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A Conceit of the Natural Body:

The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Culture and Performance

by

Duncan G. Gilbert

2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training

by

Duncan G. Gilbert

Doctor in Philosophy of Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Susan Leigh Foster, Chair

Under the influence of regimens broadly known as “Somatics,” late 20th century contemporary dancers revolutionized their training. They instituted biological and mechanical constructs of the body as the logic for dance classes, claiming to uncover a “natural” way of moving. By doing so these dancers saw themselves as rejecting preceding models such as Graham technique and ballet, which they felt treated the body as an instrument trained to meet the ideals of an aesthetic tradition. Convinced of the importance of their intervention, practitioners of Somatics initially worked with meager resources forging transnational alliances of pedagogies and aesthetics. Yet by the end of the 20th century, the training had found its way in the worlds most venerable dance education programs. A handful of choreographers, who initially experimented with Somatics in a small community, ultimately ascended within a transnational circuit of large concert houses. Educational institutions consequently saw value in Somatics, and implemented its pedagogy

based on the conceit that focusing on the natural body provides dancers with the greatest facility for performance, while fueling broad creative possibility in choreographic processes.

In contrast with Somatic rhetoric, this dissertation traces how dancers used the idea the idea of nature to tackle changing social circumstances. A conceit of the natural body endured throughout the last 4 decades of the 20th century even while its ideological underpinnings underwent change, visible in shifts seen in studio procedures, the look and aptitudes of the dancing body, and the modalities of concerts. Dancers constructed what they saw as essential bodily truths by combining scientific metaphors, with non-Western practices that they represented as ancient and mystical. Through this combination they felt they retrieved lost corporeal capacities that they believed were still evident in children, animals and supposedly primitive societies. By the 1970s, a community of practitioners had synthesized what they felt was a comprehensively inclusive body that engendered an anti-hierarchical collective dance culture. Somatics therefore lined up with other subcultures of the era that turned to nature in search of personal authenticity as a source for liberation. Bodily “truth” purported to resist outdated gender ideals and authoritarian training, an idea that fueled the rapid transnational uptake of Somatics. As the approach established itself in Britain, Holland and Australia, it disseminated and naturalized key principles of American post-war liberalism; dancers across the network believed they were reclaiming an inherent right to individual creative freedom by displacing modern and classical aesthetics with dance based on the natural functioning of anatomical structure. In the 1980s, artists largely jettisoned the emphasis on collectivism; yet as they became entrepreneurs in line with the new economic culture of staunch individualism, the rhetoric about nature endured. Using signature choreography, and emphasizing the uniqueness of different Somatic-informed pedagogies, they pursued careerism, even as they often contested

rampant conservative cultural agendas. Despite the political critique launched in the 1980s, by the close of the 20th century, Somatics had achieved institutional status, embodying new corporate ethics. The creative autonomy that dancers had won in previous decades now recalibrated itself through demands made upon artists in education and the professional field to prove capitalism is constituted by boundless innovation despite diminishing arts resources in an age of austerity. Throughout all these changes Somatics continued to cultivate a canonical body as an invisible category of nature, which purportedly accounted for ontology, yet marked difference and enacted exclusion from its supposedly universal purview.

The Dissertation of Duncan G. Gilbert is approved.

Lionel Popkin

Sue-Ellen Case

Janet O'Shea

Susan Leigh Foster, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Gill Clarke (1954-2011) and Edna Coates (1914-1996). Gill was a London-based dancer, educator and lynchpin of independent dance in her home city. She worked tirelessly to cultivate a sense of worth among artists that was not dependent on state-support or conventional ideas about success. I took my first Somatic-based class with Gill and decided that this was the training I wanted to pursue based on her teaching and dancing. Gill supported my artistic development even as my work went in directions that were challenging for her. I like to think that she would similarly engage with my study of Somatics, valuing its contribution to our field whether or not she agreed with all the ideas put forward. My maternal grandmother Edna also instilled in me a sense of worth by never tiring in her interest in, and support for, my artistic pursuits, which moved far beyond what was familiar for her. In 1993 she visited me in the Netherlands where I was training in Somatics. After watching some classes she said to faculty member Lisa Kraus, “I think this could really catch on!” As you will see in the dissertation, she could not have been more accurate!

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VITA

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- 2014 “Negotiating the Spectacle in Transgender Performances of Alexis Arquette, Zackary Drucker, DavEnd, Niv Acosta, and Tobaron Waxman.” In *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1.1:2.
- 2004 “You Have Been Watched: Dances between scrutiny and transubstantiation in the viewing of the transgendered body on closed circuit television.” In *Extensions journal of embodied technology*. Los Angeles: UCLA.

- 2013 “Forget Provocation, Let’s have Sex.” *Dance Theatre Journal* 25:2. Special issue, Doran George and Tessa Wills eds.
- 2013 “Rumpelstiltskin’s Contradictory Mandate: The contemporary obligation to weave cultural detritus in avant-garde art.” In *Inventing Futures*. Joao Da Silva, Emile Gallier and Konstantina Georgelous eds., Artez School of Arts Publication.
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Introduction: *Defining a Community of Practitioners*

I undertook doctoral research to understand a contradiction in the ideological framework manifested in and supporting Somatics. As a collection of regimens broadly gathered under the title, Somatics initially promised to liberate dancers from oppressive training by being more respectful of the body than classical and modern dance techniques. Teachers also insisted upon the uniqueness of Somatics as a form of training that nurtures the creativity of each dancer. In the early 1990s I opted for a rarified Somatic-based education at the Dutch European Dance Development Center (EDDC) because the school's ethos matched my leftist convictions. The modern and classical approaches that I witnessed in conservatories in my home country of Britain corresponded with a dictatorial culture precipitated by Thatcher's conservative government. Under the instruction of seemingly imperious teachers, students painstakingly repeated and perfected a codified vocabulary. By strong contrast, EDDC students seemed to research their own vocabularies based on an experiential understanding that they cultivated of anatomical functional imperatives. We believed we were working with culturally neutral natural kinetics that could engender artistic diversity, which I connected to values shaped by protesting against Thatcher's right wing agenda. As an economically disadvantaged gender-queer young adult, I allied myself with various minorities, women, and the working-class, all under attack in 1980s Britain. In a related manner, using Somatics, men and women moved with relative equivalence to challenge gender stereotypes, and the approach underpinned the choreographing of gay male desire. Moreover, by disbanding with codified vocabulary, disabled and non-disabled dancers invented new movement, involving wheelchairs for example.

Yet my education also instituted some conservative ideas. The training largely excluded non-Western dance aesthetics, and configured transgender expression as artificial. My

pronounced assibilation of words containing “s” sounds, and effeminate movement, seemed not to be culturally neutral because it challenged prevailing beliefs about natural gender. So when I was told my voice was unnaturally high and was encouraged to work with male teachers to connect with my masculinity, I believed my femininity resulted from my bodily nature somehow having been thwarted. Southern European and non-Western students faced similar problems being from cultures that are represented as especially passionate, sexual, and mystical in Anglo, Germanic, and Nordic contexts. Like me, these students found that the school’s dominant aesthetics marked them as non-neutral. All in all, despite its progressive intentions, EDDC stratified bodies as being more or less authentically connected with nature; and, although I (and others) questioned the premise of neutrality, it was difficult to challenge because it was bolstered by generally accepted scientific metaphors.

This dissertation addresses the robustness of the term “nature” by showing that, while dancers often feel they are working with bodily truths, their concepts are socially constructed and result from dominant cultural values. For example, the mobilization of “transgender” as a critical term and social movement didn’t happen until some years after my graduation from EDDC. In absence of a widely understood language to contest ideas about natural gender, it would have been hard to cultivate a more inclusive perspective. Similarly, as students we naturalized the tendentious aesthetics with which our teachers constructed the essential body because attention had not been drawn to the Eurocentric specificity of canonized art movements, including dance. These insights draw attention to how the idea of bodily authenticity depends upon widely held views. I capitalize on this understanding to demonstrate that rather than being essential, the natural body is a historically and culturally contingent idea. By tracing how

Somatics revolutionized pedagogy, achieved transnational dissemination, influenced concert work, and was institutionalized, this project conducts a genealogy of its approach to training.

To reveal distinct cultural values embedded in the concept of nature, the dissertation compares significantly different ways in which Somatics has been implemented. I achieve this by focusing on a relatively small artistic community which I became part of through EDDC. This first section of the introduction delineates the community on which the study focuses. It articulates the values that hold the community together; distinguishes the practices undertaken by other artists working with Somatics; and establishes how my connection to EDDC affords me appreciation of these factors.

EDDC Students and faculty saw themselves as part of a tradition associated with Judson Church, in New York's Greenwich Village, which was an epicenter for artists in the early 1960s. This tradition took shape in opposition to modern and classical aesthetics and focused on experimentation. Many EDDC teachers rejected modern and classical training in the 1970s by consolidating pedagogies and choreographic strategies they associated with Judson.¹ In contrast with emulating a visible kinetic form, teachers argued that in a receptive state, students recover functional movement patterns related to evolutionary development.² Somatics purportedly fomented aesthetic diversity because; rather than repeat imposed aesthetics, dancers discovered

¹ EDDC faculty probably identified with Judson, because it became idiomatic of changes in modern dance training and choreography. For example, Melanie Bales uses the term "post-Judson training", referring to contemporary dance culture "since the Judson Era of American modern dance". Melanie; Rebecca Nettle-Fiol Bales, *The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1-2. Many of the artists associated with Judson taught at EDDC and had artistic relationships with the faculty. For a discussion of the practices undertaken at Judson Church, see: Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

² 2. Tony Thatcher drew "quadraped" and "Monkey" positions from Alexander Technique, which refer to species lower on the phylogenetic scale than humans, while, from the same regimen, Eva Karczag used sitting and standing, and was likely influenced by BMC's development movement patterns. I address evolutionary theory in Somatics in chapter 1. My knowledge of Thatcher's and Karczag's pedagogy is based on training under them at EDDC from 1992-1996. Eva Karczag and Tony Thatcher "Practice Class" (daily training, European Dance Development Center, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 1992-1996).

a unique connection with an inherent propensity for movement. Artists who visited and graduated from EDDC saw themselves as creating novel vocabularies underpinned by the training. I conduct comparative analysis of the different implementations of Somatics within this community to reveal distinct uses of the idea of natural movement.

Geographical and historical circumstances contributed to diversity in how dancers conceived of the natural body. In fact, distinct political, economic, and social factors affected Somatics, which resulted in contestation within the community. Yet practitioners tended to frame their disagreement through the discourse that, through various implementations of the training, physical principles inherent in the body were being discovered, and contributing to distinct ideas. They resolved the conflict between the ideas that they were accessing natural movement while cultivating diverse practices, with the conceit that their experimentation gave rise to different possibilities.³ In the 1990s, EDDC boasted a multiplicity of pedagogies and choreographies based on approaches that had been developed over at least 30 years and bore the influence of changing political and economic circumstances, as well as regional differences. Dancers initially depended on the transnational reach of their community because, in their opposition to modern and classical aesthetics, they failed to attract sufficient resources from any single national dance establishment. EDDC was one of a few isolated institutions that forged alliances with artists and their independent organizations in America, Britain, the Netherlands, Australia, and elsewhere. The historical development of Somatics exhibited synchronicity in hubs where the training took root in the 1970s. As dancers tackled local conditions, however,

³ I am influenced here by Susan Foster's articulation of consistency between training and concert practice in 4 distinct choreographers. Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), chapter 1.

divergent approaches emerged that contributed to a transnational discourse on the natural body.⁴ Artists explained their differences through distinctions in their conception of the natural body and the way that they put it to use. Yet through a correspondence in basic beliefs, they sustained exchange while interpreting Somatics differently, affirming the originality with which it was being implemented compared with the supposed homogeneity of modern and classical dance.

By the 21st century, Somatics found its way into most major dance training institutions within and beyond the West. Great numbers of dance educators invested in the idea that extra-cultural motile capacity provides a foundation for unfettered individual creative freedom. Yet the opposition toward modern and classical vocabularies all but disappeared because, in mainstream education, the regimens were also used to enhance dancers' execution of these approaches. The complementary use of Somatics alongside modern and classical training, actually began prior to the 1960s at Julliard; and by the 1980s, some artists who identified with experimentation, were also integrating modern and classical aesthetics.⁵ This dissertation traces the emergence and dissipation of an experimental community, which began in the 1960s and had all but dissipated by the turn of the century as modern and classical approaches were reintegrated.

Artists' interest in EDDC (and other institutions on which they also depended for income) demonstrated a commitment to experimentation as opposed to staging or teaching Somatics as a complement to modern or classical vocabularies that were endorsed by dance

⁴ Marta Savigliano provided a model for this idea as I address below. Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Institutional Structures of Feeling (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

⁵ Lulu Swiegard and her student Irene Dowd implemented their interpretation of Mabel Ellsworth Todd's work, known as ideokinesis, at Julliard to support ballet and modern training. This way of using Somatics is now employed in many venerable conservatories. Irene Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly: Articles on Functional Anatomy*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: I. Dowd, 1995).

establishments.⁶ Yet all those working with Somatics shared a theory of instructional heritage that contributed to the eventual integration of experimental and complementary approaches. At least as early as the 1960s, teachers and dancers constructed a Somatic lineage that persisted beyond the end of the 20th century, arrogating practices under the idea of natural human kinetics principles. The lineage drew on Alexander Technique and Ideokinesis, which emerged in the progressive era in mutually influencing relationships with modern dance through, for example, Margaret H'Doubler and Doris Humphrey.⁷ Yet the late 20th century lineage also included mid-century artists who were jaundiced by the institutionalization of modern dance, and they augmented or critiqued existing vocabularies with progressive era Somatics. Beginning in the 1950s, new Somatic regimens appeared such as Klein Technique, Skinner Releasing Technique, Body-Mind Centering (BMC), and Authentic Movement. Artists creating novel movement language after the 1960s argued that existing vocabulary impedes the connection with intrinsic kinetic patterns, and focused upon the departures from modern and classical training made with Somatics.⁸ In contrast, those using the regimens to augment modern and classical dance argued that essential principles of movement had been discovered throughout the 20th century that could be applied to any technique. Both approaches, however, cultivated respect for the dancer's

⁶ Practitioners who focused on exploration rather than existing vocabulary largely credit Barbara Clarke as their teacher. For example, Melinda Buckwalter identifies Clarke as key to the development of exploration-based Anatomical Releasing, which I address in chapter 1. Melinda Buckwalter, " "Release— a History", " *Contact Quarterly: Chapbook 3 "The Anatomy of Center"* 37 no. 2 (2012).

⁷ Ann Daly traces the influence of Genevieve Stebbins, who impacted Somatics, on Duncan. Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 123-25. Meanwhile H'Doubler felt F.M. Alexander's influence both directly and through John Dewey who in turn was heavily influenced by Alexander. Janice Ross, *Moving Lessons: Margaret H'doubler and the Beginning of Dance in American Education* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). Humphrey was influenced by Mable Ellsworth Todd which is evident in her focus on fall recovery as emphasizing the effect of gravity on the body. Mike Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd: Proximities, Practices and the Psycho-Physical," *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* 3, no. 1-2 (2012).

⁸ I focus on these techniques, but they do not cover the field of Somatics. Kinetic Awareness Work had an enormous impact beginning in the 1960s, as has Feldenkrais more recently. But in the period I study dancers formed strong alliances using the techniques on which I focus from which physical and textual metaphors have penetrated studio practice to a greater degree have other Somatic approaches.

body based on the idea of working with natural ways of moving, which enabled the eventual integration of the experimental and complementary uses of Somatics.

To the degree that all practitioners invested in the regenerative potential of nature, they shared in dubious perspectives about cultural difference. Most practitioners claimed to heal the body by looking beyond the “modern West” to a largely undifferentiated ancient Orient, and inward to a lost, timeless, savage nobility still evident in children, animals, and primitive societies. The ubiquity of naturalness overshadowed the political significance of such representations, erasing cultural differences and historical specificity. Practitioners swept away the memory of racist and eugenic rhetoric in early 20th century Somatics as if it were irrelevant to more enduring insights. They established unimpeachable bodily truth by virtue of its discovery in such distinct contexts as Zen Buddhism and martial arts, that each supposedly exhibited similar truths to Western physiology and evolutionary theory. 1970s dancers felt they had recuperated a body from various traditions that provided comprehensive inclusivity. As the 20th century progressed, artists contested the conceit of universality by emphasizing cultural difference. Yet by the new millennium, Somatics still manifested a canonical body as an ostensibly invisible category of nature, which purported to account for human ontology even while it marked difference, and enacted myriad exclusions from its supposedly universal purview.

In the rest of the introduction I outline the methodologies used in the dissertation, and provide an overview of how the training changed between the 1960s and the end of the millennium. I also articulate my distinct approach in relation to other scholarship in adjacent fields of inquiry, reviewing the current literature on Somatics and related choreography, and considering how approaches to theorizing the relationship between dance and politics contribute

to my subject. The introduction concludes with a chapter summary and a rationale for the dissertation's organization.

Methodology

Using my insider awareness, I approach Somatics as a participant observer. My experience in the studio, and the broader culture of which EDDC was a part, affords me detailed insight into the meanings with which the training and choreography are infused. In the 18 years since my graduation from EDDC, I have continued to use Somatics as a dancer, choreographer and teacher, and over the course of that time remained in contact with my teachers as well as forged connections with other artists working with the training. This endows me with an appreciation of how physical aptitudes are cultivated in classes and represented in concerts, all of which embody values that are exhibited in the construction of an artistic community. In short, I am attuned to how the physical experiences and choreographic strategies associated with Somatics translate into the aesthetic and ideological convictions that form artistic and social identities.

In my research, I put to use an internal conflict in which I simultaneously identify with and reject Somatics. This arose because I grew as an artist through changes in my physicality and values as I embodied the training, even though the conceit of naturalness was oppressive. This dissertation therefore builds on questions I asked about the assumptions of the culture in which I participated. In this sense, I follow Cynthia Novack's method in *Sharing The Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. She analyzes a community that grew up around contact improvisation (CI) by ricocheting between distance and proximity to the culture.⁹ In a similar manner, I interrogate the aesthetics and ideology that are produced in Somatic classes,

⁹ Cynthia Jean. Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

and are evident in concerts, by scrutinizing the meanings embodied in my experience. I have (i) identified how I represent my body to myself; (ii) tracked what I understand myself to be achieving in particular exercises; (iii) defined the values I accorded skills I developed; and (iv) articulated my sense of self arising within the culture. Through this auto-ethnography I discerned distinctions in the pedagogy and choreography that reflect the different locales, and phases of the development in Somatics. To verify the broader relevance of my results, I collected teachers' and students' written and spoken views on different methods, the labor they entail, the associated aesthetic effects, and the perceived benefits of Somatics.

Based on the understanding gleaned through self-ethnography, I compare how different approaches theorize the recovery of natural facility as central to dance training. By asking the same questions of distinct regimens, the dissertation reveals shared propositions, common aims, and comparable strategies. Yet each regimen also exhibits an internal consistency between the theorization of the body, pedagogical ideology, exercises, and textual representation, which, overall, varies from one technique to another. Building on Susan Foster's conviction that an ideal body is at the centre of a technique, my study identifies the character of each regimen by analyzing my and other's experiences of training, as well as considering textual, visual and kinetic metaphors in the written and instructional rhetoric.¹⁰ I refer to key reference materials used by large numbers of practitioners such as: *The Thinking Body; A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man*,¹¹ and *Body Learning: An introduction to the Alexander Technique*.¹² These texts function as teaching aids with explanations of how the 'problem' of postural,

¹⁰ Susan Leigh. Foster, "Dancing Bodies," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* ed. Jane Desmond (Durham N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Mabel Elsworth. Todd, *The Thinking Body; a Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man* (New York, London,: P.B. Hoeber, 1937).

¹² Michael Gelb, *Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique* (New York: Delilah Books: Distributed by Putnam, 1981).

motional, and psychological health is tackled through particular principles using diagrams and exercises. Through close reading of the texts, as well as the culture of dance classes and pedagogy, I unmask how distinct ideal bodies emerge in different circumstances, despite the enduring presumption of naturalness.

The differences exhibited between the regimens pose a threat to the shared conceit of naturalness. Yet dancers resolve this problem with Somatic “lore” that entails stories of discovery and connection, which inform their embodiment of the training. I first encountered Somatic lore at EDDC, which I augmented for the dissertation with oral histories conducted with pioneers and leaders in the field. Based on collegial and teacher-student relationships (or connections made for me by key figures), artists and educators made themselves available for interview. I used the social science technique of ‘snowball sampling’, encouraging interviewees to guide me to colleagues who would fill in gaps and offer contrasting perspectives. The stories of lineage and ideas about ‘bodily truth’ hinted at the relationships and differences between techniques, as well as how practitioners negotiated change. Janet O’Shea’s use of oral history in *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage*, influenced my analysis of the material.¹³ She theorizes how dancers negotiated challenging circumstances by comparing their contesting stories of the origin of bharata natyam on which they based their practice. Similarly, Somatic practitioners betray the conditions in which their beliefs arose with their disagreement about anatomical function, training, and the origin of methods.

In addition to the use of oral history, I use publications that address the development of the field as reference materials. Beginning in the 1970s, dancers formed *Contact Quarterly (CQ)* and *Movement Research Performance Journal (MRPJ)* in America, as well as the British *New*

¹³ Janet O’Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).

Dance Magazine (NDM), and in Australia, *Writings on Dance*, which all had various regional, national and transnational circulations. Along with other press, institutional and personal archives, articles, letters, reviews of concerts, and interviews on which I draw, the journals document debate and commentary, offering insight into the range of perspectives about Somatics. These documents enhanced my understanding of how practitioners interpreted and applied their ideas. I integrate these diverse sources in a manner similar to Susan Manning and Linda Tomko who use archival material to represent the dynamic perspectives that circulate around a dance.¹⁴

The publications addressed a range of techniques and ideas, which reflected how community contestation over bodily truth was entangled with a diversity of influences. To elucidate identifiable trends, I treat Somatics as a discrete subject, yet it is impossible to definitively extrapolate or delimit the Somatic field, or even the distinct regimens. For example, CI and Somatics exhibit a complicated and contested relationship: the 1970s British term “contact release” emerged because the duet form was strongly associated with Mary Fulkerson’s teaching of Anatomical Releasing. Some American practitioners also experienced the two approaches as intimately related. Daniel Lepkoff and David Woodberry, for example, became involved in the early development of the duet form as undergraduates training under Fulkerson at Rochester College where they met visiting teacher Steve Paxton, who is seen as central to the development of CI.¹⁵ Lepkoff recalls that practicing CI felt like manifesting Fulkerson’s work in

¹⁴ 13. Manning reveals textual traces of historical dances, establishing they were viewed from various social perspectives Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). Meanwhile, in detailed description, Tomko reconstructs contexts and dance cultures with diverse archival traces. Linda J. Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Divides in American Dance, 1890-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Some commentators credit Paxton as contributing to and naming CI, such as Cynthia Novack, who troubles the attribution of CI’s development to one person Novack, *Sharing the Dance*. Others, such as choreographer Trisha Brown, see CI as Paxton’s choreography. For example, her dancer in the early 2000s, Lionel Popkin recalls doing

larger movement, but insists that Paxton learned about CI from working with Fulkerson and her students, who brought special facility because of their experience in Somatics.¹⁶ Woodberry felt that such facility contributed to the ongoing development of CI.¹⁷ Yet also in America, Nancy Stark Smith identified softness, lightness, and sensitivity with Anatomical Releasing trained CI dancers; and by contrast, saw herself as one of the less careful “jocks.”¹⁸ Similar kinds of contestation define dancers’ understanding of the interface between Somatics and martial arts. Some artists drew integrated a martial arts and Somatics, while others insisted the regimens did not influence their use of martial arts. To do justice to the overlap of techniques, I refer when possible to approaches that influenced a regimen or choreography, and visa versa.

The variations in practice - such as the regional differences in CI - provide rich data for comparative study. I establish distinctions in the training across forty years of development, and through the implementation of Somatics in various national and regional hubs. Using the analytical tools outlined above, I demonstrate variation in the pedagogy in line with different historical phases of development in Somatics which I outline in detail below: dance classes initially emphasized collective physical experience, then moved toward individualized processes, and finally imposed a homogenized body in line with aesthetics that had been institutionalized. I also demonstrate how dancers integrated regional distinctions into a transnational discourse by connecting what oral histories and commentary revealed about geography, with evidence of how Somatics was framed through a transnational discourse in order to receive institutional support. Key differences emerged because Somatics achieved institutionalization much earlier in Britain

an Aikidō roll in rehearsal and Brown saying “no that’s Steve’s work”. Lionel Popkin, interview by Doran George, February 5th 2014.

¹⁶ Daniel Lepkoff (choreographer, teacher, and key figure in CI and Somatics), in discussion with the author, August 24th 2011.

¹⁷ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 65.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

and Holland than in America where artists developed the work independently. Documents from the European educational institutions constructed ‘America’ as an innovative cultural center, yet American artists used the European institutionalization to establish legitimacy at a time when they were struggling with meager resources. Somatics consequently engendered dynamic reciprocal transnational relationships. Diversity in the economic and organizational strategies contributed to artists’ survival. By interrogating how pedagogy and concert dance were impacted, I reveal that the dancing embodied specific social conditions through values manifested in the milieu of distinct regions.

The Somatic network grew, in a large part, because artists believed in the potential of the regimens to fuel new choreography. I establish a relationship between concert dance and the bodies cultivated in the distinct regimens by revealing the meaning in choreography engendered by Somatics. Dance establishes values in a symbolic exchange between performers and audiences that both confirms and diverges from artists’ own understanding of their work. I deduce that these values reflect the various conditions, which impacted the way dancers were working, referred to above. Furthermore, these influences extended beyond the studio and the concert stage into the organizations and other activities through which artists developed and sustained their community. All the differentiation I have outlined above, therefore, showed up in dance class and company structures, choice of venues, publications, institutions, and the dancing bodies themselves. In order to establish some sense of cohesion within such a dynamic and diverse community, I read the regimens as cultivating comparable physicalities that achieve contrasting meaning in different contexts. I also identify differences in the way that artists choreographed common beliefs about the nature of the body through Somatics.

Project overview

In this project overview, I explain the simultaneity of progressive and conservative tendencies in Somatics by elucidating connections between the regimens and political ideology that was set down by post-war liberalism. Dancers, who sought individual creative freedom in their training, extended the logic with which the United States set its sights globally in the 1950s. The American government undertook military, economic and cultural expansionism, with the conceit of preserving the universal right to individual freedom of expression, apparently denied by totalitarian fascist and communist regimes. The 1940s text *The Vital Center* exemplifies such ideas, penned by political historian Arthur Schlesinger who influenced Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Kennedy brothers, among other prominent politicians.¹⁹ In their opposition to what they saw as oppressive modern and classical training, dancers working with Somatics manifested Schlesinger's logic. As part of political and economic developments, which I outline below, liberalism ascended in the Western hubs where Somatics took root. This in turn catalyzed the emergence of the transnational network in the 1970s. The development of liberalism also explains why Somatics subsequently became a dominant approach in institutionalized contemporary dance.

The social critique that dancers staged with their new training may seem at odds with America's rise to global power. However, Schlesinger insisted that a mature society secures the potential for cultural dissidence, and thereby avoids problems that Americans had associated with unchecked commerce since the 1930s.²⁰ The post-war government, and boosters of visual art, promoted America as the center of Western culture, insisting that, more than in any other nation, artists can push against institutionalized aesthetics and dominant values. Dancers in the 1970s extended these ideals by establishing natural propensities of the body as a foundation for

¹⁹ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

individual creative freedom, in opposition to modern and classical dance. In this project overview, I demonstrate that, as the Somatic field developed, artists recalibrated the mid-century liberal ideals, and reinvented nature to tackle economic and political changes. With its theory that effective and artistically-flexible training is based on essential truths common to every-body, Somatics seemed to offer universally accessible creative resources for unforeseen cultural dissidence.

An interval occurred between the 1950s and the manifestation of post war liberal ideology in 1970s Somatics, because it wasn't until mid-century that modern dance was first institutionalized. At this time, visual artists had already begun to push against the dominant aesthetics of an establishment with a longer history. Yet not until the 1960s did dancers consolidate similar artistic resistance against the modern dance establishment to avoid what they saw as capitulation to the market, the loss of creative independence, and the forfeiting of the potential for dissidence. When Somatics emerged as a field in the 1970s, dancers built on the previous decade's experimentation, and recycled expansionist liberal rhetoric that had become integral to visual art in the 1950s. The transnational Somatic community extended American expansionist ideology, both by characterizing New York as the origin of the training, and by disseminating the idea that the regimens restore natural uniqueness and fuel dissidence with modernist dance establishments.

Liberal ideals first manifested in Somatics as an anti-hierarchical collective culture among the 1960s New York avant-garde. These artists reflected broader trends in the United States by emphasizing the concept that having your voice heard is crucial to democratic participation. Confidence waned in the government's ability to represent ordinary people because McCarthyism was viewed as interference in the wake of its fall in 1954; and after a

decade of the Vietnam War, protesters began to feel that the government was not listening to its people. This mistrust further increased when the media documented the brutality that was meted out against the 1960s non-violent anti-segregation protestors. As a result, faith in “representational democracy” diminished, and people began to cultivate “direct democracy” in which each individual must participate in decision-making rather than have someone ‘represent’ their interests.²¹ The image of a flower in a gun symbolized a generation of bodies in non-violent confrontation with the state. When the 1969 Woodstock Festival was broadcast across the West, its images popularized the idea that a successful sociality could be achieved through harmonious co-operation of natural individual difference: a model of anti-hierarchical collectivism.

As an early example of the spirit of the 1960s, New York dancers associated with Judson Church established what they saw as an independent anti-hierarchical collective arts culture. They built on mid-century ideas such as Merce Cunningham’s proposition that ‘any-body’ is an aesthetic conveyer, and Anna Halprin’s privileging of individual exploration over the repetition of a pre-given form. To value the individual voices of dancers, Greenwich Village artists theorized that virtuosity does not represent all subjects. In makeshift spaces, they developed aesthetics in which trained and untrained bodies represented themselves by performing seemingly natural movement rather than established vocabulary. Dancers in the following decade built on this experimentation in Somatic training; individual participation in a shared culture was exhibited through each dancer’s experience of working with common principles. The singularity of each person’s anatomy theoretically guaranteed that their embodiment of the training would be individual, even as they journeyed through a shared trajectory of development.

²¹ The idea of direct democracy is adapted from David Held’s reading of a Marxist post-revolutionary sociality. David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2. ed. (Cambridge u.a.: Polity Press, 1998), 115.

Somatics thereby departed from ballet and Graham techniques in which individual experiences of the form were subjugated to expertise in the execution of prescribed vocabulary.²² Dancers valued the process of training in Somatics for itself, idealizing the ability to track, invest in, and report on their experience, affirming their individual decision-making.

The other Western contexts in which Somatics took root exhibited subcultures that paralleled American anti-hierarchical collectivism. When dancers brought Somatics to late 1960s Holland, they connected it with an anti-hierarchical-arts-oriented “Provo” movement, which provoked the state into violent response with collective non-violent direct action. In the early 1970s, Somatics reached Britain where it seemed to dovetail with a national folk-culture movement that had become a foil to commercialism. As the 1970s progressed, British dancers increasingly emphasized leftist politics through the training, at a time of abundant labor union activity that brought the government to its knees by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, Australia moved to the left when, in the early 1970s, it ended its “whites only” immigration policy; and the country agitated for cultural independence from Europe. As a result, a late 1970s arts avant-garde emerged in which dancers developed Somatics as part of a nationalist arts’ movement. In all these contexts, along with America, collectives based on consensus decision-making proliferated in domestic, professional and political spheres. Dancers verified the universality of Somatics by participating in a supposedly international, rather than domestic venture, articulating unique kinds of cultural dissent on three different continents.

Dancers saw potential in 1970s Somatics because, on a much broader level, Western subcultures linked nature and liberal ideals as they aimed to solve central questions of their time.

²² Mark Franko points out that Graham’s career is often reduced to meaning it accrued in the 1970s when her dancers were taking ballet classes, and attempting to emulate the choreographer’s style. This is what contributed to Somatic practioners distinguishing themselves from modern dance. Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). 50.

Some parallels between contemporary dance and feminism exhibit how various groups used the connection similarly. For example, both dance classes and women's consciousness raising groups idealized the expression of unique experience, which participants believed expressed natural truth that contrasted with an artificially imposed and oppressive culture. Dancers insisted that kinetic ease is integral to our physical nature, but is forfeited when modern and classical training demands that students push against their bodily logic. Stories of Somatics facilitating recovery from physical injury caused by Graham technique and ballet became a standard trope in the lore and in the regimens. Students believe they "rediscovered" their bodies in Somatic classes; and by reporting their diverse experiences, they verified their bodily uniqueness that was thought to extend from a shared anatomical reality. Similarly feminists sought a shared women's culture based on the natural female body, which they felt had been eclipsed by patriarchal representations of women as sexually available and vulnerable. Each woman's voice represented a unique truth with which they were collectively healing from oppression, mirroring the Somatic trope of recovery from physical injury. 1970s politics more broadly exhibited the belief in natural authentic difference in, for example, skin color and sexual desire that were central to civil rights and Gay Liberation.²³

The United States established itself as the center from which the creative liberation of Somatics sprang because a handful of its citizens initially disseminated the training in the transnational contexts. The centrality of New York Somatics built upon the recent dissemination of American modern dance through post-war cultural expansionism, and the longer history of the art form in the United States. The regimens consequently exhibited uniformity even while

²³ There was actually a complex tension in this period between the idea that racial and sexuality difference were insignificant but simultaneously foundations for unique cultural expression. However, overall such axes of identity were the ground for what George Chauncey calls a "a quest for authenticity and personal wholeness". George Chauncey, *Why Marriage?: The History Shaping Today's Debate over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 33.

they acquired some regional uniqueness from differences in the local dance cultures and societies more broadly. Patterns of dissemination affected by British post-colonial connections with Australia, and the proximity of Holland to the United Kingdom, also impacted regional developments. All the contexts enjoyed unity however, both because of the shared theory of nature, and because the training distinguished itself from modern and classical approaches. Dancers generally no longer stood in lines facing a teacher, nor danced in predetermined patterns, instead they explored their anatomy scattered about the studio, and improvised individual spatial journeys before sitting in a circle to share experiences.

Dancers strengthened their resolve to cultivate a collective independent culture against dance establishment hostility toward Somatics, particularly in Britain. Convinced by the liberating potential of their approach, they engaged in a range of activities that embodied the anti-hierarchical collectivism of Somatics. Artists often made decisions by consensus; took mutual responsibility; and shared the labor of organizing and producing classes and concerts.²⁴ Dance collectives sprang up that performed process-based work, resisting what artists saw as the institutional repertory model.²⁵ Members felt they contributed a unique voice to the artistic whole in contrast with the hierarchy of the choreographer over the dancer in ballet and modern dance. Dancers also ran collective spaces in SOHO lofts, London warehouses, community centers, and other venues that were independent from established theatres.²⁶ In addition,

²⁴ My proposition that a specific sociality emerged as part of dance practice beginning in the 1960s extends Banes' account of Greenwich experimentation. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 38.

²⁵ For example, early 1960s Judson dancers formed Grand Union: Barbara Dilley, Douglas Dunn, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, David Gordon, Nancy Lewis. CI underpinned the formation of New England collective Freelance Dance: Daniel Lepkoff, Lisa Nelson, Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith, and Christina Svane. San Francisco's Mangrove also grew from CI: John Le Fan, Byron Brown, Curt Siddal, and James Tyler. The British collective Strider had changing membership with a core of Richard Alston, Eva Karczag, Christopher Banner, Nanette Hassall, and Dennis Greenwood. Australia's Dance Exchange, was also defined by flux, started in the late 1970s by Russell Dumas, Nanette Hassall, and Eva Karczag.

²⁶ New Yorkers used SOHO lofts to train and perform, while British X6 collective rented and ran a space in an old warehouse changed into artists studios, and Dance Exchange used Sydney Police Boy's club.

cooperatively run publications circulated within and between the hubs.²⁷ Contributors discussed Somatics alongside organizational and aesthetic ideas, as well as listing classes and workshops; contacts for performances; teaching; and in *CQ*, free lodging, which fomented an independent artists' network to sustain and further develop the movement culture.

Despite the emphasis on independence, however, Somatics relied on a handful of college programs for its growth. Artists in the network cultivated hubs in institutions through which they extended the communitarian ideals. For example The British festival "Dance at Dartington" grew from a Somatic curriculum instituted at Dartington College of Arts in 1972. The degree program and the festival initially placed beginners alongside experienced dancers, and an impressive array of mainly American artists taught and performed at the festival for very little payment to support the new culture. The London collective X6 lauded Dance at Dartington's horizontal structure and hosted its visiting artists, which exemplifies how artists' organizations and institutions cooperated in the 1970s. Holland boasted what became the most far-reaching institutionalization of Somatics. In the early 1970s, artists enjoyed a semi-autonomous relationship with the Amsterdam Theatre School, and students exerted substantial control over their education. The British and Dutch institutions produced a first generation of Somatic-trained dancers, and through temporary employment, provided opportunities for artists from across the network to develop approaches, while exchanging ideas with colleagues and students. The schools also augmented a network of independent low-cost concert venues that offered validation artists failed to attract from their dance establishments. By working collaboratively

²⁷ Early 1970s New England Dancers established *CQ*, which circulated nationally and then internationally *Contact Quarterly*. (Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 81.) In 1976 the British X6 festival established *New Dance Magazine*. Stephanie Jordan, *Striding Out: Aspects of Contemporary and New Dance in Britain* (London: Dance Books, 1992), 58. Dancers in Australia associated with Dance Exchange began *Writings on Dance* in the 1980s. Anne Thompson (Early teacher of Australian Somatics) in discussion with the author, August 20th 2011. And Movement Research started its own journal in the same decade. "Movement Research Timeline," *Movement Research Strategic Plan*, accessed November 17th, 2014, <http://www.movementresearch.org/aboutus/MR%20Timeline-FNL.pdf>

with artists to provide resources that were denied elsewhere, the dance programs positioned themselves as part of the opposition toward an aesthetic hegemony. Yet through them, Somatics depended upon the state, so the growing network fulfilled the liberal promise that a healthy capitalist society fosters cultural dissidence.

Using Somatic ideas, 1970s artists compounded their opposition to modern and classical dances in the concerts they gave. The choreography seemed to grow out of the universal possibility of having an individual voice and therefore represented anti-hierarchical collectivism. Artists constructed an essential body through movement that appeared to be pared-down to basic anatomical functional imperatives. This minimalist approach, which is how many artists viewed their practice, seemed to avoid social and aesthetic hierarchies embedded in virtuoso display as well as the explicit narrativity of most modern and classical concerts. By investigating how terrestrial forces, like gravity, interface with muscular and skeletal structure, dancers deemphasized gender difference and, theoretically at least, performed every movement as having equal value. Many choreographers relied on their dancers to synthesize vocabulary by applying knowledge that they had cultivated through Somatics. They made this active role of the dancer explicit, thereby representing collaborative processes, which displaced the hierarchy between choreographer and dancer in modern and classical companies. Furthermore, even during performances, the dancers focused inward, sensing their physicality, and communicating that their concern was with their “authentic” experience. This and the choreography revealed the dancers’ intellectual labor, so performers repositioned themselves as neither the object of another artists’ intent, nor of the audience’s gaze, anchoring their individuality as central to anti-hierarchical collectivism.

As the 1980s approached, artists faced new questions because some choreography associated with Somatics began to receive institutional recognition. Artists also faced economic and cultural changes that were ushered in with a new political era. The Somatic field grew exponentially as large concert houses, and a new network of smaller venues, programmed artists working with the regimens. Choreographers became entrepreneurs by recalibrating the independence that had been cultivated in the previous decade, as they rode upon the ethics of individual success associated with Thatcher, Reagan, and Dutch prime-minister Ruud Lubbers. Many Western governments crushed the collective bargaining power of labor unions, and attacked socialized systems like the welfare state. Promising fulfillment from the radical pursuit of self-interest, they argued that these organizations were outdated and had stifled individual potential and freedom. In a related manner, Bill T Jones and Arnie Zane, for example, pursued career success by abandoning the New England collective Dance Asylum that they started with Lois Welk through CI. Yet choreographers who reframed collectively developed voices as marketable artistic signatures often did so in a way that simultaneously protested against the conservative cultural agendas that accompanied Reaganomics, such as the attacks upon reproductive rights and the blaming of people dying of AIDS for their illness. With their New York dance company, Jones and Zane, for example, staged explicit leftist political themes. Artists also addressed exclusion in which they felt dance had participated. Jones argued that he achieved broader accessibility with the wider dissemination of his work, which he contrasted with elitist, esoteric work of artists that resisted his commercial approach.²⁸

The association of Somatics with collectivism diminished when concert houses began promoting choreography associated with individual artistic signatures. Trisha Brown, for example, rapidly achieved international status in the 1980s. 1970s audiences had identified her

²⁸ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 224.

vocabulary with the dancers who collaborated on the work; but as Brown's career accelerated and the constitution of her company changed, audiences attributed the vocabulary solely to the choreographer. Dancers began using the term 'release technique' to describe vocabulary associated with Brown's style that was underpinned by Somatics. They considered her movement to be more natural and healthier for dancers than modern or classical lexicons. Lloyd Newson, director of the British company DV8, similarly gained traction by adapting the fruits of the 1970s into a style that was embraced by venues hungry for accessible, entertaining, but edgy artistic product. Newson repurposed the previous decade's focus on politics, choreographing narrative with a rawness that configured modern and ballet aesthetics as overly mannered. Using CI and Somatics, he critiqued sexual and gender conventions, gaining favor with state funders, and achieving domestic acclaim and international possibilities for touring. With dance that purportedly showed greater respect for the performers' body and broke outdated conventions, Brown and Newson seemed to contest establishment values even as they achieved greater commercial success.

Dancers began to associate successful individual artistic voices with the potential of Somatic training, and a new field of classes grew. Students flocked to teachers that were seen dancing the new brand of choreography, and to teachers who were known to influence prominent artists. Brown's company taught the repertory they performed in and beyond New York, and some of them formed their own companies through which, in turn, they and their company members became popular teachers. Many classes restored a modern dance format with lines of students repeating phrases. Yet they also reframed exercises that focused on the singular experience of anatomy, which suggested that the execution of the successful vocabulary

depended upon cultivating an authentic connection with the body, thereby sustaining the focus on individual embodiment.

In line with the activity generated by career success using Somatics, dancers developed an entrepreneurial attitude as they pursued work in an increasing number of pick-up companies. To cultivate the necessary versatility and efficiency to work for short periods in diverse companies, dancers designed their own training schedules with the idea that they were attending to their unique bodily needs.²⁹ Those in large companies, such as Cunningham's and Brown's, also sustained a sense of independence from the vocabulary they performed by taking classes that focused on mechanical principles with no phrase work. They affirmed their autonomy in their preference for one technique over another, while the teachers of different approaches publicly disagreed about anatomical function, and how it is best accessed. The 1970s collective sharing of information therefore gave way to copywriting, as pioneers established teacher accreditation programs in a protectionist culture. All the techniques nevertheless sustained the shared conceit that they were based on essential bodily principles. This offered cohesion to the new arts culture, and enabled the ideal of universal individual freedom to survive the diminishing of collectivism, and the encroachment of business ideals and institutional concerns.

A business growth culture, which was reflected in changes in small-scale dance programming and education, actually benefited the development and dissemination of Somatics. As artists focused on self-promotion, instead of contributing to the collective labor of producing shows, they appointed administrators who went on to become curators within a new thrust of small-scale arts management. For example, New York's Dance Theatre Workshop (DTW), and PS122, which were collaboratively established in the 1960s and 1970s, now employed artistic

²⁹ Bales refers to this separation of training and choreography. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 106.

directors.³⁰ These new heads established national and international touring to other venues that programmed experimental artists who were working with Somatics, and were overlooked by larger concert houses.³¹ In a way that related to this new network, the Amsterdam Theatre School directed students to cultivating their own styles rather than training them for employment in large companies. Teachers argued that each student's path would be distinct and unpredictable as Somatics displaced rather than coexisted with modern and classical training. The program renamed itself the School Voor Nieuwe Dans Ontwikkeling (SNDO or School for New Dance Development) and employed a constant flow of new guest teachers who were valued for the singularity of their approach as much as their participation in the growth of Somatics.

Even though independent venues and educational institutions incorporated 1980s economic changes, like the successful choreography of the period, they continued to distinguish themselves from established contemporary dance. Differing markedly from most programs, SNDO accrued a renegade reputation. As late as 1991, when I auditioned at EDDC, an antecedent of SNDO, the director congratulated us for finding a program that lacked the prominence of larger conservatories. Similarly, the network of small venues, to which PS122 and DTW were connected, distinguished itself from mainstream aesthetics by programming work for which audiences needed to be informed about marginal aesthetic trends. Dance at Dartington became an alternative national showcase for British artists ignored by the larger

³⁰ Founded in 1965 by Jeff Duncan, Art Bauman and Jack Moore as a choreographers' collective, David White took over artistic direction in 1975. Charles Moulton first used the abandoned school PS 122 for rehearsals and class in 1979, along with some visual artists. Charles Dennis, Tim Miller and Peter Rose joined him to collectively administrate and use the space. Mark Russell took over artistic direction in 1983 Susan Leigh. Foster, *Dances That Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 123.

³¹ DTW's David White started The National Performance Network (NPN) in 1985, linking "alternative" U.S. venues, setting a pay scale and support for small scale touring, and bringing artists to NYC. Mark Russell started PS 122 Field Trips, sending mixed-bills around the U.S. and to Europe and South America. Ishmael Houston-Jones, email to author, June, 2014.

London festivals. As a result, despite the diminishing role of collectivism in company structure, dance programming, and education, Somatic culture sustained its sense of opposition to the establishment. Dancers' still seemed to assert creative freedom through the regimens even though the changes in the transnational community portended the emergence of corporate Somatics.

While entrepreneurialism certainly catalyzed diversity and growth in the Somatic field, artists continued to assert their independence from the effects of commerce through small organizations built upon 1970s principles. For example, New York's Movement Research and London's Independent Dance, both framed themselves as relieving artists from career advancement pressure.³² They programmed daily Somatic classes and workshops, as well as symposia to promote dialogue, and provide platforms for the presentation of works-in-progress to relieve the demand on artists to showcase product. By focusing on exploration, to which the Somatic idea of the body as a natural resource was central, these organizations deemphasized the kind of career hierarchy that defined the way even small concert houses were run. Students therefore gained access to experimental as well more mainstream artists working with Somatics.

Independent organizations nevertheless played a key economic role in the transnational development of Somatics. Well-established studios and educational institutions continued to treat experimental training with suspicion well into the 1990s. So along with isolated educational institutions, and alternative venue networks, Movement Research, Independent Dance, and similar endeavors, provided crucial alternatives for teachers and students. Artists built their reputations through teaching and presentation as they circulated in the transnational

³² Mary Overlie recalls that she, Renee Walkoff, Cynthia Hedstrom, and Daniel Lepkoff, started Movement Research in 1978. Mary Overlie (dancer, choreographer and teacher) in discussion with the author, August 6th 2011. Independent Dance was seeded with classes in a range of London locations from the early 1980s, supported by Miranda Tufnell, Mary Prestidge, Scott Clark, Betsy Gregory, Caroline Scott and Emma Gladstone. Fiona Millward (current co-director of independent dance) Facebook message to author, January 13th 2013.

network between professional dance, CI culture, educational institutions, and independent organizations. Movement Research and Independent Dance, along with other similar endeavors, therefore provided dancers with credentials. In addition, to attract students, the organizations also benefited from the success of their teachers on large concert stages. Somatics achieved a key place in New York contemporary dance training, for which students travelled from around the world. As a result, schools not based in a metropolis, such Skinner Releasing, Body Mind Centering, and Authentic Movement, depended on the workshops taught through artists' city-based organizations to reach students. Even the New York Klein studio marketed its small business by teaching through Movement Research, and in London through the state funded organization Greenwich Dance Agency, among other outfits.³³

Some artists directly confronted the contradiction between economic growth, and the liberal conviction that creative freedom is only possible independently from the demands of commerce. For example, London artists complained about the pollution from careerism and hierarchy at Dance at Dartington in the 1980s, even as their colleagues benefited from opportunities at the festival. To analyze how Somatics figured in this struggle, I focus on a New York East Village milieu that was intimately connected to Movement Research and PS 122. In this context, artists reinvented 1970s collectivism to resist commercialization even while they emphasized staunch individuality in their training and choreography, thereby embodying ethics that emerged in line with 1980s economics. I also look at artists who survived as solo improvisers based on their reputation from the previous decades as innovators with Somatics who had resisted creating companies based on their own movement style. The solo improvisers circulated through the transnational network, including the East Village, benefitting from

³³ I participated in workshops with Barbara Mahler, Susan Klein, Neil Greenberg and Jeremy Nelson in London. "Klein Technique", Greenwich Dance Agency and Chisenhale Dance Space, London, 1999-2003.

dancers' nostalgia for 1970s independence. The careers of select East Villagers, and soloists reflect local and transnational trends, because they were prominent in the Somatic network in America, Britain and Holland. More research is needed on the role of transnational ties in Australian Somatics after the 1970s than I have achieved in this study.

By analyzing the capriciousness with which Somatics was developed in the East Village, and the aim of distinctiveness fostered by solo improvisers, I demonstrate how artists struggled to sustain liberal ideals. Because the training was institutionalized and commercialized, the natural body seemed to be losing its potential as a source for independent creativity. So East Village artists recalibrated the defiance through which the regimens had been embraced in previous decades. They reconceived as unpredictable the connection dancers make to anatomical functional imperatives. Unlike those taking classes in which dancers repeated vocabulary, these artists cultivated idiosyncratic vocabulary. They emphasized creative independence, and capitalized on the individual styles in their concerts. Similarly, solo improvisers taught exploratory classes based on their ongoing practice, which often formed the mainstay of their performing. Although marginal to choreographers staging their signature vocabularies, the network of smaller venues embraced these approaches; and from the late 1980s, the visiting faculty at SNDO and subsequently EDDC, was made up of East Village artists and solo improvisers.

In addition to their aim of sustaining independence from institutions and commerce, East Village artists reworked the concept of bodily truth to achieve broader ideological dissent with prevailing views. Artists generated erratic rather than pared-down dancing, staging provocations against the cultural conservatism associated with Reaganomics. Movement Research's Performance Journal exemplifies such irreverence by, for example, displaying female genitalia

in defiance of the control over women's bodies, which is how progressives defined the 1980s attacks on reproductive rights. Republican senator Jesse Helms used the publication to support his cry for cuts in federal arts' funding. Yet East Villagers also rejected leftist propriety, refusing to represent socially acceptable claims for rights. With exaggerated individuality, they disrupted the decorum sought through political correctness during the culture wars.

The broad diversification of the field extended to the range of aesthetics that emerged from the choreographic approaches in which Somatics participated in the 1980s. Yet most artists shared the emphasis on individuality, which was still based on the idea of physical authenticity. Even as increasingly complex vocabularies, like that of Brown, were being developed, Somatic-trained dancers emphasized their idiosyncratic embodiment of the movement, which contrasted with the uniformity that dominated late 20th century classical and modern aesthetics. Moreover, natural bodily truths were supposedly conveyed in testimonial and protest choreography that contested imposed cultural standards. However, in contrast with the previous decades, artists emphasized bodily difference as a natural source from which to assert political uniqueness. In the more complex composition and protest performance, Somatic informed dance exhibited virtuosity and theatricality that had previously been vanquished. Minimalist aesthetics endured, however, with ascetic sets, costumes, and lighting, which resulted from, but also signified, economic scarcity relative to the material excess that was evident elsewhere.

The widespread institutionalization of Somatics, beginning in the 1990s, reflected a new face of capitalism.³⁴ By diffusing responsibility throughout all levels of the workforce, corporations increasingly implemented ideas cultivated through the kind of collectivism and entrepreneurialism that had seemed liberating in previous decades. Workers allegedly enjoyed

³⁴ I have theorized this third phase by looking at how the regimens sustain post-war liberal ideals during the expansion of corporate culture. However, the subject deserves theorization within a frame of neo-liberalism.

participation in decision making, which seemed like a version of 1970s direct democracy, yet businesses not only capitalized upon their employees' autonomy and creativity for greater productivity, but also negatively reinforced the demand for such responsibility with the threat of redundancies and punishing quotas and deadlines.³⁵ In a new style of management, entrepreneurship underpinned blue and white-collar jobs as employees regulated their pace of work to win rewards for meeting bonus incentives. Yet now workers managed each other to ensure bonus-earning production levels were met, and they lost jobs and wage security along with the collective bargaining power they had enjoyed through labor unions.³⁶ Moreover, cultural difference, across axes of gender, race and sexuality, contributed to the creative potential of corporations, increasing their economic success.³⁷ Market ethics also purportedly catalyzed emancipation from marginalization because companies claimed to prioritize consumers' unique needs and desires above social conservatism.³⁸

In a related fashion, the individual creativity that dancers once fought for became a requirement for finding a job. Instead of performing preexisting vocabulary, many dancers found themselves generating material that the choreographer then shaped. Yet through this seemingly collective model, choreographers nurtured their individual success while the creative

³⁵ Jon McKenzie traces the shift from 'top-down' to diffuse decision-making theories of management in the late 20th century, which nevertheless serve efficient production. Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001). Meanwhile, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello argue that capitalism has moved from job-security and subordination, to entrepreneurialism and insecurity. Luc; Eve Chiapello Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2005).

³⁶ *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.

³⁷ McKenzie sites the popularity of 'managing diversity' toward the end of the 20th century, as arguing inclusion of cultural and social variety contributed to organizations' performance capability. McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, 68.

³⁸ Henry Jenkins argues that corporations cultivate long term economic strategy using brand loyalty which includes the commodification of marginalized identity through marketing, visible, for example, in popular television shows designed to appeal to such groups. Henry Jenkins, "Buying into American Idol: How We Are Being Sold on Reality Television" in *Reality Tv: Remaking Television Culture*, ed. Susan; Laurie Ouellette Murray (New York: New York University Press, 2004). Meanwhile Boltanski and Chiapello argue that capitalism claims to have met the demands for liberation with products and services purporting to provide emancipation. Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 442.

input of their dancers' was not meaningfully valued³⁹ Education reflected the new creative responsibility shouldered by dancers. Through disciplinary mechanisms like grading, dance programs began cultivating innovation, efficiency, and the healthy use of the body in their students. Faculty, who had initially established these ideas as a form of liberation, struggled with the contradiction of imposing exploration and self-discovery, autonomy and shared responsibility, as educational requirements.

In addition to the institutionalization of changes in creative processes, the space for independent activity also shrank. The transnational network diminished when training regimens found their way into mainstream dance education because, instead of asserting opposition to the establishment, Somatics embodied economic competition in a way that paralleled the broader collapse of alternatives to the logic of capitalism. For example, Western governments seemed resigned to the imperative to compete for the investment of global corporations, losing their ability to represent an electorate. Similarly, dance-training institutions fought to establish themselves as the most cutting-edge in their field by employing teachers and artists who had produced successful choreography and could attract students who were newly configured as the consumers of education.⁴⁰ With the aim of producing the most interesting choreographers and versatile performers, dance programs headhunted artists known for their idiosyncratic practice. So Somatics now offered skills in innovation, as well as flexibility and sustainability. Furthermore, through the reconstruction of late 20th century dances, institutions began embracing choreography that had previously only enjoyed very limited dissemination. They

³⁹ Jose Reynoso, "Economies of Symbolic and Cultural Capital Production and Distribution in Postmodern/Contemporary Dance Making: A Search for Egalitarianism," in *Dance Under Construction Graduate Student Dance Studies Conference* (University of Riverside 2011).

⁴⁰ I am drawing from a growing body of writing about 'academic capitalism,' see for example: Deanna Barcelona Bullard, "Academic Capitalism in the Social Sciences Faculty Responses to the Entrepreneurial University, Phd Diss." (PhD, University of South Florida, 2007).

therefore seemed to have integrated and made accessible what was once problematic, offering choice and freedom much like corporations claimed to do through the market. Successful artists such as Brown, and Siobhan Davies in Britain, also established large studios offering ongoing training based on the aesthetics and pedagogies that were influenced by Somatics. These studios consequently functioned as brands, and their training achieved a level of legitimacy that paralleled Cunningham and Graham techniques.

The institutionalization of Somatics restored the hierarchy between dancers and choreographers, and the regimens were reframed as a means for cultivating a compliant creative workforce. For example, Somatics contributed to the restoration of ballet training and aesthetics as an imperative for contemporary dance. To develop skills that were increasingly valued by choreographers, dancers applied internal sensory knowledge to ballet training so that they could sustain a sense of self, independent from the classical aesthetics. Many artists relinquished previously held beliefs as to the mutually exclusive nature of classicism and contemporary aesthetics.⁴¹ Line and extension returned as the ubiquitous values and self-evident necessities for training. Yet because dancers now embodied ballet with Somatic ideals, they seemed to retain autonomy even though the skills that were required of dancers became increasingly standardized.

An emphasis on the dancer's appearance also replaced the focus on the uniqueness of each body, as teachers extrapolated the verbal prompts from experiential Somatic exercises. Both within and beyond educational institutions, dance classes used anatomical and functional imperatives as a language to communicate how vocabulary should be fulfilled, but students were denied the time to experience the ideas. Without extended periods of self-exploration,

⁴¹ Ann Daly discusses how contemporary dance, including choreographers I discuss, has in various ways, adopted a classical lexicon. Ann Daly, *Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 190. Also see: Rebecca; Luc Vanier Netti-Fiol, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

dancers focused on fulfilling a visible dancing ideal performed by the teacher, rather than investigating their own body. The value of training taught by successful dancers became about embodying established aesthetic protocols. This differed from the attraction of such teachers in the 1980s, which for some had been based on a desire to accrue knowledge for their own innovation. Somatics thus aligned itself with an art market in which the appearance of the dancer became a commodity.

In brief, corporate dance culture put universality and individuality to use by requiring dancers to take charge of their contribution to choreography while caring for their physical health. Although Somatics was initially developed to afford dancers a greater stake in artistic decision-making, it ultimately fueled standards to which the majority of dancers were held based on the ideal of the universal applicability of proper anatomical function. With the idea that they were working with their unique bodily structure, dancers began to understand themselves as a resource for creativity, efficiency, ease, and career longevity. Yet while they appeared to have more self-determination than their classical or modern counterparts, they erased their difference in increasingly homogenized aesthetics, and were exploited in a context of arts funding scarcity that demanded more productivity for less investment. Distinct locales, educational settings, and choreographic practices exhibit political, economic and artistic variance; but the evidence is overwhelming for the trend outlined here in the evolution of Somatics.

Despite the rapid institutionalization of Somatics, practitioners continued to believe that they were resisting the tyranny of both modern and classical trainings by focusing on postural and motional hygiene. They sustained the sense of opposition, despite the late 20th century changes in practice, through the trope of recovery that 1970s dancers first emphasized based on

the accounts of the Somatic pioneers. In their theories of the body, the pioneers claimed to have discovered their approaches through their own healing, and also by overcoming institutional and cultural obstacles to the healing of others. Late 20th century dancers embraced the idea that Somatics was unearthed as a result of injury, or physical and mental disease, because it positioned natural bodily logic as an exceptional resource obscured by culture. Seeming to confirm that society overlooks bodily information, this idea struck a chord for dancers, whose profession was often treated as secondary to the other arts. The pioneers professed the veracity of Somatics by supporting their stories of recovery with scientific metaphors and other ideologies that were considered universally applicable.⁴² Such understanding largely underpinned the use of Somatics throughout the period on which I focus. Dancers felt that they repeatedly discovered new ways that bodily truth had been thwarted, providing “renewable originality” which contributed to the diversity of aesthetics. As part of a physical and textual discourse, the core-shared tropes of recovery and scientific veracity, also helped establish consistency among the diverse approaches. Distinct emphases in pedagogies, and the cultivation of bodies, produced contestation alongside uniformity; while the flexibility of the tropes masked the role of social change in the development of Somatics, because the disagreement seemed to be about what constitutes bodily truth.⁴³

A framework to analyze the meaning in Somatics.

⁴² For example, in a teaching film, Todd’s personal discovery of the work is used to introduce her training as taught by three key proponents. Apparently after a serious accident, medical doctors predicted Todd would never walk, yet while convalescing she experimented with movement that did not cause pain, and so developed her approach by healing herself. Mabel Elsworth; Loraine Corfield; Louise Williams; Nancy Topf; André Bernard; Sally Swift; Teachers' Video Workshop Todd, *The Thinking Body the Legacy of Mabel Todd* (Piermont, N.Y.: Teachers' Video Worksshop,, 1999), videorecording.

⁴³ Edward Said’s argument that heterogeneity helps to naturalize the disourse of Orientalism influences my idea about contestation in Somatics. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

Theories that configure the significance of the body as beyond culture, such as those proffered by Somatics, forfeit any understanding of how social forces are embodied through dance. In order to reveal the meaning that dancers construct through the idea of natural bodily capacity, I therefore position my research alongside dance scholarship that analyzes the symbolic significance of corporeality and its motion. Yet some dance scholars, like many practitioners, insist that the value of Somatics is precisely that it connects dancers with pre-cultural bodily dimensions. These theorists connect the professional field with a scholarly approach that argues that analysis of “foundational” aspects of the body contributes exceptional understanding to the humanities. I propose, however, that this eclipses the potential for a greater appreciation that comes with theorizing movement as a cultural site of meaning-making. In order to challenge the exclusion and marginalization in which Somatics participates, scholarship needs to account for the cultural biases embodied through and produced by the training. This is particularly urgent now that the regimens are so widely used in dance education.

To champion an exceptional role of the body, Somatics, and the scholarship with which it is connected, draws upon phenomenology, an approach I briefly criticize here to establish why I employ a different strategy. Much like dancers who argue that bodily knowledge, accessible through Somatics, counters the secondary status of their art form, scholars have argued that phenomenology helps them to contest the marginalization of dance studies in the academy. For example, in *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory*, Helen Thomas proposes that “social construction theories,” through which the cultural significance of corporeal movement is discerned, configure the body as distinct from and subordinate to the mind, reducing dance studies to tracing movement as a vehicle for social processes produced elsewhere. By contrast, she insists that a theory of “embodied consciousness” in phenomenology, overcomes the

distinction between “representational or textual methods,”⁴⁴ and foundational dimensions like flesh and sensory experience.⁴⁵ Her approach mirrors the insistence of Somatic pioneers that bodily knowledge confounds the dualistic separation and stratification of the body and the mind. Not surprisingly then, Natalie Garrett Brown, the associate editor of the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, invokes Thomas in her analysis of the regimens. In her dissertation, *Shifting Ontology: Somatics and the Dancing Subject, Challenging the Ocular within Conceptions of Western Contemporary Dance*, Garrett Brown argues that reading social meaning across the body overshadows the intervention into Western epistemology achieved with Somatics.⁴⁶ The regimens and related choreography apparently depart from ballet’s attempt to master nature by controlling the dancer’s appearance through a visual emphasis that subordinates the flesh to the mind, manifesting body-mind dualism.

I agree that the Western academy historically marginalized dance studies due to its epistemological foundations of mind-body dualism; and that Somatics, at least initially, departed from ballet by shifting the focus away from the dancer’s appearance. I also concur that analyzing corporeality contributes unique understanding to cultural studies. However, theories that construct the body as beyond discernible meaning depend on a universal concept of corporeality that forecloses any analysis of how social power is constructed through dance. For example, Garrett Brown argues that Somatics releases the dancer from the rationality that ballet exerts over the body by disciplining it into fixed and discernible ideals. She sees the Somatic emphasis on kinesthetic awareness as cultivating an open-ended process that dissolves the boundaries of “self,” so dancers disband with identities that underpin social differences.

⁴⁴ Helen Thomas, *The Body, Dance, and Cultural Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁶ Natalie Garrett-Brown, "Shifting Ontology: Somatics and the Dancing Subject, Challenging the Ocular within Conceptions of Western Contemporary Dance. Phd Diss. " (Roehampton University, 2007).

Somatics emerges as a utopian practice in opposition with the observable signifiers through which ballet and modern dance reify social hierarchies. Lulled into a state of sensory flux, the practitioners and audiences engaged in Somatic dance, transcend the political limitations of the ocular.

Yet along with the fixed sense of self, Garrett Brown dissolves any discernible differences of experience that dancers or audiences might have with Somatics; including those that result from social distinctions in the context where the work takes place, or the identity of the people involved. She therefore collapses diversity into sameness, which recalls the difficulty I and other students experienced in trying to articulate how the dominant aesthetics at EDDC were marginalizing. In fact, much like the function in my training of the term “authenticity,” Garrett Brown relies on a ‘real’ Somatic-informed choreography, for which she positions herself as the arbiter, extending her cultural biases while masking the political limitations she produces. In order to prove her thesis, Garrett Brown ignores dance that relies upon the regimens but affirms the ocular, either through compositional design, or by drawing attention to the politics of spectacle, in for example, a feminist frame. Her study also overlooks artists who refer to social identity in a way that critiques the presumption of universality.

Garrett Brown’s failure to articulate the cultural labor in which practitioners are engaged limits the value of her otherwise useful insights. By shifting their focus from the visual to the sensory, like Garrett Brown suggests, dancers certainly challenged some problems resulting from the focus in dance on bodily appearance, and thereby achieved critique. Yet they simultaneously reified a social hierarchy by claiming the universality of their non-dualism. In order to account for this contradictory significance, I analyze the social construction of the body-subject they forged. I draw on scholarship from within and beyond dance studies that

insists the so-called foundational aspects of the body are subject to the social conditions in which they manifest. For example, Sarah Ahmed, in *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others*, establishes the contextual contingency of a non-dualist subject, demonstrating that phenomenology which ignores class, gender, sexuality and race, erases the circumstances that condition experience. Ahmed participates in a scholarly movement that critiques ideas previously thought universal, such as sexual difference, sexual desire, and human consciousness.⁴⁷ I align myself with this stance by contesting the naturalization of internal sensation within Somatics. I ask how the ideological framework, in which kinesthesia is defined and emphasized, embodies cultural meaning, and therefore how people's position within broadly defined social structures of power affects their experience of the regimens.

Dancers have typically bolstered the universality of their modalities, like kinesthetic awareness, by projecting specificity, or that which appears to be culturally conspicuous and non-neutral, onto non-white and non-Western bodies. They inherited this strategy from modern dance. Even as they rejected modernist master narratives by using the Somatic idea of nature, contemporary dancers recalibrated a conceit of neutrality that was established for the dancing body by previous generations of white artists. In this sense, I position the regimens within an aesthetic tradition that Susan Manning articulates in *Modern Dance Negro Dance: Race in Motion*. She reveals previously un-interrogated racial investments in the universality staged in American modern concert dance, an idea that scholars have also articulated in a postmodern

⁴⁷ Some examples of these theorists include Judith Butler, who contested the presumption that biological sexual difference is a ground upon which gender is imposed, proposing that sexual difference is culturally forged. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990). Similarly, Michel Foucault argued against the prevailing idea that desire is a universal urge that has been subject to 19th century repression, instead he proposed that 19th century Western culture constructed and naturalized its repressive hypothesis. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

context.⁴⁸ I agree with Manning that it was against the *racialization* of African American bodies that white dancers seemed to transcend cultural specificity, an insight I also bring to the role of Orientalism. Using research that celebrates dancers' use of non-Western ideas, I argue that artists projected cultural specificity onto the traditions from which they borrowed aesthetics and ideologies to achieve the universality of the Somatic body.⁴⁹

The projections in which Somatics participated, however, differed for bodies and practices associated with Africa compared with the East. I articulate this difference, by building upon literature that aims to expose how racialization and whiteness work in dance through the construction of universality. Ananja Chatterjea for example, delimits “postmodern” dance with the category “women of color” in *Butting Out: Reading Resistive Choreographies Through Works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Chandralekha*. She argues a white avant-garde configures African American and South Asian women as the custodians of history and culture to furnish themselves with access to the contemporary and the universal.⁵⁰ Like Chatterjea suggests, Somatic practitioners distinguish their project from the Eastern ideas that they appropriate and recalibrate to achieve vitality, newness, and universality for the white contemporary dancing body.⁵¹ Meanwhile in *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*, Brenda Dixon-Gottschild insists that postmodern dance erases the influence of

⁴⁸ I look at Ananya Chatterjea's argument on this subject below.

⁴⁹ Mark Wheeler traces the use by modern and postmodern dancers of what he calls Eastern ideas and aesthetics. He argues that CI and Body-Mind Centering manifest the deepest truths of non-Western ideas. Mark Frederick. Wheeler, *Surface to Essence Appropriation of the Orient by Modern Dance* (Champagne Urbana: University of Illinois, 1984), PhD diss. I apply Said's insight that bifurcating global regions into essential cultural differences is reductive misrepresentative. Said, *Orientalism*.

⁵⁰ Ananya Chatterjea, *Butting Out: Reading Resistive Choreographies through Works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Chandralekha*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

⁵¹ Wheeler argues that by synthesizing Eastern ideas with science, CI and BMC recuperate mind-body 'unity' lost to modern rationality and technology. He talks of “physical-mental-spiritual integration gained through the practice of various body-mind systems.” Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*, 273. The avant-garde therefore afforded the Oriental contemporary relevance and legibility, but excluded the non-Western subject who it marked as ancient and culturally specific against the newly constructed 'neutral' body.

black culture.⁵² Indeed Somatics claims to “peel away” cultural imposition, “revealing” pre-cultural aptitudes, many of which exhibit what Gottschild calls Africanist aesthetics, suggesting that the influence of black culture is erased.⁵³ Informed by Chatterjea’s and Dixon Gottschild’s combined frameworks, I remain attuned to how the regimens participate in the appropriation of traditions represented as Eastern, while erasing the influence of African traditions; while at the same time marking, and thus risking the exclusion of, non-Western bodies and non-white bodies

We gain greater appreciation of the political contradictions in artists’ practice with a nuanced understanding of how dancers construct a naturalized idea of the body. Artists use the concepts they have at hand in order to negotiate their historical exigencies.

Along with many writers addressing the same and other work,⁵⁴ Gay Morris, for example articulates the circumstances that shape discrepancies in the significance of Merce Cunningham’s mid-century dances.⁵⁵ She addresses the contradiction at the heart of my subject, because, while she argues that Cunningham resisted textual meaning in a seemingly universal body, Morris concurs with Ahmed that the strategy was socially specific. Staging dance as meaning nothing more than corporeal movement, and therefore culturally neutral, seems to

⁵² Brenda Dixon. Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*, Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996).

⁵³ Dixon Gottschild identifies an Africanist aesthetic lineage, incommensurate with a European traditions, which is exhibited in Somatics through ‘the relaxed body of the postmodern dancer’ and ‘the use of pedestrian movement’. Gottschild insists these tropes were initially cultivated, sustained and transferred through jazz and tap dance, but the African influence is ‘disappeared’ to sustain European status in a racist American context. Ibid. Somatic teachers represent such aptitudes as inherent to the body, erasing African aesthetics, and they represent such qualities as primitive. Skinner, for example, uses the term ‘animal quality’ to describe reconnecting with nature.

⁵⁴ Many scholars argue axes of identity, and their role in social change, affect dance in ways not evident in dancers’ rhetoric including, Tomko, who points out that progressive-era, middle-class, Jewish women attempted to gloss class differences and smooth over anti-semitism exhibited toward working class recent immigrant Jews. Tomko, *Dancing Class*, 81. Meanwhile, Rebekah Kowal insists race must be understood as a factor in the work of Merce Cunningham. Rebekah J. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 186.

⁵⁵ Gay Morris, *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945-1960* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

exhibit the potential of the body to contribute meaning not produced elsewhere. Yet Morris clarifies that Cunningham addressed specific social circumstances, and that his strategy cannot be universalized.⁵⁶ She points out that in the 1950s and 1960s his approach only worked for white artists because of the way black artists were marked in modern dance, and she characterizes his approach as representing the flux of nature, for which he drew on Zen ideas. Like Morris, I identify the cultural labor in which Somatic practitioners engaged through their processes and beliefs, as well as the conditions that shaped their interventions. As they resisted obvious meaning, Somatic practitioners disbanded polarized gender ideals still evident in classical and modern aesthetics; but they continued to marginalize non-white bodies among others.

By thinking about how Somatics participated in the construction of whiteness, I use contemporary ideas to reveal how artists from a different era pursued progressive aims with exclusionary practice. Yet I historicize the subject by tracing the cultural idiom within which the training and choreography arose, still departing from scholars who insist that to analyze artists work using theory from beyond the time when a dance was made, fails to grasp the project in which an artist was engaged. For example, in *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, 'Race' and Nation in Early Modern dance*, Ramsay Burt takes this approach when he asks if Martha Graham, Catherine Dunham, and Doris Humphrey's cultural appropriation embodied racism.⁵⁷ Burt aims to resolve a conflict between scholars who want to reveal the previously un-interrogated political significance of dance, like Manning, and those that argue such an approach overshadows dance with extraneous meaning. This conflict is particularly relevant to my project

⁵⁶ She explains that by rejecting explicit themes, Cunningham restored the potential for freedom of interpretation in a context where it was everywhere being eroded by McCarthy-led government intrusiveness. *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵⁷ Ramsay Burt, *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, "Race," and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998).

because most of the artists about whom I write are still alive, and they, along with other readers, will see that my analysis departs from documenting their intentions. Yet I aim to reveal how Somatics participated in the development of concepts of the body in ways that artists cannot have seen at the time, in part precisely because of the way that the rhetoric about nature in the training participates in broader ideological limitations.

I aim to show respect for the artists about whom I write, and reveal the ideological frameworks within which they constructed the concept of nature, by moving between contemporary and past ideas. In line with Burt's suggestion, the dissertation reframes scholarship that tracks dance within the ideologies of the day. I thus point out how subsequent generations inherit a set of ideas and practices to which key political limitations are inherent. In its negotiation of identity, for example, Somatics vacillates between highlighting bodily difference and claiming natural universality in a way that was broadly evident in 1960s cultural politics. Radical anti-racists reveled in the difference of black bodies that was being portrayed in a negative light by extreme racists,⁵⁸ and radical feminism exhibited a similar trend in the following decade.⁵⁹ Yet both black and white liberals simultaneously underplayed racial differences arguing that everyone is the same, a parallel that was also seen in the 1970s fight for the Equal Rights Amendment in America. Dancers recycled this contradiction at the heart of both race and gender politics by claiming the universality of the body they theorized, while at the same time according privileged access for non-white peoples to natural capacity. From the historical vantage point of the 21st century, the marking and exclusion in which Somatics participated is visible. Yet at the time, artists constructed a concept of nature that seemed to

⁵⁸ Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 205.

⁵⁹ Emilyn Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe--: Seductive Ambiguity in Dance* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 74.

embrace the evolutionary potential of aspects of non-white people and women, which had historically been used as evidence of their lesser status.

In their training and choreography, artists constructed the different categories of social groups through anti-textual ideal; they resisted explicit meaning. The question therefore arises of how to identify the ideas. Morris reveals the socio-cultural specificity of concerts by Cunningham, who became iconic for eschewing and identifiable message, by detailing how he, as a white artist, was negotiated differently than, for example, his African American counterparts. Yet, while this establishes a social context in which the opacity of dances gains meaning, Morris never identifies racial specificity, or other explicit social issues, in the choreographed movement itself.⁶⁰ Instead she focuses on the socio-historical circumstances that conditioned what Cunningham and other artists could achieve by rejecting narrative content, a methodology in which Morris is not alone.⁶¹ However, to avoid configuring danced movement as a vehicle for meaning produced elsewhere, as Thomas warns, we must articulate how kinetics embody social agency.

Building on scholarship that interrogates bodily kinetics and experiences, as a means of constructing culture, I discern the meaning of dance, as it is intertwined with social circumstances. Rather than situating the origin of meaning in a body to which language is external, or in a mind distinct from the body, I construct Somatics as a “movement culture” in which textual and physical significance are enmeshed, along with dancers’ social circumstances.

⁶⁰ Without symbolic analysis, Morris forfeits the legible rhetorical significance of the choreography, which we see in Foster’s theorization of some of the same Cunningham dances. Foster shows how non-disclosure staged homosexuality during the Lavender scare, and simultaneously naturalized asymmetrical gender difference and whiteness. Susan Foster, "Closets Full of Dances: Modern Dance's Performance of Masculinity and Sexuality" in Susan Leigh Foster, "Closets Full of Dances: Modern Dance's Performance of Masculinity and Sexuality," in *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and Off the Stage*, ed. Jane Desmond (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 169-79.

⁶¹ For example, Barbara Browning, argues that the the rhythm structure of Samba asserts racial and class resistance by embodying meaning that cannot be apprehended through language. Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion*, Arts and Politics of the Everyday (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

In this sense, my dissertation owes a debt to Novack's *Sharing the Dance*, in which she argues that social arrangements are embedded in and extend from the dancing body. I drew the term movement culture from her theory that a community of contact improvisers produce, sustain, and transfer their values in and through the sensuous and physical dimensions of kinetic and kinesthetic experiences. Moreover, Novack frames these values as part of 1960s subculture more broadly, a proposition she supports with examples of bodily practice from within and beyond modern dance. She also explains how organizational patterns support and extend from the meaning constructed in the dancing. Economic and other social circumstances condition bodily significance; but dancers also make sense of, and reach for, practices of living based on beliefs that they cultivate in their dancing. Movement culture, then, represents a nexus of influences that cohere around a dance form. Yet the members of the community consciously draw upon some of them, while denying or being unaware of others. Rather than eclipsing the significance of the body, as Garrett and Thomas suggest happens with discursive analysis, Novack establishes corporeal motion as central to an impressive array of understanding and activity. I treat Somatics as a movement culture that exceeds the ocular, but I also argue that in training, choreography, and organizations, dancers embody, comprehend, and contribute to the social changes happening on a much broader level.

To privilege the body, Somatic practitioners cultivated a differentiated symbolic field of sensation, even when they theorized corporeality as beyond rationality, or as a gateway to uncertainty. I agree with Garrett Brown's contrast between ballet, which emphasizes appearance, and the focus on tactility in Somatics. What is more, Novack, in her article "Sense Meaning and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," also associates ballet with the visual and CI with tactility,

which is informed by Somatics.⁶² Yet, like Novack, I understand the difference as reflecting distinct values held by artists, rather than the openness of Somatic practitioners to every possibility, compared with ballet dancers' rigidity. Novack establishes the sensory foci of ballet and CI as organizing principles for contrasting ideals by considering "experience as intrinsic to meaning, action in dialogue with thought, and the actor (dancer) improvising within the *social and cultural rules of her environments*" (italics added).⁶³ Few scholars theorize the role of physical and sensory experience as producing meaning in this way, which adds fuel to Thomas' concern that the body is subjugated to textual analysis.⁶⁴ However with its focus on kinesthetic awareness, Somatics exemplifies how, as social 'actors,' dancers construct sensation as meaningfully intertwined with various dimensions of their culture; and furthermore, how the tactile sense organizes the way that cultural significance is established through the other usually-privileged-senses, such as the ocular.

However, rather than compare Somatics with techniques from which it is usually distinguished, my study correlates different approaches that share rhetoric, and analyzes variation in the implementation of the same approach. To achieve this, I establish tropes, the implementation of which, in the regimens, sometimes distinguishes one technique or artistic approach from another; but at other times is the means by which connections between different pedagogies and choreographies are established. I tease out how dancers invest in a common language, exercises, physical aptitudes, and choreographic strategies with both different and shared meaning, by treating the various dimensions of the movement culture as "choreography"

⁶² Cynthia Novack authored the article under her married name Cohen-Bull, but I am going to use her unmarried name in the text throughout the dissertation whenever I refer to her work for ease of reference, however in the notes the reference will be to her married name. Cynthia Jean. Cohen-Bull (Novack), "Sense Meaning and Perception in Three Dance Cultures.," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane Desmond (Durham London N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁶³ Ibid., 271.

⁶⁴ There are important exceptions such as the integral role of sensation to Mark Franko's theorization of expression in modern dance. Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*.

in the way that Foster conceives of the term. To achieve transparency in dance's construction of meaning in her *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, Foster frames the body's rhetorical agency in distinct artistic ideologies, which are similar to what I am calling "movement cultures."⁶⁵ She details the manifestation of an artistic perspective in training, production and presentation, revealing consistent values. Similarly I establish consistency within distinct Somatic approaches, demonstrating that artists construct different bodies even though the ideas with which they work all seem to point toward a common theory of corporeality. Like Foster, other dance scholars rely on the legibility of dance's cultural significance to socially contextualize their subject.⁶⁶ Yet, Foster dissects choreography into component parts, which she decodes by revealing the unspoken presumptions by which meaning is naturalized through the symbolic significance accorded to corporeality in late 20th century America. I use her framework to identify contrasting meaning in sensory, kinetic, visual, and textual language, in Somatic training, as well as the production and presentation of concerts.

The slippery nature of my subject requires a combination of ethnographic and semiotic analysis. I establish tropes that underpin dynamic community values, which simultaneously embody the broader social meaning through which corporeality is constructed. Defining a discursive field necessitates a level of abstraction in which, as Novack puts it, "exceptions, contents, and nuances disappear in favor of generic characterization and hyperbolic categorization."⁶⁷ With the caution that she brings to identifying the values embedded in a dance practice, Novack models how to apprehend the nuances that give shared values meaning. She insists on applying her insights in "a multiplicity of ethnographic realities [that] shape the

⁶⁵ Foster, *Reading Dancing*.

⁶⁶ For example, Novack herself articulates the "movement styles" of contact improvisation, in her text on the subject. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 115. Meanwhile Daly articulates a number of different "bodies" that Duncan stages. Daly, *Done into Dance*.

⁶⁷ Cohen-Bull (Novack), "Sense Meaning and Perception," 271.

unique and historical occasion of any dance”, and therefore questions “the transmission and transformation of dance from one cultural setting to another, as well as from one historical period to another.”⁶⁸ By moving between abstraction and specificity, she articulates meaningful change in CI, and I follow her approach to reveal comparable distinct uses of Somatics.⁶⁹

By articulating community values in and subject to changing circumstances, I build upon scholarship that traces rapid change in late 20th century dance. For example, Emilyn Claid, in *Yes, No, Maybe...Seductive Ambiguity in Contemporary Dance* chronicles dancers’ rejection, in the 1970s, and reengagement in the 1990s, of theatrical display. Claid contrasts the changes in artistic values with an intransigent “theatrical economy” that demands the artists seduce their audience, which elucidates how broader political questions interface with dance through ideology that is specific to the art form. The community of artists upon whom she focuses overlaps with my subject. To build upon her insights, I articulate the aesthetic developments as affecting, and as intertwined with shifts in the social field in which they occur. Somatics develops alongside changes in educational institutions and concert houses as part of a dynamic social field.

I avoid constructing an artist or a community of practitioners as having final jurisdiction over the meaning with which they work, by arguing that dancing bodies accrue meaning within a social field. This is crucial to contest the academic tendency to characterize the body as a passive receptacle of meaning, as Thomas complains; but also because the theories that challenge universal consciousness, of which Ahmed’s is an example, point out that there is no

⁶⁸ Jane C. Desmond, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham London N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 285.

⁶⁹ For example, she forfeited specificity to articulate how sense and perception function in the anti-hierarchical communitarian value system of CI. Yet based on such abstraction she traced the hostility that arose among the community when a hierarchy seemed to emerge: Some dancers distinguished themselves as teachers and performers by recalibrating the sensual and perceptive skills associated with physical cooperation for virtuosity. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 221.

“self” prior to culture, but rather social actors achieve agency by rearticulating the significances that they inherit. Foster addresses both of these issues by insisting that we inherit bodily connotation; so rather than exert intellectual authority over a passive body, artists articulate a perspective in a discursive field to which corporeal significance is key. I apply her approach in analyzing the significance of the senses and other bodily dimensions, proposing that dancers re-articulate inherited meaning.⁷⁰ They are able to differentiate sensation, for example, by embodying values that are inseparable from broader historical processes and so subject to cultural plasticity.

Tracing the broader socio-historical processes, in which dance is embroiled, helps to account for the conundrum in which Somatics exhibits substantial variance while sustaining a consistent theory of the body. As referred to above, the regimens extended a late 20th century liberal ideal of universal individual freedom through the diversity with which artists implemented a theory of the natural body. This thesis depends upon articulating the art form and bodily significance within broader social change. In this sense my project applies to Somatics the art history framework articulated by Serge Guilbaut in *How New York Stole The Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and The Cold War*. He links the global success of American painting, to the post World War II ascension of liberalism, thereby departing from the tendency in his field to treat aesthetics independently from social change. Adapting Guilbaut’s lens, I draw on theories that index cultural change to economic development; scholars have shown that the arrangement and categorization of working practices entails symbolic schema that affect how people see themselves.⁷¹ Somatic rhetoric manifested the

⁷⁰ Foster addresses the ideas that sense and perception is genealogically produced. Susan Leigh. Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁷¹ See McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. And Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism..*

idealization of universal individual freedom exhibited in both post-war American foreign policy and the late 20th century economic cultures in the Western hubs I address.

The dissertation contributes understanding to the construction and circulation of bodies in a transnational context by defining the social field in which Somatics thrived as shaped by economics and government policies. In this sense my project builds upon dance scholarship that traces changes in choreography as it moves between different contexts, but carries with it geographically assigned significance. For example Marta Savigliano insists in *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* that Argentine intensity of feeling or passion, associated with the tango, became a resource mined by first-world countries. Similarly, despite the conceit of universality in Somatics, artists associated the emphasis on individuality with what they saw as the American origin of the regimens. Following Savigliano's tracing of the duet form tango, I demonstrate how, through shared transnational understanding, Somatics sustained its meaning, while also undergoing change-across distinct contexts. This strategy, which is employed by other dance scholars, tracks variance by establishing meaningful tropes in dance that still achieve distinct significances.⁷² Local attitudes toward America, for example, resulted in diverse local responses and adaptations of 'individuality' as manifested through Somatics. Yet overall, the United States bolstered its symbolic significance as a resource for creative freedom. Yet, like Savigliano argues, transnational power relationships impacted the way that this meaning was constructed as the regimens travelled and changed.

Although economic and political trends constituted a context in which Somatics exhibited diversity, the community achieved a semblance of unity through the artistic lineage with which practitioners identified. Alongside broader social factors, I analyze the distinct

⁷² For example, Burt traces distinct uses of the mass spectacle linking compositional patterns to economic developments, showing how they manifest differently in fascist and capitalist contexts. Burt, *Alien Bodies*.

implementations of the regimens through what Morris calls a semi-autonomous field. She argues that artists refract politics, economics, and culture through a historical and discursive lens of aesthetic theory. Looking at social change through the semi-autonomous field of Somatic movement culture, my project traces some similar cultural shifts to those that Novack details in her study of CI. She argues that the duet form developed from small pockets of experimentation into a nationwide independent movement with communitarian values embodied in the movement principle of ‘letting-go,’ to which the 1970s economic climate was amenable. Yet economic necessity in the 1980s dovetailed with new technique, which developed in CI, to foment the emergence of entrepreneurial performer-teachers, creating tension because what was perceived as a new hierarchy threatened the values of the previous decade. Novack thus positions American economic changes as integral to the development of CI, yet she demonstrates how they are mediated through the community values centered in the duet form. Similarly, I continually foreground the role of the dancing body in the construction of Somatic culture, while insisting upon the breadth of social forces to which it is connected.

To augment the historicizing of Somatics, the dissertation draws on existing dance scholarship that looks at the artists and the periods under consideration. My study both relies upon the documentation and analysis of artistic movements and specific dances; but also reframes the existing research by placing it within the dynamic movement culture that I have defined and situating it within wider social change. A substantial body of work on contemporary dance in the last 40 years of the 20th century provides crucial insight into the values that artists held because it takes artists’ own understanding of their aesthetic innovation as the basis for its analysis. Yet by limiting itself to dancers’ self-understood logic, the writing fails to apprehend how artists tackled exigencies through their art form in ways for which their rhetoric about

aesthetics could not account.⁷³ Furthermore, because contemporary dancers often defined themselves as innovating against the previous generation, scholarship that documents rather than interrogates artists' own ideology often misses how the achievements of one generation shapes the work of those that follow. I therefore reframe such research in a way that looks beyond artists' own rhetoric by using a socio-political frame.

My study also builds upon the work of dance academics who have already situated some of the choreography that I address within a social context, and have therefore often gone beyond the artists' own understanding of their work. By contributing understanding to how dancers engaged in wider cultural debate (even when this was not explicit in their work) this choreographic analysis enhances and supports my own research. Yet by linking what these scholars have revealed to Somatics, I connect their insights to an ideological framework that dancers established for the body through their training. For example, in close readings of dances influenced by a 1980s turn to identity politics, a number of writers theorize resistive danced subjectivities in my subject across axes of gender, disability, and sexuality.⁷⁴ Through the semi-autonomous discursive lens of Somatics, I connect these revelations to the rapid aesthetic diversification of late 20th century contemporary dance, which was underpinned by liberal

⁷³ Banes documents much of the 1960s and 1970s New York concert work that I analyze, including the logic with which artists were working that drew upon Somatics. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*. And *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980). Meanwhile Bales tracks changes in training linked to artistic ideology in the same period, but primarily reproduces artists' own understanding and therefore, like Banes, limits herself to the aesthetic innovation of the moment. By looking at change in a community for whom training, production and presentation are related, I reveal that Somatics was instrumental to an ethos about the dancing body and related to a web of historical circumstances. Such insight is lost when the regimens are viewed as one option taken up by dancers who newly train independently of choreographers after 1960 as Bales suggest. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, chapter 3.

⁷⁴ See for instance, Foster, Susan Leigh. "'Throwing like a girl?': Gender in a Transnational World" in Susan Leigh Foster, "'Throwing Like a Girl?': Gender in a Transnational World," in *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jo Wildschut Butterworth, Liesbeth (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 52-64., as well as Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities*, 2nd ed. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006)., and Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, Conn. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press; University Press of New England, 1997).

ideals. The liberal ideology that shaped the regimens also explains the importance of staging what seems like a liberated dancer. My study therefore nuances the politics staged in my subject.

By insisting that the contextual conditions in which Somatics emerges are integral to the body that dancers construct, my project differs from the majority of writing on the subject. Commentators largely tell the story of a particular pioneer and/or regimen in recognition of what has been achieved;⁷⁵ or they explain how Somatic processes work in order to promote the value of the regimens for dance education.⁷⁶ Garrett Brown extends this approach by attempting to achieve significance for the central presumptions of Somatics within academia; but even some scholars who theorize the social context of dance fail to challenge practitioners' own understanding of the regimens.⁷⁷ In all these cases, by accepting the basic presumptions of Somatics, the writers conceal the cultural labor of the artists they address. I embrace the converse side of this contradiction. I recognize what artists achieved by conceiving of the body as natural or beyond textual meaning; and yet I contest their belief that they were accessing natural capacity in their dancing, and reveal cultural biases that were concealed within their rhetoric.

The Structure of the Dissertation

Each of three chapters that make up the dissertation traces a different dimension of the history of the development of Somatics in relation to political, cultural, and aesthetic contexts. Despite the fact that enormous uniformity in the conception and philosophy of the body went

⁷⁵ See for example, Pamela Matt, *A Kinesthetic Legacy the Life and Works of Barbara Clark* (Tempe, Ariz.: CMT Press, 1993)., or Nancy Topf, *The Anatomy of Center* (Northampton, MA: Contact Quarterly, 2012).

⁷⁶ A good example is: Netti-Fiol, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link*.

⁷⁷ For example, Emilyn Claid argues that late 20th century developments in British dance navigated the patriarchal values embedded in theatre. She interrogates the success of their enterprise and articulates limits in thier political achievements. But she characterizes dancers as having achieved a more authentic, individual movement style with Somatics without exploring how these ideas were synthesized as culturally specific experiences through the practice. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 84.

largely unchallenged, training and concert dance in different eras manifested and produced significantly different meaning. As the above summary indicates, between the 1960s and the end of the 20th century, the dominant values within the community using Somatics transitioned from emphasizing collective spirit to individual self-representation. Ultimately these values embodied workforce compliance, all of which depended on the development of a transnational community of practitioners. Chapter 1 traces the development of Somatics as an approach to training in the late 20th century. It focuses on how, as they overhauled the cultivation of dancing bodies through the regimens, teachers and artists established a confluence between individuality and universality. In opposition to protocols that were institutionalized in modern dance, dancers sought autonomy over their bodies and creative freedom. They claimed that by recovering universal principles of human movement, they could achieve bodily authenticity and thereby resist aesthetic imposition. In order to conceive of a trans-historical and pre-cultural body, dancers, beginning in the 1960s, constructed a lineage by consolidating progressive era and mid-century ideas that they believed were the discovery of bodily truths. Focusing on textual and studio-based rhetoric, the chapter chronicles how, as the training developed through the three different phases, it continued to exhibit the confluence of individuality and universality. The nature of the pedagogies, and the popularity of different forms changed as the dominant community values transformed from collective spirit to individual self-representation, and ultimately embodied workforce compliance. Yet dancers sustained an overriding discourse of natural logic through which they insisted upon the importance of individuality and universality, which is an ideology to which I return throughout the rest of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 chronicles the transnational dissemination of Somatic training. Practically and ideologically underpinned by post-war American expansionism, Somatics initially rode upon the

coattails of the earlier American export of modern dance. In this sense we see how, in its confluence of individuality and universality, the training embodied the liberal ideals of the United States expansionist project. Artists disseminated Somatics with the rhetoric that universal bodily truths accessed through the regimens provide a foundation for individual creative freedom. By instituting the regimens in various regional and national contexts, they verified the universality of Somatics, but the American origins of the liberal ideals disappeared because dancers developed unique local approaches as they tackled distinct conditions, and even critiqued some tendencies in Somatics that were associated with American cultural dominance. Artists also patch-worked together transnational support at a time when establishments were hostile to Somatics, so their liberalism seemed independent of transnational flows of culture through powerful institutions. Meanwhile, essential corporeal nature proved useful for local exigencies that artists faced. They synthesized geographically specific Somatic bodies that were interconnected by a transnational discourse. New York established a professional and innovative Somatic body at the network centre. A Somatic body of respite emerged in New England to escape New York commercialism. British dancers constructed a Somatic body of political and social significance against what they saw as apolitical American dance. Dutch educationalists synthesized a Somatic body in flux, resisting a relationship to any single dance context. Australian dancers asserted a Somatic body as a new frontier in a post-colonial cultural independence movement. The process of expansion established the veracity of Somatic universality, yet dancers asserted individual creative freedom as central to the training by contesting the resistance with which they were met by local modern dance establishments.

Chapter 3 analyzes the concert-stage choreography produced with Somatic trained bodies and ideas. Based upon the theory that the natural body brings together individuality and

universality, choreographers represented post-war liberal ideals through the way they framed the dancers' identity in the artistic process. Concert dance fueled the interest in Somatics because artists argued that the training liberates the dancer from the authoritarian grasp of ballet and modern dance, producing new artistic possibilities. In three approaches to choreographic strategy, I define distinct dancer-choreographer relationships that exhibit change over the three phases of development in training, as well some regional variation. These changes further reveal contingency in the idea of nature and the conceit of liberation. Although the different strategies were not mutually exclusive and were deployed in all three phases, each one emphasized an era in the late 20th century development of Somatics. "Processing" exemplified anti-hierarchical collectivism because artists first developed the approach to collapse choreographic authority into the dancers' experience of moving, based on natural functional imperatives. "Inventing" calibrated the Somatic body for new vocabulary with which choreographers established an individual artistic signature, which they did by collaborating with Somatic trained dancers who contributed creative autonomy to the making of dance. "Displaying" restored choreographer authority, but still extended liberal ideals by staging "newly-liberated subjects." The strategy emphasized the choreographer's artist signature, which manifested in valuing dancers for the appearance of the movement they performed. Because displaying recapitulated the ideas in modern and classical dance that Somatics initially rejected, the strategy represented the cessation of an experimental community.

The dissertation begins by looking at training in order to emphasize the role that constructing bodies in the studio plays in the formation of contemporary dance culture. My study is one of the first outside of ballet to examine the culture of the dance class, and the importance of training in forging a choreographic practice and related sociality. Until now dance

and performance scholars have largely neglected the process by which a performing body is cultivated. My dissertation marks an intervention into that neglected field of inquiry. I follow the chapter on training by focusing on the dissemination of Somatics to emphasize how the character of a technique is specific to the circumstances in which it is practiced. Yet, despite such specificity, my analysis reveals that American expansionism shapes the transnational context as an overarching ideology. Liberalism calls forth the local differences to verify its ideals. By articulating the temporal conditions that impact training in chapter 1, and the effect of spatial dynamics in chapter 2, I provide a foundation for the analysis of representation in concerts in chapter 3. The dissertation's organizational structure therefore aims to reveal how the concept of nature in Somatics encapsulates local and transnational social conditions, which are evident in the meaning embedded in movement and in artists' perceptions about aesthetic development.

Chapter 1. Renewable Originality: The Natural Body & Social Change.

As New York approached the end of the 20th century, the front page of *Movement Research Performance journal*, the premier publication for the dance community in which Somatics had been so central, declared:

*You can't fake release. You just copy what someone's body's doing when they're releasing and you can make your body look like that... it's not an evil thing – they're doing what their teacher's (sic) want them to do. They're reproducing. Dancers are trained to reproduce what they're seeing what is correct or desirable, but when it comes to release, that's one thing you can't fake. You can try but unless you're really releasing you're not releasing.*⁷⁸

By claiming an exceptional status for release, Leslie Kaminoff betrays the deep-seated belief that Somatics, from which the term was drawn, had revolutionized training. Kaminoff maintained that releasing could not be copied because, along with the majority of his community, he believed in the training's ability to restore innate natural capacity that other approaches bypass by focusing on the way movement looks. Yet his concern about fakery also reveals that, by 1999, a style associated with Somatics that could be copied, called “release technique”, had established prominence. For four decades, dancers had believed that artistic authenticity, achieved by accessing the natural body, had protected them from pollution by institutional and commercial forces. Kaminoff's sentiment exemplifies a broader desire to protect the value of Somatics against what the community saw as the institutionalized modalities in modern and ballet trainings, the rejection of which underpinned their justification for the regimens, and the Somatic informed choreography that they created.

