Gallery in June 1961, once by a group of poets and composers, and once by Forti. Trisha Brown subsequently used the cards as source material for improvisation at George Brecht’s *YAM Festival* (1963), and after seeing that performance, choreographer Fred Herko asked Mac Low if he might work with the pack. Brown had taken the cards to California, so Mac Low created a chance-derived “dance-instruction poem” for Herko based on a similar “Action Pack” that he had composed in May 1961. This second set was comprised of 56 filing cards bearing anywhere from one to five actions in gerund form, selected through a careful chance procedure using the Rand table of random digits and a “Basic English Word List” (69).¹⁶ While Mac Low held strictly to a randomized procedure for constructing the action pack, he granted

¹⁶ In *The Pronouns*, Mac Low makes only glancing reference to this “Basic” list of English words. In fact, what he consulted was the “BASIC” vocabulary, an acronym for “British American Scientific International Commercial.” Compiled by I.A. Richards and C.K. Ogden in 1930, this “experiment in modern linguistic hygiene” reduced the English language to a mere 850 words (Watten 148). Its drastically reduced vocabulary was intended as a simplified, globally accessible vernacular that would serve emerging technological and commercial markets. If Mac Low intended to critique BASIC by leveraging it toward interpretive instability, his failure to emphasize the nature of his source material significantly downplays the irony.

himself leeway in bringing a poem together for Herko with the cards, particularly by freely incorporating structural links such as articles and prepositional phrases. After identifying Herko with the word “he” throughout the poem, Mac Low decided to generate a poem for “every word listed as a pronoun in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary” (71). He continued to work with the pack of 56 cards, beginning a new poem by shuffling the pack, cutting it, and taking the poem’s title from the topmost card. The title, through further procedures devised by Mac Low, then gave rise to the work’s length and contents. These forty poems came to constitute *The Pronouns: Forty Dances for the Dancers*.

Some of Mac Low’s pronouns, such as “he” and “she,” render the subject of the poem straightforward, the question of gender normativity aside.¹⁷ Others, however, deploy more ambiguous signifiers such as “nobody,” “either,” or “each.” *26th Dance – Getting News – 22 March 1964* reads, for example:

*Each gives a simple form to a bridge
though seeming to sleep,
& each gets an orange from a hat, takes it, & keeps it;
each is letting complex impulses make something.*

Then each is keeping parcels.

*Darkening
& putting a story between much railing,
each, when making or giving something small, monkeys with
something that’s not white.*

*A little later each gives the neck a knifing or comes to give a
parallel meal, beautiful & shocking.*

Then each makes things new.

*Finally each harbors poison between cotton or goes from
breathing to a common form. (Mac Low 1979, 48)*

¹⁷ In the 1979 edition, Mac Low conveys a prescient awareness of the politics of gender neutrality, crafting “The THEY Manifesto” and arguing for the validity of that pronoun to designate a person irrespective of gender (76).

The 26th dance, cited above, reveals how the pronouns of *The Pronouns* forcefully implicate potential interpreters and consistently revolve around subjects taking action based on clear, if logically unconnected imagery. In an analysis of *The Pronouns* that emphasizes Mac Low's procedural manipulations in the compositional process, Tyrus Miller has posited the "priority of the linguistic plane" over and above "the body and consciousness of the dancers," who "actualize" the text without "originating" resulting performance situations (2007, 85). As a result, Miller's account unduly de-emphasizes physical practice, skewing the production of meaning toward the arrangement of language and away from that language's danced execution. In fact, Miller argues that "the bodies of the dancers are not so much acting as being affected" by the poems (or, as he describes them, "incorporeal events of sense"), which take control of dancing bodies in infinitely variable ways (2007, 89). Such a perspective explicitly counters Mac Low's own assertion that "perceivers of poems enact meanings" (Zurbrugg 2004, 270). More importantly though, for my purpose, Miller's perspective thwarts attempts to tease out how the performing subject constitutes meaning in and through the body in relation to a text, and not merely as a passive vehicle for linguistic or affective content.

Though my interest lies in demonstrating how Mac Low enlists the body to accomplish meaning-making, close attention to his language does matter to the extent that it reveals his establishment of a clear set of boundaries delineating a very definite interpretive praxis. From the perspective of grammatical construction, those "generalizing" gerunds – unlike imperatives – render the authorial voice descriptive. With phrases like "seeming to sleep" or "breathing to a common form," for example, Mac Low seems to report on a situation rather than instigating it, as traditional choreographic instructions might. In an exhaustive treatment of language scores, Lely and Saunders have posited that gerundial forms can, by evenly describing a state of affairs rather

than explicitly calling for action, eliminate mood (2012, 44). With respect to *The Pronouns*, however, the gerunds effectively shift the responsibility for creating mood more firmly toward the interpreter. Rather than facilitating performances with ambivalent or neutral mood, in fact, the nuclei cards prepare a fertile ground for assertive performer choices. In fact, Mac Low recalls a “furious” performance of the nuclei by Forti, who chose cards reading “angry, cause, sock, some, plough,” as well as the (familiar) action chain “giving the neck a knifing or coming to give a parallel meal, beautiful and shocking” (1979, 71). He describes Forti interpreting these cues by overturning a conference table in the audience's direction, chewing on the edge of the table, and screaming “HUNGRY! ANGRY! HUNGRY! ANGRY!” (71).

As is made evident by Mac Low’s report of the Forti performance, anyone who tackles *The Pronouns* encounters language as the ground upon which meaning will be negotiated, not summarily delivered. Each poem – each word, in fact – presents itself as a notational sign bearing not stability but potential, the starting point from which to make an interpretive leap. As Forti physically connects the ideas of anger, meal, and shock, she stitches together Mac Low’s chance-derived linguistic components into full-bodied coherence, giving kinetic form to the very process of reading. As I will more fully discuss in the next chapter, language prompts work exceedingly well as self-consciously open signs, where bodily meaning-making highlights a semantic openness at the heart of even the most basic linguistic constructions. By dedicating his poems to “the dancers,” Mac Low explicitly empowers the performer to take his language in unforeseen directions, illuminating its potentially endless iterability.

Scott Thurston’s detailed account of a 2012 restaging of *The Pronouns* by Mac Low’s daughter, Clarinda Mac Low, evidences not only the specificity of individual corporeal meaning making, but also the diversity of possible response. He describes three distinct realizations of the

same poem (2nd *Dance – Seeing Lines – 6 February 1964*) by the performers Carolyn Hall, Paz Tanjuaquio, and Abigail Levine. In Hall’s version, the opening line “she seems to come by wing” gives rise to a “hilarious chicken-walk” through the audience while Tanjuaquio’s consists of “a barrage of angular shapes” (Thurston 2012). Levine offers a less recognizable version of the “wing” line, perhaps fulfilling the instruction merely by looking upward. These realizations reveal how danced embodiment takes the chance-produced text to its ultimate conclusion, staging singular, subjective readings as corporeal processes that re-circulate into collectively discernable meaning. Though Mac Low doesn’t rule out the possibility of staging the dances accompanied by readings, he mentions conceiving “these dance-instruction-poems as *either* being read aloud” or “as being realized as dances” (1979, 68) His inclination toward mutual exclusivity indicates the extent to which performing and reading represent parallel processes through which nonintentionally selected components generate internal connections, points of resonance, and friction.¹⁸

Returning to the notion that *The Pronouns* furnishes not just raw linguistic materials for open-ended dancerly exploration but a very specific interpretive praxis, Mac Low’s introductory essay titled “Some Remarks to the Dancers (How the Dances Are to Be Performed & *How* They Were Made)” offers explicit and substantial guidelines to potential performers. Though Mac Low’s decisive engagement with dance in *The Pronouns* may be unique with respect to his body of work as a whole, his focus on the poems’ performance stands in profound continuity with many of his large-scale projects. As Barrett Watten argues, Mac Low’s habit of composing instructional prefaces represents “a constitutive” aspect of his process insofar as the work extends through a sequence that “begins with the act of poetic composition from original source

¹⁸ In that program, Simone Forti poignantly evoked the lineage of the project by dancing not in response to the published poems, but from the original nuclei cards (Thurston 2012).

text to stages of realization and performance, augmented by interpretive framing and publishing history” (1997, 175). Watten goes on to demonstrate how prefaces like “Some Remarks” establish a normative framework for communal participation while maintaining a degree of openness toward individual difference and transmission.

According to Mac Low’s notes in “Some Remarks,” potential interpreters are free to decide how many performers to deploy, how much to embrace or avoid “miming,” and whether to include props. He also charges dancers with a responsibility to determine whether the same line, when repeated, will give rise to a consistent and visually similar embodiment. That is, if Hall were to encounter the line “she seems to come by wing” at multiple points in the poem, she might repeat her “chicken walk” or produce another, visually dissimilar interpretation. At a more overarching level, Mac Low points out that the sequential, numbered organization of poems should not lead the reader/performer to assume that the collection represents a unified series. Each work can be taken out of context, and performances featuring multiple poems might be arranged in any order (Mac Low 1979). Choices about inclusions, exclusions, and sequencing do not necessarily represent acts of *interpretation* for the performer, though these choices yet again elucidate how meaning accrues around the dynamics of unique iterations that nonetheless satisfy the normative requirements of Mac Low’s instructional prologue.

In spite of the significant interpretive license granted by Mac Low, “Some Remarks” also suggests choices that might fall outside the scope of valid, author-sanctioned realizations. He insists, first of all, that performers must work out “some definite interpretation of the meaning of every line of the dance-poems they choose to realize,” and that each dance be endowed with the “integrity” of a beginning, middle, and an end (Mac Low 1979, 67). When a line calls for the audible production of sound or language, Mac Low specifies that “this instruction must be taken

literally” (68). Dancers must also respect, and work out in advance, “time-relations:” that is, if the two actions are connected by the word “while,” they must be performed simultaneously. Finally, Mac Low specifies very clear requirements for rights, royalties, and documentation. That is, he willingly grants “dancers &/or other artists” permission to perform *The Pronouns*, but stipulates that he will consider the payment of royalties on a case by case basis, and that copies of performance documentation must be provided to “authorized agents or heirs as soon as possible after they are produced” (ix).

In pairing expansively open scores with the aforementioned logistical and aesthetic controls, Mac Low exemplifies a fundamental tension coming strongly to the fore through score-centric artistic production of the early 1960s. On the one hand, Mac Low’s dance-instruction poems endow performers with an extraordinary degree of latitude concerning the ultimate production of content. On the other, though, they represent a heightened emphasis on the score and performer adherence to it, even as the language generates an expanded zone of interpretational possibility. As will be evident across many of the examples featured in my analysis, artists who use scores to court novel forms of interpretation and reproduction while *also* rendering the score and its parameters highly visible raise a number of important issues. Firstly, when a creator devises notation expressly intended to produce wide variation across multiple realizations, as Mac Low does in *The Pronouns*, questions about work-identity and authorship rise to the fore. Moreover, when the boundaries of interpretation are redrawn to explicitly emphasize the act of interpretation, the notion of “fidelity” to either the composer or the work begs re-evaluation. Rather than focusing on openness (and thus positioning the indeterminate score as means to engender performer freedom), I hope to point out how experimental,

interdisciplinary scores such as Mac Low's give rise to new paradigms for performer responsibility with respect to hewing to source texts and fulfilling composer expectations.

With respect to Mac Low's work in particular, I want to first investigate how the generative language score reflects and contributes to changing notions of authorship, an issue that is all too infrequently addressed in the context of dance.¹⁹ Indeed, what notion of choreographic authorship does a work like *The Pronouns* shape, when dances are written by a poet and devised by performers, with the production of meaning as an event straddling linguistic and corporeal realms? To understand the implications of these changes, it is first necessary to recall how, in the postwar years, not just the authorship of performance scores but that of texts more generally came under intense scrutiny. In an influential 1946 essay entitled "The Intentional Fallacy," W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley advance the position that artistic intention might no longer be relied upon as a starting point for the analysis and evaluation of aesthetic works – for poems in particular. Though Wimsatt and Beardsley deny the validity of intention as an evaluative tool, they concede that it doubtless exists, joking that words destined for the poetic composition "come out of a head, not out of a hat" (1946, 469). Using a hat as a compositional tool seems like a quaint evocation of chance procedure compared with Mac Low's detailed parsing of randomized number tables or John Cage's well-documented, and highly complex, deployment of the *I Ching*. The evident sarcasm with which the theorists consider the possibility of compositional nonintention sheds light on the degree to which theories like theirs, as well as comparable positions emerging from musicology, will in a few short years revolutionize authorship, composition and performance.

¹⁹ Anthea Kraut's research into the race and gender politics of choreographic copyright explores this issue, particularly as it relates to legal authorship and the ways in which "copyright has been a tool for both consolidating and contesting power" (Kraut 2009, 94).

Wimsatt and Beardsley deem critical reliance on artist intention an artifact of romanticism, a collection of ideals that frame the poetic work as a natural outpouring of creative subjectivity. By contrast, their view of artistic production carries the consequence that the work “belongs to the public” insofar as its subject is the human being, “an object of public knowledge” (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 470). Though it will be another twenty years before Barthes declares the author dead, “The Intentional Fallacy” signals the growing momentum, in the early postwar years, toward approaching composition as the production of an object with a degree of autonomy from its creator. As such, the making of the object constitutes but one step in an ongoing process of the aesthetic work’s “working.” Despite the fact that Wimsatt and Beardsley focus on formal, critical evaluation rather than the less scholarly interpretive position of the reader, their account of criticism not only reconfigures the notion of authorship but sets up the possibility that the reader might encounter the work as active participant rather than passive receiver. Mac Low espouses a comparable perspective, particularly with respect to works that resist narrative, logic, and conventional syntax:

Each person who hears or reads this kind of work produces something new – whether one wishes to call it ‘meaning’ or something else. This is, of course, true to some extent of every kind of artwork. But it’s especially true of works in which the elements don’t cohere through some conventional verbal, musical, or visual syntax or through logical argument or narrative devices such as plots or comparable structural devices in the nonverbal arts. (Zurbrugg 2004, 271)

Conceiving readership and spectatorship thusly, not only does Mac Low shift the production of meaning toward reception, but he also lends language an indexical quality, developing “the notion of poetry as a notation” (Kotz 2010, 99). Again, this underscores how *The Pronouns* models and enacts a newly energized readership, with performer action offering tangible evidence for the mind-body’s interpretive faculties. Mac Low’s specifications regarding royalties and documentation, when seen through this lens, give less the impression that he hopes to

consolidate his own authorial position than to track the circulation of emergent meanings that he does not totally control.

Since *The Pronouns* are poems, after all, they quite naturally raise questions about readerly hermeneutics in relation to the literary text. In the next chapter, I take up the indeterminate language score much more fully, especially as it relates to the longstanding theoretical impasse between dance and writing. Here, though, I continue to focus on how Mac Low's scores reframe the relationship between notation and performance by shifting the burden of performer fidelity from the author's intention to the operational parameters of the score. Again, this shift stands out in greater relief when appreciated alongside historical changes in music, which, because of its universal and stable system of notation, has had to contend much more directly with the theoretical issue of interpretational fidelity. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the relationship between performer and musical work had largely been guided by the ideal of *werktreue*, a German term that suggests a scrupulous faithfulness to originals. Lydia Goehr (1992) has demonstrated how *werktreue* exerted a powerful pressure on the performers to both discern and fulfill the demands of authorial intention, with fidelity to that intention becoming the key metric for determining the success of individual performances. Not surprisingly, as midcentury experiments with nonintention ruptured presumed connections between sign and sound, composers challenged ideals that – just as in literature – privileged a work's underlying affective or narrative content. Rejecting the “rhetoric of subjectivity that has come down from nineteenth century romanticism” (Wolff 2009, 438), New York School composers distanced compositional practices from authorial impulse and preference, de-linking sound from pre-established meaning. This conception of the score as giving rise to an open sonic field (also newly inclusive of ambient and environmental noise), was in no way conceived of as a

terrain to be controlled by the composer, nor was it meant to reflect the composer's point of view (Joseph 2008, 60-61).

In spite of this newfound openness, however, indeterminate notation also instituted new disciplinary formations, albeit ones no longer dictated by *werktreue*. David Tudor's preeminence as an interpreter of the period's indeterminate works highlights this tension. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Tudor gained renown for meticulous performances of compositions notated "in a manner that would appear impossible of execution;" the pianist often refused to "simplify" even when the composer himself might not be able to tell the difference (Schonberg 1960, 50). Often, Tudor would approach aggressively indeterminate scores by investing hours transcribing them into usable notation, creating a supplementary version of the score that facilitated his own performance (54). Additionally, he completely restructured his own training methods, eschewing traditional scales in favor of idiosyncratic exercises designed for the demands of individual compositions (54). That Tudor would emerge as the dominant interpretive voice with respect to the New York School composers speaks to the new demands placed on the performer, demands that signal a disciplinary shift away from adherence to composer intention and toward self-directed adherence to the intricacies of the score. Moreover, Tudor's practice exemplifies a very particular type of interpretive labor that serves as a useful touchstone for understanding the passage from text to body prescribed by indeterminate language scores like *The Pronouns*.

By stressing the demands placed upon the performer by emergent forms of generative scoring, I hope to complicate the notion that less determinate notational forms necessarily give rise to unfettered performer freedom – rather, they invite performers to engage with compositional structure under sets of constraints that indeed stand out all the more visibly. Composer and theorist Cornelius Cardew has produced a particularly lucid account of the

demands of indeterminate notation, where the production of a work's content rests in the performer's "charge" (1961, 31) In Cardew's terms, indeterminate notation establishes a site in which freedom and responsibility constitute not opposites but rather parts of the same whole, where "freedom lies in the recognition of one's responsibilities" (32).²⁰ Unlike many theorists of the midcentury avant-garde, Cardew acknowledges various "psychological" effects of indeterminate scores, situations in which a composer (or even audience member) might be interested in a stressed or overwhelmed performer (23). Similarly, he observes how indeterminate scores can be understood as devices used to "wake up" the performer or bring "the pianist to life" (27). Cardew's vocabulary draws attention to a changing landscape of engagements between composers and performers who use notations to *produce* works rather than faithfully *reproducing* them.

As Mac Low recalls, it was *The Marrying Maiden* that helped him realize how much responsibility he was shifting to performers when granting them with this level of interpretive license. He recalls this realization leading directly to a work like *The Pronouns*, which divvies up the authorial role to such a degree as to support a leap over medial boundaries – it is the dancer, after all, who turns Mac Low's poetry into dance (Zurbrugg 2004, 263). Like Cardew, Mac Low considers freedom and responsibility mutually enabling and articulates an interest in specific "kinds of freedom," notably those "constrained only by what's 'in the piece' and what isn't, and by such old-fashioned virtues as tact and courtesy and goodwill manifested in concentrated listening and other perception and carefully discriminating choice" (271). For Mac Low, willing acceptance of these constraints – and indeed, the creative production that results from their

²⁰ Despite his early interest in indeterminacy as both a composer and a theorist, by 1976 Cardew sees the graphic score as a misguided attempt to subvert the separation between the conceptual labor of the composer and the manual labor of the performer. "In liberating the player from the domination of the written score" he writes, the composer "liberates (divorces) himself from the activity of music making" (1976, 263)

application – makes the performance agreement a “microcosm” of Mac Low’s imagined anarcho-pacifist utopia: “a *situation*” in which the poet “invites other persons & the world in general to be co-creators!” (Mac Low 1974, 47-48). In my analysis of Ishmael Houston-Jones and Julie Tolentino in Chapter Three, I return to the notion of the participatory score as a site of political possibility, where precisely these processes of co-creation facilitate instances of collective engagement and action. For now, though, I want to stress the degree to which the models I take up in that chapter are indebted to the epistemological changes that I have been outlining relative to Mac Low’s work in the early 1960s, as it so clearly reflects a culture that positions the score neither as repressive nor liberatory, but as a bearer of enabling constraint. Offering a defined but welcoming interpretational structure, works like *The Pronouns* capitalize on the production of interpretive difference rather than its reduction, with the “work” defined by engagements with that structure rather than the production of recognizable content.

As I proceed into an analysis of the Forti scores, a compatible, but very different negotiation of the 1960s experiment comes into focus. While Forti also probes the possibilities of the language score, she establishes a very different set of relationships between language and practice, score and enactment. Rather than writing open scores to emphasize the interpretive processes that manifest in the transition from language to dance, she demonstrates how choreographic thinking can manifest fully in language itself. Where Mac Low exemplifies how scores make choreographic structure accessible to potential interpreters, Forti demonstrates how scores can propose choreographic structure to readers – indeed, how scores make space for choreographic thinking outside the moment of performance. While both artists lend the score a heightened visibility (either in process or presentation), Forti’s work even more assertively

demands a consideration of the score as a product in its own right, newly available to circuits of exchange that nonetheless resist economies of reproduction.

Simone Forti: Crystallizing Choreographic Concepts

In 1961, when Simone Forti contributed five short pieces of writing to *An Anthology*, she was in the midst of what she identifies as a “detour,” an idiosyncratic pause in the improvisational dance practice that would otherwise dominate her artistic life from the mid-1950s to the present (Simone Forti, pers. comm.). As should now be obvious, this detour took her directly to the heart of New York City's experimental arts community, where creators across disciplinary boundaries were producing novel manifestations of the score. By the time she moved to New York with then-husband Robert Morris, Forti had already spent several years deeply involved in Anna Halprin's experiential, open-ended approach to movement exploration. In New York, however, close personal and professional association with artists such as La Monte Young, Jackson Mac Low, and Yoko Ono lent her artistic practice a new focus; in no way did Forti abandon her interest in physical impulse or the intricacies of movement, but her research briefly shifted from open improvisation to conceptualizing and enacting instructional language that could tightly delimit environments and physical tasks. Her writings in *An Anthology* vividly illustrate this turn, with the “dance reports,” “dance constructions,” and “Instructions for a Dance” conveying choreographic concepts with a succinctness that nonetheless gestures toward a wealth of nuance and possibility for readerly engagement.

As I have suggested, some of the most enduring questions raised by *An Anthology* revolve around its intermingling of object-based, performance-based, and language-based paradigms. Consisting of straightforward textual outlines of movement events that (at least in the case of the dance constructions) stem from the design and production of carefully designed objects, Forti's writings clearly evoke these problematics while pointing to the collection's overarching spirit of interdisciplinarity. Nonetheless, though, the writings do evoke a certain medium-specific reflexivity – concentrated to a single page, the five short pieces all bear the word “dance” in their titles, explicitly directing the reader's attention to the interplay between language and body evident in these tight articulations of choreographic structure. As her writings progress down the page, Forti moves from description toward prescription, with carefully chosen language encouraging ever more slippage between dances past, present, and future. Taken together, the writings suggest the possibility of the page itself as a space of enactment, constituting a provocative model for notational recording in which writing instantiates choreographic ideas without being cast as ancillary to the ephemeral moment of performance.

In many ways, then, Forti's *An Anthology* writings can be read as a curious and idiosyncratic manifestation of dance documentation, where inscription does not so much serve the goal of bodied reproduction as a translation of choreographic thinking via the bare-bones model of the language score. In spite of (or perhaps because of) *An Anthology*'s uniqueness, Forti's best-known effort at documentation remains *Handbook in Motion*, a memoir that eloquently chronicles her development as an artist with autobiographical prose, drawings, and photos. In sharp contrast to *Handbook*, Forti's works are presented in *An Anthology* without the aid of contextual information or other supporting material. With astonishing brevity, they convey choreographic information stripped bare of artistic process and origin stories. By focusing on

these *An Anthology* writings, and by exploring their relationship to the wider score culture, I hope to illustrate how Forti reveals a new territory for the score in which writing and reading constitute a rich and unmitigated primary experience of choreographic material.

Like Mac Low, Forti's immersion in a post-Cagean "score culture" prompts her to explore methods of writing that expand the scope of the relationship between performance and notational inscription. Unlike Mac Low, however, she explicitly divorces her presentation of choreographic structure from supplementary information regarding the exigencies of physical practice. Her writings hint at qualitative information about performance while revolving much more strongly around core concepts, giving rise to a degree of confusion regarding their relevancy with respect to potential execution – a degree of confusion, in fact, regarding their status *as* scores. Yet if these works are read in the context of *An Anthology* – and, moreover, the historical context of widespread and collective inquiry into the mechanism of notation – it becomes clear how Forti pushes the boundaries of the choreographic score, de-linking transmission from reproduction and asserting an easy accord between choreographic thinking and its linguistic representation. Like many of her fellow *An Anthology* contributors, Forti trades functionality for conceptual precision, demonstrating how a choreographic work might inhere in a score rather than deriving from it. By circumventing the traditional trajectory from score to realization, Forti evades notions of documentation that revolve around shadowiness or insubstantiality, focusing readerly attention instead on the wealth of choreographic material that can be transmitted through its transposition to the page.

In the first two pieces of *An Anthology* writing – the dance reports – Forti playfully proposes the notion that dances surround us. By deeming her observations "reports" on dance, she casts herself as an impartial observer, probing her environment for movement events that

display innate, though refined, choreographic sensibilities. For Forti, dance doesn't require (human) dancers: the first report describes a sprouting onion slowly but steadily transferring its weight from bulb to green shoot over the neck of a bottle:

An onion which had begun to sprout was set on its side on the mouth of a bottle. As the days passed it transferred [sic] more and more of its matter from the bulb to the green part until it had so shifted its weight that it fell off. (Young and Mac Low, 1961/63)

Forti delicately excludes herself from the report; though readers understand that she is the “reporter,” it is not clear whether she set the onion over the bottle or merely observes it in the slow process of falling. In some sense, such a dance has no choreographer, only a witness who recognizes the dramatic choreographic potential inherent in a simple, tension-filled arrangement of objects. Yet in another way, Forti can be understood as a choreographer by performing the simple act of framing – of recording the moment and writing it as dance. Writing in the past tense, Forti conveys a sense of resolution and a crystallized uniqueness; the onion and bottle nearly take on the quality of an oil-painted still life. Though entirely mundane, *this* onion will never again fall from *this* bottle in just the same way. As will become clear, however, I believe that Forti's *An Anthology* writings counter theories that privilege the ephemerality of movement targeted by notation. In documenting these moments through the reports, Forti does not so much fight a loss inherent to the medium as she actively creates dance from the starting point of an otherwise unremarkable occurrence.

The second report, while describing a scenario significantly more shaped by human volition, also focuses on simple factors leading to a predictable movement outcome. A group of boys push a snowball up a hill. When they reach the top of the hill, they let the snowball roll down. It splits into two, the boys climb up onto the halves, and they rock back and forth. Finally, they leave. The raw materials present at the outset – boys, snow, hill – determine much about the

sequence's unfolding. In the report, Forti leaves out a range of details – she does not mention whether the boys are shouting, joking, or laughing, for example. She does not reveal much about the atmosphere: whether the snow is still falling, or if there are other children playing nearby. With the simplicity of this pared-down recounting, Forti encourages her readers to hone in on the boys' commitment to a series of strenuous and absorbing core actions, proceeding from one move to the next in logical progression. The distillation of each report to a clear beginning (boys roll snowball down a hill), middle (they rock on the halves) and end (they leave) reveals Forti's interest in movement events that develop based on the internal features of a situation as opposed to externally imposed choreographic impulse. This strategy of distillation, in particular, strongly characterizes Forti's subsequent *An Anthology* writings, where the score's main function is to bridge fully engaged bodies and their environment in ways that give rise to movement that seems somehow both inevitable and spontaneous.

As in the dance reports, Forti formulates the “dance constructions” using simple declaratives and recounting movement events in plain language. Though the choreographic impetus clearly shifts here from the internal features of “found” situations to Forti's own invention of devices rich in possible kinetics, she still resists the imperative, retaining a sense that movement evolves unimpeded from an initial setup. In the first (*Huddle*), a “group of seven or eight people stand together in a very close huddle,” taking turns climbing up over the group and down the other side. In the second (*Slantboard*), - “three people move on a 8 by 8 foot square platform inclined at 45°, using for support five or six ropes which hang from the top of the incline” (Young 1961/63). Also immediately noticeable from these short excerpts is the fact that Forti writes in the present tense, though she describes dances that had likely already been

staged and performed at the time of writing.²¹ In contrast to the dance reports, these writings do not crystallize a particular moment in time; rather, they abstract dance events into a permanent present, suggesting the availability of these choreographic structures to future iterations.

To indicate how subsequent realizations might reflect her choreographic intentions, Forti elaborates on performance quality, duration, and costuming. In *Huddle*, she shifts mid-paragraph from the nature of action to the quality of intention, prescribing that “movement must be constant but not hurried,” and that the “dance construction should be continued ‘long enough,’ perhaps ten minutes.” In *Slantboard*, she suggests that “any mover may rest whenever tired,” and that performers wear tennis shoes. Beyond this guidance, Forti does not prescribe or regulate movement choices. Note that even in using the prescriptive framework of the language score to articulate choreographic instruction, Forti continues to evade the imperative, writing for example, “no one is to get off the board,” rather than stating, “do not get off the board” (Young 1961/63). By stitching together description and prescription with the same even declaratives, Forti creates a sense of uncomplicated unity between task and execution. As I will discuss in greater detail, this strategy much more clearly supports a readerly engagement with the dances than their physical reproduction via the mechanism of the score.

In the last of Forti's writings in *An Anthology*, “Instructions For a Dance,” “one man is told that he must lie on the floor during the entire piece.” Another man “is told that during the piece he must tie the first man to the wall” (Young 1961/63). These two declaratives constitute the entirety of the piece, yet the terseness of Forti’s writing belies its complexity. Again, she does not provide instructions to potential performers, exactly, but states that instructions should be given – presumably, by a third party. Slyly conscripting a subsidiary choreographer, Forti

²¹ While the dance constructions were first performed in May 1961 at Yoko Ono’s Chamber Street loft, the chronological relationship between their inscription for *An Anthology* and that first performance remains unclear. See Kotz (2013).

provokes a dramatic confrontation in the most understated way possible. She refuses to retread the traditional path from choreographic conception through to performance and documentation, and then back to performance. Rather, she uses the writing process to downplay her own involvement, setting up a shift of choreographic responsibility as integral part of the process. While the “Instructions” clearly reflect Forti’s interests (including, again, a simple setup that contains inherent tension), the dance’s volatility alludes to the singularity of future realizations. Like *Huddle* or *Slantboard*, no two performances of this structure will be exactly alike, yet the uncompromising singularity of concept enforces a unity that seems perfectly transmissible by this brief paragraph laying out the work’s basic structure. Again, Forti uses the short format, narrative/declarative score to suggest direct and unembellished physical exertion, and a clear but calm attentiveness to the work's parameters. She also encourages the reader to train an extraordinarily acute focus on the inherent drama promised by the basic framework of the event.

The specificity of these writings jumps into relief when compared to Forti’s summaries of the same pieces in *Handbook in Motion*. There, Forti describes the works in greater detail, though she deploys much of the same language to convey comparable levels of information with respect to choreographic structures. For example, where the *An Anthology* description reads “One member of the group climbs up the mass of people and then down again becoming once more a part of the mass” (Young 1961/63), the *Handbook* passage reads:

One person detaches and begins to climb up the outside of the huddle, perhaps placing a foot on someone’s thigh, a hand in the crook of someone’s neck, and another hand on someone’s arm. He pulls himself up, calmly moving across the top of the huddle, and down the other side. He remains closely identified with the mass, resuming a place in the huddle. Immediately, someone else is climbing. (Forti 1974, 59)

The *Handbook* iteration reveals how, in *An Anthology*, Forti writes with remarkably little concern for detailing the practical strategies that would support corporeal realization. In addition

to offering more varied physical possibilities, the *Handbook* writing of the piece also offers information regarding specific performances – in particular, one in which a “second-generation huddle” split off from the first (Forti 1974, 59). The economy of Forti’s language in *An Anthology*, alongside her refusal to evoke the particularities of realization, indicate Forti’s strategy of streamlined expression of basic concept and structure divorced from the contingencies of enactment.

If Forti’s writings stand as valid and autonomous manifestation of choreographic practice, then how might dancers performing *Huddle*, for example, relate to these texts? By positing a degree of autonomy for these scores, I contend that bodily performance and writing convey enough substance to be considered independent products of choreographic thinking. The whole series of *An Anthology* pieces, however, stands in a somewhat unstable relationship to enactment. The dance reports, for example, seem to locate performance in reading and writing, evidenced by the fact that in May 1961, Forti includes a reading of one of the reports in a concert featuring choreographers from Robert Dunn’s composition class (Forde 2013, 256). Likewise, the dance constructions have been performed in a range of museum, gallery, stage and festival contexts, especially over the course of the last ten years; Meredith Morse, for example, rightly identifies *Huddle* as Forti’s “signature work” (2014, 30). Spectators gathering around the huddle need no familiarity with the *An Anthology* writings to understand what the dancers are doing. That goes without saying for many dances that have functional scores, though. More striking here is the fact that readers need not experience corporeal enactment to understand the dances’ central choreographic proposals (though such an understanding would admittedly lack appreciation of the many facets of the work that become evident through performance). Likewise, dancers need not familiarize themselves with the *An Anthology* texts to perform the

works effectively. With such an ambiguous relationship between writing and performance, can the *An Anthology* pieces even rightly be considered scores? In response to that question, composer Tashi Wada suggests that they might be read as “more descriptions of, or reflections on, the performances that can also function as instructions at this point” (Kotz and Wada 2014, 65). The “can also” of Wada’s statement uncovers a slippery ground between description and instruction, where Forti directs language to potential interpreters while also raising questions about its sufficiency to foster a physical practice that would actually comply with her choreographic intentions.²²

This tension particularly struck me when I took on the role of performer in *Huddle* and *Slantboard*, as well as several of the other dance constructions, in the summer of 2011.²³ At no point in the rehearsal process did Forti suggest that performers view or discuss the pieces in text form (whether from *An Anthology* or *Handbook*); instead she patiently talked the group through each work’s general organization, and watched the practice over the course of several intensive days, giving frequent feedback. Thus an apparent contradiction: if the works rely so strongly on central initiating concepts, as I have suggested, should adequate performance not follow easily from exposure to the score itself? On the contrary, Forti’s downplaying of the text scores in this practical context reaffirms their independence. Even though the writings convey Forti’s central choreographic principles as assertively as their corporeal corollaries, physical practice entails a wholly different experience than the appreciation furnished by the score. In other words, *Huddle*

²² Recent museum exhibitions have further complicated questions regarding the relationship(s) that Forti establishes between text and enactment. Both the Reina Sofia group exhibition in 2013 and Forti’s 2014 retrospective at the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg displayed a sculptural rendering of the onion report called *Onion Walk*. While the piece is dated to 1961, it remains unclear whether Forti conceptualized the piece as a sculptural entity at that time. My own reading of the dance report as descriptive scoring, and of the onion’s slow movement as something like found choreography, sits uneasily with this turn toward museum display. Is *Onion Walk* a sculptural rendering of the dance report? A re-performance? Or do these various manifestations of the central concept represent a constellation of related works, one language-based and one centered around the object?

²³ *Two Evenings of Dance Constructions* took place at the Box Gallery in Los Angeles’s Chinatown on August 18th and 19th, 2011.

feels quite different from the inside than it sounds and looks. Much has been made of Forti's assertion that she imagined audiences appreciating *Huddle* as a sculpture; Carrie Lambert [Beatty] asks, for example, whether *Huddle* should rightly said to be performed or displayed (2004, 105).²⁴ From inside the huddle, however, I felt anything *but* object-like. Dancing the work, I was acutely aware of my own body and its needs for the demanding 10-minute duration. My group constantly readjusted to support climbers; without seeing the whole, I was aware not so much of what we looked like but of my sweat, my breathing, and my constant calculations to judge the weight and momentum of other bodies. Inside the huddle, performers focused intently, though sometimes giggling or whispering surreptitiously about how much time had elapsed. The *An Anthology* score, by refusing to negotiate these concerns, perhaps works better to help readers imagine the work (explicitly from the position of viewer) than to help dancers perform it.

Additionally, Forti demands an extraordinarily specific performance quality for the dance constructions, one that is especially challenging to those trained in forms of dance or theater that rely on narrative development. Teaching the works, Forti was vigilant about maintaining a task-like attention through absorption in their streamlined structures. She instructed performers to avoid subtly bringing subtext to the works by showing anticipation or disappointment in others' choices. The goal was to simply move without commenting on the movement, a performance task that remained difficult for me for the duration of the rehearsals and performance, despite having worked extensively with various approaches to performance "neutrality." Again, none of this should come as a surprise to those who have read the terse, narrative-free language of the *An Anthology* texts. Accomplishing this quality, however, requires physical practice and a personal

²⁴ Lambert writes: "Rather than focusing on the *dancers'* experiences – their freedom from imposed choreography, their physical intelligence in determining the surfaces and weights of the bodies, their modeling of an interactive social unit – we might best approach the piece, as Forti seems to [talking about audience walking around, influence of Muybridge, seeing climbing – something she wants to watch, rapt attention], from the spectator's point of view" (2004, 105).

relationship to the tasks – indeed, a personal relationship to Forti. By the logic of conventional notation, this gap between score and physical practice might be counted as a failure, a fatal disjunct that forces choreographer and teacher to resort to the very processes of body-to-body transmission that so many forms of notation aim to circumvent. By producing choreographic writing with a high degree of autonomy, though, Forti distances herself from traditional models that promise transmission independent from body-to-body encounter. Positioning writing as a technology capable of independently manifesting the work, the score ceases to represent a functional support system. That is, Forti, does not write with an eye toward facilitating accurate reconstruction, which is not surprising if reading is considered just as natural an engagement with choreographic practice as dancing.

Throughout the preceding analysis, I have emphasized how Forti grants her choreographic works identities outside of performance by manifesting their basic structures through the concise format of the conceptual language score. As a notational strategy, this format elegantly supports Forti’s choreographic objectives, many of which concern the productive opposition of clear structural frameworks and the individualized negotiation of those frameworks through stable, but highly variable “continuous action” (Kilcoyne 1993, 7). Forti provides the slanted board, for example, and her performers have one task in relation to that board: moving around on it for a particular duration. Within that period, performers make decision after decision, never straying far from the central proposal or the limiting sculptural “prop.” With the continuous action pieces, Forti cultivates a space for spontaneous decision-making that does not quite fall under the rubric of improvisation, or at least improvisation informed by Forti’s existing body of experience at the time. As has been extensively documented, Forti’s work in the early 1960s took shape, in part, as a response to the open-ended improvisational practices of Anna

Halprin's Bay Area Dancer's Workshop.²⁵ Describing the contrast between Halprin's brand of open improvisation and the continuous action works, Forti notes that in the latter "you don't start from experiencing the movement and evolving the movement, but you start from an idea that already has the movement pretty prescribed" (10).²⁶ The easily communicable *concept* that triggers the continuous action, then, serves Forti as a device to establish a basic movement scenario (like the slanted board) rich enough to let performers explore a range of possibilities while adhering to a simple originating framework.

Indeed, many of the contributions to *An Anthology* reflect a growing interest in centralizing the concept through language, an ideological project most explicitly outlined in Henry Flynt's essay "Concept Art." Here, Flynt defines the genre as "a kind of art of which the material is language" (Young 1961/63).²⁷ While Julia Robinson suggests such strategies as evidence of the priority of "concept over content" (Robinson 19), I would argue that the *An Anthology* writings simply present an innovative approach to content, both in dance and on the page. Forti manifests this approach in the writing itself, where information withheld (evidenced by the more comprehensive *Handbook* iterations) suggests both an extraordinary openness toward individual variation and the primacy of the works' highly focused central propositions. In other words, Forti's writing effectively reduces choreographic structure to a kind of scaffolding: the introduction of an environment with tension and potential, the (loose) specification of a

²⁵ Of diverging from Halprin's training and development methods, Forti has said: "I went through a reaction to the whole thing. I was twenty-three, twenty-four, and I guess it was kind of an adolescent thing. Anna had sort of been my Mum and maybe I had to find a way to push off, find a way that this was all wrong and that I had a thread of something that was instead what I was really going to do (Kilcoyne 1993, 4).

