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Remembering Through the Corpus:
The Intersection of (Moving) Bodies with Architecture
at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

Ying Zhu

August 2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Derek Burrill, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Erika Suderburg, Co-Chairperson
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Remembering Through the Corpus:
The Intersection of (Moving) Bodies with Architecture
at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

by

Ying Zhu

Doctor of Philosophy, Critical Dance Studies
University of California, Riverside, August 2010
Dr. Derek Burrill, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Erika Suderburg, Co-Chairperson

This dissertation inserts itself into the place where the body meets architecture by asking whether and how the maneuverings and dances performed by visitors at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) shift our understanding of the practice of memorialization. I tangle memory studies, architectural theory, and dance studies within each other. By attending to the moving bodies at the memorial site, I seek to push further the ontological boundaries of dance, to include within its folds, the constant and articulate corporeal gestures and dances of the everyday. Because my project is rooted in and emerges from dance studies, I ask in these pages, what other ways the presence of the body can figure into the narrative of national memorialization. I trace the historical arc of the production of the VVM and account for the role of its primary designer, Maya Lin with the body in mind, by re-imagining the presence of bodies in the production process and re-imagining

Lin's choreographic participation in building the VVM. This effort suggests that the body plays a necessary role for understanding the development of the VVM. Because my point of examination is a national memorial, I also intervene on the discourse of memory studies, which is embroiled in a conversation about the utility of aligning memory with a material signifier. Currently, memory scholars see dissolution in the Western alignment of the concept of memory with a material object. However, by including the body's actions at the VVM into dialogue about memorial architecture and memory, I attempt to make a case for the necessity of materiality when we speak of memory. I argue that the idea of (national) memorialization is a multi-faceted concept that not only includes an architectural node, but also embraces the archive and the body as carriers of memory and signifiers of memorialization. In reading dancing carried out at the VVM, I argue that the practice of memorialization is layered with gestures of mourning.

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Introduction

This project is borne from a curiosity of where dance studies can meander if it gets pushed from formal spaces of performance. In particular, I am inspired by a 2005 visit to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Erected one block south of Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany, the memorial was inaugurated for public use the same year as my visit. This Berlin-based memorial comprises of more than two thousand concrete stalaе arranged to form an undulating sea in which blocks of varying heights are interspersed across the 4.7 acre grounds. Upon visiting the space, I was struck by the ways in which visitors were invited to freely navigate the space and how these bodies formed casual relationships with the space and architecture, despite the nature and gravity of what the memorial commemorates. The architecture provides no specific directives for the body, so visitors are compelled to construct their own pathways for moving through the space. I witnessed people perching on the concrete stalaе, using the shorter blocks as stepstools in effort to gain a better site-line, sitting on the blocks within easy physical reach. This space activated the body and encouraged individual choreographic choices. I wanted to know if and how other memorials, especially the ones built in my home country of the United States, provide conditions and invitations for the body to dance. The most obvious place to probe this question is Washington, D.C., itself a space smeared with the residue of politics, national symbolism, and American, collective memory.

The National Mall in Washington, D.C. functions as the physical representation of the fabric of American, collective memory. This space houses monuments and memorials marking the most prominent achievements (and failures) of the country's history. While I could not attend to all the architecture on this built-scape, I did want to look at bodily behavior at one of these memorials. I chose the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) as my point of research because it architecturally deviated from the representational, glorified design style permeating most commemorative structures on the National Mall. In this way, the memorial most resembled the austere, horizontal dimensions of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe that inspired this project in the first place. On a scouting trip to Washington, D.C., I noticed that visitors to the VVM making intimate gestures of contact with the black granite memorial wall and was immediately curious what extensive field research would engender.

In this dissertation, I form a investigate nexus melding theories of memory, with scholarly discourse on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, space theory, and dance studies. I want to see what happens to the meaning of this memorial when moving, dancing bodies are introduced into the equation. And as such, this project inquires into the boundaries and conditions of dances' ontology, to pose the question prominent dance scholars like Andre Lepecki and Rachel Fensham have already asked about the status of dance. In repeating a question that is central to the work of dance scholars, I want to ask it while standing in the environment of the everyday, to ask it while I stand in the space of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reading the articulations and undulations of its visitors.

It is in the first chapter that I attend to the canon of memory scholarship, pointing out the troubled status of (Western) memory, a concept intimately linked to materiality. Scholars see a problematic dissolution between what once appeared as a clear link between memory and the object embodying it. As such, these same scholars see a futility in the way Western nations continue to confront and imprint national, collective memory in the guise of commemorative architecture. Tracing the development of memory scholarship, beginning with Pierre Nora's seminal article, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," I account for idea of memory as impacted by and undone by our (postmodern) inability to organize a through-line between the past and present. Despite the relevant point scholars make about the problematic alliance of memory with materiality, I charge that one factor of materiality has yet to be critically acknowledged in the field of memory studies, and that is the gestures of the moving body. Instead of entirely dismissing the Western pattern of commemorating through materiality, I propose we introduce the body into the discourse as a way to shift the outcome of how we conceptualize memory, especially in the context of memorial architecture. In this chapter, I entangle the work of dance scholars with the work of memory scholars, using Paul Connerton's book *How Societies Remember*, as a meeting point. I argue that because bodies are themselves articulating units, that including them in an analysis of national memory and memorial architecture can shift the theoretical evaluations of (Western) memory.

This is project reliant on imagination. It is also an experiment into the theoretical possibilities of the body. It is impossible to attend to the bodies on the VVM without first

tracing the historical arc of the memorial's production process. As a dance scholar, I am not only interested in the bodily articulations of visitors to the VVM, but I am also concerned with how the idea and presence of the body can figure into all facets of theorizing the VVM. I am curious if and how the body fits into an account of the historical track of the memorial project. In other words, I am interested in how, if we attend to the presence of the bodies in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) archives, whether this bodily awareness can shift our understanding of how the VVM came into being. Using archival documents, I unravel the narrative of the building process, looking for references to the body and looking for spaces where imagining and inserting the body can enhance and clarify the story of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As such, this project does not simply attend to the live, material bodies temporarily inhabiting the real space of the memorial, but it also uncovers the echoes of bodies haunting the archives and stories memorializing the production of space (VVM) as a means of excavating the theoretical possibilities of the body. I seek to slip and weave the body into all corners of this project. And it is in Chapters 2 and 4 where I imagine the presence and possibilities of and for the body.

In Chapter 2, I textually reconstruct the memorial by tracing the emergence of the VVM as a concept in 1979 to its official inauguration in the landscape of the National Mall in 1982. Relying on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, which is housed in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., I lay out the historical context of how the VVM transformed from idea to material architecture. And interlaced in the historical account of the memorial, I locate (and imagine) the body's strategic participation in the

memorial's making. In this chapter, I also play with the memorial as a concept, arguing to expand the notion of memorial to encompass the archive and later, in Chapter 5, the moving body, within its conceptual realm.

I situate my body and bodily choreography in carrying out field research at the memorial site as points of investigation in the third chapter of this dissertation. I address the question of presence and how the differing motivations of the tourist body and investigative body fall under differing legislations and constructions of space within the memorial site. The National Park Service (NPS) is the organization that administers the Vietnam Veteran Memorial, so I look at the choreographic constraints the NPS constructs for bodies conducting field research on public lands. I examine how my body and accompanying choreographies fall under specific legislation for the practice of conducting and collecting research material. Here, I argue that within the memorial site, there are multiple constructions of space, invisibly layered on top of and across the visible space. One version of space is accessible to traditional visitors and another construction of space is bounded for bodies conducting scholarly inquiries into the VVM. Both sets of bodies however, are subject to legislation materializing in architectural signifiers on the site and via the directives of paperwork administered by the NPS. Contained within the VVM is a Foucauldian heterotopia, an "other" space reserved for bodies refusing to approach the memorial as simply a site to engage with national, collective memory.

Chapter 4 returns to my strategy of imagination as I attempt to recover the (bodily) presence of Maya Lin, designer of the black granite memorial wall. Because her

aesthetic contribution was central to the memorial project, it is necessary to acknowledge her place in the VVM narrative. Using dance studies' focus on the material body as impetus, I recover the choreographic arc danced out by Maya Lin in the memorial project. This chapter is an experiment and practice of locating, to search for Lin's physical presence via the texts of the VVMF archive as a way to construct and re-imagine her corporeal meandering in the project. Couched within this attempt at reconstruction, I argue that Lin, as designer/architect is overridden by organizations and individuals who, according to Foucault, are empowered to control and determine the techne of space. This explains her failure in retaining full aesthetic integrity of her memorial design as the VVMF sought to compromise with detractors of Lin's design by agreeing to the inclusion of additional architectural elements: a figurative sculpture and American flag.

The final chapter of this dissertation looks for and defines a space for the body's intrusion into scholarly discourse on the VVM. This section mines the canon of critical writings focused on the memorial and looks for the places into which the moving, articulating body can be slipped. In this chapter, I argue that while the breath of VVM scholarship is wide and extensive, the impact and corporeal operations of visitors are almost entirely overlooked. Most scholars addressing the VVM architecture allude to the necessary presence of bodies and discern the architecture as inviting not only multiple and varied readings of the Vietnam War as a node of national memory, but the architecture also appears to welcome—invite—the visitor's physical presence and contact within its sphere. However, no scholar directly attends to the articulations of the moving body in relation to the VVM. So, in this chapter, I claim space for a bodily intervention

and legitimizing the necessary presence of dance scholarship in the study of memorial architecture.

I have consciously avoided enclosing my readings of bodily choreography in a specific chapter. Instead, descriptions and theorizations of choreographies performed at the VVM are woven into the body of the dissertation as interruptions, scattered across the five chapters of this dissertation, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the last three chapters. This refusal to contain the body's dancing within a closed chapter functions as a structural metaphor meant to embody the way in which the body permeates all sections of this project and visually play with the idea of the body slipping into the relevant theoretical crevices. Couched within the various dissertation chapters is a claim that bodily activities performed at the memorial site can legitimately be enfolded in the conceptual boundaries of dance. Using movement descriptions of visitors navigating the VVM, I argue that the practice of memorialization echoes the choreography of mourning. In this particular memorial site, the architecture participates in conflating the practice of memorialization with gestures of mourning. Extending a claim that is briefly made by scholars writing on the VVM, I argue that the memorial is only "complete," its meaning reliant on the presence of bodies. Uninhabited, the VVM is absented of what Lin would refer to as its fluidity. I also suggest that while the pattern of choreography in the memorial is similar among visitors, what embodies the reality that the architecture allows for multiple meanings to be applied to its surface is the variation in duration that each visitor constructs for him/herself while moving through the VVM. The heterogeneity in the timing of dances is evidence for its rhetorical openness.

A Word on Research Methods

This dissertation draws on materials collected from field research conducted on site at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Over the course of a four month stay in Washington D.C., beginning in January of 2009, I visited the memorial site at various times of the day, watching for several hours at a time, the performances of the visitors interacting with its architecture. While the VVM technically comprises of three architectural elements: Maya Lin's granite wall, Frederick Hart's bronze sculpture of three servicemen, and an American flag, I concentrated my observations towards the primary architectural element, Lin's horizontal, black, V-shaped wall. It was with this element that visitors were most engaged, with many visitors choosing to overlook a visit to Frederick Hart's statue of three servicemen and American flag altogether. My data comes in the form of still and moving images I captured with a digital camera and camcorder. Drawing from the methodology of describing choreography wielded by all dance scholars, the bulk of the material I collected at the memorial site was compiled in the form of written descriptions, collected in real time I watched bodies pass through the memorial site.

Also relevant as fieldwork is my own embodied experience as visitor and critical investigator of the VVM. I used my (bodily) experience of navigating the memorial site to form kinesthetic sympathy and understanding of what visitors were experiencing. While everyone's relationship to the memorial wall is different, because I had wandered through this space myself, I was better able to describe the physical maneuvering the bodies that intersected with the site. My body also served a site for critical investigation

as I attempted to steer through the directives of the National Park Service to acquire an official permit for filming at the memorial site.

While in Washington, D.C. fieldwork also comprised of sorting and collecting materials culled from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, which is housed in the Library of Congress. In my efforts to construct the processes of memorial production and to understand the role Maya Lin played in the production process, I poured through the texts collected by the VVMF administrators, using a digital camera to capture and save necessary documents.

Because this work attempts to engage the shifts of the body with the practice of memorialization, it is crucial to introduce a varied and disparate collection of scholarly discourse focused on the study of memory, space, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and dance. Since this dissertation project is also a play on theory, I have relied on the work of Michel de Certeau and his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, as the basis of arguing for the tactical playfulness in which I insert the body into an investigation of the VVM as well as the tactical playfulness of the body in the actual memorial site. This dissertation thus becomes a scholarly web in which I tangle the materiality of architecture and bodily articulations drawn from my fieldwork in Washington, D.C. with the theoretical foundations of memory, space, and body.

Chapter One: Linking Dance with Memory

The Materiality of Memory

The status of (collective) memory is in flux as we creep beyond the postmodern border. Scholars are questioning the stability of the traditional Western construction of memory, which according to Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler, has always indicted material objects as the representation of memory.¹ Western memory culture or the practice, patterns, and habits adopted by citizens within a society to conjure up nodes from a personal and national past, has always located material objects as analogues to human memory, with the life of the memory preserved so long as the object remains intact. Memory scholars like Adrian Forty, Susanne Kuchler, Andreas Huyssen, and James E. Young question the durability between this seemingly intimate link between memory and material object. These scholars doubt whether material objects are the most effective vessels of collective memory: "...it is clear that the relationship between objects and memory is less straightforward than Western thinking has been in the habit of assuming. We cannot take for granted that artifacts act as the agents of collective memory, nor can they be relied upon to prolong it."² By situating the practice of remembering and the idea of memory within the realm of forgetting, Forty investigates the transitory nature of non-Western memory traditions. He is referring to ephemeral

¹ Adrian Forty, introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999).

² Adrian Forty, introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 7.

monuments like the *ndavos*, a bamboo and daub structure built by citizens of the kingdom of the Oku from the North West province of Cameroon. The *ndavos* metonymically represents the king's palace and is constructed after the death of the ruling figure. As an artifact, it harbors the memory of the king, but is purposely abandoned to decay. The Oku strategy for commemoration is transient; it consciously resists permanence. Forty posits this ephemeral monument as an alternate and perhaps more appropriate means of dealing with collective memory. The idea of collective memory as being marked with a transient status is historically juxtaposed to the invasion of memorial structures atop the Western landscape. Architecture as a structural signifier of memory is a prime embodiment of how Western cultures have tied material objects to shards of memory. The effectiveness of this commemorative strategy has been called into question not only by Adrian Forty, but also by other memory scholars such as James E. Young in his work on Holocaust memory as an underpinning for collective memory.

Despite such critique of Western culture's approach to commemoration, it is impossible to discount the prevalence of memorial and monuments within the (Western) built environment, and equally impossible to ignore plans in progress to produce more not-yet-constructed memorial structures. The reality of using architecture as the primary commemorative procedure notwithstanding, scholars argue that the loosening of material objects from their memory anchor is not the only changing condition of memory. They also perceive the unmooring of the past from our sense of the present as impacting the meaning and status of collective memories in Western societies. The tropes of "breakage" and "de-linkage" present in the undoing of materiality from memory are

not isolated to the condition of memory, but also relevant to how our modern sensibility deals with time.

There exist multiple caesuras in how we manage to connect the present with concepts of the past and future. The unraveling continuity between past, present and future is, according to memory scholar Pierre Nora, an inherent consequence of the changing nature of memory itself. In his critique of modern memory, Nora claims that memory no longer fully permeates the fabric of the present. Rather, it exists and transpires in certain sites/pockets alienated from both the present within which it sits and the past, which it attempts to recall.³ Nora attributes the de-linking of the past from the present to the emergence and explosion of mass culture, which has erupted on a global scale. Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism or the Cultural Capital of Logic* echoes Nora's observation about the discontinuity of time. Using architecture as a basis for defining postmodernist modes of perception, Jameson reveals a crisis in historicity and temporal breakdowns accompanying the shift to postmodern condition. Our failure to locate the chronology of past, present, and future narratives results in our incapacity to clearly organize the past, present, and future of our lived experiences. Thusly, in postmodern culture, our existence comprises "a series of pure and unrelated presents in time."⁴

For Nora, the media in particular contributes to "...the tremendous dilation of our very mode of historical perception" as it refigures memory in the guise of current events,

³ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989).

⁴ Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Capital of Logic*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991), 27.

abandoning the construction of a memory couched within the folds of a collective heritage.⁵ This is the consequence of the “acceleration of history” with which Nora opens his critique. Memory simultaneously becomes the prism through which we distinguish between real memory and history, the means through which our modern Western societies organize the past. There exists a (modern) misunderstanding that the boundaries distinguishing history from memory is blurred. Modernity, on the contrary, has brought about the eradication of memory by history, and as a consequence brought about a clear distinction between these two concepts,

On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory unselfconscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth and on the other hand, our memory [history], nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces. The gulf between the two has deepened in modern times with the growing belief in a right, a capacity, and even a duty to change. Today, this distance has been stretched to its convulsive limit.⁶

Nora conceives memory as borne out of living societies, a construction that is vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, something that is constantly shifting—dialectically open to remembering and forgetting. This shifting conceptually moving idea is implicitly one part of a binary that defines history as insistent in its form, a reconstruction of “what is no longer,” and is problematically incomplete.⁷ While memory stakes its ties to what

⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

Nora terms the “eternal present,” history is concerned with the past, embodying a representation of it.⁸

For Nora the modern era, “with the appearance of trace, of mediation, of distance...” is tuned into history, rather than true memory. Hence, the presence and need to consecrate *lieux de memoire*, floating islands of (real) memory dotting landscapes bound in the twine of history. Using France as the geographical base for examining the discrete separation between memory and history, Nora points to the emergence of historiography or the writing of a history of history in France as indicative of the division between memory and history. While the writing of a history of the nation-state and its accompanying development established “true memory” and expanded the basis for collective memory, the introduction of historiography created “...doubt, by running a knife between the tree of memory and the bark of history.”⁹ Whereas memory and history once folded into each other, sequestered in a symbiotic relationship, now memory no longer bleeds into the fabric of history, but rather becomes an object of it.

Nora identifies the nineteenth century Third French Republic as a haven for the tradition of memory, which was made palpable via concepts of history and nation. It was in this era when “the relationships between history, memory, and the nation were

⁸ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

⁹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 10.

Nora makes a distinction between “true memory” which has found sanctuary in body-based, unspoken traditions. “True memory,” has become replaced with history.

characterized as more than natural currency: they were shown to involve a reciprocal circularity, a symbiosis at every level scientific and pedagogical, theoretical and practical.”¹⁰ In this era, a nation’s definition of the present was intimately tied to its claim to the past. This cohesion between memory and history unraveled in France during the 1930 crisis, signaling a shift from the coupling of state and nation to a coupling of state and society. It was in this context that history converted from a tradition of memory to a means of self-knowledge of society:

With the advent of society in place of the nation, legitimation by the past and therefore by history yields to legitimation by the future. One can only acknowledge and venerate the past and serve the nation; the future, however, can be prepared for: thus the three terms regain their autonomy. No longer a cause, the nation has become a given; history is now a social science, memory a purely private phenomenon. The memory-nation was thus the last incarnation of the unification of memory and history.¹¹

For Nora, “the moment of *lieux de memoire*” transpires at the intersection of the emergence of historiography where history critically turns in on itself and the closing of a tradition of memory, embodied by the coalescence between memory, history, and nation. This intersecting combination of change sends us to the remaining vestiges of memory, the *lieux de memoire* in the form of archives, monuments, commemorations.

As a consequence of the decoupling of memory from history, or what Nora terms “the historical metamorphosis of memory,” our contemporary relation to the past has morphed. It is “no longer a retrospective continuity but the illumination of

¹⁰ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 10.

¹¹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 10.

discontinuity.”¹² The idea of a past as always retrievable within a present that is simply a re-formation of the past has dissolved. Now, in our modern condition, the past is no longer a member of the continuous timeline leading into the present. However, memory continues to impact our linkage to the future, which Andreas Huyssen also acknowledges in his book *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*.¹³ Whereas the future was previously a visible extension of the present, both predictable and malleable in form, with the reformation of the past, it is now invisible, unpredictable, uncontrollable.

Andreas Huyssen laments the disconnection between past and present, caught between the slipping reigns of memory slowly being un-grasped by the nation.¹⁴ For him, part of this severing of the past from the present is a consequence of a current crisis in the fundamental condition of history and its capacity to objectively devise the past, “at stake in the current history/memory debate is not only a disturbance of our notions of the past, but a fundamental crisis in our imagination of alternative futures.”¹⁵ Huyssen is at once working against and with this binary, which Pierre Nora has already characterized as the competing forces of history as objective science versus memory as subjectively personal, by pointing to the crisis in this assumption and by using this binary as a platform against which to re-theorize memory. And the crisis of memory is not only the unmooring of

¹² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 16.

¹³ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2.

material objects from their memory pier, but it also stems from an upheaval in our understanding of the past as we surrender our ability to imagine alternative futures. The failure of historiography becomes the central base from which Huyssen conceives memory as an archive that rebuilds and rescues the possibility of the future. In this way, he echoes Nora who argues that the condition of memory is impacted by the absence of a through-line linking the past to the present.

Nora suggests that our concern with memory is tied to a particular “historical moment,” wherein our realization of our disconnection to the past is entrenched with the sense that our memories are “torn” such that it becomes problematic to embody those memories in “certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.”¹⁶ Hence the presence of “sites of memory,” or *lieux de memoire*, rather than “real environments of memory,” or *milieux de memoire*. Memories have become floating islands, represented in isolated spatial pockets rather than blended into the scope of our existence, within the general (built) environment,

We have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches of schools, the family or the state; the end too of ideologies that prepare a smooth passage from the past to the future or that had indicated what the future should keep from the past...¹⁷

Nora claims that we have given up a collective memory that charts a collective heritage for a memory that is mediatically documented and comprised of fleeting current events.

¹⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

¹⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

But unlike Huyssen, who suggests that borders between history and memory are blurry and in flux, Nora divides the forces of memory from history, defining the twentieth century as an era of history.

The Western strategy of commemoration, which the United States participates in, is clearly problematic from the vantage point of memory scholars. However, such theoretical distaste for permanent material units as vessels of national, collective memory is not productive when we zone in on reality of Western memorialization strategies. The truth of the matter is that we continue to build monuments and memorials. The pattern of aligning the past with a permanent embodiment of has not eroded. Even in the wake of postmodern 9/11, the critique of materiality has been disregarded, as the urgency to erect a memorial on the grounds of the former World Trade Center resulted in a widely publicized international architecture design contest. Nowhere has the link between memory and material signifier been more enforced in the United States than on the National Mall, where plans for building more memorials are lying in wait.

In critiquing the diminishing power of the National Mall, Judy Scott Feldman points to the National Capital Planning Committee's failure to curb projects on the Mall:

The weakness of the Commemorative Works Act in controlling development is evident in the prodigious growth in the number and size of memorials since 1986...the trend toward more and ever larger memorials intensified with the 7.4 acre FDR Memorial at the Tidal Basin...¹⁸

These national memorials work to assert and define a public, collective American memory-scape that confronts shards of (real) history. The politicization of the space of

¹⁸ Judy Scott Feldman, "Turning Point: The Problematics of Building on the Mall Today" in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 147.

the national capital allows its architectures greater authority than in other urban environments. This authority seems to render memorial structures as the definitive representation of memory/history. As such, architecture retains its former power as a political advocate while simultaneously addressing the question of the history/memory debate. This rupture in our continuous sense of time, coupled with the rupture in perceptions of memory—collective memory included—as firmly attached to a material signifier, render problematic these traditional maneuvers toward commemorating the past. However, these architectural markers of memory are constructed against these tides of discontinuity; conceived, designed, and built in spite of our acknowledgement that both time and memory require alternate treatments.

It is precisely materiality, specifically the materiality of the moving body that, when accounted for in conjunction with the problematic materiality of national memorials, can help re-define and distinguish between memory and history. Memory scholars have overlooked, in their critique of memory and time, the visitors who accumulate at sites of national memorials and monuments. Some designers of space, however, are keenly aware of the impact that architecture has on the body's motility. Architect Robert J. Yudell enunciates this relationship in his article, "Body Movement" which is housed in Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore's book, *Body, Memory, and Architecture*. In making a claim for architects to design for the three-dimensional being Yudell sees,

...our movements are ever subject to the same physical forces as are built forms and may be physically contained, limited, and directed by these forms. Inevitably they are more intricately entwined with and dependent upon architecture than are sound and notation expressions of conversation, song, music, and writing. This

critical interaction of body form and movement with architecture deserves careful attention.¹⁹

Yet, the materiality of the body-at-the-memorial has not been subject to the same critical gaze that space and memory scholars have imposed on the architecture. This is where my intervention lies: by layering a dance studies lens onto the practice of reading memorial spaces; to notice and consider the articulating, moving body in combination with the architecture, I hope to provide space for re-theorizing the status of memorials and memory. Yudell, in advocating for attentiveness to the body in architectural design, even references the dancer's sense of space as inspiration, "we can look to the dancer for some fresh sense of these realm. Dancers speak of "feeling" space."²⁰ This is a project that complicates Yudell's claim that bodies and space reciprocally "animate" one another by asserting the prominence of materiality, specifically the materiality of architecture *and* the body by using a real memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a case study.

Bemoaning the idea that a completed monument or memorial structure actually works to confirm and maintain memory, James E. Young points to the deterioration inflicted onto memory's lifecycle by completion of its accompanying memorial:

In the eyes of modern critics and artists, the traditional monument's essential stiffness and grandiose pretensions to permanence thus doom it to an archaic, premodern status. Even worse, by insisting that its meaning is as fixed as its place

¹⁹ Robert J. Yudell, "Body Movement." in *Body, Memory, Architecture*, Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore. (New Haven, New Jersey and London, United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 1977), 57.

²⁰ Robert J. Yudell, "Body Movement." in *Body, Memory, Architecture*, Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore. (New Haven, New Jersey and London, United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 1977), 58.

in the landscape, the monument seems oblivious to the essential mutability of all cultural artifacts, the ways in which the significance of all art evolves over time.²¹

Young cites Martin Broszat who suggests that monumental references to history work to bury those very events “beneath layers of national myth and explanations.”²² Young also introduces the idea that the monument displaces public memory, “supplanting a community’s memory work with its own material form.”²³ Admittedly, postmodern scholars have unraveled the legitimacy of the memorial’s function as a direct representation of a piece of collective memory. However, these architectural signifiers do not disappear. Their posterity is assured by the stability of concrete, granite, marble, and bronze, but their power lingers when we gauge the number of people who temporarily inhabit the site of the memorial structures. This idea that the monument is a displacer of memory overlooks the function of the body in working through that historic point. Young is focused on the work, or rather the problem posed by the monument/memorial, that in erecting a material representation of a historic moment, we sentence that memory particle to its death. Moreover, because “the monument and its significances are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical, and aesthetic realities of the moment,” Young seems to suggest that the memorial is only current, but for a

²¹ James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany.” *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999): 6.

²² James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany.” *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999): 6.

²³ James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany.” *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999): 6.

moment.²⁴ What about the idea that architecture, while undeniably permanent, also maintains a capacity to shift with the times, to conceptually bend with winds of time and the pronations of the body?

In her analysis of The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, in Craig Barton's book, *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, Mabel O. Wilson advocates the possibility of exactly that, of a flexible architecture. The National Civil Rights Museums commemorates Martin Luther King and the accomplishments of Americans who waged the battle against racial injustice. The construction of the physical structure was intended to revitalize the museum site, a former motel, and the neighborhood in which the structure is situated. What is problematic about this museum is its firm historical articulation of the African American civil rights movement, which disallows visitors the freedom to form alternate, more personal meanings/associations with the Civil Rights Movement. As such, African-American culture and history becomes static, fixed not only within the confines of the museum, but also fixed along one interpretive plane. Even the building's design reinforces a fixed version of cultural meaning and memory. Within the museum, the Lorraine Motel, the site of King's death, is restored to historical accuracy. Any sense of the currency is erased by the reproduction of the 1968 era. Wilson critiques this simulation for the lack of imaginative potential, "[the restored Lorraine Motel] preempts the possibility of imagining the event from a contemporary perspective. The museum exhibition also weaves a linear account of

²⁴ James E Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany." *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999): 6.

African American history, placing a particular emphasis on the developments of the Civil Rights movement. Permeating the museum exhibition and the institution mission is “an overwhelming strain of Americanism.”²⁵

Furthermore, a distinct sense of nationalism is embedded in the museum’s representation of black history. This sense of Americanism stifles the racial inequality which covers the bulk of American history, “the patriotism of the exhibition also obscures the extent to which black were envisioned as the antithesis of whites—as irreparably inferior in character.”²⁶ Thus, the museum bars a mode of remembrance directly addressing consequences of inequality. As such, the museum/memorial’s meaning making capacity is also curtailed. What Wilson argues for is a strategy of memorialization that bends with not only historical changes, but also with the changing of time and perhaps the changing of conceptions of time. A memorial frozen in a particular interpretation of history is incompatible with a collective memory capable of shifting/mutating: “monuments that resist transformation risk losing their significance to future generations.”²⁷

²⁵ Mabel O. Wilson, “Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum.” in *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, ed. Craig Barton. (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 18.

²⁶ Mabel O. Wilson, “Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum.” in *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, ed. Craig Barton (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 19.

²⁷ Mabel O. Wilson, “Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum.” in *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, ed. Craig Barton (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 20.

Wilson does, however, recuperate architecture/space by proposing to read/experience the Lorraine Motel as a site of collective memory.²⁸ It is within the interstitial space between two reproductions of room 307 (site of King's death) that linear, smooth narrative of history is broken down, "between the simulations of room 307, however, the spatial and temporal underpinnings become shaky."²⁹ The relocation and reconstruction of room 307 undermines the authenticity of the space. In realizing this, museum visitors are compelled to construct their own interpretations of history, allowing individual perspectives to take part in the formation of collective memory, "consequently, the ideologies and representational strategies that elsewhere structure the museum's interpretation of history give way to more fluid, mutable remembrances of the Civil Rights Movement."³⁰ The static nature of memorial architecture that James E. Young feared would engender the corrosion and dissolution of national memories is rejected by Wilson, who ascertains the architecture can, indeed, be fluid and shifting, the very opposite of static. Moreover, Wilson indirectly hits upon a central, yet seldom acknowledged dimension in the linkage between material object and memory. She implies the necessary presence of the body as a central component of memorialization and the memorial-as-a-structure. Itself a moving entity, the body of the visitor contributes

²⁸ The Lorraine Motel, the site National Civil Rights Museum, was the site of Martin Luther King's assassination.

²⁹ Mabel O. Wilson, "Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum." in *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, ed. Craig Barton (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 24.

³⁰ Mabel O. Wilson, "Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum." in *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, ed. Craig Barton (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 24.

to the fluidity of the memorial structure and as Wilson points out, the body's reading of space can impose/instill the shakiness that allows memorial architecture to remain relevant in the every-moving current of time.

In citing the historically charged 1930 crisis in France as dissolving the alliance between memory and history, Nora pinpoints the idea of *lieux de memoire* as transpiring at this juncture, at the emergence of historiography, where history critically turns in on itself, causing the closing of a tradition of memory embodied by the coalescence between memory, history, and nation. This intersecting combination of change sends us to the remaining vestiges of memory, or *lieux de memoire* in the form of archives, monuments, commemorations. These *lieux de memoire* also speak to the now absent spontaneity of memory as archives and monuments are slowly and consciously constructed while celebratory commemorations must be strategically planned. These versions of memory no longer happen naturally, organically. Nora blames history for confining the tradition of memory in these last remaining strongholds—*lieux de memoire*—which are “moments of history torn away from movements of history,” not quite alive, but also not quite perished. As such, Nora re-situates what we call memory into the realm of history as, “what we take to be flare-ups of memory are in fact its final consumption in the flames of history...”³¹ Our fear of disappearance of memory and anxiety about the meaning of the present has imprisoned modern memory in archival form, where remnants become weighted down and made permanent. Andreas Huyssen reiterates Nora's claim by

³¹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13.

claiming that there has been a distinct shift in our perceptions of the present, which in turn has altered our sense of the past. As such, memory takes on a new function to document/record, burdening the archive with the responsibility of remembering, “what we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled.”³² The responsibility and materialization of this memory form has not only expanded, but has also become simultaneously democratized and diluted. Whereas archive work was once the responsibility of the state, church, and powerful families, archive work is now practiced by the masses. Nora critiques this construction of memory as no longer amorphous and organically shifting. The archive is problematically a conscious attempt at wrestling and pinning down lost rememberings, “no longer living memory’s more or less intended remainder, the archive has become a deliberate and calculated secretion of lost memory.”³³

As a consequence of the decoupling of memory from history, the archive forces social groups and individuals to redefine their identity through the charting of its history. Embroiled in this pattern of documenting personal and social history is the psychologization of modern remembrances. What Nora seems to suggest, in his account in the upsurge of personal or individual memory, is decomposition in the strength of collective memory. As memory in the modern condition is “no longer everywhere,” the

³² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13.

³³ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 14.

onus and the urgency rest on the individual to commandeer what remains of it. As collective memory retreats to a point of devastation in the history/memory coupling, it becomes the individual that takes on the reigns of remembering: “the less memory is experienced collectively, the more it will require individuals to undertake to become memory-individuals...”³⁴ Nora underscores a triadic of memory-like forces emerging from the modern memory metamorphosis, with the “archive-memory” representing one of three parts, along with “duty-memory” and “distance-memory.”³⁵ While memory as a triadic concept remains in the social fabric, true memory and memory changed by its passage into history must be distinguished: the latter, modern memory, is archival, reliant on the presence of the trace, while the former finds shelter in the body, “...taken refuge in gestures, habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories...”³⁶

Nora does not go further in exploring the content of true memory embedded in the body. However, his brief claim creates space for extending an analysis of the body as a receptacle for memory. Nora’s claim that the body bears the contents of true memory is an especially appropriate starting point for accounting for the body in (re)constructing the meaning and status of memorial architecture. If true memory “...has taken refuge in gestures and habits...” then what is the memorializing capacity of the body as it confronts

³⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 15.

³⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 16.

³⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13.

and assembles choreography in conjunction with architecture that itself represents a shard of the past? If memory is embedded in the dancing body, what sorts of articulations about (collective, national) memories are danced out by the visitor? Adrian Forty provides additional reinforcement for inserting the body into an analysis of collective memory. Forty sees architecture as a project of forgetting: “had architects paid more attention...and acknowledged more readily that perhaps, after all, architecture is and always has been above all an art of forgetting, their experiments with ‘memory’ might have been more successful.”³⁷ As such, he proposes to privilege a mode of collective remembering that exploits ephemeral monuments, where objects are erected and purposefully left to disintegrate via nature and time.

Forty’s proposal to attend to the tension between forgetting and remembering embodied in the form of an ephemeral memorial, is carried out by Nicolas Argenti in the first chapter of Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler’s book. Argenti anthropologically excavates the functions of lineage masquerades performed in the villages of Oku, situated in the North West Province of Cameroon. These lineage masquerades and palace appearances arise and are performed as a result of the loss of the king and the subsequent installation of his successor and Argenti attends to the series of these appearances, “the appearance, disappearance, and the falling-into-decay of several highly ambiguous objects...”³⁸ While vastly disparate in content, these appearances do share commonalities

³⁷ Adrian Forty, introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 16.

³⁸ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory and Royal Sepiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 27.

in that they materialize suddenly in and around the palace grounds and their presence in the community is brief. The installation of a new king in Oku society can be approached by two through-lines: an examination of the symbolic impact and meaning of the appearances or a focus on the “emotive impact of the appearances,” which is often imbricated with both a sense of surprise and danger.³⁹

Drawing from the work of Edward L. Schieffelin who claims that symbols gain their meaning from their performance within the social space, Argenti chooses to uncover the functions of the palace appearance by adopting the latter approach. In short, Argenti is laying claim to the memories inhabited through the performance of the body:

Cognitive memory is self-conscious and reflective; as such it is easily verbalized. Performative or habit memory, on the other hand, is not easily verbalized and is ‘as nearly as possible without reflection.’ Such pre-reflective bodily memories materialize only through enactment. Furthermore, habitual bodily memory informs present bodily actions.⁴⁰

What Argenti suggests is that bodily memories are transcribed through performance, which are themselves, a form of ephemeral monument that Forty claims is absent in Western memory culture. In giving credence to memorials maintaining only a temporary presence in the built landscape, Forty and Argenti suggest that along with public performances or buildings the Cameroonian community purposefully leaves to decay (*ndavo*), the body can also be conceived as an ephemeral memorial. For Argenti, the memory of the palace appearances do not only work on a cognitive level, but these

³⁹ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory and Royal Sepiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 23.

⁴⁰ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory and Royal Sepiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 23.

appearances also become embodied by the population, “I suggest that seeing these memories as not only cognitive, but embodied, not only thought but experienced, paves the way for an affective history of memory in Oku.”⁴¹ What these Oku appearances propose and what Argenti argues is that underlying the capture and confrontation of collective memory, the body cannot be overlooked. The witnessing of these appearances, the physicality of the appearances, and the physicality of the Oku onlookers are not irrelevant to how a society forms memory. In fact, the body not only contributes the memory making, but also functions as temporary memorials themselves. Argenti’s intervention into the nature and condition of ephemeral memorials in Cameroon is useful for rescuing memorial architecture from futility. What Argenti, along with Nora does, is create an opening through which we can theoretically inject the body as an ephemeral memorial, into the equation of collective memory. Memorial architecture is constructed for the body, for the visual and corporeal interplay between structure and body. The presence of bodies-as-memorials in relation to architecture-as-memorial shifts both the meaning of the body and of the structure.

Introducing the Body

Michel Foucault opens his investigations of heterotopias, socially fabricated sites countering the idealized notion of the utopia, by defining the nineteenth century as the

⁴¹ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory and Royal Sepulchre in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 23.

time obsessed epoch. He touts the Twentieth Century as the era concerned about space: “we are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin.”⁴² The materialization of these connections between points and intersections are, at the most basic level, carried out by the body in motion. While time and space have been de-constructed and theorized, what central concept is used to define our current western condition, which is rapidly creeping into a virtual landscape that simultaneously threatens to re-define how we conceptualized space (and time) and works to decay the previously sturdy posts establishing the boundaries of postmodernism? In this century, we have embarked into the space of virtual media, and are responding to the incessant call of technology. Nevertheless, we still navigate the Twenty-First century by the operations of our body. If the Twentieth Century was an era concerned about the formations of space, then the Twenty-First Century must take on the substance that makes visible what Foucault calls “the fatal intersection of time with space.”⁴³ It is the body that at once occupies space and performs under the structure of time, forming one part of the triad with time and space, which must be the trope for our current era.

Paul Connerton works to expand the opening created by Nora’s claim that true memory rests in the motions of the body. He delves into the bodily mechanisms that communities and societies use to sustain, convey, and build memory. Working from the

⁴² Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias.” trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1989): 22.

⁴³ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias.” trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1989): 22.

premise that collective memory exists; Connerton attempts to re-situate the conveyance and sustenance of memory within the realm of gestures/actions of the body. His is a project while acknowledging the political power of social memory, skirts an investigation of how social, collective memory is manipulated, controlled, and politicized. Rather, Connerton seeks to contribute to the idea of collective memory by raising the question of storage—how these memories are transmitted and contained. Buttressing this research proposition are two supporting claims: that our experience of the present is dependent on our knowledge of the past, and that images of the past make relevant our current social order.⁴⁴ These images and remembered knowledge of the past are transported and sustained in the form of ritual (bodily) performances.

The body's habits, as performed in the context of ritual, serve as the lens through which Connerton scrutinizes the corpus for its memory-holding power:

If there is such a thing as social memory...we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms.⁴⁵

In conceiving how a historic beginning can lead to a sequence of body-based memory-habits and remain in the fabric of remembering, Connerton draws from French Revolution as representing a new histo-political beginning. He targets social activity as the apparatus for transporting memory, specifically commemorative ceremonies, and

⁴⁴ In claiming that our present experiences are shaped by the past, Connerton implies continuity between past and present. This assumed linkage between past and present contradicts the postmodern understanding that our present is a floating entity, segregated from the past.

⁴⁵ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4-5.

bodily practices. Connerton uses the social practices of the French Revolution as a case study from which to investigate the body in the context of memory.

Connerton distinguishes between three types of memory: *personal*, *cognitive*, and *habit-memory*. While personal memory and cognitive memory memories are primary nodes in the study of memory, habit (embodied) memory has been eliminated by “a strategy of separation.”⁴⁶ There exists a tendency, Connerton points out, among social theorists to conceive of habit/behavior as the application of social rules. As such, habit-memory falls into the gap separating rule/application and code. Connerton seeks to fill in this gap with a “theory of habitual practice” and in doing so, he resuscitates social habit-memory as a function of collective remembering.⁴⁷ Drawing from the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Connerton suggests, “our memories are located within mental and material spaces of the group.”⁴⁸ What we remember is pulled from a collection of thoughts common to a group, rendering the act of individual and collective-social remembering, coterminous. Connerton, however, steps beyond Halbwach’s notion of memory to examine the physical interaction/communication within groups that causes the generation of collective memories. These (performative) “acts of transfer” determine the social formation of memory.⁴⁹ In particular, Connerton locates commemorative ceremonies

⁴⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34.

⁴⁷ Connerton is clear to distinguish between social habit-memory and individual habit-memory. He is not looking at the performance of personal memories, but is focused on efficacy of social habit-memory.

⁴⁸ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37.

⁴⁹ Diana Taylor, in her book, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, uses this term, “acts of transfer.” Taylor understands this term as “performances” from the

and bodily practices as vehicles to get at his intervention—that images and recollections of the past are conveyed by (ritual) performances.

Tracing the history of memory studies, Connerton points to the ways in which psychoanalysis has colonized personal memory and psychology has left its imprint on cognitive memory. “Habit-memory,” however, lacks a theoretical territory from which to operate, “habit-memory, by contrast, appears to be an unoccupied or even non-existent space.”⁵⁰ Citing the work of Sahlins and Winch, Connerton reveals how the idea of habit-as-memory has been theoretically left at the scholarly wayside as memory work focuses on visible signifiers and the force of language, “in such a picture, whether of a language or of sets of practices understood on the analogy of a language, no place and hence no habitual skills reside.”⁵¹ There exists a lacuna between rule/application and code/execution. It is in this space that social habit memory resides and it is this space that Connerton intends to widen and make more visible. But what is not addressed by Connerton, is the possibility of the bodily habits and movements as themselves as a set of visible, readable signs, an embodied language.

The performance and practice of skilled action sets/choreographies is a means through which the past intrudes on the present. In this guise, the body is the receptacle of the past: “many forms of habitual skilled remembering illustrate a keeping of the past in

repertoire, which offers up an alternative take on the histories/knowledge stored in the archive. Her “acts of transfer” are strategically wielded as weapons for relaying unacknowledged memories within Latin America’s colonial history.

⁵⁰ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28.

⁵¹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34.

mind that, without ever advertising to its historical origin, nevertheless re-enacts the past in our present conduct.”⁵² In claiming that memory is “sedimented” in the body, Connerton distinguishes between two disparate social practices: incorporating practices and inscribing practices.⁵³ The former refers to “messages” imparted into the world by the body.⁵⁴ More specifically, these practices require the presence of the body to sustain these activities/choreographies. The latter is defined as the means of storing and retrieving information/knowledge via an external device. Photographs, indexes, encyclopedias are such mechanisms that trap and hold information, “...long after the human organism has stopped informing.”⁵⁵ Culturally specific body practices are conceived as a mnemonics of the body. Yet Connerton does not see the body as a system capable of writing—a writing system. He sees the shift from an oral culture of collective memory to a written or literature culture as a shift from incorporating practices to inscribing practices. The impact of writing to collective memory rests on the fixity of the written account with “the process of its composition being definitely closed.”⁵⁶

Connerton sees such fixity as undermining the possibility of innovation, “when the

⁵² Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72.

⁵³ In regards to incorporating practices, Connerton separates the body’s actions according to “qualitatively distinct kinds of formality:” ceremonies of the body, proprieties of the body, and techniques of the body (79).

⁵⁴ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72.

⁵⁵ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.

⁵⁶ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75.

memories of a culture begin to be transmitted mainly by the reproduction of their inscriptions rather than by ‘live’ tellings, improvisation becomes increasingly difficult and innovation is institutionalized.”⁵⁷

Despite setting up a boundary (and a binary) between incorporating and inscription practices, Connerton acknowledges that inscribing practices do indeed contain an element of incorporation and vice versa. In the performance of writing, the body is primary participant,

...writing, the most obvious example of inscription has an irreducible bodily component. We tend to forget this; writing is a habitual exercise of intelligence and volition which normally escapes the notice of the person exercising it because of this familiarity with the method of procedure...each of these acts, none the less, is accompanied by a corresponding muscular action.⁵⁸

A body writing, for dance scholar Susan Foster, is a bodily writing.⁵⁹ A body simultaneously inscribes in the process of incorporation. By ensconcing the body in the category of incorporating practice, Connerton overlooks the body’s discursive capacity. The body does indeed relay information in motion, but it is in the very practice of transmission—in the performance of gesture, motion, choreography—that the body inscribes. Not only external technologies can be understood as inscriptive devices, “trapping” and “holding” information; the moving body is simultaneously a writing body.

⁵⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75.

⁵⁸ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 77.

⁵⁹ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Although Connerton introduces the materiality of the body into the discourse of collective memory, citing the body's choreography as a source of mnemonics, his categorization of the body as simply an incorporating practice misses the force of the moving body's articulations. Moreover, he provides little explanation as to how to read these bodily inscriptions nor is he concerned with the content and meaning of these bodily articulations. His is a project seeking to bring to the surface the efficacy of habit memory. The careful reading of the moving/dancing body and the outright privileging of the material body is the scholarly contribution of dance scholars, who have long sought to undo our perceived silence of the body, and disclose and make loud its constant articulations. Susan Foster spearheads the theorization of the body as choreo-discursive entity.

In her article, "Choreographing History," Susan Foster grapples with how to write a history of bodily writing. She is trying to get at the question of how to discursively document the choreo-conversations of the body. Underlying this investigation is Foster's stance that the moving body writes, "a body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing."⁶⁰ In suggesting the choreo-discursive capacity of the body, Foster carves a theoretical space countering the Cartesian duality in which the mind takes precedence over the body.⁶¹ Foster claims that by writing, the moving body is an intelligent, meaning making entity. Bodily writing is enacted via encounters with other bodies as well through consciousness of its own physicality and

⁶⁰ Susan Foster, "Choreographing History." in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3.

⁶¹ The idea of the Cartesian duality proposes the body as an instrument of thought.

referentiality. Foster's alliance of the body with writing troubles the very conception of "writing." We must not only privilege content produced by ink on paper, but we must also listen/see/understand *how* the body makes contact between pen and paper—this process is also a process of writing and is simultaneously a privileging of the body-in-motion.