Despite Kaminoff's belief in the natural foundations of the training, this chapter reveals that, while Somatics was certainly marginal to other approaches for most of the late 20th

⁷⁸ Leslie Kaminoff, Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal," (New York, NY: Movement Research, 1990-), 1.#18: Winter/Spring 1999

century, it had always embodied styles. It is true the modalities and vocabularies in which Somatics manifested seemed to go through much greater change than modern classical dance. Furthermore, not until later in the 1990s did large theatres and higher education really endorse the styles and pedagogy that emerged through the regimens. In this sense, Somatics had constituted a space distinct from powerful institutions. Yet rather than discover natural propensities from which they could exit the complexities of culture, dancers in the different decades leading up to the millennium actually constructed and revised nature as an idea in order to tackle the artistic, economic, social and cultural exigencies of their historical moments.

Late 20th century Somatics concealed its cultural specificity because, beginning in the 1960s, artists defined a lineage in which discoveries about the about the body were made in the early 20th century and modulated in mid-century. Yet this narrative reframed the concept of nature that progressive era pioneers had depended upon to synthesize ideas about posture and motion. Sixty or more years before the regimens were brought under the umbrella term Somatics, racial, cultural and class difference determined who could benefit from the natural capacity that contemporary dancers accrued to every-body. Nature achieved its inclusivity progressively through a series of reconstructions, the first major attempt being in mid-century when dancers shifted the body's essence from being defined by aggregate social categories, to being individual and universal. By emphasizing scientific rhetoric in the regimens, mid-century dancers focused on what they saw as pre-cultural bodily dimensions, divesting the training of troubling social theory. Moreover, based on their understanding of Eastern ideas, they validated receptivity to nature as a critique of the Western ego, and the body-mind of each individual dancer struggled to overcome authoritarian culture. Later generations naturalized such receptivity, cleansing and universalizing early 20th century ideas. Nevertheless, dancers

mythologized a story that natural dimensions of the body had been discovered, positioning their training as uncovering pre-discursive and transcendent corporeality for artistic critique.

In order to recognize the cultural labor undertaken by dancers, I focus on three distinct reconstructions of nature through which the theory of the universal individual body was reinvented. The chapter traces these shifts between the 1960s and the end of the 20th century. However, it first narrates early and mid-century developments to set up touchstones to which dancers returned again and again. The practices continued to exhibit the progressive era legacy of naturalized racial, cultural and class difference, until the end of the 20th century and beyond, even though mid-century theories attempted to whitewash Somatics with their universal individual concept of the natural body.

By the 1970s, Somatics had convinced itself of its inclusivity by extending the reach of individual-universal nature far beyond the body that had, up until then, participated in Western concert dance. Sustaining a critique of institutionalized modern dance that first materialized in the 1950s, and intensified in the following decade, dancers constructed nature as the foundation for collective participation. Their seemingly quotidian vocabulary, and an emphasis on a common evolutionary anatomical heritage, provided a foundation to stage an authentic individual self in a way that was purportedly accessible to all humanity. Yet, as dancers in the 1980s revealed, in procedures through which scientific objectivity toward the body was established, the training actually entrenched white, middle-class, and heterosexual ideals. By reconstructing the natural body as inherently sexual and emotional, among other new trends, 1980s Somatics critiqued the detachment with which inclusivity had previously been asserted. Yet the staunchly individual body that emerged also betrayed more about economic and political changes ushered in by new conservatism, than any natural truth. This was evident in the way

that dancers flocked to new training in which novel virtuoso “signature choreography”, that had established itself on large concert stages, was taught based upon Somatic ideas. The limits of 1980s individualism revealed themselves in the corporate arts culture of the 1990s and beyond, demanding yet further reconstructions of nature. Self-determination, and creative autonomy became imperatives as institutions used Somatic ideas to fuel innovation for a voracious art market that refused to fund experimental work. With the ideals of the previous decades now appropriated, nature reconstructed itself as a source of integrity against imitation; a change which Kaminoff’s quote illustrates beautifully.

In order to trace the changes in Somatic training, and the impact on the community to which it was important, I analyze how the studio procedures, through which dancers felt they accessed nature, transformed in order to tackle the artistic challenges that arose in the different decades. By examining the historical development of Somatics and its correlation with broader social issues, we see a process of sedimentation in which certain principles withstand the transitions in the training and thereby achieve natural status. Although this chapter introduces various techniques, it articulates their role in the modification of values, as well as the impact that wider developments had on how dancers used distinct regimens. Much like my theory of natural body’s significance, I therefore define the regimens, not as stable ideas, but rather as only having meaning in the context that they are used.

Aggregate Social Categories of Nature: Early 20th Century Somatics.

To demonstrate that the Somatic construction of a universally inclusive natural body originated in exclusionary theories, I first look at three progressive era educators whose ideas developed when nature was linked to social difference. Late twentieth century practitioners reframed the ideas of F.M. Alexander, Margaret H’Doubler, and Mabel Ellsworth Todd, who,

beginning in the late 19th century, all participated in an American intellectual movement that explained racial, cultural and class differences in evolutionary terms. Theories emerged about the proximity of social groups to humanity's natural origins, and the value of such proximity for the process of civilization. Like late 20th century Somatic constructions of nature, the theories claimed to be universal, but rather than applying equally to all humans, they stratified social groups as either biologically distinct, or as having achieved a different level of evolutionary development. In this historical context, Alexander, H'Doubler, and Todd theorized human physical form and function as related to learning and consciousness. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, Somatics practitioners extrapolated what they felt were inclusive theories of the natural body from ones that initially aggregated distinct social groups.

The training that Alexander developed widely influenced Somatics by challenging, in theories of consciousness and education, a prevailing distinction and stratification of the body and the mind.⁷⁹ By privileging intellectual over corporeal volition, Alexander insisted that goal-oriented behavior in which Western epistemology was invested, overrode natural capacity, which he argued is crucial to optimum functioning.⁸⁰ Continuing human evolution apparently depended upon the integration with Enlightenment rationality capacities intrinsic to the human body; nature (the primitive) and reason (the civilized) needed to be conjoined.⁸¹ Dancers reconceived the body-self in their training using his ideas.⁸² Alexander Technique, the details of

⁷⁹ Alexander penned the most elaborate texts on corporeal consciousness commonly used by Somatic practitioners, but this idea itself is not necessarily always traceable to his authorship.

⁸⁰ Alexander argued that "man" exited instinctual imperatives such as natural selection by evolving consciousness, but "natural" bodily dimensions still need to be brought under conscious control, which could be done through his regimen. F Matthias. Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, 1 vols. (New York 1918), 5.

⁸¹ Although a few of Alexander's specific terms entered dance class, he authored a language to elucidate how consciousness and physical action are intertwined, which did not translate into dance. I have footnoted the technical terms in my explanation of the studio practice to avoid overloading the text with jargon.

⁸² The field has been small enough to assume that the pioneers and teachers of all the techniques encountered Alexander's ideas. When a direct connection cannot be traced between Alexander technique and a regimen, the approach still resembles his theory of consciousness. Even Susan Klein, who asserts a dualistic separation of body

which are described in section 3, exemplifies the articulation of progressive era theories of nature through aggregate social categories. This section focuses on how Alexander theorized advanced consciousness as the exclusive purview of the white, colonial upper classes.

To establish the importance of marshalling the ongoing evolutionary process, Alexander argued various “Others” to a canonical white Western subjects fail to embody *Man’s Supreme Inheritance*, the title of his first publication. The fallen glory of ancient empires resulted from their failure to bring natural instincts under conscious control, according to Alexander who thereby agreed with the logic used to justify colonial rule.⁸³ Meanwhile pre-industrial agricultural workers on his home turf demonstrated the loss of mental capacity that results from reverting to nature,⁸⁴ and he approximated Africans to animals that rely on base instincts, suggesting their physical evolution extends beyond their mental capacity and lack of moral consciousness.⁸⁵ Civilization could supposedly only avoid the debauchery of antiquated empires, avert lower class ignorance, advance above inferior races, and access its supreme inheritance, through a new bodily consciousness training to which posture was integral.

Interpreters of Alexander Technique in subsequent eras reframed the theory of consciousness as universal,⁸⁶ despite critiques of this liberal humanist ideal.⁸⁷ Focusing on his theory of posture as a universal constant and potential for human salvation, dancers, and other

and mind argues for mind body integration. Susan Klein, "Dancing From the Spirit" in *Movement Research Inc.*, "Movement Research Performance Journal." # 13, Fall 1996. Klein and other techniques may not acknowledged Alexander’s influence due to professional competition, or because the ideas were simply prevalent in the milieu and not strictly associated with one pioneer.

⁸³ Alexander argued that, despite intellectual superiority, Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires fell prey to debauched habits because of the unconscious impact of emotion and desire, which rendered them vulnerable to more primitive societies, that defeated them. Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, 7. I am reading his theory through Said’s framework. Said, *Orientalism*.

⁸⁴ Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁶ See for example Gelb, *Body Learning*.

⁸⁷ Late 20th century theories have critiqued a universal theory of consciousness on the basis of its masculinist, white, and heterosexual nature. See for example Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Alexander practitioners, began believing the pioneer had discovered pre-cultural principles applicable to ‘any-body.’⁸⁸ Because psychophysical regulation was thought to be central to the development of consciousness,⁸⁹ optimum posture ensured continuing of human evolution.⁹⁰ The approach seemed to depend on motor and intellectual capacities afforded by biped stature and motion, rather than the membership within a specific social group as *Man’s Supreme Inheritance* suggested.⁹¹

Alexander ultimately ceased to stratify human groups,⁹² which probably reflects changing social mores, and the mutually influencing intellectual relationship he enjoyed with Progressive Education pioneer John Dewey.⁹³ However, to grasp the cultural work that the technique does, we must appreciate its dependence upon progressive era ideas about “primitive” and “civilized” mind. The construction of nature through aggregate social categories, which later practitioners erased with an individualized post-race, post-class concept, remains embedded in ideas that Alexander shared with Dewey. Opposed to conservative interpretations

⁸⁸ Alexander argues that posture is a universal constant and source for salvation in human experience. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd," 9.

⁸⁹ Gelb defines extra-cultural trans-historical principles even while he accords them a lineage. For example, he defines the head as a sensory-nervous center with a unique and delicate balance on the rest of the body, the full utilization of which, called good ‘Use,’ is only afforded by upright posture, and is achieved in the relationship between the head, neck and back, known collectively as the ‘Primary Control.’ Gelb, *Body Learning*, 25&44.

⁹⁰ Gelb’s text exemplifies how Alexander’s perspective was redefined as supposedly inclusive by isolating physical principles from racial theory. Gelb makes reference to *Man’s Supreme Inheritance*, and sustains the conceit that evolutionary theory provides insight about posture and consciousness; but never mentions Alexander’s racism and class superiority.

⁹¹ Alexander argued fully biped stature distinguishes humans from other species by enabling fine motor and economy of motion, but most importantly by affording unique emotional and intellectual capacity. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 44.

⁹² Alexander universalized his theory in texts published in the 1930s, a full 20 years after the racial theories in “*Man’s Supreme Inheritance*.” See for example, F Matthias. Alexander, *The Use of the Self, It Conscious Direction in Relation to Diagnosis, Functioning and the Control of Reaction* (New York,: E. P. Dutton and co., 1932).

⁹³ Dewey wrote the introduction to several of Alexander's books including "Man's Supreme Inheritance" (1918), "Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual" (1923), "The Use of the Self" (1932), and "A Universal Constant in Living" (1941). The mutually influencing relationship between FM Alexander and John Dewey has not received a lot of attention yet the importance of Alexander and Dewey's ideas for each other is documented, see for example Alexander Murray, *John Dewey and F.M. Alexander* (Dayton Ohio: AmSAT Books).

of evolutionary theory,⁹⁴ which proposed that innate limitations of the primitive mind explain economic and other disadvantages,⁹⁵ Dewey argued that social ills like poverty could be solved with pedagogy that integrates Darwin's insights about natural development. Like the idea that life adapts to its physical environment, Dewey insisted upon the universality of intellectual capacity, and the role of the social environment in its development.⁹⁶ Every human being could transcend the primitive mind, but Dewey agreed with Alexander that it represents a crucial component of consciousness. Like the importance for Alexander of connecting with motor capacities, Dewey insisted that intellectual development and social advancement depend upon marshalling essential primitive capabilities.⁹⁷ He explained social differences as a linear progression between primitive and advanced cultures, which mirrored the evolution of the species, but accorded all human beings equal potential for improvement.⁹⁸ Although it underpinned a universal theory of consciousness, primitive mind, which Dewey and Alexander

⁹⁴ Education focused on success was blamed for Debauched Kinesthesia in a culture that privileges conscious, objective knowledge. Alexander called for education that integrates the body and re-orders consciousness so that natural propensities, tied to evolution, could be brought under conscious control. Dewey contributed the idea of embodied reflection to education, which emerged through his relationship to Alexander. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 18.

⁹⁵ Herbert Spencer was popular with middle and upper class Americans, arguing that society evolves like an organism, and so rather than extend dysfunctional life, like government intervention for the poor, they should be allowed to die-off naturally. Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 108-20.

⁹⁶ Two dominant evolutionary ideas both presumed the inherent capacity of life-forms: "the materialist" that early forms are superior, and the "idealist" the opposite configuration. Dewey argued that difference is due to social context not biologically determined capacity, which underpinned his progressive views on racial difference. T D. Fallace, "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race," *Educational Researcher* 39, no. 6 (2010): 474.

⁹⁷ Dewey stratified culture in a teleology of Western superiority through his belief in "Linear Historicism," but challenged biological racism and class superiority by arguing that the "Savage" is evident in the "Civilized" and environment determines intellectual capacity. Ibid.

⁹⁸ Dewey spoke publicly against the presumption that race determines intellectual capacity. Yet he believed differences between societies reflected stages of social development in which the North Western Europe and the US were at the apex. He argued learning follows natural stages that reflect individual psychological as well as sociological development. Corporeality was seen to be key to learning because, like Alexander, Dewey felt education entailed resolving the instinctual dimensions of human beings with the rational. Consequently, he challenged 19th ideas about education by insisting upon the agency of the body to which cultural stratification was integral. Ibid.

agreed must be utilized in education, accrued its definition from the kind of distinctions between social groups articulated in *Man's Supreme Inheritance*.

Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique, a widely used text on Alexander's approach, exemplifies the enduring impact of a theory of nature that aggregates social groups. Michael Gelb, who published the book in the 1980s, configures children, animals, and non-Western tribal people as unfettered by the culture that robs white Western adults of their natural capacity.⁹⁹ While he seems to resist biological racism by idealizing rather than denigrating Africans, for example, Gelb constructs natural capacity as pre-modern and thus beyond the reasoning with which Alexander argues the primitive must be conjoined. He locks non-canonical and non-Western bodies in nature (the primitive), where they either remain as romantic visions of the past, or wait to evolve so that rationality and culture (the civilized) can be integrated.

Returning to the progressive era, H'Doubler applied Dewey and Alexander's ideas in a way that established a foothold for modern dance in the university, profoundly impacting the development of dance education generally and Somatics specifically.¹⁰⁰ She critiqued mind-body dualism by insisting that physical movement promotes learning,¹⁰¹ and thereby established the primitive mind as crucial to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. To this end, her methods emphasized investigation and experience such as "hands on activity", "co-operative

⁹⁹ Gelb uses images of African tribespeople, animals and children, accompanied with captions such as "the Natural dignity of this Nuba tribesman is expressed in his upright stature and the poise of his head." Gelb, *Body Learning*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Dewey acknowledged Alexander's influence on his critique of mind/body dualism. They taught together at Columbia University in 1915 and sustained a 40 year professional relationship. Alexander was also connected to other intellectuals within the progressive education movement through his work at Columbia University. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd," 7.

¹⁰¹ Janice Ross describes Dewey's perspective on education relative to various dualisms. H'Doubler based her dance educational approach on his theories. Ross, *Moving Lessons*, chapter 6.

learning”, and “reflective enquiry.”¹⁰² For example, to feel and reflect upon organic functional motion,¹⁰³ H’Doubler’s students manipulated each other while relaxed.¹⁰⁴ Her methods show up in late 20th century Somatics as the exploration of culturally neutral essential kinetic principles.¹⁰⁵ Yet to recuperate movement from the lasting Victorian associations of the flesh with salaciousness,¹⁰⁶ H’Doubler constructed a body that projected dubious morals onto race and class Others.¹⁰⁷ She broke proscriptions under which middle and upper class white women’s place was defined,¹⁰⁸ by distinguishing her approach from the associations of sexual display that attended working class women dancing in theatres as well as the savagery associated with African American movement traditions.¹⁰⁹ For example, in her comprehensive monograph on H’Doubler, Janice Ross points out that the dance educator represented jazz as ““wild” and “unartistic.””¹¹⁰ H’Doubler focused on experience and process, displacing the “product” of performance, establishing respectability by undercutting display and rejecting a goal-oriented attitude.

¹⁰² Mike Huxley draws together several texts, including the writing about H’Doubler by Janice Ross. He argued that Alexander had both direct and indirect influence on the dance educationalist. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd," 12.

¹⁰³ Fallace, "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric," 476.

¹⁰⁴ Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ H’Doubler’s students used an exercise that is still used in Somatic classes where they pulled a partner by the leg while relaxed on the floor, twisting them completely over by having each part of the body successively respond. Students aimed to feel how much energy it takes for the twist to happen, how much they could relax within the twist, exploring initiation and follow-through. Ibid., 155.

¹⁰⁶ For example, she recuperated the skeleton from Victorian iconography where it signified the supposed fatal and infective dangers of immoral social dancing. Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁸ Ross argues that the social position of women was central to H’Doubler’s project. Ibid. Several texts covering the late 19th century to the 1930s suggest that modern dance became a means for women to push beyond the confines of separate spheres ideology by forging a uniquely feminine subjectivity in the public sphere. See for example, Tomko, *Dancing Class.*, Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics.*, Daly, *Done into Dance.*

¹⁰⁹ Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 13. H’Doubler’s rhetoric participated in the “new morality,” which Tomko points out constructed middle class bodies as sedentary, versus the laboring working class. It was believed working people would not understand the value of improving comportment, as such folk dance was used to disguise the introduction of physical vitality and postural health. Tomko’s research suggest the history of class distinction in the genteel tradition persisted as working people were assumed not care about posture. Tomko, *Dancing Class*, 172-73.

¹¹⁰ Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 13.

H'Doubler stratified social groups much like Alexander and Dewey had in order to engage the primitive mind so that women could achieve bodily self-possession, which was dangerous cultural terrain. Yet her cultural agenda ultimately disappeared into scientific rhetoric.¹¹¹ As with Alexander Technique, H'Doubler's pedagogy seemed to lend itself to the removal of the racist and class superior projections with which she initially sanitized the idea that humans are not ontologically distinct but evolved from other species.¹¹² Her Students exceeded restrictive gender codes under the rubric of experiencing anatomy unencumbered by gravity; they explored joint movement and crawled in order to sense shifting weight transference in their bodies.¹¹³ To late 20th century dancers, their activity seemed to be focused on bodily realities rather than cultural differences. No such distinctions were made in the progressive era, so only by distancing her approach from bodies tainted by race and class could H'Doubler respectably engage the primitive mind in the interest of social development.

Mable Ellsworth Todd's work exemplifies how late 20th century dancers established the independence of evolutionary ideas from social difference. In her 1937 text *The Thinking Body: A study of the balancing forces of dynamic man*, Todd focused on phylogenetic rather than cultural specificity, articulating movement principles by differentiating human mechanics from that of other species. Her work, which became broadly known as Ideokinesis,¹¹⁴ functioned as a blueprint for Somatic exploration of the body.¹¹⁵ Yet, even though she refrained from social

¹¹¹ Ross acknowledges H'Doubler relied on racism in a similar vein to Duncan in order to achieved progress for white middle class women. The discourse of science supported this by seeming natural, just as Duncan argued Greek harmony is natural unlike Jazz, although Ross does not make the connection. *Ibid.*, 154.

¹¹² A key objection to Darwinism was the idea that humans were related to other species. Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism*.

¹¹³ Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 150-51.

¹¹⁴ Lulu Sweigard coined the term "ideokinesis." Lulu E. Sweigard, *Human Movement Potential: Its Ideokinetic Facilitation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).

¹¹⁵ Like with Alexander, Todd's work was enormously influential in the field, but a lineage can only be inferred at this point for some uses of ideas very similar to hers. Todd's text is, however the most vivid example of a way of thinking about the body that became central for Somatics.

differentiation like that of Alexander and H'Doubler, the primitive mind remained key to the benefits Todd attributed to her "Natural Postural Training."¹¹⁶ Like Dewey, she universalized a human capacity for rational thinking, which she attributed to upright posture in contrast with the unconsciousness she accrued to lower life forms. Todd also affirmed the crucial role of the primitive mind in social development, even though she refrained from differentiating distinct cultures and races to define it against the civilized mind.¹¹⁷ She argued that functional efficiency depends on accessing the kinetic patterns of lower phylogenetic species that remain subconsciously locked in the human body as a remnant of evolution. However, Todd compounded the ranking of bodily action and experience into nature (the primitive) and culture (the civilized) which contributed to the way that the universality, which later practitioners claimed for Somatics, persisted in constructing certain bodies, and cultural practices, as beyond its remit.

The similarities between Todd's, Alexander's and H'Doubler's ideas, made it possible for dancers, beginning in the 1960s, to synthesize their approaches in various forms of training.¹¹⁸ H'Doubler and Todd both combine kinesiology, anatomy, evolutionary theory, and physics, and Todd's students also engaged in inquiry through physical action and experience, which exhibits the idea of acting upon an environment with one's "instincts" to emulate the

¹¹⁶ Todd's and H'Doubler's emphasis on kinesthetic awareness using sensation and imagery, and skeletal information distinguishes them from Alexander. Yet, like Alexander, by focusing on kinesthetic awareness Todd insisted her approach is not about physicality but about thinking. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd."

¹¹⁷ The absence of racist and class superior rhetoric in Todd's work likely reflects new social standards, a shift that Manning traces. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*.

¹¹⁸ Todd, Alexander and H'Doubler worked in the same New York milieu and likely influenced each other. Huxley points out that 1990s and early 21st century writing draws links between Todd and Alexander's work, despite the lack of evidence for a direct connection. He argues they were likely aware of each others work, moving in the same intellectual culture, teaching in the same institutions, influencing some of the same people, and using similar ideas. In this milieu H'Doubler was influenced by Alexander and Dewey; she may not have referenced Todd because she was aligned with Dewey and Alexander, and there are suggestions that that Todd and Alexander represented opposing camps because their techniques were being taught and debated in the same context. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd."

evolutionary process.¹¹⁹ Like Alexander, Todd placed humanity at the apex of evolution by virtue of capacities afforded by upright posture, including consciousness. She also agreed with him that humans have yet to master upright posture, which they must do by incorporating the primitive mind, and as a result they will advance in moral, affective and intellectual functioning.¹²⁰

Beginning in the 1960s, dancers related Todd's training to the universal conceit of consciousness in Alexander Technique, and to the use of anatomy in H'Doubler's pedagogy. Todd's use of science convinced them of the pre-cultural status of the body she constructed.¹²¹ By proposing that different species' anatomy is subject to and formed by principles of physics and mechanics,¹²² Todd seemed to reveal how bodily structure arises from organic necessities peculiar to the way an organism negotiates its environment. She constructed human biped uniqueness against other endoskeleton organisms including fish, horses, and primates,¹²³ arguing that if students utilize the efficient means by which their bodies are designed to meet

¹¹⁹ Dewey theorized that that the primitive contributes to progressive thought, which is reflected in his conviction that instruction alone is insufficient, and that hands on experience must occupy a key role in progressive learning. His educational approach is based upon the idea that greater understanding results from the use of processes that the "primitive" mind is subject to, which includes working with non-rational dimensions of experience through the practice of solving problems through the activity of the body within as set of given environmental circumstances. Fallace, "Was John Dewey Ethnocentric."

¹²⁰ Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd."

¹²¹ Huxley points out that Todd's emphasis on science differentiates her from Alexander, but that in his forward to Alexander's *The Use of the Self*, Dewey verified the scientific rigor of the methods. Ibid., 139. John Rolland suggests Todd became more academic because she was teaching at a university when *The Thinking Body* was published. John; Jaques Van Eijden Rolland, "Alignment and Release: History and Methods," in *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam*, ed. Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009), 119.

¹²² Todd proposes that the body's form follows functional imperatives based on an analysis of what distinct systems and components contribute to the organism's negotiation of universal forces such as gravity and inertia. She analyzes anatomy using mechanics, detailing for example, how different systems manage gravitational pull. Bone is configured as the weight bearing, 'compression' members of the body, and muscle and fascia as weight transferring and upholding 'tensile' members. Bodily "substructures" are also analyzed for their local functionality, considering the physical demands they endure. The body is constructed the idea of its management of stress and pressure. The scientific analysis of human physiology is positioned amongst all the other organisms, which bolsters Todd's natural conception of the body because she argues that every species is negotiating comparable physical forces. Difference in the physical structure depends on the environmental/physiological conditions an organism adapts to negotiate. Todd, *The Thinking Body*.

¹²³ Ibid., 218.

environmental/physiological demands such as gravity, breathing, and being upright, they achieve postural and motional "hygiene".¹²⁴ With the maxim "form follows function", Todd theorized human kinetic specificity as an extra-cultural and universal truism from which optimum motion could be deduced.¹²⁵

Natural Postural Training instituted the knowledge that Todd articulated through modalities in which students developed a kinesthetic map of anatomical function.¹²⁶ Todd, like H'Doubler, believed that she could train her students to sense the skeleton and its function, and thereby synthesize reasoned analysis with instinct, achieving advanced consciousness.¹²⁷ For example, her students reduced muscular effort thought to be excessive within a given activity by focusing on images, which, while related to an understanding gained by studying diagrams and skeletons,¹²⁸ were often poetic and thought to circumvent rational thought, restoring functional efficiency.¹²⁹ Both women integrated the primitive and civilized minds by teaching anatomical

¹²⁴ Ibid., 157.

¹²⁵ Todd points out that quadruped weight distribution is achieved between two points at either end of the spine, while biped weight hangs around a single spinal column. She proposes that the latter frees up shoulder/arm articulation by relieving weight bearing responsibility, allowing for fine motor skills. She thereby connects the evolution of consciousness with phylogenetic development compared with species that have greater speed and endurance for covering distance. Yet upright posture creates pressure on the pelvic girdle and spine because, which must support all the weight and if used badly affect intellectual, moral, emotional dimensions. Ibid., 66. Her thesis reflects the Darwinian conceit that species evolved in response to the natural environment, which was part of a move by intellectuals to replace religious with rational thinking in the late 19th and early 20th century. Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism*.

¹²⁶ Todd, *The Thinking Body*, 33.

¹²⁷ Dewey's conviction that the "primitive" plays a crucial role in progressive thought is evident in Alexander's theory of the unconscious balancing reflex; Todd's idea about the use of patterns from species lower on the phylogenetic scale; and H'Doubler's cultivation of sensory awareness skeletal movement.

¹²⁸ Popkin recalls images such as pockets on the back of the trousers moving around the sides to the front to release overworked "turn-out" muscles from classical ballet, and the image of the folding ankle being door-hinge closing is thought to enhance the joint's natural tendency. Images are also used in specific movements, that are designed to cultivate minimal muscular tension, such as the tail-bone being a weight on a plumb line during simple plié exercises in which the dancer bends at the knees and hips but aims to sustain the fullest length of the spine. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

¹²⁹ In Todd's "natural postural training" students use the Constructive Rest Position to reduce physical tension, which Dowd proposes brings the body to neutral from where the work of re-patterning can most effectively take place. She advises that after achieving neutrality, students are able to track whether they are using excess tension as they progress from stillness into movement. Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly*.

structure and function which students aimed to feel in their bodies.¹³⁰ By searching for solutions to natural limitations that were sensed in the body in relation to the environment, students apparently emulated the evolutionary struggle.¹³¹ They understood human kinetics as the experience of anatomical and environmental constraints on motion.¹³² Once again Todd used science to affirm the pre-cultural nature of her images, arguing that neurological theory proves the effectiveness of the prompts.¹³³

Dancers applied the combination of ideas put forward by Alexander, H'Doubler and Todd as if they were restoring pre-culture psychophysical function by accessing anatomical structure and mechanics, with sensory exercises that combined rational capacity and inherent bodily knowledge. Yet the conceit that consciousness was benign and universal, and the experience of anatomical knowledge was scientifically grounded, concealed how the pioneers constructed lower and higher forms of action and sensation through values within a socio-symbolic field. For example, alongside modern dancers of her day, H'Doubler opposed 19th century ballet's separation of intellect and physicality by constructing a body focused on kinesthetic awareness,¹³⁴ while also resisting the dubious moral associations of the body.¹³⁵ Still, later generations of practitioners, using the pioneer's ideas, argued that they uncovered a pre-

¹³⁰ Throughout the 20th century the use of skeleton's and anatomical diagrams continued in H'Doubler's tradition such as through Halprin. Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). And in Todd's tradition such as Lulu Sweigard and André Bernard who were teaching at Julliard and NYU respectively from the 1950s onwards. Todd, *The Thinking Body the Legacy of Mabel Todd*.

¹³¹ Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 130.

¹³² Armed with the knowledge they had gleaned from studying skeletal movement in books and on a model, students then sensed their movement wearing blindfolds with studio mirrors covered. *Ibid.*, 172.

¹³³ Todd argued efficient motion that evolved prior to upright posture and consciousness are beyond conscious control because their associated physical responses do not reach the cerebellum. Todd, *The Thinking Body*, 29-30.

¹³⁴ Foster points argues that balletic head placement represents the dancer regarding their movement to suggest intellectual evaluation of the quality of performance in contrast with the Duncan's head placement, which communicates being overtaken by the divine. Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 83.

¹³⁵ Early modern dance contested separate spheres ideology by dedicating the art form to expression rather than spectacle to circumvent the problems associated with display. See for example Tomko's discussion of the nascent movement as part of New York society parlor entertainment, Tomko, *Dancing Class.*; Ann Daly's discussion of Duncan Daly, *Done into Dance.*, or Franko's discussion Duncan, Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*.

cultural corporeality. But the terms primitive and civilized persisted in Somatics for the rest of the 20th century with the idea that optimum capacity is integral to anatomy, and affords elevated consciousness.

Nature as a Universal-Individual Category: Mid-Century Somatics

Mid-century dancers contributed to the displacement of social difference from progressive era Somatics by constructing bodily nature as individual and universal. The rejection of institutionalized modern dance fueled their reframing, which was couched within a broad critique of Western epistemology. Drawing from Eastern philosophies like Zen Buddhism, artists and educators recycled Alexander's opposition to a goal-oriented attitude by opposing what they saw as the attachment of the Western ego to certain outcomes, preventing receptivity to the flux of nature. A mid-century avant-garde refashioned advanced consciousness as residing in an individual who achieves freedom from institutional constraints by connecting through the body to a universal cosmology, superseding Western authoritarianism.

In the 1950s, modern dance achieved respectability and institutional validity for the first time, and no longer depended upon its explicit distance from lower social class and African American cultures.¹³⁶ Yet dancers began resisting what they viewed as the imposition of aesthetic standards and protocols over content that were instituted by the newly formed establishment. In her study of the American government's use of modern dance for cultural diplomacy, Naima Prevots establishes that, beginning in 1954, the state funding of international tours of Martha Graham and José Limon, in contrast with unsuccessful applicants for the same support, made it only too clear to New York's dance community what the new establishment

¹³⁶ Gay Morris convincingly argues that, based on various developments, the institutionalization of modern dance first happened in mid-century. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, xiii. Naima Prevotts' information about funding supports her argument, which is addressed in greater detail in chapter 2. Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*, Studies in Dance History (Middletown, Conn. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press; University Press of New England, 1998), 11.

endorsed. Those who sought to challenge constraints on artistic freedom used Somatics with the idea that each body-self was divesting external and internal authoritarianism. In New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, artists synthesized training and staged dance that they felt embraced corporeal dimensions being suffocated by aesthetic imposition. They participated in a broader anxiety that individual freedom was under threaten, which was a post-war response to Fascist and Communist totalitarianism, as well as extreme government scrutiny led by Senator McCarthy.¹³⁷ In chapter 2, I address further how the Somatic community embodied a liberal narrative that creative autonomy is achieved against institutional authority. This tendency started in the 1950s with the belief that artists could recover and deploy extra-cultural corporeal dimensions with which to resist reproducing establishment ideals, and thereby prove a modernist pedigree by refusing to imitate institutionalized aesthetics.¹³⁸ Eastern philosophy and early Somatics signified an outside to existing dance culture. Modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey had in fact drawn upon Todd's work, and in turn influenced Jose Limón,¹³⁹ while Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Martha Graham liberally borrowed from "Eastern" cultures.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, mid-century dancers believed they were working with an epistemology that was distinct from the Western idiom of modern dance.

Those who were jaundiced by modern dance's institutionalization actually developed alternative cosmologies as a foundation for advanced consciousness by synthesizing early

¹³⁷ Serge Guilbaut traces the emergence of a U.S. theory of avant-garde based on these fears. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*.

¹³⁸ According to Morris, by the mid-1940s the rejection of the previous generation became necessary because a central principle of aesthetic modernism was independence from the market, but artists depended on institutional support to survive. Imitation, indicated that dance had become the handmaiden of the institution. So an the avant-garde formed to critique what preceded them, demonstrating independence from the market, represented by institutionalized modern dance. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, xviii.

¹³⁹ John Martin references the impact of Todd's work upon Humphrey's technique in 1936. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd," 13. The subsequent use of weight and momentum in Limón technique impacted Somatics in the UK through Janet Smith and Gill Clarke, but may also have impacted Paxton and Pauline De Groot who danced in Limón's company. De Groot (Dutch pioneer of Somatics), in discussion with the author, September 2nd 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*.

Somatics with what they saw as Eastern ideas. They thought that the imposition of early modern dance severed the mind from the body in a peculiarly Western fashion, and therefore set about recalibrating progressive era Somatics. In contrast with Judeo Christian traditions, Eastern philosophies seemed to facilitate the integration of creative resources found in corporeal nature and not graspable by consciousness. Along with insights about the body, early Somatics provided a blueprint for these new cosmologies because the use of evolutionary theory exhibited progressive era Monism in which the cosmos was seen as unified by a harmonious essential order.¹⁴¹ Some of those who contested 19th century morality also deployed Orientalist ideas in order to ameliorate modern alienation by rejuvenating the body.¹⁴² For example, to develop pedagogy in opposition with Cartesian dualism, Dewey extracted from Japanese and Chinese culture the idea of being receptive to the body's nature.¹⁴³ Therefore, although mid-century artists and educators saw themselves as making a clean break, the conceit of a pre-cultural body and the restorative potential of Eastern philosophy were well established ideas within Western traditions, including modern dance.

Eric Hawkins and Merce Cunningham laid down key Orientalist ideas through which Somatics was reworked by arguing that rejecting Ego-control facilitates receptivity to nature.¹⁴⁴ Hawkins pioneered training that purportedly engaged nature's indeterminacy,¹⁴⁵ while Cunningham challenged institutional protocols by proposing that dance is about nothing other

¹⁴¹ Daly, *Done into Dance*, 99.

¹⁴² Tomko argues that Ruth St. Denis contested the Western dichotomization of feminine subjectivity as either domestic and moral or public and immoral through her Orientalism. She represented non-Western spiritualism as combining piety and sensuousness to forge a new public subjectivity combining propriety and public life in an imagined cultural 'elsewhere.' Tomko, *Dancing Class*, chapter 2.

¹⁴³ Mark Wheeler traces the influence of the American historian of Japanese art Ernest Fenollosa on Dewey. Fenollosa converted to Buddhism and became a key proponent of the value of "Eastern" art, principles and philosophy in the America in the late 19th and early 20th century. Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*, 80.

¹⁴⁴ I am drawing on Morris's association of Cunningham's with Hawkins' ideas here. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*.

¹⁴⁵ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 31.

than human movement and any-body can be an aesthetic conveyer.¹⁴⁶ Against their approaches, Graham accrued the reputation of instructing the body to serve a willful expressive intent, and thus, receptivity to nature emerged as oppositional to her authoritarianism. For example Hawkins sought “human movement, when it obeys the nature of its functioning, when it is not distorted by erroneous concepts of the mind.”¹⁴⁷ His manifesto exhibits his application of Todd’s insights, which he understood to scientifically prove the Zen concept of “receptive mind.” Along with opposing the use of physical force, Hawkins also valued indetermination and “immediacy” in his training in contrast with pre-determined outcomes, which is how his milieu began to view established modern dance. Exploration, pioneered by H’Doubler, therefore recalibrated itself through Hawkins’ work in relation to developments in modern dance after World War II. Hawkins’ training also exhibited this change through a focus on kinesthesia in the idea of “Think-Feel”, where voluntary control is surrendered to bodily logic to achieve greater ease.¹⁴⁸ By working with Todd’s students Barbara Clark and Andre Bernard, Hawkins and his dancers felt they unlearned habits accumulated in Graham and classical trainings.¹⁴⁹ The use of muscular force therefore became associated with the authoritarian Western ego compared with lower muscle tone framed by Zen.¹⁵⁰ Cunningham contributed to this viewpoint by arguing his Zen-influenced aleatory composition was receptive to the nature of moving bodies in time

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁷ Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*, 41.

¹⁴⁸ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 31.

¹⁴⁹ Bernard reports being sent to Clark by Hawkins in the 1949. Pamela Matt, "Andre Bernard," <http://www.ideokinesis.com/dancegen/bernard/bernard.htm>. De Groot, recalls being sent to Bernard as a Hawkins dancers, and going through a process of letting go of what she had learned in Graham and ballet techniques. Pauline De Groot, interview by Doran George, September 2nd, 2012.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Wheeler’s discussion of Eric Hawkins understanding of the relationship between Zen Buddhism and Ideokinesis. Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*, 231.

and space.¹⁵¹ Against his work, Graham seemed to discipline movement to express an imposed theme.¹⁵²

The focus on experience, process and anatomy symbolized breaking from the Western ego's authoritarianism to facilitate continuing human evolution. In chapter 3, we will see how, by the 1960s, these ideas influenced new choreography against which Graham's work was seen as overly theatrical and outdated.¹⁵³ As early as the 1950s, some dancers perceived her approach, which was dominant at the time, as artificial because they saw the use of force in her training as singularly directed toward achieving virtuoso display.¹⁵⁴ These dancers pursued alternative trainings, which they felt listened to the body and exhibited Eastern ideals.¹⁵⁵ Along with Hawkins, Allen Wayne taught classes emphasizing physical health by combining yoga and breath work with ballet and modern vocabulary done with reduced tension.¹⁵⁶ Dancers also perceived Alwin Nikolai's training as more humane and as fulfilling Eastern ideals.¹⁵⁷ In summary, mid-century modern dancers who rejected Graham technique sought physically softer

¹⁵¹ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 26.

¹⁵² Rebekah Kowal cites Cunningham's parody of Graham in his 1958 *Antic Meet*, for example. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*, 174.

¹⁵³ Franko argues that, as modern dance's oldest second generation member in the 1960s, Graham was represented as embodying what he calls "bankrupt emotivism." He quotes Rainer from 1966 charging that Graham's work could not be related to "anything outside of theatre, since it was usually dramatic and psychological necessity that determined it." Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. 40.

¹⁵⁴ June Ekman, notes that dancers with whom she was associated in the 1950s felt Graham hated women younger than herself, a neurosis they believed was embedded in her authoritarian pedagogy. June Ekman, interview by Doran George, June 4th, 2012. Meanwhile, De Groot felt she by unlearning ballet and Graham technique she cultivated a receptive relationship to her body and dancing. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

¹⁵⁵ Dancers like Ekman and De Groot, pursued dance that purported to give more attention to health and wellbeing in the rhetoric and the "flowing" choreography. They trained in Hawkins technique, and Ekman and her colleagues were also attracted to Nikolai's classes, which under the influence of Hanya Holm, were seen as having a more lyrical movement style. "Interview with Author.", Ekman, "Interview with Author."

¹⁵⁶ Ekman and her colleagues took Wayne's classes because he focused on the reduction of bodily tension. "Interview with Author." Paul Langland writes "from 1943, Allan Wayne taught steadily until his death in 1978 in New York. His students included Irmgard Bartenieff, Meredith Monk, Yvonne Rainer, and Martine Van Hammel. He developed a unique vision in his dancing and teaching, incorporating yogic breath and energy work into his classes to meld dance and the healing arts in an early and powerful experiential technique." Brendan; Paul Langland McCall, "Body of Work: The Life and Teachings of Allan Wayne," *Contact Quarterly* 23, no. 2.

¹⁵⁷ Ekman, "Interview with Author."

approaches to care for their bodies by cultivating greater receptivity to nature through easing tension with lower muscle tone, and focusing on anatomical structure and function.

Despite the references to Eastern philosophy, dancers configured the new training approaches as universal by displacing the context from which their ideas were drawn. For example Cunningham's rhetoric suggested that his choreography reveals the essential there-ness of movement, erasing the origins of the Zen ideas on which he drew, despite proposing he was exceeding the limits of Western epistemology.¹⁵⁸ The ease that Hawkins valued also appeared to be discovered in the body rather than cultivated, because the culturally remote philosophy of Zen and objective Western science appeared to be two contrasting lenses through which corporeal truth came into view. Focused as they were on the mid-century rejection of Graham, artists obscured the fact that early modern dancers had long argued that physical ease provides access to more natural movement.¹⁵⁹ Genevieve Stebbins influenced progressive era artists with her interpretation of the training developed by French theatre practitioner François Delsarte. She connected relaxation and breath with inner emotion and external gesture in a theory of integrated body and mind similar to early Somatics.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, alongside Somatic-influenced modern classes, mid-century dancers cultivated ease in training that also built on European theatre traditions. They took "Sensory Awareness," pioneered by Charlotte Selver, and breath-based "Physical Reorientation" taught by Carola Speads,¹⁶¹ both of who were

¹⁵⁸ Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, 176.

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, Bales' chapter "Training As The Medium Through Which." Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, chapter 3.

¹⁶⁰ Nancy Ruyter insists that Stebbins version of Delsarte must be understood as peculiar to Stebbins, there is evidence of its influence on Isadora Duncan, Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, as well as the European pioneers of modern dancer. Nancy Lee Chalfa. Ruyter, *The Cultivation of Body and Mind in Nineteenth-Century American Delsartism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 107-10.

¹⁶¹ Ekman and her 1950s colleagues trained in alignment, awareness, and breath such in the independent studios of Sweigard, Carola Speads teaching breath work, and Charlotte Selver's awareness work. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

indebted to Stebbins.¹⁶² Allen Wayne, meanwhile, had studied with Swiss movement theorist Émile Jacques Dalcroze.¹⁶³ In order to reject what they saw as artificiality, dancers drew on various traditions that were expunged by the conceit of natural ease. Moreover, like the differentiation in the body that we saw with ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized,’ force and ease, authoritarianism and receptivity, emerged as new socially indexed signs that were ultimately naturalized in Somatic constructions of the body.

Individualized Vocabulary

Despite resistance toward imitation in New York, More than anyone, on the West Coast Anna Halprin’s seemed to fulfill the maxim that any-body could be an aesthetic conveyer. New Yorkers largely modulated existing vocabulary with Somatics.¹⁶⁴ Hawkins, and teachers such as Merle Marsicano,¹⁶⁵ as well as Nikolai’s dancers,¹⁶⁶ used Somatics in preparation for and in application to familiar exercises and phrase work, while Cunningham’s approach was too balletic for some dancers seeking alternatives.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Novack points out “Cunningham did not practice “all movement” even though he claimed that every movement could be dance, [and] Hawkins built his theatrical dance into...[an] immediately recognizable technique.”¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile the alignment and awareness classes taught by Speads, Selver, Clark, Bernard, and

¹⁶² Selver and Speads were students of the German teacher Elsa Gindler whose technique combined breathing and relaxation based on her teacher’s work Hedwig Kallmeyer, who, in turn, had been Stebbins’ student. Elaine; Joan Arnold Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers* (New York: New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, 2010), sound recording . 9 sound discs (ca. 556 min.): digital; 4 3/4 in. + transcript (315 leaves).

¹⁶³ McCall, "The Life and Teachings of Allan Wayne."

¹⁶⁴ Both De Groot and June Ekman saw Hawkins' as modulating Graham's lexicon with Somatics. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Ekman, "Interview with Author."

¹⁶⁵ Ekman danced for and took classes with Marsicano, who was using Todd's work. "Interview with Author."

¹⁶⁶ Summer's took Nikolais classes that were taught using alignment information, although she was disparaging of the results. Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers*.

¹⁶⁷ Ekman took Nikolai classes because Cunningham's work was too balletic. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

¹⁶⁸ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 33.

Lulu Sweigard, another of Todd's students, did not include dancing.¹⁶⁹ By contrast, Halprin developed training and exploration that used Somatics to emphasize each dancer's uniqueness.

Like her New York contemporaries, Halprin actively rejected established modern dance for which she reframed Somatics within cosmology to which Eastern ideals were integral. Artistic exchange between Halprin, Hawkins, Cunningham and Nikolais suggests mutual respect between the different artists.¹⁷⁰ Yet Halprin constructed her approach in opposition to the refining of the appearance of choreography, which she associated with New York concert dance, and which indeed characterizes the three men's practices.¹⁷¹ With an agenda similar to the male New York artists, that of renouncing imitation and display, Halprin reworked the pedagogy of her teacher H'Doubler to jettison the repetition of a pre-given form. Although the mid-1960s was the first time she was more than indirectly engaged with Zen, in the previous decade Halprin reframed H'Doubler's ideas as "presence in the moment."¹⁷² She recycled H'Doubler's concept of "synchronized awareness," which is the bringing together of intellect, feelings, and motor response.¹⁷³ Her students explored moving while following kinesthetic physical impulses, all of which was framed in Eastern ideals popular amongst 1950s artists.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers*.

¹⁷⁰ Cunningham gave a lecture on Halprin's deck studio in 1957. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 106. Hawkins encouraged De Groot to seek out Halprin when she was in California. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Nikolais suggested Ekman look up Halprin when moved to San Francisco in the late 1950s. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

¹⁷¹ Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 135.

¹⁷² Janice Ross argues Halprin transformed H'Doubler's idea of "synchronized awareness" into the 1960s psychological aesthetic of being 'present in the moment' when she became involved with a psychoanalyst through whom she became profoundly influenced by Zen. *Moving Lessons*, 157. However in her book on Halprin, she details Halprin's use of such ideas in the 1950s. *Dance as Experience*, 131. She cites Forti arguing that Halprin was part of the San Francisco beat movement to which the Zen Master Suzuki Roshi was important (p123).

¹⁷³ *Moving Lessons*, 157.

¹⁷⁴ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 183.

With her focus on individuality, Halprin aimed to replace exclusionary practice in established modern dance, which she experienced based on her Jewish identity.¹⁷⁵ Appalled by institutional anti-Semitism in the 1930s, she subsequently reframed H'Doubler's pedagogy as inclusive,¹⁷⁶ insisting that established modern dance was a tyranny in which the specific body of the choreographer was imposed upon every dancer.¹⁷⁷ Yet her construction of individuality overshadowed the politics through which her approach emerged because of the ideologies on which she drew. Halprin combined H'Doubler's pedagogy with Bauhaus ideas about form and nature,¹⁷⁸ she taught experiential anatomy through joint exploration, followed by the emulation of forms and movement in the natural environment.¹⁷⁹ Rather than practice an existing style, each dancer felt their movement was unique.

Like Halprin, Los Angeles based Mary Starks Whitehouse aimed to recuperate individual creativity that she argued established modern dance had forfeited. Whitehouse, who danced for Mary Wigman and Graham, felt that by the 1950s modern dance had robbed the

¹⁷⁵ Despite showing great promise, Halprin was rejected from Bennington at a time when American universities capped its Jewish intake. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ Halprin's 1950s and 1960s work with anatomy is a small part of a vast and diverse career as an educator, choreographer, and artist. She continued to stage explicitly Jewish subjects up until the late 1950s in the style of the choreographers against whom she railed. But determined to distinguish her work from what she perceived as a New York aesthetic, Halprin ultimately replaced the methodology of refining the appearance of choreography for performance with one of exploration. *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁷⁷ Ross recounts that when dominant modern dance aesthetics impacted Wisconsin, where Halprin became a student after her rejection from Bennington, Halprin's resolve against it was strengthened. H'Doubler's methods provided Halprin with an alternative but her student-work was disparaged by a new faculty member, which Halprin perceived as rejecting H'Doubler's approach. Bennington, had recently become the first university to establish a dance program independent from Physical Education, with the founding logic that dance is high art represented by Graham, Humphrey, Charles Weidman and Hanya Holm. The importance of H'Doubler's methods for Halprin was exacerbated by the fact that the establishing of the Bennington program was the first sign that H'Doubler's methods were in decline. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Bauhaus supported the aims Halprin developed with H'Doubler's with its ideological perspective that aesthetic production is a means for social change. Halprin responded to the idea that properties such as line, density, and space, occur in the natural world. In her open-air studio in Northern California, she would have her students observe objects in the woods such as plants or animals, and then ask them to use what they had seen in movement explorations without anticipating the outcome. She used the scientific and kinesthetic principles from H'Doubler, and those about design from Bauhaus to develop a pedagogy based on movement invention, theorizing nature as a benign source into which disappeared the specific cultural influences affecting her and her students. *Ibid.*, 65&66.

¹⁷⁹ Simone Forti recalls that as Halprin's student, they would go into the forest around her outdoor deck and find shape and movement to emulate. Simone Forti, interview by Doran George, February 18th 2014.

body of its innate capacity for expression with a stereotyped vision that manifested through an overinvestment in virtuosity.¹⁸⁰ Whitehouse rejected theatrical performance, but in contrast with H'Doubler's concern about salaciousness, she aimed to thwart the impact of institutionalization. In her regimen Authentic Movement, she aimed to reclaim dance from professionalism and restore it to humankind by releasing the private psychic process in Jungian based dance therapy.¹⁸¹ She insisted that in order to fulfill their creative potential, practitioners must integrate all dimensions of the psyche through the body. Exhibiting her decade's Orientalism, she argued Zen and Taoist ideas ameliorate the Western overvaluing of one side of various binaries.¹⁸² Individuals could purportedly move freely by simultaneously holding as legitimate such opposing psychic components as good and evil, spirit and body, and masculine and feminine. Whitehouse argued an integrated psyche was more akin to 'Eastern' culture, and also representative of the unification of East and West, facilitating the flow possible between individual, cultural and primordial unconscious dimensions.¹⁸³

Whitehouse constructed a body-psyche based upon the primitive and civilized mind, pointing to 'uncultivated' children's movement to demonstrate the free flow of energy. By contrast, she represented adult motion as that in which physical activity is reduced to necessary function. Like Dewey, she argued that Western society makes the mind the focus of learning: the civilized mind from which the body is separated. She protested, "We were, as little children, put at desks for hours at a time, increasingly, and told to keep still and learn."¹⁸⁴ In her rhetoric, the negative effect of social imposition creates inertia, while movement is synonymous with life,

¹⁸⁰ Mary Starks; Janet Adler; Joan Chodorow; Patrizia Pallaro Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement* (London: Philadelphia: J. Kingsley Publishers, 1999), 74.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁸² Starks Whitehouse has a chapter called "The Tao of the Body" *ibid.*, 41., and her student connects the idea in Authentic Movement of "direct experience" to Zen. Janet Adler "Body and Soul" in *ibid.*, 166.

¹⁸³ Joan Chodorow, "To Move and Be Moved" in *ibid.*, 269-70.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

and the primitive unconscious resides in the body, which cannot lie despite intention because even the physical tension produced by verbally expressing what contradicts one's true feelings is revealed corporeally. Whitehouse insisted: "The body is the physical aspect of personality, and movement is the personality made visible. The distortions, tensions, and restrictions are...[those of] the personality... the condition of the psyche."¹⁸⁵ Authentic Movement teaches that kinesthetic awareness enables the practitioner to discern between consciously arranged movement and the eruption of unconscious kinetic impulses. Practitioners aim to free the unconscious by abandoning concern about what looks attractive or how they think they should move, which for Whitehouse constitutes the application of Eastern knowledge to reintegrate body and mind, primitive and civilized.

Both Halprin and Whitehouse, like Hawkins and Cunningham, erased the cultural origins of their ideas by making contemporary innovation the purview of the West. Even though they all explicitly referenced Eastern philosophies, that context disappeared because they represented the dancing as arising from pre-cultural phenomenon that were not indebted to Eastern movement traditions but accessed through new interpretations of Eastern ideals. Despite criticizing Western epistemology, Halprin and Whitehouse, along with Hawkins and Cunningham, positioned the contemporary West as the site of rejuvenation for Eastern knowledge. They stratified Western innovation over Eastern ideals by constructing the East as an original sight of integration to which they looked in order to develop procedures to access more natural and individual movement.

Limits on natural freedom

In their alternative cosmologies, mid-century artists and educators concealed exclusion that they inherited from early Somatics despite reframing nature through the emphasis on

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 63.

individual freedom. African American dancers faced distinct challenges from the largely white students of Somatics, which exemplifies the limits on the new ideas. In her study of mid-century dance, Gay Morris, for example, argues that building on modern dance's history of racism, the establishment (against which Cunningham, Halprin and others rebelled) represented black subjects as overly sexual and spectacular.¹⁸⁶ Having already defined itself against the spectacle and sexuality with which black dancers were marked, early Somatics established its pre-cultural body as inaccessible to African Americans. Historically Black dancers also contended with the myth of having natural movement skill, and therefore lacking the artistic distance necessary for modernism.¹⁸⁷ Artists such as Katherine Dunham worked to prove the cultural and artistic labor of African traditions,¹⁸⁸ but she was then charged with being too culturally specific for modernism.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, racism made establishing the cultural labor of dance a crucial resource for African Americans, and 'nature' was a burden as much as an asset. At the same time, dancers using Somatics framed their concerns as universal because the regimens claimed to access natural capacity.

Despite their unawareness of how the conceit of universality overshadowed the experience of non-white dancers, mid-century artists and educators sought social progress with their erasure of cultural specificity. In a similar manner to progressive era pioneers, they navigated treacherous cultural territory with their cosmologies that conceived of a body/self as

¹⁸⁶ Morris points out that Dunham's attempts to apply modernist principles to the study, translation, and choreographic deployment of 'primitive ritual' were rejected because white-protestant propriety deemed her vocabulary overly sexual and associated it with commercialism. Dunham contented that the essence of the rituals was universal, but the context read the meaning as specific to the African body, which already symbolized sexuality and primitive physicality. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, chapters 5&6.

¹⁸⁷ Manning traces this problem across the 20th century. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*.

¹⁸⁸ For example, Dunham's research in Haiti can be understood as articulating the centuries of tradition to contest the supposed natural status of primitiveness in black bodies. Burt, *Alien Bodies*, 169.

¹⁸⁹ For a full discussion of how Dunham's was configured see Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, chapters 5&6. Burt articulates how she attempted to recuperate identity for African American's by demonstrating that African aesthetics had survived the middle passage. Burt, *Alien Bodies*, 169-72.

beyond what can be known. The actions of the House of Un-American Activities, for example, brought certain bodies under enormous juridical censure. By constructing an opaque, indeterminate body, subject to nature's flux, the new Somatic theories helped artists resist the demand to be ideologically accountable to government scrutiny.¹⁹⁰ Artists circumnavigated moral, religious and legal limits by constructing a natural truth that was not legible within existing signification.¹⁹¹ Rebekah Kowal, for example, articulates Cunningham's aversion to cultural specificity as enabling a covert staging of non-canonical sexuality at a time when more non-heterosexual than communists lost their jobs thanks to McCarthy.¹⁹² Cunningham could not represent homosexuality, yet it can be argued that he reframed Zen ideals in the idea of intrinsic natural meaning to contravene masculine norms in modern dance.¹⁹³

Similar political contradictions arose in training that emerged alongside Authentic Movement, and also erased cultural specificity to afford dancers greater physical autonomy. The 1950s saw the stirrings of new techniques that synthesized Eastern ideals with early 20th century Somatics in opposition to modern dance.¹⁹⁴ Like Whitehouse, the pioneers argued that psychological and physical injury result from a restrictive concept of the body, and that their approaches had been discovered in the process of healing, or were developed to aid physical health. In their explanations of Skinner Releasing Technique, and Klein Technique, Joan Skinner and Susan Klein report gathering ideas in the 1950s to combat the effects of established

¹⁹⁰ Morris insists that Cunningham's work was enshrined as a new vanguard in part because he staged the power of non-disclosure in the context of the McCarthy witch hunts. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, chapter 7. Franko supports her argument, suggesting he initially staged an anti-expression rather than the non-expressive idiom for which he became canonized. Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. 85.

¹⁹¹ Novack points out that viewers initially found Cunningham and Nikolais work unfeeling and mechanical because of their lack of dramatic facial expression. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 136.

¹⁹² Chauncey, *Why Marriage*, 6.

¹⁹³ As well as contravening gender norms, Kowal points out that Cunningham was subject to veiled homophobia in early responses to his work. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*, 190.

¹⁹⁴ Not all Somatic late 20th century techniques responded to modern dance. Feldenkrais Method, for example, emerged against perceived limitations in Alexander Technique. Its influence on modern dance happened more slowly than the 6 techniques addressed in this dissertation.

trainings.¹⁹⁵ In a related fashion, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen argues she began seeing how institutional professional medicine stifles healing, which she then overcame with BMC, aided by modern dancers.¹⁹⁶ All the new pioneers insisted that a healthy dancer must be connected to a cosmological reality through the natural body. The stories of healing and recovery sustained a tradition begun in the progressive era by Alexander, who rationalized his technique by describing how he healed himself from losing his voice.¹⁹⁷ Although Todd did not narrate her own story of healing, it does figure prominently in the teaching of her ideas.¹⁹⁸ Recovery, achieved by connecting with the new cosmologies, became a pre-cultural mythical origin for Somatics.

As part of the focus on recovery, dancers believed that psychological and physical health were intertwined, a concept they also inherited from the early 20th century pioneers. Both Alexander and Todd distinguished their approaches from progressive era regimens that they felt did not address consciousness,¹⁹⁹ and configured the body as an independent arbiter of optimum psychophysical behavior with their claims to have discovered the futility of voluntarily

¹⁹⁵ Although Skinner Releasing did not consolidate until the 1960s, Skinner reports experimenting with Alexander technique, and rejecting the use of force in the 1950s when other dancers were questioning Graham's pedagogy. Bridget Iona. Davis, "Releasing into Process: Joan Skinner and the Use of Imagery in Dance" (Thesis (M.A.), University of Illinois., 1974)., and for Whitehouse's account of her development of Authentic movement see: Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*, chapter 6.

¹⁹⁶ Bainbridge Cohen began arrogating the ideas for Body Mind Centering in mid-century, but does not position herself against institutionalized modern dance, rather insisting the art form underpins her methodology. Bonnie Bainbridge. Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*, 3rd Ed. ed. (Northampton, MA: Contact Editions, 2012).

¹⁹⁷ Alexander's story of discovering his technique through healing became central to the late 20th century teaching of his work. Professionals apparently failed to heal his voice-loss as an actor, so he experimented, through "deductive reasoning" by observing of his action to find he was using his body counter to its natural propensity. He claims to have reoriented his bodily action and consciousness to his body's logic. The story is recounted to emphasize the merging of reasoning and bodily knowledge. The pioneer reports having worked alone with mirrors, watching his posture while he was delivering the actor's lines; he observed a 'debauched' posture, and also found that consciously directing the right posture was not possible but he had to bring unconscious capacity under conscious control. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 11.

¹⁹⁸ Todd, *The Thinking Body the Legacy of Mabel Todd*.

¹⁹⁹ Todd and Alexander insisted upon a connection between the body and mind in opposition to the popular 'physical culture' of the day that they disparaged as not addressing the psycho-physical imperatives of humanity. Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd." All the regimens that contributed to late 20th century Somatics exhibit the insistence that physical and other dimensions of self are interrelated.

instructing the body.²⁰⁰ Alexander's story of healing, for example, became a blueprint for the idea that the pursuit of preconceived goals interferes with intrinsic psychophysical connections. Cultural concerns seemed to be contrary to Somatics, because the regimens were accessing bodily propensities that were not available to consciousness. For dancers rejecting institutionalized aesthetics, the stories of recovery proved that authoritarian training had interfered with bodily knowledge, while accessing psychophysical health seemed to offer an independent foundation for creativity. Ease allowed psychological release and safeguarded health,²⁰¹ while effort caused emotional repression and caused injury. Through Somatics, dancers believed that retrieved their authentic psychophysical self rather than represent artificial emotion.²⁰²

Section 1. Displacing Aesthetics: Radical Inclusion in 1960 & 1970s Somatics.

By the end of the 1970s the community on which I focus believed they had restored a universally inclusive natural body to modern dance. Already in the previous decade artists had begun setting down key principles for new approaches to training by returning to early Somatics, while sustaining and extending mid-century innovations. With a conceit that they worked in harmonious cooperation using natural bodily logic, practitioners cultivated what they felt was authentic individuality. Somatics therefore reflected broader sub-cultural politics of the era by constructing "direct-democracy", a term borrowed from David Held's Marxist reading of post-

²⁰⁰ Alexander claimed to have discovered this through his healing process. Alexander, *The Use of the Self*

²⁰¹ For example, Ekman reports that she tried Graham technique in the 1950s but could not get the contraction, and disliked the authoritarian approach. She linked techniques working with ease to Wilhelm Reich's psychoanalytical concept that the body functions as an emotional armor, and letting go of tension releases psychological blocks. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

²⁰² Ekman's believed Graham and Cunningham's techniques entailed effort compounding repression of the emotions. Ibid. Meanwhile, Elaine Summers' Jungian analyst encouraged her to attend Speads and Selver's classes. Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers*.

revolutionary political organization.²⁰³ Americans who had lost faith in the state took up direct-democracy through collective self-representation in the peace movement, civil-rights, feminism, gay liberation, and the back-to-the-land movement. Similarly Somatics idealized the concept of affording decision-making power to individuals rather than relying on a designated person within an established system to represent one's interests. In what follows, I will demonstrate how an early 1960s experimental New York milieu initially laid the groundwork to reframe Somatics as direct-democracy, and how this mantle was taken up by generations of dancers in the subsequent decade.

Artists such as Steve Paxton, Simone Forti, and Trisha Brown sustained the mid-century rejection of early modern dance, but disbanded with what they saw as outdated approaches that 1950s artists had perpetuated. Like Cunningham and Halprin, the new generation resisted the imposition of limits upon what constituted modern dance. But by using Somatic ideas in their concerts, they participated in a broader sub-culture of their decade that aimed to disabuse itself of narrow definitions of normality established in cold-war "containment culture."²⁰⁴ These artists theorized an authentic dancing-self rooted in natural movement that, in contrast with modern and classical aesthetics, was accessible to anybody. Skinner, Klein, and Bainbridge-Cohen also developed their trainings, largely isolated from the performance experiments, yet engendering similar aims. The techniques abandoned preexisting dance vocabulary, and

²⁰³ Held, *Models of Democracy*, 105-39.

²⁰⁴ Judson artists such as Paxton had witnessed first hand control over state funding for the arts through which Cunningham's aesthetic was marginalized up until the mid-1960s, as documented by Prevots. Prevots, *Dance for Export*. Paxton has insisted that American post-war culture was a safe and stupid. He suggests he and some of his colleagues wanted to break from such 'stupidity' through their experiments at Judson Church. Steve Paxton, ...*In a Non-Wimpy Way* (youtube: Bojana Cvejic, Unknown). I have coined the term "containment culture" from Rebekah Kowal's description of the affects of what she calls "domestic containment," which during the 1950s, embodied the narrow definitions of normal that Paxton refers to when he calls the culture safe and stupid. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*, 14-15.

cultivated skills that were thought to be independent of aesthetics by connecting students with natural forces.

1970s dancers combined the new training and choreographic strategies that were developed in the previous decade. By sharing the conceit that they depended on a pre-cultural body, different approaches leant themselves to unification in a new dance scene. An emerging Somatic field embodied what Cynthia Novack calls “intelligent body” culture.²⁰⁵ In this context artists aimed to integrate mind and body,²⁰⁶ and felt that their practice promised human advancement.²⁰⁷ They therefore reframed the progressive era concept of “body-consciousness” as sub-cultural rather than respectable. They insisted that anatomy’s intrinsic logic had been disregarded through imposed dance aesthetics, and sought authenticity alongside others who divested themselves of 1950s constraints by turning to the body in new therapies and theatre practices. Shy of the hierarchical structures that had instituted containment culture, artists and educators already began emphasizing collectivism in their training and concerts in the 1960s. In the 1970s, with an understanding that they were relinquishing premeditated aesthetics, innovators felt they were valuing natural bodily intelligence above virtuosity, and cultivating cooperation between a dancer and their body, as well as humanity more generally.

Separating Training from Choreography.

To displace modern dance aesthetics, the artists associated with Judson Church in early 1960s Greenwich Village separated training and choreography. As Sally Banes points out in her study of the milieu, artists privileged bodily performance as a means of cooperation between those working in different mediums seeking authentic expression against

²⁰⁵ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 3.

²⁰⁶ Huxley, "F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Elsworth Todd," 13.

²⁰⁷ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 232.

institutionalized aesthetics.²⁰⁸ Dancers renounced their training backgrounds,²⁰⁹ insisting that outdated aesthetics ideals were integral to Graham technique, for example.²¹⁰ Paxton held that in the 1950s most “dancers ended up looking neither like themselves nor their teachers, but like “watered down versions” of their teachers.”²¹¹ By cleaving choreography from training, he and his colleagues aimed to extend mid-century innovation,²¹² resist the control of powerful artists,²¹³ restore creative control to individuals,²¹⁴ and avoid imitation.²¹⁵ Alongside Paxton, Forti staged what she saw as “natural movement” that was discovered in performances by following instructions to fulfill a task.²¹⁶ Based on her experience as Halprin’s student and dancer in the previous decade, Forti recalibrated her teacher’s interpretation of H’Doubler’s pedagogy as a form of concert practice.²¹⁷ In *Rule Games*, for example, dancers appeared to derive their vocabulary from their unique bodily and imaginative resources.²¹⁸ Paxton, Trisha

²⁰⁸ Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*.

²⁰⁹ Yvonne Rainer, recalls that many dancers in the Judson milieu had no formal training, but Paxton and Brown were talented dancers who disavowed their facility. Yvonne Rainer, interview by Doran George, June 25th, 2012.

²¹⁰ Bales suggests this new discourse on training constitutes a paradigm shift. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*. Her argument is supported by the fact that in dance classes in the 1950s, dancers prepared a body-state and experience for class using Somatic imagery not directly related to the forms they practiced, which began a separation.

²¹¹ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 54.

²¹² Morris suggests that by the end of the post-war era the “objectivist” work of choreographers such as Cunningham and Alwin Nikolais established a new vanguard, which symbolized innovation against early modern dance. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, 203.

²¹³ De Groot recalls that it felt taboo to take classes outside of the Graham school when she was there in the 1950s. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Bales also argues that 1950s training was tied to the aesthetic of particular choreographers. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, chapter 3.

²¹⁴ Paxton talks about the 1950s as a time in which modern dancers had to give themselves over to the artistic vision of choreographers, which he and his colleagues wanted to break away from. Steve Paxton, "Lecture-Demonstration/Hands on Movement Exploration," in *The conscious body: an interdisciplinary dialogue*. (Dance Studio, Paris 8 University, Saint Denis 2012).

²¹⁵ Novack identifies Paxton’s fear of imitation when she documents his concern about modern dancers looking like watered down versions of their teachers. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 54.

²¹⁶ Forti characterized her early 1960s work as emphasizing the chance discovery of natural movement. Simone Forti, "Highline Art Talk with Simone Forti," in *Highline Art*, ed. Friends of the Highline (Highline Room, The Standard, 848 Washington St., New York.: Friends of The Highline, 2012).

²¹⁷ Forti danced and trained with Halprin from the late 1950's. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 127.

²¹⁸ Forti's instructions did not include references to the skeleton, but she did include terms such as sitting, standing, walking, running etc. Simone Forti email to author January 20th 2014.

Brown, and Yvonne Rainer danced for Forti, and together they all contributed to a culture in which natural movement seemed to displace cultivated aesthetics.²¹⁹

Forti's and other's exploratory performances influenced Somatic training by flouting a conventional distinction between rehearsal and presentation.²²⁰ Compared with modern dance, Forti's vocabulary seemed like movement anyone could do.²²¹ She thus seemed to abandon existing vocabulary without the need for a new specialized lexicon, and abdicated the need for interminable training. Furthermore, by applying "ordinary movement" in unique ways and through distinct tasks, the dancers established themselves as creative artists than rather interpretive artists who reproduce concert dance's established language.²²² As we will see, 1970s Somatics asserted its inclusivity by making the exploration of ordinary movement one of its central methods. The regimen thus combined creativity and training while affirming the naturalness of its activity.

In a distinct manner but with similar logic, dancers within the same milieu applied martial arts to concert dance in a way that also profoundly influenced 1970s Somatics.²²³

²¹⁹ Artists did not unilaterally share an attitude about nature. Rainer remembers being suspicious of the term, evident in her adaptation of Halprin's exercise of working with natural object that she learned at a summer workshop in 1960. Rainer used industrial and domestic objects to avoid the associations she considered nature to carry. She reports having greater interest in the body that was cultivated in ballet and modern dance than Somatics, which aligns with her suspicions about "nature." Nevertheless, she contributed, as I will demonstrate, to the culture in which Somatics became important. Rainer, "Interview with Author."

²²⁰ The work that Forti, Brown, and Rainer staged in early 1960s New York emphasized dancers working with process, and using their kinesthetic awareness in performance. Halprin's version of H'Doubler's work was primarily a means to develop a performance practice, which she would then shape emphasizing theatricality even if the action was improvised. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 151.

²²¹ I am referring to Forti's "Rule Games", in which Brown, Rainer, and also Steve Paxton danced. Forti, "Interview 2 with Author."

²²² Banes argues that the early 1960s Greenwich Village choreography was underpinned by an anti-elitist ideology. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*. Conversations I've had with Simone Forti suggest that the accuracy of Bane's argument is arguable, yet the widespread acceptance of Banes' idea indicates how the methods that artists such as Forti, Rainer and Brown used came to signify inclusion, contrasting with the exclusionary rhetoric with which they were conceived by H'Doubler in early 20th century.

²²³ Tai Chi is a good example because of its prominence for diverse dancers associated with Somatics. For example, Paxton credits the martial art as a major contributor to CI, Steve Paxton, email, Sept 20th 2011., Forti names it as her primary ongoing training, Simone Forti, interview by Doran George, May 27th 2012., Karczag insists that Tai Chi was one of the first techniques in which she learned the approach to the body for which she ultimately became

Beginning in 1964, for example, Paxton investigated the potential of Aikido and Tai Chi to provide a model of virtuosity that was not shaped by concert dance.²²⁴ He reports “as someone who had studied a number of dance techniques, I was intrigued to study movement which was not aesthetically based; that is, a martial art not destined for the stage and performance, but derived from the experience of fighters, and fighters who had survived the fights: A different reason to refine physical principles.”²²⁵ Paxton provided a model whereby dancers acquire specialized knowledge without focusing on their appearance, as they had to in modern and classical training. Although a full consideration of martial arts and its impact on Somatics is beyond my scope, I take a further look at Paxton’s approach later in this section because it exemplifies how late 20th century dancers recapitulated modern dance’s ongoing appropriation of non-Western forms.²²⁶

Despite the influence on early 1960s practice of H’Doubler’s work, and the ideas cultivated with Somatics in the 1950s, the gulf that opened between training and concert practice can be seen in the fact that dancers taking Somatic classes did so largely independently of choreographic experimentation. Most Somatic training continued to use the vocabulary that artists were rejecting. Classes that applied Somatics to a ballet and modern lexicon seemed to be

renowned as a dancer and teacher of Somatics, Eva Karczag, interview by Doran George, August 23rd til August 28th, 2012. and the choreographer and dancer Ishmael Houston Jones also recalls the importance of the technique in his artistic development. Ishmael Houston-Jones, interview by Doran George, June 6th, 2012.

²²⁴ Paxton reports he first encountered Tai Chi while on tour with Cunningham in Japan in 1964 and continued training in New York when he returned. Paxton. Email Sept. 20th 2011.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ A history of 20th century Orientalism shaped the use of non-Western techniques in the 1960s. This included the techniques themselves and the impact upon progressive education of "Eastern" philosophy and art, and the way in which ideas of non-Western culture have been represented as contributories to modern dance since the 1900s. Dancers in the 1960s were building upon sedimented meaning, whilst selectively constructing the origins of non-Western techniques in way that is not dissimilar to the way that Somatic lineage is constructed. Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*.

a distinct endeavor from Greenwich Village choreographic experimentation.²²⁷ For example, Rainer recalls taking Wayne's classes, in which 1950s dancers had cultivated ease, yet along with colleagues, like Lucinda Childs, she trained in ballet.²²⁸ Only in the next decade when the experiments had all changed and developed did classes and concerts become more intertwined.²²⁹

Although the development of Somatic training was largely isolated from the new concert approaches, Klein and Skinner, as well as Elaine Summers shared values with the artists associated with Judson. This confluence catalyzed the developments in the next decade. For example, the educators all divested their training of existing vocabulary, yet their central focus on dancers' health, probably contributed to the disjunction in the 1960s. Summers even participated in the Judson concerts where her colleagues were unaware of her other endeavors, exemplifying the contrasting aims between new training and choreography.²³⁰ The educators felt that modern and classical aesthetics imposed an unnatural way of moving on the body that conflicted with intrinsic anatomical realities. So rather than cultivating new vocabulary, Summers, along with Klein and Skinner, sought to identify natural principles that could be applied to all dance styles. In New York, Klein and Summers developed "Klein Technique" and "Kinetic Awareness" respectively, while Skinner evolved her "Skinner Releasing" at the

²²⁷ Ekman recalls that dancing for Merle Marsicano in the early 1960s, they would lie on the ground working with ideokinesis images, such as imagining oneself as an empty suit of clothes to cultivate a particular body state to bring to dance. They then did pliés and sequences building toward choreography. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

²²⁸ Rainer recounts that Lucinda said to her "in the afternoon we studied with a ballet master, and in the evening we were moving mattresses in Yvonne's loft." Rainer, "Interview with Author."

²²⁹ Forti does not want her dancers to engage in the contemplative careful movement associated with Somatic training in the 21st century reconstructions of her 1960s work "Huddle." She explains that this was not how dancers moved in the 1960s, wanting to retain the distinction between her work and how dancers move now. Forti, "Interview 2 with Author."

²³⁰ Lucinda Childs asked Summers in the 1970s why she hadn't told any of them what she was doing. Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers*.

University of Illinois.²³¹ Although Skinner eventually integrated exploration into her approach, and more than the others included dancing in her classes, none of the women initially had their students investigate movement possibilities, and Skinner began by using Cunningham's lexicon.²³² Yet they concurred with artists like Forti and Paxton by displacing the modalities of modern and classical training with what they saw as more natural procedures. To avoid injuries, their students aimed to work reciprocally with the body at their own pace.²³³

Despite have distinct aims from the Greenwich-based artists, Summers, Skinner and Klein engendered a similar spirit of innovation. They not only maintained that they were breaking away from existing training, but, while using early Somatics, they also professed the uniqueness of their regimens.²³⁴ By narrating personal recovery from dance injury in the explanation of their techniques, the three educators established their credentials as commentators on and innovators in training.²³⁵ They also affirmed that, unlike early Somatics,

²³¹ With the intention of developing Somatic training independently of choreography Summers synthesized Kinetic Awareness Work through the 1960s, then in the late 1960s, Susan Klein began developing Klein Technique contemporaneously with Joan Skinner's first experiments with what became Skinner Releasing Technique. In the early 1970s Marsha Palludan, Mary Fulkerson, Nancy Topf and John Rollands developed collaborative and individual versions of Anatomical Releasing.

²³² Rolland, "Alignment and Release," 117.

²³³ Both Summers and Klein report being prevented from launching careers as modern dancers due to injury. Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers.*, and Susan Klein, "Klein Technique History," in *www.kleintechnique.com*, ed. Klein School (60 Beach Stree, 4a, New York, NY 10013: Klein School, 1996). Skinner danced for Graham and Cunningham, and sustained an injury which she narrates as being so bad that she was told she could never dance again, but recovered using Alexander technique. Davis, "Releasing into Process."

²³⁴ Skinner applied Alexander Technique to ballet, and sites Todd's work as an influence, claiming to have discovered a new way of dancing and training. She also credited her initial questioning of technique to childhood Todd-based classes. Bettina Neuhaus, "The Kineasthetic of Imagery and Poetry: An Interview with Joan Skinner," *Contact Quarterly Online* (2010). Yet Davis points out that before Skinner took up Alexander Technique she questioned how training seemed to work against natural bodily functions like breathing. Skinner set up mirrors in her hallway to observe her body while trying out what she was learning in dance class. Davis, "Releasing into Process," 14 -24 . Klein emphasized her struggle to recover following her injury in a process that was intellectual and physical. Bartenieff is the only Somatic influence she references along with acupuncture, and the movement therapy "Zero Balancing." She characterizes her work as an interface between formal dance training and bodywork. Klein, "Klein Technique History."

²³⁵ Despite publishing no writing, Skinner established a mythic statues for her story through interviews. Along with Summers and Klein, she echo's Alexander and Todd's claims to having discovered her techniques while healing. Klein, like Summers, confesses never having come to prominence as a performer, asserting that a recurring knee injury began just as she was about to dance for "a major professional modern dance company." "Klein Technique History."

they addressed the unique needs of dancers, while compounding the idea that Somatics was discovered in the process of the body's healing.²³⁶

Small pockets of New York dancers did begin to combine exploration and training within the milieu that grew around the Greenwich arts scene, and as part of the growing interest in Somatics.²³⁷ Remy Charlip and June Ekman, for example, stopped taking classes to avoid tension that they felt arose from repetition. As part of a search for alternatives to modern vocabulary,²³⁸ they experimented with images and the use of the breath to cultivate physical ease, as well as experimenting with the Alexander technique.²³⁹ Thus they explored what they felt were more natural movements while averting tension. As well as being influenced by Halprin, Ekman and Charlip synthesized ideas from Hawkins, Nikolais, Marisciano, Wayne, Selver and Speads.²⁴⁰ Hawkins' dancer Pauline De Groot conducted similar exploration on returning home to the Netherlands in the late 1960s, which I address in chapter 2.

The Aesthetics of No Aesthetic.

In the late 1960s a group of Skinner's graduate students consolidated an influential new exploration-based regimen by integrating their teachers ideas with the kind of experimentation

²³⁶ Klein and Skinner actually argue that their techniques are applicable to non-dancers, however, Klein contends that her technique is unique because it was developed by and for dancers. "Klein Technique Application," ed. Klein School (60 Beach Street, 4a, New York, NY 10013: Klein School, 1997). Skinner, however, was also a dancer who developed her work for dancers. Davis, "Releasing into Process."

²³⁷ Ekman hosted a regular meeting at a her home studio in Flatiron in 1964 for explorations led by Remy Charlip, who was a founder member of the Merce Cunningham dance company and began creating his own choreography in the mid-1960. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

²³⁸ Halprin was using a Graham style floor warm-up as late as 1960. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 146.

²³⁹ Ekman connected an experience of effortlessness in Alexander Technique with the reduction of tension she had been pursuing. She heard about the technique in the late 1960s from Charlip, who shared her interest in reducing body tension. Under the direction of Judith Lebowitz, Ekman felt like she made an effortless transition from lying on a therapeutic table to standing without knowing how she had moved. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

²⁴⁰ Ekman had attended Halprin's workshops from which she brought a new training model. The combination of Marsicano, Nikolais, and Halprin's approaches, functions like a blueprint for 1960s experimentation with practices from the 1950s. Ibid.

in which Paxton and Forti were engaged.²⁴¹ “Anatomical Releasing” established studio procedures, and a movement vocabulary that manifested the idea of divesting dance of aesthetics into a recognizable training. Marsha Palludan, Mary Fulkerson, and John Rolland along with Nancy Topf, who was a Cunningham guest teacher,²⁴² synthesized Todd and H’Doubler’s ideas in classes very similar to early American dance education. They found connections between the Judson style experimentation of which they were aware, and ideas of postural and motional hygiene.²⁴³ The four dancers were influenced by Halprin,²⁴⁴ but Todd’s ideas had a major impact, because Skinner and Palludan had read *The Thinking Body* as they developed Skinner Releasing, and through Palludan the other students and Topf began taking classes with Todd’s student Barbara Clarke.²⁴⁵ Following Todd, Anatomical Releasing students compartmentalized and reintegrated the body to explore form and function in posture and motion.²⁴⁶ Like H’Doubler’s students, they aimed to sense skeletal movement close to the floor to reduce the challenges of gravity, while cultivating kinesthetic awareness of the minutiae of

²⁴¹ Fulkerson and Palludan were both influenced by H’Doubler’s exploration methods through study with Halprin, and by Todd’s student Barbara Clarke. My knowledge about Fulkerson’s study with Halprin is from interviewing her, Mary (O’Donnell) Fulkerson, interview by Doran George, May 31st, 2012. Both Buckwalter and Rolland document Palludan’s study with Halprin. Melinda Buckwalter, “Release— A History” in Topf, *The Anatomy of Center*. John Rolland, Alignment and Release: History and Methods in Jeroen Fabius, *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009).

²⁴² Topf was teaching Cunningham Technique at the University of Illinois where she noticed Rolland wobbling his head during class. He explained he was sensing the balance of his head on his spine, which intrigued Topf who became involved with Rolland, Palludan and Fulkerson. Melinda Buckwalter, “Release— A History” in Topf, *The Anatomy of Center*, 3.

²⁴³ Mary Fulkerson reports reading a review of a Judson concert in the early 1960s given to her by her High School dance teacher. When she was a University of Illinois graduate student working with Joan Skinner, she met Paxton on tour with Cunningham Dance Company. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author." Marsha Palludan and John Rollands, who also developed Anatomical Releasing, were student colleagues of Fulkerson at Illinois, so they would have also met Paxton and have been in conversation with Fulkerson about the new aesthetics.

²⁴⁴ Palludan trained with Halprin during the summer while she was a graduate student at U. of Illinois, Fabius, *Talk.*, as did Fulkerson. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

²⁴⁵ Palludan, Fulkerson, Rolland and Topf worked with Clarke independently. Melinda Buckwalter, “Release— A History” in Topf, *The Anatomy of Center*. Fulkerson recalls Palludan introduced her colleagues to Clarke, with whom she’d been working before her study with Skinner. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

²⁴⁶ Todd analyzes the body in component parts such as "The Vertebral Pattern" (78) and "The Pelvic and Femoral Muscles" (118), then applying the information to posture and motion of the whole structure such as "Weight Bearing and Distribution in the Upright Position" (159). Todd, *The Thinking Body*.

change. Sensory images underpinned simple movement, followed by improvising.²⁴⁷ The four creators of the technique all developed the training in different contexts after graduating, which is addressed in chapter 2.

Anatomical Releasing replaced training modalities shaped by choreography that represented theme and emotional expression, or embodied virtuosity, with the logic of working with intrinsic movement principles. Palludan, Fulkerson, Topf, and Rolland borrowed lying, sitting, crawling, and walking from Todd's work,²⁴⁸ which replaced Skinner's use of Cunningham's forms with vocabulary that was designated "pedestrian" as if it was natural to everyone.²⁴⁹ By executing such simple action, students aimed to develop their awareness of their moving joints and the effects of gravity rather than practicing movement memory, balance, turning, and extension as they might in ballet.²⁵⁰ They sought to sense the mechanics of movement similarly to the way Paxton used martial arts, which is addressed below. In both cases dancers felt they were not focused on presentation,²⁵¹ exhibiting an influence from Forti and Paxton's work,²⁵² while fulfilling Rainer's minimalist "No Manifesto", which is detailed in chapter 3.

²⁴⁷ This description is taken directly from Ross's account of H'Doubler's classes, Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 120. but could equally apply to the teaching of Fulkerson, Topf, Rolland and others. Daniel Lepkoff, interview by Doran George, August 24th, 2011.

²⁴⁸ The pedestrian approach is evident in 1970s work Fulkerson developed, and contributed to CI, and exercises like the stand that Paxton developed as a warm-up for CI. "Daniel Lepkoff Interview with Author."

²⁴⁹ Unlike Ekman, who saw the approach as creating tension, many dancers using Somatics continued to take Cunningham classes during their development of new approaches, associating the training with the choreographers artistic perspective. Fulkerson travelled to New York to study at Cunningham's studio while she was teaching at Rochester College in the early 1970s. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

²⁵⁰ Fulkerson recalls making the decision to explore new ideas when she began teaching at Rochester in 1971, acknowledging that her students were not being trained to enter existing dance companies. Ibid.

²⁵¹ When Paxton began working with martial arts he was engaged in explorations of standing, walking and sitting at a time when the performance of technical excellence was being rejected by Paxton's milieu in the Greenwich Village avant-garde. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 91.

²⁵² Paxton's dance *Satisfyin' Lover*, exemplifies this kind of work, as does *Transit* in which he "marked" the movement. Bales suggests it eradicated a "presentational" quality from the dance, Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 160., fulfilling the critique that Banes identifies as establishing actual democratic participation through authentic presence. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 244.

Through the continuing development of both Skinner and Anatomical Releasing, and other regimens, 1970s Somatics reframed the mid-century rejection of modern dance by claiming to train dancers in a way that was unencumbered by aesthetics. Skinner recounts that while dancing for Cunningham, she discovered underlying natural forces in contrast with the volitional staging of a predetermined theme that defined her experience with Graham.²⁵³ Exhibiting Alexander and Todd's influences, she ultimately proposed that instructing the body interrupts its unity with the cosmos. As a comprehensive training based on exploration,²⁵⁴ Skinner Releasing ultimately jettisoned predetermined vocabulary, and posited that unanticipated movement arises as a result of embodying cosmological forces. Meanwhile Palludan, Fulkerson, Topf, and Rolland reframed H'Doubler's concerted rejection of spectacle,²⁵⁵ while Summers and Klein, established the independence of their approaches from aesthetics by virtue of body-based practices on which they drew from beyond dance. In all the techniques, an emphasis on internal focus contrasted with the attention to the specular image of line, shape and extension, visible in classical studio mirrors. The process of refining the look of set movement made no sense in techniques that proposed indeterminate movement possibilities arise through connecting with the cosmos. Like 1960s task-based dances, 1970s Somatics insisted upon the unintentional nature of the aesthetic effects. Dancers followed sensation, believing that they were unifying body and mind, reframing Alexander's theory of consciousness as a means to escape from the visual focus of dance.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Davis, "Releasing into Process," 19.

²⁵⁴ Skinner was so determined to prove her training system that she initially told Fulkerson that she had too much technique to join her classes because Skinner wanted to show she could train dancers from scratch. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

²⁵⁵ In addition to the evidence already given of H'Doubler's rejection of spectacle, the dance educator articulates her intention in *The Dance and its Place in Education*, Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 133.

²⁵⁶ Gelb recounts that in Alexander practice, students learn to work with the verbal prompts, known as "Directions," while engaged in Inhibition, which entails refraining from voluntarily moving. The combination is seen as an alternative to goal orientated behavior of "Endgaining" and the ethic of success and failure. Students aim to

The use of “tactile feedback” enhanced dancers’ convictions that they were escaping any concern with aesthetics. Touch in Somatics classes contrasted with how classical and modern teachers might give feedback using their hands. Instead of moving a student’s body into the right form, Somatic teachers developed hands-on attention to help the receiver sense their movement while employing a particular image. The giver of hands-on would not willfully move their partner, but rather focus on the same image in their own body as their partner’s, and imagine that they were breathing into their hand.²⁵⁷ Beginning in the 1970s, pioneers and teachers of techniques increasingly offered individual sessions to dancers in which they used hands-on, but Somatic classes also included the approach.²⁵⁸ Dancers often felt they became dramatically re-aligned, or gained insight into habits, through hands-on, which is evident from key figures in the development of Somatics taking advantage of bodywork.²⁵⁹ In Alexander, Klein, BMC, and Todd’s work, tactile feedback and associated verbal prompts had different names and subtleties.²⁶⁰ In contrast with the other approaches, for example, Bainbridge-Cohen, included viscera with the skeleton, which I address in the following section, and Skinner designed “partner-graphics” in which touch was often short and rapid rather than encouraging a slow contemplative engagement with sensation of image, as was often the case in the other

psychophysically sustains all the possibilities of an action through the moment-to-moment inhibition of the decision to act. For example, in getting up from a chair, the possibility of sitting back down is sustained in each moment of rising. This is known as the “The Means Whereby,” consciousness is set ‘in process’ by remaining open and responsive. Gelb, *Body Learning*.

²⁵⁷ My knowledge of hands-on work is based upon 20 years of taking Somatic classes with teachers such as Eva Karzag, Martha Moore, and others. I have verified that my experiences reflect the way that hands-on was used in the 1970s. Karzag, "Interview with Author."

²⁵⁸ Individual sessions, integral to Alexander’s and Todd’s work, were taken up by later Somatic approaches designed for dancers.

²⁵⁹ Bainbridge Cohen encouraged Beth Goren and other students to offer private sessions to dancers. Goren worked with people such as Judy Padow, Karzag, Mary Overlie, Valda Settlefield, Cynthia Hedstrom all of whom became key figures in the Somatic field. Beth Goren, interview by Doran George, May 28th, 2012.

²⁶⁰ For example in Alexander Technique it is called non-doing touch, and in Ideokinesis it is often called Tactile Aid

techniques.²⁶¹ As a field of training developed, dancers also synthesized individual approaches to hands-on by combining ideas from the different regimens.²⁶²

Despite the belief that dancers accessed indeterminate kinetic possibility by focusing on sensation, 1970s training exhibited recognizable vocabularies. Yet the forms were theorized as intrinsic to anatomical structure, and therefore “discovered” by dancers. Based on Todd’s thesis that the most efficient movement surfaced earliest in the evolutionary process, students rolled and crawled on their bellies and all fours, gradually progressing toward walking on all fours and into biped.²⁶³ The new training therefore recycled early Somatics by redefining primitive movement as a source of optimum kinetic capacity that would help dancers avoid injury in opposition with “over-civilized” classical and modern vocabularies.²⁶⁴

CI, which ultimately boasted an extensive and recognizable lexicon, exemplifies the idea of connecting dancers with primitive kinetic patterns to fuel endless movement possibility. The dissertation’s introduction refers to considerable disagreement among practitioners about the relationship between CI and Somatics. However, the duet form undeniably provided vocabulary and pedagogy for Somatics, while Anatomical Releasing and BMC, if not other Somatic approaches, were key to the development of CI.²⁶⁵ Forms common in Somatics quickly became

²⁶¹ An example of Skinner's partnergraphics is the tracing of energy lines like a sphere going up the back of the head and down the front of the face, which is informed by Alexandrian directions. My knowledge of this work is informed by 20 years of taking Skinner classes with teachers such as Stephanie Skura in the 1990s at Arnhem, with Gaby Agis in London between 1998 and 2004, with Yvonne Meier in New York, from 2004 til 2010, and with Lionel Popkin at UCLA in 2010, and 2012.

²⁶² For example Karczag integrated “tactile aid” from Bernard’s teaching with Alexander’s non-doing touch. Karczag, " Interview with Author."

²⁶³ Todd, *The Thinking Body*.

²⁶⁴ John Rolland suggests that such choreography was part of Barbara Clarke’s and André Bernard’s teaching, which were versions of Todd’s work. But he holds that their classes were more static than those that he, Pallundan, Fulkerson and Todd developed for dance. Rolland, "Alignment and Release," 119.

²⁶⁵ Dancers used CI kinetics to practice skills developed through Somatics and felt CI demonstrated the possibilities of Somatics. Lisa Kraus, who began dancing for Trisha Brown in the late 1970s, found little use for Somatics before using the ideas in CI and other improvisational methods she encountered at Bennington from 1971 to 1974 while Paxton was in residence. Having trained in modern dance since an early age, Kraus retained an appetite for large, challenging movement and didn’t comprehend Paxton’s inner stillness work. However, Bennington faculty

associated with CI, and this shared vocabulary was thought to be indeterminate and based upon intrinsic principles rather than constituting a pre-existing lexicon.²⁶⁶ Paxton wanted to eradicate decision making from dancing,²⁶⁷ and defined CI as following the moving weight exchanged in a duet. Dancers experienced unpredictable changes in direction, speed and action as they followed the shifting motion of their combined masses. Yet to follow the collective moving weight of two people, each dancer connected their limbs, upper torso, and head to the momentum of their pelvis, the center of gravity.²⁶⁸ They used crawling, quadrupedal, and bipedal motion in which the pelvis can either lead or follow the limbs, which as a lexicon contrasts with classically influenced forms, like Cunningham's, where the limbs gesture away from a stable pelvis and torso.²⁶⁹ CI and Somatics shared a class structure in which dancers practiced the forms in order to sense how their bodies were moving individually or in pairs, and then improvised, in CI often in a circle of colleagues called a "round-robin." The modern dance division between training and composition was thereby broken, but movement unpredictability relied on a recognizable vocabulary.

CI dancers also stratified movement along the Somatic spectrum of primitive and civilized through their warm-ups. Those that were trained in Somatics aimed to cultivate a

her Judith Dunn raised her interest in improvisation, which she fulfilled by combining Somatics and CI. She responded to the different model of virtuosity in CI; going from upright to rolling on the ground, and moving with unpredictability in 360 degrees were ideas with which she wanted to solo. In classes using John Rolland's simple kinetic images, she expanded her experience of CI beyond the duet. John Rolland, *Inside Motion: An Ideokinetic Basis for Movement Education*, Rev. ed. (Place of publication not identified: Rolland String Research Associates, 1987)., Lisa Kraus, interview by Doran George, August 1st, 2011.

²⁶⁶ Novack identifies that the recognition of laws of gravity were important, although differently expressed, in both Hawkins technique and CI. In the CI movement style "Going with the momentum, emphasizing weight and flow," CI dancers follow the unpredictable direction of movement which would not happen in Hawkins set work. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 121.

²⁶⁷ In her notes, Novack sites an interview between Paxton and Banes, in which the choreographer defined his project as seeking a way to apply the chance procedure to movement generation. *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁶⁸ This is visible for example footage of 1970s CI. Steve; Videoda; Change Inc; Contact Collaborations Paxton, *Fall after Newton: Contact Improvisation 1972-1983; Chute: Contact Improvisation at John Weber Gallery, New York City, 1972, Change Inc.* (Charleston, Vt.: VIDEODA, 1989), 1 videocassette: (VHS) (33 min.) sd.,col. ; 1/2 in.

²⁶⁹ Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 243.

responsive body, which Novack theorizes as central to the duet form.²⁷⁰ Diane Madden recalls, for example, that Daniel Lepkoff, who introduced the form to many dancers who became key practitioners,²⁷¹ often introduced simple exercises working with touch and sensation to cultivate kinesthetic awareness. By developing facility in relative stillness that was then applied to large movement, CI dancers invested in the idea that aptitudes, which contribute to the efficient execution of complex dancing, are more accessible in simple movement. They therefore reconstructed Todd's idea that kinetic patterns associated with lower life forms reside in the human subconscious while retaining her symbolic stratification. CI also shared with Anatomical Releasing metaphors from physics and mechanics, through which the movement vocabulary was constructed as foundational or primitive, in contrast with ballet's decorative and by consequence (over) civilized lexicon.²⁷² Dancers believed that through receptivity to terrestrial forces, they accessed kinetic efficiency in the combined mass of two moving bodies.²⁷³

Lepkoff's approach contrasted with Paxton's, whom Novack details as teaching the form in 1973 "largely by practicing it, with a few preparatory exercises."²⁷⁴ Yet she also chronicles that most CI practice gradually integrated Somatic aptitudes,²⁷⁵ and as early as 1977 CI students

²⁷⁰ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 184.

²⁷¹ Jennifer Miller, for example, recalls first learning the dance form from Lepkoff in Connecticut, Jennifer Miller, interview by Doran George, August 18th, 2011., I refer to Diane Madden, Stephen Petronio, and Randy Warshaw seeking out Lepkoff's teaching in chapter 2, and Houston-Jones also mentioned Lepkoff as an important early influence. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author."

²⁷² While he acknowledges the somatic dimension of CI, Paxton recalls that he did not have the language of somatics at the time. Yet there are striking parallels with Todd's work, such as the use of principles of physics and mechanics applied through sensation, and *The Thinking Body* was central for Fulkerson's development of anatomical releasing. Steve Paxton, email, Sept. 20th 2011.

²⁷³ For example, the arc of a jump was analyzed whereby the body was understood to be virtually weightless if it landed on another body at the apex of its arc, compared to landing in the downward portion of the arc. Paxton, *Fall after Newton: Contact Improvisation 1972-1983; Chute: Contact Improvisation at John Weber Gallery, New York City, 1972*.

²⁷⁴ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 74.