²⁶ Forti's recollection of developing the concept pieces echoes many of the creative strategies explored in the Robert Dunn composition class. Of that class, Forti says: "we would never make a dance to have it be a certain way. We would make up a set of rules and then follow the rules to see what dance came out" (Kilcoyne 1993, 5).

²⁷ Joseph (2008) undertakes a much fuller discussion of the distinction between Flynt's formulation of "concept art" and conceptualism, writing: "many aspects of conceptualism were clearly put forward by Flynt: the turn to language as a material and the subsequent 'dematerialization' of the work of art; the emphasis of structure over content; the move from specific artistic mediums to the category of art in general; an appeal to certain aspects of mathematics, including irrational ones; a move from aesthetic to analytic propositions (and associated philosophical pretensions)" (168).

duration in which performers will explore that setup, and an intention that the action progress in the absence of narrative development or resolution.

Where Forti's entries begin with clear concepts and suggest the ways in which such concepts hold raw materials for enactment, many of La Monte Young's *An Anthology* works start and end with language, foreclosing the possibility of tangible performance all together. Young's single command works represent only a subset of his larger output of scores, some of which barely even contain a command, thereby rejecting nearly all of the conventions of traditional musical notation.²⁸ In many cases, he redirects the notational enterprise toward the limits of abstraction, going so far as to position the works within a privately imaginative space for the reader. *Piano Piece for David Tudor #3* reads, in its entirety:

most of them
were very old grasshoppers (Young 1961/63)

And *Composition 1960 #15* (to Richard Huelsenbeck):

This piece is little whirlpools
out in the middle of the ocean (Young 1961/63)

Even Young's text scores that connect to traditional instrumentation do so only tenuously – in *Piano Piece for David Tudor #1*, the performer's sole instruction concerns providing the piano a bale of hay and a bucket of water. As Brandon Joseph points out, by foreclosing the possibility of performance in a traditional sense, Young circumvents the performer as an intermediary between composer and spectator, casting an uninterrupted trajectory between the moment of composition and the event of reception. Thus Young uses the concept to distance the writing of music from the production of sound, but where Joseph suggests that the word scores give rise to a situation in which “there is, in some sense, no longer any work of art,” I would like to propose

²⁸ Henry Flynt famously posits that La Monte Young's word scores, in particular, “crystallized a new genre” proving highly adaptable to disciplines well beyond musical composition (Flynt 1996, 52).

that Young's word pieces re-situate the work precisely in this space of "unmediated connection" between composer and reader (2008, 188).

Just as Young rewires the circuitry of the score in order to bypass performance, and thereby concentrate the work's impact within the notational itself, so too does Forti centralize the device of the score by de-emphasizing its reproductive function. As I have suggested, however, because Forti's pieces are eminently performable, they take on a double life. Though the rich and highly mediated legacy of performance for the dance constructions, in particular, can be hard to reconcile with the austere autonomy of the *An Anthology* scores, both strands – crystalline conceptual formulation and resolutely corporeal iterative history – contribute vitally to the overall identity of the works. Lending the dances a life on the page, Forti does not so much de-materialize her choreographic works as suggest the imaginative experience of reading as itself a kind of materialization of choreographic content.

While the format of the conceptual language score perhaps reduces works to basic frameworks, it also lends those works a newfound mobility, enlarging their purview by making scores objects of distribution and exchange. Liz Kotz demonstrates how text scores like those of Young (or Forti) opened the door to wide reproduction and rapid circulation: "small, strange, and belonging to no definable genre," these artistic products "could go anywhere" (2010, 63). Many of the *An Anthology* artists address or dedicate scores to other artists (often those featured in the volume itself), shedding light on how ideas were proposed, refuted, and expanded upon through the medium of the score itself. In this context, it makes sense that the act of correspondence itself became somewhat strangely aestheticized, as exemplified by offerings from Dennis Johnson and La Monte Young that mimic postal system-ready letters as envelopes affixed to the page. Young's envelope holds *Compositions 1960 #9*, which consists of a graphic, single-line

depiction of the instruction that he subsequently iterated in text form through twenty-nine of the identical *Compositions 1961*: “draw a straight line and follow it” (Young 1961/63). The tendency of this group to focus on scoring as a means of exchange is also acutely evidenced by the pre-production tension that developed between, on the one side, editors Young and Mac Low, and on the other, designer George Maciunas. Kotz recounts how Maciunas pushed Young and Mac Low to consider a range of designs that privileged mailing and shipping over bookstore display or library storage (2013, 52). Their conflict amply demonstrates how the epistemological orientation of *An Anthology* – like Forti’s scores themselves – troubles distinctions between archive and creative impulses. Using scores to introduce works into an economy of exchange that de-emphasized material reproduction, the *An Anthology* artists pioneered forms of engagement that, again and again, privileged barely controlled dispersion over consolidation.

By initiating models of scoring that privilege the conceptual core of works, and by insisting on the potential of those scores to circulate to a wide and de-specialized audience, Forti and her *An Anthology* peers advance a form of documentation that grants the score a constitutive (and not subsidiary) role. One of the key consequences, then, for this new autonomy and potency concerns the capacity for choreographic scores to augment the notion that movement’s inscription must necessarily carry ghostly, or trace-like, qualities.²⁹ The simplicity and elegance of Forti’s writing in *An Anthology* encourages readers to appreciate the writing of scores as a way of espousing choreographic thinking, a parallel practice that disturbs the cloud of melancholia so often settling in at the moment of transition between event and document. If these writings are approached not as a means of recapture, however, but as an alternative mode of

²⁹ Forti herself probes notation’s spectral quality in *Handbook in Motion*, detailing the process of creating “elevation tune,” a graphic notation bearing an inscription of her vertical trajectory in and out of New York City’s subways and elevators. She recalls: “One day I handed the elevation tune to La Monte to hear what it sounded like. He whistled it to me, and in a palpable sense it had very much the feeling of those two weeks. It seemed to me that it was their ghost” (Forti 1974, 71).

performance, then they give off less an air of melancholy than a sense of resilience and potential. Moreover, when analyzed in the larger context of *An Anthology*, where artists shift text-based and graphic representations to the center of a communal creative experience, Forti's writings elude distinctions between writing and performance altogether. Under the umbrella of *An Anthology*, contributors frame art making as the development of texts summoning a novel awareness of sound, bodies, and objects. The volume, as a whole, constitutes a new genre of creative practice by mobilizing documentation toward activity and interactivity, not by forestalling artistic production to an extra-textual phase of the creative process.

Discussing her participation in *An Anthology*, Forti explains that her text pieces ended up in the volume because the works "belonged there" (Simone Forti, pers. comm.). Forti's undeniable "belonging" in *An Anthology*, analyzed through the lens of this cultural moment's particular energy, helps to indicate a number of possibilities for the dance score that, as of 1961, were so vividly emerging – namely, the score as language-based, de-specialized, and relevant outside the field of dance proper. In outlining this broader context, I hope to have illustrated how Forti's scores took their place within an ecosystem where public reading, exchange, and guerilla distribution kept ideas, espoused by the scores, circulating actively. All of this circulation helps to inform how Forti's writing refers to activity while also remaining curiously *active* itself, efficacious in its own right and straddling the realms of preservation and performance. As I will continue to stress, scores like Forti's have the potential to challenge the notion that to write dance is to fixate on ghostly traces of action. Forti's *An Anthology* writings, in particular, play out choreographic thinking through simple, accessible setups that reflect the interdisciplinary score culture to which she so palpably contributed. With these brief texts, Forti counters the notion of choreography as a technology in constant battle with ephemerality and instead stages a

choreographic imagination playfully and poignantly engaging reader and performer alike in the process of making a dance.

Conclusion

Few dance studies scholars have drawn substantive connections between Forti's "conceptual pieces" of the early 60s and concurrent developments in interdisciplinary scoring. While art historians have made significant strides in assessing the importance of the dance constructions, these accounts tend to focus on the relationship between performance and object production, rather than the *An Anthology* texts, in order to make a case for Forti's significance in the context of minimalism.³⁰ By focusing on the writings, I locate Forti's work in a wider landscape of experimentation that explicitly engages with the limits and the potential of the choreographic score. Similarly, Jackson Mac Low's foray into choreography with the "dance instruction poems" seems tangential to the development of postmodern dance until he too is located in a network of activities that consistently forefronts the relationship between prescriptive language and enactment. Both examples demonstrate how artists of the very early 1960s did not just transpose facets of musical experimentation onto related practices of writing and dance, but rather absorbed those changes while pursuing new directions, placing the moving body at the center of their research.

³⁰ Anna Chave, for example, identifies Forti as a key contributor to early minimalism, connecting the "performative" gestures of later sculptural work to the dance constructions. In particular, she notes Forti's influence on then-husband Robert Morris, writing: "The claims being made for the seminal status of Morris's early work, and with it for a canonical strain of Minimalism – the notion that these artists definitively put 'the question of the subject in play' by arranging performative situations – would be better displaced to Forti's work of 1960-61" (Chave 2000, 156). See also Spivey (2009) and Lambert (2004).

To highlight the score culture of 1960-1961 is certainly to suggest that the gestures attributed to the Judson artists – including the litany of rejections ostensibly ridding dance of theatricality, virtuosity, affective content and narrative – were already at play well before the first concert took place. It is also to suggest that these rejections ought to be understood as responsive to cross-disciplinary influences rather than just as a reactive negation to the immediate historical precursors in dance. Finally, it is to reframe the scope of these influences, to insist that many more exchanges be brought into focus than the unidirectional flow of ideas from John Cage through Merce Cunningham and finally, to the Judson artists. By dwelling on the artists who strenuously reanimated “the ‘-graphy’ in choreography,” notions of the historical import of the 1960s only expand, becoming more nuanced and inclusive (Banes 1987, 6).

Rather than pursuing how notational experimentation of the 1960s paved the way toward an expanded range of possibilities for choreographic practice in general, though, I turn my attention to the many ways in which this influence can still be felt in the context of particularly conspicuous applications of the score. In the remainder of my analysis, I pick up three distinct threads that I have traced to Forti and Mac Low: namely, language scores that accommodate interpretative variation, participatory scores that enable collective social formations, and descriptive codifications that enable nonreproductive transmission. I connect the ideological frameworks inherent in such scores to the shared culture that looked to structural schematization as a means of opening works up to variation and change rather than sealing them off. I locate in each of the subsequent examples a productive tension, articulated strongly in the scores themselves, between constraint and spontaneity, established parameters and unforeseen possibilities. In each case, these qualities come to the fore through the assertive centralization of the score, with many of the choreographers treated in this analysis (like Forti and Mac Low)

asserting an autonomous identity for their scores and documentation through publishing in print or digital formats. Ultimately, I will return again and again to the conclusions of my analysis of Forti and Mac Low: that a profusion of possible relationships between score and performance emerge once the score is considered more than a “practical aid to production,” and that the schematization of choreographic structure has consistently, in the last fifty years, prioritized the inclusion of new readers and dancers over and above the stabilization of dances as unchanging cultural products (Goodman 1968, 128).

Language Made Bodily: Deborah Hay and Yvonne Meier

In an unfinished treatise on the interrelated problems of notational representation and interpretation in music, Theodor Adorno addresses the score, inscribed on the traditional Western staff, as a “needy” text generating an unavoidable and unpredictable “zone of indeterminacy” (2006, 181). Accepting the position that all scores generate some measure of indeterminacy, Adorno argues for iterative differentiation not as an inherently meaningful quality of works themselves, but rather as a highly visible byproduct of their inscription. That is, by writing a work down, notators inescapably draw attention to iterative difference. At the same time though, notation ostensibly limits that difference, and in so doing, “always also regulates, restrains, and represses whatever it serves” (173). Figuring notation as a mechanism for sustaining interpretive difference while simultaneously suppressing it, Adorno posits a fundamental violence taking place the moment writing is applied to “something alingual” (188). Though his analysis largely concerns musical notation, Adorno does address movement notation, referring to Rudolf Laban’s work as an “eccentric attempt at dance notation:” a “regressive phenomena” marked by the “nonsensical rationalizing of the pure gesture” (179). Not surprisingly, his argument about the

inherently repressive nature of musical notation thus extends to the schematization of movement through writing.

Adorno's "nonsensical" designation aside, Laban's likewise considers his own system as a form of rationalization. Upon his arrival in Britain just prior to the outbreak of World War II, he addresses "an interested reading public" by arguing for the epistemological necessity of his *kinetography* – a universally applicable graphic system intended to clarify movement's basic principles and facilitate its recording (Laban 1966, ix). He assiduously applies himself to the problem of movement's opacity, arguing:

Movement is one of man's languages and as such it must be consciously mastered. We must try to find its real structure and the choreological order within it through which movement becomes penetrable, meaningful and understandable. In an attempt to do this, it has been found necessary to use various graphic signs, because words can never be entirely adequate in dealing with the changing nature of the subject before us. They are abstractions and, as it were, short cuts in the flow of life (viii-ix).

Later, he fantasizes about the possibility of a truly effective notational system, one sturdy enough to trump the ephemerality not of dance, but of language:

It is perhaps a fantastic idea that there could be ideographic signs in a notation through which all people of the world could communicate. This, however, is not as extraordinary as it may seem. If we could write down 'the thing,' 'the object,' 'the idea,' 'the action' in itself, and not its name only in an ephemeral national language, it would be possible for anybody of any nationality to comprehend the thing, the object, the idea, the action."³¹ (123-124)

Though Laban summarily dismisses language as a viable tool for the capture of movement, his polemic nonetheless touches upon the basic coordinates that have long oriented theoretical approaches to the relationship between language and dance. In the aforementioned quote, he first

³¹ Laban's thinking is echoed in the conceptual underpinnings of the slightly later Eshkol-Wachman system, in which the notators likewise eradicate language's "multitude of shades of expression" to "deal in an exact and unambiguous manner" with discrete "aspects" of movement (Eshkol and Wachman 1958, 5). Additionally, Laban's attempts to transcend the ephemerality of the "national language," implicitly recapitulate the universalizing aims of Feuillet's much earlier graphic notation system (discussed at length in the previous chapter). For a more thorough discussion of the ways in which Feuillet's graphic notation abstracted dance from localized social and geographical contexts, see Foster (2010), Bench (2008), and Laurenti (1994).

establishes equivalence, arguing for the existence of an inherent “structure:” an underlying (and as-yet undiscovered) grammar governing movement’s seemingly mysterious flow. While he lends movement its own quasi-linguistic integrity however, he simultaneously alienates movement from words, stressing their inadequacy in the face of kinetic flux. Thus, Laban claims the validity of dance as a language while at the same time refusing the possibility that language might be used to accomplish dance’s capture.

Even more importantly, Laban positions language as an obstacle to the dancing subject as she attempts to comprehend her own action. Where language fails to illuminate movement’s hidden substructure, Laban sees the potential for graphic inscription to establish a pathway to understanding by symbolizing the essential properties that constitute universal first principles. Both Laban and Adorno, then, either by condemning or championing the notational project, reveal how inextricably the relationship between movement and writing can be implicated in the question of the dancing body’s recourse to thought and comprehension. Laban’s comments reveal how, in the absence of a universally valid, objectivizing system of representation, the inability to write movement seamlessly morphs into an inability to understand it. Adorno, on the other hand, sees notational schematization as an affront to the “alingual,” which, one assumes, is best not rationalized at all. My analysis of the generative language scores in this chapter contests the assumption that notation need be repressive, specifically by identifying how such scores centralize iterative differentiation and validate multiple pathways from prompt to movement. To do so, I forefront language scores, demonstrating how choreographers have taken advantage of precisely the qualities that Laban finds troubling with respect to language’s validity as a notational technology.

As I suggested, Laban's claims do not merely represent the isolated musings of an impassioned crusader, intent on securing privileged status for his system of graphic notation. Rather, this characterization of the relationship between movement and language as a tense push-and-pull emerges again and again up through the present moment in critical accounts of dance's ontology. As recently as 2011, Mark Franko summarized "contemporary thought on dance" as "frequently split between a concept of dance-as-writing and a concept of dance as beyond the grasp of all language, especially written language" (2011, 322). As Laban's thinking, in particular, vividly illustrates, the two sides of Franko's polarity often function in mutually supportive ways, with assertions of an essential incompatibility between movement and language bolstered by a set of metaphors that nonetheless frame dance in linguistic terms. In the first section of this introduction, I summarize a range of these critical positions, focusing first on philosophical inquiries into the feasibility of choreographic notation. I then discuss how choreographers have likewise fortified discursive oppositions between movement and language by privileging dance's presumed capacity to resist (linguistic) representational capture.

From there, I shift my focus to 20th century literary theories that revised notions of textuality to centralize performance, plurality and deferral. Theorists in dance and performance studies have, of course, extensively explored such poststructuralist tropes over the last few decades. Any theoretical account of contemporary choreographic scores – particularly "open" or generative scores – however, must grapple with this theoretical legacy anew, especially insofar as it complicates inviolable oppositions (or neat metaphorical equivalences) between body and text. Here, I build upon productive existing dialogues where literary theories support arguments for choreography's bodily semiotics at the same time as choreographic analysis helps "literary critics discover fresh ways of describing flux" (Goellner and Shea Murphy 1995, 5). Rather than

using 20th century literary theories to consider dances as richly communicative, if particularly open texts, though, I want to use these theoretical frameworks to consider the interplay between text and body as manifested through the very particular prescriptive situation of the language score. That is, I want to explore the relationship between dance and text by approaching movement's communicability through specific examples of choreographic writing. In so doing, I hope to loosen some of the limiting theoretical binds that can arise in light of the conceptual polarity between dance-as-language and dance as language's *other*.

In order to ground this exploration, then, I focus on two choreographers who revel in the passage from text to idiosyncratic embodiment as enabled by the generative language score: Deborah Hay and Yvonne Meier. Both artists invite performers to navigate expansive, ambiguous, and occasionally ridiculous language prompts by speaking back to the text, articulating distinct and particularized physical responses. In so doing, Hay and Meier capitalize on the very features – the “range of interpretation and leeway for misunderstanding” – that have so consistently been framed as drawbacks with respect to language's efficacy as a notational tool (Guest 1984, 12).³² Hay and Meier avoid saddling notation with the burden of accurate and comprehensive capture, instead cultivating notational writing strategies explicitly intended to give rise to interpretive variation. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, indeterminate notation, pioneered around midcentury across disciplinary boundaries, problematized presumed correlations between notational signs and results. Hay and Meier demonstrate how in the wake of this rupture, notational openness no longer represents a danger to the identity of choreographic work as it passes from body to body, iteration to newly devised iteration. Indeed, that very

³² Anne Hutchinson Guest points out language's inadequacies in order to garner support for graphic notation, and Rudolf Laban's system in particular. However, language presented challenges to the notator concerned with accuracy and preservation long prior to Laban's early 20th century work. For example, Susan Leigh Foster characterizes Feuillet's 17th century graphic system as a technological streamlining of prior text-based models including Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesography* (Foster 2011, 18-23).

openness can emerge as a work-defining characteristic. Alongside clearly defined, practice-specific physical strategies, their scores provide structure and flexibility in equal measure, inviting dancers to engage with existing parameters while also producing new meaning.

With her well-established choreographic approach, Hay fosters the ongoing exploration of heightened corporeal consciousness focused on the provocatively open language of carefully crafted scores. Though Hay has been working with language prompts since at least 1970, I focus here on her Solo Performance Commissioning Project (1998-2012), a unique structure in which a group of dancers “commission” dances, working closely with the choreographer in an intensive setting to develop individual adaptations of an existing solo. Commissioning artists confront Hay’s score, but they likewise confront a series of “performance tools,” open-ended questions that overlap with the score to shape the dancer’s engagement. Offering linguistic raw material through both the score and the tools, Hay engenders a creative practice that is at once extraordinarily accommodating and tightly circumscribed, one that toggles between language and the body to carve out a space for finely tuned physical thinking and response. Hay’s scores refute the notion that notational openness necessarily detracts from dancerly self-awareness, demonstrating, in fact, how exceedingly indeterminate language can give rise to physical specificity and sharp, whole-bodied thinking.

Hay’s language scores highlight the performer’s collaborative role, but they do so mostly in the development phase, with the language prompts typically functioning as unseen infrastructure during performance. Not so with Yvonne Meier, who, in *Brother of Gogolorez* (2011) confers radical visibility on the score by audibly directing dancers over the course of an evening-length performance. Making her delivery of the score an integral component with respect to the work’s reception, Meier not only exposes her dancers’ interpretational processes,

but also cultivates a palpable tension between dancerly compliance and self-direction. Deliberately constructing a somber authorial persona that contrasts with her dancer's riotous physicality (one informed by very specific improvisational training modalities), Meier draws a taut line between the delivery of choreographic instruction and its bodily realization. Compared with Hay's immersive approach to mentorship, Meier's on-the-spot commands create raw, volatile, and highly charged interactions between choreographer and dancer. Yet by setting herself up as an exaggerated voice of authority, and by encouraging her dancers to challenge that authority, Meier convincingly critiques her own score's prescriptive force, revealing how the dancers walk a fine line between fidelity and spontaneity.

For both Hay and Meier, writing itself constitutes an integral component of the choreographic process. With language prompts centralized at production or presentation phases (or both), these artists clearly complicate assumptions of an essential incompatibility between movement and language. They also demonstrate how clearly defined approaches to indeterminacy give rise to heightened degrees of interpretational responsibility, inviting their performers to exhibit self-directed negotiation of constraint through clear, concentrated attentiveness to the parameters of predetermined texts. With my analysis of Hay and Meier, I hope to demonstrate how their scores locate the interplay between fixity and flux not just in the body, but in language itself. Moreover, I want to elucidate how Hay and Meier use this unresolved tension to endow dancers with the capacity to bring iterative difference to the prescriptive framework of the score, thereby evidencing a relationship between body and notational language that does not revolve around movement's capture.

From the General to the Work-Specific: Theorizing Multiple Relationships Between Movement and Language

When scores are approached as vehicles for movement's capture, questions about universality, accuracy and comprehensiveness tend to overshadow practice-specific connections between scores and choreographic research. Debates about notation's universal legitimacy then obscure the ways in which different forms of choreographic thinking function selectively through (necessarily) incomplete forms of codification. This preoccupation largely dominates considerations of choreographic recording articulated by key 20th century aesthetic philosophers. In order to contextualize the apparent philosophical "neglect" of dance, for example, Francis Sparshott cites dance's stubborn resistance to notational symbolization. This resistance not only makes dance difficult to record, but it also deprives critics and audiences of the stable repertory that might give rise to a "context within which mutual understanding makes discussion possible" (Sparshott 1988, 11). Formulating his well-known distinction between allographic and autographic arts,³³ Nelson Goodman tentatively includes dance in the allographic category, though he points to a lack of universally accepted standards as evidence that notation's validity remains in question (1968, 121). In a response to Goodman, Joseph Margolis argues that dance lacks the inherent formal properties necessary to translate movement from body to page, hence notation's minimal recuperation of choreographic complexity (1984, 70). Like Sparshott, Margolis associates notational insufficiency with dance's historical exclusion from philosophical discourse. Goodman, on the other hand, comes close to granting dance a privileged place, noting

³³ Goodman deems an artistic medium autographic when the artist must produce each instance of a work in order to be recognized as legitimate. Mediums are allographic, on the other hand, when instantiations can be brought about by those other than the artist, with score or notation serving as a template. In allographic production (as in music, for example), the artist's absence does not detract from the validity of performances; such performances are not perceived as forgery, as they would be in painting if an original were used as a "template" for unauthorized copies (Goodman 1968, 113).

that “the development of Laban’s language offers us an elaborate and intriguing example of the process that has come to be called ‘concept formation’” (1968, 214). Dwelling on the feasibility of thorough symbolic capture, these theorists (like Laban) implicitly align choreographic inscription with fixity, and recording with understanding. Thus, the presumed impasse between dance and representation not only reinforces the familiar split between mind and body, but also calcifies binary associations of writing with stability and the body with flux.

Contemporary choreographers often espouse similar positions on this binary, even as they meaningfully include language and inscription within the scope of their artistic practices. Jonathan Burrows, for example, affirms scores as choreographic research in multiple ways: by incorporating notational documents into his performances (*Both Sitting Duet*, 2002), sharing scores on his website, and reflecting on various approaches to scoring in *A Choreographer’s Handbook*. Nonetheless, Burrows claims that “writing dance is the exception rather than the rule,” and links writing to movement’s capture by noting the extent to which “the impossibility of pinning it down has become a quality of the artform [sic], a defining freedom” (2000, 30). Like Burrows, Tere O’Connor implicitly aligns language with stability, claiming that the “possibility of moving towards a singularity of meaning resides more in the purview of language” than in choreography. Though O’Connor invests in “the poetic space between language and dance” he also continues to associate language with “aboutness,” or “a subconscious desire to name things and to categorize.” For O’Connor, dance making becomes an opportunity to resist language’s powerful pull toward “aboutness,” as well as the concomitant strategy of crafting dances as if they could accomplish choreographic “pronouncements” (O’Connor 2014). O’Connor’s thinking, like Burrows’, allocates value to dance’s resistance to language. The medium’s “defining freedom,” then, hinges on choreography’s capacity to make

meaning outside of representation or referentiality, regardless of whether one construes movement as signified (as Burrows does) or signifier (like O'Connor).

If choreographers have situated the body's resistance to univocal meaning as a point of departure, then theorists, too, have leveraged that disconnect by deploying dance as a conceptual counter-weight for positivist thinking and logocentrism. In "Choreographies," his well-known interview with Christie McDonald, Derrida invokes dance as a metaphor for the subversive kinetics of feminine sexual difference. Though the interview has been repeatedly scrutinized to determine its usefulness to dance studies,³⁴ its key thrust does not concern choreography at all, but rather involves the philosophical subordination of sexual difference to ontological difference. Nonetheless, the conversation evokes dance at a number of key points: at the start, Derrida asks to "improvise" his responses to McDonald as a "tribute to the dance," thereby privileging spontaneous movement and underscoring a range of ephemeral qualities that stem from dance's resistance to inscription: lightness, shallowness, ahistoricity, and a refusal or inability to "look attentively" at its own conditions of production (Derrida and McDonald 1995, 141). Later, Derrida designates a proper "space" for dance that illuminates an arena of political potential for the female subject; her practical means of activating this potential remain unclear, however, as Derrida situates subversive motility in a conceptual territory beyond representation. Using the (feminine) body to carve out a space of play at the heart of discourse, Derrida handily sets the stage for a tense confrontation between body and writing. Seen through this lens, notational schematization can seem perilously binding, a technology of representational stabilization that unduly represses the body's subversive potential.

I see more potential for dance studies – and indeed, for critical approaches to notation – in Derrida's work that does not explicitly invoke the dancing body. His theorization of the

³⁴ See Foster (1998) and Cooper Albright (1995).

relationship between writing (the grapheme) and speech (the phoneme), for example, easily extends to the problematic of notation insofar as speech and movement alike carry implications of unmitigated physical presence. In fact, his identification of the longstanding hierarchy between writing and speech in the history of Western thought tightly correlates to positions that I have already summarized, where theorists and choreographers deem writing insufficient with respect to bodily action. Deconstructing that hierarchy in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida focuses on Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, where Rousseau prizes "the image of a community immediately present to itself, without difference, a community of speech where all the members are within earshot" (1976, 136). For Derrida, the fantasy of physical proximity negatively charges writing insofar as its perpetual deferral of meaning raises the frightening specter of absence. For Derrida, Rousseau's distrust of writing betrays an ideological assumption of inscription as a "menacing aid" to the "natural" self-presence of speech. As writing distances meaning from its source, it does a disservice to speech: dragging thought into a representational economy, initiating a logic of reproduction, and attaching itself as a supplement to what should be self-sufficient (144). Derrida's reading of Rousseau does not so much place writing in the privileged position of a new hierarchy, but argues against the exclusion of writing from the protected (and illusory) space of presence.

Choreographic notation has likewise been understood as something of a "menacing aid," particularly where dance studies scholars reinforce theoretical oppositions between body and language to assign dance a resistive potential. These theorists characterize writing as not merely insufficient in the face of the body, but fundamentally repressive. Laurence Louppe, for example, claims that "dance can have no recourse to the sign" because the body properly communicates without taking a "detour" through representation; it reaches out through "a direct access that

surges up from the heart of the matter, from the heart of emotion” (1994, 9). For Louppe, notation shackles dance to a representational system with which it remains fundamentally at odds. Again, though, claims of ontological distance go hand in hand with a paradoxical intimacy: Louppe also argues that notation “has always, almost fatally, been bound to the destiny of Western dance” (11). André Lepecki formulates a similar position, linking the historical emergence of choreography to the development of notation as a “moment when Western dance alloyed writing with its being” (2006, 25). Though Lepecki relies far less than Louppe on the trope of a viscerally communicative, pre-discursive body, he nonetheless pinpoints the notational “imperative” as a means through which choreography functions to “fuel, reproduce, and entrap subjectivity in the general economy of representational” (46). Here, just as in Derrida’s critique of Rousseau, choreographic writing draws the body (and thus the subject) into representational economies by force. As a framework for disciplinary command, notation stands out as material evidence of choreography’s fundamental transgression against the body.

Lepecki’s larger project in *Exhausting Dance*, of course, concerns his efforts to trouble the primacy of movement in critical formulations of dance’s ontology. I see the productive consequences of this paradigm shift,³⁵ yet for my purposes, it becomes important to ask whether Lepecki’s move to privilege stillness simply changes the term’s of dance’s association with the inarticulable and ineffable. That is, if we insist on how *either* movement or stillness facilitates the body’s evasion of representational capture, do we not fail to recognize how dancers and choreographers negotiate the disciplinary force of the kinetic imperative through the very

³⁵ Lepecki leverages his ontological critique of movement to support a much broader interrogation of the Western concert stage’s value system. He questions not only the association of dance with “constant agitation and continuous mobility,” but also with verticality, full visibility, and the conflation of that visibility with self-presence and identity (2006, 2). Lepecki draws attention to the complex array of forces, including the command to move, that intersect in and on the performing body, opening up valuable critical space for forms of body-based research that offer up slowness stillness, or refusal.

parameters that they willingly (even enthusiastically) accept? As highly visible agreements between choreographers and dancers, the language scores featured in this chapter invite dancers to develop movement from notational imperatives that playfully challenge representational fixity. That is, the language prompts written by Meier and Hay certainly link dancers' bodies to representational frameworks, but they do so without requiring either body or language to produce univocal meaning. As I demonstrate, these scores raise compelling possibilities for notational writing (and for physical practice) that refute notions of language as either insufficient or menacingly repressive. Working with these scores, dancers bridge the gap between movement and language by forging coherent connections in physical states where precision need not equal accuracy. Moreover, Hay and Meier deploy their scores in ways that do not deny the disciplinary implications of the choreographic imperative. That is, they do not suggest the work of the dancers as inherently subversive "free play;" rather, they make those imperatives explicit even as they encourage dancers to fulfill choreographic demands in individualized ways.

Throughout this chapter, I elucidate how Hay and Meier mitigate the disciplinary force of the choreographic imperative by writing language scores that pair clear authorial control with extraordinarily open sign systems. As I have suggested, they cultivate this openness by issuing indeterminate language prompts – notational cues that evoke radical plurality by accommodating diverse responses. Writing scores thusly, both choreographers stage the relationship between (language) signifier and (movement) signified as a dynamic exchange that need not seek resolution through isomorphic correlation between body and text. As such, their scores vividly evidence the arbitrary quality of the linguistic sign, widely recognized since the advent of Saussurian linguistics: a radical epistemological break that Frederic Jameson characterizes as a move from a "substantive way of thinking to a relational one" (1974, 13). Jameson's

“substantive way of thinking” – also clearly at play with respect to Tere O’Connor’s resistance to “aboutness” – lends words a brute force derived from a naturalized connection between language and matter. By contrast, the indeterminate language score fosters representational flexibility in which “the positive nature of the substance is not as important as its function in the system” (Jameson 1974, 15). In these examples, the interlocking systems governing signification clearly include the body, with dancers effecting corporeal signification by interacting with, and not resisting, language. Approached in light of Saussurian “relational thinking,” the semiotic coherence arising from a dancer’s enactment of the score no longer turns on a naturalized correlation between notation and movement. The language prompt does not restrict movement possibilities but encourages them to proliferate, giving rise to integrity without enforcing unity.³⁶

When the prescriptive prompts of the indeterminate language score are considered through the lens of 20th century semiotics, dancerly engagement with those prompts begins to look curiously similar to reading as construed by theorists of language post-Saussure. With the link between signified and signifier de-naturalized, so too does the link between notational sign and corporeal manifestation appear systematically determined and relational, constantly informed and reinforced by physical praxis. As much as the language scores of Hay and Meier demonstrate how notational marks can *relate* to movement rather than defining it, they also suggest how idiosyncratic dancing bodies bring unforeseen specificities to enactment without compromising the score’s authority. These choreographers invite dancers to participate in textually determined choreographic structures in order to cultivate difference. Rather than facilitating exact copies or faithful reproductions, their scores demand variation – it is, in fact

³⁶ In emphasizing how these choreographic scores exhibit de-naturalized connections between notational sign and movement, I am indebted to Susan Leigh Foster’s methodological focus in *Reading Dancing*, where the theorist aligns four choreographic practices with four literary tropes in order to illuminate the “codes and conventions” that enable meaning production in practice-specific ways (1986, xviii).

precisely through variation, and the attendant production meaning, that diverse iterations manifest as coherent choreographic projects.

How, then, does the dancer arrive at this meaning? If her work cannot merely be described as a recapitulation of the score's prompts, how does she relate to the text in order to derive meaning from it? Hermeneutic philosophy offers avenues of productive theoretical possibility, where a dancer's engagement with the indeterminate language score might be akin to the process of readerly interpretation. In Paul Ricoeur's thinking, for example, interpretation clearly calls upon the cognitive capacities of the reader insofar as she follows "the path of thought opened up by the text" (1991, 122). Though Ricoeur's metaphor might suggest unidirectional movement toward a predetermined destination, he counters this by insisting on textual plurivocity. His textual open-endedness reveals "something other than the polysemy of individual words in ordinary language," not just evidencing a range of possible meanings but also evidencing the interpretive engagement needed to move the text toward an eruption of unanticipated meaning (159). Undergirded by this theory of interpretation, Ricoeur's formulation of the text as an "event" supports a parallel determination of the reading (dancing) body as the medium of meaning production (119). Not surprisingly, Ricoeur draws a comparison between reading and the enactment of a musical score, an event that materializes "the semantic possibilities" inherent in the text (119). For Ricoeur, scores serve as potent models for how sign systems engage the interpretive faculties of readers, establishing reading as a practice and illustrating how meaning proliferates in the passage from text to act.

Like Ricoeur, Roland Barthes evokes musical scores, and midcentury experimental compositions in particular, to illuminate the practice of reading as a form of "co-authorship" (1977, 163). In light of the "radically altered" notion of interpretation espoused by "post-serial"

compositions, Barthes charges the reader with “practical collaboration,” a level of participation so substantive as to give her the role of bringing the text to completion (163). Barthes takes the notion of the reader as collaborator even further in his seminal declaration of the death of the author, evacuating the author as originator of meaning in order to make way for the reader as “scriptor.” The advent of Barthes’ scriptor profoundly disrupts classical notions of filiation between author and literary work, where meaning passes from creator to receiver through the tightly constructed vessel of the text. It also dramatically adjusts the temporality of the text, removing the author as a temporally distant origin and shifting meaning production to the scriptor’s perpetual present of “enunciation” (145). As a result, for Barthes, “*writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation;” instead, writing becomes “a performative” where “the enunciation has no other content...than the act by which it is uttered” (145-146). The Barthesian model explicitly supports theorizations of the choreographic score that de-emphasize denotative functions, focusing instead on the moment of enunciation as a choreographic writing that gives shape to the performative force of the text.

In its proposal that utterances do things as opposed to “merely” describing or reporting, J.L. Austin’s substantive and influential work on the linguistic category of the performative further clarifies the mechanics of the efficacious language in a Hay or Meier score. Austin uses the curious potency of the performative to emphasize the total situation of speech – the “speech act” as embedded in a wider practical context (1962). Though Austin pursues several avenues that might be expected to yield definitive criteria for distinguishing the constative utterance from the performative, his lectures ultimately produce the insight that all utterances do stand in relation to truth and falsity (again, Tere O’Connor’s “aboutness”) while at the same time exhibiting a performative dimension (so vividly exemplified by Hay’s and Meier’s scores).

Significantly, his analysis represents a philosophical treatment of language that embraces the body, posits language as an act, and illuminates the constant interplay between the production of meaning and the application of performative force. Insofar as Austin locates the speech act in a field that relates to both linguistic structure and physical materiality without privileging either term, his thinking supports a practice-specific stance on the score. Following Austin, I attend to the contextual contingencies shaping relationships between the performer and the score, treating physical approaches to interpretation as forms of dancerly enunciation. This attention to choreographic context supports my work-specific methodology, one designed to take into account the full range of strategies and interactions that support specific bodily “readings” of a score. Across the two examples in this chapter, I repeatedly emphasize the ways in which scores derive from clear physical practices, and then reinforce those practices by manifesting coherent sets of constraint. Prescriptive language can then be appreciated neither in its capacity to capture nor repress, but in its capacity to facilitate dancerly enunciation by establishing shared fields of possibility through the application of practice-specific constraint.

I theorize the score, then, as an application of performative force that nonetheless accommodates the inevitable differentiation produced by instances of bodily enactment. In this sense, my argument aligns with those that focus on iterability and citationality as mechanisms through which individuals negotiate the codes and norms that lend performatives their binding power. Developed by Derrida in “Signature Event Context” – an essay in which the theorist extends the problematic of the Austinian performative to the plane of writing – the notion of iterability lends the graphemic mark a productive instability. For Derrida, the written sign’s inevitable “citational doubling” reveals how writing fails to produce a unity of meaning, how it constantly risks situational infelicity (1988, 17). Derrida thus builds upon Austin’s investigation

to produce a theory of writing that does not indicate the transmission of meaning from an inviolable source. Rather, he positions the graphemic mark as a mobile entity, passing through variable contexts, holding itself together but endlessly deferring its own fulfillment. Judith Butler, of course, extends this problematic to the body by applying the notion of citationality to the subject's necessarily imperfect reiteration of gender norms.³⁷ Shoshanna Felman, too, builds on Austin by demonstrating how the performative speech act disturbs the "metaphysical dichotomy" between matter and language, making promises that no individual act or utterance can fully recuperate (2003, 65). Following from these positions, I hope to highlight the ways in which Hay and Meier use language scores to make space for particularized iteration, harnessing the prescriptive force of notation while also accommodating bodily divergence and the production of unforeseen "excess." Within their dances, repetition gives rise to difference without violating the identity of choreographic works. Moreover, Hay and Meier clearly authorize dancers to bring individualized meaning to choreographic texts, with enactment illuminating not just language's effects on the body but also the body's capacity to speak back.

By invoking such a wide range of thinkers, my intention is not just to suggest how theories of textuality foster nuanced approaches to language scores. I also want to propose that scoring practices concretize these discourses, tangibly anchoring conceptual frameworks to the body's materiality. I call upon these theories of textuality in order to initiate a discussion of language scores – not *choreography*, *dance*, or *the body* thought in broadly generalized terms. Nor do I use such generalizations to draw equivalences between language systems and movement production. As I suggested at the start, metaphors that posit essential likenesses between movement and language also tend to set the two categories in opposition, often alienating the dancing body from self-awareness and critical thinking in the process. My analysis

³⁷ See Butler (1993).

of Hay and Meier, then, does not turn on the affirmation of either a fundamental compatibility or incompatibility between movement and language. It does, however, seek to define the ways in which choreographers use language scoring to foster dynamic encounters between body and text, deeply troubling the notion that the body presents an unresolvable problem with respect to linguistic representation, or vice versa.