Architecture—national memorials and monuments—is the most visible actualization of the long held Western stance on the linkage between memory and material object. While the materiality of memory, specifically national, collective memory as represented in monumental form, is facing a theoretical crisis, it is impossible to ignore the reality of these structures. After all, memorials and monuments are intended for permanence and no amount of scholarly critique can cause these structures to vanish. Instead of repeating the argument that memory and its structural accompaniment are themselves floating away from each other, I propose that we redirect our theoretical facings to consider what is absented from memory discourse. Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler as editors of the book, *The Art of Forgetting*, attend to the ways non-Western transient signifiers of memory function as legitimate markers of communal memory. As suitable ciphers of memory, Forty gives examples of bodies that temporarily inhabit and force a recall of a dead ruling figure and structures purposefully left to decay, representing not only memory, but embodying the condition of memory, which itself is a concept that is subject to decay (and rebuilding). These transient vessels of memory are equally present in the built environments of Western societies. Memorials and monuments do not fully transmit meaning without the presence of visitors. These

structures need witnesses. As such, the memorial sites become a site of choreographic composition, in which inanimate, permanent structures are interrupted by the constant flow of visitor bodies streaming in and out of the space. And these bodies, in motion, articulate themselves, acting as ephemeral containers of memory. This is where dance studies and memory/memorial studies coalesce.

The body is conspicuously absent in Western scholarship on memory. Paul Connerton's book *How Societies Remember* makes inroads in situating the body as a vessel for memory. However, the body remains a crucial, but missing link in the memory equation, especially in the context of architectural/spatial markers of memory. As a visibly vocal entity coming into contact with memorial structures, the body is not dumb, in either sense of the word, neither unintelligent nor inarticulate. The pedestrian dances performed by multiple bodies at all hours of the day speak to and confront the memorial architecture. The moving body makes meaning of the memory/past to which the architecture refers. The memorial/monument is more than just visually experienced by its visitors; it is corporeally experienced and read. What and how the body speaks in these spaces is the focus of this project and serves as an intervention in the field of architecture and memorial studies.

Privileging Dance Studies in Memory Studies

How to read a dancing body's articulations is evinced by much of the work carried out in the field of dance scholarship. However, the majority of these investigations scrutinize Western dance as performed on the proscenium stage and the

figures inhabiting memorial sites engaged in formalized stage performances. In order to get at the everyday bodies, we must turn to the work of scholars like Fiona Buckland and Jens Giersdorf who provide an outlet for digging through the dances and maneuverings of the streets—of everyday spaces. This is also the theoretical space of visitors, who experience memorials not only on a visual plane, but also deal with memory on a bodily one. Fiona Buckland, in her book *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World Making*, investigates ways in which improvised social dancing in queer clubs, through its physicality and its “embodiment of experience, identity, and community,” work to shape queer world-making. Buckland legitimates the presence and performance of queer club culture by revealing its political efficacy as well its role as a resistive tool, through which queer bodies reassert themselves against homonormative agendas. Buckland not only addresses the efficacy and meaning-making capacity of bodily choreography, but also how multiple facets of queer clubbing: space, sound, sartorial strategies, and (improvised) dance align to contribute to the process of making a lifeworld for bodies denied access to normative elements of social existence. Hers is an ethnographic investigation that hinges on the concept of world-making, “a production in the moment of space of creative, expressive, and transformative possibilities, which remained fluid and moving by means of the dancing body...”⁶²

Movement/dance is central to Buckland’s analysis of queer world making, but more importantly, it is movement (along with music, bodies, and sartorial decisions) that

⁶² Fiona Buckland, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 5.

shapes *space* into a decidedly queer site: “human action and interaction shaped clubs, and participants shaped themselves by going to them.”⁶³ This reciprocal shaping of space by bodies and bodies by space is useful in thinking about how other spaces, notably memorial sites, are shaped by the bodies that dance across them. Buckland suggests that dancing in queer clubs inform one’s everyday existence, thereby creating the possibility for thinking about how the moving, visiting body also informs and infects the meaning of memorial architecture and vice versa. This project does not address queerness or queer dancing as such, but Buckland is referenced here for her theoretical intrusion into the city streets, specifically queer dance clubs. Her work functions as scholarly acknowledgement that we can legitimately excavate the corporeal happenings on the streets as academic intervention.

Jens Giersdorf, like Fiona Buckland, takes on the pedestrian shifting, lurching, walking of the everyday body in his work, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography.”⁶⁴ While his primary focus is to critique disparate choreographic constructions of the East German identity via Sascha Waltz’s problematic work, *Allee Der Kosmonauten* and Jo Fabian’s more dialectically useful work, *Pax Germania*, Giersdorf’s reading of their dance making stems from the idea that pedestrian behavior, especially the walking sequence performed by the East German bodies surging across the divide between East

⁶³ Fiona Buckland, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 11.

⁶⁴ Jens Richard Giersdorf, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography.” *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413-432.

and West Berlin, informs not only formal dance making, but also informs the social system within which they operate. In other words, dancing bodies of all kinds, on stage and on the street, participate in the formation and creation of social systems.

Giersdorf reads his own tentative yet insistent walking across the East-West German divide as embedded with the tension of the moment and choreographed in response to the built space within which he is walking. He intervenes in dance studies by reading and describing pedestrian walking in the same vein as reading and describing proscenium dance performances. He makes a clear case for the action on the street as legitimate dance action. So, the walking performed on site at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) is not insignificant. We can effectively argue that the motions performed and choreographed at the VVM are shaped by the architecture and memory. If walking into the open Berlin border can be understood to contribute to the creation of a new social system, so too can the walking through the VVM be conceived as contributing to the system of collective memory embedded in the American socio-political structure. And like the choreography performed by bodies walking across the East Berlin border, the choreography of visitors to American memorial sites is pulled from an everyday vernacular of walks, runs, stops, and pauses.

In her article, “Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance,” Sally Banes examines the genesis of this group, which formed partly from the creation of Yvonne Rainer’s work, *Continuous Project-Altered Daily* (CP-AD).⁶⁵ Banes underscores

⁶⁵ Sally Banes, “Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance.” in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

the choreographic strategies of the Grand Union and how the development of dance making by this collective takes its cue from everyday life. She defines Grand Union's work as "...about the kinds of contact we make in the world, through language and behavior."⁶⁶ The collective provides an abstracted version of "life in the modern world" by transfiguring everyday qualities and actions into dance, thereby placing attention on the performativity of the body in the context of the real modern world. More significantly, Banes' analysis of work by Grand Union brings into focus the analytically rich, but not-yet-fully mined content of the body situated in the space of the everyday. Banes takes Giersdorf's intervention further by pointing out the formalization of everyday actions into a clear dance vernacular, one that is woven into choreography for the stage. Playing with the idea of one-sided and mutual physical contact, words and sounds delivered in monologue and group form, and the tensions between private and public behavior, the Grand Union group dances out the question of dance's ontology, seeking to push, as far as they can, the boundaries surrounding the concept of dance.

Yvonne Rainer's *Continuous Project-Altered Daily* was formally presented at the Whitney Museum in 1970. In this piece, she focused on the dance making process as the "object" or subject/content of performance. In CP-AD, Rainer is concerned with details/elements of dance making: "learning, rehearsing, marking; working out material and running through material; dancing the material in a finished performance style."⁶⁷ As

⁶⁶ Sally Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance." in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 48.

⁶⁷ Sally Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance." in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 43.

such, the performance includes not only rehearsed/learned behavior, but also gestures and expressions of the everyday. The piece, comprised of chunks of material that were learned, marked, rehearsed, or learned during the performance, could be re-organized and restructured in any given order.

Sally Banes' analysis of CP-AD uncovers the casual, quality of play that is inherent in the work of the Grand Union collective: "when we look at the conceptual groundwork as it emerges from the description, we can see certain salient points: the atmosphere and dress are casual; people stop to discuss the activity or to try it out themselves with variations."⁶⁸ Probing the silent film, *Connecticut Rehearsal* by Michael Fajans, which documents the Grand Unions development of CP-AD, Banes highlights the consciously pedestrian form of the dancer's choreography, in which walking, jogging, jumping, sitting, the casual hoisting of bodies serve as undercurrents for the shape of the dance. The co-optation of everyday dances to be performed on the Grand Union's version of a stage suggests that we can indeed look to pedestrian gesticulation as imbued with meaning. The Grand Union's formalization of these seemingly casual movements into the auspices of a dance concert enfolds these movements into the structure of choreography. However, their strategic use of the casual also accentuates the function of these pedestrian motions as meaningful when performed off the stage

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is clearly not a stage and its visitors are not usually trained in formalized dance practices. However, Banes' reading of the Grand

⁶⁸ Sally Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance." in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 44.

Union group serves as a re-lensing of the bodily writings performed in the space of a national memorial. These visiting bodies while not formally performing on a proscenium stage do enact a choreography constructed from everyday movements in response to the architecture and the surrounding environment. In referencing sociologist Erving Goffman's investigations into the dramaturgical value of social life in work situations, Banes bolsters my claim that the pedestrian choreographies danced out by visitors of the VVM are indeed a social "performance" wherein the body's motility is not without meaning.

Banes uses Goffman to argue that everyday life, including working life, "is a process of self-production" where our actions—our dances—communicate information to stage impressions.⁶⁹ Dramatic strategies are not only wielded by professional performers, but also brandished by bodies in everyday life. Drawing from Goffman's claim that behavior can be separated into on-stage and back-stage categories—the latter of which is casual and often symbolically offensive—Banes points to the way in which Grand Union dances tend to conjure back stage behavior in their performances, as a means of unveiling and performing the process of making choreography. Bane's reference to Goffman's onstage/backstage separation allows us to locate the VVM in a theatrical onstage context. The site itself, littered with strategically placed signs forbidding certain behavior and populated by bodies simultaneously serving as performers and audience members, is an "onstage" space wherein visitors are compelled to abide by certain behavioral restrictions

⁶⁹ Sally Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance." in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 47.

mandated by signs strategically placed in the memorial landscape and by the directives of National Park Service rangers. As such, the body does indeed perform in this site, dancing out a choreography that is in part shaped by the governing structures of the space. Goffman also points to spatial boundaries dividing the theatrical environment from the real world. By showing ease and familiarity with the materials comprising the stage, the Grand Union group manages to "...treat the stage like the real world, erasing borders somewhat."⁷⁰ Unlike Grand Union, which attempts to undo borders, the VVM delineates a border between memory-space and real world. This is literally accomplished by Maya Lin in her memorial design. Bounded on two sides by the "real world," the structure turns in on itself, the black granite walls acting as both carrier of names and a visual and aural barrier to the real world. The memorial wall invites the visitor to turn corporeally and mentally inward. It is indeed a sort of politicized stage upon which performances temporarily yet constantly transpire.

What appear to be two entirely unrelated fields of study, choreography and memory, when imbricated as dual lenses through which to delve into the condition of national memorials, can provide the underpinnings for a new discursive footpath. Scholars have argued against the affectivity of architecture as the central means of Western commemoration. But such memorials and monuments remain fully intact in the grid of the built environment. How do we resolve the ever-present materiality of these permanent structures? Instead of folding to the discourse claiming the de-linking of

⁷⁰ Sally Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance." in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, ed. Sally Banes. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 47.

memory from its physical, material casings, I propose to play with the very idea of materiality that scholars bemoan by layering the permanent materiality of architecture onto the idea of a more temporary materiality of visiting bodies. Commemorative architectures, especially the Vietnam Veterans Memorial only makes sense in the presence of the body. The motility of such a body works as a not yet mined frame from which to theorize about memorials and memory culture. Choreography on the proscenium stage can be read for its body politics, and in turn, by widening the boundaries of dance ontology, pedestrian choreography of the memorial “stage” can be read for the politics of memory. The intersection and interaction between material body and material memorial structure provides an alternate critical viewpoint for national, collective memory.

Chapter Two: Constructing the Memorial

Memory as Space

The infrastructure of this chapter is built from texts pulled from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive. I am playing out the idea of the archive as a memorializing architecture by tracing the historicity of the VVM, from its inception as an idea, through its conceptual formation in the texts of governmental legislation, and to the reality of the controversy accompanying Maya Lin's winning memorial design. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, proposes to understand space as fluid, its production being the result of continuing and constantly shifting spatial social relations.⁷¹ He simultaneously works to expose collusion between knowledge and power, "space is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles. It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the medium in which strategies are applied, but it has now become...the disinterested stage or setting, of action."⁷² Space must be understood within the frame of the subjects who produce it, those individuals who claim and carve it out. But the space of the VVM extends beyond the physical site situated in Washington DC. This chapter configures the "space" of the archive by examining how the contents of the archive are, like real architecture, consciously constructed sources of

⁷¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁷² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 410.

knowledge. As I unravel the production processes of this memorial space, I also reposition the idea of the archive, reconfiguring it as a source of memory and therefore as a legitimate memorial.

Lefebvre proposes a triadic, unified space theory comprised of *spatial practices*, *representations of space*, and *spaces of representation*. Spatial practices occupy the arena of everyday life, inhabiting the space of objects, structures, corporeal dances and activities. This space of material production and reproduction is visually and empirically discernable. Representations of space are conceptions of space; space abstracted (with some exceptions) into a system of verbal signs. In other words, they contribute to a body of knowledge (an epistemology of space), an understanding of space that enables the practice of space. Representations of space provide a history of ideology, preserved in the blueprints, models, and diagrams of past space. Lefebvre puts forth representational space as the third leg of his triadic spatial theory. Representational space is the space of the user's mind and imagination, which is then lived. As such, it is the space of the inhabitant who experiences (lived) space via images and symbols. Representational spaces commonly "tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs."⁷³ It is also the space of scholars/artists who seek to describe space. The expanse of representational space comprises mediatic sources documenting the VVM and the war itself as well as the archived documents and blueprints disclosing the production of

⁷³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 39.

(memorial) space, which serve as the materials used for piecing together the infrastructure of this chapter.

Accounting for the Memorial Space

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, nestled in the landscaped grounds of the Constitution Gardens, which adjoins the National Mall, was borne from the vision of a small group of Vietnam Veterans. In 1979, Jan Scruggs, a United States Labor Department employee and a former rifleman with the U.S. Army 199th Light Infantry Brigade, championed the building of a memorial honoring all individuals who militarily served in the Vietnam War. He imagined a memorial financed not via government coffers but rather supported through donations from American private citizens. While the idea for claiming space on behalf of Vietnam War veterans was initially rebuffed by fellow veterans, Scruggs gained allies in Robert (Bob) Doubek, an attorney who served as an Air Force officer during the Vietnam War and John (Jack) Wheeler, Washington D.C. attorney and West Point graduate and Vietnam Veteran.⁷⁴

In April 1979, as the first step toward their design of building a privately funded memorial to be administered by the NPS, Scruggs and Doubek founded a nonprofit organization, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF).⁷⁵ Scruggs sat as president of the VVMF while Doubek took over project management responsibilities. Wheeler, a supporter of the conceptual memorial served as Chairman of the VVMF board. While the

⁷⁴ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985).

⁷⁵ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985).

VVMF was founded to oversee, in part, the fundraising efforts required to pay for the memorial design and construction, the organization also spearheaded a relationship with the State in an effort to secure federal land for the memorial site. In the folder of the VVMF Project Director's administrative files, there is a letter announcing the January 2, 1980 opening of a physical VVMF office located at 1025 Connecticut Ave N.W. in Washington D.C.⁷⁶ The office serves as the location from which the VVMF intended to oversee the intricate layers of legislative lobbying, design logistics, and fundraising required to bring a memorial to fruition. The office served not only as a logistical base, but also functioned as a proclamation of legitimacy. The VVMF finally secured a place from which to receive correspondences, a site from which to initiate discussion/action about a conceptual memorial and a starting point from which to begin the production of the memorial space. This office can be seen as an initial carving out of space on behalf of the Vietnam War, and perhaps as the first, informal memorial to the Vietnam War.

In his book, *Sites of Memory*, Craig E. Barton (re)imagines the built environment to locate shreds of memory in everyday spaces. Contributors to Barton's book highlight everyday spaces as sites, such as motel rooms, schools, freeways as relevant spaces upon which to imprint (black) memories. These scholars redraw the boundaries of what constitutes the memorial. Barton's purpose is to recuperate African American memories in a landscape that consciously disappears black cultural memory.⁷⁷ Dolores Hayden

⁷⁶ Files of the Project Director 1965-1984, Container Fifty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁷ Craig Barton, ed. *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*. (New York, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001).

makes a similar claim in her book *The Power of Place* when she envisages vernacular architecture/buildings as sites of public history and collective memory. Everyday spaces and structures reform American identity by addressing the ways in which ethnic groups, women, and working class communities infuse the built environment with a sense of place. These sites serve as markers—memorials to the process of American urban development, “the traces of time embedded in the urban landscape of every city offer opportunities for reconnecting fragments of the American urban story.”⁷⁸

By recognizing the significance of (ordinary) places, Hayden enforces the idea that urban, lived sites are imbued by their inhabitants with multiple and disparate memories, articulating a group’s shared past and empowers social groups and communities not represented in culturally and discursively prominent architectures and spaces. Office buildings (and spaces) figure into the built environment as vernacular structures, and according to Hayden, would be a relevant place in which memory and space meet. As such, the Washington DC offices of the VVMF can be understood as bearing not just the memories of the organization’s actors; because the office is the base from which memories, via the Vietnam War memorial are being produced and inserted into a constructed archive, this office can be understood as a memorial itself, an initial “theater of memory” emanating the past history of the Vietnam War.

Both Barton and Hayden wage a tactical and figurative war against normative constructions of memory and memorials by inserting memory into the crevices of

⁷⁸ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, United Kingdom: MIT Press, 1997), 13.

everyday buildings and roads. This strategy is applicable for (re)purposing the VVMF office space as a strategic gesture in the production of the VVM and as an provisional site of memory. In particular, Hayden advocates understanding the social history of landscapes through examining the power struggles evolving out of planning, design, construction, use, and demolition of vernacular buildings. She does so by wielding Henri Lefebvre's theory of space, "Lefebvre emphasized the importance of space for shaping social reproduction. One of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space."⁷⁹ The establishment of a physical headquarters for VVMF can be (re)viewed similarly as a claiming of metaphorical space for the Vietnam War. This initial operating space is an insistence of the claiming of (memorial) space.

Printed on official VVMF stationary is a memorandum composed by project director Robert Doubek and addressed, on May 6, 1980, to all "participants in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial effort" informing them that, "the VVMF is sponsoring the first national Vietnam veterans Memorial Day service...the location for the service is at the site for the memorial in Constitution Gardens."⁸⁰ The letter also encourages supporters to attend the May 12th hearings on H.J. Resolution 432, location not yet determined. Space, more specifically, location—specific plots of land—is a necessary

⁷⁹ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, United Kingdom: MIT Press, 1997), 22.

⁸⁰ Administration, Board of Advisers, 1979-80, Files of the Project Director 1965-1984, n.d, Container Fifty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

element in the acting out of legislation, as location becomes the central point for bodies to come together to make decisions. More interestingly, location is central to the legislation involving the production of the VVM.

The VVMF attempted to cement their claim on the Constitution Gardens site not only by navigating the channels of governmental legislation, but also through ritualistic performance. Their public celebration of Memorial Day featuring “remarks by prominent supporters of the memorial, including Senator John Warner and the past president of the American Gold Star Mothers,” definitively enunciates the consecration of Constitution Gardens as designated for the production of a memorial space.⁸¹ In his book, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Marvin Carlson traces the oscillating field of performance studies and the shifting nature of the concept of “performance.”⁸² Carlson acknowledges that everyday activities such as political rallies, sporting events, public presentations fall in the realm of the performative and are thus subject to critical inquiry.⁸³

In the brochure that details guidelines for the VVMF’s open competition to seek proposals for the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the choreography of the 1980 Memorial Day service was embedded in the text as a key component:

⁸¹ Administration, Board of Advisers, 1979-80, Files of the Project Director 1965-1984, n.d, Container Fifty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C

⁸² Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. (London, United Kingdom and New York, New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁸³ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. (London, United Kingdom and New York, New York: Routledge, 1996), 198.

At the site of the memorial, on Memorial Day, May 26, 1980, a ceremony was held in which people were invited to join a line and speak in turn the name of a man who was killed in Vietnam—a brother, a father, a friend, a husband...the pain, the reality and the brokenness were there for all to see. And the barriers to learning and the need for reconciliation were there for all to see as well. The important thing was to hear the power of a name, while sensing the pain.⁸⁴

The emphasis on public “seeing” and “hearing” marks the memorial service as a conscious act of performance. The performance is intended “for all” to witness wherein the “all” is simultaneously directed at those bodies who were present onsite, but simultaneously serves as an enunciating gesture toward those governing bodies the VVMF must navigate in order to achieve the materialization of a nascent idea.⁸⁵ The presence of prominent politicians and members of the veterans’ community at this public gathering politically legitimizes the occasion and makes politically relevant VVMF’s effort to establish a memorial at the desired site. By holding a memorial service at the desired site, the VVMF and their supporters perform a visually cacophonous spectacle as they performatively carve out a space, laying claim to a not-yet accessible site for the production of the memorial. There is also a doubled “seeing” of this memorial service performance. The service is performed for an audience of participant-viewers, bodies that simultaneously witness the memorial service and engage in the performance of naming dead Vietnam soldiers. But this performance/service is (re)imagined, or (re)seen in printed form, in the pages of the competition brochure, occupying multiple spaces relevant for the production of the memorial: the material grounds of the proposed

⁸⁴ Design Competition Rules, 1980-1982, Memorial Design, Container Thirty-Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁵ Design Competition Rules, 1980-1982, Memorial Design, Container Thirty-Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

memorial site, the discursive space of text, both of which attempt to insert the idea of the memorial, and its accompanying site in the space of the nation's consciousness.

In his introductory remarks to the 1973 volume of *The Drama Review*, Richard Schechner asserts an alliance between performance theory and social science by outlining seven key areas where the two fields coincide. In doing so, he also touches on the blurry boundaries which fail to discretely contain performance and ritual, "...performance is a kind of communicative behavior that is part of, or continuous with, more formal ritual ceremonies, public gatherings, and various means of exchanging information, goods, customs."⁸⁶ The memorial service is a not uncommon western commemorative practice enacted on both the large scale of national ceremonies remembering past wars and on the smaller scale in which communities gather to remember the passing of a particular individual. This ritual involves directives in the form of a paper program and demanding exacting sartorial choices, thus making it a form of ritualistic practice. The VVMF memorial service, consciously organized as a performance, is also a ritual, making their claim to the memorial site a practice of consecration.

The performance of claiming space takes place not only in carrying out ritualistic operations, but also involves the occupation of space by bodies. At its most basic structure, it is a gathering of bodies on a particular plot of land, and the presence of these bodies becomes another means through which space is claimed. Supporters of the VVMF, by amassing on the proposed memorial site literally take up space. The occupation of space by bodies, a strategy commonly used by groups/communities/nations

⁸⁶ Richard Schechner, "Performance and Social Studies." *The Drama Review*. 17.3 (1973): 3-4.

to assert dominance and a claim over land, manifests most clearly in the shape of war. But the claiming of space can also be danced out as evinced by the Broadway musical, *West Side Story*. In his reading of both the stage and cinema versions of *West Side Story*, Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez examines how space figures into the tension between the Anglo Americans (Jets) and the Puerto Rican (Sharks) immigrants.⁸⁷ The tension between Anglo-Americans and Puerto Ricans is partially formed out of the presence of (too many) bodies wanting the claim the same space. Jerome Robbins' choreography for the big screen precisely cites this bodily-claim-to-space by setting movements on both white and brown bodies, accentuating torsos, legs, arm gestures which cut and occupy large sections of space and ground. The use of dancing bodies on specific plots of land becomes the vehicle through which these fictional gangs acquire city blocks, basketball courts, and urban spaces. In short, they claim space by occupying and using it. The choreography of the VVMF organized Memorial Day celebration functions similarly, in that the performance of a memorial service on the intended site of the future VVM is a strategy of acquisition. The bodies themselves become the physical gesture of claiming space.

The memorial service is occupied not only by the living flesh and blood bodies, but the choreography of the memorial service, calling for a public reading of the names of dead Vietnam War servicemen/women also conjures up the absent presence of the ghostly bodies for whom the memorial is intended. Diana Taylor makes a case for the

⁸⁷ Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez, "A Puerto Rican Reading of the America of *West Side Story*." in *Jose, Can You See: Latinos On and Off Broadway*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 64.

live-ness of the specter by revising the ontology of performance to include ghosts, the absent present, as a necessary part of the cast. Her “hauntology of performance,” a theoretical nod to Derrida, privileges the spirit and materiality of the dead, “the way I see it, performance makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life.”⁸⁸ Taylor gives the example of Princess Diana who, although dead, remains politically and symbolically alive. Her name and image are persistent ghostly figures constantly uttered and reproduced in the public sphere. For Taylor, live performance leaves traces, evoking “memories and grief that belong to some other body,” making visible not only the live or live-d, but also the “always already living,” the ghostly figures who are present in the evocation of a name, in the printed image.⁸⁹ The memorial service, as a very visible and public performance of mourning, commemoration, and claiming of space, makes (in)visible, the bodies of Vietnam War servicemen/women who are deliberately roused by the voices of the living. Thus, Constitution Gardens becomes occupied by living bodies enunciating the names of the dead and occupied by the dead (bodies) made present by the speech act of enunciation. The continual stream of names acts as an aural memorial “wall,” built from the voices of memorial service participants, which foretell the coming of the black granite wall of names.

⁸⁸ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 143.

⁸⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 143.

The temporary presence of live participants at the Memorial Day service and the absent-presence of (dead) Vietnam War soldiers who are recalled as they are named consciously occupy the space of Constitution Gardens as an act of claiming the site for the VVMF. Henri Lefebvre supplies the body with a key role in the production of space by making an ontological claim in which the body simultaneously produces itself in space and produces space, “before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before producing itself by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing* itself by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space.”⁹⁰ Lefebvre seems to suggest that in occupying space, the body produces it for its own purpose; in short, claiming it for its own uses. The memorial service boils down to bodies inhabiting a space they want to (re)produce, and in doing so, layering Constitution Gardens with a “semiotic spatial organization” that is does not yet occupy.⁹¹

Constitution Gardens is already a politically charged site, given its proximity to the National Mall. While technically not included within the boundaries of the Mall, Constitution Gardens is nonetheless compressed into our pedestrian spatialization of the National Mall, and therefore bears for the visiting public, the same sense of sanctity permeating on the Mall itself: “it is the physical setting of American democracy even as it is a monumental allegory of that democracy. Like those other great spaces of political

⁹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 170.

⁹¹ Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez, “A Puerto Rican Reading of the America of West Side Story.” in *Jose, Can You See: Latinos On and Off Broadway*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 64.

theater...it is in some sense both the thing itself and a symbol for the thing.”⁹² To engage in a sort of modern ritual, the memorial service, in a space that is already imbued with meaning, the VVMF co-opts the sacred value of the Constitution Gardens in their conceptualization of a Vietnam memorial and layers already hallowed ground with another lamina of meaning, the commemoration of Vietnam War military personnel.

This ritualistic gesture is reiterated on Memorial Day the following year, when the VVMF selected a memorial design through their open design competition. The performance of this Memorial Day ritual-service was carried out as the VVMF began seeking federal approval for the proposed design, and as opposition to the winning memorial design drew momentum and attention. The 1981 Memorial Day service in Constitution Gardens enforced the absent/imagined presence of the black granite “V” shaped walls that was the winning entry, defining and imprinting through performance and bodily occupation the site, in this case, with the presence of an architectural concept.

Locate/Locating/Location

Such unofficial claiming of Constitution Gardens site for the Vietnam memorial reinforces the official claiming of memorial space which the VVMF sought to secure through approval from governmental agencies: the National Planning Committee, the United States Commission of Fine Arts, the Office of the Secretary of Interior, the consent of the country’s governing bodies, the President, the senate, and the House of

⁹² Michael J. Lewis, “The Idea of the American Mall.” in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 11.

Representatives. The VVMF secured authorization from the United States government to erect a privately funded memorial on national grounds when President Jimmy Carter signed accompanying legislation on July 1, 1980; this presidential consent was the consequence of a yearlong effort waged by the VVMF in building congressional and bureaucratic support for the production of a Vietnam War memorial. Not only was procuring (any) site an obstacle the VVMF was forced to straddle, but acquiring a visually prominent location for the memorial, namely space within the grounds of Constitution Gardens, also became a further point of contention.

The location of the memorial was intimately tied to the way in which the VVMF wanted the Vietnam War to be remembered and as such location became a strategic architectural choice. In a letter dated March 24, 1979, and addressed to Senator Dale Bumpers, chairs of the Senate Subcommittee on Parks, Recreation, and Renewable Resources, which must approve VVMF's site request, project director Robert Doubek writes to enforce the significance of site in relation to the production of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Doubek is protesting the intended the deletion of "West Potomac Park," in the wording of the Senate Joint Resolution. This would leave the choice of the memorial site vulnerable to the discretion of "the Secretary of Interior to place the VVM anywhere in within the District of Columbia or its environs, which would be limited only by the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)."⁹³ In 1979, the Fine Arts Commission, the government agency tasked with approving the memorial design and site

⁹³ Senate Legislation 1979-80, Legislation, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Nine, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

request initially proposed to offer the VVMF a location situated on the road leading towards Arlington Cemetery.

This site was problematic precisely due to its distance from the center of Washington D.C.: building near the Arlington Cemetery would render the VVM invisible to the constant flow of visiting bodies streaming through historical markers in the city. The VVMF wanted to align their privately funded memorial with other sites of national memory situated on the National Mall. Jan Scruggs' statement to the Senate Subcommittee on Parks, Recreation, and Renewable Resources in support of the Senate Joint Resolution 119, which would allocate a specific site to the VVMF for the production of the Vietnam memorial, affirmed how location informs the signifying power of memorial architecture,

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial will not be to a war, a battle, a unit, or individual, but to the honorable service of all men and women who carried their country's policy during a major and difficult period in its history. For these purposes it is especially appropriate that it stand in Constitution Gardens in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. First of all, a prominent site is essential. Our nation, in its haste to forget the war, has heretofore forgotten to honor the 2.7 million American men and women who served honorably in Vietnam... a site outside the monumental core would lack the significance to these Americans who experienced a major event in this country's history. Furthermore an indication of less than total recognition of their service would present serious difficulties to the VVMF in gaining the financial support of the American people.⁹⁴

Scruggs, in speaking on behalf of the VVMF, assigns the National Mall the role of housing legitimate national memories. It becomes, in effect, the official landscape of American, national memory. Edith L.B. Turner in her critique of the National Mall

⁹⁴ Legislation/Senate Legislation 1979-80, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Nine, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

characterizes the space as “...to forever symbolize the pageant of American history.”⁹⁵

For a memory to be architecturally recognized within or around this politicized space is to be legitimately accounted for in the American memory-scape. As such, the physical carving out of a highly visible location for the VVM spatially imprints the Vietnam War as a relevant part of American history, thereby conceptually carving out a place in the fabric of American memory for this war.

For the memorial to be located outside the city center is equally to be located outside the environs of acknowledged American history. In her book, *One Place After Another*, Miwon Kwon lays out the genealogy of site-specific artwork, to which the VVM is not irrelevant. The production of this memorial comprises a project deeply concerned not only with architectural design, which we can categorize as art, but it is also a project deeply concerned with site(s) and how space impacts and informs the meaning of architecture. Kwon affirms VVMF’s concern that the location of the memorial will impact how architecture signifies by defining early renditions of site-specific work as “focused on establishing an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work’s completion.”⁹⁶

VVMF President, Jan Scruggs establishes an explicit linkage between geography and meaning when he testified in his March 12, 1980 statement to the Senate Subcommittee on Parks, Recreation, and Renewable Resources that “a site outside the monumental core

⁹⁵ Edith B Turner, “The People’s Home Ground.” in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington’s Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 69.

⁹⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Location Identity*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 12.

would lack the significance to these Americans who experienced a major event in this country's history."⁹⁷ And Robert Doubek, in his March 1980 memorandum to Dean Phillips, reinforced the significance of site-specificity by outlining how production of the memorial will be determined by its location with the site dictating memorial design, "site here is key element to power of memorial."⁹⁸

The import that site, as a physical location, figures into the production of the VVM is also delineated in the political battle(s) waged to secure the passage of a Senate and House resolutions to resolve the question of a location for the memorial. Because "the site is the most important factor of the project even more than the design," it becomes the matter in the building process in which the VVMF invests the most energy.⁹⁹ The organization rejected the initial land offering proposed by the Fine Arts Commission, and sought congressional designation for a plot of land site on or buttressing the National Mall with the design of the memorial to be approved by the National Commission of Fine Arts in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the National Capital Planning Committee. The congressional route taken by the VVMF to secure the Constitution Gardens site doubly enforces the Vietnam War's place in what

⁹⁷ Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Nine, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁸ Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Nine, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁹ Legislation/Senate Legislation 1979-80, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Nine, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Edith B. Turner calls the “pageant of American history.”¹⁰⁰ Not only does the memorial acquire spatial legitimacy when the senate approves the Constitution Gardens site, but the congressional approval of the memorial itself also gives the memorial political legitimacy, as a space supported by the governing body shaping the national narrative. Senator Charles Mathias first introduced Senate Joint Resolution 119, granting the VVMF the authority to erect a memorial by “public prescription” on public grounds, on November 8, 1979.¹⁰¹ The resolution was enacted a year later on July 1, 1980. In the House of Representatives, Congressman John Hammerschidt first introduced H.J. Resolution 431, authorizing the VVMF to erect a memorial on “public grounds in the District of Columbia” on October 25, 1979 and reintroduced the bill March 5th of 1980. The House of Representatives passed this bipartisan resolution on March 26, 1980.¹⁰²

Legislating Memorial Design

While legislative proceedings were underway, the VVMF board chose, on September of 1979, to arrive at the memorial design by way of a national competition. An open competition would “fit in with the American spirit of solving problems through

¹⁰⁰ Edith B Turner, “The People’s Home Ground.” in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington’s Monumental Core*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 70.

¹⁰¹ Congressional House Legislation 1979-80, Legislation, Office Files, 1979-1985, n.d, Container Thirty-Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰² Congressional House Legislation 1979-80, Legislation, Office Files, 1979-1985, n.d, Container Thirty Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

fair and open contests, and would give the American people an opportunity to speak out about what sort of memorial they wanted.”¹⁰³ Architect Paul Spreiregen was hired by the VVMF in summer of 1980 to oversee the organization of a design competition. Central to the formation of this jury was whether to include Vietnam veterans as active members of the selection process. The VVMF reached a compromise on this matter by engaging jury members, professional architects/landscape designers who evidenced “sufficient sensitivity to what service in Vietnam meant.”¹⁰⁴ In November 1980, the VVMF concluded their jury selection process, publicly announcing a competition board comprised of Pietro Belluschi, Harry M. Weese, Garrett Eckbo, Hideo Sasaki, Richard H. Hunt, Constantino Nivola, James Rosati, and Grady Clay.¹⁰⁵

The VVMF advertised and opened their design competition in October 1980. The organization stipulated that entrants draft designs accommodating the predetermined site, two acres “near the Lincoln Memorial...in the western end of Constitution Gardens, wherein designs must fall in accordance with garden/landscape topography already existing in the area.”¹⁰⁶ Designers were asked to consider the structure’s commemorating aims, which were directed at remembering all veterans of the Vietnam War, with particular emphasis on individuals who died. In the booklet outlining competition conditions and instructions, the VVMF stipulates the memorial to be emptied of any

¹⁰³ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 50.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 51.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 51.

¹⁰⁶ Design Competition Rules, 1980-1982, Office Files/Memorial Design, Container Thirty Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“political statement regarding the war or its conduct.... the hope is that the creation of the memorial will begin a healing process, a reconciliation of the grievous divisions wrought by the war.”¹⁰⁷ So the signifying force of the memorial must conform to VVMF imposed strictures that architecture “be reflective and contemplative in character...harmonious with its site...provide for the inscription of the names of all 57,661 Americans who died in Vietnam...”¹⁰⁸

The design competition comprised a conceptual and ideological challenge that the VVMF carefully mapped out in their aesthetic conditions for design entries with the success and materialization of the design competition and to an even greater extent, the memorial itself, heavily dependent on the success of VVMF fundraising efforts. Texas financier Ross Perot claimed a stake in the memorial project by financing the evaluative portion of the design competition. This included underwriting prize money for the winning entries, funding all jury expenses, and paying for design entries to be mounted and installed at Andrews Air Force base for appraisal. Perot became the financial catalyst for the inception of the memorial’s travel from concept to reality. His role in the VVMF’s project furthermore recalls the enduring link between production of space and private economy. The memorial inhabits an interstitial site, straddling the realms of the public and private. While the memorial is ensconced in the grounds of Constitution Gardens, a public space, falling under the stewardship of the NPS, the design and construction of the

¹⁰⁷ Design Competition Rules, 1980-1982, Memorial Design, Container Thirty Two, Office Files Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁸ Design Competition Rules, 1980-1982, Memorial Design, Office Files, Container Thirty Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

structure is financed by private donations from individual donors, military veterans organizations, and capitalistic institutions. Because the impetus to erect this architectural marker on behalf of Vietnam veterans is a private venture, the memorial becomes a site where private interests and national concerns cross and clash.

Spatial Inconsistencies

By the March 31, 1981 submission deadline, the VVMF had received 1,421 entries with each entry assigned a number to ensure jury objectivity. The jury was tasked with selecting an entry that best satisfied requirements dictated by the VVMF in competition instructions and most suitably fit into a construction budget of “approximately \$3.0 million.”¹⁰⁹ The VVMF was also concerned with new structure’s “presence” and how it would discourse with preexisting memorial structures, namely the Lincoln and Washington monuments, which the Memorial would most directly adjoin, and charged the jury to consider a design “that is neither too commanding or too deferential. The memorial should take its proper place in the historic continuity of our national art.”¹¹⁰

According to design competition criterion, the presence of the VVM is intertwined with the weighted-ness of its site, a plot of land straddling the Lincoln and

¹⁰⁹ Jury Instructions, April 26, 1981, Jury, Design Competition, Memorial Design, Files of the Project Director, Container Sixty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁰ Jury Instructions, April 26, 1981, Jury, Design Competition, Files of the Project Director, Container Sixty-Six Memorial Design Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Washington Monuments. This architecture must simultaneously cohere with the politicized topography of its site and figure prominently as a presence in the material landscape of national commemoration. Architecture becomes the nexus where presence and site-specificity enjoin. The body-in-this-space is witness to actualization of architecture as both presence and site.

On May 6, 1981, the jury unanimously recommended entry 1026 to be the most appropriate memorial design. The winning proposal belonged to Maya Lin, a Yale University architectural student who conceived an austere black granite, V-shape design, with the names of American military personnel who perished in the Vietnam War inscribed on its walls chronologically by the year of their deaths. The jury reasoned Lin's scheme, "most clearly meets the spirit and formal requirements of the program. It is contemplative and reflective. It is superbly harmonious with its site, and yet frees the visitors from the noise and traffic of the surrounding city."¹¹¹ They praised Lin's modernistic (and horizontal) take on commemoration as effectively balancing with the towering neo-classical structures already cemented within the National Mall.

Because the VVMF claimed Lin "lacked the experience and professional skills needed to complete the project herself," the organization hired the Washington architecture firm headed by Kent Cooper and William Lecky to oversee the production of memorial.¹¹² Lin was re-appointed design consultant in the building project. The memorial design required final approval from the National Capital Planning Commission,

¹¹¹ Design Competition Jury Statement 1981, Memorial Design, Office Files, Container Thirty-Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹² Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 73.

and the Commission of Fine Arts before construction could commence.¹¹³ Both agencies formally accepted the design in the July of 1981, on conditions the memorial concept be subjected to further design analysis and to an investigation into potential environmental impacts the structure may cause to Constitution Gardens. The design was also subject to the approval of Secretary of Interior, James Watt, who made no initial objections to the design.

As the VVMF and federal agencies threw their support behind the jury's decision and Lin's design, criticism of her proposal emerged from multiple fronts. Ross Perot, who financed the VVMF's design competition, raised immediate objections to the transformation of Lin's concept into reality. He extricated himself from the building project by halting further financial contributions to VVMF and more significantly, by refusing to lend his voice and public figure to the VVMF and Lin's design.¹¹⁴ In an undated file in the VVMF listing the chronology of Ross Perot's declining relationship with the VVMF, the organization documents Perot's objections to the memorial design as stemming from the proposed "underground" topography of the memorial as well the

¹¹³ As the central, federal agency overseeing building projects located on federal land within the National Capital Regions, of which Washington D.C. is part, the National Capital Planning Committee (NCPC) governs memorial, museum, and federal building design, as well as determines which projects are suitable as capital improvements within the National Capital region. At the time of the memorial's production, Manus J. Fish served as director of this agency. As the presidential and Congressional adviser on design matters relating to federal building projects, the Commission of Fine Arts (FAC) has the authority to approve memorial designs. During the VVMF memorial project, Carter J. Brown served as chairman of this organization.

¹¹⁴ Container Thirty, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

perceived focus on commemorating the dead.¹¹⁵ To encourage a design change, Perot offered to fund another design competition. This proposal was rejected by the VVMF. In response, Perot sought to prevent construction of Lin's design by undermining the VVMF's financial integrity by accusing the organization of illegal and inappropriate accounting practices.¹¹⁶ Because the production of (memorial) space, in which the VVMF is the instigator and producer, cannot be untied to capital and fundraising, Perot's strategy to undo the organization, and therefore the space by making vulnerable its funding infrastructure, was particularly damaging to the organization.

Decorated Vietnam War veteran, Assistant Secretary of War, and initial member of the VVMF National Sponsoring Committee, James Webb was also a vocal critic of the memorial design. Wielding his political leverage, Webb's vocality manifested in the form of newspaper articles impugning Lin's design for omitting customary signifiers of America and the lack of representational art, "there will be no flag, no images indicative of war."¹¹⁷ In his September 1981 letter to VVMF project director Robert Doubek, Webb emphasized the necessity for inserting an American flag within memorial grounds for "patriotic and pragmatic reasons."¹¹⁸ As such, the concern for the "presence," a central criterion posed to both jury and entrants of the design competition, as a significant design

¹¹⁵ Container Thirty, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁶ Container Thirty, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁷ James Webb, "Reassessing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Wall Street Journal*. December 18, 1981.

¹¹⁸ Controversy and Criticism Webb, James, 1980-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files, Container Thirty-Two, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

factor served as a point of contention for detractors of the winning design. Webb criticized the proposed design for failing to fulfill its basic intention to “honor and recognize” military personnel and for maintaining a seemingly “neutral” stance on the Vietnam War. The memorial receives (and welcomes) multiple readings and experiences from its visitors, but national war memorials, Webb argues, must provide a “premise,” from which to remember.¹¹⁹ Because the proposed architecture is perceived to subvert the implied presence of nationhood and absents the direct presence of directives to remembering, the idea of “presence” not only serves as a design element to be taken into account by design competition jury members and entrants, but it becomes the jumping off point for critics of the winning design.

Tom Carhart, a former VVMF board member, in rejecting Lin’s choice of dark granite and decision to partially sink the architecture underground, led the opposition against the proposed memorial design. Citing the structure’s funerary characteristics, Carhart labeled the design a “black gash of shame,” indicting the design’s evocation of mourning and grief.¹²⁰ Ironically, the VVMF set out to build a memorial aimed at reconciliation. The architecture is intended to “heal,” as Jan Scruggs would declare, the rifts resulting from the Vietnam War and mourning figures prominently in enactments and experiences of reconciliation and healing.¹²¹ Inherent in Carhart’s and Perot’s criticism, is the memorial’s treatment of death. A letter addressed to the Secretary of

¹¹⁹ James Webb, “Reassessing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Wall Street Journal*. December 18, 1981.

¹²⁰ Commission of Fine Arts Meetings, Administration, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Fifty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹²¹ Jan Scruggs, *To Heal a Nation*. (New York, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 165.

Interior James Watt, composed by Congressman Henry Hyde, and signed by fellow congressional detractors, charges the VVMF with failure to appropriately represent memorial legislation within the memorial design: “the result of the design competition for a memorial to the dead is a black wall sunk ten feet below ground...” is explicitly protesting against a Vietnam memorial that individually addresses the absent presence of the dead.¹²² In the case of the Vietnam War, waged from 1959 to 1975, the number of deaths associated with the war cannot be de-linked from the controversy of the war itself, which partially rests in the duration of the war itself. As such, to directly acknowledge the vast number of dead Vietnam War servicemen is also to implicitly acknowledge (and perhaps resolve) the Vietnam War controversy.

Apart from condemning the funerary qualities of Lin’s design, detractors also opposed its composed abstraction, more specifically the absence of any representative nod to the Vietnam War or its servicemen and women. Challengers attacked the memorial as deviating from traditional commemorative architectural strategies as well as, deviating from traditional codes of remembrance, “it violated unspoken taboos about the remembrance of wars.”¹²³ The choice of black granite as the building material, the walls seamed together to create a chevron shape, which too closely resembles the gesture for peace, were central factors with which the opposition were concerned.

¹²² Congressional Reaction 1981-1983, Memorial Design, Controversy and Criticism, Office Files 1979-1985, n.d., Container Thirty, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹²³ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 51.

In an internal VVMF memo dated November 13, 1981, the organization noted that desired changes proposed by the opposition were in keeping with already established critiques against color and height,

The Memorial Should:

-Be at or above ground level.

-Be white.

-Be constructed with American materials by American labor

-Have the American flag flown over it.

-Be engraved with the words of the authorizing legislation "...in honor and recognition...etc"

-Have the names of the 57,000 odd dead, which will appear on the stone, arranged in alphabetical order.¹²⁴

The list of archived alterations to the memorial can be read as blueprint to constructing a colloquially comprehensible national memorial—that which already exists on the National Mall. What is at stake for the VVM and the cause of conflict over its design is the question of what constitutes an official, national memorial and the determination of what forces or bodies possess the power to define and enforce commemoration practices. Because Lin's design seems to undermine already established approaches to national commemoration, the VVMF confronts opposition in the form of legislative barricades put in place by politically powerful opponents such as James Webb and then Republican

¹²⁴ Memorial Design, Controversy and Criticism, Office, Container Thirty Files, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Congressman Henry Hyde from Illinois. Federal approval for construction of this memorial accords Lin's design a place in the visual landscape that is the National Mall and simultaneously gestures at freedom to re-conceptualize what constitutes memorialization (in America), which traditionally marries nationalism with memorialization, wherein the two concepts recede into each other.

