

**Emancipating the Dancing Body:**  
*Bridging the Interdependency of Aesthetic Theory with Separated  
Roles in Contemporary Dance to Solidify the Phenomenology of  
Creative Movement Causation*

~

*John Zackary Michael Vintila*

*A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts*

*York University, Toronto, Ontario  
April 2020*

© *John Z.M Vintila, 2021*

## **Abstract**

This thesis involves the development of a methodology that when assessed hermeneutically, provides an existential yet accessible framework that informs and deepens the practice of improvised contemporary movement forms. This theoretical methodology's construction also initiates a unique aesthetic theory that can be used for solidifying an improvisational creative process. The unveiling of concealed convergences eventually resonates with dancing bodies as the becoming of the unseen through a phenomenological grounding that performers using improvised movement structures have ostensibly disregarded as being the forgotten trance in dance. Through the interpolation of topics and concepts exclusive to the fields of political theory, aesthetics, philosophy and hermeneutics, selected segments from works by prominent thinkers from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel through Maurice Jean Jacques Merleau-Ponty are deconstructed to inform the eventual reasoning of how an emancipated dancing experience might come to exist.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Existential, Philosophy, Ontology, Aesthetics, Choreographer, Dancer, Spectator, Perception, Improvised Contemporary Dance

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following individuals whose instrumental expertise, leadership and motivation impacted this work and made it possible: Professor William Mackwood, Dr. Darcey Callison, Professor Susan Cash, Dr. Patrick Alcedo and Professor Susan Lee. A special thanks to my primary supervisor Professor Freya Olafson and secondary supervisor Professor Jennifer Jimenez who challenged and motivated the progress of this work. I would also like to thank Alicia Filipowich for editing this work. Additional thanks goes to Peter Alcedo Jr. in his role as video editor collaborator. My special thanks to dancers Recce Caldwell and Kyra Todd who shared their technical and intellectual expertise, thereby creating the possibility for the performative requirement of my work to exist during a relatively difficult time, considering the various limitations associated with COVID-19. I wish to thank the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies along with the Department of Politics, including, but not limited, to Dr. Shannon Bell, Dr. Jay Goulding and Dr. Jay Bazowski for expanding my understanding of phenomenology, hermeneutics, aesthetics, political theory and general semantics. Finally, a special thanks to my family whose efforts during my graduate studies motivated this journey through their unconditional love and affection.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
INTRODUCTION .....	1
PART I   THE OMNIPRESENT, CONVERGING AESTHETIC OF CHOREOGRAPHER AND DANCER: THE THEORETICAL UNIVERSALITY OF TWO MINDS AND ONE BODY .....	9
PART II   THE DANCING BODY AND ITS PRESENCE THROUGH PENSIVENESS: USING HERMENEUTICS TO DEMYSTIFY THREE SOMATICALLY COMPATIBLE TERMS RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING THE CONDITION OF A DANCE.....	24
PART III   THE INDISPENSABLE SPECTATOR: HOW JACQUES LACAN’S “THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE EYE AND THE GAZE” FROM BOOK <i>XI</i> (1998) INFORMS THE FRAMING OF A DANCING BODY FROM THE SPECTATOR’S POINT OF VIEW .....	37
PART IV   EMANCIPATING THE DANCING BODY: HOW JACQUE RANCIÈRE’S “THE INTOLERABLE IMAGE” PROPELS THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE FROM CHOREOGRAPHIC BRICOLAGE TO CREATE AN AESTHETIC IN MOVEMENT DIMENSION.....	48
WORKING AROUND COVID-19 AS AN ADVANTAGE SHAPING THIS WORK .....	67
VIDEO COLLABORATION AND SPECIFICITY OF CONTEXTUALIZATION .....	69
CONCLUSION .....	70
WORKS CITED.....	73

## Introduction

In my creative work as part of my MFA thesis, I developed a method of emancipating the dancing body so that movement occurs independently and uniformly of itself with non-dependence to kinesthetic connotations that derive from, inform and ultimately favour politically epistemic predispositions. These epistemic predispositions, including normative conditions such as the desirable role and behaviour that either a choreographer or dancer ought to embody, frame and confine a dancing body. These normative conditions may be held responsible for enabling creative distortion in movement examination (when contemplated, delivered and physicalized), thereby exacerbating the delicate and often vulnerable nature of both the dancing body and the idealized aesthetic of contemporary dance. By using hermeneutics to demystify certain textual works vivifying convergences in political theory and the art of contemporary dance as two interdependently and co-equivocal domains of knowledge, I developed a methodological process through the political and philosophical connections and convergences that emerge in order to create the possibility of emancipating the dancing bodies of my collaborators.

As a dancing body already exists as a political entity when entering a performing space, I was challenged to examine how I could support dancers to become autonomous through the methodology that I developed as part of my creative process, which was informed by my understanding of what an emancipated transformation might feel, look and sound like, and investigated primarily using the following theorists and their selected works. It is vital to mention that the concomitance of these theorists creates the particular possibility of a “body phenomenology,” which when assessed using hermeneutics, can provide the emergence of an emancipating methodology exclusive to the practice of improvised contemporary dance. As such, the usage of specific and occasional German language terms and statements indicates the

value of syntactical resemblances conditioned through the distilled body-thought connections derived from Heideggerian existentialist ideologies, further reflected through each of these theorists as being Heidegger's disciples. Interestingly, these syntactical resemblances emulate a similar yet revitalized deterministic phenomenological clause to reemerge through my hermeneutical analysis, as they may have been proposed in their original text. Specifically, Georg William Friedrich Hegel's *Introduction to Lectures on Aesthetics* (1993), Alain Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005), Jacques Rancière's *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics* (2010) and *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), and Diana Taylor's "Acts of Transfer" from *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003) comprise the grounding of a theoretical methodological framework that supports the development of an eventual emancipated dancing body. Additional theorists whose publications support my research include Theodor W. Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1997) and *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1973) in addition to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012).

This thesis has a quadripartite structure. *Part I* assesses the fundamentals of the politics of aesthetics in relation to the aforementioned theorists, specifically the relationship and capacity that such a domain carries over how the emancipation of a dancing body may eventually come to exist. *Part I* focuses on the dancing body and how the tyrannical role of the choreographer often impedes and limits individuality when mimetic principles (replication and representation through apprehension) are responsible for creating the basis of choreography. *Part I* emphasizes the role of the choreographer over the dancer, but will not entirely estrange the dancer's role. *Part II* discusses the role of the dancer and how codified languages from colliding roles dissipate upon demystifying three somatically compatible terms used to create the condition of a dance. *Part II* also deconstructs and recalibrates the meanings that these terms carry over the body from their

German origins as identified in Heideggerian philosophy and examines how a body could internalize them proactively when converted into a hermeneutic phenomenological process. *Part III* emphasizes the role of the spectator, primarily the value of their gaze, as supported by certain concepts identified in Jacques Lacan's "The Split between the Eye and the Gaze" from *XI* (1978), along with a few particular considerations central to the science of psychoacoustics that assess music's value. *Part IV* introduces a theoretical methodology derived from my research constituting the first three parts, delineating a process of emancipation that a dancing body may consult and proactively apply before, during and after a performance.

Exposing the fundamentals of what stereotypically renders dance as pleasing in nature or "aesthetic" in terms of movement quality, in conjunction with the presence of a body that delivers such movement quality, will separate normative impressions by defining differences and similarities in "aesthetic movement." Exploring choreographic reason as an imperative used to support selective movement choices will clarify what exactly makes movement selection, incorporation and presentation aesthetic in itself. As a result, a dancing body/bodies that conventionally imitates the choreographer will serve as a vital requisite to evaluate the distinctiveness of why aspects, such as imitationalism, formalism and emotionalism, remain limited despite ironically holding and suggesting unlimited potential. More often than not, these three elements act as reductive terms, confining the dancing body "to the political" without offering a performer (dancer) the chance of experiencing an emancipated, performing state. The ostensible goal of liberation from the choreographer's tyrannical static gaze through codified languages used to deliver choreography comprises an example that acts as an extension situated within the realm of the political. An agreement of a certain idea with oneself is not always an agreement of the same idea with another. Furthermore, the ambivalence from such limitations

may also pose an anti-liberating flux that a dancing body experiences unwillingly, restraining the multiplicity of available subjective experiences to favour the choreographer alone. Considering a dissemination of the generic, apothegmatic statement “to the political” listed above, how a dancing body is assessed over space, time and distance through virtue of the movement it mimics or embodies is often classified as an extension framing a politically contingent idea, which can be described here as “best something glimpsed at from the periphery of one’s vision, a liminal concept that represented the point where knowledge inevitably shaded into ignorance” (Wootton 21–53).

Additionally, elements that often reinforce the aesthetic appearance of movement, such as distinct costumes, or more specifically, musical notes, sounds or genres in certain settings or environments, may influence the degree of artistic merit that choreographers, dancers and spectators attribute to what they define as being aesthetic. Theoretically, observing the unnecessary separation of roles in contemporary improvised dance may mediate the consolidation of emancipating factors necessary in order for the dancing body, choreographers and spectators to coexist as an equal body. It could also be said that this equality relies less on the artistic reception and more on the artistic process responsible for creating what Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz would describe as an apperceptive chance. For Leibniz, a concrete definition is observed in section 4 of the *Principles of Nature and of Grace* (1714), where he affirms that apperception is “*consciousness*, or the reflective knowledge of this internal state.” In turn, the outcome of both the creative process and its reception are a culmination of procedural convergences that eventually dissolve to exist as unanimously and successive with each other as an aesthetic experience becomes readily available. This harmonization of roles can itself be said to create a moment of emancipation when once conflicting roles abnegated. The subjective

nature of this pre-emancipated experience contains the notion of uniting separate bodies that are naturally in tension with each other (choreographer versus dancer versus spectator) into one common representing body. The harmonization of the common representing body occurs during the reflection, reception and silence of the proposed observed aesthetic. Essentially, this concept is worth investigating as the belief that follows is that emancipation in a particular, politically contingent environment may come to exist when an equilibrium between all three converging bodies unites to create “a common consciousness.” This renewed conscious experience is itself an emancipated state for the duration of the creative process leading through the final performance. Evaluating the causality of the ever-evolving power of constructed movement distributed from choreographer to dancer and shared evenly and willingly between them suggests why emancipated movement may co-exist as a representational characteristic of aesthetic movement; whereby emancipated movement *is itself* aesthetic movement.

It is important to note that not all choreography has a narrative structure. Often, viewers seek to make sense of a work by attempting to find or create their own narrative to distil their overall viewing experience. Interestingly in this case, choreography contains a dualistic property of aesthetics: one that delivers a set narrative even if the structure or intention of a piece is comprised of mainly improvised, abstracted movement, and secondly, the body moving as one intends to move it, which stands as a separate apperceptive aesthetic, non-dependent on the narrative perceived and entirely arbitrary in outcome despite being cognizant through momentum. These dualistic properties (despite eliciting particular contextualizations in a narrative structure) propose that although the body and the movement in this case are considered equal to the manifestation of choreography, the idea that the choreographer proposes that initially propels the particular cause of the dancer’s movement needs not be a direct reference to the past,

but rather a pragmatic movement idea that simply exists in the internal present (*Erlebnis*). More often than not, the choreographer enables movement potentiality and suggestion through their gaze before it is converted to a physical structure. It is only after a dancing body embodies such movement that the possibility of an “autonomous chance at becoming,” or as Heidegger would claim, authenticity of existing in the world prevails (*Inderweltsein*). This idea suggests that it is indeed possible to attain an emancipated dancing state earlier rather than later in a creative process. The term “autonomous” serves as a derivative of Kantian thought, suggesting that choreography remains and retains selective control of the choreographer alone with little room for augmentation from the dancers’ point of view. Also, it would seem that perhaps in systematic attempts to preserve one’s role, once movement is finalized for a performing space, it ought to be performed in an “authentic way,” representing primarily both the manner and matter of the choreographer’s intentions. Authenticity may then be reduced to the degree of manner and matter calibrated from the choreographer’s intimacy, limitation or selectivity.

Yet what is authentic movement? In the 1950s, dance therapist Mary Starks Whitehouse insightfully defined authentic movement as a type of therapeutic movement rooted in Carl Jung’s concept of active imagination where the visceral manifestation of improvised movement seeks to reconcile neural depth and intention through “free association of the body.” The issue here identifies how emerging aesthetic trends framed and sometimes manipulated through the choreographer’s role impede and rigidify the otherwise simplistic, emancipated nature that choreographed movement should allow the body to experience in order to be classified as unequivocally compelling, not by social authorization but rather by visceral autonomy that appropriates movement outcome. This idea may be the reason why choreographers, dancers and spectators find it relatively difficult to acknowledge a possible codependence between what is

meant by authentic movement and emancipated movement; authentic movement *is* emancipated movement, just as much as emancipated movement *is* aesthetic movement. Before the choreographer delivers the choreography (even though possibly embedded with strong socio-cultural and political connotations and implications), it is nothing more than a cognizant and improvised impulsive chance of something that has yet to become; movement in and of itself that does not necessarily need to be an extension of an already agreed upon aesthetic trend.

Movement begins as an improvised cognizant possibility whose aesthetic potential emerges once its substance-like construct is abolished and converted to a dancer's physicalized attempt.

Unsurprisingly, it seems as if the moving body in the art of contemporary improvised dance has become a product of capitalist dissolution where a certain articulated movement idea that a choreographer initially proposes, and a dancing body later embodies, is often criticized as having derived from political contingencies, although this may not be true. André Lepecki recognizes the fidelity of this event after the fact in his 2013 *TDR: The Drama Review* article, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or the task of the dancer."

