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UNGOVERNING DANCE

RAMSAY BURT

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN THEATRE DANCE AND THE COMMONS

Ungoverning Dance

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Contemporary European Dance and the Commons

Kaaitheater, Brussels, March 24, 2015. I was glad that I was in Row B and not further back when Xavier Le Roy came and stood between the front row and the stage to talk to the audience at the start of *Sans titre (2014)* (Untitled 2014). The first of three parts of this piece was titled '*Sans titre,* a Lecture'. Le Roy began by announcing that the performance couldn't go ahead as planned. His task for the first part of the evening was to have lost his memory. So perhaps the audience could assist? He read out the programme description which mentioned an earlier piece *Sans titre* to see if this might help. This work had been presented anonymously in a few theatres in 2005 and had been performed on a stage so dark that no one could properly make out what was happening: 'With that aim, the movements were composed to produce zones of indeterminacy between animate and inanimate, object and subject, visible and invisible, and it was staged in a very dark situation.'[1] It was not even clear from the programme whether Le Roy had created this earlier piece or even performed in it. He asked if anyone had perhaps seen it and could remember anything about it. Awkwardness spread through the audience. A few people were brave and said something; some seemed helpful, others expressed irritation in a provocative way.

The second part, 'Trio Sans Titre', seemed very like the description of the 2005 performance. The stage was so dark that it was very difficult to see anything. A recording of Béla Bartok's piece *Music for String Percussion and Celesta* (1936) provided an atmospheric background. A dancer could just be made out coming on from the back and moving while lying on the floor in what at first looked like a pile of cloth. Gradually, as the lighting became a

1. Xavier Le Roy, "Sans titre (2014)," programme notes, Kaaitheater (2015).

little less obscure, there seemed to be a second dancer and perhaps a life-size dummy, but if so, there still wasn't light enough to make out which was the dummy and which was the live dancer. Movements seemed to ebb and flow in ways that offered new possibilities for hearing the intensities of mood in Bartok's music. By the end of this part, the lighting, though still diffuse, was clear enough to make out a puppet on ropes that Le Roy was manipulating while executing a duet with it. Both were wearing what looked like coarse hessian onesies that covered the face in a dehumanising way. The effect seemed similar to that described in the programme of the 2005 piece, which evoked 'zones of indeterminacy between animate and inanimate, object and subject'.

The lights were clear enough in the third part, 'Solo Sans titre,' performed to two tracks by DJ Shadow, the first quite mellow and bluesy, the second with a stronger hip-hop beat. Wearing the same onesie but with his head now uncovered, Le Roy started again lying down and gradually came up to standing while performing very similar movement material to the previous section, uncanny and puppet-like but looking different because of the different music. Le Roy is a self-taught dancer, so his dancing does not seem to have any connection with conventional dance vocabularies; but, after more than twenty years of performing professionally, his movements attest to an extraordinary physical knowledge and a clarity of focus in his body. Nevertheless, there is nothing remarkable about his movement, which potentially any non-disabled dancer could execute. After a bit, Le Roy disconcertingly started screaming and kept it up continuously for three minutes. In fact, all three parts he performed were disconcerting in different ways, the first because of the request for the audience to participate in the discussion, the second and third because of the seemingly non-human nature of the movement material performed.

The most awkward and challenging part of the evening was the first part. Although it was called a lecture, from my point of view as someone who teaches in a university, it was more like a seminar where the students are extremely reluctant to say anything. Whereas in such situations, the tutor tries to get a response from the students, Le Roy remained quite neutral. Ann Moradian, reviewing *Sans titre (2014)* in Paris, observed, 'He asks us, indistinctly, for ideas on how to proceed, but doesn't follow any suggestions offered.' She goes on, 'Someone proposes that the audience perform part one (which of course, Le Roy nixes as he has every other proposition we've given—either a lame excuse or by ignoring the suggestion altogether).'[2] These difficult interactions with the audience, I propose, were in themselves the

2. Ann Moradian, "Impressions from France: Xavier Le Roy's 'Sans Titre,'" *Dance Enthusiast*, December 22, 2014, http://www.dance-enthusiast.com/features/view/Xavier-Le-Roy.

point, rather than any ideas raised in the discussion. There have been similar interactions between performer and beholder in earlier pieces by Le Roy, including his lecture performance *Product of Circumstances* (1999) and subsequently in *Product of Other Circumstances* (2009), *production* (2010), and *low pieces* (2011). Discussing interactions between performers and individual visitors in the gallery-based work *production,* Le Roy observes that the piece

> is successful as it transforms and acts on the time that the visitor spends with the work. The way each one engages with the work doesn't depend only on them but is negotiated between them and the participants.[3]

It is this one-to-one negotiation that Le Roy aimed to initiate in '*Sans titre*, a Lecture'.

If one goes regularly to see new European experimental dance performances, one gets used to encountering works that, like *Sans titre (2014),* don't look like dance and don't seem to be concerned with presenting conventional dance movement as such. Because the first part of *Sans titre (2014)* breaks with the usual arrangement of theatre space, which separates stage from auditorium, it raises questions about the relationship between performer and beholder that might not normally arise. Indeed, it seeks to find new ways of negotiating such relationships. One could say that, through searching for new ways of thinking about choreography, artists who make works like this seem to be challenging beholders to reconsider their preconceptions about what theatre dance is meant to be. I suggest that *Sans titre (2014)* goes further than this in so far as it draws attention towards normative ideas about the boundaries of what dance is meant to be. It does this through the way Le Roy negotiates with beholders and the kinds of movement material he performs which do not conform to expectations of normative virtuosity. Le Roy is in effect saying to beholders 'you too have the potential to make dance'. By doing all this, *Sans titre (2014)* challenges the institutional nature of theatre dance.

An institution serves and promotes a particular purpose; in the case of a theatre this is the appreciation of performance. The institution organises the way people engage with this by ordering and regularising means of access and forms of behaviour. As Brian Massumi observes:

> Institutionalization makes woodwork reproducible (through training of wood workers; through their insertion into a system of work in which they

3. Amanda Prince-Lubaway, "Speak, Listen, Look, Move: Art Talks," *Dance Theatre Journal* 21, no. 2 (2011): 29.

can be ordered to repeat the process as needed) and perfectible (through the accumulation and dissemination of techniques).[4]

In this light, institutionalisation makes theatre dance reproducible through the training of recognised movement vocabularies. The architecture of theatres that allocate separate spaces for performers and beholders and the convention that the proscenium arch is a fourth wall dictate particular relations between dancers and audiences. Institutionalisation also enables interactions between dancers and those booking, promoting, and administering dance. While these are all essentially interpersonal interactions, they are nevertheless prescribed by what the normative physical and ideological structures of the institution enable. Note that *Sans titre (2014)* troubles or breaks all of these. To initiate negotiations between dancer and beholder, it disrupts institutionalised relations. It refuses to conform to the conventional expectation that an evening in the theatre offers an enjoyable spectacle and should, in effect, be a consumer experience.

The different parts of the dance world as it is institutionalised, including the practices of theatres, production agencies and arts centres, funders, critics, conservatoires, and dance scholars, produce and maintain these norms through the ways in which they interact and work with one another as part of a market. This book itself is to some extent involved in, and part of, these sets of institutional practices, but it also reflects on and engages with discussions about forms of artistic practices, including ways of moving and ways of creating and structuring choreography. These are also to some extent governed by the institutionalised dance world but potentially have a degree of autonomy from it. Like *Sans titre (2014),* the dances discussed in this book not only question these norms but also challenge and ungovern the ways in which they are maintained. By 'ungoverning' dance, I mean giving it independence from its institutional constraints through aesthetic deconstruction. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has no definition of the word *ungoverning* but does have definitions for *ungoverned* and *ungovernable*. A *governor* is not only 'a person who governs'; it is also a mechanical device that regulates the passage of material in a machine—steam in a steam engine, flour in a mill, or fuel in an internal combustion engine. I am not proposing that the dance world, as it is institutionalised, consciously and deliberately sets out to control and limit artistic expression. My argument is that it has a mechanism (or in Foucault's terms, a *dispositif*) that performs a regulating function, just as a governor in a steam

4. Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 18.

engine regulates the flow of steam. It is this function that the works discussed in this book problematize and disrupt.

THE MARKET, THE COMMONS, AND UNGOVERNING

This book investigates innovative practices in contemporary dance in Europe since the mid-1990s and, in doing so, discusses some of its common resources. It discusses work by a number of choreographers who came to prominence at the beginning of this period, such as Xavier Le Roy, Jonathan Burrows, and Maria La Ribot, together with those from a younger generation who started to show work in the 2000s. *Sans titre (2014)* typifies many of these artists' practices. First, with its conceptually based approach, it exists somewhere in-between the areas of dance and visual art. It challenges and disrupts the way that the experience of beholding art has been turned into a consumer activity, part of a market. Like *Sans titre (2014)*, the dance pieces discussed in this book have created performative spaces in which to acknowledge intangible properties and intensities of experience and knowledge that are common-pool resources.