The coalescence of patriotic nationalism with memorialization is represented in Congressman Henry Hyde's February 1983 press conference where he claimed that the absence of an American flag in the memorial site problematically politicizes a memorial that intends to remain unmarked from politics:

We members of Congress who have expressed our views on the placement of the American flag...have been accused of politicizing the issue. Our intention all along has been to depoliticize the Memorial by attempting to alleviate the stark funeral design of the Memorial, which to many of us makes a political statement.¹²⁵

The "political statement" Lin's design makes is an expansion on what constitutes commemoration design and how visitors are allowed to experience national memory, which dovetails with the larger question of how we construct the idea of a formal memorial. As I proposed earlier, the idea of memorial is generally tied up with a discrete set of architectural conditions. Because of this project works to re-vision the memorial, Lin's project, is, in part my own. As this chapter proposes, remembering transpires in different forms.

¹²⁵ Congressional Reaction 1981-1983, Controversy and Criticism, Memorial Design, Office Files, Container Thirty Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The backlash to Lin's memorial concept translated into an attempt at shutting down the building of the VVM as politically powerful critics sought support from Secretary of Interior, James Watt, who was the deciding arm as to whether construction on the memorial could begin. In accordance with critics of the VVMF and the chosen memorial design, Watt tabled his initial sanction of the memorial design until the VVMF reached a compromise with its detractors in January 1982. This concession made by the VVMF resulted in, to Lin's dismay, the addition of a figurative sculpture and an American flag to the memorial site with the locations of both new elements to be decided by federal agencies. On March 4, 1982, the National Capital Planning Commission approved the addition of a statue and flag to be set onsite, but not directly within the confines of the memorial walls, and five days later the Fine Arts Commission made the same gesture. Secretary Watt finalized the memorial design by signing off on the construction permit on March 15, 1982.

Because a statue and flag were added to the memorial design, a sculpture panel was established for recommending a sculptor, a statue design, and placement for both statue and flag. The panel comprised opponents to Lin's original design, James Webb and Milton Copulos and supporters of her work, Art Mosely and Bill Jayne. The panel commissioned Frederick Hart, whose entry in the design competition was awarded third place accolades, to design and construct the sculpture. While Lin continued to voice her disapproval for the inclusion of extraneous elements to her design, in fall of 1982, the Commission of Fine Arts situated the statue and flag in an entrance plaza leading to the wall. With construction for the wall underway, the VVMF slated the official memorial

dedication for Veteran's Day, November 13, 1982. Opponents of Maya Lin's design, along with Secretary of Interior James Watt, advocated for a dedication ceremony only once the statue and flag were physically situated on the memorial site. But the Fine Arts Commission was then debating options for statue and flag placement, and as such, neither element would be present during the official dedication. The Frederick Hart's statue, finished in 1982, was dedicated two years later in November 1984.

Archive as Memorial

Marita Sturken positions the sea of names etched into the memorial wall as providing an "expanse of cultural memory" that simultaneously subverts and contributes to the writing of Vietnam War history.¹²⁶ If the names on black granite are a source of politically charged national memory, how do we delimit printed words etched across texts and housed in an archive that traces the eruption of the memorial from an idea into an architectural signifier of the Vietnam War? The archive remembers, piecing together (one) version of the production of memorial space. And by drawing on the archive as a source for reconstructing history, we must confront how the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) intends history to be remembered. Nora sees the modern unease with disappearance of the past coupled with an anxiety regarding the meaning of the present as imbuing particular value to the archive, "modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of

¹²⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 58.

the image.”¹²⁷ As such, can the archive be conceived as a form of memorial? The architecture of the archive exists in the form of words and texts consciously designed and chosen for building an account of the past. The archive, as a conglomeration of words, texts, documents blurs the line between memory and story, as it holds a consciously constructed memory/account of a period in time. According to Michel de Certeau, these (archival) stories are spatial entities; they carve out a trail in the construction of discourse, “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice.”¹²⁸ In other words, the linkage of words into texts and texts into an archive which preserves the history/story about a place, is a sort of architecture built out of ink and paper and made manifest as the user of the archive contrives to reconstruct the physical architecture through the practice of reading/manipulation of the archive.

De Certeau distinguishes between place, an order in which elements are “distributed in relationships of coexistence,” and space or a “practiced place,” that emerges when it becomes used.¹²⁹ The act of reading produces a space by one’s use or practice of a place, which in this case, is a written text or a “place” built out of a system of signs.¹³⁰ As a collection of texts constructed from the same system of signs, the

¹²⁷ Nora Pierre, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13.

¹²⁸ Michel de Certeau, “Spatial Stories.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002).

¹²⁹ Michel de Certeau, “Spatial Stories.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 117.

¹³⁰ Michel de Certeau, “Spatial Stories.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 130.

archive is transformed into a space where we attend to those documents in the process of sorting out the memories of the production of the VVM. Our relationship to the archive, in dealing with it, in producing a process for extracting material from it, is not unlike the way in which visitors experience the actual memorial and the site within which it sits. De Certeau sees the production of material space as transpiring when streets, geometrically designed and defined by the urban planner, are made into space by pedestrians who use (practice) them. The VVM, while flanked by numerous architectural dictates on what and how to remember, is ultimately made meaningful (and into space) by the choreography and trajectories of its users. Both the VVMF archive and architecture produced by the VVMF call on the reader-user-visitor-dancer to render text, architecture, and site into space. In reading through archived documents and determining a pathway across the memorial, I argue that both archive and memorial are always already being re-constructed to constantly form new spaces wherein every user of the archive and every visitor to the memorial builds new conceptual architecture within that which is already in place.

The archive's resemblance to formal memorial structures is not just abstract. The very real process of designing and constructing the archive is embodied in the finding aid of the VVMF archive, which lists the contents of each box of materials contained within the archive. It acts as an architectural blueprint, revealing the archive's bone structure. Moreover, the archive-memorial occupies real space, taking up shelf space in the Manuscript Room of the Library of Congress. Diana Taylor notes the word archive

“etymologically refers to “a public building,” “a place where records are kept.”¹³¹ From *arkhe*, it also means a beginning... the government.”¹³² As such, the archive *is* an institution, a simultaneously real and theoretical space safeguarding tangible materials that trace the trajectory of the production of the VVM. And as a “building” comprised of papers, the archive, under Mayo’s understanding of memorial, acts not only as a memorial to the Vietnam War, but more significantly becomes a memorial to how the architecture-as-memorial is remembered.

If we re-imagine the archive as an institution, with its materiality in the form of papers/images/blueprints and maps, working as a trace of the process of production, it is incomplete in what is remembered.¹³³ Gayatri Spivak’s preface to Derrida’s *On Grammatology* characterizes *trace* against the breakdown in the referent system,

It is indeed an ineluctable nostalgia for presence that makes of this heterogeneity a unity by declaring that a sign brings forth the presence of the signified... word and thing and thought never become one... The structure of reference works... because of their relationship to difference.¹³⁴

Trace marks the differences sprouting between the forced (heterogeneous) linkages between the word/thing, “Derrida’s trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and

¹³¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹³² Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹³³ In this sense, the archive-as-memorial resembles architecture-as-memorial, which usually presents a single narrative/version of the past, rendering the official material representation of memory equally incomplete.

¹³⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore, Maryland and London, United Kingdom: Johns Hopkin University Press, 1997), xvi.

experience.”¹³⁵ Derrida’s usage of trace signals a critique of logocentrism where trace is wielded to undo definitive truth-values attached to a seemingly closed sign structure. According to Spivak, all signs are inherently structures of difference, smudged by the trace of an absent-present, leaving room for the possibility of multiple meanings. As such, “the authority of the text is provisional, the origin is a trace...”¹³⁶ Here, Derrida is undermining the linear practice of acquiring knowledge, which is simultaneously a desire for power that is normatively reached by a “systematic tracking down of a truth that is hidden but may be found.”¹³⁷ Spivak argues that Derrida instead advocates a strategy of “freeplay” that undercuts our desire to unify meaning and engage methods of knowledge perusal allowing for the opening of meaning.¹³⁸

While Derrida uses trace to re-conceive the inner contradictions in language and Saussure’s reference structure, we can re-place the idea of trace as a marker of an absent presence (in a sign structure) into an examination of memorialization, as both architecture and archives inherit similar disjunctions between present markers of an absent past; an act “freeplay” that admits the meaning of the VVM cannot be fully understood by simply reading the memorial architecture. A memorial literally operates as a trace, locating that which is not present. But as a signifier, the memorial can also fall under the knife of

¹³⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore. Maryland and London, United Kingdom: Johns Hopkin University Press, 1997), xvi.

¹³⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore. Maryland and London, United Kingdom: Johns Hopkin University Press, 1997), xviii.

¹³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore. Maryland and London, United Kingdom: Johns Hopkin University Press, 1997), xix.

¹³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (Baltimore. Maryland and London, United Kingdom: Johns Hopkin University Press, 1997), xix.

Derrida's critique of signs, which forces the question of where is the trace, or what is different or absent in the memorial-as-signifier? As such, the formal memorial space operates like memory itself. What becomes signified is neither complete nor total. The archive, which stores the vestiges of memorial production, is an equally legitimate signifier of Vietnam War Memorial memory. It also "traces" the trajectory of the production process, but is also incomplete. If the archive-as-memorial is a trace, it also functions as a signifier and as such, must recognize the difference: what becomes signified is incomplete and not total. The archive, which stores the vestiges of memorial production, is equally incomplete.

Derrida deals directly with the deficiency of the archive in his book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.¹³⁹ He suggests in the postscript of this book that the archive plays a concealing function. It harbors a secret in the form of texts/materials that have been "burned" to ash. The desire for the archive is imbricated with the desire to know what has been omitted, "burned without him, without remains and without knowledge."¹⁴⁰ Central to this desire is the knowledge that the archive does not house the full story. It is a trace. Because the memorial structure itself and the archive-as-memorial are both incomplete entities, then we cannot simply attend to only the architecture of the VVM or just the texts housed by the VVMF to get at the question of memorialization. Rather it necessary to consider both elements as necessary parts of a single investigation.

¹³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 101.

This investigation also houses the choreographies of bodies temporarily inhabiting the real space of the memorial. These dances are also traces, vanishing upon completion. All three sources, the archive, the architecture, and the body must be attended to in order to arrive at a more cohesive understanding of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Set against a strategy of pinpointing how social memory and cultural identity have been traditionally examined (and constructed) in the Americas, Diana Taylor's book, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, dissolves the opposition between materials that endure and ephemeral performances. In defending performance as a means for recuperating memories, knowledge, and cultural histories omitted from the western-centric archive of "enduring materials," Taylor makes a case for text-based materials to operate in tangent with embodied knowledge (repertoire), as each invigorates and informs the other.¹⁴¹ In proposing the body-in-performance as a relevant source from which to draw collective memories, Taylor claims that it is not only the archive which can be readily understood as a memorial, but the body of work which comprises body-as-text, must also be recognized as an agent of memorialization. The dances—the articulations—put out by the body divulges how individual(s) remember. These dances are fleeting, even more difficult to trace, but can nonetheless be mined for meaning, acting as transient memorials dealing with the "how" of remembering.¹⁴² This calls for a re-scripting of how we define "memorial." The VVM, situated in the grounds of Constitution Gardens in Washington

¹⁴¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁴² The suggestion that such choreographies fall into the category of memorial is broached here, but will be fully explored in the next three chapters.

D.C., forces a remembering of the Vietnam War and mediates between the archives preserving the past history of the memorial's materialization and the present dance(s) that play out at the memorial site, performed by moving bodies that temporarily weave their own texts across the memorial grounds. There exists a triadic nexus in the choreography of memorialization, where architecture-as-memorial must be joined and considered in relation to the memorializing capabilities of the archive and the body. We cannot attend only to VVM architecture in order to get at its rhetorical power and capacity; to fully excavate the meaning of this memorial, we have to align what the architecture and site is attempting to articulate with the historical context from which it was produced by accessing the archive that traces its development and more importantly, attend to the bodies that occupy and respond to the memorial site via their choreographic articulations.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to establish a definition of memorial, especially since I am attempting to rip open the conventional status of memorials to think about the archive and later in the dissertation, about the moving body as a memorial—as *lieux de memoire*. The concept of memorial has often been conflated with, and equated to the concept of monument, and in discourse about commemorative architecture, the term “memorial” has been used interchangeably with “monument.” However, the National Park Service (NPS), the federal agency which administers and maintains the VVM, distinguishes between the two. A memorial is “commemorative of a historic person or episode; it need not occupy a site historically connected with its subject,” while monuments are defined more broadly as any structure, landmark, or objects of historic or

scientific interest.¹⁴³ The NPS (federal) classification of memorial is explicitly tied to memory and commemoration. Scholars have also formally weighed in the question of memorial vs. monument. In her book, *Tangled Memories*, Marita Sturken opens her examination of the VVM by detaching the idea of memorial from the idea of monument.¹⁴⁴ Sturken draws from the work of Arthur Danto, who claims that monuments and memorials are distinguished by the respective practices of remembering and forgetting. Monuments are erected to celebrate national success, while memorials allow for the commemoration of national tragedy/defeat, “monuments are not generally built to commemorate defeat; the defeated dead are remembered in memorials. Whereas a monument most often signifies victory, a memorial refers to the life or lives sacrificed for a particular set of values.”¹⁴⁵ Inherent in both NPS’ and Sturken’s scholarly understanding of memorial is the implication of remembering what is vulnerable to erasure. This is the understanding of memorial that I intend to subscribe to: the memorial as a built entity referring to a national, historical node of tragedy or defeat intended as a safeguard from erasure within the fabric of national, collective memory.

Also embedded in the definition of the memorial, as defined by the backlash against the VVMF’s selection of Maya Lin’s austere design, is the implication that the concept of memorial is tied to a particular form of architecture and strategy of

¹⁴³ “Designation of National Park System Units,” National Park Service, 2000. <http://www.nps.gov/legacy/nomenclature.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 47.

¹⁴⁵ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 47.

architectural design. The patterning of memorial architecture tends towards a construction of heroic, patriotic, representational structures. That Lin's design skirts, in fact re-conceptualizes conventions of memorial architecture, contributed to the immediate opposition to her design. Critics of the memorial referred to the design as "a black gash of shame," a "tombstone," a "slap in the face," a "degrading ditch."¹⁴⁶ Sturken reads the VVM as "...both subversive and continuous with the nationalist discourse of the Mall."¹⁴⁷ It subverts the patterning of commemoration already present on the National Mall by rejecting the traditional aesthetic sensibility of commemorative architecture. This divergence away from tradition memorial design is apparent in Lin's non-representational, minimalist design. The V-shape formed by the two sides of the memorial wall points towards Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, situating it historically and spatially within the expanse of the National Mall.

¹⁴⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 51.

¹⁴⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 50.



Figure 1. Vietnam Veterans Memorial.¹⁴⁸

Opposition to the VVMF's design selection is not unrelated to the definition of memorial embedded in our national psyche. The memorial is more than just a structure erected for commemoration, it is also a structure that generally works to represent and commemorate in literal, patriotic form. By positioning the archive as a form of commemoration, and later in this project, by arguing for seeing the body in the memorial as inhabiting the role of ephemeral, moving memorial, I am arguing for a more imaginative and looser construction of memorial. I want to propose a conception of memorial that retains its linkage to a practice of remembering/commemorating that is vulnerable to and subject to effacement. And moreover, I propose a notion of memorial that is not always confined to the idea of architecture or permanence.

¹⁴⁸ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

Archival Architecture: Representation of (Memorial) Space

The finding aid, a booklet organized like a table of contents, divulges to its reader the contents of each box of materials comprising the VVMF archive. It is printed and written by the manuscript division of the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. and is more formally defined by the institution as a “register.”¹⁴⁹ These “registers” or finding aids

include information on the provenance and administration of the collection, an organizational or biographical history or chronology, a scope and content note, a description of the various series or groups of manuscripts in the collection, and a container list. The container list normally describes the contents of each container by folder title.¹⁵⁰

The finding aid for the VVMF archive is, at first glance, much like a first visit to the actual memorial wall, wherein the visual senses are initially swallowed by the sea of names, which first appear as a multitude of single letters. The carefully organized spread of subject and topic headings in the finding aid is equally disorienting. It reads as a vertical listing of categories, resembling a series of flip-able (paper) walls— every series heading acting as one part of the archive-as-memorial, commemorating one aspect in the production of the memorial. Visual theorist Marita Sturken points to the reverberating force of names on the memorial wall,

in response to the memorial, visitors commonly think of the widening circle of pain emanating from each name, imagining for each the grieving parents, sisters,

¹⁴⁹ “About Manuscript Division Finding Aids,” Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., April 19, 2009. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/f-aids/aboutfa.html>.

¹⁵⁰ “About Manuscript Division Finding Aids,” Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., April 19, 2009. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/f-aids/aboutfa.html>.

brothers, girlfriends, wives, husbands, friends, and children—imagining, in effect the multitude of people who were directly affected by the war.¹⁵¹

The multiple category headings that make up the VVMF archive maintains similar “widening circles,” not of pain, but rather widening circles of texts, with each series heading comprising of multiple cardboard boxes each containing multiple documents appending detail to the named categories.

In organizing categories of knowledge, Diana Taylor encircles writing within the boundaries of the *archive* and bodily performance as the fulcrum of the *repertoire*.¹⁵² For her, the archive, which Pierre Nora has already termed the locus of memory, exists in the form of “documents maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change.”¹⁵³ In other words, the archive comprises the touchable, material goods that preserve, on, within, through its depths, the past. Like Nora, Taylor recognizes its status as memory, “archival memory works across distance, over time and space...”¹⁵⁴ If the archive is made of mostly enduring things, can we also define the materials from the archive as representatives of “conceived”/representations of space?¹⁵⁵ Lefebvre argues that space must be viewed as

¹⁵¹ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 58.

¹⁵² Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁵³ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁵⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁵⁵ I, like Diana Taylor, acknowledge that the notion that the archive “endures” is, in actuality, mythical. The reality of the archive is the objects are lost or placed out of order, imbuing it with a dynamism that succumbs to change/manipulation.

a process of production, taking place through its actual construction, but we must also think of spatial production as transpiring through discourse and lived experience. Conceived spaces are discursive, tending “towards a system of verbal (therefore intellectually worked out) signs,” it is the space occupied by individuals who textualize and represent space.¹⁵⁶

The VVMF archive houses the materials tracing the process of conceptualizing the memorial space and its progress from concept to reality. It is an episteme of a memorial site, and we must confront this archive not only for what it contains, but also for what is absented from its warehouse and for what its order/structure has to say about the one version of the memorial as “conceived” space. Like the actual memorial, the archive is a mediated entity. The selection process that an item/source endures to gain a spot in the (archival) line-up is precisely what makes it archival. As such, the archive does not function differently from the memorial, which directly mediates the way in which visitors deal with Vietnam War history. Marita Sturken reminds us that because the Vietnam memorial operates on a national scale, it is a politicized mode of remembering and constricts the expanse within which we construct our own version of the Vietnam War: “the memorial’s placement on the Washington Mall inscribes it within a nationalistic discourse, restricting the discourse of memory it can provide.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 38-39.

¹⁵⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 83.

The archive functions similarly to the memorial wall in that it also restricts the discourse contained in the archive/conceived space. The VVMF archive presents a particular set of memories constructed from the texts/documents/objects selected to evidence the progress of the memorial from the point of view of its proponents and supporters. As such, the conceived space of the archive declares and mediates how we remember and understand the transformation of the memorial from concept to reality. The VVM, designed by Maya Ying Lin consists of two walls, built from 140 panels of black granite. One segment of the wall gestures at the Lincoln Memorial, which is easily visible due to its walking distance proximity, and the other length of wall points to the Washington Monument which, while located on the other side of the National Mall, is easily visible from Constitution Gardens, the site within which the Vietnam memorial is partially submerged. The two walls granite walls intersect at a point, forming an elongated “V” shape. The wall is at once reachable and daunting in height. The panels gradually escalate in height; the shortest panels, nestled at each of the two entrances, are easily accessible to small children. The memorial’s highest point is reserved for the apex, created by the meeting of the two wall segments, and reaches a height of 10.1 feet. On the face of the wall are etched over 58,000 names of Vietnam War servicemen/women arranged in the chronological order by the year of their deaths. The black granite, mined from Bangalore, India, was especially chosen for its reflective quality, as the wall not only imprints the sea of names stretched across its façade, but also imprints any image that comes into its wake. A simulacrum of the built environment exists in the depths of

the black granite and visitors who enter the memorial find themselves (re)produced against the granite.

The memorial wall harbors a mediating power that is made apparent by the way visitors engage experientially with the names etched onto the black granite. Lin makes the placement of names an architectural, and therefore a signifying component, in the memorial design, “at the intersection of these walls, on the right side, at the wall’s top, is carved the date of the first death. It is followed by the names of those who have died in the war, in chronological order...thus the war’s beginning and end meet...”¹⁵⁸ Order, specifically the organization and commemoration of military personnel in the chronological order in which they died enunciates not only the length of the war, but visually signifies both the escalation and immensity of the war. As such, the order of names contributes to the construction of Vietnam War as a national memory; it sets the way in which we visually align, and therefore remember the Vietnam War in terms of the order of casualties. The archive also remembers and is remembered in order. The paper walls upon which headings, subjects, and topics are etched are also arranged in order, not only in the chronological order, but also along an order marking significant victories and obstacles in the production of the (memorial) space.

In his book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Jacques Derrida reveals the conceptually murky status of the idea of archive, “nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word “archive.””¹⁵⁹ Derrida traces the linguistic history of archive to

¹⁵⁸ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

¹⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 90.

the Greek *arkhē*, which refers to the idea of commencement and commandment, and to the Greek *arkheion*, meaning the home/domicile of the magistrate who oversees the archive.¹⁶⁰ Derrida shows the archive as historically occupying material space, working as an institution that is simultaneously private and public. Derrida sees the trouble with archive as stemming from its occupation of the “unstable limit between public and private,” and its reputation as a place of secrets or clandestineness as it is an entity working “to shelter itself and, sheltered, conceal itself.”¹⁶¹ Derrida’s tracing of the archive’s linguistic roots reveals that the idea of archive has been historically aligned with a physical location, consignment, and authority. The very nature of the archive as both transparent and concealed, lends itself to what Derrida would argue is a troubled status. Perhaps the absence of a unified definition of archive works to our theoretical advantage as it also permits us to be playful with how we conceive its status. My own proposition of the archive falls into a gesture of imagination as I propose to conceive the archive as itself, a version of memorial in its preservation of the production process of the VVM. While problematically incomplete, constructed by individuals who conscious include and omit documents, the archive is nonetheless the source through which to gauge and understanding the process of VVM architecture.

¹⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

¹⁶¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

However, Derrida's suggestion that the archive is imbued with (constructed) authority speaks to not only the way in which archives are governed, but also speaks to the idea that the contents of an archive functions as the legitimate account of a situation. And that is part of the "trouble" with the archive. Despite its seemingly authoritative condition, we cannot fully believe that its contents provide a full account of a story. After all, as Diana Taylor points out in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, materials are constantly and consciously omitted or erased from the archive.¹⁶² Derrida makes a similar point in the closing of his book when he claims that the archive contains only a trace of what happened, and what we really desire to know is that which has been disappeared, or "burned" into ashes.¹⁶³ And this space of absence is what I want to explore next in conjunction with the archive.

It would impossible to complete a project about the VVM without attending to Maya Ying Lin, winner of the VVMF design competition and designer of the memorial wall. And to account for her role in the production of this memorial space, I will again turn to the archive, only this time, I examine the authority of the archive by attempting to re-locate Maya Lin's presence within it, to uncover what seems to be included and more importantly what seems to be missing. So this dive into the archive is a search for Maya Lin's body, an attempt at tracking her physical performance in the project, via the

¹⁶² Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁶³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 101.

archive, and an attempt to choreographically recuperate what is missing, or in Derrida's vernacular, what is "burned" into ashes.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 101.

Chapter Three: Do (NOT) Dance on the Memorial

Methodology as Bodily Practice, as Theory

The production of the VVM is founded, in part, on federal legislation ceding permission to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to dedicate space in Constitution Gardens for the building of a Vietnam War memorial. Senate and Congressional legislative support was also secured for the building of this new national memorial.¹⁶⁵ The forces of legislation, however, are not shut up within institutions of government, as the paper trail of legislation seeps into and permeates the topography of the memorial site. While the memorial site is a space of seemingly free maneuverability, its dual entrances announce the formal entry and exit of its visitors, forcing bodies to clash as groups of individuals simultaneously enter and exit the memorial site. An invisible veil of bodily legislation circumscribes the VVM, dictating how visitors are permitted to create their trajectories through the space. External directives, marked in the shape of wooden signs prevent visitors from stepping on the grass and from running across memorial grounds, bear the ravages of how legislation has followed the trail of the memorial's production from its birth as an idea requiring federal sanctions to its actualization as a material structure. Specifically, it is the presence of the scholar body, in this case, my

¹⁶⁵ Congressional Senate Legislation, 1979-80, Legislation, Files of the Project Director, Container Fifty-Nine Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

body, engaging in a critical analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that is most susceptible to the dictates of seemingly invisible barriers to motility. And it is this investigative, scholar body that is most able to make out the way in which the space is booby trapped with National Park Service ordinances, inevitably rendering the memorial into a piece of legislation itself.

By looking at how the institution that oversees national memorials, the National Park Service (NPS), the managing agency of federal land, parks, and monuments, deals with requests for critical field analysis, this chapter locates the VVM as a site imbricated with disciplinary tactics. In this chapter, I am raising the question of free access to a public space and the question of who is allowed to see/experience the memorial and from vantage point are they allowed to see it.¹⁶⁶ Using my own experience of unsuccessfully navigating the bureaucracy of the National Park Service to underpin theorizations about a memorial space that is silently legislated, I interrogate how the NPS marks and separates the presence of bodies seeking to critically excavate the memorial.

In order to carry out a scholarly examination on federal lands belonging to the NPS, one must officially make oneself visible within the system of paperwork accompanying any bureaucratic organization. The issue of presence, especially how the Vietnam Veterans Memorial must architecturally converse with pre-existing architectural styles was a central point of evaluation when the VVMF began soliciting design

¹⁶⁶ This organization is situated under the larger umbrella of the United States Department of Interior, which is lead by the Secretary of Interior. The National Park Service, while maintaining offices across the country, is headquartered in Washington D.C.

proposals that are “...neither too commanding or too deferential. The memorial should take its proper place in the historic continuity of our national art.”¹⁶⁷ There exists a concern with (bodily) presence within the legislative workings of the National Park Service. This concern is materialized via the directive that individuals proposing to study and investigate national memorials and other government owned/administered lands, must announce their presence in the form of a written proposal for use of a site. In other words, a permit is required to study and document how visitors corporeally interact with the architectural elements and space of the VVM. My request for a NPS sanctioned permit to engage with the VVM site distinguishes my critical scrutiny of the memorial from observations made by visitors who frequent the pathways of the memorial site. While both the investigative body and the visiting body are spatially governed by the structure of the memorial architecture, the individual who formally identifies him/herself as a professional investigator/scholar is subject to an even narrower set of spatial directives from the National Park Service.

I submitted my request to film visitor activity in and around the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on January 6, 2009, citing my affiliation with the Department of Dance at University of California, Riverside, as well my intention to use dance studies methodologies and dance theory to read the articulations of bodies weaving throughout the memorial space. In the methodology portion of the application, I cited the use of a digital video camera to document and collect the “pedestrian dances” executed by visitors

¹⁶⁷ Jury Instructions, April 26, 1981, Jury, Design Competition, Memorial Design, Files of the Project Director, Container Sixty-Six, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

who are physically interacting with the memorial. Because the “Application for Scientific Research and Collecting Permit” requires applicants to account for their purpose of study, I disclose that my project is an intervention on the field of dance studies by its engagement with and scrutinization of the informal and private performances carried out at the memorial wall.¹⁶⁸ In doing so, I referred to the bodily gestures articulating visitors’ immediate experience of the memorial as “dances” and referring to the visitors as “pedestrian dancers.”

No Dancing on Memorial

In his interview with Paul Rabinow entitled, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” Foucault introduces the idea of “policing” in reference to eighteenth century treatment of the state in the guise of the city.¹⁶⁹ Policing becomes the system of control asserted by the State to tightly and efficiently govern its territory, “at the outset, the notion of police applied only to the set of regulations that were to assure the tranquility of the city, but at that moment the police become the very *type* of rationality for the government of the whole territory.”¹⁷⁰ As such, “policing” as a framework for rationality is understood by

¹⁶⁸ An electronic application located online at <https://science.nature.nps.gov/research/ac/ResearchIndex> is required for all formal studies on National Park Service land.

¹⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 241.

¹⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 241.

Foucault as a regulatory system to oversee the general conduct of individuals.¹⁷¹ What remains unsaid, but inevitably couched within the practice of policing is the presence of the body. Systematic control of a population's behavior/conduct cannot be untwined from management of bodily actions, as the body's actions and gestures (in space) are the most visible channel for expressing behavior. Dance scholar Susan Foster makes explicit the articulating capacity of the moving body, "a body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing."¹⁷² This ever moving, impermanent set of writings enunciates an individual's reaction to the world at large and to the (architectural) landscape within which he/she operates. The body-in-motion, as a mode of corporeal conduct, becomes the material of policing. As a project of system regulation, eighteenth century policing is inherently a project of bodily regulation.

Foucault cites the nineteenth century evolution of mechanized technology (railroads) as pushing architecture from its influential perch in social governance. Focus shifted away from away from architecture and to technologies of space, "with the birth of these new technologies and these new economic processes, one sees the birth of a sort of thinking about space that is no longer modeled on the police state of urbanization of the territory, but extends far beyond the limits of urbanism and architecture."¹⁷³ This is coupled with emergence of a conception of society in which government not only

¹⁷¹ Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power." in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 241.

¹⁷² Susan Foster, "Choreographing History." in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁷³ Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power." in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 242.

administers over territory and population, but also wrestles with the reality created by “its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance.”¹⁷⁴ No longer is policing sufficient for manipulating society. There are, however, environs where architecture retains its political significance.¹⁷⁵ The memorial sites which dot Washington D.C’s landscape consciously and strategically marry architecture with the nation’s political aspirations. M. Christine Boyer cites nineteenth and twentieth century modernistic treatment of architecture as a mechanism for transferring meaning, “...that these artifacts actually generate memory and inscribe civic conduct,” carries over in our postmodern use of civic architecture as a means to “...legitimate state interventions and help us remember exemplary actions.”¹⁷⁶ The constructed-ness of these civic architectures hints at the fabricated nature of the past that these memorial structures are intended to commemorate. On these sites, architecture remains the key signifier of the country’s political past and preserver of a country’s political intentions.

Foucault claims that we have abandoned disciplinary measures imposed onto the body politic to render automatic all social mechanisms, for the question of how government butts up against its own limitations in the process of governance. While

¹⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 242.

¹⁷⁵ Foucault also argues that with the erosion of architecture as a mechanism of governmental power, the designer of space is also subject to a waning of political power. While the National Mall as a architectural signifier of memory and nationhood remains a powerful means for bodies to construct an idea of America, I will later argue that the architect, especially the designer of the VVM has definitely lost her power to manipulate space.

¹⁷⁶ M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 17-18.

retaining this modern inspection of governance, we can recuperate his idea, the eighteenth century French notion of policing as rationality that materializes into a regulatory approach to think about how the National Park Service deals with the bodies. Given the politicized dimensions of a memorial site, this version of policing is especially relevant for thinking about the legislation imposed by the National Park Service onto the bodies of its visitors. Because Washington D.C. is the country's capital and the National Mall and Constitution Gardens are the visible spatial representations of (mostly) the country's political triumphs, there exists an urgency to preserve order, which translates into acceptance/commiseration of the country's political affiliations and framework.

My application for permission to engage in field research on the VVM serves as a formal enunciation of my scholarly interest (and presence) in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and was evaluated by Mary Willeford Bair, a Natural Resource Specialist, charged with processing all permits related to the National Mall and its accompanying memorial sites. In our initial exchange, a follow-up to my submission of the NPS permit, she was wearily concerned with my semantic inclusion of "dancing" as a theoretical underpinning for my dissertation project. Assuming that the project involved my staging a formal performance in which I "danced" through the memorial site, Willeford Bair cited the prohibition of unacceptable behavior in all national memorial spaces. In referencing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Willeford Bair asserted that "dancing in the memorial is not allowed," marrying the idea of dancing with behavior defined as "disrespectful" to the veterans the memorial is intended to honor and commemorate.¹⁷⁷ In

¹⁷⁷ Mary Willeford Bair, Phone Conversation with Ying Zhu, January 06, 2009.

misreading my application as a proposal to stage a dance performance at the site of a national memorial, Willeford Bair hinted at the necessary practice of regulating bodily gestures/behavior in the space of a memorial. Not only does the production of the memorial pass through multiple channels of federal legislation, but the pedestrian activities carried out at the memorial wall is also subject to the scrutiny of the governing forces of the NPS. Willeford Bair, as a representative of the voice of the National Park Service, reveals in her mandate that no dancing transpire on federal land, that there indeed exists a code of action/behavior when it comes to traversing space that is heavily imbued with the meaning of history.¹⁷⁸ Ironically, she misses the very idea that dancing appears in the VVM. The very presence of visitors who perform motion and stillness on the VVM also signal the presence of dancing.

In an email dated April 2009, Willeford Bair attached a topographical outline of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where light and dark gray hatch marks organize the site into two distinct regions. The map was supplied to indicate where field researchers are permitted to situate themselves when carrying out their work. The site upon which the black granite wall is situated and the lands immediately adjacent to the memorial including the arenas surrounding *The Three Servicemen* statue and the more recently erected Vietnam Women's Memorial, all pathways cutting through the memorial, and the landscaped portions of the memorial site are classified as "restricted," in which active observation practices involving the filming of visitor activity is prohibited.¹⁷⁹ The region

¹⁷⁸ Such legislation is made apparent only when the presence of a body is announced, one that seeks to engage with NPS sites beyond the function of visitor.

¹⁷⁹ Mary Willeford Bair, Phone Conversation with Ying Zhu, April 7, 2009.

bordering the urban landscape surrounding Constitution Gardens and comprising the space of grass adjoining the streets of Constitution Ave., 23rd St. NW, and 17th St. SW is catalogued as “restricted sound and staging.”¹⁸⁰

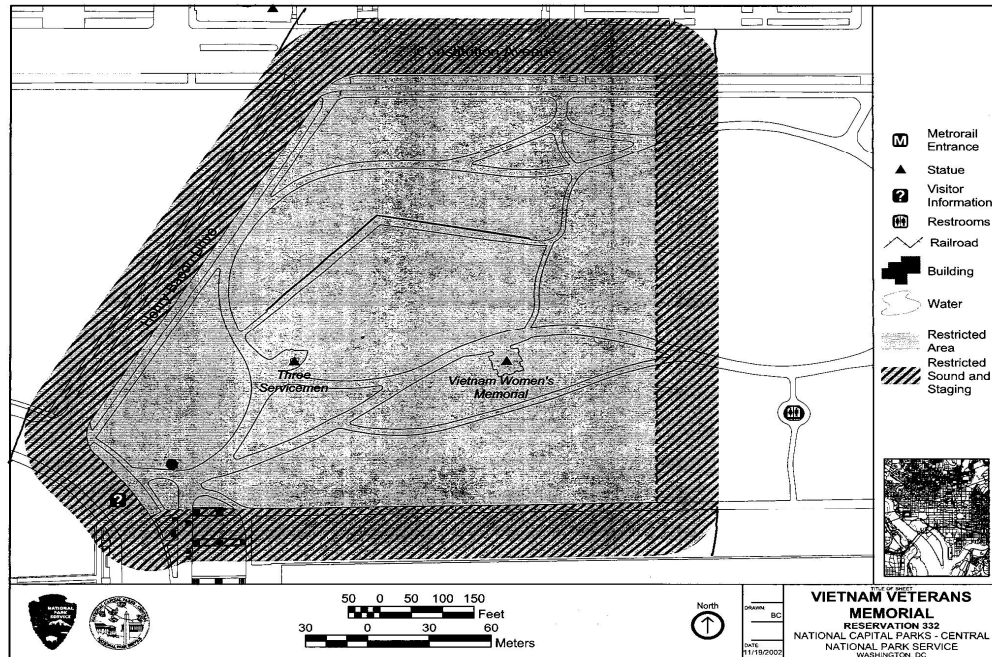


Figure 2. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Filming Access.¹⁸¹

In a telephone conversation meant to clarify demarcations on this map of the VVM, Willeford Bair pronounced that in the case my permit is finally approved, filming for my field research is only possible from the nether regions of the memorial site and that the “restricted” area of the memorial site is accessible only to the activities of the general public. Her instructions aligned the idea of restriction to the practice of scholarly investigation. While visitor access to the VVM is already confined by the NPS to the walkways snaking through and out from the memorial, access is further constricted for

¹⁸⁰ See Figure 2.

¹⁸¹ National Park Service Map

individuals who turn a critical lens on the site. What the map reveals is the segregation of two distinct functions of looking and presence, wherein my body is mapped onto the topography of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and placed in the nether regions of the site. The map distributed by Willeford Bair is not so much a map of the memorial site, as it is a mapping of (all) bodies in the space. It regulates the movements of different categorizations of bodies. The inner sanctum of the memorial grounds is accessible at all hours of the day, to all visitors who experience the memorial architecture without agenda and who see the memorial through an uncritical lens. These bodies collectively form an unassuming and (seemingly) unvoiced presence, that amoeba-like, reshapes itself with the addition and subtraction of bodies. Presence of these bodies is expected and accepted. In making the self visible through the text of a NPS permit, the presence my body is hindered from looking carefully and thus critically at the rhythm of the memorial site. My body, line of site, and capacity to see critically are confined to a strip of space bordering the urban environment that the memorial wall consciously shields. Ironically, there is a twinning of activities performed on the two sites as both tourists and I engage in the practice of capturing images of the memorial architecture, simultaneously inserting the body into the camera/corder line of vision.

In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, Michel Foucault interrogates the condition of the human body as it becomes subjected to the forces of power. The eighteenth century was particularly concerned with projects of docility, imposing rigid techniques upon the body that treated the individual to mechanisms of control and power. Bodies needed to increase their utility through mechanization and

“discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies,” increasing the forces of the body in the form of economic utility while ironically diminishing the politically autonomous forces of the same corpus.¹⁸² These disciplinary architectures concentrated on capturing the body’s force, rather than the body’s signifying components of behavior and language. The enslavement of the body’s force “implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the process of the activity rather than its result and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement.”¹⁸³ Foucault’s assertion of the body’s docility under societal and political forces of control marks the consequence of making one’s presence known through the sounding board of a NPS research permit. The National Park Service is precisely concerned with “regulating the processes of activity,” by preempting a scholar’s freedom to navigate through space.¹⁸⁴ This is accomplished when NPS organizes mandates around time and space to narrow the trajectory of movement. The researching body is disciplined, constrained within a regulated web of time and space. Foucault aligns discipline with domination. The conscious mapping of the body, which appears in the body of the text of the research permit, is akin to legislative control.

¹⁸² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 138.

¹⁸³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137.

¹⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137.

In accounting for strategies of discipline, Foucault asserts, “discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space.”¹⁸⁵ This is precisely the function of the map emailed to me by Mary Willeford Bair. It specifies which bodies are allowed into which spaces and how these bodies are permitted to operate. In making the “restricted” zone open to uncritical tourists, and the “restricted staging” area available scholars, different sets of bodies are literally distributed within the memorial site.¹⁸⁶ Falling under the disciplinary umbrella of distribution, discipline also calls for the practice of *enclosure*, a strategic placement of certain bodies into specific places, “one must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation...its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals...”¹⁸⁷ The mapping of bodies into separate regions of the memorial site is more than just an act of distribution. Rather the National Park Service seeks to distribute bodies by enclosing them into separate regions. My application for a research permit on memorial grounds differentiates my intention at the memorial site from the motivations of the visiting tourist. The NPS partitions the researching body into an invisible pen that separates it from bodies only fleetingly present at the site. As such, I am literally being disciplined, being “enclosed” as a mechanism of monitoring. Placed at a great distance from the VVM, I am prevented

¹⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 141.

¹⁸⁶ National Park Service: Map of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

¹⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 143.

from carrying out precisely what I proposed to accomplish, to observe, and critique how the body interacts with Maya Lin's architecture. As such, how one proposes to enact the performance of seeing becomes linked to how the body is legislated in its ability to navigate memorial sites and from what vantage point one is allowed to see from.

Of An Othered Space

My first proposal for research was cancelled by the NPS on account of the discrepancy between the naming of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as the primary site for study and the proposal methodology, which suggested that other memorial sites might also be subject to investigation. Mary Willeford Bair suggested that I confer with her before rewriting and re-submitting the research application. During this conference, she critiqued the content of my first permit application, citing vagueness in the methodology portion of the application and my problematic reference to dance and dance theory, advising me to remove all references to "dance" and to specifically disclose my intended movement trajectory within the memorial site. It was already stipulated by the NPS, that my presence, as scholarly investigator with video camera, would potentially disturb visiting public traversing the epicenter of the memorial cite. The NPS was concerned that my body, with camera in hand, would disturb the sense of privacy afforded to each visiting body. In other words, the NPS was concerned that my presence would be noticed, that I would be seen. So I am contained within a separate arena along the edges of the official memorial cite.

It is not sufficient that the NPS maps my body onto a pre-determined portion of space; this governing organization is also concerned with the minutiae of my maneuverings as Willeford Bair asks me to specify on my re-application, where I intend to stand when engaging in field research. In issuing such a directive, the NPS reveals a concern with the critical viewer of how the memorial is seen/perceived, and from where in space the observation takes place. While the NPS cites concern over privacy rights as reason to situate my body outside the main memorial space, the formal desire to know where I am positioned (in space) raises the larger question of the boundaries of State control. In speaking with Willeford Bair about where I intend to set up my video equipment, she warns that once approval of my chosen filming location is accepted, I am disallowed from filming in any locations that are not specified in the research application. By being immobilized in a memorial inviting the body access to stillness *and* motility, Willeford Bair's disallowance of my dancing, if we contextualized the concept as any form of bodily articulation, is ironically rendered true.

In his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau suggests maneuverability as a means to undercut all manners of, but especially, hegemonic State control.¹⁸⁸ The very practice of walking, of exploiting one's maneuverability in space, works to counter (state) disciplinary forces. As a theoretical counter to Foucault, de Certeau seeks to articulate how everyday practices, contained within the dominant

¹⁸⁸ Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City." in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 91-110.

system, can resist the very framework within which they are carried out.¹⁸⁹ The locus of examination becomes what the user does or makes during the process of consumption. Because the expansion of systems of production disallows the consumer any place in which to articulate what is being done and made to/with products from these systems, this making/using becomes a hidden *poiesis*, diffuse and lacking a central place. What these systems of production generate is the production of consumption, referring to the “*ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, de Certeau insists on examining the manipulation of products by those who do not have a hand in making the products/things—this permits us to consider differences in the production of the image/thing/product and the production resultant from the (hidden) utilization process, the *poiesis*.¹⁹¹

Walking is conceived as one such everyday tactic that empowers the consumer to (re)make the built environment, imbuing seemingly concrete signifiers with new meanings. De Certeau makes a distinction between the concept of the city and the bodily, everyday practices enacted within the urban grid. The concept of the city is based on utopian discourse, define along three tangents: the city is a “proper” space, an organization that seeks to eliminate physical, mental, and political elements that

¹⁸⁹ Michel de Certeau, introduction to *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), xi.

¹⁹⁰ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), xiii.

¹⁹¹ The theoretical model underpinning the investigation of this difference relies on linguistics. Emphasis is placed on enunciation, or the making/using of language. De Certeau proposes the speech act as a lens from which to comprehend everyday practices, “the four characteristics of the speech act can be found in many other practices (walking, cooking, etc.).” (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, xii)

undercuts its “proper” function;” it is conceived within a framework of tradition—of scientific discourse; and it creates a universal, anonymous subject, which is the city itself.¹⁹² The concept-city exists in the form of the panoptic nest of the World Trade Center. This viewpoint allows for a complete, holistic view of the entire urban network. This version of city is a theoretical “simulacrum.”¹⁹³

De Certeau attempts to locate an alternative spatiality: that of urban life carried out on street level. Not only do the city’s pedestrians read the city as a text, but their trajectories also offer another discourse. These bodies do not harbor a singular conception of the city, rather theirs is a city comprised of “migrational” metaphors, changing through the operation of walking.¹⁹⁴ While Foucault digs out minor instrumentalities, transforming the population into a disciplinary society, de Certeau seeks out individual resistance occurring within the limits of this disciplinary system. Because spatial practices are carried out within the boundaries of the disciplinary network, de Certeau points out differences in the practices administered by the “collective mode of administration” from the actions of the “individual mode of re-appropriation.”¹⁹⁵ If we trace *how* pedestrians walk, or pass by rather than concerning ourselves with the directionality of these already walked pathways and trajectories, we can recuperate the

²⁷ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁹³ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City. in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁹⁴ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 93.

¹⁹⁵ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 96.

practice of walking to locate the way in which pedestrians offer up choreo-discursive articulations via sets of signifiers that undo the “proper” significations attached to these signifiers.¹⁹⁶

Central to this tactical intervention on hegemonic systems is the assumption that bodies have unconstrained access to mobility and have open access to creating movement patterns, so long as they are contained within the spatial grid of hegemony. This investigation of how bodies interact with memorial architecture precisely hinges on the tactical powers of walking-as-consumption. As my own body is restricted from fully traipsing the VVM space, the question of State control returns (literally) to the scene of the built (memorial) environment. My enclosed and restrained body is logistically hindered from formally investigating the body-architecture problem, which simultaneously unravels the appearance of freedom that seems available within the politicized space of national remembrance. However, in true de Certeau spirit, I perform my own tactical maneuver to complete field research. While waiting for the results of my research request, I am barred from formally filming the activity on the VVM. So I operate within the confines of the NPS (the hegemonic system) by documenting my observations on the computer—writing down descriptions of the choreography performed in the VVM site. There is no official mandate disallowing me from standing/sitting in the immediate vicinity of the VVM and writing down my observations. Acting as “tourist,” I

¹⁹⁶ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 104.

venture into the memorial space to capture digital images since the option to take pictures is available to all visitors.

Before any visitor enters into the space of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, his/her eyes meet official wooden placards posted at each side of the memorial entrance/exit, indirectly outlining appropriate behavior at the memorial site by listing out a number of prohibited bodily actions, of which running is printed at the top of this (not) to do list. Running, like dancing, is a practice often associated with the rapid momentum, seemingly uncontrollable appendages, and non-normative approaches to spatiality. From the standpoint of the NPS, such performances become visibly disturbing forces, interrupting the gravity of commemoration and providing an additional element of danger to other bodies. During my initial conversation with Mary Willeford Bair, who was startled by my inclusion of the word dance and accompanying dance terminology in my research permit, rejected what she thought was a proposal to use the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a performance venue. She claimed that dancing (and running) would agitate the quietude of the environment as well as rupture the private remembering that is intended for the site. It was clear that the body-of-ideas inherent within this memorial site was spearheaded by the NPS and references commonly held American beliefs about dealing with our national past. The body constructed from a performance of commemoration is controlled and controllable.