For his part, Laban mitigates the presumed problem by working toward a symbolic grammar that he hopes will capture movement's proper structural and dynamic foundations. Such schematization, he hopes, will enable a sophisticated, language-independent understanding of movement that might support his passionate belief of movement as vital aspect of human life. His dream, however, of writing "'the thing,' 'the object,' 'the idea,' 'the action' in itself, and not its name only" circumscribes a tight range of possibilities for the relationship between notational writing and dance, one that leaves itself open to critique by naturalizing the connection between symbol and act (Laban 1966, 124). When choreographers work with language's semiotic openness (or, as Laban puts it, *ephemerality*) rather than against it, a whole new set of possibilities emerge relative to the dancer's capacity to generate bodily meaning in relationship to a predetermined text. In the remainder of this chapter, I look closely at these bodily enunciations, focusing on the linguistic and practical constraints established by the scores. I also consider how those constraints facilitate individual difference and innovation, the production of new meaning with each new bodily enunciation. In so doing, I affirm the body's ability to work with, in, and through language, exhibiting playfulness, curiosity and thoughtful rigor.

Deborah Hay: Learning the Body's Lessons

In the early 1960s, Deborah Hay moved through same interdisciplinary milieu as did Simone Forti and Jackson Mac Low. Like Forti and Mac Low, she absorbed the influence of Cage and his New York School peers, joining Robert Dunn's composition class in the fall of 1961. She played an integral part in the Judson upheavals of the next few years, presenting her own work and performing for others, notably touring with the Cunningham Company for six months starting in May, 1964. Despite years of formal training, Hay found herself (like many of the Judson-affiliated artists) suddenly less interested in the display of codified physical technique. Hay in particular registered the presence of "vague, persistent feelings of inadequacy" associated with the demands of technical training (1994, 64). In search of another way to approach physical practice, she found her attention drawn to brief moments in which technique offered a sense of transcendence, moments when she "no longer felt responsible" for her own movement (Hay 1975, 4). Intrigued by the possibility that movement might facilitate novel forms of consciousness, she took up Tai Chi Chuan, began to "unlearn" her own training (1975, 4), and sought to fashion a new relationship to dance.

After moving from New York to Vermont in 1970, Hay began working with language prompts for a series of "circle dances" designed to engender communal experiences through the practice of unison, de-skilled movement. In 1974, She gathered and published the instructions for these dances under the title *Moving Through the Universe in Bare Feet: Ten Circle Dances for Everybody*. In *Moving Through the Universe*, Hay's prompts convey simple and straightforward instructions ("line up your toes with the toes of those beside you") while also betraying her interest in the metaphysical substrate of the shared movement experience ("relax and feel the

circle's energy”) (1974, 8). Beginning at the level of specific body parts and joints, Hay gently guides the participant’s awareness outward, moving from the personal to a nearly ecstatic communal experience in which “all sense of separation and isolation dissolves in the warm equality of the circle” (232). Throughout, Hay pairs the dances with suggestion for recorded musical accompaniment, mainly 1970s rock and R&B. She also includes photos and line drawings, images that communicate practical features as well as the overall mood of the circle dance experience. Hay stresses the inclusive and participatory nature of the dances, emphasizing that they are not to be observed but rather experienced from the inside. Moreover, by publishing the dances in the format of an instructive “manual,” she allows for expanded circulation and transmission to an untrained though physically engaged readership. Explaining how interested parties might perform the dances in her absence, she recommends establishing someone in the role of a “conductor” who will familiarize herself with the dances ahead of time and verbally lead the movement progression.

This unconventional manual for social dance, then, hints at Hay’s early interest in providing clear, language-based choreographic frameworks to be fleshed out by performers with a degree of autonomy. Though the circle dance prompts do not necessarily encourage interpretive variation, Hay specifically codifies instructional language in order to endow performers with a sense of ownership over the material. Moreover, the circle dances espouse an emergent choreographic ideology in which language facilitates an enhanced awareness of physical presence and movement. They also clearly uncouple choreographic notation from accuracy, where language does not so much represent choreographic ideals as trigger the exploration of choreographic concepts. Already in 1974, Hay articulates these concepts through imagistic imperatives like “breathe your arms simultaneously in front of you” or “keep the image

of water pouring from your ears top of head center of chest palms of hands” (21, 39). Though the context and praxis surrounding these dances are distinct from the processes that characterize Hay’s Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP), *Moving Through the Universe* undoubtedly prefigures many of Hay’s contemporary choreographic strategies. In spite of the fact that the dances exhibit an intensely group-oriented nature through the development of unison movement, Hay suggests how the circle dances lead to a more individualized approach: she notes in *Moving Through the Universe* that as her own exploration of the group exercises grew deeper, she let explicit directions fall away, shifting her attention to the potential of the prompts to enable the exploration of movement in individualized ways (4).

A few years after moving to Austin, Texas in 1976, Hay reengages with more formal strategies for teaching and choreography. She institutes annual workshops for large groups with mixed levels of training, focusing on the production of ensemble dances from which she ultimately gathers material for solo performance (Hay 2000,5). At this stage, Hay continues to invest in evocative language prompts to support the development and transmission of choreographic material. As in *Moving Through the Universe*, her notational writing straddles physical and perceptual domains, as is evidenced by the extensive documentation of one of these group processes in the book-length treatment, *Lamb At the Altar*. Not only does *Lamb At the Altar* reveal the centrality of Hay’s imagistic language (“curl busily without meaning”), but it also illuminates Hay’s ongoing emphasis on performer autonomy (Hay 1996, 37). She writes:

I am addressing the artist in you. If that hasn’t occurred to you by now, then I want to clarify I am addressing the capacity to perceive that is yours and yours alone in the particular shapely way you perceive...I am not addressing a student of dance wanting to learn a way to move. My relationship to you is as an artist...The experience of your perception is the dance I want to see. How willing are you to reflect this artist – this continually changing intelligence in action? (Hay 1996, 39)

Here, Hay explicitly frames the dancer's encounter with her choreographic material as an exercise in self-consciousness and physical thinking, a change to exhibit bodily intelligence. She also sheds light on how she intends the instructional language of her prompts to support particularized responses to shared input: one can imagine a roomful of intently concentrating dancers puzzling physically over what, exactly, it means to "curl busily without meaning."

While *Moving Through the Universe* clearly functions as a de-specialized dance manual available to any interested parties, *Lamb At the Altar*, as I suggested, recounts the development of a specific choreographic project, culminating in a group dance (*Lamb, lamb...*, 1991) and a subsequent solo for Hay (*Lamb At the Altar*, 1992). With respect to both the solo and the group material, Hay sketches out choreographic structure in the form of movement "*librettos*" blending abstract imagery with more straightforward depictions of action. Though the book focuses on the production of the group work, readers can track Hay's choreographic thinking through to her solo performance practice in an addendum that contains the *libretto* for the corresponding solo work. While the formal publication of *Lamb At the Altar* perhaps lends this dance's *libretto* heightened visibility, it is not the only that has received critical attention. Ann Daly describes the *Voilà* (1995) *libretto*, for example, as "an intricate layering of description, memoir, commentary, and stage direction that slides between first- and third-person perspectives" (Daly and Hay 1999, 14). While this layered information does not necessarily address potential performers, it nonetheless documents a clearly defined physical practice, giving readers access to a work's structure, as well as the demands placed on a dancer's attention by the choreographic prompts.

Lamb At the Altar also introduces Hay's distinctive "performance meditations," which, reconceived as "performance tools" in the context of the SPCP, support Hay's choreographic objectives by anchoring a dancer's attention to an entirely distinct layer of language-based

proposals. In *Lamb*, Hay depicts the meditations as a part of a cognitive strategy to “realign” her relationship to choreography, performance, and teaching; a list of key performance meditations over the course of several years in the mid-1980s includes the following:

1986: *You (you being the rest of the world, an audience, or a partner with whom I am dancing) remind me of my wholeness changing.*

1987: *I invite being seen drawing wisdom from everything and remaining positionless about what wisdom is or looks like.*

1988: *I imagine every cell in my body has the potential to perceive action, resourcefulness, and cultivation at once.* (1996, 40)

As Hay’s depiction of group processing in *Lamb* makes clear – and as I will discuss in much greater detail in the context of my analysis of an SPCP score – these performance meditations/tools constitute a crucial foundation for the dissemination and solidification of her choreography. As key conceptual formulations underpinning Hay’s dances, the meditations focus a performer’s attention not necessarily on the movement that she produces, but on the quality of consciousness supporting an evolving relationship to self, other, and wider performance context. Hay elaborates her thinking on these meta-choreographic prompts in a subsequent book, *My Body, The Buddhist*, where she interweaves such directives with “lessons” learned from her body over the course of twenty-six years (2000, xxiii). Hay’s suggestion of her own body as a “teacher” again supports the notion of a dialogue occurring between thought and movement, evidenced by the language prompts as well as the bodily, danced instantiations of those prompts.

Voilà marks the final instantiation of Hay’s large-group Austin workshops, and it also marks a new phase in which she begins to transmit her distilled solos to other performers familiar with her choreographic and pedagogic practice.³⁸ Soon after the limited transmission of *Voilà*,

³⁸ In April of 1997, Hay performs *Voilà* alongside adaptations of the work danced by Grace Me-Hi Lee and Scott Heron at The Kitchen in New York. As Hay remembers her own thinking around this very early adaptation process, she notes that the “original idea was to give it to them [Heron and Lee] as a kind of gift” (Daly 1999, 19).

Hay further formalizes the promulgation of her substantial existing repertory by instituting the Solo Performance Commissioning Project on Whidbey Island in Washington State (1998). The program continues in Washington until 2002, makes a brief detour to Finland, and eventually settles in Findhorn Scotland, administered by a London-based organization, Independent Dance, until the final workshop in the summer of 2012.

The basic structure of the SPCP reveals how the program extends many of the strands of Hay's choreographic practice that I have already identified. First of all, the process exhibits a strong interplay between solo and group work. While SPCP participants work together in an intensive setting for ten days to learn the same choreography, the dance is a solo, and each performer will ultimately take away a self-contained and unique iteration. Secondly, once the initial period of mentorship with Hay completes, commissioning artists assume a high degree of ownership and autonomy. Each participant takes leave of Hay by signing a contract that stipulates several months of daily practice, and then returns home to embark on that practice and pursue performance opportunities at their discretion. Finally, while participants are undoubtedly drawn to the program for different reasons, over the course of those ten days each will be immersed in Hay's unique choreographic process, at the heart of which is a substantive involvement with her very particular brand of the generative language score.

In order to elaborate on the mechanics of a Hay language score, I focus specifically on the solo that participants learned in the final summer of the SPCP, *Dynamic* (2012). Though *Dynamic* obviously constitutes only one instantiation of the choreographic practice that Hay has developed over the course of many years, it is representative of many of her key strategies with respect to language scoring and the performance tools. Like Mac Low in *The Pronouns*, Hay crafts a score that enables meaning making precisely through the inherent instability of

individual interpretive response. Hay offers an elegant personal justification for indeterminate scoring in *My Body, The Buddhist*, where she writes: “if I am in a position of not knowing how a dancer will manifest a set of movement directions, my interest as well as the dancer's is consistently heightened” (2000, 83). This preference for unpredictability carries, in Hay’s particular case, a number of significant consequences. First, by suspending entrenched patterns of learning whereby dancers copy choreographic material from teachers or choreographers, Hay reframes transmission as an interpretive, rather than an imitative, process. Second, by figuring interpretation as a form of adaptation, Hay confers a degree of ownership to the performer, destabilizing traditional notions of singular choreographic authority. Finally, by supporting the score with a clear physical practice characterized by the application of the performance tools, Hay disrupts theoretical configurations of the dancing body as instrumental. That is, rather than producing movement to materialize choreographic ideas or internal affective states, Hay uses the language score to facilitate a present-centered experience of performance as physical thinking. Such an experience allows the dancer to detach from the metrics of expertise and accomplishment that I alluded to in the opening of this section when I cited Hay’s resistance to traditional dance training.

Very early on, the score for *Dynamic* evidences Hay’s sense of humor with respect to physical virtuosity. The dance opens like this:

You enter, something like a duck looking around for a place to roost. We can tell you feel silly. Upon finding the right place to be in relation to the audience, feeling silly is dropped and you perform some comic actions without acting funny, before getting to the floor to assume a minimally composed shape. (Hay 2012)

Even such a brief excerpt reveals the flexibility inherent in Hay’s approach to writing, which switches rapidly between different modes of address and tone. Though Hay writes the entire paragraph in the declarative rather than the imperative (telling the performer *that* they enter, and

not *to* enter), she suggests particular qualities of movement and attention with specific word choices and sentence structures. Even the small section cited above seems to gather speed and intensity, with the third sentence holding several instructions separated by commas. The score continues largely in the second person declarative, prescribing movement, sound, and images, while also offering advice and warnings for particularly challenging moments. Throughout, the score consistently references the audience, with several notes that certain movements or sounds should be performed out of sight or so minimally as to be imperceptible.

As the above selection exemplifies, this attention to the audience links the score to a wider performance situation, positioning the work of adaptation as highly context-bound and relational. While Hay greets the adaptor with an instruction in the second person singular (“*you enter*”), for example, she then aligns herself with the spectator, using the second person plural (“*we can tell you feel silly*”) (hay 2012). At first glance, these uses of the second person might seem to alienate the performer from both choreographer and spectator, yet who is to say the *we* doesn’t include the performer? The first lines of the score, then, set up a web of relationality in which everyone, including the performer, takes the position of observer and observed. The performer tunes in immediately, not just to the movement that she produces, but also to the perception of that movement from inside and outside. Finding the “right place to be” serves as a corporeal metaphor for the negotiation of these relationships, with the performer both witnessing her own action while registering the presence of others.

As I have noted, Hay’s score includes not only the movement instructions, but also a set of performance tools that support the dancer’s engagement with the score. For *Dynamic*, as in much of Hay’s recent work, the performance tools take the form of “what if” questions,

reflecting of a heightened spirit of play not necessarily inherent in some of the more clear-cut declarative language of the scores:

What if my whole body at once is my teacher?

What if the question “What if where I am is what I need?” is not about what I need but an opportunity to inhabit the question “What if where I am is what I need?”

What if dance is *how I practice relationship* with my whole body at once in relationship to the space where I am dancing in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to my audience? What if the depth of this question is on the surface?” (Hay 2012)

As extraordinarily open-ended prompts aimed at the dancer’s quality of attention, the performance tools establish a terrain of uncertainty: the performer’s goal is less to resolve their complexities than to stay attuned to the suggestive possibilities that arise while exploring the shifting terrain of bodily response. In fact, the constant presence of these perplexingly enigmatic suggestions inhibits a dancerly sense of expertise or accomplishment. As she places unanswerable questions at the heart of her practice, and at the heart of a dance’s transmission, Hay gently encourages performers to inhabit an experience of perpetual searching. In a way, the performance tools haunt the choreographic imperatives of the score, constantly destabilizing the successful completion of action and image. Though the score progresses in a clear sequence – walking like a duck should happen before the dancer moves to the floor in a “minimally composed shape,” for example – the dancer might engage with any of the performance tools that seem useful in any given moment. Thus, the tools constitute an even more flexible layer of the score that nonetheless strongly tethers adaptors to central choreographic concepts. Even toward the end of the intensive SPCP process, when a dancer has become familiar with the score as well as her own interpretive strategies, she remains on her toes, engaged by an ongoing practice and (ideally) not seduced by the fantasies of mastery and completion.

While the performance tools might seem supplementary, they stand out as a central component of the SPCP training process. Over the course of the practice for *Dynamic*, in fact, Hay frequently referred to the choreographic structure of the score as an opportunity to “put shape to the practice,” with the “practice” defined as an engagement with the tools (Hay as quoted by Megan Metcalf, pers. comm.). Rather than the body serving as a vehicle for dance, the dance serves as a vehicle for the practice of physical thinking. Adaptors articulate their thought processes physically by grappling with the tools alongside the choreographic commands of the score. Though the questions might seem like highly cerebral thought experiments, they manifest most strongly, at least for SPCP participants, in and through the experience of movement. When I spoke with dancer Megan Metcalf regarding her time in the workshop, she struggled to find language that would describe the experience of engaging with the tools; ultimately, she stopped speaking for a moment, accessing her memories of the performance tools by closing her eyes and moving. The SPCP then, much more than an avenue for the transmission of a singular dance, promulgates Hay’s broader choreographic perspective through a perpetually unfinished (and unfinishable) physical negotiation of the tools.

The performance tools go a long way toward defining Hay’s preferred interpretive praxis, and as an underlying support system, they ultimately help dancers to produce realizations in accord with Hay’s choreographic vision. In the case of *Dynamic*, Hay also supplements the score with work-specific notes on vocal and bodily performance (sections titled “Advice for the practice of the performance of *Dynamic*,” and “Using your voice in *Dynamic*,” respectively). Hay’s “advice,” along with the score and the tools, shape adaptations, and can thus be seen as yet another integral component of the choreography. Her remarks are at once generative (“remove hesitation and reconsideration from your dancing”) and prohibitive (no slow motion). They are

both specific (no casual swinging of the arms) and exceedingly broad (no attempts to be “unique, or original, and/or creative”) (Hay 2012). Adaptors, then, do not encounter one of Hay’s scores and launch into unbounded interpretive experimentation. Just as in Mac Low’s “Some Remarks” preface to *The Pronouns*, Hay uses the advice alongside the performance tools to supply cues and constraints to the performer, establishing parameters for compliant iteration.

Unlike Mac Low, however, Hay transmits these facets of her choreography to adaptors directly. The ten-day process of the SPCP comprises long hours of intensive person-to-person guidance in the rehearsal room, in which, day after day, Hay verbally walks performers through the score and offers detailed feedback. Hay’s scores, then, do not mobilize language as an accessible format for addressing a broad array of untrained interpreters. Indeed, performing the score without sustained and in-person training on the underlying layer of Hay’s practice would seriously compromise its enactment. Hay thus establishes and perpetuates a normative framework surrounding the SPCP adaptations by offering continuous feedback as well as asking participants to observe each other and contribute additional comments. With the SPCP, she builds in a training structure centered on the continual exploration of the performance tools serving as a touchstone for the adaptor as she initiates and sustains a commitment to the score.

The in-person process of mentorship at the heart of the SPCP links any given adaptor’s performance of the score to a shared history of physical experience with Hay at the center. This context surrounding the transmission process reflects Hay’s own strong personal and experiential relationship to the choreography. Hay explains how her choreographic process begins, in fact, when she enters the studio in open-ended engagement with one or more of the performance tools – with the body “in a question.” She spends two to three weeks working with the questions without concern for giving shape to the material, writing descriptions only when clear movement

themes or images crystallize. She then performs a Cagean aleatoric gesture, isolating individual components on scraps of paper, tossing them up in the air, and reordering the movements into a random sequence. At this point the descriptions may make no sense to her, though she “pretends to understand them,” practicing the sequence until the sequence itself helps her to “learn what the dance is” (Deborah Hay, pers. comm.). Thus, her physical practice helps her arrive at a clear conception of the choreography, which is then fine tuned in the format of a score and made available for adaptation. But again, the choreography resides more in the possibilities generated by the language prompts than in Hay’s own individual negotiation of those prompts. Though the language scores derive intimately from her own corporeal practice, the prompts function more as guides assisting dancers in their own discovery, adjacent to but not coinciding with Hay’s preexisting physical ideas.

This unconventional interplay between Hay’s authorial stance (informed by her own experience of dancing) and the interpretive decision-making of the adaptor also bears out in the logistical and contractual arrangements mandated by the SPCP. As elaborated in the contract that all participants sign at the conclusion of the process, once certain conditions have been met – notably, nine continuous months of practice – the solos can be performed when and where SPCP participants choose.³⁹ Hay does not track the performances, nor does she require pre-performance consultation. Moreover, adaptors can personalize the solos by using music, adding text, or incorporating supplementary media. They are also authorized to delete material if they notice consistent, strongly negative reactions to certain instructions. Moreover, within the 2012 workshop period, Hay convened a “score committee” to incorporate potential changes to the language that might seem advisable based on the outcome of group practice. Thus Hay mitigates

³⁹ The 2012 workshop’s requirement of nine months of independent practice represented an increase over and above previous years, where contracts had stipulated only three months (Megan Metcalf, pers. comm.).

her own strongly subjective experience of the choreography by establishing concrete procedures that grant adaptations validity and autonomy.

With each of these gestures, Hay emboldens performers, signaling the transfer of a degree of ownership over the resulting product. At the same time, though, as I have suggested, adaptation does not entail the pursuit of a choreographic vision in conflict with Hay's own. She stresses that prospective candidates should feel a degree of affinity with her choreographic values: the SPCP application process is accordingly adjudicated, at least in part, by participants confronting a series of questions about their own "aesthetic preferences" and "artistic orientations."⁴⁰ When an interpreter performs a Hay work, Hay retains the title of "choreographer," with SPCP participants receiving credit for adaptation and performance. Rather than using the open-ended, generative language score to transfer choreographic authority to the performer, Hay's specifications establish unique terms for choreographic transmission. If the choreography resides in the score as a series of language prompts deeply wedded to Hay's body as well as the bodies of her adaptors, the dance constitutes a choreographic product not stabilized and standardized by the score but rather inextricably linked to ongoing interpretive labor and a multiplicity of iterative response.

As I have hoped to demonstrate, within the scope of the SPCP process, Hay not only teaches participants a solo, but transmits a much broader physical practice intermingling language and movement on multiple levels. Her process moves from dancing to writing, back to dancing again, demonstrating how notational schematization can be applied to the body without implicating suppression or capture. Hay elucidates her perspective on choreographic writing in *My Body The Buddhist*, where she notes that writing about dancing gives rise to "unique

⁴⁰ "The Aesthetic Preferences and Artistic Orientation of the Performer in the Solo Commissioning Project Conceived by Deborah Hay," accessed June 11, 2013, <http://deborahhay.com/spcp.html>.

assemblies of thought,” that recirculate into choreography and performance, with the result that her “body as a performer is more inclusive in the aftermath of writing a dance” (2000, 27-28). As early as 1988, Hay realized that she might use writing not just as a means of reflection, but as a viable avenue for choreographic transmission. The realization was triggered, in part by an interaction with a dance notation specialist interested in recording her solo work, *The Gardener* (27). When the specialist returned an incomplete score, having been stymied by several seemingly unrepresentable elements, Hay began to appreciate prose as a vehicle for mining those "critical choreographic omissions" rather than eradicating them. Thus a score like *Dynamic*, which clearly enables interpretive variation even as it anchors adaptations to clear structural frameworks. Though Hay’s adaptors certainly retrace her steps over the course of a dance, they also traverse a resolutely personal landscape, one shaped by their own identities, bodily histories and perceptual faculties. In a neat inversion of notational logics that focus on movement’s capture, Hay shifts the goal of choreographic writing toward repetition with a difference.

Moreover, as Hay demands that her dancers relinquish mastery and self-assured display, she also uses the generative language score to cultivate an easy accord between mind, body and will. Susan Leigh Foster describes Hay’s practice by writing that “body does not succumb to the dancer's agency – striving, failing, mustering its resources to try again. Instead it playfully engages, willing to undertake new projects and reveal new configurations of itself with unlimited resourcefulness.” (Hay 2000, xiv). In refutation of the persistent mind-body split, Hay asks her commissioning artists to develop an attention agile enough to shift quickly and easily between reflection and action, language and experience. She writes that “assuming everyone is choreographed up the wazoo by culture, politics, gender, dance training, etc., a sustained and steady self-regulated transcendence of the choreographed body has to be exercised within the

sequence of movements being practiced.”⁴¹ For Hay, this has little to do with privileging a natural, pre-discursive state preceding all discipline. To get beyond the choreographed body, for Hay, means listening to the body's response to the conceptual threads articulated in the performance tools. Hay's scores, her tools, and her advice all belie a deep investment in the inscription of boundaries that enable an expansive and particularized practice. Where so many theorists, as I discussed in the introduction, associate writing with the mapping of discipline upon the body, Hay suggests that choreography as writing can offer the adaptor a self-determined path through structure to explore the body's boundless knowledge and capacity to speak back to unanswerable questions.

Foster's reference to the striving body echoes Hay's comments about feeling inadequate in the face of institutionalized training, and it also recalls a long ideological history in which the dancer's body has been construed instrumentally in the service of choreographic production. Like Mac Low, Hay's cultivation of indeterminacy clearly refutes the notion of the dancing body as a vehicle for choreographer intention. Less explicitly, though, Hay also strongly problematizes the notion that dance produces discernable meaning through the conduit of dancerly self-expression.⁴² Hay addresses this issue when describing the ideal “aesthetic preferences” of potential adaptors. She writes: “you have explored ‘self-expression’ and found it limiting as a means to create performance continuity.”⁴³ So if Hay is not interested in the mobile, highly sensitized, sharply aware dancing body as a vehicle for self-expression, what is she hoping to see when she looks at an adaptation of one of her dances? If it is not the dancer's interior life, nor

⁴¹ “Notes for the 2009 SPCP,” accessed June 11, 2013, <http://deborahhay.com/spcp.html>.

⁴² This notion – that a dance's meaning is made evident as the dancer externalizes either concept or affect –strongly influenced dance scholarship for much of the 20th century. See Martin (1983, originally published in 1933), Langer (1953), and Fraleigh (1987).

⁴³ “The Aesthetic Preferences and Artistic Orientation of the Performer in the Solo Commissioning Project Conceived by Deborah Hay,” accessed June 11, 2013, <http://deborahhay.com/spcp.html>.

Hay's own pre-conceived messages, being externalized, then what are we seeing when we look at *Dynamic*? In a way, Hay (like each of the choreographers in this analysis working with generative language scores) facilitates an inversion of the expressive body. Rather than shepherding meaning from inside to out, Hay's adaptors confront a series of potent images and directions coming from an external source: in these cases, a text. Hay's approach, in particular, forefronts dancerly self-awareness by emphasizing the physical processing of external linguistic stimulus. Rather than serving as a conduit, Hay's SPCP adaptors interact with ideas, formulating ever-evolving responses to the questions posed by the performance tools and the score. Just as in *My Body, the Buddhist*, where Hay eloquently delineates the "lessons" learned from her body, her approach to scoring invites the adaptor to let her body lead the way. Though Hay certainly uses the score to convey choreographic ideas, her openness to interpretive difference positions the adaptor as an interlocutor, not a vehicle used to pass those ideas along.

As such, Hay authors a form of choreographic writing that deemphasizes physical mastery in favor of kinetic and perceptual immersion. Her early interest in abdicating "responsibility" for movement, then, foreshadows the SPCP approach by suggesting how the adaptor's role does not concern creativity or expression, but rather sensitivity and committed focus. Hay does not charge the SPCP adaptor with the production of exciting, virtuosic, or visually stunning movement. Rather she must simply remain in dialogue with the score and the tools, accepting the work as perpetually unfinished, plumbing the productive territory where body and language overlap, coincide, and spar. In this territory, open-ended language enables an ongoing discovery of new meaning precisely through reiteration and repetition, with the familiar language of a score revealing new facets of experience each time it is practiced. As the adaptor works, puzzling out the meaning of the score, establishing a personal relationship to the "what

if” questions, she might abdicate responsibility for the movement. However, she also takes on a new responsibility: an unyielding attention to the body’s ever-unfolding lessons.

Yvonne Meier: Establishing and Dismantling Choreographic Authority

Hopefully, my analysis of Deborah Hay’s SPCP process has demonstrated how a choreographer might embrace Adorno’s notational “zone of indeterminacy” (2006) – even willfully expanding it – by applying the generative language score toward the production of iterative variation. At the same time, however, I have also suggested that Hay cultivates this expanded terrain of possibility by tethering dancers to a well-established physical practice. The SPCP adaptor’s rigorous attention to the score (and the performance tools) exemplifies how notational codification can give rise to a particularized, and ever-evolving landscape of response. I now turn my attention to Yvonne Meier, who, in *Brother of Gogolorez* (2011), likewise deploys the generative language score to invite dancerly interpretive difference. Yet while Hay transmits choreography in a private, intensive setting, ultimately endowing adaptors with the capability to perform their solos independently, Meier frames choreographic transmission by including it in the performance itself. She renders the passage from language to action exceedingly public, hyperbolizing the imperative constraints of the score as well as the choreographic authority associated with its delivery. Setting the stage for dancerly interpretive variation (and, indeed, occasional rebellion), she also exposes the limits of that authority, deftly critiquing correlations between notational writing and repression.

In the blackout darkness of St. Mark's Church on the evening of February 26th, 2011, Yvonne Meier greets her audience with an amplified, though subdued, "good evening."⁴⁴ Her welcome elicits chuckles from the audience, and even a quick "hi" in return. This audible reaction may be a result of Meier's formality, so clearly at odds with the protocols of a performance presented by Danspace, an organization typically catering to a small, tight-knit group of peers. Indeed, Meier has been highly recognizable as a teacher and mentor in New York City's downtown dance community for decades. The distancing effect of her introduction (which extends beyond the "good evening" to approximate the canned pre-show announcement of a five-hundred seat proscenium venue) works against the fact that a substantial number of audience members are likely to know her personally as colleagues and students. Adding to the effect, Meier stands at the edge of the performance space, illuminated in a halo of spotlight and equipped with a standing microphone. From that isolated, emphatically visible and audible position, Meier solemnly informs all present that "we shall begin with 'horrible, wild flow,' by Enrico;" the musicians are to "play 'Swiss gangster style.'" Finally, Meier punctuates these opening instructions with a terse "go." Once again, her words elicit laughter. Set up by Meier's authoritative formality, "horrible wild flow" is immediately recognizable as a choreographic instruction. Because her physical presence and amplified voice figure so prominently in the performance, it is clear that she intends to highlight the passage from language to action, as well as the leap between choreographic directive to improvisational response. As the dancers and musicians respond to her request, the work's structure becomes clear: Meier will deliver the instructions and her performers will actualize them, constantly in the presence of a benevolently controlling, enabling, and instigating force.

⁴⁴ My analysis of *Brother of Gogolorez* draws largely on video footage of a performance from February 26th publicly shared through the website, Vimeo. See Meier 2011, <https://vimeo.com/22873823>. Where I refer to a second performance on February 25th, 2011, I will use the following citation to make a distinction: Meier 2011, NYPL.

Once Meier has uttered the word “go,” the space comes to life. Another spotlight illuminates a wide circle in the center of the dance floor, and the live musicians explode into a loud, brassy cacophony. Enrico Wey⁴⁵ traces the perimeter of the spotlight, tentatively at first, then gaining momentum. As his walk becomes a run, and the run a controlled falling, Wey’s swinging arms grow wilder and trace ever more emphatic arcs. He eventually dives into the center of the spotlight, embarking on a solo that enigmatically, though unquestionably, lives up to the description of “horrible, wild flow.” Wey’s interpretation clearly answers to Meier’s prompt, but it just as clearly reveals a set of highly developed physical inclinations deriving from a release-based, postmodern improvisational vernacular. Wey refuses to establish a front, for example, working instead with 360-degrees of possibility for initiation, follow-through, and resolution. This manifests in spirals and more idiosyncratic energetic connections that lead his body in multiple directions, often simultaneously. He exhibits a striking mobility in the joints, particularly through the spine. He prioritizes weight and momentum at the expense of line and extension. The floor seems less a blank slate for movement than his active partner, available to support multiple parts of the body through occasionally perilous points of contact. Though Wey responds to any number of prompts over the course of *Gogolorez*, his stable of physical strategies remains relatively constant. Moreover, these characteristics might generally describe dancing by any of the four members of Meier’s cast: Jennifer Monson, Aki Sasamoto, and Arturo Vidich, in addition to Wey. Though each dancer sustains an individual approach while responding to Meier, they nonetheless share a foundational physical vocabulary; indeed, its kinetic logic underpins their strategies for processing the score’s language.

⁴⁵ For these performances, Enrico Way is credited as Dau Yang (his middle name), though he is verbally identified as ‘Enrico’ in performance footage.

With respect to the perceptual focus that accompanies this physicality, Meier's dancers bestow a serious, inwardly drawn attention upon enacting the instructions. In spite of this, their dancing reflects whole-bodied investment, with evocative facial expressions often supporting interpretive choices. The dancers move through the work fully absorbed in their challenging interpretive task, not seeming to play self-consciously to the audience. Though they hear the audience's laughter and recognition, they limit literal illustration and miming, generally finding a way to navigate prompts in a way that balances referentiality with more abstract physical processing. In many cases, spectators may not completely understand the connection between prompt and movement. Throughout, the dancers approach Meier's material gamely, never shying away from potential awkwardness or vulnerability. Meier, on the other hand, develops a performance style that comes across as more presentational, more carefully calibrated as a stylized posture. In a conversation between Meier and Vidich in *Movement Research's Performance Journal*, Vidich makes reference to Meier's "deadpan" tone in *Gogolorez*, which juxtaposes the often unbridled dancing to generate a comedic irony (Vidich and Meier 2005, 4). Meier, too, affirms her "urge to produce some fashion of comedy," which gives rise not only to the deadpan performance style, but also to the inclusion of images that might seem "outrageous" or "impossible" (Meier and Serrell, *Critical Correspondence*).

Meier's "outrageous" prompts (something like, for example, "nasty floor dance") not only give rise to a comedic element, but they also underscore dramatic leaps from concept to physicality (Meier 2011, NYPL). Such choices allow the audience to more fully appreciate the dancers' absorption in physical problem-solving and the concerted effort that goes into aligning the body with language. Some of these prompts comprise a single idea, like "sleazy exit." Others contain two ideas that seem oppositional, or at least give rise to contrasting impulses when

embodied, such as when Meier asks the group to “form a knot, but elegantly.” Yet others introduce multi-step, narrative arrangements of ideas, such as when Meier asks Vidich to perform a grasshopper having a picnic, getting poisoned, then dying “an awful death.” As is evidenced by these examples, Meier often introduces images that verge on the unpleasant, violent, or grotesque. Such evocations undercut any associations between dance and gracefulness, allowing the performers to explore a rich terrain outside the boundaries of what might typically be deemed dancerly or virtuosic. Their responses often take time to play out, blossoming from initial impulse to more fully developed, multi-layered embodiments. Leaving room for this development, Meier speaks slowly, allowing the dancers ample time with each instruction, letting movement evolve as her words linger in the spectator’s memory and filter through the performers’ bodies.

Both performances of Gogolorez that I reference in this analysis run just under an hour, with the dancers moving through a nonlinear arrangement of the prompts, with images and actions simply accumulating rather than coalescing into a narrative arc. To structure the dance, Meier supplements the movement prompts with practical instructions, orchestrating solos and group sections, for example, by calling performers out by name to execute entrances or exits. (When not dancing, performers linger on the sides or at the back, relaxed and watchful.) She often carefully positions music and dance to influence each other, with either component capable of ramping up the intensity or cooling it down. Occasionally, Meier specifically requests music and dance to work in opposition, as when the dancers are asked to go “from slow flow to fast flow” while the music reverses that progression (Meier 2011, NYPL). From night to night within the Danspace run, the show varies with respect to individual language prompts while following a roughly similar progression. The February 25th and February 26th performances begin with

corresponding solos for Wey: “wild, wild flow” on the first night and “horrible, wild flow” on the second (in both cases, musicians were asked to accompany him with “Swiss gangster style”). Both nights also transition into a second solo prompt for Enrico, and then into a large group prompt. In both performances, Meier uses this full group moment as an occasion to remind the dancers to acknowledge each other, with comments like “try to relate” (Meier 2011, NYPL), or “feel each other, somehow.” From here, the progression diverges, though Meier asks performers on successive nights to perform new instructions that nonetheless give rise to familiar movement. Sasamoto, for example, performs comparable solos in response to prompts for, on the one hand “idiotic choices,” and on the other, “drunken master.” Notably, the performance on the 25th veers further into rebellion on the part of the dancers; as I will elaborate further on, this is the performance that more fully exposes the limits of Meier’s choreographic authority, and more egregiously situates the score as a vehicle for both constraint and subversion.

Meier began working on *Gogolorez* in 2004, when she was asked to create a piece for that year’s Movement Research Improvisation Festival.⁴⁶ The work’s inclusion in this context speaks to Meier’s reputation as an improviser, and as a choreographer adept at incorporating improvised material into staged works. Several aspects of her background shed light on the factors drawing her to spontaneous scoring and language-based instruction. Meier relocated from Switzerland to New York in 1979 and began training at Merce Cunningham’s studio, though she struggled with Cunningham’s approach, and soon turned her attention to release-based classes elsewhere in the city (Snider 2012).⁴⁷ She recalls going “all the way for Releasing,” which

⁴⁶ Since its inception, Meier has conceptualized *Gogolorez* less a finished product than an ongoing improvisational group that might engage a changing roster of participants.

⁴⁷ Now used as a very broad term to distinguish a number of aesthetic approaches, “release” gained currency in the 1960s and 70s as a training practice designed to reconfigure the body by ridding it of dysfunctional movement patterns. Though each approach should be treated as distinct, Randy Martin offer a neat summation of the relationship of release-based approaches, in general, to preexisting models for pedagogy. He writes that “in contrast to the defiance of gravity through muscular exertion associated with earlier modern techniques, release technique

introduced her to improvisational movement as a way to work deep inside the body, and as a way to “relate” inside to the outside (Snider 2012). She has since become a dedicated practitioner and instructor of Skinner Releasing Technique, a system in which instructors use “clusters” of images to lead dancers to specific states of corporeal awareness designed to promote greater autonomy and ease for various parts of the body. Much of a Skinner class consists of an instructor issuing images through verbal prompts, with students only moving once they reach a sense of surrender to the image, or a sensation that the image is moving the body outside of the dancer’s conscious volition (Buckwalter 2010, 97). Such images might include “loose dangling bones” or the solar plexus morphing into a “soft sea sponge” (Lionel Popkin, pers. comm.).⁴⁸

In its incorporation of imagery and sustained physical exploration, Skinner Releasing serves as a clear model for understanding how spontaneous movement can be tied to carefully constructed language. It also serves as a model for a highly stratified relationship between a benevolently commanding choreographer/instructor, and highly receptive moving bodies. To my mind, *Gogolorez*, seems at times something like a sendup of a traditional Release class, with Meier using her clearly stylized intonation to summon all the awkwardness and pathos of the dying grasshopper rather than the supple ease of the soft sea sponge. Meier explicitly addresses the connection between Skinner Releasing and her work with language scores in *Gogolorez*. She notes the specificity of word and image choices that are so crucial to Releasing, relating that specificity to her own careful development of prompts. In any case, comparisons between Skinner Releasing and the language prompts in *Gogolorez* highlight the imagistic potency of certain words and phrases as well as their resonance at the corporeal level. If Releasing, as Meier

purports to assimilate gravitational flows in the body’s interior space to its exteriority. Rather an accumulating muscular resistance in the service of a coherent shaping of the body, release technique yields an emphasis on motional qualities as such” (Martin 1998, 172).

⁴⁸ I worked with these images extensively in the context of a Skinner Releasing class led by Lionel Popkin at the University of California, Los Angeles in April-May, 2012.

states, helps dancers relate the “inside” of the body to the “outside”, language clearly establishes that point of connection (Snider 2012).