When works like *Sans titre (2014)* challenge and disrupt normative expectations about theatre dance, they reveal mechanisms that are produced and maintained by dance as an institution. They draw attention to the generally invisible conditions through which dance circulates within its market. By doing so they offer performative critiques of the economic and political system of neoliberal capitalism whose rules the market for dance must obey. By revealing the relations of power that define and at the same time circumscribe and police the space of performance, I will show how these works ungovern dance or, to be more precise, ungovern the dance world as it is institutionalised.

When recent dance artists critique the institutionalised dance world, they are taking the first steps towards ungoverning the controls that are applied through the dance market. These have the effect of enclosing or privatising dancers' artistic practices and related resources that I propose are most usefully seen as a commons. As Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom define it, 'A commons is a general term that refers to a resource shared by a group of people.'[5] Until the mid-1990s, the term was mostly used to discuss shared physical resources, such as common grazing land or finite water resources. The term derived from the medieval English commons—shared grazing land.[6]

5. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 4.

6. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that in medieval times the 'Commons' initially referred to the common people, the third estate after the nobility and the clergy, hence the

With the rise of the Internet and the new possibilities for sharing information that it offers, Hess and Ostrom point out that knowledge has also been recognised as 'a shared resource, a complex ecosystem that is a commons'.[7] An example of this are works covered by a Creative Commons Licence. One such is Linux, the open-source operating system for computers which is freely available[8] through online distribution on the World Wide Web. Linux is an example of a knowledge commons. Whereas the users of common grazing land all know one another, this is not the case for those in the community using and managing a knowledge commons. Linux, for example, is continually being developed by programmers all over the world in different project teams for tasks in its development cycle. They do so for the common good and not for profit.

Many of the ways in which contemporary dancers, working outside the institutionalised dance companies, manage their work and maintain and develop artistic practices, I suggest, can usefully be understood as commons. Artist-run organisations such as Independent Dance in London and Movement Research in New York, the cooperatives in post-communist countries that Martina Ruhsam has written about,[9] and the collectives of dancers in Brussels that Rudi Laermans discusses[10] all share common resources in ways that could be compared with the commoners sharing a common pasture. On another level, many of the artistic practices developed by artists can be seen as knowledge commons. Contact improvisation, for example, can be seen as a knowledge commons that can be compared with Linux. Just as the operating system is developed by an international community of programmers who don't necessarily know one another, Contact improvisation is taught and developed by a similarly diverse and loosely connected international community of dance practitioners. Cynthia Novack, in her ethnographic study of the community of contact improvisation practitioners, notes the tension between the egalitarian aspirations of those who founded it in the 1970s and a tendency

House of Commons for the former and House of Lords for the latter. It also then referred to provisions or expenses shared in common, as in monasteries and early universities where monks or scholars lived together, hence the term *short commons* for insufficient rations. So the common pasture was the pasture shared by the common people.

7. Hess and Ostrom, n. 5, 3.

8. Downloaders are encouraged to make donations for its continuing development.

9. Martina Ruhsam, "I Want to Work with You because I Can Speak for Myself: The Potential of Postconsensual Collaboration in Choreographic Practice," in *Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premise, Workings and Failures*, ed. Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, forthcoming).

10. Rudi Laermans, "'Being in Common' Theorizing Artistic Collaboration," *Performance Research* 17, no. 6 (2012): 94–102.

to create a hierarchy of exceptionally talented dancers within it. Writing in 1990 she noted that while the community's social ethos of egalitarianism has survived, it has been difficult to maintain.[11] These are the kinds of problems within commons that Hess and Ostrom have analysed.

Political philosophers have used the idea of the commons while developing a critique of neoliberal politics and economics and of the new kinds of postindustrial,[12] immaterial production involved in the contemporary business model—which has been looked at in terms of post-Fordism—that neoliberal economics has brought about. What I am calling *ungoverning* is a process through which those dance artists, who are relatively independent, defend their practices and resist the way the institutionalised dance world seeks to police or enclose common resources, reshaping it in line with neoliberal ideas about self-regulating markets. Ungoverning is a way of defending the commons, and the commons is always under attack.

The central focus of this book are readings of performances of recent European contemporary dance since the mid-1990s whose conceptual framing and dramaturgical structures create spaces for experiences that directly or indirectly resonate with current social and political concerns. It thus explores the intersection of two overlapping sets of theoretical ideas. These are an investigation of the ways in which some dance works either implicitly or explicitly critique neoliberal economics and the relations of power they create, and the postindustrial world of work; and an elaboration of the idea of ungoverning dance that draws on post-Heideggerian philosophy, and in particular discussions of relationality and ethics. An exploration of ideas about the commons, I argue, offers a way of rethinking theatre dance as a practice, and understanding the critical relationship between radical, independent dance artists and new ways of thinking and living, and new kinds of relations with others and with the world.

This chapter gives an overview of the historical context of this recent dance work through a brief examination of the careers of Jérôme Bel, Jonathan Burrows, and Xavier Le Roy, choreographers who came to prominence in the 1990s, and of the cultural and artistic context in which their work is situated. It introduces the theoretical perspective underpinning the idea of ungoverning

11. Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 210.

12. The outsourcing of manufacture to developing countries where labour is cheaper than in the developed West has meant that many factories have been closed and that work in the wealthier Western countries is now mostly immaterial rather than concerned with the manufacture of commodities. Many former industrial buildings are now being reused as arts centres, performance venues, and artists' studios.

by drawing on recent discussions in European philosophy about responsibility and relationality in the work of such thinkers as Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jean-Luc Nancy. It identifies in recent European contemporary dance the persistence of radical, alternative ways of thinking that should not only be seen as exemplifying avant-garde practices but also enact a political critique in the way they reveal the power relations that disseminate normative values. These works, it argues, create spaces in which to imagine new kinds of relations and new ways of thinking and living.

Not Conceptual

It is useful here to describe, in general terms, the kinds of practices developed by recent European contemporary dance artists. Both Isabelle Ginot and Frédéric Pouillaude have discussed the way the generation of European dance artists who began to show their work in the 1990s were strongly critical of the institutionalisation of contemporary European dance in the 1980s. Ginot writes:

> Those constructions of the 1980s were the target of sharp criticism in the 1990s, that started by a reevaluation of the status of 'the dancer' and developed into a global criticism of the system, through a return to values of performance, collective, rejection of virtuosity etc.[13]

Pouillaude sees the new dance of the 1990s as a 'mutation' and the opposite of French dance in the 1980s:

> Variously named by the critics, who reduce it to the state of a local avant-garde—"New French scene" (*Nouvelle scène française*), "Young dance" (*Jeune danse*), etc.—this mutation constitutes, however one judges it, more than a fashion or a passing tendency; it announces a radical change of regime within the production of the works. And, actually, this change has already occurred. Today, for anyone that seeks to work in dance, there are impossibilities, there are some things that one simply cannot do anymore, or at least not with the same naïveté: narration, expression as well as composition or virtuosity.[14]

13. Isabelle Ginot, "Dis-Identifying: Dancing Bodies and Analyzing Eyes at Work. A Discussion of Vera Mantero's a Mysterious Thing Said E.E. Cummings," *Discourses in Dance* 2, no. 1 (2003): 24.

14. Frédéric Pouillaude, "Scène and Contemporaneity," *The Drama Review* 51, no. 2 (2007): 130.

As both these quotations suggest, performances of much of this recent work have often used a minimum of theatrical resources—in terms of lighting, set, costume, or even music—or these have been used in ways that draw attention to their materiality, deconstructing their potential to create spectacular or illusionistic effects. For example, it is not unusual now to see some kind of music player or a laptop on stage, which the performer operates to play music. Similarly, execution of movement material in these works rarely displays conventional virtuosity. Choreography often, however, draws attention to the body and its potential for movement, in some instances prompting a rethinking of what virtuosity might mean. This rethinking, as I will show, has political dimensions. (By 'political' I mean subject to relations of power rather than party politics.)[15] What is beautiful about such works is often the clarity and simplicity of their underlying conceptual structures or the key ideas that they propose.

André Lepecki, writing in 2004 about this recent innovative European dance, confirms many of the characteristics described above while adding some more theoretical and conceptual concerns. Recent European dance works, he argues, have

> a mistrust for representation, a suspicion of virtuosity as an end, the reduction of unessential props and scenic effects, an insistence on the dancer's presence, a deep dialogue with the visual arts and with performance art, a politics informed by a critique of visuality, and a deep dialogue with performance theory.[16]

An emphasis on the conceptual nature of the work has led to the term *conceptual dance* gaining currency.

Much of what Lepecki describes here could also be found in the work presented at Judson Dance Theater in New York in the early 1960s. The idea of conceptual dance, like that of conceptual art, emerged in the 1960s. Simone Forti, interviewed in 1993, called the pieces in her first evening-length concert, in May 1961, including *Slant Board*, 'conceptual pieces' because

> you start with an idea, like that you're going to build a ramp and put ropes on it and then you're going to climb up and down. So you don't

15. Chantal Mouffe's definition is useful here: 'By the political I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics' I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political.' Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

16. André Lepecki, "Concept and Presence: The Contemporary European Dance Scene," in *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*, ed. Alexandra Carter (London: Routledge, 2004), 173.