Often forgotten, the existence of a dancing body is itself separate to the narrative conveyed by and through choreographic intention. The performer's dancing body is separate to the narrative that the choreographer willfully conceives, regardless of the authoritativeness of a creative process; a story can be told and understood, but not identically replicated or lived through in exactness (*Eine Geschichte kann verstanden, aber nicht identisch repliziert werden*). This being said, improvised nuances adjacent to structured forms of choreography remain a viable somatic option that a dancing body can use in order to become emancipated. Dancers in a post-modern setting (1950s to present) can attempt to embody an understanding of this separation that will eventually promise a transformation through their revitalized perspective that

emancipates their existence, or more appropriately (their body), as artists. In this context, an emancipated dancer can be defined as a somatically sensitive and organically uninhibited mover that discovers transcendental characteristics and predispositions that compel them to move in a way that they choose to with relation but non-dependence on narrative and definitive roles promulgated in a creative process. While personally engaging and experimenting with creative movement forms, a duet of dancers will obtain the ability to relinquish externalities derived from the saturated political and social strata in which they themselves delineate the systematized by-products that suppress the development of raw, improvised creative movement in a creative process. The duet by dancers Kyra Todd and Recce Caldwell that is my thesis performance piece is brought through a series of several steps that when reflected on and supported through a four-stage diagram (see [Table 2](#)), theoretically deepen the physical and intellectual processes used while creating an improvised piece. Prompt charts consisting of monosyllabic terms, neutral statements and images of effigies guide, inform and shape the neural framework that both dancers adopt. The somatic properties such as altered states and proprioceptive reasoning that often remain dormant while improvising emerge through the evident convergences in performance aesthetics, philosophy and phenomenology, eventually creating what I call an emancipated dancing body's experience.

## **Part I | The Omnipresent, Converging Aesthetic of Choreographer and Dancer: The Theoretical Universality of Two Minds and One Body**

Myriad are the intersections that locate dance in the realm of the political. The conceptions of who can move for what, the conventions by which people gather, the spaces made available, the training and preparation, notions of embodiment—all bear upon dance, and constitute the field of forces and constraints through which it is borne into being. Yet dance also makes its own politics, crafts its own pathways and agency in the world, moves us toward what we imagine to be possible and desirable. Dance tangibly if momentarily materializes bodies assembled on their own behalf, a social ensemble made by its own means towards its immediate ends . . . (Randy Martin, qtd. in *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography* 29, 2011)

I use Randy Martin's quote to open *Part I*, indirectly relating the importance of political theory with dance and the value that hermeneutics carries over the assemblage of how the politics of aesthetics and continental philosophy can come to inform notions of embodiment in improvised contemporary dance forms. This part begins with an introduction of the four main erudite political theorists whose contributions to the field of academia extend beyond the seemingly detached and exclusive domain of political thought. As Martin indicates, the myriad of intersecting frameworks between dance and the political suggest that by using fragments of ideas and concepts from seemingly incompatible domains of thought such as critical theory, aesthetics and phenomenology, a coherent methodology comes to exist through the very intersections related both directly and indirectly within these two base fields. In turn, what these theorists later assemble as critiques, mainly toward the practice of art, can unquestionably run adjacent to all forms of art, including dance, rather than their primary focus of visual art. What the following publications listed below use as a solidified investigation of a fixed subject matter conditions one's understanding of a similar subject matter by rerouting and reconfiguring their notion as to how and why such convergences create a beckoning that attracts and captivates one's perspective

through hermeneutics. From George William Friedrich Hegel's *Introduction to Lectures on Aesthetics* (1993), through Alain Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005), Jacques Rancière's *Dissensus* (2010) and *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), and finally Diana Taylor's "Acts of Transfer" (2003), I will use hermeneutics to assess these texts by intersecting and intervening ideas and concepts by relating them directly to contemporary dance.

Hegel denotes how fine art is intended to arouse feeling, more specifically that which we associate as being intrinsically pleasing (Hegel 314). As consciousness runs central to one's ability to embody how they perceive a pleasing state of mind, it must mean that a certain set of beliefs, customs and predispositions enable their understanding of what it is that they consider pleasing in the first place. Hegel goes on to describe that the opposite is true for poetry:

The reverse is the case with poetry. In poetry all depends on the representation—which must be full of matter and thought—of man, of his profounder interests, and of the powers that move him; and therefore mind and heart themselves must be richly and profoundly educated by life, experience, and rejection, before genius can bring to pass anything mature, substantial, and self-complete (Hegel 102).

Here, while intellect still acts as instrumental to what one understands as being pleasing, the element of language is directly analyzed as a virtuous product of artistic creation. Poetry relies on the poet's ability to perpetuate a sense of satisfaction from the mere feeling of reading, regardless of whether the words being visualized on the page exhibit contradescriptive emotions. In contrast to visual art, which is a direct exposition of a concept through an image, poetry often informs audiences by allowing their intellect to appropriately judge discourse through both interpretations (*deutung*) and empirical facts (*erfahrungstatsache*). For example, Kantian thought differentiates between art, which holds the ability to be described as simply "beautiful," in contrast to that of the "sublime," which contextualizes art's embedded, manipulative and implicit forces. Hegel would agree that the human spirit emerges through an exploration of experience

once the gaze comes into contact with art. The Kantian ideological framework of the beautiful (form) and the sublime (excess of form) needs to consider a measure of what most would classify as “spirituality” in order to classify what it is that dancers observe and feel as liberating through the artwork. In relation to the choreographer and the dancer, typically in Western theatre dance (contemporary dance) or in a studio setting, the choreographer offers a vision that they convert into visualized motion so that the dancer accordingly embodies such into a mimetic representation of somatic value. The segment of “the beautiful” here is in the form and the matter of distribution that the choreographer uses in order to translate thoughts into actions. However, the sublime in dance is relatively difficult to assess as it only exists for a matter of seconds. In *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), Part II Section I: [Of the Passion Caused by the Sublime], Edmund Burke cleverly observes that “the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror.” Proponents of movement exploration often dismiss the element of improvisation, which occurs simultaneously with the information being transferred from the choreographer to the dancer. Additionally, it is often argued that seemingly mimicked movement is never identically replicated. In the moment that such a transfer occurs, improvisation is a type of excess of form and is not something that binds itself to a common reality. Improvisation from the dancer simply exists in between the realms of truth and artistic inquiry. As Hegel describes the moralistic proposition that art inevitably offers the spectator in the quote below, it could be said that improvisation in dance acts as a moralizing agent that infers with the possibility of the body becoming emancipated for the moment where such separation begins:

This antithesis [of the will in its spiritual universality to its sensuous natural particularity] . . . does not merely display itself for our consciousness, in the limited

region of moral action; but also emerges as a fundamental distinction and antagonism between that which is real essentially and in its own right, and that which is external reality and existence (Hegel 138).

In relation to choreography, Hegel seems to be acknowledging the importance that tradition and culture hold against refining artistic intention and intuition. However, it is certain that he would agree that culture erodes the commonality that would bind choreographers and dancers in unison during a creative process. A displacement of reason for dancing a certain way or desire for embodying a certain phrase of movement always contains an element of conflicting interests between the active dancer and the passive choreographer, which dismantles my objective of creating the possibility of emancipating the dancing body and mind.

In part II,  $\beta$  (*the end of art*), Hegel examines “what is good to imitate” in art. He states that “seeing that the principle of imitation is purely formal, to make it the end has the result that objective beauty itself disappears. For the question is in that case no longer of what nature that is which is to be copied, but only whether it is correctly copied” (Hegel 124). Reciprocal to this claim, Badiou states that “the pertinent unit for the thinking of art as an imminent and singular truth is thus neither the work nor the author, but rather the artistic configuration initiated by an eventual rupture—it is an artistic truth, and everybody knows that there is no truth of truth” (Badiou 12). If we were to compare these two imperative considerations, we might conclude that an emancipated body comes to exist when the dancer and choreographer reconcile measures of improvisation by embracing non-dependency towards factors of subjective manipulation and objective mimicry. An example of a method that can be used in dance may include an arbitrary collective movement exploration that a camera records. Upon reviewing the documented filmed footage, the element of chance itself is conditioned as the non-dependant variable that informs both the dancer and the choreographer. Following a set of movement impulses derived from a set

of instructions promises that the movement exploration need not be inhibited by objective suggestions or subjective predispositions compelling the dancer or the choreographer to narrate a future that does not exist, but instead co-create a present while simultaneously bearing in mind the sensory value that Hegel advocates for in vivifying artistic value.

Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* provides ample evidence of an evocative method that can be used toward the purpose of transforming a dancing body so that it might experience emancipation. It is also important to mention that for Badiou, "dance is not an art, because it is the sign of the possibility of art as inscribed by the body" (Badiou 69). In chapter six of *Dance is a Metaphor for Thought*, Badiou introduces a number of vital considerations of what dance simply begins as but soon after dissipates and alienates the dance from the dancing body. He defines dance as the *a priori*, almost a transcendental characteristic that the body pursues as: "dance is innocence, because it is a body before the body. It is forgetting, because it is a body that forgets its fetters, its weight. It is a new beginning because the dancing gesture [body] must always be something like the invention of its own beginning" (Badiou 57). Here, it is also important to mention Rancière's ideological framework of pensiveness that appears in chapter five of *The Emancipated Spectator* where pensiveness "refers to a condition that is indeterminately between the active and the passive. As in a photograph or portrait, this indeterminacy problematizes the gap . . . between two ideas of the image: the common notion of the image as duplicate of a thing and the image conceived as artistic operation" (Rancière, *Emancipated* 107).

This opinion would logically stem from a teleological perspective, whereby analyzing the body as a totality while experimenting with movement creation aims to limit the condemnation under which most narratives place the existence of a body. However, it is often observed that

Badiou's definition of dance rarely suits an embodied tendency, as the duplicate image of a common notion (in this case the aspect of narrative) replaces and distorts the dancing body-conceived artistic operation. It is important to mention that we are not equating the choreographer's position to that of the dancer; the latter's dancing body is often stigmatized and alienated through the former's choreographic gaze. As the process of choreography occurs simultaneously with the element of spontaneity in movement exploration, it could be assumed that there is nothing to suggest their mutual exclusiveness or the impossibility of their coexistence. Badiou claims that "dance is a metaphor for thought precisely inasmuch as it indicates, by means of the body, that a thought, in the form of its eventual surge, is subtracted from every pre-existence of knowledge" (Badiou 66). So then how can one reconcile with the affect that exists due to the exclusiveness of a gaze from both the choreographer and the dancer? Badiou offers a suggestive remediation used to nullify the exploitative threshold experienced at the level of the dancing body's self. Badiou rivals Heideggerian thought by claiming that classical art is not concerned with the prevailing of truth, even though with dance, a certain truth may come to exist arbitrarily through exposure and adaptation when using structural narrative. Badiou insightfully notices that "dance is subtracted from the temporal decision. In dance, there is something that is prior to time, something pretemporal. It is this pretemporal element that will be *played out* in space. Dance is what suspends time within space" (Badiou 61). In this case, as a dismantling in the temporal-spacio horizon occurs when movement transcends codification from the choreographer, or more importantly, *if* it transcends codification, the result of delivering choreography should be more than what it was to begin with. As the homogeneity of time remains suspended once the question is asked where is time, or more accurately, where is the whereness of time, it is evident that the fallacy of claiming that movement ought to be the same

before and during the time it is performed enframes the flux of control between *what* choreographs *who* or rather *who* choreographs *what*.

Badiou claims that “dance is a poem set free of any scribes apparatus” (Badiou 65). Moreover, he also offers dancers a possibility at embodying a single entity position when confronted with manipulative tactics from the choreographer’s gaze. Badiou claims that dance itself comes to exist when subjective chatter has been eliminated; “‘abstraction’, that in the end, a pure notion arises, the idea of presence” (Badiou 30). It is here where the dancing body can become emancipated by virtue of allowing the body to fine-tune its conscious tendencies while letting an unfettered, uninhibited mode of abstract experimentation replace the otherwise ambiguous structure of interrogative narrative cultivation that most choreographers idealize.

Specific theories mentioned in Rancière’s *Dissensus* also redefine the scope that choreographers often embrace toward their dancers. The impartial, impractical choreographic phenomenon that suppresses the assimilation of an otherwise emancipated body can be further investigated. Specifically, the use of selectivity in the choreographer’s gaze is to blame. Theoretically, it would seem that when a choreographer acts capably while they think and thinks while they act, a dancer does not think or question but simply obeys. Essentially, the “potentiality-for-being of human [*Da-sein*] is mollified through the passive, unconscious shock [*stoss*] of what derives from choreographer selectivity” (El Bizri 54). Similarly to Freud and Lacan who situate truth in artworks through the variable of desire, in chapter twelve of *Dissensus*, Rancière declares that art is often positioned in a method of resistance toward the emerging proponents of time and concept. This claim is quite precise as once again, interpretation is a vital component of artistic acumen, one that is necessary to deploy rationality when creating or critiquing works of art. Similarly, Rancière’s concept of framing, where

choreographic writing is itself a style of notation, the liberating sense of framing a personal memory still favours the exploitative creative process to which most dancers often remain oblivious. Rancière denotes two vital counterparts of art that may be used to effectively mobilize an emancipative process: “the two concepts of relation and infiltration epitomize the trend. These concepts represent two attempts to transform the hackneyed critiques seeking to demonstrate the power of the market or the media into a form of direct social action” (Rancière, *Dissensus* 146). Where the choreographer’s reframing occurs simultaneously with the dancer’s ability to address its importance by embodying it, there is often very little room for absolute improvisation. This selectivity introduces the element of chance, which fuels the infiltration of arbitrary likeliness that the choreographer will either disagree with or accept, (despite) what it is that they are seeing is their labour before it becomes the dancer’s labour. Surly, small nuances may be interpreted as a dancer’s interpretation, but they are still wholly dependent on the selectivity of the choreographic gaze. Rancière proposes the following observation in relation to critical art:

For critical art is not so much a type of art that reveals the forms and contradictions of domination as it is an art that questions its own limits and powers, that refuses to anticipate its own effects. This is why perhaps one of the most interesting contributions to the framing of a new landscape of the sensible has been made by forms of art that accept their insufficiency—that refuse the sculpture—performance model—or by artistic practices that infiltrate the world of market and social relations and then remain content to be mere images on cibachrome, screens and monitors (Rancière, *Dissensus* 149).