²⁷⁵ Novack argues anxiety about potential injury precipitated changes in CI, whereby highly skilled dancing replaced a general rawness. (79) She sites Lepkoff commenting that in the early experiments the Rochester contingent were less subject to the pain that many of the other early participants experienced because they had the facility to fall softly. (65) The principles necessary to avoid injury could be found in Somatic practice. Novack

learned BMC as part of the pedagogy.²⁷⁶ Dancers aimed to feel gravity, friction, momentum, and the transmission of weight down the bones, which Paxton describes as “‘reality’ as transcribed by subjective experience”, exhibiting a comparable ideology to that of Somatics in which the dancer is thought to connect with intrinsic truths of the moving body.²⁷⁷ He acknowledges CI and Somatics share principles even though he did not know the regimens personally when first creating the duet form.²⁷⁸

Regardless of the perspectives of influential teaching artists, CI, Somatics, and other coeval trainings lent themselves to being understood as related. Along with similarity in the kinetic forms being used, many practices understood themselves to be working with terrestrial or intrinsic bodily realities, which contributed to the idea that they had jettisoned premeditated aesthetics in favor of natural vocabularies. Students couldn’t help finding connections between the different practices. For example, although evolutionary theory did not figure in explanations of CI, BMC insisted that by interrogating crawling, quadrupedal and bipedal motion, all of which figured in the duet form, dancers embodied stages of phylogenetic and ontogenetic development.²⁷⁹ Moreover Forti taught a similar lexicon in the 1970s based on her study of joint structure and motility in various species that she emulated.²⁸⁰ Forti inherited similar ideas to Bainbridge-Cohen from early Somatics.²⁸¹ Based on Halprin’s reinterpretation of H’Doubler’s pedagogy Forti reframed crawling to cultivate seamless transitions between the kinetic

chronicles an important development in CI as when practitioners developed sophisticated strategies for falling, which allow them to extend their skill level by taking more risks. (151) *ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Deborah Jowitt, "Fall, You Will Be Caught," *Contact Quarterly* 3, no. 1.

²⁷⁷ Paxton., 2011 email on Somatics and CI.

²⁷⁸ Concerning the indirect influence of Somatics, Paxton, had little direct involvement in Somatic work. Yet during the 1960s and early 1970s he participated in artistic projects initiated by Brown and Forti, who brought the influence of Halprin, through her “Rule Games” addressed above. Forti, "Interview 1 with Author ".

²⁷⁹ Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*.

²⁸⁰ Goren, "In Discussion with the Author."

²⁸¹ Forti reports having not been influenced by nor having taken BMC at the time. Forti, "Interview 1 with Author ". However, her choreography betrays the influence of H’Doubler’s interest in natural kinetic patterns, and provided a model of moving that connected directly to the idea that kinetic patterns, inherent in the body, reflect evolutionary development.

emulations of various species. Bainbridge-Cohen, like Todd, insisted that ontogenetic development tracks the evolution to upright posture through the species, and that postural and motional hygiene are achieved by connecting with early developmental and evolutionary patterns. Dancers in CI, Forti's, and Bainbridge Cohen's classes felt they were recovering movement from intrinsic bodily resources through exploration.

Rather than being historically or culturally specific in the way that modern dance was represented, the new lexicon advertised itself as natural and eternal. All the techniques configured their exercises as a means to relinquish conscious control to natural forces rather than voluntarily articulate aesthetic ideals. Instead of learn kinetic forms, for example, Bainbridge-Cohen argued that her students reconnected with intrinsic movement patterns. BMC students who also studied with Forti found evidence of Bainbridge Cohen's conceit in the seamless transitions that Forti choreographed between the forms based on different animals.²⁸² Forti regulated her momentum similarly to CI dancers by using weight transference to cultivate continuous movement, which gave the impression of effortlessness compared with modern dance.²⁸³ Furthermore, the principles of physics and mechanics taught in CI seemed to be integral to evolutionary and developmental patterns embedded in anatomical structure and function. Students easily made such connections because Bainbridge-Cohen and Forti taught and in similar contexts to CI and both published in *CQ*. Dancers believed that by cultivating physicality with which to engage in exploration they could open themselves to re-discover principles of movement inherent to the body. This, they felt, provided incalculable possibilities

²⁸² Goren found striking connections between Bainbridge-Cohen work and Forti's classes based on animal studies. Goren, "In Discussion with the Author." Karczag was taking the same combination of classes. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

²⁸³ For example, in her dance *Crawling* she made seamless transitions between biped and quadruped locomotion, which seemed to be technically accomplished without referencing modern dance. Simone Forti, *Crawling* (Unpublished: Viewed courtesy of the artist, 1976), VHS Video transferred to DVD.

for vocabulary. The 1970s idea of natural aesthetics thus saw the synthesis of Hawkins' ease with Halprin's emphasis on individuality.

Dancing Direct Democracy

Dancers' belief that they were working with natural movement principles underpinned their reframing of Somatics as direct democracy. In his reading of Marx, Held cites two principles that the 1970s training exhibited: decisions were in the hands of the people they concerned, and hierarchal governance was disbanded to dissolve conflicts of interest based on power differences.²⁸⁴ Rather than being instituted as part of an imposed aesthetic, dancers believed natural forces shaped their movement choices. Yet they emphasized their individual experience of these shared bodily truths; and differences in the vocabulary they performed seemed not to be stratified, which affirmed dispersal of artistic authority. Novack identifies a confluence of individuality and universality in her account of how individuals experienced a group bond in CI.²⁸⁵ Somatics similarly promoted unique journeys through a shared means, manner, and trajectory of development against the belief that classical and modern trainings subjugated individual appreciation of practice to expertise in the emulation of a particular look. Somatic studios had no mirrors in order to focus on sensation, and teachers believed they facilitated a connection with authentic bodily experience rather than teaching kinetic forms.²⁸⁶

The conceit of accessing natural capacity underpinned dancers' embodiment of direct democracy because they believed they were undermining a hierarchy of the mind over the body

²⁸⁴ Held, *Models of Democracy*, 130-31.

²⁸⁵ My theorization of a sociality that emerged through 1970s Somatic training is indebted to Novack's account of CI. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*.

²⁸⁶ These ideas were central to the various approaches fomented by Todd's and H'Doubler's work, as well as in BMC and Authentic Movement.

as part of a broader rejection of inequality.²⁸⁷ Based on the natural corporeal knowledge with which they felt they displaced artificial aesthetics, Somatic practitioners cultivated a new sense of self, which correlated with changes in how they structured their working lives.²⁸⁸ For example, the redefinition of consciousness corresponded with a reorientation of the dancers' role in the artistic process.²⁸⁹ Somatic pedagogy theorized anti-hierarchical explorative procedures in which dancers actively investigated rather than passively received information. To afford dancers agency, classes instituted progressive education methods, like hands on activity, embodied reflection, and cooperative learning, all inherited from H'Doubler's instructional lineage, and originally sourced from Dewey. This contrasted with how converts to the regimens understood their backgrounds in classical and modern dance. In service of a choreographer or aesthetic tradition, they felt they had subjugated the body to the mind by refining the appearance of dancing based upon observing a mirror image. Therefore, dancers reframed Alexander's modality of integrating unconscious bodily capacity to both reject what they saw as outdated ideals, but also rethink the aims of training.²⁹⁰ Those drawn to Somatics held that they were collaboratively exploring new possibilities to liberate themselves from being

²⁸⁷ Novack argues that CI was one endeavor among others in late 1960s and early 1970s performance, sport and therapy, with the aim of reconfiguring notions of the self through "a responsive intelligent body." I suggest that the growth of the Somatic practices in the same era was part of that movement. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 3.

²⁸⁸ "Good Use" of The "Primary Control," or optimum postural hygiene, is thought to bring all kinds of personal and social benefit and attracts unwavering attention in the studio practice and written texts of Alexander Technique. Gelb's text provides easily digestible explanations of Use, the Primary Control, and other central principles of the technique, including their purported implications. Gelb, *Body Learning*.

²⁸⁹ Ekman, for instance, made the connection between Alexander Technique and the ideas about self-development in the late 1960s by understanding physical ease as synonymous with psychological function. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

²⁹⁰ A belief in the far-reaching implications of working with the body is written into Alexander Technique. Over identification with conscious knowledge purportedly inhibits the balancing reflex because actions are deemed right or wrong, conditioning a habitual fear response through chronic anticipation of potential failure. The 'Startle Pattern' is theorized as an unconscious postural response to fear that interferes with the balancing reflex, resulting in dysfunctional comportment. The goal-oriented attitude from which it results is known as "Endgaining," which promotes bad Use of the Primary Control because of the adverse affect on the balancing reflex. In turn organic processes such as breathing are said to be impacted because by the viscera are compressed, which also damaged thinking and the emotions, the habitual version of which is called 'Debauched Kinesthesia.' An artificial as oppose natural arrangement of bodily structure becomes familiar and is felt as natural. A structural arrangement is known as a "Postural Set." Gelb, *Body Learning*.

interpretive artists by constructing an integrated self with which they launched the collective choreographic ventures I analyze in chapter 3.

Skinner and Bainbridge-Cohen's 1970s pedagogies both vividly exemplify the idealization of experience thought to arise from unconscious bodily capacity. Skinner held that she discovered exercises by observing how students responded to her image-work, which I analyze further in the next section. Because dancers could not sustain her images while fulfilling specific movements, she discontinued teaching set material.²⁹¹ In order to tap into the unpredictability that connecting with the cosmos was thought to bring, Skinner Releasing renounced imposed vocabulary. Meanwhile Bainbridge-Cohen gathered ideas from her students who she saw as researchers, arguing that our understanding of corporeality changes and grows. Challenging medical authority more than institutionalized modern dance, she configured the dancer's experience as empirical knowledge discovered in the process of following the unanticipated directions a body takes.²⁹² Educators instituted dramatic changes with the belief that only through direct democracy's responsiveness to the individual, could the body's truth be accessed.

A collaborative structure in Somatic classes further emphasized the necessity of hearing each dancer's experience to get at the truth of the body. For example, BMC and Anatomical Releasing students never stood in lines facing a teacher, but began in a circle discussing the function of particular joint or organ, and then usually dispersed around the studio to focus

²⁹¹ Skinner represents the development of her technique through conversation with the students on whom she first began experimenting by developing exercises based on their questions about how to correct themselves following Skinner's introduction of principles of alignment into Graham based classes. Successive periods of exploration and exchange purportedly resulted in the class structure. Students, for example, expressed sustaining an image of a string attached from their head to the heavens while executing a set movement combination. Skinner consequently allowed them to work for long periods without set movement. The technique ultimately presented itself as guided by natural kinetic and sensory imperatives that arise in the connection with the cosmos. Davis, "Releasing into Process."

²⁹² For example, Bainbridge Cohen argues that through felt experience universal bodily truths can be discovered. Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*, 3.

inward or toward each other and engage in sensing the bodily component with which the class began. Throughout or at the end of class, dancers often returned to a circle in order to share distinct experiences affirming their unique embodiment of nature.²⁹³ Hands-on exercises also convinced dancers that they were discovering bodily veracity because they commonly experienced shock in the touch-based processes at the sensation of the location, size, weight and dimensions of various boney or visceral components.²⁹⁴ Students often improvised individual spatial journeys in full-bodied dancing based on the more authentic bodily knowledge that they felt they had unearthed. Classes therefore claimed to both reveal the body that was masked in the artificiality of other training, and also validate the individuality that was repressed elsewhere.

Embodying Objectivity.

1970 Somatics reframed the use of science to claim the accuracy of its discoveries against prevailing concert dance aesthetics. Dancers believed that they brought to their art form objective truths by mapping corporeality and its movement in a way that was detached from the emotional and sexual significance of the body. Anatomical Releasing relied on Clarke's pared down anatomical lexicon,²⁹⁵ while Klein claimed that practicing her exercises based on skeletal and muscular function promoted optimum biped capacity.²⁹⁶ Although Alexander and Todd's work influenced Skinner,²⁹⁷ she argued that scientific language excites the rational mind, inhibiting access to natural capacity. Yet she justified her poetic images using Sweigard's

²⁹³ Goren, "In Discussion with the Author." Lepkoff, "Daniel Lepkoff Interview with Author."

²⁹⁴ Karczag, "Interview with Author."

²⁹⁵ Rolland, "Alignment and Release," 113. The preference may reflect that Palludan, Fulkerson, Rolland and Topf connected with New York's avant-garde in which Skinner's poetic imagery would have appeared to close to the now discredited theatricality associated with Graham.

²⁹⁶ Popkin recalls that the idea that humans are still evolving into upright posture was central to Klein's rhetoric. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

²⁹⁷ When Palludan was Skinner's student at Illinois in the late 1960s they had read *The Thinking Body* although neither of them had taken classes as adults in Todd's tradition. Rolland, "Alignment and Release."

extension of Todd's neuromuscular control theory.²⁹⁸ Also using neurological theory, Bainbridge-Cohen reported that she had discovered that all the body systems generate 'inner vitality', and that the outward expression of high 'tone' in the organs and other bodily components promotes postural and motional hygiene, while a lack of vitality has the opposite effect.²⁹⁹ Clinical influences on Somatics also emphasized its scientific foundations.³⁰⁰

Convinced by the objectivity of their ideas, dancers believed that the regimens cut through elitism that they associated with modern and classical training. Somatics seemed to put information directly in the dancers' hands because many classes introduced models and diagrams from biology, physics and mechanics to explain posture and motion. This felt more transparent than pedagogy based on a right or wrong way of executing a movement for which the teacher alone had the answer by virtue of being trained in the aesthetic tradition. Furthermore, Sweigard's student Irene Dowd used scientific rhetoric to argue that conventional training works against the body's natural tendencies, causing injury.³⁰¹ She and Sweigard largely focused on training modern and classical dancers (referred to as a complementary

²⁹⁸ By selling it on her website, Skinner has endorsed Davis' thesis that SRT intentionally works with the neuromuscular systems of alignment, balance, and mechanics of motion that Ideokinesis has identified as beyond conscious control. Davis, "Releasing into Process."

²⁹⁹ Bainbridge-Cohen cites her work with spinal chord injury patients in whom feeling and motion were restored below the injury by her work with the organs. She argues stimulating the viscera restores motor nerves because survival patterns, which are manifest in organic functioning, are controlled by the autonomic nervous system that underlies the nervous system. Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*, 29.

³⁰⁰ For example, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen trained as an occupational therapist. Ibid. Susan Klein trained as an acupuncturist and in a technique called "Zero Balancing." Klein, "Klein Technique History." And practitioners who trained in Alexander Technique inherited the Alexander Lesson, designed as one-on-one session. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 144.

³⁰¹ Using an analysis of neuromuscular function, Dowd proposed conscious control only engages large "superficial" muscles the overuse of which impedes those closer to the skeleton that promote motile efficiency. Changing conscious goals, she believes, can effect the sub-cortical nervous system that controls the postural muscles because, unlike fascia for example, they are subject to motor-nervous innervation as part of the broader nervous system that connects to thinking. Therefore, focusing on image-metaphors rather than action is thought to bridge cortical and sub-cortical activity precipitating relaxation in a specific system or component of the body and activation of another. , Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly*.

approach in the dissertation introduction), which I distinguish from my subject.³⁰² Yet the community on which I focus used Dowd's insights to bolster the idea that the kind of autonomy that dancers achieved in exploratory training helped them avoid injury. Sweigard and Dowd's use of neurological theory seemed to prove beyond any doubt that Graham's authoritarian instruction suffocates unconscious capacity³⁰³ Conscious instruction revealed itself as foreclosing the benefits of accessing inherent physical capacity.

Yet the embodiment of scientific metaphors entailed orienting toward some bodily dimensions and away from others.³⁰⁴ Dancers performed what Donna Haraway calls the "modest witness," by deemphasizing sexuality and emotion, which have historically threatened objectivity in Western positivist thought.³⁰⁵ 1970s Somatics asserted its inclusivity by reframing as scientific rather than socially superior the modesty through which Alexander and H'Doubler repudiated racial and class Others. However to the degree that dancers achieved objectivity by witnessing their own bodies with modesty, they recapitulated the historical construction of white, class-superior, masculine and heterosexual propriety. Since the popularity of evolutionary theory in the early 20th century, non-white, working class, female, and queer subjects have all

³⁰² Sweigard's and Dowd's theories both became key references for Somatics. Sweigard offered a rigorous scientific justification of ideas about the body to dancers exploring new training, and Dowd, built upon her work applying it to 1970s dance culture, evident in the fact that Contact Editions, who publish *CQ*, also published Dowd's text. Positivist knowledge seemed to provide a rigorous understanding of the body while verifying that its use depended upon involuntary activity. *Ibid.*; Sweigard, *Human Movement Potential*.

³⁰³ Sweigard and Dowd both aimed to scientifically verify Todd's contention that postural and motional hygiene depends upon the interface between rational and non-rational or primitive dimensions. *Human Movement Potential*. Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly*. 243.

³⁰⁴ My argument that the discourse oriented dancers in a particular way is informed by Sarah Ahmed's use of spatial metaphors to theorized the production of exclusionary social practices. Somatics seemed to account for human ontology but directed dancers to particular bodies and subjects creating space conducive to certain possibilities in which others became conspicuous. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

³⁰⁵ Donna Haraway, defined the modest witness as embodying "modest scientific behaviours" that are "unadorned" and "factual," appearing to circumvent personal interest in the interests of truth. Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 73.

been represented as overly emotional and sexual.³⁰⁶ So 1970s Somatics inadvertently recycled the construction of nature as aggregate social categories through the manner in which scientific metaphors were embodied.

Somatic classes naturalized the performance of modesty because dancers believed that they were accessing intrinsic functioning rather than repudiating emotion and sexuality. For example, the “Constructive Rest Position” (CRP), which was central to both Alexander and Todd’s work, established itself as a staple of 1970s Somatics, and exemplifies how dancers cultivated propitious detachment. According to Alexander and Todd, CRP demands the least effort to maintain skeletal alignment: with the body supine, the knees bent upward, and the feet flat on the floor, the head is placed on a book to position it profitably relative to the neck and back.³⁰⁷ Dancers saw CRP as way to establish a neutral sensory baseline by releasing excess tension and restoring functional kinesthesia from which they could sense and inhibit “unnatural” habits while moving by connecting to what is known as the ‘natural’ balancing reflex.³⁰⁸ By securing its position as a means to access natural alignment, this exercise erased its dependence on the disassociation of emotion and sexuality that occurred as dancers cultivated a meditative state to focus on images thought to promote postural health. Reciprocal exercises like hands-on similarly engendered a chaste sensibility, because by focusing on anatomical ideas they wished

³⁰⁶ Patricia Collins points out that early 20th century Western science stratified races as havinv reached different levels of evolution from apes. African peoples were represented as more instinctual, and overly sexual. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 105. Meanwhile Leila Rupp chronicles the construction of white middle class femininity as chaste against the threat of being too close to nature. Leila J. Rupp, *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 41. Their ideas dovetail with Alexander’s depiction of Africans and the working class as too close to nature while expressing a concern that being too far from nature resulted in debauched evolution, which is the way in which queer sexuality was veiwed. Nathan Hahn, "Medical Concepts of Homosexuality," in *UCLA intro to LGBT Studies Course*. (Royce Hall, UCLA 2013).

³⁰⁷ The body is supine, the head is placed on a book to aid neck alignment through the relative position of the head and back, and the knees are bent upward with the souls of the feet on the floor. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 163.

³⁰⁸ In Alexandrian terms, CRP is thought to allow inhibition of the Startle Pattern so that students can establish a baseline from which to recalibrate reasoning and volition. In Todd's work the language used is different, but the idea is very similar.

to encourage in the receiver's body, both parties averted the emotional and sexual associations of physical intimacy with an attitude like that in CRP. The kinetic ease that dancers achieved also seemed to verify the aim of functional efficiency, which affirmed a natural rather than cultural basis for the modesty.

Somatics also choreographed detachment through the attitudes it fomented in dancers toward the moving body. In the throes of sustained physical contact, CI practitioners retained decency by emphasizing the mechanics of motion and averting erotic feelings, and along with students of Forti's animal studies, CI dancers accomplished seamless transitions by focusing on the action of bones relative to gravity and other forces. Meanwhile, under Alexander's influence, Skinner instructed her students to concentrate on the image to avert emotions that arose while dancing.³⁰⁹ Based on the idea that they were sourcing intrinsic movement capacity, dancers believed in the involuntary nature of the motility through which they performed such modesty, which further erased its cultural specificity. Skinner's students, for example, often reported being moved by images, confirming their pioneer's conviction that cosmic forces coursed through them. While Forti presented her easy transitions between distinct species' kinetic patterns as inherent to human anatomy based on evolutionary logic. Furthermore, Recipients of hands-on reported being moved without knowing how during their sessions, which they put down to the activation of innate bodily processes.³¹⁰ Science therefore seemed to prove the foundational basis of unconscious motility despite the way in which its metaphors were embodied by repudiating sexuality and emotion.

³⁰⁹ Bridget Davis includes a description of an Alexander lesson in the appendices of her thesis on Skinner Releasing. Davis, "Releasing into Process." Students of Alexander Technique are encouraged to focus on the Direction because 'sensation' is thought to be unreliable because Kinesthesia is debauched.

³¹⁰ This recalls Ekman's experience of Alexander Technique in the 1960s in which she felt she did not know how she had gotten up to standing from the therapy table. Ekman, "Interview with Author." David Hurwith reports that BMC teacher Beth Goren uses her hands to elicit movement that similarly takes a recipient from lying to standing with no effort in a way that eludes consciousness. David Hurwith, (dancer) in discussion with the author, May 6th 2012.

As much as the embodiment of scientific metaphors constructed a canonical body through the performance of modesty, the regimens compromised the access of non-canonical subjects to nature in various other ways. I have already pointed out how Gelb seemed to reverse Alexander's stratification of races and cultural groups while actually recapitulating his exclusionary conceit. Furthermore, Susan Manning points out that in the 1960s, African American dancers still faced the struggles with which Dunham contended.³¹¹ Yet by naturalizing pedestrian vocabulary, ease, and modesty, the seemingly new universal contemporary body of Somatics rendered the staging of black American traditions culturally conspicuous, and therefore outdated. At the same time, Brenda Dixon-Gottschild argues the influence of "Africanist Aesthetics" on what she calls postmodernism was erased. Somatic-trained dancers exhibited the loose-limbed, relaxed aptitudes to which she refers, while the conceit that these skills were cultivated by connecting with natural capacity through scientific understanding vanquished the impact of any cultural tradition, supporting Dixon-Gottschild's thesis.³¹² In chapter 3, I articulate how, by performing modesty, some dancers relaxed genders norms, and women averted the tendency of their bodies to signify sexual or emotional availability, but here I want to establish how the use of scientific metaphors in relation to martial arts sustained modern dance's problematic participation in Orientalism.

The pioneers connected what they represented as non-Western ideas and scientific rhetoric in their cosmologies with the belief that Eastern practices integrate the body and mind. Furthermore, dancers felt they "found" principles that promoted greater ease of movement in Yoga, the Meridian Stretches, Chinese and other martial arts such as Capoeira, all of which they imported into Somatics. Following in Hawkins' footsteps, 1970s Somatics constructed largely

³¹¹ For example Alvin Ailey came under criticism for being too commercial, just as Dunham had before him. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 220.

³¹² Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, chapter 3.

generic, non-Western sources of remote knowledge that had been gleaned through a cultural receptivity to nature lost in the West, but that could now be proven by science. The conceit that the movement principles were trans-cultural bolstered the idea that they were unchanging and essential, even as the “ancient” insights were used to critique modern dance, which erased the history of Orientalism.³¹³

Paxton’s use of Tai Chi exemplifies how dancers sustained Hawkins’ theory. Due to the slow pace of the martial art, in contrast with the relative speed of modern dance, he insisted he could track his reflexes as gravity acted through his anatomy. Using this knowledge, Paxton concluded that perception can be trained separate from action, and that dancers could be prepared for fast, disorienting movement in CI. For example an exercise called “the stand” aims to cultivate kinesthetic awareness of the reflexes that Paxton observed in Tai Chi:³¹⁴ dancers sense subtle weight shifts, developing what he calls “a persistent delicate overall awareness of the reflexes which balance the body,” and apparently “entrain” dancers to meet physical disorientation without panic.³¹⁵ Approaching Tai Chi as detached observer, Paxton extracted understanding of the body from what seemed like an ancient source of knowledge. Through the

³¹³ My articulation of the way that dancers constructed practices as non-Western, and “other” to their native culture is indebted to Said’s framework. He argues that Orientalism represents cultures as distinct, and that a fantasy of the Other is taken as real. By representing “non-Western” culture and its practices as offering something lacking in the West, dancers invested in the idea of identifiable, distinct cultures through which they defined the West. Said, *Orientalism*.

³¹⁴ The first recorded performance of the stand was Paxton’s 1972 *Mercury* at Oberlin College, often credited as the beginning of CI. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 61. While standing relatively still on two feet for a prolonged period, often with eyes closed, practitioners inhibit their tendency to tense-up against involuntary movement. Paxton. email on Somatics and CI.

³¹⁵ Paxton believed that by observing their reflexes calmly, dancers would cultivate experience that they could employ when they were in challenging, and unfamiliar physical configurations. Other exercises included inducing disorientation by asking students to move their heads into all the spaces around them gradually increasing the speed, practicing rolling with the eyes open and remaining cognizant of the apparently turning room. Paxton email on Somatics and CI.

framing of his insights within the discourse of Western science, the cultural origins and meaning of the martial art disappeared into essential bodily truths used for contemporary agency.³¹⁶

Despite the problematic reframing of non-Western practices, which sustained the Orientalism in which modern dance had historically participated, Somatics exemplifies how the manner of appropriation changed over the course of the 20th century. Mark Wheeler proposes that, unlike artists such as Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham, Paxton, along with Bainbridge Cohen, grasped the essence of the non-Western forms with which he worked.³¹⁷

Notwithstanding the problem with the idea that the totality of a practice can be identified let alone apprehended by one person from another culture, Paxton certainly showed reverence for the martial arts, as did other artists, and he avoided romanticizing non-Western subjects. Yet he felt that Somatics helped dancers to access the diverse cultural forms that they were encountering in the 1960s and 1970s due to changing cultural mores in the United States³¹⁸. By accessing natural functional imperatives through non-Western forms, however, dancers disavowed social signification, erasing context along with the harsh social realities of being Asian in America.³¹⁹ If critical discourses on cultural appropriation had been available, dancers like Paxton would likely have developed different rhetoric with which to articulate their practices.³²⁰ Section 4 in this chapter addresses the use of Orientalism by Skinner, Klein, and Bainbridge-Cohen.

³¹⁶ Paxton's use of Aikido exhibits a similar methodology. He identified the way in which as dancers weight could be transferred more efficiently and safely into the air and the ground by working with the idea of spirals in the falling and ascending body. Ibid.

³¹⁷ Wheeler, *Surface to Essence*, 267.

³¹⁸ Paxton. E-mail Somatics and CI.

³¹⁹ For discussion of the Asian American experience see Anne Anlin. Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, Race and American Culture (Oxford England; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³²⁰ In a meeting I attended about teaching that addressed the problems associated with cultural borrowing, Forti pointed out that idea of a center of movement is conceived of differently within Tai Chi and Alexander, which indicate how a context conscious of the need to respect differences, can produce a different discourse than a universalizing one. (UCLA department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance Teachers meeting, April 4th 2013).

A Field is Established.

By the end of the 1970s Somatics had established a new field of training built on ideas from the last two decades. By separating choreography and training, 1960s dancers laid the ground for seeking movement principles independently of aesthetic or expressive aims.³²¹ Dancers and educators subsequently believed they were discovering and exploring intrinsic bodily structure and function rather than developing a style of movement. Collaboration, in which Eva Karczag, Ellen Webb and Patty Giavenco engaged, exemplifies how independent activity precipitated the initial growth of Somatics, and how dancers synthesized the various experiments that were underway. With a desire to replace classical and modern methods at a time when there was a lack of Somatic classes in New York, the women synthesized Bernard's training and other practices. Along with Karczag, who had trained in Alexander and Tai Chi, Giavenco trained with Fulkerson,³²² and they all took Topf's classes; chapter 2 details the sources of the information. Their synthesis of these influences typifies 1970s exploration.

A typical class that Karczag, Giavenco or Webb taught in a downtown Manhattan loft synthesized H'Doubler's and Todd's pedagogies by bringing together exploration with a detailed understanding of anatomy. Students investigated skeletal structure and function, to then entrain a kinesthetic sense of its image using CRP. While sustaining the image/sensation they aimed to embody developmental or evolutionary vocabulary, and then began improvising. The women teachers borrowed crawling, quadruped, sitting, standing and walking from BMC, Forti's classes, and CI, and Karczag understood how to work contemplatively with pared down

³²¹ In the 1970s, Bernard was teaching ideokinesis to actors at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and became an important influence on dancers who instead of practicing a vocabulary, focused on use of the body. Bernard influenced the emergence of a number of new techniques. For example, Stephanie Skura, KJ Holmes and Eva Karczag all took Bernard's classes. Karczag, " Interview with Author."; De Groot Interview."; KJ Holmes, interview by Doran George, August 15th, 2011.; Stephanie Skura, interview by Doran George, May 13th, 2013.

³²² Karczag worked with Fulkerson at Dartington when she was a member of the dance collective *Strider*, and Giavenco was student of Deborah Chassler who trained with and danced for Fulkerson. De Groot, . Karczag, " Interview with Author."

movement from Alexander and Tai Chi. The classes emphasized caring for the body by focusing on internal sensing rather than meeting technical imperatives, and students felt they were engaged in the reciprocal exchange of information with their own body and their classmates.³²³

In their synthesis of ideas, Karczag, Giavenco and Webb exemplify how, while Somatic training diversified in the 1970s, dancers moved between different approaches which they saw as part of a big experiment. So even though Klein worked quite differently from her contemporaries, students saw her technique as part of the new field because it was couched in similar rhetoric of restoring natural bodily capacity. Dancers believed they were working with the same bodily material pursuing other aims than virtuosic facility directed toward display.³²⁴ The exercises demonstrate the stark difference between Klein technique and other regimens. Unlike the classes that Karczag, Giavenco and Webb taught, Klein insisted upon the faithful repetition of specific actions in order to engage certain muscles, and relieve others to build connection through the bones; exploration was absent from her studio.³²⁵ As we will see, the differences between the approaches became more important in the next two decades and beyond.

Section 2. Reflexive Critique: Individuality and Subjectivity in 1980s Somatics.

1980s dancers sustained a lineage with 1970s Somatics while critiquing it in ways that dovetailed with the politics of the decade. A new generation, who worked alongside veterans, inherited a substantial discourse on the regimens. Somatic training launched itself beyond the

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Beth Goren remembers that she and many of the dancers who were practicing Body-Mind Centering were also taking classes with Klein in the 1970s. Goren, "In Discussion with the Author."

³²⁵ Central to the technique was guiding the head toward the feet with the legs long allowing the passive weight of the head to lead the spine as the pelvis 'cycled' back over the hip sockets in counter-balance, engaging the hamstrings and psoas. The feet were parallel under the hip sockets to aid weight transference in the bones, called 'connecting sitz bones to heels.' Klein asserted yoga and modern dance hold the pelvis static over vertical legs while rolling down, which obstructs boney connections by causing the quadriceps to overwork or 'grip' to stabilize against natural counterbalancing. I have been taking Klein classes irregularly since 1992, with certified teachers both through my education at EDDC, and also in London and New York with Barabara Mahler, Susan Klein, Jeremy Nelson, and Neil Greenberg. Goren affirmed that in the 1970s the exercises were very similar. Ibid.

1970s with the conviction that the dancer's identity and role in the artistic process could be reconceived with scientifically verifiable bodily knowledge that had previously been overlooked. Furthermore, the new dance culture that fostered these ideas asserted the foundational nature of its aesthetics. Two major trends emerged as the field diversified and grew. Some artists rejected collectivism to pursue career success with the new ideas, while others critiqued the conceit of universality, and the aesthetic of no aesthetics, even as they sustained collectivism. In both cases 1980s Somatics reconstructed nature to justify the new approaches that emerged.

Differentiation in the field benefited from new possibilities for the production and dissemination of choreography, as educators, programmers, and artists, exploited broader economic changes. These developments, which I focus on in more detail in chapters 2 and 3, participated in the shifts associated with a political swing to the right among many Western governments. Most artists deplored the conservative cultural and economic agendas associated with Reagan and Thatcher, yet they adapted Somatics to capitalize on the new opportunities. Even artists who resisted commercialization and conservatism often did so by foregrounding what they saw as staunchly individual rather than collective truths, embodying the culture of self-interest, if done with a critical agenda.

Reproducing Successful Individuality.

Already in the in the late 1970s new pedagogy emerged taking its logic from Somatic informed choreography that was becoming increasingly visible. For example, through large theatre engagements, Trisha Brown's work became emblematic of what could be achieved using Somatics.³²⁶ Employing aptitudes cultivated with the regimens, she gained international status in

³²⁶ Brown presented *Glacial Decoy* at Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1981, alongside Lucinda Childs, whose dancers were also training in Somatics, and Laura Dean. Philip Bither, "From Falling and Its Opposite, and All the in-Betweens," Walker Arts Center, <http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2013/philip-bither-trisha-brown>.

the 1980s, and Somatic training was subsequently profoundly influenced by her work.³²⁷

Dancers wanted to learn the skills that they saw on large concert stages and in CI jams, so they flocked to classes based on the reproduction of hers and other's successful vocabulary, rather than exploration-based training. In a return to a 1950s model, set phrases replaced exploration, although the vocabulary that Brown developed within the dictates of Rainer's "No Manifesto" seemed to break with modern dance.³²⁸ So rather than apply the regimens to a modern dance lexicon, the training still asserted that it was based on intrinsic bodily principles.

Although new classes based on set vocabulary were organized more like modern training, they distinguished themselves with the conceit that students were cultivating physical authenticity. For example, Lisa Kraus, who began dancing for Brown in the late 1970s, rejected what were seen as authoritarian teaching methods while offering training in virtuoso skills compared with Anatomical Releasing.³²⁹ She taught the choreography she was performing, but as much as demonstrate phrases, Kraus gave her students the verbal prompts with which Brown developed her 1970s choreography. Based on her Somatic and CI training she encouraged her students to imagine the anatomical motion with which they were fulfilling the instructions. Her emphasis on embodying movement principles framed the use of set kinetic forms as distinct from previous training models.³³⁰

Brown's 1980s company dancers followed in Kraus's footsteps. They prepared the students with exercises from regimens in which they were training, and then applied Somatics to

³²⁷ Throughout the 1970s Trisha Brown developed choreography informed by her work with Elaine Summers to reduce tension in her body. Summers, *Interview with Elaine Summers*.

³²⁸ Trisha; Klaus Kertess; Rebecca Davis; Carolyn Davis; Maryvonne Neptune; Michele Thompson; Trisha Brown Company; ARTPIX (Firm) Brown, *Trisha Brown Early Works 1966-1979, Artpix notebooks* (Houston, TX: ARTPIX, 2004), videorecording, 2 videodiscs (ca. 239 min.): sd., b&w and col.; 4 3/4 in.

³²⁹ Kraus recalls that when she first started dancing for Brown she was swimming in a swamp of Somatics and Brown's structures gave her a form through which to articulate the skills she had developed. Kraus, "Interview with the Author."

³³⁰ In the late 1970s Kraus taught *LOCUS* in and beyond New York. Diane Madden, interview by Doran George, May 25th, 2012.

the choreography they performed, using verbal prompts and hands-on.³³¹ With images and instructions from regimens not designed for dance, or in which dancing was not included, the teachers explained the dynamics of the vocabulary.³³² Vicky Schick applied a combination of approaches, while both Irene Hultman and Shelley Senter focused on Alexander's work. Diane Madden and Stephen Petronio emphasized the use of Klein Technique, as did Jeremy Nelson who danced in Petronio's own company. Students faced the teacher and repeated phrases, but the classes began with contemplative internal focus with the logic that connecting with anatomical function and structure was essential to the execution of the material.³³³ Rigorous self-awareness seemed of equal or greater importance than movement memory, or mastering turning and balances.

Participants in these classes still understood them to veto the emulation of the look of dance because an authentic connection with the body was thought to underpin the motile efficiency that gave the vocabulary its artistic success. Using anatomical language rather than terms associated with classical training, teachers underplayed the technical demands of the vocabulary, and "getting the phrase" was represented as less important than focusing one's own

³³¹ Many teachers, as I have mentioned, used CRP from Alexander and Ideokinesis. Diane Madden, Jeremy Nelson, Neil Greenberg, and others also began using exercised from Klein technique. Ibid.

³³² Madden, who danced alongside Karczag in Brown's company, reports that she transposed ideas from Alexander Technique to formal class such as the 'Directions.' Gelb articulates the Directions as imperatives of good alignment that embody the optimum relationship between the head neck and back: 'The neck is free,' while the head moves 'forward and up,' and the back is 'lengthening and widening' as it moves 'back and up.' The Directions must be 'willed' in combination with Inhibition both in Constructive Rest and while moving through simple actions such as 'quadruped' in which the knees and hands support the weight of the body through the floor. Students move through sitting; standing; and entering 'Positions of Mechanical Advantage' in which inhibition and Direction are said to be aided by skeletal placement relative to gravity. Gelb, *Body Learning*, 70. In each position and the transitions, students will the Directions while exercising Inhibition. Other Brown dancers such as Irene Irene Hultman, Vicky Shick, and later Shelly Senter all trained as Alexander Teachers, and Madden recalls Petronio using the ideas. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

³³³ Vicky Schick, e-mail to author, February, 9th 2014, and Shelly Senter, e-mail to author, March 10th 2014.

learning process.³³⁴ For example Schick rephrased passé from ballet as “lift the leg in parallel by softening the knee” which she believed changed students’ execution. Corrections took the form of anatomical instruction rather than reference to shape, and there continued to be a conspicuous absence of mirrors in the studio. Set phrases therefore reinvented themselves as procedures to overcome habits, practice functional alignment, and developed motile efficiency. Like modern classes, the complexity of exercises gradually increased, yet students focused on sustaining kinesthesia, and the class might return to an anatomical notion set up in the beginning that informed the execution of a phrase.³³⁵

The use of CRP in classes exemplifies how dancers understood the difference between Somatics and modern or classical training. Prior to the class’s beginning, dancers often practiced CRP rather than stretch, with the logic that they were restoring a neutral sensory basis from which to avoid instructing the body. The Alexandrian “habitual response” of goal oriented behavior, translated into “habit” which was associated with ballet and modern skills. Furthermore, teachers used receptive sounding terms like “allow” to describe how to embody movement, which they contrasted with terms like “gripping” or “pushing.”³³⁶ It was not unusual to see students cease executing a phrase in order to practice CRP, which indicated how they were restoring a connection with unconscious capacity, which had been lost to a goal-oriented attitude.³³⁷

³³⁴ For example Ralph Lemon would say in classes “don’t worry about the phrase just move across the floor,” while Gill Clarke would encourage students to think “It is only the spine that is moving.” (I took classes with Ralph Lemon at Naropa Institute, Boulder, Colorado, in the summer of 1998, and took classes with Gill Clarke through Independent Dance in London between 1991 and 2009.)

³³⁵ So for example, students would not be told to lift a leg higher, pull in or pull up, or even told where to put their feet or arms to fulfill the kinetic shape. Rather they would be given metaphors of energetic direction, or relationships of joint structure and gravity to think about. Schick, email correspondence.

³³⁶ Schick email correspondence, and Senter email correspondence.

³³⁷ This was particularly noticeable in the Dutch institutions, that I talk about in chapter 2.

The new pedagogy naturalized physical aptitudes that became identified with the material taught. For example, letting and flowing were physical metaphors in classes that became known as release technique. Dancers sequenced movement by reverberating a kinetic impulse outward from its center, controlling the direction and pace using kinesthetic awareness that they understood as the sensation of boney weight producing muscular ease. Release technique got its name because dancers were thought to be “releasing” unnecessary tension by refraining from instructing the body to allow forces like gravity to act through them by giving in to momentum for example. Yet the phrases still signified an artist’s unique signature rather than universal kinetic patterns, and professional mastery began to replace the collective rejection of established vocabulary. Nevertheless, the use of anatomical, physical and mechanical metaphors as teaching tools, erased the aesthetic investments of release technique, and the vocabulary was configured as more authentic to the body than the so-called artificiality of modern and ballet.

Individual Empowerment.

Company dancers teaching set phrases felt they were empowering students based on their own experience of embodying Somatics informed choreography. For example, Brown’s late 1970s and 1980s dancers felt ownership over the vocabulary because they contributed understanding to its execution. Brown did not explain how to execute her work,³³⁸ so in an approach also taken up by dancers in other companies, her company turned to Alexander and Klein techniques for metaphors.³³⁹ Karczag spearheaded the use of Alexander’s approach after

³³⁸ Popkin recounts that the joke of company class was almost lore within the company when he joined in the early 2000s because there never was one. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author." Madden felt that Trisha provided the movement or gave directions on how to make the movement, but it was up to the dancer to find a way of executing the dance.

³³⁹ For example, dancers in Lucinda Child's, Stephen Petronio's and David Rousseve's companies all used Alexander and or Klein at different times.

joining the company in the late 1970s.³⁴⁰ Using what is known as “inhibition”, which exhibits similarities to Paxton’s ideas about the skills he learned in Tai Chi, Karczag danced using dramatically less effort than she had experience needing in ballet.³⁴¹ She cultivated what she felt was internal space to move with more lyricism,³⁴² paralleling the reason that 1950s dancers turned to Nikolais’ and Hawkins’ classes. As a dancer that the celebrated critic Deborah Jowitt describes as having “graced” Brown’s company, Karczag established herself as a master of the choreography through her approach, affirming her creative agency in Brown’s work.³⁴³

Without company class, many of Karczag’s colleagues followed her lead.³⁴⁴ To meet the aesthetic demands of Brown’s choreography, they also applied inhibition, with the aim of curtailing the output of effort that exceeded what they saw as necessary.³⁴⁵ The idea of overworking, however, carried a more profound significance because it was thought to be a retrogressive psychophysical habit tied up with willful bodily control. Dancers associated the habit with incessant repetition undertaken in modern and classical training, which they viewed as evidence of the authoritarian institution of aesthetics. By contrast, through inhibition, they believed they were corraling unconscious capacities to subvert the habit of instructing the body, and thereby nurturing their reliance on structural support that is integral to anatomy, and cannot

³⁴⁰ Karczag joined Trisha Brown’s company in the late 1970s, bringing with her experience of studying Alexander Technique as well Tai Chi in the United Kingdom. She became a strong proponent of its value for the performance of Brown’s choreography, which was convincing for company members and Brown herself. Elizabeth Garren, who Karczag replaced in the company, had already been working with Alexander technique. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

³⁴¹ Karczag had substantial experience in Graham technique and classical ballet, which she had trained in and performed for example with the London Festival Ballet for which she had moved from Australia to England in the early 1970s. Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Deborah Jowitt, "By Deborah Jowitt (Eva Karczag)," *Village Voice*, March 8th 1994.

³⁴⁴ Along with Karczag, Madden, as well as Irene Hultman, Shelley Senter and many other company members took up Alexander Technique, many as Ekman’s students. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

³⁴⁵ Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

be accessed through conscious direction.³⁴⁶ Dancers therefore invested a sense of empowerment in their approach to the choreography based on Alexander's idea of bringing unconscious capacity under conscious control, and in turn they encouraged their students to refrain from "forcing" movement. The primitive (unconscious), conceived of in the progressive era, therefore reframed itself as a new source of power in opposition with outdated (overly civilized) training procedures based on conscious repetitive instruction.

Classes teaching set material recycled the 1960s separation of training and choreography with the belief that students gained information about moving that was not tied to the aesthetics of the phrases they learned. Based on the idea that they were practicing neutral movement principles in set work, students seemed to develop autonomy in these new classes. Madden taught ideas such as counter thrust from Klein's work in which the trajectory of the body was thought to move away from a direction in which a dancer was connecting with gravitational force, such as the foot pressing into the floor in a particular direction while the rest of the body launches in the opposite direction.³⁴⁷ Madden, whom Petronio introduced to Klein Technique when she was struggling with the demands of being in the company,³⁴⁸ catalyzed the broader application to Brown's work beginning in the early 1980s. For counter thrust, she aimed to sense moving weight in boney connections, which she also felt augmented the reverberation of movement through the joints as oppose classical extension of the limbs. By teaching such skills as opposed to having them perform drills of set movement, Madden saw herself as empowering

³⁴⁶ Voluntary activity is thought to recapitulate habitual postural schema because the sensory feedback mechanism by which action is executed has been incorrectly habituated. It is argued that knowledge of executing an action is drawn from sensation based upon previous experience that has invariably been conditioned by the Startle Pattern in a goal-oriented culture. See for example descriptions of unreliable sensory appreciation and "inhibition." Gelb, *Body Learning*, 52-67.

³⁴⁷ Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

³⁴⁸ Petronio introduced Madden to Klein's work when she began having back problems in the early 1980s after dancing for Brown full time. Madden was already doing Alexander Technique at the time. Ibid.

students with information.³⁴⁹ By contrast, the Somatic community represented modern dance as shaped by ideals that ignore the body's nature, deny students information about how to move efficiently, and through the means of correction teachers use, thwart postural and motional hygiene.³⁵⁰ Healthy alignment thus redefined itself as dancers' autonomy against the injurious impact that resulted from submitting to the preexisting aesthetics. Kinesthetic awareness, dancers believed, enabled them to make choices based on their unique physical structure rather than simply emulate form.³⁵¹ They retired the collective exploration of new vocabulary to achieve what they saw as new authority over their craft, reflecting a broader shift toward individualism.³⁵²

As approaches based on principles of posture and motion devoid of creative exploration, Alexander's and Klein's techniques leant themselves to the move toward individual autonomy. Fuelled by the association with Brown and eventually Petronio, a small New York network developed around the regimens. Klein designed her approach for dancers, but Alexander Teachers who were also dancers, such as Charlip, Ekman, and Marjorie Barstow, all modulated the technique for dance. Ekman, who was a revered figure because she had taught Brown,³⁵³ took over a regular class that Charlip had begun, and served several generations of Brown's

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Madden, for example, recalls that during her classical training in New York prior to working with Somatics she never received feedback about how to work better with her body. Ibid. Many of the dancers that I interviewed who had trained in classical and modern techniques talked about similar experiences, such as Karczag, Skura, and Jennifer Monson. Devotees of Somatics often represented the feedback they received in classical and modern training as oppositional to the body's logic.

³⁵¹ Madden, for example, argues that she was empowered by Alexander's and Klein's ideas because she learned to understand her body within the performance of movement. Ibid.

³⁵² In workshops I have taken with Karczag dancers commonly talk about having liberation themselves through Somatics from oppressive classical or/modern training practices. I am referring to workshops I've participated in as a student at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem, The Netherlands, between 1992 and 1996, but a workshops in London at Moving East Studio in 2001, and workshops at Trisha Brown Dance Studio and through Movement Research in New York in 2006 and 2009. Although these experiences are all later than the 1980s, they parallel the things dancers were telling me in interview.

³⁵³ Because Eckman was already part of the contemporary avant-garde dance scene in New York when she trained as an Alexander Teacher, people began to take classes with her including Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

company as well as other dancers.³⁵⁴ Karczag introduced new company members to her Ekman,³⁵⁵ who became devotees of the class and also took private lessons. This small community made it possible to bring Barstow to New York for special workshops,³⁵⁶ and along with Ekman, Barstow was thought to work with greater flow than teachers faithful to Alexander teacher training doctrine.³⁵⁷

Through the concept of an integrated body-mind, which although initially put forward by Alexander also found a place in Klein's rhetoric, dancers affirmed the personal significance that set vocabulary had for them. As I address in the next section, Klein theorized a connection between physical, emotional and social dimensions, and in Ekman's classes, students felt they were processing emotions, which engendered a private sense of the body that was intertwined with their execution of vocabulary distinct from the choreographer's aims.³⁵⁸ Despite the embargo on representing emotion, the modern dance idea of expression therefore reframed itself in what was seen as non-expressive material, because dancers felt their skills embodied personal psychophysical truths. As a result, the application of Alexander and Klein Technique to set material further emphasized individuality over collectivity. Even those for whom psychological dimensions were unwelcome followed the trend toward individuality to the degree that they

³⁵⁴ For example, Ekman taught Hultman, Madden, Senter, Karczag, and Popkin, all of whom danced with Trisha Brown and Nelson, who danced for Petronio. Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Charlip, with whom Ekman had danced, started Alexander training together with Ekman in 1977. Eckman met Karczag through Trisha Brown and also because Elizabeth Garren who's place Eva took in the company was in the same training as Eckman. Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ekman and colleagues brought Barstow to New York because she was seen as a renegade by the Alexander community for her more flowing, dance-informed approach. Ekman was able to raise the interest in Barstow based on a small dance community interested in Alexander's work. Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Karczag suggests there is a lot of variation in how Alexander it taught. Ekman brought her experience as a dancer as did Barstow. Teachers like Barstow and Ekman were thought of as mavericks, and lore developed within the Somatic dance community about teachers having skillful hands. Karczag brought her work with Fulkerson, and a Tai Chi master named Gerder Gedders to Alexander, and remarks that the teachers she was drawn to in the U.S., such as Ekman and Barstow, exhibited a more flowing approach. She also proposed that the technique was taught in a more rigid way in the Britain than America. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

³⁵⁸ Eckman felt that dancers came to her because she understood the relationships between psychology and the tensions in the body. Ekman, "Interview with Author."

focused on the mastery of complex vocabulary. Receptivity to nature asserted itself anew as an individually potent awareness directed into execution, which was reflected in Alexander and Klein class modalities that involved little verbal exchange.

Subjectivity Versus Objectivity.

The New York East Village community reframed rather than disbanded with collectivity yet they exposed the aesthetic investments of the previous generation by changing the gesture of the movement vocabulary. By intentionally distinguishing their approaches from prevailing developments in the field, this small and not necessarily representative group of artists, exemplifies the flexibility with which Somatics was instituted. They embraced what had been repudiated in modest performance, forging a milieu that reveled in behaviors not previously acceptable in the modern dance studio. Through the embodiment of emotionality and sexuality, dancers collectively emphasized individual expression. Yet while they critiqued the belief that independence from aesthetics results from training based on intrinsic bodily principles, rather than disband with the conceit of nature, they reconstructed it by including psychological dimensions. Regimens became popular that combine anatomical images with Jungian symbolism, Eastern mysticism, or other cosmology in procedures that were distinct from both those established in the 1970s, and set movement classes. Also, concerned about the imitation that successful Somatic-informed dance might generate, dancers marked their creativity with individuality by emphasizing the psychological uniqueness of their exploration.

Beginning in the late 1970s, alongside Brown's first successes on large New York concert stages, East Village dancers sought creative rather than physical autonomy in training directed toward innovation. They embodied radical individuality to critique the conservative cultural agenda intertwined with Reaganomics, and to contest modern dance exclusion prior to

and during the 1960s and 1970s. Dancers continued to break modern and classical protocols even as they rejected the 1970s conceit of non-aesthetics. For example, “Open Movement”, which was neither a dance class nor a performance, fostered exploration similar to early 1960s experimentation.³⁵⁹ Artists including John Bernd, Stephanie Skura, Mark Russell, Yvonne Meier, Ishmael Houston Jones, Diane Torr, Tim Miller and Jennifer Monson gathered at the event started by Peter Rose under the influence of Polish Theatre innovator Jerzy Grotowski.³⁶⁰ Artists attending Open Movement contributed to the East Village milieu in which similar events emerged.³⁶¹ They integrated language, emotional gesture, and performance art with dance improvisation often involving physical risk.³⁶² Choreographed references to social and cultural identity exhibited the milieu’s vision alongside articles in print media that the community produced, as well as themed concerts and panel discussions, the production of which I address in chapters 2, and I analyze the dances in Chapters 3.

Many of the dancers felt that Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement dovetailed with their aims by combining training and creativity. Through these regimens, physical sensation gained new significance as dancers reconstructed the body through involving themselves with its supposed unpredictable and emotional nature, rather than retaining the modest distance of scientific observation in which the previous generation had engaged. They

³⁵⁹ Houston-Jones, " Interview with Author."

³⁶⁰ Peter Rose, spent a summer in Poland working with Grotowski who had abandoned the idea of performance because he found the rehearsal process more compelling. Based on his experience of Grotowski’s ideas, Rose began the weekly meeting place for dancers at the recently established performance and rehearsal space PS 122 in New York’s East Village. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

³⁶¹ Improvisational dancing was integrated with text and other practices in several experimental events that were neither performance nor class. “Open Presentation,” in which artists would try an idea, was started by Skura and PS122’s eventual artistic director Mark Russell. At “Night Reading,” artists shared text from their journals, sometimes more than one reading simultaneously, while at “Avantgardarama” artists would try out performances. Ibid.

³⁶² At Avantgardarama, Houston-Jones danced on 2nd Avenue while the audience watched him from PS122’s window. Skura remembers how intense it was to see him moving vigorously while the lights of cars whizzed by. She performed the making of an omlette at the event in the building’s kitchen, feeding the audience as part of her performance. Ibid.

generated what they saw as idiosyncratic risky dancing, based on Skinner's idea that each student must stay true to their indeterminate connection with cosmology. This ultimately fueled an interest in an individual psychological dancing-self, which contributed to the uptake of Authentic Movement later in the decade.

Meier initially introduced Skinner's work to her colleagues, who built on and critiqued 1970s ideas using the regimen.³⁶³ Classes often began with the body supine, and eyes closed focusing on the kinesthesia of weight, so the format was familiar because all the dancers had taken CI and Anatomical Releasing. Yet to release tension, for example, Skinner replaced scientific imagery with poetic prompts such as "your bones are melting", which suggested uncertain outcomes from connecting with anatomical function. Kinetic forms and decision-making processes learned in CI informed the dancing, but now in solo, and propelled by the images rather than moving weight in exchange with a partner.³⁶⁴ In this sense, the poetic imagery offered a new logic from that in CI to understand the involuntary nature of embodying an established vocabulary. Focused on themselves, students confirmed the unpredictability of the modality in which they were engaged by moving differently from each other, while with more erratic dancing than that seen in other Somatic classes, they displaced the performance of modesty.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Meier heard about the technique from her East Village roommate, dancer and writer Tim Miller. He worked with Skinner in Seattle where she based herself after leaving Illinois. Meier attended a regular Skinner Releasing summer workshop, and immediately taught the work when she returned to New York. Ibid.

³⁶⁴ My observation of how dancers modulated CI in their use of Skinner Releasing is based on analysis of the choreography, seen in chapter 3, as well as observing and participating in classes. East Village dancers working with Skinner's work had all trained in CI, honing skills of moving into and out the floor safely, and responding to the impulses that are set in motion by the duet dance that were thought not to be based on a volitional choice to express something, but emerging through the dance itself.

³⁶⁵ Students all worked with the same image but one might be lying completely still on the floor while another danced wildly. They believed they were "witnessing" their body on a particular day rather than trying to emulate a particular idea of how the image works. Davis, "Releasing into Process," 59.

Skinner's non-volitional theory helped East Village dancers to distinguish their aims from company dancers applying Klein and Alexander to set material. By exceeding an ostensible rational analysis of the body, the poetic images engendered the body as unpredictable, configuring the connection with nature as a logical source for individual innovation rather than repetition of a pre-given form. Like Klein and Alexander classes, Skinner's training involved no set phrases, but the inclusion of improvisation afforded the space to develop vocabulary.³⁶⁶ Rather than master newly minted complex choreography with abstract principles, or observe scientific realities in a pared down 1970s vocabulary, East Village dancers felt they were propelled into risky dancing by Skinner's images.

The small community reintegrated psychology through Skinner's work even though they largely sustained the aversion, established in the 1960s, to what they saw as theatrical artifice in the pantomiming of emotional gesture or narrative. Being propelled by poetic imagery seemed to be the authentic psychological expression of natural imperatives. Rather than outward appearance, the dancers focused on the image, conceived of as the psychosomatic manifestation of the cosmos. Graham and Skinner both used Jung's "collective unconscious,"³⁶⁷ yet Skinner rejected what she saw as Graham's volitional force to represent Jung's archetypes. Influenced by early Somatics, she argued that her 'Image-work' circumvents the conscious control with

³⁶⁶ Skura felt the training combined creative exploration with the development of physical skill because of the poetic rather than anatomical lexicon. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." Meier also saw anatomical images as restricting movement choices by the way that natural facility was being conceived. Yvonne Meier, interview by Doran George, July 7th 2011. She and Houston-Jones used Skinner's ideas to cultivate movement that appeared reckless and even violent compared with releasing style. In chapter 3 I look at Houston Jones erupting into movement that throws him through space crashing into walls and the floor, cushioned by sequencing and low muscle tone.

³⁶⁷ Both Graham and Skinner drew upon Jung's theory that human beings share universal psychological archetypes. Manning and Burt point to Graham's use of Jung, Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 179., Burt, *Alien Bodies*, 162. while Bridget Davis recounts Skinner's use of the same theorist. Davis, "Releasing into Process." In Graham's cosmology, like Skinner's, the modern dancer reconnects with universal truths through movement.

which Graham technique severs the dancers connection with the cosmos.³⁶⁸ Yet despite Skinner's use of Jung, East village dancers actually embodied emotional states more radically with Authentic Movement. For Meier, Skinner's idealized natural imagery, and her insistence on focusing away from emotional responses to the poetic prompts, stifled the development and use of kinesthetic awareness.³⁶⁹ She introduced Authentic Movement to her colleagues to restore "content" to the empty body cultivated in Skinner's work.³⁷⁰ However, in their use of the regimen they built on their experience of Skinner Releasing similarly to the way they had used CI to embody of Skinner's images. Even so, by choreographing emotions or discomfort that other regimens tapped into but disavowed, dancers further emphasized innovation and individuality with Authentic Movement.³⁷¹

Meier and her colleagues embraced Whitehouse's theory that the body is the psyche in which social convention prevents authentic motile expression.³⁷² They felt they were resisting 1980s conservative morality by learning to move without judgment.³⁷³ The integrated body-mind reinvented itself bringing emotion to the foreground; physical sensation was now

³⁶⁸ Skinner argues that many dancers instruct their bodies to fulfill predetermined goals instead of being receptive to natural propensities. This betrays Alexander's influence by resisting "objective knowledge." The cosmology also reflects Todd's notion that pre-conscious patterns underlie efficient functioning because for Skinner when the body is relieved of cultural interference, it achieves harmony with nature, restoring optimum motility by realigning with cosmic rhythms that lie dormant in the unconscious.

³⁶⁹ Stephanie Skura, "Releasing Dance: Interview with Joan Skinner," *Contact Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1990).

³⁷⁰ Meier felt Skinner's approach resulted in an 'empty' body, achieved for example with the imagery of energy-lines that 'open up' greater facility and range of movement. Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

³⁷¹ Meier began teaching Authentic Movement after being introduced to it in her native Switzerland in the mid 1980s by friends in Jungian analysis. Ibid.

³⁷² Whitehouse reports she rediscovered the value of the lost legacy of modern dance in Jungian psychoanalysis. She realized the body is the location of the unconscious and the proper vehicle for expression of the psyche, which is why dance has such creative potential. Jungian psychoanalysis configures Western culture as impeding the authentic self. She suggests that objective knowledge as well as stereotyped notions of right and wrong must be disbanded for students to listen to their psyche with no preconceived idea of where the work will take them. Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*, chapter 2.

³⁷³ Late 20th century conservatism seemed to prove Jung's theory that Christianity suffers from judgment about what is right and wrong because 1980s cultural politics reveled in the negative representation of various lifestyles. Dancers did not explicate their opposition to cultural conservatism in psychoanalytic terms but Authentic Movement was used in a milieu that idealized the contravention of propriety, which was linked to leftist politics, at venues like King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. Lucy Sexton, interview by Doran George, September 17th 2011.

understood as unconscious psychological impulses. Moving with eyes closed to enhance their kinesthetic awareness, primitive psychic impulses now propelled the dancing rather than natural poetic imagery.³⁷⁴ In exchanges between a “witness” and mover, participants brought focus to the idea of the psyche³⁷⁵ in mediated conversations designed to support the exploration of behavior that would otherwise have seemed inappropriately sexual, aggressive, depressed, afraid or bored.³⁷⁶ In activity that resembled popular representations of insane asylums,³⁷⁷ the dancers resisted concern about their appearance, transgressing the 1980s idealized attractive, high functioning body.³⁷⁸ They pressed into each other and the surroundings, repeated action obsessively, made strange sounds, and threw themselves around.³⁷⁹ The regular contravention of expressive and relational protocols offered rare social latitude, for example, Jennifer Miller, a woman with a full beard, recalls feeling her difference didn’t matter even while her colleagues had an awareness of its significance beyond the rarified East Village milieu.³⁸⁰ As the culture wars were stirring, artists asserted their opposition to conservatism with risky, unpredictable dancing, even while they retained a sense of independence from the mainstream left by

³⁷⁴ Dancers aim to tune into their kinesthetic sensations by moving with their eyes closed.

³⁷⁵ The witness-mover dyad is based on the psychoanalytic process. Whitehouse’s student Janet Adler argues that movers internalize the witness, and learn to differentiate between authentic bodily responses by observing themselves moving. Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*, 153-55.

³⁷⁶ Codified language exists for this part of the process, which is couched to abate judgment in either negative or positive terms. Judgment is thought to obstruct the process of reaching for the authentic self because it inhibits the free flow of the psyche. I came across this language through Meier at a workshop she taught at Chisenhale Dance Space in London in January 2000.

³⁷⁷ Whitehouse argues that movers have to let go of preconceptions they have about what looks attractive or how they think they should move. Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*, 30.

³⁷⁸ Whitehouse suggest that staying tuned to ‘honest bodily’ reaction is a process that entails learning to identify when movement is being ‘arranged.’ She asserts that the unconscious source is evidenced the initiation of an impulse within the body that is distinct from conscious decision-making. *Ibid.*, Chapter 5.

³⁷⁹ My description of Authentic Movement is based on participating in classes in New York and London between 1999 and 2008. East Village dancers such as Houston-Jones, Monson, Miller, DD Dorvillier, and Diane Torr were present at these sessions at different times. Although my experiences are a decade later that Meier’s introduction of the technique, I am also influenced by Monson and Meier’s descriptions. Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." Jennifer Monson, interview by Doran George, July 23-27, 2011.

³⁸⁰ Miller, "Interview with Author."

remaining true to what they saw as natural psychophysical truths.³⁸¹ By resisting ideological legibility, the practice recycled the 1950s constructions of nature: the primitive mind re-asserted “bodily truth” against political partiality that resulted from a singular focus on social power, and was thus “over-civilized.”

In its embrace of Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement, the East Village reframed anti-authoritarianism and the rejection of established aesthetics to respond to changes in the field. Brown’s success and elegant seamlessness threatened to instantiate aesthetic protocols for Somatics. With jarring movement that embraced dimensions that were disavowed in modest performance and the fulfillment of the “No Manifesto”, East Village artists asserted their rebellion by renouncing the ideals of increasingly dominant aesthetics.³⁸² Furthermore, because the focus was away from conventional virtuosity, the regimens seemed accessible to dancers regardless of prior experience.³⁸³ Rather than pursue the mastery of set material, the milieu cultivated psychophysical ease whereby energy purportedly erupted through the body as dancers submitted to cosmological forces and the unpredictability of the psyche. Training modalities constructed a collective of individuals embracing behavior that was unacceptable in 1970s Somatics, 1980s Alexander and Klein classes, and classes based on set movement. Skinner work emphasized collective individuality with an anti-competitive focus on each dancer’s process,

³⁸¹ Monson, for example, felt that Meier held out a beacon for cultural freedom in her work at a time when there were so many forces constraining what artists could do, both within and beyond the East Village milieu. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

³⁸² Houston-Jones commented that when he saw a video of himself in a ballet class in the mid-1970s he was repelled by the mannered look and ceased from training in the technique. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author." Monson found solace in Somatics coming from a university dance program where she was on parole because the ballet-based aesthetic of the faculty deemed her overweight. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." In the same time period, Skura experienced problems imposed by the balletic aesthetic at New York University Tisch dance program, where she was encouraged as a choreographer but not as a dancer because of the shape of her feet. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

³⁸³ Skura argues the focus on individual process means anyone can take the classes because they are valued for where they were at, with a class structure not directed toward a virtuosic dancing body. "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

which Authentic Movement affirmed in private exchanges between a supportive witness and vulnerable mover. Chapter 2 addresses the use of the regimens elsewhere.

Expanding Anatomy.

The East Village approaches benefitted from a mystical reconstruction of the natural body, instigated by some late 20th century pioneers, which contrasted with the scientific logic of the training applied to set choreography. Skinner, Bainbridge-Cohen, and independent teachers experimenting in the way that Karczag, Giavenco and Webb had in the 1970s, developed studio procedures that built upon scientific metaphors of anatomy and mechanics, but asserted anew the unconscious essence of inherent bodily capacity.³⁸⁴ For example, with a greater emphasis on the cosmological and psychological implications of connecting with innate physical structure, Skinner and Whitehouse paralleled Bainbridge-Cohen's theory that all body systems have a mind. In the same decade Fulkerson, then based in Holland, argued that anatomical images impose imaginative limits on movement, an idea that I address in chapter 2.³⁸⁵ In contrast with the more utilitarian use of Somatics fomented by set movement classes, the mystical body fueled the exploration so important to East Villagers. To appreciate such developments I outline some of the theory behind the pedagogy.

Skinner inferred that embodiment of her images provides access to facility overshadowed by focusing on science, because the prompts come from cosmological rhythms

³⁸⁴ Rolland suggests that prior to *The Thinking Body* Todd's writing was more "artistic" or "intuitive." Rolland, "Alignment and Release," 119. Meanwhile, even with her scientific emphasis, Dowd filled her text with fanciful pictures of skeletal structures with wispy lines circulating about them, suggesting anatomical understanding alone does not account for the mysteries of the body. Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly*.

³⁸⁵ She ultimately authored stages of releasing that far exceed functional imperatives, such as releasing into life after death, reflecting how her choreography shifted from pedestrian to exploring psychological and mystical themes, and altered states. Fulkerson already moved beyond pure anatomy in the late 1980s. Aat; Wendell Beavers Hougée, "A Search for Words: Providing New Symbols," in *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam*, ed. Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009), 51. I am also cognizant of the way that Fulkerson's work developed having been her student for four years from 1992 to 1996, and having danced with her company during that time.

with which students can connect if they relinquish conscious control. After initially experimenting with anatomical images,³⁸⁶ Skinner developed her poetic lexicon, insisting rationality severs cosmological unity.³⁸⁷ The images draw on plants, animals and landscapes, proposing, for example, that bone joints are sea sponges, or legs are shadows falling from a bottomless well at the solar plexus. Students purportedly reconnect with a collective unconscious of which the prompts constitute a linguistic form as the translation of a felt sense of the body into words. Teachers cultivate receptivity with a hypnotic voice and music, which is thought necessary to embody the ideas that, according to Skinner, must move the dancer rather than being consciously illustrated.³⁸⁸

In a related manner, Bainbridge-Cohen extended Todd's concept of form-follows-function beyond a conventional scientific construction of the body even though her lexicon remained anatomical. BMC constructed a body in which the analysis of structure and function extends to the organs, neuro-endocrine, glandular system, fluids, skin, and other 'systems,'³⁸⁹ all of which are presumed to contribute to postural and motional hygiene.³⁹⁰ Bainbridge-Cohen's concept of nature exhibited the unpredictability with which East Village dancers integrated

³⁸⁶ Fulkerson recalls Skinner initially used very mechanical images. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

³⁸⁷ Skinner largely occludes anatomy from her pedagogy, which betrays the force of her insistence on the problems of rational thinking. A trained Skinner Releasing Technique teacher, Popkin, informs that Skinner teachers disagree about whether knowledge of anatomy is important to understanding how the technique works. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

³⁸⁸ Skinner reveals her theory about the images through the inclusion of an article in her unpublished reader that she provides for the teacher training. In the article "The Depth of Openess: A Study of Deep Image Poetry," George Gleason, argues linguistic metaphors embody physical experience, he suggests "the movement of poetry can be conceived to be the translation of kinesthetic imagery into linguistic form." Joan Skinner, "Teacher Training Reader," (Seattle Skinner Releasing Teacher Certification Program, Undated), 25. This is why Skinner does not want her students to synthesize the images consciously, because she believes they evoke something on an unconscious level.

³⁸⁹ Like other Somatic practices influenced by Todd's lineage, Body-Mind Centering purports to lead the student through a process of differentiation and reintegration of each bodily component part. Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*.

³⁹⁰ Bainbridge-Cohen insists consciousness exists in every corporeal component and system, which must be interconnected if the practitioner wishes to access full vitality. She extends early 20th century ideas that posture embodies character by conjoining emotional affect with an alternative map of the body. *Ibid*.

affective dimensions, because she argued that organs are “primary habitats for emotions, aspirations, and memories,” which connect practitioners to “universal symbols and myths.”³⁹¹ In the throes of BMC procedures, students might burst into tears, or enter a panic state, but they also expect to discover new movement. Bainbridge-Cohen conceived of the dancer as entering “the mind” of tissues to access the body’s optimum functional and creative potential by listening to corporeality that can, however, never be fully apprehended. The pedagogy therefore urged that teachers attend to students’ verbal and non-verbal feedback, following “the mind of the room” with an intuitive attitude about what the body might offer.

To push beyond the scientific rhetoric of the previous decade, 1980s Somatics revisited its Orientalism, representing East and West in the rhetoric even if these terms were not always used in the teaching language. For example, the concept of the psyche overshadowed Whitehouse’s Orientalism in *East Village Authentic Movement*.³⁹² Yet many teachers and dancers constructed a mystical body using the idea of “energy,” which they represented as Eastern. Metaphors such as the chakras, borrowed from south Asian metaphysics, and chi, from East Asian medicine, symbolized knowledge through which to understand bodily experience exceeding Western theories of physics and biology.³⁹³ Based on the synthesis of Somatics and martial arts, dancers also developed teaching practices that emphasized bodily dimensions, which Western epistemology purportedly failed to apprehend. For example, Karczag used the Chinese terms Ying/Yang as an analogy for integrating physical properties that are configured

³⁹¹ Ibid., 30.

³⁹² Whitehouse theorized that the primitive state is where the work of unifying Occident and Orient is carried out. Whitehouse, “The Tao of the Body” Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*, chapter 4. The use of the Orient to achieve the Otherness of the psyche dissipated into the idea of pushing against convention in the East Village.

³⁹³ The importance of chi is evident in the role that the Meridian Stretches came to play for teachers such as Karczag, Kraus and Hultman. The training provided them with a way of connecting a simple stretch series with the movement energy along the meridian lines in the body, which were represented as energy circuits in traditional Chinese medicine. For Karczag the meridian stretches also connected with her use of Tai Chi. Ilchi Lee, *Meridian Exercise for Self-Healing*, 2 vols., Dahnhak, the Way to Perfect Health Series (Las Vegas, NV: Healing Society, 2003). Meanwhile Klein, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen and many other teachers refer to the Chakras in their work.

in opposition in lay scientific understanding. She proposed lightness inheres weight and visa versa because gravity entails the counter force of upward thrust, and she taught Tai Chi as a means to find stillness in movement and visa versa, thereby reframing with Eastern mysticism Paxton's 1970s fusion of physics and awareness.³⁹⁴

Through the mystical expansion of the theories of nature, East Village artists reasserted their rejection of institutions. They constructed an unwieldy body based on Whitehouse's renunciation of mid-century modern dance, and Bainbridge Cohen's frustration with the restrictions of medicine. The integrated, but unpredictable BMC body opposed what was seen as the dis-integration produced by the silos of medical care that legally and conceptually prevented Bainbridge-Cohen from instituting her insights. The new vocabulary that 1980s dancers produced still purportedly sprang from intrinsic realities, but dancers believed they were exceeding scientific understanding by embodying mystical and psychological forces of nature. Kinesthetic awareness now focused on energy coursing through the body to which dancers responded by giving in to weight and momentum. By critiquing the supposed certainty of science with which the body had been constructed through Somatics in the previous decade, they recycled exploration at a time when the regimens were being applied to set choreography.

The diversification observable in 1980s Somatics marked a new confidence as the field consolidated. Since the 1970s, Somatics had gained enough traction to sustain greater differentiation broadly defined by, on the one hand, the pursuit of technical mastery of new choreography like Brown's using Alexander and Klein techniques, and on the other hand, an unwieldy body sought in Skinner Releasing, Authentic Movement, BMC, and artists' own

³⁹⁴ Karczag combines Paxton's conceit about sensing balancing reflexes through the slowness of the form, with Alexandrian principles. She uses Alexandrian ideas about tracking gravity through the skeleton to achieve efficient structural relationships while practicing Tai Chi. My knowledge of Karczag's work is gleaned from taking class with her at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem, Holland, between 1992 and 1996, and also participating in workshops she taught in London in 2000 at Moving East.

approaches. However many dancers continued to integrate various approaches in their teaching, dancing, and choreography, and the regimens remained largely marginal to and critical of modern and classical approaches. Communities in New York and other large cities supported the development of the field with little institutional support, and classical and modern trainings were still thought to be limited in their conception of dance. Yet dancers disputed the 1970s conceit of inclusivity in modes of production, representation, and organization, as the whiteness of Somatic informed choreography became conspicuous, and cultural difference entered discourse to critique the opposition of nature and culture. However, even while Somatics began transforming in line with changing social and artistic circumstances, the idea of a natural body at the center of the training went largely unchallenged as dancers found novel vocabulary in what they believed were previously untapped intrinsic bodily capacities.

Section 3. Corporate Somatics: Recalibrating critique for commercialism.

1990s Somatic training felt the increasing corporatization of the arts, both in changes in funding and a corresponding cultural shift. Susan Foster points out that corporate patronage increasingly dominated the arts from the mid-1980s, and affected the working lives of dancers in ways that displaced experimentation with self-promotion.³⁹⁵ Exploration dramatically diminished as dance establishments fully endorsed large companies that were influenced by Somatics. To attract sponsorship, programmers promoted artists that had achieved substantial success, so Brown's, Petronio's, DV8's and Siobhan Davies' vocabularies, for example, reached brand-name status within the field. Foster laments that a resulting "emphasis on constructing a successful career... left the choreographer with little time to investigate new choreographic

³⁹⁵ Foster points out that corporate, as oppose state funding, which became the dominant source of patronage for the arts as the 20th century progressed, diminishes experimentation in a variety of ways. Foster, *Dances That Describe Themselves*, 131-39.

issues.”³⁹⁶ With fewer funds for experimentation, and therefore woefully little studio time, unknown artists used Somatic ideas by relying on dancers to take responsibility for their training and health, and offer creative resources to the artistic process. Dancers saw their roles re-conceived in-line with new management paradigms in which autonomy and responsibility were allegedly enjoyed at all levels of the workforce. Practices, developed as liberatory direct democracy and entrepreneurship only decades before, however, became new imperatives for employment for dancers and other workers. Furthermore, the art market sought unique choreographic signatures, but corporate funding fomented the homogenization of companies into ones led by an individual, restoring a hierarchy of the choreographer over the dancer, despite the changes in the organization of the artistic process.

Somatic training, which was increasingly under the jurisdiction of large educational institutions, reflected the re-conception of the dancer’s role within a corporate logic. Most university dance programs and conservatoires embraced the regimens now that they had established themselves on major concert stages. This shift provided employment for artists who were choked by the paucity of funding for small-scale projects. But education increasingly adopted a business model to compete for enrollment, so teachers were under pressure to market Somatics as valuable for, rather than critical of, the established field. They reframed the 1970s displacement of authoritarianism and the 1980s critique of universality as pedagogical resources. Yet in institutions, creative and physical autonomy restructured themselves into educational imperatives imposed upon students. Affected by the competitive culture within which Somatics reframed itself, the independent studios of late 20th century pioneers also capitalized on the success of companies associated with their approach, promoting their techniques in competition with each other, and with modern and classical trainings.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 140

The revision of Somatics also reframed diversity and ingenuity through new corporate ethics. With artists now pressurized to promote a signature, they found that they had to achieve visibility for their creative uniqueness, which some did through initiatives pursued against marginalization in the previous decades, such as the critique of performing modesty. This shift paralleled changes in large businesses, which exploited the creative potential of unique skills found in its workforce, including those that came with differences in genders, races, sexualities and other social identities.³⁹⁷ Within the restructuring of organizations, difference and creativity, that had been problematic in the standardizing logic of production lines, became a new imperative for a market thirsty for new products with which to beguile consumers. Dance training institutions followed suit by valuing Somatic regimens thought to teach creative autonomy, while students sought programs that offered choice rather than instituting regimentation. The implementation of Somatics therefore bolstered the idea that academic capitalism offers diversity, choice, and excellence. Similarly with the growth of the field, professional dancers seemingly had a breadth of choice from which to design training suited to their individual needs and desires. Yet the new corporate logic mediated what they saw as freedom and autonomy, because employment depended on offering flexibility, creativity, and self-responsibility to choreographers running pick-up companies that offered no employment security.

Training for an Established Field.

In Somatic training, corporate arts culture overshadowed the collectivism of previous decades, because the regimens became largely associated with aesthetic approaches that were

³⁹⁷ McKenzie sites 'managing diversity' as a performance model that became popular toward the end of the 20th century, and saw inclusion of cultural and social variety as contributing to the performance capability of organizations. McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, 68.

institutionalized by a single artist as either tried and tested, or critical and innovative. Somatics no longer signified experimentation now that dancers pursued preexisting images and aptitudes of the moving body. The initial impetus of rejecting training tied to an aesthetic tradition therefore disappeared. Release technique affirmed the homogenization of a dominant look by symbolizing virtuosity associated with Somatics. Such changes erased, for example, how company members, by applying Somatics to the vocabulary, had contributed to the conceptualization of Brown's lexicon beginning in the 1970s, because the choreography established itself as a new style tied to the choreographer. The logic of using set movement in classes therefore shifted from one of practicing skills that offer autonomy, to embodying a successful look.³⁹⁸

The new corporate arts culture also reframed skills cultivated in Klein and Alexander Techniques. Despite these classes being devoid of dance vocabulary, they were known through their association with large companies, and were therefore seen as serving existing aesthetics.³⁹⁹ Some of Brown dancers, for example, felt that Klein training was integral to the vocabulary they performed,⁴⁰⁰ so Somatics reconstructed itself as a compliment to established aesthetics. Even Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement linked themselves with artists that achieved visibility with idiosyncratic approaches they had cultivated in the East Village.⁴⁰¹ And the

³⁹⁸ For example, Karczag left Browns company when it began securing large theatre gigs because she felt that the framing of company in a conventional hierarchy between choreographer and dance displaced evidence of her creative contribution, exacerbated by the loss of intimacy between performer and audience. She was not prepared to sacrifice the agency she felt she had developed through 1970s Somatics. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

³⁹⁹ For example, Nelson, dancing for Petronio, Greenberg, who had danced for Cunningham, as well as Carolyn Lucas, and Popkin who danced for Brown, were all taking Klein and/or Alexander classes.

⁴⁰⁰ Popkin felt that learning to be grounded through boney connection contributed to his ability to execute vocabulary that was created by dancers like Madden and Brown herself, who were influenced by Klein training. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

⁴⁰¹ Popkin, who was associated both with East Village choreographers and danced for Trisha Brown, recalls that in 1990s New York, the various regimens were associated with particular choreographic approaches. He perceived artists such as Houston-Jones, Skura and others using Skinner as having a powerfully individual aesthetic, in which the performer themselves was very important. Yet Alexander and Klein Technique, were more associated with dancing in large companies. Ibid.

milieu, previously critical of the institutionalization of Somatics, established itself as a launch pad for uptown success.⁴⁰² A new generation therefore perceived the regimens as fulfilling the demands of working in an established field rather than a way to explore new choreographic ideas.

The field saw changes in the organizations and the artists offering training, which refigured Somatics as a handmaiden of authorized concert dance rather than a source of innovation. Brown inaugurated ongoing public training at her studio in the 1990s; and in 2006, Davies created a comparable endeavor in London. Somatics formed a significant curricular component, compounding its association with large companies. To teach their regular classes, independent artist-run organizations also increasingly employed dancers working for successful mid-scale and large companies,⁴⁰³ including current and ex-dancers for Cunningham, Brown, Bill T Jones, and Bebe Miller.⁴⁰⁴ London experienced a similar trend.⁴⁰⁵

Equally important, the companies associated with Somatics began to resemble modern and ballet companies at an organizational level, which affected the training procedures. For example, Brown established her repertory by severing the vocabulary from the dancers on which it was initially made. Successive generations of her company taught the choreography

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ I am referring to Movement Research in New York and Independent Dance in London.

⁴⁰⁴ It is notable in Movement Research that teachers of daily technique class were generally dancers with companies, or had danced for companies, and those teaching workshops were more likely to be independent artists not working on concert stages with conventional approaches to composition. I have observed this by looking at the training schedule throughout the 1990s. So the schedule divides into daily “classes”, which were often taught by people like Nelson, Bebe Miller, Hultman, and other dancers who had worked or were working in companies, and periodic workshops, focusing on choreography or techniques that exceeded a more conventional training model like Skinner Releasing. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal."

⁴⁰⁵ Teachers giving daily technique class through Independent Dance in the 1990s were generally those dancing for Siobahn Davis or Rosemary Butcher such as Gill Clarke, or those with small companies making conventional work informed by Somatics such as Fin Walker, and Gregory Nash. I know this from taking those classes and receiving their information during the the 1990s.

and technique classes, and like their students, brought with them a different impetus for pursuing Somatics than had drawn dancers in the previous decades. The idea that accessing individual bodily truths is integral to the pedagogy became generic in the branding of Brown's studio and of Somatics more generally. But extended periods of sensory focus diminished in classes that now focused on the mastery of set material. Teachers used anatomical terms to explain the movement, much like Schick had pioneered in the 1980s. But without the time to have an individual experience of how a joint moves, for example, the body constructed itself through the anatomical language as equivalent rather than unique: 'Everyone can do this movement this way because we all share a common anatomy.' Somatics therefore modulated itself to cultivate a look of dancing for the established field, rather than promoting individual dance practices.

Even where dancers did sustain a sense of individuality within a corporate arts culture, such autonomy reframed itself as a means to cultivate excellence as determined by the establishment. Despite the disappearance of reflective time from set classes, some dancers pursued training, like Klein's and Alexander's, which they believed gave them access to a physicality independent of aesthetics by focusing on movement principles.⁴⁰⁶ Yet 1990s Somatics reconfigured this separation of training and choreography as a means for dancers to attune their unique bodies to the demands of well-established vocabulary, rather than the logic a decade earlier when dancers had sought strategies to embody new vocabulary.⁴⁰⁷ Now dancers

⁴⁰⁶ Popkin's experience while he was dancing for Terry Creach, and auditioning and apprenticing for Trisha Brown, exemplifies this use of Somatics. He felt Klein training "cleaned out" his body. Furthermore, when he was dancing for Brown he didn't want to take a class in which he was learning material, he wanted to warm up in a way that would last for 6 hours. He suggests that Klein's work warmed up his bones. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

⁴⁰⁷ Alongside daily classes, Brown's studio hosted special workshops taught by educators focused on movement principles, such as Klein and Karczag. The positioning of these workshops as marginal to daily class frames them as complimentary to the more conventional skills associated with "technique class". (I have attended such workshops, and followed them on Brown's studio program over the last 12 years.)

sought autonomy not to divest their dancing of outdated habits and embody novel styles, but to excel in the execution of existing work. For Brown's company, this even extended to dancers lining up their own training background with the idiosyncratic nature of roles that were a legacy of the 1970s and 1980s dancers.⁴⁰⁸ Practitioners still felt they were in charge of their bodies by pursuing training preferences, which by the 21st century extended to ballet for Brown's company.⁴⁰⁹

The emphasis on excellence in fulfilling established vocabulary dovetailed with a reengagement of classicism as concern about resisting aesthetic imposition diminished. Choreographers like Brown and Petronio integrated classical ideals,⁴¹⁰ and employed ballet-trained dancers, while pedagogy now concerned itself with producing the best, most efficient, and self-sustaining dancers who needed to master extension, elevation, and balance with precision and clarity of line.⁴¹¹ Dancers therefore reframed ballet's lexicon rather than extrapolate principles from it as they had in previous decades. Through the application of Feldenkrais and Alexander Technique, ballet reconstructed itself as a practice in which autonomy could be sustained. For example, Luc Venier and Rebecca Netti Fiol applied Alexander Technique to classical training, after 'discovering' that "ballet... [is] not divorced from the natural form and function of the self."⁴¹² In reconstructed ballet, students focused on sensations they attributed to the relationship of physical forces to anatomical structure, so

⁴⁰⁸ Popkin remembers that roles created by dancers such as Karczag and Randy Warshaw entailed different demands. He felt that he brought distinct skills to the table than company members with extensive classical training, and that each dancers skills were put to use in the assigning of roles in repertory. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

⁴⁰⁹ When he was in Brown's company from 2000 to 2003, the company pursued their own training preferences, some of which were Somatic-based and others were classical or yoga. Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ See for example, Daly, *Critical Gestures*, 190.

⁴¹¹ Popkin's view of Brown's company before he joined highlights the change that took place. When he first saw them in 1990, he never imagined he would be able to join because the dancers had the line and extension of classical training. When he did join the company, he understood his Somatic training as an alternative to, rather than critique of the classical training of his colleagues. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

⁴¹² Netti-Fiol, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link*, xiii.

Somatics, which had historically been thought alien to the external focus demanded by aesthetic ideals, was no longer seen as oppositional to the classical vocabulary. Ballet therefore reasserted itself as a ubiquitous foundation and self-evident necessity for training, and aesthetic hierarchies were no longer seen as antithetical to a dancer's agency.

Selling Somatics.

Now that they were associated with large companies and educational institutions, the distinct regimens found themselves forced to compete with each other, which dramatically altered the field. Rather than working as allies in the development of ideas as they had in the 1970s, many proponents marketed their approaches to a limited number of influential choreographers, potential students, and training institutions. A protectionist culture emerged because the differences between techniques became important selling points. In the early 1990s, Skinner and Klein established teacher certification programs, insisting that their ideas were being watered down in their generic use.⁴¹³ Bainbridge-Cohen had been certifying teachers since her first generation of committed students in the early 1970s,⁴¹⁴ but she locked down her technique in the 1990s by publishing *Sensing Feeling and Action*.⁴¹⁵ With her business and domestic partner Barbara Mahler, Klein also copyrighted her technique. The spirit of investigating gave way to the crystallization of pedagogy, as proponents disagreed about how to access corporeal authenticity.

Yet, as Bainbridge-Cohen's text powerfully illustrates, practitioners tried to retain their original intent despite the changes that had occurred since the 1970s. *Sensing Feeling and Action* reframes BMC's collaborative pedagogy as marketable, yet still affirms the self-reflexive

⁴¹³ Skinner officially began her teacher training in 1991, although Skura recalls that some people went through a training before then. Skura Facebook message to the author November 29th 2013. Klein's training began at least as early as 1994 when Greenberg joined. Greenberg, email to author September 24th 2013.

⁴¹⁴ Goren, "In Discussion with the Author."

⁴¹⁵ Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*.

critique of aesthetics ideals at the heart of the practice. The workbook of exercises maps the body based on practitioners' common observations, all the while insisting that readers must trust their own experiences, because new discoveries about unstable, unknowable bodily nature are always possible.⁴¹⁶ Bainbridge-Cohen therefore delineated BMC exploratory pedagogy, even while she deferred to the absolute authority of bodily knowledge. Similarly, in a collection of essays about Authentic Movement, Whitehouse refers to limitations in her understanding, which she credits to the growth of the practice, and flux of the psyche.⁴¹⁷ Despite renouncing their jurisdiction however, both women fixed their ideas with greater sophistication by publishing, which along with certification programs, intensified the competition between the approaches, and also resulted in splintering within a regimen as students disagreed with their pioneer-teachers.⁴¹⁸ These shifts in the regimens parallel the resentment that Novack identified in 1980s CI when dancers broke with anti-hierarchical ethics by establishing reputations as teachers, although the CI community refused to establish teacher certification.⁴¹⁹

Klein and Karczag engaged in a particularly visible struggle because of the association of both women, and the regimens they taught, with Brown's company. Klein, promoting her technique, and Karczag, combining various approaches, disagreed publically about how anatomy functions, and therefore how to achieve motile efficiency.⁴²⁰ Ideological differences fueled the disagreement because Klein seems to use voluntarily control by actively placing and

⁴¹⁶ The emphasis upon process is compounded by the inclusion of exchanges by letter Bainbridge-Cohen has had with students. Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Whitehouse, *Authentic Movement*.

⁴¹⁸ In 1999, shortly after Greenberg was certified, his teaching privileges were revoked because he disagreed with the Klein and Mahler (Greenberg e-mail to author September 24th 2013. Similarly Mark Taylor, who trained in BMC, disagreed with Bainbridge-Cohen and started his own approach. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author." More recently, Skura has also felt the need to establish her own approach independently from Skinner. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁴¹⁹ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 220-21.

⁴²⁰ Exchanges in *MRPJ* between Karczag and Klein argued over the authority of principles associated with Alexander and Klein techniques respectively. In a workshop that I took with in London in 2000, Klein gave participants the articles. (Workshop at Greenwich Dance Agency, London, September, 2000)

stretching the body, while inhibition is crucial in Alexander's work.⁴²¹ The idea that Brown's dancers were split between the two methods achieved mythic status in the transnational Somatic community.⁴²² Such distinctions proliferated when company dancers pursued teacher trainings because they used the ideas and the terminology they were learning in classes they taught, which contributed to the association of a choreographic style with a particular approach. For example, Brown's dancers Hultman and Shelley Senter, certificated as Alexander teachers,⁴²³ while Carolyn Lucas and Madden began Klein's teacher training along with Nelson, ex-Cunningham dancer Neil Greenberg, and Ralph Lemon's company dancer Wally Cardona.⁴²⁴ Because teachers focused in the classes they taught on the technique in which they were trained, the integration of diverse information diminished. Disagreement also arose over the sources of ideas, because some pioneers argued that teachers had to be certified in a technique to use its language and exercises.⁴²⁵

Competition between the proponents of the various regimens also dovetailed with and fed upon the institutional embrace of Somatics. Independent ventures initially benefited from the idealization on the concert stage of aptitudes associated with Somatics, because interest in the regimens grew. But once the training established itself in educational institutions, and ventures such as Brown's Studio grew in scale, smaller endeavors struggled to survive. The

⁴²¹ Through ideas such as cycling the pelvis over the hips in the roll down, dancers feel they experience action they cannot instruct by allowing gravity to work through their structure. But the insistence upon unconscious capacity is not exhibited in Klein to the same degree as in Alexander and the other Somatic regimens because none of the exercises invite a receptive, contemplative relationship to the body.

⁴²² I heard about this in late 1990s London from Fin Walker, a choreographer and dancer who was a prominent figure in the development of British Somatics. The discussion in London happened at a time when significant numbers of dancers were being exposed to Klein technique for the first time. Gill Clarke, another British dancer and choreographer who was a prominent figure in the development of Somatics, also openly discussed the merits and pitfalls of Klein compared with Alexander Technique.

⁴²³ Ekman, "Interview with Author."

⁴²⁴ Greenberg, email to author, September 24th, 2013.

⁴²⁵ Madden recalls that Klein asked her to discourage her colleagues from using ideas from Klein Technique in their teaching, a request with which Madden was not comfortable. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

Klein studio relied much more on teaching workshops in larger organizations, while the presence in the field of Fulkerson's and De Groot's approaches, not based in the United States and with no teacher certification, diminished significantly. Summers' Kinetic Awareness, and Authentic Movement also lost traction because they were not so powerfully associated with a large company.

Some regimens nevertheless achieved widespread institutionalization as universities and conservatories implemented the approaches to strengthen their training and education. Teachers fought to establish the value of Somatics, arguing for the unique contribution it makes to training dancers and choreographers. For example, permanent and visiting faculty insisted that, as well as cultivating a healthy dancer, Somatics trains the student's body and mind by integrating creativity and training, and imparting anatomical information. With the aim of producing the most interesting choreographers and versatile performers, higher education employed dancers that had established a reputation in large companies that were informed by Somatics,⁴²⁶ or were known for iconoclastic choreography.⁴²⁷ With its teacher certification, Skinner Releasing also provided a kind of legitimacy for the academy or conservatory not available through other approaches.⁴²⁸ Educational institutions affirmed that they offered choice and training excellence with the diverse teaching methods developed in the Somatic field.

⁴²⁶ Some examples include, Jeremy Nelson, who is now teaching at a conservatory in Denmark, and began teaching at P.A.R.T.S. in the 1990s along with other New York dancers such as Shelly Senter. Jeremy Nelson email to author, February 9th, 2014. Senter has taught at institutions in numerous different contexts. Shelly Senter, interview by Doran George, February 15th, 2014. Gill Clarke, who danced for Siobahn Davis, began teaching her Alexander influenced approach at Trinity Laban in the same decade. I know this information from personal contact with all the artists mentioned over at least a 15 year period.

⁴²⁷ Monson, Houston-Jones, Sarah Skaggs, Neil Greenberg, Terre O'Conner, and Kirstie Simpson began working as adjuncts, many of them eventually occupying tenured positions at American universities.

⁴²⁸ Kirsty Alexander began teaching Skinner Releasing Middlessex University in the U.K. in the 1990s, from there she moved to the Laban Center and finally the London School of Contemporary Dance. Alexander danced for Siobahn Davis and Rosemary Butcher. Arts Council of England, "Kirstie Alexander London Dance.Com," <http://londondance.com/articles/features/skinner-releasing-technique-in-britain/>.

Yet the corporate education culture that emerged toward the end of the 21st century also helped to foreclose the experimental ethics with which dancers had set out only decades before. Institutions tended to bifurcate the approaches into ones that equip dancers with anatomical information, improving their execution of vocabulary and cultivating health, and those that engender creativity by training students to invent movement, based on experiential knowledge of the body. For example, a Dutch state conservatory for the arts, which was linked the institutionalized Somatics since the 1970s, set out with an experimental ethos for all dancers that was replaced in the 1990s with the idea that the regimens are better for training choreographers. Yet further down the road, they reframed Somatics again as contributing solely to dancers' health and self-sufficiency as a compliment to traditional training.⁴²⁹ The institutionalization of Somatics also curtailed the role that had been played by the independent transnational network. As institutions competed for a good global reputation, faculty came under pressure to bring attention with successful choreography and teaching excellence.⁴³⁰ All in all the 1990s saw the disappearance of collectivism through the reframing of Somatic pedagogy as a marketable product within and beyond institutions.

Release Technique: Imitation Anxiety.

⁴²⁹ I talk more how Somatics changed in the Netherland in chapter 2. Documents that rationalize its use in education shift from framing the training for indeterminate outcomes to contributing to the health of the dancer. In the early 21st century dancers focused on Somatics at Artez in Arnhem were called dance-makers rather than performers, and then later, the separation was eradicated, and Somatics was configured as contributing to health. Opleiding Theatredance/EDDC, "Zelfevaluatie rapport in Het Kater Van Visitatie Dans (Self Evaluation Report for Dance)," (Arnhem: Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Arnhem (Arnhem State Conservatory for the Arts), 2000). HBO-Raad Besteladministratie, "Eindrapport Van De Evaluatiecommissie Dansopleiding (End Report of the Evaluation Committee for Dance Training," ('s-Gravenhage 1994). Voorlichtingsdienst HBO-Raad, "Report of the Visitation Committee Professional Dance Education in the Netherlands " (CC-Gravenhage: Den Haag: Voorlichtingsdienst HBO-Raad, 1991). Assessment Agency for Higher Education, "Report of the Limited Programme Assessment " (Utrecht Artez Institute for the Arts, 2012).

⁴³⁰ My assessment of changes in higher education are based on a growing body of writing about 'academic capitalism.' Bullard, "Academic Capitalism."

As increasingly definitive Somatic pedagogies were marketed in contemporary dance, some veterans in the field feared the practices in which they had invested so much labor and belief were losing their critical edge. To the degree that release technique signified a recognizable form, it recapitulated modern dance's imposition of protocols of beauty, which practitioners had initially turned to the regimens in order to resist. A discourse emerged in which imitation was contrasted with the rigorous and authentic embodiment of Somatics. The quote about faking release, which opened this chapter, exemplifies how dancers opposed imitation to reaffirm the natural basis of Somatics, and ratify its independence from commercial and institutional concerns. Some pioneers of late 20th century regimens also reassured dancers by accentuating distinctions between their approaches and release technique. The field therefore responded to the impact of corporate culture by reiterating that Somatics accesses natural creative freedom, even though this happened through the competitive marketing of training products.

Skinner and Klein affirmed their independence from release technique by labeling it a style like ballet, Graham, and Cunningham trainings, and reasserted that dancers connect with intrinsic bodily capacity in their work rather than train to move in a particular way.⁴³¹ The women publically associated themselves with respected artists whose practices could not be reduced to release technique,⁴³² and they asserted the radical nature of their ideas, distinguishing

⁴³¹ Klein argued that her students achieve a means by which to work in any existing dance styles while sustaining autonomy through their physiological understanding. She insisted that all other training such as Graham, Cunningham and ballet are actually styles because they were developed for performance. She defined her approach as addressing the how of dance not the what. Skinner critiqued modern dance and ballet using different language than Klein and some different principles, but in essence she also distinguished herself from the style of other techniques and argued that her approach is applicable to any dance form. Klein, "Klein Technique Application."

⁴³² The success that Brown achieved on the concert stage, and the related prevalence of "release technique" had tarnished dancers' confidence in the critical potential of Somatics. Artists who participated in the experiments of the 1970s along with a new avant-garde generation grew suspicious of the proliferation of choreographic style associated with release technique. I return to this issue in both of the other chapters.

themselves from generic Somatic training.⁴³³ Klein enjoyed association with Petronio and Brown,⁴³⁴ along with whom she publically disavowed release.⁴³⁵ Skinner referenced Houston-Jones', Meier's, and Monson's use of her approach to generate jarring, vigorous movement that contrasted with release's letting and flowing.⁴³⁶ She emphasized the contrast between the unanticipated outcomes of her ongoing "releasing" process, with the look associated with "release."⁴³⁷

Klein's 1990s rhetoric contrasted sharply with the other approaches in a way that assured dancers of their opposition to imitation, even while they were dancing set vocabulary that had integrated modern and classical aesthetics. By configuring the body and mind as distinct and to be connected in her technique along with other distinct dimensions of self, Klein refuted that natural propensities are lost with conscious control. In fact, she insisted that letting go or "releasing" into sensation, impedes the connection through the bone that is necessary for

⁴³³ The Release Technique from which people distinguished themselves was rarely articulated in concrete terms. The clearest examples are assertions by Skinner and Klein, and also by Brown and Forti in the 1999 MRPJ from which the quote opening this chapter is taken. However discomfort with the aptitudes of sequencing and flow that became associated with release was evident in the early 1980s when Houston Jones and Stark Smith began to reject the canonized aesthetics of CI, which I talk about in chapter 3.