> start by climbing up and down, and then developing movement. You don't start by experiencing the movement and evolving the movement, but you start from an idea that already has the movement pretty prescribed.[17]

There is a problem, however, with the language Forti uses here. When she speaks of 'an idea that already has the movement pretty prescribed', this seems to imply a separation between thought and physical action. What she describes is a movement idea or movement concept which she used to create *Slant Board*. Rather than using some process like improvisation to generate movement and then edit this down into set choreography, what Forti is describing here is the devising of a movement concept, one that is grounded in the experience of movement. Decisions about choreography can then be made by referring to this starting premise rather than to the artist's own feelings or aesthetic preferences.

The problem with the term *conceptual dance* is that it does suggest the imposition onto movement of an idea that is not grounded in the experience of moving. At a round table discussion in 2007, dance artists Jonathan Burrows, Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy, and dance theorist and dramaturg Bojana Cvejić all agreed that the term *conceptual dance* is misleading.[18] This term suggests a practice that is purely cerebral and thus ignores what they argued are the important, physical aspects of this kind of work. Dominique Frétard, the French dance critic, complained that these dance artists were makers of *non-danse* (not dance): 'Following the example of recent art practice, they privilege the work's concept over the work itself, the interrogation more than the proposition.'[19] Frétard laments that contemporary dance in France had passed in less than twelve years (between 1983 and 1995) 'from enthusiasm to disenchantment, from movement to immobility, from hope to apoplexy'.[20]

As an art critic, Laurent Goumarre did not have Frétard's problem with the overlap between dance and visual art. Goumarre coined the label *l'art déceptif* ('deceptual art') in an essay which discusses dance work by Jérôme Bel and Myriam Gourfink and visual art installations by Douglas Gordon

17. Simone Forti, *Art Archives: Simone Forti* (Exeter, UK: Arts Documentation Unit, University of Exeter, 1993), 11.

18. The talk 'Not Conceptual' on Thursday, February 22, 2007, was part of a season of talks titled 'Parallel Voices' organised by the Siobhan Davies Studios in London.

19. Dominique Frétard, *Danse contemporaine: Danse et non-danse* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 2004), 8; my translation.

20. Ibid.

and Ingrid Luche. Goumarre's term is a combination of the English words *deceptive* and *perceptual* while suggesting a negative of the word *conceptual*. Whereas Lepecki draws attention to questions about the performer's presence (and thus continues a debate about the ontology of performance initiated in the early 1990s by Peggy Phelan[21]), Goumarre wittily argues that l'art déceptif is 'a dynamic, spectator-oriented form of art which sets out not only to forestall criticism or undermine judgement, but to raise questions about its own place and the expectations surrounding it'.[22] Like much of the writing about Bel's work, Goumarre here focuses on Bel's Duchampian gesture of cleverly upending normative expectations about the nature of dance. This is an approach Bel himself has encouraged.[23] Thus, he has sometimes tried to make work that has none of his own movement in it but entirely consists of work by others, as in, for example his 2004 piece *Véronique Doisneau*. Or he has presented a work choreographed by someone else but taken the authorial credit for it, as in *Xavier Le Roy* (2000), thus wittily engaging in the kind of deconstruction of ideas about authorship that Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault have analysed.[24] Beyond these deceptual aesthetic strategies, I suggest, a more serious political ambition can be detected. As Goumarre infers, it is through the kinds of spectatorship that recent contemporary works invite, rather than through any subject matter or content, that one can find affinities between art and politics. *Sans titre (2014)* is an example of this because of the way it reveals how institutions govern dance through physical and ideological structures. As I will show, these affinities are grounded within correspondences between the aesthetic sensibilities these works generate and current social, political, or ethical concerns about inclusiveness and relationality.

In the professional lives of some of the choreographers who began showing their work in the mid-1990s, one finds similar sequences of events that, in each case, led to the kinds of positions Goumarre and Lepecki have outlined: a dissatisfaction with the direction in which contemporary dance seemed to be

21. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993); and André Lepecki, "Presence and Body in Dance and Performance Theory," in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

22. Goumarre, Laurent, "L'art déceptif." *Art Press*, no. 238 (1998): 47.

23. For example, in his dialogue with Pichet Klunchun (see chapter 7), and during his performative lecture 'The Last Performance (Lecture)'.

24. "The Death of the Author," in Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana 1977), 142–48; and 'What Is an Author?' in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113–38.

heading, a radical questioning and critical rethinking of what dance might be, and then a gradual discovery that each was not alone but that other choreographers had been pursuing similar artistic journeys at the same time.

The British choreographer Jonathan Burrows began his career at the British Royal Ballet, before leaving to run his own relatively small dance company in the early 1990s. He found that he was beginning to gain international recognition when he received commissions from William Forsythe—to make a large piece for Ballet Frankfurt—and from Sylvie Guillem—to choreograph a screen dance solo for her as part of a television series *Evidentia* that she was creating. He realised that the logical career path for him would be to use the attention he was attracting to gain more stable arts funding for his company, and then make larger pieces with more dancers, breaking into the touring circuit of larger, more prestigious theatres. This would have been to expand in a typically neoliberal way. This was not, however, what he felt he needed to do as a creative artist. He says he decided to commit what many would have considered at the time to be artistic suicide and to only make dance pieces with people who were not dancers—for example, the theatre director Jan Ritsema and the composer Matteo Fargion (some of his works with the latter are discussed in chapter 7).[25]

Jérôme Bel gives the following account of his artistic genesis. After dancing in a number of French contemporary dance companies, including Ballet Preljocaj, in the 1980s and early 1990s, he assisted Phillipe Decouflé in creating the opening ceremony for the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville in the French Alps. Finding himself with a healthy bank balance thanks to his work on this ceremony, Bel calculated that, if he lived frugally, he could afford to spend two years living in Paris without having to earn any money and could use this time to find instead a direction for himself as an artist. His apartment, he says, was close to a good public library, and he gradually read books about dance history, art history, and philosophy. He read key works by French post-structuralists whose ideas, he says, had been affected by the events in Paris in May 1968, in particular Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault.[26] At the end of this period, when he began to make work, he made the deliberate decision to do so at home and not in a dance studio, so as not to fall into habitual ways of moving that seem 'normal' in a studio but to find instead a new approach to performing.[27] Bel's breakthrough 1995 piece *Jérôme*

25. Burrows, talk at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, March 13, 2007.

26. Christophe Wavelet, *Entretien Avec Jérôme Bel* (Pantin: Centre national de la danse, 2005).

27. Bel said this during the Not Conceptual talk.

Bel exemplifies this new approach, and Goumarre cites it as an example of l'art déceptif.

Xavier Le Roy became a choreographer via a slightly different route. As he explains in his 1999 lecture performance *Product of Circumstances*, he first became interested in dance while doing doctoral research in molecular biology. Having completed his PhD thesis, he gave up scientific research, finding himself disillusioned with its institutional demands. He was deeply uncomfortable with the expectation that he should regularly publish research articles, regardless of whether or not his findings warranted it, in order to help the research laboratory generate a steady income in grant money. 'I was learning that research has to follow the methods of capitalism. I was asked to produce science not to search.'[28] He began making work on his own without having the years of formal training in dance that, for example, Bel and Burrows had had, nor the experience of dancing in an established dance or ballet company. Whereas these other two dance artists devised strategies to unlearn a certain conventional dancerliness—Bel choreographing in a domestic space, Burrows choosing to work with 'non-dancers'—Le Roy set himself the task of researching what his untrained body could do. As a result, he began creating pieces like *Self Unfinished* (1998) out of movement material that did not conform to conventional vocabularies of aesthetically valorised dance movements. I have already noted this aspect of *Sans titre (2014)*. He thus opened up previously unconsidered potentialities for making dance.

All three dance artists recognised that their new approaches to choreography conflicted with normative ideas about dance as art. When Le Roy began to receive invitations to present dance work, he realised that

> the systems for dance production had created a format which influenced and sometimes to a large degree also determined how a dance piece should be. Most of the time producers and programmers have to significantly follow the rules of global economy.[29]

In other words, he became aware of institutional pressures that were similar to those he had experienced within scientific research: 'I felt like a fugitive who actually never escaped.'[30]

28. Xavier Le Roy, "Score for Product of Circumstances (1999)", http://www.xavierleroy.com/page.php?id=63e83a12f776477d633187bdfbdb1c24c130da87&lg=en.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

TROUBLING THE DANCE MARKET

Jonathan Burrows recalls that when he first started working away from the centre ground of contemporary dance he thought he was entirely alone in doing so.[31] It was only when he was invited to the event 'I'll Never Let You Go' in Stockholm in March 2001 that he found that others had been going through similar processes. Organised by choreographer Mårten Spångberg and Joachim Gerstmeier of Siemens Kulturprogramm, the event brought together a number of choreographers, visual artists, and dance theorists. It was described as

> neither a festival, nor an exhibition, nor a conference in any conventional sense. The project sought to find new ways of presenting and discussing the performing arts through the interplay between choreography, performance art, theory and the visual arts.[32]

The title came from a line at the end of the film *Titanic*: Rose says 'I'll never let you go' as she pushes the dead body of her lover, Jack, into the water. 'This subtle, apparently paradoxical combination of word and deed—the kind of act involving relinquishing something in order to preserve'[33] was the thematic focus of the event. It was here, Burrows said, that he met Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel and first saw their work.[34]

It would be a mistake to see the approach to choreography of the artists involved in 'I'll Never Let You Go' as a reaction against the aesthetic values or artistic ideas informing the work of these older artists. What was radical about the work of these younger artists was the way they used a deconstructive approach to choreography to draw attention towards what is usually invisible: the economic and political context that enabled its production. By doing so, they

31. Burrows, n. 25.

32. From an account of the conference Siemens Arts Programme, "I'll Never Let You Go," https://www.siemensartsprogram.de/projekte/darstellende_kunst/archiv/2001/i_ll_never_let_you_go/index.php.