An Interruption (and Invitation) to Dance

Maya Lin viewed the landscape as a central component to translating the intention of architecture. This is evidenced in photographs capturing a model of her proposed architectural design, which reveal paper figures occupying the full extent of the memorial landscape rather than being contained, as they are now, within the vicinity of the architectural elements.¹⁹⁷



Figure 3. Eye Level View of Model of Vietnam Veterans Memorial.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

¹⁹⁸ Slide LC-VV-05-2635, LOT 13034, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Figure 4. Aerial View of Model of Vietnam Veterans Memorial.¹⁹⁹



Figure 5. Ground Level View of Model of Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Slide LC-VV-05-2665, LOT 13034, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁰ Slide LC-VV05-2642, LOT 13034, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

The stewardship of the VVM was transferred to the National Park Service after Constitution Gardens was developed into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As this governing institution presided over the upkeep and maintenance of the VVM, the NPS also inserted additional elements to the site. While the integrity of the memorial wall, *The Three Serviceman* statue, and the American flag remain in tact, the presence of additional elements to the VVM works to undermine the initial concept sanctioning the fluidity of human trajectories that would contribute to the variability in the rhetorical content of the memorial (site).



Figure 6. East Entrance/Exit, Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.



Figure 7. Path Leading Out From East Exit Towards Washington Monument.²⁰²

²⁰² Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.



Figure 8. “Honor Those Who Served” Sign, Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²⁰³

The strategic insertion of signifiers of containment like the series of chains and stanchions guarding landscaped portions of the site from human trespassing, funnels incoming visitors along a specific trajectory within the site. This, coupled with the presence of wooden signs situated along the borders of the VVM stipulating spatial non-access, shrink the possibilities of spatial practices and resistances available to VVM visitors as the body is bounded a specific walking trajectory.

Michel de Certeau’s claim that there exists tactical freedom to the choreography of how consumers/citizens make/use the unit of consumption is relevant to redefining the bodies physically present in the VVM. Scholars engaged in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial studies refer to these bodies as visitors, viewers, or witnesses, thereby implying

²⁰³ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

the singular practice of watching or seeing the memorial. This labeling of bodies suggests a level of passivity in the visitor-viewer-witness' experience with the memorial. As de Certeau suggests in his definition of consumption, even the practice of watching/taking in images is inflected with an internal act of making and doing. In his example of consuming television and its accompanying images, de Certeau is concerned with the choreography of the viewer during the television watching and what is done to the images drawn from this viewing process. It is this individual and often personal making and doing with the images or product of consumption, which strays from the original intention of image or product that embodies what de Certeau refers to as the hidden *poiesis*. Embedded within this *poiesis* is the act of making or doing, concepts that signal some sort of internal or external physical—bodily action.

Individuals who tread through the space of the VVM do more than simply look at—view—the memorial. As evidenced by the choreography I analyze, there a practice of making/doing between the visitor and architectural elements. The tactile relationships established by visitors with the memorial as hands stretch out to make contact with the granite wall and as fingers trace the carved out hollows of a name on the memorial wall represent the very practice of making/doing that de Certeau makes renegade. In other words, the material intersection of body with granite or body with stone pavers expands the VVM visitor's role in the memorial beyond the responsibilities of a viewer or witness. Even the concept of visitor does not appropriately address the intimate link between memorial architecture and body. This is not to deny that VVM visitors do indeed engage in the practice seeing, looking, viewing. The practice of visually taking in the

topography of the VVM is crosshatched with the markings of making and doing. And the act of constructing a visual experience of the VVM opens the possibility of an embodied making/using. As such, we must re-position our semantic references to the people engaging with the memorial space by seeing them as users-makers, indicting these bodies with the force of motion and contact in and with the memorial space and architecture. However, another theoretical jump must be made. Given that this is a project scrutinizing the dances performed in the VVM, we have to establish that these visitors-makers-users engaged in making and using by putting their bodies in motion, which can be conceptually understood as dancing. The search to expand the realm of dance ontology, like moments of dancing, will appear in repetition, woven into the text of this dissertation.

De Certeau suggests that beneath the discourse of the city (as a concept) there exists the material grid of streets, buildings, and people. It is the (discursive) movements of those bodies, while operating within the grid/structure of the ideologized city, work to contradict and resist the reach of panoptic power. De Certeau's focus on the street level is not dissimilar to the effort of dance studies to bring forward the function of the material body as a meaning-making entity. While the body has been imbricated, often implicitly, in theorizations within social sciences and humanities, the material corpus, the tendons, muscles, skin, bones of the body have been clearly neglected. Much like de Certeau's project of retrieving the operations of the streets, dance scholars are redirecting work on the Concept-body to the renegade, unstill, material body. This is where the body in de Certeau and the body in dance studies intersects, centering on practices, operations,

movements. And this is the theoretical space where we can playfully and tactically conflate the act of making/doing with the act of dancing.

If the open grid (of a city) within which the body can compose such “migrational” metaphors is reduced to a single pathway, wherein visitors are ushered into and out of the memorial site by seemingly unending sets of chain and stanchions reinforced by signs conflating patriotism with avoiding the grassed areas of the memorial site, then what is the status of bodily action?²⁰⁴ Not only are we restricted from large portions of the VVM, as the carefully landscape areas are distinctly absent of human occupation and activity, but our choreographic arsenal is also monitored by placards posted at the memorial’s entrance/exits. The (hegemonic) spatial system of the VVM is indeed narrowed by under the direction of the NPS.



Figure 9. Impermissible Actions, Vietnam Veterans Memorial²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 93.

²⁰⁵ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.



Figure 10. Impermissible Actions, Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²⁰⁶

Upon stepping onto the walkway leading towards the first panels of the memorial wall, I noticed signs prohibiting food, smoking, bicycles, and running. A ban on these actions carries direct implications for the body. As such my own body tensed, my muscles already turning vigilant toward the potential cropping up of gestures veering towards the possibility of excessive force equated with any of the impermissible

²⁰⁶ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

behaviors. These posted signs extend their reach beyond their function to maintain un-littered grounds and to prevent injuries caused by running bodies and bicyclists. The signs also signify the VVM as an (social) arena carrying regulations for the body, making visitors aware that not all actions are permissible in this memory zone. Not unlike the placards demanding visitors to honor the memory of Vietnam veterans by avoiding the lawn, these signs that prohibit the frenetic energy accompanying running and bicycling and the casual attitude accompanying outdoor eating (especially outdoor eating on the grass) inevitably dictate the bodily tone in which visitors must approach the memorial site. In restricting bodies from space and certain actions, these posted restrictions insist on a constant effort of self-regulation, making visitors-users-dancers aware of every gesture performed within the space.

These placards narrow the space and possibilities in which the consumer/visitor can engage in the practice of making/using. In other words, the presence of these signs raises the question of appropriate (corporeal) behavior before the body enters memorial grounds. As we become aware that constraints to bodily action do indeed exist within a context of this site, we are compelled regulate our bodily actions to extend beyond the bounds of the four prohibited activities. The signs set the tone for a careful dance, in which visitors are on constant alert as to other potentially unsuitable gestures. The VVM, when imagined without elements of regulation, functions as a rhetorical device allowing for multiple and disparate readings expressed by the multiple and disparate bodily trajectories and choreographies. Is this only possible when the body is provided with access to every point in space and the entire vernacular of human action? Drawing from

de Certeau's theorization of the citizen walking within the urban grid, it is the possibility of carving out a singular path, not discernable within the folds of the map, which choreographically discloses an individual's tactical reaction to the dominant system as well as functions as a reading of the space itself. The regulatory signifiers however, do not entirely diminish the rhetorical impact of the VVM. Rather the chains, stanchions, and signs refigure the memorial as a site recapitulating the corporeal practice of citizenship in American society, regardless of the visitor-maker-dancer's nationality.

However rigidly the National Park Service has defined one's available trajectory within the VVM, thereby potentially tempering the possibility of spatial resistance (creativity within the memorial grounds), the possibility of motion remains an outlet for (political) bodily articulation. Visitors retain some modicum of control and agency for creating meaning of the memorial and the accompanying historical node of the Vietnam War. In his intervention into dance and political theory, Randy Martin briefly outlines the unbalanced and heavy-handed focus cultural studies places on the practice of resistance in the study between everyday life and social change, in which refusing/rebuffing the logic and codes of the dominant culture has become the dominant means force of theorization.²⁰⁷ Yet, the practice of resistance falls into the mire of social control, "...to the extent that resistance assumes the perspective of that which blocks an offensive movement, it already cedes much to the forces of social control."²⁰⁸ So perhaps in the

²⁰⁷ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998).

²⁰⁸ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.

spirit of de Certeau's conception of tactics, Martin proposes to think about social formations as produced by bodies in motion, wherein such mobilization provides a more productive mechanism via which to evaluate and engender social change, "it is necessary to preserve a space where new formations germinate, to avoid assimilation and co-optation of the energies and demands that issue from social movements, to refuse to unsee what difference difference makes in the world."²⁰⁹ As such, not only can we place the dancing enacted in the VVM as mechanism of social change, but Martin also provides a conceptual space through which the narrowed space through which to travel and the minimization of particular choreographies is not without political efficacy, allowing for the possibility that any sort of bodily mobilization, even limited ones, renders political results.

Interruption Over

Foucault cites the project of eighteenth century bodily management as organized around the taming of the individual corpus, "...it was not a question of treating the body, en masse, 'wholesale,' as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it 'retail,' individually..."²¹⁰ Central to this strategy of individual domination lies the manipulation of forces, "the internal organization" of the body.²¹¹ Discipline seeps into what Foucault

²⁰⁹ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.

²¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137.

²¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137.

refers to as the “infinitesimal power over the active body.”²¹² It is precisely the excessive force of dancing (and running) which threatens not only to undermine the reigning in of the internal body, but the dancing/running body also threatens to explode out of the orderly spatial framework that the National Park Service sets of for me and for the rest of its visitors. The active body is not welcome in a sacred space of national memory, rather it is the body that is activated by external signs of discipline, refusing the compulsion to dash across the memorial’s pathways, acknowledging and complying with tenets of memorial behavior mounted onto wooden signs that line the site’s periphery.

Along with controlling my spatial trajectory, the NPS service, in exchange for permission to film on the memorial site, also demands control over the time frame around which I perform my research choreography. I must specify in my research proposal, the number of visits I intend to make to the memorial site and the duration of each visit. Thus, the main components of operating within a spatial terrain: space and time, that of asserting one’s directionality, location, and trajectory in space, and the timing of these assertions are administered by the governing arm of the NPS. A central condition of the research permit, contingent upon the approval of my research permit, decrees that I notify the offices of the NPS of all planned memorial excursions, three days in advance. As such, my construction of time and practice of timing is subjugated to State structures of time and duration. The NPS oversees my timing on memorial grounds. If I want to gain permission to film on the VVM, I must disclose of the duration of my filming/research

²¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137.

sessions. While the NPS office claims that early notification of my presence at the memorial site would diminish potential confusion of my filming activities for patrolling park rangers, such intimate supervision of my timing and structuring of time is another mechanism of bodily legislation. The elements of space, time, and movement trajectory the NPS seeks to govern also function as primarily components of dance and dance composition. In overseeing the conditions of space, time, and movement trajectory within which I operate, the NPS plays choreographer to my research project, undermining their own policy that no dancing take place at the VVM. There is indeed dancing on national spaces, but it is choreographed and organized on the terms of the NPS.

Foucault includes the control of time and timing as central components of discipline. He points to how military organizations and religious institutions (monasteries) exploit “temporal regulation” as a means of controlling the body. Time became a carefully measured and divided entity used to confine the body to a rigid timetable, dictating when and for how long activities are performed. Timing or the imposition of individual rhythm to bodily choreographies is also vulnerable to control and conceived as a disciplinary measure. The imposition of inflexible rhythms to bodily activities is equally effective as manipulating the behavior of body parts,

There are for example, two ways of controlling marching troops. In the early seventeenth century, we have: ‘Accustomed soldiers marching in file or in battalion to march to the rhythm of the drum. And to do this, one must begin with the right foot so that the whole troop raises the same foot at the same time...’²¹³

²¹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 151.

In revealing the way in which timing is used to control the choreography of multiple bodies at once, Foucault also exposes the way in which control of timing bleeds into control of the body via choreography. In order for all military bodies to comply with the timing/rhythmic dictates imposed by the constantly beating drum, these same bodies are subject to performing, in unison, a dance that starts off with the right foot, marrying the possibility of (right) timing with the performance of (correct) choreography in space. The inter-linkage between time, timing, bodily gestures, and spatiality as parasitic facets of disciplinary action is played out in my dealings with the National Park Service.

In defining the twentieth century as the epoch of space, Foucault concentrates on lived, interrelated sites, "...I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect."²¹⁴ These "other" spaces reflect the spatial organization of our everyday lives, utopias, and heterotopias.²¹⁵ By representing society in its most perfect form, utopias maintain a direct or inverted relationship with the real space of society while being un-situated in any real space. Heterotopias, on the other hand, occupy real space, functioning as a sort of "counter-site," "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 24.

²¹⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 24.

²¹⁶ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 24.

Foucault defines heterotopias along five principles that are also useful for thinking about the way in which VVM has been mapped by the NPS for two sets of bodies that occupy two overlapping spaces within the memorial grounds. While heterotopias are present in all cultures, the concept lacks a universal model. They are, however, classifiable into two categories. Within primitive societies, heterotopias exist in the crisis form. These are sacred or forbidden places occupied by individuals who, in relation to society, suffer from crisis. Here Foucault gives examples of adolescents, pregnant or menstruating women. The body in crisis must confront such crisis in the nowhere place situated outside society's formal built environment, pushed into a place lacking geographical markers. Foucault sees these crisis heterotopias dissolving, replaced by heterotopias of deviation, "those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed."²¹⁷ The VVM can be conceived to harbor within its construct, a heterotopia of deviation. Deviant behavior, in this case, refers to the (my) body laden with critical interest and scholarly questions. While my inquiring body externally engages in same performances of navigating the architecture, capturing photo-and video-graphic images of the space (also practiced by visitors), the deviation comes from the purpose, what Foucault would refer to as the "force" of my presence at memorial site. As such, deviation emerges from how the body, specifically how my body, perceives the memorial, not as a place to dwell in a national past or a space for commemorating the patriotism of American servicemen. For me, the VVM is a space from which to consider whether the politicized space of a national memorial

²¹⁷ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 25.

manipulates bodily conduct, imposing a choreographic protocol for dancing out national memories. It is this disparate impetus that visually and physically excludes my body from the landscape of the memorial grounds.

There exist two versions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, both located in the same space, overlapping one another. One construct of the memorial comprises the entire site, accessible to visiting bodies that do not critically train their eyes or camera at the black granite wall or the metal chain links prohibiting bodily intrusion of the lawns circumscribing the architecture. The second space is heterotopically organized, also situated in the actual space of the memorial grounds, yet comprising a narrow swath running along and within the border of the memorial grounds and is made available to bodies (like me) concerned with mining the partnership between structure, space, and the body. While this space is technically inside the terrain of the VVM, it is a distinctly othered space, literally situated at the fringes of the memorial grounds. For looking and experiencing the memorial architecture, it is a no-place where the body is fully disconnected from immediate contact with all architectural elements. From here, the view of the memorial is distorted by landscaping obstacles. The body, when situated in the no-place that is still part of the memorial, remains unseen and disconnected from the memorial. This is space seldom trodden by touring bodies desiring intimate bodily contact with the memorial.

Foucault's third heterotopic principle centers on the categorization of a single real place into several incompatible sites, "thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one

another...”²¹⁸ Such incongruous compartmentalization of space prohibits any spatial relationships between these divided sub-sections. In re-mapping the memorial arena into touristic and research-oriented terrains, the National Park Service consciously breaks the space into disparate sections. The space is unequally bisected into an arena permitting filming for personal remembrance and another space allowing for filming and observation for research render renders the space heterotopic (see Figure 2). While the bodily choreographies carried out in both set of spaces, operating within the same memorial confines, are not incompatible and indeed visually cohesive, the disparity in function of these performances forces this spatial separation as a strategy of bodily separation. Because the function of my (bodily) behavior remains incompatible with the (bodily) actions adopted by tourists in the act of commemoration, the stages upon which my body and tourist bodies operate must also be rendered discrete and incompatible.

Heterotopias are also linked to what Foucault terms, “slices of time,” opening up to heterochronies.²¹⁹ These spaces occupy an organization and idea of time that breaks from traditional sense of time and timing by which we operate. The memorial, by nature, is organized around a (past) slice of time and can be contextualized as a sort of eternal heterotopia, fixed within a specific time slot comprised of a year or set of years. The VVM is specifically designed not only to steel itself from the visual outlay of the built environment of the urban city, but the memorial design also juxtaposes itself against the city’s rhythm and timing. The architecture and spatial design of the VVM drown out the

²¹⁸ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 25.

²¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 25.

current time, which is most palpable in the form of urban sound-scape. The noises that remind us of our currency, the aural reminders of technological development of automobiles, of ringing mobile phones, of overbearing construction machinery are not only deadened, but nearly dissolved by the black granite wall, which is built against the main avenues of Washington D.C. The wall not only serves as a medium through which individual servicemen of Vietnam War are commemorated, but it also serves as an instrument that re-situates our temporal sensibilities. As a wall, the memorial keeps out the visual reminders of everyday urban life and its accompanying aural signifiers. The wall separates the body from the reality of our present time. Time is instead organized around the imposing time signatures of 1959, the year of the first American death in Vietnam and 1975, the year of the last military casualties, etched on the first, middle, and final panels of black granite. These inscribed dates not only organize our conception of the Vietnam War, but also work as the heterochronic template within which the visitor is meant to operate.

While heterotopias are generally inaccessible places, "...the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory...or else the individual has to submit to rites and purification."²²⁰ However, heterotopias are systems that both open and close, making them at once penetrable and inaccessible. These spaces are sites of exclusion, and while seeming to allow entry wherein the act of entering is transformed into act of exclusion. Foucault gives the example of the hidden bedroom in Brazilian and South American architecture, where the entry door, instead of taking the

²²⁰ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 26.

body into the home's central living area, leads the body into a bedroom accessible for the use of all passing travelers. Set in a landscaped garden topography, the memorial wall of is situated within and surrounded by large pockets of grass-covered lawn. While visually inviting, these green areas refuse access, made impassible by chain-linked fences and wooden signs that caution against treading bodies. This architectural gesture, prompted by the NPS, directly articulating exclusion while simultaneously revealing what gets excluded. The memorial space is seemingly an open space; its accessibility from other areas of the National Mall belies the direct exclusion of the body from portions of immediate grounds that are technically still part of the VVM. Unlike Foucault's farmhouse bedroom example, where what is excluded is simultaneously unseen, the impenetrable arenas of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are made visible to all visitors-users-dancers.

In Foucault's construction of heterotopia as a penetrable system of exclusion, this exclusion seems to exist on a material order, as what becomes excluded is a tangible space that goes unseen by the body that seems to find access. The VVM enacts a mode of exclusion that also skirts along a more conceptual thread of exclusion as the space excludes particular bodies from apparently available spaces. By dictating all research activities and researchers to remain outside the restricted zone surrounding the memorial architecture, my body is excluded from infiltrating a particular spatial zone. This exclusion, while invisible within actual topography of the memorial site, as the carefully segregated restriction zones are only clarified on the NPS logistical maps, which the public does not see, is also specific to particular individuals, who make their presence

known through research paperwork handled by the NPS. This is doubly exclusionary in that only certain bodies are subject to this ban on spatial navigation.

Dance as Tactic

Mary Willeford Bair of the National Park Service raises a larger question, in her admonitions to avoid any dancing in the space the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, one that opens our theoretical understanding of dance. She unravels the question of what it means to dance and how to define it. In what conditions can we refer to a body-in-action as engaging in the practice of dance? This question can potentially disturb the markers of not only dance ontology, but also impact the boundaries demarcating the sphere of dance studies. This project intends to push outward, making blurry the ontological borders within which dance exists by troubling Willeford Bair's warning against dancing on public memorials by practicing and participating in dancing...on the memorial. Resisting cautions against dancing does not immediately call for wild, visually prominent choreographies. Rather, what I propose to reframe is Willeford Bair's narrow definition of dance itself by arguing that bodies always already "dance" on the memorial site. The physical relationship between visitor and architecture is performed in motion and the body's shifts and starts embody a construction of dance defined along the idea of motion—a moving body is a dancing body.

Andre Lepecki, in his book, *Exhausting Dance*, poses the same question as he contends with the stilling/hiccapping of dance that threatens to curtail dance's futurity. Lepecki addresses the perception that "Stop and Go" choreography threatens to disrupt

the flow of dance, “any choreographic questions of dance’s identity as being-in-flow” as inciting an ontological fissure within the realm of dance.”²²¹ Lepecki suggests the ontological impact emerging from the absence of dance-in-flow is perceived as a betrayal of the essence and conception of dance. It is through this sense of betrayal that we can pinpoint a dance ontology that is rooted in the linkage between dance and movement, as contemporary choreographers are accused of disrupting this conceptualization of dance with constant, fluid motions.

Lepecki’s project literally works to “exhaust” our (ontological) understanding of dance. He challenges the framework within dance is situated, taking on a Deleuzian strategy of deterritorialization as he poses the question of what *is* a dance performance, what is the ontological status of dance? Lepecki’s intervention in reconfiguring dance ontology is a critical examination of contemporary hiccupping as “valid artistic experiments.”²²² Lepecki points to the “down-time” stillness of dance as symptomatic of the “down-time” in the critical discourse of dance.²²³ This reality of “down time” evinces a gap between contemporary choreographic patterns and a strategy of writing aligned with a conception of dance that is intricately tied to perpetual movement.²²⁴ Western

²²¹ Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

²²² Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

²²³ Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

²²⁴ Andre Lepecki’s scholarly investigations of dance always seem to locate themselves in a gap. He fittingly locates a fissure between contemporary choreography and dance discourse, which is not unrelated to the gap proposed in his book *Of the Presence of the Body* in which Lepecki articulates the gap between the dancing body and the dancing presence.

dance's association with perpetual motility (dance as only linked to pure movement), Lepecki argues, is a project of modernity.²²⁵ It is via Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey in the USA and Mary Wigman and Rudolph von Laban that modern dance located movement as its dominant essence. Lepecki is writing against the creation of choreography that is exploited as a technology, which produces a body that moves to the dictates of writing.

It is through close readings of choreographers Jerome Bel, Juan Dominguez, Trisha Brown, La Ribot, Xavier Le-Roy, and Vera Mantero that Lepecki critiques the constitutive elements of Western concert dance. He highlights idea of solipsism, stillness, the linguistic materiality of the body, the topping of the vertical plane of representation, dance as a racist terrain, choreography's melancholic drive, and the politics of the ground. In interrogating the artificial boundary of choreography, Lepecki's project is decidedly postmodern in form. As such, Lepecki also proposes a strategy of moving the dance studies episteme outside its field of vision; to ask "dance studies to step into other artistic fields and to create new possibilities for thinking relationships between bodies, subjectivities, politics, and movement."²²⁶ This mode of thinking resonates with Rachel Fensham and her use William Forsythe's *Eidos Telos* as a vehicle for outlining a strategy for deterritorialization, in which she confronts the visual order of dance. Both Fensham and Lepecki argue an articulation of dance ontology unbound by finite borders.

²²⁵ Lepecki also juxtaposes the flowing/moving modern dancing body to the dancing body of the Renaissance period where "choreography defined itself only secondarily in relationship to movement" (2). Fear of the still body is clearly a modern threat.

²²⁶ Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

Rachel Fensham's article, "Deterritorialising Dance: Tension and Wire," investigates how the political and aesthetic images of wires, bodies, and their intersection function as a source of agency, impacting tension in the present. By situating the idea of tension in the space of modern capitalist societies (and globalization)—wherein it becomes agent for migration, mutation, movement, explosion—and within the dancing body, Fensham looks at the tension linking the dancing body to the twenty-first century in William Forsythe's *Eidos Telos*. She seeks to read this particular Forsythe piece in relation to the Australian sentiment against refugees and migration. So it is the possibility, not of containment and exclusion, but rather the potential for dance to seep over its boundaries as art "into contact with another aspect of reality," that Fensham is writing towards. Her larger theoretical intervention wrestles with the limit(lessness) of dance, using Deleuze and Guattari's conception of deterritorialization as structural underpinnings. Fensham relies on their definition of "territory, "which is "the means by which 'assemblages' of bodies, desires, physical and social forces are coordinated to produce positive and negative effects."²²⁷ What Fensham challenges is the construction of hierarchy and order in dance. In other words, a movement away from territory,

as an analysis of change taking place within political, epistemic or social structures, deterritorialisation is a radical force, able to undo existing orders by making new alignments possible between elements that have previously been without momentum or affect.²²⁸

²²⁷ Rachel Fensham, "Deterritorialising Dance: Tension and Wire. *Discourses in Dance* 1.2 (2002): 68.

²²⁸ Rachel Fensham, "Deterritorialising Dance: Tension and Wire. *Discourses in Dance* 1.2 (2002): 69.

Moreover, deterritorialization alters the body's relationship to knowledge. Such bodies and events/instances no longer move or function in line with the codifications and political systems designed to order and maintain territories of fixed states and subjects. In citing the work of DV8's *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* and Bill T. Jone's work, *Still/Here* Fensham offers examples of deterritorialized dance. In both pieces bodies, texts, and images are ejected from their normative order and place in dance.

While Lepecki and Fensham do indeed complicate the status of dance ontology, with Lepecki making a case of stillness as dancing and Fensham creating a space in the dance allows for the undoing firm subjectivities and ordered codes, their efforts to disturb the condition of dance comes from rethinking Western concert dance as performed on a proscenium environment. In order to further agitate the theoretical composition of dance, I propose to take a dancing leap off the traditional concert stage, prompted by the force of Lepecki and Fensham's interventions and wander in step with dances scholars like Jens Giersdorf and Fiona Buckland who have tread onto the streets and examined the choreographies of the pedestrian body dancing itself through the built environment.

The premise underpinning dance theory and the work of dance scholars is centered on the idea that the material body is a discursive unit—that meaning is created by the body-in-motion. In her seminal contribution to dance scholarship, "Choreographing Histories," Susan Foster makes this very claim.²²⁹ As she grapples with the question of how to write a history of bodily writing, she makes a case for the moving

²²⁹ Susan Foster, "Choreographing History." in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995).

body as participating in discourse, “a body, whether sitting writing or standing thinking or walking talking or running screaming, is a bodily writing.”²³⁰ In suggesting the choreo-discursive capacity of the body, Foster carves a theoretical space countering the Cartesian duality in which the mind takes precedence over the body, which is conceived as an instrument of thought. In attending to the body’s materiality, Foster excavates a space for defining ontological status of dance in broader terms. Couched within her definition of bodily writings are everyday choreographies, the performance of sitting, standing, walking, talking. These “...habits and stances, gestures and demonstrations, every action of its various regions, areas, and parts...” which for Foster are shaped by cultural practices, are not only bodily texts, but also bodily texts relevant to her investigation of the corpus.²³¹ The practice of sitting, standing, walking, talking are choreographies that generate meaning. Thus, Foster makes all instances of these practices, when defined in relation to cultural context and geographic space, worthy of critical examination.

In tracing the presence of the body in Western scholarship, Foster reveals the body as an oft-neglected point of critique, “...the body shares with women, racial minorities and colonized peoples, gays and lesbians, and other marginalized groups the scorn and neglect of mainstream scholarship.”²³² Despite Western scholarship’s

²³⁰ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3.

²³¹ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3.

²³² Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 11.

conscious denial and repression of the body from its canon, the body, once inserted into academic discourse, harbors an ability reveal the problematic “patriarchal and logocentric value systems” embedded in traditional scholarship.²³³ The body is engaged in reading, speaking, and writing, practices central to the foundation and materialization of scholarship. We can conceive the body as not only a subject area, but as a strategy of inquiry linking seemingly unrelated fields. It is here that Foster establishes the possibility for the body, and thus for dance, to tread into the domain of other fields, allowing for a widening of the definition of dance. To approach the idea that the body is generator of ideas, Foster proposes we inhabit the role of choreographer, “dance, perhaps more than any other body-centered endeavor, cultivates a body that initiates as well as responds”²³⁴

Foster also implicitly asks us to see the body in motion—bodily texts—as choreographies. She directly links the body-in-any-motion to dance, alluding to ways dance studies can expand its territory by critiquing the status of traditional dance studies which is “replete with the same logocentric values that have informed general scholarship on the body, have seldom allowed the body this agency,” the agency to articulate its cultural identity.²³⁵ What Foster advocates is an approach to dance studies, and indirectly to dance, allowing for the possibility of the body to literally and metaphorically move in new directions and interlope onto unrelated fields, where scholars confront the “body’s

²³³ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 12.

²³⁴ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

²³⁵ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

involvement in any activity with an assumption of potential agency to participate in or resist whatever forms of cultural production are underway.”²³⁶ By calling for attention to the body’s performance in the practice of all forms of cultural production, not just dance as performed on the proscenium stage, Foster makes a case for the dancing out of the everyday, legitimating sitting, standing, walking, talking as necessary choreographies to be scrutinized. Within the nooks and crannies of Foster’s scholarly intervention for a body that writes is simultaneously the opening of the conceptual frameworks of dance to include all bodies-in-every-motion, to all bodily texts.

In her article, “Dancing Bodies,” Susan Foster is responding to theorizations of the body which deal only with the *idea* of the body. She proposes a theory of the body that is firmly rooted in the physical corpus by examining formal dance practices that instruct and construct the body. Foster refers to the participation of the body in corporeal disciplines such as dance or daily life as comprising a “body-of-ideas.”²³⁷ The body is reconceived in each discipline via strategies of metaphor and trope, “whether worded or enacted, these tropes change its [the body’s] meaning by re-presenting it.”²³⁸ The body-of-ideas that underlies Foster’s theorization is based in Western, theatrical dance. Foster’s theorizations of dance (and dance training) is rooted in the idea of two bodies, a perceived, tangible body, derived from the dancer’s sensory information, and an ideal

²³⁶ Susan Foster, “Choreographing History.” in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Foster. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

²³⁷ Susan Foster, “Dancing Bodies.” in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies in Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond. (Durham, North Carolina and London United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1993), 236.

²³⁸ Susan Foster, “Dancing Bodies.” in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies in Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond. (Durham, North Carolina and London United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1993), 236.

body, which serves as an ephemeral, fantasized image of a body. And within this dual body construction, Foster emphasizes the materiality of the body and how dance training via disciplinary exercises works to define and construct the dancing body. Both bodies evolve from not only training, but also visual and oral information drawn from watching and speaking about dance.

It is this idea that bodily disciplines—in this case dance techniques—produce a “body-of-ideas,” actualized through the formation of a particular body (based on which body parts are emphasized, trained, dealt with) and subject position, which can be applied to practices existing outside the boundaries of formal theater dance.²³⁹ It is not only dance that cultivates bodies and “bodies of ideas.” Rather all disciplines relating to the body, “sports and physical-cultural pursuits; regulations governing posture, etiquette and comportment...” help shape it.²⁴⁰ As such the socio-cultural-political environment within which the body is situated, also dictates a set of bodily ideas and functions not unlike the art of training a dancing body. I argue that molding the body to function in socio-cultural space of the built environment trains and forms a version of the dancing body. The disciplinary techniques the body undergoes to navigate the world as participant produces its own set of movement vernacular, a dance technique built from training exercises of socialization and the disciplinary rules of political legislation. To navigate the world, to

²³⁹ Susan Foster, “Dancing Bodies.” in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies in Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond. (Durham, North Carolina and London United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1993), 236.

²⁴⁰ Susan Foster, “Dancing Bodies.” in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies in Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond. (Durham, North Carolina and London United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1993), 236.

engage in what de Certeau would perceive as individual tactical maneuverings carried out by means of walking a careful trajectory through the urban grid, is to dance.

The possibilities for dancing on the streets have not gone unnoticed by dance scholars. Jens Giersdorf opens his analysis of pedestrian and professional choreographies responding to the opening of the Berlin wall by discursively re-choreographing his own trek across the border.²⁴¹ For Giersdorf, the practice of resolute walking towards demarcation line separating East and West Germany, “this walking was never a stroll, nor was it Benjamin’s flaneuring,” was performed with the desire to break into West Germany and undo the border-lines as “a forceful attempt to gain new space.”²⁴² Giersdorf intersects the practice of walking in a politically charged space and time during the opening of the Berlin wall with the Sascha Waltz and Jo Fabian’s choreography, both of which are inflected and informed by the bodies that walked across the border between West and East Germany. He mines the “dialectic relationship between bodies’ conscious movements during a historical walks across the border on one hand and the diverse contemporary choreographies as interrogations of such movements on the other...” to disclose the way in which both sets of bodily performances are built from the same choreographic and social impulses.²⁴³ Drawing on Mark Franko’s call to rethink performance (dance) in terms of presence and disappearance, Giersdorf builds a

²⁴¹ Jens Richard Giersdorf, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography.” *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413-432.

²⁴² Jens Richard Giersdorf, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography.” *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413

²⁴³ Jens Richard Giersdorf, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography.” *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 415.

theorization of bodies that centers on the corporeal embodiment of a society's past, present, and future by reuniting artistic (choreographic) exploration with "seemingly vanishing" cultural symbols and bodies to which they refer.²⁴⁴ Franko returns corporeality back into culture by endowing dance/performance with a capacity to perform over again and as such, movement is produced in the past, present, and future, "...not only does the sociocultural system produce certain bodies and movements, but also bodies and embodiment themselves produce far more than just memory."²⁴⁵ Bodies are seen as cultural constructs and cultural systems are constructed via embodiment.

Giersdorf's main project confronts head on dance and the body's ephemerality, a condition that makes the body vulnerable to be reduced to an essence, thereby separating the body from its cultural and political context. However, his proposition that there exists a dialectical relationship between the body and cultural systems, coupled with his re-choreographing of the bodies intent on crossing the East/West German divide, intervenes the ontological question of dance and which performances get defined as dance in dance scholarship. Giersdorf's treatment of walking—he offers a detailed description of the quality and force of this form of walking—locates this seemingly pedestrian street performance as dance. Dance scholars carefully describe choreography as a strategy to generate theory and pinpoint the meaning of bodily motion. In attending to the meaning of bodies walking in the landscape of East Berlin with a critical lens—using the

²⁴⁴ Jens Richard Giersdorf, "Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz's and Jo Fabian's Choreography." *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 415.

²⁴⁵ Jens Richard Giersdorf, "Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz's and Jo Fabian's Choreography." *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 415.

technique of dance description—Giersdorf suggests that the body practices performed in everyday life and on the ground of the urban landscape are relevant moments of scholarly investigation that can be enfolded within the ontology of dance. My own project is an investigation of the ways in which architecture and the body inform each other and is carried out with the assumption that how the body choreographically navigates the Vietnam Veterans Memorial space is a relevant point for scholarly investigation. In order to complete such an investigation, we have to assume and accept that the body's gestures at the memorial site do indeed contain meaning, and thus can be understood as dance. As such, this is inevitably a project of clarifying the dance's ontological status, wherein the idea that everyday practices themselves can be rendered as dance must first be established.

Making and Using with Dance

David Gere, in his book *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic*, like Jens Giersdorf, Fiona Buckland, and Valerie Briginshaw, conceives the possibility of choreography in pedestrian spaces. While his project does not directly relate to the study of memorials or of bodily memory, he does propose, in his investigation of how choreography/dances by gay men, especially gay bodies inf(1)ected with the HIV virus, performed in time of epidemic, spread codes/signs of death, mourning, and disease from the proscenium stage onto street level. Gere advocates thinking of dance as a “continuum” encompassing multiple body practices through which patterns of bodily signifiers (about AIDS) metonymically emerge within the layers of different

choreographies. Gere seems to address what Lepecki, in *Exhausting Dance*, refers to as the “hiccup” in dance, a potentially threatening shift to the ontological frame of dance making legitimate the performance of stillness and by implication, other more everyday bodily practices.²⁴⁶

By articulating the impact pedestrian choreography carries in the construction of corporeality, Gere literally enacts the “hiccup” which seems to betray a conception of dance firmly rooted in movement. And it is his strategy of shifting effectivity away from inanimate monuments and onto the dancing bodies of insurgent performances that is useful for considering the intersection between architecture and the moving body, “monuments in the age of AIDS stand cold and mute, as symbols of an uncaring nation, while choreographic insurgencies make the private-public and struggle to overcome the stigmas of homo-and AIDS-phobia.”²⁴⁷ Gere reads the body as a relevant vehicle for memorializing. His reading of the funerals of New York AIDS activist Jon Greenberg and Alvin Ailey as choreography opens the possibility of thinking about (private) memorialization as a performative practice. Gere’s attention to bodily detail allows him to excavate references to homosexuality consciously erased from Ailey’s funeral, “Gray’s hand is resting on the knee of an unidentified African American man. Gray and the unidentified man are intimately intertwined with one another through touch...”²⁴⁸ Gere

²⁴⁶ Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

²⁴⁷ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 148.

²⁴⁸ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 121.

read the mourners' motions in Greenberg's funeral, "they touch the wooden casket. They lean in close by Jon's face. They pass papers over his boxed torso."²⁴⁹ This reading of bodily practices during Ailey's and Greenberg's funerals discursively delineates the dancing-ness of the body on an occasion that is simultaneously performative and everyday. In critically attending to the bodily actions within the funerary frame, which also satisfies Lepecki's support of more "hiccupping" in dance, Gere provides ammunition for re-positioning fence posts demarcating dance ontology to include pedestrian dances.²⁵⁰

The possibility of defining everyday motility as dance is best represented in Gere's reading of the unfurling of the Names Project AIDS quilt memorial in Washington D.C. as choreography. Not only do the movement descriptions highlight Gere's thesis of the body as insurgent subject effectively takes the place of inanimate commemorative structure, but Gere's intervention with the choreography of the AIDS quilt also supports my claim that critically reading the dances performed at the VVM is not an irrelevant strategy of analysis. Gere is reading the body as it intersects with the materiality of national memory:

The choreography involves alternate members of the group kneeling in to unfurl "petals" of the quilt—four layers of petals in all. They reach down to pull back a corner of the fabric, then wait for the other group to do the same...the choreography in unabashedly pedestrian. As the group proceeds across the grid,

²⁴⁹ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 162-163.

²⁵⁰ Andre Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. (New York New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

opening panels in succession, some unfurlers remove their sneakers to avoid walking on the fabric...²⁵¹

That Gere refers to the motions of maneuvering portions of the quilt as choreography while simultaneously acknowledging the ordinary pedestrian nature of the dance provides theoretical fodder for thinking about the function of bodily choreography in relation to the stable, material structures of memorial as not only (re)actions making meaning out of architecture, but ephemeral memorials themselves.

The unfurling of the AIDS quilt is indeed a composed affair, with each team of unfurlers assigned a captain who gives directives for the body, creating a dance that is similarly repeated by multiple teams. While Gere troubles the functionality of architectural memorials/monuments by (re)placing them with bodily as the more effective insurgent force, I argue that it is the coalition of the dancing body with memorial space and architecture that allows for the playing out of the insurgency—and memory. Commemorative architecture, specifically the VVM, fulfills a role not unlike that of the captain of a team of unfurlers responsible for sections of the AIDS quilt. Although the memorial structure provides no verbal edicts for the body, according to critics like Sonja Foss and Carole Blair, Marsha Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr, who argue for the rhetorical power of the VVM, the memorial clearly articulates itself via design and symbolic structures. Coupled with the strategically placed placards issued by the National Park Service, the memorial site and its accompanying architecture provide choreographic

²⁵¹ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 172-173.

direction for the visiting body. Gere's claim that monuments in the AIDS era embody "an uncaring nation" skirts the private-public efforts at erasing the stigma of AIDS that often accompany the gay, male (dancing) body. In writing off the monument, Gere also writes off the possibilities of choreographic insurgency, acceptance, or healing that is produced by inanimate architecture.²⁵² It is because monuments/memorial sites are imbued particular meaning that we can dance against/on/with it and as such, I want to attend to the element of architecture and choreography simultaneously. I propose that the dancing on sites of commemoration serves a dual purpose as both the vehicle for making meaning of commemorative structures and as ephemeral memorials created in conjunction to the concrete, permanent fixture of national memory.

Do Dance on the Memorial

January 8, 2009

12:30

Farragut West Metro Station to Foggy Bottom-GWU Metro Station

I walked south, taking 23rd Street from the Foggy Bottom Metro Station towards the National Mall, turning left on C street, right on 22nd Street, meeting the intersection of Constitution Ave and 22nd Street. At this intersection, I am standing at the traffic light that marks the interstices between the infrastructure of urban activity and the tree-lined expanse of the national mall. And it is this cross-walk, which is one of many, that functions as a very visible path demarcating the way towards the memorial space(s),

²⁵² David Gere, *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 148.

taking the body from the oral and architectural noise of the urban space to the collection of more silent architectures comprising the threads which are seamed together to make up the fabric of national memory that is so obviously in the city's built environment. While Washington D.C. itself constitutes a memorial to the socio-political tenets of American ideology of freedom, democracy, and capitalism, these tenets and their accompanying political ideology are most obviously distilled into body of the national memorials, which cover the National Mall. However the transition from the urban space behind me at C Street and Constitution Ave of massive and grand office and governmental buildings, themselves echoing the monumentality that is most formalized on the National Mall, is made seamless by pathways. I literally step from the sidewalks of Constitution Ave, crossing the street by way of cross walk, only to venture onto another pathway which seems to direct me towards either side of the National Mall. This provides texture to the built environment, dividing space into urban city and memorial grounds. There is a clear juxtaposition between the persistent (hard) materials of concrete, asphalt, marble, steel, and glass dividing the city from the green lawn, suffering the ravages of winter, pocketed by aging and naked trees upon which the memorial wall is situated.

My target this morning is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. While the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument tower visibly through the expanse of tree and lawn, as I turn left, stepping off the street and onto a gravel-lined pathway of the southwest corner of the National Mall, I am lost in space, uncertain where to go. I cannot see the wall, my line of sight is muted by the trees dotting the landscape and so I cut

across the grass, spotting a sign that may direct me towards the appropriate memorial. It is ironic that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is difficult to locate, it is flanked by two strategies of architectural commemoration, which in their horizontal-ness are not only easy to spot, but serve as obvious representatives of memorial architectural. While I manage easily to locate the pointed obelisk, that is the Washington Monument and the columns framing the Lincoln Memorial, I am directed to the VVM not by locating the body of the architecture, but via signs. The signs refuse the body any opportunity in making contact with the organic materials of the lawn and dirt by asking the visitor to keep off the lawn in honor of the fallen Vietnam War soldiers. I am disallowed any shortcuts which the lawn may provide, and am confined to the pathways that seamlessly connect each memorial with the other. In deference to the men and women who have died in the Vietnam War, before one even arrives at the wall site, we are asked exist in a state of consciousness about where and how one can operate in space. The signs disallowing use of the lawn also seems to imply disallowance of expansive choreography, choreographies that take up space, which call for rapidity and loudness. This is clearly articulated by the architectural elements imbricating lawn with sidewalk, as bronze posts line both sides of the footpath and connecting each post is a length of linked chain, while not direct physical barrier for a body desiring to overstep the divide between sidewalk and lawn, serves as a visual sign demarcating the boundaries of permissible and un-permissible space. This memorial, its surrounding space, is a play on boundaries—the boundaries of space, which then enforce boundaries for bodily action. There exists a formalized mode of performance that is permissible in this particular memorial space

and it is literally bounded by where the body can go, where honor and respect is paid to the fallen soldiers of the Vietnam War by containing oneself—bodily—on the less expansive maze of footpaths. The chain-linked posts, aside from the memorial architecture itself seem to drive the body into motion, governing where the body can step. There exists an additional layer of structure in the memorial site as we have to confront the extra-structural elements imbricated with the memorial wall itself—in this case the signs posted all around the space, refusing particular choreographies such as overstepping boundaries.

I finally see the memorial site from the back, the top of its wall indenting the otherwise flat lawn-scape. As my body is bounded and forced along the pathway, chain-linked railings and park benches surround me, stillness and pauses seem to be invited by way of the seating options, which are situated along the walkways. The wall itself is exposed only on one side, the structure physically embedded into the soil. As such, the earth is not flat, reconfigured on two levels, with the wall itself serving as the cause for this structure. On one side (get the directions), the wall is nestled against the soil, so that as you walk towards the back of the memorial, you see only a minor indentation of grass, that seems to disturb the congruity of the lawn that is the National Mall. This fissure or purposeful cutting into the earth works as a mode of productive destruction. While all other memorials literally lay flat upon the lawn, this wall physically disturbs the plane of the built environment, forcing the need for soil erosion, to for the wall to be physically nestled into space, but one does not arrive at the memorial wall without disruptions. As one approaches on the set of footpaths directing the body towards the front of the

memorial, careful to avoid portions of the lawn that are denied the visitor as a platform for choreography, one not only encounters benches placed along the walking paths, but one can see metal lecterns housing the directory of names and numbers, each page covered in protectively laminate against prying hands and natural elements. Our bodies here are bounded by the plastic sheeting that creates a barrier between our hands and the text of the book. The lectern/pulpit itself is covered in thick fiberglass/plastic and only our hands and arms are permitted within the structure, indicated by two grooved indentations situated alongside the book of names and dates, documenting the history of each fallen soldier. I am led by the footpath into a paved circular vestibule, upon which Frederick Hart's bronze statue of "The Three Servicemen" stands, facing the wall of the memorial. The paved circle, surrounded by more chain-linked posts suggests to my body to travel circularly and I walk slowly, taking time to mind my footsteps while my eyes are directed at the statue. The upper half of my body is turned towards the statue; my shoulders slightly hunched forward, physically supporting my examination of the statue. While my feet, guided by the layout of the pathways, knowingly and slowly shuffle around the circular platform. It is a slow, deliberate walk that I am engaged in, there are starts and stops as my body pauses, makes time for viewing, and continues again. Given the organization of the entire memorial comprising of Maya Lin's memorial wall, Hart's statue, and the Vietnam Women's Memorial statue, the memorial is a process of bodily wandering. There are no architectural directives prescribing an order for how to proceed—I notice fellow visitors bypassing the bronze statue directing interest toward Lin's memorial wall. I follow the path connecting the statue to the wall itself, but before I

enter, I am bombarded by directions confining my choreography—no cell phones! No running! No yelling!—protocol echoing the process of traditional mourning. Before even entering the space of the wall, I am asked to omit particular modes of dancing. The wall is situated on two inclines. I enter from the (direction) entrance, as visitors, depending on where they are arriving from, may enter from each side of the wall. As I step onto the smooth black footpath framed by a cobble stone floor on either side, my body is gently propelled downward by the slope of the (granite) pathway, and immediately it takes an inward facing as my torso and head faces the wall of names, which begins as a corner upon which is imprinted on name. The names grow more numerous on the face the wall as the incline expands, making for more wall space. But this choreography, which is governed by walking, is shaped by the downward sloping incline of the walkway, which propels my feet forward. The walk is effortless due to the descending momentum forced by the incline. It is always easier to go down than it is to go up—and this is no exception. But there are pauses during this walk, as my body, while relaxed, one hand gripping a handbag that I have slung over my shoulder, I stop every few feet to examine the growing list of names that expands as the length of the wall grows taller thereby providing more space to house more names. The names, because there are so many, blur and dissolve into letters of the alphabet if one does not look too carefully. That is why I have to stop. I have to stop and wrestle back control of my sight, to re-converge these seemingly separate letters of the alphabet into the singular identities of individual soldiers—this forces my body to stop its ambling choreography that is helped along by the downward incline of the walkway. The only way to make out the names clearly is to stop and so my

body is thrown into stillness, my head, my torso, my right arm clutching my handbag with handles hooked over my shoulder, my relaxed left arm hanging at my side, my feet planted comfortably hip length apart are still, facing the wall. In an effort to move out of the way of other traveling bodies, before I stop, I step off the black granite pathway and onto the cobble-stoned area, which surround either side of the walkway, which is smooth and easy to walk on. The texture of the cobblestones makes it easy to stand still, giving my feet a stability that is not quite as readily available on the granite pathway.