⁴³⁴ Already in 1993 Brown's company had officially co-taught with the Klein school through Movement Research. The regular morning dance classes organized by Movement Research included Brown repertory preceded by Klein bodywork in April 1993, sourced from *MRPJ* # 6. Brown and Stephen Petronio continued to collaborate with the Klein school in public workshops throughout the 1990s.

⁴³⁵ Brown and Klein separately repudiated the term in two 1999 "release" focused issues of *MRPJ*. In the Klein states clearly that her technique is distinct from release technique Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal." Winter/Spring 1999:9, while in the second issue the caption for a photograph of Brown is a quote in which she says "I don't have any idea what release is, my body moves how I want it to move." *ibid.* Fall/Winter 1999:17.

⁴³⁶ Skinner has pointed out in interviews that dancers such as Houston-Jones and Meier use her work to throw themselves against walls and the floor. Elizabeth; Joan Skinner Dempster, "Releasing Aesthetic with Joan Skinner," *Writings on Dance* 14 (1996).

⁴³⁷ Skinner made the distinction between release technique and her 'releasing' technique in several places a tendency that her students have picked up, for example Gaby Agis and Joe Moran emphasize the difference in their writing for a British readership, Gaby; Joe Moran Agis, "In Its Purest Form," *Animated: Making Dance Matter* Winter 2002 (2002): 21. and Skinner emphasizes the distinction for Australian readers. Dempster, "Releasing Aesthetic with Joan Skinner."

continuing human evolution.⁴³⁸ Like Todd, Klein privileged efficient weight transference through the skeleton, but argued that the facility is achieved with stretching and placement rather than internal sensing, renouncing the concept of bodily-consciousness with which Somatics had displaced modern and classical training. Equally, by maintaining that the difference between audience and performer must also be sustained, she endorsed spectacle as oppose to the participation that was important in 1970s concerts, as is analyzed in chapter 3.⁴³⁹ Her lack of hostility toward classical and modern aesthetics appealed to dancers performing choreography such as Petronio's, which clearly depended on a conventional skill set. Further, at a time when audiences had tired of what they saw as self-indulgent dances based on the performer's experience, Klein ratified the cosmological profundity of conventional audience performer relations. Nevertheless, by including no activity in her classes that would normally be performed on a stage, she still guaranteed her independence from aesthetics. Dancers believed they were developing ease with which to achieve mastery in the execution of vocabulary, and they often turned to her technique for capacity, safety, and artistry with greater longevity through minimizing injury⁴⁴⁰.

BMC and Authentic Movement also convinced dancers that they were not emulating a style, because the pioneers distinguished their aims from those of modern dance, affirming that

⁴³⁸ Klein argues binding rather than release defines the optimum relationship to body, community, and gravity, which is achieved through proper articulation at the points of connection be they boney, interpersonal or cosmic, including the contact between the body and the earth through gravity. Healing depends on connection, through binding within and without the body as the practitioner learns to transcend social atomization and disconnection from the self. Susan Klein, "A Movement Technique — a Healing Technique," ed. Klein School (60 Beach Stree, 4a, New York, NY 10013: Klein School., 1998).

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Many dancers turned to Klein Technique when they had punishing performance schedules or were fighting injury. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)." Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

they were uninterested in the look of movement.⁴⁴¹ Bainbridge-Cohen cited occupational therapy as her source, and recounted turning to dance when the medical profession began limiting her investigations. Having training herself in Hawkins' approach, she claimed dancers brought an open-ended creativity to bodily inquiry.⁴⁴² Bainbridge-Cohen's concept of body exceeded the generic focus on skeletal and muscular connections by instructing students to enter the mind of organs or other body systems. After locating viscera with prolonged hands-on, they imagined themselves breathing and hissing into the organ from which movement ultimately emanated throughout the whole body.⁴⁴³ Many artists turned to BMC in the 1990s to ameliorate injury, and their recovery indicated that the approach could offer knowledge from beyond the new dilemmas raised by the corporatization of the arts.⁴⁴⁴ Much like other Somatic approaches, dancers cultivated ease in BMC classes. But in metaphors for sensation and movement similar to Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement, they felt that the organs and other body systems released energy that pulsed with its own vibration, fueling idiosyncratic vocabulary and rejuvenating exploratory procedures. Like Skinner's concept of releasing, BMC invested the body with natural flux, promising unforeseen dancing rather than the reproduction of established styles.

As Somatics fortified the ways in which it was distinct from release technique, it replaced the critique of the establishment with a conceit of superiority to compete with modern and classical training. Dancers idealized ease as an experience afforded by the regimens, and

⁴⁴¹ 410. Bainbridge-Cohen reports having trained with Hawkins' whose perspective about dance was one of radical exploration according to Pauline De Groot who danced with his company in the late 1950s. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁴⁴¹ Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*.

⁴⁴⁴ Monson, Holmes, and dancer Mark Taylor who, along with Holmes, eventually trained in BMC all report first turning to the approach due to injury. All three artists eventually integrated BMC into their practice. Jennifer Monson, interview by Doran George, April 25th, 2014., Holmes, "(Improviser and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author.", Mark Taylor, email to author,

blamed injury on the unnecessary use of force. Unlike classical and modern training methods, as well as faking release, Somatics stood firm that dancers must cultivate aptitudes to underpin the execution of movement rather than simply copy a form.⁴⁴⁵ Alexander and Klein techniques, asserted rigor with the absence of any dancing in their classes, and the emphasis on an individual process of discovery,⁴⁴⁶ while Skinner Releasing and BMC prioritized depth of process. To fight for supremacy as a training approach, Somatics reframed the rhetoric about tapping into intrinsic bodily capacity now that the value of exploration had diminished in the field of contemporary dance.

Additionally, Somatics laid claim to its preeminence by reconstructing bodily nature as a source of moral superiority by equating artistic integrity with the practice of the regimens. Dancers found support for this belief in Alexander's, Todd's, and, Klein's theories that postural efficiency enhances intellectual, emotional and spiritual evolution. Furthermore, Todd, Klein and Bainbridge-Cohen naturalized a relationship between anatomical capacity and other dimensions of the self by arguing that efficiency and coordination reverberate on all levels of

⁴⁴⁵ Klein exercises tend to be slow, careful, sustained, minimal actions designed to isolate and move specific body parts and nurture weighted connection through the bones. A "connected" body never loses its sense of weight transferring into the floor. Klein argues that when weighted connection is sustained in challenging choreography, dancers have greater fullness, ease, efficiency and in fact beauty of motion. Susan Klein, "Dancing from the Spirit," *Movement Research Performance Journal* 13, no. Fall (1996).

⁴⁴⁶ Klein classes accrued the reputation of working with physical rigor through the notoriety of the prolonged roll-down and similar exercises that sustain stretching while focusing on functional connection. Alexander and BMC exercises also seemed not to be related to aesthetics. Klein classes typically took place in a small studio where all the attendants could not stand and swing their arms in a full circle at the same time. They placed themselves evenly in standing or sitting or lying exercises, configuring their work as equivalent, while following the teacher's simple instruction. Ekman's Alexander classes also took place in a small studio, and many dancers took individual lessons which might involve lying on a massage table or sitting in a chair. Like Anatomical Releasing, Klein, Alexander and BMC, students' questions are invited with the conceit that they are interrogating their body, and that new information can be discovered. For example, in a 2011 class with Barbara Mahler, who developed the work with Klein in the 1980s and 1990s, a student asked about pain they were experiencing in their sitz-bones during an exercise. Mahler responded that she had recently discovered a new way working with the sitz-bones, which suggested that students and teacher are engaged in an interrogative process. In Skinner, Alexander and Klein, exercises are rarely demonstrated, with the conceit that students must discover their own embodiment of the work.

being, and depend on using bodily components for what they are intended.⁴⁴⁷ Klein technique and BMC equated physical depth and superficiality in bodily tissues with a psychological corollary of these terms.⁴⁴⁸ Klein held that boney connection engenders a ‘knowing state’ which is the highest goal of art,⁴⁴⁹ while Bainbridge-Cohen’s ‘state of knowing’ depended on the ‘centering’ of awareness with action.⁴⁵⁰ Dancers believed that working with superficial muscle results in injury, and indicates lack of personal and artistic integrity; the modalities in ‘fake’ release, modern, and ballet trainings, thus purportedly resulted in arrested development.⁴⁵¹

The mysticism with which some educators reconstructed anatomy in the previous decade, also contributed to the superiority that practitioners claimed for Somatics. Skinner and Klein, for example, recycled the idea that the likelihood of being injured increases when capacity is lost due to limitations imposed by viewing the body within Western epistemology.⁴⁵² Their techniques asserted supremacy by arguing that they benefited from the receptivity to nature

⁴⁴⁷ Klein argues energy is accessed by connecting differentiated bodily tissues to transfer weight effectively through the pelvis into the legs and feet. A "knowing state" emerges through connection with the earth, paralleling Alexander and Todd's insistence that consciousness is coeval with upright posture, and like connection, is not only within the body and between the body and the earth, but also between the cosmos as a whole. In a similar way to BMC the component parts of the body accrue psychological value. Klein Technique therefore claims to achieve spiritual work of the highest order, exhibiting a kind of morality that it shares with the other Somatic practices. Klein, "Dancing from the Spirit."

⁴⁴⁸ Like Klein, Bainbridge-Cohen references the Laban/Bartenieff lineage as an influence, which may explain similarities such as use of the term “knowing” and the aim of unity between a distance mind and body through restoring a “natural” relationship between them. Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action*, 1-4.

⁴⁴⁹ Klein, "Dancing from the Spirit."

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁵¹ As a young dancer, Popkin, for example, felt that by working with psychophysical dimension through Somatics, his development would accelerate relative to dancers with longer training histories in classical and modern regimens. He did not view Somatics as way to displace an established background, but rather as an approach through which he could compete with dancers who had longer training histories. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

⁴⁵² Klein uses “non-Western” terms in combination with science, for example the “base chakra” from Indian metaphysics refers to the importance of the coccyx, and “Qi” from Chinese medicine to explain the body’s energetic dimension that she argues are similar to spirit in its relationship to flesh. Klein, "Dancing from the Spirit." Skinner attributes to non-Western people facilities that have been lost through Western modern culture but can be restored through her training. In her reader for the teacher training she includes an article by George Leonard called “What the Senses Say” in which he argues that an Aristotelian configuration of the senses dominates modern rational society, and has robbed humans of sensing abilities that “primitive hunting and gathering [peoples] possess.” Skinner, "Teacher Training Reader," 43.

drawn from “Eastern” cultures.⁴⁵³ Furthermore, also recapitulating the progressive era valuing of the primitive mind, Skinner insisted that optimum functioning depends upon achieving harmony with subconscious cosmic rhythms. Reconstructing Alexander’s ideas, she characterized the West as castigating and attempting to control, grasp or contain nature, thereby impeding the potential for cosmic unity.⁴⁵⁴ Like Gelb, by suggesting an “animal-self” is restored in her training, Skinner reversed the negative values Alexander associated with the primitive, thereby locking non-Western cultures and bodies into antiquity by attributing to them primal qualities that are lost when a society advances. Nevertheless, supported by such ideas, dancers affirmed that they were doing emotional and spiritual work,⁴⁵⁵ guaranteeing the profundity of Somatics in contrast with training the body in order to find employment.⁴⁵⁶

In spite of the social stratification that Somatics sustained, black, other non-white artists, and dancers with sexual identities that seemed to contravene aim of bodily purity, appropriated the regimens away from their exclusionary roots.⁴⁵⁷ Many artists refused to take the rhetoric of

⁴⁵³ Skinner inherited progressive education methods through the influence of Alexander Technique and *The Thinking Body*, as well as her graduate students Palludan and Fulkerson, who worked with Halprin. It is unlikely Klein had not come across associated ideas given the similarities in her theory and the fact she was dancing in New York in the 1960s.

⁴⁵³ Skinner’s texts for her certification program brings together ideas that represent her theory of a cosmology, including linguistic theory, Zen Buddhism, new science, and representations of the body that are radical alternatives to conventional biology. Several authors she draws on argue that Western rational body-mind dualism originated in the significance of the body as the ‘fall’ in Christianity. Western constructions of the body are understood to sever the relationship between corporeality and the cosmos. "Teacher Training Reader."

⁴⁵³ Skinner did not write about her form because she insisted it is hard to describe the process of image-work, which contributed to the aura of mysticism surrounding the work. Skura, "Releasing Dance." Klein wrote elaborate ideas about the multiple ramifications of connection, see for example, Klein, "Dancing from the Spirit." And Eva Karczag talks about how the integration of Tai Chi into contemporary dance practice was fueled by an interest in Eastern Mysticism. Karczag, email to author, June 27th 2013.

⁴⁵⁴ Foster articulates a “body for hire” in late 20th century training that constructs itself for employment, it is against this body that I suggest Somatic practitioners asserted their exceptionalism, Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 253.

⁴⁵⁷ In the 1990s, for example, non-white artists such as Bebe Miller taught regularly at movement research, David Rousseve and his dancers trained at the Klein studio, and David Zambrano developed flying low technique which became very popular in the East Village. Julie Tolentino (dancer and artist) in discussion with the author, April 7th, 2014.

different regimens as credo, extracting the value they found, while discarding other information. Meier exhibited this strategy, for example, by continuing to use of Skinner Releasing despite identifying its limits. Besides, in her rhetoric Skinner continued to affirm the biological and mechanical foundations for the ways that her approach exceeded more familiar training procedures, which provided artists with more rational justifications if they were put off by the mysticism or the cultural insensitivity.⁴⁵⁸ For example, to explain support achieved with the images but not available to conscious instruction, Skinner argued tensegrity and hydrostatic pressure contribute to upright posture through connective tissue and high levels of water, but cannot be consciously directed.⁴⁵⁹ Again, by drawing a connection between the energetic make-up and rhythm of body and the universe as a whole, Skinner explained how her images relate to the cosmos by using metaphors from new physics. She references a text in which, when seen through an electron microscope, the body actually appears as ‘universal natural forms’ such as a seascape.⁴⁶⁰ In addition to the appropriation of Somatics, Movement Research, the independent training organization started in the East Village, also helped to position Somatics as training that served the political aims of diversity by programming the regimens alongside non-Western

⁴⁵⁸ Some Skinner exercises focus explicitly on movement principles such as “Partner-graphics” in which two or more dancers give tactile feedback. For example, tracing a circle around their partners upper torso to suggest an upward direction in the back and a downward direction in the front, while the partner receiving squats or balances on one leg called “tipping.” They practice carriage of the torso while moving. My knowledge of partner-graphics comes from 18 years of taking Skinner classes, for example, with Skura at EDDC in 1992, Agis in London at Morley College from 1996-2004, Meier in New York at various independent studios and in London at Chisenhale Dance Space, and with Popkin at UCLA from 2009-2013. The class modality and exercises are consistent due to the teacher training program.

⁴⁵⁹ These ideas are articulated in a chapter called “Connective Tissue” that Skinner includes in her teacher training reader from *Job’s Body*. Deane Juhan, *Job’s Body: A Handbook for Bodywork* (Barrytown, N.Y. New York, N.Y.: Station Hill Press; Distributed by Talman Co., 1987).

⁴⁶⁰ In Skinner’s texts for teachers, George Leonard’s “The Silent Pulse: Flesh, Spirit and Emptiness” configures the body as an energetic landscape through recourse to subatomic physics, which Leonard breaks down into ‘tendencies.’ He also describes the body’s appearance through an electron microscope to critiques biological images of corporeality: “Auditory cells... are like sea anemones... boulders are calcium crystals that move when the head moves; sensing...movement.” Skinner, “Teacher Training Reader,” 29.

training.⁴⁶¹ Somatics remained by far the dominant approach, but all these changes still provided some reassurance for a field that had become conspicuous for its exclusivity in the 1980s, not least through the choreographic interventions of African American and queer artists, which I analyze in chapter 3.

By discerning what they took from Somatics, dancers reassured themselves that they were not faking release, and that they had an edge over those following more traditional training. For example, at a time when artistic and physical integrity seemed to be in short supply because of the potential to fake release, dancers fed their nostalgia for a time before corporate Somatics by taking classes with veterans in the field who signified the uncompromising experimentation of earlier decades. With an explorative pedagogy connected to their improvisational practices, artists such as Paxton, Karczag, Forti, Lepkoff, Nelson, and Stark-Smith supplied a noticeable alternative to Somatic efficiency and proficiency. Their artistic histories and reputations as performers, analyzed in chapter 3, bolstered the sense that their classes granted a unique take on the body, affirming the potency of Somatics. And again, when dancers taught the 1970s and 1980s repertory, which was originally choreographed on them, they endowed students with the feeling of accessing the source of vocabulary that had now achieved brand status, like Brown's, and also Forti's by the 21st century. Karczag, Kraus, Schick, and Madden, as well as Forti herself, taught in institutional and other settings, bringing their original take on the choreography, and therefore rejuvenating its artistic value.⁴⁶² Finally, certain practitioners gained notoriety for being able to arouse the body's intrinsic capacities in one-to-one hands in

⁴⁶¹ For example, Butoh artists Aiko and Koma taught regularly through Movement Research, and the program also featured the Urban Bush Women, and African dance taught by Paul Kengmo. But the majority of classes were Somatic-based training. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal."

⁴⁶² Karczag recounted that when she taught 21st century Dutch students the 1980s work by Brown *Set and Reset* for which she was original cast, she focused on aptitudes that had been important to her as a dancer. Yet Vicky Shick, another original cast member, came to teach the set movement because it was not Karczag's strength. Eva Karczag, email to author, 27th May, 2014.

sessions. Dancers accrued “good hands” to Klein, Karczag, Bainbridge-Cohen, Ekman, and the BMC teacher Beth Goren. Pursuing individual sessions with these teachers, dancers contrasted the depth and integrity of their work with the body to the superficiality of copying the forms called release technique.

Benefiting from the diversity of approaches in the field at the end of the 20th century, dancers sought both the creative skills to contribute to choreography, and the dexterity, sustainability and self-responsibility necessary for employment in a company. Yet the regimens no longer represented a break from modern dance, or even the critique of 1970s aesthetics, but instead guaranteed the skills necessary for the job market. To the degree that Somatics achieved significance either for its role in dancers’ health and sustainability, or as engendering creativity, the belief that the regimens furnished contemporary dance with a new comprehensive training all but died. Most dancers and educators came to see Somatics as a compliment to other training.⁴⁶³ Despite such dramatic change, and even though the regimens had become increasingly distinct and competitive, a natural body still asserted itself as central to the training. Dancers believed they were accessing the same functional imperatives in distinct ways in the various regimens, for different purposes. They saw themselves as accessing essential bodily truths by engaging kinesthetic awareness differently in distinct techniques. The tropes, language, and conception of sensation, all pointed to common intrinsic bodily principles.

Conclusion.

With the enduring belief that Somatics accessed the body’s authentic inherent nature, dancers affirmed that the corporeal material at the center of their art form was pre-cultural and

⁴⁶³ My experience was that even in the 2000’s many London dancers still perceived Somatics as strange. Dancing alongside colleagues who had trained at London School of Contemporary Dance and the The Laban Center, which both train their students Graham, Cunningham and Limón techniques, they expressed dismay at the idea of lying on the floor and then getting up and doing complex movement. I was working for the company *Bock and Vincenzi* in 2000.

trans-historical. Yet the development of the regimens over the last four decades of the 20th century reveals the cultural labor through which this idea of nature was constructed. The procedures and vocabularies to which dancers accrued bodily truth, exhibited substantial change, along with the organization of classes, and the rhetoric through which Somatics was framed. The 1970s saw students cultivating kinesthetic awareness, explored in pedestrian-like vocabulary. Practitioners believed they were sensing the action of physical forces through the skeleton in neutral and innate movement that connected them to human evolutionary heritage. The simplicity of practice, compared with other training, engendered anti-hierarchical collectivism in a culture of willing exchange, both within and beyond the studio. By the next decade, however, many dancers had disbanded with ordinary movement and collective ethics to pursue individual goals in classes that still proffered kinesthetic awareness of functional imperatives as foundation; but entailed reproducing novel, complex, set choreography. Meanwhile artists that sustained the 1970s impulse of resisting institutionalized aesthetics did so by insisting upon the integral nature of emotional and sexual impulses to the body that had been overlooked by their predecessors. They also exhibited a greater emphasis on individuality in vigorous and jarring vocabulary that appeared idiosyncratic compared with pedestrian movement. Toward the end of the 20th century, the agency that dancers had enjoyed through asserting staunch individualism collapsed. Now marshaled by corporate arts culture, the natural body reconstructed itself as a source of artistic and moral superiority, serving dancers that executed vocabulary into which classical and modern lexicons had been integrated. The training competed for preeminence by defining itself against techniques that were seen as compromising the dancers' artistic integrity.

Despite such dramatic changes, dancers sustained their belief in the natural status of the body by directing their attention away from the social and economic conditions affecting their practice, toward timeless corporeality defined by primitive, scientific, and mystical properties. Infantile and animal bodily truths disavowed the racist and class superior history through which nature was established. With romanticized and idealized visions of other cultures, species, and stages in human development, cultures that were represented as Eastern or primitive, along with children and animals served as an undifferentiated counterpoint to Western ideologies and morals. Somatics also erased its historical and cultural specificity through recourse to scientific rhetoric, which was presented as proof of the mystical insights drawn from Eastern traditions, and the basic principles found in atavistic corporeality. The body therefore constructed itself as an invisible category of nature that nevertheless perpetrated privileging and exclusion, even while it claimed to be universal.⁴⁶⁴

Yet even though the conceit of the natural body depended on exclusionary rhetoric, dancers undeniably achieved various kinds of progressive agency through the training. In Somatics they found evidence that the available knowledge about dance failed to apprehend the complexity of the body, which teachers used to modulate training and take greater care of their students. As we will see in chapter 3, with the sense of self they constructed in Somatics, artists also continued to project their identity beyond the limits of existing gender, race, sexuality, and disability discourses in a similar manner to mid-century artists. However, to the degree that Somatics postulated the possibility of transcending socio-historical limitations by connecting with the body's essence, it naturalized an American post-war liberal ideal of universal

⁴⁶⁴ The way that Orientalism and the construction of a primitive body combine to construct an invisible category of the natural body deserves further investigation. I have touched on this in the introduction in reference to Chatterjea and Gottschild.

individual freedom. As this liberal ideology ascended and transformed throughout the late 20th century, it helped to conceal the impact of changing economic and cultural conditions upon the regimens, because along with contemporary dance, Western societies idealized universal individual freedom on a much broader level. The limits and possibilities of the idea of nature came into view when Somatics reached other national and regional contexts, and American specificity was challenged and transformed, which I address in the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Contradictory Dissidence: Somatics and American Expansionism.

In this chapter, I argue that Somatics embodied American cultural expansionism in a transnational context. Commentary on Somatics largely overlooks this fact because dancers using the regimens were critical of American cultural dominance and mainstream cultures, and contested the artistic constraints imposed by dance establishments. The training therefore seemed oppositional to cultural dominance. However, three key historical developments explain how Somatics extended the United States government's aims. After World War II, America promoted itself as the center of a Western culture in which artists were purportedly free to push against institutionalized aesthetics and dominant values. Yet American modern dance first achieved institutional legitimacy in the 1950s, so not until the 1960s did dancers consolidate the artistic resistance that the rhetoric of creative freedom claimed to offer. A Somatic field emerged in the 1970s as dancers and educators applied the artistic rebellion of the previous decade to training. They also built upon the global purview of America after the 1950s by forging a transnational community that saw itself as resisting the dominance of American modern dance. Through a loose network of independent artists and organizations, as well as isolated institutions, Somatics reached hubs in Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia, as well as basing itself in New England.

My argument distinguishes between two related ways in which Somatics linked itself to American expansionism. First, New York established itself as the origin of the training, compounding the idea that America is the center of Western culture. German modern dance's influence on the regimens all but disappeared into the impression that the training was imported

from America. Isolated artists and teachers working outside of the United States prior to the 1960s contributed to the impact of Somatics and modern dance in their respective locales. Yet the symbolic centrality of New York largely erased these histories.⁴⁶⁵ Ideas seemed to flow outward from America's cultural capital, which compounded expansionism.

Second, dancers embodied the liberal ideals that gained ascendancy after World War II when the United States government asserted its role in protecting the universal right to individual freedom against fascist and communist regimes. The postwar political treatise *The Vital Center* exemplifies such ideas penned by Arthur Schlesinger, political historian, and adviser to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Kennedy brothers among other prominent politicians. My reference to Schlesinger builds on Serge Guilbaut's scholarship in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. He maintains that the global success of New York visual art depended on Schlesinger's ideas. America, Guilbaut asserts, internationally promoted its painters to showcase the fruits of creative freedom in line with Schlesinger's insistence that mature societies tolerate cultural dissidence.⁴⁶⁶ Boosters of

⁴⁶⁵ As chapter 1 chronicles, German modern dance contributed to Somatics both through early 20th century regimens aiming to reduce tension, and in mid-century when dancers turned to Hanya Holm's technique, thought more flowing and easier on the body than Graham's. British Somatics also built upon Laban's work with body states before the American approaches arrived. Meanwhile Eva Karczag and Anne Thompson report that Australian children's classes, influenced by German modern dance, impacted their interest in Somatics in adult life. Yet in postwar modern dance, German influences were underplayed if not erased because of hostility following the global conflict. Valerie Preston-Dunlop points out that British modern dance struggled to emerge precisely because of its association with Germany. All the transnational hubs were allies against the Germany in World War II, so it is likely they felt equal hostility toward German culture. Valerie; Luis Monthland Preston-Dunlop and España; Friends of the Laban Centre., *The American Invasion, 1962-1972* (S.I.: Valerie Preston-Dunlop, 2005), videorecording, 1 videodisc (108 min.): sd., col. ; 4 3/4 in.

⁴⁶⁶ Schlesinger argued liberalism depends upon freedom of the individual, which was relevant to mid-century American artists not least because repression in Nazi Germany, and Soviet Russian control of its domestic cultural production, were being hotly debated. Schlesinger responded to left disillusionment when revolutionary left politics had become associated social repression while he also spoke to a concern about unchecked commerce that had fueled the interest in communism in previous decades. He proposed that individuality be prioritized before social structure, which depends upon the social toleration of cultural dissidence. He secured progressive capitalism as a way forward for the American left. Liberalism underpinned American expansionism because it was intertwined with changes in United States foreign policy precipitated by a new world order emerging after World War II. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*.

modern painting and the government testified to American liberalism by promoting artists who were vilified by the domestic establishment.⁴⁶⁷ So when dancers in the 1970s argued that Somatics released them from the authoritarian training of existing aesthetic traditions, they recycled expansionist liberal rhetoric about individual freedom that was integral to postwar American art. Dancers claimed that the regimens restore individual uniqueness, which fuels dissidence against cultural imposition. They verified the universality of Somatics in a supposedly international rather than domestic venture, and articulated dissent on three different continents.

The charge that 1970s Somatics embodied American expansionism will seem like a stretch to anyone aware of the meager resources to which artists had access, compared with the power behind United States foreign policy.⁴⁶⁸ Since the 1950s, the government, industries, and wealthy philanthropists have ploughed capital into military, economic and cultural expansion, yet educators and artists patch-worked together a Somatic network through personal connections based on artistic commitment and goodwill. A handful of dancers initially disseminated Somatics, which illustrates the small scale on which they were working.⁴⁶⁹ By contrast, postwar American military outposts were to prevent the resurgence of fascism, while cultural promotion showcased the benefits of liberal capitalism in a psychological war on communism, and as an

⁴⁶⁷ As a symbol of freedom, the United States government and C.I.A. supported painters who were being castigated by America's large art institutions and the middle-class press. Modern Art theorist Clement Greenburg used the foreign success of abstract expressionists struggling at home to prove their integrity as an avant-garde. *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁶⁸ The government saw military outposts as necessary to prevent the resurgence of Fascism, sought economic opportunity in the negotiation of providing aid to European nations devastated by war, while claiming to feel a political responsibility to quell the spread of communism by disseminating liberal-capitalist ideology through spreading American culture. *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁶⁹ In 1972 the American artist and educator Mary Fulkerson introduced Somatics to the United Kingdom and became a lynchpin for a first wave in Europe. American trained Dutch dancer Pauline De Groot connected with Fulkerson and other Americans to inaugurate Dutch Somatics following her return there in 1969. In 1976, under Fulkerson's influence Nanette Hassall, introduced Somatics to her Australian homeland.

opportunity for economic growth.⁴⁷⁰ Yet two decades later, Americans teaching Somatics in England through a festival at Dartington College were paid little more than travel. However, to garner support, British, Dutch and Australian dancers linked their work with America's position as the center of Western culture, a logic through which a handful of American dancers also secured jobs in Dutch and British higher education. Americans visiting Dartington Festival also taught at local independent collectives where they verified their artistic merit for themselves even if they earned little money. In all cases, Somatics found new foreign devotees, while extending America's centrality.

The do-it-yourself approach to dissemination also depended upon government expansionism because Somatics rode upon on the coattails of American modern dance. As Naima Prevots points out in her study of the use of modern dance as form of cultural diplomacy, the state began funding international tours of Martha Graham's and José Limón's companies in the 1950s.⁴⁷¹ They intended to export liberalism and change perceptions of America as unsophisticated, insular, and only interested in profit. Britain and Holland, where modern dance had not been consistently sustained, rapidly took up the American tradition. Graham protégés helped establish training institutions in Britain in the late 1960s. Within just a few years, Somatic proponents capitalized on America's significance as the origin of modern dance with the idea that the regimens originated in New York as the newest development in its sophisticated dance culture.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ For example, aid for French recovery from war came with a deal that decimated the nation's film industry and bolstered Hollywood. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*, 137.

⁴⁷¹ Prevots, *Dance for Export*.

⁴⁷² Modern dance was not consistently sustained in Britain, Holland or Australia until after the late 1960s. Graham and Cunningham trainings were instituted in British and Dutch conservatories as a modern dance establishment emerged and sought to cultivate technical excellence. Cunningham fulfilled a classical imperative in British postwar dance even while he was characterized as a visionary. He was compared to Diaghilev by the 1964 British

Despite depending upon and embodying American expansionism, the Somatic pioneers viewed their project as critical because they struggled with powerful proponents of modernism. Through control over state funding, a newly consolidated American modern dance establishment implemented the universalist dogma with which it had ascended when Leftist dance declined, and Negro dance was assimilated.⁴⁷³ To fulfill the postwar American cultural ideal of speaking to global rather than domestic concerns, modern dance's proponents enshrined the performance of emotion, myth, and symbol as communicating basic human truths. Yet by the early 1960s, a New York avant-garde hailed what they saw as a superior embodiment of liberal principles through artistic practices based Somatics. At Judson Church and in Robert Dunn's choreographic workshop, both of which have now been canonized as watershed moments in contemporary dance's development, artists such Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, and Trisha Brown used Somatic ideology to reject classical and modern training and aesthetics in the belief that they were developing unique vocabulary from motile capacity integral to human anatomical functioning. Somatics in the 1970s consolidated these ideas with the conceit that exploring movement principles had displaced emulating existing vocabulary.

We can best understand how Somatic practitioners launched transnational opposition to modern dance by tracing how they followed in Merce Cunningham's footsteps. After being denied state funding, Cunningham successfully challenged the New York dance establishment through the enthusiastic responses he received for his independently funded 1964 London

press. Carolyn Brown, "Merce Cunningham and the Language of the Body," *The New York Times*, March 25th 2001.

⁴⁷³ John Martin talked about universality in the 1930s but this was at a time when Graham had a small devoted following, and modern dance was one approach alongside other. Yet by mid-century, Leftist dance, which was tied to Marxism, had been eviscerated, and Negro dance was becoming usurped by modern dance, which broadened its audience and ascended to dominance. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*.

engagement.⁴⁷⁴ The New York press characterized him as a sorely needed iconoclast, forcing those who had rejected Cunningham's application for state funding to accept his artistic credibility. By conquering British conservatism Cunningham inaugurated his artistic dissidence while questioning the New York establishment's commitment to artistic freedom.⁴⁷⁵ His success seemed to prove that America could produce dissident choreographers expressing international rather than domestic concerns. By succeeding as an artist who overstepped domestic cultural limitations, Cunningham demonstrated that America lacked communist and fascist repression. For artists who were aware of his struggle with the establishment, which many associated with Somatics were as his dancers or mentees,⁴⁷⁶ Cunningham symbolized artistic integrity, which he proved internationally through an iconoclastic and therefore dissident venture.

Those who disseminated Somatics beyond New York likely fueled their belief in their prospects based on their knowledge of Cunningham's ascendancy. They defined the regimens against limits on what was considered technique by those implementing Graham's and Cunningham's approaches in the non-American contexts. For example, as we will see, British state funders and the national press dismissed and vilified Somatics as failing to fulfill technical excellence, which had been enshrined as a central imperative of concert dance since the postwar dominance of classical virtuosity. From across the transnational network, dancers passed through hubs in the United Kingdom that were crucial for the development of Somatics, so the

⁴⁷⁴ Cunningham was deemed by the panel of the state funding for international tours as failing modernist universality by not staging emotion, myth, and symbol. Prevots, *Dance for Export*. Lewis Lloyd, Cunningham's tour manager in the 1960s, recalls that after a decade's rejection, Cunningham put together funds for an international tour with foreign pressure on JD Rockefeller Foundation and the support of "Artists for Artists." He also lacked support of the domestic press and concert houses. Things changed after his international success. Lewis Lloyd, email to author, August 23rd, 2013.

⁴⁷⁵ The 1960s New York press represented Cunningham as a "sorely needed iconoclast" who had conquered British conservatism. Alistair Macaulay, "Recasting the Very Essence of Dance," *The New York Times* July 28th 2009.

⁴⁷⁶ Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

antagonism with the establishment broadly verified that Somatics could challenge the status quo. Furthermore, with the rhetoric that they are based on bodily realities that all human beings share, the regimens seemed to more convincingly embody universality than modern dance. This impression also correlated with challenges to modern dance's universality in its mid-century international exposures. Graham's codification of emotional symbolism revealed itself to be built for the performance of culturally specific narratives,⁴⁷⁷ and although many of the dancers who invested in Somatics felt Cunningham's technique was neutral by comparison, it still seemed to depend on elitist classical virtuosity. In the final analysis, in their hostility toward Somatics, the British establishment seemed to fail to grasp cutting edge dance, and institute limits upon creative freedom.

To the degree that they critiqued the widespread institution of American modern dance, artists working with the regimens seemed to reject American cultural dominance. Some artists within and beyond Britain further emphasized this tendency with nationalist and leftist perspectives. So American expansionism seemed to be absent from the dissemination of Somatics. In all the transnational sites, dancers also saw their work with the body as not being specific to any culture because of the rhetoric that the training accesses corporeal imperatives. Yet native avant-gardes that formed outside of the United States, often depended upon American creative and pedagogical resources to fight structural exclusion by their own dance establishments. As they tackled specific conditions, Somatics manifested in different ways through the renewable originality of universal-individual nature that I articulated in chapter one. The plasticity of the Somatic tropes overshadowed American cultural dominance and obscured

⁴⁷⁷ As 1950s American modern dance encountered different cultures, the rhetoric about universality was challenged. For example, Graham met such challenges performing in non-Western contexts. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*, 40.

the impact of local circumstances on the regimens. In this chapter I focus on an underlying pattern in which New York, just as it had with the formerly avant-garde modern dance, established itself as the center of a dissident transnational culture, made up of local variations that also critiqued values associated with the American city. American expansionism therefore concealed the way in which it naturalized itself through the training.

In the different hubs, the ideal of individual creative freedom dovetailed with local artistic and social development, which is evident from the rapidity with which the Somatics regimens were taken up. Beginning in America, this chapter makes a whirlwind tour of Britain, Holland and Australia, to look at how artists staged critique, and adapted Somatics to changing circumstances. We will visit New York artists who opposed the establishment's commitment to 1940s modernism, and situate them alongside a New England culture that claimed to provide respite from the demands of professionalism. We then take a trip to London where dancers infused Somatics with feminist ideals against the local demand for classical virtuosity and what was seen as the American penchant for abstraction. Australian dancers calibrated the training to decolonize dance of European aesthetics, while Dutch educators insisted that their institution of Somatics was at the forefront of innovation, unfettered by the commercialism of any professional dance context.

Geography occupies as much a symbolic as factual role in this chapter because the signifying agency of place is inextricable from the material and historical conditions through which the differently located artists and practices contributed to the transnational discourse. I articulate five "geo-Somatic bodies" to represent ideas that emerged as dancers negotiated diverse local conditions and responded to New York's cultural dominance. The scope of this project prevents me from accounting for the complexity of each locale, so each geo-Somatic

body emphasizes an aspect of the transnational discourse. The chapter parses out key issues geographically even though the artists and techniques I associate with a geo-Somatic body are not always located in the associated locale. Nevertheless, the regional distinctiveness finds expression in the relationships between institutions and independent artists, and the emergence of artists' organizations and publications.⁴⁷⁸ Such significance either resonated throughout the whole network, between select hubs, or was only important locally. For example, the ideas encapsulated in all geo-Somatic bodies were evident in every locale, but due to its dominance New York largely failed to acknowledge the significance of the non-American contexts. British colonialism and European proximity also complicated the exchanges between Britain, Holland, and Australia. Despite contradictions, exceptions, and unevenness, the geo-Somatic bodies still represent the most accurate version of the discourse that emerged within the transnational community.

The geo-Somatic bodies are terms I have authored to understand the transnational discourse and were not used explicitly within the dance community. Building, as it did, upon the dissemination of modern dance, transnational Somatics exhibited an enduring discourse of its art form, indicated here with precedents. New York Somatics constructed an innovative and professional body, because the contemporary use of Somatics seemed to originate in the city. The relationship between innovation and professionalism emerged as early as the 1930s in Gotham when black dancing bodies were configured as less innovative than their white counterparts because they supposedly had "natural rhythm" and therefore did not have to work

⁴⁷⁸ In the further development of this project I intend to consider how the geo-somatic body relates to Arjun Appadurai's notion of "scapes." Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

as hard at the craft.⁴⁷⁹ New England Somatics proffered a body in “artistic respite” from New York, an idea that Margaret H’Douler initiated in the early 20th when she characterized dance education, rather than concert dance, as the preeminent context in which to nurture artistic and bodily integrity.⁴⁸⁰ British Somatics emphasized a body of “political and social signification,” which was fueled by ambivalence toward New York formalism and the critique of the conservative domestic dance establishment. The suspicion toward ‘abstraction’ recapitulated the of 1930s American leftist dancers against modernism.⁴⁸¹ Rejecting pre-existing vocabulary, Dutch Somatics proffered a body “in-flux,” exhibiting the aversion to imitation central to mid-century American modern dance.⁴⁸² In Australia, a drive for cultural independence from Europe in the 1970s contributed to “new Frontier” Somatic body in which natural propensities were thought to liberate domestic dance from European traditions, recapitulating a trope of early American modern dance such as seen in Duncan’s and Graham’s pioneer narratives.⁴⁸³

This chapter tracks the character of the Somatics organizations that formed to manage training, concerts, and other activity, along with artists’ experiences of the different locales between which they moved. To assess the impact of local concert dance history and socio-

⁴⁷⁹ Black dancers were viewed as imitating white artists when they staged nascent modern dance, yet their execution of black subjects was seen as natural rather than the result of artistic labor. John Martin argued that the raw talent of Bahamian dancers failed to achieve the same grasp of the primitive truths as Helen Tamiris in her execution of black spirituals, associating professional capacity in modern dance with the ability to make material significant in a new way. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 15.

⁴⁸⁰ H’Douler’s hypothesized that imitation thwarts dancers’ individual voices, she associated imitation with display and argued that away from the demands of professional dance, in an educational setting, students can better find their artistic integrity. Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 137.

⁴⁸¹ The idea that modernism undermines political critique was at play when the New Dance Group and The Workers Dance League critiqued Martha Graham for being too abstract and not attending to left wing narratives. Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. 61.

⁴⁸² 1950s modern dance contended institutionalization and distinguished itself from Broadway with what Gay Morris calls the “objectivist” choreography of Cunningham. It succeeded as a new artistic vanguard with the idea of uncertain outcomes in choreography, rejecting the certitude of good product necessary for Broadway and the establishment. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, chapter 7.

⁴⁸³ Duncan argued that she embodied a new cultural identity in her dance compared with the antiquated European provenance of classical ballet. Daly, *Done into Dance*, 11. Graham also distinguished her dances from European art with a frontier narrative. Burt, *Alien Bodies*, 11.

political circumstances, I analyze artists' accounts of the countries in which they worked, and the means by which organizations fulfilled a particular role. For example, I compare how organizations represented themselves in their publications; what kind of activity they undertook; how these factors changed over time; as well as how local publications represented other sites in the network. The geo-Somatic bodies ostensibly accrued their definition through dancer's ideas about what they were doing, and the ethics and protocols of organizations. However, the contextual character of the regimens reveals that expansionist liberalism manifested through a locale's artistic and socio-political history, and was impacted by the relationships between different nation states.

Section 1. New York Somatics: The Innovative and Professional Body

For its centrality to transnational Somatics, New York built on its reputation as the epicenter of American high culture, which, in a discourse constructed by commentators and patrons in major Western metropolises, depended on establishing national specificity while claiming to address international rather than domestic concerns.⁴⁸⁴ With an arts milieu that critiqued mainstream and establishment values, New York held exceptional status in the United States as a center for postwar cultural dissidence. The city's modern dance avant-garde fulfilled postwar high-culture ideals through a critique of the structural imposition of establishment modernism,⁴⁸⁵ and the rejection of the idea that choreography should speak to the suburban middle-classes.⁴⁸⁶ An artistic movement, mythologized in the figure of Cunningham, first

⁴⁸⁴ Guilbaut articulates that for both New York and Parisian postwar commentators on literature, architecture and painting, the expression of a uniquely national perspective that spoke to international rather than domestic concerns was crucial to establish high culture. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*, 43-44.

⁴⁸⁵ Key members of a dance establishment controlled state dept. tour funding. Their values were evident in their rejection of choreographers including Cunningham, Taylor, Nikolais, Dunham, Tamaris, and Primus. Prevots, *Dance for Export*.

⁴⁸⁶ The mid-century avant-garde intertwined critique intertwined and elitism when choreographers who rejected the values being asserted through stated funding for the arts re-characterized the masses in their refusal to pander to

coalesced around the contestation of constraints imposed by state funding. Then when mid-century avant-garde dance was institutionalized in the 1960s, a new generation salvaged its logic with experiments to which Somatics contributed. By repudiating virtuosity while vetoing Graham's communicative transparency, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown and others intertwined artistic dissidence with elitism.⁴⁸⁷ New York seemed to produce dance that critiqued mainstream American culture by nurturing experimental practice.⁴⁸⁸ Yet dancers also sought institutional recognition to prove their artistic credibility as well as to challenge any circumscription on what constitutes modern dance. The city therefore became known for both innovation and professionalism.

New York Somatics emphasized its centrality to the transnational network with what seemed like accelerated experimentation compared with overseas. In early 1960s Greenwich Village, figures like Forti, Paxton, and Brown laid the groundwork for Gotham dancers to establish their advanced status by fulfilling the high-culture requirement of claiming a uniquely American perspective, while exceeding the limitations of domestic taste. Their irreverent everyday vocabulary departed from Cunningham, who represented institutionalized dance once he became the darling of middle-class audiences following his London success.⁴⁸⁹ Yet while the

large audiences. Leftist dancers had believed in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat as exemplified in the communicative transparency of their socialist realist choreography. Yet when leftist dance collapsed, accessibility became the purview of modern dance, which had previously only reached small audiences of devotees. Responding to the imposition of modern dance universality and the attendant idea of communicability, the avant-garde re-characterized the masses as a reactionary middle class force against which dissidence was defined. Dissidence became key to critique during the cold war in reaction to McCarthy. Cunningham resisted the dictates of the state-funding panel through dance whose message was opaque. I have put these ideas together by reading what Cunningham's tour manager told me with key texts that track changes from the 1930s to the 1960s including. Ibid. Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*; Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*; Morris, *A Game for Dancers*; Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*.

⁴⁸⁷ Thinly veiled elitism can be read into the projects of early 1960s Greenwich Village artists, who, Sally Banes argues, inverted the values of the suburban masses in what she calls "heterotopias". Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 13.

⁴⁸⁸ Following the 1964 tour university concert halls around the country booked Cunningham based on what they saw as "solid" New York press. Lewis Lloyd (Cunningham's tour manager), email to the author August 23rd 2013.

aesthetics connected to Judson flouted expectations associated with large theatres, not unlike Cunningham's rhetoric, the anti-virtuosity stance, which maintained that all objects and actions are equivalent, appeared to be inclusive, universal, and therefore to speak to international concerns. In the 1970s, new vocabulary based on the 1960s experiments arrived in foreign contexts where Cunningham technique had only recently been endorsed by dance establishments. Paxton brought contact improvisation (CI) to Britain, and Pauline De Groot introduced ideokinesis-influenced training to Holland, while Forti brought to Europe a concerted non-dance lexicon along with other Americans teaching Somatics.⁴⁹⁰ As I detail below, while Britain's establishment labeled Cunningham's formalism uniquely American, the country's avant-garde perceived the renouncing of virtuosity by the next generation also as 'American' innovation because Cunningham's technical excellence abided by the stranglehold of classical imperatives on British dance. With rhetoric about exploring anatomical function, dancers teaching Somatics proposed the "natural" body as a basis for individual creativity to displace the emulation of established styles. A Gotham City invention therefore offered the means to surpass existing aesthetics.

To some degree, innovation claimed New York as its origin through the different responses to Cunningham's vocabulary by European and American artists experimenting with Somatics. In early 1970s London, the collective *Strider* combined Somatic aptitudes with Cunningham's off-center incongruous use of line and elevation, a strategy that was recapitulated by the Australian collective *Dance Exchange* later in the same decade in Sydney.⁴⁹¹ On British and Australian turf the rejection of high-effect muscular tension in dance that was divested of

⁴⁹⁰ New York had seen a decade of exploration building on the early 1960s use of pedestrian vocabulary, which had given rise to CI, and Brown's minimalism, seeming to supersede modernism.

⁴⁹¹ Members of *Strider*, who also participated in *Dance Exchange*, used "Cunninghamesque" vocabulary informed by Somatics for composition they called abstract. Theirs was the first exploration of Cunningham's ideas on Australian and British soil. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

dramatic narrative, signified innovation against ballet's dominance and the ascendance of Graham's approach since the late 1950s.⁴⁹² Yet Cunningham was already well established on American stages by the late-1960s, and Hawkins began applying Somatics to a Graham-like vocabulary in the 1950s. Even though Cunningham sometimes included actions associated with everyday life, experiments by the Big Apple's avant-garde contrasted with his technique by forcefully relinquishing any signs of being presentational. Gotham artists therefore appeared to be in advance of British and Australian Somatics when they came into contact.⁴⁹³

Even when New Yorkers working with Somatics enjoyed international success beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, their home city continued to affirm its advanced position. Choreographers such as Brown, Stephen Petronio, and Bill T. Jones, who the British noted for his novel use of CI,⁴⁹⁴ staged increasingly complex vocabulary that nevertheless upheld its departure from modern and classical dance. By synthesizing virtuosic lexicons that clearly disengaged with the Graham and ballet vocabularies still being taught in most dance education, these artists verified the potency and dissidence of New York Somatics. In short, other hubs in the network therefore initially found themselves playing catch-up with the choreography and pedagogy emanating from the American city.

When Brown's choreography first hit large British stages in 1979, Somatics from Gotham accentuated its innovative force to local artists by flummoxing the domestic mainstream press. Yet British dancers also saw its professionalism by accessing its pedagogical

⁴⁹² Through Strider, its founding member Richard Alston applied Mary Fulkerson's Anatomical Releasing work to Cunningham's vocabulary, which De Witt argues resulted in the withdrawal of the company's state funding. Mara De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington College of Arts U.K. 1971-1987" (Ph. D., Middlesex University, 2000), 102. Nannette Hassall and Eva Karczag used this approach in Australia with Dance Exchange, which was warmly received by state funders and critics as a new approach. Sally; Jill Sykes; Mary Emery Gardner, "Minimal Resources," *Writings on dance* 18/19, no. Winter (1999). I am taking the negative response of the Arts Council of England, and the representation of Dance Exchange as "new" to be evidence that combining Cunningham and Anatomical Releasing was seen to be a departure from established practice.

⁴⁹³ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 154- 63.

⁴⁹⁴ Ramsay Burt, "Bill. T. Jones, Arnie Zane & Company," *New Dance Magazine* 27, no. winter (1983).

potential. In response to Brown's London debut, after American Somatics had already established itself on the British margins, the domestic press dismissed the dancers as performing for themselves; reviewing *Glacial Decoy*, a respected national newspaper charged, "anyone moderately active could have mastered the little runs, jumps, bursts of energy."⁴⁹⁵ Some local dancers publically aligned themselves with Brown, arguing that outdated ideals had obscured the critics' understanding of the choreography.⁴⁹⁶ The value that British dancers attached to Brown's work drew from understanding they had gained in classes taken with Lisa Kraus, whose application of Somatics to Brown's set material I referred to in chapter 1. The presence since 1973 of CI, and Mary Fulkerson's Anatomical Releasing in Britain, also informed the community's perspective.⁴⁹⁷ In her dismay at the British press responses, Brown referred to sympathetic writers back home,⁴⁹⁸ conjuring the impression of Gotham's advancement, and compounding an well established image of New York dance as ahead of British conservatism.⁴⁹⁹

New York Somatics positioned its pedagogy as an innovative source of professional excellence when concert dance values began to change in the 1980s. For example, the British press reception of Brown had changed by 1984, and London's large "Dance Umbrella" festival

⁴⁹⁵ Cited from Mary Clarke writing for the *Guardian* national newspaper. Clare Hayes, "Review of *Glacial Decoy*," *ibid.* 12 (1979).

⁴⁹⁶ Clare Hayes argued that critics had failed to understand the practice because they had not followed British New Dance, and so did not understand "release technique." *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ As I articulate further below, Fulkerson instituted Somatics at Dartington College in 1973, which, through open workshops and a festival became a hub for the regimens. Kraus taught *Locus* at the festival prior to the Hayes article referred to in the previous note. *New Dance Magazine*, "Review of Dartinton Festival," *ibid.* 11, no. Summer. Dancers who had experienced other Somatic regimens had already seen release technique and CI as connected to innovative choreography from Gotham.

⁴⁹⁸ Brown mentions Deborah Jowitt and Sally Banes in New York as sympathetic dance writers. Clare Hayes, "Review of *Glacial Decoy*," *ibid.* 12.

⁴⁹⁹ For modern dance, let alone Somatics, the shift was enormous when professionalism became an option in the late 1960s. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 1. Paxton recalls that when he performed with Cunningham for the first time in Britain, there was sense that they were performing in a vacuum. Steve Paxton, e-mail to the author, August 19th, 2013. Fulkerson felt similarly on her arrival at Dartington College. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

began programming artists like Paxton.⁵⁰⁰ Yet while this established some legitimacy for Somatics on British stages, the major dance training institutions still primarily implemented Graham, Cunningham, and ballet techniques, as did their American corollaries. Those situated on the margins, however-dancers that had already encountered American Somatic training-appreciated the main-stage booking of innovative choreography through their experience of related pedagogy and studio performances.⁵⁰¹ After dancing for Brown, Stephen Petronio swiftly received the same welcome with his own company being presented at Dance Umbrella in the 1980s.⁵⁰² Similarly his dancers taught in marginal contexts.⁵⁰³ Moreover, as Dutch education based on Somatics developed, it drew upon the perceived expertise of Paxton and Forti for a radically different model of training from modern and classical dance.⁵⁰⁴ Because of the disparity between theatre programming and most institutionalized training, dancers tended to see the American choreography they in large theatres as underpinned by sophisticated New York ideas that were ahead of the curve in dance pedagogy.

As the century progressed, emerging East Village dance contributed to New York's significance by implementing Somatics in ways that seemed oppositional to the aesthetics that were gaining recognition through Brown's success. Along with Ishmael Houston-Jones, Stephanie Skura, Yvonne Meier, and Jennifer Monson, whose training innovations I detail in chapter 1, Pooh Kaye and others used the regimens to develop explosive, awkward, and bound

⁵⁰⁰ The mainstream publication "The Dancing Times", known for its heavily ballet focused aesthetic, gave a glowing review of Brown's "Set and Reset" Alistair Macaulay, "Umbrellidom," *Dancing Times* January 1984.

⁵⁰¹ Paxton taught at X6 studio and Dartington Festival, Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 83. In the same year he was programmed at London's premier dance festival Dance Umbrella. Jack Anderson, *Choreography Observed*, 1st ed. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987), 182.

⁵⁰² Alistair Macaulay, "Stillness and High-Speed Rides in a Triple Bill from Scottish Ballet," *The New York Times* October 7th 2008.

⁵⁰³ For example, Jeremy Nelson consistently taught for Movement Research and also taught in marginal contexts in London such as Greenwich Dance Agency, and at the European Dance Development Center, which is one of the schools in the Netherlands that I address below. I have taken classes with Jeremy Nelson between 1993 and 2004 in all the contexts mentioned)

⁵⁰⁴ Fabius, *Talk*, 19.

movement.⁵⁰⁵ Critics read the vocabularies as violent compared with the easy, seamless dancing that had become associated with Somatics. For example, a 1986 reviewer refers to “the artfully disheveled dancers [who] slam, bang, smash, heap, tussle and grapple” in Houston-Jones’s *Them*.⁵⁰⁶ London withheld from these artists the kind of embrace it offered to the other New Yorkers I have mentioned, but Dutch education exploited the critique that Houston-Jones, Meier, Monson, Skura and others offered as guest teachers. Equally important, a small community of marginal British artists identified with the East Village against London’s approved version of experimentation.⁵⁰⁷ Gotham therefore sustained its claim to fomenting greater innovation than in other contexts.

All in all, New York established itself as an origin for successive waves of dynamic, innovative, and contradictory implementations of the regimens. Practitioners from across the transnational network therefore viewed the city as home to the most advanced experimentation. In her documentation of 1970s and early 1980s British dance, Stephanie Jordan, for example, recalls that “for several years American work [primarily coming from New York] dominated Dance Umbrella if only because it seemed so fresh . . . clearly breaking ground in comparison with most British work.” Many of the artists to whom Jordan refers contributed to the

⁵⁰⁵ I am introducing Pooh Kaye, because, as I detail in chapter 3, her style influenced East Village developments through dancers such as Monson and Meier, and David Zambrano, who developed “Flying Low Technique.” Kaye actually discovered Somatic training through her dancers, such as Meier, who introduced Skinner Releasing and began teaching warm-up. Pooh Kaye, interview by Doran George, August 15th, 2011.

⁵⁰⁶ Robert Sandla, “Á La Recherche Des Tricks Perdue,” *Movement Research Performance Journal* 38 (2011 (reprinted from 1986)).

⁵⁰⁷ In the early 1990s improviser Kate Brown, who was my first improvisation teacher (1989), mentioned feeling alienated in London because her aesthetic related to East Village dance, which she had connected with in New York in the 1980s. Furthermore, beginning in the 1990s, artists with small state grants independently programmed performances and workshops by Houston-Jones, Monson, Meier and others at the marginal artist-run space Chisenhale Dance Space. At Chisenhale, I took class with Kate Brown, participated in a workshop/performance with Houston-Jones in 1999 organized by Gaby Agis, and programmed a series with Jennifer Monson and Yvonne Meier in 2000. Houston-Jones and Monson recall teaching earlier workshops. Monson, “(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author.”; Houston-Jones, “Interview with Author.”

development of Somatics.⁵⁰⁸ New York thus saw a heavy traffic of dancers from Britain, but also the Netherlands and Australia, all seeking the latest developments. The city became something of a gateway for approaches to the rest of the network, compounding its status as the origin for the regimens even though Somatics drew upon myriad influences from across and beyond the United States, such as the Midwest, and the West Coast, with Anna Halprin being a glaring example, and Germany, including Laban's impact on British artists such as Rosemary Butcher who I talk about more below.⁵⁰⁹

The reputation that Judson Church first achieved as a flashpoint in contemporary dance underlined New York's symbolic significance, because the regimens were intertwined with the early 1960s experimentation. Many Americans who initiated the transnational network participated in or identified with the Judson milieu, and the regimens were often taught in conjunction with ideas to which it was linked.⁵¹⁰ The first published writing about major departures from established modern dance also focused on artists associated with Judson. These texts quickly reached Anglophone contexts beyond America, as well as Holland.⁵¹¹ Therefore, even when there was awareness of the range of influences, New York claimed the status of updating and consolidating Somatics. For example, Pauline De Groot, who first introduced the regimens to the Netherlands, imported a variety of influences, including Hawkins' and Halprin's approaches. Yet when CI dancer David Woodberry showed her the duet form in her Amsterdam

⁵⁰⁸ Dance Umbrella disproportionately programmed New York dance, because it was perceived as the locus of the greatest industry and sophistication in the art form. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 100.

⁵⁰⁹ Preston-Dunlop and España; Friends of the Laban Centre., *The American Invasion, 1962-1972*.

⁵¹⁰ Fulkerson sees her development as having been influenced by learning of Judson in the 1960s, and although she was never based in New York, she associated with artists who worked in early 1960s Greenwich, ultimately employing them. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁵¹¹ *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, published in the 1980s, documents "Judson" artists' approaches. Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*.

studio, De Groot associated it with Judson experimentation.⁵¹² Similarly, Anatomical Releasing, Forti's work, and that of Lisa Nelson, who developed a sensory-based approach from CI, all accrued the association of Judson's watershed aesthetics when they first reached foreign hubs. New York's significance dominated the understanding of how Somatics developed, sometimes framing artists who were not currently or had never been based in the city,⁵¹³ and overshadowing historical and geographic diversity.⁵¹⁴

The impression that Somatics flowed out of New York to other contexts built upon a pattern already established in modern dance. In this sense, the names of choreographers such as Graham and Cunningham, which were emblazoned on a transnational idea of what constitutes postwar modern dance, illuminated Judson Church by affording New York City mythic status throughout the network.⁵¹⁵ Students had travelled to New York to train at least since the 1950s, and some, such as De Groot and Meier, incidentally "discovered" Somatics, which they understood to be the next phase of innovation.⁵¹⁶ As knowledge of Somatics spread, state and independently funded dancers arrived in New York to study the techniques.⁵¹⁷ The pilgrimage of foreign artists compounded the importance of the city for local and visiting artists, as did state

⁵¹² De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁵¹³ As we shall see below, Paxton, Forti and Nelson had relocated to New England in the 1970s, while Fulkerson, among others, had never based herself in New York.

⁵¹⁴ Artists located in New England were either collapsed into New York or understood as in respite from the metropolis, and therefore related to its centrality. While the diverse influences of artists such as Butcher, disappeared into the significance of New York once she had visited the city.

⁵¹⁵ For example Paxton and Fulkerson connected by virtue of Cunningham, Fulkerson met Hassall at his studio, and many of the artists active in the transnational network met through a growing artistic milieu associated with Judson Church. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁵¹⁶ De Groot trained at the Graham school in the mid-1950s. She attended Andre Bernard's classes in Ideokinesis under Hawkins' direction as his dancer. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Meanwhile, Meier arrived with Swiss government support in the late 1970s to study Cunningham technique, but convinced her funders that the CI and "release-work" were more innovative and valuable. Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁵¹⁷ Butcher funded her time from 1970-1972 in New York with a scholarship, Rosemary Butcher, "Rosemary Butcher Dance & Visual Artist," Rosemary Butcher <http://rosemarybutcher.com/>. Later in the same decade the collective Dance Exchange also undertook research in New York funded by the Australian government. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

sponsorship for travel to the city. Visitors fed their respective contexts with information coming from the American city, which was reflected in British, Australian and American publications. For example, Gaby Agis, a recipient of a theatre training bursary from the Arts Council of Great Britain, detailed in *New Dance Magazine* the Gotham classes she took with Petronio, Skinner and Stark Smith.⁵¹⁸ Meanwhile, Manhattan dance press defined the city as a creative and pedagogic resource for struggling foreign artists.⁵¹⁹

New York's function as a Somatic Mecca meant that approaches launched in the city rapidly achieved transnational dissemination. Resident New Yorkers applied the techniques to choreography that was more likely to reach national and foreign audiences than dance from elsewhere within or beyond America, which is exemplified in how Alexander and Klein techniques became prominent through their association with Brown and Petronio. Furthermore, visiting regional American and foreign dancers brought home the techniques they encountered in Gotham.⁵²⁰ Teachers who developed Somatics in other contexts failed to achieve significance to the same degree as New Yorkers unless they established a Manhattan presence. A New York timeline for the application and popularity of techniques therefore had an enormous influence on the use of approaches in other hubs. Although Klein, for example, began developing her approach in New York the late 1960s, prior to CI, she first taught in London in the 1990s after her technique achieved New York popularity through Brown and Petronio. The spread of

⁵¹⁸ Gaby Agis, "Report from New York," *New Dance Magazine* 29, no. Summer (1984). Agis's is one of a number of such reports over the decade of the publication, and was probably a condition of her funding. Interviews also appeared with dancers and choreographers from the city who were visiting Britain. In her report on New York, Betsy Gregory characterizes Brown, as the originator of formal choreography using Somatics. Betsy Gregory, "Letters from America," *ibid.* 8, no. Autumn (1978).

⁵¹⁹ In the 1990s Paxton published a letter in *MRPJ* urging readers to financially support the organization on the basis that the small community is of great creative importance, which is verified by how essential it has become to the development of dance in Europe. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal."

⁵²⁰ Elaine Summers, Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, Barbara Clarke, Nancy Topf and Andre Bernard, all of who are referred to in chapter 1, taught a burgeoning 1970s New York community many of whom were training in CI. Summers, Bainbridge-Cohen and Paxton rapidly became known as pioneers in the transnational network, and Ideokinesis was seen as an important technique.

Skinner's work shows a similar pattern.⁵²¹ Techniques developed in non-American contexts tended to spread slowly, or remained marginal within the transnational Somatic community.⁵²²

As the transnational community accessed different approaches through New York, Somatics from the city accrued the association of professionalism despite the fact that distinct aims often underpinned Gotham dancers' use of techniques. The non-American hubs encountered the different regimens in quick succession. So along with the common kinetic and textual metaphors, the timeline on which different techniques reached beyond America overshadowed the different artistic strategies.⁵²³ Paxton and Forti first taught improvisational approaches in Europe only a few years before Kraus had students learning Brown's choreography. British dancers connected the skills necessary to execute Brown's material with the aptitudes that underpinned CI.⁵²⁴ They combined Paxton's and Fulkerson's teachings in the term "contact-release."⁵²⁵ Most commentators on British dance still associate Paxton, Fulkerson, and the various American teachers at Dartington Festival with a common approach.⁵²⁶ Despite the divergent projects from which CI and Brown's concert stage choreography emerged, for

⁵²¹ Joan Skinner developed her technique in Illinois and Seattle and it only became well known when it was introduced to New York in the 1980s by Meier. Gaby Agis introduced the work to Britain, after encountering it in New York, Gaby Agis, interview by Doran George, September 7th, 2012. Similarly, Skinner's Releasing technique was only taught in the Netherlands because of visiting artists from New York such as Stephanie Skura and Meier.

⁵²² Fulkerson and De Groot both developed Somatic pedagogies in the 1960s but were not recognized to the same degree as Skinner, for example, within the transnational community because they were located in British and Dutch hubs rather than New York City. Feldenkrais technique, developed in Israel, has only really become a significant player in the 21st century.

⁵²³ The link is exemplified in the way that 1970s practitioners understood the training to be crucial to Brown's choreography, which was recapitulated in the 1990s with Stephen Petronio's work. Brown's artistic approach was associated with Somatics because from the late 1970s onwards dancers taught her choreography along with Somatic ideas as I have articulated in chapter 1. Brown's dances also seemed to exhibit Somatic aptitudes in the way that the look of the movement contrasted with classical and modern approaches, for example, Betsy Gregory described Brown's work as a "fast and floppy" body in game or accumulations structures. Gregory, "Letters from America."

⁵²⁴ As well as not giving company class, as I chronicle in chapter 1, Brown asked her dancers to teach the repertory outside the company. Left to their devices, Brown's dancers practiced and taught Alexander and Klein Technique, which became associated with Brown's choreography. I have also referred in chapter 1 to the fact that many trained in or became devotees of Klein and Alexander techniques which they incorporated into their teaching.

⁵²⁵ De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington."

⁵²⁶ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 83.

example, dancers associated both Brown and Paxton with Judson, which meant they saw commercial success and investigation as conjoined in Gotham's artistic culture. Innovation and professionalism thus fused together in New York's transnational significance.

Notwithstanding the foreign misrecognition of analogousness between contrasting approaches, New York's material circumstances also fomented a connection between innovation and professionalism. Gotham's dancers enjoyed the opportunity to commit themselves to Somatics to a greater degree than those in other contexts. The high levels of interest granted teachers the opportunity to tailor classes and scheduling to provide regular training for dancers, including the translation of regimens not originally designed for dance. For example, chapter 1 chronicles June Ekman's application of Alexander Technique to dance, along with the adaption by Eva Karczag, Patty Giavenco, and Ellen's Webb of André Bernard's interpretation of Mabel Ellsworth Todd's work. Dancers in other hubs used these techniques, but New York's volume of activity was unique, and, particularly as the field grew, practitioners became devotees of particular regimens.⁵²⁷ Some training emerged precisely because of the level of interest, such as BMC, which Bainbridge Cohen attributes to the input of dancers.⁵²⁸ During the 1970s, she inaugurated a studio in the city, as did Topf, and Klein. Dancers capitalized on the available resources, even pursuing teacher accreditation in Somatics while performing, which, as the field developed, resulted in the knitting together of the regimens with new vocabulary such as

⁵²⁷ [Bainbridge-Cohen's first students developed Body-Mind Centering (BMC) with her for eight years, at the end of which time she accredited them as teachers. Greenburg, Madden, and Nelson devoted themselves to Klein's work, pursuing teacher training for 5 years with uncertain outcomes. Klein actually rapidly rescinded Greenburg's initial accreditation, and the studio was surrounded by lore its protectionism, and the enormous commitment demanded of those engaged in teacher training. Neil Greenberg, interview by Doran George, August 19th, 2011.

⁵²⁸ BMC started out as an experiment in body-mind therapy and became a coherent system based on the contribution of dancers who attended the classes in the early 1970s. In the same era Klein, Topf, and Lepkoff, were teaching classes for professionals and developed approaches tailored specifically for dance, all of which I have chronicled in chapter 1.

Brown's and Petronio's.⁵²⁹ All in all, the application of Somatics to dance reached levels of sophistication in New York that weren't possible in hubs with smaller communities using the regimens.

New York's unmatched volume of activity engendered a rich discourse as artists discussed the value of regimens for distinct professional demands. To the degree that Manhattan saw choreography that was influenced by various regimens, dancers exchanged ideas and disagreed about their experience of the training. Such a focus contrasted with Britain, Holland and Australia, where pioneers had to fight to establish a place for Somatics within newly emerging modern dance scenes, or rationalize the value of the training for higher education. The students populating classes that artists ran independently in the non-American sites sometimes came in search of "New Age" culture, and had little interest in professional dance and often limited experience.⁵³⁰ The historical unevenness in modern dance therefore meant that beyond New York, Somatics lacked the same focus on professional dance.

Professionalism asserted itself again through Gotham dancers' choice to continue training in ballet alongside Somatics. Klein technique, which was strongly associated with New York and secured its credibility through a 1990s affiliation with Brown and Petronio, exhibited this tendency by including balletic exercises and therefore seeming to prioritize technical

⁵²⁹ Shelly Senter, Irene Hultman, and Eva Karczag all trained in Alexander technique while dancing for Brown. And in the same company Madden began her Klein teacher training with Greenburg who had danced for Cunningham, and Nelson the Petronio dancer. Meanwhile KJ Holms and Roseanne Spradlin certified in BMC, while Skura certified in Skinner Releasing Technique.

⁵³⁰ De Groot reports that many of her students were not concerned with dance as a serious endeavor, which contributed to her isolation in the Netherlands, and possibly influenced her commitment to working in an institutional modern dance program despite difficulties. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Miranda Tufnell, who I talk about in chapter 3, recalls that a significant proportion of the students in the Britain were "new-agey." De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 159. Australians attending Somatics in the 1970s were also those interested in the alternative healing scene as much as dance. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

excellence.⁵³¹ Brown's and Petronio's dancers used the technique to cultivate precision, endurance, extension and elevation while sustaining the connection to gravity that is so central to Somatics. So while sharing principles with other approaches, Klein insisted her training applies to all styles, which spoke to New Yorkers who continued to train classically.⁵³² Her technique ascended in the 1990s as part of the diminishment of a distinction between Somatic-informed vocabulary and classical and modern dance, addressed in chapter 3.⁵³³ In the 1990s Klein asserted exceptional professionalism by distinguishing herself from "releasing," and thereby disowning the rejection of modern and classical aesthetics on which most Somatics was initially hinged.⁵³⁴

Even East Village artists, who critiqued the movement vocabularies on large concert stages and resisted commercialism, still focused on professionalism by distancing Somatics from its association with personal development. Dancers in New England and other reaches of the CI network, cultivated therapeutic community with the psychological emphasis in BMC and Authentic Movement, which they also applied to improvising in their duet form. For example, 1987 subscribers to *Contact Quarterly (CQ)* read a talk on "Physical Movement and Personality"

⁵³¹ Workshops that Brown and Petronio or their company taught with the school cemented the idea that above all the other Somatic approaches Klein technique was directed to contemporary dance professionalism. For example in April 1993, Trisha Brown Dance Company ran a workshop through Movement Research of which Klein's teaching was an explicit part, then in September the same year Petronio gave a Movement Research workshop with Klein. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal." Klein also worked in some rehearsals with Brown's company. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

⁵³² Classical training was not taboo for New Yorkers as it was in the Netherlands. In chapter 1 I talked about how Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs took ballet alongside new training. Later in the 20th century Janet Panetta became an important ballet teacher for Anne Iobst from DANCENOISE Neil Greenberg, and Jane Comfort, all of who were also working with Somatics. Neil Greenberg, email to author, October 14th 2013. Cynthia Hedstrom and Stephanie Skura also recall combining Somatics with ballet rather than opposing them. Cynthia Hedstrom (dancer with Lucinda Childs), email to author, 10th December, 2011; and Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁵³³ Daly, *Critical Gestures*, 190.

⁵³⁴ Klein claimed her approach supports dancers' execution of any "style" including Graham, Cunningham, and Limón, as well as CI and Brown's vocabulary, while the releasing approaches marked a departure from the modern dance vocabularies. Klein, "Klein Technique Application."

by Mary Starks Whitehouse,⁵³⁵ an editorial decision that supports Cynthia Novack's conviction that dancers acknowledged the therapeutic benefits of CI. Arguing this was heightened in the mid-1980s, Novack quotes a practitioner who "suggested that contact 'puts you in touch with something experienced as a child with a parent—it's a nurturing kind of dance.'"⁵³⁶ By strong contrast, Houston-Jones, Monson and Meier in particular, used the same techniques in the 1980s to create confrontational artistic products, which, while challenging the aesthetics that were becoming institutionalized, did so as a provocative theatrical force.

Also largely an East Village endeavor, Movement Research, from its 1970s beginnings, exhibited an emphasis on professionalism and innovation in the use of Somatics.⁵³⁷ Started as a collective service organization, Movement Research initially consolidated the field simply by registering the classes, workshops and other information pertaining to artists' independent activity, which is not dissimilar to one of the functions that *CQ* fulfilled.⁵³⁸ Yet it grew exponentially throughout the 1980s, accessing larger amounts of funding, programming its own daily technique classes and workshops, as well as organizing performances and public symposia, and hiring an executive director.⁵³⁹ Through its prominent role in supporting New York dance as well as in shaping the debate with the topics of discussion put forward, Movement Research

⁵³⁵ Mary Starks Whitehouse, "Physical Movement and Personality: A Talk Given in 1965," *Contact Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1987).

⁵³⁶ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 170.

⁵³⁷ The organization was inaugurated in the 1970s to register classes in the city's privately leased lofts and other spaces. Lepkoff, Hedstrom, and Mary Overlie aimed to prevent overlap in scheduling, which they remedied while also publicizing the information to dancers about what was on offer. Mary Overlie, interview by Doran George, August 6th, 2011.

⁵³⁸ *MRPJ* was initially very similar in nature to *Contact Newsletter*, later *Contact Quarterly (CQ)*, which is not surprising given the involvement of dancers from the same community such as Lepkoff, who was a strong proponent of the anti-commercialism of CI. Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Founded as collective for 20 artists, Movement Research's rapid growth and expansion exemplifies its professionalism. By 1982 it had begun the Studies Project symposia, aimed at raising critical issues, the following year it began the Open Performance series, and by 1987 Richard Elovich was hired as the first Executive Director who's explicit aim was to expand the organization. The operating budget went from \$8,811 in 1978 to \$160,100 in 1990. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Timeline," Movement Research, <http://www.movementresearch.org/aboutus/MR%20Timeline-FNL.pdf>.

validated the teachers and dancers it selected. Being programmed by the organization came to signify having achieved a level of success. From a collective of artists sharing information about classes, Movement Research ultimately established a legitimizing role for itself.

Yet, unlike many other collectives initiated in the 1970s, the organization remained under artists' creative control, sustaining its reputation as supporting innovation.⁵⁴⁰ Despite changes in the organizational structure, artists continued to program a significant dimension of Movement Research's activity.⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, the publication *Movement Research Performance Journal (MRPJ)*, which was inaugurated under Richard Elovich's 1990s leadership and became a mouthpiece for the community, exhibited the collective spirit of the organization by expressing conflicting opinions⁵⁴². Movement Research also framed itself as dedicated to investigation rather than production through its programming, which I address more deeply in the next section on New England.⁵⁴³ The emphasis on collective investigation granted dancers the space to use the organization as a platform to express their resentment about the copyrighting of ideas by Somatic pioneers when certification programs began to emerge in the 1990s.⁵⁴⁴ The hostility toward commercialization reflects Elovich's tenure, which Movement Research itself represents as "characterized by an activist's agency . . . by relating

⁵⁴⁰ Dance Theatre Workshop (now New York Live Arts or DTW/NYLA), and PS122 had artistic directors making curatorial choices by the late 1980s. Foster, *Dances That Describe Themselves*, 123.

⁵⁴¹ A board, made up of artists, still makes significant programming decisions such as the themes of the studies project and who will be presented. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author."

⁵⁴² *MRPJ*, which began in the 1980s, is a mouthpiece through which Movement Research represented its collective nature. Rolling guest editors address themes, current for the community, expressed in shared and conflicting opinions, which contrast with the single vision of an artistic director.

⁵⁴³ *MRPJ* evidences that Movement Research has consistently programmed artists such as Forti and Paxton regardless of whether they were being taken notice of in the rest of the dance world. Also the organization had programmed a variety of teachers emphasizing an investigative approach.

⁵⁴⁴ Skinner established a certification program in Seattle, Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." Bainbridge Cohen did the same in upstate New York. Mark Taylor, (dancer and BMC teacher) email to author, July 3rd, 2014. Susan Klein established the same in New York but when she tried to exert copyright over the ideas dancers criticized her including letters in *MRPJ* contesting her claim to particular phrases or ideas. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal," 3.Issue 18 Winter/Spring 1999

[the organization] to the current political climate of NYC.”⁵⁴⁵ The institution therefore reflected the agendas of artists like Houston-Jones and Monson, who infused 1980s Somatics with political critique, as chapter 3 chronicles. By advocating for artists’ exploration while also consolidating and refining the field, Movement Research escalated the emphasis in New York Somatics on innovation and professionalism.

Transnational Role

New York’s significance supported the development of Somatics on a transnational scale. From the 1970s onwards, various artists who linked themselves with the city secured employment in all the transnational hubs.⁵⁴⁶ At a time when Somatics was largely unknown, Australian and Dutch artists gained support for the training in their respective countries by using credentials they had earned training and performing with choreographers such as Graham and Hawkins.⁵⁴⁷ Although this strategy had no purchase in Britain because the establishment was familiar with and hostile to Somatics, avant-garde dancers still endorsed to a greater degree pedagogy and performance that was linked with New York Somatics.⁵⁴⁸ Gotham symbolized a

⁵⁴⁵ "Movement Research Timeline".

⁵⁴⁶ Artists benefited from linking themselves to Judson. Fulkerson and Cone in the 1970s, and Rolland, Kraus and Karczag in the 1980s all secured positions in the Netherlands, and a slew of artists were employed temporarily throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Europe and Australia.

⁵⁴⁷ De Groot was asked to help establish a modern dance program in the Amsterdam State Conservatory for the arts in part because she studied at the Graham school and performed for Limón and Hawkins. She introduced Somatics instead of modern dance, but interest in her contribution was associated with New York centered American modern dance, even though time spent with Halprin in California also influenced her. De Groot, "Interview with Author." Press and state-funders initially took *Dance Exchange* seriously because the collective’s members had danced for well-known New Yorkers, and subsequently Karczag’s insistence on the value of Somatics was understood as part of sophistication about dance gained being in New York, all of which I address further below.

⁵⁴⁸ British Somatics also sustained an emphasis on New York that was initiated when Graham protégé’s Robert Cohen and Bonnie Bird became instrumental in the development of contemporary dance education in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although the British dance establishment was initially very resistant to Somatics, artists who had spent time in New York gained cache in the avant-garde. Rosemary Lee recalls in the mid-1980s feeling she had more status because she had been in NYC, which indicated she had more experience. British dancers interested in Somatics understood New York as the origin of the work and sought training from artists who had drank from the source. Rosemary Lee, interview by Doran George, 21st - 29th July 2012.

creative and pedagogical resource for marginalized British artists.⁵⁴⁹ In both cases the Big Apple's symbolic value catalyzed the entry of Somatics into emerging contemporary dance scenes. Relationships forged in New York signified a shared understanding about dance, which contributed to the dissemination of Somatics. For example, educators trained in Somatics secured positions in higher education by word-of-mouth, through connections made in or associated with New York.⁵⁵⁰ From the early 1970s, loose networks based on time dancers had spent in Gotham, or through connections they had with artists from the city, also increasingly thrived.⁵⁵¹ Linchpin events for the transnational development of Somatics, such as Dartington Festival, fed upon Gotham's mythic status.⁵⁵² Artists who were isolated in their domestic contexts affirmed the value of their endeavors by presenting to the festival community, while New York Somatics functioned as the referent for what put them at odds at home. For artists contending against their domestic establishments, the city symbolized the potential for the fruition of dissident projects.

With its self-image as the center of innovation and professionalism, New York was largely oblivious to the geo-Somatic bodies in transnational contexts beyond America.⁵⁵³ Yet

⁵⁴⁹ For example, Paxton met Fulkerson while on tour with Cunningham's company at the University of Illinois, and subsequently helped her secure her first post at Rochester. His position as an innovator in his own right, and member of a revered company were both associated with New York dance and afforded him such influence. It was because of a connection that Fulkerson made with Hassall at Cunningham's studio that she eventually became the director of dance at Dartington College in South West England. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁵⁵¹ For example, British dancer Mary Prestige reported in *NDM* about Finnish artist Ulla Koivisto who she had met in New York. She insisted that reconnection with the artist strengthened each of their artistic resolve to push ahead despite hostility on home turf. Mary Prestige, "On the Road," *New Dance Magazine* 16, no. Autumn (1980).

⁵⁵² Dartington festival evidenced New York's symbolic role, because despite the rural location, many artists had made initial connections in Gotham or found relationships based on pedagogical or aesthetic lineages associated with the city. Artists from continental Europe, isolated at home, also reconnected with people and a set of beliefs they first encountered in New York; or they travelled to the city to experience the work rather than settle with second-hand versions in Europe.

⁵⁵³ The absence of reference to other contexts as productive of particular ideas in *MRPJ* attests to the fact that the city was not concerned with the discourse of other transnational hubs. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal."

because dancers depended upon proving an international rather than domestic focus of their work, Britain and Holland were important for New Yorkers. Artists who were not circulating in large concert spaces verified their resistance toward domestic mainstream values and their international relevance by teaching and performing for small-scale foreign organizations. With paid employment abroad, New Yorkers affirmed their cutting-edge status, while earning revenue and the confidence to pursue their work and establish significance at home. Yet they only seemed to notice European dance when it posed competition for the symbolic status of their city as the center of innovation.⁵⁵⁴ That foreign artists rarely taught in Gotham may reflect the city's belief in its creative superiority, but it could also be because British, Dutch and Australian levels of state funding were higher than those in America.⁵⁵⁵ The resources were perhaps more available to fly Americans to foreign contexts, and artists abroad were less likely to seek teaching opportunities in New York. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, the disparity in who was teaching where contributed to the direction of ideas outward from Gotham.

In the final analysis, New York's innovative and professional Somatic body cannot be separated from accelerated commercialization in the field beginning in the 1970s. The early 1960s anti-virtuoso projects avoided large venues, but by the late 1970s artists who had engaged in such experimentation, such as Brown and Lucinda Childs, choreographed Somatics into a

⁵⁵⁴ The obliviousness of New York to ideas in other transnational hubs is evident from the way that when Europe achieved significance in the city in the 21st century it was more as a threat of artistic competition. When Europe had become a powerful force in the international contemporary dance circuit with conceptual dance, some artists associated with the East Village asserted a patriotic insistence that New York has as much creative innovation. Miguel Gutierrez, for example ran, "Young Americans," which was billed as a way to show that "we" can do what the Europeans are doing just as well. And festivals like American Realness show a consciousness of Europe as a significant artistic force by defining the national character of their artists' innovation. Gabriela Pawelec, "Tomorrow's Choreographers Danspace Project Brings Together Young Artists in Innovative Dances," *Gay City News*, 3-9 February 2005.

⁵⁵⁵ I need to do more research to establish the nature of this pattern.

new virtuosity in major theaters.⁵⁵⁶ As I detail in chapter 1, this change in contexts dovetailed with the increasing use of commercial and institutional structures by pioneers and teachers to expand their projects, contributing to the impressive diversity of techniques that Gotham housed from the 1980s onward. Creativity therefore linked itself with commercial success in New York Somatics, and thus the natural body presented itself as a site of mutual co-creation between individual freedom and capitalist industry, embodying a key principle of American liberalism. As we will see, with New York's significance as the center of the transnational network, the Somatic bodies in all the other hubs emerged in relation to the naturalization of this expansionist ideology.

New England Somatics: The Body in Artistic Respite

New England Somatics positioned itself against its New York counterpart. Beginning in the 1970s, dancers and educators constructed a body associated with rural living that purportedly recuperated integrity, deemed essential for innovation, yet which commercialism and professionalism thwarted. They rejected conventional ideas about success to which New York Somatics had calibrated itself, and focused on rigorous experimentation against the encroachment of the dance establishment and mainstream culture. Yet by doing so, New England Somatics contributed to the predominance of liberal ideology in contemporary dance. Artists participated in the cultural dissidence associated with the 1970s "back to the land" movement, which Donna Brown describes as the symbolic exodus of white, middle class Americans to rural environments, renouncing the mainstream culture of commercially

⁵⁵⁶ The difference between experiments in the early 1960s and the late 1970s is particularly striking in a comparison of Forti's "Dance Constructions" with Brown's "Glacial Decoy," and Childs "Dance" both of which premiered in 1979 and I consider with some depth in chapter 3. For dates of premiers and other details on Brown see: Trisha Brown Dance Company, "Trisha Brown Dance Company," www.trishabrowncompany.org and for Childs see: Lucinda Childs, "Lucinda Childs Dance," <http://www.lucindachilds.com/>.

dominated environments. ⁵⁵⁷In *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America*, she notes that aiming to escape the suburbs with which they associated “mindless consumerism and a soul-destroying culture of conformity[,] . . . back-to-the-landers . . . perceived a return to the land as safeguarding their personal and political independence.”⁵⁵⁸ By rejecting prevailing expectations about how ordinary people organize their lives, dancers and back-to-the-landers asserted their right to go against the grain, and reanimated another key tenet of liberalism of insisting that the individual must be protected from unchecked commerce.⁵⁵⁹ By restoring the authentic natural body, which allegedly predates consumerism, New England Somatics interlaced itself with the back-to-the-land movement.

Much like the back-to-the-land movement, New England Somatics incited as much, if not more, of a symbolic relationship between dancing and rural life than the actual organization of radically different dance economy than in New York. Brown laments that many Americans “hoped one day to go back to the land, but in the end they simply went back to work,” even though they consumed the associated culture through various publications.⁵⁶⁰ Similarly many dancers no more than identified with returning to nature through key figures who actually based themselves in provincial and rural spaces to the north of New York. Even artists living in New England kept a relationship with dance in the Big Apple, and depended on employment in higher education for income as well as space for exploration. Paxton, Forti, Lepkoff, Nelson and Deborah Hay based themselves in rural Vermont and neighboring states, while in Northampton,

⁵⁵⁷ Brown cites one 1973 study that found the back-to-landers of the decade were “overwhelmingly white, under thirty, and from economically, educationally, and socially privileged families.” Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 206.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 210-11.

⁵⁵⁹ Guilbaut narrates disagreement within the emerging postwar discourse on liberalism about the role of capitalism. But he points out that, although Schlesinger’s *Vita Center* disbanded with the mistrust of large monopolies that was embodied in F. D. Roosevelt’s pre-war New Deal, it still paid lip-service to American’s mistrust of unchecked commerce by proposing a mixed economy. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole. . . Modern Art*, 191.

⁵⁶⁰ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 9.

Massachusetts, Bainbridge-Cohen relocated her school for BMC, and Nancy Stark Smith inaugurated *CQ*. Yet many of these artists retained real estate in New York, and they all kept artistic connections with the city.⁵⁶¹ Nevertheless, along with some independent activity, artists found employment at Bennington, the five colleges, as well as in other dance programs, and New England Somatics established a semi-autonomous network with distinct values from Gotham dance. Artists based in the region introduced their university students to research rather than training them for existing companies, while New York-based dancers escaped north to recuperate from the city by what they saw as rediscovering their natural integrity.

Other regions around the United States held similar symbolic significance. But the proximity of New England to the Big Apple afforded it a privileged position in the transnational network. Although I don't wish to gloss over the distinct specificities of other American regions, my analysis of New England Somatics stands in, to some degree, for other areas beyond New York that contributed meaning to the development of Somatics. For example, the University of Illinois functioned as an important hub while Skinner was there, and when she subsequently based her training in Seattle, the association of the city with nature contributed to the understanding of her technique.⁵⁶² However, it is important to note that San Francisco, for example, spawned a Somatic body that, through its interface with the city's "sex positive" culture, diverged dramatically from the implementation of the regimens in both New York and

⁵⁶¹ Goren reports that Forti and Lepkoff retained residencies in New England and New York which they managed by subletting. They continued to teach and perform in New York along with Paxton who was a member of the New York dance collective Grand Union. Goren, "In Discussion with the Author."

⁵⁶² For example, Skura, who became an important teacher and proponent of Skinner Releasing, associates the nature-based imagery in Skinner's work with the pioneer's location in Seattle, ultimately moving to the region herself to escape the demands of New York life. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

New England.⁵⁶³ Yet to the degree that the aim of respite from professionalism demonstrates regional variation in American Somatics, New England is undoubtedly the most vivid and influential example.

Somatics and the 1970s back-to-the-land movement shared the construction of nature in a number of ways that seemed to make the connection between artistic integrity and rural living indisputable. For practitioners in both cultures, naturalness signified a timeless but also novel solution to the problems of contemporary life. Like contemporaneous Somatics, the late 20th century back-to-land movement constructed respite in nature as being newly discovered.⁵⁶⁴ They recycled the late 19th century idea that the ills of capitalism could be countered with rural self-sufficiency, paralleling their dancing contemporaries who drew on the Progressive era idea that restoring natural propensities overcomes the ill effects of Victorian department.⁵⁶⁵ Yet Brown points out that in the popular imagination, the idealization of rural living got associated with the 1960s; the era for which Joni Mitchell's lyric "got to get back to the land, and set my soul free" has become paradigmatic.⁵⁶⁶ Dancers and back-to-the-landers reconstructed existing ideas of nature to find a sense of personal authenticity that afforded spiritual rejuvenation and

⁵⁶³ The sexualized Somatic body represents contrasts with the approaches developed everywhere else in the network. Artists explored ideas related to the "polyamory" movement and the fetish sex movement through CI and Somatics at the 848 community space. I have not included this in the dissertation because of the timing of my research in this area. However, for more information about this work Dance Theatre Journal has a whole issue devoted to the subject, Doran George, "Guest Editorial 1: Forget Provocation Let's Have Sex," *Dance Theatre Journal* 25, no. 2 (2013). 848 also published a collection of writing Rachel; Keith Hennessy Kaplan, *More out Than In: Notes on Sex, Art, and Community* (San Francisco: Abundant Fuck Publications, 1995).

⁵⁶⁴ Duncan contrasted a harmonious nature with the discord of rapid urbanization. Daly, *Done into Dance*. Furthermore, Jane Desmond points out that in the same era it was thought that time spent in large open green spaces would ameliorate working class unrest resulting from the newly concentrated labor of industrial life. Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 159.

⁵⁶⁵ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 71.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

constituted political activism.⁵⁶⁷ The two movements shared the conviction that reconnecting with an essential way of living restores personal autonomy, which toward the end of the 1970s seemed to be under attack in Somatics from commercialism and institutionalization, while a broader counter-culture identified greater threats from the American government.⁵⁶⁸ Etched as it was into the history of modern dance and the American left, the metaphor of nature appeared a self-evident means by which to escape contemporary disillusionment. For dancers, rural and provincial New England thus presented itself as a garden in which to reconnect with bodily nature, unfettered by the social complexities of New York.

To construct New England Somatics, dancers sustained the trope of iconoclasm that had established itself in postwar modern dance, and was also key for the back-to-the-land movement. With so many Americans dreaming of rural living without the means or commitment to do so, some of those who succeeded achieved mythic status as examples to which others could look.⁵⁶⁹ Similarly, artists living in remote New England became iconic of flouting the need for success, when other artists were using Somatics to achieve professional recognition. Through “opting-out,” well-known New Englanders, despite sustaining a Gotham presence, signified integrity to dancers in the city.⁵⁷⁰ They seemed to cultivate a practice that was less affected by the problems

⁵⁶⁷ Brown's account of back-to-land ideals bears striking similarity with the values Novack identifies in the CI community. Both communities felt that by opting out they were staging political activism and engaging in spiritual rejuvenation. Ibid., Novack, *Sharing the Dance*.

⁵⁶⁸ The movement might be more appropriately seen as a response to the end of the 1960s, marked by the Kent State University massacre, Watergate, and the 1973 oil embargo. The back-to-the-land movement expressed disillusion with the American government and commerce in the 1970s and was connected with Buddhism, pacifism, anarchism, and collectivism; ideologies that influenced avant-garde dancers working with Somatics, for whom disillusionment was with modern dance. Brown, *Back to the Land*, 215.

⁵⁶⁹ A number of couples that succeeded at rural living as a life change established their iconic status in the movement by publishing or reissuing books in the 1970s. Ibid., 205.

⁵⁷⁰ Paxton, Lepkoff, Forti, Hay, Stark-Smith and Lisa Nelson all continued to perform and teach in New York after basing themselves for some or all of the time in New England. These artists tended to focus on improvisational or other approaches that emphasized the idea of process, and seemed more concerned with the experience of the dancer. See my discussion of Paxton and Forti's work in the other chapters, and, for example, Foster's discussion of Hay's work. Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 7-9.

of professional dance, such as those arising in the 1980s, at a time when dancers became concerned that Somatics was losing critical potential through imitation of a “release style.” The symbolic value of rural living contributed to the reputation of artists like Paxton and Forti, who cultivated unique practices in their solo improvising and teaching. As the century progressed, New England Somatics provided a home for a 1970s style of investigation that was increasingly displaced by the repetition of set choreography.⁵⁷¹

Other solo improvisers also distanced themselves from New York professionalism, but were based in other contexts. Nonetheless, British artists like Laurie Booth, Julyen Hamilton and Kirstie Simpson, still benefitted from the CI network for employment, which, as I establish below, meant that they also accrued an association with New England. By refusing to form companies based on the style of the choreographer, as so many dancers began to do in the 1980s, artists whose practices were associated with life beyond the city secured the reputation of being iconoclastic, much like Cunningham had in the mid-1960s for resisting the dance establishment’s protocols for modernism. Regardless of their locations, these artists verified their integrity by seeming to function beyond commercialism even while they remained engaged, if marginally, in the economies of contemporary dance.

Much like the fantasy of living beyond the reaches of the state and capitalism, however, the idea of working beyond the clutches of commercialism and the institution was mostly symbolic. To sustain a rural dance practice required either independent wealth, or a substantial income that didn’t impose the time constraints of most conventional employment.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Paxton’s “Material for the Spine” focuses on embodying movement principles often through executing very few kinetic forms, such as a series of rolls. Steve Paxton, *Material for the Spine - Steve Paxton* (Brussels: Contradanse Bursels, 2008), DVD-rom, 4 hours. While Forti taught animal movement forms by having students visit the zoo, as she did at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem in the 1990s. I witnessed this as a student when Forti visited EDDC in 1993.

⁵⁷² A 1973 study of back-to-the-landers that dubs them “children of prosperity. Brown, *Back to the Land*, 74.

Consequently, New York dancers behaved like tourists, leaving the city for short periods with romantic notions of what the land had to offer, rarely confronted with its oft-harsh realities. Capitalizing on the idea of rural respite, they organized and attended Somatic workshops in New England, rejecting urban professionalism with nostalgia for the lost truth of nature that was integral to back-to-the-land rhetoric.⁵⁷³ Meanwhile, artists who signified the possibility of New England Somatics by basing themselves permanently in rural settings often enjoyed reputations through which they remained connected with metropolitan art worlds. Paxton, for example, who actually ran a farm, continued to be employed throughout the transnational network after moving to rural Vermont in the 1970s, an experience that contrasts with Skura, who found that when she moved to the countryside around Seattle in the 1990s, sustaining the level of interest in her work she had enjoyed in New York became increasingly hard.⁵⁷⁴ The disparity in their experience probably reflects the difference in their status because unlike Skura, a second-generation experimental artist, Paxton rapidly came to be seen as a pioneer and an icon of new practices associated with Judson. With a few exceptions then, New England Somatics did little more than extend modern dance's tradition of artists retreating from urban life to nurture artistic integrity.⁵⁷⁵

However, regardless of the realities of artists' lives, by signifying the return to the body's essence, New England Somatics established a unique character for itself. In their focus

⁵⁷³ Bainbridge Cohen moved her school from Manhattan to Amherst in the late 1970s, Goren, "In Discussion with the Author." Topf, Lepkoff, Rolland, and Palludan ran the "Putney Workshop" in Vermont during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Holmes, "(Improviser and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." In the 1970s Karczag, Ellen Webb and Patty Giavenco, spent a summer in a barn loft in Vermont developing a way to teach Ideokinesis for movement. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁵⁷⁴ Paxton comments "12 years of being right under NY's nose and being ignored turned into 45 years of living in a wild splendid place and lots of work, especially in Europe. Go figure." Steve Paxton, e-mail correspondence with the author, 27th June 2013. Stephanie Skura had the opposite experience. Stephanie Skura, e-mail correspondence with the author, 12th March 2014.

⁵⁷⁵ In 1931 Ted Shawn purchased Jacob's Pillow farm to develop his company. Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 161.

on authenticity and integrity through training, some dancers privileged the discovery of natural imperatives above the act of performing—unique for a regimen in Western concert dance.⁵⁷⁶ The correlation between therapy and dancing made by members of the CI network probably extends from this tendency in New England Somatics. Furthermore, images of agrarian lifestyles entered the language of training through the idea that ongoing labor in rural living is dictated by the seasons, which parallels the Somatic idea that bodily authenticity and autonomy are ‘recovered’ through connecting with natural imperatives.⁵⁷⁷ Artists also changed the organization of concerts to emphasize the act of dancing over the design of choreography, stressing that the performers were connecting with natural imperatives that could not be contained by tightly defined compositional structures. I address this idea in greater detail in chapter 3 as a choreographic strategy called “processing.”⁵⁷⁸ Even though it was not always associated with the particular region, New England Somatics thus resonated on a transnational scale with the idea that natural imperatives bolstered by rural and provincial living serve a critique of professionalism and offer resources for innovation.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ KJ Holmes recalls that, while participating in the Putney Workshop, she had misgivings about whether to accept Laurie Booth’s invitation to perform in his presentation at the retreat. She felt that the demands of performance would undermine her investigation, a perspective that was supported by her teachers and colleagues. Holmes, "(Improviser and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." The support she received, and the appreciation of her justification would be almost unthinkable in dance forms such as ballet, tap, and modern. The only conceivable reason for turning down an opportunity to perform would be injury, or perhaps that the choreographer was not considered as the right caliber.

⁵⁷⁷ Paxton used metaphors from rural activity to explain the function of physical principles in the body. He proposed that students could understand corporeal efficiency by imagining how use of the knowledge of levers and fulcrums could facilitate shoveling earth. I experienced him using these ideas when he was teaching in Arnhem in 1993. The idea that nature is a site at which a basic truth of the body is revealed through animal behavior, weather, and plant growth are metaphors that were liberally used throughout the late 20th century. Joan Skinner’s lexicon of poetic imagery is another good example. Skura, "Releasing Dance," 13.

⁵⁷⁸ I look at Paxton’s 1970s performance that connected directly connected his home in Vermont to his New York artistic community "Grand Union," in chapter 3. CI as a movement engages in this process more generally. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*.