33. Ibid.

34. The full list of participants is as follows: Vito Acconci, Jérôme Bel, Johanna Billing, Jonathan Burrows, Boris Charmatz, Christine De Smedt, Tracy Emin, Hubert Godard, Myriam Gourfink, Hendrik Håkansson, Dorothea von Hantelmann, Carsten Höller, Benoit Izard, Cuqui Jerez, Mart Kangro, La Ribot, Thomas Lehmen, Xavier Le Roy, Sharon Lockhart, Isabelle Launay, Raido Mägi, Vera Mantero, Martin Nachbar, Tom Plischke, Jan Ritsema, Renata Salecl, Saira Blanche Theatre, Markus Schinwald, Rebecca Schneider, Tino Sehgal, Hooman Sharifi, Gerald Siegmund, Claudia Triozzi.

used aesthetic means to critique the role the market plays in the functioning of dance as an institution, and it thus ungoverned dance. One might imagine that the market operates in a benign way and does not deserve to be criticised in this way. It would appear that choreographers, who fifty years earlier would have had to work with ballet dancers or ones trained in one of a small number of accepted modern dance techniques, are now free to work within whatever approach they feel they need to explore. Audiences, for their part, are free to make their own choices and watch whatever interests them. This is a deregulated market. As Brian Massumi observes, however, this approach to the market merely points to capitalism's 'power to produce variety—because markets get saturated. Produce variety and you produce a niche market'.[35] For similar reasons, capitalism can appropriate or capture innovation wherever it finds it. There is therefore a tension between the needs of the market to exploit innovation and the needs of artists to find alternatives outside the centre ground of contemporary dance when the latter fails to be relevant to contemporary experience. Contemporary dance as a commons is always in need of defence against incursions.

The word *freedom* is associated with the market in two ways. There is the consumer's freedom of choice, and there is the freedom to make money alluded to in the title of a founding text of neoliberal economic theory Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962).[36] In their analysis of neoliberalism, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello analyzed the ability of postindustrial capitalism 'to base itself on new forms of control and [to] commodify new, more individualised and "authentic" goods'.[37] They point to 'certain mechanisms whereby capitalism, while holding out a certain liberation, can by the same token deploy new forms of oppression',[38] and to 'capitalism's vocation to commodify desire—especially the desire for liberation—and hence to recuperate and supervise it'.[39] It is necessary therefore to be cautious about claims that contemporary dance is an expression of freedom and to ask what kind of freedom this means. Through recuperation, the market for dance performance often appears to favour works that close down rather than open up potentials for critique, particularly when the target of critique is the way dance as

35. Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 20.

36. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

37. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 467.

38. Ibid., 438.

39. Ibid.

an institution encourages the idea that dance expresses an individualistic but supposedly universal freedom.

Burrows felt that the market dictated a particular career structure and found it was leading him artistically in a direction in which he did not think he should go. Le Roy explains, in *Product of Circumstances*, that the funding system for dance enabled him to research new ways of making dance but channelled the resulting products in particular ways:

> I had integrated the economic dynamics of dance production because I wanted to be able to make a living with what I had decided to do. But, even though I was very careful not to find myself under that particular logic, and simultaneously aiming for acceptance and resistance, I was not always completely convinced by my decisions.[40]

This is a remarkably candid statement, particularly Le Roy's recognition of the contradictory pulls of wishing to be accepted and yet at the same time resisting the effects that follow from what needs to be done in order to gain acceptance. It would be a mistake to dismiss these as isolated instances where individuals have experienced minor problems in negotiating and adjusting their relation with the institutionalised dance world. Many dance artists in the last fifteen or so years have investigated the new kinds of spaces for choreographic exploration that only become visible when one critiques the role the market plays in maintaining dance as an institution.

While choreographers are now allowed, or perhaps even encouraged, to work with a range of new approaches to movement that would have been unacceptable fifty years ago, they nevertheless experience new kinds of restrictions that operate on another level. As I have noted, by going against normative expectations, Burrows worried that he might be committing artistic suicide, while Le Roy felt like a fugitive who had never actually escaped. The institutionalised dance world no longer depends on a tightly disciplined approach to a limited definition of dance. It has become instead a world where there are new and subtler ways through which the market exercises control. This is a shift from what Michel Foucault called a disciplinary regime to a control society. Gilles Deleuze has pointed to the centrality of this proposition within Foucault's work in the 1970s and 1980s: 'We're in the middle of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement—prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family . . . [This] initially presented new freedoms, while at the same time contributing to new mechanisms of control as rigorous as the harshest

40. Le Roy, n. 28.

confinement.'[41] The difference between these two ways in which power works in society is that 'control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline is long-term, infinite, and discontinuous. A man is no longer a man confined but a man in debt'.[42] The ways in which the market exercises control over choreographers is short-term and rapidly shifting. While choreographers like Burrows and Le Roy cannot choose not to be part of the market, they generally nevertheless ensure that they do not become completely absorbed by it. They remain on the defensive against its tendency towards recuperation, and persist in resisting the market's effects.

CONTEMPORARY DANCE PRACTICES AS A COMMONS

The idea of the commons provides an alternative to neoliberal politics and economics. It is an axiom of neoliberalism that the market must be free and unregulated or regulated as lightly as possible. There is supposedly no problem with the fact that it is determined by the individual decisions of people who act purely out of self-interest, because of the mantra that a self-regulating market is the only viable way in which these affairs can be managed. The idea of the commons takes an entirely different view of the way decisions can be made. This becomes evident when one considers debates about the ecologist Garrett Hardin's contentious essay 'Tragedy of the Commons' (1968).[43] Using as an example a common pasture, Hardin argued that people tend to use limited common resources in a way that benefits their own interests and inevitably leads to the depletion or deterioration of shared resources. To maximise their profits, Hardin proposes, people will put too many animals in the pasture and thus spoil it. This leads him to conclude that the idea of the commons is idealistic but unworkable.

As Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom point out, there are a number of flaws in Hardin's argument.[44] Distinguishing between open-access resources and managed commons, they note that Hardin ignores the fact that the kind of commons he chose as an example would have been managed. He also, they point out, assumes that people only ever act out of self-interest and have no sense of the public good. Another flaw is that Hardin assumes that there are only two possible solutions to the problem, either privatisation or government

41. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 178.

42. Ibid., 181.

43. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243–48.

44. Hess and Ostrom, n. 5,11.

intervention. Ostrom, however, carried out field work over many years into different kinds of commons—such as limited water resources, shared forestry, grazing, and fisheries—analysing the ways in which communities managed these. Her work identifies the kinds of management structures that communities use, and the problems and social dilemmas these involve. People in stable communities, she proved, reach decisions that are not just for profit.

To say that the common-pool resources of knowledge about contemporary dance are a commons does not mean that these are not used to make money. Professional dancers earn their living through the practice of their art. Dancers are paid for rehearsals (or should be) and for performances and may receive a fee when their choreography is presented by a theatre or festival (or may split the ticket sales with the venue), and earn a fee or wages for teaching and other related activities. In large companies, the sums involved are of course more substantial compared with independent dance artists, as are the costs involved in a company's activities. No one, however, as far as I am aware, has become a millionaire as a contemporary dance artist.

Knowledge about dance techniques and approaches towards movement research are shared as are knowledge about improvisation and choreographic processes. Individuals may be paid to teach about these areas but this is so that they can go on working rather than to make a profit. Commercial companies protect their intellectual property through legal structures such as patents. There is no market for franchises in the teaching of so-called somatic approaches to dance training. While it is true that these approaches are increasingly taught in European and North American university dance departments and conservatoires, they have not been adopted by any major institutionalised dance company. As Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol point out, professional dancers increasingly put together highly individual training programmes for themselves that reflect their own eclectic interests combining, for example, taking regular ballet class, a course in martial arts and in the Alexander technique.[45] Dance artists share and exchange knowledge rather than jealously keeping it to themselves, as for example with William Forsythe's CD ROM *Improvisation Technologies* and Steve Paxton's interactive DVD *Material for the Spine*, both discussed in chapter 3. Artists benefit mutually from the existence of a community of like-minded artists. Jonathan Burrows's book *A Choreographer's Handbook*[46] is not just about his own approach to choreography but offers a wide range of different ideas. In doing so

45. Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

46. Jonathan Burrows, *A Choreographers Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2010).

it refers to many other artists with whom he has taught in workshops or had conversations. Because contemporary dance artists share these common-pool resources as a knowledge commons, this makes some of them, who are politically aware, sensitive to and critical of the enclosure of physical or knowledge commons in general.