The Skinner instructor offers images with little preconceived notion of what the results might be – in fact, most Skinner teachers assure their students that the work might still be “happening” even if they find themselves not producing movement at all (Lionel Popkin, pers. comm.). This level of detachment perhaps evokes Deborah Hay’s stated preference for “not knowing how a dancer will manifest” a particular image or instruction (2008, 83). Meier reports using language scores, on the other hand, because they reliably induce specific movement states or qualities: “that’s why I use the score,” Meier explains, “because I know what I want to see” (Vidich and Meier 2005, 5). Yet even as Meier targets those results, she also looks for improvisational variation – which may explain the subtle differences in language from night to night. For Meier, movement’s complexity can be degraded by the repetition involved with learning and performing more traditionally “set” choreography. She recalls “going back and forth” between relying on set material and improvisation in choreographic works, finally affirming her interest in the improvising body’s production of subtle unrepeatabilities, “the little shifts of weight, this or that:” texture that tends to disappear when movement solidifies into stable material (Meier and Serrell 2006).⁴⁹

Though Hay explicitly frames her work with the SPCP as the transmission of choreography (and not the cultivation of an improvisational practice), Arturo Vidich notes a consonance between the two approaches, having worked extensively with scores by both Meier

⁴⁹ In spite of Meier’s long and committed investigation of these improvisational techniques, she notes that when talking to dance presenters: “I never say I am improvising. I would never talk about it. ‘Uh-uh, can I buy that jump? If I can’t buy the jump I can’t buy the show’” (Meier and Serrell 2006). Such an acute awareness of the demands of packaging and presentation may have contributed to the formulation of *Brother of Gogolorez* as an improvisational event leveraging formality in order to engender open-ended exploration.

and Hay. An interview between Vidich and Meier in Movement Research's *Performance*

Journal reveals the following exchange:

Vidich: Some people consider it improvisation, but she [Hay] doesn't. People have totally different ideas about similar ways of working. For instance, you say you view yourself from outside the body; Deborah says position yourself 360 degrees around outside your body. It's almost the same thing; it's just how you word it, and what sort of practice you do. Deborah's practice reconfigures the body into 73 trillion cells, each one has the potential to perceive the originality and uniqueness of all there is. I've also heard people say that everything is simply matter – move your matter.

Meier: And I'll just tell you to turn yourself into a pig and crumble – probably the same results.

Meier issues a humorous response to Vidich's suggestion of an inherent compatibility between her use of language and Hay's, which perhaps belies the issue's true complexity. On the one hand I, too, have emphasized how both artists use the language score to cultivate dancerly interpretive agency. I would align, for example, Meier's interest in the unrepeatable with Hay's interest in the unrepresentable, as both choreographers clearly capitalize on the supposed incommensurability between body and language in order to generate and uphold a dynamic interpretive terrain. In each case, language initiates and highlights what cannot be "captured," supporting the choreographer's pursuit of variation and intricate complexity. Both choreographic practices unhinge connections between writing with capture by applying writing to the body in ways that ensure perpetual variation and the proliferation of individually determined meaning. I also, though want to insist upon the theoretical significance of these "totally different ideas about similar ways of working" (Vidich and Meier 2005, 5). It is precisely due to these work-specific idiosyncrasies that I deem it crucial to analyze scores in and alongside their contexts.

Appreciated in context, it becomes clear how various scores bear features that generate and limit possibilities at the same time. Meier is quite aware that she uses scores to circumscribe improvisational possibilities, noting that while scores catalyze the body, they also apply

restrictions that become equally generative. “By restricting,” Meier asserts, “more will come out of the dance” (Snider 2012). She also sees scores as a way to limit conscious thinking and self-assessment. She recalls, of her early experience with improvisation:

I was always in conflict that I was thinking too much and being too critical of myself while I was improvising, and I always would try to define what I was doing even though there was no time to define anything; there was only time to be in the moment. That’s why I developed *Scores*, so I knew what I was supposed to think about, and it would occupy my mind, to concentrate on a certain score (Snider 2012).

By this account, the mind sets upon a score as a useful diversion, emboldening the body to dedicate its full resources to the specificity of a defined task. Meier’s reflection illuminates how the score, and particularly the language score, has the potential to relieve the burden of freedom, where the body might be hamstrung by conscious decision-making at odds with the goal of improvisational spontaneity. By contrast, the scored body returns to prompts that are clear enough to enable focus, but not so imposing as to be stifling. Throughout, *Gogolorez* gains intensity by mining the tension between a prodigiously mutable physicality and the relatively tight parameters established by Meier’s simultaneous oral performance of the score.

As with Hay, though, Meier’s writing process interweaves with bodily practice from the beginning, arising not from compositional processes as such but from the tangible results of physical exploration. Just as Hay seeks out language to transmit movement concepts arising from her own physical practice, Meier works with language as shorthand to reference movement that catches her attention in the course of studio time with the dancers. She traces her method of language scoring then not just to Releasing, but to Authentic Movement, an improvisational modality in which participants move freely with eyes closed, accompanied by a non-participatory “witness” (Pallaro 2007). Meier recalls working with a group in which “we would watch each other at Authentic Movement and then say, ‘now do just slamming,’ or, ‘just

crashing,' or, 'crumbling'" (Vidich and Meier 2005, 4). These simple denotations become starting points for more crafted improvisation outside the context of Authentic Movement. Combined with her experience in Releasing, where subtle shades of linguistic meaning and tone visibly shape a dancer's movement experience, this utilitarian practice of short-handing movement opens up a range of expansive possibilities for improvising and choreographing. Once Meier distills movement qualities from an Authentic Movement experience, the reiteration of that quality does not just recapture or replicate preexisting movement, but rather gives rise to additional possibilities. Meier describes using language to "get something out of your body that you wouldn't have explored, like opening the door to a hidden room that you would never step into otherwise" (Vidich and Meier 2005, 5). Again, Meier's symbolization of movement through the language does not so much capture movement as it nudges the body ever deeper into the realm of exploration and discovery.

Though Meier's connection to physical practice certainly informs her writing process, her dancers do not prepare for performance through in-depth exploration of the scored material. For *Gogolorez* in particular, Meier characterizes the rehearsal process as largely "doing lovely bodywork" and "cuddling" (Meier and Serrell 2006). She has also stated that choreographic process includes the dancers improvising, culling movement from that improvised material, and then developing the score to "amplify" what she sees (Vidich and Meier 2005, 4). Again, in sharp contrast to the intensive score-centric SPCP process – as well as the adaptor's nine months of continuous practice – Meier's dancers experience a more spontaneous encounter with the language prompts in the moment of performance. Where Hay's scores serve as a vehicle for the exploration of her expansive and immersive performance tools, Meier's create the conditions for rapid, in-the-moment processing. As such, her choreographic practice centralizes interpretive

instinct and quick decision-making. Clarinda Mac Low (who frequently works with Meier as a dancer) emphasizes the importance of surprise: “as an interpreter,” she notes, “you end up becoming very good at creating elaborate plans really fast, and skilled at allowing the first impulse to lead you to the next with few barriers, to make snap judgments on the fly” (Mac Low 2012).⁵⁰ In fact, as Meier herself puts it: “What I am gonna tell them has to be so clear and so specific that it’s possible to make those choices right then and there” (Meier and Serrell 2006). Where Hay’s score (and the performance tools) draw dancers into a perpetually unfinished, exploratory process, Meier’s score in *Gogolorez* generally encourages a dancer to produce a response, commit to it, and move on.

Certainly, that process of spontaneous corporeal processing constitutes a large part of what Meier stages in *Gogolorez* – her delivery of the score continually draws audience attention not just to the movement but also to the process whereby the dancer devises that movement. Meier’s delivery of the language prompts heightens the impact of dancerly interpretation as spectators track the transfer of choreographic meaning in real time from script to body. Though Meier carefully calibrates her own performance to emphasize the relationship between choreographer and interpreter – issuing polite imperatives like “go,” saying “thank you” to conclude a section, or offering slight corrections and modifications – her spectators largely remain on the outside of that exchange. After initial greeting, in fact, Meier never uses the microphone to address the audience. Moreover, outside the language prompts, Meier does not explicitly communicate the subtleties of her dancers’ interpretive praxis. Spectators do not necessarily know whether or not her instructions are familiar to the dancers, whether specific parameters have been pre-established for acceptable and unacceptable interpretive strategies, or

⁵⁰ Clarinda Mac Low has also compared Meier’s scores to her father’s dance-instruction poems. She notes that, “with Meier, the instructions create a poem, inadvertently. With Mac Low the poem becomes an instruction, intentionally” (Mac Low 2012, 12).

whether the dancers are aware of any preferences Meier might have with respect to execution. Where some scores (particularly those I will discuss in the next chapter) open up choreographic processes in order to implicate or include audience members in a palpable way, Meier, generally allows the spectator to rest in the position of an informed – though not fully informed – observer.

Nonetheless, by providing the score in the context of performance, Meier opens up a window into improvisational processes that can otherwise constitute an intensely private experience for dancers. In the absence of Meier's score, the dancers' inwardly drawn focus might come across as alienating, and their movement choices as inscrutable. Explaining the challenges involved with staging improvised performances of scores, Meier notes that the task of physical processing can be "all consuming," giving rise to what she would consider "not necessarily an open state for a performance" (Vidich and Meier, 4). As the dancer works to bridge the gap between language and danced action, the audience can be forgotten, left out of the experience entirely. In fact, Meier reports staging a version of *Gogolorez* that did not include the oral performance of the score, ultimately determining that without that component, the audience lacked a coherent frame through which to view the movement⁵¹ (Meier and Serrell 2006). When the score becomes part of the performance, however, the audience gains traction with respect to interpreting movement that might otherwise seem inscrutable. The score provides information to the spectator about how to perceive and parse the meaning generated by the dancing, a comparative framework within which to evaluate the range of connections between a given language prompt and a diverse set of danced responses.

⁵¹ Meier recalls: "Yes, I tried it without the words. The audience didn't know what the dancers were going to do and that didn't seem to work so well, but as soon as they knew what the dancers were supposed to do, it became more framed. There is a clear explanation of what's happening and you can really see what they will do with the idea" (Meier and Serrell, 2006).

If the presence of the score determines much about how the dance is read, then so too does Meier's presence as its author. The dancers remain in constant negotiation with the text, and as its very visible author, Meier serves as an actual and symbolic source of choreographic authority – the puppeteer who is just as firmly embedded within the work's representational frame as her “puppets.” As is evidenced by the careful application of a deadpan tone, Meier's presence does not reflect the “natural” choreographic stance that she might assume casually in the rehearsal room. She is the choreographer, but she is also a performer playing the role of choreographer. Where Hay positions the language score as mediation between her body and the bodies of her adaptors, Meier exploits the most traditional of choreographic setups by exposing it in performance. She tells her dancers what to do, and they do it. Yet by leveraging indeterminacy, mining the outrageous and impossible, and overemphasizing her own formality, Meier also draws attention to the inevitable slippage between her choreographic impulse and the physical realities of enactment.

The performance on February 25th starkly evidences this slippage when, about halfway through, the dancers veer wildly into revolt. It begins when Meier asks Vidich to perform “one accident after the other.” He bolts into the space, and immediately trips over a prone Aki Sasamoto. This propels him into a vicious and risky physicality; he darts around, tosses himself backwards into space, smacks into the floor with Buster Keaton-like haplessness. He approaches an audience member, starts rubbing that audience member's face, and ends up licking another spectator's bald head.⁵² He hits the floor and rolls toward Meier, bites the microphone and

⁵² On *Gogolorez's* opening night – a performance not discussed in this analysis – Vidich used the “one accident after another” prompt to target the New York Times dance critic, Gia Kourlas. In a review of the piece, Kourlas muses that “it isn't every night that you find yourself sitting dead center at a performance as a dancer approaches you with the steady resolve of the shark from ‘Jaws’ (NYT). Kourlas continues, describing the moment when Vidich “zeroed in on his kill — me — with the sole intention of making out,” and noting Meier's response in a tone that “bordered on glee.” “‘Uh-oh,’ she [Meier] said, ‘the critic’” (“At Danspace, Physicality Gets a New Dimension,” *New York Times*, New York edition C3, February 25, 2011).

tangles himself in its cord, yanking the microphone from her grasp. Vidich's performance seems to loosen something in the group as a whole, and Meier's next instruction to Wey is clearly ignored. Back in control of the microphone, she repeats it a few times, finally arriving at an emphatic "Enrico, nasty floor dance, please!" With some measure of control regained, she turns her attention back to Vidich, saying "nasty floor dance, help Enrico." Later in the same performance, Meier calls for an ending as Jennifer Monson is poised mid-relevé in the center of the space. Monson lowers her heels, looks sharply at Meier, and puts her hands on her hips. Meier responds, "You wanna do something? OK, everybody find yourself in a knot." The audience responds with laughter, and the dancers perform for a considerably longer time until Meier proclaims "find a miserable end," and the prompt is finally accepted (Meier 2011, NYPL). By working with open disobedience, Meier allows her authority to be imbued with tension and a degree of uncertainty. Spot-lit and amplified, she embodies the repressive force associated with notation while also fostering the conditions for that force to be subverted.

The February 25th performance illuminates the extent to which Meier, in *Gogolorez*, uses the language score to assert her own vision as a choreographer while also celebrating the self-directed work that comes with making someone else's choreographic vision a bodily reality. Her frank avowal of artistic intention helps to contextualize her onstage presence, though it also raises pertinent questions about how that intention evolves when played out in and through interpreting bodies. Because Meier leaves much to chance by not rehearsing the scores, subtly changing the tone of prompts from night to night, and fostering the physical and perceptual conditions for rebellion, she stays in charge without being totally in control. Her dancers agree to work under the conditions of a specific interpretive framework, but they also agree to take responsibility for, quite literally, "fleshing out" Meier's ideas in the moment of performance.

With this process happening spontaneously, Meier and her dancers raise the stakes around the language score, allowing the formation of the work to become a central component of the work. In so doing, Meier draws connections not only to the legacy of indeterminate notation (as exemplified, in the last chapter, by Mac Low's own language scores), but also to the broader history of dance notation, where standardization and consolidation have long gone (uneasily) hand in hand with individual variation and shared authorship. *Gogolorez* makes space for complicated encounters between text and body, choreographic vision and interpretive individuality, without instituting a hierarchy between terms. Meier embraces the full range of consequences stemming from such encounters: the ones that shock, the ones that provoke laughter, and even the ones that bear just the slightest trace of violence.

Conclusion

As I demonstrate with respect to the examples in this chapter, generative language scores frame and highlight the interpretive faculties of their performers, giving rise to iterative variation rather than reducing it. In both cases, choreographers support interpretive ingenuity with very specific physical practices that help bridge score and enactment, text and body. On the one hand, then, the generative language score can be understood as a vehicle for opening up the creative process, giving the performer an unprecedented role in determining the work's content. On the other, though, I have hoped to emphasize how performances of these scores are shaped and enabled by constraints, rules, and normative frameworks. These frameworks distinguish one approach to the language score from another, and are deeply emblematic of individual artist's

interests and concerns. Where Hay engages in intensive mentorship and then grants her adaptor ownership over their iteration of the solo, Meier keeps her performers close, constantly highlighting the impact of her commands delivered in the moment of performance. Such choices profoundly impact the nature of the choreographic processes through which performers make text bodily, considering language through movement.

Just as the interpretive frameworks bear out choreographic vision, so too does the writing of the scores themselves. Hay and Meier have developed writing processes strategically, positioning their texts in order to further choreographic aims and continue to foster the conditions for specific qualities of engagement. These two factors, combined with the increased performer responsibility engendered by language scores in this analysis, contribute to a somewhat de-centralized notion of the choreographer's role, as well as a decidedly unconventional notion of the choreographic product. As ongoing and perpetually solicitous of interpretation, these works stand out as radically open, inherently unfinished, and always available to be made remade. Hay and Meier take language's obvious instability as a signifier for movement and render it foundational – not something to be corrected by more precise methods of inscription, but something to be appreciated for the expansive possibilities it enables. Their scores fail to capture movement, but how much does that matter when readers and dancers are busy moving and shaking, working out fresh possibilities for embodying the nuance and subtlety of words, phrases, and ideas?

Participatory Scores and the Choreographic Encounter: Ishmael Houston-Jones and Julie Tolentino

In the late 1960s, Lawrence Halprin expressed a vision of scoring as participatory and liberatory, a powerful trigger for communal creativity. Halprin saw scores everywhere, taking many forms – even something as mundane as the grocery list might be considered a score in its capacity to render “process visible” (1969, 1). As a landscape architect deeply influenced by the choreographic work of his wife Anna, Halprin was uniquely attuned to the ways in which scores interweave structure and spontaneity, bringing static components to bear (whether environmental or conceptual) on the dynamic flux of human movement. In his 1969 book, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*, Halprin develops a method for group scoring outlined by the title’s acronym.⁵³ He asserts the efficacy of scoring, and the RSVP Cycle approach, in contexts like education or community development; for the most part, though, he focuses on the arts. With respect to art-making, Halprin argues, scores transfer the benefits of creative production from the hands of an autonomous creator to a smoothly functioning,

⁵³ Halprin’s “R” stands for resources (“human and physical” materials at the disposal of those undertaking the creative process), the “S” for scoring (the inscription of the process itself), the “V” for valuation (an ongoing process of evaluation that feeds into possible revisions of the score), and the “P” for performance (the result, understood by Halprin not necessarily as an endpoint but an opportunity for further evaluation and evolution). As a whole, the RSVP process enables a group to come together, apply themselves to a common goal, amass resources toward that goal, structure the process, and evaluate its success (Halprin 1969, 2).

equitably accountable group. Indeed, Anna Halprin came to rely heavily on the RSVP approach to scoring in her collaborative approach to choreography, deeming the cycles “the most important set of principles I have worked with because they extend and formalize a method of applied democracy” (Halprin 1995, 46). For both Halprins, scores clearly imbue the creative process with an embedded politics, organizing collective action by providing transparent participatory frameworks that allow for substantive, self-directed input from all involved.

Throughout the following analysis, I build upon this premise – not so much by arguing that scores necessarily give rise to democratic configurations in dance-making, but rather that they enable modes of participation that effectively highlight (and shape) the relational structures underpinning choreographic works. I focus on Ishmael Houston-Jones and Julie Tolentino, who summon spectators into their works as co-creators with scores that provoke heightened mobilization and immersion. In *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest*, for example, Houston-Jones asks audience members to take control, dictating the parameters of his movement, speech, and vision. As spectators call out spontaneous instructions, he struggles to respond, poised on an improvisational edge of uneasy availability. By contrast, in *Raised By Wolves*, Tolentino invites a small audience into a gallery space rife with opportunities for perceptual and experiential engagement. Like Houston-Jones, she asks her spectators to structure the dance – though in this case they do so by choosing from an array of graphic scores designed to be combined anew with each iteration. Both examples evidence a sole dancer/choreographer engaging a group of spectators directly, using participatory scores to blur boundaries between reception and creation. With these dances, Houston-Jones and Tolentino each proposes a clear choreographic body politic, shedding light on dance performance as a form of collective sociality, and articulating cogent questions about agency, authority, and intimacy in the process.

To preface my analysis of these dances, I address several theoretical perspectives that, in various ways, help contextualize the impact of the participatory choreographic score. First, I address some key existing approaches to spectatorship and aesthetic reception, beginning with treatments of the “gaze” in dance studies and moving on to the dialogue surrounding relationality and interactivity in the visual arts. I use these to demonstrate the importance of dances that model expanded realms of possibility for the choreographic event as a collective encounter, shattering ossified notions of spectatorship that turn on oppositions between passive and active, looker and looked-upon. These perspectives also raise the issue of critical potential, suggesting how ongoing theories of participation in the context of dance might flesh out possibilities for social formations that resist alienation and domination. From here, I redirect to theories of power and disciplinarity that centralize the body, focusing particularly on those that underscore the subversive potential of physical practices. I then draw upon the work of several dance theorists that locate this potential in community formation, mobilization, or the individual’s assertion of agency. Finally, I stress the importance of non-oppositional models for thinking through terms like agency and resistance. With respect to the embedded politics of participatory scoring, it becomes particularly important to address how choreographers encourage self-direction and self-awareness by instituting collective processes and (occasionally fraught) relational negotiation.

The Politics of Participation: Theorizing Engaged Spectatorship

As I have suggested, dances by Houston-Jones and Tolentino trouble neat distinctions between performance and reception. In so doing, they shed light on the limits of visibility as a lens through which to appreciate audience experience. In problematizing the visual, I clearly invoke a wide range of scholarship on spectatorial “gaze” rooted in feminist film theory, though no less prevalent in dance studies since the late 1980s.⁵⁴ As Susan Manning points out in her assessment of gaze theory in the context of early modern dance, such arguments tend to focus on whether particular dances “resist or reinforce dominant conceptions of gender,” and, I would add, resist or reinforce modes of spectatorship constructed around the power differential of the gendered gaze (Manning 2003, 154). This body of literature, while fruitful, reveals the extent to which theorists have centralized ways of seeing with respect to theatrical spectatorship.⁵⁵ In these models, resistive works have still resisted by encouraging alternatives for viewership, suggesting how seeing might be performed differently rather than supplying alternatives possibilities for analyzing spectatorship. I revisit some of these perspectives (particularly in my analysis of Houston-Jones), but as a whole, this chapter asks: how might participatory scores urge the spectator to go far beyond *looking* in her reception of choreographic works?

To address this question, I underscore features of the works in question that compel a broader perspective, necessitating theoretical models for spectatorship that de-emphasize gaze by calling attention to possibilities related to action, vocal response, and haptics. With *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest*, which Houston-Jones presents in a fairly conventional context of an informal studio showing, the need for a multi-faceted approach to spectatorship becomes clear as audience

⁵⁴ See Daly (2002), Desmond (1991), Burt (1995), and Manning (2003).

⁵⁵ See also Savigliano (1995) and Srinivasan (2009) for the impact of the colonial imperialist gaze on the racialized dancing body.

choice and response assume as much importance as his dancing. With Tolentino's work, which she situates in a gallery setting amidst concurrently displayed objects and large-scale installations, it becomes even more crucial to identify how looking shifts toward a more expansive terrain of experience, and how interactive aesthetic reception promotes awareness spanning registers of body, environment and performance.

By prompting modes of engagement that are not limited to acts of seeing and being seen, Houston-Jones and Tolentino clearly eschew conventional models of spectatorship associated with the theater's "mystic chasm," or its fundamental separation between watcher and doer.⁵⁶ They also, though, contravene the pervasive clichés that tend to accompany the notion of "audience participation." Amidst these clichés, lofty ideals collide with uncomfortable realities. The obliteration of the illusory (and illusion-enabling) "fourth wall," the activation of an inert body public, and the sudden and improbable realization of a community: all exciting possibilities that nonetheless remain stubbornly abstract as the house lights flicker on and a solicitous performer approaches. Performance theorist Herbert Blau delineates the tension between such intentions and their typical results, noting: "even when a director or a method tries to make the theater participatory, the actors circulating amid the spectators or inviting them on stage, that never quite stops the looking, nor that sense of being watched, and with it estrangement and distance" that leads to a "ghosting sense of aloneness" (Blau 2011, 123). Throughout this chapter, I pinpoint how Houston-Jones and Tolentino circumvent Blau's sense of "aloneness" by including spectators knowingly, giving audience members the tools to fully understand, and indeed shape, their own involvement. In fact, while these two dances offer potent models for

⁵⁶ Wagner's "mystic chasm," embodies an essential distance between spectators and the proscenium, buffering the real from the illusory (or, 'the unapproachable world of dreams'). (Kuritz 1988, 263). Paul Kuritz helpfully connects the idea of an impregnable gulf to the institution of several longstanding theatrical conventions, including the darkening of the auditorium (264).

relationality within choreographic structure, interrelatedness does not, as I have suggested, come about without tension, contestation, or potentially uncomfortable points of contact. As I hope to demonstrate, it is perhaps precisely through the discomfort brought about by these choreographic strategies of participation that the dances (and their scores) exhibit urgent critical potential.

This potential comes strongly to the fore when choreographic strategies of interactivity are contextualized alongside visual arts practices that conspicuously shift modes of reception from viewing to participation. For decades, theorists in this field have had to contend with art-making that explicitly engages spectators, prompting various levels of involvement. Art historian Claire Bishop notes the breadth of this “expanded field of post-studio practices” by listing the many names conferred on the genre: “engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and (most recently) social practice” (2012, 1). First theorized in the early 1990s by the French theorist Nicolas Bourriaud under the mantle of “relational aesthetics” (2002), these practices relate to the dances in my analysis by triggering questions about the political efficacy of self-consciously calibrated, aestheticized forms of interaction.⁵⁷

Bourriaud, for example, draws on Guy Debord’s formulation of the *société du spectacle*, in which the commodity-driven representation of social life induces profound alienation by overtaking a shared, lived reality. For Bourriaud, “artwork stands up to the mill of the ‘Society of the Spectacle,’” through the institution of “everyday micro-utopias” marked by a shared space of interactivity (2002, 31). Similarly to Halprin’s process-based theorization of the score Bourriaud’s argument emphasizes the transfer of artistic production from the private to the

⁵⁷ Bourriaud anchors his analysis with the following examples, among others: “Rikrit Tiravanija organizes a dinner in a collector’s home, and leaves him all the ingredients required to make a Thai soup. Philippe Parreno invites a few people to pursue their favorite hobbies on May Day, on a factory assembly line. Vanessa Beecroft dresses some twenty women in the same way, complete with a red wig, and the visitor merely gets a glimpse of them through the doorway,” etc. (Bourriaud 7-8).

public space. Within the broadly shared scope of relational aesthetics, transparency and visible collaboration replace the mysteries of solo creative production (2002, 14). Likewise, Bishop's analysis outlines how interactive works counter the "alienation induced by the dominant ideological order – be this consumer capitalism, totalitarian socialism, or military dictatorship" (2012, 275). For his part, Grant Kester focuses on the "dialogic" nature of relational works, where conversation becomes "an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict" (2004, 8). Each of these treatments of participatory art turns on the proposition that the carefully choreographed social encounters qualifies as a critical social practice, challenging the status quo of aesthetic reception while negating boundaries between art and life. I, too, hope to suggest the potential of creative (and specifically choreographic) practices aimed toward the interactive and the relational. As I have suggested, though, I am less interested in utopian social encounters than in the intimate, sometimes uncomfortable negotiations of power brought about shared, non-coercive engagements with the score.

In terms of the manifestation of power through social and organizational structures, I begin by echoing Foucault's assertion that "it is always the body that is at issue." Particularly in the context of his genealogy of punishment, Foucault demonstrates how the body must be "directly involved in the political field" insofar as "power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (1995, 25). Importantly, Foucault insists upon the workings of power as productive mechanisms rather than repressive forces. He reveals the extent to which modern subjectivity has developed in response to disciplinary power, not simply because power imposes itself upon the disciplined subject, but because that subject embodies it, performs it, and negotiates with it to

become part of the social order. Foucault's analysis demonstrates how the ebbs and flows of disciplinary power move subjects, and how individuals take their place in the social fabric by participating in and registering the corporeal effects of disciplinary regimes. For Foucault, the body does not occupy one term in a binary opposition to power, but rather constitutes the terrain of disciplinary formation itself.

Foucault's formulation of disciplinary power informs my choreographic analysis insofar as he locates the body at the center of the network of relations determining social, institutional, and state organization. Yet because his work does not necessarily open up significant space for corporeal re-negotiation, I also look to one of his key interlocutors – Michel de Certeau – in order to think through the ways in which disciplinary constraints (like those conveyed by choreographic scores) enable choreographers to redistribute or reconfigure of their own authority. Where Foucault focuses on the constitutive effect of disciplinary constraint relative to the body, de Certeau sees bodily practice as offering myriad opportunities for subversion. He searches out the conditions of possibility for unpredictability and self-direction, proposing an agile notion of subjectivity bringing its resources to the “everyday” acts through which individuals become “poets of their own affairs” (De Certeau 1984, 34).

Importantly with respect to any theorization of engaged spectatorship, de Certeau critiques notions of cultural consumption that imply receiver passivity, arguing how the act of reading, in particular, involves the active production of meaning and response. In alignment with Roland Barthes's proposal (discussed in the last chapter) that the reader *creates* meaning through the act of reading, de Certeau likewise empowers the reader by casting her as a producer. He counters the pervasive assumption of modernity's passive consumer by demonstrating how such assumptions betray an embedded class ideology, reinforcing established hierarchies and power

differentials (1984, 167). I extend de Certeau's notion of active reception to performance spectatorship, demonstrating how Houston-Jones and Tolentino use scores to enable active and self-directed involvement, thereby redistributing powers of determination with respect to a dance's outcome. Insofar as their spectators engage vocally and physically, entering into the works rather than standing at a distance, they give and receive at the same time, becoming self-conscious producers even in the moment of aesthetic reception.

Additionally, De Certeau's treatment of pedestrian locomotion vividly points up how subjects navigate the constraints of predetermined structures through self-determined ways of moving. He perceives walking in the planned urban landscape as an opportunity for articulating an individual "rhetoric" in the face of totalizing structure (De Certeau 1984, 100). This perspective, similar to Lawrence Halprin's, demonstrates how physical environments are continually made - and made over - by the people traversing them. Halprin, too, considers the impact of volatile pedestrian life in confrontation with established urban structures.⁵⁸ In his thinking, city streets impact subjects as highly influential scores, scores "used to guide and control" individual movement (Halprin 1969, 82). Like de Certeau, though, rather than conceptualizing this control as an overbearing disciplinary mechanism, Halprin considers the constraints of environment and landscape to be productive, enabling innovation and particularized response. These perspectives on body and environment support, in particular, my theorization of Tolentino's work, where engaged spectatorship revolves not only around the spectator's power to direct the dance, but also around her heightened attention to place.

Emphasizing the dialogue between Foucault and de Certeau, I hope to suggest how theorists outside of dance studies have placed the body (and bodily practices) at the center of

⁵⁸ Referencing his design for the Lovejoy Plaza and Cascade in Portland, Oregon, Halprin calls the fountain itself a "score" insofar as it affects people's movement in and around the plaza; the fountain, as "static" structure, is thus drawn into urban life rather than merely serving as a backdrop for it (1969, 82).

critical debates about entrenched power structures and the potential for their subversion. Within dance studies, of course, theorists have long emphasized the body's efficacy, much more explicitly focusing on how physical techniques and choreographic strategies support and extend ideological frameworks that concern relationality, community, and political mobilization. In her pioneering auto-ethnographic treatment of contact improvisation, for example, Cynthia Novack generates a vivid picture of a dance subculture enacting expansive ideas about self and community through falls, leans, spirals, and the transfer of weight from one pliant physicality to another. She defines the loosely organized, geographically widespread contact improvisation scene as a "community of experience," establishing a tightly correlated, mutually productive relationship between its embedded value system and the social relations that it provokes (Novack 1990, 15). Describing the implicit political ethos of contact improvisation as an "egalitarian meritocracy," Novack cites the community's welcoming attitude toward a range of bodies, its disruption of the traditional allocation of gender roles in dance performance, and its capacity to encourage "individual action within and through a cooperative, group setting" (190).

Because Novack argues that contact improvisation physicality should be appreciated for "contributing and responding to larger patterns of thought and organization" (1990, 13), she looks closely at how improvisers express a sense of self within the form's ideological framework. She quotes Nancy Stark Smith describing the shock of audience members at some of her earliest performances, saying "'When they'd see somebody falling, they'd gasp because they weren't used to seeing that be anything other than a terrible accident'" (72). The act of falling, even aestheticized in a performance situation, remains an act of falling. Such an act carries meaning, as well as implications about the "self" that performs it. To fall is to lose control, to give up verticality, to trust that the ground will support you, and to acknowledge vulnerability.

The action of the contact improviser, in this sense, amounts to the proposal of a very particular kind of self in the world. These principles emerged quite strongly from the social and cultural changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Novack clearly situates contact improvisation within a larger landscape of physical practices redefining the body as “independent yet communal, free, sensual, daring” (38). When Stark Smith notes the observers’ shock that a body would willingly and joyfully fall, she calls attention to the presence of ideologies and values within contact improvisation, values that the dance form reproduces and disseminates. Novack uses Stark Smith's account to demonstrate that for a dance practice to actively cultivate the skill of falling amounts to a radical re-evaluation of priorities, not just with respect to the performing body, but also with respect to the socially and culturally intelligible body.

In *Dancing Communities*, Judith Hamera likewise elucidates how shared ideological infrastructures support and manifest within physical practices, especially where “dancers reach across multiple dimensions of difference to incarnate new shared aesthetic and social possibilities” (2007, 1). Like Novack, Hamera identifies these possibilities as potent raw materials for community formation. From this perspective, dancers mobilize within and around dance techniques, not just honing ways of moving but developing “tactics for living;” critical attention to such mobilization, then, encourages an approach that reaches “beyond a cramped sense of dance as artifact and toward a more nuanced understanding of how it actually serves people who make and consume it” (209-210). Hamera allows herself to imagine an almost utopian future populated by “corporeal art parks” instead of corporate industrial parks, “laboratories for complex, productive forms of citizenship” taking shared physical practices as a point of departure (212). I, too, want to insist on the urgency of perceiving dance practice as constitutive of social, and not just aesthetic, possibility. However, where Hamera expands her

analytical framework to the durable physical and social support systems bolstering choreographic production, I limit my analysis to performances that mobilize temporary communities bound by the explicit parameters of participatory and inclusive scoring. In Houston-Jones's work, for example, a collective social body comes to life in the charged space between a vocally empowered spectatorship and a compliant, physically destabilized choreographer/performer. For Tolentino, on the other hand, communal experience manifests as personalized and tactile, taking place within a choreographic landscape that thoroughly integrates body, object, and environment. In both instances, though, dances come to life as shared experiences structured by scores that invite a mobilized, highly self-aware spectatorship.

It is crucial to appreciate the extent to which these dances mobilize particular forms of relational and social life, and perhaps no theorist has gone so far to identify dance as a potent form of social mobilization than Randy Martin – though Martin's early work does tend to maintain a clear bifurcation between performer and spectator. By focusing on the dancerly production of a "collective social body" (1990, 86), Martin positions the spectator as somewhat of a passive consumer, where the "two opposite sides of the frame – conceiver and consumer – do not come face to face" in a substantive way (82). In his slightly later work, though, Martin theorizes dance as a "mobilization of participation in relation to a choreographic idea," one that in no way need exclude the spectator as an active and self-directed presence (1998, 4). Also importantly, by stressing choreography's inherent capacity to mobilize, Martin confers political efficacy on choreographic practices without burdening choreographers with the task of producing a "tactical stance" in relation to particular issues or institutions (2). Similarly, and particularly in my analysis of Houston-Jones's work, I stress the embedded politics that arise on a structural level as a result of the participatory score. As Martin might, I read Houston-Jones's

work in *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest* as a choreographic mobilization of participation that highlights how a dance can function as a site of political self-articulation.

Also like Martin, I identify various and multifaceted forms of participation in order to theorize the political potential of choreography beyond “the purely oppositional rubric” of compliance versus resistance (1998, 12). Martin acknowledges the value in theorizing non-dominant cultural forms of resistance, yet he also points out how this focus unduly emphasizes blockage over movement, control over change (13). With Houston-Jones and Tolentino, the novel forms of relationality arising from participatory spectatorship do not map cleanly onto the oppositional coordinates of compliance versus resistance, especially insofar as these choreographers reveal how compliance (or at least complicit immersion) can constitute a productive point of departure. In addition to the question of resistance, my analysis also interrogates agency, particularly where it conflates with models for liberatory individualism that exclude modes of self-determination that derive precisely from an acceptance of constraint. In this spirit, I also draw on the work of Carrie Noland, who, like Martin, construes “the cultural field as differential rather than oppositional” (2009, 3). Noland produces a body-centric theory of agency emphasizing the interplay between improvisation and the habitual reiteration of behavioral norms. She looks closely at “learned techniques of the body” (a conceptual category developed by sociologist Marcel Mauss) in order to demonstrate how the performance of such techniques betrays the role of “improvisation” even within the boundaries of normative behavioral frameworks. Noland sidelines terms like “mobilization” in favor of the “gesture,” which for her, adequately encompasses both reiteration and innovation, both “the carapace of routine” and the continual subversion brought about by individual performance (2009, 7).

Noland's claim that "agency cannot spring from an autonomous, undisciplined source" echoes the central argument organizing my discussion of Hay and Meier in the previous chapter (2009, 2) – namely, that individuals bring particularized interpretive response to open-ended scores even as those scores establish clear normative frameworks around the task of interpretation. Noland's perceptive commentary on agency also pertains to my analysis of the participatory scores in this chapter, especially insofar as Houston-Jones and Tolentino enable energized spectatorship through heightened accountability, immersion, and imbrication in choreographic structure. By working from non-oppositional models for agency, I theorize scores as normative, prescriptive, and indeed even disciplinary frameworks that nonetheless make space for change, contestation, and the valorization of personal response.

In her deeply challenging take on agency – one that explicitly counters the reflexive alignment of agency and progressive politics – cultural theorist Saba Mahmood argues that discussions about social and political transformation "must begin with an analysis of the specific practices of subjectivization that make the subjects of a particular social imaginary possible" (2005, 154). Following Mahmood, I examine first of all how dances by Houston-Jones and Tolentino catalyze "practices of subjectivization." I also attend to how these choreographers palpably shape and direct those practices with visible scores as structuring apparatuses. Moreover, by considering the dances as emergent social imaginaries, I emphasize how inclusive scores give rise to relational formations in which choreographers encourage spectators to reflect on those practices as they are underway. Finally, I contend that what makes these processes so powerful, in large part, will be their specificity and contingent nature. As different modes of scoring initiate processes of subjectivization in radically different ways – spectatorial engagement looks and feels dramatically differently in Houston-Jones's context as compared

with Tolentino's – these dances suggest how the parameters surrounding agency might be construed as highly mobile, flexible, and contextually bound. My analysis of a relatively tightly defined category of participation, then, connects to a much broader conversation about agency even where individuals might be constricted by seemingly intransigent historical and cultural forces.

Accordingly, my analysis echoes Danielle Goldman's recent appraisal of improvisation in which she emphasizes constraint, thereby troubling persistent associations with improvisation and freedom. Like Goldman, I argue that "one's social and historical positions in the world affect one's ability to move, both literally and figuratively" (2010, 5). I also take a methodological cue from Goldman, who identifies discrete examples of improvisational practice giving rise to "unique interactions with constraint" (27). Again, I note how scores enable distinct forms of participatory engagement, distinct practices of subjectivization, and distinct social imaginaries. With two very different forms of choreographic research, I delineate two different modes of participation as encouraged by specific scores. Rather than lumping both dances on the preferred side of the "unhelpful binary of 'active' and 'passive,'" I look to each score as a blueprint for how and why choreographers facilitate audience involvement, and for how spectators might use participatory scores to reflect on and shape that involvement (Bishop 2012, 8).

Ultimately, I hope to shed light on how Houston-Jones and Tolentino draw spectators closer – modulating, intensifying, and, at times, interrogating their involvement – thereby reflecting on the importance of being, and making, together. Crucially, within this togetherness, spectators have room to recognize their own perceptual, experiential, and critical faculties. Participation comes about through self-direction, and agency through the willing acceptance of scored choreographic structure. With these scores, though, Houston-Jones and Tolentino not only

shift spectatorial experience, but also profoundly interrogate choreographic authority and the nature of the choreographic work. By visibilizing process, and by relinquishing a degree of control over that process, they encourage spectators to perceive dances as much more than products. Rather, these dances become engagements, mobilizations, and formations of a consenting body politic made up of individuals newly encouraged to see each other, and themselves, as integral players. Through the application of these participatory scores, Houston-Jones and Tolentino envision dances as conditions of possibility. Rather than functioning as templates for the reproduction of movement, their scores introduce uncertainty and change. They foster choreographic encounters remade with each iteration, adaptable containers that welcome new bodies, minds, and voices at every turn.