⁵⁷⁹ Halprin’s independent endeavor at her San Francisco outdoor studio modeled the idea of independence from professional dance coupled with a relationship to the natural environment. And the director of the EDDC in Arnhem bought a farm in New England where students would go to do projects with visiting faculty, which I witnessed as a student at EDDC from 1992-1996. In the UK, artists attended workshops that were run at the remote

Distinctions between the Massachusetts publisher of *Contact Quarterly* (*CQ*) and Movement Research exemplify some concrete effects of the divergence between New York and New England Somatics. Both organizations started in the 1970s as registers for classes, but when Movement Research began programming, its relationship to its artistic community contrasted with that of the New England publishers known as Contact Editions.⁵⁸⁰ Dancers had started *CQ* to avoid professionalizing CI, whereas, all things considered, Movement Research moved toward professionalization. Novack points out that influential figures in CI exerted influence through *CQ*, which allowed them to avoid copyrighting the form or establishing teacher accreditation, as the articles they published directed dancers toward an idea of good practice. They could also track the developing community through *CQ*'s event register.⁵⁸¹ The events *CQ* listed tended to invite participation regardless of dancers' level of experience, which differed from the professional program that Movement Research ultimately offered and advertised. Furthermore, while *MRPJ* opined on activism, following executive director Elovich's lead, the discussion related to political confrontation in performance, contrasting with the discourse on the therapeutic aspects of CI and Somatics seen in *CQ*. When it addressed physical practice, *MRPJ* largely focused directed itself to the production of performance. Some of these differences probably arose because the papers, being cognizant of each other and sharing some readership, aimed to sustain a distinction. What is more, the contrast between the

Scottish retreat of Findhorn. Findhorn Foundation, "Findhorn Foundation," Findhorn Foundation, <http://www.findhorn.org/>.

⁵⁸⁰ Contact editions emerged out of the collective that published Contact Newsletter, which later became *CQ*. The organization predated Movement Research by four years, and served as a model for the New York organization. Lepkoff, who was one of the collective that began Movement Research, was also involved with what became *CQ*. Ibid., 88.

⁵⁸¹ Novack argues that *CQ* solved dancers desire to protect CI's integrity by rejecting hierarchical and commercial modes of professionalization when the form spread and developed. Dancers skill sets showed marked differences as virtuosity emerged, which seemed to contradict the inclusive ethics. Yet the first generation wanted to sustain good teaching practice as the community of teachers extended beyond dancers of whom they were aware. The use of the journal as a mouthpiece for the pioneers, allowed them to exert influence without imposing a rules. Ibid., 82.

two organizations was anything but clear-cut because the East Village and the CI network more than overlapped.⁵⁸² However, it is fair to say that, by asserting its aims through the tropes associated with New England, *CQ* represented a community that saw itself as less interested in and even more suspicious of professionalism than *MRPJ*.

New England asserted its greater emphasis on resisting professionalism with the back-to-the-land trope of economic self-sufficiency, which actually serviced some of the needs of East Village dance.⁵⁸³ Teaching and performance connected to rural spaces accrued the aura of reflecting the personal integrity of artists to a greater degree by having developed independently. Relative to the supposed tyranny of commercial and institutional encroachment, New England Somatics seemed to claim access to bodily authenticity with greater ease; even if this meant that dancers beyond New York seemed more often to calibrate the regimens toward personal therapeutic concerns, losing artistic rigor, as with the difference between the East Village and the CI use of Authentic Movement. Yet artists whose reputation was unshaken by basing themselves in the pastoral regions north of the Big Apple, such as Paxton, Hay, Forti, Nelson, Stark Smith, and Lepkoff, when they taught in the East Village contexts brought with them the significance of artistic integrity.⁵⁸⁴ By connecting itself with New England Somatics, Movement Research seemed to retain a connection to earlier phases of experimentation, and the aura of

⁵⁸² *CQ*'s reach was national and to some degree international, compared with the local activity to which *MRPJ* and Movement Research directed themselves. It would have therefore been impossible for Contact Editions to regulate classes and workshops in the way that New York organization did. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 87.

⁵⁸³ Economic independence was an enduring trope in back-to-the-land movements through the late 19th and early 20th century. The 1970s was no different. Brown, *Back to the Land*, 210.

⁵⁸⁴ Artists associated with the Somatic network beyond New York, like Paxton, Nelson, Forti, Lepkoff and Stark Smith, all continued to teach and perform through Movement Research. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal."

independence.⁵⁸⁵ For New Yorkers, the symbolic integrity that they extracted from their rural neighbors promised to fuel innovation in professional dance.

Against the increasing institutionalization of New York Somatics in the 1980s onwards, its New England equivalent claimed particular regimens for personal and artistic integrity. The pattern in the distinction between East Village Authentic Movement, and its CI community corollary repeated, for example, in Bill T. Jones manipulation of CI skills, which so impressed British by emphasizing the endeavor of performance, compared with the use of the duet form for personal satisfaction in the community associated with *CQ*. Furthermore, during the mid-1970s, a rural setting configured itself as the proper context to develop Anatomical Releasing, CI, and other approaches that emphasized exploration. For example, Nancy Topf, Marsha Palludan, and John Rolland, who with Fulkerson pioneered Anatomical Releasing, for several years ran “The Putney Workshop” in rural Vermont along with Lepkoff, Stark Smith and the CI dancer Christina Svane, encouraging students to work with the two forms together.⁵⁸⁶ Dancers who went on to have a lifelong career based on their work with Somatics remember attending the Putney Workshop.⁵⁸⁷ Meanwhile Karczag, along with Giavenco and Webb, also retreated to Vermont to develop a pedagogy based on the teachings of Mabel Ellsworth Todd’s student André Bernard, as I have referred to in chapter 1.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Movement Research accrued significance as critical of professionalism because it programmed East Village and New England-based artists as teachers and in performances. Ibid. As I have pointed out above, when PS122 and DTW appointed artistic directors, Movement research remained an artists’ collective.

⁵⁸⁶ Buckwalter, “Release— a History”.

⁵⁸⁷ Ishmael Houston Jones, and KJ Holmes, who’ve had lifelong careers as teachers and performers, attended the workshop, as did the British improvising soloist Laurie Booth. Holmes, “(Improviser and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author.”

⁵⁸⁸ Karczag, Ellen Webb, and Patty Giavenco worked privately for the summer in a Vermont barn to develop pedagogy for dance from what they were learning in Bernard’s NYU class. Karczag was moving between the UK and Australia at the time, had met Giavenco in South West England through Fulkerson. Karczag, “Interview with Author.”

Related to the rural claim on certain approaches, New England Somatics continued to reject classical training, while Klein's New York-associated technique integrated ballet.⁵⁸⁹ With their initiating ideal of greater accessibility for untrained dancers, Anatomical Releasing, and CI in its "pure" form (that is, not set movement), accrued an association with New England, while the CI network also hosted non-professional performance. New England Somatics therefore expanded the 1960s critique of virtuosity that Banes calls an "anti-hierarchical desire to erase differences between professionals and amateurs," seen for example in "Judson Dance Theatre Performance [that] might deliberately range from highly trained to un-trained." She concludes that "in theory at least, there were no stars," an ethic with which New England Somatics also flattered itself.⁵⁹⁰

With its edict against technical elitism but connection to New York dance, New England provided a gateway for some dancers into lifelong careers. For example, Lepkoff, Bill T. Jones and his dancing partner Arnie Zane, Stephen Petronio, Randy Warshaw, Jennifer Miller and many others, first entered dance through CI. Based on their training in New England Somatics, dancers such as Diane Madden and Lisa Kraus exhibited the skills Brown sought for the work she began making in the late 1970s.⁵⁹¹ The seemingly more inclusive ethics of New England

⁵⁸⁹ Artists such as Lepkoff, Forti, Paxton, Stark Smith, Nelson, Bainbridge Cohen, developed and disseminated what was seen as new vocabulary. Paxton in particular was explicit about his interest in a training regimen that did not entail long, slow, gradual changes in musculature in order for the body to become a good dancer. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 68.

⁵⁹⁰ Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 122 & 12. In her work Fulkerson also amplified dancers' awkward idiosyncrasies in contrast with, for example, the seamless unity of Petronio and Brown's work. Karczag also continued to insist upon the value of movement that contrasted with the elegance of conventionally trained bodies. My understanding of both Fulkerson's and Karczag's perspectives are based on my experience as their student at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem, The Netherlands, from 1992 to 1996. During this time I also performed in Fulkerson's work.

⁵⁹¹ Kraus initially trained in Graham technique before discovering CI and Ideokinesis at Bennington. Kraus, "Interview with the Author." Madden discovered the same techniques as a Hampshire College student after training in ballet in New York. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)." Both women secured positions in Brown's company with the new skills they developed, at a time when the choreographer was looking for dancers who could move more naturally. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 160.

regimens also naturally contributed to New Yorkers' belief that in the regions north of the city they could reconnect with a sense of self not determined by professional demands. As the century progressed, dancers chose either to invest in New York Somatics and develop virtuoso skills to execute what they saw as innovative choreography, or to focus on what they felt was greater personal and artistic integrity with New England Somatics. The differences exhibited themselves in career choices, such as Madden staying with Brown's company in various ways for the rest of her career, and Karczag's decision to leave in the 1980s.⁵⁹²

On the other hand, despite its supposed inclusivity, New England Somatics engendered a purism that also paralleled a similar hankering in the 1970s return to rural living.⁵⁹³ Brown characterizes the movement as infused with "a relentless scrutiny of the personal purity and ideological consistency of back-to-the-landers."⁵⁹⁴ Elitism also emerged in New England Somatics because, as Novack theorizes through her study of CI, values associated with the 1970s, which were difficult to sustain in changing socio-economic circumstances, nevertheless established themselves as a way of life with which dancers identified. She suggests, "the dance form allowed people to invoke a social ambiance from the past."⁵⁹⁵ Yet in its efforts to sustain anti-hierarchical collectivism, New England Somatics framed artists who aimed to reach large

⁵⁹² Madden's and Karczag's career choices reflect such differences. Madden, convinced by New York Somatics, stayed with Brown's company as a rehearsal director after she stopped performing. She became a proponent of Klein technique in her teaching and participated in co-teaching experiments in the early 1990s between the Klein School and the Trisha Brown Dance Company. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)." By contrast, Karczag worked in Dutch educational institutions where she pursued the ideas in New England Somatics of discovering the potential of different bodies, including those without classical and modern training. As her student at the EDDC between 1992 and 1996, I heard Karczag talk about her interest in diverse bodies working with vocabulary not determined by existing ideas about training, and based on their own structure. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁵⁹³ This similarity is seen in developments of the late 20th century back-to-the-land movement to those seen in modern dance. Like concert dance, during the 1950s, rural escape became associated with dissidence for an elite rather than being a mass movement as it had been earlier in the 20th century when it was connected to socialist and progressive movements. Like the arts, back-to-the-land pushed against the normalizing culture that was a vestige of the 1950s, and therefore also attracted political and social dissidents. Brown, *Back to the Land*.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 222.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

audiences as capitulating to commercialism.⁵⁹⁶ In a related manner, we will see that students in Dutch dance education who pursued Somatics with vocabularies that signified “professional” dance, also came under judgment.⁵⁹⁷ New England Somatics figured prominently in the curriculums of the Dutch institutions because of the faculty’s opposition to modern and classical training, addressed below. However, artists who aimed to sustained artistic integrity, such as some East Villagers and solo improvisers, found themselves limited to performing for small well-informed audiences. They depended on their reputation as teachers for income, which nevertheless threatened inclusivity as far as some of the CI community was concerned.⁵⁹⁸ Professionalism therefore functioned as a specter for New England Somatics precisely because dancers repudiated its ills.⁵⁹⁹

Resources for Exploration.

It was through employment in isolated universities that some New Englanders solved the problem of sustaining an artistic practice with relative independence from the professional field. Beginning in the 1960s, through teaching in higher education in New England and elsewhere, artists experimented with Somatics to a degree that was less possible in New York. For example, Skinner and Anatomical Releasing both made their debut at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign starting the late 1960s, and Mary Fulkerson further developed Anatomical

⁵⁹⁶ Changes in the 1980s meant that artists who were not independently wealthy depended upon reaching large audiences in order to earn an income on which they could survive. Yet artists like Bill T Jones, clearly felt that he was frowned upon for pursuing commercial success. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 224-27.

⁵⁹⁷ This was evident at the Dutch schools, SNDO in Amsterdam and EDDC in Arnhem where students with balletic and modern training felt that they were looked down upon for using their skills. Faculty member, Trude Cone recalls hearing this from Students in Amsterdam in the late 1970s and early 1980s Trude Cone, interview by Doran George, September 4th, 2012. While João da Silva, faculty member at EDDC beginning in the late 1990s recalls having this experience as student at the school, as well as witnessing other students struggle with the same issue. João da Silva, interview by Doran George, August 26th, 2012.

⁵⁹⁸ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 96.

⁵⁹⁹ Monson recalls that in the 1980s in the East Village, having a press-pack was looked down upon, which exemplifies dancers’ anxiety about the potential for professionalism to soil their artistic purity. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

Releasing in her short-lived role from 1970 as the head of the Rochester College dance program. Paxton also began teaching at Bennington around the same time, and Lepkoff taught Somatic classes as an adjunct professor at both Hampshire and Amherst Colleges later in the decade.⁶⁰⁰ By prioritizing research through New England Somatics, they reworked Margaret H'Doubler's theory that dance education has superior goals to modern concert dance.⁶⁰¹ When artists took up residency in universities, they instituted the idea of returning to the essence of art making under the influence of progressive education principles that had survived in Somatics.⁶⁰² Boosters of Somatics created research opportunities for independent artists to include students in the experimentation.⁶⁰³ The artistic integrity, which rural living purportedly offered, thus linked itself with the Enlightenment principle of independent reasoning in the academy. The connection between scholarship and New England Somatics reflects the idea that the regimens afford authenticity by approaching corporeality with scientific objectivity. Dance students in higher education found themselves configured as researchers of their own bodies.

⁶⁰⁰ Skinner began the explorations for Skinner Releasing Technique with her graduate students Paludan, Fulkerson, Rolland, and Topf. In her position at Rochester College in New England, Fulkerson followed Skinner's example developing Anatomical Releasing. Buckwalter, "Release—a History". Meanwhile Paxton took up residence as Bennington faculty in 1970 for the four years that Kraus was a student there, Kraus, "Interview with the Author." Lepkoff also gave Somatic classes at the 5 colleges including Hampshire and Amherst in the late 1970s. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

⁶⁰¹ Alongside the emergence of modern dance H'Doubler distanced her educational approach from professional performance because she felt that the aims of progressive education embody distinct ethics. Her focus on exploration as distinct from imitation endured throughout the 20th century in the rhetoric of university programs that privilege investigation and understanding above success in professional dance. Ross, *Moving Lessons*, 137.

⁶⁰² Fulkerson subsequently conducted a similar at practice at Dartington College in her role as head of dance, and the Dutch institutions SNDO, CNDO, and EDDC followed suit to some extent based upon her model. De Groot had already begun inviting visiting teachers to her Amsterdam studio, which influenced the development of Somatics in Dutch state conservatory dance education. However, the administrative director of the schools, Hougée, only saw the value of bringing practicing artists into the curriculum after he followed De Groot to Dance at Dartington in 1978. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author." De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁰³ John Cage, and subsequently his student Merce Cunningham, recapitulated H'Doubler's concerted rejection of existing models of concert dance at Black Mountain College. Emma Harris, "Black Mountain College: An Introduction," Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center <http://www.blackmountaincollege.org/history>. Rochester College in New England followed suit, closely followed by Bennington where Paxton began teaching in 1974, and the five colleges where Lepkoff worked as an adjunct.

Yet, in line with New England Somatics more generally, the universities sustained a reciprocal relationship with New York's dance scene, which in turn was crucial to the development of the regimens.⁶⁰⁴ Dance educators, with an eye toward the professional field, introduced students to the notion of innovating by employing artists who were engaged in research. For example, Fulkerson played key role in fostering a flow of artists between New York and the region to the north in the early 1970s. She arranged low-paying, low-pressure residencies for artists at Rochester College who were otherwise working in makeshift spaces in Manhattan. Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Judith Dunn, and Judy Paddow were among those who took advantage, and Fulkerson herself made Somatics the program's foundation, probably for the first time in an institutional setting.⁶⁰⁵ Through Rochester and other universities, artists accessed a new generation. They developed pedagogy to which respite from performance, and cultivating artistic integrity through investigating natural functional imperatives were integral. Beginning in the late 1970s, Trisha Brown's dancers, some of whom were educated in New England, exhibited these ideas by "resting" body parts that they felt were not needed for a particular

⁶⁰⁴ It was through a relationship between Urbana-Champaign and New York that Topf developed her pedagogy. As a visiting Cunningham teacher she was drawn to experimentation in which Skinner and Paludan were engaged. Returning to New York she trained with Todd's student Barbara Clarke and introduced Somatics to the city's dancers in a way that rejected conventional modern vocabulary while still connecting Todd's work to dancing. Topf sustained a working relationship with Rolland, and Paludan, with whom her pedagogy developed in a similar manner along with Fulkerson. She advanced Somatics in 1970s New York by bridging the gap between vocabulary and movement principles of posture and motion. Her students explored anatomical ideas that they developed into movement. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author." Buckwalter, " "Release— a History"."

⁶⁰⁵ The artists Fulkerson hosted were working in privately owned or leased lofts, or the makeshift spaces of churches and other buildings at the time. She offered them the train fare from New York and \$100 with the invitation to do whatever they wanted, which may or may not include teaching or presenting work. She intended to bring students into contact with experimental artists. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author." Although Fulkerson was only at Rochester for a short time, her program established links between artists and students that went on to have a profound influence upon the development of Somatics, which will become clear throughout the dissertation.

action.⁶⁰⁶ By introducing the trope of respite to the field, New England Somatics contributed meaning professional dance, sourced from Todd and Alexander.

Higher education also sustained the connection between New England and New York Somatics because faculty explored ideas that they had either personally initiated in early 1960s Gotham dance or borrowed from that period. For example, Fulkerson configured Anatomical Releasing as inclusive, extending to dance class the early 1960s idea of mixing trained and untrained dancers.⁶⁰⁷ She reframed the critique of virtuosity to connect artistic integrity with the experiential analysis of the body. Dancers believed that their participation depended not on being skilled in a particular lexicon, but on their willingness to explore imperatives of anatomical functioning. Fulkerson remembers, “We wanted the work to connect with humanity.”

⁶⁰⁸ Artists also developed their choreography with dancers who had embodied the new ideas as students.⁶⁰⁹ Kraus, Madden, Petronio and Warshaw had trained in Ideokinesis and CI in New England Colleges before performing for Brown. While Paxton met Lepkoff and David Woodberry as Rochester College students, both of who significantly contributed to the

⁶⁰⁶ Madden sites Lepkoff’s slow, contemplative sensory work as an important influence for her, Petronio, and Warshaw, who applied his interpretation of Fulkerson’s work to Brown’s vocabulary *ibid.*, while Kraus connected with Paxton at Bennington. Kraus, "Interview with the Author."

⁶⁰⁷ Fulkerson recalls that as a graduate at Urbana-Champaign she choreographed on athletes from her kinesiology class alongside dancers from her own department by using simple movement that she felt was inclusive. Skinner was still using the images with Cunningham vocabulary such as plies. Fulkerson separated images from existing dance vocabulary. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁰⁸ Fulkerson was conscious that the training she instituted at Rochester, and developed further in the UK and the Netherlands, would not equip students to participate in conventional modern dance companies. Like 1970s CI ethics, she wanted to open dance for all abilities of dancer rather depend on a training history. Her methodology shared origins with CI, and she discovered the potential of untrained bodies through her cognizance of “Judson” experiments. Also, like Forti, she had trained with Halprin in the idea that ordinary gestures done with awareness had great aesthetic potential. So although she equated New York’s avant-garde with the center of innovation, she developed her approach at an explicit symbolic distance from professional dance. *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁹ Participating in a 24-hour dance class that Paxton taught at Rochester prepared Lepkoff and Woodberry for a rehearsal process that led to the first showing at the Weber gallery in New York of what became known as CI. Lepkoff, "Daniel Lepkoff Interview with Author." Because the dancers all lived and worked in a way where rehearsal bled into everything they were doing. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 64.

development of CI. Universities therefore offered alternative validation and the space for process-based work, but the results of research often found their way into the professional field.

Along with higher education, independent artists formed a quasi-autonomous network that sustained New England Somatics using festivals, and residential workshops. Retaining the 1970s spirit of investigation, collaboration, and independence, the region functioned like an annex to New York. Artists who relocated to rural and provincial settings generated dance activity of which students in the local university dance programs took advantage. Especially when the field was just establishing itself, adjunct faculty put their students in contact with the regional network beyond the institutions, for which committed dancers went to some lengths to access. Madden recalls that while she, Petronio, and Warshaw, were all at Hampshire College, they travelled nearly 100 miles to Boston for a class with Lepkoff, and also trained in BMC with Bainbridge-Cohen close-by Northampton.⁶¹⁰ Furthermore, New England festivals such as Jacobs Pillow bridged dancers, visiting from various American provinces, with New York through concerts and classes. Attendees therefore gained exposure to ideas that had not reached other regions.⁶¹¹ After using the accessibility of New England Somatics to access Gotham dance, and secure employment in a new companies that required the skills developed in CI, Ideokinesis

⁶¹⁰ Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

⁶¹¹ At a time when Monson was on probation at her University of San Diego dance program because of her weight, she found relief at Jacob's Pillow taking CI classes with Warshaw and Madden, and composition classes with Trisha Brown, in which students were instructed to make a dance based on what they had eaten for breakfast, or their journey to the class. It was a revelation for her that dances could be generated from something other than existing codified language with aesthetics other at her university. The festival brought her into contact with a new way of thinking connected to New York's professional scene, but in the relative safety of New England. She met Victoria Marks who was a senior at Sarah Lawrence and suggested Monson go there instead. So the festivals also supported networking so that students could seek out different approaches. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

or BMC, when some dancers arrived in New York they took advantage of the approaches there that were explicitly geared toward company dancing.⁶¹²

Transnational Implications.

The transnational community experienced New England Somatics in relation to New York. Across the network, the trope resonated—of returning to rural-life to restore bodily and artistic integrity in training, and aesthetics that were defined against professionalization and commercialization. Along with local dancers, Gotham visitors attended New England workshops, which they had learned of in *CQ*.⁶¹³ They took back to their local contexts the meaning attached to working in rural space beyond the throng of the city.⁶¹⁴ New England's symbolic significance therefore accrued to artists throughout the network who employed choreographic strategies or pedagogies linked with the region.⁶¹⁵ Foreign dancers embodied the differences between New York and New England Somatics by learning to privilege investigation over presentation.⁶¹⁶ For example, the British rural arts college Dartington, where

⁶¹² Madden learned CI and trained in Somatic approaches as a student at Hampshire College, which resulted in her being taken on as a dancer with Brown's Manhattan-based company. However, dancing full-time for Brown, she began to sustain injury, which she felt was due to the lack of professionalism in her training history. She turned to Klein technique at the suggestion of Petronio. Her experience exemplifies how a dancer might associate CI and some Somatic approaches with respite and investigation while seeing Klein as a means to contend with professional demands. Madden, "(Dancer and Teacher, and Rehearsal Direction with Trisha Brown Dance Company)."

⁶¹³ Australian dancer Ann Thompson found out about the Putney workshop through *CQ*, and then studied with Topf in New York for several months following her participation in the Putney Workshop. Anne Thompson, interview by Doran George, August 20th, 2011.

⁶¹⁴ Paxton, Forti, Nelson, Lepkoff, and Hay were all teaching in Britain and the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s when they were living in rural New England. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington."; Fabius, *Talk*.

⁶¹⁵ For example, in the early 1980s the teachers at the Putney Workshop were joined by British dance improviser Laurie Booth, who had been Fulkerson's student in Devon. Julyen Hamilton and Kirstie Simpson also carried an association of New England Somatics because they were focused on improvisation becoming known through the CI circuit more than an established concert house network. I talk about this further, in relation to Simpson, in chapter 3.

⁶¹⁶ In chapter 3, I analyze Paxton's dance improvisation in New York, which began upon his arrival from Vermont, making his rural New England residency a key component. Conscious of the journey he had taken, his audience encountered the New England body as one that met the demands of performance through its experience of a rural life and the distance between Vermont and New York. Paxton insisted on the aesthetic value of understanding what constitutes the dancing body. Steve Paxton, email to the author, December 18th 2011.

Fulkerson headed a dance program from 1972, positioned itself against London's modern dance-based training using New England Somatics.

The distinction between America's symbolic-center-for-dance and its garden annex further imprinted itself on the transnational network through differences in the focus of *CQ* compared with *MRPJ*. The Gotham journal almost exclusively addressed dance within the city, while *CQ*, even though it primarily focused on American subscribers, enjoyed a transnational readership that it referenced.⁶¹⁷ Consequently, dancers beyond the United States unfamiliar with the East Village milieu had no way of finding out about its collectivism, anti-commercialism, and activism, instead meeting New York Somatics through successful choreographers. By contrast they read about American dancers' critique of professionalism in *CQ*.⁶¹⁸ Even though the CI community asserted its decentralization, New England housed *CQ*,⁶¹⁹ and was home to many of the pioneers,⁶²⁰ so the region provided a focus for CI. Therefore, in addition to claiming the critique of professionalism for the rural areas north of New York, *CQ* associated the duet form itself, as well as BMC and Authentic Movement, with New England. What is more, many of the large community gatherings chose remote settings, thereby further stressing the

⁶¹⁷ *CQ* addressed its foreign readership through reports from the European Contact Teachers conference. See for example Nancy Stark Smith, "Still Moving – Contact Shop Talk and Dialogue Le European Contact Teachers Conference," *Contact Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1986). See also Contact Collaborations, "Study Lab on Ci & Sexuality at the 10th European Contact Teachers Conferencamsterdam, 1995," *ibid.* 21, no. 1 (1996). Yet *MRPJ* focus almost primarily on New York when it addressed a location.

⁶¹⁸ Special issues drew attention to the idea of a community working together to address concerns. Forcus on Sexuality and Identity Volume 21:1 Winter/Spring 1996 "Contact Quarterly Back Issues," http://www.contactquarterly.com/cq/back_issues/index.php#sheetName=issues&id=39_1.0; Dancing with Different Populations Volume 17:1 Winter 1992 *ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ CI established a network beyond New York and other urban centers, and many jams still happen outside of major cities such as jams at Broughton and Harbin. It was somewhat self-sustaining, independent of existing circuits for dance training and presentation or funding. Dancers used the contacts section of *CQ*, which included the contacts of people with whom visitors could stay and dance. The community could therefore exist without funding, although this began to change in the late 1970s and early 1980s when dancers began to get subsidy to continue with their endeavors. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 89.

⁶²⁰ Paxton, Nelson, Lepkoff and Stark Smith are all CI pioneers based in New England.

connection between the duet form and “the land.”⁶²¹ Authentic Movement and BMC established their place in CI culture through dancers’ interest in personal development, which made them a large clientele for the techniques. Contact Editions published *Writing about these approaches*, compared with a relative silence about Klein Technique.⁶²² By using and contributing to the CI network, BMC and Authentic Movement therefore shared in the reputation of independence from the professional circuit.⁶²³ Furthermore the distance from New York of the schools for Authentic Movement and BMC echoed as a conceptual distance from professionalism, and the idea that they offered respite.

Dancers in foreign hubs either associated the meaning of rural space with New England Somatics or constructed a local corollary. Dartington, for example, instituted Anatomical Releasing and CI, while through its festival the British also encountered BMC, and pedestrian movement, cementing the significance of rural space in these approaches. Emilyn Claid contrasts Dartington’s approach with that at London’s X6 collective in a way that mirrors the relationship between New England and New York. She observes that Dartington pedagogy encouraged “clearing away habits and mannerisms, releasing muscle tension, working with breath, stillness, and imagery rather than external posturing . . . allowed each student to find authentic physical movement . . . to develop a personal movement vocabulary.”⁶²⁴ Whereas along with her X6 colleagues, Claid recalls that by applying Alexander technique and some of

⁶²¹ Since at least 1984, a yearly “jam” has taken place at the Oregon hot-springs resort known as Breitenbush. See for example Terrie Yaffe, “Random Notes from Breitenbush Jam,” *Contact Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1984).; Contact Collaborations, “Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the Breitenbush Jam,” *ibid.* 32, no. 1 (2007).

⁶²² Contact Editions published Bainbridge Cohen’s book “Sensing Feeling and Action” based on many articles that appeared in *CQ*, and the journals Summer/Fall 2002 issue focused on Authentic Movement (*CQ* 27:2). On November 23rd 2014, an author search for Susan Klein, and a title search for Klein in *CQ*’s 40-year history produced not one single article. “Contact Quarterly Back Issues”.

⁶²³ Bainbridge-Cohen started the school for BMC in Amherst and benefited from her proximity to the 5 colleges, while Skinner moved to Seattle where she started the teacher training, and the school for Authentic Movement also made its home in New England.

⁶²⁴ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 82

the approaches taught at Dartington, she sought to “relearn the fundamentals essential to the language of ballet.” Although they sought to recalibrate the capacities afforded by classical training and its lexicon by stripping them of “performance mannerisms,” Claid and her colleagues retained the virtuoso vocabulary that Dartington discarded.⁶²⁵ Holland lacked an equivalent town and country distinction within its national shores, but EDDC’s students accessed New England Somatics through a farm owned by the school’s director. EDDC employed Americans to lead projects at the farm, which was conspicuous for its similarity in region and circumstances to the homes of Paxton, Lepkoff, and Forti, all of whom taught at the school.⁶²⁶ Further research is needed to establish how New England Somatics impacted Australia; however, through the distribution of *CQ* and the traffic of artists between the rural region and the antipodes, it is fair to assume that there was some influence.⁶²⁷

By disseminating the critique of professionalism, New England Somatics offered an important counterpoint to the way that its New York equivalent rapidly came to signify on a transnational level through the success of companies like Trisha Brown’s. Contributing to such meaning, *CQ* hosted discussion that was struggling to be heard in other contexts. For example, in the mid-1990s, EDDC student Sidsel Pape published an article in the journal criticizing the aesthetic limits of CI in their institution at the school.⁶²⁸ Yet with its editorial policy of including diverse opinions, *CQ* privileged the liberal ideal of individual freedom of expression over any

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ The school director Aat Hougée owned a New England farm during my time at EDDC from 1992-1996. I recall several projects being conducted there for students with artists such as Lepkoff.

⁶²⁷ Karczag brought the pedagogy that she developed with Giavenco and Webb to Australia in the late 1970s, and she recalls Dance Exchange bringing Fulkerson over to teach and present work. Karczag, "Interview with Author." Meanwhile Thompson began teaching what she learned through the Putney workshop and from Topf on her return to Australia, and she first learned of the workshop through *CQ* that she accessed in Australia in the late 1970s. Thompson, "(Early Teacher of Somatics in Australia) in Discussion with the Author." Furthermore, Lisa Nelson, Deborah Hay, and Joan Skinner all taught workshops in Australia in the late 20th century. Ros Warby, interview by Doran George, January 23rd, 2013.

⁶²⁸ Sidsel Pape, "Work in Process, Words in Progress Experimental Dance as Performance," *Contact Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1994).

concerted criticism of institutionalization or commercialization in Somatics. Although the journal included expressions of discontent, against the panoply of discourse (including ideas about the therapeutic benefits of dancing, as well as differing opinions about improvising), the potential for critique found itself swallowed by the generic backdrop of a community of individuals asserting their integrity. In this sense, *CQ*, and New England Somatics more generally, embodied American expansionist liberalism by stressing the importance for dancers of connecting with their authentic individual artistic perspectives beyond institutional and commercial structures. New England Somatics reflected the back-to-landers' aim to execute activism not through collective action or by representing a social message in dance, but in an individual lifestyle choice, which Brown characterizes as "purifying oneself of 'complicity' with corrupt politics, or industrial capitalism, or modernity."⁶²⁹ She laments that "they often failed . . . to live up to their own expectations." The rural-dance lifestyle saw its own version of this problem in the struggles over authenticity that ensued from its meanings. Furthermore, the American liberalism of New England Somatics met opposition in the body cultivated in Britain where individual authenticity was not enough to contest the domination of the conservative dance establishment.

British Somatics: The Political and Socially Signifying Body.

British Somatics exceeded the New England focus on individual authenticity by framing itself collectively against a conservative dance establishment that had dismissed the first wave of American Somatics in the early 1970s. Because the regimens were not thought to meet the imperatives of technical excellence and communicative accessibility, they met with structural exclusion in Britain. X6 also rejected what they represented as New York formalism, which

⁶²⁹ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 226.

they insisted had failed to address the political exigencies of late 1970s dance. Despite aligning themselves with Somatics because of shared marginalization, and using the training to embody their feminist principles, X6 deplored what they saw as the apolitical nature of Gotham choreography at a time when the British press and theatres were beginning to embrace artists such as Trisha Brown.⁶³⁰ By the 1980s British Somatics asserted the independence of domestic contemporary dance from America through socially conscious dance theatre. Nevertheless, in all the different waves of resistance, dancers embodied postwar American-expansionist liberalism by reifying the natural body as a way to defy domestic protocols on aesthetics and expressive content, while combating American dominance. By claiming freedom from technical standards and aesthetic formalism, artists felt they ‘liberated’ creative expression by addressing local concerns. Yet British Somatics ultimately revealed that liberalism underpinned its political overtones when the training contributed to artistic success within the very institutions that had initially been critiqued.

Structural and Aesthetic Critique of the British Dance Establishment

The dance establishment quickly configured the first wave of experiments with Somatics as beyond theatre dance. The early 1970s collective *Strider*, credited as Britain’s first independent contemporary dance company,⁶³¹ declared their approach post-Cunningham, and flouted the aims of modern dance proponents.⁶³² They reacted against the ethos of London

⁶³⁰ As early as 1964, Cunningham fulfilled a classical imperative in British postwar dance even while he was characterized as a visionary. The press compared him to Diaghilev. Macaulay, "Recasting the Very Essence of Dance." Yet a decade later, along with funders, they vilified and dismissed choreography developed with Somatics, and were more sympathetic to what was considered abstract work than dance with explicit political themes as I talk about more below.

⁶³¹ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 35 ;Judith Mackrell, *Out of Line: The Story of British New Dance* (London: Dance Books, 1992), 18.

⁶³² Strider members, including LSCD students, were disillusioned when the school’s emphasis turned toward a resident company that was established within a year. Experimentation in the arts more generally had drawn interest in the possibilities of dance, and when LSCD first opened, despite the Graham based training and compositional

School of Contemporary Dance (LSCD), the first modern dance training institution formed in 1969.⁶³³ Some *Strider* members trained at LSCD, but disagreed with the aim of attracting middle class audiences with the kind of palatable dance that early proponents of the art form used to establish modern dance's respectability.⁶³⁴ With the support of Graham protégés who introduced her training and the choreography of explicit themes, British modern dance fulfilled an imperative of classical technical excellence that it inherited from the ballet-centric dance establishment.⁶³⁵ *Strider*, however staged "abstract" dance with Cunningham-like vocabulary,⁶³⁶ the innovation and technical proficiency of which the press embraced. Independent subsidy that the collective received from the Gulbenkian Foundation embarrassed the state into funding *Strider*.⁶³⁷ Yet when the collective drew on Somatics for experimentation, commentators turned on them, arguing that the caliber of the work was undermined. *Strider* disbanded in 1975 after the loss of state funding and press support, and Somatics found itself positioned against conservatism.⁶³⁸

In the face of structural marginalization, British interest in Somatics depended on connections with American artists. *Strider* first encountered the regimens through Fulkerson's Anatomical Releasing and improvisation training when they were in residence at Dartington

approach. Students from diverse backgrounds experimented with performance art, sculpture, film, and other media in presentations that flouted the conventions of the concert. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 13-23.

⁶³³ LCSD's company London Contemporary Dance Theatre (LCDT) embodied the school's dominant aesthetics and methodology, Graham-based technique and choreography focused on theme, symbol and myth. *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶³⁴ Richard Alston, who spearheaded *strider*, rejected offers to work with LCDT because of their explicit desire to attract ticket buying middle class audiences with dance that was not too shocking. Mackrell, *Out of Line*, 10. Instead *Strider* used their publicity to align themselves with a "post-Cunningham generation" of dance makers. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 142.

⁶³⁵ Preston-Dunlop and España; Friends of the Laban Centre., *The American Invasion, 1962-1972*.

⁶³⁶ *Strider* was made up of critical graduating students influenced by Cunningham as well as Twyla Tharp, who had both been seen on British soil in the previous decade. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 2.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶³⁸ *Strider* lost funding and press support when they began working with Somatics and choreography, Karczag, "Interview with Author."; Jordan, *Striding Out*, 46.; De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 102

College in the south west of England.⁶³⁹ Based on its historical investment in experimental pedagogy, the rurally located arts education college sought an alternative to LSCD, which it found in Fulkerson.⁶⁴⁰ For *Strider* members, Fulkerson's focus on anatomy supported their desire to displace emotional narrative as the logic for choreography, and provided a welcome relief from the classical ideals to which the British establishment was so doggedly committed. The collective found diverse exciting new possibilities in emphasizing the dancers' experience in training.⁶⁴¹ Yet the British press expressed open hostility toward Fulkerson's influence on *Strider's* work,⁶⁴² and LSCD, as well as the recently inaugurated Laban Center, rejected her advances to build connections.⁶⁴³ Meanwhile, in their attempts to secure higher education accreditation for the dance program, Dartington's administration also found itself battling with British conservatism.⁶⁴⁴ To avoid isolation in her remote location,⁶⁴⁵ Fulkerson recycled the educational model she had developed at Rochester, this time bringing Americans to Britain to

⁶³⁹ Through several residencies at Dartington College in 1974 Strider encountered Fulkerson whose influence on the company is well documented. "New Dance Development at Dartington," 94 ; Jordan, *Striding Out*, 37-38.; Mackrell, *Out of Line*, 20.

⁶⁴⁰ In her study of New Dance at Dartington College, Mara De Witt traces how the administration sought an approach that would not duplicate the offerings of other dance schools, and would be representative of the college's tradition of experimental, learning-by-doing philosophy. They found what they were looking for in Fulkerson. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 96-98.

⁶⁴¹ Alston recalls the powerful experience of improvising with Fulkerson's company *Tropical Fruit* in sessions Fulkerson led. He connected her anatomical emphasis with Cunningham's formality. *Ibid.*, 101. He saw the potential to make dance not based on external appearance, while another *Strider* member Nanette Hassall discovered the possibility of individual development and growth in dance processes. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 38. Meanwhile Karczag connected the approach with the reduction of tension she had pursued in Alexander Technique and Tai Chi at LSCD. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁴² Fulkerson recalls that when press wanted to dismiss dance, they say the work showed her influence, even if she had nothing to do with the performance or even the artist. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author." Christy Adair remembers at a Laban Center seminar that dance writer Clement Crisp proposed that Fulkerson was single-handedly destroying London's technical achievements. He called her "that dreadful Fulkerson woman." Christy Adair, (professor of dance, University of York St. John) in discussion with the author, August 2012.

⁶⁴³ Fulkerson wrote to the directors of LSCD and the Laban Center, which was established the same year Fulkerson moved to Dartington, to invite their students to attend the Dance at Dartington Festival, which she began in 1978, they turned down her offer. *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ Her syllabus was initially part of interdisciplinary performance, and later formed a specialization: "Movement for Performance." De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 101-16.

⁶⁴⁵ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 92. Fulkerson felt isolated at Dartington, and Paxton points out that in America they were connected to a whole scene, but in England there was very little in early 1970s, exacerbated by the rural setting. Steve Paxton, email to author, August 25th, 2013.

teach New York and New England Somatics.⁶⁴⁶ Like *Strider*, other young dancers seized on the regimens; they forged new choreography as part of an unprecedented British independent dance culture. The sources with which they associated Somatics therefore positioned America as a center for critical culture.

With institutional backing, to celebrate the long awaited accreditation of the dance program, Fulkerson also started the “Dance at Dartington” festival in 1978. She brought together artists from America, Britain, and other areas of Europe, to perform, teach, and engage in debate. At a time when many artists working with Somatics were isolated with few resources, Dartington became a crucial hub for the transnational community’s development. Because the majority of the festival’s teachers were American, and the British establishment remained so hostile, the college appeared to be an outpost developing New York experimental culture. For example, the first festival offered classes taught by Topf, Paxton, Marsha Paludan (another pioneer of Anatomical Releasing), and Fulkerson herself. All the teachers performed along with another of Fulkerson’s colleagues from Illinois, Nancy Udow.⁶⁴⁷ Dartington also hosted Paxton as a resident teacher from 1974-1978.⁶⁴⁸ The college thus established itself as a foothold for disseminating the regimens in and beyond Britain by virtue of American artists to whom Fulkerson offered vital opportunities to develop their work.

Faced with suspicion by the British establishment about the value of Somatics, Fulkerson and her colleagues used the liberal ideal of individual creative freedom to

⁶⁴⁶ Fulkerson made a condition of her Dartington appointment a budget to bring American artists. Those she had brought to Rochester now traveled from New England and elsewhere to Dartington along with Fulkerson’s colleagues from Illinois such as Rolland and Udow. Fulkerson also secured support for her to work at Dartington and in the United States with her company *Tropical Fruit*, which included Lepkoff, Woodberry, and Deborah Chassler from Rochester. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁴⁷ Dartington College, "Dance at Dartington Festival," ed. Dartington College of Arts (held at Dartington Archives Exeter) (Devon, England 1978).

⁶⁴⁸ De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 106.

institutionalize the training. They overcame the discrepancy between Somatics and establishment protocols on British concert dance by framing the pedagogy as developing the compositional artistry of each dancer instead of their performance ability. The Council for National Academic Accreditation rejected Dartington's first application, and the changes that were made to the successful application reveal how Somatics negotiated the British establishment.⁶⁴⁹ Students were said to be interrogating movement rather than mastering an existing vocabulary, so the revised application concealed Fulkerson's interest in mundane gesture and untrained dancers.⁶⁵⁰ Nonetheless, in contrast with other institutions, Dartington relieved incoming students of the requirement of previous training. By focusing on individual creative potential as an alternative to mastering the aesthetics of a major choreographer, Fulkerson institutionalized the inclusivity she had developed at Rochester,⁶⁵¹ also established as a key principle of 1970s CI. The emphasis on individual creativity in Somatics appealed to artists wanting to work outside of large companies, and Fulkerson's institutional foothold provided an oasis at a time when Britain offered few funding or other opportunities for concert dance outside of ballet and two modern companies. In her history of the emergence of an independent British contemporary dance scene Stephanie Jordan documents that choreographers and dancers faced "severe problems of funding [in] the mid-1970s."⁶⁵² They thus shared

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 123. Fulkerson felt that if Peter Brinson had not taken over the panel the course would not have passed because prejudice in London dance toward Graham's and Laban's approaches stood in her way. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁵⁰ For example the term "Pedestrian" was omitted even though it had figured significantly in the initial document. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 108-34.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Jordan, *Striding Out*, 45.

Fulkerson's marginalization at the hands of the establishment,⁶⁵³ and drew creative and moral resources from her and the other Americans teaching at Dartington and its Festival.⁶⁵⁴

In 1976, with the formation of X6 based on the feminist ideas, London materialized a focus through which artists challenged the establishment on administrative, ideological and aesthetic levels.⁶⁵⁵ Using Somatics, the collective critiqued sexist ideals in training, which they perceived to be integral to the virtuosity demanded by the establishment. X6 felt that the natural female body was eclipsed by classical aesthetics, which enforced a hierarchy that put women in competition to become passive tools for male choreographers.⁶⁵⁶ In response, they invested in the idea of working with natural functional imperatives of the body to foreground dancers' health and autonomy.⁶⁵⁷ They also critiqued conventional masculinity, using what they saw as CI's indifference to gender, cutting through social difference by focusing on anatomical structure.⁶⁵⁸ Along with other dancers, X6 developed an artistic culture they called "New Dance." The first generation of Fulkerson's graduates began teaching, taking classes and presenting

⁶⁵³ X6, like Fulkerson, were ignored or demeaned by the press, and concert venues did not program their work. Collective member Fergus Early, who was on the state arts funding sub-committee for dance, reported on hostility toward experimentation. For example, Peter Williams was the editor of the powerful publication *Dance and Dancers*, and chair of the Arts Council subcommittee on Dance, and a vocal opponent of experimentation. Throughout the 1970s he published articles dismissing the value of artists' investigative initiatives, and argued against channeling resources toward those same projects. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 146.

⁶⁵⁴ The collective had been exposed to Alexander Technique and Tai Chi at LSCD where they studied. *Ibid.*, 159. X6 then invited Fulkerson to teach in their space along with visiting artists at Dartington including Paxton, Nelson and Nancy Udow. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 87.

⁶⁵⁵ X6 spearheaded "New Dance," which echoed various late 1970s British arts movements seeking independence through innovation in form, coupled with intellectual deconstruction of the history of genres. Jacky Lansley, "Writing," *New Dance Magazine* 1 (1977): 3. The collective articulated their perspective through classes, workshops, performances and public discussion hosted at their studio, as well as in the pages of *New Dance Magazine (NDM)*, which they published for a decade beginning in 1977. The ideological trajectory and activity of X6 is well documented. Jordan, *Striding Out*; Mackrell, *Out of Line*; De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington."

⁶⁵⁶ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 67.

⁶⁵⁷ De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington."

⁶⁵⁸ Mary Prestidge, "Review of Fulkerson and Booth Workshops," *New Dance Magazine* 15, no. 15 (1980).

work in a loose London network to which X6 was pivotal.⁶⁵⁹ Dartington spawned individuals and small companies who worked with vocabulary that contrasted with the dominant British conception of technical excellence.⁶⁶⁰ New Dance epitomized a deepening sophistication that occurred as X6's feminist agenda both did and did not cross-pollinate with the ideas learned from American artists at Dartington.

X6's problem with what they saw as apolitical abstraction created tension in New Dance over what constituted British Somatics. Although they shared the periphery with Fulkerson, X6 perceived American Somatics as contributing to aesthetics that were endorsed by the dance establishment. The initial enthusiasm for *Strider's* early Cunningham-like work probably built on the press's perception in 1964 that Cunningham's choreography constituted a combination of innovation and technical excellence. By the late 1970s, Richard Alston, *Strider's* founding member, had become similarly embraced by the establishment after choreographing for large companies and using classical aesthetics including pointe work.⁶⁶¹ Because Alston credited Fulkerson as key to his artistic development, when he began working with ballet in ways that appeared traditional, artists for whom political activism was important began to perceive Somatics as potentially contributing to aesthetics of which they were highly critical.⁶⁶² In the late 1970s and early 1980s, British programmers favored New York dance – rich in complex

⁶⁵⁹ Reviews in *NDM* of the work of Dartington graduates, and listings of their classes and workshops is evidence of the way in which Fulkerson's impact was felt in London, along with the discussion about "release technique," other Somatic approaches, and CI.

⁶⁶⁰ Dancers such as Laurie Booth and Julyen Hamilton and companies such as that of Yolande Snaith who worked with Kathy Crick, and Kevin Finnan's company Motionhouse, with his partner Louise Richard's all used skills that reflected their study at Dartington. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 72-73.

⁶⁶¹ Alston studied in New York after *Strider* disbanded, and on his return began choreographing for LCDT, the other major modern dance outfit Ballet Rambert, and European ballet companies in the early 1980s. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 105-30.

⁶⁶² The idea that Fulkerson's influence had permeated major dance companies as well as experimental projects was already put forward in the early 1980s by, for example, Hubbard who suggested "through her teaching and performing and those of her students, Fulkerson's gentle aesthetic is quietly permeating mainstream as well as experimental English and European dance." S Hubbard, "Experimental Dartington Hall Carries on English Tradition," *Dance Magazine* 1983.

steps and devoid of explicit theme – which exacerbated the mistrust of American influences for British artists committed to politicized dance.⁶⁶³ When the Dance Umbrella festival did showcase New Dance, it chose British artists such as Rosemary Butcher and Madee Dupres,⁶⁶⁴ who identified with New York formalism and avoided social commentary.⁶⁶⁵ Although initially an X6 member, Dupres’ choreography contrasted with her colleagues Fergus Early, Jacky Lansley, Emilyn Claid, and Mary Prestidge. The establishment ignored or vilified the rest of the collective who often used performance art strategies to staged explicit political themes.⁶⁶⁶

New York’s centrality contributed to the opposition between New Dance artists staging political themes and those working with “formalist approaches.” The British dance establishment’s embrace of formalism erased the context in which New York dance developed and therefore its means of critique, both of which I analyze in chapter 3.⁶⁶⁷ Yet those who visited the Big Apple experienced the implicit politics in formalist choreographies of Somatics.⁶⁶⁸ Back home, however, the same approaches signified innovation for its own sake partly because America had established itself as a global cultural center through expansionism as I have outlined above. Packaged by large British theaters and festivals in a way that was mediated by the establishment’s penchant for technical excellence, New York choreography lost

⁶⁶³ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 101.

⁶⁶⁴ Although Dupres was initially a member of X6, like Butcher she aligned with what they both called ‘abstract’ dance. Dupres eventually left the collective to pursue her choreography, and perform in work that became understood in Britain as “American Abstraction.” *ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁶⁵ Work by Fulkerson, Paxton and other Americans signified innovation in way that echoed New York’s symbolic status established first by Graham and Cunningham’s impact on Britain and compounded by native artists who identified with their work.

⁶⁶⁶ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 64.

⁶⁶⁷ As I have pointed out, in the 1950s, rejecting narrative resisted government interference, as well as the demand for theatrical display with which Graham’s work was associated. Gender critique also was inherent in the rejection of virtuosic vocabularies, along with the apparent equalizing of bodies through physical imperatives in contact improvisation. Pedestrian movement in the 1960s and 1970s critiqued the virtuoso body, while the use of galleries, churches, and urban public space brought attention to the mechanisms of production, critiquing the construction of the dancer as an object of display. I explore these issues further in chapter 3.

⁶⁶⁸ I argue this concerning Rosemary Butcher’s aesthetic in chapter 3.

the historical context of its critique. Meanwhile Alston recapitulated traditional heterosexual gender roles in his later work.⁶⁶⁹ By contrast Claid, Early, Lansley, Prestidge and others explicitly interrogated gender in response to ideals that seemed archaic and were staged in ballet and Graham technique. Consequently those who championed politically conscious dance easily felt that the combination of Somatics and formalism failed to deconstruct gender. Some commentators thus labeled New York work as “art in a vacuum.”⁶⁷⁰

As a result of the tensions in New Dance, a bifurcation occurred between American formalism and British political dance. The reticence of the state to fund any independent British ventures provided a continuing basis for an uneasy alliance between artists staging political themes and those focused on what they saw as the formal aspects of movement. However, the press intensified the association of ‘formalism’ with America in the early 1980s, when they favored dance from across the pond and positioned Brits working in a comparable manner as derivative.⁶⁷¹ Nevertheless, innovative programmers who attempted to convince the press and funders of the value of New Dance did so by foregrounding British formalism. X6 publicly tracked and critiqued funding and programming, identifying patterns of privilege. In the late 1970s it appeared that classicism best conformed to establishment protocols, followed by large modern companies and New York formalism, while third in line was formalist British dance,

⁶⁶⁹ Dance critic Alistair Macaulay has called Alston a classicist. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 129.

⁶⁷⁰ Fergus Early, "Review of Dutch Festival," *New Dance Magazine* 13 (1980).

⁶⁷¹ The press lauded American work presented at Dance Umbrella, while castigating British New for its poor execution and lack of innovation. Native choreographers working with Abstraction were seen by both their colleagues and the dance establishment as emulating American artistic traditions. Antagonism between British artists working with political themes and those investigating formalism heightened because to convince the Arts Council of the value of New Dance, Dance Umbrella programmed British work that appeared to stand up to that coming from America. (100) Polemical performance art with little step content was not represented in the festival. (83) Jordan, *Striding Out*.

with explicitly political work receiving the lowest priority for funding and programming.⁶⁷² This naturally put a strain on the New Dance community.

British independent dancers disagreed over Somatics, the use of explicit politics, and American dominance.⁶⁷³ Some associated with X6 critiqued British choreographers who used the regimens for formal innovation. Claid, for example, insisted upon the political redundancy of creating new vocabulary because, she argued, dance must directly address existing social structures and aesthetic traditions. She held that British contemporary dance needed structural change rather than innovation.⁶⁷⁴ She and her colleagues explicitly critiqued ballet, and reworked the training, teaching it barefoot and apparently making class non-competitive and discursive as oppose authoritarian. To achieve gender critique, she deconstructed classical narrative, which perhaps also explains her repurposing rather than rejecting of ballet. She and her colleagues integrated Somatics to minimize physical stress, and fostered an anti-competitive and anti-hierarchical culture where students exchanged ideas with their teachers and each other.⁶⁷⁵ Yet some other artists, such as Karczag, felt they could better stage gender critique using casual or quotidian vocabulary that rejected the classical idiom. Karczag, who immigrated to Britain from Australia to join London Festival Ballet, and then left to join *Strider*, therefore appeared to engage in the very innovation against which Claid railed.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷² In *NDM*, Fergus Early documented where dance funding was being spent, see for example, Fergus Early, "Funding " *New Dance Magazine* 1, no. New Year (1977).

⁶⁷³ *NDM* applauded the horizontal structure of Dance at Dartington, which reflected their political aims, yet the festival was criticized for the over-representation of American artists and the dominance of Release Technique. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 94.

⁶⁷⁴ Claid, for example argued that innovation had nothing to offer contemporary dance, and instead emphasized intentional connections with the social, political and economic conditions of dance making. (68) Innovation signaled abstraction, which she argued positioned art independent from social conditions, initially distancing her working process from the physical images in what she called release work. (79) *ibid*.

⁶⁷⁵ Early and Claid taught ballet, Dupres taught contemporary dance, and Prestidge gymnastics, all in a way that was influenced by Somatics. De Wit, "New Dance Development at Dartington," 147-65.

⁶⁷⁶ Karczag recalls she was less interested in X6 precisely because they continued to investigate ballet. On her return to the U.K. from the U.S. in the late 1970s, she danced with Butcher, who had worked with Summers in New

Yet despite a divide between New Dance artists over the significance of American choreography, they continued to capitalize on New York's significance as the center of modern dance to fight for their own visibility and harvest ideas through exchange with visiting artists. For example, the dancers who aligned themselves with Brown when the press attacked *Glacial Decoy*, as I mentioned in the section on New York, used the fact that the concert was hard to ignore because of Brown's American provenance. They insisted that had critics followed developments in the British New Dance movement, they would not have been so ill informed about what constitutes technical virtuosity. The British dance press, they argued, harbored ideas that had been superseded both in New York, but also in homegrown New Dance. Even so, while none of the New Dance commentators agreed with the mainstream press that Brown's work lacked technical proficiency, some deplored *Glacial Decoy* for being apolitical. David Collins called the dance "the 'serious work in a social vacuum' of the New York approach."⁶⁷⁷

Structural exclusion was not enough to gloss over the differences of the artists who were marginalized in British dance.

However, the tolerance of contradiction between artists who took inspiration from choreographers like Brown, and those who saw her as failing to address the most important

York in the early 1970s and introduced formalism and Somatics to the U.K. through an independent route from Fulkerson. Butcher's practice predated the New Dance explosion, from which she ultimately distanced herself. Along with Butcher, Karczag and other artists who had danced for Butcher, or had an independent interest in Somatics, used the approach in ways that were not dominated by explicit political signification. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁶⁷⁷ For example, some *NDM* writers critiqued Brown's first appearance on British soil as art in a vacuum, while others used the negative mainstream press coverage as evidence that the British establishment was out of touch. The contradictory responses reflect the editorial policy of *NDM* to entertain diverse perspectives, and are symbolic of disagreement in the dance scene. David Collins, expressed mistrust the New York abstract dance work inferring that dance must reveal its social context through explicit political reference. David Collins, "Review of Dance Umbrella," *New Dance Magazine* 12, no. Autumn (1979): 19. Yet in the same issue Clare Hayes proposed that people are either in awe of the avant-garde or frustrated with it because the message in the work is not transparent. Her comment reflects the way that artists identified with formalism were interested in the minimalist movement language informed by Somatics, while those who identified with the idea of explicit politics found the work problematic. Hayes also argued mainstream critics who felt the work was not of the caliber of concert dance did not understand Brown's contemporary practice because they had not followed British New Dance. Clare Hayes, "Review of *Glacial Decoy*," *ibid.*

concerns, gave British Somatics its strength. The editorial policy of *New Dance Magazine* (*NDM*), which X6 began in 1977, allowed for a unifying platform despite the divided interests of independent artists. *NDM* aimed to remedy what its editors saw as critical vacuum in which artists were working because of the grip of classical ideals and Graham technique on British dance.⁶⁷⁸ Like *MRPJ* and *CQ*, *NDM* registered independent classes, but its writers also focused on politics and inequality to critique dance conservatism long before either of its American counterparts addressed these issues with any consistency. A rich if fraught late 1970s and early 1980s New Dance culture emerged because artists such as Laurie Booth, Rosemary Butcher, Miranda Tufnell, Dennis Greenwood, Julyen Hamilton, and Kirstie Simpson, who were fascinated by the new movement possibilities of Somatics, shared studio and performance spaces with the X6 collective. They also saw each other's work, about which they published writing.⁶⁷⁹ Reports in *NDM* from visiting New York artists that critics back home understood their work, such as Brown's interview referred to above, fueled British dancers' conviction about the validity of their endeavor. New Dance also derived encouragement from the reportage of Brits who travelled to Gotham, even though they were compounding the idea that New York was at the cutting edge of contemporary dance culture.

Ultimately, however, to establish independence, British artists constructed a national contemporary dance identity, distancing themselves from New York by their staging of social themes. Politicized choreography asserted itself as uniquely British not least because formalism was associated with America. Moreover, those invested in social themes argued that formalism was theoretically flawed, which aggravated the identification of independent dancers with

⁶⁷⁸ Lansley proposed a new language was needed to talk about the new dance form, referencing similar strategies in contemporary film and theatre criticism. Jacky Lansley, "Writing," *ibid.* 1 (1977).

⁶⁷⁹ Along with Karczag and Butcher, some other dancers working in a more formal way include Miranda Tufnell, Dennis Greenwood, who I talk about in chapter 3, and Sue McLennan.

distinct national tendencies. For example, in a symposium on New Dance, Claid's partner Stefan Szczcelkun refuted that Butcher could work with the formal aspects of dance. He argued that because of the body's social coding dance couldn't avoid representing a political viewpoint.⁶⁸⁰ Artists not working with explicit themes consequently aligned themselves with New York, or were defined as such by default, and interdisciplinary social critique claimed itself as a peculiarly British aesthetic. Jordan reports that, rather than look to New York, X6 artists "decided that, as British artists, they would build directly from their experience in Britain."⁶⁸¹

A new generation of dancers in the 1980s somewhat resolved the tensions with the emergence of British "Dance Theatre."⁶⁸² Companies such as *DV8 Physical Theatre* choreographed social themes using new vocabulary informed by Somatics, which benefitted from the experiments undertaken in the 1970s. The artistic director Lloyd Newson synthesized CI, Somatic improvisational practices, and performance art, to represent political themes.⁶⁸³ In what many Brits referred to as the "dance boom" after the paucity of resources in the previous decade, young artists secured state funding, played established theatres, and received sympathetic press. Changes at Dartington Festival contributed to this cultural shift, both by increasing the number of British New Dance artists and teachers that it programmed relative to Americans, but also by displacing its early culture of exchange and experimentation by

⁶⁸⁰ Butcher declared her formal interests in the spatial and rhythmic aspects of her work, identifying with Cunningham and Brown. Szczcelkun's reaction mirrors Claid's insistence upon the redundancy of seeking new vocabulary. Fergus Early, "Report on New Dance Seminar," *New Dance Magazine* 3, no. Summer (1977).

⁶⁸¹ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 63.

⁶⁸² Claid notes that *Dance Theatre Journal*, which first began publishing in 1983, replaced *NDM*, which ceased publishing in 1986. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 133. The new publication title helped establish a term through which Britain's burgeoning new dance culture could be understood.

⁶⁸³ Newson worked with Nigel Charnock and used the vocabulary of New Dance working with explicit gender coding and theatrical narrative. I address DV8 further in chapter 3.

becoming an alternative national showcase. The changes demonstrate how British nationalism rose as collective ideals diminished.⁶⁸⁴

The establishment mediated the artistic nationalism with which Dance Theatre emerged in ways that recapitulated the very liberal ideal of creative freedom against which Claid's and Szczelkun's discourses seemed to argue. In Margaret Thatcher's entrepreneurial culture, artists constructed unique signatures to represent feminist and queer subjects, which, while opposing the government's conservative cultural agenda, nevertheless rode upon its rhetoric about the value of individual gain. Artists used state subsidy to further their careers so the collective cultivation of an independent context diminished. Furthermore, despite the choreography's progressive overtures, artists performed to largely white middle-class audiences. Claid, for example, points out "while white artists were rejecting conventional European aesthetics of identity, black British dance artists were seeking an identifiable presence,"⁶⁸⁵ which created "a paradox between subjectivity and in/visibility." For Claid, this meant, "as black and white dance artists we worked in parallel with each other but not together."⁶⁸⁶ Even community dance, based on 1970s political concerns, failed to exceed the tenets of liberalism by inadvertently extending a state agenda. Artists using Somatics choreographed working class and minority communities, hoping to make contemporary dance accessible to people whom otherwise would not have accessed the art from. However, rather than critique inequality, they served as artistic missionaries for bourgeois values.⁶⁸⁷

Transnational Significance.

⁶⁸⁴ Jordan, *Striding Out*, 94.

⁶⁸⁵ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 5.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁸⁷ This needs further research, but Christy Adair articulates what I'm referring to when she looks at the problems of state initiatives to remedy what is perceived of as a paucity of culture within a particular community. Christy Adair, *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon* (Alton, Hampshire, England: Dance Books, 2007).

The initial struggle of British Somatics to establish itself contributed to the development of the transnational network. In British regions and other European contexts, London-based New Dance pioneers identified isolation similar to what they had experienced. They argued that the dissemination of their ideas was a political necessity to liberate dancers from the tyranny of ballet and modern dance.⁶⁸⁸ In this sense New Dance followed in Fulkerson's footsteps, which started the Dartington Festival to nurture European dance and connect American visitors with local artists.⁶⁸⁹ With evangelical zeal, artists and educators promoted Somatics and, through Dance at Dartington, for example, established an expansionist agenda for British Somatics that rivaled its corollaries from New York and New England.

The dynamics of Dance at Dartington reveal how broader American cultural dominance overshadowed critical aims. Fulkerson organized the festival using the collective and inclusive ethics that had become increasingly associated with New England Somatics in the 1980s. At the college country manor, established artists and unknowns danced, ate, and lived together, while the classes welcomed students of all experience levels. Yet artists struggling to gain critical recognition in their native contexts garnered support from the Festival's transnational scope based on New York's cultural capital, because key American figures added importance to the festival. Meanwhile, those who were isolated at home felt they were reestablishing links with Gotham, which for Dutch and Australian dancers, for example, positioned Dartington as a more

⁶⁸⁸ Contributors to *NDM* stress the importance of reaching the British Regions of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the North of England. Meanwhile, Anna Furse talks about New Dance finding footholds in Europe with a sense of urgency: "a few isolated pioneers who are making their own movement statements, often without the support system of an 'alternative' dance community and almost invariably without a communications network such as is provided here by NEW DANCE magazine and in the U.S. by CONTACT QUARTERLEY." Anna Furse, "On the Road," *New Dance Magazine* 16, no. Autumn (1980): 8.

⁶⁸⁹ The first festival showcased the performance and teaching of many US artists with whom Fulkerson knew from her time in the U.S., but artists associated with X6 were included as well as Alston and Butcher. Dartington College, "Dance at Dartington Festival."

accessible way to access New York Somatics.⁶⁹⁰ Consequently, despite many of the American visitors actually living elsewhere, the Big Apple configured itself as a center to which Dartington referred. Some British artists contributed to this myth because they complained of American dominance at the festival without differentiating between the collective, inclusive ideas at Dartington, and the values that the British press ascribed to New York formalism. Finally, New Dance depended on Dartington for creative and pedagogic resources: for example, to acquaint Londoners with new ideas, X6 hosted American teachers when they came for the festival. All in all, whether British artists welcomed or begrudged the influence of their New York colleagues, American expansionism left an indelible mark on New Dance with its claim to cultural centrality, as well as the increasing ubiquity of its liberal ideology.

American centrality overshadowed the significance of British Somatics in New York. American artists travelled to the United Kingdom for work rather than research. Furthermore, the East Village and CI network ultimately matched the focus on social critique in British Somatics, as is evident in the topics of debate in *MRPJ* and *CQ*. However, Americans withheld calling Somatics to account for its political efficacy to the degree that X6 had. Instead they grappled with representing social issues through their use of the regimens, considering how the previous generations had extended or failed to include diversity and stage political resistance, all issues I deal with in chapter 3. British Somatics, on the other hand, framed its political aims as severing ties with establishment imperatives, which resulted in judging whether all dance contributed to such a project. The political emphasis in British Somatics did, however, impact Australians, many of whom could more easily study and work in Britain than in America. This

⁶⁹⁰ When more British artists were brought as the visiting artists for the festival, even *NDM* writers talked of the event having lost its potency. Peter Middleton, "Language and Dance at Dartington," *New Dance Magazine* 25, no. Summer (1983).

impact is evident in the Australian journal *Writings on Dance*. Yet we will see that Fulkerson and other Americans still strongly influenced Australian Somatics.⁶⁹¹

By the 1990s, British and New York Somatics mirrored each other. Like Movement Research, Chisenhale Dance Space (CDS), the daughter of X6, focused on exploration rather than the production of dance, and continued to battle with the establishment, while Independent Dance (ID) offered daily professional Somatic classes and workshops in a more formal vein. Politics and professionalism were never neatly divided between the two organizations,⁶⁹² but dancers using Somatics for technical excellence could attend ID classes, while those pursuing an exploratory approach would be more likely to use CDS. The divergence exhibited itself in the techniques and artists associated with the different contexts: for example, ID ran a daily technique class that applied ideas from various Somatic regimens to set movement. Dancers associated with successful British choreography often taught ID's regular training, but the organization also employed Americans who danced with large companies and used Klein technique for instance.⁶⁹³ Meanwhile, rather than regular classes CDS tended to offer workshops that combined training and exploration based on the approach of individual artists.⁶⁹⁴ In a similar manner, Trisha Brown's New York Studio established itself as an alternative to

⁶⁹¹ Libby Dempster, Hassall, and Thompson all worked with Fulkerson. But exploring Ideokinesis and feminism, Thompson's article in the first issue of Australia's *Writings on Dance* exhibits the influence of British New Dance. Anne Thompson, "A Position at a Point in Time," *Writings on Dance*, no. 1 (1985 A Position at a Point in Time).

⁶⁹² Gill Clarke, who danced for Butcher and Siobhan Davies, was a key figure who straddled CDS and ID insisting upon excellence in dance practice while keenly aware of the problems of the funding and production structures for independent artists.

⁶⁹³ ID's list of teachers is extensive, but some prominent British names include Gill Clarke, as well as Fin Walker who danced for Butcher and ran her own company. Both women used Alexander, and Walker also became a devotee of Klein Technique. Meanwhile Americans included Diane Madden and Susan Klein's teaching partner, Barbara Mahler. Independent Dance, "Teachers and Artists," Independent Dance, <http://www.independentdance.co.uk/who/people/teachers/>

⁶⁹⁴ Rather than training, CDS describes its focus as "artist development, experimentation, research and the creation of new and exciting dance and movement works." I programmed workshops there in 2001 given by Jennifer Monson and Yvonne Meier. Combining Skinner Releasing with improvisation structures and showings, they were typical of the kind of fare CDS offered.

Movement Research for training that did not consider social politics.

London, however, exhibited an importance difference from New York in that British artists not focused on either politics or formalism slipped between the cracks.⁶⁹⁵ New England Somatics contributed to an improvisation scene in New York through the East Village, while British Somatics never established such a context in London. *NDM* with its inclusive editorial policy had provided a discursive context for Brits improvising with Somatics, but with its collapse in 1986, such artists became increasingly marginalized, although they participated in a transnational context framed by CI and New England Somatics.⁶⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the growth of equivalencies between New York and London betrayed the impact of commercialism and institutionalization in the 1980s and 1990s. The two cities found themselves linked by a transnational dance culture to which the independent Somatic network had contributed, but now played second fiddle. The establishment in the United Kingdom reconstructed itself in the dance boom, imposing new aesthetic and technical protocols for British dance theatre. Fulkerson marked this sea change when, in 1988 she moved from Dartington to Holland in search of new resources to cultivate independent transnational Somatics.

Dutch Somatics: The Body in Flux

Dutch Somatics found itself almost exclusively housed by higher education, which made it possible for proponents, in their implementation of the regimens, to largely avoid the impact of dance critics' opinions or the programming policies of concert houses. Unlike Britain, the approaches not only failed to establish themselves in the domestic professional dance scene, but also lacked a substantial independent community. Educators therefore escaped the kind of control exerted over their endeavor that Fulkerson struggled with in her role at Dartington, but

⁶⁹⁵ Practices like Tufnell's became marginalized within this conception, which I look at in chapter 3.

⁶⁹⁶ Booth, Hamilton, and Simpson are all good examples.

never connected with the domestic dance scene in the way that happened through New Dance. As a result, education based on the regimens survived primarily through ties to the transnational network. By sidestepping what was endorsed by any establishment, proponents working in state conservatories constructed a body “in flux” by framing dance training as individual investigation for which outcomes could not be anticipated. In its renouncing of identifiable aesthetics, Dutch Somatics nonetheless emphasized liberalism by configuring the natural body as a site where the dissident individual artist could overstep existing social structures.

In the first of two phases of development beginning in the early 1970s, Pauline De Groot helped to create the first modern dance program in Amsterdam’s state arts conservatory (Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten or AHK). Based on the training to which Eric Hawkins had introduced her as his company member, De Groot consolidated a process-based pedagogy in opposition to classical and modern dance. Along with other artists trained in the regimens, and support from those interested in the new training, the approach that De Groot introduced ultimately achieved dominance within the institution. The program found itself at odds with Dutch professional dancers, however, when they withdrew from the AHK because they were opposed to the experimental pedagogy and aesthetics. In his historical anthology on the school, Jeroen Fabius identifies those who left as “Bianca van Dillen, Kristina De Châtel, and Yoka van Brummelen . . . the choreographers dominating state subsidized modern dance . . . in the late 1970s and 1980s.” He notes, “the school acquired a relatively isolated position,” which resulted in it being “a subject of fierce debate in national newspapers.”⁶⁹⁷ The school employed Americans, such as Trude Cone who trained in Lulu Swiegard’s interpretation of Mabel Ellsworth Todd’s work at Julliard, and later John Rolland, who with Mary Fulkerson co-

⁶⁹⁷ Fabius, *Talk*, 16.

created Anatomical Releasing. The program saw itself as part of an international milieu in which its pedagogy and aesthetics were embraced. By linking itself to multiple foreign hubs and thus configuring professional dance as geographically remote, Dutch Somatics deferred the intended outcomes of the training, focusing its students on individual research.

A second, late-1980s expansionist phase followed the establishment of a new AHK dance program based on Graham and Cunningham techniques. The Somatic-based department reformed as the School voor Nieuwe Dans Ontwikkeling (SNDO, or School for New Dance Development). The state conservatory in Arnhem (De Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Arnhem or HKA), simultaneously established its own Somatic-based program, initially known as the Centrum voor Nieuwe Dance Ontwikkeling (CNDO, or Center for New Dance Development). The Arnhem school, ultimately called the European Dance Development Center (EDDC), further extended its program to the Tanzwerkplatz in Dusseldorf, Germany, and also pursued unfulfilled plans for a program in Lisbon, Portugal. Through temporary foreign teachers whom the schools employed, Dutch Somatics established a co-dependent relationship with the rest of the transnational network. Visitors brought pedagogic and creative resources, while benefitting from exchange and employment at the institutions that became pivotal to the transnational community. Artists and intellectuals congregated to interrogate dance, directing Dutch Somatics toward the hubs outside of the Netherlands.

The development of Dutch Somatics in education meant dancers did not create independent organizations because they coalesced and supported each other within institutions. The isolation from domestic professional dance diverged from marginalization in other contexts because of the substantial support the institutions offered. Local artists did not therefore produce a publication, but instead focused on independent contexts that emerged in Anglophone sites.

The Dutch schools thus became junctions of exchange between artists working with Somatics.⁶⁹⁸

Individualism

Recycling the idea that dancers were training as creative rather than interpretive artists, which initially emerged in opposition to Graham and ballet in New York, Dutch Somatics perhaps more than any other context emphasized individuality. Rather than reproduce existing vocabulary, students investigated kinetic possibility by cultivating kinesthetic awareness; working with pedestrian movement; and using lower muscle tone than in classical and modern training. First instituted in De Groot's independent Amsterdam studio, although this approach exhibits strong similarities with the classes being taught in the 1970s in Britain and America, the pioneer initially developed her pedagogy in relative isolation. Her classes resembled Anatomical Releasing,⁶⁹⁹ and betrayed common ideas about the body, its nature, and the choreographic process to work undertaken by Brown, Forti, Paxton and Fulkerson, as well as the influence of Ideokinesis and H'Doubler's pedagogy,⁷⁰⁰ all addressed in chapter 1. However, having gathered her ideas as a full-time Hawkins company dancer, De Groot returned to the Netherlands without the connections that Fulkerson brought with her to the United Kingdom, even though, just as

⁶⁹⁸ For example, when Fulkerson moved to Holland, Peter Hulton continued in Dutch education a project of documenting artists' practices that he had begun at Dartington in the 1970s. Peter; Arts Archives (Project) Hulton, ; Arts Documentation Unit,, *Theatre Papers Archive* (Exeter: Arts Documentation Unit, 2010), text, 1 computer disc: illustrations; 4 3/4 in.

⁶⁹⁹ Students began in constructive rest position (CRP) to develop their awareness of "grounding" through the line of gravity, the center, and breathing. Then standing they loosened the joints felt the "stand of the ground," doing brushes and other conventional modern dance exercises working with the principle of the weight falling down the back and coming up the front. Students might make sound to connect with the senses. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁰⁰ Hawkins encouraged De Groot to interrogate "the nature and mechanics of dance" which she felt contrasted with the focus on fulfillment of form in ballet and Graham technique. He also exposed her to a broad range of traditions including bharata natyam revivalist Tanjore Balisarawati, Balinese dance, and Flamenco, in which she saw greater expressive possibility than focusing on a form from one culture. Furthermore while visiting her father in California, De Groot met Halprin through Welland Lathrop who she knew from the Limon company. Through exposure to dance ideology influenced by Zen Buddhism, such as Improvising on Halprin's outdoor deck in the late 1950s, De Groot found greater possibility for creativity than following existing aesthetics. Ibid.

Fulkerson did with British Somatics, De Groot initiated a Dutch equivalent on the basis that training could engender experimentation as the foundation of a contemporary dancing body.

In a further correlation with Britain, Dutch Somatics felt the impact of American expansionism in a way that caused domestic conflict. Pioneers of postwar Dutch contemporary dance saw establishing a training program as an important move in a context with little domestic modern dance. They viewed America as the preeminent source for a sophisticated tradition.⁷⁰¹ De Groot established a foothold for Somatics in higher education by virtue of her American modern dance credentials.⁷⁰² Along with others who had trained and performed in American modern dance,⁷⁰³ the new AHK program invited her to contribute to its formation. Yet unlike her colleagues, De Groot rejected the idea that modern dance should underpin the training.⁷⁰⁴ Initially the moderns and De Groot allied with each other against teachers who wanted all students to have a classical foundation.⁷⁰⁵ When a purely modern program established itself in 1976, however, Somatics revealed its incompatibility with Graham technique. In meetings with the modern and classical teachers De Groot's student Jacqueline Knoops represented her teachers as training as having distinct aims like using the pelvis as a center of gravity, moving with ease in and out of the floor, and cultivating awareness of the motion of weight so that the vocabulary emerged from the directional movement of energy rather than a predetermined

⁷⁰¹ As director of the AHK, the Dutch cultural philosopher and politician Jan Kassis initiated the *moderne dans opleiding* (modern dance training) and invited dancers to the table who were running studios in the city based on American modern dance. Pauline; Mary Fulkerson De Groot, "How Things Got Started," in *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam*, ed. Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009), 38.

⁷⁰² De Groot trained at the Graham school in New York in the late 1950s because there was no domestic Dutch modern dance training or professional dance scene. While in the United States she danced for Limón and Hawkins. When she returned to the Netherlands in the late 1960s there was still very little happening. *Ibid.*, 33-36.

⁷⁰³ Fabius, *Talk*, 16.

⁷⁰⁴ De Groot established her own studio precisely because existing Dutch dance studios wanted her to teach Graham technique from which De Groot wanted to depart. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁰⁵ Teachers from within the ballet program wanted to have students do two years of classical training before they trained with De Groot or Stuyf who taught Graham. *Ibid.*

lexicon. Yet the balletomanes and moderns felt Somatics would undermine dancers' professionalism. Classical teachers argued students would lack extension and elevation, and Graham teachers insisted that the strength they were cultivating was counter to the 'softness' of Somatics.⁷⁰⁶ Meanwhile, De Groot believed students would have to unlearn modern and classical technique to cultivate sensory awareness, which she thought essential to integrating creative exploration in training.⁷⁰⁷ Modern dance at the AHK therefore inherited a conflict within the artistic traditions they imported from America.

The Netherlands amplified the incompatibilities between modern dance and Somatics established in New York, and a source of conflict in Britain. As a Hawkins company dancer, De Groot powerfully incorporated into training the 1950s rejection of Graham technique that I talk about in chapter 1, particularly because she initially travelled to New York to train at the Graham school. Although the antagonism was not dissimilar to that in Britain, in the Netherlands Somatics and Graham technique first established themselves as part of a common project. British Somatics made its debut as the rural experimental alternative to London modern dance; so modern concert dance supporters established LSCD without having to negotiate Somatics, even though the British establishment was clearly threatened by Fulkerson. De Groot, however, instituted Somatics in the new dance training in Holland's cultural capital, which magnified its conflict with Graham and Cunningham technique because all the approaches were arguing at the same time for their superiority as a means to cultivate a national modern dance.

⁷⁰⁶ De Groot's asked Knoops to attend the meetings in her stead, because she had trained in pedagogy. She also reported to the meetings that De Groot worked with percussion rather than a piano during classes to introduce different musical measures including syncopation. Jacqueline Knoops (dancer, choreographers, teacher), e-mail to the author, July 16th, 3013.

⁷⁰⁷ De Groot, "Interview with Author."

De Groot's belief in the opposition between the individual and authoritarianism convinced her of the incompatibility between modern dance and Somatics. She argued that the imposition of modern vocabulary instituted a mindless physical regimen, which she had felt she needed to divest herself of as a Hawkins dancer. Working with Mable Ellsworth Todd's student Andre Bernard at Hawkins's behest, De Groot recalls an agonizing "unlearning process"; letting go of the skills she had developed through arduous labor in Graham and ballet training. Yet because she felt "her life and meaning" were consequently allowed to "stream through her," that was what De Groot sought for her students. Although she believed in an eclectic training, something she also inherited from Hawkins,⁷⁰⁸ De Groot resisted integration with the moderns because she believed that in order to integrate creativity with daily movement practice, Somatics must replace classical and modern the authoritarianism. Moreover, when the modern teachers defined their techniques as hard and hers as soft, De Groot felt her philosophy and politics had been reduced to a matter of muscle tension.⁷⁰⁹ For fear of being ridiculed, she concealed what she calls her Buddhist understanding of working with self, spirit and society in dance.⁷¹⁰ Yet despite the misinterpretation to which De Groot felt she was subject, and her high ideals for her students, with her insistence upon the importance of individual creative freedom, De Groot brought with her to the AHK a model of training that embodied postwar American liberalism.

⁷⁰⁸ De Groot followed Hawkins' example of embracing broad influences by incorporating experimental theatre, classes in rhythm and martial arts. Jenn Ben Yakov taught physical non-textual theatre, Phoa Ian Tiong taught martial arts, which De Groot felt would focus students on energy rather than form, subsequently John Yalenizian taught Tai Chi and rhythm using an instrument called the "Ud" while students would play tin cans or whatever made a noise. Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ De Groot felt that their reduction of the contrast in ideology to physical differences demonstrated a lack of understanding of her belief in an anti-authoritarian ethos and the individual process of the creative dancer. She also felt that the Graham teachers had a particularly hard and rigidly codified interpretation of Graham's work. Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ She feared her convictions would alienate the other teachers. She still believes that Somatics allows students to develop an intelligent and creative approach to their dancing, which is robbed by authoritarianism in classical and modern dance. Ibid.

Like the institution of Somatics at Dartington, however, the peculiarities of Dutch society mediated the expansionist liberal logic through which De Groot established her approach. The directorate initially resolved the diversity of opinions about training among faculty with a semi-autonomous structure that reflected a broader Dutch history of mediating between differences through what is known as pillarization. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Netherlands established distinct social spheres, or “pillars,” in which Catholics, Protestants, socialists and liberals conducted their life in relative isolation from each other. Pillarization diminished after the 1960s, yet unprecedented postwar state funding of pillared organizations left a lasting impact, and at its height distinct financial; political; educational; entertainment; health; community; and labor organizations emerged for Dutch people with distinct religious and political affiliation. Late 20th century immigrants even formed their own pillars. Commentators attribute to the system both Dutch tolerance of social diversity, and a lack of dialogue between different groups, resulting, among other social ills, in racism.⁷¹¹ Reflecting Holland’s pillared society, AHK students took classes at De Groot’s and other artists’ semi-independent dance studios, for which the teachers were financially remunerated.⁷¹²

With institutional support, De Groot therefore developed her ideas while enjoying relative autonomy compared with Fulkerson’s struggle to establish academic accreditation. Furthermore, because De Groot established her training alongside rather than in opposition to the institution of modern dance, an educational equivalent of pillarization meant that Dutch

⁷¹¹ For a discussion of the history of pillarization and its impact on multiculturalism and Islamophobia, see: Marlou Schrover, "Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing. Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas," *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review* 125, no. 2-3 (2010).

⁷¹² In 1972 the AHK established an agreement with De Groot to continue her artistic career through a self-contained studios at which students enrolled in the institution could take classes, and De Groot was salaried. In 1975, Aat Hougée was employed by the AHK to help De Groot administer her studio. He secured funding for its improvement, covered the rent, and in turn De Groot and other teachers from her studio began to teach in the Theatre School. Aat Hougée, interview by Doran George, May 30th, 2012.

Somatics emphasized dissidence to a lesser degree than its British equivalent in the 1970s. However, the AHK required De Groot's students to train in ballet and modern dance, which forced the teachers into antagonistic dialogue with each other. De Groot argued against modern training, insisting that contemporary dancers need protean creative capacity, which she emphasized through her individualist pedagogy. Students also struggled trying to fulfill both approaches, which exacerbated the tension between the teachers. They wanted more of what they called technique, meaning Graham and classical training, but at the same time they flocked to De Groot's classes.⁷¹³

After ongoing conflict with modern dance throughout the 1970s, Somatics established its dominance at the AHK by the end of the decade. The institution employed two key figures to resolve the differences among faculty, but both of the arbiters found themselves convinced by what they saw as the more progressive solution to training that De Groot offered. Aat Hougée became a proponent of Somatics after he began administrating the quasi-autonomous relationship of De Groot's studio to the AHK.⁷¹⁴ Her artistic philosophy dovetailed with his political background, together reflecting a broader anti-authoritarian Dutch cultural zeitgeist of which the 1960s countercultural Provos movement was indicative. The Provos used non-violence and absurd humor to create social change, taking their inspiration from anarchism; Dadaism; the German philosopher Herbert Marcuse; and the Marquis de Sade, all of which they

⁷¹³ Knoops recalls that in meetings to discuss students' progress conflicting camps emerged, and modern teachers expressed concern about the lack of physical proficiency. Jacqueline Knoops, email to author, January 16th, 2013. De Groot, who was still developing her ideas, remembers that she wanted students to have more training than she alone could offer and wanted to be in collaborative dialog with the Graham and Cunningham teachers. Yet she also felt that the modern training was counter to her approach, while the Graham and Cunningham teachers felt that De Groot's teaching undermined students' physical achievements. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷¹⁴ Somatics convinced Hougée because he felt that the Graham teachers were instituting outdated aesthetics in class like requiring students to shave their armpits, wear no jewelry and instructing them to smile. The Graham teachers also insisted a dancer must train for many years before they can be creative, and characterized choreography as a predetermined craft along the line of *The Art of Making Dances* by Doris Humphrey. Hougée felt that such pedagogy was outdated even for kindergarten. Hougée, "A Search for Words," 50.

exhibited through performance-art pranks intended to fool and frustrate government agencies.⁷¹⁵

In this milieu, Hougée developed a taste for anti-authoritarian, client-centered learning through participation in a 1960s mental health treatment reform movement.⁷¹⁶ Hougée's background harmonized with De Groot's teaching, and she found parallels the Provos' anarchic use of music, poetry, and performance as a strategy of protest.⁷¹⁷

Hougée and De Groot eventually took up directorship of the school along with the Graham teacher Baart Stuyf who posed no serious opposition to their approach.⁷¹⁸ When Cone and Rolland joined the faculty they extended the range of Somatic classes on offer. Antagonism persisted with modern teachers, however, and the AHK replaced De Groot with Jaap Flier when she rescinded her leadership frustrated by the way that she was represented as central to the ongoing conflict.⁷¹⁹ Flier, as a Dutch ballet star who also trained in and performed modern dance, promised to resolve the situation because of his background in technique; esteemed position in Dutch dance; and international sophistication, which the administration thought would position him to mediate between the artistic differences. But like Hougée, the individual creativity and anti-authoritarianism of Somatics convinced Flier. As someone who had directed and choreographed large companies based on classical and modern training, which he had also taught, Flier sought a pedagogy with the "goal that one can share . . . and give each other information . . . [to take] it away for me from being a student-teacher situation."⁷²⁰ The

⁷¹⁵ Teun Voeten, "Dutch Provos," *High Times* 1990.

⁷¹⁶ Hougée, "(Former Director of S.N.D.O. And E.D.D.C.) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷¹⁷ De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷¹⁸ Although Bart Stuyf's work was Graham based, he was not concerned with technique in the way that De Groot, or some of the other Graham teachers were, so his position in the leadership did little for the cause of the modern dance teachers. Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ The school was described publically as De Groot's "sectarian undertaking." Fabius, *Talk*, 16.

⁷²⁰ Jaap; Remy Charlip Flier, "Teaching as Learning," in *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam*, ed. Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009), 61.

remaining modern teachers left by the early 1980s, paving the way for such an approach to crystallize based on the renouncing of any predetermined vocabulary.⁷²¹

The faculty consolidated their ethos by framing the school as a laboratory. As administrative director, Hougée recycled and translated De Groot's ideas and later Fulkerson's when she joined him as co-director in 1986 after the British hostility became unbearable for her.⁷²² He argued that the school teaches underlying skills through which students develop new languages rather than reproduce existing styles. With a belief in the efficacy of training in movement principles, an idea articulated in chapter 1,⁷²³ Hougée insisted, "techniques to me are nothing else than practicing elements of being an artist." He distinguished the school's approach from the way that "technique in education often stands in for reproducing known material," an approach he saw as "an old way of learning."⁷²⁴ Meanwhile, Flier extended the laboratory idea by theorizing teaching itself as exploratory.⁷²⁵ The idea of dance training as a laboratory of pedagogy influenced the ongoing development of Dutch Somatics, although this philosophy was brought under increasing pressure from the state as the century progressed.⁷²⁶ Still, Flier saw

⁷²¹ Flier was known in the Netherlands as the Dutch Nijinsky, he saw De Groot's as part of developments happening in American modern dance. Ibid.

⁷²² When Fulkerson approached Hougée because she felt her position in the UK was no longer tenable, he gladly invited her to join him as an artistic director. Fulkerson, "Interview with Author."

⁷²³ The idea that Somatics provides underlying skills applicable to any style is particularly strong in Alexander, Ideokinesis and Klein techniques, for example, while the emphasis on novel movement language is strong in Skinner Releasing Technique, Body-Mind Centering and Authentic Movement. See chapter 1.

⁷²⁴ Hougée, "A Search for Words," 51.

⁷²⁵ "Teachers are here to study too... I had the possibility to investigate so much that had to do with myself... we have found about 50 systems to make this school work, somehow it never, never happened that there was a system that was neat package for this school." Jaap; Remy Charlip Flier, "Teaching as Learning," *ibid.*, ed. Jeroen Fabius, 61.

⁷²⁶ Teachers' creative autonomy was sometimes in tension with institutional requirements. Tony Thatcher, who taught in Amsterdam from the late 1980s and continued to teach in Arnhem, recalls that he wrote a letter to Hougée complaining that he felt his pedagogical freedom was being undermined. Tony Thatcher, interview by Doran George, September 6th, 2012. Thatcher was responding to changes that followed the national auditing of Dutch dance education by the *landelijk commissie* in 1994, (HBO-Raad Besteldadministratie, "Eindrapport Van De Evaluatiecommissie Dansopleiding (End Report of the Evaluation Committee for Dance Training."), through which the school, even though it was rated very highly, was required to reveal how it was functioning. Teachers had to produce syllabi, which they felt foreclosed their ability to respond to what arose in their classes. The school also

himself as a researcher in dance education, a perspective also evident in Hougée's conception of the school's development. The director felt anatomical approaches offered concrete ideas in the early 1980s to negotiate uncertainty without the known tools of modern dance, but that later, with "releasing," students moved beyond the limitations of anatomy with creative compositional possibility.⁷²⁷

The Dutch schools worked with a great volume of visiting artists to emphasize the cultivation of individual artistic processes rather than the emulation of a style. In this sense, to achieve the body in flux, Dutch Somatics recalibrated Fulkerson's inclusion of experimental artists in education, which had contributed to respite in New England Somatics and political critique in Britain. De Groot first encountered 1970s New York and New England Somatics, as opposed to the mid-century approaches she discovered as Hawkins' dancer, when artists visited her Amsterdam studio in the early 1970s.⁷²⁸ Hougée followed De Groot to the Dartington festival later that decade. The pedagogy and choreography of Americans such as Paxton, Kraus, and Fulkerson, appeared more individually focused than Dutch modern dance. To extend its aims of individuality-focused education, the AHK therefore employed the same artists that Fulkerson brought to Britain. Hougée continued and expanded his use of experimental artists as the century progressed by drawing from the East Village for approaches that seemed to flout the expectation that Somatics cultivates effortless seamless dancing. The emphasis upon each dancer's uniqueness in Holland's schools also meant that, unlike New York, London, and

came under scrutiny for an international rather than domestic focus. da Silva, "(Director of the Artez Academy M.F.A. In Dance) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷²⁷ The first phase was when John Rolland became full time faculty, introducing his work with Ideokinesis, and the second was when Fulkerson introduced her update of Anatomical Releasing, which I talk about in section 2 of chapter 2. Hougée, "A Search for Words," 51.

⁷²⁸ Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and David Woodberry visited, the latter of the two introducing De Groot to CI, from which she deduced that the ideas to which she had been exposed as Hawkins dancers continued to develop. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

Australia, Dutch Somatics all but excluded classical training until the 21st century.⁷²⁹

The body in flux that Dutch education constructed—sought by fleeing from any recognizable style—opposed itself to New York professionalism with the emphasis on individuality. By employing teaching artists who were often not well supported by their domestic establishments,⁷³⁰ Hougée, for example, insisted that the approaches taught at the school were independent of the professional demand for success. Education in the Netherlands therefore used its independence from professional dance to align itself with artists who resisted reworking experimental practice for large concert stages seen, for example, in the popularization of release technique in the late 1980s and early 1990s as addressed in chapter 1. New England artists such as Forti, Paxton, Lepkoff, and Nelson, influenced the school with their pedagogy based on their improvisational practices, emphasizing exploration as opposed to commercial success. Meanwhile, the recalcitrance of East Village artists contributed a critique of 1970s aesthetics at a time when the new complex vocabulary seen on large stages seemed to have claimed Somatics for its own. Dutch education therefore reasserted the dissidence of the regimens when the natural body seemed to be losing its critical potential.⁷³¹ EDDC solidified its anti-professionalism position by presenting itself to prospective students as a program that

⁷²⁹ EDDC actually included classical training through workshops given by the ex-Béjart dancer James Saunders, and Flier in the late 1990s, but these were six-week workshops peppered throughout the year, so they didn't provide anything like the consistency with which dancers normally embody ballet. I was a student of both Saunders and Flier at EDDC in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

⁷³⁰ Hougée employed artists who worked on the margins of professional dance by making trips to New York to look at the work being staged in off-off Broadway-like spaces of the East Village.

⁷³¹ Hougée advertised his attraction to the theatrical use of confrontation, and reveled in Somatics that engaged in physical risk. I recall this from a conversation about him employing the Canadian BMC teacher and dancer Lee Saunders based on her wild looking publicity material. Many artists he employed at EDDC made work that conflicted with the soft-flowing conception of Somatics such as Houston-Jones, Meier, Skura, Monson, as well as Jennifer Lacey, Sarah Skaggs, Cathy Weiss, and Jennifer Miller.

would equip them to work in marginal rather than mainstream dance.⁷³²

Housed within the laboratory frame of the schools, permanent faculty escalated in their own pedagogy, procedures through which they felt students' individual creativity could be edified. In what they saw as experimental anti-authoritarian teaching, the school's permanent faculty paralleled a difference that New England and East Village Somatics signified from domestic Dutch dance and large successful transnational companies. But they developed distinct perspectives. For example, Karczag wanted students to oppose the idea of the dancer as a tool for the choreographer by resisting recognizable vocabulary. Her pedagogy extended from her solo improvising rather than her history as a company dancer, and aimed at movement that flouted aesthetic traditions to replace a hierarchical company model with each dancer being their own choreographer.⁷³³ Karczag, who was on permanent faculty at SNDO and then CNDO/EDDC from the late 1980s, looked to teaching artists such as Paxton for inspiration.⁷³⁴ She combined Ideokinesis, CI, Tai Chi, and Alexander Technique, cultivating what she saw as an expanded kinetic form to provide students with physical and artistic space to move.⁷³⁵ With her approach, Karczag wanted to focus students on what she calls "the form of the functioning human body, the elements that fill the form rather than the form itself."⁷³⁶ Her colleague Tony

⁷³² I recall that the publicity I first saw for the program stated that graduates could expect to work in marginal spaces rather well funded concert stages, which was one of the things that I found appealing because it spoke to the idea of investigation.

⁷³³ Working at CNDO/EDDC throughout the 1990s, she felt that codified vocabulary often becomes devoid of internal meaning and forces dancers into molds that may not suit them. Karczag's pedagogical research built on her experiences of dancing in *Strider* and performing for Brown. She felt that even with Brown's Somatic-informed innovative vocabulary, the company's success undermined the creative agency of dancers because they appeared as the anonymous tool of the choreographer's vision within large spaces. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁷³⁴ From a Paxton performance in the early 1970s at Dartington, she recalls: "I had never seen a dancer move in such an ordinary and at the same time extraordinary way...I loved this easy, unmannered way of moving, the intimacy." *ibid.*

⁷³⁵ Eva Karczag, email to author, January 13th, 2013.

⁷³⁶ Thatcher was on permanent faculty at SNDO as well as CNDO/EDDC from the late 1980s. He trained at the Cunningham studio and enjoyed financial support from the Arts Council of England in the late 1970s. Thatcher, "(Choreographer, Teacher, Faculty at Trinity Laban Conservatory, London) in Discussion with the Author."

Thatcher sought unanticipated outcomes by challenging the premise that a student knows what it is that they want to do as a dancer or see as a choreographer.⁷³⁷ Influenced by Alexander Technique, like Karczag, he proposed that greater breadth of creative possibility lay in allowing oneself to be or feel ‘wrong.’⁷³⁸ Faculty theorized individuality in opposition to existing aesthetics and company structures, aiming to engender creative potential in training, rather than prepare students for employment in existing companies.

Students within the various manifestations of higher education within the Netherlands sometime rejected faculty’s ideas about experimentation. All the same, they did so by affirming the discourse of discovering a personal aesthetic rather than emulating an established form. Those who were not cognizant of the context or history against which their teachers were reacting experienced the training as an imposition of aesthetics in exactly the way that faculty wanted to avoid. Some students felt under pressure to discard what appeared to be control or precision in their dancing because it challenged the aesthetics through which the teachers were affirming their ideology.⁷³⁹ Consequently, through the institutionalization of resistance toward the reproduction of an established form,⁷⁴⁰ a dominant aesthetic emerged of physical looseness and unpredictability from one movement choice to the next.⁷⁴¹ To critique their training, students also deployed the ideals of personal development and healing integral to Somatic

⁷³⁷ Thatcher taught students set movement, but insisted that the choreography could be a vehicle for discovering the possibilities of the moving-self by letting go of the imperative of success and finding out what the form becomes in the body. Ibid. His approach bears similarity to that developed by Senter, which may be due to their shared interest in Alexander Technique. Senter, "(Dancer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷³⁸ Joao Da Silva, one of the first generation to study at the CNDO, felt under pressure to be less controlled, less formal, and “wilder” in his movement. He perceived some faculty as wanting something different than he had to offer, and therefore imposing an aesthetic agenda. da Silva, "(Director of the Artez Academy M.F.A. In Dance) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷³⁹ Da Silva now sees the aesthetic as one that became the dominant expression in the late 20th century of the Judson lineage, which he came into contact with for the first time at the school. Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Norwegian CNDO student Sidsel Pape publically criticized a dominant school aesthetic. Pape, "Work in Process, Words in Progress Experimental Dance as Performance."

rhetoric. For example, they demanded access to psychotherapy, arguing that their training relies on interrogating the self, and therefore arouses emotional confusion for which resources are needed.⁷⁴² Thus, regardless of whether they accepted the faculty's aesthetics, those who pursued their dance education in Dutch Somatics embodied the ethics of individuality.⁷⁴³

In a manner similar to the way that professionalism haunted New England Somatics, a specter of reproducing existing form emerged through Dutch educators emphasis on escaping any recognizable vocabulary. When SNDO and CNDO formed in the late 1980s, they disagreed about how to cultivate individuality. The new directors of SNDO in Amsterdam, Trude Cone and Ria Higler, continued to use Somatics in opposition to pre-given vocabulary, but argued that a style had crystallized in the school's training.⁷⁴⁴ Already earlier in the decade, Cone opposed the pedagogy of some of her colleagues, arguing that students needed to move throughout their practice instead of lying on the floor working with images. Her different conception of training reveals how her introduction to Ideokinesis had been integrated with rather than opposed to classical and modern techniques,⁷⁴⁵ for she felt a style had emerged in Dutch Somatics because of the concerted opposition toward classical and modern dance.⁷⁴⁶ Yet, applying insights from

⁷⁴² 1990s CNDO/EDDC students Tanja Matjas and Rainer Knupp both felt they ought to have access to therapy or counseling. Knupp attributed his physical sickness to confusion aroused by the program. Rainer Knupp (Feldenkrais teacher), in discussion with the author, September 22nd 2012. While Matjas insisted that psychotherapy should be integral to a training that was asking students to engage in self-interrogation. Meanwhile The landelijk commissie also expressed a concern about the intensity of personal experiences that students experienced. Thatcher, "(Choreographer, Teacher, Faculty at Trinity Laban Conservatory, London) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁴³ Da Silva used the discourse of individual experimentation to insist upon the validity of his artistic perspective in contrasted with the dominant aesthetic. He critiqued what he saw as the imposition of a style. da Silva, "(Director of the Artez Academy M.F.A. In Dance) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁴⁴ Trude Cone and Ria Higler co-directed SNDO when Hougée and Fulkerson left with some of the faculty to form CNDO/EDDC. Fabius, *Talk*, 11.