The artistic practices developed by dancers can be seen as a commons. Knowledge, Hess and Ostrom point out, 'refers to understanding gained through experience or study' and includes 'creative works such as music and the visual arts and theatrical arts'.[47] Whereas the pasture that Hardin chose for his example is common property, these artistic practices constitute a field of knowledge that is a common-pool resource. This is because many aspects of dance as an art form—such as dance techniques, theatrical devices, generic compositional structures or improvisational processes—are common-pool resources accessible to dance artists but also, as I will show in chapter 3, potentially subject to attempts at privatisation, copyrighting, and commercial exploitation.

Hess and Ostrom argue that the idea of the commons 'can be constructive, and often provides the impetus to collective action around the commons', but they go on to assert that 'a commons is not value laden—its outcome can be good or bad'.[48] The idea of the commons has united groups protesting against governments that sell off public asset and privatise public amenities and services, and against companies who try to claim copyright for things like seed banks, or genetic material, or intellectual property. The idea of the commons has also recently been taken up by political philosophers. For Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, the commons are

> the common wealth of the material world—the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all nature's bounty—which in classic European texts is often claimed to be the inheritance of humanity as a whole, to be shared together. We consider the common[49] also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth. . . . [However,] through a long process of enclosures the earth's

47. Hess and Ostrom, n. 5, 8.

48. Ibid., 14.

49. I treat 'the commons' and 'the common' as having the same meaning. Where continental European thinkers are concerned the idea of the medieval English commons has been translated into another language where there is not an equivalent term and then translated back into English, often resulting in the loss of the *s* in 'commons'. Furthermore, in the United States, where English settlers brought with them the idea of the commons, remaining areas have sometimes been called 'common' rather than 'commons', as in the Boston Common.

> surface has been almost completely divided up between public and private property so that common land regimes, such as those of indigenous civilizations of the Americas or medieval Europe, have been destroyed.[50]

One reason for Hardt and Negri's interest in the idea of the commons is that it is used by activists opposed to globalisation and neoliberalism, such as those who mounted demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999, or the more recent protests against the banking crisis by Los Indignados in Barcelona and Madrid and by the Occupy Movement in London and New York. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten propose, through their idea of the undercommons (see chapter 6), that the commons is always under attack by those who wish to capture or enclose it. 'Our task,' they write, 'is the self-defense of the surround in the face of repeated, targeted dispossessions.'[51] It is this situation of always being alert to the need for self-defence of the commons in general that I suggest characterises much of the work discussed in this book.

In the face of these new political movements and new forms of extra-parliamentary political protest as well as threats from terrorism, the state has also recently emerged as an apparatus that, as Simon Critchley observes, 'is there to control security at all costs'.[52] As such it has been in its interest to limit and close down spaces for social and political interaction that are outside its control and this has, in effect, resulted in further encroachment on the commons. Neoliberal steps to dismantle the structures for public funding of the arts have this effect. Defence of contemporary dance practices as a commons is not only therefore defence of a common-pool resource but also of an aesthetic space that has the potential for imagining and creating a new culture and new ways of thinking and living. As David Harvey argues:

> The commons is not to be construed, therefore, as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process, but as an unstable and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood.[53]

50. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), viii.

51. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 2013), 17.

52. Simon Critchley, *Impossible Objects: Interviews* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 137.

53. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 73.

To understand contemporary dance practices as a commons, therefore, is to posit a communal space in which dancers share responsibility for making and remaking, and which they appreciate for its usefulness as a common resource.

THEORY AND THE UNGOVERNING OF DANCE

As I noted previously, Jérôme Bel has spoken of reading, during his two years of idleness, the work of philosophers like Barthes, Deleuze, and Foucault, whose ideas he said had been influenced by the events of May 1968 in Paris. The generation of French intellectuals who moved away from Marxism after 1968 had previously protested against French colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria and were shocked by revelations about the French army's use of torture in both those wars. They became disillusioned with the inability of the Communist Party, both in France and internationally, and with the orthodox interpretation of Marxism on which party ideology was based, to mount an effective critique of these injustices and inequalities. This disillusionment was then compounded by the events of May 1968. They, therefore, began to try to analyse the workings of institutionalised power.

This rethinking of left politics has led to a recognition of new sites, such as cultural production, where the effects of power can be contested, and new ways of doing so. After 1968 European intellectuals began to realise that power relations operate through networks. Foucault states that these are 'interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and conditioned role'.[54] Although their effect is to dominate, they are nevertheless prone to 'inertia, displacement and resistance'.[55] Deleuze also sees possibilities for resistance:

> these power-relations, which are simultaneously local, unstable and diffuse, do not emanate from a central point or unique locus of sovereignty, but at each moment, from one point to another, in a field of forces marking inflections, resistances, twists and turns, when one changes direction, or retraces one's steps.[56]

It is because of the instability of power relations, and because the subjects which they seek to take hold of and dominate are mobile rather than static,

54. Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies," in *Michel Foucault Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 142.

55. Ibid.

56. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 73.

that resistance is possible and alternative ways of thinking and living can persist. The political here concerns new ways of thinking and living rather than parliamentary or congressional politics. These are the conditions of possibility in which processes of ungoverning can take place.

What Foucault and Deleuze describe corresponds in many ways with the subsequent critique of what philosophers associated with the Italian operaist movement have called the post-Fordist world of work.[57] The mass production model of Fordism that developed in the early twentieth century was transformed through the neoliberal restructuring of capitalism that began in the 1970s. As production focused on smaller, specialised markets and on immaterial production, the world of work has adjusted requiring greater flexibility among workers. Paulo Virno proposes that the post-Fordist worker no longer requires professional expertise or technical knowledge: 'On the contrary, what's required is the ability to anticipate unexpected opportunities and coincidences, to seize chances that present themselves, to move with the world. These are not skills people learn at the workplace.'[58] They are part of the general intellect (a concept Virno borrows from Marx's *Grundisse*) which post-Fordism seeks to privatise and exploit. Virno argues that workers now 'educate themselves outside the workplace and their entire lives become job competency and thus devoted to the labor process'.[59] Social skills and forms of behaviour are thus privatised and used to create profit rather than being available as common-pool resources that contribute to the life of communities in general. Like Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, Virno was influenced by the ideas of the operaist movement. He arrives at his philosophical position via a very different intellectual journey from Foucault. Both are nevertheless, in effect, acknowledging that individuals are not just controlled from without but also from within. In other words, power works at both the macro and micro levels. In a late seminar Foucault talked about the 'contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self'.[60] He gave the name 'governmentality' to this overarching system, where macro and micro levels work in concert.

As I argued earlier in the chapter, when recent dance artists critique dance as an institution, what they are doing is ungoverning dance. Shakespeare used

57. This is also known as the Autonomist Movement, in Italian Autonomia Operaia.

58. Paulo Virno, "The Dismeasure of Art," in *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 31.

59. Ibid.

60. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. H. Martin (London: Tavistock, 1988), 19.

the term *ungoverned* in a negative sense, in phrases like 'ungoverned youth' and 'ungoverned rage' implying a lack of control and disturbance of balance.[61] In the period covered by this book it is neoliberal ideology that could be said to disturb the balance. Acts of ungoverning in this context are positive. What the dance works discussed in this book are ungoverning, following Foucault, is the governmentality of dance as an institution, or, to put it another way, the controlling effects that the institution applies through the dance market and through its effects on individual self-management. Using aesthetic means, dance artists can ungovern the processes that have the effect of enclosing or privatising common-pool resources. These, as I see it, are shared as a commons by those involved in the contemporary dance sector. To ungovern is to resist the processes of control that, following Foucault, are applied from within—at the level of individuals' artistic and aesthetic practices—and from the outside—through institutions. Ungoverning is continually engaging in the maintenance and protection of the commons through opening up spaces that are relatively free from the effects of control, regulation, or normalisation. In these spaces, spectators, as witnesses, can contribute to this ungoverning process. These are spaces for interaction, negotiation, and contestation as well as for sharing. This enables new kinds of relations to emerge. Attempts to institutionalise and govern the dance sector endanger these relations.

These spaces may, from time to time, coincide with the spaces of the institution, and indeed dancers and spectators may have no choice but to try to work at ungoverning them from within, the necessity being to think differently about them. As Le Roy has put it, this is to integrate with the economic dynamic of dance production while being careful not to be governed by its particular logic. It is sometimes, but not always, necessary to make explicit the workings of the institution to audiences, as works like *Sans titre (2014)* and *Product of Circumstances* do. This frees the space of performance, to some extent at least, from the controls that threaten to enclose and privatise it. I am using the term *ungoverning*—a word that is ambiguously both a verb and an adjective—because of its temporal connotations. Deleuze proposed that control is short-term and shifting. Those evading control, as I noted earlier, therefore need to be strategic, fluid, mobile, and alert to changes. Resistance, and the persistence of alternative ways of thinking and living and of alternative ways of relating with others, depend on taking care not to become fixed and predictable, and therefore to continue to be always in process of becoming.