The precision in this quote lies in affirming that the sculpture-performance model is similar to that of the choreographer and the dancer—the choreographer internalizes the role of the sculptor and the dancer becomes the clay for performance. Moreover, choreographers seem to be apathetic toward the artistic egalitarianism that most dancers wish to experience. Dissensus as a concept remains inseparable to any form of art, especially to that of dance, which is considered as an ephemeral art form. In fact, due to dance’s ephemeral nature, dissensus often exacerbates

the degree to which the dancer can become emancipated as the very ephemerality of a creative movement phrase delineates the mimetic predispositions that the choreographer dictates and imprints through time, distance and space. For example, Rancière contributes valuable insight toward this idea when claiming that aesthetic rupture is the source of dissensus: “tension between the presentation of sensory awareness and the clarification of revision of what one understands” (Rancière, *Dissensus* 139). Here, the embeddedness of a social hierarchy predicate may be used to power the very existence of creative movement in dance. As almost all movement has more or less undergone repetition or mimicry over generations, certain movements have been wrongfully classified as inherently political, such as the possible wrongful assumption that movement incorporating a rope explicitly references Martha Graham’s *Night Journey* (1947). Interestingly, the dissensus in this case actually pervades the aesthetic rupture from occurring truthfully since the dancing body relinquishes individuality to favour only the choreographer’s interpretation. Here, interpretation is investigated and pursued solely by the choreographer who transforms it into a type of intellectual subterfuge that disregards the dancing body as a necessary but unrefined and fabricated instrument by almost deeming it as an external entity to the movement idea being pursued; a vessel whose essence and presence remains suspended without the ability to level with a common agreement in the what, why or how interpretation that the choreographer is administering. Additionally, it is worth noting that Rancière’s critical *dispositif* is described as one of two responses to *consensus*: where firstly, “art must become more ambitious at problematizing the presuppositions that construct a system of stultification, and secondly, that art must be a space of refuge for *dissensus*” (Rancière, *Dissensus* 145). It is clear that although this quote belongs to an alternative publication later used in Rancière’s essay, *The Emancipated Spectator*, it clarifies one’s understanding of the vital relationship that a choreographer needs to

emphasize for dancers. By questioning the fragile nature of dominant social structures that are imbued in the choreographer-dancer relationship, dissensus in given choreography can reconfigure a dancer's interpretative lens accordingly, which will vivify their artistic intention while embodying such movement.

Examining the specific theories that Rancière proposes in *The Emancipated Spectator* can be achieved by narrowing the scope to the distortion of the gaze. Rancière introduces French philosopher Guy Debord who identifies the locus of the passivity within the “essence of the spectacle” as a type of power that alienates the self from one's own life—“the more he contemplates, the less he lives” (qtd. in Rancière, *Emancipated* 6). This quote embraces the very element of inclusivity that is needed for a dancer to properly emancipate themselves in a choreographic process. A dancer often conforms to the choreographer's demands through a psychoanalytic process identified as cognitive transference. The customs, beliefs and traditions informing the choreographer's “signature” retain aesthetic exclusivity; a somewhat sensible method that assumes proper integration of movement to suit a certain environment and create a certain atmosphere. However, the transference often affects the dancer's ability to create and develop their body's proprioceptive tendencies as they begin to accept such customs, beliefs and traditions as a means to an end. The created affect literally compels the switching of roles, where the dancer becomes the choreographer and the choreographer becomes the dancer. By doing so, simplicity overrides artistic intention and is eventually relinquished to parallel the compelling gaze of what the choreographer alone declares to be compelling. This mimetic (*mimetikum*) representation on behavioural predispositions condemning dancers to experience an inequality of intelligence can be observed in the procedure where Rancière denotes:

. . . the ignoramus, spelling out signs, to the scientist who constructs hypotheses, [is itself] the same intelligence always at work—an intelligence that translates signs into

other signs and proceeds by comparisons and illustrations in order to communicate its intellectual adventure and understand what another intelligence is endeavoring to communicate to it (Rancière, *Emancipated* 10).

In this respect, the dancer carries the same intellectual capacity to manifest compelling choreography but fails to assimilate it on a physical level as they are influenced to abide by the certain selectivity in the choreographer's gaze. The dancer then forfeits intelligence in the form of personal improvisation (when a strict phrase is deliberately enforced), suggesting that their acceptance is silently acknowledged as a critique toward the unparalleled, undeniable intelligence that the choreographer egoistically practices.

So then how does one emancipate the spectator when the spectator is the dancer (the dancer viewing the choreographer)? Rancière argues that it is done by "first overcoming the gulf separating the activity from passivity" (Rancière, *Emancipated* 12). Yet with attempts to diminish the degree of "stultification experienced between the art purveyor (choreographer) and the spectator (the dancer) so to de-rigidify from activity and passivity, we must firstly reinforce and co-create embodied allegories of inequality" (Rancière, *Emancipated* 12). Rancière then identifies a consolidating remedy that may limit the denial that ignoramuses (choreographers) face by defining that "emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection" (Rancière, *Emancipated* 13). The delicate nature of emancipation that expands from one's own perception of aesthetics derives from the intrinsic uniqueness that renders meaningfulness in attestations. Intellectual capacity reflects individuality from our sensation of belonging to a collective community. For Rancière, there exists an amalgam of interdependent, individual intelligences that should not be foreseen to depend on a "self-indulgent" embodiment only to suit

or satisfy authoritative figures such as the choreographer. Even though capacity is exercised through an “unpredictable interplay of associations and dissociations,” we should accept our own capacities optimistically through our own existences, without entitling [our] existences to those of others (Rancière, *Emancipated* 17). Ideally, the contested role of autodidactic choreographers should embrace an equilibrium of thoughtfulness; where neural processes abide by virtuous intelligence worth sharing *as* intelligence proper and not *as an* intelligence. For Rancière, “an emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators” (Rancière, *Emancipated* 22). In this quote, there exists a method of communication that develops and maintains collaboration as a tactic used to refine artistic intelligence on both sides. Interpretation and improvisation should be promoted to mobilize the dynamic, intellectual tools necessary to create compelling dance, ensuring that dominance from the gaze does not suppress the perpetual existence of the body in a vulnerable space.

Lastly, Diana Taylor’s concept of “Acts of Transfer” from “Translating Performance,” published in *Performance* in 2001, can be assessed as an allegory, capturing the possibility of how a dancing body may become efficiently and effectively emancipated through her insights. She introduces the field of anthropology and sociology relating to the culture of Latin America, deconstructing certain words such as *acción* and *representación* by conjoining them to the problem of using the generalized term “performance” as a central tenet that, due to its false cognates of *performative* and *performativity*, often dismisses and alienates the various behaviours it covers (Taylor, *Translating* 47). Taylor soon after acknowledges that “a dance, a ritual or a political demonstration requires bracketing or framing that differentiates it from other social practices surrounding it does not imply that the performance is not real or true. On the

contrary, the idea that performance distils a truer truth than life itself runs from Aristotle . . . to the present. (Taylor, *Translating* 46)

This notion is important considering how various ideas through verbal transmission become eroded through space and time when being delivered by the choreographer to the dancer. Considering the dancer's role, the reception of tracing another image or event from the choreographer retains with it a dense, culturally and politically active memory that has and holds exclusive rights by and through the respective body that shares it. It is quite difficult to impose the result that a dancer has successfully embodied a translated tracing of someone else's memory. Taylor goes on to say that "the many uses of the word *performance* point to the complex, seemingly contradictory, and at times mutually sustaining layers of referentiality" (Taylor, *Translating* 45). Taylor's claim is rightfully accurate.

However, what is manifested as being politically legitimate in creative movement begins from the implicit awareness that is used to create improvised nuances. This is often overlooked. These nuances inform and reform political connotations throughout a phase of movement integrated in such a way as to balance both the choreographer and the dancer equally, without a certain role superseding the qualitative composition of what evolves into compelling live movement. Equality has the potential of prevailing here, proposing an intellectual levelling between the dancer and the audience that exists on the basis of the same equality experienced between the choreographer and the dancer. The ocularcentrism that binds the audience to the dancer does not consider the implicitness of movement control, creation and condition that the dancer embodies. Instead, the gaze only dictates a partial cognitive impulse that the audience embraces in order to accept what they see as dynamic and multidimensional without truthfully

analyzing the origin of why the movement must necessarily be performed in the way that it is presented.

The imposition of the ocular split that wrongfully asserts a lack of omnidimension when visualizing the dancing body actually inhibits its emancipation as it is unable to level with the dancer. Taylor refers to performance art, which carries strong aspects of dramatic theatricality that are often used to engage the audience with characteristics that they readily understand. In an effort to promote identity accessibly, Taylor denotes the difference between how “theatricality strives for efficaciousness, not authenticity. It connotes a conscious, controlled, and thus always political dimension that performance need not imply” (Taylor, *Translating* 48). Dance, however, does strive for authenticity as the vulnerability of the dancing body in a controlled space calls for uncontrollable emotions while dancing, although the dancer often works at riding their emotions, which is a cultivating practice of controlling and measuring liveness. No matter how tedious of a process the choreographer-dancer relation is prior to performing for a live audience, the dancer will have to accordingly recalibrate their consciousness in order to relate to the collective presence of a much larger spectacle. Here, the omnipresence of the dancing body on stage senses and sentences the dimension: how well does the dancer simultaneously bind with both the given choreography and the unique ability to internalize it so to augment it and convert it into their own?

Here, the acts of transfer that remain inseparable from the artistic intention and objective carry with them a metaphysical proponent of validation that is used to inform and refine the transition of firstly contemplated language and thought into provocative, compelling movement. Considering the dancer and choreographer in the choreographic process, Taylor’s insights authenticate the reasoning of the necessity of communication, collaboration and cooperation in

acquiring a body's trust in a vulnerable space that dominant social and cultural hierarchies often suppress, which the choreographer usually further synthesizes and monitors. A possibility of emancipating the dancing body begins before the procedural demands take place through the collective aesthetic that choreographers often strive for to satisfy audience members. Unlike the efficacious nature on which theatricality depends, improvised dance should enable the body to explore only as much as it needs to in terms of external implications. The body may very well exist as a politically capable, culturally diverse entity, yet with the practice of improvised dance, the body should aim to investigate an intrinsically intimate dimension of somatic possibilities that derive from intrinsic predispositions that create movement for movements' sake and not for the sake of solidifying audience-prone interpretations such as forced satisfaction and enjoyment.

**Part II | The Dancing Body and its Presence through Pensiveness:  
Using Hermeneutics to Demystify Three Somatically Compatible Terms  
Responsible for Creating the Condition of a Dance**

Still, another aspect of aesthetic intent is involved. The dancer deals not just with movement, but with the motivational source, idea, or metaphor behind the movement, that which the movement will bring to mind. Even if the dance is stylistically abstract, it will draw our attention to its unique unfolding to movement patterns in space-time. Movement patterns are also images, as they impress the imagination, as the word “image” implies. The imaginative, or meaningful, level of the dance may be the focus of phenomenological description (Fraleigh 14)

Sondra Fraleigh’s insights on phenomenology through dance reiterate the importance that hermeneutics carries over how a body might become emancipated in improvised movement forms. The images located outside of dance, such as those created through the use of language, convert into somatic possibilities that a dancer contemplates before strategically integrating them to deepen their experience while improvising. The once arbitrary impulses vanish as they are substituted with substantially enhanced, intellectually bound intentions. In this section, noticing how demystifying three somatically compatible terms responsible for creating the condition of a dance will, in turn, reinforce the very principles needed to determine the overall level of somatic commitment reflected by Fraleigh in the aforementioned quote. Hermeneutically speaking, Diana Taylor’s prior concept of “Acts of Transfer” engages and prepares its audience for acquiring the necessary dialectical framework to understand how an emancipated dancing body may come to fruition. Taylor quotes Victor Turner, for whom “performances revealed culture’s deepest, truest, and most individual character” (Taylor, *Translating* 45). Guided by a belief in performances’ universality and relative transparency, Turner claims that populations can grow to understand each other through their performances. For others, of course, performance means just the

opposite: the “constructedness” of performance signals its artificiality—it is “put on,” antithetical to the “real” and “true” (Taylor, *Translating* 45). Interestingly, it would seem that if one were to assume the value of a performance rooted in epistemic predispositions, they could deduce that old knowledge constantly informs and reconfigures the spectator’s perspective in analyzing present phenomena referenced in performances (i.e., embedded political connotations, technological principles, etc.). Why? Rancière would state that the creation of art should be to problematize and disseminate the presuppositions that construct a system of stultification. The ramifications of favouring the new without understanding why the new exists or where it comes from fundamentally neutralizes the artist’s role by pervading artistic empathy through a lack of human-documented accuracy and dimensionality.

This section, rooted in Heideggerian existentialism, investigates the role of the dancer in correlation to the paronomasia (homonymic resemblances) between the terms dance, prance and trance while simultaneously interpolating the particularity of three German idealist, phenomenologically centred and compatible terms: *Geisteswissenschaft* (human sciences, or the interaction of subjective and objective elements), *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (equiprimordiality or the gliding) and *Erlebnis* (inner lived experience). I will use hermeneutics to propose a harmonizing latency of pensiveness available for embodiment, initiated through the causal, synergistic alchemy that these particular terms create. What surfaces is a methodological basis that can firstly be used to clarify and simplify aesthetics in non-narrative movement forms that a creative mover explores. I propose that by suggesting the mutual exclusiveness of these terms (*Geisteswissenschaft*, *Gleichursprünglichkeit* and *Erlebnis*) and their eventual levelling, non-dependence toward narrative or the implicit need to fortify a certain topic, trend, custom or belief while improvising with raw movement need not inhibit the natural synthesis of apperceptive

propensity (body phenomenology) experienced at the time of improvisation, and secondly, where this framework informs the emergence of an emancipated state, as I will discuss in *Part IV*.

The table below can be used to distill the generic copula “as being” conveyed in the following statement that I created—“being in dance cannot exist without the prance, as the prance in dance creates the trance.” This statement should be used as a neurological tenet before and during the movement exploration. It also acts as a suitable linguistic prompt that a dancer might follow, leading into an emancipated state. [Table 1](#) is a tool that can be used to decipher the seemingly paratactic structure composing the aforementioned statement.

**Table 1**

Their being before and the clearing of their being during ( <i>Da-sein</i> ) (of the respective creative mover) in improvised dance forms	
<i>Geisteswissenschaft</i>	= to (the) being in the dance
↓	
Human sciences or the interaction of subjective and objective elements	
<i>Gleichursprünglichkeit</i>	= the act of the prance
↓	
Equiprimordiality or the gliding	
<i>Erlebnis</i>	= the trance embodied by (the) being in the dance
↓	
Inner lived experience	

Mainly focusing on contemporary dance, narratives often conveyed in structured choreography offer spectators a solidified, physicalized version of a choreographer’s intended vision. Through a compelling display of various articulated movements, choreography generally seeks approval by virtue of the reactive agency distributed by a spectator’s sign of enjoyment and understanding of a narrative. Lepecki’s notion of the “choreo-theoretical-perceptive” (Lepecki, *Apparatus of Capture* 121) apparatus can be understood as an extension of the dancing

subject that can be applied retroactively when examining these three somatically compatible terms:

Only by daily reinventing for oneself a body-for-living—a reinvention that is about activating memory (cellular memory, affective memory, muscular memory) for the present and not about repeating information for the already archived future—can the dancer create for him- or herself other modes of dancing and thus foster other modes of understanding dance perceptively and theoretically (Lepecki, *Apparatus of Capture* 122).