Ishmael Houston Jones: Interrogating Desire and (Incomplete) Surrender

It is early June of 1996, and New York City-based choreographer Ishmael Houston-Jones appears in front of a small audience at the San Francisco Festival of Improvisation.⁵⁹ He greets this audience with a “howdy,” and explains that what they are about to see is “kind of a piece and kind of not.” The kind-of-a-piece in question is entitled *Eyes, Mouth and All the Rest: Surrendering to the Desire of Others (EMAAR)*. A structured improvisation, the dance features a communal score in which spectators activate or shut down Houston-Jones’s sight, speech, and movement while also modulating the overall pace. Houston-Jones attributes the conceptual

⁵⁹ My analysis of *Eyes, Mouth, and All the Rest* relies on repeated viewings of video footage captured June 3, 1996 and archived in the New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division (see Houston-Jones 1996), unless otherwise noted. This iteration of the dance was presented at the San Francisco Festival of Improvisation in association with the Talking Dance Project.

underpinnings of *EMAAR* to a realization that his longstanding improvisational practice, in spite of its apparent spontaneity, rested on a foundation of his own control. As a result, he designs an improvisational structure incorporating two things that he “hates:” 1) audience participation and 2) “giving up control to people I hardly know.” Searching for conditions that might induce an improvisational state marked by vulnerability and discomfort rather than self-control, he uses audience member intervention to short-circuit his own preferences and instincts, thereby engaging in a process of continual surrender. As a dance designed to engage performer and spectator alike in choreographic creation, *EMAAR* suggests audience participation as a collective negotiation of choreographic structure. This negotiation requires a vocal spectator willing to pinpoint and voice her desires, as well as a highly responsive performer willing to act on them. As spectators shout out commands, Houston-Jones speeds and struggles through a stream-of-consciousness exercise in movement, speech, and seeing. He dances at the edge of his own control, ever ready to change course. His responsiveness highlights a prominent, and often unacknowledged, feature of dance performance: the desirous gaze of a spectator fixed on a moving body. Lending that relationship unprecedented visibility, as well as practical consequence, Houston-Jones stages a revelatory exercise in participation. Engaging in Houston Jones’s score, the spectator must not only acknowledge and articulate her own desire, but also contend with the physical reality of a dancing body at the mercy of it.

Throughout his delivery of those introductory remarks, Houston-Jones exudes casual warmth. Dressed in a t-shirt, sweatpants, and sneakers, he addresses his audience frankly and with humor, effacing any aura or alienating distance that might accompany his appearance as an accomplished choreographer and performer. As Houston-Jones talks animatedly, his spectators occupy folding chairs along one side of a light, airy studio. Despite this clear frontal orientation,

the proximity of the spectators encourages more intimacy than would be permitted in a conventional proscenium theater, with its explicit distancing of performer and spectator. Casually and conversationally, Houston-Jones clearly addresses an informed, close-knit crowd with some investment in improvisational dance practice. After the “howdy,” Houston-Jones transitions fairly quickly into detailed instructions regarding the score. Though at this stage, he still maintains full control over the proceedings, his introduction cues the audience to an impending reciprocity and the possibility of heightened participation. The mood in the room seems relaxed but alert, a sense of possibility palpable.

To explain and initiate the mechanics of his score, Houston-Jones chooses seven audience volunteers, explaining each participant’s task. The first should “be smart about counting,” and must be willing to sit in a position clearly visible to the other audience members. This first, highly visible volunteer will monitor the pacing of the piece, holding up cards marked with numbers each time a new section has been called. Section break calls can come from anyone in the audience who finds themselves “bored or anxious” and wants to push the piece forward. Once the audience volunteer holding the cards gets to a card bearing the number five, the dance concludes. By explicitly linking the production of a command to feelings of boredom or anxiety, Houston-Jones underscores the direct connection between spectator desire and choreographic structure, even if that desire might lead to the act of pushing the dance toward its conclusion. Someone Houston-Jones recognizes and identifies as “Ray” volunteers for the job of holding the cards. Houston-Jones reacts to Ray’s willingness with delight, and sets him up with a folding chair on his side of the studio, facing the other spectators.

The next six volunteers receive instructions that more directly involve them with the action. They are, in essence, to make decisions about whether Houston-Jones will open or close

his eyes, talk or be silent, and move or be still. The volunteer calling “eyes open” should be “someone responsible” who Houston-Jones charges with the task of keeping him from getting hurt. The next volunteer is “someone irresponsible,” who can instruct Houston-Jones to close his eyes at any time, whether moving or not. Houston-Jones confers a role with “medium responsibility” to the person who calls “talk,” whereas “somebody who's really into negativity” and “stopping the process” is given the “shut up” command. The last two calls simply consist of “move,” and “not move” (movement, presumably, constituting the title’s “all the rest”). Houston-Jones concludes his address by emphasizing how important “you” (the spectators) are, not in order to express gratitude at their willingness to participate, but rather to stress their accountability. “I’m gonna give up my responsibility,” he warns, “so if this piece sucks, it’s your fault.” Though the volunteers with specified roles hold the most sway over the development of the improvisation, each and every audience member, either by calling for section breaks or declining to do so, remains complicit in the work’s unfolding.⁶⁰

Once Houston-Jones chooses volunteers and assures himself that everyone understands their responsibilities, he quiets – suspending both speech and movement, closing his eyes. Other than this preparatory neutrality, Houston-Jones creates no gap between the quotidian persona delivering the score and specialized performing body. With no costume change, and no blackout, this moment shepherds the group into a shared space of collective accountability. The call to

⁶⁰ Though Houston-Jones has performed *Eyes, Mouth, and All the Rest* at several instances subsequent to the San Francisco festival performance, this is the only iteration that incorporates such direct audience participation. Both a 2001 version at Danspace Project and a 2004 version at the Judson Memorial Church feature pre-chosen callers who are mostly well-known performers in New York City's downtown dance scene. The versions that feature these callers have a markedly different tone. Whereas the self-selecting audience volunteers in San Francisco seem almost giddy to be participating so actively in the structure, the pre-trained callers in New York issue the calls more coolly, obviously focusing on these directives as compositional choices in their own right. The audiences in New York remain third party witnesses, observing from a safe distance the tension generated by Houston Jones's efforts to comply with the callers' commands. In San Francisco, the improvisational structure directly engages everyone in the room; each audience member holds some measure of power, whether exercised or not.

“move” comes first, and Houston-Jones’s physical intensity ramps up immediately. When, soon after, a caller urges him to speak, he delves into a highly personal narrative about a dream he had involving his dead father. From then on, in both movement quality and spoken subject matter, the tone of the piece ranges widely. The calls come quickly, and occasionally overlap. Houston-Jones works doggedly to keep up on the register of movement as well as speech. Though clearly adept at listening for the calls while remaining committed to producing fully invested movement and speech, he occupies a perpetual state of unease. He must talk even if he has nothing to say. He must move even when his attention is monopolized by the production of speech.

With respect to his movement, Houston-Jones shifts easily through a qualitatively impressive range. Often, he tends toward explosiveness, joints loose and resilient yet ever prepared to thrash, stomp, and pound the floor. At times, however, he moves delicately, inscribing intricate curlicues in the air with limbs or fingers. Yet other times, he performs small gestures that relate to his own body, touching his head or chest with such softness as to seem almost suspended. The quick changes in particular draw attention to the range of physical strategies at his disposal. In one sudden transition, the caller issues a curt “shut up,” and the sudden prohibition propels him from a manic mime act (illustrating something that he had been talking about) to the coolest postmodern physicality, all clean lines and efficient transitions. At the mercy of his callers, Houston-Jones's body appears charged but focused, fully committed to each moment yet prepared to redirect at a split-second's notice.

Just as Houston-Jones throws himself into successive, and highly distinct, physical modes with no discernable pause or transition, his performance of speech hinges on an instant and total absorption into new subject matter. Sometimes he talks, and sometimes he screams. In general, he grasps at what might be most immediately available, producing reflections on his internal

state arising through the process of dancing. Not surprisingly, and more prominently as the piece goes on, he harshly judges his own performance, pointing out, at various points that “I’ve gotten really self-referential, I’m really stuck there,” or “I feel really dumb, like I’m not doing anything new.” He also produces general reflections on his performance state, connecting his experience of dancing to the more mundane facets of everyday life. Explaining that before the show he had some bad paella, for example, he physically demonstrates queasiness and says he feels like “odd, out of focus, nasty version of myself.” Like his movement, Houston-Jones’s improvised speaking exhibits a particularly impressive mix of riskiness and vulnerability. He matches a bold exploration of movement with an equally intrepid dive into the murky backwaters of consciousness. Talking quickly and enunciating clearly, he offers up aspects of his own experience freely, seemingly without censor, and certainly without concern for supporting narrative development.

Accordingly, *EMAAR* exposes a cross-section of Houston-Jones’s subjective experience, no layer more important than the next: dead father, self-criticism and bad paella contributing equally to an unfolding, highly immediate succession of disclosures. In an analysis of the self-referential speech in Houston-Jones’s 1982 piece, *Relatives*, Susan Foster notes the particular virtuosity required to present “the relationship between speech and action as one of dissimilar pursuits easily accomplished simultaneously” (2002, 201). With the added complication of audience intervention in *EMAAR*, speech and movement certainly come across as dissimilar pursuits, but here, Houston-Jones replaces the ease of virtuosic performance with persistent destabilization. He not only performs two tasks at once, but also performs two tasks at once under the pressure of constantly evolving and overlapping demands.

Where Houston-Jones's work has been incorporated into the dance historical cannon, it has often been dealt with under the rubric of post-formalism, or, more specifically, the choreographic exploration of territory wherein the personal and political fruitfully merge. Sally Banes, for example, associates Houston-Jones with a “rebirth of content” following the “analytic postmodern dance” that, in her view, grew so abstract through the 1970s that it threatened to eradicate meaning wholesale (1987, xxiv). She suggests that choreographers redressed the imbalance between form and content by investing in the personal and cultural forces motivating their work. They articulated these concerns through language, and particularly language geared toward the autobiographical. Banes construes disclosure, or the “public display of the personal,” as a “political gesture in the style of the New Left,” and concludes that content driven choreographers of the 1980s and 90s used autobiographical material “as occasion to meditate on larger issues” (xxx). Janet O’Shea builds on Banes’s historicization in a summary of the developments of “new dance studies” through the late 1980s and into the early 2000s (2010). She associates Houston-Jones with a choreographic turn toward autobiography and then links that development to emerging forms of scholarly analysis focusing on the production and critique of identity along axes of race, class, gender, and sexuality (8).⁶¹ I do see the value in locating Houston-Jones within a larger group of artists who gained prominence through the 1980s and 90s for exploring broad themes, often by juxtaposing language and movement. By focusing on *EMAAR*, though, my analysis ultimately concerns not only *what* Houston-Jones communicates to his audience, but also *how* he brings that communication about through the participatory score.

Nonetheless, Houston-Jones himself reflects on his interest in autobiographical disclosure through direct address, referring to that forthright gesture of audience inclusion as a “leveling

⁶¹ O’Shea includes Houston-Jones in a substantial and diverse list of artists that includes Bill T. Jones, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Lloyd Newsom, Pina Bausch, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Chandralekha and Wim Vandekeybus (1998, 7-8).

device” used to reconfigure his relationship to viewers (Robinson et al., 36).⁶² In the performance of *EMAAR* presented at the intimate San Francisco studio showing, a degree of disclosure of personal details might not seem surprising, but his more heavily rehearsed and substantially produced works have likewise probed intimate territory. Houston-Jones recalls infusing *Them* (1986), for example, with themes that would have been inescapably pressing for a queer, African-American choreographer working in downtown New York as the AIDS crisis gained momentum. He remembers confronting and expressing his own complicated relationship to disease, violence, and death, and using autobiography to draw palpable connections to such difficult material: “I don't want to make hermetic work,” he states, “but I don't know how to make political work that's not personal; I'm trying to show myself as a human being facing these big issues – and sometimes failing” (36). Remembering *Them*, Houston-Jones makes a clear connection between the personal and the political. He also, however, attests to using the friction generated by spoken, charged disclosures to get closer to his audience. By “showing” himself, (“making my life visible”) (Robinson et al., 52), he shares something with his spectators, crafting performances that privilege accessibility over the distancing effects of the spectacular body.

With respect to Houston-Jones’s choreographic objectives, both autobiographical disclosure and the score’s transparency support a crucial, and overarching, aim: subverting invisibility (Robinson et al., 36). Houston-Jones attributes this commitment to visibility, in part, to his experience as a black performer working in the downtown New York performance world, a scene that he has at times perceived as overwhelmingly and undeniably white. Particularly when Houston-Jones was a new arrival in the early 1980s, he felt isolated, pressured to identify artistically with “black dance” on the monumental scale of the Ailey Company while also feeling

⁶² Houston-Jones discusses his use of autobiographical disclosure in the context of his 1984 work, *Cowboys, Dreams, and Ladders* as well as his 1982 dance, *Relatives* (Robinson et al., 36).

a clear affinity for the scrappy post-Judson experimentation occurring at venues like Danspace in St. Mark's Church. As Houston-Jones recalls, this double-identification contributed to a "healthy schizophrenia," a bifurcated awareness that allowed him to both feel a part of the downtown community while simultaneously perceiving it through the eyes of an outsider.⁶³ Such awareness seems to have granted Houston-Jones a particularly keen understanding of how identification can give rise to either alienation or a sense of community, depending upon how much visibility has been conferred on a particular identity within a given context. Houston-Jones's vacillation between inclusion and alienation has, at times, sharpened to well-placed critique, most poignantly evinced by *Wrong Contact Duet*, a 1983 collaboration with Fred Holland in which the pair attempt to break all of contact improvisation's tacit rules. Their number one transgression: "Being black" (Jowers 2012).⁶⁴

While Houston-Jones's verbal performance in *EMAAR* clearly gains momentum from the revelation of personal information, I argue that its impact and criticality derive perhaps more from form than from content. By this I mean that the score visibilizes a relationship between Houston-Jones and his audience that carries an embedded politics whether or not the movement

⁶³ In a 2012 New York Times article on Houston-Jones's curatorial reprisal of the significant *Parallels* platform of black dance, Brian Seibert writes: "In the minds of many the term 'black dance' seemed always to summon a few set images, most of them having to do with Alvin Ailey. Watching an Ailey dance had been formative for Mr. Houston-Jones, but artistically he felt more at home at the performances put on by Danspace Project in St. Mark's Church, which happened to be across the street from his apartment" ("Ready to Upend Dance Expectations Again," *New York Times*, *New York edition* C1, February 8, 2012).

⁶⁴ Additional parameters of the piece included: wearing combat boots, dancing to music, "trying not to be in contact," and "not being gender neutral (as is traditional contact improv) but allowing the contact to get erotic/rough" (Jowers 2012). The duet with Holland vividly illustrates Houston-Jones's interest in the friction between visibility and invisibility. Though he and his collaborator perform the dance at a prominent venue in the context of a community-driven Contact Improvisation Festival, they also inscribe blackness into a set of unwritten rules, stressing what might otherwise go unseen within the dance form's insular context. By breaking the "rules" of contact while publicly performing contact, Houston-Jones enacts his insider-outsider status, translating an affective tension into clear choreographic decision-making. Unlike *EMAAR*, the presentation of *Wrong Contact Duet* did not include a communication of these rules to his audience. Whether the audience perceived the dancers' blackness as a violation of CI's normative cultural specificity would depend upon noting that blackness as difference in the first place; seeing the duet as an expansion of the form would likewise first necessitate an acceptance of its unspoken and exclusionary boundary lines.

or spoken themes address politically charged issues, like race. The dance gathers friction from a palpably intersubjective relating rather than a unidirectional expression of identity. Like Lawrence Halprin, Houston-Jones frames the highly conspicuous score as a tool to draw others into creative processes by making these processes transparent. And just as in Halprin's *RSVP Cycles*, *EMAAR*'s transparency leads intrinsically to involvement. The spectator not only understands the score, but even more importantly, understands the critical role that she will play within it. Accordingly, the impact of *EMAAR* resides less in bringing attention to particular issues than in subtly shifting the structural relationship between performer and spectator.

Moreover, Houston-Jones creates intimacy through revelation, yet without allowing himself the certainty of a grounding in self-directed pacing or sequencing. The score ensures that Houston-Jones cannot maintain censorial filters, but must simply stay present as spectators call on him to produce or halt reflection.⁶⁵ Thus, *EMAAR* establishes a clear connection between Houston-Jones and his audience even before any particular issues are explored. It lends autobiographical disclosure an unprecedented rigor, wedding it not to his agenda but to the unpredictable force and immediacy of the spectator's intervention. In his effort to abdicate control, Houston-Jones confers a degree of responsibility upon the spectator, lending his investment in that relationship more importance than the success or failure of the choreographic product. Rather than trying to bridge an existing divide with verbal communication, he builds relationality into the work's structural foundation, making his spectators complicit and asking them to audibly relate to his disclosures instead of merely receiving them.

⁶⁵ In the 1996 performance, the only comment that Houston-Jones makes about internal "scoring" that shapes his content (i.e. what kind of movement and speech he produces) is that he tries not to "censor" himself. He feels that the audience commands fostered unpredictability, leading him to things he "wouldn't do if I had the choice" (Houston-Jones 1996).

As I have suggested, transparent scoring, like autobiographical disclosure, establishes effective parameters through which to institute shifts in the relationship between performer and spectator. *EMAAR*, however, pushes these shifts further by locating participation not just in the realm of seeing and understanding, but of action and response. Structural transparency and autobiographical disclosure certainly give the *EMAAR* spectator impressive access to the dance's organization and its performer's inner life, but Houston-Jones asks his spectators to do much more than watch, listen, or perceive – he invites them to act in their own right. By initiating this participatory process, Houston-Jones explicitly interrogates commonplace binary models of spectatorship that pair a passive looker with an active (though objectified) looked-upon. Clearly, he accomplished this with self-referential talking that makes it impossible to reduce his physical presence to the level of display. He also eschews this binary in his very responsiveness to the spectator's demands. Finally, though, he does this by honoring the demand to close his eyes. By curtailing his own vision, Houston-Jones institutes a vulnerable self-presence, offering himself up wholly to the spectatorial gaze to such a degree as to hyperbolize the very terms of his own objectification. Rendering the passive mastery of the spectator explicit, he re-choreographs the play of gazes animating the space between dancer and viewer, re-asserting his own complicity in that arrangement by relinquishing his capacity to gaze back.

Each of the examples discussed in this chapter undertakes such a re-choreography, channeling the spectator's scopophilic energy into new relational formations. Spectator gaze, though, has always been about more than the gaze. In fact, film scholar Laura Mulvey's spearheading treatment of the gaze pinpoints the scopophilic urge as a desire not just to see, but to control. She cites Freud's early work on scopophilia, which associates the drive with "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey 2013, 59).

Yet when Mulvey extends Freudian scopophilia to the cinema, the drama plays out not through the interactive pleasure of taking physical control, but through the spectator's distance from the screen as "a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience," separate but available for voyeuristic pleasure (60). Dance scholars have likewise probed the illusory, and hermetically sealed stage, no less seductive for the possibility of dancerly submission. Ann Daly, for example, discusses the spectatorial gaze in the context of both Romantic ballet and the more recent neo-classicism of Balanchine. In the latter example the dancers' prowess is seductive, "but the titillating danger – the threat – of her self-sufficient virtuosity is tamed by her submissive role within the interaction," and ultimately, "if she is feisty, her surrender is all the more delicious" (Daly 2002, 283).

Rather than forestalling surrender to a phase of narrative or developmental climax, Houston-Jones establishes it as a condition of possibility for the choreographic encounter. Indeed, the dance's subtitle (*surrendering to the desire of others*) clearly suggests how Houston-Jones wants to incorporate the movement of spectatorial desire into the dance's structure rather than trying to eradicate it, redirect it, or simply call attention to it. The hermetically sealed world of the stage, then, gives way to a two-way street of call and response. The dance, as a flexible improvisational structure, plays with scopophilic desire by breaking down illusions, revealing how performance and spectator alike take part in the same relational landscape. The question for Houston-Jones and his audience seems to become: what happens when the spectator gets exactly what she desires? What happens, he asks, if the performer's surrender is not metaphorical but actual, a drama playing out plainly rather than lurking as a psychosexual subtext?

By training the audience's focus on desire and surrender in the context of a participatory score, Houston-Jones clearly interrogates the binary that separates a passive looker from an

active doer. Yet with respect to the choreography of his own surrender, he also clearly examines the authority implicitly carried by his position as choreographer and performer. I mentioned at the outset how Houston-Jones developed *EMAAR* in response to perceiving his habitual improvisational practice as tightly controlled. Likewise, he reports feeling “concerned about how much control” he has over an audience, specifically in the choreographer’s capacity to “inflict my vision on them.” From this perspective, the looked-upon stands in self-assured mastery, shepherding the audience along an unfamiliar path no matter how they might respond to its unfolding (hence the feelings of boredom or anxiousness Houston-Jones references in his introduction). He connects this position of mastery to physical virtuosity, which “sets the audience in opposition, or the performer in a position of superiority” (Robinson et al., 34). I would argue that Houston-Jones does display virtuosity in the context of *EMAAR*, but again, he uses that virtuosity to subvert his own mastery, adeptly affecting those lightning quick changes that continually destabilize his physical vocabulary. He becomes relatable precisely through his stuttering, vulnerable kinetic language, communicating frantic confusion, frustration, or disorientation while navigating spectator demand. Rather than using the participatory score to articulate a utopian vision of togetherness, Houston-Jones allows participation to verge on the dystopian: a certain brutality seeps into the command-respond structure, and the difficulty of Houston-Jones’s task renders his performance compelling but also somewhat frightening. He enacts surrender by being physically out of his own control, giving the audience free reign while also being honest about the weight of that responsibility.

Introducing some of the theoretical responses to relational visual art at the outset of my analysis, I referenced Bourriaud’s formulation of interactivity as an occasion to construct and inhabit “everyday micro-utopias” (2002, 31). Bourriaud evokes the notion of utopia in the

context of a wider discussion of “conviviality,” arguing that encounters fostered by relational works tend to open up new opportunities for pleasurable social congress. He also allows, however, for examples of relational works that take a more “aggressive” stance, positing discomfort and misunderstanding as equally valid manifestations of aestheticized social relation (Bourriaud 2002, 32).⁶⁶ By suggesting that *EMAAR*’s choreographic structure might lend the dance a dystopian quality, I mean that the participatory structure gives rise to a barbed and fraught form of sociality, one in which it becomes too difficult to disentangle spectator desire from overt dancerly submission. Perhaps even more useful might be Lawrence Halprin’s assertion of scores as fundamentally “non-utopian” insofar as they refute the attainment of a final, perfect state. Rather than aiming individuals toward resolution, he proposes, scores make space for constant change as structures designed for responsiveness to changing individual and social needs. Seen through this theoretical lens, communal enactment of a score will tell us more about the future than the present, revealing the accountability and self-awareness needed to be together in tolerable ways in spite of clashes and misunderstanding. As such, participatory scores like the one at the heart of *EMAAR* provide important opportunities to challenge the “dichotomy between the act of art and the act of life; between decision-making and results; between control and communication” (Halprin 1969, 19).

Despite the fact that Houston-Jones places himself in the hands of his audience, the decision to do so remains his own. He does not simply reallocate control from masterful performer to spectator, just as he does not simply manifest spectator desire as a smooth, uncomplicated process. Rather, he takes all these lines of force into account, constructing a choreographic assemblage that enables participation as play through various coexisting moments

⁶⁶ Here, Bourriaud cites work by Douglas Gordon Angus Fairhurst, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe and Andrea Fraser (2002, 32).

of resistance and compliance. The tenuous realignment of the boundary between choreographer and spectator is tested, for example, when the caller assigned to the “talk” command suddenly replaces it with “sing;” Houston-Jones responds with an emphatic “no,” and goes further by saying that “I can give up control, but not all control.”⁶⁷ The caller's transgression of the score, as well as Houston-Jones's rejection of that transgression, underscore the degree to which the choreographer has placed himself at the mercy of his audience. It also, however, gives Houston-Jones an opportunity to reclaim his authority, emphasizing that by inviting his audience into the score, he still ultimately holds the reins. Similarly, when Houston-Jones issues his instructions, he points out that the structure could feasibly generate a piece that is either over in five minutes or goes on for days. But, he stresses, “I would want that not to happen, either of those extremes.” The point is not that Houston-Jones asserts or denies any specific (or static) distribution of power, but that he peels back the curtain concealing the implicit contract between performer and spectator that often goes unmentioned. In so doing, he invites the spectator not only to make choices, but to confront the effects of those choices, putting her own desire on the line as a form of participatory engagement. Thus the somewhat brutal requirements of the piece also breed immediacy and vulnerability; even Houston-Jones's refusal of a command reveals him as body and subjectivity enmeshed in relation. The dance as a whole reveals the potential of a fully responsive choreographic structure, a model for group participation that allows engagement, resistance, and compliance to go hand in hand.

With *Eyes, Mouth, And All the Rest*, Houston-Jones queries the potential of participatory scoring as vehicle for shared experience. Careening between one instruction and the next, speaking until he's told to shut up, and fumbling through a dance with his eyes closed, he tests

⁶⁷ In a characteristic moment of fully bared self-doubt, Houston-Jones wonders, in the same performance: “Maybe I shouldn't have rejected singing. I'm sorry, was I rude?”

the limits of choreographic control while also lending it absurdity and pathos. Despite his own interest in “leveling” the relationship between performer and spectator, this skewering of their relationship does not necessarily result in equalization, or in a nullification of the power structures undergirding performance. Throughout the piece, Houston-Jones places himself in an extreme position of vulnerability, only to make it clear that he has his limits. He puts himself at the mercy of his audience, but retains a measure of authority over the dance as a whole. Though he draws on the clichéd notion of audience participation as a way to force himself out of his own comfort zone, the score at the heart of *Eyes, Mouth, And All the Rest* makes a cogent statement regarding participation as rewarding and fraught enterprise that translates heightened visibility into heightened engagement. Establishing a clear, inclusive structure that encourages wide participation and courts the uncertainty of the other’s desire, Houston-Jones offers a sophisticated intervention into the mechanics of choreography as a participatory process, issuing a poignant reminder of its thrills and risks.

Julie Tolentino: Being Together, Shaping a Dance

In order to theorize the participatory processes at the heart of *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest*, I sat patiently in front of laptops and library media station screens, viewing and re-viewing video footage. I paused and rewound, looking away from the screen to take notes and then looking back, again and again. I tried to imagine the texture and feel of being inside that work’s highly transparent score. I speculated as to who might have made up Houston-Jones’s audience, and how he might have taken this information into account when rehearsing and preparing to

engage with them. I strained to hear laughter and comments from the audience without seeing faces or bodies, since the camera that was trained on Houston-Jones kept most of his spectators out of range. If obliquely, I became an audience member to that audience, standing at a remove, trying to perceive the intricacies of the larger choreographic structure meant to unfold and include, to transform spectators into co-creators.

By necessity, my analysis of *Raised By Wolves* rests on a very different foundation. Here, the intimacy of my own sense memories preempts orderly and dispassionate observation. I remember the incandescent quality of light on that Wednesday afternoon, for example – it was May 1st 2013 when I arrived at the gallery (Los Angeles’s Commonwealth & Council),⁶⁸ just before four o’clock. I had been writing all morning, and as I parked my car and walked up to the gallery, I felt disembodied, lost in thought. Inside the gallery, I remember the texture of a white shag rug under the soles of the thin shoes I was wearing. I remember the smells of smoke and eucalyptus oil. I remember Julie Tolentino’s body, close enough to touch, as well as her eye contact, soft but unwavering as she knelt at my feet. I reconstructed the performance from notes scribbled feverishly after returning to my desk that afternoon, but the sense memories did not need (and still do not need) reconstruction; they arose as indelible features of the dance and as such they persist, if necessarily somewhat faded with time.

Luckily, my own involvement in *Raised By Wolves* supports an appropriately personal methodological orientation, since I hope to elucidate a model of participatory scoring that forefronts the physical experience of the spectator. To analyze the dance, I reflect upon my experience as informed by Tolentino’s choreographic imagination, her careful manipulation of the gallery space, and the bodies present, including my own. Like *EMAAR*, the dance turns on an

⁶⁸ Throughout my analysis of Tolentino, I draw upon personal experience of the May 1, 2013 performance at Commonwealth & Council Gallery in Los Angeles. The work was performed daily from April 13-May 4, 2013.

exchange between a solo dancer-choreographer and an audience. Unlike Houston-Jones, however, Tolentino brings an audience of just a few spectators into a gallery space by specially designated appointment. Moreover, she asks her audience to choose from a range of cryptic graphic scores, casting participation as a form of uninformed, instinctual choice. She thereby presents a form of scoring that does not so much shed light on choreographic structure or economies of perception, but rather cultivates a group awareness of the affective impact of particular bodies sharing a particular space. As such, Tolentino emphasizes not desire and surrender, nor criticality and self-awareness. The scores at play in *Raised By Wolves* may not promote transparency and understanding, but they certainly effect attentive immersion. In the previous analysis, I emphasized how participatory scoring engages audience members at the structural level, and *Raised By Wolves* offers yet another example of unconventional relationality built into choreographic structure. This time, though, choreographic structure contributes to a broader ecology, where dance is not so much viewed as physically inhabited, and with spectatorship reconceived through processes of sensing, feeling, and mutually offering.

I learned about *Raised By Wolves* through word of mouth, which traveled to me via several avenues within the Los Angeles performance community. From the beginning, I knew that I might view the “multi-tiered exhibition of installation, objects, ephemera and performance” only by personal appointment.⁶⁹ For some reason, I put off arranging the plans and nearly missed my chance, securing a last-minute slot in the final week of the exhibition’s run. To set up a visit, I consulted the Commonwealth & Council website, retrieved an email address, and requested an appointment. A possible time was promptly sent back to me, and I agreed to it. I then received a second email that confirmed the engagement and supplied useful information such as parking

⁶⁹ “Raised By Wolves: Julie Tolentino,” accessed August 27, 2015, http://www.commonwealthandcouncil.com/exhibitions/raised_by_wolves/press.html

directions and notes about how to access the gallery. I was told that a staff member would meet me at the door. I also received a special warning to text or email in the event of lateness. As Los Angeles art blogger and fellow spectator, Geoff Tuck, perceives, the confirmation, and particularly its warning about lateness, summons prospective audience members into “a sort of social contract” where it becomes clear that a “failure to attend would have a disruptive impact on the outcome” (Tuck 2013). By staging the dance through multiple personal appointments, Tolentino creates a situation in which a no-show results not just in an empty seat but in the total collapse of the choreographic work. If there is no spectator, there is no dance.

The gallery’s understandable warning about lateness rendered the potential spectator aware of the centrality of her own presence, framing the performance situation as a mutual agreement requiring some degree of responsibility. My own delay in making an appointment evidenced this slightly heightened atmosphere of spectatorial accountability: entering into such a “social contract” requires significant initiative when compared to the anonymity of buying tickets online and scurrying into a darkened theater at the last moment. Moreover, as the work was announced and publicized, it became clear that multiple slots were made available on a given day, so spectators were aware that they might be preceded and followed by other individuals or small groups. As I will discuss more fully, the act of choosing each dance’s arrangement of scores led to what was potentially a wholly unique encounter each time. My awareness of the contingent nature of my own personal choices was further underscored by the knowledge that Tolentino engaged with a new audience with each new appointment.

Discussing interactivity within the visual arts context, Bourriaud, Bishop, and Kester cite related threads of mid-20th century art-making that include Fluxus, conceptualism, minimalism, and a range of events falling under the rubric of “Happenings.” These serve the theorists as clear

historical precedents for participatory engagement, where works of art take on a conspicuous degree of openness to the spectator, highlighting her constitutive role. Bourriaud, in particular, notes the prevalence of invitations, appointments, and other personal interactions as formalized and direct modes of initiating contact between the artist and the potential spectator. He asserts that these midcentury models serve contemporary artists as a kind of “vocabulary” or “lexical basis” used to puncture the isolation of private aesthetic experience (2002, 46). Bourriaud does not provide specific examples of relevant historical antecedents, but to my mind, *Raised By Wolves* evokes, above all, Yoko Ono’s pioneering exhibition of ‘instruction paintings’ presented by George Maciunas’s AG Gallery in July of 1961. As Tolentino does in *Raised By Wolves*, Ono personalized the gallery experience, in many cases introducing the paintings “orally when she or Maciunas escorted the exhibitions few visitors around the gallery” (Altshuler 2000, 66). Like Tolentino, Ono reframes reception through relationality: the works are not just made but made *for* the spectator, not just presented but presented *to* someone in particular. The logistical constraint of the personal appointment intensifies the gallery experience, weaving socialization into the aesthetic encounter. For Tolentino, personal engagement establishes an intimacy that will be mirrored in the spectator’s engagement with the work.

Ono’s instruction paintings also serve as a useful historical referent in their overall emphasis upon the viewer’s activation. The paintings engaged viewers dramatically, often through physical movement, and sometimes by explicitly inviting the public to “complete” the works. Though Ono herself did not perform in the AG Gallery show, the instruction paintings clearly position the gallery space as rife with bodily experience and physical interaction. By bringing Ono and Tolentino into conversation, I hope to construct a theoretical lens flexible enough to take body, object, and environment into account. Rather than treating *Raised By*

Wolves as a dance that just happens to take place in a gallery, I approach the exhibition as a whole by perceiving its many facets as overlapping occasions for sociality and connection. By staging an intimate choreographic work in the midst of a gallery exhibition, Tolentino clearly upends conventions of dance spectatorship that turn on anonymity and spectatorial distance, supplanting visuality as the primary mode of engagement in dance performance (just as Houston-Jones does). Like Ono though, she also comments on modes of spectatorship that typically accompany the exhibition of objects, insisting on the spectator's presence not just as receptive but constitutive.

If *Raised By Wolves* uses personal appointments to reconfigure the encounter between artist and spectator through the institution of a social contract, it also turns on the gallery space as a site for group socialization, where openings and closings typically mix the reception of art with personal interaction. In fact, Tolentino has stated that she hoped to “collapse” pre- and post-show receptions into the show itself, and indeed, my first moments upon entering the gallery did feel like a cozy reception for one (pers. comm.). After meeting a Commonwealth & Council staff member at the door and walking into the reception area, I met more of the gallery staff and was offered a glass of sparkling wine and some smoked almonds. I was surprised by the attention, but I happily accepted. While eating, drinking, and chatting, I was also surprised to catch a glimpse of Tolentino moving around the gallery. Somehow, I had assumed that pre-performance rituals would be taking place, ones from which I would naturally be excluded. Instead, Tolentino walked into the reception area and cheerfully greeted me. We talked about some mutual acquaintances and she led me into the gallery space, introducing me to some of the installed works and discussing their context or significance.

At one point, she used a lighter to activate a work called *Smoke Of Future Fires*, a nub of slowly burning wood sending a light plume of smoke up through a small hole in a glass dome. I wondered why she would go to the trouble of lighting it just for me, realizing only later that my appearance (like that of each and every spectator) was precisely the occasion for this inanimate object's "performance." At some point Tolentino excused herself, and while she finished preparing to dance, I wandered around looking at more of the objects; after spending some time with *Smoke Of Future Fires*, I walked over to a formidable installation piece called *Echo Valley* that included a cluster of stacked wooden chairs, a hanging network of gold thread, and a floor-to-ceiling inscription of text by Kemper/Kelly. Standing in the midst of the installation's various components, I felt the gravity of my own presence, a real responsibility to approach the work intently as its sole spectator. At first this caused me some discomfort; if I grew bored with the work, there was nothing to do but keep looking. Gradually, though, I settled into a quiet but intense focused wandering, spending much more time with individual pieces than I normally would at a crowded gallery opening.

In addition to the more traditionally installed works, Tolentino made several modifications to the gallery itself, the removal of an entire wall standing out as perhaps the most significant. With this gesture, Tolentino unearthed the charred residue of flames from a long-ago fire that traced the outline of a destroyed staircase. She reconstructed the lost architecture with an echo of gold filament hanging just above the existing stairs. As I ascended, skimming the palm of my hand along the blackened stone and gazing up at the gently swaying threads, my simple climb transformed into an oddly concentrated, whole-body experience. As Tolentino recalls, of these modifications:

I ventured into uncovering what is already present in the particular space of Commonwealth and Council (CWC) and within me – taking it (us) apart, making

messes while conscious of the kind of contact/contracts that were being proffered – both in the wish for/invitation to engagement between Viewer and Space, and the way I hoped the work dug behind and into the building’s body – and into the memory of the bodies which constructed the lives (art-lives and sustained-lives) of those where would be present (Tolentino as quoted in Tuck 2000).⁷⁰

By working closely with the gallery space and uncovering the hidden traces of its past, Tolentino locates both herself and her viewers, both objects and performance, in a larger network of meaning that extends far beyond individual works. With the gallery modifications, in particular, she prefaces the experience of watching performance with a sense of rootedness in space and place – eschewing both the anonymity of the blacked-out proscenium as well as the typical “white cube” of the gallery space. In short, she turns the building itself into an active participant in the work, and then brings the spectator into explicit, and resolutely corporeal, relation with it.

Again, Ono’s instruction paintings provide a helpful touchstone for thinking through the ways in which Tolentino’s art objects and installations provoke and sustain bodily involvement. Ono’s *Waterdrop Painting*, for example, comprises a canvas placed on the floor, ready to receive drops of water applied by the spectator. Also situated on the floor, a blank canvas labeled *Painting To Be Stepped On* contains its simple participatory instructions within the title. In *Smoke Painting*, Ono asks that the viewer apply flame to the canvas, with the painting considered “complete” when no canvas remains. The instruction paintings clearly prefigure Tolentino’s work at Commonwealth & Council insofar as they implicate the body in the activation of works: the wrist tilting to pour water, the knees lifting to step on a canvas, the arm extending to apply flame to a canvas. Though Ono emphasizes the paintings themselves and not

⁷⁰ Tolentino also performs this gesture of “uncovering” in *Smoke of Future Fires*,” which “pays tribute” to Ken Warne, who lived, worked, and ultimately passed away in the room where the sculpture is presented (“Raised By Wolves: Julie Tolentino,” accessed August 27, 2015, http://www.commonwealthandcouncil.com/exhibitions/raised_by_wolves/press.html).

necessarily the surrounding gallery space, she does lend the gallery a responsive quality, with particular emphasis on elemental materials like smoke, water, and live plants.

While Ono's paintings might be understood as ends in themselves, however, Tolentino's installations clearly prime the visitor for the ensuing performance. Moving through the gallery alone, noting my physical responses to its features and modifications, I felt the registers of visuality and performance blurring. I was not just seeing, but sensing. The gallery subtly shifted from a space of display to a site in which relationships between creator, viewer and environment could develop. Without feeling the need to coalesce my sense experiences into understanding, I perceived an unspoken logic amid Tolentino's use of gold, textural contrasts, language, and natural materials like wood and hair.⁷¹ I relaxed into the physical sensation, becoming aware of discrete moments of interaction: the effort needed to step gingerly, the desire leading me to reach out and touch, or the awkwardness of craning my neck to see from a different angle. Like Ono's *Painting To Be Stepped On*, Tolentino's phantom staircase (titled *Sky Burial*) invites physicality, speaking directly to the body and revealing physical movement as activation. By inviting spectators into the gallery alone or in very small groups, she insists not just upon the importance of bodies, but on the importance of precisely *your* body, relating to a particular location with an undeniable and unforgotten history.