61. For example, Cordelia in *King Lear* (4.4) says, 'Seek, seek for him Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life That wants the means to lead it.' The third outlaw in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (4.1) says, 'Know, then, that some of us are gentlemen, Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth Thrust from the company of awful men.'

This idea of ungoverning dance that I put forward here is intended as a complement to André Lepecki's notion of *exhausting dance*—another term that uses a word that is ambiguously both verb and adjective. In his 2006 book *Exhausting Dance*, Lepecki argued that dancers since the mid-1990s have sometimes felt the need to create choreography that is no longer primarily concerned with the flow of dance movement but can encompass still acts. We have been witnessing, he suggests, 'the exhaustion of the notion of dance as a pure display of uninterrupted movement'.[62] To critique the notion of dance in this way, Lepecki argues, is to critique an idea of subject formation that has been central to modernity since the time of Descartes: 'To exhaust dance is to exhaust modernity's permanent emblem. It is to push modernity's mode of creating and privileging a kinetic subjectivity to its critical limit.'[63] Lepecki's book is a key text for understanding recent developments in dance, and is important for putting questions about the relation between dance and aesthetics back on the agenda of Anglo-American dance studies. In particular, he shows how Heidegger's philosophy, particularly his account of subjectivity, can offer insights into the kinds of critical questioning about presence and the fundamental nature of dance—its ontology—in which some of the most innovative dance artists in recent years have been engaging.

Lepecki's focus on questions of ontology and his existentialist account of presence leads him to examine the political significance of individual acts of performative presence. Most of the works discussed in his book are solos that, he argues, act as 'a means for transcending the self-contained, socially severed, self-propelled being-towards movement'.[64] He points out that recent conceptually oriented European choreographers have created works that radically question

> the presumed stability (that has always been secured by representation) between the appearance of a moving body on stage (its presence), and the spectacle of its subjectivity (that representation always casts as the spectacle of identity).[65]

Following Heidegger, Lepecki argues that the subjectivity that these works deconstruct is a self-positing, rational, unitary subject position. But, as Simon

62. André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7.

63. Ibid., 8.

64. Ibid., 40.

65. Ibid., 51.

Critchley points out, in Heidegger's fundamental ontology 'the anticipatory resoluteness of authentic Dasein is simply a more existential version of self-positing autarchy'.[66] By 'autarchy', Critchley means self-originating and self-legislating. This is very different from the post-Heideggerian approach to ethical subjectivity proposed by Emmanuel Levinas. As Critchley notes, for Levinas, 'ethical subjectivity is the experience of being affected by another that precedes consciousness and which places in question our spontaneity and sovereignty'.[67] I will return to Levinas's view of ethics in later chapters but note here that it is very different from the idea of subjectivity underpinning Lepecki's analyses of work in *Exhausting Dance*. Lepecki discovers in the works he discusses a politics of individual engagement rather than one of individual or collective responsibility and action. Questions about the commons and relationality do not appear in his book.

Lepecki makes a number of references to Deleuze and Guattari and their concept of the body without organs, their concepts of the rhizome and of the processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation. He also refers to Foucault's critique of authorship. What Lepecki doesn't consider, however, is these writers' political philosophy. Foucault and Deleuze draw on a philosophical heritage that emphasises flows of energy and relations of power. Its genealogy runs through the philosophies of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Spinoza. Lepecki's focus on presence and on the nature of individual being, however, leads him to the ontological concerns of Heidegger and thus back to Aristotle. The politics that informs *Exhausting Dance* is a critique of modernity, particularly that developed from German critical theory by Peter Sloterdijk; this is supplemented with Randy Martin's application of Marxist theory to performance studies. This is a very different approach to politics from the left libertarian politics of the situationist Guy Debord, or of Deleuze and Foucault, or of a subsequent generation of philosophers that includes in France Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, Judith Revel, and in Italy Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt[68] and Tony Negri, Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, and Paulo Virno. Jérôme Bel and Xavier Le Roy, for example, each mention Debord's ideas about the society of the spectacle in one of their works.[69] The political thinking of the choreographers whose work Lepecki discusses is closer to the work of these leftist

66. Simon Critchley, *Ethics Politics Subjectivity* (London: Verso, 1999), 121.

67. Ibid.

68. Michael Hardt is from the United States, but I include him here with the Italians because of his long-term collaboration with Toni Negri.

69. Bel refers directly to Debord's ideas about the society of the spectacle in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*, while Le Roy refers to it in *Product of Circumstances*.

thinkers than it is to the more orthodox academic Marxism that informs the approach which *Exhausting Dance* utilises.

This chapter began with a description of Xavier Le Roy's *Sans titre (2014)* as an example of the choreography and performance that are the subject of this book. I have identified overlapping sets of theoretical ideas through which the book develops readings of these kinds of works. They are works that ungovern, critique, and are part of, or defend, a commons. To further clarify the appropriateness of these issues to these recent works, I shall briefly apply them within a reading of *Sans titre (2014)* and use them to indicate key concerns in this book.

First, *Sans titre (2014)* creates a space within which dancer and audience have access to common aesthetic and affective experiences. It involved a conscious negotiation between dancer and visitor thus touching on issues around ethics and relationality. Our responsibilities—to one another and to art—are a central concern of this book. Second, I noted that that *Sans titre (2014)* challenges any expectation that Le Roy should provide his audience with a spectacle or virtuoso dancing. Instead, it offered its beholders opportunities to recognise that if Le Roy could do this, then they too have a potential for making dances. Paulo Virno argues that, in the post-Fordist world of work, production has significantly changed from Fordist approaches so that now everyone employs virtuosity in what they do, and that this could potentially be used for the good of what he calls the multitude rather than, as it is currently, to make profits for the few. A section of the book focuses on virtuosity. It looks at the intersection between a radical, alternative approach to virtuosity in dance and the way a political concept of democratic, egalitarian virtuosity has emerged from critiques of post-Fordist labour.

Third, the starting point for *Sans titre (2014)* is the memory of the previous *Sans titre* from 2005. At the beginning of the more recent piece, Le Roy invited the audience to engage with collective memories. The 2014 piece thus poses questions about our relation with the past and, by implication, about the passing of time in general. History and memory are important but tend to be undervalued in contemporary society because of the effects of neoliberalism. However, history and memory are the means through which values and beliefs are transmitted. They therefore become sites of conflict and dispute, as people interpret the past in order to make sense of changing situations. They are central to the persistence of alternative ways of thinking and living, as I will show.

The chapters in this book fall into three thematic sections and each draws theoretically on the work of different groups of philosophers. The next three chapters continue the relation between contemporary dance works and the effects of neoliberalism and post-Fordism on the dance and dancers. Philosophically, these chapters draw on the work on virtuosity by Paulo Virno

and other philosophers associated with the Italian operaist movement, including Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, Toni Negri, and Judith Revell. They also draw on early writing by Jacques Rancière. Chapter 2 places a political critique of neoliberalism within the historical context of the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, which, it points out, is also an important point of reference for recent European contemporary dance. It then investigates the similarities and differences between contemporary dance in Europe and the United States, asking whether US-based dance artists might also be ungoverning dance. Chapter 3, which focuses on virtuosity, takes as its starting point Hannah Arendt's discussion of the virtuosity with which citizenship is performed in the Greek polis, and considers the transformation of this idea by Paulo Virno into a critical account of labour in postindustrial capitalism. The task of rethinking virtuosity is a necessary stage in understanding the threats to contemporary dance as a commons. Chapter 4 proposes a rethinking of virtuosity through discussions of works that comment on the transformations of labour under post-Fordism. It does this through discussions of Natalie Bookchin's video installation *Mass Ornament* (2009), which comments on the circulation of dance material on the Internet via video-sharing sites like YouTube, and of BADco's performative reflections on the commodification of dance as a leisure activity in *1 Poor and One 0* (2008).

In the next four chapters, questions about responsibility are considered through discussions about the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. Drawing primarily on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, responsibility is understood here both in terms of an ethics of responsiveness, and of responsibility to art; it thus involves an openness towards the realisation of potential which, it argues, is different from the idea that responsibility is always no more than a duty to fulfil some moral or legal obligation. Responsibility, as Levinas defines it, is key to the equitable sharing of common-pool resources. In this section, a larger group of philosophers are cited, including Hannah Arendt, Jean-Luc Nancy, and, in particular, Maurice Blanchot. Blanchot's writing about literature offers ways of using Levinas's approach to ethics within critical analysis. Chapter 5 examines a radical passivity within the ethics of relations among members of groups who seem not to have anything in common with one another. It does this through a discussion of two works by Maria La Ribot that both involve laughter and create performative spaces in which to reflect on lives that are lived in situations of marginality and invisibility that could be described as an undercommons. Chapter 6 considers the particular kinds of relationships that a solo dancer, alone on the stage, develops with spectators. It looks at solos by Xavier Le Roy, La Ribot, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Alone but moving towards the world, their performances exemplify an ethics of relationality. Chapter 7 looks at the performative relationship between pairs

of dancers in recent contemporary dance works. It discusses duos by Mathilde Monnier and La Ribot, by Jérôme Bel and Pichet Klunchun, by Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion. These, it argues, raise questions about the responsibilities of friendship, asking what constitutes success or failure within the kinds of relationships that result from the effects of neoliberalism. Chapter 8 explores responsibility without obligation as exemplified in the way dancers interact during Steve Paxton's *Magnesium* (1972) and in an account, by the Egyptian choreographer Adham Hafez, of street demonstrations during the Arab Spring. For reasons I will explain, his account is a dialogue with European contemporary dance.