The embedded para-psychological substrate of pensiveness is an irrefutable variable that remains on standby before, during and after experiencing whatever a dance is. However, it is often overlooked that if a spectator were to be a witness to a creative mover's improvised technique that remains dependent on non-narrative involving chance and spontaneity, such aesthetic approval would remain limited to the mover alone, without considering the spectator. This aesthetic flux creates the possibility of a suggestive authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) identified through the bearing of the term *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance). Interestingly, the subversive anomaly of the term “authenticity” as reflected in Theodor W. Adorno and Frederic Will's *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1973) remains contested when observed in relation to narrative-structured dance forms:

The aura of authenticity in Heidegger is that it names “nothing”; the “I” remains formal and yet pretends that the word contains content in-itself. For Adorno, Heidegger's existentialism is a new Platonism which implies that authenticity comes in the complete disposal of the person over himself-as if there were no determination emerging from the objectivity of history (Adorno and Will xvii).

Yet while observed from the entity enduring improvisation, *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) can itself be an authentic state of being compelling the improvised movement. Let us recall that the definition of the term *Geisteswissenschaft* involves an interaction of both subjective and objective elements creating the human sciences; a truism that propels a body in Euclidean space to manifest movement from a multiplicity of various predeterminations without

having to logically reference them in a particular aesthetic, or as often demonstrated, in a narrative structure. This instance also clarifies a contingency riddling the claim of what ought to be considered “an aesthetic” in improvised movement. Noticing their (creative movers) “being before and the clearing of being during” heading in the table (see [Table 1](#)) separates the misconception of the “leading into something” before it has “successfully started from nothing.” This separation generates *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) by first allowing the improvising entity to place subjective reality in opposition with objective influence. It is the opposite of narrative structure embodiment. The being before (non-dance) leads into the something (dancing) and transforms into the clearing of being. The clearing of being is a result of a transfigured aesthetic, whereby improvisation becomes a nuanced principle of a reality dismantling the apparition of things otherwise.

Once the body endures *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance), the earthly (*irdischen*) stability of the entity in Euclidean space is relinquished through the acceptance of a physically tolerable and perceptible yet transcendental characteristic of *das gewaltige* (yielding to the powerful); in this case, the power of pre-determined movement possibility. The anamorphic form of such improvised movement ensures that chance is equally as important in the dance’s compositional structure as the physical laws that constitute the body’s ability to move in a dance-determined state. Mimetic movement, defined here as embodied movement by the dancer from the choreographer, cannot transform into, nor embrace, the affect that *Geisteswissenschaft* offers to the improviser as the somatic synchronicity between these three terms (dance→*Geisteswissenschaft*, prance→ *Gleichursprünglichkeit* and trance→ *Erlebnis*) is hindered early in the process due to choreographic ocularcentrism. *Geisteswissenschaft* begins with *geist*, meaning inner mind and spirit, which remains an instrumental component constituting

and compelling the reason that a dancer moves the way that they choose to, and not the way that they were meant to. *Wissen* is scientific nature, an empirical foundation that a dancer needs to acknowledge before pursuing the phenomenological impulse that the mind triggers and that the body further senses, synthesizes and physicalizes. As *Geisteswissenschaft* prevails, the dancer begins to embrace adaptability in an improvised movement structure that can now translate into an equiprimordial shift adjacent to the term *Gleichursprünglichkeit*.

The term *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) reflects a concept known as gliding, the equiprimordial leap that in this case considers the dancer enduring the process of improvised experimentation before the dance occurs. This second phase or cue imbues the body to experience improvised chance in movement creation without guilt so that essentially, consequentiality remains devoid of placing the dancer in flux with their own body and the space that co-exists and balances their movement. *Gleichursprünglichkeit* is a mode of reaction to the primary particularity of *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance), which is exclusive to the process of creating a dance. Often a misconception of constructed movement is that no matter how movement is verbally or physically distributed and by what role, it begins in itself as an improvised chance from an initial circumstance. The circumstances demand an impulse of movement, which exists prior to the creation of an improvised phrase as nothing more than a somatic possibility or impossibility. The improvised chance emerges on a count of accepting the uncalculated precision of what is to become a transition, or more importantly, a translation of *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance). The gliding is a continuous somatic transition that delineates a unique translation for the dancer by virtue of their experience recalling the movement before, during and after the fact. The spectator, if present, also desires recollection of the dancer's exposed experience as such an experience successfully translates a viable alternative

to movement that the spectator senses only visually. This instance places “the gliding” as the act of the prance, that is, the uncalculated calculation of the multiplicity that organizes the basis of aesthetics in improvised movement. The entity that has now embodied the first two constituents (*Geisteswissenschaft* [to (the) being in dance] and *Gleichursprünglichkeit* [the act of the prance]) of the three is a step closer to mobilizing what is needed in order for a dance to manifest.

*Gleichursprünglichkeit* can further be used to manipulate the sensations of body language so to expose a counter-intuitive example of what the spectator or dancer may have felt otherwise. For example, the gliding in a non-improvised movement structure remains limited and static due to the promulgated refinement in movement ideas and lack of abstraction that the choreographer enforces. This is likely because language can only go as far as to describe what aesthetic should look or feel like, especially when instructed for someone else to embody. The gliding in this case represents the choreographer’s work, as if the choreographer themselves is the dancer, abolishing the unique propensity of a somatic chance by replacing it with a strict uniformity of mimicked movement. An example that can be related to the partial transference effect that takes place between dancer and choreographer includes the applicable circumstances caused by the author’s role as identified by Roland Barthes in his essay “Death of the Author” (1967):

Probably this has always been the case: once an action is recounted, for intransitive ends, and no longer in order to act directly upon reality—that is, finally external to any function but the very exercise of the symbol—this disjunction occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author [choreographer] enters his own death, writing begins . . . the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who has produced it, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always finally the voice of one and the same person, the author, which delivered his “confidence” (Barthes 2).

This seeming duplicity in outcome actually fractures and suppresses *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) from occurring, which would mean that *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) exists solely for the choreographer’s behalf. Theoretically, a psychoanalytical assessment

of this issue would reveal that the choreographer is actually the dancer but not equal to the dancer, while the dancer is the choreographer but not equal to the choreographer—a transference effect of sorts. This inequality impedes and extends to factors of emancipation that most dancers would ideally pursue to maintain the necessary levelling of roles if both *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) and *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) were to occur. Returning to improvised movement structures, one can see how *Gleichursprünglichkeit* enables a dancer to seamlessly transition from one somatic chance to the next. In improvised movement, there exists a heightened sense of self-control through self-perceptibility and self-evaluation (when further paired with proprioceptive awareness in Euclidean space), which allows the act of the prance to occur, not as a forced response to an aesthetic but rather a chance (outcome) from a chance (desire of movement impulse before it occurs).

Most importantly, *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) can be used as an intellectual tool to refine the rigid transition often experienced by movement improvisers with attempts to construe how the inner lived experience, *Erlebnis* or the simultaneous pairing of the trance, may look or feel. Taking the example of a musical score, timbre is often associated with offering a dancer a transcendental reaction to what is being heard in terms of frequency. In turn, the feedback alters a dancer's consciousness accordingly, which compels the body to adjust in order to fit the appropriate movement signature. Yet even here, the dominance (like the choreographer over the dancer) carries the unique ability to abolish *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the gliding, or related act of the prance) through its ever-evolving tonality. This suggests something particular that the body may not otherwise have accepted if such a musical score were not present. It could also be argued that the score's artificiality (whether or not the music has been produced live, vocally, with musical instrument digital interface, or with live instruments)

augments the dancer's experience at securing the embodiment of the gliding. If we examine the ironic counter-example, that is to say, if a musical score were not present, the body as an entity enduring improvised movement can itself inhibit its own potential by becoming overpowered with what the dancer is most adept at embracing while considering movement vocabulary. Silence can, at times, inform the body to base its movement in the sounds that the body itself creates, both internally and externally. Adept here is also comfort or composure (calmness); what comfort is can easily become imbued with nuances of superficiality through pervading egoism. Taking that body language that a dancer expresses in Euclidean space can derive from personal emotion, it is important to recognize that for *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) to balance both terms and their affiliated contextual reactions, the experimental improvisation needs to be fully segmented from anything and everything, making it susceptible to mimicry. An arbitrary unforeseen and raw examination of both neural and visceral impulses should, through their unification, urge the mover to manifest something that cannot exist in any other way other than the way that they (the dancer) intended it to be. The result of the delivered improvised movement can now begin the trajectory at becoming the eventual clearing of being with an inner lived experience (*Erlebnis*).

Finally, *Erlebnis* (the trance embodied by [the] being in the dance) is paired with the act of the trance itself, which is partially para-psychological. The following example by Erika Bourguignon in her conference presentation, "The Relationship of Trance and Dance" (1995), explores the responsiveness of trance when embodied by a dancer:

An example of the one might be excitement, as at the peak of a sports event, of the other drowsiness induced by monotony, as in highway hypnosis. Such states of hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal of the nervous system are both common and diverse. Some are ordinary, others extraordinary, perhaps even spectacular. In spite of their diversity, they share a number of common characteristics. These include alterations of perception, sensation, memory, thought processes, in short, of consciousness. They are often followed by

euphoria and heightened levels of energy. In calling these states examples of “dissociation,” I wish to draw attention to a common process that characterizes them, namely the narrowing of the focus of attention, so that most ordinary stimuli are excluded, for example, sensations of pain, or even a habitual sense of self and personal identity. Trancing constitutes a universal human capacity that comes into play in numerous circumstances, from the most ordinary and quotidian to the most dramatic, ritualized and sacred (Bourguignon 2).

The being begins to transform into non-being by embracing the procedural transitions between *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) and *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance). Here, the particularity of the improvised chance that emerges with every movement that the dancer pursues happens without the necessity of creating an aesthetic, but rather to sanctify their own and refine it. What comes to be exposed for a spectator or for the respective dancer improvising the movement is a mode of consciousness that can never truly be fully exposed in a visually observable manner. The trance that isolates the being from non-being exists at the level of visceral charisma to which the dancer attunes them self. How well they know their body as a result of attempting to experience their dance is a direct evolution of how deep their consciousness allows them to experience the possibility of a trance. This tripartite evolution endeavours a discovery of all three somatically compatible terms that simultaneously pair with the sense of proprioceptive awareness. The degree of the trance is both dependent and non-dependent on proprioception, which is defined by how well a dancer comes to “feel” through, around and within the space that encapsulates their (body) vessel. The method of which the trance is dependent on proprioception is if the dancer successfully manages to mobilize their body with the environment in such a way as to extend their improvised movement beyond the body’s form. For example, as long as the body performs in a space, the larger availability of space will subject the body to a type of immersive fetishism by making a dancer feel the need to use as much space as they possibly can in order to satisfy their own or the spectator’s lived

experiences. This is an example where the tendency of dependence actually dilutes the level of the trance and *Erlebnis* (the trance embodied by [the] being in the dance). If one observes a counter example of how the trance dependency of proprioception can work with a dancer rather than against them, the following can be considered.

Space dependency can help a dancer maintain their trance only if they know the exactness of how the space merges and neutralizes their improvisation. More often than not, a performing space can overpower a dancer's ability to maintain the separation between being and non-being so that ideally the trance can be felt and understood for an extended period of time once non-being is discovered. The counterexample involves a direct integration and incorporation of a portion of a performing space into the structure of the improvisation that the dancer pursues. However, this skillful approach is just as vulnerable as it is susceptible to emerging a narrative interpretation that can easily erode a trance. A dancer must ensure that using the space directly means placing the space as an equal entity adjacent to their own body. The dancer must look beyond the conventional clash between materiality and non-being in order to maintain the typography of improvisation that will reflect the degree of depth in their trance.

An example where the trance is non-dependent on proprioception is if the dancer chooses to situate their body by performing in nature. Kathy Foley intelligently recognizes the benefit behind this practice by employing evidence accumulated during her time spent in West Java, Indonesia. In her article, "The Dancer and the Danced: Trance Dance and Theatrical Performance," she notes how:

the appeal to this type of acting is two-fold. First, there is the attraction of voyeurism: these forms allow audiences to see beyond their everyday existence into the normally hidden world of the spirits who perform. . . . The second appeal is spectacle: since these spirits are endowed with superhuman powers, the entranced performers often engage in activities beyond the limits of mere mortals (Foley 28).

This particular instance replaces a fixed Euclidean space dimensionality, often presumed and equated as a “black-box theatre” with a vector-space multiplicity of infiniteness considering the external environment. Although boundaries do exist, the conventional walls restraining a dancer to improvise in a certain way are replaced, and the dancer is instead offered a wide range of movement alternatives and psycho-somatic methods worth investigating. Incidentally, due to the multiplicity of infiniteness that the external environment offers, the dancer will actually be compelled to restrict their movement to as small of a region as possible, where less movement will actually mean an increased chance at experiencing the depth of a trance. Taking this example, choosing between dependence and non-dependence is really a matter of how well the dancer knows the capacity and sensitivity of their own body. The transformation between *Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) through *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) and *Erlebnis* (the trance embodied by [the] being in the dance) is a result of logical inferences from a choreographer that the dancer does not listen to per say but rather feels and applies proactively at the level of the self before the separation from being into non-being can occur through the trance.

By using hermeneutics to demystify these three somatically compatible terms—*Geisteswissenschaft* (to [the] being in dance) through *Gleichursprünglichkeit* (the act of the prance) and *Erlebnis* (the trance embodied by [the] being in the dance) responsible for creating the condition of a dance—one can understand why improvised movement structures could simplify a dancer’s course of experiencing an *Erlebnis*. The lived experience in this case is a trance not readily available by questioning the convictions of everyday life but instead by “viscerally forgetting” a reality that eventually becomes more than it was previously. By conditioning the consciousness to follow a tripartite structure, the dancer observes the

transitional transformation between *Geisteswissenschaft*, *Gleichursprünglichkeit* and *Erlebnis* to result in the dance's creation. Discussed previously, the being before (non-dance) leads into the something (dancing) and transforms into the clearing of being. The latter is a result of a transfigured aesthetic, whereby improvisation becomes a nuanced principle of a reality dismantling the apparition of things otherwise. Assuming that any dancer should attempt to discover their own embedded trance waiting to prevail, the question lies not with how well a choreographer manages to estrange a dancer from discovering non-being by implicitly using mimetic principles to guide and impose movement ideas or how obedient a dancer can be at embodying and satisfying the authoritative choreographer's role. The question instead lies with how well a dancer places their body into a parallel state of existence that corresponds to "being" but does not inhibit the chance of experiencing "non-being." By evaluating the distinctiveness of each term, a new question arises, one that is worthy of analysis and may mediate the consolidation of understanding how consciousness itself is the force that guides the trance needed to create the dance.