To introduce Tolentino's work, I suggested that the type of participation instigated by *Raised By Wolves* might manifest an ecological quality, meaning that it encourages spectator involvement by staging a large-scale and immersive interaction between body and environment. By manipulating the gallery, Tolentino casts the building's architecture as a natural phenomenon, with a history and an evolution that now includes the viewer and her passage through it. The

⁷¹ Tolentino admits to a "secret obsession with gold (the awe, rarity, trappings, insidiousness, trace, privilege and gaudiness at once)" (Tuck 2010).

standalone works, such as *Smoke Of Future Fires*, become an integral part of the participant's immersion in the space, especially insofar as they blur the static and live, and insofar as Tolentino presents the works directly to the viewer. Calling such an arrangement ecological, I borrow again from Lawrence Halprin, where "environment" comprises not only the natural, but also the manmade and the human. For Halprin, much of the appeal of scoring lies in its capacity to give individuals the tools to interact with their environment rather than imposing themselves upon it (at the one extreme), or feeling themselves at the mercy of it (at the other). Likewise, the "mutual relationship and trust" engendered by participatory scoring "can be called ecological in the broadest sense of the term" in that it gives rise to a connection between artist and audience that is a "symbiotic rather than a parasitic relationship" (Halprin 1969, 182). Halprin sees scores permitting a two-way creative exchange marked by agency and responsibility in equal measure. I have already demonstrated how Tolentino extends a personal invitation to enter the gallery as a tactile and responsive environment, resolutely bringing focus to the importance of the spectator's physical presence. I now turn my attention to Tolentino's own physical presence, as well as how she shifts the terms of spectator involvement by introducing the participatory score.

I have been in the gallery for some time when two more spectators arrive; they seem to be a couple, and I have never met them before. They receive the same warm greeting from Tolentino and the Commonwealth & Council staff, and after spending some time of their own walking through the rest of the gallery, they join me in the performance space. Also billed as an installation, this central room includes carefully placed and constructed objects – wooden platforms, a microphone, a clock, a golden cat, fake hair, pillows, a plastic horse, candles, glasses, a record player, vinyl records, a suitcase. I sense implicitly that Tolentino has not supplied the objects for us to touch or interact with, yet I also sense that they carry purpose and

efficacy. Like a surreal living room filled with mysterious totems, everything seems to lie in wait for Tolentino's activation. Because the wooden platforms are placed along one side at various levels, they lend the room the barest suggestion of a spectatorial divide. Nonetheless, though Tolentino introduces spectators to the space by indicating that one might move around over the course of the performance. The objects and platforms, then, while binding viewers into a common spatial configuration, allow for (and encourage) the possibility of different perspectives. Tolentino's spectators are keenly aware of the specificity of their own positions, and their capacity to change those positions at will.

Tolentino's partner, Stosh Fila, soon arrives to complete our group. With everyone standing together in the performance space, Tolentino asks us to describe how we're feeling that day. She offers us a whiff of three essential oils; we are to choose one, and once we do, she rubs it into our skin with an expertly modulated touch. She shows us a few pressure points, explaining ones we might access on our own for emotional grounding or to relieve nausea. Prefacing her performance by drawing out information about our moods and offering touch as a remedy, Tolentino suggests that one never arrives at a performance empty-handed. She insists on the mutual influence of performer and spectator, underscoring the relational exchange inherent in the act of coming together to make a dance. Just as she draws the spectator into conversation with the building's architecture and history, she draws the spectator closer to her own body, connecting in a tactile way before assuming the role of performer. She acknowledges how bodily experience, affective texture, and personal context feed into the performance situation, cultivating a group state of soft, resolutely corporeal attentiveness from the raw materials of our own presence and willingness to participate.

When each spectator has been attended to, Tolentino retrieves a stack of cards, each about the size of the palm of her hand. Fanning them out in our direction, she asks us to choose two. Though Tolentino does not shed light on the content of the scores themselves, she does explain that each card bears a compact graphic representation of one of fourteen scores contributed by a diverse group of mostly Los Angeles-based artists. Since we have obviously selected some at the expense of others, she makes it clear that the sequence will become a unique performance, possibly never to be repeated.⁷² The cards serve as a material reminder of our direct involvement, channeling the force of our small audience's presence into a concrete choreographic framework. They also, however, bring a phantom group of additional artists into the room, extending the dance's creative network yet wider.

In a subsequent conversation, Tolentino provides additional context, informing me that to garner source material for the piece, she made preliminary connections with a group of artists, some of which she did not know personally. The list, Tolentino explains, included people that she had talked about working with or secretly wanted to work with. She recalls that she didn't use the word "score" explicitly in her request, noting that artists, particularly those making up a diverse and interdisciplinary group, will tend to hold strong preconceived ideas about what it means to construct a score. To keep the possibilities more open, and to make the request more inclusive to artists who perhaps had less experience working with performance, she simply asked for each to give her "materials" for a solo dance that they would like to see her perform. These came in the form of instructions, images, objects or sound compositions. Tolentino then constructed a score from each set of materials, and then indexed the score with a simple graphic image drawn in ink on the series of cards (Julie Tolentino, pers. comm.).

⁷² Contributors to *Raised By Wolves* include Rafa Esparza, Mark So, Catherine Opie, Taisha Paggett, Stosh Fila, Chloë Flores, Juliana Snapper/Miller Puckett, Jet Clark, Aliza Shvarts, Judie Bamber, A.L. Steiner, Zackary Drucker/Ellen Reid, Cyril Kuhn, and Commonwealth & Council.

Moreover, at an early stage of the process, Tolentino engaged the performer Nick Duran (who also performed on the opening night of the work). After developing movement in response to the initial materials, she taught Duran the scores, and then asked him to teach them back to her. This exchange allowed Tolentino to see the material more clearly, not just its practical and technical demands, but any subjective responses that were arising in her own experience. Stepping back, Tolentino observed the choices she had made, noting those she was comfortable with as well as several that she wanted to avoid. At this intermediary stage of the dance's development, she gained sensitivity to her own relationship with the material, including certain resistances that proved productive, generating new alternatives. Sometimes, she made a conscious decision to hew to what she assumed to be the original artists intention; other times, she would not necessarily perform the score, but some version of her subjective response. In this way, the experience of performing – privately with Duran in the early stages of research, and the later publicly – further nuanced the scores' contents. Tolentino recalls that some of the scores changed greatly by virtue of popping up more frequently than others in performance, and some changed when performed in close proximity to other materials. Tolentino's working process, then, reveals relationality at every step of the process, with the scores serving as vehicles for interaction with multiple participants, witnesses, and co-creators.⁷³

In the moment of performance, the act of selecting cards evoked for me some of the over-determined foreboding of a tarot reading; since Tolentino had already focused so much on the quality of my own presence, she primed me to feel that the choice would subtly reflect

⁷³ Tolentino describes the openness thusly: "Recently I was asked what I have found has consistently been part of my process – and I replied: "non-monogamy". I think of *Raised by Wolves* as a offering where intimacies are illuminated, drawn out, cross paths, curious. The scores from each contributing artist offer their own kind of impermanent layering. It acts upon me, each other, the viewers. There is no clutching. The work's precarious structure draws us into the open (Tuck 2000).

something about me in ways that I did not yet fully understand. As graphic images, the cards represent a strikingly opaque vision of choreographic structure as compared to Houston-Jones's straightforward, verbally delivered instructional score. Where he cultivated transparency, Tolentino maintained an air of mystery. As she arranged the cards on one of the platforms, I wondered: did I choose well? Is that a ridiculous concern? Which artists have I picked? Which scores might lead to five seconds of action, and which to fifteen minutes? By focusing on her spectator's internal affective states prior to asking for these selections, Tolentino suggested that these decisions arose, if mysteriously, from instinct, from some liminal space between the random and the wholly conscious. Throughout the performance, the scores rested face-up on one of the wooden platforms, entirely visible, mysterious but potent, reminding my fellow audience members and me how concretely we had affected the dance's unfolding.

Staring at our collection of scores, Tolentino deciphers them as if she is reading the text of a language that I do not understand. She retreats from us slightly, shifting into private conversation with the choreographic material. Though she distances herself, we are still together; if the world of *Raised By Wolves* manifests as hermetically sealed, then so too are we sealed within it. She puts a record on, and begins to move. Lushly but precisely, she works through movement sequences. I have no idea where one score starts and another stops. Some are so specific that I sense they must represent set choreography, but then the landscape shifts, and it seems like Tolentino is finding her way through an improvisation. One section keeps her on the floor, working flesh against rug with serpentine twists and turns. Elsewhere she stands, executing a sharp series of turns and leg extensions. At one point, Fila reads movement instructions out loud. As Tolentino enacts the instructions quite literally, I see the correspondence and feel

delighted to be able to connect the movement to its source. When this sequence ends, Tolentino moves on, the quick flash of transparency receding as quickly as it arrived.

Throughout, she brings a tactile intensity to the dancing that mirrors the selection of objects that surround us. She wears false eyelashes, and along with the hair extensions and the furry white profusion of the rug, everything seems alive, bursting with intricate textures. As I watch her move, I remember her touch, the reality of her physical presence. Not only does my up-close perspective allow me to perceive the intricacies of the movement (subtle weight shifts, changes of gaze, or the gripping of balancing toes on the carpet), but I also perceive intensely how the movement roots to the installation, the same physical environment that I share. At one point she reaches up, leg crooked into a back *attitude*, facing away from me to gaze out the window. Her hair blows softly in the breeze, and I feel my own hair stirring. At another moment, she picks up what looks like a stray clump of fibers and places it on someone's knee. (I find out later that this “fur ball,” as she calls it, like all of the objects in the installation, has been stipulated by one of the scores.) Toward the end of the dance she disappears, dashing out of the room only to return some moments later. When she is gone I am left with a strange hollowness, feeling not just that she is absent but that the dance has moved elsewhere. My eyes dart from place to place in the installation, and I realize that I have been reading the room through her body, weaving meaning together through sensation either shared or imagined.

Sustaining *Raised By Wolves* as an immersive, acutely sensorial environment anchored by her own physical presence, Tolentino takes on a degree of responsibility relative to her audience. Even before dancing, she works hard to make everyone comfortable, supplying food, drink, and personal attention. Then by asking us to choose scores, she presents the resulting dance as a personalized gift; again, not just dancing but dancing *for* our small group in particular.

Finally, as she dances, I experience her seeing me, acknowledging my presence throughout. Taken together, these factors produced a sensation of feeling *cared for*, not surprising considering that Tolentino herself claims to be “deeply influenced by her extensive experience as a caregiver,” particularly for those in the late stages of AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses (Colucci 2013).⁷⁴ It is well outside the scope of this analysis to fully explore the impact of the AIDS crisis through the lens of activated spectatorship in performance. Moreover, since I have argued for the importance of approaching activated spectatorship from a structural standpoint, I have not chosen examples of works with strong thematic positions, and certainly not works that deal explicitly with AIDS or AIDS-related politics. Yet, it must be noted that both of the artists in this chapter have turned to performance as an opportunity to reflect on the nature of that personal and collective trauma. Indeed, like Houston-Jones, Tolentino uses the participatory score to reflect on the very boundary between the personal and the collective, proposing alternative models for relationality, community, and accountability through inclusive performance.

If Tolentino takes on a heightened level of responsibility herself, she also raises the stakes for the spectator. Being seen and attended to comes with its own pressure, and receiving a gift often takes work. With *Raised By Wolves*, Tolentino builds on a history of creating highly charged performance pieces for small groups, or even a single spectator. In *A True Story About Two People*, for example, she invited spectators one by one into a mirrored booth, where she danced unceasingly, and blindfolded, for a consecutive twenty-four hours. Viewers became dance partners, coming into close physical and affective proximity with Tolentino under conditions of extreme duress. This description of heightened spectator/participant experience from *A True Story About Two People* captures the undercurrent of spectator accountability:

⁷⁴ For Tolentino, acting as a caretaker for many of her friends and loved ones who were dying from AIDS-related complications taught her about the importance of touch, which she then transferred to her performance work

We danced for what felt like a long time, closer, her head on my shoulder not so much relaxed as exhausted...The most difficult part was leaving, coming up with an excuse and then stepping out of the intimate space; it felt like a betrayal (Cesare and Joy 2006, 174).

Though the *True Story* spectator's relationship to the dance obviously differs from Tolentino's – the spectator can leave, after all – Tolentino passes along the intensity of her task at the visceral level. Similarly, in *Raised By Wolves*, Tolentino takes plenty of opportunities to remind the spectator of her own centrality, and likewise the demands of her role. As I have already discussed, the logistics of the initial social contract give way to a particularly pressurized viewership, where the objects in the gallery are presented personally, thus demanding personal attention. Finally, by culminating this heightened process of looking with an intimate and specially designed choreographic event, Tolentino proposes dance reception not just as a mode of looking, but as full-bodied experience. Taking performance seriously as a vehicle for visibilizing the connections that develop as people come together in performance, she suggests these interpersonal links as potent, and far from casual. As Tolentino herself puts it, “I secretly tend to make my work for the one(s) I love.”⁷⁵ If Tolentino is comfortable talking about love in the context of performance, her work posits love (and even caring) as a force not always gentle.

The performance theorist Debra Levine has approached Tolentino's body of work through the conceptual lens of “hosting,” connecting the artist's propensity to foster intimate encounters to her habit of courting the extremities of physical endurance or pain – hypodermic needles shot through the upper lip, twine over the face, extended duration, enforced blindness. Levine attributes the affective impact of these gestures to their capacity to engender an empathic connection with the spectator, allowing “each participant to feel the ethical possibilities of what

⁷⁵ “Julie Tolentino,” *Performance Art World* (blog), last modified June 10, 2010, (<http://performanceartworld.wordpress.com/2010/06/20/julie-tolentino/>).

can be experienced as beings-in-common in each ephemeral encounter.”⁷⁶ Though Tolentino does not bleed or otherwise ostensibly suffer in the performance at Commonwealth & Council, she does locate *Raised By Wolves* within the context of her work with over-the-top physical exertion, noting that “the challenge of putting my body in the line of fire multiple times a day, beholden to the scores of fifteen incredible artists” led to an uncomfortable confrontation with “invisibility, transparency, experience, age, loss, and, admittedly, my insecurity” (Tolentino as quoted in Tuck 2010). Like Houston-Jones, Tolentino seems interested in the necessary difficulties of being together in concerted and considered ways, with participation figured as liberatory but also burdensome through particular articulations of constraint and accountability. In *Raised By Wolves*, as in *Eyes, Mouth And All the Rest*, communal creativity emerges from responsibility. In each case, the spectator’s presence supports the choreographic structure, opening up space for particularized experience that nonetheless turns on connection and relation.

In Tolentino’s own words, *Raised By Wolves* enacts a “queer methodology in which experience intersects with intuition,” alongside “a queer pedagogy wherein knowledge travels through personal, diasporic, and unanticipated relations.”⁷⁷ Attributing *Raised By Wolves* a queerness, Tolentino perhaps echoes the theorist Sara Ahmed in her assertion that “to make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things” (Ahmed 2006, 161). To think and enact spectatorship outside its typical scope is certainly to query the passive/active binary. Yet it is also to register the ways that performance can cling to a particular order of things – or, perhaps more aptly, a particular order of bodies and subjects that tends toward separation, distance, and alienation. I would certainly agree that *Raised By Wolves* accrues potency by reorienting ways of

⁷⁶ “Queer Pleasures: Julie Tolentino Wood,” Debra Levine, *Hemispheric Institute*, accessed August 27, 2015, http://hemi.nyu.edu/journal/4_1/artist_presentation/jt_eng/.

⁷⁷ “Raised By Wolves: Julie Tolentino,” accessed August 27, 2015, http://www.commonwealthandcouncil.com/exhibitions/raised_by_wolves/press.html

being together in a shared space of performance. I would also assert that being together within the choreographic structure of *Raised By Wolves* involves the creation of new relational formulations that trump the (ever-imperfect) citation of worn and comfortable patterns. These new formations foster not just immediacy and connection, but they also highlight the particularity inherent in the moment of coming together to create a dance. This dance, rather than coalescing around a pre-determined structure, comes together through the ever-evolving actuality of the specific and unrepeatable. By venturing into the territory of community, responsibility, caring, and love with her audiences, Tolentino, like Houston-Jones, articulates a vision of the possible through an unflinching look at the actual: the raw materials of people (and bodies) coming together. As in my analysis of Houston-Jones, the various disturbances at the heart of *Raised By Wolves* perhaps go a long way toward establishing its criticality, as Tolentino troubles the order of things through personal invitation, whole-bodied acknowledgement, and a persistent failure to claim a hegemonic hold on the resulting choreographic product.

Conclusion

Ultimately, then, I have arrived at a formulation of the participatory score as an agent of disorientation, a tool for relational destabilization leading to a wealth of possibilities with respect to spectatorial engagement. As such, my analysis returns to the fundamental tension that I thread through my analysis as a whole: on the one hand, these scores bear order, rules, and constraints; on the other, they enable spontaneity, endless variability, and personalization. They offer the promise of heightened agency for each participant, but they also complicate the notion of agency

by linking empowerment to collectivity and mutual accountability. To introduce this analysis, I referenced theater's "mystic chasm," the titillating distance between looker and looked-upon. Participatory scores do not stand alone as the only way to cultivate an activated body public. Yet the participatory processes engendered so clearly by these uses of the score provide valuable models for thinking through dance spectatorship in light of bodily and perceptual proximity rather than irreducible separation. In particular, *Raised By Wolves* and *EMAAR* emphasize spectatorial contribution by prioritizing forms of address over forms of display. They then use these destabilized roles to profoundly interrogate the ontological status of self-contained dances, devising scores that likewise prioritize the flexibility of choreographic structure over its stability.

When flexibility and openness come to the fore, we practice togetherness choreographically, though as I have suggested, I am most interested in collective encounters that highlight the tension between agency and commitment, self and other. These tensions perhaps thwart perspectives on performance that lock either performer or spectator into predetermined roles, hierarchies, or possibilities for self-determination. They also de-center proscenium spatialities as primary loci for theorizing dance viewership. Tolentino's work, for example speaks to the necessity of thinking through how choreographic relationality takes shape beyond the context of the theater – not just between viewer and viewed, but within a larger landscape that includes object and environment. As contemporary dance occupies an ever more diverse array of spaces (not just galleries and museums, but all manner of public spaces, inside and out), it becomes ever more important to take account of the various ecologies that dance contributes to and takes place within. Pinpointing environmental and relational factors in diverse contexts can only strengthen the ways in which we look at theatrical works as enabling particular relational forms of their own. Houston-Jones, after all, transforms the studio showing, with its implied

performer-spectator divide, into a site of renewed possibility, capitalizing on a conventional separation between performer and spectator only to reconfigure those positions entirely.

By bridging the gap between dance spectatorship and the admittedly catchall categories of the “relational” or “interactive,” I hope to draw upon the widest possible pool of theoretical possibilities for formulating a participatory politics. As powerful tools for opening up dances to unpredictable spectator contributions, scores facilitate modes of performance that do indeed counter alienation, both from our environments and from each other. They enable choreographic social imaginaries that bring people together without recourse to coercion, in ways that can be generous, but also demanding. They encourage the individual to perceive the importance of her own physical presence and critical capacities, even as she makes space for others. They allow us to see and acknowledge each other, accepting the complicated bodies and selves that we bring, that we offer, and that we invite to dance.

Generative Documentation: Ralph Lemon and William Forsythe

Up until this point in my analysis, I have attempted to address a range of functions for the choreographic score falling outside the scope of documentation – documentation, that is, narrowly conceived as recording geared toward consistent and accurate reproduction. With respect to an improvisational work such as Ishmael Houston Jones’s *Eyes Mouth and All the Rest*, for example, I outlined how the score guides and shapes various iterations without worrying over whether or not it “preserves” them. Similarly, with the open-ended language scores of Deborah Hay and Yvonne Meier, I focused on how language prompts foment interpretational difference rather than how they might be said to document choreographic thinking. Even where a choreographer explicitly undertakes the task of recording – in Simone Forti’s “dance reports,” for example – I emphasized how documentation doubles as a choreographic act, turning the tables on economies of reproduction that privilege the live. In this chapter, I turn my attention more directly to the choreographic archive, analyzing scores that record and preserve choreographic material. Yet these scores enable me to theorize documentation beyond reproduction – that is, to track the discursive and practical possibilities that arise when notation does not effect the reconstruction of dances. As in previous chapters, I

suggest how scores expand the purview of dances. In this case, it is by rendering their boundaries porous and by manifesting choreographic thinking outside the moment of performance.

Importantly, by promulgating choreographic thinking in enduring print and digital formats, these forms of documentation can be theorized in a way that uncouples dance from the dual problematics of ephemerality and disappearance. Setting aside the potential of notation and scoring to combat loss, it becomes much more evident how scores enable specific patterns of production, distribution, and engagement. The conversation around documentation then productively shifts from the ghostliness, or trace-like qualities of the choreographic score, to specific accounts of the ways in which scores extend and activate choreographic thinking.

I first address the *Geography Trilogy*, a decade-long project in which Ralph Lemon produces three theatrical works accompanied by three published accounts of their production and presentation. Treating these books as dance documentation, I contend that Lemon secures a much wider reach for his choreographic research by giving it vibrant life beyond the stage. He crafts an intimate but expansive portrait not only of the materials that ultimately make their way into the dances, but much of the life experience that precedes, surrounds, and supports their performance. Through the many layers of archived dance-making and life-living, Lemon models a form of notation that locates the dances ever more firmly in affective texture and on-the-ground realities, eschewing abstraction in favor of complex and often fraught particularities. Next, I analyze *Synchronous Objects*, an online project designed to gather “data” from William Forsythe’s choreographic work, *One Flat Thing, reproduced*. From this score-derived data, a collaborative team of researchers develops several interactive “objects,” making choreographic structure available to material manifestation beyond the body. In sharp contrast to Lemon’s books, the *Synchronous Objects* site clearly abstracts choreographic structure, dis-attaching the

dance's infrastructure from people, places, and the history of its own production. Nonetheless, both examples illustrate how documentation extends the reach of choreographic thinking.

Whether through print or digital formats, these extra-bodily manifestations of choreographic structure reveal how choreographers access multiple media and multiple temporalities, lending dances flexibility rather than indexing their disappearance.

In Chapter Two, I summarized a range of perspectives on the relationship between dance and textuality, alluding to the fact that many of these perspectives presume the dancing body's fundamental resistance to inscription. Here I push that investigation further, exploring how such resistance can be used to buttress arguments positing disappearance as a central theme in dance's ontology, thereby rendering choreographic documentation perpetually problematic. The last three decades, in particular, have yielded a wealth of critical perspectives on the relationship between corporeality and ephemerality, stemming in part from the introduction of dance and performance studies into the academy, as well as the increasingly concentrated presence of performance in visual art contexts. As my introduction to this chapter will demonstrate, many theorists focus on disappearance's emancipatory or subversive potential; arguments like this often cast documentation as a technology that necessarily works against performance's essential liveness. More recent efforts to problematize the notion of liveness, however, have made it evident that such a binary offers limited resources, that performance has the potential to activate multiple temporalities, and that the archive represents a productively contested term.

Recent artistic production also speaks to this point, and I am particularly concerned with the ways in which choreographers (Lemon and Forsythe, specifically) use documentation to grapple with questions about reproduction and the archive. I am also concerned about the degree to which generalized debates about dance and ephemerality have drawn focus away from these

practices, where notation and scoring represent vital, practical avenues of research quite apart from anxieties regarding loss and preservation. Of what interest is it, then, to recapitulate a conversation from which I am trying to extract the critical discourse on documentation? With projects by Lemon and Forsythe serving as examples, I argue that existing forms of documentation expand notions of the archive, but to do so it is first useful to examine where these choreographic practices enter into conversation with theoretical debates about the archive. It will also be useful to trace the boundaries of the presence/absence dichotomy in order to make it clearer how those limitations inhibit an understanding of performance (and specifically choreographic) research as a multi-faceted pursuit that is sometimes “bound” to the live action of bodies and sometimes not. To truly embrace movement-based research is to appreciate it as a phenomenon occurring on multiple registers, and grounded in choreographer- and dance-specific practices. Before diving into these two contrasting examples, I pay close attention to the many layers of this critical debate that will enable an appreciation of the stakes, and a hint of what might be gained as choreographers continue to raise them.

Dance and Ephemerality: Distancing Documentation and Loss

Anxiousness about dance’s disappearance crops up at least as far back as the late 16th century, which, as I discussed in Chapter Two, marks the appearance of Thoinot Arbeau’s manual for French Renaissance social dancing, *Orchesography*. In dialogue with his imaginary student, Capriol, Arbeau attributes the loss of dances past to “the passage of time, the indolence of man or the difficulty of describing them;” he also points out the dancing public’s

inexhaustible desire for novelty. As new dances proliferate, Arbeau suggests, older dances simply fall out of fashion. At issue is not the loss of important works of art, but the loss of social practices, the extinction of ways of moving that claim no clear authorship or origin. Arbeau does not initially trouble over this attrition, but Capriol is agitated, anticipating the disappearance of the very dances he has not yet even learned. “Do not allow this to happen,” he pleads, “as it is within your power to prevent it. Set these things down in writing” (1967, 15). The remainder of *Orchesography* represents Arbeau’s attempts to do just that, but despite these worthy efforts (as well as the myriad notational practices that have developed between the 16th century and the present), contentions regarding dance’s ephemerality have long characterized scholarly and colloquial assessments of dance’s ontology.

In the same 2011 essay in which Mark Franko identifies a split “between a concept of dance-as-writing and a concept of dance as beyond the grasp of all language” (322), he also neatly sums up dance’s long association with ephemerality. “Has any other time-based art,” he asks, been so identified with its own impermanence?” (328).⁷⁸ In light of the diversity of historical approaches to dance notation that I summarize in the first chapter of this analysis, such an intractable association may seem curious. Yet for many reasons, the flourishing of choreographic documentation has not led to an ideological grounding of dance’s endurance or stability. It is beyond the scope of this project to delve into an in-depth investigation of these factors, but a short list would certainly include: the absence of a single, very widely accepted notational system (comparable to the Western musical staff), the devaluation of oral culture and modes of corporeal transmission, persistent ideological attacks on the body, and the strong link

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note how Franko, with this relatively simple question, raises the issue of ephemerality with respect to other art forms. He does not ask why dance is deemed ephemeral, but why other forms are not identified with their own impermanence. Though I sketch out some of the reasons why this association has taken shape, it would equally productive to evaluate the factors that have enabled an assumption of inherent stability within music, theater, literature, and the visual arts.

between choreographic works and the dancing bodies that originate central roles. My goal here is not to counter argue along any of these lines. Rather, I merely hope to suggest how such discursive foci have had a tendency to obscure the distinct and varied ways in which documentation has long played a central role within choreographic practice.

One of the most conspicuous consequences of the longstanding critical emphasis on ephemerality has been a specter of death haunting dance, and a corresponding notion of the archive as a means of (always incomplete or unsuccessful) resurrection. Archived documents of any kind evoke the cycle of life, death, and (spooky) resurrection; Derrida reasons that the archive itself bears an inherently spectral *structure*, with its contents “neither present nor absent 'in the flesh,' neither visible nor invisible” (1996, 84). Teetering in the balance between a here and a gone, the archive has been understood to preserve even as it marks demise, and the life of the archived document tends to be framed as an afterlife. With respect to the documentation of dance, however, a double disappearance unfolds, since dance is often said to pass away at the very moment it comes into being. Documentation returns dance to a life it never really had. Moreover, dance’s commemoration generates a special poignancy, since choreography’s substrate is the dancing body; the experienced dancer holds a wealth of corporeal knowledge that is doomed to go to the grave as she does.⁷⁹

Choreographers, too, have reflected on documentation as an antidote – though potentially a weak one – for their own mortality. Martha Graham’s dire proclamation that “a dancer dies two deaths” refers to the highly trained body as opposed to the choreographic work (1991, 238). Nonetheless, since so many of Graham’s canonical works were constructed around her own

⁷⁹ André Lepecki particularly underscores notation’s spectral qualities in his discussion of Arbeau, where the melancholic pull of writing hinges on a desire to consort with the “master’s ghost” (2006, 26).

performance, one can infer that the works died a preliminary death as well.⁸⁰ In the introduction to the first volume of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's recent, and very ambitious, project of choreographic documentation, Bojana Cvejić reflects that the impetus came from the choreographer realizing that a 2010 revival of canonical works (including *Fase*, *Rosas danst Rosas*, *Elena's Aria*, and *Bartók*) might mark the last time the choreographer would dance them. "Is this an occasion," De Keersmaeker wondered, "to write these choreographies down?" (2012, 7) Her musing inextricably connects writing to loss, securing for the dances a future nonetheless predicated on De Keersmaeker's conspicuous absence. The resulting volume contains a vast array of materials that, like Lemon's book, shed light on not only a dance's structure but its context: with respect to *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983), this includes information about sound and lighting design, reproductions of publicity and programs, the work's "dramaturgical macrostructure," as well as its "punk 'fuck you' attitude" (De Keersmaeker and Cvejic 2012, 81). The work skirts the territory between documentary and memoir, stirring a palpable nostalgia through De Keersmaeker's recollections and the looming evacuation of her own body.

In an essay about the long life, many transmissions, and dubious notational prospects of *Trio A*, Yvonne Rainer concludes with this open-ended surrender: "Oh well, when I am gone..." (2009, 18). She goes on to reassure herself that the dance will fall into the hands of a trusted few "custodians," expressing confidence that the version of *Trio A* that they teach their students will not cause Rainer to "roll over" in her grave (2009, 18).⁸¹ Rainer settles on the model of person-to-person transmission, expressing deep misgivings about the capacity of notation – and

⁸⁰ The possibility of a second, and final, death for Graham's works became very real over the course of the infamous, protracted legal battle between the Graham Company and Ronald Protas, who claimed exclusive rights to much of the repertoire, and could have barred the company from performing them. See Doreen Carvajal's summary: "Bitter Standoff Imperils a Cherished Dance Legacy," *New York Times* B4, July 6, 2000).

⁸¹ At present, the 5 "certified teachers" of *Trio A* include Pat Catterson, Shelley Senter, Emily Coates, Sara Wookey, and Linda K. Johnson (Sara Wookey, pers. comm.)

particularly Labanotation – to accurately capture the work. She reports reacting negatively to a version of the dance reconstructed from notated score that “needed not just fine-tuning but gross adjustments” (Rainer 2009, 17). Rainer’s experience counters Labanotator Ann Hutchinson Guest’s affirmation of the score as a failsafe for preservation in the absence of the authoritative choreographic voice, her deep conviction that when “no one” remains to recall a work, “the score is there as a means of resurrection” (Guest 1984, 131). Mixing documentation up with the choreographic death drive, these references might seem casual; they nonetheless signal a profound and widespread anxiety. And what choreographer wouldn’t experience anxiety in the face of documentation as an index of her impermanence and ultimate disappearance?

As the above examples illustrate, fears accrue particularly intensely not just around the death(s) of the dancer, the choreographer, and the choreographic work, but also around the troubling notion of death without commemoration. Some, however, seem to take a sanguine pleasure in the notion of choreographic masterworks fading gloriously into memory. Yet others use disappearance as an excuse to designate dance as a field not reliably rising to the task of producing masterworks at all. In a late 2009 summary of a decade’s worth of (New York City) dance, and seemingly in an attempt to prove that not much history had been made, Alistair Macauley, Senior Dance Critic at *The New York Times*, declared, “dance is the art with no history.”⁸² Macauley’s article generated a substantial amount of backlash, notably from dance critics such as Lisa Kraus and Eva Yaa Asantewaa,⁸³ who took issue with his neglect of much of

⁸² See Alistair Macauley, “Choreographic Climate Change,” *New York Times*, New York edition AR7, December 31, 2009.

⁸³ In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, also published on Kraus’s website, *Thinking Dance*, Kraus argues that “broad-minded reporting” of dance, “IS in effect its history” (“A Letter to the *New York Times*,” last modified January 6, 2010, <http://writingmydancinglife2.blogspot.com/2010/01/letter-to-new-york-times.html>). On her site, *Infinite Body*, Asantewaa claims: “*The New York Times* does not care about dance. If it did, it would give dance a senior critic with diligence, breadth of knowledge, curiosity, serious chops and respect for artists” (“Summing UP Alistair Macauley,” last modified January 15, 2010, <http://infinitebody.blogspot.com/2010/01/summing-up-alastair-macaulay.html>).

the field outside the boundaries of ballet and heavily institutionalized modern (Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Paul Taylor Company, etc.). I agree with their assessments that Macauley's piece represents a tragically myopic perspective on the current landscape of dance, as well as a troubling disavowal of historical forces impacting and reverberating from the form.⁸⁴ Yet, for my part, it is just as striking that such a remark can be taken seriously at all, with a radically heterogeneous field of choreographic production exhibiting clear investment in forms of archiving, documentation and legacy production.⁸⁵

Ideally, my comparative analysis of Lemon and Forsythe represents a critical assessment largely, and purposefully, resistant to dance's melancholic association with ephemerality. Nonetheless, my purpose is not to deny that many theorists have offered productive perspectives on ephemerality – in particular, those who either affirm or deny the association in order to allocate performance a political potential. Recapitulating these contrasting positions seems useful not so much to determine once and for all whether dance is subversive because it disappears or endures. Rather, I want to emphasize how theorists draw attention to the stakes of documentation when aligned with issues of cultural reproduction, power, and the formation of institutionalized history. This line of questioning has come to the fore perhaps even more prominently in performance studies than in dance studies, where questions about "liveness" can be traced to the

⁸⁴ At its most shocking, Macauley's piece declares the 1980s a "decade of loss" due to the deaths of ballet choreographers George Balanchine, Antony Tudor and Frederick Ashton and the retirement of several well-known ballerinas. He does not mention the widespread impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis ("Choreographic Climate Change," *New York Times*, New York edition AR7, December 31, 2009).

⁸⁵ Though I focus largely on American choreographers, the acute interest in choreographic documentation is certainly not limited to the United States. Once again contextualizing Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's desire to formalize an archive, Bojana Cvejić cites the prevalence of contemporary European choreographic work focusing on documentation not just in the service of preservation, but as a form of transmission. She attributes this profusion, in part, to the austerity measures that, by 2012, had for several years imperiled experimental art making across Europe. She notes the twofold consequences of this interest in the archive: such projects bring dance to a broader "readership," as well as countering "the Romantic defiance of the word, a defiance rooted in the understanding of the ephemeral nature of movement, bound up with disappearance and loss of lived experience in creation and performance" (7-8). In short, Cvejić demonstrates the extent to which contemporary dance practice itself urges a critical reappraisal – not necessarily of the form's ontological status, but of the concrete and current practices that engage with forms of recording and documentation (De Keersmaeker and Cvejić. 2012).

very founding of the discipline.⁸⁶ The question – certainly a valuable one for dance studies – has often seemed to revolve around how much traction performance might gain with respect to the archive, and moreover, if it does gain that traction, whether performance somehow troubles the logic of the archive from within.

Peggy Phelan's influential *Unmarked* remains notable not only for its strong position on the political potential of disappearance, but also for the impassioned responses it generated from a wide swath of theorists concerned with corporeality. Though many who document dance search for viable methods of representation, Phelan digs deeper into the very notion, arguing that representational “visibility” may not be the most effective strategy for those oppressed by a hegemonic majority culture. For Phelan, performance functions as “representation without reproduction,” thereby serving as a model for an alternative “representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same is not assured” (1993, 3). Working largely from Lacanian and feminist theories of the subject, Phelan problematizes the register of the visible, construing live performance as an emblematic encounter in which a spectator fails to fully appropriate the performing body. Though Phelan does not dwell on the performing body’s resistance to forms of documentation, her account certainly de-emphasizes artist-initiated approaches to recording. Since appropriation and “capture” are so consistently afforded to those already within a consolidated arena of power, Phelan sees performance's vanishing act as a refutation of that power, as well as of the privilege that implicitly colors the archival impulse.

Some have read, in Phelan’s championing of disappearance, an anxiety about ever

⁸⁶ In a section of, *Performing Remains* entitled “A small history of ephemerality,” Rebecca Schneider recalls the dominance of disappearance as an ideological framework in the early days of performance studies. She traces this line of thinking to Richard Schechner’s work in the mid-1960s, but notes that “by 1985, ‘disappearance’ was a veritable mantra applied to all performance;” she also cites Michael Taussig’s joke that “the department should rename itself the Department of Ephemerality Studies” (Schneider 2011, 95).

growing encroachments on the live by the mediatized.⁸⁷ Others have disputed the accrual of political valence around disappearance, arguing instead for performance as an efficacious mode of retention and recovery. This position has been formulated most compellingly by Diana Taylor; in her canonical distinction between “archive” and “repertoire (2003), Taylor identifies disappearance as a very real consequence of colonial violence. Where Phelan’s analysis focuses on the visual recording and reproduction, Taylor focuses on writing, particularly emphasizing the clash between written and corporeal forms of cultural retention provoked by the Spanish Conquest of the Americas. Though Taylor’s two terms might seem to suggest a binary, she counters that assumption, emphasizing that the repertoire actually destabilizes the opposition between written and embodied forms of cultural transmission. Like the archive, she argues, the repertoire too can be approached as durable, lasting, and efficacious. Despite the fact that “the relationship between the archive and the repertoire is not by definition antagonistic or oppositional,” Taylor does however underscore the extent to which “written documents have repeatedly announced the disappearance of the performance practices involved in mnemonic transmission” (2003, 36). Disappearance, then, is precisely the term around which Taylor sees “debates about the 'ephemerality' of performance” becoming “profoundly political” (5). For Taylor, unlike Phelan, invisibility leads down a path of repression and forgetting rather than to a place where subversion of the dominant cultural forces might be a real, practical possibility.

In large part, the differences between Phelan's position and Taylor's can be traced to the ways in which each scholar construes knowledge production. In Phelan's text, knowledge functions as a means through which the minoritarian subject gets caught up in the machinery of

⁸⁷ Philip Auslander writes, “As the mediatized replaces the live within cultural economy, the live itself incorporates the mediatized, both technologically and epistemologically. The result of this implosion is that a seemingly secure opposition is now a site of anxiety, the anxiety that underlies many performance theorists’ desire to reassert the integrity of the live and the corrupt, co-opted nature of the mediatized. One of the most articulate versions of this position is Peggy Phelan’s” (1999, 39).

hegemonic cultural reproduction – as known, understandable, and appropriated. For Taylor, on the other hand, knowledge serves as a vital link connecting successive generations through learned and enacted elements of cultural practice. Phelan sees performance as a celebration of the incompleteness of knowledge, a gap that produces a progressive politics; Taylor, on the other hand sees knowledge as a result of performance, a way of passing archived knowledge from body to body. Just as these positions lead to differing stances on the politics of disappearance, they lead to different perspectives on the choreographic archive. For Phelan, documentation and liveness remain mutually exclusive; in spite of her desire to memorialize valiantly nonreproductive performance works, her own writing about them amounts to nothing more than a “paradox” (1993, 31). Taylor, on the other hand, sees bodily practice as a fundamental challenge to archival economies, and especially documentation as writing. To elucidate the ways in which documentation has worked against (indigenous) live arts practices, she sheds light on the forms of recording that have aimed not to preserve, but to eradicate. She draws the very real connection between documentation and power, noting that “histories were burned and rewritten to suit the memorializing needs” of colonial aggressors (Taylor 2003, 17). In spite of these significant differences, both Phelan’s and Taylor’s approaches make abundantly clear the extent to which the archive inextricably links to power. As such, both positions add urgency to the task of recognizing and assessing forms of documentation that evade reproductive economies, or participate in them in novel ways. Such critical attention might in turn reveal possibilities potent enough to counter historical legacies of appropriation, consolidation, and abuse.