Chapter Four: Reconstructing Maya Lin

Choreographic Intention

In his 1984 interview with Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault places the relationship between space and power in a historical context by recounting how the technology and the industrial revolution shift political weight from building/space design to technologies of space.²⁵³ Emerging from this historical evolution is a more prominent role for technicians, diluting the impact designers of space impose within politics. Rabinow asks Foucault to articulate the architect's (current) position and Foucault responds by pointing out that the omission of architects from determining the three great variables of the spatial techne: territory, communication, and speed undoes the tie between architects and power. According to Foucault, the architect is de-linked from the disciplinary action

...the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house he built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control...I would say that one must take him—his mentality, his attitude—into account as well as his projects, in order to understand a certain number of techniques of power that are invested in architecture...²⁵⁴

In order to understand the relationship between the production of space, its accompanying legislation, and the power that is bound in the physical materials of the VVM, it is useful to undertake Foucault's suggestion to use the architect as a lens for discerning such interconnection. Tracing Maya Lin's troubled role as designer of the

²⁵³ Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power." in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

²⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power." in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 248.

memorial concept becomes a way to excavate which and how “techniques of power” become layered over the production of an architecture that simultaneously requires legislation for its materialization and works to legislate through its materialization. In the brief introduction to the portion of her book, *Boundaries*, devoted to recalling her design for the VVM, Lin admits that she has been reticent to discuss the controversial construction of the memorial, in part because she has “...forgotten the process of getting it built.”²⁵⁵ This claim is ironically forged in the scope of writing about a structure clearly insistent on the practice of remembering. Although Lin, through her architectural design, is concerned with remembering on the national scale, the cloudiness of her mental archive regarding the memorial’s production process makes wobbly Lin’s account of her logistical choreography and participation within the memorial project. But a project addressing how the body makes meaning out of the memorial architecture cannot abandon a central force in its design. So how do we reconstruct Lin’s maneuverings within the memorial’s production phase as a way to pinpoint her positionality as architect/designer? How do we get at Foucault’s claim that power has been ceded to technicians, rather than to designers of space? It is necessary to first acknowledge the VVM is comprised not only of the reflective, granite wall that Lin designed, but also consists of Federick Hart’s bronze statue of three servicemen and an American flag, both of which were included later in the VVM’s development process. The addition of these two elements came about precisely because bodies overseeing the techne of space were faced with wide criticism of the alleged non-representational and un-patriotic nature of

²⁵⁵ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:08.

Lin's design. However, the memorial wall remains the most visually prominent element in the VVM, so I will focus only on its designer.

Rethinking Dance Reconstruction

For dance scholars, the idea of reconstruction refers to the practice of reproducing historical dances in which present-day dance makers recreate, with choreographic accuracy, dances that have been performed in the past. The practice of reconstruction also beckons at the question of memory, since the process of reconstruction relies (when available) on the memories of dancers who have danced the choreography intended for reconstruction. The very practice of reconstruction, requiring the reconstructor to delve into material formed in the past, touches on the idea of memory itself, as the idea of reconstruction makes current blurry points from the past. As such, I think it is particularly appropriate to co-opt the dance studies understanding of reconstruction to pin down Lin's presence in the memory bank of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Her presence not only haunts the physical structure of the memorial, but she can also be located as a paper trail, in the space of the archive, which itself functions as a source of memory (for the memorial). Moreover, the idea of reconstruction beckons at the literal practice of transforming Lin's pastel concept design into an actual structure. (re)Construction is indeed central to translating image into architecture. But inevitable to the construction of the VVM is the presence of Maya Lin whose roles as designer and consultant during the building of the memorial has yet to be reconstructed.

It is first necessary to burrow deeper into the question of reconstruction in order to understand why a dance studies theorization of it would be useful in a context that is seemingly unrelated to the study of the body. Here, the epilogue to Mark Franko's book, *Dance as Text* will situate how I intend to reconstruct Maya Lin's presence in the production of the VVM and reveal how reconstruction, in the bodily sense, is also useful imagining Lin's corporeal twists and turns in the maze of the memorial's production process.²⁵⁶ Franko deals with reconstruction in the context of the transition from modernism to postmodernism. He argues that modernist reconstructions of dance were focused on bringing back dances from the baroque period, which can be categorized as the dawn of dance's "radical historicity."²⁵⁷ But as "modernism itself loses its initial impact and becomes an object of deconstructive study," Franko inquires into the function of reconstruction in the era of postmodern art.²⁵⁸ He defines the conventional understandings of reconstruction as rooted in historicism, wherein the primary functioning of re-creating and re-performing (in this case dance) is to bring forth "...what no longer is, with the means of what is present," in other words, of pinpointing the old in the new.²⁵⁹ Given that I am attempting to forge an understanding of Lin's work within the scholarly era of (post)postmodernism, it is fitting that Franko's postmodern

²⁵⁶ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁵⁷ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.

²⁵⁸ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 134.

²⁵⁹ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.

intervention serves as the template for reconstructing the positionality of a postmodern architect.

In separating the driving force of such strategies of reconstruction from the desire instead to see the “new in the old,” of identifying radical historicity in past productions, Franko bifurcates the concept of reconstruction. He distinguishes between *reconstruction*, in which emphasis is placed on locating the old in the new and *construction*, referring to his postmodern idea that fixating on the stylistic and theoretical aspects of an original work produces more original work: “construction sacrifices the reproduction of a work to the replication of its most powerful intended effects.”²⁶⁰ The idea of the effect is central to Franko’s demarcation of *construction* as divergent from *reconstruction*.

Reconstruction is only concerned with recreating a reality without reproducing the original effect or impact of the work, whereas the *construction* attempts to pinpoint precisely the dance’s effect/impact. Here, Franko disentangles himself from postmodern dance as situated in the choreographic developments of the 1980’s where references to popular culture subtend the structures of dance. Instead, Franko subscribes to Umberto Eco’s sense of postmodernism which claims that the concept cannot be chronologically delineated, but must be understood as way of operating—a sort of mannerism. And as such, every period houses its own postmodernism.

Franko’s revision of reconstruction into two discrete concepts creates a space through which dance can collide with other lenses of critique. It is his introduction of

²⁶⁰ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.

construction into the discourse of dance re-creation that provides an entryway into thinking about how tracing out Lin's presence has anything to do with the body. Moreover, the idea of *construction* is especially useful for thinking about Lin's positionality in relation to the building of the VVM as it evokes architecture and the practice of building. For Franko, *construction* "opens a dialogue between forms and periods on the basis of style, vocabulary and theory, rather than history alone."²⁶¹ Franko's reference to disparate forms, vocabulary, and theory remains firmly entrenched within the confines of dance as he suggests how new or postmodern dance works can engage in cultural critique by historicizing dance in manner that complicates and problematizes "canonic lexicons and their current reception."²⁶²

Construction seeks to disturb conventional associations of vocabulary and style at different periods, sinking itself in radical, rather than tradition historicity. In the spirit of Franko's urge for radicalism (and radical historicism) and for locating the new in the old, I am rereading Franko's assertion that *construction* opens a dialogue between forms, periods, and theory in way that creates a literal throughway between the arena of dance studies and the study of national memory and space. I propose to think about forms in terms of lenses where *construction* allows for a dialogue between the form of dance and forms of discourse/memories as housed in archives and paper texts. This (re)*construction* on the interplay of forms to refer to different forms of expression enables the tracing or

²⁶¹ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993),135.

²⁶² Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993),135.

construction of Lin's presence in the VVM project to produce the "replication of its most power intended effects."²⁶³ Consequently, constructing Lin's presence in the material memory bank of the VVM can be a sort of radical historicity that Frank so urgently calls for.

Also defined within the parameters of *construction* is the substitution of the frame of historical representation, upon which the reconstructor relies, with the signposts of historical theatrical theory, thereby making the practice of *construction* a practice of deconstruction wherein historical theatrical concepts are regenerated in present day performances. As such, the practice of *constructing* dances cannot rely solely on an examination of the original choreography. Rather analysis of the choreography's theoretical underpinnings is required—an analysis of all primary sources within which the dance is framed, "the move from reconstruction to construction is also a move toward the creation of choreography that actively rethinks historical sources."²⁶⁴ By rejecting literal reconstructions of historical dances and a linear narrative of the dance's development, Franko's *construction* of historical choreography seeks to create dances that reveal their own theory in the *constructed* dancing out of the process of digging up the past. Using his own revival, *Harmony of Spheres* as an example, Franko's description of his (re)*construction* discloses how a new work can be drawn from the reinterpretation of historical sources, wherein construction results in reinvention. Such an approach to

²⁶³ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.

²⁶⁴ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137.

reconstruction—*construction*—paves membership into discourse about and with the body. A *construction* of Lin's presence within the historical sources becomes the underpinnings for a theoretical imagining of Lin's bodily choreography as she maneuvers through the process of materializing her memorial design in the built landscape.

By manipulating Franko's reframing of reconstruction, I will discursively (re)construct Lin's dance as framed by the depths of archived sources that preserve and remember the production of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Just as Franko shapes, through his choreographic *constructions*, the link between choreography, *construction*, and theory, rendering these dances a sort of theory-in-motion about the linkages between present choreography and historical dances, I insert the dancing body into an analysis of Lin's presence in the VVMF archives as an alternate way of theorizing her role as designer of the memorial architecture. I want to specify that this chapter is specifically an excavation of the VVMF archives as I am primarily concerned with the role Lin played within the context of the VVMF's project to erect a Vietnam War memorial. Because the archive is maintained and organized by the organization, how and in which places Lin appears on the pages of preserved text (and memory) speaks to her depth of operation. Other sources like Lin's own writings on architecture and Freida Lee Mock's documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision* will be used to frame what is unearthed within the archive.²⁶⁵ Foucault claims that the architect in the twentieth century is stripped of his/her political agency. In (re)constructing a choreographic version of Lin's

²⁶⁵ *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Film, Freida Lee Mock. (Docurama Films, 1994).

presence in the archives, can we affirm such a theorization of the architect's function and more importantly, we can theorize Lin's place within the sphere of the memorial project?

In describing about her work provenance, Lin refers to her architecture in terms not uncommon to dance making and in turn, the body. For Lin, time, space, and movement are primary components to the design and production of structures, "time is also a crucial element in how I see my architecture. I cannot see my architecture as a still moment but rather as a movement through space. I design architecture more as an experiential path, in which rooms flow from one to the next..."²⁶⁶ Couched within the notion of an architecture-in-motion is the presence of a body-in-motion, activated compelled by the structure of a fluid architecture. While Lin's work arena is clearly centered in architectural design, the body does not go unnoticed as she acknowledges its participation in making meaning of architecture, "a direct empathy exists between the artwork and the viewer. These works rely on a physical or empathetic response rather than on a learned one from the viewer in order to be understood—or more, accurately, felt."²⁶⁷ To understand architecture is to bring the human body into contact with the surfaces of material structures, involving a force of motion between architecture and body. If the body, as Lin suggests, becomes the site of physical meaning making in response of architecture, then perhaps the body is also the site of understanding and theorizing about the process of its design and production. The imagining of Lin's physical trajectory throughout the construction of VVM becomes a simultaneous

²⁶⁶ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 2:07.

²⁶⁷ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 2:03.

intervention in the study of space, as not only the visitor's body, but the designer's body is also accounted for.

Mark Franko stipulates, a *construction* of historical dances—in this case historical actions-dances—calls for the attendance of more than just the material of the original choreography, but also necessitates an investigation of primary historical sources.²⁶⁸ In this case, accounts of Lin's maneuverings as well as references to her participation during the building of the memorial are housed in boxes comprising the archive. These texts also serve as frames for *constructing* Maya Lin, choreographically. In her book, *Modern Dance/Negro Dance*, Susan Manning examines American modern dance and black concert dance from the 1930's to the 1960's. She establishes a model of spectatorship built from the idea that the relationship between performer and audience is determined by sociohistorical encounters governed by historical constructions of blackness and whiteness. Her work can be used as methodological inspiration with which to engage with Franko's approach to reconstruction (*construction*). Manning's book provides a useful strategy for imagining and reading bodies from sources lacking explicit accounts of historical choreography/actions.

While the most common methodology for dance scholarship relies on the careful reading of live or recorded dance, Manning's project is partially based on the interpretations of still images and written accounts of the dancing body. Given the time period within which she seeks to understand the development of black concert dance as it

²⁶⁸ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

runs parallel to the unfurling of American modern dance, which was cross-viewed by audiences from varied and disparate social locations and racial contexts, few moving images/data exist of choreography made and performed in the early twentieth century. Manning's access to the moving body is culled from the archive, "my evidence comes partly from performance archives...and partly from an extensive search of relevant periodicals. My comprehensive survey of the black press, leftist press, dance press, and arts press turned up many sources that were missing from performance archives."²⁶⁹ These paper trails form a phalanx of frames within which the body bears shape and despite its inevitable evanescence, the frames of paper scout out the body's presence and for Susan Manning, the body is used as a vehicle not only to historicize spectatorship, but also to understand race relations in the early and mid-twentieth century.

Figuring the Material

Drawing from Susan Manning's methodological force of hunting down paper trails, we can find traces of Maya Lin in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. She is locatable in two places where the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive is housed, in the Prints and Photographs Reading Room and in the Manuscript Library. The Prints and Photographs Reading Room functions, ostensibly, as the receptacle for images. This reading room houses a collection of images, drawn from the early phase of the memorial project. The bulk of this collection takes the form of design entries—copies of all 1,420

²⁶⁹ Susan Manning, *Modern Dance Negro Dance: Race in Motion*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xviii.

submissions to the 1981 public design contest are preserved as part of the archive. The multitude of these images and architectural proposals nearly drown out the references to Lin, which are imprinted in a handful of images. Her presence, nonetheless, can be tracked down in the guise of her own contest entry; comprising seven hand-rendered inked blueprints and pastel renderings of what is now the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The inclusion of Lin's design entries functions as visual security of her participation in the design contest as well as historically situates her in the early phase of the memorial project. But more importantly, Lin's abstract renderings of the memorial wall becomes a visual juxtaposition to the multiple binders housing the other 1,401 design submissions, demarcating her singularity as winner as well as foretelling her aesthetic impact on the VVMF memorial project.

The idea of tracking down Lin's presence or remnants of her performance as designer within the memorial's production process is helped by Diana Taylor's performance hauntology concept. Taylor sees the residue of performance—in our case any visual or written reference to Maya Lin—as itself imbued with performative value. In her rendition of (performance) hauntology, a Derridean construct, Taylor challenges the ontology of performance that is traditionally wrapped up in the live-ness or now-ness of performance by examining the substance that remains after the performance disappears. As such, the detritus of performance can be perceived as retaining its own performance value, “the remains, in this spectacle, take on a life of their own...”²⁷⁰ Taylor's

²⁷⁰ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 142.

conception of performance is reliant on the idea of ghosting, "...visualizations that continues to act politically even as it exceeds the live."²⁷¹ I want to situate Lin's real time performance with the VVMF within this idea of ghosting, as another way to make relevant Franko's notion of *construction* as a strategy of reaching Lin's presence. And in this case, the residue of Lin's performance as designer and consultant in this building project is materially tangible, leftover in the form of archival materials.

Taylor uses the death of Diana Princess of Wales to explain her idea of ghosting. While Diana as a live body no longer exists, she in fact remains to perform via the mediatic images, references, materials left in the wake of her death. These traces politically perform. What Taylor suggests is that performance forces into our point of view, a "moment of revisualization," and its vanishing only marks the possibility of reappearance in a disparate form.²⁷² Such a claim is particularly useful, in conjunction with Franko's methodology for *constructing* dances, for our excavation of Maya Lin. Lin's performance-participation-dancing out within the scope of the VVMF's production of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has long disappeared. However, Lin's performance (and presence) haunts the memorial itself, re(per)forming itself in the form of archival texts.

Taylor links the reappearance of performance with the presence of ghosts and specters, which she defines by reading both Evita and Princess Diana's deaths as

²⁷¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 143.

²⁷² Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 144.

containing acts of repetition. Both women continue to haunt and eclipse respectively Argentinean politics and the representation of the death of the beautiful woman. The performances of their death are (re)produced not only by the wax copies of Evita's corpse, but also via the residual images capturing Diana's funeral, which itself repeats the performance of death. Their hauntings come in the form of repeats, in the repetition of the performance of multiple corpses or in Princess Diana's death, her subsequent ghosting induced the reappearance of other historic and mediatically powerful deaths of other woman (Evita, Selena, Marilyn Monroe, etc), serving as a repetition of the death of the (same) beautiful woman.

My use of Taylor's construction of hauntology of performance is less literal as I am concerned with how performance participates in the "economy of reproduction," which Peggy Phelan, in her theorization of performance claims that it fails to do.²⁷³ Taylor's provision that performance does in fact leave traces and those traces "threatens to reappear...in another shape or form" functions as a theoretical underpinning for legitimizing the relevance of unearthing of traces of Lin's performance/presence in the depths of the VVMF archive.²⁷⁴ While Lin's original performance as winner and designer of the Vietnam War memorial and consultant to its production has long dissolved, the residue of her performance is preserved in the pages of the archive, working to repeat her

²⁷³ Diana Taylor points this point in conceiving performance hauntology. And Phelan's construction of performance ontology that fails to recognize the residue of the post-performance that Taylor intervenes upon.

²⁷⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 144.

performance in “another shape or form.”²⁷⁵ As Taylor suggests these repeated and revised performances work to critique and shape cultural repertoire. The haunting of Lin’s presence in the archive that charts the beginning and end of the memorial project also carries a critical function, as the depth of her haunting traces her domain of influence, her positionality within the context of project.

Housed in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. is a collection of still images of a three-dimensional model of Lin’s proposed design. These photographs offer insight into Lin’s original intent for materialization of her abstract pastel conceptions. These images serve as juxtaposition to the actual memorial itself, as the proposed landscape and architecture is noticeably emptier, absent of external structural details such as wooden placards prohibiting particular modes of physical behavior and the waist-length chain stanchions marking the pathways into and out of the memorials. The 3-D mock-up of Lin’s memorial design discloses how the actual construction of the memorial was injected with multiple decisive and deciding voices—members of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, politicians who maintained a stake in the success of the project, the National Park Service, responsible for maintaining and managing the memorial site—hinting at Lin’s diminishing impact on the final outcome of the memorial project. Foucault suggested in his interview with Paul Rabinow that it is not the designer of the space, but rather the technicians of space—those bodies determining the functions and operations of space—who wield political power over space. The shift from Lin’s initial

²⁷⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 144.

architectural model to the memorial site in its current condition hints at the relevance of Foucault's assertions on architects and space.

Lin's memorial in miniature proposes a stream of visitor movement disallowed in actual memorial space. She has scattered cardboard figures across the memorial site to suggest unrestricted travel and interaction with the entire site. Cardboard figures are situated along the black granite pathway running parallel to the black granite walls and positioned in the landscaped areas circumscribing the memorial structure itself.



Figure 11. Eye-Level View of Model of Vietnam Veterans Memorial.²⁷⁶

Cardboard figures stand in the triangular plot of grass framed by the open facing of the wall. Bodies are placed on higher ground, on top of the mound of land supporting the back of the memorial structure. Lin has placed paper figures on the edge of this ledge, with the facings of these bodies suggesting choreographies of peaking over to the greater

²⁷⁶ Slide LC-VV-05-2638, LOT 13034, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

expanse of the memorial wall. The arrangement of these figures across the entire memorial site suggests that Lin is concerned and interested in the way in which the site is made available to visitors. The deliberate situation of bodies outside and beyond the walkways suggests that Lin intended the entire memorial site, not excluding the landscaped areas, to be entirely accessible. The placement of the bodies in the lawn above the memorial and on the lawn facing the architecture articulates permission that one can and should interact with the architecture not only from immediate confines of the pathways. Lin seems to propose the wall to be experienced from further afield and from different points of view-and-space. What is most significant about the still images of Lin's model is her attention to the body; the very presence of bodies in the model conveys the idea that the visitor exists within Lin's range of focus in the design of the memorial structure.

This attraction to a bodily experience of architecture is further reinforced by Lin's written codicil accompanying her competition submission. Also housed in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress and reprinted in Lin's book *Boundaries*, this written explanation of her design entry begins with the body, "walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth—a long polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth...walking into the grassy site contained by the wall of this memorial we can barely make out the carved names..."²⁷⁷ Lin has imagined and proposed a mode of operation for the body as it navigates through the landscape, which for her is an integration of both "natural" materials and the memorial

²⁷⁷ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

structure itself. She proposes the body to perform a choreography of walking in the scope of the memorial landscape. By placing the wide spatial directives such as, “through the park-like area” and in the “grassy site contained by the wall,” Lin seems to suggest that the body should be spatially un-tethered, free to roam the across the expanse of the site.²⁷⁸ By describing the view of the memorial from the lawn area “contained by the wall” as a black surface upon which are etched barely perceptible names, Lin prompts us to experience the wall from multiple locations in space and asserts that distant perspectives of the memorial wall are no less legitimate than an inspection of the memorial in which the body makes more intimate contact.²⁷⁹

In keeping with her architectural philosophy for creating fluid, moving structures, Lin’s discursive addition to her conceptual drawings provides insight to how she understands the (un)fixity of both architecture and the body, “the memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to understand as we move into and out of it, the passage itself is gradual, the descent into the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the meaning of this memorial is fully understood.”²⁸⁰ Here Lin provides a rhythm for both the memorial and the body. The choreographic timing for the visitor-user-dancer echoes the status of the memorial; both body and structure enact this “slow” motion as the body takes measured steps along the memorial pathway within the memorial site. The memorial itself is encumbered, “slowed” by the sheer quantity of

²⁷⁸ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

²⁷⁹ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

²⁸⁰ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

names etched on the face of the black stone. Lin also imagines the body's spatial organization in the site. Her insistence for the "body to move into and out of" the memorial reinforces the idea of a wandering body.²⁸¹ A body moving into and out of the memorial epicenter is one that perceives the memorial from multiple vantage points, reinforcing the idea that the memorial itself is meant to be experienced from different perspectives. In conceiving a fluid architecture and body, Lin seems to assert a dialectical partnership between the memorial and the body. The fluidity of the memorial informs and compels the body to set itself in motion, while the body-in-motion actualizes the motility of the memorial wall.

Dance Hiccup: Dancing as Maya Lin Intended

Walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth—a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward, and the low walls emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into the grassy site contained by the walls of this memorial we barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole. For this memorial is meant not as a monument to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during this war, as a whole.

Brought to a sharp awareness of such a loss, it is up to each individual to resolve or come to terms with this loss. . . . The actual area is wide and shallow; allowing for a sense of privacy and the sunlight from the memorial's southern exposure along with the grassy park surrounding and within its wall contribute to the serenity of the area. Thus this memorial is for these who have died, and for us to remember them.

²⁸¹ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

...the memorial's construction involves recontouring the area within the wall's boundaries so as to provide for an easily accessible descent, but as much of the site as possible should be left untouched (including trees). The area should be made into a park for all the public to enjoy.²⁸²

This portion of the textual accompanying Lin's entry to the VVM national design competition consciously imbricates the body and its experience into the memorial landscape. Lin's discursive addendum to her design textually weaves the body into this written account of the memorial design. Not only does Lin intend the memorial itself to evoke and sustain motion, but she also intended the visitor-as-user-as-dancer to engage with the memorial in motion. She opens her description of the architecture by referring to it in relation to a moving body: this body "walks," "approaches," "makes out," "is brought to sharp awareness," "descends" and "enjoys" the "park-like" topography of her proposed memorial site.²⁸³ At the conceptual stage of the design, Lin has already conceived the visitor-as-user-as-dancer to inhabit the memorial space in motion. The architecture is also intended to "move" in response to and along with the dancing bodies temporarily staking presence in this carefully topo-graphed space. The granite wall "slopes," "extends," "converges," "conveys" and encloses by creating "privacy."²⁸⁴ Lin's description in reference to memorial structure consciously evokes a mental image of architectural dancing, one that coheres with a colloquial understanding of dance

²⁸² Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

²⁸³ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

²⁸⁴ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

performances since dancing bodies also engage in the practice of extension, convergence, and enclosure.

The material reality of the VVM, accented by the additional architectural elements of signs, chains, and stanchions, contradicts the original vision of its designer, as evidenced by images of small-scale model of the VVM, capturing intended landscape and architecture layout.²⁸⁵ More significantly, the model also demonstrates the spatial roaming of the memorial's visitors-users-dancers. Lin, via these early images, clearly intended users of the memorial to wander freely, across the entire memorial site. We can discern bodies inhabiting the entire breadth of the green areas encapsulating the memorial walls. Figures are scattered across the grassy terrain, even hovering over the ledge of the memorial wall, using the space that, in material reality, has been removed from visitor access. The NPS, as custodian of this memorial site, has redefined the spatial corridors of the memorial site and has reconstructed the tone of the VVM. Whereas Maya Lin had initially intended the memorial to function as a "park-like area," open to the forces of the wandering body, the NPS, by prohibiting fast motion, as evinced by placards refusing running and biking (as well eating and smoking) and by cordoning off the areas enhancing the VVM's "park-like" environment, has redefined the boundaries of the memorial.²⁸⁶ The visitor-user-dancer's bodily understanding of the memorial is no longer of a memorial embedded in a park-like arena, since the landscaped, "park-like" areas are never accessed by its visitors. What the body physically and conceptually experiences are

²⁸⁵ See Figures Eight - Eleven

²⁸⁶ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

the hard surfaces of the memorial architecture. Because the visitor-user-dancer is confined to the triangular wedge of the VVM, comprising of the granite walkways that follow the length of the black-granite memorial wall, the expanse of the memorial is narrowed, physically redefined to the spaces contained within the chains and stanchions. As such, the construction materials of the VVM work to delineate what constitutes the memorial site and what falls outside its realm. The granite (of the walkways and memorial walls) marks the accessible and official space of the memorial. The soft surfaces of grassy lawn while visible and materially present are inaccessible to visiting bodies. These untouched and un-embodied spaces are thereby rendered irrelevant to the force and meaning of the VVM and equally irrelevant to the visitor-user-dancer's corporeal experience of the site. Because the VVM calls for collaboration between architecture and body, what the body makes contact with or is permitted to connect with, marks the (new) boundaries of the memorial site. The NPS, by inserting additional architectural elements of signs, chains, and stanchions in the landscape, reconstructs (for the body) the boundaries of the VVM. This delimiting of space contracts what is conceptualized as the memorial site. While the borders of the VVM officially extend to the limits of lawn and trees rendered out of reach to the visiting public, the experiential space of the VVM remains within the architectural blockade.

The posted placards aligning the practice of honoring fallen military personnel with a bodily compliance to stay off grass and restrictions to running and by implication other rapid and forceful movements, has confined the forward motion choreography of the body to the possibility of walking. Because the granite paths are the only means

through which visitors-user-dancers can travel through the memorial space, bodies are forced to fall into line, hindered from any forward motion by visitor-users-dancers ahead of them. As such, a visible line often forms along the memorial pathway as users-dancers who enter from either of the two entrance/exits form a deliberately slow procession, echoing the choreography and form of a funeral procession in which bodies file somberly past the gravesite of the deceased, a choreography that usually signals not only the conclusion of the funeral, but also marks a final effort at remembering the deceased. The narrowed space to which the visitor has access constricts the VVM visitor's freedom to wander, undermining Lin's planned use of the VVM as a park where the practice of "enjoyment" was initially intended. Instead, visitors-users-dancers are compelled to vigilantly maintain their spatial orientation, remaining within the confines of the granite walkway. The VVM cannot be understood as a site for "enjoyment" as Lin proposed, but rather the memorial and space in which it is situated is a site of solemn remembrance in which the act of remembering/memorializing has been conflated with a practice of mourning. The possibility of "enjoyment" has been undermined by the choreography of the bodies treading silently and carefully through the memorial walkways.

Critics of Maya Lin's design for VVM have likened the memorial wall, which is partially sunken into the earth, to an open grave, serving as a vessel containing the collective guilt of an entire nation. While mourning is indeed folded into the practice of memorialization within the site of the VVM, the act of memorialization-mourning instead of reflecting the national guilt, works as an acknowledgement of a nation's actions and thus, successfully provides the means through which visitors-users-dancers confront the

reality of the Vietnam War, to be “brought to a sharp awareness of such a loss...”²⁸⁷

Kristin Ann Hass has aligned American funerary traditions with the activities present at VVM. For Hass the individuated traditions of various and disparate funerary practices of the American public has been transferred onto the site of the VVM wall, “

The impulse to use public memorials to privilege the memory of the individual as an emblem for the nation, the impulse to use the dead to assert the past of the community, and the impulse to use things to negotiate the liminal position of the dead meet at the Vietnam memorial. People have responded to the individuated memory that the Wall makes with a new memorial impulse—leaving something at the Wall is an act of negotiating...²⁸⁸

The practice of placing material objects at the VVM registers as an act of funerary commemoration. However, the impulses for visitors to couch the act of mourning in the practice of memorializing extend beyond the act of leaving letters, flowers, and objects at the base of the memorial wall. The impulses to mourn are bodily as visitors literally, physically blur the lines of memorialization and mourning. The practice of memorializing and experiencing the VVM is tied to a bodily practice of mourning that is danced out in dialectical partnership with the memorial wall.

The choreography of visitors-users-dancers enacted at the VVM is invariably a patterning of walking, stillness, and making contact with architecture. On March 12, 2009 at 2:45pm, I notice two young women enter the wall from the west entrance/exit. One is clad red and one wears white sweater. They enter in rapid speed, their feet quickly replacing each other in space as the two bodies take confident strides without breaks or

²⁸⁷ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

²⁸⁸ Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1998), 66.

pauses: stepstepstepstep. However, they abruptly stop at the fourth panel of the west wall. The twosome separate, each taking time to walk away from the other, locating a sphere of privacy as they stand feet apart of each other.



Figure 12. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.²⁸⁹

Both women carry themselves easily; their postures are loose and relaxed. They drop their weight and sit in their hips as their faces focus on the granite panels. Stillness ensues as seconds, even minutes past. Both bodies gaze without motion at the granite panel. While their bodies remain relaxed, feet rooted to the ground, accommodating the weight of gravity, both women incline their heads forward, bowed as if to peer more carefully at the inscription of names etched across the face of the fourth panel. In both the practice of memorialization and mourning, stillness figures centrally. The necessity of

²⁸⁹ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

contemplation and the impulse to draw inward is embodied in the performance of physical stasis and quietude often referred to as the “moment of silence.” The bowed heads, articulate visitors’ making effort towards reading the script of the memorial wall. But the bowing of the head figures centrally in the choreography of mourning, including the choreography of a “moment of silence.” In traditional funerary choreography, the drawing inward of the head towards the chest signals an outward exemplification grief (mourning) and internal remembering. The often performed “taking a moment of silence” in funerary environments and memorial services is accompanied by the choreographic dictate to lower/bow the head. In an archived image of Maya Lin standing in front of a full-scale model of two wall panels, her physical stance embodies a moment of stillness captured on film. Lin’s own stillness echoes the choreography of stillness performed by the two unknown women clad in white and red.²⁹⁰ With shoulders slightly hunched, head pushed forward from its upright centerline, Lin (along with the two women) resemble a body placed at a gravesite, marking and recognizing the absent presence of the dead. According to David J. Getsy, the “moment of silence” is a common mode of mourning, establishing,

...a bracketed time in which private emotions appear as performed absence. This act of voicing loss through the cessation of voice itself serves not just as a powerful act for participants but also as a reminder of the resonance of silence as a metaphoric zone in which the personal is made public.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ See Figure 14.

²⁹¹ David J. Getsy, “Mourning, Yearning, Cruising: Ernesto Pujol’s *Memorial Gestures*.” *A Journal of Performance and Art* 30.3 (September 2008): 11.

In the case of the VVM, Lin's architecture forces these pauses of silence and stillness by eliciting the body to simultaneously examine (memorialize) and contemplate (mourn). The two women who begin their excursion into the VVM with speed and motion are compelled to locate inaction. Lin's black, granite wall calls for this stoppage as it is impossible to clearly make out the text on the wall if the body does not pause to visually re-organize what appears, when one is in motion, to be a barely discernable sea of arbitrary letters. Only by finding a bodily stillness can the visitor-user-dancer clearly make out first and last names inscribed across the entire face of the granite wall. Performing stillness is not only necessary to pick out these discrete names, but in sorting through the letters into legible names, visitors confront the reality of what is to be memorialized. The sheer number of names on every single granite panel makes palpable the efforts of fallen military personnel and the scope of the Vietnam War. As such, the stillnesses performed in reaction to the memorial wall work as choreographies of memorialization, in which the visitor-user-dancer, in enacting stasis, takes notice of the history and reality of the Vietnam War. But the stillness is also choreography of mourning. Following the re-organization of letters into names, the body's "moment of silence" transfers into a practice of mourning as the memorial wall functions as a record of national memory *and* as an expansive tombstone upon which the names of the deceased are etched. As such, the memorial wall engenders simultaneously in the stillness (and silence) of the body, an act of remembrance and mourning.

This stillness is further invited by the reflective quality of the black granite. As visitors-makers-users-dancers find stillness in order to make sense of what is imprinted

on the wall facing, and lengthen this stillness into an act of mourning, they encounter a reflected image of their own bodies temporarily superimposed across the granite surface and the object(s) of gaze becomes doubled. The two women who paused in front of the fourth panel of the west wall of the VVM must see past their own likeness before cataloguing the multiplicity of etched letters into discrete names, with the reflection of their live bodies intimating the material humanity that each name once embodied. Stillness becomes a necessary part of the choreographic vocabulary, a practice revealing the dialectical link between the making/doing power of the visitor and the rhetorical power of the architecture to encourage the construction of visitors' dances.

As the two women emerge from their dancing out of stillness, they continue towards the memorial's apex, where the east and west walls intersect. Their pace is slowed as their footsteps become more protracted, more deliberate as the space between each footstep is expanded: step step step step step. The lifting of the feet becomes more deliberate as the knee is recruited for walking, bending at right angles as feet spend time dangling in the air before carefully placed on the walkway. As the women take creeping steps, their heads occasionally turn left, focused on the memorial wall. This motion is not languid or lethargic, rather the two bodies seem to be walking out (performing) an internal contemplation centered on the gravity of history, embodied by the number of names etched on across the granite. The weight of their footsteps becomes the physical manifestation of the weightiness of internal thoughts. In these less harried, more reluctant footsteps is a practice of sorting out what these two visitors stopped to see. The body's

dance, after stillness can no longer be speedy or hurried, as the two women confront the terrain of names inscribed across the length of the entire two walls.

Such choreography stands in contrast to the rapid, confident steps taken by the two female visitors when they first entered the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It is the nature of the site that forces the body to shift languages. All visitors who enter the VVM arrive from the urban built-scape of Washington, D.C., as the pathways leading into the VVM are visible from and to thoroughfares constantly producing the frenetic energy and sounds of an urban environment. Because the memorial sits parallel to Constitution Ave and is situated between 23rd and 17th streets, the movement pace of visitors arriving at the VVM reflects the physical effort of urban navigation. Visitors often come directly from these streets that propel the body in tune with the rhythm of the city. The hurried and often hurried footsteps of visitors carry in their rhythm, the tempo of the urban environment. If the placards requiring the body to locate and exhibit an erosion of speed fail to diminish the body's construction of urban choreography, the memorial site itself, in conjunction with the memorial architecture invites, compels the body to shift into a slower gear. Because the memorial walls, which rise to ten feet, are partially sunken into the earth, Lin's architecture acts as sound barrier deadening the sounds and views of the city within which it is nestled. The black granite wall becomes the visual focus of its visitors, enhanced by the chains and stanchions erected by the NPS that literally push bodies into close vicinity of the architecture. Surrounded by lawn and gesturing towards the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, the VVM exists in visual disparity to urban structures of concrete and streets constantly populated by moving vehicles.

Upon entering the VVM, the body is literally injected into a different environment, a world materializing the fabric of national memories wherein the central task of the user-dancer is to not only determine a path for navigation, but also to get at the work of memorializing. In the case of the VVM, this process of memorializing is a bodily one in which its users-dancers subject themselves to the choreography of trudging steps, extended stillness, and moments of corporeal liminality, where the body occasionally hovers between motion and stoppage that the memorial provides and insists upon.

The two women coming into the VVM traveled without trepidation, their intrepid gestures and steps indicative of their previous bout in Washington, D.C. urban space. However, it is the initial moments of stillness, taken to examine the shorter panels of the west wall that shift their choreographic patterning. The performance of stillness is not only compelled and constructed by the memorial wall, but this dancing out of stillness becomes the moment where the body situates itself to alternate spatial reality of the VVM. In finding stillness, the two women also find and react to the choreographic duties literally etched across the granite walls. As such, the prolonged pauses persistently and constantly performed in the memorial works can be read as a practice of tuning into the VVM space, not unlike a dancer taking a “moment of silence” on a new stage as a means of confirming the materiality of the performance space and establishing a relationship with the new dance floor. The performance of stillness at the VVM is not dissimilar. Visitor choreography indeed responds to and is directed by the architecture, as the body must locate stasis to read the names inscribed onto the granite. However, the performance of stillness is simultaneously an opportunity to establish a relationship between visitor-

user-dancer and memorial site. Stillness gives the body an opportunity to steady the hand, to reach out and feel the granite surface upon which the visitor stands, to discern the mineral details contained in the granite facings of the wall. Stillness also creates opportunity and time for the body to make physical contact with the wall, to reach out a hand or two, to place fingers, palms across the indented surface of wall face and to feel the smooth material that is embedded with hollow points derived from the letters etched across the surface.

The protracted steps taken by the two female visitors I have been describing is a performance co-choreographed by the memorial wall. In the course of their walking, these two bodies hover between motion and stillness as they shift their head and gaze left, towards the wall, slowing down to make out the names carved onto the memorial wall. Their own bodily inscription becomes a response to what must be noticed and confronted—the textual inscriptions of the wall as they increase the length of their footsteps, decrease their walking pace, finding an unsteady balance between motion and stillness in order to find clarity in the wall. The bodily writings performed by the two women, and by many other visitor-user-dancers to the VVM are direct responses to the writing imprinted on the memorial wall. In order to see these texts clearly, the body must stop or at least hover in that shaky place of mid-walk, where the body momentarily finds both motion and stillness.

In his article for the *Theatre Journal*, “Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz’s and Jo Fabian’s Choreography” Jens Giersdorf reveals the way in which the practice of walking, when considered in the

context of pace, dynamics, and quality, articulates the intentions of the performer.²⁹² In describing the community of East German citizens gravitating towards the Wall dividing Germany into two discrete political regions, Giersdorf describes a choreography of walking in conversation and affected by the built and political environment within which the walking bodies were operating,

This walking was never a stroll, nor was it Benjamin's flauering. It was also not a resolute hike toward a clearly demarcated goal. Rather the power of the walk was obtained through the impact on the space in which occurred. This walk was a forceful attempt to gain new space.²⁹³

For Giersdorf, the conscious navigation and manipulation of bodies as they head toward the East/West German border is a consequence of social impulses and the way in which the performance of walking is relevant for understanding the content and consequence of these impulses. Much like the East German bodies that headed towards the Berlin Wall, the visitors embarking on the pathways of another wall, the granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, are also choreographically affected by the material and political environment that is a memorial site.

Giersdorf recognizes the way in which the material and political arena of the East/German border participated in the construction of the walking choreography, the "...uncertainty about the outcome made us all hyper-aware of our spatial choices as well as the choreography of our body postures..."²⁹⁴ As a space of memory and one that

²⁹² Jens Richard Giersdorf, "Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz's and Jo Fabian's Choreography." *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413-432.

²⁹³ Jens Richard Giersdorf, "Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz's and Jo Fabian's Choreography." *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413.

²⁹⁴ Jens Richard Giersdorf, "Border Crossings and Intra-National Trespasses: East German Bodies in Sascha Waltz's and Jo Fabian's Choreography." *Theatre Journal* 55:3 (October 2003): 413.

architecturally gestures towards other monuments of American collective memory, namely the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, the VVM is space invisibly covered with a socio-political residue in which visitors are made aware of their role as memorializers/vessels for memory. The heightened impulse to remember, in a space of memory, is not only an act of mental contemplation, but is also viscerally experienced as visitors-users-dancers enact a choreography shaped by the architecture which then becomes the bodily choreography of remembering. Much like Giersdorf, in which the political moment of the toppling of the Berlin Wall partially dictated the bodily actions of participants, the politicized environment of the memorial site, coupled with Lin's architecture, forms a choreography of memorializing comprising a vernacular of walking, stasis, and hesitant moments between walking and stillness.

But the more labored footsteps taken by the female visitors to the VVM embody more than the visitor-user-dancer's relationship to the architecture. The choreography of lengthened, slowed down footsteps also embody the performance of mourning. And in this way, both the stillness and walking danced out by the VVM's visitors conflate the architecture's choreographic proposals for memorialization with the practice of mourning, making indiscernible the boundaries between bodily representation of memorialization at the VVM and funerary choreographies—mourning.

David Gere describes the choreography of funerals and mourning in his book *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of AIDS*.²⁹⁵ In

²⁹⁵ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in An Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

his account of the activist funeral celebrating the life of New York AIDS Jon Greenburg, Gere describes the stillnesses present in the choreography of this funeral, “there is a stillness around the casket, a sense of reverence for Jon’s life and a growing pall at the reality of his death.”²⁹⁶ Such a description of “reverential stillness” is not unlike the stillness(es) danced out by bodies at the VVM. We can argue that the body’s unmoving study of names commemorating individual military personnel from the Vietnam War engenders “growing pall” at the magnitude of lives lost during the Vietnam War. This realization fuels the stillnesses performed in front of various panels across the memorial.

In his description of choreography accompanying Jon Greenburg’s funeral, David Gere attends to the body-in-motion where walking is centrally figured as Greenburg’s casket is carried by six pallbearers across the streets of the East Village in New York City. This funeral procession, which Gere reads as resembling the passage of President John F. Kennedy’s cession through the streets of Washington, D.C., comprised of “two dozen participants, some walking along, trudging, eyes down cast, others with their arms twine about one another...” The dragging of feet as the body propels itself forward closely resembles the choreography of dancers at the VVM as the footsteps steps of visitors to the memorial are carried out with equal gravity and performed in a sort of slow motion, as if the feet singularly refuse to move forward. VVM visitors also trudge.

The line of visitors wending their way through the linear pathways of the VVM forms a sort of reverse funeral procession that never ceases. Unlike the Jon Greenburg’s

²⁹⁶ David Gere, *How to Make Dances in An Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of Aids*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 162.

funeral procession, which Gere describes as establishing a spatial trajectory upon the urban built environment of the East Village with mourners following the casket (and body), the granite memorial wall upon which are etched the names of fallen Vietnam War troops become the physical embodiment and reminder of these absent bodies. While not a casket, the VVM nonetheless recalls in a similar manner, the mortality and death of these thousands of individual soldiers. Instead of following a moving casket, visitors exert forward moving momentum to pass and mourn the permanent and unmoving names inscribed across the memorial wall, which, like the casket, recall the death and materiality of these fallen soldiers.

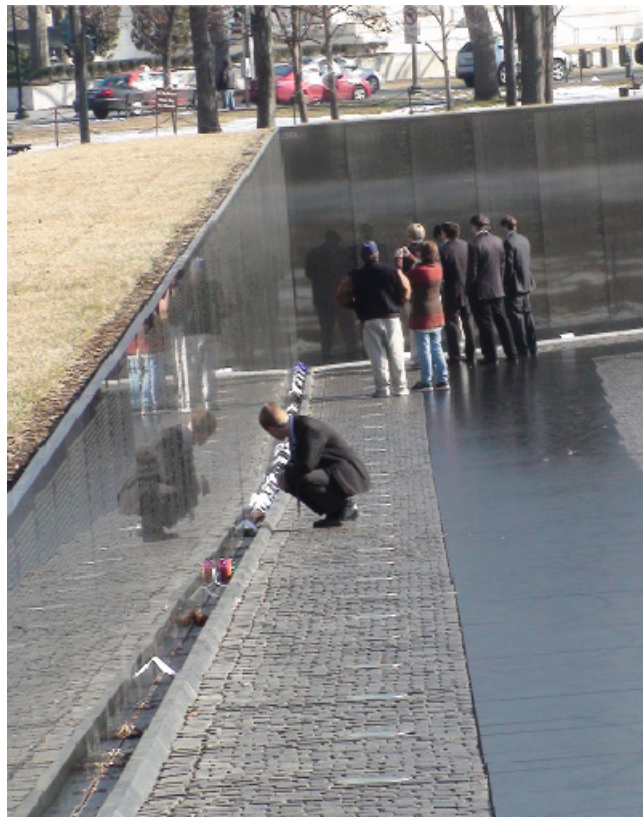


Figure 13. Apex of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

Maya Lin hints at the way in which her memorial design functions as an arena in which the practice of memorialization merges into the boundaries of funerary mourning, “brought to a sharp awareness of such a loss, it is up to each individual to resolve or come to terms with the loss. For death is in the end a personal and private matter, and the area contained within this memorial is a quiet place meant for personal reflection and private reckoning.”²⁹⁸ Lin clearly intends for the memorial to engender a consciousness about the magnitude of loss caused by the Vietnam War. This intention echoes the “growing pall” mourners experienced at Jon Greenberg’s public, East Village memorial service. Lin more clearly indicates the possibility of mourning at the VVM in her definition of death as a “private matter” which must be individually resolved, thereby theoretically intertwining memorialization with the idea of mourning as we engage with the history of the Vietnam War.