**Part III | The Indispensable Spectator: How Jacques Lacan’s “The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze” from book XI (1998) Informs the Framing of a Dancing Body from the Spectator’s Point of view**

In this section, I will observe the conglomeration that Lacanian ideologies offer the instance of improvised contemporary dance by the reference and shaping that narcissism uses to inform the persuasive force that spectators often disregard. Perhaps unwillingly, this partially cognitive, disinhibiting force that narcissism uses to reduce the value of the gaze consumes the spectator’s ability to differentiate accurately between the intolerable and the uncanny, where both realms can be co-representational and co-compatible. The silent “vying” between the bodies of a spectator, dancer and choreographer that create a salient alternative to critique can begin with questioning the piety of judgment in relation to aesthetics. How can an aesthetic in improvised contemporary dance forms in conjunction with the aforementioned hermeneutical analysis clarify and vivify the spectator’s ability to “breach the void” without dismissing the gazed reality with the sidereal? This section uses various performances as examples that frame the emerging methodology that I describe (see [Table 2](#)) in *Part IV* while implicitly using Rancière’s “The Split between the Eye and the Gaze” as a foundation that guides a precept to which most spectators remain oblivious. In addition, the domain of psychoacoustics will prove invaluable to assessing the “onto-visceral” and somatic matter associated with deepening a visual experience for an audience by providing them with an accessible, hermeneutical theory.

Lacan begins by describing the pervasive force that narcissism uses to dilute the stream of attention when ocularcentrism embodied by a spectator remains fixated with art:

Lacan complicates this understanding of the narcissistic view in the mirror by distinguishing between the eye's look and the Gaze. Gaze in Lacan's later work refers to the uncanny sense that the object of our eye's look or glance is somehow looking back at us of its own will. This uncanny feeling of being gazed at by the object of our look affects us . . . (Felluga).

This instance remains consistent with the work of Vito Acconci in *Theme Song* (1973) (see [fig. 1](#)) where his use of language remains synonymous with an ostentatious display of elusive and sensuous suggestions, likely holding the objective to make the spectator uncomfortable and partially violated against their own will.



Fig.1. Image downloaded from a museum website reproduced in a text  
Acconci. *Theme Song*. 1973. Video (black and white, sound) 33:15 min. The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

The gaze that Acconci uses is as piercing as his selection in language, creating a narrative and ambiance that embeds itself within and around a favouring of a certain intention within a certain embodied identity that may or may not be his identical own:

Lacan then argues in “Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*” that there is an intimate relationship between the objet petit a (which coordinates our desire) and the Gaze (which threatens to undo all desire through the eruption of the Real). As I stated in the previous module, “at

the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections. It is that lack at the heart of desire that ensures we continue to desire.” However, because the objet petit a (the object of our desire) is ultimately nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections, to come too close to it threatens to give us the experience precisely of the Lacanian Gaze, the realization that behind our desire is nothing but our lack: the materiality of the Real staring back at us. That lack at the heart of desire at once allows desire to persist and threatens continually to run us aground upon the underlying rock of the Real (Felluga).

Another of Acconci’s works, *Centers* (1971), remains consistent with his earlier works, resonating with a phenomenological grounding. When examined alongside Lacan’s Seminar *XI* (1998), the fracturing of the succession of the gaze proves that what is seen by the eye is relative yet separate to a moment in time and space. Heidegger calls this concept *Gestel* or the enframing of the negative image; in this case, the image that spawns from the spectator as a reflection of, but not as an exact mimetic engram of, what is momentarily being perceived. “This disturbance in the perception of space is induced by something that is not seen but imagined. It is not space, but vision, or rather a different spatiality of vision, which Lacan proposes to diagram in introducing the function of the gaze.” (Mariño70) Logically, the audience somehow knows that the perception of their gaze is distorted by the movement in realtime as it happens simultaneously yet separately. In relation to *Centers*, the frustrating affect from the attempt to create a neural projection of imagination that Acconci’s pointing on screen (see [fig. 2](#)) will eventually reach its centre to fulfill the desire of both Acconci and the spectator creates an unsettling tension that introduces agency as the mediator of the gaze rather than the body.



Fig. 2. Image downloaded from a non-profit arts organization reproduced in an archive  
 Acconci. *Centers*. 1971. Video (black and white, sound) 22:28 min. New York. Electric  
 Arts Intermix (EAI) Electric Arts Intermix (EAI).

Phenomenologically, both realms situated on different planes of existence begin to morph into one where the audience literally becomes a by-product of the tension that is both visualized and felt. The conjoining of roles in this case creates a unifying body that the gaze accepts and further magnifies through the dissolution of engrams closely associated with the neoplatonic notion of anamnesis. A trance then begets the level of depth perceptivity that reciprocates the engagement a spectator delineates as either viscerally tantalizing (enjoyable through relatedness) or viscerally non-associative (disliking through non-relatedness).

With reference to the instance of narcissism, both aforementioned examples of Acconci's works carry with them the notion of self-indulgence and egoism closely attributed with any performance where spectators are present; after all, performances act as metaphorical mirrors used to redistribute an experience in return for another experience. Now, these are the two features of the everyday use of video: the simultaneous reception and projection of an image and

the human psyche used as a conduit (Krauss 180). It is important to remember that despite these examples being central to performance for video, the nature of idiosyncratic, ideological frameworks developed through hermeneutics used to refine the depth that improvised dance calls for considers the same discursive methodologies discussed in the entirety of this thesis. The compatibility within seemingly incompatible domains of thought has proven to resolve the flux between how, for example in this section, aesthetics can become extinguished or vivified through narcissistic elements.

More often than not, a spectator relies on the same narcissistic elements used to reduce, confine and define their overall engagement with the condition of a dance. The stability and dependency of stasis that a spectator often embodies when viewing a dance restricts their gaze from experiencing the equiprimordial shift necessary to excite not just all senses of perception, but their being in and alongside the performance as a similar performing entity. The gaze seems to be a performing entity separate to the mere function of the eyes; where the eyes only see what is being presented to them, the gaze remains capable of drawing decisions over how what is being seen influences its viewer. If you insert an absolute event into a relative system, no matter how much the relative elements change, the absolute event is still there (Jackson and Lethem 254). If a spectator chooses to interpolate a narcissistic judgment (relative element) with their eyes in terms of the “what” a performance consists of (absolute event), the spectator remains unable to visualize the foundational noetic predisposition that the gaze would otherwise use to assess the “how.” Simply put, the gaze remains capable of digging through multiple layers of a vision to clarify the “how,” creating the relative aesthetic that coalesces with the being in a space, whereas for the mere sight that superficially assesses the “what” in a performance (i.e.,

lighting, design, music) often restricts a spectator to remain in the realm of the thinking alone and omitting reason.

When observing the value that a gaze offers to the spectator, the dynamism between what is apparent and what is relative begins to reform spatially in such a way that strengthens spectral tendencies:

Lacan appropriates Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological model of vision that identifies a fundamental “reversibility” in vision; the body is both subject and object, the seeing and the seen. Lacan takes up this notion of reversibility, but changes the emphasis of Merleau-Ponty's model through insisting that, despite the reversibility of the seeing and the seen, it is the possibility of being observed which is always primary (annotated by Lee, 67–78 *Theories of Media*, 2003).

This example of Lacanian ideologies can also work alongside those of Merleau-Ponty for whom *le corps propre*—the living body or the body proper—is a moving and perceiving bodily subject, which as such constitutes the very site of expression: “the body is eminently an expressive space” (Merleau-Ponty 103). Expression here plays a significant role that the spectator willingly subscribes to when viewing a performance; the gaze creates expressivity for the spectator who remains unable to share dynamic movement, which, in turn, dismisses the vapid, static re-possession that might wrongfully be best described as something that the spectator can manage in a shared performing space. The appositional trajectory of gazes here (the gaze shared amongst the performers) and the gaze that connects the spectator to the condition of a performance, unifies “the being in the dance” with “the dance in the being” despite losing authenticity along the way, as Maria Scott cleverly notes alongside Lacan, due to misrepresentation:

The gaze is shown to elude representation as much as it escapes vision: In our relation to things, insofar as this relation is constituted by the way of vision [our path of vision: ‘la voie de la vision’], and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze (Scott 329).

Indeed, it is evident that the gaze carries with it a certain degree of distortion, but nonetheless provides a spectator with a co-constituent informative lens that can be theoretically inserted into that of the performer, strengthening the unification of separated roles in a shared performing space.

Interestingly, despite the dense, psychoanalytical framework constituting much of Lacanian philosophy, the appearance of what Philip K. Dick much later described as “discorporating slippage” remains a compatible mode of reasoning that a spectator, perhaps unknowingly or unwillingly, resorts to using when ruminating over a live performance. By considering the fact that Dick’s discorporating slippage seems to occur over both his hypnopompic and hypnagogic states suggests that similar states of consciousness replace a spectator’s gaze differently when visualizing a performance as opposed to visualizing something else. The pensive degree of devotion that a spectator depends on when fixation occurs with a moving performer reveals their (spectators), or as Heidegger puts it (*geborgenwerden*), secretly hidden body consciousness (*vuszt-zein*) as described as thinking with their body and not the mind. As a performer thinks and expresses with their body, so must a spectator in order to experience what the gaze authentically offers them, but then what, or more importantly how, does a gaze come to offer a spectator authenticity? In order to differentiate accurately what is or is not considered authentic in regard to the specificity of the gaze, I introduce a hermeneutic assessment of certain ideological theories discussed by Theodor W. Adorno and Maurice Merleau-Ponty that provide evidence clarifying the much contested topic.

Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), a translation by Robert Hullot-Kentor, uses a clever description that hints at the embedded nature of authenticity in a concept that could be applied specifically to improvised contemporary dance:

The universal determinations of art [dance] are not simply an exigency of their conceptual reflection. They testify to the boundaries of the principle of individuation, which is no more to be ontologized than is its opposite. Artworks get ever closer to these boundaries the more uncompromisingly they pursue the *principium individuationis*; the artwork that appears as something universal bears the accidental quality of being an example of its genre: It is spuriously individual (Adorno 181).

He soon after goes on to say the following: “The more single-mindedly artworks devote themselves to the emerging idea of art, the more precarious becomes the relation of artworks to their other, a relation that is itself demanded by the concept. But this relation can be conserved only at the price of precritical consciousness, desperate naïveté” (Adorno 181).

In this example, it would seem that the artwork remains inseparable from its viewer while its ontological predicate serves to distill the authentic confirmation that chance perception offers the overall experience. Aesthetics is not obliged, as under the spell of its object, to exorcise concepts. Rather, its responsibility is to free concepts from their externality to the particular object and to bring them within the work (Adorno 180). In this case, multiple aesthetics can be seen to converge into one, suggesting that a gaze remains incapable of nullifying creative judgment. A spectator often embraces a dualistic personality; the spectator that gazes willfully to assess and the spectator that gazes critically to differentiate. This epiphenomenon of the gaze grants the spectator ownership of their will to criticize what they see or more importantly, how they feel over what they see. Laura U. Marks vitally examines the difference between haptic criticism and the more conventional optical visibility whose objective remains to create an opinion over a certain subject matter being perceived. Evidently, it is the former haptic method that informs and reconfigures the gaze in both the spectator and performer that remains able of unifying separate bodies in a common environment:

Optical seeing depends upon a center, a point in the brain (or is it the soul), where the object is reproduced (light carrying its image needle-like through the pupil). These elements allow us to make pinhole cameras of ourselves. We reproduce the results of our

observations at a place called the self, deep within us, while our surface remains intact. In haptic seeing, all of our self rushes up to the surface to interact with another surface. When this happens, there is a concomitant loss of depth—we become amoebalike, lacking a center, changing as the surface to which we cling changes. We cannot help but be changed in the process of interacting. We give up believing that meaning is formed after the fact, in our minds, and attribute power to create meaning to the interaction itself. In other words, we give up some of our power of self-determination in order to let the other transform us (Marks 20).

This example informs *Part IV* of my methodology where performers interpolate three otherwise separated roles by embodying them simultaneously when applying prompt charts to guide and shape improvised movement. As a result, by embracing the role of the spectator alongside the choreographer and dancer, the spectator can be said to look through the vanishing point in order to synthesize their experience of deepening the process by which visceral manifestation translates and transforms into an emancipated moment.

Moving on, the element of chance that the spectator trusts can also be said to work alongside notions of authenticity. How might a shorter lasting, less-refined moment in improvised dance resonate a deeper degree of authenticity? How can authenticity as a token of improvised movement inform artistic intentions suggesting a strengthening in reason and choice despite its arbitrary nature when converted to visceral manifestation? For example, the attraction of chance to the artists involved in the surrealist timeframe of the 1920s was primarily creative rather than political—it served as a new way to liberate imagery from convention. By developing new and individual “automatic” processes, these artists sought to reconcile opposing parts of the human experience: the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious, reality and dream (Gale). With a connection to improvised contemporary dance, where the performer can share the role of the spectator as well, chance usually compels the performer to discover the ambiguity associated with non-narrative impulses or the implicit desire to circulate a spontaneous output of creative movement energy in a given amount of

space. In turn, what converts from chance into visceral manifested movement is an attempt to characterize the perception of chance as silently visualized before it realistically comes to life. Its congruous immediacy, once converted into visceral manifestation, ought to occur as quickly as possible to preserve its authenticity as it remains unrefined, uninformed and untraceable to previous thought processes that may have used calculability to determine how it implicitly should have otherwise come to exist. This instance places trust and chance as equal variants whose co-resonance creates the degree to which authenticity is associated once visceral manifestation engages. Merleau-Ponty insightfully interweaves an extension of phenomenological thought that could be applied to the spectator's role by noting that "the perpetual 'synthesis' must be incomplete and perception can only present a 'real' to me [spectator or performer] by exposing itself to the risk of error" (Merleau-Ponty 396).