⁷⁴⁵ Cone struggled with Rolland who was employed full time at the school a few years after her in 1981. While Barbara Clarke's influence was evident in Rolland's interest in exploration of pedestrian movement, Cone trained at Julliard in the lineage of Lulu Sweigard, and perceived the pedestrianism as a style like modern dance. Cone, "(Former Director S.N.D.O.) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁴⁶ Cone recalls that some SNDO students experienced some staff as viewing their technical background as interfering with their ability to dance authentically. *Ibid.*

Body-Mind Centering, Cone reasserted her belief in Somatics by explaining the problem and proposing a solution based on a theory of the natural body. Using Bainbridge-Cohen's conception of developmental theory, the co-director insisted that students were trapped in a low ontogenetic stage that was cultivated by the inner focus of teachers who had inherited Todd's work from Barbara Clarke. To Cone, Clarke's approach was much less scientific than Swiegard's and it was not developed in a conservatory, so the pedagogy had been isolated from the demands of professional dance. To rectify what she saw as the problem, Cone synthesized curriculum that purportedly guided students through the developmental stages, cultivating a mature self that could communicate an individual perspective outward. She also argued that a New York style, which failed to embrace cultural differences, had been imposed with the illusion of cultivating individuality.⁷⁴⁷ Yet, while Cone identified the impact of American expansionism, She reproduced its liberal logic by creating an educational model that would foster "more authentic" individual creativity.⁷⁴⁸

Faculty within each institution also disagreed with each other about how to cultivate individuality, which reflected the growing concern about the development of a Somatic style in Dutch education and further afield in the other transnational hubs that fed the schools. For example, SNDO teacher Gonnie Hegen, who trained at the institution in the 1980s, argued that Somatics as an approach forfeits individuality because students embody images that are not related to the "self," yet stand in for personal authenticity. Much like Cone's insistence that American experimental aesthetics had stood in for individuality at SNDO, Hegen tabled a

⁷⁴⁷ Cone felt a "Judson" aesthetic was being reproduced at SNDO, and recalls that in meetings faculty seemed to express concern about the ability of particular students to connect with their authentic self. Yet she felt they were identifying differences in national culture that were being overridden by a culturally specific American ideal of individuality. Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ To Cone's credit, she did employ a much greater range of cultural traditions, including teachers who gave classes in "Vogueing," African music and dance, and other diverse styles, with the belief that this enhanced the natural multidimensionality of the body. Ibid.

valuable critique of Somatics. Yet like Cone, she introduced her own pedagogy that sustained the liberal ideology of creative freedom, rather than expose the fallacy of *training* students to achieve individual artistic authenticity. Hegen taught structures that demanded rapid change in action to avert preconceived movement ideas, which she felt restored uniqueness. However, accelerated redirection simply replaced the looseness, internal focus, or unpredictability of movement choice that had previously signified individuality.⁷⁴⁹ Meanwhile, student allegiances that developed at CNDO/EDDC in Arnhem exhibited a similar concern with how to achieve individuality and avoid reproducing a recognizable vocabulary. For example, some students affiliated with Karczag, who used anatomical imagery and emphasized the physical body as a mystical source of untapped creative resources, while others associated themselves with Fulkerson, who insisted upon the value of psychological and symbolic images as a way to move beyond the limits of focusing on physicality. Both approaches I analyze in chapter 1.⁷⁵⁰ By evidencing a broader transnational concern about the crystallization of Somatic style as the century progressed, the schools revealed the way in which they enjoyed less independence from professional dance than they might have liked to think.

Transnational emphasis

De Groot planted the seeds for Holland's emphasis on a transnational rather domestic context in the implementation of Somatics, because on returning home from America, she was isolated in her vision of new training.⁷⁵¹ Only by virtue of a few artists who joined her in

⁷⁴⁹ Hegen was a student from 1984-1988 under both Rolland and Cone, then began teaching freelance at SNDO in 1994, and became full-time faculty in 2008. Gonnie Hegen (former SNDO faculty), email to author, June 28th, 2013.

⁷⁵⁰ Da Silva, for example, felt that Fulkerson's releasing technique allowed him to go beyond a particular look. He argues that her concept of release extends into the intellect where becoming an image was not limited to anatomical ideas, and that rather it is about the artistic process. da Silva, "(Director of the Artez Academy M.F.A. In Dance) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁵¹ De Groot wanted to supersede Hawkins' application of Somatics to Graham technique but was unaware of the US Somatic developments of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Graham practitioners dominated Amsterdam

Amsterdam, bringing American experimental dance and theatre,⁷⁵² and a handful of committed Dutch students, did De Groot's project survive.⁷⁵³ She laid the groundwork for successive waves of artists from foreign contexts to contribute to and benefit from dance education in the Netherlands. Visitors to Dartington, whom the Dutch schools subsequently employed, brought pedagogic and creative resources with which De Groot and Hougée expanded the AHK implementation of the regimens,⁷⁵⁴ replacing the faculty who left program because they were hostile to Somatics.⁷⁵⁵ Yet by solidifying Somatics as the foundation of the training and relying on imported educational and artistic talent, the schools entrenched the separation from domestic professional dance. Before the regimens dominated the AHK program, Dutch audiences and critics showed interest in the work being made.⁷⁵⁶ Students who trained with De Groot, Cone, and the modern and ballet teachers, in the 1970s worked similarly to *Strider* and *Dance Exchange*, performing modern dance with a different quality. However, because the faculty could only agree on their incompatibility, the modern dance teachers who left contributed to a

modern dance. Initially many of her students had no background or lasting interest in dance, compounding De Groot's isolation. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁵² Fellow Hawkins dancer James Tyler, also De Groot's ex-partner and the father of her child, brought with him the shared understanding from working with Hawkins. De Groot also found support from theatre artist Jenn Ben Yakov, who was working with New York's "Open Theatre" and came to De Groot's studio while on tour. Ibid. Open Theatre functioned from 1963 to 1973 in New York with an experimental approach that was not dissimilar in its focus on process to the Polish theatre artists Jerzy Grotowski. Sam; Stanley Kauffmann; Robert Patrick; Lawrence Kornfeld; Megan Terry; Crystal Field; Richard Kostelanetz; Carl Weber; Wynn Handman; Rochelle Owens; Carolee Schneemann; Michael Feingold Shepard, "American Experimental Theatre: Then and Now," *Performing Arts Journal* 2, no. 2 (1977): 17.

⁷⁵³ Knoops saw a De Groot performance in the early 1970s and began commuting to Amsterdam from Utrecht for her classes. Knoops subsequently became a teacher and an important liaison between De Groot and other teachers in the early phases of the development of the program at AHK. Jacqueline Knoops, email to author, January 20th, 2014.

⁷⁵⁴ Hougée and De Groot organized a summer course in 1980 with teachers they had met at Dance at Dartington including Fulkerson, Topf, Rolland and Kraus. De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁵⁵ Many of the Graham and Cunningham teachers left with generous settlements. Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Knoops recalls that from 1973-1980 alongside Somatics students took a weekly ballet class and bi-weekly Graham classes and later they also trained in Cunningham technique. She cites Haryono Roebana, Truus Bronkhorst, Margie Smit, Cecile van Deurzen and Wies Bloemen as students from the period who became successful within domestic Dutch professional dance. Jacqueline Knoops, email to author, January 20th, 2014. Cone recalls that there was a growing Dutch audience for New Dance in this period. Cone, "(Former Director S.N.D.O.) in Discussion with the Author."

growing domestic hostility toward the program. So the experimental artists set their sights overseas when the split occurred between the Somatic-based education and modern-influenced domestic professional dance.

SNDO and CNDO/EDDC directors interpreted their alienation from domestic dance differently. Hougée strengthened the connection between New York and the Arnhem school, fostering a belief that a domestic lack of appreciation for his mission was a sign of parochialism. De Groot supported Hougée because, since the early 1970s, she had felt her choreography was more warmly embraced abroad.⁷⁵⁷ But Cone believed that solipsistic dances had alienated Dutch audiences, because students were immersed in research and unconcerned with communication, which supported her theory about the early “developmental stage” initially cultivated by Dutch Somatics.⁷⁵⁸ Indeed, Hougée prioritized research over reaching audiences in the belief that the artist is a necessary generator of novel cultural language, a role that he felt cultural centers inhibit because innovation gets appropriated through the professional demand for success.⁷⁵⁹ By positioning education against domestic dance, he deferred the context to which pedagogy might be connected, and argued that employment at the schools also supported the independence of transnational artists from their domestic professional contexts. “Through the security of the school,” he felt he was “teaching artists about their role in society . . . [,] telling them you do not have to become popular to be important.”⁷⁶⁰ His theory betrays Paxton and Forti’s influence, and exhibits the relationship between New England and New York, and, much like the back-to-

⁷⁵⁷ De Groot, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁵⁸ Trude; Christina Svane Cone, "Back to the Body: Trude Cone Interviewed by Christina Svane," in *Talk, 1982-2006: School for New Dance Development Publication: Dancers Talking About Dance, 15 Interviews and Articles from 3 Decades of Dance Research in Amsterdam*, ed. Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdam: International Theatre & Film Books, 2009), 73.

⁷⁵⁹ He argued that professional dance scenes inflate artists when they provide new languages but artists are discarded in the period when they are not producing new language, which is untenable. Aat; Wendell Beavers Hougée, "A Search for Words: Providing New Symbols," *ibid.*, ed. Jeroen Fabius, 49.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

the land philosophy with which rural locations were associated in Somatics, Hougée's transnational focus exhibited a self-righteous critique of Holland, rejecting local culture in favor of generating new possibility. In this sense, the Arnhem school ideology reproduced the cultural elitism with which liberal discourse constructs high culture; and yet Hougée disavowed the potential of local culture to give birth to internationally focused art, even though Holland housed the venture to which he had committed himself.

The student population reflected the increasingly transnational focus of Dutch Somatics. During the 1970s, substantial numbers of Hollanders attended the Amsterdam school, yet their numbers dwindled with the loss of domestic support. At the same time, the presence of key transnational figures for Somatics ignited foreign interest. Fulkerson's co-directorship strengthened the transnational scope of SNDO, and subsequently CNDO/EDDC, because of her pivotal role, through Dartington, in the network from which Dutch education drew visiting teachers.⁷⁶¹ Foreign students thus heard about the school by word-of-mouth and through publications circulating among between American, Britain, Australia and Holland.⁷⁶² They flocked to SNDO and CNDO/EDDC, because the trainings were unrivaled beyond the Netherlands for the range of experimental artists to whom students gained access. Hence, Dutch Somatics increasingly depended on foreigners for its ongoing development.

SNDO and CNDO/EDDC replaced Dartington as the European juncture for transnational

⁷⁶¹ Visiting artists included dancers associated with Dance Exchange in Australia; the X6 collective, British choreographers who investigated the formal potential of Somatics, including Dartington graduates; New York artists from the Judson generation forward, including those who populated the East Village dance and performance art community of the 1980s, practitioners who made their home in New England, Dutch choreographers and teachers, including graduates from the school, and finally artists from other locales across Europe including performance artists as well as dancers and choreographers. For a full list of visiting artists at SNDO see: Fabius, *Talk*, 197-99.

⁷⁶² Thompson recalls she first encountered Fulkerson's teaching at the AHK 1980 summer school, which she found out about from *CQ*. She already knew of Fulkerson through Hassall, with whom she was taking classes in Australia. Thompson, "(Early Teacher of Somatics in Australia) in Discussion with the Author."

exchange when Dartington Festival ceased and Fulkerson moved to the Netherlands.⁷⁶³ British Somatics integrated into domestic dance diminishing its connections to the transnational community, except for those artists whose work exceeded establishment protocols and who relied on overseas opportunities to find validation for work largely focused on process.⁷⁶⁴ Meanwhile, foreign artists working in Holland misrecognized the success of Dutch Somatics as resulting from Holland's more laissez-faire culture compared with Anglophone contexts. In fact, the history of pillarization enabled dance education and its professional corollary to exist alongside each other in relative non-communication. Yet rather than being viewed domestically as a basis for tolerance, Dutch progressives challenged domestic cultural partition in the 1960s on the basis that it restricted choice through religious and other affiliations, even to the point of employment opportunities.⁷⁶⁵ To some degree, we can understand the eventual domination that Somatics achieved at the AHK as a product of this social shift because, with its rhetoric of individual choice, the training dovetailed with the wider challenge to pillarization. Yet by positioning itself as the only training within which dancers could make individual choices, Dutch Somatics recycled America's expansionist hypocrisy in which the opportunity for freedom of expression depends upon American cultural, economic, and military domination. Yet dancers from contexts that still marginalized training based on exploration experienced the

⁷⁶³ It was after visiting Dartington Dance Festival that Hougée acquiesced to De Groot's insistence that they should employ visiting artists. De Groot, "Interview with Author." He witnessed how the festival functioned as a transnational meeting place for a New York centered culture. In the 1980s De Groot and Hougée employed many of the artists and teachers with whom Fulkerson had cultivated a relationship. Fabius, *Talk*, 197-99.

⁷⁶⁴ This was true, for example for artists associated with Chisenhale Dance Space. It also meant that Fulkerson eventually left the UK for the Netherlands.

⁷⁶⁵ Marlou Schrover talks about a "cradle to grave embeddedness" that resulted from pillarization. Schrover, "Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing. Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas," 332.

Somatic domination as resulting from Dutch tolerance,⁷⁶⁶ masking the inability of modern and Somatic teachers to collaborate, and concealing the expansionist underpinnings of the training.

Australian Somatics: The Body of the New Frontier

Like its Dutch equivalent, Australian Somatics sought to transcend local parochialism through participation in a transnational context. However, antipodean practitioners framed their practice with a pioneer narrative in which they were achieving post-colonial cultural independence by breaking new ground for the international venture of contemporary dance. By importing Somatics they claimed to source bodily truths with which local dance could be liberated from the lasting cultural influence of British colonialism. Although their approach came from abroad, dancers believed that renewable originality in the regimens meant that Somatics could nurture an independent Australian voice to relieve contemporary dance of its dependence on and identification with archaic European aesthetics. They participated in a broader 1970s Australian cultural independence movement in which practitioners from various fields aimed to achieve a national movement that participated in the cutting-edge arts that were circulating between major Western hubs such as London and New York. Dancers worked with experimental musicians and theatre practitioners in a budding avant-garde. Australian Somatics therefore powerfully embodied the construction of high-culture that was seen in postwar American arts as part of United States expansionism. In order to assert national independence, dancers configured the natural body as a source from which a distinctly Australian voice could be cultivated that exceeded domestic limitations to speak to international concerns. The Australian experience thus highlights the role of internationalism and authenticity in the use of the regimens.

⁷⁶⁶ This perception was supported by behavior in the school that reflected cultural differences between Teutonic and Nordic, compared with Anglo cultures like both sexes changing into their dance clothes together, which for American's and Brits represented the sexual liberation.

After participating in British and American contemporary dance, a handful of Australians brought ideas home, with which they argued authentic domestic contemporary choreography could be cultivated as part of an international arts venture. Nanette Hassall and Russell Dumas formed the Sydney-based collective *Dance Exchange* in 1976 and were joined by Karczag later that year.⁷⁶⁷ As well as performing with major ballet and contemporary companies in New York and London, the three danced with London's *Strider* earlier in the decade, and employed a similar approach on antipodean turf. Together, Somatics and choreographic formalism signified avant-garde methodology to develop dance of an international caliber without imitating other cultures. The classical work recently established in Australia, by contrast, represented for *Dance Exchange* an unsophisticated, outdated legacy of colonial imposition that was not authentically Australian and out of touch with international contemporary trends. Hassall and Karczag introduced Anatomical Releasing and the improvisatory procedures they had encountered with Fulkerson. Hassall also used the aleatory methods she learned as a Cunningham dancer, while Dumas developed the movement puzzles he gleaned from Twyla Tharp. Together Somatics and "pure movement" seemed to be specific to no culture, but rather offer unique artistic expression through a broadened range of aesthetic options, sourced from movement capacity integral to human physiology.

The Australian rhetoric of cultural decolonization embodied tropes that were evident in all the transnational contexts. *Dance Exchange* recycled Fulkerson's missionary narrative and the rhetoric that New Dance was helping isolated regional British and European artists achieve

⁷⁶⁷Hassall and Dumas returned to their native Australia with the explicit intent of disseminating the new ideas they had gathered working in the U.S. and the U.K. Karczag who was initially reticent to join them, got on board when she was visiting her family and found that the company had been state funded. All the dancers had performed for *Strider*, and when it folded Karczag had gone with Alston to New York while Hassall continued working with Fulkerson for a year at Dartington. Hassall had also previously danced for Cunningham, while Dumas had performed for a handful of major classical, modern and post-modern companies including Twyla Tharp and Sara Rudner, both of whom left a lasting impression on his choreography. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 57.; Karczag, "Interview with Author."; Warby, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

liberation. The castigation of existing domestic dance also paralleled the superiority with which Hougée viewed the Dutch domestic scene. Like British artists, the Australians rejected establishment aesthetics, but more like the Dutch, they looked to international rather than domestic developments to advance their venture, exhibiting the mid-century American modern dance avant-garde strategy of contesting the domestic establishment with foreign success. However, unique to 1970s Somatics, the antipodean dancers embodied the idea evident in early American modern dance of being a new frontier of Western culture.

As part of the independence movement, boosters of Australian high-culture expanded concert dance in the 1970s compared with the paucity thereof up until the 1960s.⁷⁶⁸ The growth and political character of the arts reflected a progressive turn, exhibited in recent legal changes that rejected outdated colonial logic. Indigenous Australians achieved full citizenship in 1967, and a labor government removed explicit racism from immigration law in 1973.⁷⁶⁹ National self-consciousness about these changes precipitated a broad shift toward cultural independence, within which Somatics positioned itself. The trope of bodily authenticity certified the appropriateness of the new training for the cultural work at hand because of a wider concern to generate uniquely Australian arts. For example, progressives identified with Aboriginals in their nationalism, building on a history of Australian settlers appropriating native culture to furnish a confident sense of nation.⁷⁷⁰ Yet a principle of autonomous cultural participation infused the

⁷⁶⁸ The Australian Ballet was only formed in 1962 and funding for dance only began in 1973. Wendy Owen, "Style Without Definition" *The Age (Age Arts)*, June 18th 1977.

⁷⁶⁹ Legislation passed that eradicated race from matters of immigration. The end of the "Whites Only" immigration policy and the introduction of dance funding were both secured by the Gough Whitlam led Government, who were the first labor party to take office in 23 years. Joseph Pugliese, (Social Justice scholar, Macquarie University) email to author, January 7th, 2013.

⁷⁷⁰ In the 1920s Margaret Preston exhorted to 'go to the art of our Aboriginals,' and shamelessly expropriated Aboriginal design, color and symbols to produce a vision of Australian art informed by primitivism. Similarly, in dance and music, John Antill's 1930s score and ballet 'Corroboree' represented a romanticized savage-primitive vision of Aboriginal culture with the notion of a unique Australian identity. Massive expropriation of Aboriginal culture with no permission financial recompense also attended the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and consequent

1970s appropriation, because the history of the representation of Aboriginal culture by white artists was viewed as inauthentic.⁷⁷¹ Aboriginals precipitated this change by achieving greater visibility through protest, which extended from achieving citizenship, and from participation in the avant-garde arts,⁷⁷² including dance.⁷⁷³ The new position of indigenous culture in Australia dovetailed with the idea that reproducing classical European aesthetics signified a vestigial colonialism. With the conceit that they were accessing fundamental movement principles, Somatic practitioners, along with other white artists such as experimental musicians, aimed to achieve autonomy by rejecting European aesthetic traditions that they represented as imposed upon the antipodes. In this sense Australian Somatics reframed its initial rejection of modern and classical dance in nationalist terms peculiar to its 1970s national culture.

Despite the role of indigenous culture in the discourse on Australian authenticity, along with other non-native avant-garde artists, dancers working with Somatics largely aspired to be part of an international Anglophone network. To the degree that the emancipation of Aboriginals figured in Australia's new cultural self-consciousness, settler artists saw themselves as joining with a global vanguard. They complained of their isolation from Western, post-

opening up of Australia to international tourism. Aboriginal law, which views the elders as custodians of their symbols, was ignored. Meanwhile Aboriginal people lived under the violence of the Aboriginal Protection Acts, had their children forcibly removed and institutionalized or farmed out as servants or laborers and had no citizenship or civil rights. Joseph Pugliese, (Social Justice scholar, Macquarie University) email to author, January 7th, 2013.

⁷⁷¹ Warren Burt, who was an avant-garde musician in the period, recalls that his Melbourne milieu discussed what constituted authentic aboriginal arts compared with the appropriation thereof. Warren Burt, interview by Doran George, January 25th, 2013.

⁷⁷² Aboriginal people reclaimed their expropriated culture through activist politicization of their role in white Australian colonial culture. The early 1970s saw the landmark establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House in the national capital, and the flourishing of Aboriginal political theatre, poetry and other arts as ways of contesting the ongoing colonial regime and its various systems of colonialist representation. Joseph Pugliese, (Social Justice scholar, Macquarie University) email to author, January 7th, 2013.

⁷⁷³ In 1972 Papunya Tula Aboriginal artists group formed and they started transferring Aboriginal sand painting onto canvases and selling them in white galleries. In 1976 Tai Kwan Chan formed Sydney's *One Extra* dance company, which was made up of European, Asian and Aboriginal Australian dancers. The company explored themes of colonialism with its multiracial cast. Jaqueline Lo, "Dis/Orientations: Asian Australian Theatre," in *Our Australian Theatre in the 1990s: Australian Playwrights*, ed. Veronica Kelly (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998).

industrial centers for the contemporary art to which they looked for creative resources. For example, *Dance Exchange* seemed like the new frontier of a transnational project because its members employed strategies they learned working in Britain with Strider. Hassall, Dumas and Karczag faced similar problems as the pioneering British company because of a paucity of Australian infrastructure for dance outside of large companies. Like *Strider*, they therefore worked in cheap makeshift venues educating their audiences with workshops connected to their concerts.⁷⁷⁴ The dancers also followed in *Strider*'s footsteps with their anti-hierarchical company structure; they shared organizational roles, danced in each other's choreography, and hosted work by artists with whom they shared values.⁷⁷⁵

Yet despite *Dance Exchange*'s marginal position relative to large companies, and the collective's progressive 1970s approach in configuring themselves as a new frontier of experimental art, they embodied Western cultural expansionism as part of settler-colonialism. Writing in queer indigenous studies, Scott Lauria Morgensen argues, "[s]ettler colonialism is naturalized when conquest or displacement of Native peoples is ignored or appears necessary or complete."⁷⁷⁶ By seeking an authentic Australian dance to gain significance within a transnational cultural circuit, *Dance Exchange* configured colonialism as a thing of the past. They sought to supersede an outdated aesthetic colonial legacy by reifying Australia rather than contesting the settler state. The 1970s avant-garde settlers, who saw themselves as finding creative truth, represented the people whose land they occupied as also taking up an authentic

⁷⁷⁴ The company rehearsed, taught classes and performed in the Sydney Police Boys Club, and also participated in residencies such as with Melbourne Institute for Technology, where they lived performed and taught. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁷⁵ Karczag performed *Soft Verges*, *Blue and Connecting Passages*, by Alston and presented work that she had made collaboratively with the U.K. dancer and choreographer Miranda Tufnell. *Dance Exchange* also invited foreign choreographers to present work with them, such as Fulkerson and her husband Jim Fulkerson who was a musician and composer that worked for John Cage. Ibid.

⁷⁷⁶ Scott Lauria. Morgensen, *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 16.

place within a new cultural independence movement. "Australia" therefore presented itself as a shared solution, rather than the being the problem that it was and is for natives. It must be understood that Morgansen's opposition to settler colonialism comes 35 years after *Dance Exchange* began its project, and that supporting Aboriginal authority over indigenous culture was an important move. Yet by interrogating the participation of Australian Somatics in settler colonialism, we can see how the American expansionist underpinnings of the training transformed themselves in foreign contexts by presenting liberal democracy as a progressive development, while affirming capitalist imperialism's inevitability.

With the cultural power that the antipodean avant-garde accrued through the nation's turn to independence, Australian Somatics enjoyed a substantially different reception from its British equivalent. Some Australian dance critics promoted *Dance Exchange* as the new artistic frontier. They agreed with the collective that balletic ideals were vestiges of colonial conservatism, and therefore sympathized with the use of Somatics. The antipodean experience thus contrasted with the defunding and loss of press favor that *Strider* experienced when they employed the regimens.⁷⁷⁷ Unlike *Strider*, whose initial success came before working with the regimens, the members of *Dance Exchange* brought with them to Australia a history with the training as ex-members of *Strider*, so Somatics always infused their dancing.⁷⁷⁸ While *Strider* lost its funding after incorporating Fulkerson's ideas, *Dance Exchange*, having already begun to

⁷⁷⁷ Both companies quickly received financial and press support, but unlike in Britain where Fulkerson's influence was represented as undermining *Strider*'s development, Australian critics such as Mary Emery and Jill Sykes welcomed *Dance Exchange*'s experimentation. In influential publications like *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* they aimed to educate audiences about the company, and other writers followed suit. Gardner, "Minimal Resources."

⁷⁷⁸ Hassel and Karczag in particular were already committed to Somatics when *Dance Exchange* first started, and had been part of *Strider* when it lost press and funding support because the company began to use Somatics. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

work with Somatics and enjoying warm press support, rapidly received Theatre Board of the Australian Council funding.⁷⁷⁹

Differences in the press representation of *Strider* and *Dance Exchange* also reveal why the idea of a new frontier worked so well. Even when critics supported the British collective prior to their work with Fulkerson, writers saw themselves as arbiters of established taste, judging a young company's potential to fulfill self-evident aesthetic criteria.⁷⁸⁰ By contrast, assuming that audiences were unfamiliar with modern dance, Australian critics educated their readership about *Dance Exchange*. Hassall and Dumas capitalized on the opportunity to cast off the shackles of European tradition, and fulfill the promise of authenticity in Somatics. They influenced critics by publically discussing the development of Australian modern dance.⁷⁸¹ Dumas argued that because Australia tended to emulate European culture to achieve sophistication, its modern choreography was a diluted European copy of American ideas. Hassall matched his rhetoric by distinguishing *Dance Exchange* from Australian modern ballet, on which she acknowledged the influence of modern dance, but characterized it as committed to tradition rather than risk.⁷⁸² Together, they presented *Dance Exchange* as severing ties with antiquated aesthetics by taking risks rather than sustaining tradition. Critics explained to their readers that *Dance Exchange* differed from other companies in their use of ease as opposed to tension, and informed that the "release" method they employed provided a greater breadth of

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ British writers talked of *Strider* as a promising project with the potential to mature. Alexander Bland, "Not Available," *Observer*, January 20th 1974 Jan Murray and Clement Crisp make similarly supportive but cautious and paternalistic comments.

⁷⁸¹ Dumas actively courted the attention of the critics, a venture at which he was successful. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁸² Dumas insisted that Australian modern dance had never flourished because it emulated European achievements to demonstrate its cultural worth, which makes antipodean dance modernism second hand. While Hassel asserted that while modern ballet is influenced by modern dance the exchange does not happen the other way around because modern dance is engaged in risk whereas ballet perpetuates tradition. Owen, "Style Without Definition".

vocabulary.⁷⁸³ Because Somatics was represented as offering new possibility distinct from ballet, the physical tension of classicism accrued to the association of colonial culture, which Australians identified with Europe.

Despite the effort to establish the Australian character of *Dance Exchange's* practice, the press and dancers verified the company's value by linking it to an international context. As I have pointed out, Dumas argued that American rather than European aesthetic lineages held the key to an independent Australian dance, and by referring to the foreign career histories of *Dance Exchange* members, the press added weight to the critique of existing concert practice. Writers emphasized the collective's New York and London credentials, furnishing them with sophistication and providing evidence for the value of their risk-taking. The artists appeared to have forfeited international careers to develop domestic dance. For example, writing about a *Dance Exchange's* 1977 residency at Royal Melbourne Institute for Technology, Donna Greaves admitted that it "might seem at first an unusual place for people used to working in the artistically sophisticated circles of London and New York."⁷⁸⁴ With histories in what were seen as world-class classical and modern companies, Hassall and Dumas seemed to have the understanding to distinguish between real innovation and the emulation of outdated traditions or watered-down modernism. *Dance Exchange* therefore positioned itself at the vanguard of a new national dance culture.

Despite focusing internationally, along with their rejection of European antiquity, 1970s artists showed a consciousness of and distaste for United States expansionism, associated with American commerce.⁷⁸⁵ Yet in contrast with the British, *Dance Exchange* saw themselves as

⁷⁸³ Alan Brissenden, "An Exploration of Body and Space," *The Advertiser*, March 11 1978; Mary Emery, "Fair Exchange," *The Australian* 21st February 1978

⁷⁸⁴ Donna Graves, "The Exchange," *The Catalyst* May 16th 1977.

⁷⁸⁵ Burt, "(Experimental Musician) in Discussion with the Author."

unaffected by such cultural dominance because they felt that their influences were part of an international movement rather than being specific to a context. The mid-century export of American modern dance certainly initiated Australian interest in overseas approaches. For example, based on the collective's foreign credentials, Sydney and Melbourne dancers saw the company as a source for New York's latest trends.⁷⁸⁶ The collective believed, however, that they were achieving domestic dissidence by addressing international concerns, so they recapitulated Cunningham's strategy for challenging the New York establishment in the mid-1960s, and recycled the idea of iconoclasm within a national independence discourse. In addition, experimentation from other centers, such as London, exhibited similar ideas to those from New York, of finding artistic truth within pure form, confirming the transnational basis of the aesthetic movement.⁷⁸⁷ Meanwhile, indigenous people's emancipation and the end of a "Whites Only" immigration policy hailed growing antipodean sophistication. Settler and native cultures seemed to advance through the common pursuit of authenticity, fulfilled in Somatics with the rhetoric about the natural body.⁷⁸⁸ Consequently *Dance Exchange* felt they were achieving artistic truth by drawing from international sources, and the Australians who embraced them felt that the collective was cultivating a domestic version of overseas contemporary high culture.

With the idea that their foreign sources were "international," dancers also averted a broader concern within settler artist communities about Australia's marginality in Western culture. Non-native Australian dance culture relied upon international input, a situation that

⁷⁸⁶ Dancers at the Melbourne studio of the Australian modern dance pioneer Margaret Lassica had heard about Judson Church and looked Hassall, Dumas and Karczag to make its choreographic traditions available. Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ British experimental music was imported to Australia, which dancers connected with Somatics and associated choreography. Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ While white artists were valorizing the idea that the only Aboriginal arts that were authentic were those executed by indigenous people, they were also working with ideas of authenticity in Western experimental practices. For example, both Somatics and the minimalist approach to music composition rejected classical aesthetics with the idea of working with the most basic material of the medium.

predated the introduction of Somatics, because modern and classical dance had already depended on harvesting ideas from abroad.⁷⁸⁹ *Dance Exchange* continued this trend by using foreign research to further develop the field.⁷⁹⁰ They then disseminated their ideas through Australian touring and residencies, which included workshops, and precipitated further independent activity.⁷⁹¹ Already in the 1970s, by taking advantage of the citizenship and visa agreements based on colonial history, other dancers travelled to Britain to access American ideas through Dartington, and still others visited America and Holland to bring ideas home.⁷⁹² Yet they believed that they were creating an independent culture, developing their own styles rather than learning existing vocabulary, often launching projects without state or other institutional support. For example, in 1978 dancer Ann Thompson reconstructed dances from Rainer's *Workbook. 61'-73'*, earning the author's blessing by mail.⁷⁹³ In this culture of willing exchange, a small community initially passed on information by word of mouth. However, dancers saw their practice as dependent on New York, even through London, and Dartington,⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ For example, Hassall was in receipt of a state scholarship to study at Cunningham's studio when she met Fulkerson there. The fact that the state supported overseas study demonstrates the perceived need for Australian's to reap ideas from abroad to develop a domestic culture. Nanette Hassall, (Faculty at Western Australia Academy of Arts) email exchange with author, 10th-13th July 2013.

⁷⁹⁰ *Dance Exchange* received research funding, some of which they used to spend extended periods in New York. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁷⁹¹ During the RMIT residency, Hassall, Karczag and Dumas lived in a loft space together where they performed and taught dancers and non-dancers. Rachel Fensham (dance scholar, The University of Melbourne) in discussion with the author, 17th November 2013.

⁷⁹² Thompson found Somatics and the associated choreographic processes so compelling that she went to the Netherlands where she took Fulkerson classes at the SNDO summer school, and then attended the Putney workshop in Vermont. She found out about the workshops through *CQ* and on her return to Australia, almost immediately began teaching at the VCA Dance and Drama School and in community classes attended by people interested in circus dance, and acting. Thompson, "(Early Teacher of Somatics in Australia) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Thompson began studying Somatics and task-based improvisation, as well as working with "found movement" in 1978 with Lyndal Jones. She recalls imitating the gestures of people on the street from slide images, and finding transitions between the gestures. She connected Jones' choreographic process with Somatics because both entailed finding pathways between movements. At the age of 20, Thompson was aware of the relationship with what she was doing to the Judson Church in New York, and that the new ideas in Australian dance also came from Britain. Ibid.

compounding Gotham's centrality, which, much like in Britain, overshadowed other influences on the development of Australian Somatics.⁷⁹⁵

In subsequent years, when Karczag had left Australia, Hassall and Dumas nurtured a new generation, encouraging them to make their own work, and introducing them to overseas artists.⁷⁹⁶ In 1991 Hassall set up "Dance Works," a Sydney production house and studio through which choreographers such as Ros Warby, who eventually danced for Dumas, were nurtured. Meanwhile, in Melbourne Dumas mentored artists such as Becky Hilton and Lucy Guerin. He introduced them, along with Warby, to Sara Rudner on state-funded trips to New York, and he brought artists such as Lisa Nelson to Australia to give workshops.⁷⁹⁷

Hassall and her students also quickly established Somatics in educational institutions,⁷⁹⁸ reaching a new generation with an Anatomical Releasing approach taught in a manner almost identical to other contexts.⁷⁹⁹ For example, Australian dancers such as Lyndal Jones and Elizabeth Dempster, who had participated in British New Dance, studied with Hassall and went on to teach Somatics elsewhere in Australia.⁸⁰⁰ New students therefore learned of the

⁷⁹⁵ Thompson felt that she responded so well to Somatics because of childhood dance classes she had taken with a European modern dancer who immigrated in the 1940s. She recalls doing ballet class barefoot and then improvising to music or poetry. Her experience betrays a legacy of European modern dance in Australia that all but disappeared in the transnational development of contemporary dance. Ibid

⁷⁹⁶ When Dance exchange received funding, David Hinkfuss was subsidized to study under Dumas's mentorship, a role that Dumas continued to fulfill by introducing new generations to practices he had learned from Twyla Tharp and Sarah Rudner. Dumas took young dancers to New York, and became notorious for instilling in dancers that they must go searching. Warby, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ Only a year after *Dance Exchange* began, Hassall was teaching at Rusden Teachers College in Sydney where she implemented Ideokinesis influenced Anatomical Releasing. Thompson, "(Early Teacher of Somatics in Australia) in Discussion with the Author."

⁷⁹⁹ Thompson first encountered Somatics through Hassall's student Lyndal Jones. Her recollection of class bears striking similarities to the teaching associated with Ideokinesis and Anatomical Releasing in the U.S., the U.K. and the Netherlands. After studying the skeleton and its function, students practiced constructive rest position (CRP see chapter 1 section 2) while working with images such as the "center line," an imaginary line of energy at the center of the torso extending beyond the head and beyond the pelvis. They would improvise with the images and sensations. Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ After studying in the UK, Jones taught at Melbourne State College (later named Melbourne University College of Education), using what she had learned from Hassall, and the practitioners she encountered in Britain. Dempster

transnational network from their teachers, and through *CQ* and *NDM*, which circulated in institutional settings. The country saw a less turgid relationship than Britain and the Netherlands between the regimens and skills associated with classical and modern training. Like the two European countries, the combination of both was initially seen as innovative, but Australia didn't experience the opposition to formalism seen in Britain, and the labor at hand was launching any contemporary dance culture, rather than repudiating what was established by modern dancers, as happened in Holland.⁸⁰¹ Somatics thus quickly established its role as complimentary to existing techniques, as much as, if not more than, as a source for movement innovation.⁸⁰² This was in part because, although Hassall, for example, initially contrasted *Dance Exchange's* practice with contemporary ballet, when the regimens instituted themselves in Australian dance education, their value as a compliment to other approaches became dominant.⁸⁰³ This reflected the effort to advance Australian cultural identity,⁸⁰⁴ which was also seen with the press framing dancers working overseas as proving Australia's artistic excellence. For example Jill Sykes laments in the Sydney Morning Herald that when Karczag left Australia to dance for Trisha Brown, "an irreplaceable talent was lost," yet when she croons over the "more mature performer" that she perceives Karczag to have become, the writer betrays her

studied in the U.K. after being Hassall's student, and subsequently taught with and after Hassall at Deakin University. Victoria University hosted a Somatic-based dance program for many years, at which Shona Innes, and Eleanor Brickhill were students who became dancers. (Thompson, interview, 8/20/11)]

⁸⁰¹ Australian dancers influenced by Somatics continued training in ballet for different reasons than New Yorkers. Entering the antipodean concert stage through a Cunningham-like vocabulary, Australian Somatics exhibited a similar use of line, extension and elevation to the classical tradition. Institutional training rapidly adopted Somatics to train dancers both for large companies and a new independent dance scene because the approaches were not set in opposition with each other.

⁸⁰² Rather than being used to develop new vocabularies, Australian Somatics contributed to training ballet and modern dancers, although the company *Chunky Moves* is something of an exception. Nanette Hassall, email dialog with author, July 9-13, 2013.

⁸⁰³ Hassall concedes, "in Australia the somatic work has been in large part complementary to the formal techniques taught although this varies from place to place. For example Western Australia Arts PA makes an extensive commitment to it. It permeates the entire BA program." Nanette Hassall, email dialog with author, July 9-13, 2013.

⁸⁰⁴ Hassall fed the Australian ballet companies with new generations of dancers, while others went to work with Rudner or Petronio in New York or Deborah Hay and Karczag in Austin Texas, and the Netherlands respectively. Warby, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

pleasure in the dancer being overseas.⁸⁰⁵ Therefore the antipodean implementation of the regimens ultimately resembled to a greater degree Sweigard and Dowd's aim at Julliard of cultivating health and excellence in ballet and modern dance, than the pursuit of generating new vocabulary promoted by Fulkerson and De Groot.⁸⁰⁶

The domestic publication *Writings on Dance*, a legacy of *Dance Exchange's* endeavors, evidenced the emphasis on the transnational network and the trope of Australia being a new frontier for Somatics.⁸⁰⁷ Despite government and press support for *Dance Exchange*, *Writings on Dance* saw isolation as a key domestic problem. For instance, in a report on a "small dance companies" conference in the 1987 issue, co-editor Sally Gardner conveyed the belief that the consolidation of an independent dance scene remained beyond Australia's reach. She insisted that dancers and choreographers need a critical framework to be able to talk to each other "to overcome their artistic and geographical isolation and . . . discuss issues of mutual concern"⁸⁰⁸ The journal therefore attempted to resolve the problem by addressing what Dempster, its other co-editor, observed as the "absence of a critical space for dance . . . in Melbourne [and] Australia."⁸⁰⁹ *Writings on Dance* consequently differed from its foreign equivalents by philosophically interrogating artists' practice, and aiming to cultivate great sophistication about

⁸⁰⁵ Jill Sykes, "Fine Tuned from Head to Toe," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 26th 1994.

⁸⁰⁶ Because the press and state funders embraced artists' exploration of Somatics as part of broader developments in dance, it is likely that Australia did not experience the kind of battles within education that ensued in Britain and the Netherlands. But Rachel Fensham suggest that Somatics did not take on the same character as a training approach through which new vocabulary could be developed as it did in British and Dutch dance education. Rachel Fensham (dance scholar, The University of Melbourne) in discussion with the author, 17th November 2013.

⁸⁰⁷ A collective of Australian dancers began the journal in 1986 to address issues that they felt were relevant to their context, many of which paralleled those covered in the publication's counterparts in London, New York, and New England. For example, in the first issue, Thompson addresses the feminist implications of working with Ideokinesis, which reflects her familiarity with British New Dance discourse. Thompson, "A Position at a Point in Time."

⁸⁰⁸ Sally Gardner, "Reflections of the State of the Art: A Report on the Small Companies Conference, January 1987," *ibid.1* (1987).

⁸⁰⁹ Elizabeth Dempster, e-mail correspondence with the author, February 20th 2014.

Somatics.⁸¹⁰ For example, the first issue in 1985 boasts an extensive article in which Thompson aims to “consider . . . ideokinesis and related image processes within the current, social, economic, and political context.”⁸¹¹ She provides a detailed description of Mabel Ellsworth Todd’s pedagogy and its application for dancers through, for example, “release technique,” but also considers how the approach is liberatory for women by framing the ideas about image with John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*.⁸¹² Although the journal differed from *NDM*, its ongoing interest in feminism suggests strong links between British and Australian artists,⁸¹³ and the recycling of X6’s strategy of aiming to deal with isolation and lack of resources by nurturing critical perspectives to establish a robust independent context.⁸¹⁴ The depth and rigor with which writers addressed various issues in *Writings on Dance* reflect an artistic milieu that saw itself as pioneering Somatics in uncharted territory.

⁸¹⁰ Unlike the publications in other contexts, *Writings on Dance* did not register classes or host a forum for diverse community voices to be heard through letters, reviews, and short opinion pieces. Rather it proffered long articles including liberal reference to academic writing from outside of the field as a way to strengthen the credibility of the discourse. Dempster reflects that they were responding to the small size of the country’s dance community and the poor quality of available information, aiming to reform the situation with education. Elizabeth Dempster email to author, February 20th, 2014.

⁸¹¹ Thompson, "A Position at a Point in Time," 4-12.

⁸¹² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, Harmondsworth: British Broadcasting Corporation; Penguin, 1972).

⁸¹³ The artists who developed the fledgling scene in Australia were aware of the problems that had been encountered in the UK both through direct experience and from reading *NDM*. Furthermore, in addition to the experience *Dance Exchange* collective members had in the UK as members of *Strider*, Libby Dempster, who was a key figure in the development of the journal was also a student of Fulkerson, and had danced with Tufnell, Greenwood and Karczag before returning to Australia.

⁸¹⁴ It is notable that throughout the rest of the 20th century, *Writings on Dance* repeatedly returned to feminism as a framework for thinking about dance. For example, issue 3 (1988) focuses on "Bodies and Power" with the articles such as "Habeas Corpus: Feminism, Discourse and the Body" by Philipa Rothfield, and "Women Writing the Body" by Elizabeth Dempster. While issue 9 (1993) devoted itself to "Thinking Through Feminism" including: "Unlimited Partnership: Dance and Feminist Analysis" by Ann Daly, "Revisioning the Body: Feminism, Ideokinesis and the New Dance" by Elizabeth Dempster, "Dancing In and Out of Language: A Feminist Dilemma" by Rachel Fensham, and "Dancing Out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St Denis's 'Radha' of 1906" by Jane Desmond. Writings on Dance inc., *Writings on Dance* (1985-).

Australia impacted the transnational network less visibly than the other hubs.⁸¹⁵ Yet for antipodean dancers the relationship between the other centers affirmed Australia's position in the community. For example, Europe presented its antiquity to Karczag and Dumas when, after they traveled to Britain to dance for London Festival Ballet, they participated in experimentation amidst battles with the local dance establishment.⁸¹⁶ Subsequent generations witnessed similar British-based antagonism in the pages of *NDM* and on their own travel to the United Kingdom.⁸¹⁷ By strong contrast, the potential for innovation with Somatics seemed to be at its greatest in Manhattan, where Karczag performed Brown's choreography, Dumas connected with Tharpe and Rudner, and Hassall first went to discover what she calls "the new dance," which she found performing for Cunningham. For Dumas, New York remained a site of pilgrimage for young Australian dancers to encounter resources for innovation. Yet teaching in the Netherlands, Karczag rejected New York's professionalization of Somatics, which she felt threatened the creative agency that dancers had carved out in the 1970s.⁸¹⁸ As full-time faculty at EDDC, she became a vocal proponent for Somatics as a source for innovation, publicly criticizing the use of Somatics to recapitulate classical or modern aesthetics in line with the Dutch body in flux. She taught workshops in all the transnational hubs I have mentioned, as well as many besides. All the members of *Dance Exchange* taught at SNDO and thus benefited

⁸¹⁵ In the further development of this project I intend to conduct field research in Australia, which I anticipate will reveal the country's influence that is not immediately evident in the material available. Furthermore, Australian's perception of their culturally marginal position may have influenced the way that interviewees presented their experiences.

⁸¹⁶ Both Karczag and Dumas relocated from Melbourne in the early 1970s to dance for London Festival Ballet. They left the classical company shortly afterwards, Karczag joining *Strider*, and Dumas danced for various companies including Netherlands Dance Theatre, Béjart, and also *Strider*, where Hassall ultimately joined Karczag and Dumas. Karczag, "Interview with Author."

⁸¹⁷ Dancers with family histories of emigration to Australia could more easily live and study in Britain than the other hubs because they had access to special visa privileges. Thompson, "(Early Teacher of Somatics in Australia) in Discussion with the Author."

⁸¹⁸ Hassall commented "I had read about the Cunningham Company...in one of the American dance magazines.... the US was definitely the center for new dance development... It proved to be a very exciting time to be there." Hassall, email to the author, November 22nd 2013.

from the focus of Dutch Somatics on drawing teachers from the transnational community. However, despite the rich discourse in *Writings on Dance* and the unique antipodean experience with the regimens in the 1970s, with the odd exception,⁸¹⁹ Australia largely remained simply an outpost within the transnational network, without any other strong identity.

Conclusion

The transnational network exhibited unevenness in the degree to which each geo-Somatic body signified beyond the local community in which it was cultivated. Interrelationships nonetheless characterized the symbolic meaning in which the regimens manifested in each hub and the material conditions by which they were shaped. Through a dynamic web, dancers sustained the underlying tropes that established the field, and accessed necessary resources as late 20th century contemporary dance underwent local and transnational change. Crucially, dancers preserved the conceit of the natural body with the cumulative distinct implementations of the rhetoric. By positioning itself as the center, New York's professional and innovative body resourced the network with varied pedagogies and choreographies, verifying the creative potency of connecting with natural corporeal capacity. New England's body in artistic respite, however, safeguarded against losing the connection with nature by providing a symbolic space beyond the reaches of commercialism and institutionalization. The socially signifying British body failed to have the same reach as either of its American equivalents. Yet emerging as it did through dispute with a conservative establishment, British Somatics epitomized nature's dissident potential for dancers from across the network. Similarly, by functioning as a vessel for discourses from foreign contexts, Holland's body in flux largely disappeared beyond the higher education situation in which it was cultivated. Yet the Dutch

⁸¹⁹ Helen Poyner, working in the United Kingdom, would be a good example of an exception. However notably, although British dancers know of her Australian roots, this doesn't figure in her self-description. Helen Poyner, "Walk of Life Movement Workshops with Helen Poyner," <http://www.walkoflife.co.uk/helen.htm>.

commitment to the transnational network provided employment for many artists and supported exchange between various contexts enriching the overall discourse. While Australia's new frontier body largely affected only those artists who lived in or visited the antipodes, it nevertheless stood for the potential of Somatics to disseminate creative freedom to ever more unchartered geo-cultural territories, a project in which the regimens engaged in many contexts that I have not been able to touch on here.⁸²⁰

The different symbolic and material functions of the geo-Somatic bodies changed in character and importance in relation to the phases of development articulated in chapter 1. The particular character of the geo-Somatic bodies and their interdependence emerged by virtue of the transition from an independent network to institutionalization, a change that the interconnected network also lubricated. In the 1970s, without substantial institutional backing, dancers confirmed the value of their marginalized efforts through the transnational scale of their venture. With its reputation of advancement, New York symbolized the potential of the regimens at a time when artists in various contexts were struggling to establish alternatives to modern dance. Meanwhile, British Somatics functioned as a conduit for resources from Gotham through Dartington College, while X6 modeled the determination with which independent projects could be pursued in a hostile environment. In this same phase of early development, Australia justified the missionary zeal with which Somatics pursued its own expansionism. Then with commercialization and institutionalization, New England stepped in as a site to which artists could flee from the professional circuit to protect the value of Somatics. Similarly, through its separation from domestic dance culture, Dutch Somatics took up the role of an outpost for American innovation and a site of transnational exchange when Britain closed its

⁸²⁰ I refer to some of these contexts in the dissertation conclusion.

borders by asserting a nationalist contemporary dance in the 1980s. The emergence and shuffling of distinct roles within the transnational network therefore maps the phases of development to which Somatics was subject. Yet in the same topography we see the construction and retention of rhetoric about accessing universal individual creative freedom through nature. By launching critique of their respective establishments, dancers concealed the role of American expansionism.

We can see how well transnational dissemination worked for Somatics by the fact that great numbers of contemporary dance educators ultimately embraced the training. They invested in the idea that through the regimens, students access extra-cultural motile capacity as a practical foundation for unique unfettered artistic potential, and unprecedented health and sustainability as dancers. By the 21st century, Somatics had spread beyond the West and found its way into most major dance training institutions. Programs now apply its analysis of the body to the very classical and modern training that Somatics was initially developed to resist, as well as drawing upon the approaches for novel movement invention.

Considering the diversity of ways in which Somatics emerged in various contexts, a reader unfamiliar with the training may find the belief that it is based on an essential universal body confusing. Yet dancers' ongoing investment in the rhetoric is not dissimilar to the pervasiveness of Western medicine. Many of us assume that the best treatment for a fracture, for example, is the same for everyone wherever they are located because we are thought to share a basic skeletal structure with properties that have been discerned by science. Dancers worked on a similar principle when they configured Somatics as a means to rescue individual creative freedom from existing traditions, or as the optimal means by which to recalibrate existing vocabulary for new choreography. Yet to the degree that Somatics naturalized individuality,

universality, and dissidence through the body, it compounded the ubiquity of liberalism in contemporary dance. Dancers therefore embodied postwar liberalism through the belief that they were developing critical projects from a *carte blanche*, which encouraged an artistic culture that claimed to provide freedom from establishment constraints and the space to stage political and aesthetic critique. Liberalism, therefore, not only sidestepped interrogation but also seemed to be the very basis from which critique was possible. By looking at concert dance in the next chapter, we will better understand how liberalism helped to smooth over the paradox between dancers' initial intention to critique institutions and the eventual appropriation of Somatics by those same organs of power.

Chapter 3: Somatic Bodies on the Concert Stage, Processing, Inventing, and Displaying.

Introduction: Natural contestation, it's not all softness and flow

I opened chapter 1 with Leslie Kaminoff's quote from *Movement Research Performance Journal* that warned about the problems of faking "release technique." In the same issue, which focused on release as an approach to dance, Simone Forti protested, "there's so much life beyond letting go and flowing."⁸²¹ The term "release technique" emerged when contemporary dance, informed by ideas that came to be known as Somatics, achieved success on large concert stages with choreography that demonstrated the qualities Forti described. Large numbers of dancers subsequently pursued the skills associated with the regimens; the training found its way into major dance education institutions; and establishments, which had initially repudiated Somatics, endorsed the aesthetics with opportunities and earning power. Yet by the end of the century, as Forti's and Kaminoff's comments indicate, the institutionalization of Somatics by dance establishments piqued concern that the outer appearance of the dancing body was displacing the focus on inner knowledge in training, and that broad choreographic possibility was being lost to a narrow set of canonized physical aptitudes, and compositional approaches. In their opposition to these changes, some artists harkened back to the aims with which dancers had begun using the regimens 40 years earlier. They insisted that, rather than the established aesthetics Somatics had engendered; the true value of the regimens was in their use for investigation. This chapter traces development in the application of Somatics through concert dance, from its use as an exploratory approach valued in a small community, to its institutionalization through aesthetics associated with the work of a few choreographers who became successful on a transnational scale.

⁸²¹ Simone Forti, "Young Frog Falls Over" Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal," 14. Winter/Spring 1999 Journal #18

Although artists voiced disagreement about the changing use of Somatics, their rhetoric masked the role of social and economic factors in the shift. For example, to oppose release technique's canonization of softness and flow, Forti implored her community to restore the aim of aesthetic critique for which artists had turned to the natural body in the 1960s. Nature, for Forti, constituted a way of knowing and experimenting, rather than a source for recognizable aesthetics. In her bid to widen the application of Somatics, she proposed that a natural and efficient use of the body could entail gripping as well as flowing or letting-go.⁸²² Purposefully drawing on a term that had emerged as the antithesis of dancers' aims in release classes, Forti argued that if nature represents an epistemology for investigation, then the aesthetic possibilities being entertained must include gripping, because in nature muscles sometimes need to grip. Her comments exemplify how the discourse on nature entailed contestation, which actually conflicted the claim that Somatics accesses a body beyond cultural influences. Indeed the exigencies that artists faced informed the different ideas and choreographic approaches that they developed through their engagement with the regimens. Yet rather than examine the role of economic factors, organizational practices, or thematic concerns on the changes occurring in the use of Somatics, artists felt that the loss of an authentic connection with nature was the reason for the diminishing emphasis on investigation.

This chapter reveals how, through concert dance, artists applied the ideologies articulated in chapter 1 to tackle socio-cultural factors. 1960s dancers employed Somatics to establish creative agency by rejecting the choreographer's authority in new dance-making processes and their framing of concerts. Forti's early work profoundly influenced these first

⁸²² She asserts that throwing a stone while running along a narrow ledge "you can not afford to let the momentum sequence freely." *ibid.* In her characterization of, and challenge to release technique, Forti corrals the presumption that nature is basic to the meaning of physical experience and action.

developments. By the 1970s, dancers had corralled the idea of nature to synthesize creative processes, vocabulary, and modes of organization that they saw as comprehensively inclusive. We see the improvised work of Steve Paxton, Barbara Dilley, and Nancy Topf, building on the previous decade's experimentation in ways that were related to but distinct from Trisha Brown's and Forti's 1970s set choreography. Meanwhile, contemporaneous work by British artists Miranda Tufnell and Rosemary Butcher, reveals that shared ideas flowed between New York and London, but were differently framed. The next decade's artists drew attention to social identities that had been excluded by 1970s universalist claims. I look at 1980s East Village work by Ishmael Houston-Jones, Channel Z, as well as Yvonne Meier and Jennifer Monson, which asserted the value of individual difference. These artists also critiqued institutionalization that was happening in this time period with Brown's success on large concert stages. In their 1990s modalities, choreographic processes largely returned to those that Forti and her colleagues had initially rejected. Somatics provided the skills for dancers to fulfill the choreographer's vision, restoring company hierarchies. Along with changes in Brown's work, I reveal the nuances of institutionalization by analyzing dances by Stephanie Skura, Stephen Petronio and David Rousseve. Furthermore, by also looking at a handful of alternatives to the dominant model of 1990s dance, the chapter traces how other artists staged their own versions of Forti's objections. Eva Karczag's solo improvisation, and the intergenerational choral practice of British choreographer Rosemary Lee are two amongst other artists addressed whose work aimed to circumnavigate the impact of the institutional success of Somatics.

In the reworking of the concept of a natural body, we see not only how Somatics was progressively institutionalized, but also how, across changing circumstances, the regimens sustained the conceit that they provide universal access to individual creative freedom. The

concert work that got canonized by large theatres seemed to embody the liberatory ethics from previous decades because the rhetoric about nature endured, and the artists who achieved recognition contributed to earlier experimentation. So even while alternatives to a conventional company model were sidelined, institutions claimed to integrate the progressive practices that dancers initiated. I analyze work in distinct time periods in order to reveal the values and corresponding methodology that was marginalized by the end of the 1990s. I have selected works that help to elucidate the boundaries between distinct applications of Somatics in concert dance, often by signifying a turning point in an artist's practices that reveal broader changes in social and artistic developments.

With chapter 1 having already traced the historical development of the regimens, this chapter focuses on how dancers incorporated the post-war liberal ideal of universal individual freedom as they tackled changing social circumstances. The chapter is therefore organized topically rather than chronologically. Under three distinct choreographic strategies, I represent the clustering of principles in the making, presentation, and reception of dance, and then show how these strategies changed across time. The strategies represent distinct conceptions of the dancer and choreographer roles, and the relationship between them. In various modalities of the culture of concerts, artists manifested liberal ideology, while navigating their circumstances by reworking and critiquing practices set down by the previous generation. By framing the strategies in relation to broader social changes, I trace how liberalism was initially exercised through collectivism, then transformed into entrepreneurialism, and subsequently into a corporatization of Somatics.

Although all the principles in the three strategies were exhibited throughout the last 40 years of the 20th century, I have authored them in a way that lines up loosely with the

chronology outlined in chapter 1 on Somatic training. Beginning in the 1960s dancers choreographed their experience of moving based on Somatic ideas in “processing”; this seemed to provide a universal foundation for individual authenticity. Based on this approach, 1970s dancers cultivated anti-hierarchical collectivism in their concert culture. Through “inventing”, they also produced what they felt were novel forms of dance based on knowledge afforded by Somatic experience. Even though these principles emerged in an overlapping milieu with processing, they powerfully embodied 1980s entrepreneurial culture and social change by providing methodology to invent individual signature vocabularies, and stage new social identities. It was through “displaying” that choreographers finally ascended in 1990s institutional contexts with signature vocabularies based on the theatrical effects through which the other two strategies conveyed their ideologies.

Processing, inventing and displaying are analytical terms based on artists’ understanding of their choreography rather being than labels used within the community. I read the cultural specificity of codes through which artists constructed the dancing body by framing the distinct uses of common terms with the ideas in the choreographic strategies. My sources of evidence reveal how meaning changed in the contexts where the choreography circulated. For example I compare international reviews of Trisha Brown’s work with the perspectives of different generations of her dancers, while also conducting my own close reading of her choreography. Despite excursions beyond America to consider local differences and transnational influences, my primary focus on New York capitalizes on the city’s role as the symbolic center for contemporary choreography. I use Britain as a counterpoint to show how state funding, a distinct dance establishment, and other local conditions mediated the development of Somatic-informed dance as part of a broader trend. More research is needed on comparable

developments in the Netherlands and Australia to provide additional examples of local differences. This would likely reveal choreographic trends influenced by transnational links based on British colonial history, and European proximity that fed back into the community as a whole. Nevertheless, the New York-centric evidence shows artists tackling distinct circumstances with the shared concept of the natural body, underpinned by the post-war liberal ideal of individual freedom.

Section 1. Processing Somatic Experience in Concerts.

Through the principles that I'm representing as processing, 1970s artists established what they saw as a new definition in Western concert dance of the choreographer-dancer relationship. They dispensed with the distinction between the roles, transforming how they made dances. As the dancer and choreographer were collapsed into each other, one creative agent emerged, the identity of which was determined by the mode of training. Although the 1970s witnessed the heyday of equivalence between the dancer and choreographer, the ideas accumulated over at least the two previous decades through interventions into training that purportedly brought the dancers needs to the fore. Having disbanded with regimens that they saw as imposing aesthetics, dancers staged their consciousness of kinesthetic processes as they were theorized in Somatics. Rejecting the skills necessary for Graham's work, for example, the regimens fueled the staging of new ideas about what constitutes a dancer's preparation. Artists thus put the performers' experience in the foreground, participating in broader sub-cultural trends that aimed to place decision-making in the hands of those that the decisions concerned, so in the case of dance, this meant the dancers performing a work. The milieu understood itself to be cultivating anti-hierarchical collectivism in its concerts, and thereby embodying the direct democracy seen in Somatic classes in the same decade, as detailed in chapter 1. Dancers seemed

to liberate themselves within the artistic process based on the conceit that they were reconnecting with the natural body, and so such liberation was supposedly universally accessible. Based on these developments Somatics enjoyed a mutually influencing relationship with concert dance.

The identity of a fused dancer with the choreographer challenged Western concert dance's conventional organization of the artistic process. In her analysis of Western dance training, Susan Foster offers a theory of the dancer's subjectivity that illuminates the intervention artists undertook. She argues that students assess their execution of movement over time in class, investigating how to best fulfill the ideals of a technique, and altering their activity as a result.⁸²³ The method of training, and its ongoing process, therefore define a dancer's endeavor in training. It was precisely these aspects of dancing that artists emphasized in their new concert practices. Ballet and modern dance appeared to confine the dancer's subjectivity to the training studio by privileging the choreographer's vision in rehearsals and performance.⁸²⁴ By contrast, in contact improvisation (CI), and other choreography, dancers performed their investigation and assessment of kinetic solutions, thereby staging compositional forms that represented their moment-to-moment experience.

Although was central to the choreographic changes underway, the training did not define the milieu in which the new concert practices emerged. One of Steve Paxton's 1970s

⁸²³ Foster theorizes the body in training as emerging between the dancers perception and the artistic ideals for which they are training, mediated by the models they use in assessing how to work toward the ideal. She articulates an "ideal" body that represents the trajectory of desired control; the "perceived" body, apprehended through the senses, where the success of the approximation of the ideal is assessed; and the "demonstrative" body providing evidence in the teacher or colleagues of both correct and incorrect behavior relative to the ideal. Foster proposes that Western theatre dance techniques can be understood through these bodies. The physical-intellectual labor of bringing the perceived and ideal body closer together characterizes the dancer's subjectivity, and the space between perception and ideal situates that subjectivity in a process tied to the perspective of the training. Foster, 1997 Foster, "Dancing Bodies."

⁸²⁴ Randy Martin refers to this generally accepted definition of dancer and choreographer roles. Randy Martin, "Dance as a Social Movement," *Social Text* 12, no. Autumn (1985). Other ideas occasionally surface such as the exceptional virtuoso, but Martin's theory is still the prevailing understanding.

improvisations illustrates how concerts dovetailed with and drew upon Somatic ideas even if the artist didn't work directly with the training. Paxton's position as a key critic of conventional choreographer/dancer relations also meant that he influenced many artists who staged their experience based on Somatics. So understanding his practice provides insight into the milieu. Paxton scheduled the untitled dance in question to begin on his arrival at a New York venue directly after travelling from his Vermont home.⁸²⁵ Removing a backpack and boots, he signaled the journey's end and the dance's beginning. Taking a bus as a "warm-up" was one among several ways that he "investigated the mind of the dancer" by varying his preparation,⁸²⁶ which exhibited his milieu's challenge to the separation between training and concert.⁸²⁷ By staging his choice of preparation as the dance's subject, Paxton replaced the choreographer's authority with the dancer's experience.⁸²⁸ Furthermore, coming from Vermont signified nature's integrity in spaces beyond the city associated with the back-to-the-land movement addressed in chapter two. Paxton contested the artistic power structures associated with metropolitan culture by focusing on what he calls "those who were seen to be the pawns in the game; the dancers" to explore "the source and processing of choreographic movement."⁸²⁹

Historical precedents that underpinned Paxton's approach, reveal the impact of Somatic ideas on his work specifically, and his milieu more generally. In the early 1960s, Paxton worked with Forti and others in Greenwich Village renouncing virtuosity as a critique of elitism with the

⁸²⁵ The show was part of a Grand Union improvisation festival on 14th Street in Manhattan. Paxton is unsure of the exact date and location, but recalls the performance, which I also heard about from other artists active in New York in the 1970s. Steve Paxton, email to the author, December 18th 2011.

⁸²⁶ During his series of improvisations, Paxton also prepared by meditating; completing a dancer's barre; and exploring a movement principle. Steve Paxton, email to the author, December 18th 2011.

⁸²⁷ For example, Rainer created environments that attendees explored. She conjoined exploration and performance, bringing together the communal and experiential aspects of dance class with the concert practice of presenting an idea. Kaye, "(Choreographer, Dancer Filmmaker) in Discussion with the Author."

⁸²⁸ Banes argues communitarian values underpinned experimentation across artistic disciplines in Greenwich Village. Novack argues similar values contributed to the emergence of CI. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 38; Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 202.

⁸²⁹ Steve Paxton, email correspondence with author, 7/15/2014.

idea that anybody can participate.⁸³⁰ Forti influenced the community by staging the consciousness of the moving body.⁸³¹ Her dancers investigated what Banes calls “elements”, including “balance, weight, momentum, energy, endurance, [and] articulation of the body.”⁸³² Forti displaced what she saw as the outdated aesthetics of pointed feet and extended arms with task-like action such as pulling oneself up an angled plane in *Slant Board*.⁸³³ With a focus on the awareness of action, and the decisions about kinetic form being left to the moment of performance, Forti aimed to divest dance of anything “superfluous”, following “questions of perception rather than questions of theatre.”⁸³⁴ She choreographed the dancer’s experience to displace the concern with appearance.

Forti and her early 1960 milieu drew, in turn, from the mid-century innovations of Cunningham and Halprin, among others, who responded to perceived threats to artistic freedom referred to in chapter one.⁸³⁵ They seemed to liberate the dancer from the tyranny of authoritarian choreography by using training ideas in composition, expanding the dancer’s role from interpretive creative. By constructing the body as “physical material” available for investigation-Halprin anatomical, Cunningham’s anti-referential- they capitalized on the

⁸³⁰ Banes argues that across the artistic disciplines of the Greenwich avant-garde, the performing body was privileged as a critical strategy with the imperative of “actual” rather than “metaphorical” participation to establish “authenticity of presence” in the work. She insists this was achieved by including amateurs and those not trained in the given discipline. Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 70.

⁸³¹ Forti’s influence can be summed from the adoption of her ideas by artists like Paxton and Brown, such as their taking up of the the loose clothes she chose for her dancers. Simone Forti, email to author, June 8th, 2014. For example in Brown’s 1963 *Lightfall* Brown and Paxton wore unitards. Yet by 1968, in a Brown’s *Falling Duet* that she performed with Barbara Dilley, they both wore the loose clothes Forti preferred. Source for images of Brown’s work: Trisha Brown Dance Company, “Trisha Brown Dance Company”.

⁸³² Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 28.

⁸³³ *Slant Board* was first staged in Forti’s concert Dance Contructions at Yoko Ono’s loft in 1961. Virginia B Spivey, “The Minimal Presence of Simone Forti,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 30, no. 1 (2009).

⁸³⁴ Made available by the artist. Forti, “Interview 2 with Author.”

⁸³⁵ See my discussion of Hawkins in chapter one who influenced De Groot among others with his interest in ideokinesis, and insistence on the role of uncertainty in the creative process. De Groot, “Interview with Author.”

dancer's experience.⁸³⁶ Halprin, who taught Forti, Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown, among others who influenced Somatics, emphasized experience (the kinesthetic), above the choreographer's eye (the visual) in her training. *Slant Board*, and other similar dances, reframed Halprin's pedagogy as performance. Mid-century Somatics therefore contributed to the communitarian organization of concerts in the next decade, which seemed to foreground the individuality of dancers.⁸³⁷ This dovetailed with emerging Somatic pedagogy that insisted upon the intrinsic corporeal nature of kinetic skills, independent of aesthetics, and found through exploration.⁸³⁸

The early 1960s ideas, which contributed to what I've termed processing, exploded in the following decade into a culture that grew up around, but was not limited to CI. By disavowing conventional choreographer/dancer relations, CI culture betrayed the degree to which it held Paxton as an influential figure. I am giving some focus to CI, because it centralized the dancer's experience in concerts. Although not all dancers working with the duet form used Somatic training, the culture provides a vivid example of, and was a central force in, the application of Somatics to concert dance. Chapter one points out that, in their simultaneous

⁸³⁶ Novack points out Halprin replaced emulating a choreographer's style with individual movement (28), and argues Cunningham's dancers were thought not to be working toward a prescribed ideal, but training for open-ended possibility (25). Novack, *Sharing the Dance*. Foster agrees, arguing the logic of the training is "to become articulate by doing movement." Foster, *Reading Dancing*. Cunningham thusly impacted models of training.

⁸³⁷ Although concerts may have purported to be egalitarian in their practice, like any endeavor, the actualization of ideals was not always achieved. However my focus is how the ideals changed.

⁸³⁸ Bales proposes two ways of thinking about changes in the relationship between choreography and dance class that parallel processing. She suggests that Deborah Hay configured training, performing and choreography as equivalent, and that CI combines the dancer and choreographer roles. She argues that these are two of many new models in post-Judson dance that result from the severing of training from choreography, affording class its own discourse. Radical juxtaposition in Judson performances meant no single regimen made sense. But some models she identifies exhibit radical proximity and equivalence of training and composition rather than distinction. Bales' fails to account for why Hay's practice, and CI emerge in response to the separation, thereby enshrining "Judson" aesthetics as a wellspring of change without explanation. I argue that the changes in dance class, the new models of training and composition, and ultimately the dialog between Somatics and concert dance were part of broader social and artistic movements. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, chapter 3.

development, Somatics and CI exhibited enormous crossover with each other.⁸³⁹ The blurred boundaries arose because some Somatic training used CI's kinetic forms, while Somatic ideas also informed the development of CI vocabulary. Furthermore, the practices share key elements from 1950s precursors, such as Halprin's and Cunningham's work.⁸⁴⁰ Dancers brought beliefs and aptitudes from Somatics to their execution of CI, around which an artistic context developed that housed other choreographies of processing. 1970s CI and its culture, established key principles and an ideology that had an enduring impact on Somatic-informed choreograph

By focusing on their experience of the moving body, CI dancers believed that they averted the hierarchical theatrical conventions that had previously determined concert dance. Cynthia Novack describes CI as "most frequently performed as a duet, in silence, with dancers supporting each others' weight while in motion."⁸⁴¹ She argues that any concern with the outer form of CI was secondary to the tracking of changes in the body's relationship to gravity. By emphasizing kinesthetic awareness, she suggests dancers reduced their risk of an unanticipated fall, which established processing as a necessary condition of performance.⁸⁴² She attributes an internal gaze, widely seen in 1970s CI dancing, to such demands.⁸⁴³ For example, in duets, the dancers connected their respective centers of gravity to each other from which they extended loose limbs to sense the floor and regulate the gradual spread of falling weight. The vocabulary therefore served the need to pay attention to gravity and momentum. Yet along with other

⁸³⁹ Paul Langland recalls that Diane Madden, Stephen Petronio, Daniel Lepkoff, Nina Martin and himself were all taking release classes and practicing CI, which was not unusual. Paul Langland, e-mail to author February 18th 2014.

⁸⁴⁰ Novack argues Cunningham and Halprin informed the development of CI, which Melanie Bales gives as precursors to "Judson aesthetics." Yet Novack interrogates a complex social, aesthetic and methodological matrix that underpins CI, to which she argues direct participation is central. Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 30; Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 25.

⁸⁴¹ *Sharing the Dance*, 8.

⁸⁴² Novack articulates 12 styles of movement. "Experiencing movement from the inside" in particular exhibits physical aptitudes, and communicative intent that highlight the dancer's process. *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸⁴³ She includes photographs captured during duets in which the dancer's gaze is often descending, apparently attentive to inner experience, which contrasts with the images she includes of ballet, modern, tap, and aerobics, with the dancers' gaze unabashedly inviting spectatorship. *Ibid.*

behavior that represented the dancers' ordinariness,⁸⁴⁴ an internal focus also signified anti-theatricality.⁸⁴⁵ CI dancers idealized performing "as oneself,"⁸⁴⁶ being concerned with the experience of moving rather than expressive or aesthetic protocols.⁸⁴⁷ Novack chronicles the rapid expansion of CI culture as a 1970s anti-hierarchical movement in which, like *Slant Board*, dancers staged direct democracy by representing the experiential investigation of physical principles.

CI embodied broader sub-cultural values based on the idea of that dancers were drawing on a universal potential for cooperative subjectivity found in nature. The dancers participated in a rebellion against narrowly defined gender roles, and other predetermined ways of living associated with the 1950s.⁸⁴⁸ They sought what they saw as freedom and equality by relinquishing physical control to natural forces like gravity and momentum. The duet form offered lifting and weight sharing techniques in which men and women could potentially participate equally, as well as dancing not restricted to a heterosexual dyad.⁸⁴⁹ Dancers embodied what was represented as the risky new sociality of their generation in the unique motility and mutual responsibility that they felt they "discovered" by giving and receiving weight. The idea that new collaborative possibility resides in nature dovetailed with the ideas put forth in the media coverage of 1969's Woodstock Festival. The event represented itself as

⁸⁴⁴ Novack points to the signifying agency of behavior that appears incidental to the dance when she suggests that dancers "adjust clothing, scratch, laugh, or cough," which indicates that they are ordinary people rather than rarified performers. *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸⁴⁵ For example, a classical ballet dancers whose face suggests she is struggling with her balance would be considered a technical failure.

⁸⁴⁶ My argument builds on Marcel Mauss's denaturalization of bodily practices such as walking or fouling, which he argues are learned, the implication being that behavior cannot be separated from its signifying agency. Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body" Margaret M.; Judith Farquhar Lock, *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*, Body, Commodity, Text (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 50.

⁸⁴⁷ I am influenced by Foster's analysis of how the dancer's gaze meets the audience as part of framing a concert. Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 64.

⁸⁴⁸ For an informative discussion of the narrow social values to which mid-century dance responded, see: Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance*.

⁸⁴⁹ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 11.

engendering anti-hierarchical collectivism, hailing the end of 1950s culture. In a rural context attendees combined social protest and individuality with mutual cooperation.⁸⁵⁰ CI dancers, like the festivalgoers, saw natural realities as central to their practice, which was largely identified with New England.

Nature represented a site at which control could be renounced to discover new possibilities for both CI dancer and within other contemporaneous subcultures. CI dancers believed that they opened themselves up to new creative possibilities through their kinesthetic awareness of anatomy interfacing with terrestrial forces like gravity. Novack suggests that CI transgressed social norms through physical inversion and moving sideways while spiraling or curving, facilitated by a sensation of reducing control over the direction the body takes. Paxton initiated this approach to extend to dance vocabulary Cunningham's idea of abandoning decision making in composition.⁸⁵¹ Novack argues, "minimizing control can carry frightening social implications. Disorientation in American social behavior is usually... a sign of mental instability, and lack of physical control is generally thought of as a sign of injury, illness, or intoxication". But she points out that the duet form recalibrated lack of control insisting that "contact improvisation can teach an enjoyment of disorientation and a reconsideration of spatial associations."⁸⁵² Similarly after being declared a disaster zone due to the unanticipated volume of attendants, Woodstock achieved mythic status for the attendees' use of harmonious co-operation to survive in precarious circumstances.⁸⁵³ In line with 1970s back-to-land rhetoric,

⁸⁵⁰ Although she does not talk specifically about Woodstock, Novack references the influence of 1960s values on CI. Ibid., 73.

⁸⁵¹ In her footnotes, Novack sites an interview between Paxton and Banes, in which the choreographer defined his project as seeking a way to apply the chance procedure to movement generation. Ibid., 54.

⁸⁵² Ibid., 151.

⁸⁵³ Micheal Doyle argues that Woodstock Festival's historical significance exceeds what can be known about the actual event thereby configuring as a myth. This myth was characterized by harmonious social organization achieved with the coming together of diverse interests under the anti-Vietnam war spirit. In the documentary made about the festival in 1970, footage of attendants represent a diversity of bodies engaged in co-operation. Michael

upstate New York's garden setting bore forth hope for young Americans that was thought not to be found in the existing social structures of the cities and suburbs.

CI blurred the lines between participation and performance, which affirmed for dancers the universality of the sense of self they felt they recovered from nature. The duet form therefore recycled the "natural universal individual" constructed in 1950s modern dance, articulated in chapter 1.⁸⁵⁴ Rather than refining a performance of essential mythic truths that supposedly spoke to everyone like Graham, or choreographing virtuoso dancing that asserted its compositional receptivity to the flux of nature like Cunningham, CI dancers convinced themselves of the comprehensive relevance of their form by minimizing the difference between performing and learning, and thereby achieving broad inclusion. For example, Foster points out that concerts differed little from "Contact Jams" in which dancers practiced skills.⁸⁵⁵ With performances framed as the demonstration of an activity in which virtually anyone could participate, CI spread rapidly in the early 1970s, and the pedagogy was designed to avoid years of virtuoso training.⁸⁵⁶ In the first ten years, Novack recounts inclusivity was valued with the idea that any two people could dance together, which was supported by the initial rawness of the form.⁸⁵⁷

The early transnational dissemination of Somatics also emphasized inclusivity even though the regimens fueled more conventional performer/audience relations. By looking beyond America at a similar emphasis on participation in the institution of Somatics, we can see the transnational reach of new concert practice that aimed to verify its universality in a distinct way

Doyle, "Statement on the Historical and Cultural Significance of the 1969 Woodstock Festival Site," Woodstock Preservation Archives, <http://www.woodstockpreservation.org/SignificanceStatement.htm>.

⁸⁵⁴ Gay Morris suggests that in the 1950s universality succeeded against specificity, as the appropriate referent for modern dance, citing how African American dancers, and Jewish dancers who wished to reflect upon their identity, stretched or exposed the limits of modern dance universality even as they sought to obey its rules. Morris demonstrates that the conceit of universality embodied dominant, white-protestant American culture. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*.

⁸⁵⁵ Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 179.

⁸⁵⁶ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 68.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

from modern dance. The dance collectives *Strider* and *Dance Exchange*, for example fostered participation through education programs. Stephanie Jordan notes that *Strider* was the first British company to perform in non-proscenium settings and described their mission as wanting to “integrate the work of dance with everyday life...to make more contact than a mere performance can allow.”⁸⁵⁸ Similarly, Australia’s *Dance Exchange* executed residencies outside of theatres to build audiences and plant the seeds for a dance community. By introducing non-professionals to dance that was ostensibly inclusive and universal, early British and Australian Somatics aimed to demystify concert dance before CI had established itself overseas. Anatomical Releasing, which strongly influenced both companies, provided a language and pedestrian kinetics that were accessible in a way that classical and modern dance was not.⁸⁵⁹

The emphasis on participation in American CI extended to theories of viewership, while flux in the ideas about the meaning of performances helped to affirm the anti-hierarchical nature of the culture by replacing expertise with mutual enquiry. Reviewers wrestled with their role. For example, in 1977 Deborah Jowitt asked, “[c]an it be (ought it to be) defined and evaluated only in terms of how it feels to the participants, or can the opinion of an outsider (teacher, critic, spectator) be considered?”⁸⁶⁰ She concluded that it is hard not to stratify the dances, confessing it is “impossible not to view as successful... transfers of weight and energy [that] are clear”. But she insists that the ultimate value is in an empathetic response: “If the lifts are breathtaking it isn’t because they look difficult or prepared, but because they look so easy, so in tune with my own pulse that, watching them, I am extended.”⁸⁶¹ Apologizing for her preferences, Jowitt

⁸⁵⁸ The quote is taken directly from Strider's first application to the Gulbenkian Foundation. Jordan, *Striding Out*, 39.

⁸⁵⁹ During Strider's late 1970s residency at RMIT (see chapter 2), they conducted long classes that exceeded the conventional idea of training, and felt like a participatory performance. Rachel Fensham, in conversation with the author, November 17th 2013.

⁸⁶⁰ Jowitt, "Fall, You Will Be Caught."

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

betrays the degree to which the culture renounced the primacy of a spectators' experience. She also reveals a conviction that viewing the dance is an elevating experience through an empathic response, which evidences how CI was thought to enhance essential dimensions of the self. By blurring performance and participation, practitioners configured viewership as a vicarious kinesthetic experience⁸⁶². Novack insists, "contact improvisation stimulates...the spectator to identify with the sensual, proprioceptive experience of the dancers."⁸⁶³ The journal *Contact Quarterly (CQ)*, discussed in chapter 2, pondered psychological, scientific and artistic implications of CI and Somatics, reveling in the idea that all the possibilities could not be known.⁸⁶⁴

CI was not the only practice to focus on and feature principles of the dancer's experience in performance; concerts that did not invite the same degree of participation crossed over with the duet form. Nancy Topf, for example, developed game structures performed by groups throughout the 1970s,⁸⁶⁵ while Barbara Dilley, after leaving Cunningham's company, rather than teach her own style, authored instructions for performance in order for dancers to "realize and clarify their own dancing selves."⁸⁶⁶ Such work shared the makeshift New York loft spaces, and arts collectives, as well as dancers, and reviewers with CI, but depended on the dancers having a level of sophistication in Somatic training, and distinguished the concerts clearly from classes. In her 1978 review of Dilley's *Dancing Songs* for example, Mona Sulzman admires the

⁸⁶² Novack divulges that she initially saw CI as lacking choreographic concern, which changed when she understood its value system from learning the practice. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 19.

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁸⁶⁴ For example, in response to a question about whether CI is performance art, Paxton concluded the answer lay in treating the question like they might treat a duet. Steve Paxton, "Letters Page," *Contact Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1987). Meanwhile, Ernst Von Glaserfeld posited a theory of subject/object relations in CI that he connected to the promise of greater understanding of relationships more generally, and his writing was framed as a critique of scientific objectivity. Ernst Von Glaserfeld, "Seen from the Outside," *ibid.* 2, no. 3 (1977).

⁸⁶⁵ Nancy Topf, "Game Structures, a Performance," *ibid.* 5, no. 3/4 (1980).

⁸⁶⁶ Mona Sulzman, "Performance and/as Process 1979," *ibid.* 30, no. 1 (2005): Originally printed in *Soho Weekly news*, 1978.

“delicately and subtly sustained group rhythm” which dancers such Cynthia Hedstrom executed by virtue of a combination of Somatic, modern and, classical training.⁸⁶⁷ Meanwhile, among others, Topf worked with Danny Lepkoff, BMC teacher Beth Goren, Nina Martin who I return to later in this chapter, and Patti Giavenco, who, as I outlined in chapter one, performed for Mary Fulkerson and developed Somatic pedagogy in the 1970s with Eva Karczag and Ellen Webb.⁸⁶⁸ Like Dilley, Topf designed her games to cultivate the individuality of her dancers’. She contrasted her spatially defined rules with the dimensions of the choreography over which the dancers had control, including “[t]he dynamic and temporal aspects [which] are more open to the discretion of the dancers.”⁸⁶⁹

Even though the rule-based choreographies required a level of skill from their performers that distinguished them from CI, as procedures designed to highlight the Somatic emphasis on kinesthetic experience, they exhibited a number of principles in common with the duet form. The dances seemed to be anti-hierarchical because the performers made their own choices. The formality of the structures also claimed to connect the dancers with natural universal truths of form rather than marshal bodies within imposed culturally specific ideas, which was how modern dance was viewed. The dancers thus appeared to “find” themselves within the choreography, generating new social possibilities by taking risks.

British artists also staged processing, but their dances embodied the battle with establishment conservatism, with justification for the work framed by “New Dance” feminist discourse rather than the exploration of unknown potential. When Kirstie Simpson improvised at X6 with skills learned from Paxton at Dartington, Emilyn Claid saw her as exceeding classical limitations on women arguing she has “no physical boundaries... no feminine pretense,

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁸ Nancy Topf, "Game Structures, a Performance," *ibid.* 5, no. 3/4 (1980).

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

no primness; she is out in the open, free from constraint.”⁸⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Chris Crickmay asserted the value of Miranda Tufnell’s structured improvisation against disparaging press responses.⁸⁷¹ Tufnell worked with “a framework of suggestions”⁸⁷² which, similarly to Topf and Dilley, depended upon training in Somatics and martial arts.⁸⁷³ Battling press hostility, Crickmay recycled American CI ethics by positioning her work in opposition to “older forms”, which also paralleled Claid’s rejection of classicism. He insisted on the egalitarianism of Tufnell’s work, which “rejects hierarchical or directive social relationships between one performer and another, and between performers and audience.”⁸⁷⁴ Crickmay represents this approach as more advanced because for him, Tufnell and her collaborator Dennis Greenwood are “no mere marionettes dancing to prescribed steps. They are thinking beings, constantly seen in the act of making choices.” Furthermore, he reframed the aesthetics that reviewers represented as boring by arguing “The work proceeds at a slow pace, with a constant reference to stillness, and the pace is limited to the inner awareness and discovery of the dancer.”⁸⁷⁵ For Crickmay, by foregrounding the experience of the dancer, Tufnell liberated dance from the constraint that Claid attributed to classicism. He tackled the specific exigencies of the British context by reframing the American liberal ideals of the anti-hierarchical collectivism found in Somatic culture.

⁸⁷⁰ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 74.

⁸⁷¹ Crickmay cites various reviews which focus on bringing the validity of Tufnell and Greenwood's work into question. Chris Crickmay, "The Apparently Invisible Dances of Tufnell and Greenwood, (Reprinted from 1983)," *Contact Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2005): 42. originally published in *New Dance Magazine*, 24th November, 1981 and reprinted in *CQ* 8:2 Winter 1983.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, 44. 44

⁸⁷³ Tufnell explains that she "moved more towards the skills developed through release work, Alexander technique, and the T'ai Chi, where the emphasis is on exporing the movement information stored within the body, rather than with more traditional dance skills." *ibid.*

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

Notwithstanding transatlantic differences in their discourse, American and British artists similarly overlooked important aspects of their cultural specificity. Despite both contexts being overwhelmingly white, they upheld the universality of the possibility for dancers to access freedom by choreographing kinesthetic experience. This contradiction between the rhetoric and the dancers it served embodied two distinct 1960s ideas about race. “Essentialist positive primitivism” constitutes the first of these, which according to Banes, Greenwich Village artists and “radical antiracists” engaged in regarding black culture to value that which racists denigrated. Despite defining the body as neutral, Banes details that Greenwich artists embraced African American aesthetics such as bent limbs, compartmentalized torsos, contrapuntal rhythm, emphasis on gravity, repetition, and improvisation, all of which signified “the concreteness of the body” as opposed to ethereal virtuoso Euro-American corporeality.⁸⁷⁶ By contrasting aesthetic based on perception with modern and classical dance’s “refined” theatricality, Forti exhibits this preference, which also recalls from chapter 1 Somatic representations of non-Western others being more connected to nature.⁸⁷⁷ Forti and her colleagues felt African American cultural influences not least through the jazz to which they danced socially.⁸⁷⁸ 1970s CI culture also initiated a comparison between its concerts and jazz music to insist on the value of improvising against set choreography. For example, reviewing a CI concert at New York’s Kitchen, Stephanie Woodard argued CI “is the closest thing that dance has to jazz.”⁸⁷⁹ By borrowing ideas from Black culture, artists seemed to value what racists denigrated, yet by framing the ideas as pre-cultural, like following terrestrial forces or “neutral” formal spatial and

⁸⁷⁶ Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 205.

⁸⁷⁷ Banes argues that the artists were listening to African American popular music and dancing African American social dances, which had an impact on their aesthetic values. *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸⁷⁸ Simone Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, The Nova Scotia Series-Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts (Halifax N.S. New York: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York University Press, 1974).

⁸⁷⁹ Stephanie Woodard, "Writing Moving," *Contact Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1977).

temporal rules, artists' erased their use of African aesthetics in a similar manner to the way that CI's appropriated ideas from martial arts, as seen in chapter 1.

By insisting upon the universality of their practice with the claim that they were accessing a pre-cultural body, however, dancers working with Somatics in their choreography also exhibited a second idea about race underpinned by anti-racist intentions. Banes informs that, unlike the radicals who valued racial difference, 1960s black and white liberals asserted equivalence by “deny[ing] racial and cultural difference in their fervor to gain equality for African Americans.”⁸⁸⁰ Artists who subsumed African aesthetics into universal ideas about the moving body therefore insisted that the ideas about black people against which racists railed were foundational truths for every moving body, which would have seemed to combat racism rather than erase cultural specificity. However, as Banes and Claid admit, neither 1960s Greenwich Village, nor 1970s British New Dance addressed racial difference, or the exclusion and marginalization of black dancers.⁸⁸¹

Perhaps not surprisingly then, referring to the Manhattan locale where many of the dances I have analyzed were staged Dixon Gottschild argues that “‘Downtown dance’... is the loose, less structured, experimental form(s) that emerged from downtown Manhattan venues like Judson Church...it is the code for white dance.”⁸⁸² Woodard, by failing to mention the African American dance form that grew up alongside jazz music in her claim that CI most closely embodies the sonic tradition in movement, supports Dixon Gottschild's claim. Moreover, regardless of the sexualities of those that participated in 1970s CI and related dance practices, a comparison of the approaches with contemporaneous queer performance endeavors, reveal the heterosexuality of the practices. For example, like CI, the San Francisco “Cockettes” cultivated

⁸⁸⁰Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963*, 205.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 111., and Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 100.

⁸⁸² Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 20.

an anti-hierarchical collective culture, and sought freedom by opening themselves to disorientation in performance. Yet they did so by marking their oft-naked bodies as hyperbolically gendered to contradict conventional heterosexuality.⁸⁸³ By contrast, Somatics and CI, depended upon “performing modesty,” evacuating emotional and sexual impulses to establish the scientific veracity of their practice, which, as chapter 1 articulates, embodied white, middle class heterosexuality. With the increased access to CI through the rapid establishing of its artistic network,⁸⁸⁴ participation of increasingly diverse dancers exposed the mono-cultural make-up of the community and its ethics.⁸⁸⁵ Yet, dancers understood their vocabulary to be based on “pedestrian” movement, despite the focus on disorientation and the need for specialist training for the choreography based on rule structures. The culture therefore seemed to espouse inclusivity, making it hard for dancers to critique the universalist claims put forward.

Delimiting Universality in Processing

While sustaining important tenets of processing, developments associated with the 1980s challenged the universal claims of choreographing kinesthetic experience. For example, East Village improvisation revealed some limits of inclusivity by highlighting a tension between the cultivation of anti-hierarchical collectivism and performing individual and social identity.

Wrong Contact Dance, staged in 1983 by African Americans Ishmael Houston-Jones and Fred Holland, exemplified this by contravening what the dancers saw as tacit CI rules. Presented at “Contact at 2nd and 10th,” a large New York gathering of the CI community to celebrate 10 years

⁸⁸³ Bill; David Weissman Webber, "The Cockettes," (Strand Releasing, 2002).

⁸⁸⁴ Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 179.

⁸⁸⁵ For example, Ishmael Houston-Jones learned CI in Philadelphia and became involved in the New York scene in the late 1970s. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author." Meanwhile Bill T Jones learned CI from Lois Welk at the State University of New York in Brockport, where he worked with her for several years. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 75.

of the form, Houston-Jones and Holland wrote a manifesto to define how their dance failed to meet the conventions of the duet form.⁸⁸⁶

1. We are Black.
2. We will wear our "street" clothes, as opposed to sweats.
3. We will wear heavy shoes, Fred, construction boots; Ishmael, Army.
4. We will talk to one another while dancing.
5. We will fuck with flow and intentionally interrupt ourselves.
6. We will use a recorded sound score – loud looping of sounds from Kung Fu movies by Mark Allen Larson.
7. We will stay out of physical contact much of the time.

By drawing attention to CI's cultural specificity, the dancers insisted that racialized, sexualized, and emotionally enthralled bodies were rendered conspicuous by CI universality.⁸⁸⁷ They staged an emotionally fraught encounter in *Wrong Contact Dance*, contesting the inclusivity to which the duet form had laid claim by revealing the detached sensibility in which in CI was entrenched.⁸⁸⁸ Houston-Jones and Holland embodied desire, fear, aggression, and resignation by choreographing distance and proximity, opposition and collapse. They generated charge with a lack of contact, like when Houston-Jones slowly, intently circled Holland, eyeing him. By grasping each other's clothes, pressing flesh against flesh, and sustaining balances for long periods punctuated by sudden tussling, the dancers evoked psychic intercourse more than represent the dispassionate observation of moving physical architecture. Appearing to follow erotic impulses by attempting to control each other physically rather than follow momentum,

⁸⁸⁶ Houston-Jones recalls they wrote the list afterwards. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author."

⁸⁸⁷ I'm identifying here how CI renders certain kinds of body conspicuous in a way that is difficult to see because of its universality. This exemplifies how my study has been influenced by Sara Ahmed's work as I referred to in the introduction. In her critical reading of phenomenology, she proposes that Western subjects achieve 'bodily coherence' by orienting themselves toward the 'East' which erases the cultural specificity of whiteness. The conspicuousness of non-white bodies that *Wrong Contact Dance* highlighted demonstrates how CI erased its cultural specificity in a similar way. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, chapter 3.

⁸⁸⁸ Viewed at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Jackie; Kirstie Simson; Steve Paxton; Nancy Stark Smith; Ishmael Houston-Jones; Fred Holland; Melanie Hedlund; Jenifer Smith; Alan Ptashek; Mark Allen Larson; Michael Schwartz; Cathy Weis; New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Dance Division, Shue, *Contact at 10th and 2nd: Program 2 and 3* (1983), videorecording, 1 videocassette (VHS, NTSC) (120 min.): sd., col.; 1/2 in.

they insisted that attraction and repulsion are as integral to investigating bodily motion as terrestrial forces. The dancers challenged the universality of the practice by contravening the pre-cultural presumption of “performing modesty;” a concept that I argue in chapter one underpinned the belief in the ordinariness of 1970s CI and Somatic vocabulary.

A comparison between *Wrong Contact Dance* and Paxton and Stark Smith’s duet on the same program reveals the African Americans’ departure from 1970s “ordinariness.” As they had in the previous decade, Paxton and Stark Smith averted erotic or emotional readings of their proximity by emphasizing the dance’s mechanics. Bare-footed and in a CI standard of loose sweats, their mutually facilitated balancing and lifting followed a pendulum-like motion that conveyed natural momentum; stillness was a tipping point rather than a pregnant pause, and the dancers’ internal gaze displayed that they were sensing moving weight or the structure of a balance. Dancing ten years after the birth of CI, the pioneers did reflect on aesthetic specificity, yet it was by extending a style Novack calls “The dancer is just a person.”⁸⁸⁹ This trope distanced 1970s aesthetics from epic modern dance narratives by insisting on a disinterested relationship to the scientific reality of ordinary human kinetics. It was with quotidian amusement, like a knowing smile, that Paxton and Stark Smith commented on inadvertent associations brought forth by their dance. Novack observed a growing consciousness at *Contact* at 2nd and 10th of social significance, which Paxton and Stark Smith exemplified by acknowledging a hand in a suggestive place, or the breaking of familiarity with an untoward direction like a missed lift or support.⁸⁹⁰ They reflected on conventions by laughing when the dance exceeded embodying scientific realities by refusing to follow its most efficient next move,

⁸⁸⁹ “The dancer is just a person is one of the movement styles that makes up Novack’s analysis of CI (122) which she contextualizes within the broader artistic rejection of modernist faith in expressing the human condition on a grand scale. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 136.

⁸⁹⁰ Novack attended *Contact* at 2nd and 10th, and recounts that self consciousness of performing had entered many of the dances. *Ibid.*, 101-05.

or eliciting sexual tension. Yet along with the audience, who shared their amusement, they did so by recapitulating modest ordinariness, considering such connotations from a distance.⁸⁹¹

By revealing that the performance of ordinariness depends on the exclusion of emotion and desire, however, Houston-Jones and Holland exposed tacit assumptions in CI.⁸⁹² Novack reports this was a topic of discussion at Contact at Second and 10th,⁸⁹³ and it dovetailed with new directions dancers sought, which Novack defines as a mid-1980s interest in conflict.⁸⁹⁴ In the year following the gathering, Stark Smith reported working against accepted CI principles: “I’ve learned a lot...[a]bout accepting gravity, falling, following momentum... But...I find myself playing against the forces—making myself heavy...insisting instead of yielding, adding fierce to gentle, no to yes.”⁸⁹⁵ She could be describing *Wrong Contact Dance*, such as Houston-Jones’s immobilizing himself by collapsing into his partner, or the dancers’ gripping their heads around each other’s shoulders or legs. Stark Smith claimed her desire was sparked by the tone, rather than the content, of a tense public debate between Paxton and African American dancer Bill T Jones that she witnessed in the same year as Contact at 2nd 10th as part of Movement Research’s “Studies Project.”⁸⁹⁶ Her comment, together with the context and manifesto of *Wrong Contact Dance*, suggests that increasing racial diversity brought with it a feeling that

⁸⁹¹ The audience laugh when suggestive encounters or missed connections occur, acknowledging that an uncompromising entanglement doesn’t mean in this dance what it means in other circumstances. Pleasure is taken in the embarrassing effort to transform sexual and other bodily significance into the chaste exchange of weight: “We know that when you put your ass in his/her face, it meant nothing like what it would mean elsewhere.” Audience laughter also releases tension raised by the “missed moments” in the duet, providing reassurance that the failure to achieve what has become the standard execution of the form exhibits the ethical standard of CI unpredictability. Shue, *Contact at 10th and 2nd: Program 2 and 3*.