The last section of the book focuses on history and memory. This section draws on Walter Benjamin's discussion of history and on the process philosophy of Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, and their readings of Gilles Deleuze, Henri Bergson, and Susanne Langer. It examines how one remembers the past and the kinds of historical narratives through which this is conceptualised and their impact on how one determines the future. It argues that by contesting the past, one can reach a clearer understanding of one's potential for agency in the present. Chapter 9 examines the recent phenomenon of reconstructing, re-enacting, or reinventing dance works from the past that were often, but not always, avant-garde in their day. It looks in particular at works by Faustin Linyekula, Olga de Soto, Fabián Barba, and Martin Nachbar. Reconstructions like these, it argues, not only repudiate ideologies of progress but sometimes also contest canonical histories, as artists actively situate themselves within their own revisionist accounts of the past, reconnecting with persisting traditions of radical, critical practices. Chapter 10 explores the virtual nature of memory and of dance through discussions of dance pieces by New Art Club and Ivana Müller. Both, it argues, exemplify what the philosopher Susanne Langer called the virtual power of dance and extend Henri Bergson's account of memory, on which Langer draws.

The final short chapter, by way of a conclusion, draws together the central concerns and themes of the book—'the political', 'responsibility', 'the commons', and 'ungoverning'—treating them as keywords, inspired by Raymond Williams's classic book.[70] In doing so, it adds two more—'life', and 'open'. Readers may choose to read some of these keywords whenever they may find it useful. If, as David Harvey argues, the commons is unstable and malleable and in a constant state of change and development, then contemporary dance as a commons offers its beholders possibilities to free themselves from the normative, known, and predictable and thus to open themselves up to new ways of

70. Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana Press, 1976).

relating with others and to be open to new ways of thinking and living, hence the inclusion as keywords of 'life' and 'open'.

The aim of this book is to answer a question posed by the work of contemporary European dance artists since the mid-1990s: how is contemporary dance possible? The avant-garde antecedents for this within dance and the visual arts during the twentieth century engaged in practices of negation, rethinking what is possible in art through eliminating what is conventionally expected and thus finding new, previously unconsidered possibilities.[71] It is this aesthetic negation that is at work within the process of ungoverning. The first section of this book considers the social and political context of ungoverning since the mid 1990s by drawing on contemporary political critiques of neoliberalism and on the theorisation of post-Fordism. The long central section of the book explores how the process of ungoverning enables an escape from the limited kind of responsibility that is prevalent in the relationships formed within neoliberal society. Blanchot's writings offer ways of applying Levinas's ideas about responsibility to critical analysis of works of art. In framing the question 'how is contemporary dance possible?' I am aware of Blanchot's early essay 'Comment la literature est-elle possible?' (How is literature possible?).[72] Blanchot's ideas have not made much impact within dance studies, with the exception of a book by Laurence Louppe, *Poetique de la danse contemporaine* (1997).[73] Blanchot's post-Heideggerean poetics offers ways of considering the relationship between ethics and aesthetics within recent European dance. In the final section, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's ideas are central. These offer ways of rethinking the nature of dance as a relational form that cannot be fixed because it is always in process of becoming.

It is the dance works themselves rather than philosophical concepts that are the main focus of this book. Deleuze and Guattari argued that 'Philosophy is the discipline that involves creating concepts'[74] while the arts and sciences involve 'other ways of thinking and creating that . . do not have to have to pass through concepts'.[75] The aim of this book is not primarily to create new concepts. To understand the affect that these dance works have had and continue to make, I argue, it is necessary to draw on the concepts developed within these three groups of philosophers.

71. This is what I argued in Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

72. Maurice Blanchot, *Comment la littérature est-elle possible?* (Paris: J. Corti, 1942).

73. Laurence Louppe, *Poetique de la danse contemporaine* (Brussels: Contredanse, 2000).

74. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (London: Verso, 1994), 5.

75. Ibid., 8.

2

Transatlantic Comparisons

While the focus of this book is recent contemporary dance in Europe, this chapter considers the relation between contemporary dance on either side of the Atlantic around the beginning of the twenty-first century. Whereas for most of the twentieth century, New York had been the centre of most of the significant developments in modern dance,[1] in the 1990s new, more theoretically informed approaches to choreography and performance emerged in Europe that were very different from what was then being created in New York. This chapter explores some of the reasons for these differences, which it uses to frame discussions of two pairs of dance pieces, with one from Europe and one from the United States in each pair. These pairs are Jérôme Bel's (1995) piece *Jérôme Bel* and John Jasperse's (2000) piece *Fort Blossom*; and Xavier Le Roy's (2007) solo *Le Sacre du printemps* paired with Trisha Brown's (2002) production of Simon Keenleyside's performance of the Schubert song cycle *Winterreise*. Bel's and Jasperse's pieces propose radical new theatrical uses of nudity, while Le Roy and Brown explore new ways of relating music and dance. In each pair, however, differences between the European and American approaches to choreography and performance are evident.

All four works owe debts to discoveries that were made by members of Judson Dance Theater in the 1960s and 1970s—Trisha Brown herself being one of the artists making these discoveries. There are, in effect, two related legacies from Judson Dance Theater.[2] One is a conceptually oriented,

1. This period includes Martha Graham's Greek pieces, Merce Cunningham's chance procedures, Judson Dance Theater's minimalist use of ordinary movement, and the development of contact improvisation and image-based approaches to movement research in the 1970s.

2. I argued this in Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

avant-garde approach to the deconstruction of dance conventions and traditions. The experience of performing the resulting, often minimalist, works led to the other legacy, new approaches to the generation of movement material through a heightened focus on the specificity of bodily awareness. As I will show, both of the US pieces discussed in this chapter draw on these new bodily focused approaches to creating dance movement, whereas there is little or no explicit evidence of this kind of focus in either of the two European works. Bel and Le Roy, however, use avant-garde approaches to choreography and a radical opening up of the idea of what dance might be, strategies that were pioneered by members of Judson Dance Theater. In the 1960s and 1970s, this opened up possibilities for exploring new ways of making dance that corresponded with new social and political aspirations that were circulating within the counterculture of that time: these crystallised around opposition to the Vietnam War, rejection of the alienating nature of industrial or bureaucratic work, and criticism of the lack of meaning in consumer culture.

The four works were created in a different social and political context—that of neoliberal politics and economics and post-Fordist working practices. This context was one within which the critical concerns of the counterculture were no longer relevant; indeed, some argue that those concerns had been reappropriated by new forms of consumerism and new approaches to work practices. The two European works discussed in this chapter continue the avant-garde, deconstructive approach to choreography that is part of the Judson legacy, as do Trisha Brown and Simon Keenleyside in *Winterreise*. Bel's and Le Roy's pieces are also, as I will show, informed by critiques of the social and political context of neoliberalism. It is difficult, however, to see any comparable critical potential in either Brown or in Jasperse's piece.

These differences between contemporary dance in the United States and Europe in the 1990s and 2000s are the primary focus of this chapter. It therefore begins with an overview of those aspects of neoliberalism and post-Fordism that are relevant to the development of contemporary dance during this period, including recuperation of aspects of the counterculture to develop new kinds of consumer habits. It then looks at two differing accounts, by dance scholars, of the development of contemporary dance in the United States since the 1970s. One, by Susan Foster, discusses the impact of a new, market-oriented model for dance in New York that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The other, by André Lepecki, discusses emerging differences between dance in New York and dance in Europe during the 1990s. These discussions provide the context for readings of Bel's *Jérôme Bel,* Jasperse's *Fort Blossom*, LeRoy's *Le Sacre du printemps,* and Brown and Keenleyside's *Winterreise*.

NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism, as anthropologist and geographer David Harvey defines it, is

> a theory of political economics that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.[3]

Henry Giroux calls it a 'virulent and brutal form of market capitalism' and 'a belief that the market should be the organising principle for all political, social and economic decisions'.[4] Governments adopting neoliberal policies set about privatising publicly owned utilities and creating markets for services that had not previously been commercial, such as education, healthcare and social care, and the arts. New opportunities for wealth creation became possible with the globalisation of financial markets and free-market approaches to trade and industry. Most commentators place the beginnings of neoliberalism in the 1970s. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy point to an economic recession in Western countries due to a decline in growth and technological progress, which resulted in reduced income from share dividends and a decline in the value of loans due to inflation. This necessitated the development of a new approach to capitalism.[5] David Harvey points out that as part of the economic restructuring of Chile imposed by the International Monetary Fund after Pinochet's coup, Chicago School economists were able for the first time to experiment with Milton Friedman's neoliberal theories. The resulting approach, Harvey says, was then applied in the United States (under President Reagan) and the United Kingdom (under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), as well as in China and other countries around the world, including post-communist European countries after 1989.[6] Following the theories of the Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek (1899–1992), this involved reducing the size of government by allowing big corporations to bid for contracts to run what had previously been government services, and making government less interventionist in areas as disparate as international trade and workplace

3. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

4. Henry A Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm, 2004), xiii.

5. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 13–15.