In this case, error can actually be said to guide and shape not just the performer but the spectator as well. For the performer, what feels like an error when devising improvised contemporary dance forms, might actually strengthen and solidify the attempt of creating a pure chance outcome without predetermined thought selection. For the spectator, error can be said to exist when the expected turns, or more appropriately, becomes the unexpected, as I will explain in *Part IV* of my methodology. Error is a mode of chance that guides the principles constituting the aesthetic of the uncanny. When the performer trusts the inconsistency and unpredictability of error, chance, in return, feels "right" for the body, once mobilized into visceral manifestation, rather than wrong.

An example of an artist that uses the element of "chance" to shape the spectators and performers' experience is John Cage, whose work can also be considered analogous to the concept of chaos theory rooted in serialism and Chinese philosophy. For Cage, the *I ching* is

intended to produce a detailed examination of the present moment (Jensen 97–102). It also serves as an implicit oracle of sorts used to shape the product of chance outcome exclusive to music. I employed the same ideological framework in my methodology addressed in *Part IV*, wherein a prompt chart works as an analogy adjacent to chaos theory to produce an entirely arbitrary and incalculable outcome specific to improvised movement function by following the structure that the prompt charts offer to performers. For Cage, the *I ching* is reputed to reproduce the tendencies of the universe, which is an embrace of randomness that conceals a hidden order resonating only at a universal level (Jensen 102). The hidden order in my methodology can be seen in the four stages that a dancing body proactively applies so to experience the physical aesthetic of the uncanny parallel to the gaze; it creates what I describe to be an emancipated moment. Additionally, in my methodology, where performers are given the opportunity to use both music and silence, similarly to Cage, a reversal effect of sorts is noticed in conjunction with chaos theory; where music exists, the performer must look beyond what the score suggests in order to examine the depth and silence that coalesces with the body despite the multitude of present sounds. Where music does not exist, the performer must create their own mental projection of music in the omnipresent silence by employing precognition as a feature that informs, but does not dictate, the fortification of chance outcome.

## **Part IV | Emancipating the Dancing Body: How Jacque Rancière’s “The Intolerable Image” Propels the Phenomenological Experience from Choreographic Bricolage to Create an Aesthetic in Movement Dimension**

If there is a visible hidden beneath the invisible, it’s not the electric arc that will reveal it, save it from non-being, but the *mise en scène* of words, the moment of dialogue between the voice that makes those words ring out and the silence of images that show the absence of what the words say (Rancière 44).

In *Part IV*, I will demonstrate an experimental, theoretical methodological cosmology that has inevitably emerged through the interpolation of the concepts central to the previous three parts of this thesis. The partially psychoanalytical methodology that I employ in the studio/in the creative process with the dancers imposes the use of distributing neutral questions, monosyllabic words as well as the images of three works (one sculptural effigy and two paintings created from organic materials) in order to generate a causal relationship between how the seen can create the becoming of the unseen, but more importantly, convey how the unveiling of concealed convergences creates an emancipated aesthetic for dancers to embody. I chose Nicola Samorì’s works to supplement the conversion of eventual viscerally manifested movement that the dancers explore. Despite other artists delivering similar works to that of Samorì, I sought visual artworks that would support a seamless transition into contemporary dance in order to clarify the mode of non-representational thinking that I was aiming for the dancers to embrace when attempting my method. Samorì’s works of *Ciclope* (2020), *Caporosa* (2019) and *Testa Con Lacrima* (2017–19) are sculptural and visual art works featured in my thesis that represent classical antiquity in a postmodern setting. As poetic connotations embedded within these works characterize the intolerable construct of aesthetic, the dancer experiments with the creation of a visceral manifestation through and from the translation of the generated neutral statements, monosyllabic

terms and images of sculptured effigies from their gaze without control emanating from predetermined suggestion. The three artworks were purposefully selected as cranial/neck effigies as opposed to full body renders as they seize the possibility of solipsism and apathy clouding the dancer's body through their reduced affect of creating a bounded sense through codification.

This idea followed the intention to allow the dancer to transcend codification, censorship or fetishization thereby strengthening the existential attempt to liberate the dancing body from the body's dance through the presence and deepening of a trance. Idealistically, the distorted, intolerable effigy represents just enough artistic incentive to create a somewhat equiprimordial penetration that becomes part of the dancer. Dancers Recce Caldwell and Kyra Todd were encouraged to use what they could directly see, without over thinking the chance of what viscerally could become, nor analyzing it as nothing more than it is:

Nicola Samori's relationship to the sources of his pictures is suffused with a continuous grappling with the history of visual art—not didactic, but substantive. His work as a painter and sculptor necessarily implies confrontation with this legacy, which nowadays is all too often regarded as unwieldy ballast. Samori has no fear of the past or of his predecessors. He takes possession of them as role models and uses them to traverse the necessary path of knowledge and self-knowledge, using them as instruments to deconstruct their language and to found his own poetics. The suggestive power of an art-historical icon can be so great that it is reworked again and again over the centuries; each work becomes a building block that gradually loses every component of recognizability, increasingly becomes one with its respective creator, and moves ever further away from the original work. (...) In the exhibition's painterly works, Nicola Samori works with the natural flaws in marble and onyx slabs, with cavities, geodes, and aggregates in the material. The figures in his pictures fit these flaws, rather than hiding them; sometimes these imperfections are repurposed as eyes, sometimes they dissolve into blossoms or faces, and sometimes they imitate nipples. The motifs develop out of a physical defect or deficiency and often point to the martyrdom of biblical or art-historical figures: Lucretia, St. Lucia, or St. Jerome. And when the raw material is flawless, as in the case of Santa Lucia in white Carrara marble, then it the artist who, with his processing, inserts a disruption or anomaly: as in a surgical intervention, he implants natural geodes in the material's eye sockets. The act that blinds the picture opens the gaze of those who view it—for new interpretations of the canon (Stefani).

I also purposefully selected these artworks because their mutilated, obscene compositions are not necessarily suggestive of any gender, race, class or culture. The depiction of a cranium also facilitates the understanding of why its separation from a body needs to be created accordingly and not systematically. If the body were present as part of these works, a mimetic disposition would draw forth a narrative impulse abolishing the process leading into an emancipated state. Rather, these effigies ought to be seen as anamorphic and uninhibited. A mover is compelled when viewing these images, creating an emancipated experience from the guided language—monosyllabic terms in conjunction with neutral statements—that reflect a translation filtered through the images of these works. This, in turn, becomes a transformation by virtue of the applied disambiguation. Heidegger calls this *Besinnlichkeit* or contemplation or more appropriately reflective meditation, where the narrowing of ambiguity by embodying a unification of roles between the dancer, choreographer and spectator proves the primary objective stated at the beginning of this thesis; authentic movement *is* emancipated movement, just as much as emancipated movement *is* aesthetic movement.

Jacque Rancière's dissemination on *The Intolerable Image* creates the particular aesthetic that I describe as breaking the line, which is firstly a phenomenological and consciousness centered approach that transitions to a somatic-sensory and physically centered attempt. It focuses on movement that places the body in a vulnerable and uncomfortable performing state through the discovery of movement alternatives contrary to the typical contemporary dancer's comfort zone. Comprising my choreographic signature is the explicit, contorted and anamorphic anatomical attempt used to create a transfigured image by essentially replacing the enjoyable and known with the intolerable and unknown. Simply put, the complete "opposite" is investigated through the dancer's improvisation via what would otherwise constitute their general movement

vocabulary. Movement qualities comprising this aesthetic reflect the body's grotesque and unpredictable nature when offered the power of chance through perceptibility. Essentially, by delineating a movement aesthetic of the intolerable image, one that in this case juxtaposes the conventional straight lines emphasizing the classical and contemporary repertoire, a dancer follows and embodies a list of neutral statements, monosyllabic terms and images to create an emancipated aesthetic of discovering what a specific intolerable image might feel or look like—the unlearning of the learned and the visceral manifestation of the becoming of the unseen and uncanny.

It is without question that language facilitates a grounding that propels the intolerable aesthetic into visceral manifestation. The image of the effigy in each of the prompt charts averts the dancer's temptation to willfully subscribe to fetishizing over a predetermined aesthetic that would be conveyed if the entire body was present. Shortly after the prompt charts are offered to the dancers, they are given eight minutes to memorize the chart containing the neutral statements, monosyllabic terms and an image in order to limit preempt narrative dependency. The eight-minute limit forces the dancer to engage only with what they observe on their prompt chart. The tripartite reasoning originates from the obvious fact that the dancer will likely be unable to fully memorize each of the neutral statements and monosyllabic terms. As a result, by virtue of the shortened nature (eight minutes) of cognitive stimulation upon observing the chart, the tripartite structure assumes that the dancer will select independent terms in the neutral statements without memorizing the entire neutral statement itself. The monosyllabic words are assumed to be memorized separately as well. The memorization of the images is a mere substrate neural imprint that translates into the becoming of a reactivation of the spectator's own uninhibited gaze. Again, the idea of subjecting the human mind to no more than eight minutes of

repetition implies that additional neural impulses to create alternative possibilities of movement creation will be halted.

When the eight minutes come to an end, the idea of sharing equilibrium between the embodied roles of the choreographer, dancer and spectator remains residually active, rather than just momentarily active. Filming of the dancer starts the moment that the eight minutes of memorization come to an end, and the dancers are separated from each other in space. Dancer *A* will not view Dancer *B*, as the dancer as a spectator might have the tendency to convert visualized movement into mimicked movement, which goes against the scope of experiencing an emancipated state. Additionally, this approach abolishes the want of somatic repetition, suggestion and refinement that not only creates a narrative, but also places the body in an earlier realm, likely one that pursues the known rather than the unknown. The same approach is repeated with Dancer *A*. Finally, both dancers are reunited in the common space and are given a new “hybrid” prompt chart, which has a combination of neutral statements and monosyllabic terms that each dancer has discovered during their independent memorization and improvisation experiment. What differs slightly is the image’s non-representational aesthetic. Interestingly, the dancers now have a chance to view the previous terms that they embodied while separated from each other before proactively applying the rooted counterparts of language to proactively supply the condition of a shared aesthetic in space. Once again, the dancers are given eight minutes to memorize the prompt chart before experiencing sensory deprivation—they blindfolded themselves. This final scene includes both dancers filmed in complete silence, with no musical score reciprocating their visceral manifestation. The instructions below clarify the methodology that the performers apply in following the step-by-step process:

- Step 1:** Dancer *A* and Dancer *B* are offered separate prompt charts that consist of different neutral statements, monosyllabic terms and an image.
- Step 2:** Dancer *A* and Dancer *B* are given eight minutes to memorize as much as they can from the chart, considering the neutral statements, monosyllabic terms and an image essentially converted to neural reflections and later to movement impulses.
- Step 3.1:** The same music score is given to both dancers. Dancer *A* leaves the performing area. Dancer *B* begins movement as soon as the music starts and the filming begins.
- Step 3.2** Dancer *B* leaves performing area. Dancer *A* begins movement as soon as the music starts and the filming begins.
- Step 4:** Dancer *A* and Dancer *B* enter the performance area. Both dancers are given a new shared prompt chart with familiar neutral statements and monosyllabic terms. The image on this prompt chart differs from the chart that Dancer *A* and Dancer *B* viewed earlier. After eight minutes of memorizing the “hybrid” chart, both dancers experience sensory deprivation as they blindfold themselves and are placed somewhat equidistant from each other in the space. Both dancers begin to move, without a musical score accompanying the filming that captures them.

The prompt charts below are administered to both performers, following the same order of steps discussed above:

Dancer A Final Independent Study Prompt Chart

Neutral Statements	Monosyllabic Terms
Jagged right arm through palm	Lob
Left leg bent with curve and with flexed foot	Jarred
Back tilted with left knee caved in	Taunt
Neck bent with right shoulder raised	Crack
Left elbow elevated with left palm open	Vaunt
Both legs bent and uneven with arms overhead	Curve

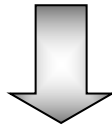


Fig. 3. Image downloaded from a museum website

Samori. *Ciclope*. 2020

Dancer **B** Final Independent Study Prompt Chart

Neutral Statements	Monosyllabic Terms
Left ankle inverted with right knee bent	Seal
Torso tilted	Stretch
Neck bent back with arms curved	Grip
Right palm wrapped around left upper leg	Loom
Bent knees with arched back	Gloom
Both arms proximal to lower legs	Baste

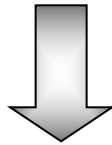


Fig. 4. Image downloaded from a museum website

Samori. *Caporosa*. 2019

Dancer *A* and *B* Final Shared Study Prompt Chart

Neutral Statements	Monosyllabic Terms
Both feet and palms on floor	Vaunt
Head tilted and feet pointed	Taunt
Left arm straight	Loom
Legs crossed and arms crossed	Gloom
Head on floor with both legs extended	Daunt
Right arm alongside torso	Haunt

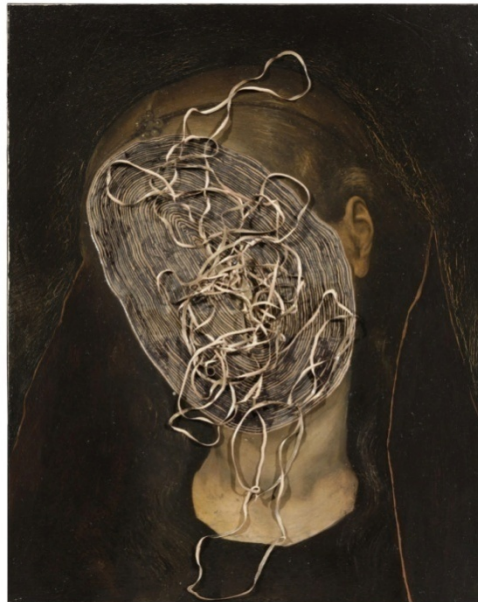
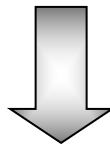


Fig. 5. Image downloaded from a museum website

Samorì. *Testa Con Lacrima*. 2017

Additional Sample Prompt Chart for Dancers A and B used in Rehearsal for Experimentation

Neutral Statements	Monosyllabic Terms
Right palm inverted	Taunt
Left leg bent with tilted torso	Doom
Left knee straight	Gloom
Left knee rotated with elbow curved	Bloom

Syntactical Deconstruction for content listed above:

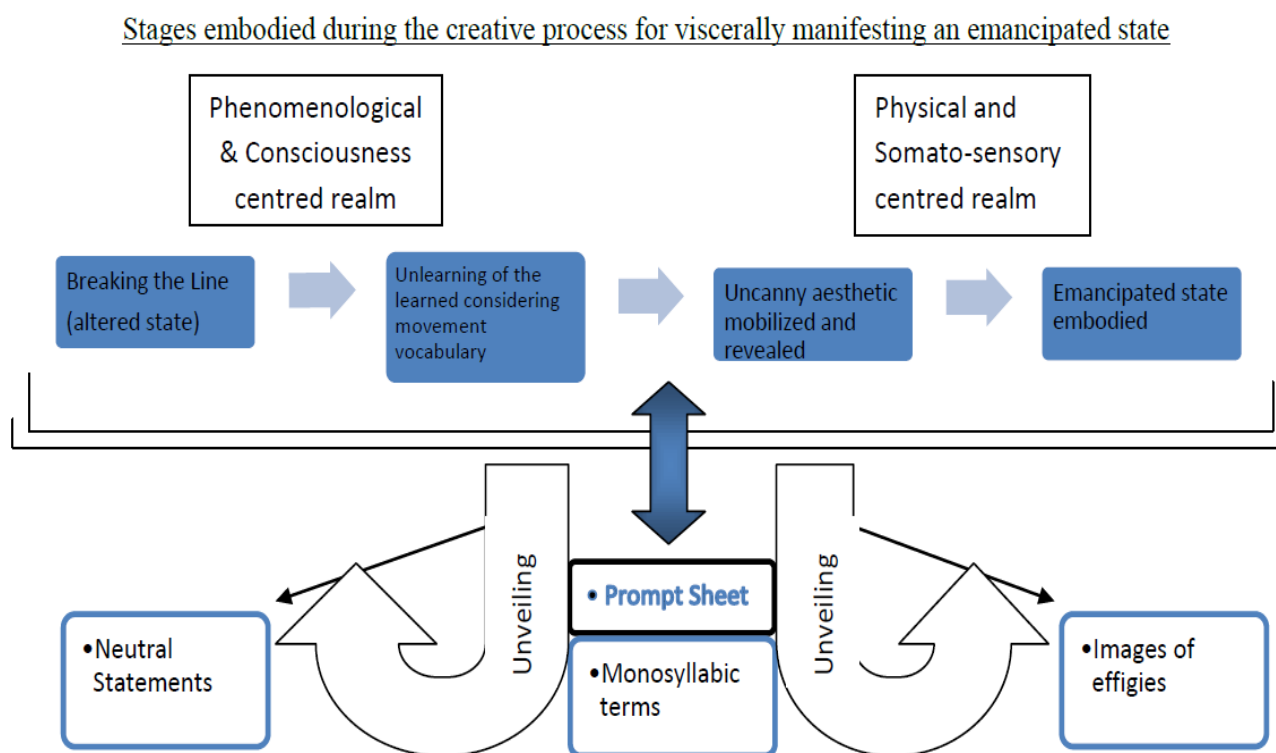
**Taunt**: Gibe - Middle French (gibber) “to handle roughly”; **Doom**: Proto Germanic (*domaz*) (source also of Old Saxon and Old Frisian [*dom*], Old Norse [*domr*]) “judgement,” “irrevocable destiny” to modern day “destruction”; **Gloom**: Dutch (*gluren*) “to leer”; **Fear**: Old Norse (*far*) “harm, distress, deception”; Old Norse (FÆRA) “to taunt.”



Fig. 6. Doody. *Glimpse*. Digital Art. 2020

Post-performance Questions for Dancers used in Creative Process:

1. Did you use the neutral statements and terms as a starting point or as a recurring motif throughout visceral manifestation?
2. Did the depth of the music (audible frequency) in conjunction with the depth of the image offer you a heightened sense of perception that translated into experiencing a trance?
3. How can the weighing of these specific monosyllabic terms (homonymic resemblances) present an accessible uncanny aesthetic in visceral manifestation differently than other common terms?
4. How did you situate yourself in the space differently than if this methodology would not have been the incentive challenging your creative threshold?

**Table 2**

The diagram of the stages embodied (see [Table 2](#)) aims to simplify and clarify the ontological basis and existential relationship that it carries over how my theoretical framework successfully informs the dancing body. In accordance with Rancière's work, found in Chapter four, *The Intolerable Image*, of the *Emancipated Spectator*, it is vital to understand that the mode of assessing his work provides a reasoning of translatability that the dancing body can directly embody (Rancière, *Emancipated* 83). Although Rancière explicitly postulates the embeddedness of the violence evocative through an emerging aesthetic when observing works of art, that is to say, the becoming of the unseen that translates into a transformation of more than what is merely seen, I have used his work as an ontological extension to clarify the notion of propelling a dancing body to embrace my process. By starting with the existential, phenomenological notion

of “breaking the line,” a dancing body begins to sense lines that may have been previously hidden. “Breaking the line” is a trope that involves the equiprimordial shift needed to experience a distancing from what is known about pre-learned contemporary movement forms. As the shift continues, so does the dancer’s consciousness to engage with the material that was memorized from the prompt charts as a mindful, deterministic attempt to unlearn the learned in regard to movement vocabulary. Most importantly, these first two steps are completely self-driven and autonomous as they occur strictly in the phenomenological realm as indicated above. The following step examines the uncanny aesthetic as it reaches fruition through the bearing of the first two stages and (by its definition, mysterious and unknown) condenses the dancing body to embrace a non-representational mode of thinking.

This mode is where the visceral manifestation surfaces as a direct investigation of the intolerable image, hence Rancière’s specific usage. The intolerable image, through both the textual and syntactical variances that it carries psychologically once observed visually and converted physically and through its procedural deliverance as with the case of this methodology, allows the dancer to strictly embody the discovery of what the intolerable image might look and feel like from its uncanny origin. How the dancer appropriates my methodology creates the outcome of what I describe as being an emancipated dancing body; the freedom of separation from the roles of the choreographer, dancer and spectator as well as the simultaneous embodiment of all these roles, or ontologically speaking, the unveiling of concealed convergences that inform the non-representational thinking required to successfully situate oneself in the trance of non-being. Heidegger would call this *Anwesen* or “a presence” within an essence. Additionally, *Erklüftung* (see Goulding, *Daoist Phenomenology*, Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 2021) or “the cutting into two” directly supplements this methodological framework

by describing both interdependent realms that a dancing body would have to pass through into order to experience an emancipated state. Finally, Heidegger would also employ the term *Ektasis* (see Goulding, *Visceral Manifestation*, Beijing: Commercial publishers, 2003) or “the standing out but the standing out within” as an identical apparition that involves the notion of the dancing body as a vessel, that when experimenting with this methodology, dismantles the temporal-spacio-horizon. The science fiction writer Phillip K. Dick insightfully denotes a similar perceptive epiphenomenon in what he dubs a “Ditheon dream”:

. . . instead of a human mind crossbonding with the plasmate [human knowledge] to produce a homoplasmate, two human minds form the building blocks that compose the plasmate. This new life form has no body. Instead, “It utilizes the principle of organization to structure anything, a whole lot of things—ordinary things—into its “body.” Thus it is “floating” . . . It amounts to a “perturbation in the reality field,” exerting valence or displacement. To it, reality is a series of ideas, not things, since it itself is an idea (Dick 762).

This crucial example reinforces the phenomenological principles that my methodology carries over the eventual emancipated experience sought after by dancing bodies investigating improvised movement. Referring to an earlier segment, the eight minutes of memorization prior to the visceral manifestation delivery also consider the accumulation of neural stimulation that causes fear [*FÆRA*] from Lt. [*experior*] defined as a person that has gone through a fearful time. This experience prepares and engages the simultaneity of all three converging and embodied roles to begin the stages of the methodology. This theoretical, cosmological methodology thereby deepens and solidifies the process used to enter improvised dance forms that a performer embodies by using philosophy, linguistics, phenomenology and aesthetics to inform, appropriate and reconfigure their intellect in order to convert, as Heidegger would have said, a “translation into a transformation” through visceral manifestation.

It is also important to compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses that my methodology holds over the dancing body. Considering aspects of weakness, my methodology challenges the dancing body to accept the possibility of the body not dancing the dance, but rather the dance dancing the body. This ontological statement predicts the dancer's ability to remain separate from and not authoritatively controlled by the codified languages often used and associated with roles in Western theatrical stage dance. My methodology allows a dancer to reteach themselves the other side of technique (intellectual counterparts) that has most likely been disregarded in a creative process. Philosophically speaking, the awareness that a dancing body experiences while improvising in a creative process is two-fold: firstly, it (the body) acknowledges its rigidity through its technical, anatomical training that allows the body to self-identify as one that is capable of dancing, and secondly, the fundamental understanding that any or all dance that viscerally manifests is a product of partial chance and unpredictability just as much as it is partially predictable and calculated. This draws upon the notion of a dancer's craft, which recognizes outcomes of both luck and skill. A skilled dancer can use luck to their advantage by making it seem as if both unpredictability (chance) and predictability (calculation) cleverly coalesce to cloak their desire of proving this methodology as being suitable or logical in achieving an emancipated state. This being said, chance in this case would work as an antagonist principle of visceral manifestation; that is to say, chance could both limit and inhibit a dancing body's potential to experience an emancipated state based off of how technically skilled and anatomically adept it is. Chance, therefore, could be an outcome of using the mechanism of muscle memory to favour the skill that generates calculated chance, which is simply a matter and manner of narrative structure that my methodology strives to distance itself from, regardless of

how phenomenology comes to inform the dancer-spectator at the time of visualizing the prompt chart.

However, my methodology also contains aspects of strength that aim to challenge the dancing body by drawing upon an interdisciplinary method of self-application and devotion to fields of external thought such as phenomenology and aesthetics. These domains of thought, as my methodology explains, simply place the body in a realm outside of itself so that it may experience the “othering” of technique and anatomical customs gathered through years of training. In turn, the body that endures this method creates the uncanny dimension of aesthetics that craves exploration in order to project the dance that viscerally dances the body. The main strength that my methodology holds over a dancer is vivifying their volition to accept the margin of error that improvised dance forms wrongfully omit in terms of its arbitrary occurrence once practiced. My method acts as a starting point for a dancer to deepen their entry into the void of improvising, which itself implies that nothing has yet manifested for it to be traceable or configurable. It conditions the dancing body to level with often separated roles, dictating how an outcome should come to be in a practice where nothing should come to be in a certain way. By experiencing equilibrium between roles, my methodology naturally becomes part of the creative process outcome without disrupting the generic structure that many performers have accepted and become accustomed to employing. Rather, my methodology reinforces the way in which any mover, beginner or experienced, can enter into improvising deterministically.

Many dance scholars, clinical psychologists, neurologists, performance philosophers and anthropologists have inspired the development of my methodology over the last few years. For example, James Leach and Catherine J. Stevens suggest in their 2020 work, “Relational Creativity and Improvisation in Contemporary Dance,” that using improvised dance as an

incentive to generate creativity and common originality in shared interests among creative movers results in solos and duets that conveys a heightened sense of “interpersonal synchronization and joint action whose two settings support through distributed cognition has been explored experimentally” (Leach and Stevens 97). They go on to reference Edwin Hutchins from *Distributed Cognition* (2001):

Hutchins theorizes that cognitive processes may be distributed across the members of a social group; the operation of the cognitive system involves coordination between internal and material/environmental structure; and products of earlier events can transform the nature of later events. Distributed processing occurs, he argues, when the processors are neurons, areas of brain, whole persons, groups of persons, or groups of groups of persons. He notes too that the cognitive properties of a group can differ from the cognitive properties of the members of a group. This is pertinent when considering human cognitive capabilities. The possibility of a creative outcome is made possible by group and distributed processes (Leach and Stevens 97).

Hutchins’ notion on the neural-cognitive phenomenon of distributed processing shaped my work by offering me options for distributing my prompt charts in a manner that would limit the tracing of their own engrams or the neoplatonic notion of anamnesis. Moreover, Leach and Stevens’s research motivated me to use improvised dance as a means to resolve its inconsistency or deficiency, especially when examined in small numbers, hence my selection of a duet. What does it mean to feel improvised, especially if the dance that viscerally manifests dances the body? How can the now solidified version of improvised creative movement guide a dancer when practicing structured, narrative forms without falling back into the trap of codification?

Another source that shaped the development of my methodology is the work of Susanne Ravn whose analysis of Danish creative mover Kitt Johnson responds to “the enactive and phenomenological clarifications of agency—our capacity to perform acts, and how dancers then handle openness and spontaneity differently in improvisation practices” (Ravn 75). Ravn goes on to begin her essay by arguing the following:

Although it is essential to be aware of the spontaneity that characterizes improvisational practices, it can be argued, as I will elaborate in this article, that any enactment of a dance has an element of spontaneity. No dance can be an exact or full repetition of previous enactments. As any performance of a dance will entail unknown aspects—and some degree of openness—it will also demand some degree of spontaneity from the dancer. However, the next step is not to argue that, accordingly, we should simply dissolve conceptual barriers between improvised and non-improvised dances. Instead, I wish to emphasize that, by having accepted the potential openness and demand for spontaneity of any kind of dance practice, we should focus our investigations into improvisation on the ways openness and spontaneity are put to use or explored in enactments that specifically seek to experience and realize these aspects of the dance. In order to do so, I suggest, we need to turn our attention toward the way agency—a dancer's capacity to perform acts in a given context—is exercised by the dancer in the enactment of the dance (Ravn 75).

Here, Ravn clearly differentiates between modes of improvising in movement; the agency that remains linear cause's intentional improvisation to occur as well as the inability to entirely separate improvisation from the outcome of chance, which itself is a redistributed feature powering the agency that the dancer embodies. In my work, agency is examined by the mode of reasoning dancers choose to adopt in their creative process via the enframing that the prompt chart offers them. The tripartite structure (neutral statements, monosyllabic terms and artwork of effigy), in conjunction with the condensed time frame for memorizing, renews and revitalizes their agency over how they enter into improvised dance. With relation to this idea, Hubert L. Dreyfus discusses the following in his 2002 work, "Intelligence without Representation – Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Mental Representation: The Relevance of Phenomenology to Scientific Explanation":

. . . two most basic forms of intelligent behavior, learning, and skillful action, can be described and explained without recourse to mind or brain representations. This claim is expressed in two central notions in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*: the intentional arc and the tendency to achieve a maximal grip. The intentional arc names the tight connection between body and world, such that, as the active body acquires skills, those skills are "stored", not as representations in the mind, but as dispositions to respond to the solicitations of situations in the world. A phenomenology of skill acquisition confirms that, as one acquires expertise, the acquired know-how is experienced as finer and finer discriminations of situations paired with the appropriate response to each.