This conflation of national remembering and mourning is physically embodied in the choreography of visitors to the VVM. Figure 13 partially reveals the way in which the choreography of mourning is translated into a mode of memorialization. In particular, the male figure squatting in the foreground of the image echoes the physical exertion of mourners situated at the gravesite. Kristin Ann Hass attends to the practice of leaving materials at the base of the VVM, seeing this practice as strategy of grieving for the dead, simultaneously inspiring visitors-users-dancers to mourn the erosion of patriotism, nationalism, and community instigated by the Vietnam War. Ultimately, the mourning for

²⁹⁸ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

individual soldiers and the nation, “takes place in all the things left at the Wall...”²⁹⁹ But the presence of flowers, letters, materials at the wall works as a more than just a means of personal grieving or resolution for an individual who leaves the object at the memorial wall, the objects also engender physical response from the greater visiting public which reproduces the physical act of mourning. As visitors stop to kneel, squat, bend over to closely examine the objects, read the letters and dog tags placed at the base of the memorial, the wall can be seen as a site mourning as its users hover, bodies contracting into narrow figures dancing out a choreography that is often performed in private gravesites as bodies squat, bend, and sit to the height of the grave marker which houses the corpus of the deceased. The young man captured in the foreground of Figure 13 embodies this intimate act of mourning as his body is lowered toward the base of the memorial. He is squatting, and thus allowing the granite wall panels to tower over his compressed figure. He has obviously lowered and constricted his body to inspect at and across the line of paper and objects left on the ground. As such this body not only re-performs the act of personal communing that is persistently enacted by bodies grieving at gravesites, but this body also seems to re-perform the act of bending over, of folding the body inward that is required of someone who bends over, kneels, and contracts to leave flowers and objects at the gravesite, a part conventional, Western mourning traditions.

As Kristin Ann Hass, author of *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, has concluded, the presence of materials external to the

²⁹⁹ Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California, Press, 1998), 104.

architecture of the VVM establishes a new set of (American) memorial practices figuring the VVM as a site of private and public grieving.³⁰⁰ This memorial, which underscores not only the overarching idea of the Vietnam War, reveals the way in which loss encumbers the fabric of American memory. Beyond the materiality of objects placed at the VVM, it is the materiality of bodily practices that confirms the fluidity between memorialization and mourning. The dancing enacted by the visitors-users-dancers visually inscribes the aura of mourning onto memorial grounds, thus impacting and reconstructing the concept of memorialization. As bodies fold in on themselves to scrutinize and look over materials placed at the memorial wall, visitors also discern the names etched across the lower levels of the granite facing, which usually go unnoticed and perhaps overlooked if the body were to remain constantly upright. This choreography of compression to see both objects and names etched on the lower arena of the wall exacerbates the “sharp awareness of such a loss,” that Lin intends for visitors to embody as the lines of names reiterate the vast scale of bodies contributing to the Vietnam War and reminds visitors-users-dancers that these names (standing in for the bodies of individuals) are linked to a narrative expounded by both the materials carried to the wall and by the people who do the carrying. So, in hovering over the base of the wall, moments of silence are also performed as visitors find quietude and stasis in their bodies.

While the architecture of the VVM plays a central role in shaping the form of visitor choreography, the temporary physical linkages created as visitors encounter each

³⁰⁰ Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California, Press, 1998).

other or as groups of visitors collectively navigate the pathways of the memorial site also produce choreographic representations of memorization as mourning. Set in the background of Figure 13 is a grouping of bodies comprising what appears to be both strangers and acquaintances standing together at the meeting point of the east and west walls engaged in a practice of collective stillness. Lin refers to the intersection of the two walls as the memorial's apex. It is at this meeting point where the dates of the Vietnam War's commencement and ending come together. As these bodies hold themselves rigid, the gazes of these visitor-users-dancers are focused toward the memorial's highest point, where the quantity of names etched across the wall is most numerous and most overwhelming. Because the wall panels here are so tall, the spine has to strain as vertebrae are extended for the head to gaze at the top most lines of names, almost illegible from their ten-foot perch. In this image, choreographies of stillness, while consistently performed, are varied in form. The men clothed in formal attire and situated in the very background of Figure 13 perform stillness with arms placed at the sides of their torso or with hands stuffed into their pants suit pockets. In the reflection of the wall, we can discern a slight bowing of heads, typical of how official "moments of silences" are performed. Standing next to these suited men is a couple more casually dressed with both bodies focused towards the apex of the memorial wall. The female body seems to inhabit the liminal space of motion and stillness, as her lower body is grounded to the granite floor beneath her with feet planted slighted apart while her upper body is slightly shifted by her raised arms as she pauses and finds enough stasis to focus the camera, as the gesture of taking a picture of the VVM calls for a moment of stillness.

It is in the formation of temporary collectives at the VVM, where visitors unfamiliar to each other locate themselves next to each other in the performance of stillness, that individual remembering-mourning transforms into collective remembering-mourning. These frequent moments of group stillness can be understood as the physical manifestation of national, collective memorializing. The visual impact of multiple bodies unmoving in space recalls choreography usually seen in private funerals/memorial services where bodies congregate together, bodies stilled and shoulders drawn in collective introspection. Moreover, the coming together of bodies in stillness and silence is a sort of interaction, a (silent) conversation in a space that is riddled with what Lin predicted as practices of “private reckoning.”³⁰¹ In his analysis of Ernesto Pujol’s movement theater piece that investigates the public exposure of personal mourning, “Memorial Gestures: Mourning and Yearning at the Rotunda,” a site specific work performed over the course of twelve hours at the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Rotunda in the Chicago Cultural Center, David J. Getsy argues that the moments of minor interaction between performers, where bodies corporeally engaged with each other, amplifies and makes immediate the performance of mourning.³⁰² Pujol’s performative work argues, I as do, that the practice of memorializing is ultimately a means of

³⁰¹ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

³⁰² David J. Getsy, “Mourning, Yearning, Cruising: Ernesto Pujol’s *Memorial Gestures*.” *A Journal of Performance and Art* 30.3 (September 2008): 13.

Getsy writes specifically, “the overt meaning for the work and its justification centered on the relation between the Rotunda—a memorial space dedicated to fallen soldiers—and the performance of mourning that the work enacted in silence in it.” (13).

confronting and dealing with loss—a practice of mourning. The presence of multiple bodies gazing silently and without motion at the face of the memorial wall makes materially palpable the concept of collective mourning. For Getsy, Pujol’s staging of mourning explores in a concentrated manner, the performance of the private on a public arena, and the vulnerability that inevitably emerges in these acts. However, the setting of a formal performance is not necessary to magnify the presence and practice of mourning. In the case of the VVM, the visitor-user-dancer’s bodily experience of the memorial is always already a conscious and visible performance of mourning (and memorialization). With the spatial arrangement of the architecture on a flat plane of grass—what Lin refers to as a “park-like setting”—the rounded human form of visitors, a nexus of skin, organs, muscle, and tendons exist in stark contrast to the angled composition of the memorial wall and the hard surface of the granite. The subtle choreography of motion, stillness, and the liminal motions wavering between both actions is heightened by the fact that bodies are visible from within and without the formal space of the memorial, made easier to discern by the juxtaposition between permanent architecture and moving bodies. As such, the VVM functions not only as a public memorial, but also as a sort of public performance space where the temporary dances composed by the visitors-as-users-as-dancers enunciate the merging of memorialization with practices of mourning.

Hiccup Completed/Returning to the Chapter

Also contained in the image archive of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund are images of Maya Lin. Lin stands in front of a life-sized cardboard replica of two memorial

panels. These two mock panels represent the memorial's apex. Lin's presence in the memorial archives is most obvious in these images, which capture not only her body in relation to her design, but also capture her participation in the production of the memorial site. In these images, her back is turned towards the mock-up with her hands stuffed in her pockets as her shoulders are hunched and head bowed toward the panels.



Figure 14. Maya Lin in front of full-scale wall panel.³⁰³

In a few shots, the camera reveals a partial image of her right hand stretching away from her body, reaching towards the face of the ersatz panels. These photographs capture Lin as inhabiting multiple positionalities. The pictures clearly show the early stages of the memorial project as the mock-up walls serve to recreate the dimensions of the real granite panels, while simultaneously situating the memorial in its determined site. In this context, Lin adopts the role of designer testing out a preliminary sample of her

³⁰³ Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, LOT 13034, Slide LC-VV-05-2682

concept. In these pictures, her posture is slightly curved; her body seems to tip towards the wall face, suggesting a careful inspection of the size and spacing of the names as well as an examination of the dimensions of artificial walls. This inward form, in which the shoulders are slightly hunched and feet firmly planted on the ground also demarcates Lin's playing out the role of visitor. Her body positioning echoes the practices of actual visitors-users engaging with the real memorial. Lin seems to perform the bodily choreography that she proposes in her explanation of her design proposal. Standing at a mock-up of the apex of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Lin's body articulates a choreography of intimate contact with the wall, enacting a bodily "...awareness of such a loss," a corporeal grasping of "...the meaning of the memorial."³⁰⁴

The depth of Lin's participation in the memorial's production is uncovered in the caverns of the Manuscript Reading Room of the National Library. It is here where the memories of the VVM materialize in the form of memos, receipts, letters, construction contracts and invitations are housed in cardboard boxes compiled and organized by founders of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. This part of the archive charts the process of building the memorial, from the founding of the VVMF as an organization, to the construction of the memorial itself, spanning the years from 1965 to 1995.³⁰⁵ The archive is made up of 135 boxes and organized into eight series: Office Files 1979-1985, Files of the Project Director 1965-1984, National Salute to Vietnam Veterans 197-1983,

³⁰⁴ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 4:05.

³⁰⁵ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, A Register of Its Records in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. p. 3.

Fundraising 1979-1984, Miscellany 1966-1985, Card Files 1980-1984, Addition 1980-1994, Oversize 1980-1982. Lin's presence is distinctly lacking within this archive encompassing thousands of sheets of written memory. Each of the eight series is annotated according to the materials housed in the numbered boxes and Maya Lin formally appears in the finding aid annotations of two boxes (33 and 61).³⁰⁶ While her presence is also hidden within other boxes and folders within the depth of the archive, she is not easily located in a direct fashion. As a material vessel of memory, the archive is subject to a process of selection, in which its gatekeepers, in this case performed by Project Director, Robert Doubek and members of the VVMF executive team, consciously filter through the collection of materials to include in its archives. As the winner of the VVMF design competition and architect of the black granite chevron, Maya Lin should have a central presence in the archive that testifies to the production process of her design. However, she is conspicuously un-present in the bulk of these textual memories.

In Office Files series of the archive, Lin appears in a folder preserving "fact sheets" composed by the VVMF in the 1980 in response to the criticism emerging in the wake of the selection of Lin's submission as the winning design. In an undated version of the fact sheet, of which there are several versions, Lin appears under the subheading, "The Designer is American," which credits her with the winning design concept and charts her ethnicity, acknowledging her Chinese heritage while simultaneously

³⁰⁶ Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, A Register of Its Records in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. p. 13, 19.

confirming her American citizenship and loyalties.³⁰⁷ The fact sheet confirms her family's immigration to American soil in the 1940's as a product of fleeing China's communist regime. Such disclaimers regarding Lin's Chinese-American positionality not only overshadow her status as winner of the VVMF design competition, but also suggest that race, specifically Lin's Chinese-ness, contributed to the intense backlash against the memorial design. After all, the purpose of the fact sheet is to confront misreadings of Lin's memorial concept and to temper opposition to her ethnicity in the context of her design.

In her book *Up From Under: The Africanist Presence in American Performance*, Brenda Dixon Gottschild performs archaeology on the arc of American modern dance to uncover how these dance forms inherit and are influenced by Africanist movement traditions. The caching and denial of such Africanist influences is a product of twentieth century racial discrimination and segregation,

The Africanist presence in American culture has shaped a New World legacy that sets American culture apart from Western Europe. It is a potent, vital force that plays a significant role in defining the American aesthetic. At the same time, it has suffered from sins of commission and omission; it has been "invisibilized" ...³⁰⁸

Dixon Gottschild's intervention into the modern dance scholarship reveals the ways in which Africanist aesthetics have shaped the construction of American culture—not disincluding modern dance.

³⁰⁷ Fact Sheets, 1980 n.d., Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

³⁰⁸ Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Up From Under: The Africanist Presence in American Performance*. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 1-2.

Dixon Gottschild's claim that the denial of Africanist influences in American aesthetics, the practice of conscious invisibilization, stems from the dis-equality between African and white Americans, and is useful in thinking about the virtual absence of Lin's presence in the textual memory bank of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In addressing her problematic racial construction, as an Asian American designer of a memorial intended to commemorate American casualties in an Asian war, the VVMF's fact sheet listing her American loyalties support a reading of the absence of Lin's presence as partially a consequence of her Chinese heritage. In the case of the VVM project, it is not a question of the black/white binary Dixon Gottschild works within, but it is nonetheless a question of race.³⁰⁹ While her Chinese-American-ness is clearly a point of contention for individuals reproving what appeared as a detrimental representation of Vietnam War memory, Lin's scant presence in the bulk of archived papers—her invisibilization—rather addresses her minor involvement within the production of the memorial. She lacked leverage and power in making decisions regarding the condition of her design, while approval for allowing for the construction of the memorial and the fulfillment rested in the hands of federal institutions. Visual scholar Marita Sturken also sees Lin's ethnicity as point of contention in the public debate over the memorial design,

Lin's ethnicity doubly displaced her in the public debate...her Asian-American identity was read as particularly ironic, given her role in defining the discourse of remembrance of a war fought in Indochina (even if, with the volatile and complex politics between China and Vietnam, this conflation of ethnic identities is a

³⁰⁹ In Freida Lee Mock's documentary, *May Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, Lin testifies to the way in which her ethnic positionality became a point of critique for detractors of her memorial concept, "it took me months to realize that obviously a lot of people were going to be offended that the creator of the American Vietnam Veterans is not only not a veteran, but she is a she, she is an Asian...there were letters coming in saying, "how could you let a gook design the memorial?"

particularly American one). In the debate, Lin's status as an American disappeared and she became simply, "Asian."³¹⁰

Although race was unavoidably a point of controversy in the critique of Lin's winning design, her invisibilization also stemmed from what Foucault would argue as the dissipation of the link between politics and designers of space. Much like the community of African-Americans who made contributions to American culture, Lin's influences, her intellectual and aesthetic contributions, to not just the design of the memorial, but to the subsequent production and building of the memorial structure, are omitted from the records.

The same fact sheet acknowledging her Chinese heritage does make clear her position as the memorial transitions from concept to material structure. The VVMF refers to Lin's design as a concept that must be revised to accommodate the reality of the site with a need to establish actual dimensions for the real structure. As such, "architects hired by the VVMF, in concert with Maya Lin, developed the design..."³¹¹ Lin was assigned the role of consultant as the VVMF initiated the building of the memorial structure. Her status as consultant, rather than architect in the ensuing construction and building process is delineated by the legal discourse of contracts and conditions outlining who and how the building process is to be carried out. References to her name in these textual records are often situated in the margins; her name cropping up on a final article of a legal document becomes a reflection of how she is seen by the VVMF organization.

³¹⁰ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 55.

³¹¹ Fact Sheets, 1980 n.d., Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Foucault points to the powerlessness of the architect in deciding the *techne* of space. The struggle undertaken by Maya Lin to (re)assert her take on the design becomes a means to understanding the power dynamics inherent in producing this national memorial. Lin's limited critical voice in this project is also evoked by the limited role she played in overseeing her design's transformation into a tangible, material structure. Because Maya Lin, a senior at Yale University at the time of the design competition, was deemed too inexperienced to fully oversee the production of her design, the VVMF hired The Cooper-Lecky Partnership to evolve Lin's concept into reality. In a letter dated June 3, 1981, the VVMF offered to retain Lin's services as design consultant and provide her with full participatory role in all deliberations regarding the development of the design. However, her aesthetic agency is tamped down as Lin's contract stipulates her participation in the building project to fall under "the direct supervision" of The Cooper-Lecky Partnership,

The nature of your services shall be to provide design consultation to assure that then design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as developed and realized, is as consistent as possible with the concept of the Winning Design and with your intentions as Winning Competitor.³¹²

As the "design consultant," Lin was conceptually nudged onto the edge of the production process. The very notion of consultant connotes a form of participation performed from the outside. Lin becomes theoretically and literally thrust into the margins of the production process.

³¹² Contracts—Maya Lin, 1981, n.d., Construction Team Organization, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Sixty-One, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

In the contract settled between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and The Cooper-Lecky Partnership, the Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect lists the VVMF as project owner and Cooper-Lecky as project architect. Lin's name was absent from the listing of technical responsibilities taken on by Cooper-Lecky over the span of the memorial's production. While the VVMF intended to see the integrity of Lin's design into fruition, the organization refused her a leading role in the production of her own design. Thus, her presence in the architectural contract between the VVMF and The Cooper-Lecky Partnership is only visible in the fringes of the contract conditions.

Article 14, outlining Cooper-Lecky's working relationship with Maya Lin, becomes the only place where she is referenced in the architecture contract as formal discourse over the production-construction of the memorial.³¹³ Placement of Lin in the margins of an architectural contract makes discrete the role of designer and architect. While Lin assumes credit for designing the memorial concept, Cooper-Lecky assumes the authority of making and enacting logistical decisions allowing for the transformation of concept into physical structure. Lin herself registers the dulling of her architectural point-of-view,

I was driven down to D.C. the day of my college graduation, and I immediately became part of an internal struggle for control of the design. I think my age made it seem apparent that I was too young to understand what I had done or to see it

³¹³ Contracts—Maya Lin, 1981, n.d., Construction Team Organization, Files of the Project Director, 1965-1984, n.d., Container Sixty-One, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

through completion. To bring the design into reality would require that I associate with an architect of record...³¹⁴

In the official set of VVMF correspondences, dated between 1981 to 1983, addressed to the Department of Interior, National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, concerning the addition of a figurative sculpture and an American flag within the memorial grounds, Lin's opposition to the proposed design changes is omitted from these written exchanges.³¹⁵ The letters reveals the bureaucratic barriers confronting the VVMF, especially in securing the approval of then Secretary of the Interior, James G Watt for the addition of Frederick Hart's bronze rendering, "The Three Soldiers," and the American flag.³¹⁶ The bodies wielding legislative power to support additions to Lin's memorial design see the structural additions as not threatening the integrity of the Lin's origin concept. In letter to the Honorable Helen Scharf, Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission, a federal institution tasked with the responsibility of approving the Vietnam Veterans Memorial proposal, Secretary of the Interior, James G. Watt writes,

³¹⁴ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2000).

³¹⁵ Interior, Department of 1981-83, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³¹⁶ The addition of Frederick Hart's bronze statue of three Vietnam servicemen and the American flag were included in the construction schema of the VVM as a consequence to the public backlash to Maya Lin's memorial design. Politically prominent individuals such as Ross Perot and noted author of Vietnam War literature, former staff of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, James H. Webb were members of the opposition to the proposed memorial design. These critics placed pressure on then Secretary of Interior, James Watt to withhold permission for the construction of the memorial until a compromise was reach to include figurative elements to the memorial site, in addition to Lin's black granite, V-shaped memorial wall. Recognizing the potential demise of the VVM project, the VVMF conceded to the demands of the opposition to include a statue and flag in their final memorial design. The VVMF organized a committee, comprised of not only VVMF personnel, but also critics to the memorial design like James H. Webb to select appropriate statuary for the memorial site.

The department recently received the enclosed revised submission from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund outlining an altered design for the Memorial to be constructed in Constitution Gardens. The basic design is unchanged except for the addition of a flagpole and a statue of an American soldier.³¹⁷

While Lin's presence is disregarded in the (preserved) official exchanges between the VVMF and federal institutions, the archive does remember Lin's stance on modifications to the original design concept. The archive houses correspondences and memos from and about Lin's condemnation of the proposed additions, dated in the same period as the correspondences VVMF initiated with the federal institutions.³¹⁸ As such, the separation of official requests for memorial design changes from documents revealing Lin's legal efforts to halt the inclusion of the same design changes speaks to the reality of the production of the memorial itself. Lin's absence from the official correspondences suggests the VVMF conceives her dissensions as external from their intention to gain approval for the extra design elements. Lin's presence in the archive reveals the rift emerging between designer and VVMF.

A copy of a September 30 call report from 1982, documents Jan Scruggs' conversation with VVMF lawyer Steven M. Umin, regarding Lin's rejection of "all proposals to include a flag/statue with her design. Including Kent Cooper's."³¹⁹ Scruggs' conversation centered on Steven Umin's discussion with Lin's Lawyer, John W. Barnum. The memo points to Lin's attempt to desist plans to realize the placement of the sculpture

³¹⁷ Interior, Department of 1981-83, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³¹⁸ These correspondences were an effort waged by the VVMF to garner approval for the design changes as a means to begin actual construction on the memorial site

³¹⁹ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

and American flag onto the VVM site. Scruggs notes in the call memo, “Umin feels there is little chance of legal action by White and Case,” suggesting that Lin intended to take legal action against the organization.³²⁰ What this particular memo clarifies is Lin’s (negative) stance on the inclusion of additional architectural elements within the memorial landscape as well as her initial efforts to halt the changes to her memorial via legal means. Lin’s refusal to support these addendums was not made without first considering the statue and flag in conjunction with the proposed placement of these two design elements. Earlier telephone memos from September 12 indicate that she arranged to see Hart’s statue as well as to consider Kent Cooper’s design suggestions for the placement the additional elements within the sphere of her memorial design.

After reviewing both the proposed memorial additions and their potential placement in Constitution Gardens, Lin wrote a letter dated September 24, 1982, delivered to VVMF via her legal firm, White and Case, voicing dissent towards the inclusion of Hart’s “Three Servicemen” statue and the American flag onto the memorial site, “I disapprove the proposed additions to the original design. Not only is each additional element unnecessary in and of itself, but more importantly, these “enhancements” violate the original concept.”³²¹ Lin’s reproach of the architectural additions is made in stark contrast with the federal bodies, in particular, Secretary of Interior James Watt, who sees the inclusion of Hart’s statue and the American flag as

³²⁰ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d, Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³²¹ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

doing little to impact the integrity of Lin's design. Lin, in her letter to the VVMF, argues the insertion of a statue and a flagpole in her design concept at once diminishes the memorial's original meaning as well as undermines the visual cohesion of the memorial site and landscape, "the attempt of the Board [VVMF] to combine two works of art of different and stylistic and conceptual intention expecting to achieve one harmonious memorial is unrealistic in this case."³²²

More than just revealing how Lin's disapproval is excluded from governmental discourse regarding the production process of the memorial, the archive also discloses the VVMF's figuration of Maya Lin as a problematic presence in the project itself, especially at the onset of debate to include the statue and flag additions to her design. An annotated draft letter dated August 17, 1982 composed by the VVMF and directed at Lin suggests tension between the designer and the producers of the memorial. The content of the letter itself is unclear, alluding to a possibility of a meeting between Lin and the VVMF. An August 5, 1982 missive addressed to the VVMF and composed by Lin's newly hired lawyer, John Barnum, concerning Lin's objection to the VVMF's decision to include both a statue and flag element in her design without her approval may be the impetus for this particular letter.³²³ Ironically, the VVMF does seek approval for the design changes,

³²² Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³²³ The August 5th letter, written on behalf of Maya Lin by her lawyer John Barnum, requests a viewing of Hart's statue as well as a hold on efforts of the VVMF to push the design changes through the governmental agencies (Department of Interior, Commission of Fine Arts, and National Capital Planning Committee), which would allow for actual construction of the memorial site to begin. Despite this request temporarily halting the approval process for the memorial additions with the three federal agencies, the VVMF, according to archived copies of correspondences continued seeking approval from all three governmental bodies in an effort to reach the construction phase of the memorial.

but the approval the organization is concerned with is not drawn from the designer of the memorial, but rather the VVMF seeks the approval from the federal institutions, which control the allocation of space and determine the function of space, which Foucault refers to as the technicians of space. As the designer, Lin lacks the power to dictate the conditions of what Foucault refers to as “variables of space” consisting of territory, communication, speed, all of which are logistically and legally administered by the governmental agencies. While Lin contributes by designing the VVM, federal agencies contribute by carving out and dictating the terms of development (of space). The VVMF is concerned with developing its conceptual idea into material reality and is thus more concerned with those bodies possessing the power to approve and allow for development of Constitution Gardens into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Lin carried little political and logistical weight in the development of the project.

Of particular interest to our project of pinning down Maya Lin’s presence is not the body of the August 17 letter, but rather the annotations appending the document. These side notes evidence Lin’s position within the building project. The annotations suggest that Lin’s presence in the project was problematic for the VVMF in their efforts to ensure the materialization of the memorial into reality, providing an explanation as to why Lin’s presence in the archive is so fleeting. The letter is addressed to Lin, in the care of “Mr. Barnum, Attorney.” An inked arrow pointing at the word, “Attorney,” is accompanied by the notation, “to the lay reader, this word emphasizes the nastiness of Maya’s attitude.” Such a comment implies Lin’s decision to wield legal leverage as an

articulation of her dissention with the VVMF.³²⁴ That Lin’s attitude is referred to as “nasty” suggests VVMF as no longer perceiving Lin as a cooperative, supporting partner in the production process. The organization’s attitude toward Lin is further cemented within the memo situated underneath the body of the letter, “it is important that the letter go to Maya—though routed thru Barnum. She is the principal. We have to look like we still feel a friendly bond to her.”³²⁵ Here, the VVMF emphasizes a (friendly) relationship with Lin must be outwardly maintained, however the pretense of this “friendly bond” is intended as a legal strategy and implies the reality of strain between the organization and Lin. The effort to appear to have a (good) working relation with Lin is also driven by the public perception of Lin as “sweet and small and feminine” juxtaposed to the Fund as “mean crazed fiends running around in their fatigues.”³²⁶

Foucault cites the eighteenth century as the period in which one witnesses the “...development of reflection upon architecture as a function of the aims and techniques of the government of societies.”³²⁷ Architecture and urbanism function as techniques of government, woven into political discourse. Stemming from this collision of architecture with government regulation is a shift in the importance of space, and more specifically, spatialization. Foucault sees technology, particularly the emergence of railroads as

³²⁴ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³²⁵ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³²⁶ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³²⁷ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 239.

shifting the relationship of space and power, “these were to establish a network of communication no longer corresponding necessarily to the traditional network of roads, but they nonetheless had to take into account the nature of society and history.”³²⁸ Such technology not only rendered a literal shift in how elements in the built environment were spatialized, but there emerged shifts between how power was exercised over the space of a territory. The prominence of architecture was diminished while emphasis was placed on the techne of space, “it was not architects, but engineers and builders of bridges...as well as polytechnicians—those are the people who thought out space.”³²⁹ Foucault sees this concern with the techne of space as remaining unchanged in the twentieth century, within the realm of postmodernity, in which technicians of space, rather than designers of space maintain the upper hand in the linkage between power and space.

This theoretical break between architect and power can be applied to Lin in the production of the memorial she designed. It can be argued that Lin never technically inhabited the role of architect in the VVMF’s efforts to build a Vietnam War memorial since this responsibility was remitted to Cooper-Lecky. In creating the winning design for the VVMF competition, Lin performed the functions of architect that Foucault refers to in his critique of architecture. As the visionary of the landscape and as designer of not only the memorial architecture, but also of its layout in space, Lin attends to the spatialization of architecture and landscape elements. For Foucault, such factors, especially the

³²⁸ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 243.

³²⁹ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 244.

practicing of spacing architecture in the built environment, is what imbued architects with political relevance in the eighteenth century. Such practices no longer carry political impact in the twentieth century and the archive marks Lin's efforts to retain her design integrity, her choice of spacing for both architecture and landscape via written exchanges between her legal team and the VVMF. A September 10, 1982 VVMF memorandum composed by Terrence O'Donnell referring to his conversation with Lin's lawyer Carolyn Lamm reveals Lin's acceptance of the additions to her memorial design and her desire to oversee their location—in other words, the spatialization—of these elements within the site, “I told Lamm I had seen the sculpture yesterday, and that I was very impressed with it and that I was confident that Maya Lin would like it. Lamm responded, “that it was not a question of liking it but living with it.” Lamm made the point that it was extremely important to know where the sculpture and flagpole would be situated and location is “key” to determining whether Maya Lin will “approve” of the modification.”³³⁰ While Lin wants to retain control over the spatiality of her design via legal maneuverings, in the same memorandum, O'Donnell disputes Lin's legal power to approve changes to the memorial design.

In an effort to dissuade the VVMF and federal institutions from including the statue and flag to the landscape she designed, Lin, through her lawyers, invokes the rules of the design competition, which states that changes to the memorial design will be subject to the approval of the competition winner. In a letter dated September 23, 1981,

³³⁰ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Lin's lawyer writes to remind the VVMF of the designer's (legal) right to vote down alterations to the winning design,

Ms. Lin has also asked us to remind you that paragraph 9.3 of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design Competition Rules provides the use of a feature that was not a part of the first-prize winning design "will be made only with the agreement...of the author of the first-prize winning design."³³¹

The letter continues by transmitting Lin's willingness to support the possibility of accepting the both statuary and flag were both elements relocated. Particularly problematic for Lin was the proposed placement of the two elements, which threatened to diminish the force of Lin's austere and carefully plotted design. Lin sees cohesion of the structure of the memorial with the landscape as contributing to the totality of her design. The additional architectural elements not only disrupt the underpinnings of the memorial concept, but also undo the intended interplay between architecture and landscape. In her testimony to the Commission of Fine Arts in autumn of 1982, Lin makes clear her resistance to the imposed additions:

These intrusions which treat the original work of art as no more than an architectural backdrop, reflect an insensitivity to the original design's subtle spatial eloquence...these intrusions rip apart the meeting of names destroying the meaning of the design. I am not approving or disapproving the sculpture per se. I disapprove of the forced melding of these two memorials into one memorial.³³²

Concern over the spatiality of the statue and flag was demonstrated in video footage of the same 1982 meeting as representatives from the Commission of Fine Arts were caught

³³¹ Maya Lin, 1981-1984, Memorial Design, Office Files 1979-1985 n.d., Container Thirty Three, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Archive, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³³² *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Film. Freida Lee Mock. (Docurama Films, 1994).

on film moving both the models of the extra architectural elements onto different places of a miniature memorial site.

Lin wants to retain the spatial configuration of her design and wants authority to shift the proposed spacing of Hart's statue and flagpole. Her effort to access legal authority to relocate them speaks to the ways in which the techne of space is no longer controlled and accessible to the architect. In this case, the VVMF and the federal organizations are the ruling bodies presiding over the development of space. The urgency in grasping control over the placement of the two additions to Lin's memorial concept is literally articulated by Jan Scruggs as he points to the heavy public turnout in the fall 1982 meeting convened by the Commission of Fine Arts. Scruggs testifies to the way in which discourse within the meeting centered on inclusion of these two proposed new elements and their placement in the landscape of the site, "the interest in this subject had mounted so we had to move into the cash room of the Department of Treasury in order to accommodate the media and the public that all wanted to get in this issue of whether or not a flag and a statue should be added to the design and if so, where."³³³

That the archive traces Lin's retaining of legal support and the invocation of her privilege as (winning) designer to refuse changes to her design indicates an attempt at securing an empowered position in the memorial production process. It simultaneously exposes the reality of her near silent role in development and construction of the VVM. The use of a law firm and the invocation of design competition rules are meant to give

³³³ *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Film. Freida Lee Mock. (Docurama Films, 1994).

her voice and her design perspective a more palpable thrust in the production of the memorial.

(re)Constructing Maya Lin

Lin's haunting of the VVMF archive—the residue left behind in reference to the shape of her presence during the process of selecting a memorial design, securing legislative approval for the building of the memorial on a government site, acquiring federal approval for the memorial's design and its ensuing changes, and erecting the actual memorial structure—is minor. Lin's presence within an archive providing refuge to the residue of the memorial's production makes a comparatively small footprint. The archive suggests that as designer of the memorial, Lin occupied a peripheral place in the production of the memorial site. While she provided the visual inspiration and architectural framework for the memorial, ultimately, as Foucault would argue, she lacked the power to manipulate the space to satisfy her aesthetic standards. Her almost imperceptible haunting of the VVMF archive suggests that she has been invisibilized from the textual memory bank charting the transformation of Lin's concept to tangible structure. This chapter is also a strategy of recuperation, of making more perceptible Lin's position within the context of the archive.

The body, for dance scholars, functions as a primary source of knowledge. It is a mechanism of discourse. In motion, the body is an unavoidable performative vehicle in the built environment. Lin's physical presence within the scope of producing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is, like all performances and motions, ephemeral and thus no longer

visible. While traces of that performance exist within the texts of the archive, hers is a ghosting that is barely noticeable. So to intervene in the recuperation of Lin's presence is to imagine her body and her bodily choreography.

According to Mark Franko's (re)conception of dance reconstruction, Lin can be (re)*constructed* from the textual and visual materials within which she is located. After all, Franko's notion of *construction* is a gesture at recuperation since the revival of already-performed-choreography is a practice that deals with the project of restoring or recovering, which has been absented. *Constructing* Lin's choreography in the building of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is, ostensibly, an inaccurate practice. But as Franko's suggests, the redeeming of radical historicity, or "finding the new in the old," does not hinge on choreographic precision. Rather choreographic *construction* makes visible the impact or effect of the original choreography. In this case, the *construction* of Maya Lin in choreography must function as a moving theory of how she navigated her experience—the impact of her dancing out during the memorial project. And more significantly, *constructing* Lin choreographically brings to the fore the presence of her body, a tactic of recuperating her from invisibilization. For dance scholars like Susan Manning, using textual frames to reconstruct the body's trajectory is a useful way of recouping what is historically overlooked.

Solo of/for Maya Lin

Performer: One (Chinese-American) female dancer. This is a solo attempting to (re)construct Maya Lin's presence and maneuverings during her participation as

designer for the production of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As such, the body should reflect her gender and perhaps even her ethnic heritage.

Venue: Triangular lawn encircled by the pathways leading into and out of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Currently this grassy area is cordoned off from public use. Because spatiality, especially the location of the statue and flag statues to Lin's original design, became a point of contention and concern between Lin and the VVMF, the conscious placement of the performing-dancing body in this particular arena visually signals the issue of who controls placement of architecture and as a consequence, of bodies within the memorial site. That Lin hired lawyers as strategy to insert her voice into the discourse attending to the proposed additions (and their placement) to her carefully construed memorial concept speaks to the way in which (control over) spatiality was a central aspect of not only the memorial's production process but also of Lin's involvement within the process of materializing her design concept. In placing the solo within this restricted area also indicates the way in which spatiality continues to remain on the visual fore as bodies navigate the memorial. The metal stanchions and chains delineating the spaces open and closed to the body suggest that power, does indeed, as Foucault suggests, rest in the hands of bodies and institutions that command the techne or the crafting and manipulation of space. In placing the solo dancer within this enclosed block of lawn, the performance embodies and makes visual the conflict over spatiality, an issue Lin was particularly concerned with as she attempted to preserve the integrity of her memorial design. This is an issue which remains currently pertinent as the

memorial's visitors themselves are spatialized by the memorial site, treading carefully to avoid those spaces that are deemed out-of-bounds.

Duration of Choreography: One Minute (Short). Choreography is constantly repeated—danced over and over again. The brevity of the dance speaks to the brevity of Lin's presence within the collection of primary sources (VVMF) archive documenting the memorial project from conception to physical reality. But the repetition of the dance refers to the way in which Lin's performance re-emerges within the lines of text that partially preserved her contentious role in the building of the memorial. The repetition also recalls Taylor's claim that (live) performances do indeed, participate in the economy of repetition with traces of the initial performances re-forming themselves into a mode of performance. The repeating of the dance echoes the way in which Lin's initial presence/performance of working with the VVMF has not entirely dissipated. While we cannot recover her role with complete choreographic accuracy, the residue of her live performance unearths a version of Lin's role and struggle within the memorial project. Even when this dance is constantly repeated and even when the choreography is consistently executed, the inconsistency of the body will always produce, at each performance, a slight variation. The shifting of the shape of the dance, however slightly, recalls the way in which the live performance gives way to hauntings by the traces left in its wake.

Choreographic Structure: Standing with complete stillness, arms gently placed at the sides of the torso, the dancer opens her dance by silently uttering the words “no additions” and “spatiality.” While no sounds emit from her voice, the viewer can notice the tracing of words by the movement of the dancer’s mouth. These silent utterances delineate Lin’s struggle within the memorial project to retain the integrity of her design. While she engages in discourse, speaking her disapproval, at commission meetings and via correspondences to the VVMF, of the Fund’s decision to cede to the pressure of politically influential detractors of Lin’s design, to include Frederick Hart’s bronze representation of three Vietnam War soldiers and the presence of an American flag within the sphere of her memorial concept, her claim that any additions to the site would undo the harmony of her design lack impact. The dancer runs to various points on the grass, improvising the locations to which she runs. Before shifting into dancing on her dance site, the dancer pauses. The stillness of her body gives way to subtle movement as she swings in succession her right and then left arm in an arc around her torso. Her arms create a circular shape in front of her body, the quality of movement suggest effort in reaching and encircling some unseen object. Her upper body is pulled slightly forward by the rotation in her arms as well as by the weight created by the gesture of reaching. Stillness transpires in the process of reaching. The stillness abruptly transfers into shifting of weight as the dancer is once again engaged in running to another spot on the triangular lawn. She stops. Finds stillness and repeats the gesture of circular reaching. She dances out stillness and reaching in at least four places within her performance site with the dancer choosing where she intends to stop. The effect is a juxtaposition of visual

stillness and chaos in which the audience lacks a clear idea of the dancer's pathway. The erratic placement of the body in multiple locations speaks to the multiple proposals emerging in the wake of the confirmation of additional architectural elements to the memorial design, as Lin's concern regarding the changes to her carefully composed landscape shifted from resisting the inclusion of statue and flag to concern over their placement in space. The layout of the memorial site—the spatiality of structure and texture of the landscape was part of her design idea. So the repeated running and stillness in various places in the performance site speaks to the multiple propositions of placement for the additions to the memorial, while the reaching and cradling gestures danced out by the performer evokes Lin's attempts to include her voice in the discourse over spatiality. The gentle motions of reaching and encircling shift into more visually aggressive movement. The dancer's four limbs become the focal point as arms swing outward from the body and legs hurl into the air taking the body, momentarily from the safety of the ground. The torso and head respond to the pull of the arms and leg as the interconnected muscles cause the upper body to move in relation to arms that sweep across and around the body, expanding themselves in straight and curved lines. With feet pointed, the right leg cuts behind the left, creating a spiral that takes the body in rotation. The visual loudness of this portion of the performance speaks to Lin's verbal concern for the integrity of her memorial. In a speech given at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, Lin speaks insistently about the need to main the integrity of her artistic vision. This forceful display of dancing attempts to evoke the equally forceful meaning of her claim, "the artist fights to maintain the integrity of her work so that it remains a strong clear vision.

Art is and should be the act of an individual willing to say something new, something not quite familiar.” The visually loud dancing returns to stillness, as the dancing body finds a stopping point by returning to the place that she began, conjuring the quiet condition of the memorial in its current state and suggesting the end of the production process itself.

Chapter Five: Carving Out (Theoretical) Dance Space

Locating Open Spaces in VVM Discourse

It is impossible to effectively engage in the discourse of Vietnam Veterans Memorial without first treading through the body of scholarly work already addressing the subject. Since the VVMF announced Maya Lin as winner of its open competition in search of a final memorial design, popular media has inundated the social fabric with commentary and analysis, both in support and opposition to Lin's horizontal memorial concept. Scholars have followed suit in their efforts at pinpointing what and how this memorial enunciates. Because I am expanding on the conceptual space within which the body fits into the discussion of this architecture, I am attending to the cannon of VVM literature strewn across the multiple fields in the academy as a strategy of excavation. In order to place the body into the conversation, we have to first uncover the theoretical possibilities and spaces available for inserting the body into the VVM discourse.

The earliest scholarship, written in the years shortly after the official dedication of VVM, concerns itself with making meaning of Lin's divergence from normative American design approaches to collective and national remembrance. In his critical inquiry, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography" Charles Griswold mines the VVM's iconography as the basis for philosophical theorization.³³⁴ Griswold situates the memorial within a

³³⁴ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986).

category of architecture that simultaneously functions as a claim to political values and as a means of pedagogy. He is specifically concerned with the memorial's symbolic content in conjunction with the how the architecture impacts "...those who participate in it."³³⁵ In his initial discussion of the VVM, Griswold already begins to create space for the body to emerge as a factor in making meaning of the architecture by suggesting the necessity of wielding energy and force—the practice of participation—by visitors as they envision and enact a pathway through the memorial site. By accounting for the VVM's participants, Griswold implies the need to include the physical presence of visitors into an analysis of architecture. The body, however, is not his primary concern, as his larger project works to discursively situate the memorial in relation the larger space of the National Mall as well as the Washington and Lincoln Memorials, which are both architecturally referenced by the VVM's granite walls.

According to Griswold, the VVM fails to reference historical architecture—its only allusion to the architectural canon is a structural nod at the Washington and Lincoln Memorials. Stylistically disparate from the prominent memorials in the Mall landscape, the VVM is invisible from a distance, "it demands that you enter into its space or miss it altogether" and as such implies the exertion of effort in the attempt to locate the site.³³⁶ Griswold points to the site as a "living memorial" defined by the presence of war

³³⁵ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 690.

³³⁶ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 706.

veterans who engage with the memorial as visitors and in doing so define themselves as part of the architecture.³³⁷ Griswold notes that with their constant presence within the memorial grounds, “it is almost impossible to visit this monument without encountering Vietnam veterans. And they generally are not just sitting and chatting but are usually involved very emotionally and publicly in the Memorial.”³³⁸ While he goes so far as to acknowledge the significance of particular bodies and ventures to read their focused presence as un-casual choreography, he stops short of mining their bodily texts for meaning. He does, however read the architecture as dictating and controlling not only the tone of the space, but also the choreographic possibilities, “...children can play on the nearby statue of Einstein; but one cannot treat the VVM with informality or familiarity.”³³⁹

Griswold reads the memorial as embodying a quality of simultaneity, evoking both the articulateness of the war and also overcoming its silence. The chevron shape of the memorial wall calls forth a sense of openness while the presence of the memorial itself signals the close of the war. The structure’s immediate relation to the earth suggests the Vietnam War as only one part in the trajectory of American history. Griswold perceives the memorial as ploughing into the earth, making way for new space, charting the possibility for new, more positive history to be amended to the historical fabric. This

³³⁷ Charles L Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 706.

³³⁸ Charles L Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 706.

³³⁹ Charles L Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 706.

reading of the VVM suggests the site and its accompanying architecture compels its beholders to contemplate not only a war in the past, but to also envision America's future constructed from the values and symbols embedded in the VVM. Griswold further conceives the memorial as a physical scar on land, a visible gash that is partially healed and alleviated by the trees and grass enveloping the actual structure.

Like many scholars who laud the VVM as a healing device, Griswold contextualizes the memorial as a "therapeutic" resolution to the Vietnam War.³⁴⁰ The function of memorial-as-therapy is implied within the VVMF's design constraints mandating the memorial to be negated of any overt political statement. And it is the seemingly neutral position embodied by Lin's design which creates opportunities for healing, "...the monument's neutrality about the merits of the Vietnam War is intended to make possible proclamation of the honor of the veterans' service in Vietnam, and rejection of the suspicion that they did something shameful..."³⁴¹ For Griswold, this affirmation of honor provides the means for veteran and visitor reconciliation, and thus healing in regards to the war. Further couched within the memorial's neutral stance is an insistence on interrogation, "...the architecture of the VVM encourages us to question America's involvement in the Vietnam War on the basis of a firm sense of both the value

³⁴⁰ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 713.

³⁴¹ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 712.

of human life and the still higher value of the American principles...³⁴² For Griswold, the memorial reminds its visitors to question (the status of war, the cost of death, etc), but its alliance to neutrality disallows the architecture to commit itself to definitive answers to the questions the structure, and in turn, the visitors, pose. It is precisely this possibility for interrogation that engenders the memorial's therapeutic potential.

Another scholar who views the VVM as a mechanism of healing is Kim Servart Theriault. Her thesis traces the techniques of healing contained within the VVM as a response to the historical disregard of the Vietnam War as a subject for national commemoration, stemming from the war's status as a politically divisive decision, "The Wall," has helped to re-member, put back together, or re-engage individuals, families, and much of the government and society through a process of remembering that has addressed physical, psychological and intellectual trauma...³⁴³ Because the Vietnam War was and remains as a controversial political issue, the government was reluctant to officially frame the war within a national, commemorative structure. Rather the war was subject to erasure within the public mind. Theriault sees America's defeat in Vietnam as tied to masculine aesthetics bound into the conception of war, "wars that are won are testaments to national virility. Losing a war is a kind of castration...³⁴⁴ Drawing from

³⁴² Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 713.

³⁴³ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall." *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 421.

³⁴⁴ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall." *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 422.

different versions of the narrative outlining Jan Scruggs' initial impetus for creating the VVM, Theriault links the VVMF's eagerness to establish a national Vietnam War memorial as evincing a (national-collective) desire to resolve the trauma that lingers in post-war era, "much of the language surrounding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is inscribed with wounding and scarring. This idea of scarring refers to trauma," wherein "The Wall" becomes the stage/space upon which bodies can honorably bear and confront the scarring resulting from the war itself.³⁴⁵

Theriault reads the "journey" through the walls of names as echoing the "journey through the war."³⁴⁶ In describing the visitor experience as a "journey," Theriault evokes the possibility of movement, as journeys are often organized around (bodily) travel. In the case of the VVM, the "journey" she refers is very much a bodily practice, a physical relocation of the body from one of the memorial's starting/ending points to the other. As such, Theriault, like Griswold, implicitly folds into the discourse, the possibility of the body-in-motion as the vehicle for grasping meaning of the memorial, but also for coming to terms with the war. Because the memorial abstracts the Vietnam War, it successfully promotes visitor interaction with the architecture. Echoing the earlier work of Blair, Jepperson, and Pucci, Theriault points to the way in which the memorial, by attending to every Vietnam War soldier fallen in combat, also underscores the worth of all Vietnam veterans both living and dead.

³⁴⁵ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall."'" *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 423.'"

³⁴⁶ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall."'" *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 424.

The etching of names onto the smooth black granite also operates as a kind of scarring and is doubly “scarred” by the temporary presence of bodies and faces of visitors navigating the VVM landscape. The reflective quality of the black granite is only successful as bodies situate themselves in the close vicinity of the memorial, “as the viewer looks at The Wall, he or she is reflected on its surface.”³⁴⁷ The VVM allows for what Theriault refers “the subversive subject” of the Vietnam War to be openly confronted, refiguring itself into a solution for healing citizens aggrieved by the national rift caused by the Vietnam War.³⁴⁸ The memorial is a hologram, reflecting the sticky cultural issues of appropriate commemoration strategies. Citing Marita Sturken’s work on the VVM in *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, Theriault re-enunciates the idea of the memorial wall as screen, projecting the practice of remembering and the interpretations of history binding the United State’s participation in the Vietnam War and the experience of the war’s veterans.