⁸⁹² The conceit that CI was universally applicable parallels Natalie Garrett’s argument, addressed in the introduction, that Somatic-informed dance produces a non-dualist subject that supersedes identity politics. Garrett’s Somatic subject imposes neutrality as the prescribed experience of dancing in exactly the way that Houston-Jones and Holland’s dance accuses CI of doing.

⁸⁹³ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 102.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁸⁹⁵ Danielle Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 107.

⁸⁹⁶ In 1984, Stark Smith expressed discomfort with canonization of the form in writing she published in *CQ* introducing ways that she uses her body to counter expectations. *Ibid.*

values needed to change.⁸⁹⁷ Houston-Jones lauded CI yet criticized the crystallization of aesthetics: “I loved the democratizing of dance, the eliminating of gender roles... What I didn’t like was the always-soft, always-flowing lack of edge.”⁸⁹⁸

While Houston-Jones’ and Holland’s intervention related to broader CI trends, they also participated in an East Village critique of minimalist aesthetics which, building on 1970s experimentation, were now finding a place on large concert stages, as is addressed below. The readings of human drama invited by conflict in duet dancing dovetailed with the engagement of social signification to assert creative freedom from existing aesthetics in the embrace of theatricality.⁸⁹⁹ For example, the improvisation ensemble Channel Z, who all trained and danced in CI contexts, integrated actions of social affront as if they were neutral movement.⁹⁰⁰ Company member Paul Langland recalls: “There was a lot of release work and being nice in the 1970s... with white yoga pants etc. By 1980 I became interested in expanding the range of pedestrian actions to include... slapping, screaming, groping each other... But quotes were placed around these actions so they could be seen in their pure form.”⁹⁰¹ With Nina Martin, Randy Warshaw, Diane Madden, Stephen Petronio, and Daniel Lepkoff, Langland expanded CI unpredictability by initiating, amplifying, embracing and transforming the meaning of socially coded action. In duet, ensemble, and solo, the company staged familiar scenes of social interaction, such as arguing with or greeting someone, but not as pantomime. Instead, they performed the movement as if it had no social content, thereby aiming to give the physical

⁸⁹⁷ At the SNDO in Amsterdam, Paxton expressed a concern about the aesthetic canonization of the form in a way that associated it with particular lifestyle. Lucy Sexton, of dance duo Dancenoise, was there at the time. Lucy Sexton, email to author, 22nd August, 2011.

⁸⁹⁸ Houston-Jones, " Interview with Author."

⁸⁹⁹ Novack points out that dancers generally viewed East Coast CI style as pure compared with the engagement of “theatrical” elements on the West Coast, so when New York artists began working theatrically it signified a shift. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 87.

⁹⁰⁰ By configuring socially potent behavior as if it were neutral, Channel Z extended a Cunningham-like theory that all movement is dance. For further discussion of Cunningham's ideas see *ibid.*, 53.

⁹⁰¹ Paul Langland, email to author February 19th, 2014.

action new meaning.⁹⁰² Like in *Wrong Contact Dance*, social reference added psychic momentum to the movement of weight, contesting and expanding existing assumptions about how to dance, and insisting that dancers can investigate more than the awareness of terrestrial forces.

Combining “theatricality” and “neutrality,” Channel Z demonstrated that the appearance of universality had depended on dancers’ intentional repudiation of social context by constructing bodily experience as natural through scientific metaphors. The bastardization of Dilley’s performance score *Corridors* illustrates Channel Z’s reworking of 1970s ideas by playing with cultural references including reflecting upon dance vocabulary.⁹⁰³ *Emotional Corridors* begins with the dancers in silhouette, turning to reveal comically large balloon bellies and butts that they pop, working along a line in one direction then slapping each other’s faces going back the other way.⁹⁰⁴ The opening foretells of coming innuendos that will disrupt an otherwise detached performance of CI and Somatic informed vocabulary. Martin spirals out of the floor with an easy-looking spinal length characteristic of Somatic training, yet then her arms hyper-extend as she topples back in a precarious relevé, referencing the classicism from which dancers distanced themselves in the previous decade. Meanwhile, Lepkoff exceeds modest performance with his ambiguous gesture of collapsing through the spine and breaking in the neck, dressing a journey to the floor with a quivering torso, and when Langland’s shoulders

⁹⁰² The company formed from a group who had been teaching and improvising alongside and with each other in the late 1970s. They wanted to reunite and explore new possibilities. They synthesized vocabularies from the legacy of CI and the influence of Somatics. Paul Langland, e-mail to author February 19th, 2014.

⁹⁰³ Barabara Dilley's score "Corridors" exemplifies the 1970s focus on "pedestrian vocabulary" and simple spatial patterns. Melinda Buckwalter, *Composing While Dancing: An Improviser's Companion* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 16.

⁹⁰⁴ Martin introduced the idea of working with Dilley's score corridors with addition of emotion as a joke yet they performed the score at Judson Church in the early 1980s. Nina Martin, email to the author, February 20th, 2014.

hunch and arms extend, seeing a cinematic image of a zombie is unavoidable.⁹⁰⁵ With classical, pop-cultural, and other references, Channel Z amplified the amusement with which Paxton and Stark Smith commented on 1970s aesthetics. They troubled the comprehensive inclusivity of a scientific construction of the body by staging their individual responses to embodying the forms developed in the previous decade.

Yet by divorcing loaded gesture from its social context, Channel Z affirmed the pre-cultural status of CI and Somatics. Their social references created what Novack calls the “surrealism of ... pseudodramatic event in the middle of contact improvisation.”⁹⁰⁶ Although the dancers announced the specificity of a CI lift, for example, against theatrical moments, they claimed to access cultural coding from a detached position. The movement vocabulary therefore no longer appeared to be neutral, however, the dancers assumed a neutral position relative to the social references they made. Even while insisting that they were part of a historical context with their use of cultural references, Channel Z thus affirmed the universality of their dancing by staging social signification as if they did not have to contend with the power structures that infuse sociality. They therefore choreographed a liberal individual who escapes institutional control or commercial domination.

In contrast with Channel Z, Houston-Jones exemplifies East Village artists who reframed the staging of the dancers’ experience of moving within an explicit political context. For example, along with distaste for the stylistic canonization of CI, he rejected the idea of the

⁹⁰⁵ My analysis is based on a performance of Channel, at St. Marks Church on December 3rd 2011 as a reunion. Although clearly distinct from works performed in the 1980s, I have augmented my understanding of the company’s practice by watching Lepkoff’s private archive of videos of 1980s concerts, such as Z-Boys (February 2nd 1986), and a performance at St. Marck Church (April 26th 1987). Langland also reported that the company used the same rehearsal and development approach they had in the 1980s. Paul Langland, interview by Doran George, September 15th, 2011.

⁹⁰⁶ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 105.

duet form “only being about itself.”⁹⁰⁷ Further reworking CI duet techniques that reject hetero-opposition, Houston-Jones wrangled with the impact of the AIDS epidemic in his 1985 collaboration *Them*.⁹⁰⁸ Kinetic unpredictability represented psychosexual tension in staged equivocation between dancing men, who seemed haunted by the specter of death in clandestine sexual liaisons that risked contact with disease. Houston-Jones’s dancers simultaneously moved in two directions both in their own bodies and in duet, manifesting a struggle of fighting with themselves as well as moving toward and away from their dancing partners. For example, Julyen Hamilton and David Zambrano sought the possibility while striving to avoid the inevitability of contact, doubling back on themselves by truncating the flow of weight.⁹⁰⁹ Using kinesthetic awareness cultivated by imagining the joints, they rapidly redirected momentum with shifts in the shoulders or hips, bending a knee or throwing out an arm to pull them in a new direction.

Novack notes the appearance of such vocabulary when CI dancers began applying their skills to solo moving in the early 1980s, which was likely influenced by Somatics.⁹¹⁰ But Houston-Jones contested the universal rhetoric of CI by situating his dancers’ decision-making within a political climate precipitated by the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the rise of the pro-family movement, the AIDS crisis, and the culture wars.⁹¹¹ The tension between Zambrano and Hamilton embodied explicit social themes, augmented by Dennis Cooper’s text

⁹⁰⁷ Houston-Jones, " Interview with Author."

⁹⁰⁸ Houston-Jones collaborated with writer Dennis Cooper and Musician Chris Cochrane. Performance Space 122, "Them," <http://www.ps122.org/them/>.

⁹⁰⁹ Rehearsal notes made available by Houston-Jones. Ishmael Houston-Jones email to author, April 14th, 2011.

⁹¹⁰ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 105.

⁹¹¹ John D'Emillio, for example connects the changing political climate for gay rights at the end of the 1970s, with other struggles including the Equal Rights Amendment. John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity " in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Barale, Michèle Aina, Halperin, David M. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 473.

that accompanied the work.⁹¹² They pulled toward and away from each other enthralled by the throes of attempted and aborted physical connection relieved only by momentary acquiescence to shared weight, performing equivocal sexual intimacy propelled by the bewilderment of desire associated with disease. Houston-Jones extended CI and Somatic inclusivity to bodies affected by specific social circumstances, exposing the limits of universality. However, he still asserted his liberal claim to creative freedom by staging political and artistic dissidence.

Infusing Somatics with affective and erotic dimensions, Houston-Jones insisted upon the social contingency of motile experience by stressing the political limitations of performing modesty. For example, in his ‘masturbation solo’, he reworked the duet material by struggling with his sexiness, wanting to be seen and also hide.⁹¹³ Touching his erogenous zones, and stroking and licking himself obsessively, he danced the conflict that came with visibility for non-heterosexual men in 1980s America.⁹¹⁴ Fighting marginalization necessitated the foregrounding of difference, and conservatives represented homosexual acts as the depraved cause of disease. Houston-Jones folded his body inward, collapsing through his joints to retract the fleshy display with which he indulged the audience moments before, no longer able to contend with the sexualizing gaze. Yet leaps, rolls and crashes, exploded from the seeming pressure of hiding; the personal consternation, which psychologists would later label “minority stress,” uncontrollably coursed through Houston-Jones’ body; a tussle embodying

⁹¹² I have argued elsewhere that Cooper’s text evokes themes of death and clandestine sexual liaison. Doran George, "Propelled by Bewilderment: Dramaturgy, Reconstruction, and Improvisation in the Re-Staging of Them.," in *SOCIETY OF DANCE HISTORY SCHOLARS 34th Annual Conference Dance Dramaturgy: catalyst, perspective, + memory* (York University and University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada 2011).

⁹¹³ These are taken from instructions Houston-Jones gave to the dancer who reconstructed the role in 210. Courtesy of the artist, email to author, April 14, 2011.

⁹¹⁴ My analysis of the 1980s work is based on video footage of a PS122 performance on May 12th 1985 viewed at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Ishmael; Chris Cochrane; Dennis Cooper; Donald Fleming; John B. Walker; Performance Space 122 Houston-Jones, *Them* (1985), videorecording, 1 videocassette (VHS, NTSC) (38 min.): sd., col.; 1/2 in.

psychophysical conflict.⁹¹⁵ With gesture, proximity between dancers, the timing of dancers approaching each other, and the gaze, *Them* staged a duplicitous, passionate, sexual, anxious, tender, aggressive, and furtive body inseparable from the mishandling of AIDS.⁹¹⁶

The increased specificity in performance techniques on which Houston-Jones and Channel Z depended, prevented the broad participation of untrained dancers. Novack argues a similar shift took place in the broader CI network when dancers developed virtuoso skills and no longer wanted to duet with beginners, while concerts and training also became increasingly distinct.⁹¹⁷ The dexterity and uniqueness of the dancing in *Them*, and the aesthetic reflexivity Channel Z staged, similarly exhibited a shift in priorities that demanded commitment to a professional milieu. 1970s collective and inclusive ethics came under threat with the increasing exclusivity of practices, and new economic pressures. Novack chronicles how 1980s artists, such as Bill T Jones, launched careers by building on CI vocabulary at a time when dancers could no longer get by with the meager resources they previously had. Bill T Jones defended his career aspirations insisting that to survive as an artist he had to “suit the ladies out in Iowa and also the young intellectuals in downtown New York who write about you and help you get your reputation.”⁹¹⁸ Yet, East Village artists exhibited hostility toward such moves because the press tended to focus on a single artist’s creative genius when they covered a concert, and dancers such as Houston-Jones, Stephanie Skura, and Yvonne Meier felt that their culture grew from

⁹¹⁵ See for example, Gary; Margaret Schneider Harper, "Oppression and Discrimination among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People and Communities: A Challenge for Community Psychology.," *American journal of community psychology* 31, no. 3/4 June (2003): 247.

⁹¹⁶ For more information about the New York context in which dance and performance tackled the AIDs crisis see David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of A.I.D.S.* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).; Holly; David Román Hughes, *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1998).

⁹¹⁷ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 96.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

collaboration.⁹¹⁹ Anti-commercial ethics therefore emerged, not to claim that dance should be free from financial concerns, as was the argument among some CI dancers,⁹²⁰ but to protect what they saw as creative integrity against the pressure to achieve critical repute, and communicate to large audiences.⁹²¹

With inclusivity threatened by professionalism, dancers sought to affirm their creative independence from commercial ethics in line with the liberal ideals that had infused post war arts. They did so by reasserting in their work the centrality of the dancer's experience, in this case by choreographing a space for failure, which reasserted the aim of protecting the investigation of movement from the concerns of presentation.⁹²² Dancing for Cunningham at the time, Neil Greenberg, recalls being confused by a Channel Z concert in which dancers tried moves that they seemed to botch, despite some of them dancing for Brown.⁹²³ He later learned that investigation was integral to the work. As a trope, failure verified compositional unpredictability, promising surprise. Yet it insisted that the work was not marketable, thereby reformulating the 1970s rejection of theatrical concerns.

The difference between *Them* and the 1980s work of British company DV8, also indebted to CI in their tackling of queer subjects, reveals how Houston-Jones deployed the dancers' experience as a foil to commercial ethics. In DV8's homoerotic duet *My Sex Our*

⁹¹⁹ Skura recalls that Tim Miller was one of the first artists from their milieu to receive press attention, and funding. Meier, Houston-Jones and herself were shocked that the press represented his work without reference to the whole group because their industry had been a collective. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁹²⁰ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 221.

⁹²¹ Monson recalls that having a press-pack and engaging in self-promotion were actively frowned upon within her milieu in the 1980s. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁹²² Talking about the training process Foster comments that "the body seems constantly to elude one's efforts to direct it...suddenly, inexplicably, it diverges from expectations, reveals new dimensions, and mutely declares its unwillingness or inability to execute commands. Brief moments of "mastery of the body" or of "feeling at one with the body" occur, producing a kind of ecstasy that motivates the dancer to continue . . . The prevailing experience, however, is one of loss, of failing to regulate a mirage-like substance." She therefore constitutes failure as an integral to the dancers experience of training. Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 237.

⁹²³ Greenberg, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Teacher, Faculty at the New School, Ny) in Discussion with the Author."

Dance, Lloyd Newson and Nigel Charnock choreographed an ambiguous view of gay male sexuality that critic Anna Kisselgoff saw as a bleak vision in which “homosexual tendencies cannot exist without accompanying brutality.”⁹²⁴ Like Houston Jones, DV8 represented urgency by foregrounding how the performance was taxing for the dancers, Kisselgoff observed: “They really do wrestle, get red in the face, pant and groan from the effort and strain.”⁹²⁵ Yet the imperative of theatrical display, instituted through 1980s British state support, underscored DV8’s social commentary,⁹²⁶ contrasting with Houston-Jones’ whose staging of skirmish I describe further below. DV8 provided seamless athleticism based on CI skills and themes that built on 1970s New Dance politics for a British context that sought accessible novel virtuoso dancing.⁹²⁷ Their engagement at Brooklyn Academy of Music, about which Kisselgoff wrote, 2 years after the company formed, attests to the speed with which they began international touring. Meanwhile, in a context that associated the accessibility of the theatrical message and the display of seamless dancing with capitulating to commercialism, the dancers in *Them* affirmed that they had not refined their performance. They made it explicit that they were engaged in decision-making while performing and thereby processing their ongoing experience of moving, which was visible in the smaller off-off-Broadway-like art-house venues that the dance played.⁹²⁸

In its opposition toward commercialism, the East Village spawned contexts in which artists could perform experimentation. In the weekly Hothouse at PS 122, for example, improvisers exchanged their practices with fellow artists through informal presentation. Yvonne

⁹²⁴ Anna Kisselgoff, "Clash of the Sexes," *New York Times*, December 15th 1988.

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ Newson's choreography was supported early on by X6 veteran Emilyn Claid, who commissioned him in 1984 to make work for Extempory Dance. He extended the imperative of explicit gender critique of the previous decade, which is clear from how Claid writes about his work. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 69.

⁹²⁷ For a description of the althetcism and use of narrative in "My Sex Our Dance" see Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 48.

⁹²⁸ *Them* was staged at PS 122 that seats between 69 and 128, whereas "My Sex Our Dance" was staged at Brooklyn Academy of Music that seats between 834 and 3000.

Meier and Jennifer Monson used such contexts to remove Channel Z's quotes and Houston-Jones' social context from performing the effects of personal consternation. They choreographed cultural impropriety as if it arose from natural impulses that course through the body. For example in a 1988 untitled Hothouse showing, Monson and Meier began with arrhythmic torso undulations throwing their heads into vomiting motion followed by awkward taxing activity, like repeated manic springing with outstretched arms while bent forward. Their dancing appeared to be the inevitable result of bodily impulses that flouted rather than capitalized on social reference.⁹²⁹ They constructed a body of natural unwieldiness that breaks through conservative social mores.

Procedures from Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement underpinned the distinct staging of the dancer's experience of moving that Meier, Monson and other artists used in their critique of preceding modalities defined by modesty. As chapter 1 chronicles, Meier introduced these regimens to the East Village, which generated the integration of emotion and sexuality into the concept of a natural body. Rapid directional shifts seen in *Them*, for example, now resulted from corporeality's affective vicissitudes rather than the relational drama between two dancers. The bizarre motility in Monson and Meier's improvisation insisted upon its inevitability and lack of rational logic or psychological reference. Monson's body hung from the neck as hands took her focus shooting high, exploding from localized torso collapses reverberating in the arms and legs, which swung the dancer in a descending motion. Suddenly she paced a slow circle, then she shifted into gentle tips while Meier tumbled in dizzying inversions flying into turns and launching into lunges. Bringing Skinner's rhetoric about being moved by the image to their dancing, they felt they were propelled into unforeseen movement staging and nature as force that erupts through individualized contraventions of mainstream

⁹²⁹ My analysis of the dance is based on observation of documentation from Meier's personal archive.

behavioral codes. When she commented to Meier, “I don’t think anyone else does Authentic Movement quite the way we are,” Monson highlighted their use of the approach for provocation, which many practitioners used instead for personal development.⁹³⁰

To reclaim the natural body for critical purposes against its use for choreography on large concert stages, Authentic Movement offered the concept of a “psyche”, a repository for the most basic, but always fluctuating emotional and cognitive dimensions of self. Rather than make explicit social reference to break 1970s aesthetic codes, dancers theorized extraordinary conduct as erupting from authentic bodily experience. Using this strategy, Meier staged her own infringement of propitious femininity, recapitulating how CI found a new sociality in “natural” disorientation. Believing that the psyche’s changeability propels motility, dancers discarded typical lyricism, shifting unpredictably between radically different moves.

Yet, while naturalizing the critique of modesty-infused new vocabulary with a sense of inevitability, it also erased the specific character of the culture against which the intervention was being made. To discern the traditions on which East Village dance depended requires more research, but dancers certainly inherited the use of physical disorientation from CI. Novack reveals that by embracing physical loss of control, CI dancers breached a specifically white middle class sense of decorum embedded in what she calls “American theatre dance.”⁹³¹ African American social dances, for example, already entailed inversion, suggesting that it signified differently for practitioners of, say, the lindy hop. By performing disorientation to “reconsider

⁹³⁰ Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

⁹³¹ For example, she argues that African American social dances that include similar kinds of disorientation influenced the movement culture within which CI emerged, but she does not reference black modern theatre dance forms as contributories indicating that CI positioned itself in relation to white modern concert dance while drawing on ideas from black social dance (34), she positions CI as “the only contemporary American theatre dance that emphasized the wildness and awkwardness of falling...” Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 151.

spatial associations”, CI dancers thus embraced cultural Otherness to disrupt a white tradition.⁹³² To the degree that inversion got naturalized through CI rhetoric about bodily mechanics, the influence of Africanist aesthetics were erased, along with the whiteness of the culture being critiqued.⁹³³ Similarly by naturalizing the body-psyche through which 1970s aesthetics were rejected, Meier and her colleagues risked concealing the white, middle-class value system they were critiquing, and universalizing their cultural position. The changes to the staging of the dancer’s experience in the 1980s reveal how liberal discourse shaped the possibilities of contemporary dance in a way that marshaled artists to frame their projects in universal terms through Somatic rhetoric. Acknowledging cultural specificity therefore often seemed oppositional to the project.

Despite the problems of their discourse, however, East Village and CI dancers made some important gains with the idea of universality. By maintaining the primacy of the dancer’s experience, they embraced various axes of identity that were previously marginalized in dance.⁹³⁴ CI dancers re-conceived bodily capacity, thereby including disabled dancers who had previously had little access to concert dance. Ann-Cooper Albright insists that because of the focus on process, which she calls “the how rather than the what,” disabled dancers did not have to fulfill a prescribed ability.⁹³⁵ Alito Alessi, who developed accessible CI pedagogy, insisted upon the “naturalness” and “normalness” of Emery Blackwell’s movement, a dancer with

⁹³² Novack sites dance techniques such as “the lindy,” an African American social dance in which women’s bodies are regularly inverted, as contributing to the wider movement culture in which CI emerged. *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹³³ Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 4.

⁹³⁴ Ann Cooper Albright insists CI saw a sea change as dancers prioritized engaging different bodies over athleticism in the mid-1980s, which she attributes to a principle of CI looking to open itself to new possibilities. Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 89. Early 1990s CQ issues focused on different communities and sexual identity, which reflects the broader move within contemporary dance that I refer to in the next section on “inventing.” For example, the Summer/Fall 1992 issue (17:2) focused on “Dancing with Different Populations,” while the 1996 Winter/Spring and Summer/Fall issues (21:1&2) were titled “Focus on Sexuality & Identity.” Contact Editions, “Contact Quarterly.”

⁹³⁵ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 90.

cerebral palsy. Despite the difference in Blackwell's physical movement from those who do not share his diagnosis, Alessi affirmed Blackwell's embodiment of CI using the rhetoric of nature. Alessi asserted that exploration must not be confined to an established vocabulary, privileging the dancer's experience of moving over the kind of athletic display, which along with DV8, was seen across the 1980s CI network. Yet, such inclusivity of course broadened the notion of a universal body, compounding liberalism's natural basis and progressive potential.

Lamenting and Contesting the Decline of Processing.

Alongside the reinvention of bodily experience (to resist commercialism associated with promoting choreographic products in a theatre circuit), dancers also reasserted kinesthetic processes as a choreographic tool against the traditional hierarchical structures of companies using Somatics. From the 1980s onwards, veterans such as Forti, Paxton, Simpson, Karczag, Julyen Hamilton, and Laurie Booth, established themselves as virtuoso solo improvisers who benefited from nostalgia for experimentation, fueled by the codification of Somatic informed vocabulary, addressed below. By staging their bodies and artistry as irrevocable, they modeled innovation independent from conventional career trajectories, seeming to sustain anti-hierarchical collectivism by insisting that commerce or a single choreographer must not displace the primacy of the dancer's experience. By avoiding forming companies based on their movement style, soloists benefited from low overheads. Yet they capitalized on an entrepreneurial arts culture in which their reputations were marketable, albeit marginal to large companies, but nevertheless depending on their superiority over lesser-known dancers.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁶ Rather than mid-range or large concert houses, they performed in art house spaces in large cities with substantial dance communities, and artist-run contexts such as Movement Research provided, affirming the investigative focus. For example, Eva Karczag performed the dances I focus on later in this section at Judson Church for an audience of around 100, rather than Brooklyn Academy of Music where DV8 were seen.

In virtuoso practice, the failure, which affirmed the primacy of the dancer's experience in Channel Z's work, transformed into a mastery of unpredictability. Artists staged their unique bodily knowledge that hierarchical company structures seemed to eclipse. Paxton, for example, insisted that hearing with his body and moving distinctly in each concert restored "change, adaptation, or interpretation" to his performances of J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, which scoring and recording had robbed.⁹³⁷ Improvisation, in these works, claimed an exceptional value not available to artists working with set material. Along with Paxton's career history and choice of music, Paxton's rhetoric added legitimacy that is not normally accorded to improvised dance.⁹³⁸ By admiring the visibility of what she called Paxton's thinking in the dances to Bach,⁹³⁹ Karczag valued his processing. Meanwhile Claid endowed Simpson's improvising with a value not available to dancers in traditional companies, describing her as a "powerful physical presence that could never be contained within the constraints of contemporary dance." Simpson agreed with Claid, defining herself against the dance establishment's gender politics, arguing "what is alive gets broken... [when] women's bodies fix... [because] the dance world needs to package that spark."⁹⁴⁰ Configuring the "aliveness" of women as lost within the dance world, Simpson, like Paxton, contrasted the staging of the dancer's experience with procedures that depend upon a set artistic product. Simpson thereby naturalized women's verve against the social structures by which it is constrained.

⁹³⁷ Paxton explains that in 1986 he began working with variations between recordings of the Goldberg Variations made by pianist Glenn Gould in 1955 and 1982. He insisted "every time we listen we are different." Steve; Walter Verdin Paxton, *Steve Paxton's Introduction to the Goldberg Variations* (Leuven, Belgium: Walter Verdin, 1992). Ramsay Burt understands Paxton as working with "the idea of variation and the problematics and paradoxes of live performance that are raised by [Glenn] Gould's recordings." Ramsay Burt, "Steve Paxton's Goldberg Variations and the Angel of History," *TDR: the drama review: the journal of performance studies* 46, no. 4 (2002): 4.

⁹³⁸ Burt calls Paxton "undoubtedly one of the most important dance artists of the past 40 years" (3), and supports the idea that Paxton's approach is exceptional by claiming that "[t]he fact that Goldberg Variations was an improvised piece appears to have made it more difficult to discuss than a performance of set choreography." "Steve Paxton's Goldberg Variations," 4.

⁹³⁹ I was a student of Karczag at EDDC in Arnhem when Paxton performed his Goldberg Variations there in 1993. She made this comment in her class the next day.

⁹⁴⁰ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 74.

Karczag established the exceptional artistic potential of improvisation with her responsive, open, supple body that was revered in her community,⁹⁴¹ and admired by critics. In her 1994 review of *Wrapt Concurrence*, Jowitt's called Karczag "the remarkable Australian woman who graced Trisha Brown's company" describing her as "gentle, resilient, leisurely."⁹⁴² Three decades of American and Australian writers similarly lauded Karczag's dancing for qualities idealized in Somatics.⁹⁴³ Seamless transitions with svelte dexterity caused Jowitt to declare, "her joints are velvet", and to "marvel at the way she can fold her limbs...so her thighs nestle along her chest."⁹⁴⁴ Karczag performed advanced bodily knowledge through the unflinching concurrence with which she embraced incongruous changes as she folded, oscillated, swept, jerked, flinched, collapsed, lurched, extended, and hesitated. Because of her almost mythic status as a Somatic virtuoso, I focus on Karczag to reveal how her solo improvisation reasserted processing.

Karczag established her Somatic mastery by referencing and exceeding preceding embodiments of processing. With loose responsive 1970s CI limbs, she regulated her falls by reverberating her collapsing joints through her structure. Yet fluctuation in her focus of attention resulted in rapid multidirectional shifts similar to Houston-Jones's reworking of CI. The complexity and speed of change appeared to be more than someone could register consciously, which emphasized the creative potential of intrinsic bodily knowledge forfeited in set

⁹⁴¹ When Jeremy Nelson, who danced for Petronio and has taught internationally, discovered I was Karczag's student he said she has the most released body he has ever experienced, a reaction to which I have become accustomed. Jeremy Nelson, in discussion with the author, April 1994.

⁹⁴² Performed at Judson Church. Jowitt, "By Deborah Jowitt (Eva Karczag)."

⁹⁴³ In the same year, writing about an improvisation Karczag gave at the Seagull Room in the Bondi Pavillion with Warren Burt on July 23rd, Australian critic Jill Sykes draws attention to propensities associated with the regimens such as Karczag's "astonishing lightness and fluency", and suggests "there is no obvious physical effort in her seamless phrasing." Sykes, "Fine Tuned from Head to Toe." Almost a decade earlier, writing about a concert at St. Marks, Burt Supree also refers to aptitudes associated with Somatics when he insists it "is intimate wisdom, deep kinesthetic knowledge that Karczag is conveying" about which he remarks "the movement is pure, eloquent." Burt Supree, "Opening the Launch Window: A Juxtaposition of Memory and Sensation," *Village Voice*, October 21st 1986.

⁹⁴⁴ Deborah Jowitt, "By Deborah Jowitt (Eva Karczag)," *ibid.*, March 8th 1994.

choreography. With small joint articulation, range of movement, and percussive action, Karczag exceeded the 1970s aversion to thematic, dramatic, or psychological reference. For example, Jowitt uses the metaphor of opening a book in the air to describe a section of *Wrapt Concurrency*, contrasting with Novack who describes the mechanics of CI motion rather than use fanciful images.⁹⁴⁵ Karczag's wrists fold, offering a book to nobody, while flicking something from her heel, but then the joints of her legs abruptly fold, plummeting Karczag from her unflinching focus. Like Channel Z, she resisted thematic logic; Jowitt likens her dance to dreaming, describing the way myriad images flicker across Karczag motion with the ambiguity of sleep's dramatic landscape. Like Meier and Monson, rather than decisively rupture modest performance, unbidden bodily impulses seem to fuel Karczag's gestures. Reviewers saw her riding a frontier of sensory experience, because while her gaze was not internal it remained within her kinesphere.⁹⁴⁶ Similar to the quality she admired in Paxton, Karczag staged her (sensory) thinking with the finesse through which she rode the capriciousness of her choreographed processing. Remaining unperturbed by seemingly the incompatible demands of her motile journey, Karczag presented herself as a virtuoso of the kinesthetic experience of the flux of the body.

Also asserting of the value of investigation, some choreographers reformulated processing within ensemble dancing. For example, with similar convictions to Simpson's about the shortfalls of contemporary dance, the British choreographer Gaby Agis resisted the

⁹⁴⁵ By drawing attention to the mechanics of moving, Novack not only represents 1970s CI ideology, but also betrays the absence of action in the dancing that seemed superfluous to embodying terrestrial forces. See for example Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 3.

⁹⁴⁶ About Karczag's 1986 St. Marks concert, Supree commented that "the focus of attention is all in the bodies relation to itself," which could refer to *Wrapt Concurrency*. Supree, "Opening the Launch Window: A Juxtaposition of Memory and Sensation."

establishment imperative that shaped DV8's work.⁹⁴⁷ In *Touch Un-site*, for example, she emphasized her dancers' experience of moving.⁹⁴⁸ For Natalie Garrett Brown, Agis is among artists who "employ a range of strategies...to frame and amplify the dancing subject's attentiveness to the somatic moment."⁹⁴⁹ As stated in the introduction, Garrett Brown de-historicizes Somatics by failing to frame Agis's work against the kind of demands instituted by funders, programmers and critics, demands that I used to contextualize DV8.⁹⁵⁰ Yet as Garrett Brown suggests, Agis did reject prevailing dance theatre conventions, and insists that her cast's training in Skinner's work "allows them to have an immediate response, an immediacy... [that] enhances the... awareness and ability to respond to space." Moving slowly with eyes closed, *Touch Un-site's* dancers experienced various non-theatre spaces, representing the integral nature of their bodies to the architecture that they occupied. Shifting from large activity to small detail, similarly to Karczag, instead of virtuoso seamlessness Agis choreographed changes in awareness in a series of activities to exemplify "the dancers' embodied experience of these spaces."⁹⁵¹ For example, restful contemplation followed frenetic action, the contrast of which the dancers' proximity to the audience heightened. Using Skinner Releasing, Agis recycled Forti's 1960s privileging of perception over theatre, which she asserted against the codification of Somatic vocabulary.

⁹⁴⁷ Agis rethought her use of Somatics due to exhaustion from substantial career success in the 1980s. Agis, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teachers) in Discussion with the Author."

⁹⁴⁸ The use of "concept" by British artists must be understood within a context where Live Art was burgeoning on their own soil and "Koncept" dance had achieved critical repute in central Europe. In both cases, rhetoric arose that artistic concept took precedence over the material through which the artists manifested their ideas, which in the case of koncept dance often meant rejecting recognizable vocabulary, in the work of artists such as Jerome Bel. I have articulated the ways in which British Live art and European "Koncept Tanz" intersect elsewhere. Doran George, "Rumpelstiltskin's Contradictory Mandate: The Contemporary Obligation to Weave Cultural Detritus into Avant-Garde Art," in *Inventing Futures: Doing and Thinking Artistic Research with(in) the Master of Choreography Programme of Artez Institute of the Arts, the Netherlands* ed. João; Emilie Gallier; Konstantina Georgelou da Silva (Arnhem: ArtEZ Press, 2013), 115-26.

⁹⁴⁹ Garrett-Brown, "Somatics and the Dancing Subject."145

⁹⁵⁰ As I have pointed out in the introduction, Garrett Brown argues Somatics exceeds what she defines as spectator theories of knowledge, resisting the "ocularcentrism" of Western theatre dance.

⁹⁵¹ Garrett-Brown, "Somatics and the Dancing Subject," 98.

My final examples reframed 1970s CI-style participation in order to claim exceptional status for the performance of motile experience. Meier capitalized on audience proximity, like Agis, but broke theatrical conventions by choreographing direct contact with her dancers in her early 1990s *The Shining*.⁹⁵² Extending the interpersonal impropriety developed in Authentic Movement to her audience, Meier staged excessive intimacy and disturbing disregard.⁹⁵³ She and her company of East Village colleagues guided small audiences through a dark maze, where they were physically manipulated into dancing, and violated in “frisking” dances or left bewildered to their own devices watching other audience members get embroiled in exceptional behavior.⁹⁵⁴ Rather than present the compositional products of Somatics that were being endorsed in large theatres, Meier’s reasserted the ideas in processing by procuring audience participation in the experience of moving.

Meanwhile British artist Rosemary Lee composed visions of inclusive community with intergenerational casts of dancers and non-dancers. Her mixed casts performed mutual care to embody and represent an embracing sociality, which I analyze further below. Based on the participation of untrained dancers ranging from toddlers to seniors, critics characterized Lee as creating community wellbeing.⁹⁵⁵ Many of the choral works relied on a motif of dancers

⁹⁵² Meier first staged *The Shining* at PS122 in 1993 and then again at PS1 in Queens in 1995. The maze was constructed of cardboard boxes, and the dancers led no more than 12 audience members at a time around the space using flashlights. Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author." *The Shining (Reconstruction)* (New York: New York Live Arts, 2011 and 2012).

⁹⁵³ When finally the dancers performed phrases that could be watched, the audience was so close that they were prevented from viewing the spatial design, or feats of execution.

⁹⁵⁴ Elsewhere I have argued the the *The Shining* challenged its audience to the participate in the culture cultivated amongst artists such as Meier, Monson, Houston-Jones, and other East Village artists such as DD Dorvillier and Jennifer Miller. Many of the dances the performers invited the audience to engage in were based the artists own practice. Doran George, "Choreographing New York's Rudeness: Exceptional Behavior in Yvonne Meier's Objectionable Dancing Subjects of the Early 1990s.," in *SOCIETY OF DANCE HISTORY SCHOLARS 35th Annual Conference Dance and the Social City* (The University of the Arts Philadelphia: SDHS, 2012).

⁹⁵⁵ For example Valerie Brigenshaw and Christy Adair both argue that, in *Egg Dances*, Lee stages community that has been lost in the modern age. Christy Adair, "Review of Rosemary Lee's Work at the Place Theatre," *Dice Magazine: The magazine for community dance*, April 1990., Valerie Brigenshaw, "'Egg Dances' at the Place Dec. 7th 1988 " *Laban News* Spring 1989. Meanwhile Catherine Hale proposes that *Passage* (1990) represents a

listening with their ear to places on each other's bodies, building on attentiveness developed in rehearsals. Using the kind of reflective exercises seen in *Anatomical Releasing*, her dancers cultivated what they understood as openness toward themselves and each other. The action, which resembles the hands-on practices of Somatics seen in chapter 1, conveys a sensibility of contemplative mutual care. Figuratively and literally the cast listen to the 'nature' of each other, creating a sense of belonging through collective acceptance. Like Meier, Lee recalibrated participation for theatrical effects that were foreclosed by the protocols that, we will see, dominated 1990s Somatic vocabulary. Like the solo improvisers and Agis, they lamented and contested the decline of choreographing the dancer's experience by highlighting the unique potential of processing. As inventing and displaying moved center stage in Somatic informed choreography, artists who reasserted the consciousness of the moving body staged a thinking dancer as a foil to the increasing focus on set composition. Yet they also reasserted liberal ideals by resuscitating an idea of artistic freedom associated with contexts, and strategies thought to resist commercial and institutional ethics.

Section 2. Inventing Novel Movement with Somatics.

Dance that exhibited principles I have grouped under "inventing," initially aimed to manifest the same anti-hierarchical collectivism of CI and related choreography. Yet, although staged in an overlapping milieu, the performances sustained a distinction between choreographer and dancer roles, even though they were thought to embody an egalitarian relationship. The difference from processing stemmed from the fact that establishing a unique signature of vocabulary and composition constituted a central tenet of inventing. To distinguish itself from the staging of the dancer's experience, the choreography asserted a level of

forgotten manner of social organization, which it achieves by foregrounding the performers individual truths. Catherine Hale, "In Rehearsal with Rosemary Lee," *Dance Theatre Journal* 12, no. 2 (2001). All the writers refer to Lee's work in the community even though this was not represented in either *Egg Dances* or *Passage*.

authorship. Artists presented a specific lexicon and syntax that they framed as having been cultivated over time and prior to the concert, rather than revealed through the performance of investigation. To resolve the inevitable tension between the authority implicit in authorship, and the centrality of the dancer's experience to collective ethics, artists initially choreographed nonhierarchical relationships. Rather than collapsing dancer and choreographer roles into one identity, artists reconstituted the dancer as a collaborator with an explicit decision-making role. The work emphasized the intellect of dancers applying their skills at processing physical information to compositional structures arranged by choreographers. The strategy therefore embodied the ideal of direct democracy, and displaced what were seen as the hierarchical structures of modern and classical dance companies.

The focus on new vocabulary and composition replaced broad participation, by demarcating the audience and performers, not least because the choreography achieved levels of complexity that clearly demanded specialist skills. Nonetheless, by drawing on pedestrian vocabulary, the dances still initially exhibited the broader 1970s claim that Somatics accesses bodily movement common to all humanity. The choreography theorized a universal anatomical origin for its motility, replacing participation with a kind of conceptual or vicarious accessibility. Within the structures that choreographers authored, dancers created complexity from ordinariness, thereby staging their intelligence, while also occupying a collaborative rather than compliant role. In this sense, by virtue of the apparently ordinary source of the vocabulary, choreographers reframed themselves as facilitators, and dancers asserted their intellect against the historical privileging of the choreographer. Through inventing, artists therefore extended liberalism by affording individual creative freedom to the dancer role

within a different organization of the artistic process to that which I articulated through processing.

Trisha Brown's 1972 *Primary Accumulation* illustrates both the central role of Somatics to inventing, and the difference of the strategy from processing. In a grainy black and white film of the dance shot from above, Brown lies horizontally filling center frame, lifting her right forearm to perpendicular with her elbow, her hand remains flat as it was on the floor.⁹⁵⁶ She could be minimizing muscular tension while sensing the elbow joint like Somatic students, and indeed Elaine Summer's Kinetic Awareness work informed the vocabulary, visible in the apparent effortless with which Brown adds simple actions in this and other dances with an accumulating structure. Writing and dancing in the milieu, Sally Banes insisted "the beauty of the dances rests in the choice of gesture... simple, compatible and articulate... and also in their execution which has little to do with virtuosic dance and everything to do with presence... tenderness, and honesty to the raw gestures themselves... seeing ideas embodied."⁹⁵⁷ The gestures fold into each other overshadowing the transparency of 1+1+2+1+2+3 etc., revealing a complexity beyond the layperson, despite the component actions appearing not to be based on specialist training. As in Paxton's improvisation following his journey, Brown initially performed her dance, and therefore arguably fused the choreographer and dancer roles. However, rather than stage her dancing-self as producing vocabulary by investigating an idea in performance, Brown executed a premeditated structure with largely predictable kinetic outcomes arranged by herself as choreographer and then performed by herself as a dancer. She revealed her intellectual labor as a dancer a decade before she began talking in her work through

⁹⁵⁶ Brown, *Trisha Brown Early Works 1966-1979*.

⁹⁵⁷ Sally Banes, "Accumulation Dances," *Chicago Reader*, November 8th 1974, 17.

the finesse with which she negotiated the structure, which she, as a choreographer, laid bare as a composition in its mathematical transparency.⁹⁵⁸

Through authorship, 1970s Somatic-informed choreography contributed to the decade's changing gender mores, and as the century progressed artists returned to inventing as means renegotiate other axes of social identity. We will see that more strongly than they could through investigating the experience of moving, by predetermining their vocabulary, artists contested the ways in which concert dance had previously constructed gender, sexuality, and disability. By simultaneously drawing attention to the dancers' intelligence, however, the work also stood against social stratification per se. In the 1970s, along with Brown, Simone Forti and Rosemary Butcher introduce us to the use of Somatics⁹⁵⁹ to contest entrenched gender roles by validating the dancers intellect and asserting intellectual authority over movement, rather than emotional authority as Graham seemed to do.⁹⁶⁰ These moves reflected how women were asserting their intelligence and taking up leadership in the Equal Rights Amendment movement, aiming to outlaw sex discrimination.⁹⁶¹ Similarly Brown, Forti and Butcher choreographed gender equivalence by contesting the idea that men are more intelligent and leadership orientated, while also disputing the reliance of choreographic authorship upon power differences. Furthermore, like the staging of the dancer's experience, by focusing on kinesthetic awareness, dances that

⁹⁵⁸ Banes argues that by talking in her dances, Brown, along with other artists, established that "dancing can be an act of intelligence." *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 225.

⁹⁵⁹ It is important to understand that Somatics is a term came into wide usage in the 21st century, so these artists may not have used the term, but I'm arguing that their work embodied tropes that have remained consistent in the dance practices that we now associate with Somatics.

⁹⁶⁰ Foster, "Throwing Like a Girl?" Gender in a Transnational World," 52-64; *ibid.*

⁹⁶¹ Much of the choreography I have considered under processing also renegotiated gender; men and women achieved a degree of kinetic equality in CI for example, which I address further below. But I am arguing for the exceptional role of authorship in asserting the intelligence of women choreographers while also staging the dancer's intellectual labor, and thereby asserting that artists achieved with movement what Banes attributes to the inclusion of the voice.

privileged inventing averted the tendency of Western concert dance to present itself as a feminine spectacle.

To stage bodies as knowledgeable rather than as objects of desire, the artists made visible concentrated, functional execution that would disappear with theatrical lighting and the literal or symbolic distance from the audience in a proscenium-arch setting. Brown and Forti used similar New York spaces to those in which the work analyzed in the previous section was staged. Novack informs that “[m]ost [CI] performances occur in small spaces,”⁹⁶² while Banes recalls that along with Judson Church, the concerts she writes about which I analyze below, were in “art galleries, lofts, other churches, and various other non-proscenium spaces.”⁹⁶³ Meanwhile Butcher, who danced and studied with Summers in early 1970s New York, used similar spaces in a related milieu on her return to London, working for example with some of the same dancers as Tufnell, and influencing others.⁹⁶⁴ Brown intentionally avoided the trappings of concert houses, aiming to avoid “conventions that are hanging all over the theater space: preconceptions that aren’t present outdoors or in a gallery.”⁹⁶⁵ Likewise distancing herself from the stage, Forti saw some of her work as minimalist sculpture,⁹⁶⁶ which was similar to Butcher who thought of her dances as the temporal and spatial embodiment of geometrical form in a visual art idiom.⁹⁶⁷ Without anonymous darkened seating, the artists drew attention to

⁹⁶² Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull, (Cynthia Novak), "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* ed. Jane Desmond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁹⁶³ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 14.

⁹⁶⁴ For example, Gaby Agis and Sue McLennan who both continued to work with Somatics. Butcher, "Rosemary Butcher Dance & Visual Artist".

⁹⁶⁵ Allen Robertson, "Trisha Brown (Dance)," *Minnesota Daily* 76, no. 70 (1974).

⁹⁶⁶ Speaking of "Huddle", which although first choreographed as part of the 1960 "Dance Constructions" Forti continued to stage throughout the 1970s in various dances, “she has said that 'it was more placed like sculpture in a gallery space.' She continues to show Huddle in situations where 'viewers can be walking around it.’” Carrie Lambery, "More or Less Minimalism: Six Notes on Performance and Visual Art in the 1960s," in *A Minimal Future?: Art as Object 1958-1968*, ed. Ann Diederichsen Goldstein, Diederich (Los Angeles, Calif. Cambridge, Mass.: Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); MIT Press, 2004).

⁹⁶⁷ For further discussion of Butcher's rhetoric see Crickmay, "The Apparently Invisible Dances of Tufnell and Greenwood, (Reprinted from 1983)."

the dancers' experience rather than display seductive glowing moving bodies, which parallels Novack's insistence that in CI "with the... close proximity to the dancers... the audience is invited... to concentrate on the unification of people through physical contact and interaction."⁹⁶⁸

The sources for the methodology on which inventing relied, can be found in some of the same historical flashpoints that informed CI and related choreographies of processing. Yet artists marshaled the ideas upon which they drew in distinct ways. With pedestrian movement, Brown, Forti and Butcher displaced theatricality with bodies of anatomical *knowledge* rather than the kind of *experience* Forti emphasized in the early 1960s, and as was seen in CI. Banes argues, "[w]alking opened up a range of non-dance movement" for Paxton, an activity she describes as "something that everyone does;"⁹⁶⁹ thereby proposing that dancers departed from established vocabulary using an unspectacular lexicon. It was in Robert Dunn's canonical composition class⁹⁷⁰ with Rainer,⁹⁷¹ that Brown and Forti reframed the exploration Halprin used to prepare for more theatrical presentations⁹⁷² by making concerts based on their teacher's pedagogy.⁹⁷³ Forti, for example, rejected Halprin's desire to modulate action for performance.

⁹⁶⁸ Bull, "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," 277.

⁹⁶⁹ Adam Benjamin, *Making an Entrance: Theory and Practice for Disabled and Non-Disabled Dancers* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 31.

⁹⁷⁰ Dunn's class has been canonized as precipitating late 20th century developments on contemporary dance that were central to the reformulation of Somatics through a focus on dance as a conceptual project. For example, Sally Banes cites the workshop as key to the development of the various approaches she reviews in "Terpsichore in Sneakers," she goes on to detail how Brown, Forti, Rainer and Paxton all took the composition class. Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 10.

⁹⁷¹ In 1960 Rainer and Brown participated in Halprin's summer workshop at Forti's invitation. Forti had been working with Halprin for some time. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 152.

⁹⁷² By the late 1950s Halprin's performances included work with objects, costumes, and voice in ways that were playfully theatrical. *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁷³ Forti's recalibration of Halprin's work is exemplified in the difference between Forti's *Huddle* (1960) and Halprin's exercise *Natural Group Processes*. In both, dancers followed clear instructions to execute ongoing action with task-like simplicity: Halprin's instructions were to walk in a circle and not doing anything interesting *ibid.*, 128. While Forti's dancers climbed over and then rejoined a group of dancers one at a time. Forti, "Highline Art Talk with Simone Forti." Yet while *Huddle* was part of the *Dance Constructions* in which *Slant Board* (referred to in the section of processing) was included, *Natural Group Process* was an exploration to prepare for more theatrical performances.

She sought “the most direct and crudest, in the sense of raw, way to fulfill the assignment” Halprin gave, such as when she “crawled... and... Ann wanted me to... formalize my feet... I said no that I was just crawling. Ann would feel that the movement should be... refined or aestheticized.”⁹⁷⁴ Rainer, was initially interested in theatricality, but articulated the aesthetics she, Forti, and Brown cultivated, in her 1965 “No Manifesto,”⁹⁷⁵ reflecting that, like Forti,⁹⁷⁶ she ultimately “opted for neutrality,”⁹⁷⁷ and “proposed a new dance that would recognize the objective presence of things, including movement and the human body.”⁹⁷⁸ Brown, Forti and Rainer rejected spectacle by reframing Halprin’s work in Cunningham-like formality, as gender-equivalent neutrality,⁹⁷⁹ which like pedestrian aesthetics, seemed universal.⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁴ Forti travelled back and forth between New York and the Bay Area in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which probably influenced her perspective about Halprin's practice. But the "Branch Dance", in which the disagreement about crawling arose, was choreographed in 1957, which suggests Forti was already interested in paring down movement. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 128.

⁹⁷⁵ “No to spectacle. No to virtuosity. No to transformations and magic and make-believe. No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image. No to the heroic. No to the anti-heroic. No to trash imagery. No to involvement of performer or spectator, No to style. No to camp. No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer. No to eccentricity. No to moving or being moved.” Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 43.

⁹⁷⁶ I am distinguishing the aesthetic character of rejecting narrative and spectacle in the early 1960s from that which was staged by Cunningham beginning in the previous decade. Cynthia Novack, for example, points out that audiences for Cunningham’s and Nikolais’ work initially felt that it was robotic. Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 136. Although she ascribes this to the dramatic change in performer sensibility from the preceding generations aesthetics, she also distinguishes the ‘pedestrian’ quality of the two choreographers work from that in contact improvisation and looking at work in the 1970s the effort toward ordinariness is clear through the clothes that were worn and the attitude of the dancers which was not so much the effortful refusal of expression as the obvious distance from theatricality that may have included the anti-expressive codes in Cunningham’s work.

⁹⁷⁷ Banes, reports Rainer’s early 1960s work was initially “eclectic, theatrical, almost surrealistic”, Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 42-43., even though Ross insists Rainer expressed distaste for Halprin’s use of Graham exercises which portends her later public protestations against Graham’s theatricality. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 146.

⁹⁷⁸ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 43.

⁹⁷⁹ Brown, Forti and Rainer advanced what Susan Foster defines in Cunningham’s artistic rhetoric as “equivalence of male and female bodies,” because compared with the gender neutral investigations Forti and Brown went on to pursue in the 1970s along with Butcher, Foster points out that in Cunningham’s work “[m]ale and female dancers performed overlapping yet distinctive vocabularies... in which men... lifted women.” Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 175 and 77.

⁹⁸⁰ They replaced expressing myth, symbol and emotion with the idea of dancing natural motile capacity, embodying H'Doubler’s agenda, by purportedly staging the experience of the moving body free from imposed theatrical and technical imperatives, including the representation of gender difference. Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 117. Yet they continued modern dance’s conceit of its universality and expression believing they were dancing the experience of essential bodily realities rather than representing emotion. In his critique of the conventional representation of Cunningham, Franko points to the continuing use of expression through bodily state, despite the rhetoric of anti-expression. He argues that Cunningham rendered the ‘individual’ private through an anti-expressive

In her 1970's "mathematical pieces"⁹⁸¹ including *Primary Accumulation*, Brown synthesized Forti's exploration and Rainer's minimalism, resisting spectacle by asserting the dancer's intelligence through apparently accessible ordinariness.⁹⁸² Various solo and group works accumulated and reordered what appeared to be components of pedestrian kinetics into complex dances,⁹⁸³ the ordinariness of which Brown verified by insisting "I can't... fake extravagant movement."⁹⁸⁴ She linked pedestrian vocabulary and Somatic ideas maintaining that in *Primary Accumulation*, for example, "movement... has to be natural, comfortable and simple."⁹⁸⁵ Modern dance's polarized representations of male and female found themselves replaced by what Foster calls "a neutral body" that Brown constructed in contrast with Graham's vision of "gender as a natural and inevitable aspect of the human... [with] a clear division of labor between the masculine and the feminine."⁹⁸⁶ Using low muscle tone, passive weight, and sequencing, Brown composed complexity, fulfilling her desire to capitalize on the fruits of exploration she undertook with Halprin.⁹⁸⁷ Jowitt observed "[e]verything [Brown] does seems to... flow out of her without any tension... the adjustments in her body are fluent, natural looking... using just as much time, space and energy as she needs and no more."⁹⁸⁸ Halprin's

body in contrast with the non-expressive dancing that fulfilled the media construction of the Cunningham revolution later in the choreographer's career. The 1960s and 1970s artists who worked with Somatics ideas were associated with the Cunningham studio in the period before the press stereotyped the work as non-expressive. Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. chapter 4. Gay Morris agrees that Cunningham's initial impulse was the refusal to display emotion. Morris, *A Game for Dancers*, chapter 7. Morris and Franco's ideas dovetail with the fact that dancers working with Somatics in the 1950s understood Graham technique to be working against natural psychological processes and the natural expression of feeling as I have articulated in chapter 1.

⁹⁸¹ The works I analyze in the 1970s are broadly known as the mathematical pieces. Wendy Perron, "Trisha Browns Group Forges Ahead without Her," *Dance Magazine*, May 2013.

⁹⁸² Brown's stated intention was to develop vocabulary within the remit of Rainer's No Manifesto, and she refers to the importance of structured improvisations she participated in with Forti. Brown, *Trisha Brown Early Works 1966-1979*.

⁹⁸³ *Accumulation* (1971), *Primary Accumulation* (1972), *Group Primary Accumulation* (1973), *Locus* (1975), and *Sololos* (1976). All dates for the dances from: Trisha Brown Dance Company, "Trisha Brown Dance Company".

⁹⁸⁴ Robertson, "Trisha Brown (Dance)."

⁹⁸⁵ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 83.

⁹⁸⁶ Foster, "Throwing Like a Girl?' Gender in a Transnational World."

⁹⁸⁷ Ross, *Dance as Experience*, 148.

⁹⁸⁸ Deborah Jowitt, "By Deborah Jowitt," *Village Voice* April 5th 1973.

Alexander-like open-ended approach underpinned Brown's ease in *Primary Accumulation*, which she developed by "using it... like a warm up exercise, accumulating to as far as I had gone the last time, in a... relaxed manner with no goal."⁹⁸⁹ Yet while her casual manner affirmed the naturalness of her neutrality, the precise but poetic accretion of gestures asserted her authorship.

Increasing convolution occurred between as well as within the dances. For example, describing *Sololos*, which put a *Primary Accumulation*-like lexicon on moving legs, Brown's dancer from the late 1970s, Lisa Kraus, used terms similar to Brown. She called the choreography "natural movement not extending beyond a normal range of motion, in which body parts were lined up creating right angles peppered with rhythmic detail."⁹⁹⁰ Yet Kraus insists *Locus* entailed "unorthodox movement" directing body parts beyond the dancer's kinesphere, even as the metronome pattern from *Primary Accumulation* regulated the addition of tips, turns, lunges and inversions that extended from and returned to a basic stand. For Kraus, Brown expanded a pedestrian lexicon with Somatics, an idea with which Foster concurs, suggesting Brown "inventories movement possibilities, channeling motion one way and then another, so that all pathways are equally plausible."⁹⁹¹ The intelligent dancer complicated ordinariness by shifting from simplicity to virtuosity.

In set form rather than instructions, Forti also expanded ordinariness by contending that it is underpinned by ontogenetic, terrestrial, and phylogenetic realities evident in infant, pedestrian, and animal kinetics. The dancer identity she constructed appeared as equivalent to,

⁹⁸⁹ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 83.

⁹⁹⁰ Kraus, "Interview with the Author."

⁹⁹¹ Foster is analyzing *Watermoter*, which seems to mark a transition in Brown's choreography from the mathematical pieces to what is known as the "unstable molecular structure" work. Yet I propose that Foster's idea about Brown inventoring movement is something that developed throughout the 1970s in the collected explorations of each work, an idea I will further explore below. Foster, "Throwing Like a Girl?" *Gender in a Transnational World*.

but an intelligent guide for, the audience through what Banes calls the “defamiliarization” of everyday action.⁹⁹² Banes traces Forti’s dances from the early 1960s, when she was “finding dance... in the commonplace... dissecting ordinary movement,”⁹⁹³ until the mid 1970s, when she built upon “crawling, animal movement, and circling [walking].”⁹⁹⁴ After rejecting Halprin’s aesthetics, Forti became a virtuoso on all fours, seeming to recover efficiency in kinetic detail and performing the complexity of simple action. In the 1974 dance *Crawling*,⁹⁹⁵ Forti offset deceleration and seamless continuity with spinal consecution and accentuated weight shifts. Banes observed “analytical intelligence at work as Forti examines each term in the sequence.”⁹⁹⁶ With pared down action and spare staging, Forti procured a contemplative gaze, resisting theatricality by staging developmental mechanics that, when considered in relation to her rhetoric on the animal studies, analyzed below, accrued for Forti the idea of being universal to both genders. The vertebral articulations, revealed in infantile perambulation, seemed to cut through ballet’s and Graham’s division of gendered labor as foundational and inclusive.⁹⁹⁷ Forti’s spine stacks effortlessly, as if in basic human simplicity, as her hip softens and pelvis sits.

Forti also staged animal motility as a common evolutionary inheritance, integral to biped skeletal structure. Deducing how human bones best emulate the structural kinetics of lizards, bears, frogs and other species, she cultivated seamless transitions from one species to another,

⁹⁹² Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 21.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁹⁵ My analysis is based upon VHS documentation of a 1997 performance in Japan. Simone Forti, *Crawling (Tokyo)* (Personal archive of Pooh Kaye 1976).

⁹⁹⁶ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 31.

⁹⁹⁷ See for example Novack’s characterization of hetero-opposition in ballet, Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 125. and I have referred to Foster’s theorization of Graham’s naturalization of gender difference above, which is evident in dances such as “Embattled Garden”. Martha; Carlos Surinach Graham, “Embattled Garden (Motion Picture),” (1976).

asserting the intrinsic nature of the patterns to humans with ideas like Todd's.⁹⁹⁸ Banes notes, "[a] violent swing of the neck and head, gleaned from the polar bear, propels an efficient turn while travelling on all fours."⁹⁹⁹ By gradually altering her placement she shifted between species using weight and momentum to construct a natural motile logic and aesthetics that seemed to prove Forti's conviction that "we are much less different from animals than we think."¹⁰⁰⁰ With dancers including Banes,¹⁰⁰¹ Forti staged gender equivalence in evolutionary terms by providing intelligent access to apparently universal kinetics.¹⁰⁰²

Butcher saw herself as facilitating her dancers' intelligent connection with nature by shaping, with spatial and temporal accenting, movement they produced. Like Topf she gave her company "formal" prompts, maintaining "[w]hat I have to offer [is] a task form...they (the dancers) must ...move in their own way." So despite setting her dances, Butcher insisted they emerged collaboratively. As Crickmay puts it: "[t]he choreographer sets up the conditions within which the dance can be 'found.'"¹⁰⁰³ Treating composition as a found object, Butcher echoed the belief that aesthetics arose from anatomical function, yet changes in vocabulary as the work developed not only verified her facilitator role but reflected the pattern of transnational dissemination of ideas, addressed in chapter 2. Soft tips, reminiscent of *Strider* and *Dance Exchange*, propelled *Pause and Loss* (1976), but in *Passage North* later that year, with simpler

⁹⁹⁸ When she returned to the US from Rome where she had begun her animal studies, Forti saw the earliest known fossil remnants of a fish at the New York natural history museum in the early 1970. One of the fins of was labeled a "pelvic fin." The idea that an early aquatic animal exhibited nascent human anatomical form convinced Forti that all prior species are integral to human anatomy. She was not aware of Todd's work, despite the obvious connections. Forti, "Interview 2 with Author."

⁹⁹⁹ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 33.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Forti, "Interview 2 with Author."

¹⁰⁰¹ From Forti's photograph archive, made available by the artist. Banes danced in "Planet." *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰² Forti began her animal studies at Rome Zoo in the late 1960s, and staged them in dances such as Planet at PS1 in which the performers were David Appel, Sally Banes, Pooh Kaye, Paul Langland, Ann Hammel, David Taylor, and Terry O'Reilly. Other works included Forti The Zero and Crawling from 1974, Big Room (1975), Red Green (1975), and Planet (1976). Dates from Forti's photograph archive, made available by the artist. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰³ Chris Crickmay, "Dialogues with Rosemary Butcher - a Decade of Her Work," *New Dance Magazine* 36, no. Spring (1986): 10-13.

movement, Butcher emphasized action, stillness, and the placement of bodies. As British-based dancers trained in CI and Somatics, they replaced a classical or modern lexicon with walking or running. Gaby Agis, who danced for Butcher beginning in the late 1970s, recalls, “the pedestrian nature was the kind of movement we were all exploring at the time.”¹⁰⁰⁴ *Pause and Loss* combined settling together, leaning on each other, departing with similar but never unison timing. Repeated hopping with a low front-extended leg highlighted the flocking and dispersal as those doing the action increased and dissipated. By 1980 in *Spaces 4*, a lean or embrace interrupted walking, running, sitting and lying, with occasional soft lunges or spirals into and out of the floor.

Through her compositional simplicity, Butcher persuaded her audience that her vocabulary arose from, rather than being imposed upon her dancers. Through her careful temporal and spatial arrangement she made her input visible while also staging gender equivalence. As Claid argues “[a]rchitectural and visual space between bodies came into focus...[as] bodies were defined ‘by’ rather than in space.”¹⁰⁰⁵ By configuring the dancers as neutral vessels of formalism, the choreography claimed to circumnavigate gender altogether with what Crickmay defines in terms that recall the modest performance of ordinariness. He observed that for “sexuality, role playing (to do with gender), and overt emotion or expression”, Butcher’s choreography “substitutes its own rhythmic, spacial (sic) and sensory structures and delicate abstract allusions to experiences in ordinary life.”¹⁰⁰⁶ Along with Brown and Forti’s vocabulary and composition in the early to mid 1970s, it would have been hard for a casual observer to distinguish the rudimentary nature from that seen in processing. This attests to the degree that the artists worked in overlapping milieus with CI and related practices. Yet by

¹⁰⁰⁴ Agis, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teachers) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰⁰⁵ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 85.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Crickmay, "Dialogues with Rosemary Butcher," 12

establishing a distinct character for their work, the three women achieved the delicate balance necessary to assert authorship through movement seen as “natural” to the body, performed by dancers aiming to materialize their creative equality with choreographers.

Although Brown created kinetic forms rather than shape her company’s movement, she still staged her work as collaborative. Banes saw the dances as conceptual vessels through which dancers create movement, arguing Brown’s “major concern has always been... structures that organize movement, rather than the invention of movement per se.”¹⁰⁰⁷ Other reviewers saw the incremental complication of gesture as the dancers composing in the concerts. Of *Primary Accumulation* Jowitt insists, “[t]he audience is mesmerized... watching this dance get made before their very eyes,”¹⁰⁰⁸ a sentiment with which critics beyond New York agreed.¹⁰⁰⁹ They recounted how the dancers executed the work, detailing Brown’s instructions,¹⁰¹⁰ and representing the dancers as choreographing. For example the *New York Times* marveled at how “the dancers are forced to react to outside forces...the imaginative movement they devise is the basic material of the dance...to show individual beautiful movement in the process of development.”¹⁰¹¹

The perception that Brown facilitated new vocabulary rather than impose a style drew on the link between her mathematical structures and her 1960s work, broadly referred to as “the equipment pieces.” Like Forti’s *Dance Constructions*, the 1960s work marshaled pedestrian

¹⁰⁰⁷ Banes remarks that she was writing the text on Brown found in “Terpsichore in Sneakers” in the year that Watermoter was being made, which is 1978. Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 86; *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁸ Deborah Jowitt, “Rituals on Concrete and Air,” *The Village Voice*, May 24th 1973.

¹⁰⁰⁹ For example, strikingly similar in the understanding of the work, if different in tone, is a French Canadian review two years later that explains, “[t]he method of creation takes on more interest than the work ' created, and the structure of the dance, more interest than the dance itself.” L Brunel, “Translated Review of Performance in the Haut Var Experimental Festival, Canada,” *form TBCD archives translation from French*. (1975).

¹⁰¹⁰ Roy Close M., “Dance Compay Offers Cerebral Architecture-of-Motion Program,” *Minneapolis Star*, November 7th 1976; Brunel, “Translated Review of Performance in the Haut Var Experimental Festival, Canada..”; Banes, “Accumulation Dances.”

¹⁰¹¹ Unknown, “Sonnabend Dance Series,” *New York Times* (courtesy of TBDC archives), April 1st 1973.

activity within tasks involving equipment that dancers fulfilled.¹⁰¹² Brown later saw herself as replacing the equipment with puzzles the conception of which drew on Somatic ideas.¹⁰¹³ “Since 1970, I have been working with internal structures or ideas, not physical structures.”¹⁰¹⁴ Using kinesthetic images of skeletal structure and motion developed independently of codified vocabulary in Somatics,¹⁰¹⁵ she and her dancers followed the rules for each composition,¹⁰¹⁶ which choreographed specific forms, through what her 1980s dancer Shelly Senter calls “conditions for movement”, like Butcher’s rhetoric.¹⁰¹⁷ The appearance of co-creating elicited an experience of participation similar to CI.¹⁰¹⁸ Banes talks of “the pleasure of watching the dancing with its natural but often uninterrupted phrasing, ... both learning the deep structure of the piece as the dance progresses and feeling a mutual sense of accomplishment with the dancers.”¹⁰¹⁹

Forti also asserted her role as a facilitator by providing access to what she calls “the dancing state” in which momentum and other motion “possesses” the body, based on Zen ideas

¹⁰¹² *Man Walking Down the Side of Building* (1970) exemplifies the equipment work. For other examples and an indication of how the work was seen by her peers see Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 82.

¹⁰¹³ Laurel Tentindo performed with Trisha Brown Dance Company in the 21st century during a period when the “Early Works” were being regularly reconstructed and performed. She recounted that the language used to describe the movement was often anatomical, such as lift the hand from the floor by bending at the elbow. Laurel Tentindo, interview by Doran George, May 14th, 2013.

¹⁰¹⁴ Banes, "Accumulation Dances."

¹⁰¹⁵ Brown ensured her dancers shared her physical understanding by sending them to Elaine Summers’ Kinetic Awareness classes. But much of her 1970s company had also pursued Anatomical Releasing. Kraus had taken classes based on John Rolland's book. Kraus, "Interview with the Author."; Rolland, *Inside Motion*. So the dancers applied kinesthetic awareness framed as experientially dissecting and reintegrating the body, in for example, Todd’s work, while Elizabeth Garren, one of the original cast for *Locus*, was a student and eventual teacher of Alexander Technique. Trisha Brown Dance Company, "Trisha Brown Dance Company"; Karczag, " Interview with Author."

¹⁰¹⁶ Kraus's describes *Locus* as outside the normal range of motion because, as Banes explains Brown “posited an imaginary, elongated cube... long enough to stand in. Each of twenty-seven points on the cube correspond to a letter in the alphabet; Brown generated a four part score by translating a written autobiographical statement into numbers, then into points of the cube.” Some of the required actions “pulled” the dancers out of Kraus’s “a normal range of motion.” Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 86.

¹⁰¹⁷ Senter, "(Dancer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰¹⁸ With instructions such as “retrograde” called out to specific dancers, who were named along with the prompt during a performance, Brown revealed a complex composition of existing material like in group versions of *Sololos*, in which the company, seeming impossibly, began and ended in unison. Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 90.

¹⁰¹⁹ Banes is talking here about *Sololos*, but her comments relate to the phase of Brown's work that she groups together as structured with mathematical and verbal prompts. Ibid.

used with Halprin.¹⁰²⁰ Through new vocabulary, Forti and her dancers saw themselves as connecting with evolutionary kinetic patterns, or terrestrial forces, not unlike CI improvisers. Banes observed, “the geometric design... animal and infant themes...investigate different sensations and body states.”¹⁰²¹ Recalling “primitive mind”, referred to in relation to Somatic rhetoric in chapter one, Forti contended that she restored a child-like state to dancers in contrast with what she saw as the “adult, isolated condition” of Cunningham’s work: “the thing I had to offer was still very close to the holistic and generalized response of infants.”¹⁰²² As much as authoring movement, she saw herself as relinquishing creative authority to nature. Banes called Forti a “polemicist of a generation that investigates the border between nature and culture... [making] dance another instrument for organic living.”¹⁰²³ Her facilitator identity connected with the Somatic idea that dancers achieve an authentic sense of self through their receptivity to nature because, like Butcher and Brown, as a choreographer she seemed to catalyze and depend upon such receptivity.¹⁰²⁴ The new organization of the artistic process proffered that those dancers to whom a connection with nature had been restored, could recover their creative freedom in the choreographic process by participating in arranging movement that was thought to be a shared human heritage.

Despite sharing with CI a discourse of working with terrestrial forces, Brown, Forti, and Butcher carefully negotiated the social significance of gender in their dances. They constructed nature in a tension between masculine object-like aesthetics that became associated with

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰²² Ibid., 24.

¹⁰²³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰²⁴ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 54.

minimalist art, and feminine sensuousness engendered by Somatics.¹⁰²⁵ They thereby circumnavigated a problem for women of asserting gender equivalence,¹⁰²⁶ which they confronted in their work.¹⁰²⁷ Looking at the way CI constructs gender, Foster highlights the potential pitfalls for women of a dance that claims to be unilateral for both sexes. While moving toward greater equality for the sexes, the duet form reified masculinity as the norm. Foster argues that dancers developed techniques that “enabled small, structurally more fragile, bodies to lift and support larger bodies. . . [such that] size nor sex intervened in. . . how two bodies might move together.” However, she goes on to detail that in its pursuit of the androgynous...[CI] tacitly [privileged] certain masculine attributes” like athleticism.¹⁰²⁸ Feminists in the 1970s identified a similar problem with androgyny, which they saw androgyny as “inappropriate for women wishing to advance themselves” because it normalized masculinity erasing femininity’s critical potential.¹⁰²⁹ Emphasizing the sensuousness cultivated in Somatic training, Brown, Butcher and Forti constructed a “gynocentric” gender-equivalence without the emphasis on strength acrobatics that troubled CI.

With seemingly feminine poetics, Forti disrupted the rational masculinity of scientific constructions of the body for receptive pleasure through sybaritic contemplation of the minutia in infantile motion.¹⁰³⁰ Dancers of both genders found equivalence *in femininity* in her

¹⁰²⁵ My argument is influenced by Franko's critical framework in which he suggests expression signifies femininity against the masculinity of modernism. Somatics embodied feminine sensuousness in Brown, Forti and Butcher's work. Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*.

¹⁰²⁶ Foster identifies a feminist aim beginning in the 1960s, to “celebrate women’s unique biological capacities, and to claim the rights to speak about the body publically and without shame”, which highlights the problem that a history of asymmetrical power difference posed for staging gender equivalence. Foster, "Throwing Like a Girl?" *Gender in a Transnational World*, 52-64.

¹⁰²⁷ As a result of reorienting her body in space and resisting the demand for spectacle in *Primary Accumulation*, Brown experienced “a period of feeling extremely vulnerable... infantile, sexual, helpless, lazy.” Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 83.

¹⁰²⁸ Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 182 & 86.

¹⁰²⁹ Weil quoted in Claid. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 73.

¹⁰³⁰ My reading is influenced by Julia Kristeva’s theory that the patriarchal logic of language is disrupted through uniquely feminine ‘poetic semiosis,’ bequeathed by the maternal body. Paralleling “cultural feminism” in which

unassuming, sensitive appraisal of what seemed like unilateral foundational skeletal kinetics.¹⁰³¹ Meanwhile, Banes, in her struggle to frame Brown's dances as minimalist, betrayed the choreographer's use of sensuousness.¹⁰³² With terms like "sensuous abstraction" and "voluptuousness", sexual difference seeped into *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, which Banes tellingly labeled "a bi-product" of the dance.¹⁰³³ Yet the prone women in *Primary Accumulation* exceeded the dictates of the No Manifesto,¹⁰³⁴ refusing to signify non-gendered material.¹⁰³⁵ By asserting the dancers' intelligence, however, Forti and Brown still resisted the problematic association of women with nature that would foreclose their access to cultural authorship.¹⁰³⁶ Brown says of *Accumulation* "[t]he construction...tends to make it object-like. Repetition has the effect of blurring the image, much as a word repeated over and over again loses its original meaning...The performance is a live process of keeping vigil over the integrity of each gesture."¹⁰³⁷ She synthesized a tension between the ostensible masculine neutrality of the

women-only consciousness-raising groups aimed to nurture a distinctly "women's culture," eclipsed by patriarchy, Kristeva constructed a reproductive female body as a site of critique. Kristeva first published her feminist theory of semiosis in *La Revloution du Language Poetique* in 1974, coeval with the feminist aim to develop a uniquely female perspective away from men's interference. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 101.

¹⁰³¹ The men's quality in Forti and Butcher's work contributed to, and probably benefited from the tendency toward femininity, which may have related to their own sensibility and their work in Somatics. For example, Dennis Greenwood and Julyen Hamilton who danced for Butcher, and Paul Langland, who danced for Forti all exhibited what Susan Foster calls "sensuous vulnerability." She argues 1970's male CI dancers staged a "more open, sensitive, and process oriented" vision of masculinity with this quality. Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 183.

¹⁰³² Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 158.

¹⁰³³ Banes used such terms in relation to *Primary Accumulation*, but also described the "quirky actions" in *Locus* as ones that "resemble emotionally expressive gestures." Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, 85 & 86.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰³⁵ Banes compares *Primary Accumulation* with the 1970s work of Carl Andre, arguing both are "floor bound...art forms [that] dispense with smooth, logical connections or polish, presenting matter of fact arrangements of rather ordinary materials in discrete units, held together by mental systems which focus attention on the properties rather than the presentation of units." When she acknowledges the women's performance of sexuality, she dismisses the significance insisting that the associations "dissipate in the extended performance of the whole dance." *ibid.*, 84 & 84.

¹⁰³⁶ Understanding a 1990s appraisal of 1970s feminist theory gives insight into the risk of critiquing asymmetrical heterosexual gender with a pre-cultural femininity. As part of a broader critique of the reification of a natural female body, Judith Butler deconstructed Kristeva's theory of semiosis in her post-structural framework *Gender Trouble*. She argued that if the female body is theorized as a natural site of resistance toward the logos of patriarchy, the purview of women is limited, because language, intellect, and cultural power are reified as a masculine domain, and women are configured as essentially maternal. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 160.

¹⁰³⁷ Unknown, "Unknown (Clipping from the T.B.D.C. Archives)," *Avalance*1972.

gestures, and the blurring feminine motility of their execution.¹⁰³⁸ The women choreographed slipperiness between rational analysis and its other, creating the effect that Brown's reviewers found so compelling. They experienced the work as witnessing a "process. . . to grasp the logic behind what she is doing. . . It's so simple it's overwhelming."¹⁰³⁹ The explicit structures and ordinary movement seemed to reveal their simplicity through mesmerizing execution. In this tension between the analysis of movement and its sensuous embodiment we see how the scientific conceit of Somatic training, and the performance of modesty through which it was secured, achieved nuance in concert dance.

In Butcher's negotiation of masculinity and femininity, transatlantic questions framed the tension between the supposed object-like nature of movement and the sensuous embodiment of choreography.¹⁰⁴⁰ A bifurcation of artists work into either "American formalism" or "British and politically engaged," chronicled in chapter two, affected how her work was read. Butcher's identification with Cunningham and Brown contributed to the disparagement of her dances as apolitical. Crickmay challenged the association of Butcher's abstraction with American cultural dominance however, by arguing "while there is a purity and strictness of form in Rosemary's work, there is also a poetic, lyrical aspect, which can be described as very English." He

¹⁰³⁸ My proposition that dancers both commented upon and identified with nature as an idea is influenced by Elin Diamond's articulation of how Brechtian theatre practice and theory has served feminism. She details that actors comment upon their characters rather than embody them as a realist actor would, proposing that this prevents the audience from identifying with the character and reading the narrative as a set of interpersonal psychological dynamics. Instead the audience is invited to understand the way in which each character is situated within a set of historical conditions. Similarly, the deliberation over nature in Brown, Forti and Butcher's work asks the audience to look at the notion of a natural body from some distance. Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁰³⁹ Robertson, "Trisha Brown (Dance)."

¹⁰⁴⁰ Contrariness of the relationship to feminine nature that I have identified in 1970s inventing bears striking similarity a simultaneous embrace and refusal of spectacle Claid calls for in the 21st century. As articulated in the dissertation introduction, she argues that in the 1970s dancers renounced theatre's economy of seduction, which placed the choreography beyond significance. Her argument draws upon the post-structural critique of feminism to which Butler contributed. Yet I suggest, Brown, Butcher, and Forti averted and engaged spectacle by playing between sensuousness and constructing movement as object-like. The New Dance discourse probably played a major role in Claid's failure to identify the critical potency of work like Butcher's and Brown's. Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 201.

distinguished her from what was understood as American “art in a vacuum” choreography, by representing her work as asserting national difference. He contested the “mistake of a globally dominant culture (such as America is today) to pressure international status for what is... a national phenomenon.”¹⁰⁴¹ Yet despite differences in the framing of Butcher’s style, and my distinction between CI’s androcentric-androgyny and gynocentric strategies of Brown, Forti, and Butcher, 1970s softness and “letting go” stood for natural harmony, which, as we saw, artists challenged in 1980s processing, and they followed suit with contemporaneous inventing.

Reengaging Spectacle: Difference and Visibility.

Alongside the incorporation of theatricality into processing, Brown and Butcher re-choreographed their approaches for concert houses beginning in the late 1970s with various ideological implications. In contrast with Forti’s solo approach mentioned above, they adapted their vocabulary for the different demands of the proscenium arch in which, with its theatre lighting, bleached out the object-like ordinariness and the dancer’s intelligence that had been visible in galleries and more intimate loft spaces. For example, insisting that a “seductive economy” of theatre relies on the drama of sexual difference, Claid argues Butcher staged “absence of presence, seduction in reverse,” which “avoided sexual objectification... and [the] male... heroic role.” Yet she pronounces that the dances “did not always evoke an engaging connection between performers and spectators [so] absence came close to disappearance within the conventions of theatrical performance.”¹⁰⁴² Butcher’s touring works, such as *Traces* (1982), and *Flying Lines* (1985), maintained an understated non-athletic gender equivalent vocabulary. They seduced audiences with temporal drama by amplifying acceleration and stillness. In

¹⁰⁴¹ Crickmay, "Dialogues with Rosemary Butcher," 11.

¹⁰⁴² Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 115 & 16.

Glacial Decoy (1979), Brown also made vocabulary specifically for the concert stage.¹⁰⁴³ She critiqued the theatre conventions she had previously avoided by asserting her artistic authority, but consequently relinquished the anti-hierarchical collectivism implicit in her gallery and site-specific works. Nevertheless Brown re-choreographed the dancer's experience in a way that influenced the development and dissemination of Somatics as referred to in the two previous chapters. Thus, I focus on her concert work rather than Butcher's or other similar artists.¹⁰⁴⁴

Brown contested the theatrical construction of dancing women as idealized objects of display by choreographing quotidian femininity as a condition of movement that could be critically embodied. She sustained her kinetic ordinariness from earlier work, staging everyday women in a way that differed from the ironic commentary with which X6 established distance from classicism referred to in chapter 2. Yet from the surprising rhythmic twists in *Sololos* and *Locus's* "unorthodox" moves, Brown synthesized complexity to meet the theatrical demand for dancing prowess. My analysis of *Glacial Decoy* builds on Foster's theorization of *Watermotor*, a 1978 solo in which Brown developed the virtuosity for group works known as her "unstable molecular structure" period.¹⁰⁴⁵ Based on the idea that inhibition defines quotidian feminine comportment and motility, Foster suggests Brown explodes the feminine.¹⁰⁴⁶ She is referring to habits of constrained motility produced by uncertainty about the propriety of their every movement that result from the constant scrutiny under which women find their bodies.¹⁰⁴⁷ By

¹⁰⁴³ Brown, *Trisha Brown Early Works 1966-1979*.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Other artists who choreographed 1970s Somatic informed vocabulary for large concert stages included Lucinda Childs in the United States, and Janet Smith who was a contemporary of Butcher in Britain. I touch on Childs' approach in the next section

¹⁰⁴⁵ Sanjoy Roy, "Trisha Brown," *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2010/oct/13/step-by-step-trisha-brown>.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 59.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Foster's analysis is based on Iris Marion Young's theory that women find themselves "throwing like a girl," the title of her essay, because they learn they are constantly on display, preventing the unselfconscious use of their body. Young distinguishes her analysis from "structured body movement which does not have a particular aim... for example dancing," focusing on "gross movement... in which the body aims at the accomplishment of a definite

synthesizing complexity from inhibited movement, Brown reconstructed ordinary white femininity.¹⁰⁴⁸ At a distance from what Foster calls Graham's naturalized powerful feminine archetypes, she staged "many more articulations within a mid-range of motion than are normally conceivable... laughingly dismissing their inhibited-ness."¹⁰⁴⁹ Brown changed speed in phrasing, falling in and out of suspensions with skips, for example, accelerating her trajectory only to catch herself and decelerate by leading with the foot and sequencing to the head, ending in a full body balance parallel to the floor. Her ease, which enchanted earlier reviewers, smoothed the temporal and directional unpredictability Foster calls "oxymoronic juxtapositions of incompatible movements," which, combined with the fact she "rarely extends to full limits of her reach," commanded attention in a different way than classical line or modern dance athletic expression.¹⁰⁵⁰

Glacial Decoy intensified rhythmic irregularity with incongruous small gestures that initiated weight or direction changes, and shimmying shoulders or elbows appearing from skips or jumps in which the torso rode calmly on the legs. Brown flouted musical and narrative logic with Cunningham-like juxtapositions, yet unlike the stern inventorying of movement by his dancers, her company used weight change and momentum for seamless multi-directionality.

task." (30) Her parsing out of practices is significant, because historically, women have accessed uninhibited movement in Western concert dance precisely because they are on display: A ballerina can execute split leaps across a proscenium arch stage, yet it is still convincing when for evidence of the effects of the scrutiny attending idealized femininity, Young recalls holding up a hiking party as she attempts to cross a small creek that all the men had confidently traversed. (34) Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁴⁸ I am adding the caveat of race to Foster's theorization, because as Kimberley Crenshaw has pointed out: "Statements such as 'men and women are taught to see men as independent, capable, powerful; men and women are taught to see women as dependent, limited in abilities, and passive...overlooks the anomalies created by crosscurrents of racism and sexism. Black men and women live in a society that creates sex-based norms and expectations which racism operates simultaneously to deny; Black men are not viewed as powerful, nor are Black women seen as passive.'" Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Foster, "Throwing Like a Girl?" *Gender in a Transnational World*."

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid.

Linda Small describes the languidness as “stream-of-consciousness movement, in all its astonishing nonviolence”, calling the dance “an elegant, casual form” with “disjointed movement dialogue.”¹⁰⁵¹ It was precisely the unfamiliarity of the dancing that caused British critics to disparage *Glacial Decoy*, as recounted in the sections on New York and Britain in chapter 2. Yet alongside the unpredictability, like the manipulation of ensemble presentations of *Locus* and *Sololos*, Brown asserted artistic authority by underlining her choices with unison moments. The dancers diverged, collided, and regrouped as shared vocabulary surfaced from unrelated movement and direction.

Yet even as Brown reinstated an artistic hierarchy by flexing her choreographic muscle, the dancers affirmed their jurisdiction over the new vocabulary by developing individual strategies for its execution as explained in chapter 1. Kraus, who was original cast in *Glacial Decoy* and *Son of Gone Fishin’* (1981), felt the work reflected how dancers held themselves in space and gravity, which was visible in a latitude they enjoyed rather than precisely emulating the kinetic form. Reviewers celebrated such individuality; Small contrasted Kraus with “Brown’s postmodern clones who cannot match her fleshiness,”¹⁰⁵² while Jowitt delighted in “the pleasure of watching two women in unison as much as their differing temperaments permit: Karczag constantly silky and resilient, Brown given to small eruptions.”¹⁰⁵³ The orientation of the dancers in space further connoted the dancers’ ownership of the vocabulary. Directed toward 360 degrees rather than a frontal view, spectator pleasure seemed incidental to the movement, embodying the disavowal of a concern with appearance in Somatics chronicled in chapter 1. Also regardless of where bodies were pulled, how they sequenced or collapsed, the dancers’

¹⁰⁵¹ Linda Small, "A Moveable Feast: T.B.D.C. At Brooklyn Academy of Music October 18th.," *Other Stages*, November 5th 1981.

¹⁰⁵² Ibid.

¹⁰⁵³ Deborah Jowitt, "Postmodern Spectacle," *Village Voice*, November 8th 1983.

heads returned to upright as if coming up for analytical air before the next choreographic ride, which worked in tandem with the sporadic unison to prevent the dancers' intellect from being erased by the lilting movement. The company also seemed to pause by returning to a stand or simple walk to punctuate more complex movement with moments of contemplation.

Brown's concoction of ordinariness and virtuosity dovetailed with cultural changes in the negotiation of social identity when nature no longer seemed to offer a resolution to gender asymmetry. Concert dance, with its history of spectacular femininity, provided a poignant site for recalibrating critique when a conservative backlash against the ERA, which successfully defeated the amendment in 1982, began eroding the progress of the 1970s.¹⁰⁵⁴ Inventing overlapped with displaying as artists engaged theatre's visual economy as new site of critique, which is evident in how the pedestrian origins of Brown's vocabulary progressively disappeared. The likelihood of audiences imagining the movement to be ordinary, like they did with the accumulations, diminished. As we have seen, reviewers now described the dances' appearance rather than its process. Furthermore their focus on Brown's signature vocabulary and the valuing of dancers' unique execution, betrayed the diminishing interest in anti-hierarchical collectivism in line with a broader cultural turn toward an ideology of individual achievement through merit-based success.

East Village artists responded to similar social and artistic changes also building on 1970s vocabulary. Yet by privileging experimentation over careerism, and sustaining collective ethics, they embodied the individualistic culture differently from Brown.¹⁰⁵⁵ Dancers reveled in

¹⁰⁵⁴ The ERA, designed to guarantee equal rights for women under the law, was first introduced to congress in 1972 where it passed both houses, yet a decade later it failed to win the requisite number of state ratifications as a growing conservative right movement consolidated attacking the cultural agenda of the Women's Movement and contributing to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Many East Village artists danced in each other's concerts, and much like Crickmay argues about Butcher's practice, sustained a culture in which dancers felt they collaborated on new ideas in opposition to the model of dancers as interpretive artists executing the choreographer's vision. Like Brown, they built upon 1970s vocabulary

irreverence toward a theatrical status quo, staging provocation that reflected changes in feminist strategy. Along with new popular culture stars,¹⁰⁵⁶ artists and activists dismissed the arguments against the ERA by transgressing taboos that conservatives proposed as the reason to restore conventional gender roles.¹⁰⁵⁷ As the culture wars dawned, they amplified social conspicuousness in feminine pastiches that asserted the power of spectacular sexual difference, flaunting the female body as a desiring subject rather than a sexual object. Cindy Lauper's successful "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun", captured the new aesthetics, which took pleasure in the dazzle of the spotlight by reworking 1970s insights and flouting old beauty ideals in staunch individual feminine difference.¹⁰⁵⁸ East Village dancers similarly embraced spectacle, recalibrating Somatics for what they felt was unique vocabulary to wrangle with the conspicuousness with which marginal bodies were being framed. They thereby extended inclusivity.

The broader political changes also dovetailed with the critique that artists launched of universality that I have already referred to in relation to processing. As marginal bodies accrued social conspicuousness through rising conservatism, artists drew attention to how the aesthetics of the "No Manifesto" erased social difference. For example, neutrality and minimalism, as set out by Rainer aesthetics prevented them from addressing what Cooper Albright calls a "racial

even though it moved in a different direction. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰⁵⁶ Early 1980s pop icons like the British Boy George, and in America Cyndi Lauper and Madonna vividly embodied strident visions of autonomous femininity. Cathy Schwichtenberg, "Madonna's Postmodern Feminism: Bringing the Margins to the Center," *Southern Communication Journal* 57, no. 2 (1992).

¹⁰⁵⁷ With the sexual freedom afforded by greater availability of the contraceptive pill and changing values about marriage, came representations of women as subjects of sexual autonomy, depicted as morally dubious by the conservative Christian right, and sexually adventurous elsewhere, resulting in the rise of the pro-family movement. Nancy D Polikoff, "Equality and Justice for Lesbian and Gay Families and Relationships," *Rutgers Law Review*, no. 61 (2009).

¹⁰⁵⁸ Bedecked in chains, rhinestones and ostentatious make-up, with lopsided brightly-died hair, Lauper recalibrated the trappings of conventional femininity toward an image that contested the idea of a compliant woman aiming to attract a man. Cyndi Lauper, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," Vevo, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIb6AZdTr-A>.

gulf” between black performers and their largely white downtown audiences.¹⁰⁵⁹ In response *Wrong Contact Dance* constructed racial difference as spectacular by insisting that the dancers’ skin color contravened CI aesthetics, while *Them* revealed the limits of natural inclusion by pointing to the way that culture of the AIDS crisis had marked queer male bodies. Along with Houston-Jones and Holland, other African Americans exposed the exclusion in the field.¹⁰⁶⁰ Furthermore as they reinvented processing, artists also built on, and modulated the gender critique staged by Brown, Forti and Butcher, by, for example rejecting the performance of modesty.¹⁰⁶¹ The natural forces that Meier and Monson theorized as fueling their moving bodies seemed to break with conventions about femininity in a way not dissimilar to *Crawling*.¹⁰⁶² Yet the two women rejected Forti’s scientific observation in her functional quality. They seemed to

¹⁰⁵⁹ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 20.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Along with Houston-Jones, African American artists such as Bill T Jones, Bebe Miller, Ralph Lemon, and Blondell Cummings invented new movement building upon 1970s vocabularies developed using Somatics. Some refused to comment on their racial difference, resisting the call to represent the African American perspective in a largely white context, and others asserted black subjects, drawing attention to the exclusion of the preceding decade. They all taught Somatic informed classes through Movement Research. Movement Research Inc., "Movement Research Performance Journal." Many of these artists also participated in the 1983 series “Parallels in Black” at Dance Theatre Workshop a performance platform of black experimental artists put together by Houston-Jones to resist the idea that the only modern dance happening by African American’s was that of the like of Alvin Ailey. Yet African American artists working experimentally were primarily performing for white audiences. Anna Kisselgoff, "Dance: Black Choreographers' 'Parrallels'," *New York Times*, October 30th 1982.

¹⁰⁶¹ Jennifer Miller, for example, recalls that she brought explicit feminist politics to her participation in East Village dance when she arrived in the early 1980s. Jennifer Miller, "Jennifer Miller in Conversation with Ezra Berkley Nepon," *Movement Research performance journal* 44 (1990). This was around the same time that *Wrong Contact Dance* staged its contravention of CI aesthetics based on Houston Jones and Holland being black.

¹⁰⁶² I am influenced here by in by Diamond who argues “identification” offers a site of disruption of the stability of identity. To nuance her argument, she recuperates identification in theatre from feminist criticism that privileges Brechtian alienation. Diamond proposes that identification need not be a-historical and collapse critique, but that rendering the subjective can reveal how identity is bound up with cultural and political meaning. She distinguishes identification from identity, which she sees as mimesis of the internal to the external, the self to the social where the self is a coherent and true origin. Yet by reading identity as constituted through identification using a psychoanalytic framework, Diamond proposes mimesis ‘unmakes’ itself along with the unity of identity. I suggest this is exactly what is going on in Meier’s identification with nature, because of the way that it rubs against, and dislodges conventional femininity and with it naturalness. Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*.

unleash irreverent, unwieldy corporeal nature, to dislodge a facade of propitious female conduct imposed upon the natural body.¹⁰⁶³

We can see both the lack of a clear distinction between inventing and processing, and the way that 1970s practices and themes cross-pollinated in 1980s experimentation. Although East Village dancers asserted a new politics, much like their predecessors, they avoided pantomimed movement as a means of representing ideas. Instead the ambiguous reference to social context, seen in Channel Z's work or *Wrong Contact Dance*, served as a vehicle for novel dancing subjectivities. In this sense the cultural interventions paralleled the opacity of meaning in the pseudo-dramatic eruptions that Novack identified in CI. Differently, however, a milieu that focused on identity politics, which by the 1990s was evident in the *Movement Research Performance Journal (MRPJ)*, framed the East Village disavowal of neutrality. Artists asserted cultural differences in critique of 1970s universality by inviting and reveling in theatricality through vocabulary that they believed they were sourcing from a natural body. Committed to experimentation, and opacity of meaning, in events such as Hothouse, the close-knit community interrogated the possibilities for social commentary by delving into what they saw as the vicissitudes of the body. They therefore reified Somatic rhetoric by inventing new ways to stage the dancer's experience as socially indexed. By returning to some of the East Village examples analyzed in processing, I will demonstrate how the natural body reinvented itself in concert

¹⁰⁶³ Rebecca Schneider who argues that performance, which renders the body as "literal," punctures the insatiable desire on which commodity capitalism depends influences me here. Schneider points out that women's bodies are represented as perpetually disappearing even in their apparent availability. She suggests that performance artists who render the symbolic literal collapse the narrative of desire, based on disappearance, through which women's bodies are constructed. By calling up bodily functions in their dancing Meier and Monson literalize the apparent availability of the female body collapsing its participation in patriarchal capitalist formulations of desire. Thinking of Meier and Monson's dance through Schneider supports my use of Diamond's theory of critical identification, because it is through identification with the "nature" of the body that the dancers literalize corporeal availability. Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).

dance, through strategies that are more akin to inventing even though they were integral to the development of processing.

Increased vigor broadly characterized the new East village lexicon. With physical consternation, artists contested the universality of ease and flow that was purportedly based on integral bodily truths. The kinetic harmony through which CI and Somatics had claimed to be inclusive based on anatomical imperatives, failed in the face of increasing social stigmatization directed at gendered, racialized, and sexualized 1980s bodies. By rejecting the aesthetics of ease, Houston-Jones and Holland, Meier and Monson's, as well as Stark Smith, in her response to Bill T. Jones's and Paxton's debate, staged the conspicuousness that some bodies accrued in the new politics of the 1980s.

With the loss of belief in its inclusivity, African American participation in CI also ushered in a loss of optimism reflected in the broader culture with the defeat of the ERA. Motile vexation was an appropriate response, which already in the late 1970s, Pooh Kaye staged by applying urgent repetition to Forti's lexicon, which she had embodied earlier as Forti's dancer and collaborator. Kaye's all-female company jumped obsessively on all fours, slammed into walls, the floor, and each other, displayed bodily endurance, which, in different ways from Kaye's predecessors, rejected femininity while relying on Somatics. By using skills from Anatomical Releasing and Skinner classes such as sequencing through joints and low muscle tone, Kaye and her dancers, including Meier and Monson, minimized injury with logic not dissimilar to Forti's use of velocity in the polar bear-like swinging of the head.¹⁰⁶⁴ With speed and repetition Kaye staged a similar vigor to that seen in Houston Jones' and Holland's surging

¹⁰⁶⁴ Kaye, Meier and some of her other dancers took classes with Ellen Webb, Eva Karczag and Patty Giavenco, chronicled in chapter 1, and when Meier began training in Skinner Releasing in the early 1980s, it served her so well in executing the choreography that Kaye asked her to teach some of the company warm-ups. Kaye, "(Choreographer, Dancer Filmmaker) in Discussion with the Author."

force, as well as Meier and Monson explosiveness. Choreographing desire, frustration, aggression, and convulsion, artists authored conspicuous individuality, which embraced difference, and like Brown's new work, procured an excited rather than empathic viewership.

Despite sharing kinetics tendencies, artists asserted the idea of individuality in unique approaches that they invented using the differences in the regimens on which they drew. Houston-Jones' interpersonal consternation contrasted with Meier's intrapersonal emphasis, for example. Like Brown had in her mathematical pieces, they both authored instructions, yet differences arose between Houston-Jones' and Meier's methods through the training on which their dances relied. Houston-Jones and Holland constructed individuality relationally, contravening CI by replacing harmoniousness with confrontation. The same strategy underpinned *Them*. Houston Jones instructed his dancers to embody "tentative, fragile attraction... like the 2 sides of a magnet... drawing you together... pushing you apart" in what he called the "circle duets."¹⁰⁶⁵ Even the psychological and physical wrestling he staged with himself in his masturbation solo relied on a relationship with the audience.¹⁰⁶⁶ By contrast, the prompts for Meier's kinetic perplexity pushed against personal aesthetic and psychological limits. She and Monson aimed to marshal corporeal impulses through Meier's "No No Scores,"¹⁰⁶⁷ which broke the precepts of Rainer's No Manifesto, and like Houston-Jones rejected 1970s aesthetics. She constructed and confronted a familiar self in dances of fear and pain, pure aggression, as well as ones that the women defined as obscene; hysterical; ugly; bizarre; sleazy, both fast and slow; stupid; nervous; feminine but not stupid, and macho but not

¹⁰⁶⁵ Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author."

¹⁰⁶⁶ Choreographers notes for the reconstruction, made available to the author by Houston Jones, November, 4th, 2010.

¹⁰⁶⁷ The No No scores described dancing states Monson and Meier found while improvising together. They used the scores to direct performances into a particular quality while remaining open to impulses by refraining from setting the movement. Meier, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

stupid; as well as idiotic and creepy. To contest the construction of the dancer's experience by the previous generation, Houston-Jones and Meier asserted their authorship in similar ways to that seen in 1970s inventing. They emphasized individuality more than the dancing staged in the processing and inventing of the previous generation, by claiming to launch their dancers beyond constraint into unrepeatably frenzied vocabulary propelled by the unconscious.