For me (not unlike Phelan and Taylor), questions about the body’s relationship to the archive become particularly pertinent where documentation hinges upon a disciplinary restraint of the body – where the faithful, de-personalized adherence to scores upholds the integrity of

canonical works. I would like to contend, though, that the preponderance of contemporary choreographers explicitly taking documentation in tailor-made directions offers ample reason to reject the notion of the archive as inherently confining or fixed.⁸⁸ By focusing on Lemon and Forsythe, my analysis highlights forms of choreographic documentation that do not trouble over the production of copies that exceed or betray inviolable originals. Indeed, they do not trouble over the production of copies at all. These forms of documentation enable dances to move freely across medial boundaries, thereby effecting choreographic transmission without replication. With respect to *Geography*, transmission concerns a deeper contextualization of a dance's materials and processes for a community of readers. In *Synchronous Objects*, on the other hand, transmission involves the translation of choreographic structure into incorporeal, digital, and often interactive devices. In both cases, transmission lends physical practice new meaning in new contexts; if the body is not stilled by movement's recording, neither is it held accountable to an idealized past.

Several theorists have helped illustrate how dance notation and documentation might contribute to a reimagining of the choreographic work in a way that privileges the potential of present and future over and above retrieving a lost past. Much of this work has focused on reconstruction and reenactment, with Mark Franko's epilogue to *Dance As Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* constituting an early example. Franko cites a shift in the 1980s toward reconstructions that aim for the "theatrical force" of originals in their time (1993, 134). Not only

⁸⁸ This echoes Derrida's thinking (1996), where the archive profoundly highlights a tension between revolution and tradition. In *Archive Fever*, even the archival drive of psychoanalysis does not exude the security of stable confines, but rather bears the mark of constant negotiation and contestation: situated at an "unstable limit" between origination and regeneration, "nothing is more troubled and more troubling" (Derrida 1996, 90). Filled with documents that have been admitted precisely because of their singularity, Derrida's archive nonetheless seduces with the possibility of reproduction and re-circulation. And this impossibility – the feverish oscillation between law and transgression, origin and copy, disappearance and reappearance – represents a strong theoretical link between body-based knowledge and the "troubling" impulse to preserve.

does this increased vitality restore the dance going public's interest in historically significant works, but also triggers new modes of creativity in the present. For Franko, disappearance does not dead-end the choreographic work but cycles it into reappearance, where returning to historical subject matter through choreography can be construed as a valid form of research. Franko prefers the term "construction," to reconstruction, illustrating his belief that what choreographers learn from the past can be activated in the present. Accurate reproduction of a work is de-emphasized in favor of the "replication of its most powerful intended effects;" documentation, in this context serves not just the memorialization, but renewed cultural efficacy (135). While my analysis of Lemon and Forsythe hinges on examples of documentation that do not effectuate reconstruction, critical discourse on reconstruction and reenactment has nonetheless shaped my theoretical position on the efficacy of recording as a mode of choreographic thinking.

Like Franko, André Lepecki blurs the boundary between production and reproduction, exploring choreographic strategies for mapping works of the past on bodies of the present. In an essay on Julie Tolentino, Martin Nachbar, and Richard Move,⁸⁹ Lepecki demonstrates how various re-embodiments problematize the stability of both originals and copies. Moreover, he underscores how the body might not only undertake the work of archiving, but also become the archive, complicating associations between performance and disappearance. With documentation located in the sphere of choreography's bodily transmission, dances refuse to stay put, but rather than vanishing, they merely get passed along (Lepecki 2010, 39). The "returns" performed by

⁸⁹ In *The Sky Remains the Same* (ongoing), Tolentino undertakes a physical archiving of Ron Athey's *Self-Obliteration #1* (2007), inscribing the work through cutting and scarring onto the very surface of her body. Nachbar labors to learn Dore Hoyer's *Affectos Humanos* (1962/64) despite "having the wrong body" – that is, a 21st century, male body (Lepecki 2010, 36). Finally, Richard Move's infamous embodiment of Martha Graham demonstrates the extent to which reenactment can develop its own force, transferring mourning's energy into the unmistakable momentum of choreographic histories and departed bodies living on.

Tolentino, Nachbar and Move constitute, for Lepecki, repetitions with a difference, gesturing to originals without fear of failure. Lepecki reveals how these projects disrupt preservational priorities by actualizing possibilities in past works that the artists of “now” are fully prepared to mine. They enter the archive and become the archive, demonstrating the body's potential to negotiate the past without succumbing to the logic of disappearance. Ultimately formulating a notion of the “will to archive,” Lepecki eschews readings of reenactment that focus on psychological tropes like nostalgia and melancholy, redirecting critical attention to the bodily work of “returning,” and its effect on the present (2010). Returning becomes a generative, creative practice that repurposes untapped potential in the original work and disrupts the original's ontological priority.

In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider also evidences a keen attention to the multi-directional temporalities provoked and sustained by reenactment. As Cvejić, Franko, and Lepecki do, Schneider cites the striking amount of late 20th- and early 21st-century performance work that hinges on returning, reimagining, and re-embodiment. She argues that the number of “artists exploring reenactment as medial material, as a fertile mode of inquiry, as a means of making and as a mode of art practice, should be indicative of a turn toward or into temporality as a malleable substance” (Schneider 2011, 182). Though Schneider’s analysis hinges on the theatrical more explicitly than the choreographic (and especially the meticulous “play” of civil war enthusiasts), her insights deeply problematize disappearance as the dominant framework for understanding the body in performance. Complicating the question of the live event's relationship to repetition and perpetuation, she – like Lepecki – develops a critical perspective that identifies performance as a method of archiving, and documentation as a mode of theatricality. Regarding the Wooster Group, she reads Elizabeth LeCompte’s efforts at precise

reenactment as something incomplete, uncanny, “queer,” and thus redolent with progressive political possibility. She notes that “the more they get the reenactment exactly right, the more uncannily wrong it begins to feel,” and that, moreover, “it is the force of literal precision itself that both upholds the entire enterprise of fidelity to event and, at the same time, challenges that enterprise” (Schneider 2011, 112). Just as LeCompte's doubling of performances past generates a paradoxical challenge to notions of authorship and authenticity, it also situates performance not outside the archive, but as a troubling presence resonating from within. If visual and video archives of performance make the “live” available for purposes of copying, and then those copies turn out “queerly,” what becomes of the archive as it files those copies alongside the originals?

Indeed, problems posed by the copies that confound distinctions between reproduction and variation open up a whole range of questions about the archive's relationship, not just to the past, but to the future. In some ways, the examples cited by both Lepecki and Schneider differ starkly from the choreographic documentation that I address with respect to Lemon and Forsythe. Where those theorists focus on performance practices that position the body as a potent force within the archive, I address documentation practices that animate choreographic ideas in extra-bodily formats. Nonetheless, I see a deep resonance among these pursuits – all manifesting in the relationship between archive and performance– that confound linear temporalities, bringing past into present with a sense of abundance rather than loss. Like uncanny reenactments or re-embodiments, the forms of documentation addressed in this chapter illustrate the archive's porousness, where recording leads to expansion and transformation rather than reduction and stabilization. They reveal the gaps and openings in what has been inscribed, capitalizing on spaces that the bodies of the present and future willingly fill as well as alter.

While dance and performance studies have had to contend most visibly with questions about loss, perpetuation, and the archive, these issues also emerge in the context of visual arts, particularly as performance gains ever more institutional traction. Indeed, the question of disappearance haunts museum-based efforts to preserve and display and performance art – an issue notably brought to light in Amelia Jones’s discussion of the Marina Abramović restagings at the Guggenheim Museum (*Seven Easy Pieces*, 2005) and the Museum of Modern Art (*The Artist Is Present*, 2010). Jones’s analysis of Abramović leads her to interrogate the critical and institutional investments that have long situated live art in opposition to static objects; once fetishized under the mantle of presence, Jones demonstrates, originating performance works gain authenticity at the expense of their continued efficacy and endurance. Coming from the disciplinary framework of the visual arts, Jones espouses a perspective that makes documentation seem simpler in the case of dance and theater, art forms that have historically “acknowledged their reliance on the *script* that passes down through time to be ‘redone’” (Jones 2011, 20). Though I have argued that the relationship between “script” and enactment has proven to be anything but straightforward in the context of dance studies, I do agree that object-centric discourses have historically furnished themselves with very few tools for meaningfully incorporating performance. Where discourses and institutions have centralized liveness, Jones, argues, there has been a resulting tendency to “downplay” documentation. If liveness summarily represents performance’s value, then documentation will necessarily be cast as shadowy and supplementary (25). Indexing what is no longer there, documentation for events that claim no identity outside the fleeting moment of “live” presence draws attention to the incompleteness of after-the-fact knowledge and appreciation (25).

Jones's work helps to counter the widely accepted notion that performance necessarily poses challenges to the visual arts marketplace by illustrating the multiple ways in which, especially in Abramović's case, the live "gets turned into capital" (Jones 2011, 37). I agree that the ideological circuits through which performance's "essential" ephemerality becomes commodity deserve attention. Where the promise of unruly capital constantly hovers over the art market, though, scarcity and tenuous survival dominate the conversation about institutions that exclusively support and present performance.⁹⁰ As performance gets caught up in the movement of capital, might institutions help bolster the security of artists themselves rather than fixating on how works can become salable and tradable? Recent years have made it plain that performance, and most especially dance, has gained an increased visibility within the museum.⁹¹ Accordingly, much work is needed to bridge the gap between critical discourses that already contend comfortably with performance, and those that are historically more tailored to objects. Moreover, if dance-makers are to truly benefit from their own representation in visual arts institutions, Jones should be taken seriously in her position that "any textual description and analysis is inevitably a form of reiteration that itself participates in the work as it circulates in discourse" (26). This would require setting the question of ephemerality aside and appreciating forms of engagement with performance that allow choreographic thinking to come to the fore through the

⁹⁰ I want to acknowledge Randy Martin's astute critique of the perpetual tendency to link the dance field with scarcity (1998). Yet it is also important to note the concrete examples that demonstrate how dance organizations continue to teeter on the edge of economic crisis. The climate of New York real estate in the early 2000s proved particularly harsh for dance organizations, with the closures of Dance New Amsterdam and the Joyce SoHo, as well as established companies (Trisha Brown Dance Company, Paul Taylor Dance Company) losing leases, and the surprising merger of Dance Theater Workshop and Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company designed to shore up the financial stability of both organizations.

⁹¹ Evidence of this would include a wealth of recent programming from New York's Museum of Modern Art (including Ralph Lemon's "Some Sweet Day" series, Boris Charmatz's "*Musée de la Danse*," and performances by many others), Movement Research's recent residence at the performance-friendly New Museum, The Hammer Museum's "Dancing With the Art World" Conference, Sarah Michelson's prize-winning performance at the 2012 Whitney Biennial, and recent retrospectives for Simone Forti (Museum der Moderne) and Yvonne Rainer (Getty Research Institute).

full gamut of physical, virtual, and conceptual channels.⁹² Through my analyses in this chapter, I demonstrate how choreographers are already pioneering this model, and how they capably propose forms of documentation that complicate the notion of a work living only in the present, or impacting audiences through the commodification of liveness.

The critical positions and debates brought forward in this introduction reveal the extent to which questions about choreographic documentation have historically been dominated by the question of the performing body's ephemerality. What possibilities for thinking through choreographic documentation might be revealed outside the following predictable timeline: a fleeting moment of authenticity collapsing into an instant death, and then resuscitated through a necessarily labored reconstruction? Though I believe strongly that dance has a history, and that scores and notation are an important part of that history, I also believe that documentation is best appreciated as a creative practice rather than a bureaucratic or institutional one. As Bojana Cvejić writes, the more we can “learn from choreographers and dancers about their notations and methods, the more complex our experiences and thoughts will be, as we will have to account for the tension between choreography as an art and any theory whatsoever that attributes a sense to it” (De Keersmaecker and Cvejić 2012, 8). Cvejić is suggesting an intrinsic link between the way that choreographers record dances and the meaning that we cull from them; she argues that we see the score not just as a vehicle for re-animation but crucial apparatus for explicating systems of thought. In what follows, I attempt just such an analysis, considering forms of documentation as creative practices, methods of recording that stand along side performance to further articulate

⁹² Even so, documentation's commodity-status is a question that remains open. Roselee Goldberg deems notation “a ‘thinking tool’ for the performer, a means to generate and express abstract ideas, a set of instructions, and a language for discussing those ideas with others. Far from being a saleable commodity that could become art by the mere fact of being exhibited in a gallery context, notation, for Goldberg, serves only performers: “It is a means to an end and nothing else” (1976, 54). Amelia Jones, on the other hand, notes that “market pressure inspires the range of methods that have been developed to ‘document’ the work and/or its re-enactments and thus to secure the work its place in the markets of objects and histories” (Jones 2011, 20).

and develop choreographic proposals. By reframing documentation as the perpetuation of choreographic thinking, I hope to demonstrate how scores manifest possibilities for a dance's endurance while also making space for change and continual re-inscription.

Ralph Lemon: An Archive of Excess

Where dance documentation works in the service of eventual reconstruction, it often boils a surfeit of movement information down to essentials – clarity coming at the expense of complexity, dancing body expected to put flesh on the bones of written blueprint. By contrast, Ralph Lemon's *Geography Trilogy* sprawls and meanders, pairing large-scale dance theater works with a rich and nuanced archive speaking to a decade's worth of body-based research. The trilogy comprises three dances and three books – produced between 1997 and 2005 – all of which perform sustained investigations into race, identity, memory, and history. They also signal a profound re-orientation of Lemon's choreographic practice, unfolding as a long, self-determined process of “finding a new relationship to the stage” (Lemon 2000, 7). Here, I focus not on the dances but the three published texts, which shed light on this lengthy research process through loosely chronological organizations of photos, drawings, correspondence, and travelogues. Considering the full range of these materials as choreographic documentation, I suggest that Lemon confounds the representational economies typically governing dance's participation in the archive (i.e. reduction and distillation) by presenting extraordinary excess that does not cohere toward reconstruction. For the most part, I focus on the first of these books, *Geography: Art, Race, Exile* (2000), where Lemon's documentation methodology crystallizes,

particularly around the overlapping questions of space, place, diaspora and mapping. To conclude, however, I address the fruition of these themes in his final book, *Come Home Charley Patton* (2013), which offers a clear sense of just how much the trilogy allows Lemon not only to develop a new relationship to the stage, but also to formulate a novel approach to documentation. Handling the archive thusly, Lemon sidesteps the question of whether or not it is possible to comprehensively document (and thus preserve) movement; instead, he frames *The Geography Trilogy* as a multi-faceted, highly personal, research project of which live performance constitutes only a small part.

At various points throughout the first installment of the trilogy, *Geography: Art, Race, Exile*,⁹³ Lemon provides condensed schematizations of the corresponding, finished performance piece. Though each reflects different facets of the work, they all offer the reader a clear sense of the dance's organization and scope. Lemon introduces these overviews, which are largely language-based, in a variety of ways. About a quarter of the way into the book, for example, Lemon includes a "rough-draft script for Geography: a performance work in four parts," alongside "a rough-draft physical performance scenario (or, how the above information might translate to an experimental performance perspective" (Lemon 2000, 41, 45). In the "script," Lemon details how he has used the structure of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* to parse the dance's narrative arc into four sections, including *Map, Crime, Trial* and *Divination*.⁹⁴ In the accompanying "performance scenario," he delves deeper into each section, moving from overarching narrative components to concrete events, images, and movement ideas. To conclude

⁹³ From this point on, I use the abbreviated title *Geography* to refer specifically to the book. Special indications will designate the performance piece or the trilogy as a whole.

⁹⁴ Lemon contextualizes his use of the source material like this: "I use the whole *Oresteia* as an invisible narrative element, not for the eyes of an audience, but to guide and give a Western epic score to my more important concerns with African and African American unity and disunity in art and physical performance politics" (Lemon 2000, 42).

the book, Lemon distinguishes a final section with a title page bearing the word “Geography” in large, bold script. In this section, Lemon lists character assignments for the performers, shares photos of the dancers onstage, and exhibits (often photocopied) reproductions of the performance text (by poet Tracie Morris). Whether “scripts,” “scenarios,” or “overviews,” these distilled summaries clearly record and communicate various structural facets of the performance work – that is, they look like choreographic documentation traditionally conceived. They provide the reader with an insider’s perspective on the work and its source materials, and they also reflect Lemon’s reasonably straightforward processes of record keeping. These schemas would be valuable resources, for example, if Lemon were to remount the dance. Yet, embedded as they are in so much additional prose, photography, and drawings, they represent only a few of the many approaches to documentation threaded through *Geography* as a whole.

In fact, as the book trilogy progresses through its second and third installments (*Tree: Belief, Culture, Balance* and *Come Home Charley Patton*), Lemon places even less emphasis on condensed, legible schematization. *Tree*, for example, includes one “preliminary script” that details key structures, concepts, and source materials for the work as well as, later, a simple list of events in chronological order (Lemon 2004, 199). *Charley Patton* does not offer the reader straightforward documentation until the end, where Lemon concludes with an untitled list of performance events, including spoken text, time-stamped cues, and working titles for sections, such as “hose dance” (2013, 227). The aforementioned sections come closest to approximating strategies for documentation that map space and/or time in orderly ways to orient readers. As I will demonstrate, the trilogy as a whole moves progressively toward disorientation, toward a dismantling of convention and the breakdown of choreographic structure in a pursuit of kinetic “non-form.” Accordingly, Lemon’s recording process mirrors this progression, and the texts, like

the performance works, come to exhibit an increased tension between what Lemon has experienced (over the course of his research) and what can be presented (as legible contributions to a finished product). Even from the start, though, by nesting these components within sprawling collections of ephemera, Lemon reveals an interest in cultivating disorientation. He uses these materials – with his own experience as the through-line – to explode any sense that his choreographic thought processes might be contained by the formal parameters of a dance’s infrastructure. The books reveal, in fact, how his well-defined choreographic structures connect to multiple thought processes and experiential points of reference.

This is not to say, then, that the dances are too simplistic to reflect the multilayered choreographic research evidenced by the texts. Even early in the trilogy, as *Geography* skitters through seemingly disparate thoughts, images, and interactions, Lemon suggests how a diversity of raw materials ultimately works its way into the dance. The reader travels with Lemon from Papua New Guinea to Haiti to Africa to New York to New Haven, watching choreographic experimentation dovetail with a lived, kinesthetic tracking of Black Atlantic diaspora. As Lemon travels, diary entries contribute to a rich sense of rootedness in time and place. For example, on a trip to the Ivory Coast city of Abidjan in summer of 1996, he writes:

The airport is smaller than I expected, made even smaller by the many boys hustling for bags. In their rough T-shirts they seem hungry and then proud. It is at first a frightful city. The space here, the air and light, has the option of neutralizing the desperation to my eyes and sometimes it does...Dimanche. Rain. August 18. A new bed. The room is smaller than the room in Abidjan proper. There is no seat on the toilet. The room across from ours has a television blaring the entire time of its nearness. Palms surround the hotel. A dirt road of red earth marks its place in history. There is new singing in the background, somewhere. It turns out to be another television. (Lemon 2000, 27)

And in the performance scenario:

Words are heard, a description of some kind of landscape. A partial view of a landscape owing to bedspring curtains and light. Bodies, ritual moving, possibly through the space,

possibly constructing something. There is a purpose to everything. Everything here is shrouded by the curtain and manipulation of light. (45)

Though the performance scenario does not mimetically translate moments from Lemon's travels, one can trace resonances passing from dance to page. Lemon references his Spartan sleeping arrangements often in the course of his diary-writing, and one might connect these thin, unforgiving pallets with the vertical "bedspring curtains" that "shroud" the *Geography* stage (45). He also references the "manipulation of light," akin to the glare of glowing televisions; similarly, television sounds from a distance perhaps evoke the passively constructed statement: "words are heard" (45). The "ritually" moving bodies onstage might reference the baggage boys at the airport or many other manner of keenly observed daily expressions of an West African *habitus*, from women milling around the market to policemen "stalling in tight uniforms" (31). The title shared by the book and the dance, of course, alludes to both mapping and movement, and while scores often occupy an interstitial space between these two categories, they do not always do so by ushering in the specific features of a landscape in which a dance was constructed or conceived.

In fact, scores and notations often exclude meaningful connections between dances and specific places, times and bodies. Where spatial and temporal particularities root a dance to places and historical moments, abstraction facilitates the smooth machinery of reproduction, repositioning movement to accommodate any space, time, or body. In part, this exclusion serves as a practical measure to economize space on the page, yet it also bears the mark of strategic ideological underpinnings, making notation complicit in an historical legacy of much more troubling erasures. Harmony Bench has rightly identified the practice, evident from Feuillet onward, of locating dance in "an abstract, idealized space," even going so far as to pinpoint such abstraction as a "precondition" for dance's "paper-based mediation and documentation" (Bench

2008, 38). Bench terms the evacuated spatiality of Feuillet notation a “no-place,” noting those scores’ conspicuous lack of topography, built or natural landmarks, clutter, and historically bound bodies. For Bench, the “no-place” is “a site deployed to erase location,” and as such, explicitly links to formulations of space and movement that supported Western colonial violence (37). The *Geography Trilogy*, then, represents a profound redirection of the archival impulse away from evacuation. Lemon deploys “paper-based” documentation not to elevate dance to the plane of abstraction (or Bench’s “no-place”) but to track the drifts and flows that complicate cultural exchange, historical excavation, and the making of a dance. By focusing on – and re-enacting – diasporic movement, Lemon establishes intensely located choreographic and recording practices that are nonetheless indebted to ongoing processes of cultural, aesthetic, and conceptual dis-location. While Bench and others⁹⁵ have rightly linked notational abstraction to the on-the-ground realities of colonization such as flattening and razing, Lemon offers an antidote by erecting conceptual and material monuments to personal and shared histories.

If Lemon uses documentation not to erase but to evoke particular geographies, he also wants to address his own movement through these historical and spatial terrains. As I have already suggested, the first work in the trilogy amounts to a critical investigation of Lemon’s position within the African diaspora. Though he feels compelled to retrace the forced steps of slavery’s transatlantic crossings, *Geography* begins not in Africa, but with a process of “inventing Africa,” or dwelling imaginatively on a wholly unfamiliar place that nonetheless triggers a deep affective response. Arjun Appadurai theorizes an imaginative dimension of diaspora, noting how diasporic culture often entails building pockets of familiarity into the unfamiliar. In this pressurized way, diaspora spurs “the force of the imagination, as both memory

⁹⁵ Like Bench, André Lepecki references Paul Carter’s *The Lie of the Land*, which probes the relationship between aesthetic representation and colonial appropriation, and particularly “a philosophical and topological flattening of the ground that is also a fleeing from it” (Lepecki 2006, 100).

and desire, into the lives of ordinary people” (Appadurai 1996: 6). Appadurai takes care to distinguish imagination from fantasy; where fantasy is private, and divorced from “projects and actions,” imagination is a “prelude to some sort of expression, whether aesthetic or otherwise” (Appadurai 1996, 7). Similarly, Lemon’s imaginary is not self-contained and fantastical, but practical and social, engaging other bodies from the outset. Throughout the book, he gazes upon unfamiliar bodies, and their unfamiliar movements, intently. Thus his “imagination” of Africa, and the African body, essentially amounts to choreographic thinking, continually articulated through the terms of movement, position, and relation. Yet in some ways, it moves through the opposite trajectory that Appadurai describes: rather than using imagination to make space for the familiar in disorienting new realities, Lemon’s social imaginaries bring him closer to what he has not known. The dance, as well as its documentation, begins with these imaginaries, with propulsion into the unfamiliar, and with Lemon’s close tracking of the bodies that animate his movement along the diasporic path.

Indeed, Lemon’s investigation of diaspora leads him to kinesthetic experiences that likewise fail to map onto the familiar coordinates of his dance training. Lemon’s stated desire to “understand something other” necessitates the formulation of a creative practice distinct from the “straight legs, elongated spines, and pointed feet” of the dance company that he had, in 1996, recently disbanded (Lemon 2000, 7). Lemon himself deems his pre-trilogy work as “Eurocentric,” reflecting a lineage of white postmodernism influencing the young choreographer through his close association with artists like Nancy Hauser and Meredith Monk (2000, 192). In an afterword to *Geography*, Ann Daly references not only Lemon’s comment about Eurocentrism, but also the relative absence of African-American dancers in his earlier work. For *Geography*, then, he engages six professional performers from Cote d’Ivoire, a Guinean expat,

and American house dancer. Just as in his travels, where “he had a strong emotional stake in the culture but felt primarily like an outsider,” Lemon created a rehearsal situation in which he had no clear path forward with respect to crafting a shared movement language (Profeta 2005, 24).

Describing the encounter as a “cultural collision,” Lemon writes:

I think of what it will be like to let seven blue-black Africans into my hermetic interior. I cannot come up with anything that is familiar. I cannot come up with anything that seems immediately useful to them or to me. I am not particularly in love with traditional African dance. I am not particularly in love with any tradition. (2000, 38)

When Lemon describes his choreographic process as a “hermetic interior,” he spatializes the process, as if the very time spent in the studio becomes a territory traversed. The finished product, then, reflects a hard-won path fought over unfamiliar terrain. He de-emphasizes the familiar coordinates of his own aesthetic compass, and often asks his performers to do the same. In the sections of *Geography* that depict rehearsal processes, Lemon often details processes of painful and imperfect mimicry, with his Guinean dancer passing along brutally difficult, deeply ingrained steps that Lemon cannot master, useful to the extent that they cause him to “fall apart” (77). When Lemon demonstrates something to the Guinean dancer named Moussa, on the other hand, Moussa “seamlessly” transforms it “into one of the things that he masters,” deftly skirting the obstacles that Lemon forces himself to tackle.

Moments like this elucidate the extent to which Lemon’s documentation is shaped by the tight, uniquely alchemical connection between the performance work and its originating dancers. Lemon’s accounts of process and performance make it clear that *Geography* (the dance) remains inextricably tied to its performers and to their training; accordingly, *Geography* (the book) does not distance the dance from those bodies in order to objectify its choreographic structure. Where documentation often disentangles movement from particular bodies in order to ensure reproducibility once they (and even the choreographer) are gone, Lemon dwells on his own

physical experience, and vividly renders his interactions with the performers. The documentation takes on a heightened intimacy, with Lemon seeming to stress the ways in which the dance takes shape in response to this group of performers acting as collaborators, interlocutors, and occasional antagonists.

Perhaps tellingly, the two examples in this chapter – documentation by Lemon and Forsythe – represent the only scores in my analysis as a whole where specific performers' names are mentioned. Since previous chapters have concerned scores that explicitly court dancerly interpretation or audience involvement, they have (with good reason) delinked prompts and instructions from specific bodies, leaving the possibilities for involvement open-ended. By and large, those scores have looked much more like invitations than documentation. Here, by contrast, specific dancers come to the fore – in Lemon's case with detailed narrative accounts of their engagement, and in Forsythe's (as I will discuss in detail further along) clearly identified in order to assist the score's reader in penetrating the dance's deeper structures. Forsythe's use of his dancers' names in the score underscores how, even as he translates choreographic structure to non-dance media, the goal is not necessarily to render that structure amenable to new bodies. In both cases, though, this acknowledgement of individual performers clarifies how scores do not have to rid dances of bodies for the purposes of perpetuation.

Lemon's emphasis on the performers also relates to a larger inclusion of process within the scope of documentation. He dwells as much on failure as on success, detailing not just the parameters of finely tuned finished structures, but also on the occasionally painful processes of building those structures. He details good days and bad days, days when his performers failed to show up to rehearsal, or even refused to move. He includes logistics, as well as overtones of institutional tension and support. He leads up to the work's premiere at Yale Repertory Theatre,

but continues to document past the premiere, reflecting on dozens of subsequent performances up through the New York run at Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave festival. The reader gets a sense of the particularity of each iteration, a visceral sense of the uncertainty of touring, of returning to something "finished" night after night only to be confronted by the continually shifting dynamics of live, ensemble performance. November, Minneapolis:

Almost filled the house. But we didn't completely inhabit the space. A fairly smooth show, with lots of bugs and snags. My dancing was very full. Tapé's djembe skin split in the middle of his solo. He literally threw the broken drum off stage, grabbed another drum and continued playing more furiously than before. (Lemon 200, 142-43)

November, Austin:

My control of this work and the performers continues to be challenged. James and Moussa began laughing near the end of Tire Talk, because James had earlier grabbed Carlos under his standing seat. Carlos was furious. The rest of the performers sat through the silent part of Tire Talk, imploding with the need to laugh. James ran off stage afterward collapsing to the floor, hysterical, missing his next entrance. (149)

December, New York:

Last night was a great show. Every moment clicked. My best Map to date. I felt a certain comfort with the lights and the space. The company's dancing energy was inspired, extravagant, but did not break my structured boundaries. Tire Talk was perfect. My dancing was spacey, almost delirious. The one flaw was the bottles flying in, musically uneven. (152-153)

Particularly with respect to the relationships that animate the dance, Lemon depicts no triumphant arrival; he recalls that he had not "expected this postpremiere responsibility," that there can be no "letting go of this work" until the performers "are on the plane home" (137). Lemon's work, then, does not conclude when the dance is made, and his writing goes far past the notion of a singular, self-contained product as it details all of the complexities that the dance provokes and sustains over time.

As a substantial and well-received finished product, *Geography* (the dance) stands as a testament to the potential benefits of a lengthy, self-reflexive choreographic process. The

volatility of its production history – whether variations would be discernable to the casual audience member or not – reflects the ongoing negotiations of place, personality, and cultural expectations that are so crucial to Lemon, and to the success of the work. *Geography* (the book), however, goes much further toward tracking the everyday intricacies of his struggle to formulate a legible choreographic product from the disjoints and discomforts of the process. Though the trilogy has received a substantial amount of critical attention (including insightful analyses by Lemon’s longtime dramaturge, Katherine Profeta), detailed considerations of the relationship between the dances and the books have proven scarcer. Nicholas Birns argues the books constitute important “paratexts,” publically available “by-products of the creation of a staged work that are as important to what the artist is doing as the finished work itself” (Birns 2005, 19). I would go further to argue that Lemon’s documentation does not represent a “by-product” at all. In fact, as Schneider’s and Lepecki’s accounts of the archive suggest, it’s entirely possible to think of the performances themselves as a manner of “documentation.” Where I have argued that the books represent full expansions of Lemon’s choreographic thinking, I contend that each performance might be considered a distillation of this extended research, rehearsal, and writing. The point is not to construct a new hierarchy privileging the document over enactment, but to appreciate the extent to which Lemon intertwines choreography and documentation in ways that refute pervasive frameworks of loss and recuperation.

Indeed, as I have suggested, Lemon’s approach to documentation constitutes an atypical stance regarding reproduction, one that deeply problematizes the assumption that choreographic recording combats loss by re-inscribing a dance’s essential features on the page. For Lemon, finally, the book does not facilitate the dance’s reproduction so much as it indicates the dance’s expansion along multiple lines of research. Similarly, Forsythe’s score, as I will discuss, is not at

all aimed toward restaging, but toward the dance's "translation" into other media. Taken together, these forms of documentation present strikingly different contestations of the hierarchy privileging dance (as original) over score (copy). Lemon and Forsythe cannot be said to position these forms of documentation as "traces" of embodied action; rather, they clearly flesh out the process of writing a dance with distinct agendas. Lemon, in rendering his experience, and his relationships with his dancers, so indelibly, weds documentation to a shared, lived experience that can be communicated, but not replicated. Not only does *Geography* confuse the hierarchy between original and copy, but it also challenges the notion of the finished dance as self-sufficient and bounded. The scores in my previous chapters render dances "unfinished" by approaching a potentially limitless field of interpreters (Hay and Meier), or by summoning audiences to shape the dance (Houston-Jones and Tolentino). Here, Lemon does so by revealing the research that precedes, surrounds, and extends beyond any individual performance. As I have suggested, Lemon's methodologies stand in sharp contrast to modes of documentation that pursue comprehensive representation through the reduction of danced movement into easily recordable units and sub-units.⁹⁶ Because Lemon's documentation follows a radically different logic – refusing to economize, accumulating rather than reducing – it explodes the dance, scattering its coordinates far beyond the scope of any clean, linear trajectory.

The relationship between performance piece and book, then, highlights a much broader tension between devising viable choreographic structures and representing the sprawling, and sometimes ambivalent, experiences and histories that inform them. When a dance is "about" longstanding, multilayered, personal research into charged and complex topics, how does an artist reflect this complexity within the boundaries of legible choreographic structure? As

⁹⁶ Not only Feuillet's, but also virtually any notational system that uses graphic symbolization (like Rudolf Laban's), evidences this strategy.

Lemon's trilogy progresses, he continues to draw attention to this question rather than resolving it. His research and studio practices shift further toward the undoing of choreographic and representational convention; the dances and the books, as I have suggested, become further and further de-linearized. By the time Lemon begins research for the third installment, *Come Home Charley Patton*, he is geographically closer to home, yet he continues to disorient himself. No longer permitting himself even the slightest distinction between research and performance, he travels throughout the American South, getting into the habit of performing near-invisible rituals. These might reference civil rights struggles in historically significant public spaces, or pay dancing tribute in the living rooms of forgotten African-American bluesmen.⁹⁷ During this phase, Lemon struggles to perform "actions appropriate to the full weight of the history;" similarly, when the time comes to bring this research into the studio, he faces the question of what aspects of these performances might be "replicable" in the context of the theater (Profeta 2005, 25). Ultimately, Lemon arrives at the notion of "non-form," or dancing that would be resistant to choreographic structure; he specifically asks his dancers to produce movement that he would not be able to describe (Profeta 2011, 217). In practical terms, this meant cultivating (sometimes drug- and alcohol-fueled) ecstatic improvisational sessions in which dancers pushed themselves past familiar movement patterns and stylistic habits. As Lemon watched the dances, he asked his dancers to "un-form" the moments when he could see something – anything – distinct.

It is worth emphasizing the fact that by the time Lemon reaches the trilogy's conclusion, he explicitly searches out movement that resists description, and thus recording. The exploration of non-form is, for Lemon, the theatrical counterpoint to staging nearly invisible rituals in bus stations or on street corners, where spectators stream by, registering neither the performance

⁹⁷ Birns draws an analogy between these performances and the work of Joseph Beuys, Bruce Nauman, and Fluxus, stating that such acts are "seemingly casual and impromptu even as they are highly politically inflected" (Birns 2005, 19).

itself nor, in most cases, the historical significance of the unmarked sites. Despite Lemon's own near-obsessive desire to mark these sites in some way, he also wonders at his own impulse to render his research archivable; he has stated that with enough "perverse courage," he would not have videotaped these in situ performances (Profeta 2005, 24).⁹⁸ If the ultimate act of courage would be to let these events fade without a trace, then how are we to understand the exhausting documentation of the book trilogy as a whole? What are we to make of the fact that Lemon dedicates a decade of his life not only to this project, but of its documentation, and to the incorporation of so many of the experiential threads that typically go unwoven into choreographic products?

Perhaps publicly shared documentation and the privacy of unnoticed mourning, then, dovetail paradoxically at the heart of Lemon's overall project. Each highlights his acceptance of the difficulty of solidifying lived experience into text alongside a desire to keep trying, by whatever means necessary. *Geography* reveals the extent to which this desire to preserve can be a desire to reach out, not to keep the dance hermetically sealed in its "original" context, but to make it available to audiences reading from ever-changing historical vantage points. From the beginning, Lemon wrestles with the relationship between himself and his theatergoing audience, asking himself: "What is the audience really interested in seeing anyway? Certainly more than I'm showing" (Lemon 2000, 137). What the performance piece doesn't "show," the books lay bare, and Lemon's readership constitutes an audience that will know him and his dancers personally, witnessing the struggles and joys of bringing these dances into being. Instead of appealing to this wider audience by clarifying choreographic structure (as Forsythe does), Lemon implicates choreographic structure in geographies and genealogies, the flow of history and the

⁹⁸ After retracing the route of the Freedom Riders (civil rights advocates who took interstate buses into segregated states from Washington D.C. to New Orleans starting in 1961), Lemon realizes that he has inadvertently skipped Fredericksburg, Virginia, and contemplates the necessity of riding the entire route again (Lemon 2013, 30).

bodies of himself and his collaborators. In doing so, Lemon devises a novel form of documentation standing alongside (and not chasing after) the dance. Documentation in the service of preservation can all too easily succumb to the defeatist assumption that the “real” dance has, from the moment of its performance, been lost. How can a dance be “lost” that comes from a place of purposefully losing the self, meandering along bus routes and back roads, sweating out dances in strangers’ living rooms that no one else will ever see?

William Forsythe: From Dance to Data to (Extra-Bodily) Object

The goal of *Synchronous Objects*, a website developed collaboratively by William Forsythe, his dancers, and a cross-disciplinary team of researchers at Ohio State University, is to isolate, represent, and re-imagine the choreographic structure of Forsythe's *One Flat Thing, reproduced (OFTr)* (2000). The project’s guiding inquiry revolves around the possibility that choreographic structure might be rendered extra-bodily, extracted from the dance and translated into interactive digital “objects.” Run jointly between the university’s Dance Department and its Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design, the web project makes the most of its digital format, working outward from the score toward a network of possible paths for self-directed user engagement. The comprehensive score, then, serves not as an end in itself, but as a means to give the choreographic structure of *OFTr* new life across multiple media. Though the score and the objects deploy more visual imagery than text, the project as a whole deserves contextualization amid Forsythe’s long history of choreographic experimentation with writing,

inscription and translation.⁹⁹ It also, as I will demonstrate, deserves contextualization as a form of documentation designed to extend and adapt choreographic structure rather than preserving or reenacting it. Like Lemon's book trilogy, *Synchronous Objects* makes choreographic thinking accessible to a wider audience, demonstrating how a dance might manifest discursive possibilities and bodies of knowledge beyond the moment of performance. Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to shed light on the ways in which choreographers are using documentation to look past the ephemeral "live" toward more flexible and efficacious modes of activation; *Synchronous Objects* illuminates how a score can keep a dance moving and transforming, indexing possibility instead of loss.

To experience *Synchronous Objects*, the user deploys her Internet browser's search bar to navigate to the site. Once she has arrived, she chooses to "enter fullscreen" or "enter windowed." If entering windowed, thumbnail images will begin scrolling through (and past) the screen below the site's title and tag line: "visualizing choreographic structure from dance to data to objects."¹⁰⁰ When moving the cursor to the right, the thumbnails scroll to the left; moving the cursor to the left, they scroll to the right. These images represent many choices, many points of entry; the site designers have placed no more emphasis on "the dance" than any other choice, but it is a helpful place to start. If the user clicks that image, the video footage will load and she might notice another tagline, appearing briefly, reading "interactive dance score." *OFTr* begins to play in a

⁹⁹ I deliberately choose to address *Synchronous Objects* rather than the more recent *Motion Bank* project, which is also coordinated by the Forsythe company along with multiple teams of "education partners," "score partners," "workshop partners," and funding bodies. Although *Synchronous Objects* is, in many ways, a conceptual and practical precursor to *Motion Bank*, it conveys a fully developed vision for a single trajectory from score to digital "object." As such, it represents a much more coherent and manageable object for analysis: since *Motion Bank* incorporates the work of additional choreographers and collaborative teams (including Deborah Hay, Jonathan Burrows/Matteo Fargion, and Bebe Miller/Thomas Hauert), the site requires methodologies and theoretical perspectives tailor-made for each. As that project continues to evolve, it will certainly generate critical attention from outside, just as it creates space for theorization and contextualization from those who shape it from within.