Theriault points to the practice of rubbing a name from the memorial wall onto paper as a phenomenon particular to the VVM. This practice implicates the body in the practice of commemoration. Theriault reads this choreography as a gesture of materially securing what is already lost, “it is as if making a rubbing and then taking one away means that you get a little piece of that person back.” She sees the securing of a “rubbed” name as an effort in securing a part of the memorial for off-site remembrances. However,

³⁴⁷ Kim Servart Theriault, “Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and “Scarring Over” After “The Wall.”” *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 425.

³⁴⁸ Kim Servart Theriault, “Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and “Scarring Over” After “The Wall.”” *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 421.

Theriault overlooks the involvement of the body in the process of creating a material image of a name. The choreography of squatting alongside the chosen name or reaching over one's head to steady the paper is an equally relevant point of analysis for understanding the practice of remembering and speak to her initial claim that the memorial indeed calls for bodily (inter)action.³⁴⁹ She stops short of investigating how the choreography is enacted, the movement quality associated with "rubbing" a name from the granite wall, and how this practice contributes to the meaning of the memorial itself. Thus this snippet of choreography is simultaneously attended to and overlooked.

Although discourse on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is channeled primarily from scholars operating from various humanistic fields, it is not uncommon, given the tensions embedded in establishing the memorial and given the status of the VVM as a non-normative model of commemoration, that social scientists would also grapple with the condition of the VVM. Reading the VVM as an architectural explication of a nation's conflicting construction of self and its past, Robin Wagner Pacifici and Barry Schwartz discern Lin's design as embodying the ambivalence expressed by opposing social constituencies in the construction of Vietnam War memories.³⁵⁰ Couched within this critical analysis of the VVM, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz confront two central problems: that of understanding the process by which culture and cultural meaning is produced and the status of a memorial that commemorates national defeat and political

³⁴⁹ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membering Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall."'" *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 426.

³⁵⁰ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 376-420.

failure. For the authors, collective memory and national ideologies are embedded in the production of culture and thus must be put through a sociological lens. As such, the VVM serves as the case study through which the authors figure the question of national commemoration and more generally confront the issue of the sociology of culture. Methodologically, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz rely on the practice of thick description and consider, along with the VVM, the patterning of other memorials commemorating divisive points of history.

Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz are particularly concerned with the VVM's production process: "we take up our subject by tracing the social, political, and cultural trajectories of the negotiation process that resulted in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial."³⁵¹ The authors focus their analytical lens on the construction of commemorative architecture that simultaneously confronts the problem of resolving a part of the country's painful and controversial past, that deals with the question of how to commemorate an event lacking collective, national consensus, and that resolves the cultural dilemma of working against traditional strategies for remembering war. In tracing the events of the official dedication to the VVM, the authors read the discourse during this event as rendering the memorial into a device for intended healing, a rhetorical practice which counterbalances the reality of the country's treatment of the Vietnam War and its veterans.

³⁵¹ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 377.

Drawing from Wendy Griswold's concept of commemorative materials as embodying a shared significance in material form, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz move the other direction to examine commemorative practices that emblemize a historical node wherein significance remains divisive. Referring to the work of Emile Durkheim and Maurice Halbwachs, sociologists who work with the question of commemoration, the authors see traditional sociological theorization of memorials as used to integrate a nation's former glory within its present condition and aspirations. Central to such theoretical underpinnings is the idea that commemoration is built from a unified understanding of the past. Problematizing this sociological construction of commemoration, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz intervene by undoing the tie between national unity and commemoration. They use the VVM to showcase how national non-resolution over the Vietnam War nonetheless allows for the emergence of a commemorative form, "the succession of events that led to the Memorial's creation and public reception was a culture producing process. In that process, contrasting moral evaluations of the Vietnam War and its participants were affirmed."³⁵²

The memorial becomes a national attempt at honoring the nation's soldiers without directly addressing the country's defeat with the production process depicting a simultaneous desire for a memorial design reflecting the uniqueness of the Vietnam War as well as its resemblance to all other American battles. The form of the VVM—which the authors claim strays from conventional architectural approaches to war

³⁵² Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 379.

commemoration—embeds the condition of the Vietnam War and resonates with the nation’s discordant positionalities on the war. The resulting memorial serves as a hologram for the political climate within which the VVM was constructed. As such, the authors suggest that it is not only the memorial architecture which contains symbolism, but its production process must also be read to decode its meaning.

Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, like Griswold and Theriault, hint at the way in which the body must be accounted for in the theorization of the wall as symbol of discord and resolution, “the meaning of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is defined by the way people behave in reference to it.”³⁵³ In claiming that behavior must be considered when establishing meaning, the authors make a case for thinking through the body, as behavior most often manifests itself as corporeal articulations. They point to the way in which the VVM allows for the visitors to establish a relationship with the memorial that is unlike the visitor-memorial link found in other public monuments. Specifically, the authors refer to the persistent human contact made with the granite panels, “the names on the wall are touched, their letters traced by the moving finger. The names are caressed.”³⁵⁴ These descriptions underscore the relevance of bodily choreography.

Like Theriault, who briefly attends to the developmental stages of the VVM as a strategy for understanding its healing function, Michael Kelly’s concern with the memorial addresses its development and resulting public success in order to frame his

³⁵³ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 402.

³⁵⁴ Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 403.

theoretical demarcation of successful public art. By taking the position that public art, instead of providing a representation of social consensus, must be examined for ways in which it represents discord, Kelly suggests that debate and dialogue must "...be a mandate in public art as the construct of public often harbors discordant point of views, a product of multiple voices resulting from gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality."³⁵⁵ The central question residing in Kelly's investigation of the VVM as public art is the dimensions of its adjudication. If public art is always embroiled in the conflict over interpretation, then how can we adjudicate it without imposing a singular identity on a multivalent public or resorting to "the mere play of multiple identities"?³⁵⁶ Lin, in this case, works as a successful example for thinking about the non-cohesion of public art. Citing the controversy ensuing from her winning the VVMF sponsored national design competition, Kelly points to the way in which her design is always already a point of contention. Criticized for its non-representational and seemingly un-heroic aesthetics, opponents of the memorial design promoted a more representational memorial design, one complying with traditional memorial architecture that frames not only memories, but also patriotism.

Kelly sees the unfolding process arriving at the materialization of Lin's concept as a promising model for how to deal with public art and its accompanying controversies as veterans, along with members of the using public served as the memorial's central

³⁵⁵ Michael Kelly, "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54.1 (1996): 15.

³⁵⁶ Michael Kelly, "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54.1 (1996): 15.

organizers. Washington politicians were removed from the equation of producing the memorial as the VVMF shouldered all logistical and financial responsibilities and as such sheltered the memorial from partisan debates. Unlike Robin Pacifici-Wagner and Barry Schwartz, who view Lin's memorial design as consciously and visually apolitical, Kelly sees Lin and the VVMF as forced, when designing and building the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, to take a political position on the contentious war. The competition guidelines reflect the way in which the VVMF understood the disparate sentiments imbricated within the issue of the Vietnam War. Kelly touts the success of the VVM as, in part, due to the design selection process as well as the fact that the memorial and the design of it are specific to the location. In the case of the VVM, the public guided the artist. Lin's decision to submit a design that skirts any attempt to resolve the Vietnam War debate allows the structure to represent all publics.

The body does not go unnoticed in Kelly's intervention to discourses on the VVM and public art. Like Theriault, Kelly sees the temporary reflection of visiting bodies on the surface of the memorial wall as drawing visitors into the memorial space.³⁵⁷ Kelly hints both at the way in which the architecture narrates the body's pathway within the memorial site and the ways in which the body makes meaning via its (moving) contact with the memorial structure.

But Michael Kelly is not alone in defining the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as art. In her 1986 article, "The Ambiguity of Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,"

³⁵⁷ Michael Kelly, "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54.1 (1996): 19.

Sonja K. Foss situates the memorial in a theoretical framework of non-discursive rhetoric and art. Foss conceives the VVM as a rhetorical device, appraising the memorial for its ability to appeal to an audience that is diverse and non-cohesive in form and positionality. While visitor experiences vary within the scope of the memorial site, "...it [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial] manages to transcend the differences and appeal to virtually all audience members."³⁵⁸ Foss' awareness of a heterogeneous audience aligns with Kelly's definition of public, one that refuses the idea of a cohesive unit. For the author, the memorial is an ambivalent one, simultaneously symbolizing opposition to the Vietnam War and honor to its participants.

For Foss, a building discloses not only information about its designer and selection panel, but also informs and structures audience reactions. She admits that in order to accept her condition of art as rhetoric, we must also accept that art inherently contains intentionality, in particular the intentionality of the artist. Moreover, we must also assume the artwork is not the end result of a creative initiation. Rather its immediate presence and existence is mired with the purpose of a creative act, "thus the art object itself is intended meaning, and it contained intention to be what it is from the moment of its conception."³⁵⁹ As such, visual art can be defined as rhetoric when the effects it produces are understood as intentional and purposeful. Foss, however makes the caveat that we cannot entirely confine visual arts to the rhetorical frame, that art and its

³⁵⁸ Sonja K. Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 328.

³⁵⁹ Sonja K. Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 329.

accompanying features are distinct from discursive rhetoric. But it is our rhetorical response to the work of art that generates a meaning exceeding what is directly, and aesthetically experienced. Here Foss suggests that we derive meaning from the VVM via our rhetorical response to the architecture. A rhetorical response involves a critical and reflective analysis of the work in which the form of the structure via its colors, lines, and textures, become the basis for making meaning extending beyond the face value of the structure. In other words, the presence of an audience is necessary for the interpretation of art, which inevitably engenders multiple meanings and interpretations, but is ultimately constricted by the nature of the art object itself.

Foss makes the claim that architecture—the material form—is central to how meaning is made within the memorial grounds, “the viewer is free to interpret the memorial or create meaning for it according to his or her own experiences, as long as the meaning attributed is grounded somehow in the material form of the memorial.”³⁶⁰ It is Lin’s unorthodox design approach, which undermines conventional war commemoration that contributes to the memorial’s mass appeal. The memorial’s “welcoming stance” concentrates commemorative strategies on those individuals who perished during the war, fails to insist on a clear narrative of the Vietnam War, and contains multiple referents within its visual components—these are the elements which provide the memorial with such receptive public approval. It is also the absence of explicit references to the Vietnam War that Foss, like Theriault and Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, registers

³⁶⁰ Sonja K. Foss, “Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 331.

as the abstract nature of the Lin's concept, enhanced by the absence of a figurative representation of male hero in Lin's geometric composition.³⁶¹

Lin's choice to inscribe, chronologically, the name of each American soldier who lost their life in the Vietnam War brings intimacy to the process of commemorating war and disrupts conventional strategies of war commemoration by straying from tendencies towards patriotic references and gestures of nationalism.³⁶² This paradigm shift in the memorial form is what provides a larger range of positive reception to the VVM, "because the form we expected is not there, we are encouraged to replace it with expectations for new forms that may be more personal and individual."³⁶³ Lin violates the structures of conventional memorial design by designing a horizontal structure, which for Foss, is what provides the possibility for the memorial to be read in various and disparate ways. The extended chevron shape of the structure "invites" the visitor-user within its granite fold. The non-threatening nature of the memorial is further enforced by its harmonic union with surrounding landscape, a feature that Lin consciously intended in her design. The memorial's integration and literal interdependence with and on the earth provides a sense of what Foss sees as security within the site.

The absence of a clear and direct narrative becomes the opening via which visitors can legitimately impose their own interpretations onto the site, making prominent

³⁶¹ This, of course, is amended by the inclusion of Frederick Hart's statue on memorial grounds.

³⁶² This, in part, contributed to the mounting opposition in the initial stages the memorial's development. The lack of attention towards patriotism prompted dissenters to use political leverage to include an American Flag within the memorial landscape.

³⁶³ Sonja K. Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 333.

the memorial form as rhetorical form, “reliance on the formal arrangement within the work to create its appeal allows for a great deal of repetition in exposure to a work because a viewer, listener, or reader may bring to and see developed a wide variety of expectations that then are fulfilled.”³⁶⁴ Lin’s design centers on the individual. Therein lies its wide appeal. Despite the war’s controversial status, its focus on military personnel moves commemoration away from glorification to contemplation of the cost of war and this is the point where all visitors find unity with the constant repetition of names persistently enunciating the “message of waste,” providing a shared sense of grief.³⁶⁵

An Interruption to Move: A Stillness Causing Motion

As I have argued in the previous chapter, the memorial architecture invites the performance of stillness, creating temporary yet significant moments of silence that punctuate the rhythm of bodies propelling themselves forward into and out of the memorial site. This stillness however is also a call for motion. On February 13, 2009 at 3:48pm in the afternoon, I observed a boy, clad entirely in black clothing enter the memorial space from the West entrance/exit. As he approaches the first panels of the memorial wall, he swivels his body toward the wall panels, stopping to make contact with the wall via his left hand. With hand in place, his body holds steady. However, this stillness, which is urged by the memorial wall as the boy stills himself to physically

³⁶⁴ Sonja K. Foss, “Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 334.

³⁶⁵ Sonja K. Foss, “Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Communication Quarterly* 34.3 (1986): 336.

connect with it, is equally a call for motion. The ebbing sea of names that gradually expands and increases, imprinted on granite panels which themselves gradually expand in height, force the body to still itself so the eyes can compartmentalize what appears as a profusion of jumbled letters into discrete, recognizable names, also insists upon motion. The body's stillness gives the eye a chance to travel beyond the scope of names one sees in stasis, to wander and make visual contact with the parts of the memorial wall situated beyond the realm of the immediate space of the body. And at this point, as the eyes pull the body from its static form as it travels with the direction of the eyes, tipping itself out of its moment of silence. The practice of making physical contact with the memorial wall compels the same choreographic possibility. As the boy makes contact with the wall, his hand continues to feel the indentations created by the etched names, brushing an invisible line across the granite panels. For this boy it is the desire to connect with wall that induces stillness, which in turn, creates motion as he emerges out of a performance to stasis, moving towards the apex with his left hand affixed to the wall panels. In forming persistent and constant contact with the wall, the boy's body literally interacts the memorial as wall and body come to a common point, enjoined by the digits of his fingers and the palm of his hand. Arriving at the origin, the young man reluctantly releases contact with the granite, as he peels his hand away from the architecture. At this juncture, the hand contact with the wall is taken over by the right hand. Twisting his right arm across his chest, his right palm and fingers maintain contact with the wall as he walks awkwardly toward the East exit, his speed and form hindered by the unnatural placement of his right arm across his upper body. Only when he meets the shorter panels, which his

arm and hand can no longer meet the wall does he dissolve the physical contact he makes with the wall. The desire to touch the architecture and the architecture's open permission to be touched compels stillness. But from the stillness, and further propelled by a desire to connect, is derived a choreography of forward motion, the shape and the speed of walking dictated by how the body makes contact with the VVM.

Maya Lin conceived the memorial, "...not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to be understood as we move into and out of it; the passage itself gradual, the descent to the origin slow..."³⁶⁶ Couched within the dimensions of her text, Lin seems to imagine the process of experiencing the VVM as journey that implicates the body into participation. The consequence of a body-participating-in-motion is a constantly shifting understanding of the memorial. In claiming that visitors can only "understand" the monument as bodies "move into and out of it," Lin seems to imply that meaning of her architecture is best constructed through the practicing of dancing.³⁶⁷ And what gets danced-out as visitors commune with the architecture is a mode of memorialization permitting, evening folding into itself, a practice of mourning. As such, the meeting of the body with architecture delineates the condition of (bodily) memorialization, one that cannot be absented from conventions of mourning.

The unending lines of names inscribed on the granite panels are, in part, what contributes to the VVM's fluidity. The permanent sea of letters forge a visual wave for the visitors, one that is coupled with notations of time as each year of the Vietnam War is

³⁶⁶ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 4:05.

³⁶⁷ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 4:05.

accompanied by the names of soldiers who perished during that time. The shifting, moving quality of the wall is buttressed by the allusions to a forward moving scope of time also inscribed on the granite panels and accompanying the reality of the war. But it is the seemingly constant stream of names that also propels the visitor-user-dancer forward as he/she is drawn by the names vaguely taking form in the distance, etched on the faces of panels further ahead. The body wants to move forward to see better these names not yet fully discernable. As such the memorial wall, as a “moving composition,” instigates the body’s movements.³⁶⁸ And such forces of motion cannot be divorced from the gravity of death and loss, as the multitude of names that pushes bodies to motion helps construct a choreography, specifically a walk of mourning.



Figure 15. Vietnam Veterans Memorial.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 4:05.

³⁶⁹ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009

The compulsion to shift into motility produced by bouts of stillness can be read as a practice of political mobilization. The visitor-user-dancer engaged in walking is mobilized, inspired, called by the VVM (especially the memorial wall) to engage in national remembering. The visual impact of a dancing, motile corpus embodies the very figuration of mobilization. It is the moment where the still and silent body ignites into motion, when we can witness the body slightly but noticeably lurch into the force of motion when the idea of mobilization becomes most visible. In calling for building a concept of dance around the idea of progressive movement, Randy Martin uses dance studies and the motion of dance as a means of understanding political activity as “always already in motion.”³⁷⁰ It is his idea of mobilization from which I draw theoretical inspiration. Martin advocates for thinking about political action as located in the minutiae, in the (smaller, everyday) gestures and motions carried out by the body.

For Martin, the concept of politics cannot be severed from the bodies executing the political in a specific frame of space and time, “politics goes nowhere without movement. It is not simply an idea, decision, or choice taken at a moment, but also a transfigurative process that makes and occupies space.”³⁷¹ In other words, politics and political activities are embroiled in the idea of mobilization, “mobilization is situated through dancing so as to indicate the practical dynamic between the production and

³⁷⁰ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998), 2.

³⁷¹ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998), 3.

product...through mobilization, bodies traverse a given terrain that by traversing, they constitute...”³⁷²

This reading of mobilization is particularly apt for this project since I argue that the dances choreographed and performed on the politicized space of the VVM are not neutral practices. The architecture’s capacity to mobilize bodies into stillness and motion materializes and makes real the practice of memorialization. The VVM visitors, in dancing out choreographies of stillness, motion, and the act of hovering between the two is a political act in which the VVM is the mobilizing force through which memory and remembering (of the Vietnam War) is enacted. And the performance of politics that is national collective memory is embodied by the tipping point in which body’s stillness causes motion.

While Martin’s construction of mobilization encompasses all dance vernacular, embracing both the non-motion of stillness and the motility created by forward (and backward) momentum, it is the point in which stillness shifts into motion that best concretizes the idea of mobilization. The memorial indeed mobilizes its visitor-users-dancers into the (political) practice of constructing and memorializing a version of Vietnam War memory. The visitors’ forward moving energy, materializing in the practice of walking, further expands on the idea of mobilization. In walking, VVM visitors engage with the landscape of the memorial and are making efforts to move through memorial

³⁷² Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. (Durham, North Carolina and London, United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 1998), 4.

space. And as such they are literally mobilized to action, to complete the course of the memorial experience.

March 3, 2009 at 12:45pm: I see a group of four visitors, two women and two men: one woman is blonde, clad in a pin tank top, the woman with brown hair is wearing a gray sweater and she enters with her arm encircled around the waist of a gentleman clad in a blue t-shirt. And last visitor of the group is a gray sweat-shirted man. These visitor-users enter from Lincoln Memorial walking quickly, their steps are taken without pause: step step step step step step step. The bodies suddenly stop at the third granite panel from the entrance. Three of the four bodies dance stillness. A solitary female body (the one in pink) takes two steps forward but swings back and returns to her group. She is not still, but her wandering is confined to a very small space, back and forth she swings.

The group walks forward. Together they take lingering, hesitant slow steps. And as they propel their bodies forward toward the apex, their gaze is pulled toward the memorial with heads slightly twisted to follow the direction of the eyes. They stop midway, between the entrance and the apex with gray-sweatered female, whose hand is encased in the hand of a male member of their contingent, pulling out her camera and slightly separating herself from her group. She begins taking images of the memorial. Meanwhile, the rest of this collective has paused in stillness and silence. As the female photographer returns to her group, the pink-shirted woman kneels down to examine objects left at the base of the memorial. The man in the blue t-shirt responds in kind, squatting next to the compressed form of the female visitor. Their fingers graze the materials they examine. At the same time, the other female visitor of the group examines

the wall, sporadically turning her head to look away; she is slouching, her shoulders hunched inward, waiting for her group to continue. The bodies break out of their stillness/waiting configuration and walk towards the apex. The group forms two stacked lines, as the men situate themselves next to each other, while the women are positioned in close proximity. The blue t-shirt clad male visitor who flanks the entire group, reaches his left hand, index finger out and places it at a point on the wall above their heads. He briefly traces the indentations in the granite that form the visible outlines of names.

The group emerges from their moment of silence, induced by the towering height of the apex and the magnitude of individuals represented on the two intersection walls. They walk past the apex and stop four or five panels past the apex on the east wall. Here the group reforms their spatial alignment to each other, shifting the dynamic of group choreography. There is choreographic separation as the two men re-perform stillness, their bodies turned to face the memorial, their gazes fixed at the wall. Perhaps the men are urged to stop by the wall's reflective quality, reproducing images of their own bodies across the granite plane. Perhaps, in their stillness and recognition of themselves, these men are drawn to understand how their own live, warm bodies imprinted onto the inscription of names become stand-ins for the bodies represented by the names inscribed onto the entirety of the wall. The woman with the gray sweater walks past the immobile bodies of the two men. But her footsteps are reluctant as she takes loping steps, slowly stretching her toes out in front of her body, reaching for the farthest point possible before placing her foot back onto the pathway. Her body seems to wrestle between stopping and going as her lingering gait locates her in an interstitial choreographic space of motion and

stillness. Her head is bowed and she occasionally looks up, only to turn her face away from view as she makes occasional glances at the memorial. She stops, her body stilled, approximately five feet from her group with the other woman shuttles between the men and the lone woman.

The two men tread towards the east exit with the pink shirted woman in tow. They catch up to the last member of their group, who remains a distance apart. The merging of bodies into the same space also transforms into a dance performed in unison as the bodies compress their spatial ownership by collectively lowering to the ground, bending necessary leg and arm joints into a squat, making prominent the bony parts of the body. The body's center is tugged forward as the knees and (hunched) shoulders make stable this contracted and slightly precarious shape. As the group squats, the woman in the pink shirt lays a sheet of paper across the granite wall. And with a writing instrument in her right hand, she begins to graze her tool against the paper and rock, pulling from the VVM a sort of residue, a material marker to be taken into personal possession, of the space. The visitors emerge from the grounded position allowing their bodies to consume more space as they fan out from each other. The group performs collective stillness, facing the wall with their bodies visibly relaxed. The two men have crossed their arms across their chest while one woman (pink shirt) catches her hands behind her back and walks away towards the exit only to turn back toward her group. The group moves as a unit, lingering, walking. Stopping momentarily with head directed at the wall, torsos moving forward. Walking, stopping again. Moving on. They land as a group in front of another panel and huddle together. A pair of hands produces another sheet of paper and these same hands

reach out to trace another name. With four bodies condensed into a single unit, it is impossible to discern which hands are performing the tracing as all eight hands make contact with the wall en masse. Unfurling themselves from what appeared as one fluid, human unit, the group turns to face the exit, releasing themselves from the temporarily formed connection with the wall. Together, they speed up their footsteps—stepstepstepstepstep—taking themselves out of the space of the VVM.

The choreography danced out by these four bodies exhibits conventions of mourning. The bowing of the head, the diminished pace of bodies walking, the footsteps which seem to drag the body forward through space, conform to the choreographic vernacular of a funeral. These bodily articulations parallel the solemnity and melancholy conspicuous during an occasion of loss. The diminished speed of the moving body, a product of the body turning itself inward makes visible the process of mourning/grieving which is equally an internal practice. But the bodily practices of the four visitors that I account in the previous paragraphs also speak to the way in which commemoration at the VVM is at once a private and personal experience and an experience of collective memorialization and mourning. The spatial configuration constructed by this group of visitors varies between the solitary consumption of space by a single body as members of this anonymous group of visitors separate themselves from the collective to form a single unit or to make smaller groups of two (or three) bodies as moments of silence are danced out. Also persistent in the duration of this group's VVM choreography are bouts of dancing together, as the group finds forward momentum together, as the group simultaneously exposes their hands to the surface the memorial wall, as they linger

through space, their footsteps matching each other in pace and distance. As such the bodily practices of memorialization at the VVM delineate the way in which the effort at remembering shifts between the desire to remember in private and to remember as a collective. In this way, the patterns of bodies moving into and out of group choreography and solos of mourning aptly project how citizens deal with national, collective memory. Because citizens share the historical arc of the country, embodied in the form of memorial architecture, memorialization is inevitably dealt with together, as a nation. However, what individuals choose to remember and how they filter and engage with the fabric of national memories is a singular performance (duration). The flow of visitor-user-dancers shifting into and out of the folds of multiple bodies and solitary moments of silence exemplifies the way in which national, collective memory is always already both a collective and singular practice. The architecture of the memorial wall supports and “invites” the practice of grouping and ungrouping as the wall provides space for the body to isolate itself within a spatial vacuum for private remembering while the apex, the intersection of the East and West walls forms a triangular gathering place where most bodies collect to stop or linger, sharing a consciousness of the war and its accompanying loss.



Figure 16. Practices of Solitary and Group Memorialization.³⁷³



Figure 17. Collection of Bodies at the Apex.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009

³⁷⁴ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009.

Interruption Complete: Return to Theory

Sonja Foss is not the only scholar to define the VVM as a device of rhetorical power. Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. also claim public commemorative monuments as falling within the realm of rhetoric.³⁷⁵ But unlike Foss, who is concerned with understanding the VVM's widespread rhetorical power, these authors stage the memorial within the context of the conflict between modernist and postmodernists over the built environment. The authors see the reach of the VVM's rhetorical power as symptomatic of its position as "an instance of an emergent discourse within the cultural rhetoric of public commemorative monuments."³⁷⁶ As such, they intend to intervene on the discourse over VVM by reading the VVM—as a postmodern commemorative text—as a means to understand and define the idea of a multi-vocal rhetoric. The authors re-articulate Foss' earlier claim that the architecture is (rhetorically) accessible to a wide and diverse audience. For Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, the memorial as rhetorical device is cemented by the multiple and disparate accounts of the memorial that reveal the political threads woven into the fabric of VVM's rhetoric. But authors make a smaller, yet equally trenchant gesture by claiming that the VVM establishes the conditions of postmodern monumentality.

Postmodernism's displacement of meta-narratives as legitimating discourses undoes the rigid norms and patterns of thought accompanying modernism's meta-

³⁷⁵ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 263-288.

³⁷⁶ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 264.

narratives, disrupting the composition of “normal.” For postmodern authors, like Frederick Jameson, who claims in his book *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, this application of postmodernism is most visually apparent in architecture. Modernist architecture has abolished any references to history and any symbolism interfering with the efficiency and functioning of a structure—neutrality figured centrally in the practice of design and construction used to represent twentieth century achievements and technological innovation. Modernistic theologies, which have inserted their tentacles into architectural design, have been criticized by postmodernist architecture via its insistently political agenda and conscious exploding of the meta-narrative, “postmodern architecture symbolically undercuts modernism’s progressivist faith in the new and its valorization of rationality, technology, and corporatism, all of which objectify and dehumanize the social sphere and the individuals who inhabit it.”³⁷⁷ Postmodernism lacks a distinct and signature style, a nod to efforts at dissolving the legitimization or normalization of a particular architectural rhetoric. The heterogeneity of postmodern architecture works to restore architecture’s “voice” as a language of partisanship. While modernism’s architectural signs are predominantly self-referential, postmodernist architecture attempts to recapture its former symbolic force, its ability to make meaning, allowing for the generation of rhetorical readings upon and about these structures. These readings, due to the multivalency postmodernism advocates are multiple and divergent. And significant to this project, the body comes in to focus in postmodern

³⁷⁷ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 266.

architectural design as architects become more concerned with accommodating the corpus rather than the other way around.

Because public memorial architecture makes sacred places, ideas, situations, and individuals, it escapes the re-doing of the built environment that modernism sought to impose. But the authors pose this question within the context of the postmodern condition. With a refusal to embrace the metanarrative, an element central to the practice of architectural commemoration, postmodern thinking is potentially at odds with the memorial form. Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci ask, if we define postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives” then how can postmodern architecture sanction or refuse its existence?³⁷⁸ In the context of postmodernism, the central question related to memorials is whether public commemoration is “...possible within the terms and conditions of postmodernism.”³⁷⁹ Here is where the Vietnam Veterans Memorial serves as a case to resolve this dilemma.

For their investigation, Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci define the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as encompassing all three features present on the site: Lin’s memorial wall, Frederick Hart’s representational statue of three Vietnam War soldiers, and the American Flag. Unlike most scholars who choose to attend only to Lin’s chevron-shaped granite wall, Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci conceive the disparity of the three elements as reason to address them together. In approaching the memorial as “an inclusive text” the authors

³⁷⁸ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 266.

³⁷⁹ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 271.

point out the way in which the memorial is comprised of two monuments on one site.³⁸⁰ To treat them as distinct memorials neglects "...the Memorial's character as culturally constituted and to overlook its nature as itself a political compromise."³⁸¹ It is precisely the juxtaposition of wall and statue that provides the space for multivalent readings, disallowing the possibility of a single interpretation, "...they invite a textual reading that places no demands on the unity or consistency of the rhetorical object."³⁸² The memorial's failure to provide a unified rhetorical proclamation, thereby inciting a varied response from its audience, is a consequence of its function as a place of supplementary rhetorical maneuverings, made visible by the items left at the base of the memorial by its visitors. These objects, disparate in nature, make constant amendments to the memorial's symbolic field. The wall invites, within its text, the stories and interpretations the visitors make and leave at the site, while the reflective quality of the black granite contributes to the memorial as text, "quoting" the image of whom or whatever is within (reflective) range.

In their efforts to frame the VVM as rhetorical device, the authors acknowledge the memorial wall as the focal point of the site. In order to fully understand the memorial's rhetorical stance, it is necessary to place the wall as fulcrum of a rhetorical text that is supplemented by the statue, flag, and rotating schema of mementos and

³⁸⁰ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 272.

³⁸¹ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 272.

³⁸² Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 272.

visitors. As a text, the VVM is written by a collective: by its designer Maya Lin, but also by the VVMF which provided the structure and constraints for the design, by Frederick Hart, and by the jury panel which selected the competition winner. This view of VVM authorship repeats what sociologists Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz see as a communal and collective design effort. And so to conceive the VVM as a text and to remove authorship from a single body—“to deauthorize its authors”—establishes the possibility of multiple readings.³⁸³ This reading of the wall as de-authorized falls in line with Michael Kelly’s claim that as public art, the VVM has been effectively adjudicated, not from a single vantage point, evidenced by the a varied range of readings, but rather by the public at large. The postmodern elements of displaced symmetry, regional citations, and contextualism are what contribute to the rhetorical character of Lin’s wall. The placement of names on the wall defies symmetry and explains the converging readings of the wall as providing a sense of closure and refusing closure. In form, the wall recalls the image of a gravestone and its collection of inscribed names mirrors smaller memorials marking sacrifice of locals in war. This strategy of regionalism and contextualism support the authors’ reading of the VVM as distinctly postmodern. The memorial visually accommodates the landscape, working in harmony, rather than obstructing and intruding into the natural environs. The memorial’s horizontal configuration supplements the intention to cohere with the landscape. This strategy is another nod at postmodern architectural rhetoric, which makes space for a multitude of readings.

³⁸³ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 273.

While many critics echo and concede to the idea that the memorial is devoid of politics, Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, Jr. see the postmodern features of the structure as decidedly comprising a political statement, “we will maintain, to the contrary, that the wall itself bears a strong political statement and that that statement is reinforced by the wall’s relationship to other monuments within its proximity and to its “other side”—the Hart statue and flag.”³⁸⁴ The interrogative features of the wall form a loud political message wherein the practice of “...questioning is the point, and that point is a thoroughly political one.”³⁸⁵ The memorial, as Foss and most other critics of the memorial have indicated, departs from conventional constructions of commemoration. This aesthetic undercutting of normative memorial architectural design is visually enunciated as the VVM sits dwarfed between two iconic and traditional memorial structures. The geometry of the memorial points directly to the Washington and Lincoln memorials, structurally indicating difference.

Such rupturing of architectural norms in conjunction with the careful placement of the wall—in contrast with its built environment—must be read as political and is thus an inevitable part of the content of the memorial’s text. These “violations” to commemoration indicate a dissatisfaction and refusal to comply with “normal” architectural discourse. As a divisive and unpopular war, there does not exist a social consensus regarding the country’s participation in Vietnam, and as such, there is a lack of

³⁸⁴ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 275.

³⁸⁵ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 275.

“consensual warrant” to empower the valorization of the dead. It is this lack that calls for divergence from normal aesthetic commemorative structures. The inclusion of statue and flag, a compromise established between the VVMF with opponents of Lin’s original concept, accentuates the wall’s histo-political dimensions. As the memorial site represents two disparate historical accounts of the war and embodies the internal turmoil of the memorial’s development process, “the memorial is a testimony to the conflict that led to the compromise of its own character; it is a historical recapitulation of the battle over the appropriate rhetoric of commemoration.”³⁸⁶ So the three elements within the site are symbolic of the conflict over suitable commemoration while simultaneously exhibiting the (continuing) unresolved domestic conflict over the war itself. And the site’s conflicting and visually disparate messages allow the visitors to enter and leave the site with their views on the Vietnam War unaltered. Like Foss, the authors see the memorial’s rhetoric as inviting “...active engagement by the visitor,” thus indirectly suggesting the prominence of the body in making meaning of the site.³⁸⁷ And while most critics align the idea of audience response with discursive responses, there is a failure to acknowledge that the response is first and foremost a bodily one.

The VVM defines the conditions for the possibility of postmodern monumentality by eluding and abandoning the “metanarrative sanction” and differentiating itself from modernist efforts of commemoration. The memorial lacks a single narrative as embodied

³⁸⁶ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991): 276.

³⁸⁷ Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77.3 (1991).

by the presence of multiple elements on one site. Moreover, Lin's wall is specifically a tribute to the individual. And rather than insisting on a single story, the postmodern monument depicts multiple and conflicting stories. For the authors, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial refuses the modernist project of "functionalist" commemorative architecture, allowing and providing the possibility of multiple readings with its "syntactical" elements speaking to all positionalities. The multiple components in the site landscape defy synthesis, closing the memorial off to the construction of a single reading. Since its inception, the VVM has prompted a new trend in monument construction.

This strategy of postmodernist commemoration was in part spearheaded by Lin's intentional divergence from designing a memorial constructing a single, unwavering narrative of history. The discourse addressing Lin's body of work as contributing to the emergence of a postmodern mode of commemoration is extended by Daniel Abramson as he traces how Lin's architectural interventions can be conceived as a suite of works embodying the three defining social phenomena of the 1960's: the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the women's movement.³⁸⁸ Within this scope of work, Lin's representation of these historical nodes is organized around the non-normative commemorative format of chronology/time line, and Abramson, "through a combination of textual and formal analyses..." argues, "...Lin's monuments constitute particular ideology representations of their subject matters."³⁸⁹ In the case of the VVM, which

³⁸⁸ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 679-709.

³⁸⁹ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 680.

many scholars like Griswold and Theriault claim as apolitical, Abramson implies that this, indeed, is not the case. The political status of the memorial can especially be elucidated when considering the common politics of all three of Lin's monument designs.

Abramson points out how academic discourse on Vietnam Veterans Memorial is usually concerned with how Lin's low, black, abstract wall shies away from traditional commemorative strategies positioned to celebrate heroism. For Abramson, the granite's reflective surface psychologically absorbs its visitors, and the sea of inscribed names attends to the reality and individuality of death. The inclusion of the names of all fallen combat soldiers along with the need to accommodate architecture to its surrounding landscape are primary tenets of the open design competition sponsored by the VVMF. Abramson, along with Sonja K. Foss, sees the chronology of the names—the time sequence of the memorial—as Lin's central contribution to the memorial design. And this organization of time in relation to names functions as an essential crux to the memorial's meaning. This concern with a graphic depiction of history "...as a chronological time line..." is echoed in Lin's design of the Civil Rights Memorial and the Women's Table at Yale University, "Lin's time lines thus appear as a potentially new type of monumental representation of history. With their strictly chronological format they attempt to cast off moralistic descriptions of heroic conduct and designations of social hierarchy."³⁹⁰ For Abramson, this aesthetic takes on a new mode of commemoration in the history of monument design. Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci make similar claims in their critical inquiry

³⁹⁰ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 697.

into the VVM as a (new) postmodern overture to commemoration. The time line as an ideological tool is not uncommon within the construct of American pedagogy. It is a often used means for understanding historical trajectories, printed in school books, common in print magazines, and used by architects like Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in their designs of memorial architecture. This structuring of (historical) time makes history ideologically accessible. But imbricated within the time line are moral virtues which de-neutralize what Lin conceives as a purely apolitical way of articulating via architecture, “indeed, the time line also possesses characteristics of the chronicle form of history writing.”³⁹¹ According to Abramson, the time line is a new means of representing history, emergent from the graphic, social, and ideological imperatives of the information age. And the meaning of Lin’s memorials, the VVM included, is rendered primarily through the formation of time and facts as circular, unclosed, spiraling. Lin’s treatment of the individual, ordinary American references the scholarly rise of social history, “like a social historian, Lin also uses statistics and other hard facts to objectively quantify historical experience...”³⁹²

The VVM’s physical shape, “...the sunken, circular chronology of names” renders the war as both over and closed.³⁹³ The granite walls point outward, toward the

³⁹¹ Daniel Abramson, “Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism.” *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 697.

³⁹² Daniel Abramson, “Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism.” *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 700.

³⁹³ Daniel Abramson, “Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism.” *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 702.

Washington and Lincoln Monument, connecting the Vietnam War to the network of American historical nodes, while her non-normative design symbolizes the war's unique and problematic status within the national conscience. Like Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, Abramson advocates a postmodern reading of Lin's design concept, one which is distinctly political. The memorial is built from granite, a clear divergence from the use of industrial materials and contains, unlike minimalism, referential meaning. It not only coheres with its landscape, but acknowledges and includes its beholders—a feature that minimalism eradicates. The minimalism that does exist within the scope of Lin's memorials, not discounting the VVF, is in the information offered up by the memorials, "...it is not the hardware of Lin's monuments that is minimalist, it is the software."³⁹⁴ For Abramson, Lin's monuments are not spared from taking an ideological political stance as they embody a

... fundamentally conservative position of conciliation and continuity towards the political, social, and artistic movements of the 1960s. Memory is partial, events are reduced and represented in such a manner as to reestablish point of traditional authority, and minimalism's radical aesthetic critique seems to have dissipated.³⁹⁵

The possibility of alienation exists in the VVM. The seemingly autonomous collection of data—the sea of names etched into the granite surface— dominates the visitor. The data represent the reproduction of the conditions of production, distribution, and consumption of information inherent to our present culture wherein the individual is unilaterally administered with seemingly selective, disembodied, objective information.

³⁹⁴ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 705.

³⁹⁵ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 707.

Yet the alienating nature of Lin's monuments is undercut by the architecture's prompt towards interaction, "the forms invite an extended, tactile, personalized engagement over time that might mitigate the authority of information."³⁹⁶ Here emerges the implication that is it the body's intersection with architecture that alleviates the alienation accompanying the rows of silent information etched across Lin's structures. Lin's work suggests a new, dialogic relationship between visitor and architecture, "...one that involves intensified levels of physical and perceptual intimacy and self-realization."³⁹⁷ But how that physical intimacy transpires, and what are the details and conditions of that "physical and perceptual intimacy" are not specified and this is where the dance scholar can be injected into the discourse to push it further.³⁹⁸ Nonetheless, it is significant to this project that Abramson suggests the VVM provides an opportunity for the visitor to establish a tactile relationship to the architecture. Abramson helps widen the tiny space already made visible by the work of preceding scholars like Griswold, Theriault, Foss, and Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci to introduce the body as a lens for discerning the rhetorical articulations of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

³⁹⁶ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 707.

³⁹⁷ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 707.

³⁹⁸ Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism." *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 707.

An Interruption to Dance: Timing and Duration

The “physical and perceptual intimacy” Abramson sees as elicited through interaction between architecture and visitor is contained in the timing of a visitor’s duration in the VVM.³⁹⁹ Abramson conceives Lin’s circular construction of time as her primary intervention to the design arc of memorial architecture. But the idea of time, specifically the idea of timing and duration, also plays a primary part in the compositional strategies of VVM visitors-makers-dancers as they choreograph themselves through the memorial site. In accounting for her approach to designing structures and site, Lin includes the architectural marking of time as contributing to the experiential dimensions of the sites she constructs, “time is also a crucial element in how I see my architecture. I cannot see my architecture as a still moment but rather as a movement through space”⁴⁰⁰ Specifically, the physical relationship engendered between the viewer-user-dancer of the VVM is shaped by the delineation of war via a chronology of time in relation to death. The wall marks at its apex, both the start and close of the war. Lin’s claim that time contributes to the immediate experience of the viewer-user fittingly foretells the way in which time, specifically the duration of the individual’s experience within the VVM, the duration of moments of stillness and motion performed within the site, become the choreographic frame for the dancing and how the viewers-users make meaning of the VVM.

³⁹⁹ Daniel Abramson, “Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism.” *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 707.

⁴⁰⁰ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 2:07.

I am specifically concerned with duration as defined by the amount of time each visitor-user-dancer takes to begin and complete their visit/dance to and within the VVM. Under this larger umbrella of duration I refer to the various pockets of timing: the time it takes for the body to dance out discrete moments of stillness, motility, and lingering comprising the larger duration of the body's total experience in the VVM. In referring to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and other time-based architectures like the Women's Table designed for Yale University, Lin claims, "this use of time brings viewers into a real-time experience of these works, allowing their participation and making past events part of the actual time spent reading the works...time becomes the object of the works..."⁴⁰¹

The idea of time, however, extends beyond its function to make present the presence of the past. Time, in relation to motion, provides the space within which visitors to the VVM make their own meaning of the site. Or in de Certeau's vernacular, time, specifically the duration of choreography, becomes the means through which users tactically make/use the site. Because the VVM topography includes additional architectural barriers intended to funnel bodies into the immediate vicinity of the memorial wall, Frederick Hart's bronze sculpture of three servicemen, and the American flag, leaving swaths of the site un-used, the possibility to see the memorial architecture from multiple perspectives and the possibility to cut individual tracks across the site is deeply narrowed. The posted signs restricting certain bodily behaviors also function as a general call for maintaining vigilance in exhibiting suitable bodily actions, thus further

⁴⁰¹ Maya Lin, *Boundaries*. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 2:05.

reducing the space within which the viewer-user can engender *poiesis*. However, what remains un-restricted and so far unnoticed by scholars intervening in VVM discourse are the moments of stillness and the multiple and disparate durations, built from collections of steps and pauses that viewer-user strings together—a personal timing visible in the body’s dancing.

The idea of timing is not only a necessary and primary component of the choreographic process, but is also inherent to the practice of dance itself. Dances are inevitably structured around a framework of time where the duration of movement phrases are set as part of the choreography. In an interview with Jacqueline Lesschaeve embedded in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, choreographer Merce Cunningham acknowledges the centrality of timing to building choreography and in establishing performative cohesion, “you have to begin to know where the other dancer is, without looking. It has to do with time, the relationship with the timing. If you paid attention to the timing, then, even if you weren’t facing them, you knew they were there. And that made a relationship.”⁴⁰²

Timing is also a relevant point of investigation for scholars of dance. In her seminal article, “Choreographing History,” Susan Foster recognizes the need not only to convert the physical motions of dance into text, but also to attend to the timing of live dance—that substance which determines the quality of the dancing itself, “how to transpose the moved in the direction of the written. Describing bodies’ movements, the

⁴⁰² Merce Cunningham and Jacqueline Lesschaeve, “Torse: There Are No Fixed Points in Space.” in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, eds. Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1998), 187.

writing itself must move. It must put into play figures of speech and forms of phrase and sentence construction that evoke the texture and timing of bodies in motion.”⁴⁰³ Karmen Mackendrick, in an effort to distinguish between dance and pedestrian action, places motion into the category of dance when it elicits, “. . .the kinesthetic, or embodied, sense of space and time.”⁴⁰⁴ In his book *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, Gilles Deleuze echoes the idea of motion as dictated by a time frame or duration when he considers filmic composition in relation to Bergson’s theses on movement, in which movement is distinct from the space covered.⁴⁰⁵ Couched within this conception of time and movement is the idea that movement transpires through concrete duration. Movement cannot be reconstituted with positions in space or instants in time, “each movement will have its own qualitative duration.”⁴⁰⁶ The idea that timing forges relationships between bodies in dance, as well as functions as a tool in constructing dance, is applicable to this project for thinking about how timing works as the structural scaffolding for the dances performed on the memorial.

Drawing on both Deleuze’s conception of motion as organized around duration and on Foster’s insistence that the timing of dance must be excavated in analysis and discourse of dance, I argue that it is the variability of the durations constructed by

⁴⁰³ Susan Foster. “Choreographing History.” in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, eds. Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1998), 33.

⁴⁰⁴ Karmen Mackendrick, “Embodying Transgression.” in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*. ed. Andre Lepecki. (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan Press, 2004), 148.

⁴⁰⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁴⁰⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 1.

visitors-users-dancers wending their way in and out of the VVM that serves as the physical embodiment of the multiple and disparate textual readings accompanying the VVM.⁴⁰⁷ In order to fully confront the timing of the VVM, it is necessary to first define in a wide arc, the understandings of timing relevant to this project. As Karmen Macendrick points out in Andre Lepecki's book, *Of the Presence of the Body*, one must make a distinction between time as an awareness of the present and time as a mechanism for measuring segments of choreography, "one might argue that attention all the time, even the all-absorbing, postintentional attention of the body, is not attention *to* time..."⁴⁰⁸ I am referring to time as constructed by the latter definition, referring to the time/duration visitors allot themselves to enter and exit the VVM, thus dictating the length and speed of each dance. In this sense, timing concerns the span of seconds, minutes, hours each visitor uses in the memorial space—such timing determines the length of each dance performed in the space. Embedded within this larger construct of duration is the internal timing of the dance, the duration of stillness and pauses corporeally uttered over the course of navigating through walkways, which keep bodies in a localized area. Timing also refers to the speed of steps taken by each visitor, the time it takes visitors to travel through motion to reach stillness and the time it takes for them to perch in that practice of lingering, that interstitial space between motion and stasis.

⁴⁰⁷ See Chapter Five of this dissertation, where I give an overview to the scholarly work carried out in regards to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It is in this chapter where it is shown that most scholars view the VVM as providing a space for composing personal and multiple readings of the Vietnam War as memory.

⁴⁰⁸ Karmen Mackendrick, "Embodying Transgression." in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. Andre Lepecki. (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan Press, 2004), 150.