Maximal grip names the body's tendency to refine its responses so as to bring the current situation closer to an optimal gestalt. Thus, successful learning and action do not require propositional mental representations. They do not require semantically interpretable brain representations either (Dreyfus 367).

Dreyfus's observations, paired with Ravn's discussion on agency, helped me to understand how Merleau-Ponty's topic on perception (specifically Merleau-Ponty's earlier mentioning of "le corps propre" as a site of expression) might carry over to the eventual emancipation of the dancing body. Before employing hermeneutics, Dreyfus' explanation utilizing both Merleau-Ponty's concepts on the intentional arc and the tendency to achieve maximal grip motivated my search for the monosyllabic terms that serve as one of three items in my prompt chart. I sought out these terms to create a neural pause for the dancer as they were not readily identifiable or feasible with situating in the realm of visceral manifestation. Considering the intentional arc, the selected monosyllabic terms in the prompt charts challenge the dancers alongside the suppression of time (the eight-minute memorization timeslot) mentally and physically by rivalling common terms that interconnect to experiences that have previously been stored and reused frequently. They act as the dispositions leading up to the situation of having to improvise. Moving to the notion of maximal grip, with merit to the image of the artwork in the prompt chart, it challenges the dancers semantically by juxtaposing what the gaze is often used to seeing and disregarding by replacing the gaze with the vision that exists in a deeper sense but has not yet been tamed for knowingness. In this case, my inspiration for selecting the terms and the images came with the goal of abolishing the sense of gestalt limitation by essentially reversing it; rather than a whole being perceived as larger than the sum of its parts, I ensured that the sum of a part constituting a whole remained more important as they delivered individual and independent considerations that would resonate into the threshold of emancipated movement.

Lastly, in Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere's book, *Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader* (2003), they account for the difference between choreographed movement and improvised movement by providing an elementalist differentiation between them. Albright and Gere claim that "perhaps choreography is like oil painting, and improvisation, more like watercolor where the immediacy of the mark, or gesture, is an important part of the poetics . . . where each new improvisation with its own carries a particular essence" (Albright and Gere 55). Their specific thoughts informed and inspired my work despite their elaborate use of examples throughout their own personal experiences in improvised dance, by proving to be mutually latent with my own research. On the one hand, my methodology silently exists in a concealed manner when a choreographer delineates fixed choreography to their dancers, but on the other, each body, regardless of the role that they embody at the time of the making and the becoming of the dance, has the option to experience the potential it has to offer. Discovering that the term *presence* has the word *essence* situated or rather (concealed) within it motivated my methodology to resonate the essence of an emancipated state with the presence of the dancing body being danced.

### **Working around COVID-19 as an Advantage Shaping this Work**

Through my creative process I aimed to enlighten and empower the performers' experience while they embodied this sensitive methodology during a vulnerable time. This section highlights the importance of the simplistic editing approach that my video editor collaborator adopted. To create this work I used Zoom, a digitally interactive social platform for filming the performance piece, which featured the dancers in their homes as informal

performance spaces. The dancers, Kyra and Reece, were given the opportunity to collaborate remotely without endangering their well-being or engaging in non-essential travel.

Throughout the process, I encouraged the dancers to select micro-scale performing environments in their homes as extensions of the ideas investigated in *Part I* of my research, which emphasized the dancer's role. In using informal performing spaces in their homes, the dancers could vivify their embodiment of my method without resorting to nostalgic, possibly inhibiting movement patterns previously associated and experienced with formal contemporary movement structures and performance settings. The performers were also granted the unique opportunity to sense the benefit of shifting their awareness in conjunction with my methodology once established in their selected performing spaces, offered them the ability to experience "movement newness" without implicitly using the methodology alone to co-create a similar understanding or passage that would resonate into the deeper contextual meaning that the methodology espouses.

Kyra and Reece experimented with the elements of chance, desire, spontaneity and trust, which were all similar elements that many individuals needed to embrace during a relatively difficult time. Their internal presence as performers alongside their desire to manipulate the known with the unknown was documented for archival purposes by using a generally simplistic and uniform editing style (i.e., no special effects, creative editing, etc.). I also proposed the performers embrace their selected performance space without forcing themselves to drastically "improve" or "augment" their spaces in ways that suggest the exclusiveness of a professional formal studio or stage. As mentioned earlier in the examples of Acconci, the editing that I discussed with my collaborator is intended to absorb the overt spectator enjoyment driven approach with a more stylized approach that remains focused on the process of the methodology

rather than the reception of the work. In the end, both the process and the reception of my work were equally informative.

### **Video Collaboration and Specificity of Contextualization**

The process that Peter Alcedo Jr. and I used as part of our collaboration for the final performance video began by discussing how we could use the performers' remote locations and vivify them accordingly to suggest the philosophical depth that the overall research entails. By focusing on how the spectator's reception of the video would be interpreted differently than if it was filmed in a formal performance setting such as a studio, along with live bodies in space, we realized that simplicity in this case would work to our advantage and serve my thesis' largely procedural framework. The filming was completed in conjunction with *Part IV* of my thesis, as the prompt charts offered to the performers promised a deterministic outcome in visceral experimentation. In following the outline and instructions listed in *Part IV*, Kyra and Reece could use their understanding, and more importantly their instincts, on the recording day. This added to what the dancers described as being a heightened overall conceptual and intellectual experience. On the day we recorded the footage, both Kyra and Reece's movement investigations were captured via Zoom and from a room of their choice with a neutral background, suggesting that the possibility of an early narrative would remain limited. The dancers wore simple black clothing and used basic warm soft-spot lighting to enhance their physical presence on screen and generate the aesthetic that they hoped to experience. The dancers applied light makeup as I encouraged the use of facial expressions as part of the overall embodying of my methodology.

After we finished recording, Peter and I compiled the main shots that consisted of approximately five minutes per dancer, to ensure that the former would be able to use the material without the tendency to manipulate them in excess of their cinematic counterparts. It was evident that this video would not be one where special effects would guide the spectator's understanding with the hope of imprinting the element of entertainment as a main takeaway. Rather, the beauty of the minor edits that I suggested for the video editor's creative integration would logically inform the overall uncanny aesthetic that any spectator could glimpse. The main shots consisted of performer *A*'s movement exploration, performer *B*'s movement exploration, performer *A* and *B*'s movement exploration and lastly, an additional capture of both performers static gaze, representational of the pensiveness used to assess and internalize the linguistic idiosyncrasies and visual art exposed on the shared prompt chart. This specific shot was where I encouraged the video editor to manipulate and invigorate it in such a way that would enthrall viewers. The underlying metaphor was two-fold: the song's title "come ruin and rapture" as an evocation of the "ruin and rapture" that the movement transitioned into from its origin when assessing language and visual art as co-constituent products. Finally, the music was professionally inserted on top of the individual shots to ensure that both artistic merit and spectator enjoyment would be adhered to evenly considering the track's audible clarity.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as a dancing body already exists as a political entity when entering a performing space, I was challenged to examine how I could support dancers to become autonomous through the methodology that I developed as part of my creative process informing my understanding of what an emancipated transformation might feel, look and sound like. By

assessing various segments and deconstructing works from the concomitance of the theorists and artists listed earlier in this thesis, the particular possibility of a “body phenomenology” begins to provide an access point for performers that will eventually transition into the emergence of an emancipating methodology exclusive to the deepening of and practice of improvised contemporary dance forms. Most importantly, by using hermeneutics, I have evaluated and analyzed these texts and works to propose a reconfiguration of their axiomatic counterparts that when attributed to the field of improvised contemporary dance, prove to be just as inseparable as the domain of performance philosophy.

The primary goal that I believe to have accomplished in my thesis includes the solidification of the initial subversive anomaly that the title of “improvised contemporary dance” calls for. Considering occidental thinking, generally, the term *improvisation* implies something that isn’t calculated and thereby carries the tendency to be criticized as lacking substance, structure or purpose. In *Part I*, I emphasized the role of the choreographer over the dancer, without entirely estranging the dancer’s role. *Part II* transitioned into emphasizing the role of the dancer and how codified languages from colliding roles dissipate upon demystifying three somatically compatible terms used to create the condition of a dance. *Part II* also deconstructed and recalibrated the meanings that those terms carry over the body from their German origins as identified in Heideggerian philosophy and examined how a body could internalize them proactively when converted into a hermeneutic phenomenological process. *Part III* emphasized the role of the spectator, primarily the value of their gaze, as supported by Jacques Lacan’s “The Split between the Eye and the Gaze” from book *XI* (1998) along with a few particular considerations central to the science of psychoacoustics that assesses music’s value. Finally, *Part IV* included my theoretical methodology derived from my research constituting the first three

parts that delineated a process of emancipation that a dancing body may consult and proactively apply before, during and after the duration of a performance. Together, these four parts conjoin to create a process that could be used to challenge, inform and inspire the posterity of creative movers.

I believe that the statement that I mention several times throughout my thesis (authentic movement *is* emancipated movement, just as much as emancipated movement *is* aesthetic movement) can indeed be inserted logically into any creative process in order to deepen it by which a dancer enters improvised movement. I am not opposed to, nor am I rivalling, the conventional choreographer versus dancer versus spectator approach as it seems to be suitable considering the strict measures and etiquette that professional performers often adhere to in order to make a living in what they love the most. However, the scope of my thesis was to advocate for and acknowledge an alternative that challenges the possibility of creating an eventual levelling of roles that dismantles the social hegemony closely associated with the codified languages of roles affiliated within and around Western theatrical stage dance. By aiming to limit self-indulgence, ingratiation and egoism in improvised dance forms, drawing upon external fields such as political theory, phenomenology, philosophy and aesthetics may not seem as farfetched of a method leading to an emancipated dancing state.

### Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Adorno, Theodor W., and Frederic Will. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Translated by Knut Tarnowski, Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- Albright, Ann Cooper, and David Gere. *Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*. Wesleyan University Press, 2003.
- Badiou, Alain. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Translated by Alberto Toscano, Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Barthes, Roland. The Death of the Author. Translated by Richard Howard, UbuWeb Papers, 1967, [www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death\\_authorbarthes.pdf](http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf).
- Bourguignon, Erika. "the relationship of trance and dance." *Trance, Dance and Ritual: Sacred Movements in the World's Religions, 11 April 1995*. Cambridge: Center for World Religions, Harvard University, 1995.
- Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018.
- Centers*. Directed by Vito Acconci, Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York, 1971.
- Dreyfus, H. L. "Intelligence without Representation – Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Mental Representation The Relevance of Phenomenology to Scientific Explanation." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1, 2002, pp. 367-83.
- El Bizri, Nader. *The Phenomenological Quest Between Avicenna and Heidegger*. Global Publications, 2000.

- Felluga, Dino. "Modules on Lacan: On the Gaze." *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*, 2002, <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/lacangaze.html>.
- Foley, Kathy. "The Dancer and the Danced: Trance Dance and Theatrical Performance." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1985, pp. 28-49.
- Fraleigh, Sondra. "A Vulnerable Glance: Seeing Dance through Phenomenology." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1991, pp. 11-16. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/1478693](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1478693).
- Gale, Matthew. "Elements of Chance." Tate.org.uk, ADAGP, Paris and DACS, 2020, [www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/display/elements-chance](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/display/elements-chance).
- Goulding, Jay. "Cheng and Gadamer: Daoist Phenomenology." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 2021, pp. 1–15.
- Goulding, Jay. "'Visceral Manifestation' (藏象): Chinese Philosophy and Western Phenomenology (現象學)." *Chinese Philosophy And The Trends Of The 21st Century Civilization*, Edited by Fang Keli, vol. 4, 2003, pp. 360–417.  
Beijing: Commercial Publishers
- Hegel, Georg W. F. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. Translated by Bernard Bosanquet. Penguin Group, 1993.
- Jackson, Pamela, and Jonathan Lethem (eds). *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.
- Jensen, Marc G. "John Cage, Chance Operations, and the Chaos Game: Cage and the 'I Ching.'" *The Musical Times*, vol. 150, no. 1907, 2009, pp. 97-102.
- Krauss, Rosalind. "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism." *October*, vol. 1, 1976, pp. 50-64.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Split between the Eye and the Gaze." *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Alan Sheridan, Norton, 1978, pp. 67-78.

- Leach, James, and Catherine J. Stevens. "Relational Creativity and Improvisation in Contemporary Dance." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2020, pp.95-116.
- Leibniz G.W. "The Principles of Nature and of Grace, Based on Reason." *Philosophical Papers and Letters. The New Synthese Historical Library (Texts and Studies in the History of Philosophy)*, Vol 2., edited by L. E. Loemker, Springer, 1989.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1426-7\\_67](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-1426-7_67).
- Lepecki, André. *Choreography as Apparatus of Capture*. MIT Press, 2007.
- Lepecki, André. "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer." *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 57, 2013, pp. 13-27.
- Mariño, Melanie. "Body as Place: Vito Acconci's Gaze." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1999, pp. 63-74.
- Marks, Laura U. "The Haptic Critic 2." *The Journal of Images and Cultural*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1995.
- Martin, Randy. "Between Intervention and Utopia: Dance Politics." *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, edited by Gabriele Klein and Sandra Noeth, Transcript Verlag, 2011, pp. 29-46. *JSTOR*,  
[www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxt9q.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxt9q.5).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2012.
- Pallaro, Patrizia, editor. *Authentic Movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*. Translated by Steven Corcoran, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, 2009.

Rancière, Jacques. *Figures of History*. Translated by Julie Rose, John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Ravn, Susanne. "Investigating Dance Improvisation: From Spontaneity to Agency." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2020, pp. 75-87.

Scott, Maria. "Lacan's 'Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a' as Anamorphic Discourse." *Paragraph*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2008, pp. 327-43.

Stefani, Chiara. *See Into the Abyss*. Excerpt, 2020.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Taylor, Diana. "Translating Performance." *Profession*, 2002, pp. 44–50. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/25595729](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595729).

*Theme Song*. Directed by Vito Acconci, Museum of Modern Art, 1973.

Wootton, David. "From Fortune to Feedback: Contingency and the Birth of Modern Political Science." *Political Contingency: Studying the Unexpected, the Accidental, and the Unforeseen*, edited by Ian Shapiro and Sonu Bedi, NYU Press, 2007, pp. 21-53. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qft23.4](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qft23.4).