¹⁰⁰ For all references to *Synchronous Objects*, see Forsythe, Palazzi, and Zuniga Shaw (2009).

window on the upper half of the screen. To the left side of the video window, text scrolls from lower to upper edge, offering information on “cues,” “alignments,” and “themes.” For example:

Cue 258
Cue Given: Prue
Cue Response: Liz

Theme T18
Francesca, Marthe, Roberta, Yoko

And so on. On the right side of the video window, several toggle switches control “video settings,” “overlay settings,” and “audio settings.” When the video's “overlay” systems are turned on, the user is drawn to themes, alignments, and cues with animated traces of color flashing within the frame itself. Other choices include front view, top view, and close up video shots, as well as ambient sound or the composed score. Users can turn on Forsythe’s commentary, which offers a conversational take on choreographic strategies, source material, and directorial observations. Another option, the playful Forsythe “sing through” overlay, offers a visceral accompaniment to the movement: “eeeyah! bah dah dee dub, oopah ee wooomph!”

In the video footage, which lasts for almost sixteen minutes, seventeen dancers move on, around, and through symmetrical rows of rectangular tables, which stand about waist-high and stretch long enough to accommodate a prone body. Each dancer wears a shirt and pants in a distinctive combination of solid colors, grays or blacks. They move as a collection of individuals, though shreds of unison appear in duets or small groups before dissolving again. Spines are supple, weight drops into the tables or the floor. Arms and legs slash arcs, and any part of the body might initiate movement rippling through the whole. Dancers use each other’s bodies for support, clasping hands or working together to lift someone else fully into the air. An overall quickness reigns – though individuals might pause or retreat from the foreground, other dancers

keep up the pace. A sense of unstoppable momentum, with no perceivable repetition, theme, variation, or collective stillness. Constant change, infinite complexity.

On the bottom half of the screen is the score, likewise bewildering in its complexity. To the far left, the user sees a vertical list of the dancers' names; holding the cursor over a name reveals a bodiless drawn outline of their clothing, helpfully rendered in that dancer's unique color combination. To the right of this list is a graph that looks something like a traditional musical score, all of the dance's action distilled into primary-colored bars of "movement material" that extend from left to right. Yellow nodes indicate dancer "sync-ups," and thinly curved black lines connect dancers at various cue points. As the dance progresses, a vertical scroll bar moves from left to right, indicating where performers are in the score, encouraging users to read alongside the action. Perhaps one sees two dancers connected in the score by one of those curving lines, and then notices an impulse passed from one to the other in the video footage: a jabbing elbow triggers a jump, or one dancer's drop to the floor connects to another's weight shift onto the table. One might also look for these "sync ups," where dancers fall into unison briefly, at varying degrees of physical proximity. It is possible to track a single dancer, or to try and perceive as much as possible of the whole, matching moments of obvious density in the score to more populated, visually intricate nests of rapid-fire movement.

The digital score, with its cues, sync-ups, and color-coded bars of action, bears Forsythe's choreographic "data," rendered in an economized graphic format that lends the dance a heightened legibility. As Nora Zuniga Shaw, one of the project's directors, points out, the data collection at the heart of *Synchronous Objects* occurs at a "rare level of granularity," producing a "detailed accounting of every structurally significant choreographic system in the dance" (DeLahunta and Zuniga Shaw 2008, 132). The score derives from a painstaking accumulation of

information not just from Forsythe's perspective, but also from the "inside" experience of performers and sustained viewings of the video footage by the interdisciplinary collaborative team. Even from its earliest stages, the process of "decoding" the dance engaged participants in a "creative dialog," a collaborative process of score-building drawing on both experiential and analytical input (Zuniga Shaw 2014, 212). Considering that the seventeen dancers rarely move in unison, Zuniga Shaw is right to point out that the score's "granularity" represents a formidable accomplishment. Moreover, though, the collaborative team contends with the fact that much of the dance involves structured improvisation, where dancers "translate specific properties of other performers' motions into their own" (Zuniga Shaw 2014, 215). These translations occur spontaneously, and differently, each time the dance is performed. Thus the dance's "choreographic structure" is tied not to a fixed order of steps but to a mutable, processual engagement between bodies working within the boundaries of clearly defined tasks and relational configurations. While the video footage displayed on the site reveals only one fleshed-out iteration of this variable structure, the score denotes a conceptual framework flexible enough to accommodate the variation inherent in any number of performances of the dance

The score, then, exhibits a fundamental openness to the iterative differentiation brought about by the work's improvisational nature. Yet to accommodate the dance's mutability, the collaborative team establishes data production along very specific coordinates: namely, the interlocking progression of cues, individually performed "movement themes," and sync-ups. The score effectively conveys information about these occurrences and the relationships between them, but it does so at the expense of a range of other factors. Most notably, the score does not describe, depict or denote the shape or energetic qualities of the movements. Similarly, it conveys none of the dance's overall speed and energy. Neither does it incorporate the significant

factor of the tables, making no distinction between actions that involve the support of those props and actions that do not. Thus the score performs a clearly classificatory function, breaking down a bewilderingly complex sixteen minutes of movement material into just a few basic categories. Since the video viewing experience can be customized with various shots and audio options, it presents the viewer with a level of interactivity and autonomous decision-making. Yet at the same time the score shows users how to read the dance in a very specific way, encouraging them to adopt a shared vocabulary that shapes their viewing and understanding. The data can be viewed from multiple perspectives, but the central epistemological axes of the score nonetheless fix that data into a relatively stable framework.

Though the *Synchronous Objects* team clearly assigns value to the score's central conceptual organization, the site does not necessarily foreclose other ways of experiencing the dance. Zuniga Shaw admits, for example that "quantification requires a reductive process that necessarily obscures certain aspects of knowledge (performance quality, and kinesthetic awareness) in order to reveal others (in this case, choreographic structure)" (2014, 212). I would also add that the dance's choreographic structure might be quantified in a number of different ways, generating quite different data sets. Despite the fact that I will emphasize how these efforts toward stabilization and reduction ultimately lend a medial flexibility to the dance, it is worth taking a moment to note the specificity of recording practices that take quantification as a central goal. Recalling the *Geography Trilogy*, one can summon vivid examples of the "qualitative" data brought to the surface by Lemon's approach to documentation: the affective force of an empty swimming pool in Haiti, a favorite nightgown lost in a hotel room, the ache of muscles intractably resisting new patterns of exertion. In taking choreographic structure "from dance to data to object," the Forsythe team positions data as a key transitional term, facilitating the

movement from subjective corporeal experience to manipulable digital device. In fact, scores can always be said to hold “data,” whether that data is mobilized toward replicative or individuated re-iteration. Forsythe takes the production of data a step further, however, de-linking it from the body and putting it to use within a range of visualizations that mobilize choreographic structure through very different terms.

Thus, the website allocates the score value in and of itself as an “objectification” of choreographic structure, but the decoded choreographic elements are ultimately destined for re-coding through the formulation of the interactive devices, or “objects.” When users exit the screen that holds the video footage and the score, they might return to the landing page with those scrolling thumbnails, each of which leads to one of these objects. The nineteen objects effectively serve as nineteen different ways to engage with the dance's structure, transforming it into responsive displays of color, texture, topographical landscape, even digitally rendered furniture. Some of the “objects,” like the “Counterpoint Tool,” depart from the content of the dance, honing in on particular governing principles (such as counterpoint) that are integral to its construction. In this case, the tool encourages users to explore a specific choreographic device through the movement of onscreen widgets. Others, like the “Data Fan,” mobilize digital renderings of the dance’s structure arrived at through a variety of technological manipulations. These produce images that reveal density of movement material, the dance's networks of cues, and the like. Yet others, such as the “Video Abstraction Tool,” allow users to play with their own perception, in this case by applying a range of video processing filters to the original footage. The dancers might become brightly colored digital dots or trails, flitting across the screen or leaving enduring graphic marks. Once the website reformulates data into various interactive configurations, the “objects” constitute a variety of ways in which a broader online public can

engage, playing with choreographic structures and principles as if they constituted tangible, plastic entities outside of the dance. As Lemon's *Geography Trilogy* does, so too does *Synchronous Objects* extend the dance, reaching out to a de-specialized public, not only making the work accessible, but also revealing the ways in which it might engender modes of choreographic thinking and communication separate from dancing.

Where Lemon deploys prose, photos, and hand-drawn images toward these aims, however, the *Synchronous Objects* team focuses on graphic scoring and digital "visualization." And where Lemon's writing evokes the particularity of his own experience – of specific moments, places and people – Forsythe's objects dramatically distance choreographic structure from the tangle of those on-the-ground realities. In fact, each of the objects might be said to carve out its own, pristinely evacuated "no-place," with the screen bringing choreographic structure to life in a spatial void cleared of body, geography, and history. In fact, Forsythe's institution of a no-place (and a "no-body") should not be understood as a casual side-effect of the cross-medial translation process, but rather as a key epistemological precept of the project. As Forsythe puts it, "choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices." When choreography is extrapolated from the bodies performing it, distilled to its operational and structural "essence," it becomes virtual, more readily available to adaptation and conversion. In terms of dispensing with the body, Forsythe explains that his interest in depopulating choreography represents, in part, a defense against the "centuries of ideological assault" against corporeality. In order to circumvent the intractable anti-body bias that colors perceptions of choreographic labor, and to ostensibly validate that labor, he asks: "what else, besides the body, could physical thinking look like?" (Forsythe 2009). Whether this approach encourages a new appreciation for body-based physical thinking, or further alienates online users from lived, bodily

experience, is outside the scope of this analysis.¹⁰¹ In any case, Forsythe's question remains an intriguing one, and one that Lemon likewise addresses, albeit through radical expansion and contextualization rather than reduction and abstraction.

Though *Synchronous Objects* diverges from the *Geography Trilogy* by eschewing language-based documentation, Forsythe's choreographic practice has long evidenced an interest in writing, inscription, and translation. In an analysis of the Forsythe Company's work with "intermodality" – or, more specifically, the passage from movement to sound – Freya Vass-Rhee notes an interest in translation as far back as 1990 in *Limb's Theorem* (2010, 395). In that dance, text-based source material informs the movement, with dancers converting "the complex two-dimensional geometry of a drawn instruction into a three-dimensional solo" (Vass-Rhee, 2011, 79). Vass-Rhee also cites the 2005 installation work *You Made Me a Monster*, a tribute to Forsythe's late wife, in which audience members were invited to create paper-based sculptural components resembling bones; the dancers then responded to the audience constructions by converting the sculptural shapes into movement in real time (Vass-Rhee 2011, 79). Similarly, Gerald Siegmund locates processes of inscription and translation at the heart of some of Forsythe's most canonical works (2012). With respect to *Alie/N(a)ction* (1992), for example, Siegmund cites multiple layers of source material: Raymond Roussel's novel *Impressions of Africa*, drawings produced by the dancers, randomly generated computer images, and Rudolf Laban's spatial diagram of the twenty-seven pointed cube (2012). Siegmund demonstrates how Forsythe, with the collaboration of his dancers, gathered these two-dimensional elements into "a condensed choreographic notation or score," subject to a second phase of translation that produces a 27-word movement alphabet (2012, 191).

¹⁰¹ The *Synchronous Objects* blog reveals a wealth of activities, such as installations, workshops, and interactive exhibitions, that signal that the project's collaborators are committed to drawing the project out of the virtual space and into contact with audiences on a visceral level.

On one level, *Synchronous Objects* might be said to reach “beyond the purview of translation,” since the digital devices allow the material to “jump and swerve out of familiar territory into new spaces” (Zuniga Shaw 2014, ,210). Yet I perceive *Synchronous Objects* as an extension of Forsythe’s longstanding interest in dance-making as fundamentally transitive, open to extra-bodily influences and fundamentally amenable to open-ended processes. With many of Forsythe’s dances, like *OFTr*, it becomes difficult to discern where processual engagement concludes, if at all. Indeed, whether or not the procedures can properly be called translation, the interactive objects challenge the primacy of original over copy; as the score fixes the dance’s “data,” it simultaneously renders it available to multiple material manifestations.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, then, the comprehensive score at the heart of *Synchronous Objects* serves a radically different purpose than many forms of dance notation: just as *Geography* does, *Synchronous Objects* reveals how documentation might be conceived as a means of exchange, transmission, and communication quite separate from reconstruction. Traditional forms of notation tend to position the score as a means to an end, facilitating a dance’s ultimate resuscitation. Here, even the dance itself is a means to an end, by delivering choreographic structure to the interdisciplinary array of objects, as mediated by the score. As distinct from *Geography*, however, the *Synchronous Objects* documentation is also inextricably linked to a representative version captured on video, and prominently accompanying the score. In fact, because *OFTr* features so much structured improvisation, there is no truly definitive version: since the dancers are always negotiating improvisational “tasks,” the piece is always in a state of flux (Zuniga Shaw 2014, 215). Erin Manning emphasizes the variation encompassed by the *OFTr* score, pointing out how “the ‘reproduced’ of *One Flat Thing, reproduced* connotes the repetition with a difference that is at the heart of each of Forsythe’s stage-based choreographies”

(Manning 105). Just as Lemon's writing sheds light on the profound differences experienced from within a dance performed night after night, so too should Forsythe's score be understood as a technology meant for activating, and not suppressing, iterative difference.

Like many forms of digital documentation, the *Synchronous Objects* score counteracts the assumption of notation as a tool for fixing and stabilizing movement. Through its interactive functions, its multiple possibilities for seeing and hearing, and its orientation toward the extra-bodily objects, the score allows users an unprecedented level of flexibility. There is no one way to "read" the score against the dance, and certainly no one way to re-interpret the dance through the choreographic objects. The site's very organization embodies this perspective, mirroring the de-centralized aggregation of the score's data. Rather than establishing a linear trajectory from score to data to objects, the site's developers created a rhizomatic structure, with no dominant path defining one's exploration of its features. Users can dive straight into an encounter with the objects without viewing either dance or score, for example. As thumbnails of the objects roll through that introductory screen, one might be tempted to click on whichever catches the eye. Once inside the window for a particular object, users need not return to the main screen, and can instead keep exploring by clicking on an ever-present tab titled "related objects." Though there are many advantageous consequences to *Synchronous Objects* being a web-based project (including expanded accessibility, easy updating, user interactivity), it is crucial to appreciate this as a project that could only exist in such a format. Its foundational precepts demand rapid and easy movement from one corner of the site to another, goals that naturally give rise to a decentralized strategy for information-sharing and user engagement.

In "The Dance Without the Dancer," Laura Karreman elucidates the practical and conceptual foundations of several digital approaches to choreographic documentation that

attempt to “dance along with the dance itself” (2013, 120). Karreman points out that efforts to represent dance digitally trace to 1967, beginning with A. Michael Noll’s experiments in New Jersey’s Bell Laboratories. Noll mused “that if a way was found to transfer dance movements to digital data then this data could subsequently be manipulated in many different ways, offering new opportunities for the analysis, creation and transmission of dance” (120). Starting in the late 1960s, then, digital tools were seen as a pathway to more intuitive, user-friendly, accessible, and de-specialized modes of recording. Karreman tracks the development of these tools, noting a series of overarching similarities in contemporary approaches: most tend to be video-based, multi-authored, and open source (2013).¹⁰² In a collaborative essay on emergent digital forms of choreographic research, Scott deLahunta (key collaborator for *Motion Bank*) and Norah Zuniga Shaw (key collaborator for *Synchronous Objects*) detail several of these projects, including web-based efforts by Siobhan Davies, Wayne McGregor, and Emio Greco (2008).¹⁰³

All of these developments in digital dance scoring point to an interest not just in making dance more accessible, but making it more legible. In this sense, the Forsythe team’s objectives are closer to those of some forms of traditional notation (Laban, Feuillet, and even Arbeau, for example¹⁰⁴) than they are to the Lemon’s accumulated archive. Though *Geography* might offer the reader insight into Lemon’s creative trajectory, for example, Lemon’s focus is less on choreographic structure than sub-structure, the strata of historical and personal experience that

¹⁰² In particular, the increased focus on open source technology (as opposed to proprietary platforms that do not make codes available for use and adaptation) has real consequences for the presumed correlation of notation and authorship. Though *Synchronous Objects* relies on the Adobe’s Flash platform, and is thus not technically open source, the collaborative nature of its development clearly aligns with these priorities.

¹⁰³ The digital archive for Siobhan Davies Dance is called *Replay*; Emio Greco’s company has been pursuing the *Notation Research Project* since 2004; Wayne McGregor’s *ENTITY* was a collaborative research project involving specialists in artificial intelligence, cognitive science, robotics, biology/ cardiology, neurophysiology, interface research and digital arts (DeLahunta and Zuniga Shaw 2008, 131).

¹⁰⁴ Forsythe was particularly influenced by Laban’s schematization of bodily mechanics, adapting those ideas while exploding the physical language of ballet through “a continual reassignment of effort and shape” (Forsythe and Guatterini 1989, 76). From Laban, Forsythe also gleans the notion of the trace forms written in, on or with body parts (75), an influence clearly evidenced by another of his influential digital projects, *Improvisation Technologies* (see Forsythe 2000).

underpin the dance. Yet both *Synchronous Objects* and the *Geography Trilogy* ultimately concern knowledge production, and the ways in which documentation renders choreographic research penetrable and communicable. Fiona Bannon, in particular, makes the case that online archives and scores, like *Synchronous Objects*, contribute to the validation and extension of dance as an academic discipline. She argues that the embodied experience viewed through the lens of digital processing creates opportunities for “synergistic learning” that cement dance’s presence in the academy due to its adaptability to other inquiries (Bannon 2010, 53). Thus a departure from traditional systems of notation: choreographic documentation is now, in many contexts, understood as a vehicle to translate bodily knowing into arenas outside of choreography, where learning about dance morphs into “learning through dance” (57).

As I discussed at the opening of this chapter, I chose to focus my analysis around the question of documentation in order to explore the quality and diversity of the “documents” themselves, whether in the form of a book or through emergent modes of web-based recording and transmission. I have also hoped to demonstrate how documentation can be used to expand the terrain of choreographic thinking, how various practices come to the fore in order to give dances multiple identities across media. In discussing digital format scores and documentation, Karreman echoes this concern, writing that the authors of digital scores:

focus on expanding conditions for “creation,” “exchange,” and “transmission” at the expense of the establishment of an authoritative source or score. All of these are terms that connect knowledge with motion, and this is not accidental. On the opposite side stand “recording,” “documenting” and “capturing” – terms that imply an image of the dance or dancer as still object. These processes rather render dance into an object that can be made intelligible through a traditional positivist approach: analysis, categorization and, ultimately, storage in the right place.” (2013, 125)

Here, Karreman implicitly aligns documentation with static archives, and opposes these to digital formats that, by the very nature of the digital world, will be render choreographic thinking more

open to flow and exchange. I, too, have certainly emphasized the possibilities of creation, exchange and transmission – and not just through digital scoring as exemplified by *Synchronous Objects*. Lemon’s approach to the archive, though analog, also reveals the creative power of choreographic thinking, and generates new opportunities for moving dance into broader discursive frameworks. In contrast to Karreman, then, I do not see digital projects in theoretical opposition to documentation, recording and archive formation. Rather, *Synchronous Objects*, among many other concurrent examples of digital documentation, evidences the power of dance to expand existing notions of the archive, and to contest equivalences between documentation and anti-body positivisms. Bannon, in fact, points out how Forsythe uses *Synchronous Objects* as a way to archive, or create a “library:” “to effectively publish what previously was thought unpublishable,” to contest “doubts about the worth and contribution to culture that dance can make” (2010, 54). It is one thing to privilege creation and exchange over recording and capture, but to create a critical stance in opposition to the archive is, from many perspectives, to lose the progress that has been made in validating dance’s history.

What is clear, in any case, is that time-worn appeals to dance’s essential ephemerality run aground precisely at the point where the many viable, contemporary projects for documentation and scoring come to the fore. Moreover, when viewed outside the purview of preservation and reconstruction, the impact of these inscriptional practices hinges on their ability to activate a choreographer’s thinking in ways that accompany, but do not supersede, the body’s immersion in a dance. How can the conceptual category of “disappearance” still be deemed useful, then, when the dances in question persist in new forms, extend in multiple directions, assert themselves under new guises, and continue to uncover novel possibilities for engagement? Forsythe argues that as “poignant as the ephemerality of the act might be, its transient nature does not allow for

sustained examination or even the possibility of objective, distinct readings from the position that language offers the sciences and other branches of arts” (Forsythe 2009). Dance's ephemerality, for Forsythe, remains stubbornly problematic not because we lose dance works to the relentless passage of time, but because their disappearance renders us unable to adequately read and analyze choreographic structure. Thus, Forsythe's interest in searching for new ways to represent and visualize choreographic structure aims not to fix the live event as a stable object, but to exploring what choreographic structure can offer as a mode of knowledge production beyond in-the-moment experiences of dance. Thus his strategies for digital documentation and recording do not just stabilize and consolidate, but rather render dances legible, accessible, and open to continual re-inscription. They suggest how the schematization of a dance (whether through data, language scores, or self-reflective prose) can contribute to yet another point of connection between reader and dance that generates pleasurable new ways of thinking and engaging.

Conclusion

Merce Cunningham famously, though somewhat paradoxically writes, in his collection of choreographic scores entitled *Changes*, that “you have to love dance to stick to it” because “it gives you nothing back, no manuscripts to store away, no paintings to show on walls and maybe hang in museums, no poems to be printed and sold, nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive” (1968). Cunningham's remark gains a considerable irony in hindsight, and not only because of its placement in a formal, widely distributed collection of scores. As we now know, the years immediately following his death have witnessed the performative finality of his

“legacy tour” alongside the gradual transfer of the company’s material archives to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In focusing on the fleeting moment, Cunningham loses sight of the concurrent practices (writing, sketching, theorizing) that have shaped the experiences and education of countless students and dance lovers who have sought to interact with his work. In the throes of the creative process, under the pressure to mount a choreographic product, and captivated by the immediacy of dancing bodies making choreographic vision a reality, it must seem inconceivable that the bulk of dance’s impact resides anywhere besides the brief window of time in which dancers take the stage. Yet many of Cunningham’s dances have enjoyed longer lives than most. They have passed through generations of bodies, raised theoretical issues animating countless critical perspectives, and left material traces substantial enough to be sought after by an established institution. In addressing the documentation practices of Lemon, and Forsythe, I hope to have gestured toward a vast landscape of territory that is being (and will continue to be) explored beyond Cunningham’s fleeting moment – evidence, in fact, of choreographers treating documentation as a labor of love unto itself.

As I discussed much earlier in my analysis, when Rudolf Laban developed his notational system, he was convinced that symbolic inscription would “clarify and simplify” vague notions about the nature and structure of movement (Laban 1966, 123). Recording became, for Laban, a kind of unveiling, a way to penetrate deeper into the rich corporeal knowledge typically locked mutely within the dancer’s body. Documentation represented a viable means of bringing that corporeal knowledge to the surface, the better to revel in and share. A similar impulse can be discerned across the examples in this chapter. Lemon, radically reversing Laban’s trajectory toward simplification, reveals corporeal knowledge by amassing and sharing an excess, gesturing to the poignancy of capture as an eternally unfinished project. Forsythe, finally, follows Laban

by reducing dance to a series of symbols, using the score not to uncover movement's universal principles, but to reveal and re-present choreographic structures. Moreover, Forsythe goes much further, unleashing those structures into a virtual space of engagement where new audiences can approach it on their own terms. These practices deserve to be contextualized within the long legacy of notation, especially in the extent to which they extend documentation's purview from preservation to transmission and exchange. They also deserve to be appreciated and evaluated for their own sake, not as traces left in the wake of ephemeral moments, but as enduring articulations of choreographic thinking grappling with the way that dances make meaning, and history.

Conclusion: Toward Generativity

In November 2005 I was studying at Trinity Laban in the UK, working on a master's degree that combined practice and theory by incorporating studio-based and scholarly research. Looking to further develop my choreographic practice, I was not at that time particularly interested in Rudolf Laban's system of notation; in fact, the course that I enrolled in did not include training in reading or writing the *kinetography*. Nonetheless, I encountered Valerie Preston-Dunlop, one of Laban's most prolific former students with respect to carrying on, and in many ways extending, his legacy. Studying with Preston-Dunlop, I found myself immersed in the bewilderingly complex historical background that informed Laban's work: childhood military training with the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy, experimentations in Rosicrucianism amid the turn-of-the-century Parisian salon circuit, establishing a dance school among the Munich avant-garde of Kandinsky and Schoenberg, drawing young dancers to Ascona's anarcho-spiritual "centre for experimental living" (Preston-Dunlop 2008, 28), organizing mass movement choirs for amateurs and laborers, assuming cultural leadership under the Nazi party, and applying movement analysis to labor efficiency in postwar England. It seemed to me, and still does, that the practice of writing dance – of *scoring* dance – resonates with this multi-faceted historical context in fascinating, and often contradictory, ways.

How is it, for example, that Laban's work with movement notation connects equally to an interest in "sacred geometry" and a commitment to industrial productivity? How was Laban's codification of movement used to support a rhetoric of individualism at the same time as it

promoted a disciplined collectivism, implicitly championing the “natural” body as well as the culturally conditioned? How was notation deployed to secure the legitimacy of bodily practices while also being used to extract movement’s principles toward an extra-bodily “rationalization?” Similarly, I puzzled over the theoretical implications of Laban’s project, particularly in light of the 20th century progression from structuralism to post-structuralism. What did it mean to posit a universal structural “grammar” underlying human movement, and what are we to make of this grammar if textuality is all about flux, flow and destabilization?

While these questions were crystallizing, I was also hard at work in the studio, trying for the first time to initiate a choreographic practice that revolved around devising movement. Most of my prior work had been developed in a collaborative, theater-based model wherein I co-directed alongside a playwright and an actor/director. Our works contained in-depth movement explorations, but I typically choreographed these with character or plot development in mind. At Laban I forced myself to contend with an empty studio, and to start with the resources of my own physicality. Soon, though, I was furnished with a particularly useful set of tools in the form of William Forsythe’s “improvisation technologies.” The technologies, packaged for distribution as a CD-ROM in 1999/2000, comprise a series of operations integral to Forsythe’s choreographic practice. In a series of video lectures, Forsythe explains and demonstrates various procedures, largely concerning the inscription and manipulation of points, lines, and curves within and around the body (clearly influenced by Laban’s conception of kinetic space). I eagerly engaged – “extruding,” “replacing,” and sweeping through “parallel shears” (Forsythe 2000). For the first time, I was producing movement that felt interesting yet referred to nothing.

With the help of the improvisation technologies, I exploded into movement, crafting long sequences of spatially intricate material. Energized, I took my beautiful movement phrases into a

group rehearsal, where they promptly and unequivocally died. When I taught the phrases, everything that had seemed idiosyncratic and fresh flattened out into what looked like painfully enforced unison. Perhaps I was not a skilled enough director, or perhaps the transposition of the material onto other dancers revealed that it was not as strong as I had initially thought. In any case, I realized that whether or not those initial movement phrases survived, I was still intrigued by the process of negotiating Forsythe's operations. I returned to the "technologies," thinking about them as a set of instructive notations. I let go of the movement, and then let go of Forsythe's language as well, re-writing prompts that seemed to better capture what I had produced. I returned to the studio with the same group of dancers, instructing verbally instead of physically. I had anticipated that my approach would function as a kind of "faulty" notational system, giving rise to different interpretations and approaches. As I watched the prompts ripple through the room in completely unforeseen ways, I was captivated, noting significant differences juxtaposed with an echoing sameness. The group exhibited clear individuality matched with an obvious connection to the shared verbal source material.

I still work this way today, ten years later. Straightforward verbal directions continue to interest me because no matter their simplicity, they encourage dancers to produce a dizzying amount of variation. I ask dancers to approach these instructions like problems to be solved, and there is no way that I can anticipate the resources that they will bring to these problems, or the physical ingenuity that will be evidenced by their choices. I have also found this method to be a productive means of grappling with choreographic legacy. Soon after I started transmitting my own movement through language scores, I realized that I could devise scores referencing pieces of canonical choreography or pop cultural movement phenomena, investigating perpetuation, re-inscription and the choreographic archive in the process. Within the scope of this research, I

consider myself to be engaging in choreography on a number of levels. I devise the prompts, and this writing practice is itself choreographic. I make decisions about spatial organization and timing, encouraging the physical material to take a distinct shape. I place frames around a dance that guide the spectator's experience, often communicating the scores verbally or in print alongside the performance. In most cases, the identity of a specific work, and the nature of dance-making labor, sits somewhere in between originating concept, language prompts, in-studio decision-making, and the irreplaceable contributions of the dancers.

In general, I work toward setting material; I do not construe this as an improvisational practice. Oddly, though, I found my work with language scores resonating with another facet of my training – choreographic improvisation as developed by Richard Bull. I encountered Bull's methods as a college student in Philadelphia, where Headlong Dance Theater had been deploying those methods to great success. Later, I performed with De Facto Dance, a New York Company spearheaded by former member of Richard Bull Dance Theatre.¹⁰⁵ Bull's approach – influenced by his improvisational training as a jazz pianist – encourages dancers to develop a number of spontaneous compositional skills, such as cultivating theme and variation, effecting spontaneous unison, and attending to a balance between foreground and background. Bull was also well known, however, for producing "talking dances," or "dances that describe themselves."¹⁰⁶ In these dances, a performer might frankly state what they are doing as they are doing it, or verbally air the structural principles through which the dance is coming into being. While my Bull-influenced improvisational training contrasted significantly with my own application of language scores, I found common ground in the easy juxtaposition of movement and language, the implementation of clear structural precepts to encourage individual decision-making.

¹⁰⁵ Members of Headlong Dance Theater and De Facto Dance studied with Bull at Wesleyan University, where he taught from 1983-1997.

¹⁰⁶ See Foster (2002).

When I carried these ideas into yet another phase of postgraduate research – this time in the context of a doctoral program in the UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance – I knew that I did not want to write about my own choreographic process, or the improvisational practice that had influenced me so substantially. Rather, I thought I might treat approaches that seemed consonant with those. The more I looked, the more I seemed to see them – “faulty” notations, conspicuous scores, or creative practices using idiosyncratic scoring as a point of departure. I thought immediately of canonical works like Trisha Brown’s *Line Up* (1976), where Brown uses verbal articulations to direct, describe, or facilitate the dancers’ actions. I considered dances that emphasized the materiality of the score, like Jonathan Burrows’ *Both Sitting Duet* (2002), where Burrows and his collaborator, composer Matteo Fargion, perform an intricate gestural sequence facilitated by the documents lying at their feet. I thought of performances I had seen in person, like Miguel Gutierrez’s *Last Meadow* (2009), where dancers charge maniacally around the stage as Michelle Boulé (in James Dean drag) shouts triggering prompts alongside brutal exhortations of “keep going, keep going, keep going” (2009). I experienced Gerard and Kelly’s *Reusable Parts/Endless Love* (2011), where the artists subvert the hetero-normative couplings in Tino Sehgal’s *The Kiss* (2006) – using precise verbal notation to transpose Sehgal’s choreography onto the “wrong” bodies. Aside from specific *works*, I also researched score-centric models of *working*, like Anna Halprin’s approach to the “open” score (developed alongside Lawrence Halprin’s systemized RSVP Cycles). I watched video footage of dancers negotiating Lisa Nelson’s “tuning scores,” where dancers collectively direct improvisation by calling mutually recognized cues, such as “go,” “pause,” “replace,” and “reverse.”¹⁰⁷ In attempting to make sense of this rich field of experimentation, I felt an urgent need to better

¹⁰⁷ See Buckwalter (2010).

understand how scores promote different forms of engagement, and an urgent desire to cultivate a vocabulary that might address the multiple relationships between score and performance.

I share this personal history, and these long-percolating questions, in order to shed light on why I have undertaken the present theorization of the contemporary score. Obviously, I could not treat every notable instance of choreographic scoring since the early 1960s, nor was I interested in producing a periodized historicization that linked similar applications to particular time frames. Rather, I set out to identify some important commonalities across a range of choreographic practices that all seemed to point to the score's generative capacity – to the notational structures that keep dances moving rather than locked into place. By linking these examples to overarching theoretical question about textuality, political efficacy, and archival, I have also hoped to suggest how a more finely tuned attention to notational specificity might enrich existing approaches to these admittedly broad questions. When scoring is understood as an integral part of choreographic practice rather than its reflection or index, it becomes easier to see how different ways of schematizing structure produce different results, and most especially different forms of engagement. Those questions can then take root in a heterogeneous field of ongoing practical and discursive possibilities, one that perpetually reanimates itself as multiple modes of inscription, agency, and perpetuation come to the fore.

In this pursuit, I am indebted to the body of research that has, for decades, asserted dance's legibility. Where much of this research has focused on how dance makes meaning, however, the current project in some sense pursues the opposite trajectory. That is, I consider not so much what dance represents, but how it is represented; not movement as signifier, but movement as signified. Rather than using scores to make the case for any universally valid relationship between dance and language, I look at specific ways in which choreographers have

used language to shape process and product. Deborah Hay, for example, writes scores that de-emphasize what particular movements look like in favor of the physical thinking that supports performance. She makes use of unanswerable questions to keep dancers searching, virtuosic in their refusal of mastery or resolution. Yvonne Meier, as is evidenced by *Bother of Gogolorez*, uses imagery to nudge dancers toward the unpredictable, unhinged, and uncensored. She also explicitly addresses the audience, highlighting notational signification in the moment of performance in a way that calls her own choreographic authority into question. These choreographers are careful about the kind of language that they use, and the ways in which language interweaves with physical strategies for interpretation. Thus they illustrate how notational writing can contribute to choreographic practice in ways that are tangible and tightly linked to the body. Not movement *as* language, and not movement as language's *other*, but language and movement working in tandem to support clear choreographic goals.

Likewise, my discussion of participatory scores challenges over-generalized binaries between active and passive spectatorship, pinpointing specific forms of involvement in particularized contexts. In many ways, the question of agency relates just as pertinently to the language scores featured in this analysis, since dancerly compliance with those scores challenges the opposition between choreographic force and resistance, nuancing the presumed alignment of writing with the former and the dancing body with the latter. Here, though, I have focused on the spectator's role in order to address the score's capacity to instigate (and instigate reflection upon) collective action. In so doing, I shed light on engagement where that engagement is typically thought to hinge on receptivity. And ultimately, I arrive at the same conclusion – that scores provide clear frameworks, demanding compliance but also enabling self-direction and heightened self-awareness. In the case of Ishmael Houston-Jones's participatory improvisational

structure, that self-direction manifests as audience members acknowledge their own “desires,” and come to terms with the choreographer’s “surrender.” For Julie Tolentino’s spectators, on the other hand, involvement entails more physical immersion, a process of surrender that relates not to conscious decision-making, but rather to an acknowledgement of the weight of physical presence and mutual influence. Engendering accountability, self-awareness, and a sense of responsibility, these participatory scores uncover the relational connections that underpin even more conventional instances of spectatorship.

In addition to these score-driven meditations on textuality and agency, my research presents a fresh perspective to those continuing to wrestle with dance's presence in the archive. Countering dance's presumed ephemerality has long been one of the most conspicuously stated aims of those developing and championing notational systems. Yet I consider choreographic documentation that does not concern itself with countering the losses incurred as a result of dance’s association with the body. Taking the bodily manifestation of a dance as merely one facet of choreographic production, Lemon and Forsythe demonstrate how choreographic research can circulate in print or digital formats: through words, images, reminiscences, translations, and medial manipulations. I have consistently emphasized the extra-bodily facets of these forms of documentation, and this perhaps runs counter to current theorizations of the archive that make a case for the body’s centrality, demonstrating how performance itself can function as an act of recording. While I acknowledge the potency of performance as a mode of knowledge production, perpetuation and transfer, I develop a different focus in order to broaden the scope of what might be discernable as choreographic research and choreographic labor. I certainly do not take this approach in order to alienate the body from the archive, or to further link bodily cultural production to the fleeting moment. What I do hope is that by acknowledging

the many possible avenues through which documentation circulates and extends choreographic ideas, it might be easier to appreciate the profound rootedness of those ideas in corporeal experience without necessarily linking them to loss and disappearance.

As much as I have attempted to validate scores as crucial components of choreographic practice, I have also labored to locate dance-based experimentation within a wider context of interdisciplinary notational play around 1960. At present, dance historians have drawn very few connections between rapidly changing approaches to the choreographic score and the interdisciplinary “score culture” emerging from that period's avant-gardes. In fact, the noticeable shift from highly codified, universalizing forms of dance notation (like Laban’s) to work-specific modes of generative scoring has thus far received almost no critical attention. If the present investigation signals such a shift, then much work remains to be done to more comprehensively detail how choreographers influenced and were influenced by similarly inclined composers, directors and visual artists. By beginning my analysis with a discussion of the early 1960s, I anchor my investigation to a significant period of notational upheaval. By tracking these changes through the present, I suggest how contemporary choreographers taking up generative scoring link not only to dance historical precedents, but to a much wider network of artists who continue to grapple with and redefine the relationship between structural templates and action. I also hope that this approach will shed light on what I perceive to be somewhat of a dance historical blind spot – that is, the few years just before the Judson Church concerts, in which so many of the innovations typically associated with Judson period were already well under way. These two gestures – a more thorough acknowledgement of early 1960s interdisciplinarity, as well as a more measured appreciation of the Judson concerts with respect to the overall historical arc of

the 1960s – will undoubtedly prove beneficial as researchers continue to evaluate and complicate the lasting impact of that significant historical period, both within dance studies and without.

If, after 1960, generativity, indeterminacy, and openness become impossible to ignore, then it is not to say that notational systems and vocabularies dating from pre-1960 would not benefit from a similar theoretical refocus. I have undertaken the present investigation in part due to my conviction that notation systems of the past, even those aspiring to comprehensiveness and universality, can be scrutinized with generativity in mind. Assessments of notational successes and failures have, in many ways, obscured how the necessary partiality of notational documents can be considered a theoretically productive point of departure. This investigation considers the “gap” between the contemporary score and its various readers as a fertile ground where questions about interpretation, community, and legacy come to the fore. Such questions might easily be taken up with respect to scores of the past, and the people who engaged with them. For example, how do various notational forms invite individuals into choreographic structures in particularized or unforeseen ways, even as they facilitate preservation and reproduction? What elements are knowingly, even strategically, left to personal style, contingent circumstances, or well-established (and thus unrecorded) approaches to physical “reading”? What possibilities do notational documents foment for re-reading, and how might strategies for realization that appear to involve misunderstanding be reframed as welcome evolution? And finally, might we attend to the ways in which scores establish a dance’s work-identity by enabling iterative differentiation rather than minimizing it?

I became interested in scores by puzzling over the seeming incongruity of Laban’s influences. I soon stopped trying to resolve those incongruities, and I likewise stopped trying to reconcile his utter fascination with individual expression and the desire to schematize its

materialization. I became even more interested in scores as I developed my own, taking unambiguous choreographic control while opening a door to everything that I could not control as embodied by the dancing *other*. I stopped trying to resolve that incongruity too. Instead, I followed this unresolvable problem to the present investigation, one that I hope might be of much more general use, especially its proposal that the score constitutes a productively double-edged sword of stability and motility, of what it can and cannot contain. It would be a fruitless question to ask whether or not the scores treated in this analysis “work” – they work to the extent that we perceive their working, that they make forms of engagement possible for dancers, choreographers, spectators and readers. Instead, the goal is to ask better questions about how they work, through what parameters they draw people in and move dances forward.

In moving dances forward, these scores do not keep dances intact; they do not hold them in place. They do not communicate choreographic ideas in the absence of bodies, but rather they call upon those bodies. They summon, and they welcome. They render choreographic structures responsive. They ask us to think through the perpetuation of choreographic works outside a paradigm of fixity, suggesting instead the promise of multiplicity and inescapable difference. They reveal choreographic production as consummately relational, coming about through practice (which is another way of saying culture), and manifesting through a range of media. They highlight the work of choreographing, the work of dancing, and the power of engaged reception. Scores offer themselves up as maps, provocations, invitations, and challenges, as fodder for understanding and misunderstanding, as vehicles for compliance and for subversion, as evidence of what might have been, and what will be.

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