Because the choreographic vernacular appearing in the VVM is relatively consistent across the spectrum of all visitors, this reality coupled with the body's confinement to a specified walking path within the memorial site, it is the timing of each viewer-user-dancer within their performative experience that produces heterogeneity. In other words, the duration each visitor takes to navigate through the VVM and the internal timing structures of these dances embody and articulate the practice of personal memorialization. The discrepancies in timing between visitors-users-dancers at the VVM are the means through which each visitor interprets and deals with the memory of the Vietnam War.

What determines the semblance and tone of a dance, if the dancers appear fluid, released, staccato, or abrupt is, in part, a consequence of timing, "order for dance is spatial as well as temporal, holding the still instant-between in the spatial unfolding of musicality."⁴⁰⁹ The time it takes the visitor to make/use/dance in the space determines the length of choreography performed within the space of the VVM. This is also what allows for variability in the practice of memorialization/mourning within the space of the VVM. For some dance ensembles, this duration is measured in seconds, as bodies speed through length of the walkway, finishing in under a minute, while other viewer-user-dancers operate on much slower tempos, taking miniature and hesitant shuffling steps, drawing the dance of stillness as their bodies halt, every few steps, pausing to face the sea of names etched on the granite face. It is the intersection of these dances, each performed in

⁴⁰⁹ Karmen Mackendrick, "Embodying Transgression." in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. Andre Lepecki. (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan Press, 2004), 146.

a different speed, taking on dissimilar durations which makes visible the disparities in the practice of memorialization as ambling, pensive bodies make space for the rapid choreography of those viewer-user-dancers intent on locating the exits. What the environment of different durations provides is a visual and bodily representation of the scholarly claim of the memorial providing space for multiple readings on the Vietnam War.

Interruption Complete: Return to Theory

The scholarly pattern of reading the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the context of its rhetorical capacity is continued by the 1988 article “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” written by Cheree A. Carlson and John E. Hocking. Following on the discursive path of Sonja Foss, which Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci have also tread, Carlson and Hocking conceive of the memorial as harboring rhetorical strategies providing the means for veterans and citizens to “heal” in the wake of a controversial and unsettled war. In this way, Carlson and Hocking’s reading of the VVM can be aligned to the work of Griswold and Theriault, both of whom see a therapeutic power inherent within the memorial. Unlike scholars like Foss and Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, who are concerned with the memorial as rhetorical unit, Carlson and Hocking choose to attend to the rhetoric of materials/artifacts left at the base memorial rather than conceiving the memorial itself as a vehicle of rhetoric. The practice of leaving objects/letters becomes the “therapy” via which visitors wrestle with the tensions of the Vietnam War era, “especially the letters exemplify a tragic ritual of guilt and redemption”

with the variation in written content representative of the rhetorical strategies inherent in the memorial structure.⁴¹⁰

In their description of activity within the memorial site, the authors detail the ways in which the body is central to the remembering process by describing the actions of the body, “some visitors walk through quickly, in a hurry to catch a tour bus. But others move slowly, back and forth, again and again, stopping, staring, sometimes touching a name, sometimes making a pencil rubbing, and usually shedding a tear.”⁴¹¹

What Carlson and Hocking, like most VVM scholars suggest, but fail to explicitly notice, is the inevitable relationship between the architecture and the body. Despite the attention to bodily rhythms within the memorial site, which hints at the possibility for corporeal-rhetorical enunciation of a reading about the VVM, for Carlson and Hocking, the way in which the memorial provides meaning is only accessible in discursive form, “it is impossible to ascertain the thoughts of such quiet, intense visitors to the Memorial.”⁴¹²

But if we intersect the memorial with dance scholarship, the “thoughts” of these embodied visitors are indeed made visible via their bodily reactions to the space.

Drawing from Burke’s “Iron Law of History” in theorizing the human desire for redemption, the authors see the VVM as allowing for a redemptive cycle to be performed on the personal level, “rhetors who choose to scapegoat address the visitors to the

⁴¹⁰ A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 204.

⁴¹¹ A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 205.

⁴¹² A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 205.

Memorial, while those who choose mortification address themselves, or direct their messages to the waiting dead.”⁴¹³ Like Foss and Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, who claim that the memorial elicits multiple and varied responses and readings, Carlson and Hocking see the ambiguity of the Memorial as providing space for visitor interpretation. One set of visitors exploits this ambiguity by imagining concrete entities that are symbolically eradicated to “complete the guilt ritual through scapegoating.” Within these written messages, dead Vietnam War soldiers are conceptualized as vessels of redemption—they are often killed a second time in writing. This written form of scapegoating emerges from a motivating frame of acceptance in which the writer/visitor refuses to accept the conditions of the war, yet is willing to accept its reality and the idea that this historical node must be integrated within the social fabric to end the nation’s guilt and discomfiture. Writers either emphasize the honor and sacrifice of dead soldiers or point to the senselessness of so many deaths, thereby creating scapegoats by referencing the name(s) inscribed on the memorial wall.

Carlson and Hocking recognize strategies of mortification, an attempt at attaining singular and individual peace, as also appearing in written, material form at the base of the memorial structure, “their guilt arises not from the war, but from what the writer did not do during it, or what he or she has not yet done to fulfill a promise.”⁴¹⁴ Such messages are often introspective and not necessarily addressed to a specific soldier drawn

⁴¹³ A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 206.

⁴¹⁴ A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 210.

from the wall. Instead writers acknowledge their failure to action or offer apologies to the to the dead via the wall as mediating unit. Such writers are seeking forgiveness. So for the authors, the writings placed at the VVM are what provides the memorial with its rhetorical power, and in claiming this, the authors simultaneously acknowledge the necessity of the body for the memorial to fully function, “unvisited, it would merely be a piece of stone. But the visitors’ writings are creating a vision of that sacrifice, one emphasizing the essential psychic cost of war.”⁴¹⁵

Despite multiple references to the possibility of interaction between architecture and the body, scholars engaged in the discourse of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, while have evolved the dialogue from historical accounts of the memorial’s inception and early readings on the architecture’s iconography to setting the VVM as a participant in the theoretical shift from modernism to postmodernism, have omitted the material bodies of visitors as a legitimate point of investigation. The body remains blurry, not yet visually formed within the wide breath of established discourse on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, in his article, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” comes closest in making the body manifest within the sphere of architecture in his reading of the memorial as simultaneously embodying two interconnected concepts: what psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan terms a “linking object” and what Richard

⁴¹⁵ A. Cheree Carlson, and John E. Hocking, “Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 213.

Etlin would term “a space of absence.”⁴¹⁶ Ochsner centers his analysis of the memorial site on a reading of the surface and space (virtual) of the black granite, as it is the reflectivity of building materials that draws visitors into the space. Ochsner’s approach mirrors the work of Marita Sturken, who uses the metaphor of the screen, a reflecting device not unlike the black granite of the memorial wall, as a way of investigating how the Vietnam War memorial works as a piece of public commemoration, where personal and public memories, and “shifting discourses of history” coincide.⁴¹⁷ Ochsner examines the way in which the architecture functions as a communicating device for its visitors, grounding his reading of the VVM by linking architecture to the bodies which navigate its form and surrounding space, “although the memorial has been widely discussed in print, few publications have touched on precisely how this memorial actually engages the visitor.”⁴¹⁸ It is within this claim where conceptual space is explicitly delineated for thinking about how architecture engenders a (physical) response from the body, from

⁴¹⁶ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 160, 163.

⁴¹⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1967), 44.

As a surface that is both projected upon and veils objects from view, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial plays out the uses of the screen, “. . .the black walls of the memorial act as screens for innumerable projects of memory and history—of the United States’ participation in the Vietnam War and of the experiences of the Vietnam veterans since the war”(44). By allying the memorial with the concept of the screen, Sturken seems to gesture at the memorial’s mediating capacity. As a screen, the memorial projects non-traditional codes of remembrance. The controversy over the memorial’s abstract design reveals our collective attachment to traditional signs of remembrance. The vocal presence of prominent individuals, in disparaging the memorial, was an effort to halt the project together. And the controversy that Sturken highlights in her account of the memorial, in particular the memorial architecture, as an intervention in the coding of American war memorials is also a performance where the claiming of space serves as an exhibition of power. By identifying the VVM as a screening mechanism, Sturken argues that the memorial wall functions as a cultural symbol that is invites multiple and disparate interpretations of the war.

⁴¹⁸ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 156.

which dance scholars can tunnel their way to discursive membership about the VMM. And by acknowledging that the history of the development of the memorial has already been recounted by multiple scholars, Ochsner strays from traditional approaches to architectural analysis by merging interpretation with response, arguing that “the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is essentially incomplete without human participation; it cannot be fully understood without addressing the issues raised by human interaction,” thereby discounting readings of the memorial as non-representational in form.⁴¹⁹ The necessary presence of the human form in the memorial spaces dissolves the abstract features of the memorial.

Using Vamik Volkan’s “linking object” as theoretical support, Ochsner sees the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a permanent tie to the dead. As a “linking object” the memorial bears a connection both to the dead and the living, “...specifically, the linking object must be psychologically invested with aspects of the deceased and of those who mourn.”⁴²⁰ Drawing from Riegl’s definition of the “intentional monument,” Ochsner situates the VVM as a linking object intentionally established to maintain a connection to the deceased.⁴²¹ The names inscribed in the black granite work successfully as this “link” between those who mourn and the dead. As such, the memorial is a permanent symbolic record of all military personnel who died in the war and visitors to the memorial enter

⁴¹⁹ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 156

⁴²⁰ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 160.

⁴²¹ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 160.

into these absent present bodies via funeral rites. While the memorial is not a formalized place of funeral rites, the practice of leaving objects and written narratives at the site echo traditional mourning choreographies.

As a “linking object,” the VVM is also what Richard Etlin refers to as “a space of absence” a void signaling both the absence and presence of the deceased.⁴²² Inhabiting both the form of a “linking object” and “a space of absence,” the memorial is a mechanism of projection, allowing us to tune into our memories to make conceptually alive those who are no longer physically present. Recalling Etlin’s examination of the VVMF, Ochsner highlights the bodily choreography that necessarily confirms the memorial as “a space of absence.”⁴²³ It is the choreography of descending into the memorial space, which itself is partially hidden by a wall of soil that foregrounds the memorial’s ability to evoke the presence of absent bodies. Ochsner sees a deliberate sequence contained within the structure of the memorial, that the body, at once contained, is forced to walk downward, toward the apex, only to emerge towards level ground, where surrounding memorials become visible.

The reflectivity of the memorial also contributes to its condition as “linking object” and “a space of absence.” Like Kim Theriault and Marita Sturken, Ochsner alludes to the black granite as a reflective/projecting device, “as we move along the memorial to the point where the wall rises above our heads, we see others reflected in the

⁴²² Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 156.

⁴²³ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 156.

polished surface of the black granite...then facing the wall directly, we see ourselves reflected back in the polished surface.”⁴²⁴ Couched within this description of the granite surface as reflective device is the allusion of the body’s participation in reflecting itself. It is only by putting the body in motion, “as we move along” to a suitable point that we can see ourselves against the granite wall. The slightly blurry image of ourselves imbues the reflection with an ephemeral quality and the layering of the names etched into the body of the granite with our images temporary contained within the wall’s surface marks our connection to those who are remembered. This aesthetic play on reflection falls precisely within the concept of “linking object,” “the directness of proper names connects us; the reflective surface superimposes our images upon the names...thus the space apart in front of the wall connects to a space apart that is seen through the surface of the wall” working as an optical virtual space.⁴²⁵

But what compels and propels us into motion within the memorial site? Ochsner fails to pinpoint the moment or inspiration that allows for interaction between body and structure. And while he acknowledges, “the interactive process is complex...” he skirts discussion away from defining the specificities of the interaction and its ensuing complexity.⁴²⁶ Ochsner sees physical contact with the granite surface, the actual touching of the names as a way of marking the reality of the names. And in touching the wall, the

⁴²⁴ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 164.

⁴²⁵ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 164.

⁴²⁶ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 165.

reflectivity of the granite immediately projects the appearance of fingers making contact with the wall, inscribing along with the names, the hand that reaches out to make contact, thereby creating a single image of the live body in contact with the deceased, “the spatiality of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—the relationship of physical space and virtual space, mediated by the surface of the names—allows proximity to and identification with the dead, and experience of the simultaneous reality of separation and connection, of living and dying.”⁴²⁷ Ultimately, Ochsner’s intervention on the study of the VVM overlooks the choreographies of the body as a factor and product of the beholder’s response to the memorial. While he does indeed cite instances of the body intersecting with architecture, he does not address the discourse produced by the body and how it articulates (with architecture and space). Ochsner creates space for the body to be accounted for by suggesting that we must shift our investigate lens and look at how architecture engages with the visitor. But the void created by Ochsner’s claim is where a different construction of “linking object” can emerge, when dance scholars knit the “linking object” between architecture and the body.

It appears that one can legitimately claim that the discourse on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been concluded. After all, scholars have been working on the subject since the memorial’s official dedication in 1982 and have seemingly emptied the investigate well with their inquiries into the architecture violating traditional commemorative norms, the architecture as both non-representative and representative,

⁴²⁷ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50.3 (1997): 165.

the political enunciations of the memorial wall, the rocky process of bringing the memorial into material reality, Lin's careful attention to landscape, Lin's (problematic) positionality as an Asian-American student, the memorial's multiple functions as rhetorical device and as screen, the artifacts/materials left at the base of the granite walls, the memorial as attending to the individual. However, there exists a persistent and ever-present haunting in this scholarly cannon. The body, constantly hovering between and within the lines of text, has yet to be fully discerned by viewers who are so careful to scrutinize the memorial in (almost) all its facets, plotting out their experiences with discursive care by taking on the practice of looking and reading with intense concentration. Scholars continue to see through the specter of the body and its attempts to communicate within the realm of architecture.

Charles Griswold, one of the earliest contributors to the scholarly conversation regarding the VVM, begins his investigation of the memorial by writing, "my reflection on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) were provoked some time ago in a quite natural way, by a visit to the Memorial itself. I happened upon it almost by accident..."⁴²⁸ Griswold is not alone in enacting this discursive tactic of inserting the self into the memorial space and accounting for one's personal (bodily) experiences within it. What is so obvious to a dance scholar, and apparently invisible to academics in other fields of the humanities, is the central part the body plays in the VVM dialogue. The body of every author is embedded in each scholarly intervention, not discounting Griswold's body in

⁴²⁸ Charles L. Griswold and Stephen S. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 688.

his VVM article. In order to reach the point of textual description, it is Griswold's bodily exposure to the memorial, his (physical) "visit to the Memorial" which provides the material via which articles can manifest. To accidentally "happen upon" the seemingly hidden memorial, the body is inevitably complicit in Griswold's surprise. In providing a description of one's "journey" as Theriault would describe it, one must first appear, fully-bodied into the memorial space.⁴²⁹ Only through an actual visit to the memorial, in which our hands traces one or many of the names inscribed on the black granite, in which our feet walk through the pathways laid across the VVM site, can we actually begin to critically mine the space for meaning. And yet the specificities of these bodily actions-choreographies, for which dance scholars argue, contain their own text/articulations, have always gone unattended. And it is at this juncture that I can argue that the discursive sphere surrounding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not yet depleted. There exists a conceptual space that has barely been split open and not even filled, and in this space is positioned the body and its articulations with and within the memorial. And it is in this space that I situate my intervention using dance theory as the machinery with which I intend to widen the not-yet-so-large niche to fill it with new inquiry.

One Final Performance: Collective Dancing on the Memorial

While most authors who contribute to the cannon of VVM scholarship make implications for the body's relevance in locating meaning for the architecture, these

⁴²⁹ Kim Servart Theriault, "Re-membling Vietnam: War, Trauma, and "Scarring Over" After "The Wall." *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 424.

scholars also fail to directly and extensively address the question of the body. Many scholars have suggested the VVM is a therapeutic structure and that it encourages visitor interaction. In doing so they allude to the necessary participation and dancing of the body. However, what these visitors-users-dancers articulate through their corpus and how such articulations are carried out in terms of quality and rhythm have not yet been addressed. Yet it is via the material, physical contact with the VVM architecture that visitors make (individual) sense of and determine the conditions of this shred of national, collective memory. After all, as de Certeau points out, it is in the act of dancing/walking/motion enacted within space that we impose our own meaning and signification onto what appears to be rigid signs. There exists a rhetoric of walking and this is defined and framed by the walker's manipulation of spatial organizations. Pedestrians offer up choreo-discursive articulations via sets of signifiers, often unconsciously enacted. De Certeau gives the example of his friend from Sevres, who is unconsciously attracted to street names alluding to his city of residence. Despite the imposition of proper names onto the city grid, walkers imbue alternate, personal, subjective significations onto these names. Official names lose their value and become repurposed by urban inhabitants, "these names make themselves available to the diverse meanings given them by passer-by; they detach themselves from the places they were supposed to define..."⁴³⁰ Because these names are emptied of their ordinary function (and value), they become "liberated spaces" upon which pedestrians can assign their own

⁴³⁰ Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City." in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 105.

discourse, what de Certeau refers to as “poetic discourse.”⁴³¹ If walking through an urban terrain engenders poetic discourse, then walking—dancing—on the VVM is also opportunity to impose individual meanings onto the memorial architecture. Scholars have already identified the VVM as provoking disparate and multiple readings. But when attending to the bodies in the space, this argument becomes visually documented by the varied constructs of duration or time that visitors-users-dancers take to experience the memorial. Such differences in duration is engendered by disparities in timing, speed of the body-in-motion, timing of stillness, all of which are components of dances performed on the memorial stage.

I want to argue that VVM is only fully complete in the presence of bodies, that the idea and practice of memorialization must circumscribe not simply the architecture and the space upon which it is situated, but must also include the temporary but necessary presence of the structure’s users. Only when all three components coalesce, can we fully understand this concept, memorialization. In the case of the VVM, the absence of bodies renders the space naked, where the meaning and purpose of the wall is diminished, absented without witnesses. Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, in their article, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past,” claim a similar point as they see “...the large gatherings from which much of the memorial’s dramatic impact derives. By contrast, when the memorial’s grounds are deserted, its wall appears

⁴³¹ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City.” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 105.

less magnetic, less moving.”⁴³² Authors also suggest the memorial is only complete, its meaning only fully accessible with the presence of bodies.



Figure 18. Empty Memorial.⁴³³

On March 10, 2009, I approached the Vietnam Veterans Memorial early in the morning, hoping to catch a glimpse of the space emptied of visitors: it is 7:07am and since it is winter, I arrive at the memorial before the sun has fully risen. With the exception of my own body, there is not a single soul present at the memorial site. The park lights are still turned on since it is dark enough for the light sensors in the park space to remain alert. I am at the space early enough that I witness the sun provide gradual light to the sky. There are, within the West Potomac park area, a few runners using the

⁴³² Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 97.2 (1991): 403.

⁴³³ Photo Credit: Ying Zhu, 2009

walkways/trails for their morning exercise, but they are the only people remotely close to the memorial area and no one is directly running across or through the memorial space.

Since no bodies have imposed their presence in the memorial space as yet, I am struck by the emptiness of the space and how the site and accompanying architecture is quiet, but devoid of the energy that human bodies provide to a space. The emptiness of the site enhances the tomb-like feel of the memorial as the hard surfaces of the granite are offset and remain in contrast to the grass and plant material temporarily deadened by the season. In the absence of bodies in the space, the architecture cannot fully operate. The reflective quality of the granite is meant to function as a mirror, reflecting not just the images of the landscape it surrounds, but also to temporarily inscribe across its surface, the images of bodies passing through. The imprint of moving and still bodies on the memorial wall participate in establishing what Maya Lin sees as the shifting, fluid, motile nature of the memorial. Without these shadows, the memorial truly appears static.

A single female visitor walking towards the VVM from the west entrance/exit breaks the inert quality of an empty memorial. Her feet tread steadily, constructing a consistent rhythm: step step step step step. Her pace remains unchanged as she enters into the formal structure of the memorial wall. Taking no stops, she continues to walk, retaining the same pace and upright posture. As she passes the wall panels which begin to match her height, there is an erosion in the speed of her footsteps: step step step step, as she simultaneously swivels her head to gaze at the granite surface of the memorial wall. This woman begins to dance out a repeated phrase of shifting her head and torso to glance at the wall, returning her head and torso to look in front of her, glancing

downward toward the base of the wall. As she positions her body into and out of examining the memorial, she maintains forward momentum, putting one foot in front of the other without cessation. She doesn't stop as most visitors do, at the memorial's apex. Instead she tilts her head backward, taking a single glance upward towards the memorial's tallest point and walks onward. She slows down her walking pace once she has passed the apex, taking more time to glance to her left, at the memorial. This woman is attired in sneakers and running pants, so I wonder if she is here to run, using the VVM as a shortcut or she is here with the conscious knowledge to inhabit the memorial space alone.

As a space constructed for use by bodies, the concept and practice of memorialization at the VVM must include the body. Space theorist Henri Lefebvre argues that to think about the production of space, and to think about space at all, we have to account for the body that uses/consumes/makes do with the space. The meaning of the space is derived by the people who navigate/inhabit/use/visit the space, so what is the condition/state of an empty memorial space? Even the presence of a solitary female visitor sets off the motility of the architecture, as her moving body is reflected by the morning sun, onto the surface of the memorial, imprinting the idea of motion onto the granite panels. But in the absence of people, the equally static monuments and landscape becomes the film that runs across the granite panels. Because the VVM wall is partially sunken into the earth, it dims the sounds of the urban environment that surrounds it, but the sounds of visitor-user-dancers speaking in low tones and the energy of moving bodies are retained within the folds of the VVM. So when the space is empty, it serves as a

vacuum, highlighting both the silence created by the lack of bodies and the noises of the environment within which the memorial is set.

In contrast to the morning when the VVM was entirely uninhabited, six days earlier in the early evening of March 4, 2009, at approximately 5pm, I witnessed a different scenario, in which the memorial site played host to large collections of bodies. The wall seems to take on a different form when it is heavily populated. Multiple school groups approach the VVM and from my perch, next to the west entrance-exit, it appears that they will soon amass near my vicinity, entering the memorial from the side closest to the Lincoln Memorial. With the onslaught of several dozen sets of school children, there is suddenly a line to enter the memorial. As bodies pile up in front of the granite panels, focused toward its reflective surface, I lose sight of the memorial architecture as a wall of fluctuating bodies invades my sightline. A visible wall/line of teenagers forms as bodies take a place directly in front of the memorial wall. These young visitors-users-dancers shuffle their feet, dancing out their own version of stillness imbricated with a sense of constant motion. It is a performance almost falling into the category of stationary lingering than it is a performance of perfect stillness. The school groups manage to stay together and the aural architecture of the memorial space is heightened—made louder—by the multiple voices of the visiting students.

As other visitors-users-dancers approach the wall from both sides, the wall of humans thickens and what is most visible from afar is the undulating mass of bodies, lined up and massed in front of the granite panels in a way that matches the more permanent shape of Maya Lin's architecture. In this crowded arena, the somber energy

usually pervading the VVM landscape is eroded by the compounding energy of numerous bodies. While these bodies continue to execute choreography that inculcates the practice of memorialization with mourning: lingering footsteps, moments of stillness, physical contact with the wall using hands and fingertips, the dynamics of the memorial are nonetheless infused with a spark of excitement that partly results from the buoyant energy of the school-aged visitors and partly a product of the sheer number of bodies convening in tight quarters.

The large numbers of bodies inhabiting the VVM also makes prominent the way bodies are indeed dancing, strategically choose a spatial pattern and a timing structure with which to experience the VVM. The memorial space, in all scenarios, is related to the ebb and flow of the visitor population. The presence of the bodies in various configurations affects the ways in which one can interact with the space. The abilities and freedoms of visitors to reach a particular wall panel, to arrive at close proximity to the wall itself, to navigate through the structured pathways, are determined by the other bodies in the memorial space. As such, each visitor's bodily position at the VVM is affected and influenced by other bodies present. The bodily conversation that arises, especially when the VVM is crowded, as we each attempt to wend our way through architectural and corporeal barriers, make our actions a dance as we conscious carry out and construct placements and gestures for our bodies that accommodate and react to the choreography of other bodies.

The memorial is always a play on timing. It is not only a question of the duration of single visitors who navigate through the VVM from beginning to end, but it is about

the timing of when one chooses to visit the VVM. The constant ebb and flow of people visiting/using/dancing on and with the memorial makes it unpredictable. However this constantly shifting cast of visitors contributes to its fluidity. In her book *Boundaries*, Maya Lin describes the VVM as mercurial architecture, a structure that enacts motion. The architecture's motility is materialized, in part, by the fluctuation in the number of (moving) bodies present at every moment. These variations in visitor populations embody a concept of motion.

More than just dancing, articulating bodies, the visitors-users-makers of the VVM embody the function of memorialization. In motion, each body not only confronts the architectural representation of national memory, but also become temporary memorials-in-motion as their choreography in the memorial space take on the ephemeral, but visible form of performing and embedding national, collective memory. Pierre Nora, who sees cultural memory as segregated into singular entities floating in the vast terrain of modern society, suggests that it is the body that harbors the last vestiges of real memory, "of course, we still cannot do without the word, but we should be aware of the difference between true memory, which has taken refuge in gesture and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self knowledge, in unstudied reflexes..."⁴³⁴ For Nora, such bodily memory is at odds with modern memory, changed by its passage through history and reliant on the "materiality of the trace."⁴³⁵ Unlike true memory where

⁴³⁴ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

⁴³⁵ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

the body serves as the vessel for conveyance, modern memory is archival and exists through “outward signs” and through its exterior foundation beams.⁴³⁶ True memory, embedded in the body, and transmitted via its “gestures and habits,” is experienced internally, viscerally. Nora clears space for legitimately imagining the body as itself a temporary, yet viable memorial. The performance of remembering is reliant on feeling the body as it enacts a choreography that works in tandem with the signifier of modern memory, which in this case, are the architectural elements of the VVM. In motion, the visitor-user-dancer becomes a visible signifier of memory as his/her choreography becomes the means through which memory can be internally experienced.

Michel de Certeau, in his book *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, similarly conjures up the body as site of memory. In his historical account of Indian communities in South America and Mexico, repressed by ruling governments in retaliation for asserting rights to land and attempts at self-governance, de Certeau describes the “reality of violence” imposed on Indian bodies by European, colonizing forces as strategies of “day-to-day *ethnocide*” become the means of asserting cultural domination and economic marginalization.⁴³⁷ But Indians do not forget, “dominated but not vanquished, they keep alive the memory of what the Europeans have “forgotten...”⁴³⁸ The history of Indian

⁴³⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

⁴³⁷ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 226.

⁴³⁸ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 227.

resistance, interrupted by bouts of colonial repression is doubly accounted for, both embedded in the Indian's body and archived in written accounts, "this inscribing of an identity built upon pain is the equivalent of the indelible markings the torture of the initiation ceremony carves into the flesh of the young."⁴³⁹ For de Certeau, "the body is memory."⁴⁴⁰ And this body both remembers via its materiality and via its corporeal practice of (literally) writing history. But it is not only the colonized bodies of Latin America that are engraved with memories; all bodies are inscribed with the etchings of culture. In her introduction to *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz, in undoing the dualism between body and mind, argues for a understanding of the body that is seeped in the cultural context within which it operates, "the body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitutions. The body is not opposed to culture...it is itself a cultural, *the* cultural, product."⁴⁴¹ And as a product of culture, the body inherits the arc of collective memories permeating a culture and manifesting itself in the built environment. A body's experience, the dance produced from interacting with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is also an act of inscription in which the physicality of the visit becomes the material manifestation of remembering. Not only is "the body a memory," but in motion, within the frame of choreography, the body is an ephemeral memorial.

⁴³⁹ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 227.

⁴⁴⁰ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 227.

⁴⁴¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 23.

Non-Western commemoration formats support Certeau's proposition of the body as memory and in conjunction my claim that of the moving body as memorial. In the book, *The Art of Forgetting*, Nicolas Argenti traces commemoration practices upon the death of the King of the village Oku in the North West Province of Cameroon where lineage masquerades and palace appearances becomes the primary means of remembering the lost king and signaling the installation of his successor.⁴⁴² These commemorative practices are not only ephemeral in nature, but also include the body as a vehicle for memorialization, thereby bolstering the conceptual possibility of dancing body-as-memorial. Argenti lists a series of appearances, "the appearance, disappearance, and the falling-into-decay of several highly ambiguous objects..." as framing the Oku culture of royal commemoration. Argenti traces the practice of metamorphosis as the fulcrum of power in the Oku civilization as bodies transform from human to wild creatures. The installation of a new king in Oku society can be approached by two through-lines: an examination of the symbolic impact and meaning of the appearances or a focus on the "emotive impact of the appearances" which are often imbricated with both a sense of surprise and danger.⁴⁴³ Drawing from the work of Schieffelin who claims that symbols gain their meaning from their performance within the social space, Argenti chooses to uncover the functions of the palace appearance by adopting the latter

⁴⁴² Nicolas Argenti, "Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom." in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999).

⁴⁴³ Nicolas Argenti, "Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom." in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 23.

approach. In short, he is laying claim to the memories inhabited through the performance of the body,

Cognitive memory is self-conscious and reflective; as such it is easily verbalized. Performative or habit memory, on the other hand, is not easily verbalized and is 'as nearly as possible without reflection.' Such pre-reflective bodily memories materialize only through enactment. Furthermore, habitual bodily memory informs present bodily actions.⁴⁴⁴

What Argenti proposes is that bodily memories are transcribed through performance. And to situate his claim in the field of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the body creates its memories in motion, through the performance of interacting, making contact with the memorial architecture. The symbolic nature of the memorial architecture is only established as the body moves through it. The body becomes an ephemeral memorial.

It is specifically Argenti's account of the appearance of the twins, *mboke*, *nokan* or a specialized set of court jesters, which supports my proposition to think of the body as a memorial. As part of the tradition of commemoration during the months after a king's death, the appearance of the twins literally become the embodiment of memory; in short, a memorial, "...the ordinary *nokan* appears for the death celebration of any *kwifon*, or royal death, which includes not only kings, but also any one of the king's mothers, or fathers."⁴⁴⁵ The twins function as a set of palace jesters in masquerade, metamorphosized from their human state. The twins or *nokan* appear as two near-naked adult bodies

⁴⁴⁴ Nicolas Argenti, "Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom." in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 23.

⁴⁴⁵ Nicolas Argenti, "Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom." in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 32.

covered in (white) kaolin. These whitened bodies suggest a caricature of children or madmen, as the color white in Oku culture is associated with sickness, disease, listlessness.

According to Argenti, the twins, their bodies, occupy multiple symbolic roles, “over and above the single vision of symbolic correspondence between the white ‘twins’ represent a layered and plastic nexus for signification taking on different forms of relevance at different times and in different places...”⁴⁴⁶ As fluid carriers of symbolic power, the twins establish symbolism through their ephemeral and immediate performance. Their existence also signals a symbolic correspondence with the (deceased) king as the doubling of bodies, in the form of the twins’ appearance blurs the distinction between the dead and newly crowned king, “thus two individual kings of Oku, as represented in the appearance of the ‘twins,’ are revealed to share a single life force, and by this principle to rule according to the same light. The ‘twins’ appearance marks their unity...”⁴⁴⁷ For Argenti, the memory of the palace appearances not only work on a cognitive level, but these appearances become embodied by the population, “I suggest that seeing these memories as not only cognitive, but embodied, not only thought but experienced, paves the way for an affective history of memory in Oku.”⁴⁴⁸ What these

⁴⁴⁶ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 34.

⁴⁴⁷ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 35.

⁴⁴⁸ Nicolas Argenti, “Ephemeral Monuments, Memory, and Royal Sempiternity in a Grassfields Kingdom.” in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty, and Susanne Küchler. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999), 41.

Oku appearances propose and what Argenti argues is that underlying the capture and confrontation of a collective memory shard, the body cannot be overlooked. The witnessing of these appearances, both the physicality of the appearances and the physicality of the Oku onlookers are not irrelevant to how a society forms memory. In fact, bodies contribute to the memory making *and* function as moving memorials themselves.

The internal functions of the material body enforce the idea of the moving body as a memorializing entity. As visitors-users-dancers wend their way through the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the patterning of dances, formed from motion compelled by the shuffling of feet and the lingering stillness invited by the memorial wall work to impose a remembering of not only the memorial, but the content of the memorial through the firing of the musculature system. Part of the bodily experience at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the process of figuring out how to manipulate the body in a way that is suitable for the environment. To fully describe the VVM and the flow of choreography passing through the space is to acknowledge the echo of funerary ritual that imbricates not only the memorial site but also its accompanying ephemeral, body-as memorial. Not only do posted signs warning against running, bicycling, eating and smoking contribute to the absence of forceful dancing within the memorial site, but these signs also situate the memorial as a funerary environment calling for the honoring of fallen soldiers through the physical gesture of staying away from the landscaped portions of the memorial and by asserting appropriate physical behavior. These signs suggest that the practice of honoring absent bodies is a corporeal, material act, one that is ritualistic in

tone. And the ritualistic nature of gestures performed on the VVM is foregrounded by the practice of leaving objects, texts at the base of the memorial wall. The patterning of leaving objects of the wall evokes American funerary ritual which houses the practice of leaving materials, flowers at the gravesite of the deceased. Kristin Ann Hass, VVM scholar supports this reading of the things-left-at-the-memorial-site:

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, there are American funerary traditions...that involve speaking to the spirits of the dead with gifts and grave decorations. Although the leap from the grave to a national memorial is new, it is impossible to imagine that the impulse to decorate the Wall has not been shaped by these funerary traditions.⁴⁴⁹

Once the visitor-user-dancer comes to a conclusion as to how to corporeally proceed and navigate the architecture and space of the VVM, the emerging bodily actions—the choreographic vernacular—become tethered to the body as the muscles become inscribed with a kinesthetic awareness of the sensations of this dance. And embedded in the muscles is the knowledge and memory of the physical experience of the VVM. The gestures, motions, stillness enacted at the VVM become transformed into muscle memory and the experience of the VVM becomes physically inscribed in the fibers of the muscular system. This sort of knowledge, the body’s capacity to accumulate muscle memory is referred to by dance scholar, Inge Baxmann as “tactic knowledge:” “sensory, emotional, and perceptual experiences are stored in movement, gestures, and rhythm. This knowledge relies on verbal and gestural traditions of cultural

⁴⁴⁹ Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1998), 88.

transmission...”⁴⁵⁰ For Baxmann, the body’s memory bank, in the form of muscle memory, is tied to more abstract concepts like nationality. And it is through the recalling and practice of accompanying physical gestures and movements that these large conceptual ideas are emotionally grounded. Baxmann intervenes on the dance studies and its ontology by proposing to rethink the archive as more than just an idea and space housing written culture, “gradually, appreciation is increasing for the roles of movement, emotion, and bodily sensory memory in the production and staging of knowledge. This change affects cultural understanding: opportunities appear for dynamic archives of body memory...”⁴⁵¹ And encased within this “archive of body memory” are the sensations and dance steps of one’s experience at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.⁴⁵² As the physical experience of the memorial is stored in the body, as the body repeats these gestures and movements outside the VVM elsewhere, in daily life, the accompanying memory of the Vietnam War and the VVM is brought to the surface and re-remembered.

⁴⁵⁰ Inge Baxmann, “At the Boundaries of the Archive: Movement, Rhythm, and Muscle Memory: A Report on the Tanzarchiv Leipzig.” *Dance Chronicle* 32.1 (2009): 127.

⁴⁵¹ Inge Baxmann, “At the Boundaries of the Archive: Movement, Rhythm, and Muscle Memory: A Report on the Tanzarchiv Leipzig.” *Dance Chronicle* 32.1 (2009): 128.

⁴⁵² Inge Baxmann, “At the Boundaries of the Archive: Movement, Rhythm, and Muscle Memory: A Report on the Tanzarchiv Leipzig.” *Dance Chronicle* 32.1 (2009): 128.

Conclusion

This project, that intersects the (moving) body with the space and architecture of the VVM, confirms that memory, especially the practice of architectural memorialization, is comprised of a necessary dialectical relationship between the body of the visitor and the architectural form. It is only with the presence of both body and architecture can the process of memorialization be enacted. Maya Lin's granite memorial wall is designed and embedded with mandates for the body. Its meanings are only made clear when the body is present to respond to and embody those mandates. Within the sphere of the VVM, the users (bodies) that are activated in and by space define the practice of memorialization as enfolding within their choreographic structures, the gestures of mourning. That visitors-users-dancers at the VVM conflate memorialization with mourning is embodied by bouts of hesitant walking and heavy footsteps, which are punctuated by moments of deliberate stillness and enjoined by moments wherein the body hovers between effort at moving and a desire to maintain stasis. The contents of these individual choreographies are more than just texts from which to discern the motions and meaning of memorialization. Once performed, these gestures are embedded into the muscle memory of each body, corporeally archived. The body serves as vessel engraving the physicality of memory and the temporary dancing carried out at the VVM, rendering its performer complicit in conceptualizing memory. The dancing bodies at the VVM, in engaging with the VVM architecture and space, become moving memorials themselves, the architecture echoed and implied in the body's kinesthetic power.

In response to the discourse of memory scholars who see architectural signifiers of national memory as working to erode the integrity of memory, I have argued for a wider understanding of what constitutes memorialization. By admitting the (moving) body into the bounds of memorialization, I suggest that the memorial has not yet surrendered its power to evoke historical triumphs and tragedies. The interaction between the body and the architecture provides a visually tangible means through which memory is transferred. Along with asserting the bodily aspects of memorialization, I have argued that the archive can be conceived as itself a permanent and imperfect memorial. Drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida and Diana Taylor, I expand and play with the idea of memorial by assigning the archive the duties of memorialization. As a collection of consciously selected texts, the archive functions as a vessel of memory, providing a narrative of the VVM's (past) production process. Ultimately, what I propose by attending to the archive of the memorial, the memorial architecture, and the bodies temporarily inhabiting the memorial, is the idea that memorialization must deal with both permanent and transitory components; it must encompass the material signifier as well as textual references to its production, most often embodied in the form of an archive. National, collective memory is only partially conveyed through its architectural signifier. The body and the archive participate in the remembering process.

I have used my own body as a point of analysis. The methodology of reading the bodily articulations requires that I insert my own body onto the memorial site and acting as a participant who first engaged with the memorial as a visitor-user-dancer, I wandered through the memorial with my body responding to the horizontal, chevron shaped

structure. Such corporeal engagement with the VVM provides me with a kinesthetic awareness with which to better describe the dances performed by other visitors-users-dancers to the memorial site. Moreover, my body serves as a lens through which to scrutinize the ways in which the space is a place of legislation, overseen by the National Park Service. The obstacles that I faced as I unsuccessfully attempted to acquire formal permission to gather filmed data for my research uncovers the way in which the memorial space only permits conventional choreographies of memorialization (and mourning). My proposal to perform a different set of bodily practices representing my intention to treat the memorial as a subject of critical analysis brings to light the memorial as a modern heterotopia.

I have tried, in this dissertation, to place the body in an arena where it has not yet been welcome. As an experiment of bodily imagination, I am curious about the consequences of tracing both the VVM's production process and designer Maya Lin's positionality in the memorial building through a dance studies lens. This dissertation re-imagines the body's participation in the development of the VVM as well as re-imagines Lin's body and her choreographic role (participation) in the production of the memorial space. By staying alert to the body's presence as I unravel the stages of the memorial building, what gets uncovered through archival research is the way in which the body is implicitly used in scenarios of ritual as a strategy of claiming space. As such, what this bodily tracing suggests for investigations into the condition of a material space is that we must not only attend to the live bodies that enunciate in real time, but must also search for the hauntings of former and past bodies woven and present in the depths of the archive.

While imagining and searching for Lin's body in the depths of the archive indeed produces a clearer understanding of her role and struggle to assert her aesthetic voice in the production of the VVM, thereby confirming Foucault's claim that the architect has lost his/her political influence. I am not certain that this attempt at tracing Lin's body was entirely successful. Lin's presence within the VVMF archive was wanting, as references to her name and duties were glaringly absent from many folders, but this is part of playing out an experiment. However, what dance studies provides is the possibility to evoke both the murkiness of her role as accounted for by the archive and her clear struggle to assert her voice in the production of the memorial. In using dance description as a tool for (re) constructing Lin's positionaltiy, I imagine Lin's role as a dance, to figure her participation as designer of the VVMF in bodily form.

This dissertation is merely an initial effort to imbricate three arenas of study: dance studies, memory studies, and space theory, and therefore three separate analytical lenses on top of each other; it is an experiment intended to drop dance studies into fields (of study) previously unoccupied by the body. In particular, I hope to have troubled the status of Western conceptions of memory. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I relayed the current scholarly concern with the seemingly durable linkage between memory and the material objects that represent them. Along with this shift in memory studies, the once stable relationship between memory and its representative artifact has been theoretically compromised by memory scholars like Adrian Forty, Susanne Küchler, Andreas Huyssen, and James E. Young who seek to undo our reliance on the permanent and the material when it comes to remembering. The erosion of our Western

understanding of memory is quickened by the decoupling of the past from our sense of the present. The de-linking of memory from its material signifier and the de-linking of the past from the present trouble the Western approach to commemoration.

Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, in their book, *The Art of Forgetting*, provide an alternative solution to the relationship between memory and material object by arguing for the utility of non-Western memory traditions, where memory is most often built from ephemeral, decomposing monuments.⁴⁵³ However, what is proposed by Forty and Küchler does not resolve the material reality of the Western built environment, where memorial architecture remain as enduring and prominent fixtures in urban and rural landscapes. Instead of succumbing to the binary between Western memory strategies and their more ephemeral counterpart in the non-West, I urge for re-conceptualizing (Western) memory in way that imbricates the material object with its users, where the material coheres with the temporary. I suggest the idea of memorialization must encompass more than just the structure or object with which memory shares a linkage. Rather it must conceptually include the bodies engaged in the practice of remembering as well as the archives and records tracking the construction of architectures of memory. In the second chapter of this dissertation, I use the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Archive to trace the unfolding of this memorial project from a concept brought to founder of the VVMF, Jan Scruggs, to the real materialization of a tangible memorial structure. Embedded in this chapter is also a proposal to think of the archive as a sort of

⁴⁵³ Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, eds. *The Art of Forgetting*. (New York, New York: Berg Press, 1999).

architecture/container of memory, a version of a memorial. What I have hoped to do, by introducing the body and the archive as points of analysis into the memory question, is to problematize the critique against (permanent) materiality; to suggest that the linkage between object and memory is not so clear-cut, but also not completely eroded, as memory scholars have tended to claim.

The users—bodies of memorial signifiers complicate, via their choreography, the content of memory and how it is dealt with, revealing the theoretical trouble the body can effectively wage in arenas of study where it has previously gone unnoticed. Woven into the body of this dissertation are interruptions for dancing in which I describe the corporeal activities performed at the VVM and mine these choreographies to understand not only the articulations of the body, but also the relationship between body and memorial. I suggest the notion of memory is not simply comprised of a direct link between a shard of remembrance and the material object that represents it. Within this relationship are bodies that physically confront and participate in interpreting this memory as embedded in materiality. In the specific case of memorial architecture, the visitors-users-dancers not only define memory and accompanying material signifier on their own terms, but the presence of bodies becomes a necessary component in relaying memory. Insofar, scholars invested in the study of memory and space have yet to directly acknowledge the body that remains a visible presence in their fields of study. This is what I conceive as the power of dance studies, a means of interrogation that contributes an extra layer of questions and an additional layer of depth to seemingly unrelated discourses. The body is silently present in many fields other than the formal study of

dance and what I hope this project conveys is the theoretical potential the body can provide in those arenas of research.

This dissertation, however, is only the beginning of a potentially larger inquiry into the status of memory and memorial architecture. I have only attended to one case study, which does not entirely represent the American nexus between body and memorial architecture. The context within which the VVM emerged impacts the architecture and the way the space is intended for interaction with its visitors-users-dancers. I have traced in Chapter 2, the process of VVM's production and in Chapter 4, Maya Lin's impetus for her memorial design as well as how she bodily figured into the production process. These two chapters lay the groundwork for conceiving the VVM as constructed within specific political and aesthetic frameworks. I suspect bodies are treated differently by memorial architecture built in the normative monumental style that emphasizing patriotism and figurative representations. Those architectures, built within different political and aesthetic constraints, likely provide disparate choreographic frames for the body. In a post 9/11 world, the epicenter of national memory and mourning is not simply contained in the nation's capital. Places like New York, future home to the National 9/11 Memorial and Oklahoma City, which houses the Oklahoma City National Memorial commemorating the 1995 bomb attack on the Alfred P. Murrah federal building, have also become spatial focal points for commemoration. Do geography and the postmodern architectural strategies of new memorials shift the bodily status of commemoration?

The inspiration for this dissertation, the Memorial to Murdered Jews of Europe, built in Berlin, Germany, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is a space structurally

inviting personal choreographies and individual constructions of Holocaust memories. Operating in an urban landmine of history, this memorial wrestles with a specific historical arc and landscape different from memorials set in the United States. How does this impact visitors-users-dancers and do the dances performed in this Berlin-based memorial articulate a different understanding of memory? While these questions remain unanswered by this dissertation, what this project does is provide an outlet, a methodology, and epistemology—a scholarly foundation to begin answering such inquiries.

In attempting to secure permission to film on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a strategy of my field research, I communicated with Mary Willeford Bair, a National Park Service employee charged with processing and approving applications to conduct scholarly filming/investigations on federal land. Using my own body and its accompanying maneuverings as a point of analysis, I argue in Chapter 3, for conceiving the VVM as a space of bodily legislation. It is in this chapter that I document how NPS administrators misunderstood my research proposal as a request for staging a formal dance concert on the grounds of the VVM. Aghast, Willeford Bair warned that this idea was completely prohibited. She pointed out that dancing would interfere with the intended solemn tone of the memorial space. Her admonition against “dancing” on the memorial remains a striking component in my memory of the research process. The concept of dancing is a question that has been broached, but not fully answered in the text of this dissertation. Why is the normative concept of dance, one aligned with formal performances on proscenium stages, conceived to interrupt spaces imbricated with a

sense of gravity and seriousness? I argue that dancing is indeed carried out in the memorial space. This dancing is imbued with the choreography of mourning. What Willeford Bair suggests in her refusal to permit “dancing” on the VVM is a larger association of dancing with the speed, the absence of control, and a tone of celebration. Has the history of dancing in ritualized and politicized spaces confirmed this understanding of dance? Does “dance” even figure into the history of American efforts at memorialization? In accounting for the body’s gestures at the VVM, I am cutting a wider swath for the dance studies territory. By arguing that the pedestrian moves of visitors-users at the VVM are embedded with meaning, I also inherently encircle these motions into the construct of dance. As such, VVM visitors are also dancers and their corporeal reactions to the VVM can be legitimately mined for meaning. However, this theoretical claim does not address the larger role that dance has possibly played in the country’s pattern of commemoration and remains a point of future research.

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