As they extended individuality, Meier and Houston-Jones recycled the 1950s ideal of creative freedom by critiquing existing aesthetics and rejecting ideological constraints. Cunningham's inclusive conception of vocabulary and bodies brought Meier to New York. Yet she initially felt CI and Somatics more faithfully fulfilled inclusivity, and subsequently staged her own intervention into the new practices.¹⁰⁶⁸ Meier rejected Skinner's language of physical integration with her *No No Scores* by replacing natural imagery and nurturing adjectives, such as melting or floating, with words like exploding that she coupled with body parts. She distorted CI's logic of natural flow by choreographing conflicting states in different body parts like "running, interrupted by rhythmical frenzy" or "fierce rhythm possesses the spine." While resisting narrative with provocative individuality, Meier broke social codes with bizarre movement. Meanwhile, Houston-Jones asserted individuality by contesting both conservative and leftist agendas.¹⁰⁶⁹ *The New York Native* writer Robert Sandla castigated the contradictory ideas in *Them* as a homophobic, staging of "sex and violence, love and death, as irredeemably

¹⁰⁶⁸ Meier went to New York from her native Switzerland with a government fellowship to study at the Cunningham studio. She felt that despite his rhetoric, Cunningham's company embodied a physical ideal she would never fulfill. Disenchanted by the classes at the studio, she discovered CI and Somatics through dancers she met at the Cunningham school. In Webb's classes, CI and Skinner Releasing she felt their was the potential for much greater artistic freedom, and convinced her government that the new approaches in which she trained were more important than Cunningham technique. She had initially been skeptical about improvisation, but found she could extend her vocabulary using training in Todd's ideas. Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Colleague Lucy Sexton recalls that the dominant idea on the 1980s left was that lesbian and gay identity should be represented as positive and coherent, preventing more nuanced considerations of queerness. Sexton was part of East village duo Dance Noise, and worked with Houston-Jones on numerous projects in the 1980s. Sexton, "(Dance Noise Performer, and East Village Cultural Agitator) Interview with Author."

intertwined.” He bemoaned the removal of consideration from CI resulting in a “slam, bang, smash, heap, tussle, and grapple” where “support and concern [are] purposefully lacking.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Houston-Jones drew attention to the foreclosure of possibility in mainstream gay culture as much as CI by reflecting on the demonizing of queer bodies by conservatives, while refusing to comply with leftist imperatives to represent positive images of marginalized subjects. Despite continuing to stage the dancers’ experience of moving, both artists asserted their authorship as inventors through their glaringly idiosyncratic approaches. So even while they sustained collective ethics in their experimental milieu, individualism underpinned the artistic critiques.

Nevertheless, East Village dance contrasted with broader 1980s and 1990s changes in contemporary dance that embraced spectacle and staged social theme, often in vigorous dancing. For example, Cooper Albright contrasts Monson, Meier, and their “smaller more informal” scene more generally, with La La La Human Steps, Stephen Petronio Company, Bebe Miller Dance, and Streb Ringside. Despite the new visions of femininity all these artists staged, she insists they put women’s bodies on display in “fast, explosive, and intense physicality” that depends on training in “modern and ballet...Contact Improvisation and Fitness Conditioning” to which I would add Somatics.¹⁰⁷¹ To extend Cooper Albright’s observation beyond New York, DV8’s athletic non-heterosexual subjects also critiqued gender categories,¹⁰⁷² while men and women performed with equivalent strength in the work of Europeans such as Pina Bausch, Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker, and Wim Vandekeybus. The central Europeans staged polarized

¹⁰⁷⁰ Sandla, "À La Recherche Des Tricks Perdue."

¹⁰⁷¹ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*.

¹⁰⁷² For example *My Body Your Body* is a work that Newson initially made with students at Leicester Polytechnic and eventually toured with his company DV8. The dance, based on the book *Women Who Love Too Much*, interrogated of how men view women’s bodies. The students with whom he researched benefited from the focus on Alexander Technique and CI for which the dance program at Leicester Polytechnic was famed in the UK. DV8 Physical Theatre, "My Body, Your Body," DV8 Physical Theatre, <http://dv8.co.uk/projects/archive/my-body-your-body>.

gender categories,¹⁰⁷³ which they often proposed were rife with violence.¹⁰⁷⁴ Cooper Albright distinguishes Monson from these other trends, arguing “she fits neither into the traditionally gendered image of a lithe feminine dancer nor into its more recent reconstruction as a sleekly muscled one.”¹⁰⁷⁵ East Village artists directed their work to a tight knit community in which shared values of inclusivity and progressive politics could often be presumed, so playful, risky, implicit and veiled political reference made more sense than transparent meaning or proselytizing. Comparison between the East Village and other contexts needs further research, yet there is strong evidence that the artists used Somatics to collaboratively explore novel vocabulary as individualist rejections of strategies seen in large theatres.

Codes that East Village dance often exhibited, betray how artists asserted their lack of interest in large theatres. They could rely upon audience familiarity with the vocabulary that they critiqued in their use of failure and provocation. Viewers understood that Channel Z were contravening modest performance with interpersonal affront, pop-culture, and dance history referencing, while the space for failure affirmed their experimental aims. The company therefore distanced themselves from the refinement seen in Somatic informed work for large stages.¹⁰⁷⁶ Meanwhile, falling, scuffling, and colliding replaced CI seamlessness, which signified the provocative use of failure, while erupting, tripping, and flailing worked similarly in relation to Brown’s effervescent precision. Sandla’s review of *Them* reveals that the work

¹⁰⁷³ In *Immer das Selbe Gelogen* Vanderkeybus exposed flesh in the costuming of his female dancers, constructing powerful and sexy femininity, but still primarily desirable, which contrasted with the suits worn by the men, a look for which he became notorious. Wim Vanderkeybus, "Ultima Vez," <http://ultimavez.com/>.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Burt argues Pina Bausch "mediated contemporaneous discussions about the potential, or need, for men to change their behavior" (148). While he suggests De Keersmaker's work in the 1980s and 1990s drew attention to "the visual appearance and action of the male dancer while emphasizing the female dancer's agency." Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 186.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 53.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Greenberg’s notes that his dismay at Channel Z’s use of failure was fueled by his knowledge that Madden, Warsaw and Petronio were all dancing for Brown, which is one reason that he decided to attend the concert. Greenberg, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Teacher, Faculty at the New School, Ny) in Discussion with the Author."

bewildered New Yorkers unfamiliar with the milieu's aims—let alone audiences further afield. Many dancers also used a direct regard, compared with the internally focused, downcast eyes of 1970s dancers. In *Wrong Contact Dance* the duo conveyed confrontation with their gaze, as did Houston-Jones in his masturbation solo in *Them*. Channel Z dancers shifted from inner sensing to an outward focus to shape the unfolding landscape of their scores or embody character,¹⁰⁷⁷ while Monson and Meier also alternated their gaze in a way that signified at one moment sourcing impulses, to another in which they instigated the other dancer, or accentuated a moment of kinesthetic eruption with the face. Change in the use of the eyes positioned dancers as social subjects rather than physical masses in throes of falling, or ascending with gravity. Like the codes of failure and social reference, the legibility of this tactic relied upon familiarity with the internal gaze of the previous generation, and the intimacy of small theatres.

The degree to which rarified understanding shaped artists' practices is evident in how, through extended collaborations, Monson embodied her politics as physical experience rather than textual themes. Often improvising on a daily basis with artists such as Meier, DD Dorvillier and John Jasperse, she investigated kinesthesia rather than psychology or social message, asking, "what physical sensations can we arouse in relation to each other."¹⁰⁷⁸ Like Houston-Jones, Monson rejected any limits on identities such as woman or lesbian for which she became conspicuous during the culture wars. She examined instead the vulnerability raised by the devastation of the AIDS crisis, and the risks entailed in protesting against the attacks on reproductive rights, or to fight for lesbian visibility through the groups ACT-UP and the Lesbian

¹⁰⁷⁷ Channel Z's intention was not confrontational in the same way as Houston Jones's, yet their outward gaze took on a quality of provocation against internal focus that they continued to use in some of their dancing when they returned to more conventional 1970s CI or Somatic-based vocabulary.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

Avengers.¹⁰⁷⁹ Synthesizing 1970s androcentric and gynocentric gender-equivalence, she “wanted to be as powerful as a man but there was a rawness and a vulnerability that I really valued.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Her comment suggests raw vulnerability complicates male strength, an idea she pursued with the kind of androgynous vocabulary seen in her duet with Jasperse in *Finn’s Shed* (1992). Of the dance Cooper Albright observes, “strong, explosive movement, does not preclude a softer, more tender dancing.”¹⁰⁸¹ Professional soccer tackling served as a metaphor for developing the vocabulary,¹⁰⁸² which recalls Paxton’s use of apparently non-aesthetic Aikido skills combined with the increased vigor Novack identifies in 1980s CI. Jasperse and Monson ran and threw themselves at each other, crashing safely into the floor, yet based on different relationship dynamics, Monson infused similar vocabulary with sexual energy for a 1993 duet *RMW* with Dorvillier that I return to below.¹⁰⁸³ In choreographing social commentary by intertwining Somatics and personal relationships, Monson was not alone,¹⁰⁸⁴ and the approach was largely supported in her milieu.¹⁰⁸⁵

Despite their interventions, East Village artists relied upon the idea that Somatics accesses essential bodily capacities. For example, they reconstructed gender using the lifting

¹⁰⁷⁹ Monson recalls asking herself whether she was prepared to chain herself to a bridge, risk arrest, or deface billboards, all of which entail strength and vulnerability through risk. interview by Doran George, January 13th, 2010.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸¹ Cooper Albright is describing Monson because she is using the work to contrast with the construction in other work of muscular femininity, but her comments about the physicality equally apply to Jasperse. Albright, *Choreographing Difference*.

¹⁰⁸² Monson recalls that she was enthralled by televised images of tackling in the 1992 World Cup series. She understood the activity, in which players were engaged, as movement improvisation. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰⁸³ The duet was made for the “Sexual ID” series St. Marks Church, and Monson commented that the more explicit themes of identity in the work were Dorvillier’s influence, which further attests to the collaborative nature of movement invention in the East Village. "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰⁸⁴ Houston-Jones also talked about the way that the tension he cultivated in *Them* a decade earlier, was possible because of sexual dynamics between dancers in the work, and others in the East Village community. Houston-Jones, "Interview with Author."

¹⁰⁸⁵ This wasn’t always the case, for example, after *MRPJ* featured a woman’s vagina in response the attacks of abortion rights, some members of the community questioned what the issue had to do with dance. Monson, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

and weight sharing techniques that Paxton and his colleagues developed by reframing ideas from Martial arts as the embodiment of essential mechanical and terrestrial forces. More research needs to be done on how broader developments in dance vocabulary impacted the East Village, but it seems likely that African aesthetics in social dance influenced the breaking of joints that became important in the vigorous vocabulary.¹⁰⁸⁶ By reconstructing nature as a source for individualism, artists concealed the cultural traditions from which they drew, maintaining the liberal rhetoric about the universality of creative freedom.

Much like I argued in relation to processing, despite the erasure of cultural specificity that Somatics promulgated, based on their belief in its universality artists in and beyond the East Village extended concert dance to an impressive range of bodies through inventing. As referred to above, Lee rejected the professional exclusivity, insider knowledge, and narrow age-range of dancers that underpinned British establishment aesthetics. *CandoCo*, also based in Britain, rejected modern and classical body ideals by integrating disabled with non-disabled dancers. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Lee and *CandoCo* exposed limits on the idea of creative freedom imposed by tacit ideals of what kind of body can perform, an endeavor in which they were not alone.¹⁰⁸⁷ I am turning to British New Dance to highlight how local conditions impacted the use of inventing for inclusivity. Although similar projects emerged in America,¹⁰⁸⁸ a concern about conservatism and exclusivity influenced British artists who sublimated rather than emphasized conspicuousness. They choreographed idealized inclusive communities in which the dancers

¹⁰⁸⁶ Monson for example recalls that she and her artistic colleagues would spend a lot of time dancing at gay night clubs, which recalls the influence of jazz music on Judson artists I have used Banes to suggest above. Ibid. The use of breaking in the joints may well connect with the polyphonic juxtaposition of joint flexion in contemporaneous popular dancers like Michael Jackson's choreography.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Lee cites cycles dance company as an important influence. Cycles, based in Leamington Spa, used Somatic approaches and improvisation to work with untrained dancers. Lee, "(Choreographer, Educator) in Discussion with the Author."

¹⁰⁸⁸ Liz Lerman is known for working with seniors in concert dance, while the Oakland based company Axis is made up of disabled and non-disabled dancers. Meanwhile, Anne Carlson has worked with disabled performers.

were interdependent and collaborative, rather than provocative individuals. Lee aimed to overcome contemporary dance elitism, while CandoCo co-director Adam Benjamin argued that disability critiques narrow aesthetic ideals.¹⁰⁸⁹

Inventing in British Somatics therefore embodied liberal dissidence mediated through the political ideal of accessibility.¹⁰⁹⁰ This happened a decade before Cooper Albright argues American CI turned to “diverse communities,”¹⁰⁹¹ probably because 1970s New Dance had already sought to reach people seen as marginalized.¹⁰⁹²

British “community dance”, which promulgated inclusive ethics, emerged from the drive toward participation underpinned by educational and therapeutic aims.¹⁰⁹³ Dartington’s program supported this thrust by applying dance in non-arts contexts,¹⁰⁹⁴ under the influence of German modern dance and American Somatics.¹⁰⁹⁵ 1970s Dartington graduates developed alternatives to ballet and Graham,¹⁰⁹⁶ within the milieu that developed when they joined X6 artists. In the late 1970s state arts funding also focused on education, and by the 1980s envisioned the direct

¹⁰⁸⁹ Benjamin formed CandoCo with Celeste Dandeker in 1990. Benjamin, *Making an Entrance*, 39.

¹⁰⁹⁰ In a similar way to my argument that Somatics was used against the patriarchal demands of spectacle, Albright configures disabled dancers as fracturing the male gaze, both expanding upon and rejuvenating feminism. Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 57.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁹² They built upon Laban’s post World War II quiet influence through his insistence that dance must be practiced in non-arts contexts. Modern dance was taught as an educational tool in schools in the 1950s, which established its utility as something quite distinct from the art form. Preston-Dunlop and España; Friends of the Laban Centre., *The American Invasion, 1962-1972*.

¹⁰⁹³ The term “community dance” developed to describe practice in which dancers aimed to create access to the art form for populations who were perceived as being excluded. Christy Adair chronicles the development of such a perspective in relation to state funding in the late 1970s. Adair, *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon*, 57.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Mary Fulkerson expanded on the legacy Laban left after he based himself there when he fled Nazi Germany. De Wit, “New Dance Development at Dartington.”

¹⁰⁹⁵ Lee explored working with dance in non-art contexts as a student at the Laban Center. She studied the work that Dartington students were doing in the working class East London district of Walthamstow. Young independent choreographers writing in *New Dance Magazine* also proposed that utilitarian dance was a way that the apparent elitism of concert dance could be challenged. Lee, “(Choreographer, Educator) in Discussion with the Author.”

¹⁰⁹⁶ Benjamin, *Making an Entrance*, 34.

involvement of audiences as a key to a healthy arts culture.¹⁰⁹⁷ Simultaneously British dancers were connecting with American artists such as Alessi, who were cultivating accessible dance in American CI.¹⁰⁹⁸

Lee developed her aim of putting diversity on the concert stage while teaching community classes in the rapidly expanding early 1980s community dance programs.¹⁰⁹⁹ By disbanding the bodily ideals in professional training, she wished to represent each dancer as equally valued.¹¹⁰⁰ Early 1980s New York experience influenced her approach, which reflects how British artists brought ideas home from visits to America, addressed in chapter 2.¹¹⁰¹ She invented vocabulary that avoided stratifying dancers as more or less competent because of their age,¹¹⁰² or training, or physical capacity. Lee reformulated 1970s CI and Somatic practices by ceasing to use counts, and developing kinetic forms based on sensory exercises that do not rely on precise repetition. With movement that focused her cast toward how each dancer feels, similar to CI, she challenged established aesthetics, defining her vocabulary against skills that

¹⁰⁹⁷ Adair points out that “A focus of the community arts was on developing participation, rather than passive experience of the arts, and this approach matched the [Arts] Council’s aim of making education a central focus.” Adair, *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company Phenomenon*, 87.

¹⁰⁹⁸ In 1987 the artistic directors of *Motionhouse* Louise Richards and Kevin Finnan, who was student of Fulkerson and Paxton at Dartington, were invited by Alito Alessi and Karen Nelson to join Emery Blackwell, Bruce Curtis, and Alan Patshek to exchange ideas at “Dance with Different Needs”. Benjamin, *Making an Entrance*, 34.

¹⁰⁹⁹ In site-specific spaces, Lee choreographed works including what she calls “community casts” of up to 250 people of mixed ages and abilities. Examples include: the ruined Haughmond Abbey, Shrewsbury (*Haughmond Dances*, 1990), Fort Dunlop Tyre Depot (*Ascending Fields*, 1992), the Festival Hall Ballroom (*Stranded*), and The Banqueting Hall at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich (*The Banquet Dances*, 1999). Rosemary Lee, biography, provided by the artist July 23rd, 2012.

¹¹⁰⁰ For example, teaching untrained dancers she found if she used conventional modern dance techniques the group quickly became stratified on the basis of different degrees of previous training. She found that students lost what she calls their physicality, which is a kind of comfort with dancing, if she taught phrases set to music, because Lee felt the students got caught up in the cerebral demand of fulfilling the steps. Lee, “(Choreographer, Educator) in Discussion with the Author.”

¹¹⁰¹ Lee saw work by Meredith Monk, and was drawn to choreography that included untrained dancers executing unconventional dance vocabulary compared with the dominance of Graham and Limon influenced styles in British dance. Ibid.

¹¹⁰² Lee has worked with companies of mixed ages ranging from dancers under the age of 10 to those over the age of 80. Ibid.

demand years of classical or modern training. As Lee puts it, she rejected concerns like “how high they could lift their leg.”¹¹⁰³

Similarly Benjamin cultivated responsiveness using weight and breath with which he insisted dancers achieve authenticity in contrast with exclusive classical vocabulary.¹¹⁰⁴ Disabled and non-disabled dancers used Somatic inventing for movement that demands skill from all the participants,¹¹⁰⁵ theorizing disabled dancers as intelligent bodies that contribute to vocabulary rather than being fit into existing techniques designed for the non-disabled. Dance critic Chris De Marignay refers to CandoCo’s “extraordinary choreographic solutions”, which used CI ideas of “leaning, falling and supporting.”¹¹⁰⁶ With leverage, gravity, and momentum, disabled and non-disabled bodies forged interdependent identities.¹¹⁰⁷ CandoCo therefore choreographed integration, in which they challenged both the idea that competent dancing depends on the exclusion of disabled dancers, but also resisted the prevailing representation of disabled people as incapable.¹¹⁰⁸

The integration, through British inventing, of bodies that had largely been excluded from dance, depended upon a 1980s dance boom.¹¹⁰⁹ Following a 1970s paucity of opportunities for independent projects the boom was characterized by a rapid growth in funding and

¹¹⁰³ Lee has worked with companies of mixed ages ranging from dancers under the age of 10 to those over the age of 80. Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁴ CandoCo used a Tai Chi exercise “push-hands,” based on breath, and gentle reciprocity to develop vocabulary between disabled and non-disabled dancers. Benjamin, *Making an Entrance*, 3. This is similar use of Martial Arts to the by Paxton, Forti and Karczag is no coincidence because Benjamin sites compositional and training trends beginning in the 1960s as crucial to the integration of disabled dancers into contemporary dance.

¹¹⁰⁵ Benjamin sites CI and Graham technique as underpinning CandoCo’s work, but he also trained in release technique at Middlesex. Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁰⁶ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 78.

¹¹⁰⁷ I am influenced by Foster’s idea that CI dancers forge a new sense of self through the connection between their bodies. She suggests CI “offered an intriguing new experience of subjectivity wherein dancers became defined by the contact between them.” Foster, “Closets Full of Dances,” 179.

¹¹⁰⁸ Cooper Albright argues that CandoCo’s choreography refused to position the disabled body as furniture for able-bodied dancers, but also refused to prevent able-bodied dancers from using their full movement capacity in order to not show up the disabled bodies. Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 77.

¹¹⁰⁹ “Dance Boom” is a term that Rosemary recalls was currency within the New Dance community in the 1980s. Lee, “(Choreographer, Educator) in Discussion with the Author.”

programming on which artists capitalized by working with Somatics, as chapter 2 outlines. Like DV8, CandoCo met the aesthetic protocols of the concert house circuit with virtuoso vocabulary, while Lee depended on the regional dissemination of contemporary dance, instituted by a statewide national agenda.¹¹¹⁰ The institutionalization of inventing therefore compromised artists' independence.¹¹¹¹ Under pressure to create innovative, accessible, and participatory projects, Somatics came to fuel dancers' creative labor for projects that would attract funding, programming and critical acclaim. America saw comparable developments in which the creative autonomy through which dancers initially asserted their agency, became a requirement for employment in "pickup companies" a term used by mid-1980s New York dancers for what Randy Martin describes as "a group of dancers assembled for a single run of performances."¹¹¹²

The exploitation of inventing increased, in the 21st century. José Reynoso argues that seemingly egalitarian creative relationships exploit dancers in companies modeled on corporations, which he insists increased from the 1980s onwards due to funding remits. He suggests "conventions that distribute creative labor in a less hierarchical [way] . . . may include improvisational scores . . . and . . . the use of dancers' bodies . . . [to] contribute . . . [to] the distinctive . . . vocabulary and style of the work", which characterizes Somatic inventing.¹¹¹³ Yet the lack of proper crediting for such labor ultimately reinstated company hierarchies as the

¹¹¹⁰ State funded dance amateurs in various British regions cultivated local interest in the art form on which Lee depended when she conducted projects based in various British locales The National Association of Dance and Mime Amateurs (NADMA) was established in 1986 ultimately to become the Community Dance and Mime Foundation (CDMF). NADMA was initially project funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain, with CDMF becoming a client for annual funding in 1990. Foundation for Community Dance, "People Dancing the Foundation for Community Dance," Foundation for Community Dance, <http://www.communitydance.org.uk/>.

¹¹¹¹ Agis, for example, reports that she felt under pressure to produce new exciting choreography in the late 1980s to the point of exhaustion, Agis, "(Choreographer, Dancer, Teachers) in Discussion with the Author." I have argued elsewhere that state support for projects artists think of as critical can bring with it requirements that undermine the foundation of the critique. George, "Guest Editorial 1: Forget Provocation Let's Have Sex."

¹¹¹² Martin, "Dance as a Social Movement," 56.

¹¹¹³ Reynoso, "Economies of Symbolic and Cultural Capital Production and Distribution in Postmodern/Contemporary Dance Making: A Search for Egalitarianism."

dancers input was represented as a “defaced, nameless mass”, such as ‘choreographed with the dancers’ placing “symbolic and cultural capital the work produces... in the hands of the one credited [choreographer].”¹¹¹⁴ This shift portended the erosion of collaborative dance making as dancers found themselves displaying an empty idea of agency through vocabulary in a way that reinstated the choreographer’s superiority, a question to which I now turn in the final section.

Section 3. Displaying the Theatrical Effects of Somatics.

Displaying constitutes choreographic strategies that artists developed as Somatics found its way onto large concert stages. These new approaches conflicted with processing and the initial aims of inventing. Artists found that they need not foreground the dancer’s experience of moving, nor sustain collaborative equality in order to exploit the creative potential of the regimens. Therefore, despite having first asserted its ability to resist concert dance’s focus on appearance, choreography informed by Somatics ultimately revealed itself as accruing visual meaning. As the century neared its end, choreographers increasingly explored the significance of Somatic informed vocabulary as a form of display. With the audience’s spectator position restored, through the dominance of displaying, some tendencies in inventing displaced the ethics and approaches I’ve grouped under processing. Artists increasingly verified their worth as inventors of dance through the appearance of the moving body. Consequently, as a style associated with Somatics became mainstream, the regimens established themselves within major training institutions through composition and vocabulary that was attributed to single choreographers, relegating the dancer’s explicit role to an interpretive one.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The 1985 dance *Survey of Forms* epitomizes how dancers initially reengaged appearance value, not because of institutional agendas, but through their reflexive critique of Somatics.¹¹¹⁵ On-stage at a PS 122 benefit, Kraus, who made the work with Skura, states matter-of-factly “Bang different parts of your body against the floor” then throws herself against the ground, recovering only to launch once again at the floor, varying her collision. Her concentration recalls that with which Meier and Monson conveyed the inevitability of their kinetics, yet by enacting on-demand, this and other “forms,” Kraus and Skura emptied the vocabulary of the integrity Somatics usually accrued. The action described could be a parody of Houston-Jones, and the other forms seemed to refer to various artists who experimented with Somatics.¹¹¹⁶ “Take your cue from the animal kingdom” might ironize Forti’s practice by adding appropriate noises for each species, while “Talk about the mechanics of what you're doing while you're doing it” referred to the evacuation of theme and the introduction of speech in the milieu. “Being slightly off-balance” recalls Brown’s vocabulary, and “Let your body ripple gently in its falling” is reminiscent of Monson and Meier’s practice. “Pick something up, put it down, and go onto the next thing,” might describe Channel Z in action, and “work with negative space,” describes the formalist conceit inherited from 1970s choreography.

The women’s commitment elicited humor, because by performing on demand the tersely denoted forms, they erased from the framing of the kinetics the dancer’s experience and intelligent consideration. A reviewer of a longer version of the work wrote: “Miss Skura made dance seem inherently preposterous. Nevertheless, she appeared to love its follies.”¹¹¹⁷ As

¹¹¹⁵ Stephanie; Lisa Kraus Skura, *Survey of Styles, Floor it: Benefit for Performance Space 122* (New York City: Performance Space 122, 1985), Videorecording, 2 Streaming video files NTSC: sd., col 107mins.

¹¹¹⁶ Some of the forms, like “Be the tide” and “Be components of the same machine”, raise humor because they seem antiquated or naïve, more at home in a children’s creative dance class than a Lower East Side avant-garde stage. (Viewing of video at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Ibid.

¹¹¹⁷ Jack Anderson, "The Dance: Stephanie Skura," *The New York Times*, March 2nd, 1985.

insiders to the artistic milieu, Kraus and Skura skillfully executed the choreography with sophistication even while emptying it of associated ideology. The audience laughter indicated discomfort with the proposition that ideas that they had understood to be integral to the vocabulary might actually be expendable.

The East Village home to PS122, constituted a context through which company members, independent artists, and CI dancers crossed paths, providing space to negotiate conflicting ideologies as the use of Somatics changed. As referred to in chapter 1, four years after *Survey of Forms*, the discomfort about the expendable nature of the integrity with which Somatics had been associated reached the point that “you can’t fake release” filled the cover of *MRPJ*. The audience laughed at Kraus and Skura because, while they shared familiarity with the Somatic-influenced vocabulary and associated values, the forms had not yet been broadly identified as theatrical effects. Somatics still signified the liberation of the dancer from hierarchical company structures that were associated with the focus of modern and classical dance on appearance. But like Paxton and Stark Smith had done with CI two years earlier (at Contact at 2nd and 10th), Skura and Kraus drew attention to aesthetic conventions, undermining the inseparability of Somatic informed vocabulary from the dancer’s interiority.

In Skura’s 1987 dance *Cranky Destroyers*, we begin to see how, by exploiting the visual effects of Somatics, artists moved beyond rarified contexts. The dancers learned movement that Skura had selected from videoed improvisations. Using Skinner-influenced exploration.¹¹¹⁸

Creating ambiguous symbolic content, Skura linked her interest in the idea that the unconscious

¹¹¹⁸ Skura gave her dancers prompts like “limbs of fury” taken directly from Skinner’s lexicon. However, she reports that some cues, such as “truncated initiation,” she had worked with before training in Skinner’s work, even though the embodiment of such cues was supported by the creative propensities cultivated in Skinner Releasing. For example, she notes that one of her own cues, “always moving on the horizontal plane,” relates to Skinner Releasing, which entails a lot of “gliding movement.” Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

is an intrinsic bodily logic to dream images. To open creative flow she theorized physical impulses as a source for free-association, like Karczag. Recalling Meier's No No Scores, she sought contradictions between movements by interrupting the internal censor. The dance also included scenes from hers and her dancers' dreams, paralleling Channel Z's use of theatricality, and contributing to a collaborative company culture.¹¹¹⁹ East Village colleagues danced in her work, using aptitudes from CI and Somatics to "give in" to rather than direct their dance.¹¹²⁰ Through consultation with her dancers, Skura amplified what she saw as their unique qualities,¹¹²¹ from which she chose and adapted vocabulary to emphasize individuality in the final composition. Furthermore, *Cranky Destroyers* exhibited the vigorousness, obsessive repetition, and sudden change in direction that characterized the East Village critique of the aesthetics on large stages. Yet Skura insisted such vocabulary fulfills the theatrical conventions against which it was initially developed. In the British *Dancing Times*, Jack Anderson describes with delight "Six dancers [who] waggled their heads, hobbled laboriously... and collapsed to the floor. There were quivers and shivers, creepings... sprintings, and flingings about."¹¹²² He theorized the vocabulary as surprising, compelling, and innovative for a transnational context.

Once it had been transformed into appearance value, however, critics reframed provocative individualism as liberal cultural dissidence, losing the East Village critique launched against cultural homogeneity. They did aim to represent Skura's logic, such as Cincinnati's Marty Munson who described her work as "very democratic... in which each

¹¹¹⁹ Her dancer Brian Moran wanted to be the dying swan, which Skura fulfilled by using his dream about her carrying a machine gun while smiling, and directing. Ibid.

¹¹²⁰ Benoit La Chambre, for example, also danced in the 1986 version of Houston-Jones' *Them*, and the other dancers had participated in intensive Skinner Releasing classes taught by Skura, as well as trained in CI and Klein Technique. Ibid.

¹¹²¹ To generate compelling vocabulary, Skura gave directions to individual dancers based on her observation of their movement tendencies. She also followed company members preferences for trying her prompts as solo, duet, or trio material, and the dancers focused on body parts such as arms, legs, or head of fury to see what material it generated, altering the size of the gestures such as "minimal truncated initiation." *ibid.*

¹¹²² Jack Anderson, "New York Newsletter," *The Dancing Times* (1988).

company member's style is allowed to show."¹¹²³ He even understood the critique of authoritarianism, explaining that Skura aimed to overcome the modern dance problem in which "expressing yourself in movement gets lost,"¹¹²⁴ and that when dances depend on a choreographer's style the dancers don't achieve the same quality of execution. This concern underpinned Paxton's development of CI as referred to in chapter 1. Anderson also seemed to appreciate the rejection of formalism, asserting that although Skura's choreography "could be described as an abstract dance... such a bland description would fail to convey...its extraordinary eccentricity."¹¹²⁵ Yet he read kinetic anomaly in *Cranky Destroyers* as asserting undifferentiated creative freedom against convention, a generalized enemy embodied in the pompous, white, European propriety associated with Beethoven's 5th symphony, to which the dance was set.¹¹²⁶ Anderson reports he had to "think about esthetic decorum", concluding "[w]hy should we allow convention to dictate what sort of choreography is or is not appropriate to certain types of music,"¹¹²⁷ talking of "musical irreverence with cleverly designed choreographic messiness."¹¹²⁸ When the work toured, regional American critics built on Anderson's ideas,¹¹²⁹ and even Beethoven's German birthplace embraced the quixotic style. But now codified for large theatres, the East Village break with propriety signified universal non-conformity in which "the personalities of the performers are allowed to shine through." This framing lost the critique of both exclusivity in modest performance, and the narrow

¹¹²³ Marty Munson, "Roll over Beethoven: Dance Interprets 5th Symphony," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 21st 1990 D6.

¹¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹¹²⁵ Anderson, "The Dance: Stephanie Skura."

¹¹²⁶ It is pertinent that Jack Anderson insists: "Few ballet or modern dance choreographers would probably ever dream of associating such outlandish movements with Beethoven". Ibid.

¹¹²⁷ "And the Foot Bones Are Connected to the Funny Bone," *New York Times* 1988.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹¹²⁹ For example a Cincinnati staff writer directly references Anderson's New York Times reviews, Unknown, "Stephanie Skura October 22-27," *Cincinnati Footprints* 3, no. 3 (1990).

representations of marginal bodies in the culture wars.¹¹³⁰

Despite the rhetoric about individuality, the demands of large houses forced Skura to recalibrate the reengagement with theatricality as the display of East Village irreverence. She thereby forfeited evidence of either the dancer's experience of moving or their intelligent contribution to the choreography. Although New York critic Elizabeth Zimmer suggests "[c]ourageously...she's in open waters", in reference to the premiere of *Cranky Destroyers*,¹¹³¹ Skura protected her audience from the confusion Greenberg experienced witnessing Channel Z's embrace of failure. For the final composition, she modulated the material that dancers learned from the documented improvisations, for example, instructing them to cut every third movement from a busy section, or asking them to involve the arms, or execute a lift that nearly occurred. *Cranky Destroyers* evacuated failure with quirky virtuosity, such as when David Rousseve travels backwards on one leg after falling and reaching toward a dancer who moved away. With classical line, he comically displayed virtuosity, which exemplifies how Skura's company extended through their limbs more like ballet or modern dance than the vocabulary analyzed thus far.¹¹³² When they turned, balanced, or leapt, the dancers pushed into the floor extending the limbs distally to create shape rather than sense their "interiority." Zimmer describes them as "virtuosic on their own terms, athletic, highly mobile in their upper bodies,

¹¹³⁰ Similarly to the positive reception in New York, Bonn celebrated Skura as "a veritable embodiment of disrespect." KHR, "Im Clinch Mit Papa Beethoven (in Synch with Daddy Beethoven)" *Neue Kronen Zeitung unabhangig*, March 21st 1990. While Cincinnati lauded how she "short-circuits audience expectations." Munson, "Roll over Beethoven: Dance Interprets 5th Symphony."

¹¹³¹ Elizabeth Zimmer, "Roll over Beethoven," *The Village Voice* (1987).

¹¹³² The dancers' divergence from the more receptive use of Somatics is also evident in more contained vocabulary such as rapid repetition of arm gestures that opens the first of Beethoven's movements punching the air manically. The action doesn't ripple through the dancers in the way that it does in the other choreographies I have discussed; rather than sensing, Skura's dancers seem to have focused on displaying an outward appearance of shape and form into which they were once propelled in the throws of Somatic exploration. Stephanie; Ludwig van Beethoven; Stephanie Skura and Company Skura, Inter-Media Art Center., *Cranky Destroyers* (Huntington, NY: Inter-Media Art Center production Co., 1987), videorecording, 1 videocassette (35 minutes): sd., col.; 1/2 in.

and [yet] rarely constrained by conventional behavior.”¹¹³³

After piecing sections together, Skura edited further,¹¹³⁴ capitulating Halprin’s opposition to refining choreography for visual effect. Even though like Karczag, Monson and Meier, she resisted the symmetry and linearity of classicism,¹¹³⁵ Skura satirized formality with a clearly premeditated if unpredictable structure. Upstage duets counterbalanced downstage solos, which were related in kinetics and timing. Dancers even walked to a place on the stage to be lit by a spot and begin. Along with uncanny spatiality, the vocabulary seemed to deride while embodying a presentational dance idiom: dancers thrust their pelvises, twitched their legs, and bounced their heads or arms directly facing the audience. By observing that “[a]s faithful as she is to the integrity of each dancer... Skura’s works have an overall style”, Munson betrays how vocabulary came to signify individuality in *Cranky Destroyers*, which replaced the strategies we have seen thus far. He writes “[m]ovement seems to emphasize a similar quirkiness and interest in gesture. What begins as one movement frequently ends as another, adding the feeling of surprise and unpredictability.”¹¹³⁶ By framing the vocabulary as signifying, rather than embodying, individual innovation, reviewers sealed the coffin on the agency dancers had achieved by staging their experience of moving and asserting their creative input to the choreographic process. Zimmer reveals the lack of critical import that the focus on appearance fomented when, talking of Skura’s offbeat composition, she makes the politically impotent promise “you won’t get bored.”¹¹³⁷

New Universal Dancer Identities

¹¹³³ Zimmer, "Roll over Beethoven."

¹¹³⁴ Skura recounts the final structure emerged as she pieced the learned movement together with the three movements of symphony number 5. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹¹³⁵ Bull, "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," 274.

¹¹³⁶ Munson, "Roll over Beethoven: Dance Interprets 5th Symphony."

¹¹³⁷ Zimmer, "Roll over Beethoven."

Cranky Destroyers universalized individual provocation, embodying a problem to which artists who pursued success within the conventional dance circuit were bound: the imperative to fulfill theatrical conventions often undermined their critique.¹¹³⁸ Skura depended on her dancers' input for the unconventional spacing and movement, sourced from their responses to internal impulses cultivated with her prompts for improvisation. But to make idiosyncrasy legible beyond the East Village she transformed the strategies I've grouped under processing and inventing into a form of display, like she had with Kraus. So as artists re-engaged theatrical protocols, the impact of Somatics changed even though the same rhetoric endured. The choreography still staged a new dancer identities compared with classical and modern choreography, however, which, as *Cranky Destroyers* reveals, reflected the artistic context of the work. Skura's provocative individuals invited the gaze, reveling in transgression. By contrast, the dancer Brown constructed displayed a resolute lack of concern about being looked at while taking pleasure in the experience of moving. This built on the choreographer's earlier rejection of concert stages. Through compositional strategies and kinetic effects that were recognizable independently of particular dancers, Brown synthesized a nonchalant dancer. Like Skura, she never codified vocabulary as a technique, but nevertheless created a kinetic form to represent nonchalance independently of the dancers with whom she worked.

Although Brown ultimately cultivated unilateral dancing-nonchalance, she first developed the identity by communicating indifference toward historical demands on dancing women. In order to understand how the focus on appearance transformed artists' invention with Somatic into universal dancing identities, I am returning to *Glacial Decoy*. The dance contrasted

¹¹³⁸ Skura had received recognition for humorous multi-disciplinary works, which the playful quality of *Cranky Destroyers* builds upon. She had a booking agent "Soho Booking" and had received an NEA grant. But *Cranky Destroyers* is significant because it was the first work in which she used the technique of learning from video, which exemplifies displaying. Skura, "(Choreographer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

with Brown's 1970s strategies by re-choreographing ordinariness using theatrical conventions of femininity.¹¹³⁹ Voluminous, sheer, white dresses wafted in opposition to the dancers, which, along with light-footed shifts of weight giving way through the body, was nothing less than sylph-like. With costumes that amplified vocabulary not directed to the monarch's gaze, Brown renegotiating theatrical looking relations by making visible the inventorying of movement not directed to a frontal view.¹¹⁴⁰ For example, when a sudden shift in the upper torso dragged the lower body in a fall moving upstage left, the glowing fabric billowed behind, so the task-like movement communicated spectacularly to audiences for whom a full view was often obscured. By framing movement that was not always frontally focused in feminine trappings, Brown observed and rejected the historical demands placed on dancing women by constructing a performer who visibly does her own thing. Yet *Glacial Decoy* achieved the intervention by virtue of Brown's vocabulary rather than by making the dancer's experience visible.

The nonchalant dancer also superseded the limitations of spectacular femininity by displaying intellectual prowess in her play with gravity and skeletal structure. Sharp, rapid changes in direction, often barely altering location, shocked the dancers out of the direction in which they were falling, which blistered feminine ethereality with intellectual acuity through the deft performance of unpredictability. Although focused on weight and momentum, the dancers kept resurfacing with poise and attention to relocate for the next action rather than "going with the flow," as Novack suggests 1970s contact improvisers did.¹¹⁴¹ Percussive breaks in the hips

¹¹³⁹ Brown ultimately staged many of her gallery works in large theatres in combinations. But I'm focusing here on a distinction in the vocabulary and compositional structure, as well as, ultimately, the way the staging of the dances changed.

¹¹⁴⁰ I am focusing on the use of Somatics in the vocabulary, but Brown asserted her insistence of the dance happening in spite of the viewer through other devices, such as Linda Small's observation that "you get the ghostly sense of dance going on outside your range of vision as a line of the four gradually shifts back and forth, always obscuring one member beyond the wings." Small, "A Moveable Feast: T.B.D.C. At Brooklyn Academy of Music October 18th.."

¹¹⁴¹ Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 139.

took the dancers forward, backward or sideways, reorienting them to task-like continuous motion resisting a romantic resolution of gravity invited by the lilting quality. The soundtrack of dancers footfalls contributed to an obsessive quality along with nonsensical patterns created by rebounding flexion in the elbows and knees, but soft execution in the detailed design and jolting rhythm suggested contemplation rather than mania. The women seemed to repudiate while contemplating feminine display by effortlessly performing a mentally demanding lexicon in proscenium arch trappings and glowing white fabric. Yet, unlike the collaborative thinking dancer of the 1970s, Brown's new vocabulary constructed technical masters of the form who she stretched between sensuousness and spatial authority with her signature vocabulary.

Brown asserted analytical prowess and virtuoso unpredictability at a distance from the classical idiom, establishing the nonchalant dancer by *displaying* a lack of concern with *display* using Somatic aptitudes. Ballet dancers achieve elevation and extension by pushing down into the floor with their feet while externally rotating the legs and lifting the upper body while stabilizing the pelvis.¹¹⁴² Friction with the floor prior to a leg gesture creates energetic release and length in the limb, translating into climactic lightness and elevation. This gives dance a heroic quality along with turnout and a torso holding that Melanie Bales calls "high emotional effect" in contrast with the relaxed body she attributes to "Judson dancers."¹¹⁴³ In dancers working with anatomical logic, Brown found the "natural, well coordinated instinctive ability to move" that she sought, which gave the pedestrian look, as oppose to what she saw as an affected quality like a "puffed out ribcage" in classical and modern dancers who she insisted cannot "do

¹¹⁴² Foster looks at the values embodied in classical training in her writing about dance class. Foster, "Dancing Bodies." While Janet Wolf discusses how ballet has been used to sustain a "classical" body. Janet Wolf, "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics" in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond (Durham London: N.C.;Duke University Press, 1997).

¹¹⁴³ Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 160.

a natural kind of movement, not even a simple one.”¹¹⁴⁴ The making of *Glacial Decoy* coincided with company changes as Brown began working with dancers such as Kraus who were trained in Somatics, as well as modern and classical regimens.¹¹⁴⁵ Yet the company focused on internal anatomy, emphasizing function as they directed their bodies, seeming not to care about display.

The recalibration of strategy from *Glacial Decoy* for a mixed company helped to establish Brown’s signature. She demonstrated nonchalance as a set of kinetic effects that are applicable to men, and through which heterosexuality can be sublimated without evacuating sexual difference. By referencing ordinariness and privileging no stage area, Brown disbanded with the spatial, temporal and energetic stratification through which compositional poignancy normally provides the differentiating drama between the sexes. Despite the men’s occasional display of physical strength, their encounters with women appear mundane in *Set and Reset*, which treats every action with indifference.¹¹⁴⁶ Burt argues that the dancers’ apparent disregard for the audience and horizontal dispersal of qualities, sublimated masculinity into an overall structure that resisted the construction of dancing men as bravura. He insists that in the original staging, Petronio’s and Randy Warshaw’s “powerful contributions are redistributed into the texture of the piece as a whole, through the way the dancers’ gaze is contained, and through an overall, decentralized structure.”¹¹⁴⁷ Dancers fall and catch themselves or each other while limbs rarely extend fully except to navigate tipping weight, or elongate a swing, like *Watermotor*. Legs hang with weight as dancers lift their knees with ease, dropping feet into gravity that pull

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁵ Kraus joined the company in 1979, and feels she offered capacity afforded by modern and classical dance training coupled with aptitudes developed in Somatics. She studied at Bennington from 1971 to 1974, and put together information from Paxton’s stillness work, improvisation training with Judith Dunn, CI, and classes using Roland’s Todd influenced images. Kraus, "Interview with the Author."

¹¹⁴⁶ By linking Brown's staging of femininity in *Glacial Decoy* with her choreographing of a mixed company, I am building upon Burt’s argument about the men’s dancing in *Set and Reset*, while also arguing that Somatics was central to the Brown’s reconstruction of gender. For a detailed discussion of how *Set and Reset* disperses masculinity within its overall composition see: Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 154-58.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the leg and pelvis, reverberating in the torso and shifting them in a new direction with uneventful skips. The composition amplifies such motile insouciance with pathways that seem incidentally related such that Burt insists “the piece avoids ... development or climax through... uniformity of incident and... continuous, fast, strong but free pace”, which he describes as the “antithesis of the balanced, symmetrical grouping found in, for example, the ballets of Pepita.”¹¹⁴⁸ Yet slipping impossibly in and out of unison, the dance coordinates its mercurial unpredictability. Interchanges between dancers, such as falling to be caught by another focused elsewhere until the moment weight was taken, also assert compositional control. With the moments that frame the casualness as intentional, Brown insists that the sublimation of sexual difference within nonchalance is something that the dancers achieve by displaying her choreographic strategy.

Despite the seeming indifference to display, Brown laced her ordinariness with eroticism, supported by the way Somatics projected sexual nature onto black bodies and movement traditions while erasing such investments. Recalling her 1970s sensuousness, reviewer Marcia Pally argues, “*Set and Reset* has the beginnings of an erotic edge,”¹¹⁴⁹ which is evident in hip movement historically associated with African dance and positioned as lascivious relative to upper class European aesthetics.¹¹⁵⁰ The work of Brown’s contemporary Lucinda Childs highlights *Set and Reset*’s use of sexuality, because Childs also constructed a nonchalant dancer with the dropped torsos, easy swinging arms, and lack of effortful extension characteristic of

¹¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 157.

¹¹⁴⁹ Marcia Pally, "To See or Not to See (T.B.D.C Brooklyn Academy of Music Oct. 20-23)," *New York Native* November 7th-20th 1983.

¹¹⁵⁰ Burt points out that ““ballet [and]... social dances [of] Polite Society” until... dancing to jazz... have treated the chest and pelvis as one unbroken unit. Pelvis movement in the West has inevitable sexual connotations.” Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 162.

Somatic training.¹¹⁵¹ Childs choreographed “simple movement ideas, simple walking patterns, changes of direction, pedestrian-like vocabulary” using what she calls stripped-down ballet.¹¹⁵² Like *Strider* and *Dance Exchange*, referred to in chapter two, she innovated by choreographing existing vocabulary with Somatic aptitudes. Concerning how the movement is coded, Claid calls such strategies “postmodernist minimalism,” arguing that educated viewers derived pleasure from seeing the purposeful absence of spectacle.¹¹⁵³ By describing her work as the application of the No Manifesto, Brown attests to Claid’s claim.¹¹⁵⁴ Yet in contrast with her earlier work, and that of Childs, Brown remarked that in the late 1970s she made “animal dance,”¹¹⁵⁵ a quality she associates with non-white bodies and dance traditions, recalling the racial projections chapter 1 traces.¹¹⁵⁶ So while building on 1970s modest performance to evacuate spectacle in her group concert works, Brown engaged what she saw as non-European natural sensuousness, tantalizing her audience by rejuvenating her ordinary lexicon with unchaste casualness.¹¹⁵⁷

Brown’s subtle use of the erotic to entice her audiences recalls the broader shift in the 1980s when artists asserted the integral nature of sexuality to the body. However, in contrast with Houston-Jones for example, who confronted his audiences with the disturbing association of 1980s male homosexuality, Brown avoided theatrical provocation as part of her strategy to

¹¹⁵¹ Cynthia Hedstrom, one of the founding members of Movement Research and an original cast for Childs’ *Dance* (1979), trained in BMC, Ideokinesis, Alexander Technique and CI. Cynthia; Laurel George Hedstrom, *Interview with Cynthia Hedstrom* (1998), sound recording . 2 sound cassettes (approx. 2.5 hours) + 1 transcript (53 leaves; 28 cm.). Along with Hedstrom, the other company members exhibit a similar lower muscle tone than is normally associated with ballet.]

¹¹⁵² Pomegranate Arts, "Lucinda Childs Dance (1979) Revival (2009)," U.C.S.B Arts and Lectures, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEORmY2e2vI>.

¹¹⁵³ Both *Set and Reset* and *Dance* were theatrically framed by enormous spectacular projections, which is another way that Brown and Childs negotiated the demands of theatre.

¹¹⁵⁴ Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*, 94.

¹¹⁵⁵ Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 156.

¹¹⁵⁶ Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*, 45.

¹¹⁵⁷ The seeming more novel nature of Brown's vocabulary compared with Childs' or that staged by Strider and Dance Exchange, probably explains why Brown became associated with the possibilities of Somatics. However, to establish this as more than speculation would need more research.

undercut the way heterosexuality often signifies gender asymmetry. She dispersed the erotic throughout her vocabulary and composition as part of her aesthetics of uniformity to which Burt refers. Nevertheless, in what she saw as her “one phrase fits all genders” approach, Brown still naturalized masculinity in the male bodies of her dancers. She aimed to escape both what she saw as “undignified” movement for the male body, and modern dance “ clichéd images of...muscular male movement.”¹¹⁵⁸ By placing hyper masculinity at one end of a spectrum, Brown indicates that overly feminine dance is the undignified vocabulary she is fending off at the other end, which resonates with Burt’s suggestion that *Set and Reset* integrated Warshaw’s and Petronio’s “power” relative to the women dancers in the company.

By contrast, in his company, Petronio amped up the association between sexual perversion and dancing men by reveling in undignified movement and staging queer masculinity. Along with artists such as Michael Clarke, Javier De Frutos, Russell Maliphant, and Mark Morris, Petronio updated classical and modern vocabulary largely rejected by his predecessors.¹¹⁵⁹ He synthesized it with Somatics in what Claid represents as lyrical male homosexuality.¹¹⁶⁰ British dynamics influenced Petronio through his connection with Clarke who,¹¹⁶¹ Burt argues, “follow[ed] in the tradition of gay artists...[that] intentionally debase...high art”, and incited a conservative establishment by infusing ballet with transgressive

¹¹⁵⁸ Brown wanted to explore movement beyond undignified and clichéd masculine stereotypes to forge new choreographic possibilities. Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 157.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kisselgoff describes the vocabulary as a synthesis of “Trisha Brown, Merce Cunningham and the mutual support in partnering derived from the technique of contact improvisation.” Anna Kisselgoff, “Hurling, Hurdling and Whirling near the Edge,” *New York Times*, May 18th 1992.

¹¹⁶⁰ Claid observes of Maliphant “[t]he upward aesthetic of ballet merges with the downward aesthetics of release-based movement” (162), which she calls “feminine qualities on masculine bodies” (160), which she argues are one way that “openly gay/queer self identified performers... engage the audience through their play with the *conflict* between masculine and feminine desire.” (169) (italics in original) Claid, *Yes? No! Maybe*.

¹¹⁶¹ Burt argues Petronio’s British collaborator and lover Michael Clark influenced his approach. Unlike Petronio, Clark was classically trained and “deliberately betrayed” the British audiences’ commitment to ballet with “symbols of degradation [as] a defiant gesture” toward “a tradition that reinforced a value system which oppressed and abjected gay sexualities.” Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 161-64.

symbols as part of culture responding to “a climate of AIDS activism.”¹¹⁶² Using flexion and inward rotation in his own debasement of balletic line, Petronio, who performed for Clarke,¹¹⁶³ similarly indulged in referencing and contravening classical propriety, rejecting Brown’s heterosexual ordinariness and also the hypocrisy with which Foster argues the female body is put on display in Balanchine’s work.¹¹⁶⁴ By incorporating classicism as a feminine sign of queer male sexuality, Petronio capitalized on the way male heterosexuality is brought into question on the dancing stage.¹¹⁶⁵ He represented queer masculinity through men’s embodiment of spectacular femininity, which theorized a dancing identity that had been excluded by the rejection of spectacle.¹¹⁶⁶ In so doing, Petronio portended work by Neil Greenberg, John Jasperse, and Tere O’Connor, all of whom choreographed male femininity with Somatics as a sign of queerness.¹¹⁶⁷

Like Brown, Petronio displayed his dancing subject in a recognizable vocabulary, which is distinct from the work analyzed thus far because classical precision was ensured by subsuming weight and momentum within shape and line as the dancers undulated against stabilized body parts. With contained viscosity in *Full Half Wrong* (1992), rather than ripple, the dancers sequenced through their joints to full extension, and snaked along the torso from the pelvis to head. Petronio’s vocabulary embodied Susan Klein’s objection to “letting go”, which

¹¹⁶² Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁶³ *Heterospective* (1989). Ibid., 162.

¹¹⁶⁴ She details “the female pelvis, often highlighted by the ruffled tutu, is frequently displayed...[with] splits of the legs” then “subsumed by the quest for geometrized form.” Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 83.

¹¹⁶⁵ Burt argues modern dance carefully constructed the gender of male dancers as heterosexual because when men’s bodies are the subjects of display, their claim to male power and heterosexuality are brought into questions. Burt, *The Male Dancer*, chapter 1.

¹¹⁶⁶ Foster argues that even while modern dance has historically been one of the most open closets for gay men, the performance of anything but heterosexually constituted masculinity by the male dancer has been difficult if not impossible. Susan Leigh Foster, “Improvising/History,” in *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, ed. William B. Holland Worthen, Peter (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 196-213.

¹¹⁶⁷ I have written about the queer strategies employed by Greenberg, Jasperse and O’Conner in a forthcoming volume. Doran George, “The Hysterical Spectator: Searching for Critical Identification among Dancing Nellies, Andro-Dykes and Drag Queens,” in *Meanings and Makings of Queer Dance* ed. Clare Croft (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

reflects his investment in her technique. He also absorbed various idioms creating incongruity that Deborah Jowitt describes as “slippery grace”, which connects with Klein’s claim that her approach is applicable to all styles.¹¹⁶⁸ Petronio dancers displayed erotic feeling through dynamism,¹¹⁶⁹ causing Kisselgoff to marvel not at the performers “baring either breasts or bottoms”, but that they “always appear to be living on the edge. Whiplash is the word to describe the propulsive power on display,”¹¹⁷⁰ a sentiment with which Nicole Collins agreed describing Petronio’s work as “aggressive, stylish, athletic, and highly sexed.”¹¹⁷¹

In a further recapitulation of Brown’s concert stage work, Petronio presumed the unilateral applicability of his vocabulary for both sexes, a strategy that brought its own problems. For example, the female soloist opening *Full Half Wrong* introduces dancing debauchery with gestures reminiscent of Nijinsky; her head throws back and with bedroom eyes, her foot slaps and rubs the ground. She could be a boy being a girl as she writhes, holding under her thighs waiting for penetration then arching as if satiated, teasing the audience with her disembodiment of conventional heterosexual femininity through queerly male seduction.¹¹⁷² Yet with their transgression of masculinity in the male body, the men in the company upstage her homosexualization of the male gaze, so even if Petronio’s women escape old-fashioned

¹¹⁶⁸ For example she writes: “[u]p will fly a leg, but at the same time a shoulder will curl in, one part of the rib cage will shake down.” Deborah Jowitt, "Conversation Pieces," *Village Voice*, June 2nd 1992.

¹¹⁶⁹ Only a year earlier, Clarke choreographed his own perversion of ballet in *Mmm*, which Burt describes as “a strangely contorted variation of ballet...flexing the pelvis...[that] referred inescapably to sex.” (163) Burt distinguishes Petronio’s lexicon from Clarke’s, referring to Petronio’s training with Paxton and Brown producing a dance “grounded in knowledge of the internal motivation of movement” referring to Somatic ideas. (162) Burt, *The Male Dancer*.

¹¹⁷⁰ Kisselgoff, "Hurling, Hurdling and Whirling near the Edge."

¹¹⁷¹ Nicole Dekle Collins., "Stephen Petronio," in *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers (First Edition)*, ed. Martha Bremster (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹¹⁷² I am influenced here by Manning’s argument that early 20th century white women disembodied conventional femininity by staging black subjects. She proposes that artists like Helen Tamiris forged new subjectivities by performing black spirituals. They renegotiated their difference because they “embodied references to black spirituals...[and achieved] disembodiment of conventional femininities.” Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, 12. So the black metaphorical subject relieved the burden of being marked as female. Similarly in the solo Petronio has choreographed for the women that opens *Full Half Wrong*, defies the male gaze by embodying a queerly male sexuality and sensuality.

feminine sexual availability as symbolic queers, they do so as a chorus for the boys. Petronio's mixed company reinstated gender asymmetry by universalizing the gay male body as the origin of artistic critique through sexual provocation.

Despite the distinct achievements and limitations in the dancing identities they constructed, by having their dancers display their ideas, Brown and Petronio both recapitulated the power-relations that were initially displaced with Somatics. With little control over the meaning they performed, the dancers faced a problem that Cooper Albright insists women face more generally because they "are always on display and yet often they are never really in control of the terms of that representation."¹¹⁷³ Although Brown constructed an identity that was unconcerned with the demand for spectacle, her dancers emulated the appearance of indifference, which replaced collaboration and the intelligent dancer. Her company went from fulfilling instructions in the accumulations, *Locus*, and *Sololos*, to learning set material.¹¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, Senter insists that in the 1990s the appearance of the repertory, achieved by learning roles from video, replaced the ideas with which the dances were initially created,¹¹⁷⁵ the company valued the look that had become associated with Somatics rather than the

¹¹⁷³ Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 120.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Sololos* and *Locus* were often performed differently due to instructions given before or during a concert, and it was more efficient to learn the accumulations by following the rules of the work than learning by rote. Yet although the original cast explored phrases that Brown taught them in the creation of *Glacial Decoy* and *Set and Reset*, once the work was set new generations of dancers learned a pre-given composition. However, Senter asserts that in the 1980s dancers sustained the idea of performing within a set of conditions by applying Somatic ideas such as resisting goal-oriented behavior through skills developed in Alexander Technique, but that this was lost with subsequent generations because the appearance of the dances became more important. Senter, "(Dancer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹¹⁷⁵ After joining the company in 1986 Senter was one of first to teach the choreography to a repertory company, *Opal Loop* for Ballet Rambert in 1989. Senter expanded the use of Alexander Technique in classes using set movement, which she applied to her teaching of the repertory so that rather than aiming to achieve the look of the movement, dancers were questioning how they are fulfilling an action. Yet she recalls that after leaving the company she was brought back to teach her role in a particular work, and later discovered that after she had left the dancer was asked to look at the video, which is an example of how valuing of the individual embodiment of movement was replaced by the solidification of a particular look that dancers were supposed to fulfill. Ibid.

investigative practices for which dancers had also previously used the regimens.¹¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Petronio's gay male dancers seemed to take control by homosexualizing the male gaze, yet their provocation depended on mastering vocabulary, so despite the skill the dancers demonstrated, the identity they represented overshadowed their experience of and intelligence in the dancing. Referring to a visual emphasis in concert dance that separates training and performance, Novack argues, "[p]erformers and spectators learn from the dance that technique and expression are separate capacities."¹¹⁷⁷ Brown's and Petronio's choreography ultimately constructed idealized dancers rather than ones in whom learning, exploring, and potentially failing, were visible. The dancers agency therefore found itself banished back to the training studio from where it had been unleashed by artists earlier in the previous decades.

When Somatics became more of a skills resource for executing vocabulary rather than an investigative practice through which the dancers' experience or intelligence was stage, company member began drawing on techniques that were initially rejected by the milieu in which Brown and Petronio had developed their work.¹¹⁷⁸ Related to her assertion about the idealization of dancers, Novack argues ballet institutes the "objectification of the body as an instrument to be mastered."¹¹⁷⁹ From the 1990s onwards, Brown's and Petronio's companies

¹¹⁷⁶ Laurel Tentindo, who danced for Brown from 2007 to 2012 experienced an enormous struggle between what she calls the "authentic physicality" she cultivated with Somatics, and the demand of performing the repertory. Tentindo's experience of such a contradiction is striking in comparison with Kraus's and Karcag's, who thirty years earlier had experienced Brown's work as a container through which they made sense of and developed their work with Somatics. The shift exemplifies how the training went from supporting dancers' creative agency in choreography to signifying a skill set to fulfill existing aesthetics. Tentindo, "(Dancer/Choreographer/Teacher Formerly with Trisha Brown Dance Company) in Discussion with the Author."; Karczag, "Interview with Author."

¹¹⁷⁷ Bull, "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," 283.

¹¹⁷⁸ In a related move, Childs pursued classically trained dancers as the century progressed, which is evident in the difference between the execution of her Dance 1, 2 and 3 in 1979 from its 2009 reconstruction. The 21st century cast display the balletic line that comes with what Bales calls the high effect lifted torso, pointed feet, and full sustained extension in the arms and neck. Child's transformed her work into a theatrical display of Rainer's minimalist dictates, whereas in the late 1970s the look of the dancers contributed to her repudiation of display. Lucinda Childs, "Dance " (Royce Hall, U.C.L.A.: The Center for Art and Performance, 2011).

¹¹⁷⁹ Bull, "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures," 283.

conceived of the dancers role in a way that resulted in the kind of objectification to which Novack refers. Perhaps not surprisingly then, alongside dancers who had trained in and were continuing to explore Somatics, the companies included dancers with classical training for whom ballet class continued to be their ongoing training.¹¹⁸⁰ This marked a sea change in the approaches on which Brown's company drew.¹¹⁸¹ In contrast with Bales insistence such an eclectic model of training constituted a paradigmatic shift from "pre-Judson" concert dance,¹¹⁸² dancers made their choices to best fulfill the choreographer's vision, thereby recapitulating the company hierarchy that early 1960s experimentation rejected. Dance critics followed suit, representing Brown and Petronio as the creative font of the work, no longer remarking on the dancers' individuality. Jennifer Dunning represented Brown as a singular artistic genius, "indisputably one of the most influential choreographers to come out of... Judson Dance Theater... having developed a style that has clearly left its mark on many younger choreographers and dancers."¹¹⁸³ Consequently Banes' insistence that Brown discovers rather than invents dance was lost. When writers represented Brown as a collaborator, it was now through her work with famous artists working on her sets, accompaniment, and lighting rather than the dancers.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁸⁰ Lionel Popkin, who danced with Brown from 2000 to 2003, recalls that some company dancers were training in ballet while others, like himself, took a combination of Klein and Alexander Technique. He confirms that Somatics no longer seemed to be integral to the choreography, but was seen as one approach through which it could be fulfilled. Popkin, "(Dancer, Choreographer, Faculty in U.C.L.A. Dance Dept.) Interview with Author."

¹¹⁸¹ It was precisely the ideas about the body cultivated in Somatics through which Senter insists dancers could move within a set of conditions rather than fulfill a particular image, particularly when they were executing a set form. Senter, "(Dancer and Teacher) in Discussion with the Author."

¹¹⁸² Bales, *The Body Eclectic*, 29.

¹¹⁸³ Jennifer Dunning, "Trisha Brown Offers Quiet Contradictions.," *New York Times*, March 8th 1991.

¹¹⁸⁴ It is striking that both Kisselgoff and Dunning list the dancers at the end of descriptions of the work, Dunning at the bottom of the page, and Kisselgoff's after the description of each piece, which contrasts with the way that reviewers in the late 1970s and early 1980s drew attention to the dancers individual embodiment of the material. But both Kisselgoff and Dunning mention Laurie Anderson, who composed the music for "Set and Reset" and Robert Rauschenberg, who designed the set and costumes for the same work. Anna Kisselgoff, "For 20 Years, Distinctly Trisha Brown," *New York Times* March 9th 1991 ; Dunning, "Trisha Brown Offers Quiet Contradictions.."

In the early 1990s Petronio, like Brown, was already represented as the single creative origin of his style, despite using Somatic trained dancers¹¹⁸⁵ who contributed to the artistic process in a similar manner to the development of *Set and Reset*. Petronio taught phrases that his dancers developed.¹¹⁸⁶ Company member Jeremy Nelson recalls “he would show us something once and we had to make our own version of what we had seen, or we would make partner-work based on a specific premise.”¹¹⁸⁷ Yet Collins enshrines Petronio’s choreographic superiority in her reviews of *Full Half Wrong*, insisting “[t]he distinctiveness of Petronio’s choreography owes a great deal to his own idiosyncratic movement style,” even verifying his company’s quality by remarking on the dancers’ ability to embody Petronio’s way of moving. She suggests that the “prodigiously talented performer[s]... plunge headlong into [Petronio’s] vernacular with the abandon of native speakers.”¹¹⁸⁸ In line with Reynoso’s argument above, the representation of Petronio as the creative genius indicates a change in the way that the milieu viewed dancers’ contribution to the choreographic process.¹¹⁸⁹ The codification of the choreographer’s signature overshadowed the fact that dancers were employing the creative agency established for them in previous decades through Somatics.

To the degree that vocabulary forged with Somatics became recognizable through its codification, the idea of cultural specificity in kinetic forms pushed against the conceit of individuality dominant in 1980s inventing. I have argued that artists erased how contemporary

¹¹⁸⁵ For example, Jeremy Nelson, who danced for Petronio between 1984 and 1992, trained with June Ekman. Ekman, "Interview with Author." He also pursued the Klein Technique teacher training along with Greenberg. Neil Greenberg, email to author, September, 24th, 2013.

¹¹⁸⁶ Stephen Petronio, Facebook message to the author, May, 26th, 2014.

¹¹⁸⁷ Jeremy Nelson, who danced with Petronio between 1984 and 1992, recalls that the choreography “involved a lot of our creative contributions from us the dancers”, although “he didn’t really work with open improvisations,” the process clearly depended on inventing through, for example, manipulations of [Petronio’s] phrase material, or making material around a specific task”. Jeremy Nelson, email to author, May 26th, 2014.

¹¹⁸⁸ Collins., "Stephen Petronio," 189.

¹¹⁸⁹ If reviews of Brown’s work only exhibited this pattern, it could be argued that she became seen as the author of the vocabulary because it was associated with her over a long period in which the make-up of her company changed. But Petronio, began making work twenty years after Brown, and as his company had not been subject to the same degree of flux that Brown’s had.

dance had subsumed or misrepresented influences from other traditions with the Somatic idea that inherent bodily capacity underpins individual innovation.¹¹⁹⁰ Yet as Brown's work became broadly recognizable, some African American choreographers associated softness and flow with white contemporary dance. For example, due to his use of Somatic aptitudes, David Rousseve's African American colleagues characterized his work, including the 1995 *Whispers of Angels* as "white dance."¹¹⁹¹ The fact that it was physical aptitudes to which Rousseve's critics refer is clear because *Whispers*, for example, included a section in which a black woman in a mammy costume sang Georgia on my Mind. I would argue, however, when compared with Petronio's and Brown's vocabulary, Rousseve had re-imagined black American modern dance.¹¹⁹² His dancers do emphasize and follow weight like Brown's, and combine full extension with 360-degree dimensionality and using different levels like Petronio's. Yet they performed Ailey-like sumptuousness by reaching into space with a high releasing sternum, conveying a black spiritualist quality distinct from Rousseve's white contemporaries. Ailey's characteristic tension and athleticism gave way, however, to languid ease, which 1990s company dancer Julie Tolentino recalls was achieved with Klein Technique. A focus on anatomy produced seamless motion, circulating sensuality through the body, dispersing dramatic punctuation in the phrasing by avoiding sharp beginnings and endings. Nevertheless, Tolentino's experience of the milieu in which they worked adds credence to the charge that Somatics signified whiteness. She and the rest of the company, who had trained at the Ailey school, joked about their background with the

¹¹⁹⁰ My argument here exhibits the influence of Ananja Chatterjea, whose critique of what she calls "postmodernism" I outline in the dissertation introduction.

¹¹⁹¹ When Gottschild asks African Ronald Brown about white choreographers he mistakenly says Rousseve, which he puts down to the aesthetics. Brenda Dixon. Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 52. Rousseve also recalls colleagues at a festival of African American choreography asking him why he is making white dance. David Rousseve, (Choreographer, U.C.L.A. professor) in discussion with the author, February 2011.

¹¹⁹² Ailey's style became a signifier of an African American choreography and the staging of black subjectivity on a predominantly white concert stage. Thomas DeFrantz, *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25.

awareness that jazz aesthetics contravened the conventions of contemporary dance.¹¹⁹³ They accessed a lexicon associated with black culture by subsuming its presentational appearance with Somatics. The ban on jazz-like aesthetics in a context where Brown was projecting sexuality onto non-white bodies attests to the way that Somatics participated in the appropriation, or deployment of ideas about black bodies, while within a contemporary dance culture that excluded African American cultural traditions. Nevertheless, Rousseve expanded on both Ailey's and Houston-Jones' achievements by claiming new territory for African American dance traditions within a white-dominated context.

However, while Rousseve and his dancers used Somatics in ways that were meaningful for them, the transnational success of the regimens sometimes resulted in Somatics being imposed against artists' own sense of authentic expression. The experience of Phoenix Dance, Britain's first Black contemporary company, exemplifies this problem.¹¹⁹⁴ Eager to nurture Black dance in the wake of racial unrest, the British state encouraged a practice based on the symbolic centrality of that New York contemporary culture. The white American artistic director of Phoenix, brought in as an Arts Council of England funding requirement against the dancers' wishes, employed Rousseve to work with the company alongside his colleagues Bebe Miller and Blondell Cummings, who were commissioned to choreograph repertory based on their work with Somatics. Yet while the African American artists fulfilled an establishment vision of black contemporary dance, their aesthetics conflicted with the local Northern English Jamaican immigrant heritage upon which Phoenix dancers drew. Christy Adair argues that the work resulted in "confusion for the dancers, as their success had been based on their...

¹¹⁹³ Julie Tolentino, (dancer, artist), in discussion with the author, April 5th, 2014.

¹¹⁹⁴ Adair, "Review of Rosemary Lee's Work at the Place Theatre."

performance of work that... drew on their cultural specificity.”¹¹⁹⁵ Rousseve also recalls discomfort among company members about his approach.¹¹⁹⁶

Also subject to a state agenda, CandoCo rapidly attracted funding, critical, and programming support by displaying virtuoso disability. In this sense they extended an institutionalized model of contemporary dance to previously excluded subjects. Cooper Albright argues that they thereby privileged “ability,” which she contrasts with Blackwell and Alessi who use CI to model a body “in becoming” that need not meet a dancing ideal.¹¹⁹⁷ CandoCo’s co-director Benjamin expresses a similar concern, insisting that “[i]ntegration is not, as I understand it, a dance form, organization or style.”¹¹⁹⁸ Yet to attract state support, companies like CandoCo found themselves displaying idealized identities of difference by fulfilling a broad agenda of participation mediated by the establishment imperative of technical excellence addressed in chapter 2.

To contrast with universalized identities, I am returning briefly to the individual relationships Monson choreographed, which epitomize how East Village artists continued to experiment even while, along with artists working on larger stages, they invested in the appearance of dance. In her duets with Jasperse and Dorvillier referred to above, Monson infused the vocabulary she developed based on tackling with the uniqueness of each relationship. Androgyny, risk, and tenderness defined her duet with Jasperse. They generously gave weight to each action, cushioning athleticism with mutually soft landings achieving greater gender

¹¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 175.

¹¹⁹⁶ David Rousseve, (Choreographer, U.C.L.A. professor) in discussion with the author, February 2011.

¹¹⁹⁷ Cooper Albright contrasts Alessi and Blackwell's dance with Victoria Marks's dance video for CandoCo *Outside In*. She argues in Marks's work, wheelchair users are positioned as passive compared with non-disabled dancers, while David Toole, a man without legs who moves in and out of chair, becomes an "extraordinary" body. She argues his masculine control is re-inscribed, yet he is also spectacularized recapitulating the discourse of the freak show. Notwithstanding her critique based on identity, my main interest in her argument is that she points out how virtuosity, fueled by CI and Somatics, underpinned CandoCo's success. Albright, *Choreographing Difference*, 76.

¹¹⁹⁸ Benjamin, *Making an Entrance*, 16.

equivalence than had been seen in Cunningham's or Brown's work.¹¹⁹⁹ The dancers ran at each other, leapt, knocked each other over, spun, or suspended in precarious balances, extracting themselves from compulsory heterosexuality by capitalizing on the CI potential to lift and share weight equally. By gamboling between task and mutual nurturing, Monson and Jasperse also desexualized liberal body contact.¹²⁰⁰ Deadpan gazes and pietà-like poses infused function and devotion into Monson resting her head on Jasperse's ass or both dancers faces falling into their partner's crotches.

In strong contrast, with a similar vocabulary, Monson and Dorvillier conjured a shimmering image of lesbianism in *RMW* 1993. They dangled in the throes of a kiss as they swung each other around, launched each other over their respective shoulders, and crashed onto the floor.¹²⁰¹ The dancers embodied and introduced to each other the woman from the duet with Jasperse who danced free of gender opposition, burning sex into the platonic vocabulary.¹²⁰² In addition, the women ricocheted between gender poles, blurring androgyny with ambiguity by amplifying fervor and tenderness, recalling *Wrong Contact Dance*. The dancing subject that extracted female corporeality from the clutches of canonical male desire hankered for another version of herself, stealing a space for lesbian lust on dance theatre boards that have conventionally been hostile to all things Sapphic. Yet Monson avoided displaying a

¹¹⁹⁹ I have referred above to Burt's contention that Brown's *Set and Reset* "integrates" male power rather than stage a different version of gender. He also refers to various disappointments that scholars interested in gender critique have found in Cunningham's work. Burt, *The Male Dancer*, 129.

¹²⁰⁰ I am influenced in this argument by Foster's insistence that CI "preserved the chasteness of the modern dance tradition," except here I'm looking at how such chasteness was used productively for gender critique. Foster, "Closets Full of Dances," 181.

¹²⁰¹ My reading of the dance is based upon viewing a reconstruction and extensive interviews about the original work, all of which contribute to a forthcoming essay. Jennifer Monson; DD Dorvillier, "R.M.W. (a) and R.M.W.," in *Making and Meanings of Queer Dancer* (University of Michigan: Congress on Research in Dance, 2012); George, "The Hysterical Spectator: Searching for Critical Identification among Dancing Nellies, Andro-Dykes and Drag Queens."

¹²⁰² Monson and Dorvillier also wore the early 1990s street dyke uniform of denims, a white T-shirt, and a bomber jacket. "The Hysterical Spectator: Searching for Critical Identification among Dancing Nellies, Andro-Dykes and Drag Queens."

universalized lesbianism by altering the vocabulary through a responsive practice she developed in her long-term collaborations.¹²⁰³

Monson's approach with Jasperse and Dorvillier is comparable to her work with Meier, or how Houston-Jones staged a relationship with Holland as well as between his dancers in *Them*. Channel Z similarly put individual and interpersonal material on display. But these alternatives to universal identities relied on the familiarity of the audience with the performers, which is evident from how Skura's work signified generic individuality once artists well known in the East Village became anonymous on large stages. Monson and the other artists with whom her approach is similar, refused to cultivate an artistic signature in a codified vocabulary based on an opposition to what they saw as the commercial demands of large theatres. Such an approach meant that they sustained experimentation, as referred to above in processing, yet as I insisted in relation to inventing towards the end of the 20th century, it also meant some East Village artists failed to fulfill the corporate model that attracted funding and performance opportunities.

Conclusion: Nature, Artistic Rigor, and Economics.

This chapter traced how distinct aims, resulting from the social and artistic forces that artists tackled, resulted in aesthetic diversity in Somatic-informed choreography. Ideological frameworks, revealed through the analytical lenses of processing, inventing and displaying, shaped concert dance culture. This included the contexts in which choreography was presented, how the vocabulary was produced and understood, as well as the definition of the dancer and choreographer and the relationship between them. For example, we saw how Karczag exhibited

¹²⁰³ Monson insists that the tenderness and risk she cultivated in a playful relationship with Jasperse reflects how they explored physical sensation, whereas the more sexual and representational nature of her duet with Dorvillier embodied the rampant sexual lifestyles in which the women were engaged and Dorvillier's interest in theatricality. Ibid.

principles grouped under processing. In opposition to dominant norms of technical excellence, and conventional company hierarchies, she staged her experience of moving as a creative agent that combined the dancer and choreographer roles. Her decisive use of vocabulary evidenced her ideology, as did working on the fringes of contemporary dance, capitalizing on the greater intimacy with audiences in small venues. With a generous use of parallel, inward rotation of the hips, collapsing in the elbows, knees, and spine, as well as hyperextension in all those same joints, she distanced herself from classical feminine display, demonstrating rigorous specificity and a sophisticated understanding of concert dance language.¹²⁰⁴ Yet the agendas through which artists applied Somatics to concert dance often disappeared in the discourse on nature. Jowitt describes Karczag's suppleness as being like an "infant."¹²⁰⁵ She represented the artist as divesting her body of culture rather than making a cultural intervention, which erased the incisive wrangling with aesthetics.

By analyzing concert practices through processing, inventing and displaying, I therefore recuperated the cultural labor artists invested. Furthermore, this chapter identified how different approaches interfaced with economies of presentation and dissemination. Most of the 1980 East Village work I considered insisted on the experimental value of staging the dancers' experience of moving, like Karczag, and much of the 1970s dance I looked at. East Village artists also emphasized the collaborative development of new vocabulary, which I called inventing. Because they refused to fulfill a model of dance that was legible to booking agents, however, their work rarely moved beyond their local milieu.¹²⁰⁶ Yet by modulating East Village ideas for

¹²⁰⁴ Foster argues ballet generally, and Balanchine specifically, attempts to persuade the audience to view the body in a certain way by drawing attention to sexualized areas of the body. She details that in "Balanchine's style...the female pelvis, often highlighted by the ruffled tutu, is frequently displayed...[with] splits of the legs." Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 83.

¹²⁰⁵ Jowitt, "By Deborah Jowitt (Eva Karczag)."

¹²⁰⁶ For example Yvonne Meier commented that in the 1980s "I tried to find a manager with out any luck [because]... my pieces were mostly on such a big scale that producers shy away... [and] my work didn't look very

their visual effect, which I defined as displaying, Skura achieved broader dissemination than her colleagues such as Meier, Monson, Houston-Jones or Channel Z. Nevertheless because she depended on a collaborative relationship with her dancers, and did not codify a vocabulary, Skura never enjoyed Petronio's level of success, an artist who paraded his love affair with spectacle by incorporating classicism. Brown, however, gained even greater acclaim with a vocabulary that became representative of Somatics as an approach. By the 1990s both she and Petronio had virtually branded their vocabularies, which were canonized as transnational contemporary dance ideals. Meanwhile, exploiting their claim to novelty in a different manner, CandoCo developed a methodology that, by demonstrating innovation and technical proficiency, fulfilled British establishment contemporary dance ideals. Exhibiting the central principles of inventing, the integrated company offered unique skills to establishment-endorsed artists who were commissioned to choreograph new repertory. In a different move, against the new demands of dance establishments, solo improvisers like Karczag, Paxton, and Simpson rarely booked large venues, but by reinventing ideas associated with processing, secured a transnational reputation in the smaller art-house circuit, and within dance communities that were exploring Somatics and CI.

Value, associated with the size of audiences that choreographers reached, or the aura of artistic rigor that work accrued, infused tension into the contexts in which Somatic-informed dance circulated. Recalling Forti's frustration with aesthetic canonization, Brown's softness, and the flow she shared with Petronio, became associated with greater funding, programming, and critical support than Houston-Jones' skirmish, or Meier's explosion for example. Some East Village artists felt support eluded their work because it was not "safe" enough for booking

good in video [because it] was built on the out put and handling of energy which didn't read on video." Yvonne Meier, email to the author, July 14th 2014.

agents, which fueled the self-perception of the milieu as a space that nurtured integrity.¹²⁰⁷

Meanwhile, Karczag, rejected large concert stages because she felt that the focus on spectacle undermined the dancer's creative agency. She shared this sentiment with Paxton,¹²⁰⁸ and left Brown's company in the early 1980s as a result, opting to foreground what she saw as her artistic integrity as a dancer.¹²⁰⁹

Yet to the degree that the discourse on nature concealed the cultural labor in which artists were engaged, the focus on artistic integrity overshadowed the impact of commerce on the organization of dance concerts. For example Karczag forfeited the support that came with large spaces to use audience proximity to intervene in the construction of her moving body as an object of spectacle. Yet Wendy Perron, another Brown dancer from the 1970s,¹²¹⁰ infantilized Karczag's dependence on intimacy. Perron commented that, although she marveled at the concentrated labor visible in Karczag's detailed dancing, she wanted to make "more grown up choices."¹²¹¹ By linking an ability to communicate to large audiences with artistic maturity, Perron masked the economics that shape dance viewership in a discourse on sophistication. Meanwhile East Village artist felt they would have to dumb-down their work to access to large theatres, and solo improvisers like Karczag and Paxton saw a potential in spatial proximity with the audience that was foreclosed by the proscenium's visual economy. So for some choreographers, artistic integrity seemed to depend upon disavowing success. The discourses of "nature" and "rigor" masked how these different strategies not only emerged under distinct economic, social, historical, and geographic circumstances, but also how they shared in the

¹²⁰⁷ Houston Jones commented that it was difficult to get a booking agent because one of the main agents "Pentacle was better for safe, middle of the road small dance companies than work that was happening downtown." Ishmael Houston Jones email to author, July 14th 2014).

¹²⁰⁸ Steve Paxton email to author, July 15th 2014.

¹²⁰⁹ Karczag, "Interview with Author."

¹²¹⁰ Perron, "Trisha Browns Group Forges Ahead without Her."

¹²¹¹ "The Body as a Discourse," *Women and Performance A Journal of Feminist Theory* 6 (1): 43.

ideals of liberalism by defining creative freedom against the encroachment of commerce. I thus propose a different solution than artists have tended to proffer to recover the aesthetic diversity that, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Forti and others feared release technique had displaced. Rather than expand the concept of nature, or pursue artistic rigor, we need to pay attention to the myriad ways that the Somatic idea of nature has been modulated to tackle different circumstances.

Dissertation Conclusion: Understanding the Focus on Authenticity.

As Somatics became a central component of modern dance training, artists transformed the conception of the dancer within the choreographic process. Dancers seemed to achieve an unencumbered individuality in contrast with the authoritarian imposition of aesthetics in classical and modern concert dance. By focusing on the experience of dancing, Somatics encouraged practitioners to connect with their ‘unique’ embodiment of natural principles, and retrieve an authentic self that was thought to be integral to the physical body. This notion that the dancer embodies individual authenticity is probably the major contribution that Somatics made to Western concert dance compared with, for example, the technical excellence in the idealized vocabulary of classical ballet, or the codification of emotional expression in modern dance. Yet, despite the seemingly progressive thrust of Somatics, I argue that in their pursuit of individual authenticity, dancers actually fulfilled post-war liberal ideals that were central to American expansionism, and that permeate contemporary capitalism. The post-war American government justified military, economic, and cultural expansion by insisting they were protecting and propagating a universal right to individual freedom; dancers invested in the same idea by touting, as universally applicable, the notion that individual creative freedom can be accessed through functional imperatives of the body.

This dissertation consequently argues that Somatic authenticity embodies a late twentieth-century capitalist ideal of propagating universal individual freedom. The study does this by tracing the relationship between training, dissemination, and choreography within a small community that identified itself as concerned with experimentation in contemporary dance. Chapter 1 chronicles how dancers revolutionized training with the belief that they were connecting to universal bodily truths in individually unique ways. With the theory that any

dancer can achieve an authentic sense of self, Somatics developed through three phases. Initially established as a collective anti-hierarchical culture beginning in the 1960s, dancers recalibrated Somatics toward entrepreneurialism in the 1980s, but by the end of the twentieth century saw the corporatization of Somatics, and institutions had appropriated the ideas cultivated independently in the two prior phases. Yet despite these changes in the training, practitioners continued to believe that they were achieving an authentic sense of self by connecting with essential bodily truths. Chapter two, by tracing the transnational dissemination of Somatic training, connects the theory of universal individuality to American expansionism. With its focus on an authentic sense of self, Somatics exhibited the liberal ideology that became important after World War II when America became a super-power. Yet, while the spread of Somatics depended on a flow of culture outward from New York, dancers in other contexts seemed to access intrinsic creative freedom via natural properties of the body. Wherever the regimens took root, dancers implemented them in unique ways that fed back into a transnational discourse, seeming to affirm both the universal relevance of the training, and the training's ability to cultivate authentic self-expression. The third chapter analyzes how, using Somatic-trained bodies and related ideas, artists represented liberation from oppressive aesthetics and cultures on the concert stage. Through shifts in the conception of the dancer's identity, which paralleled the phases of development in chapter 1, they choreographed post-war liberal ideology. By staging universal individuality in a diversity of way, artists affirmed their creative freedom, established in chapter two. Yet the dances embodied economic and political changes, reflected in the reinvention of Somatics, from anti-hierarchical collectivism, to an entrepreneurial pursuit, and ultimately embodying the corporate culture and widespread institutionalization.

My thesis poses a problem for artists who have committed their life to developing the training, and the large community of dancers now using Somatics. If the central contribution of the approach to contemporary dance is a sense of authentic individual creativity and physical autonomy, and yet this embodies liberal capitalist ideals, artists seem to be robbed, theoretically at least, of the independence from commerce and access to artistic critique that Somatics promises. I outline here research that such a proposition invites, such as, how artists are negotiating the appropriation of their practices, and whether they continue to resist institutional hegemonies through Somatics. However, without such research having been done, I want to first insist that, rather than undermine the relevance of the training, the insights of this study can be used to expand the uses of Somatics. I thereby intend to validate the value of the labor of those who cultivated Somatics and contributed generously to my research. Returning to my direct experience with the regimens, discussed in the introduction, the conclusion first briefly touches on my current use of Somatics to reflect on how I have integrated my findings.

If we wish to push against the imposition of ideology and aesthetics in the way that artists initially intended in their use of Somatics, we must track the cultural values being instituted now that the approach has been institutionalized. My chronicling of the changes in training suggests that dancers' sense of agency depended not on accessing an essential physical nature, but contesting the material and cultural conditions through which they were subjugated. The institutional success of Somatics clearly evidences this assertion because dancers began to experience, as an imposition the idea of locating and accessing natural bodily capacity. For example, in the 1990s when Somatic aptitudes became a requirement for employment, the language of bodily truth served the primary concern of reproducing preexisting aesthetics, rather than affording creative and physical autonomy. As noted in chapter 3, this problem was

particularly evident in the experience of members of the British company Phoenix, whose cultural heritage was displaced. Through funding requirements, government agencies and other institutions imposed artistic approaches associated with Somatics because they signified creative authenticity. The same chapter traces the exploitation of dancers who embraced Somatics. Struggling to meet funding requirements in a corporate arts culture, choreographers depended on the ability of their dancers to invent vocabulary, yet the dancers were not accorded the value accrued to choreographers through the credentials of making a dance. Even in the earlier phases of development, when Somatics enjoyed greater independence from institutions, the racial and other marginalizing projections, integral to the concept of a natural body, meant that some dancers achieved agency at the ideological expense of others.

Based on the insights about how Somatics has the potential to impose its own cultural agenda, I endeavored to integrate into my teaching the understanding that, rather than unearthing natural movement, dancers construct nature to achieve a sense of authenticity against what they experience as imposed aesthetics. As part of studio classes, I tried to teach students to reflect on how ideas of collectivism and individuality are synthesized through Somatics using the rhetoric of natural capacity. The analysis of the ideology turned out to be counterproductive to the labor of embodying the regimens. Nevertheless, the consciousness I brought to teaching helped me refrain from imposing aesthetics that I associated with the conceit of authenticity. In classes not based on set movement, I perceived students as failing to transcend “imposed aesthetics” when they embodied Somatics through vocabulary familiar to them. I wanted them to “let go” of what they knew, but, cognizant of the insights in my study, I realized I was looking for pedestrian-like forms, temporal execution, and aesthetics. Apparently I needed to “let go” of my preconceptions about “authenticity” to allow the students to use aesthetics that

they valued. They asserted movement ideas that pushed against a homogenized aesthetic. A student described bringing the skills learned in my classes to hip hop, which alerted me to my assumption that he would bring hip-hop to contemporary dance-the dominant idiom in the dance program where I was teaching, and in most other American university dance programs. The student contested contemporary dance's superiority by insisting upon his autonomy over the Somatic skills he was learning, which bolstered my belief in the potential use of the regimens to critique the homogenization of technique and vocabulary.

Using this adaptability of Somatic modalities to different vocabularies, I also choreographed work that draws attention to how contemporary dance excludes disabled dancers. The British dancer Catherine Long cannot access most training because of her difference from what is assumed to be a normal bodily structure. Yet using Somatics, I developed vocabulary with her based upon her physicality, a vocabulary that critiqued the aesthetics by which she is generally excluded. Compared with non-disabled people, Long is invariably represented as lacking the capability to do everyday activity properly, such as walk or balance. Unlike most dance techniques, many Somatic exercises, particularly those associated with the 1970s, and those focused on idiosyncratic movement that 1980s East Village artists used, do not depend on the presumption of a normative physical structure. I recalibrated these approaches to train Long, while developing movement that critiqued exclusionary aesthetics. The 2014 solo *Impasse* emphasized the awkwardness and incapability with which Long's movement is usually associated. The dance conveyed the experience of debilitation or paralysis that Long often associates with being visible as a moving body. Yet by executing the dance with physical capacity she cultivated using Somatics, Long exercised agency over the effects of how she is generally represented. Ideas that have been important in Somatics, such as physical autonomy,

and the critique of established skills, therefore underpinned the creation of choreography that highlighted how contemporary dance reifies a particular idea of physical ability. Rather than stage a physical natural truth, *Impasse* announced the symbolic role of movement in differentiating bodies as elegant and capacious or awkward and incapacitated.

By describing my implementation of Somatics, I want to stress that although accessing natural physical capacity does not guarantee dancers' agency, we can attune our teaching and choreography to the social, political, cultural and economic processes of subjugation. Of course some artists, particularly those associated with the British 1970s collective X6, and East Village artists beginning in the 1980s, took note of the body's socio-political relevance. Yet their uses of the training continued to invest in the idea of nature, with which they cultivated distinct Somatic bodies to negotiate different circumstances. Because practitioners invariably believed that they were pursuing authenticity that is integral to the natural body, the causes of the tensions that arose with the diversification of pedagogy and choreography were overshadowed. Further research would reveal whether this ultimately robbed artists of a language to challenge the effects of institutionalization, or if they found ways within Somatic discourse to continue their resistance. Towards the end of the 20th century, dance training programs and concert houses began asserting their belief in artistic freedom by engaging both highly successful and more marginal artists who seemed to share a pedagogical and artistic heritage to which Somatics was integral. They embraced well-known choreographers that guaranteed large audiences and promised students access to the knowledge required to join a company. The institutions also, however, included marginal artists that would be appreciated by well informed dance audiences and teach students about innovation. A shared discourse, that the artists were experimenting with natural physical capacity, concealed how material and cultural conditions mediated artists'

choices. If, however, we understand the search for authenticity as the pursuit of agency against myriad forms subjugation, as well as the capitalizing upon available opportunities, then the question becomes not what is the right way to access natural physical capacity, but how dancers contend with their circumstances.

Artists invested in the conceit of nature because it seemed to offer them space, theoretically at least, from the increasing ubiquity of liberal capitalism. Somatics therefore confirmed that contemporary dance develops its aesthetics independently from institutional and commercial forces. This dissertation reveals, however, that the contribution made by Somatics to such independence, affirmed a liberal discourse that was tied to the very social conditions from which artists aimed to establish creative freedom. Artists choreographed cultural dissidence as they challenged the limitations they saw in their respective dance establishments, the practice of their predecessors, and broader social mores. Yet post-war liberalism defined a mature capitalist society precisely as one that tolerates cultural dissidence. Differences in the implementation of Somatics consequently naturalized American liberalism even while artistic practice seemed to be independent of any specific cultural context or organ of power. New York established itself as the center of a dissident transnational culture embodied in local Somatics that even critiqued values associated with the American city.

Important ramifications for dance studies extend from the insight that, through Somatics, contemporary dance fulfills a key premise of liberal capitalism even when it explicitly engages cultural politics. For example, my choreographic critique of elegance and capacity in *Impasse*, and my student's use of the regimens in hip-hop, both constitute cultural dissidence. Like many scholars and artists, I invest in the contemporary moving body as a site at which marginalization can be contested along axes like race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. Somatics

underpins much of the methodology by which artists contest misrepresentation, or seem to cultivate vocabulary that stages new social subjects. This suggests that they are trapped in a double bind, because as they assert an authentic self against dominant oppressive ideals, they extend liberal ideology by staging cultural dissidence as proof of their creative and social freedom. Even if dancers refer to existing vocabulary in their choreography, Somatics still configures the body as a *carte blanche* at the point of training, through which various traditions can be embodied to launch critical projects.¹²¹² Scholars that theorize contemporary dance as a contestation of prevailing and oppressive ideals similarly recapitulate the idealization of cultural dissidence in liberal capitalism. Contemporary dance claims to provide freedom from establishment constraints, and the space to stage critique, in a way that allows liberalism to sidestep interrogation by seeming to be the basis from which critique is possible.¹²¹³

The understanding that Somatics embodies liberalism offers important insight to scholarship using an inter-textual methodology, which aims to better appreciate dance forms by relating them to practices from which they have traditionally been distinguished.¹²¹⁴ Dance studies now boasts a substantial body of work that theorizes diverse cultural traditions, including classical, popular, commercial, and contemporary dance, including the transnational flow of these practices. By framing Somatics as inter-textually related to other forms in a transnational context, we may find that the regimens claim global superiority in a way that is not

¹²¹² I am influenced in this insight by Foster who argues that through "release technique", the distinctions between movement traditions are lost because that anatomical basis of the approach seems to provide a universal basis from which dancers move into and out of diverse practices. Susan Leigh Foster, "Hired Bodies & Dancing Nomads," in *Springdance Salons* (Theatre Studies Utrecht University 2011).

¹²¹³ In this sense, liberalism universalizes itself much like I argued consciousness had in the introduction using Sara Ahmed's work. Liberalism disguises itself as a means for liberation, but by doing so it conceals its own oppressive structure. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

¹²¹⁴ See the scholarship that I referred to in the introduction as two among many other examples. Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*; Chatterjea, *Butting Out: Reading Resistive Choreographies through Works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Chandralekha*; Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*; O'Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage*; Burt, *Alien Bodies*.

dissimilar from classical ballet. To the degree that Somatics underpins Western contemporary dance's assertion that it is at the apex of aesthetic and social development, the training embodies 21st century expansionist capitalist logic like that established post-war. This warrants further research into how Somatics works in regional contexts beyond the Western cultural centers focused on in this dissertation, and how the training is taught alongside other forms. For example, the dance academy in Singapore teaches Somatics in a program that includes Barata Natyam, and Somatics has also become popular in Mexico City where it manifests in, and is applied to, vocabulary in a way that is distinct from the history traced in this dissertation. Studying the pedagogy, as it has come into contact with new dance traditions in non-Western contexts, would reveal whether the rhetoric about individual freedom persists; and if so, whether and how the story about rejecting Western classical and modern stills serves the conceit of individual freedom. Such research would also provide insight into how the continuing diversification of contemporary dance culture extends or contests existing global power relations.

Further focus on the transnational traffic of Somatics also calls attention to the change in the relationship between ballet and the regimens, which deserves further research. The dissemination of Somatics, beyond the small transnational network that established itself in the 1970s, dovetailed both with the success in various countries of companies using the regimens, and the decline of the view that classical aesthetics were oppositional to the training. The understanding, established in this dissertation, that Somatics initially rode upon the coattails of American modern dance, provides a model for thinking about how the training traveled, where and who enjoyed the privilege to study and teach it, and who financed the venture. The global success of ballet has long exceeded that of modern dance, and increasingly the classical

approach has informed concert dance by subsuming modern, experimental, and non-Western approaches in various forms of contemporary ballet. The question arises then, whether Somatics has expanded exponentially beyond its experimental beginnings through its relationship with ballet. Other related research questions include how the presumption that ballet is foundational to concert dance survived by feeding off Somatics, and in what ways have the regimens changed the look and pedagogy of ballet, and consequently its values.¹²¹⁵

The widespread shift toward using Somatics as a complement to classic training also begs the question of how the values in the regimens changed to support the execution of existing Vocabulary as opposed to training dancers to generate their own styles. As I have argued in the introduction, the broad institutionalization of Somatics happened at a time when dance education began embodying a competitive corporate model. But with my focus on the rapid growth and then decline of a community identified with experimentation, this study neglects to analyze the values constructed in the studio by dancers who aim to cultivate excellence in the execution of existing vocabularies, including ballet and modern dance. What I did uncover was that some institutions changed their use of Somatics from cultivating idiosyncratic dancers to promoting the regimens as a way to protect health and enjoy career longevity.¹²¹⁶ But deducing how the language of the practice changed will reveal how the use of Somatics as a source of innovation in the late 20th century relates to its use as a source of excellence in execution in 21st

¹²¹⁵ Luc Venier and Rebecca Nettle Fiol talk about how the Somatic training in their title makes better ballet dancers. But the question arises how the execution of classical ballet has changed, and whether it embodies different values for the dancers as well as those conveyed to the viewers, by combining classicism with the liberal ideals embodied in Somatics. Nettle-Fiol, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link*.

¹²¹⁶ Documents from EDDC and its antecedents track a transformation from Somatics being talked about as a maverick approach with uncertain but creative outcomes, to the regimens being talked about as offering health benefits to the dancer and preparing them in the best way possible for the existing contemporary dance market. HBO-Raad Besteldadministratie, "Eindrapport Van De Evaluatiecommissie Dansopleiding (End Report of the Evaluation Committee for Dance Training)." Opleiding Theatredance/EDDC, "Zelfevaluatierapport in Het Kater Van Visitatie Dans (Self Evaluation Report for Dance)."

century dance education. I would ask whether the principles established in the period from the 1960s to the 1990s continue to be asserted as the foundation of the work.

Along with the questions about how Somatics reconfigures itself in relation to non-Western dance forms and in non-Western contexts, the further research I am proposing calls for a substantial focus on major dance training institutions. The Singapore Dance Academy, P.A.R.T.S. in Belgium (which is thought to be at the cutting edge of contemporary dance training) Juilliard (which remains the most well know conservatory for dancers in the United States), and the London School of Contemporary Dance, all figure as major institutions in different countries that look to a transnational context for contemporary dance. These institutions also all implement Somatics in their effort to establish a competitive edge in a dance education market. The question becomes then: how do teachers and students use the idea of authenticity in these contexts where the aim is clearly not to resist dance establishments, but achieve success within them?

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