6. Harvey, n. 3, 7–9.

health-and-safety legislation in order to make it easier for companies to make profits.

Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello argue that the development of what they call 'the new spirit of capitalism' took advantage of and exploited the values of the alternative counterculture that developed out of student protests in the 1960s.[7] David Harvey also argues that neoliberalism grew out of the discontent of those times, observing that

> powerful corporations in alliance with an interventionist state were seen to be running the world in individually oppressive and socially unjust ways. The Vietnam War was the most obvious catalyst for discontent, but the destructive activities of corporations and the state in relation to the environment, the push towards mindless consumerism . . . were also widely resented.[8]

Boltanski and Chiapello identify dissatisfaction with capitalist consumer culture as a factor in the development of the counterculture in the 1970s. Like Harvey, they also suggest this dissatisfaction was brought out onto the streets with the student revolutions of the late 1960s. Targets of countercultural critiques included 'the inauthenticity, the poverty of everday life, the dehumanisation of the world under the sway of technization and technocratization; . . . the loss of autonomy [and] the absence of creativity'.[9] Members of the counterculture aspired to live more creative, authentic, and individualistic lives. As I will show shortly, new, individualistic approaches to dance making were influenced by and contributed to the development of the counterculture.

Harvey argues that neoliberalism was able to exploit the individualistic nature of the counterculture because its aspirations towards greater personal freedom brought its members into conflict with the state's conservative values. New kinds of capitalism were, he argues, able to capture ideals of individual freedom and to turn this into political support for making government smaller and less interventionist. Boltanski and Chiapello offer an account of how neoliberalism went about doing this. They argue that the critique of capitalism that developed within the 1970s counterculture was subsequently appropriated and neutralised by the new globalised neoliberal economic model. Whereas the counterculture argued that work is alienating, work in postindustrial

7. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007).

8. Harvey, n. 3,42.

9. Boltanski and Chiapello, n. 7, 170.

busnesses has shifted, since the 1980s, from the production of material artefacts to the exploitation of immaterial and affective labour. The workplace consequently becomes a site of social exchange and global networking where the distinction between work skills and the social skills used in leisure activities becomes increasingly blurred. Whereas the counterculture criticised the mass consumption of standardised products, the new globalised consumerism focuses on individualised niche products and services and their supposed potential to liberate the consumer's individual creativity. Key examples of this new kind of consumerism are the lifestyle choices supposedly opened up in the 1990s by owning a Sony Walkman and in the 2000s, an Apple iPod.[10]

Boltanski and Chiapello explain how this shift from the countercultural aspiration for authenticity towards this new, highly individualised consumerism came about:

> The supply of authentic goods and human relations in the form of commodities was the only possible way of responding to the demand for authenticity that was compatible with the [capitalist] imperatives of accumulation. But clearly, in this new sense the reference to authenticity no longer presupposed the ascetic rejection of goods, material comfort or 'materialism' that still permeated the critique of the consumer society in the years following May 1968.[11]

Dancers who were part of the counterculture, as I will show, made works that were often implicitly critical of the materialism of American society in the 1960s and 1970s. Boltanski and Chiapello argue that old forms of critique have been neutralised and new forms are now necessary. Questions about new forms of critique are central to this chapter.

DANCE AND COUNTERCULTURAL CRITIQUE

As I've already mentioned, new approaches to making dance emerged within the counterculture. In the 1970s, many artists worked together in collectives to develop radical new approaches to dance making and movement training. Non-hierarchical, collective approaches to organisation were being adopted in many areas outside dance at that time as alternatives to the way mainstream

10. See Paul du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997); and Michael Bull, *Sound Movers: Ipod Culture and Urban Experience*. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

11. Boltanski and Chiapello, n. 7, 443.

industries and institutions were being run. Dance artists were organizing themselves in ways that were informed by the values of the counterculture. Through new ways of dancing, they sought what seemed to them more authentic modes of expression. Whereas consumer society was criticised for 'standardizing consumers of mass cultural products by transforming them into passive recipients of a standard message',[12] the new approaches valued individuality and personal autonomy alongside meaningful communal engagement.

Steve Paxton, interviewed in 1981, criticised the inauthenticity of much contemporary bodily experience. He believed that 'the body is designed by nature, or has evolved in nature, to throw itself around the landscape with great efficiency'.[13] Noting how people were living and working in New York, Paxton observed that they seemed to sit all day, at work, in the subway, or watching television in the evening, occasionally getting up and walking a little. This, he argued, uses about 'one per cent of our potential'.[14] Modern city life made people unaware of how little they used their bodies. Paxton believed that through practices like contact improvisation people could utilise more of their individual potential for movement and live more authentic lives.

In the 1970s both Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton left New York City to live in the countryside in a dancers' and artists' commune at Mad Brook Farm in northeastern Vermont. Cynthia Novack, in her 1990 study of contact improvisation, analyses the way the groups of young Americans who became involved with this approach to dance during the 1970s saw it as an expression of alternative values.[15] The same can be said of the *Circle Dances* that Hay developed in the early 1970s. Key to their performance, Novack wrote, is 'the experience coming from the energy of everyone in the circle'.[16] They are, she explained, 'definitely for people who want to dance without having had previous dance experience'.[17] In other words, they didn't require any specialised

12. Ibid.

13. Steve Paxton, *Contact Improvisation*, ed. Peter Hulton, vol. 4, Theatre Papers (Dartington, Devon: Dartington College of Arts, 1981–82), 13.

14. Ibid.

15. Novack describes the way contact improvisation evolved through a network of non-hierarchical groups, and offers an interesting analysis of the conflict between this and their desire to see Steve Paxton as a leader, a position he himself did not wish to assume. Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 81–82.

16. Ibid., 7.

17. Deborah Hay, Interview in Anne Livet (ed.) *Contemporary Dance* (New York: Abbeville Press), 128.

knowledge, only willingness to be sensitive to bodily experience. This came from valuing the ordinary and everyday. Such dance practices celebrate the freedom to be oneself and reject what were seen as the lack of authentic experience in a capitalist society. This desire for authenticity was a countercultural aspiration and central to a critique of capitalism and the interventionist state. This raises the questions, what happened to the critical potential of the counterculture when such aspirations were captured by neoliberalism, and what, in particular, happened to those forms of dance that expressed these aspirations?

TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANCE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1970–1999

I mentioned earlier that neoliberal ideologies required the state to create markets in areas which had not previously been commercial. Susan Foster has given an account of the development of a market for postmodern dance in New York in the 1970s and 1980s. Her account offers insights into the neutralisation of the critical potential of the new dance practices. Writing in 2002, Foster's main concern is with the marginalisation of the once vibrant dance improvisation scene in the United States, in which she had been a participant in the 1970s. Her particular focus is the work of Richard Bull but she mentions a range of independent organisations set up by American dancers in the 1970s to explore dance improvisation. In New York, improvisatory modes of performance were developed by small collectives living and working in lofts in the then inexpensive former industrial areas of Lower Manhattan, such as SoHo. The improvisation collective Grand Union is perhaps the best known example. The dancers in these collectives sometimes performed alongside other choreographers and experimental performance makers in spaces, such as Dance Theater Workshop, The Kitchen, and PS 122, that were initially dancer-led, collectively run organizations.

Foster criticises the way that arts funding developed in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead of supporting artists directly, funding bodies increasingly began to give grants to presenters and organizations, including those that began to take over spaces that had formerly been artist-led collectives. In 1982, Foster points out, 'Moneys granted by the NEA to organizations sponsoring dance events surpassed for the first time the amount given to artists.'[18] Artist-run spaces can be seen as commons in which dancers manage their own shared resources. The new approach to funding is an example where neoliberal ideology requires

18. Susan Leigh Foster, *Dances That Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 129.

the creation of a market regardless of whether it is appropriate or not. This is therefore an instance where a commons was enclosed. Foster discusses the Faustian contract that, in her view, dance artists made with presenters, spaces, and institutionalized organisations whose aim was to support artists:

> As performance spaces acquired their new status and luster, the emphasis on experimentation became institutionalised as support for the space itself and for the artists' career. What mattered was the promotion of the artists deemed to be successful in their experimental inquiry.[19]

The problem with this was that choreographers found themselves having to produce work with less and less rehearsal time. Continuing an argument from an earlier essay,[20] Foster pointed out that this 'reduced the amount of investigation that choreographers could undertake', while 'the booking and touring of work also discouraged choreographic experimentation'.[21] Choreographers were not able to employ dancers for long enough to develop an individual movement style, which meant that the dancers had to work on different projects with other choreographers. In Foster's view, this results in performance that 'homogenizes all styles and vocabularies beneath a sleek, impenetrable surface'.[22]

Foster's problem with the sleek, impenetrable surface of the kind of choreography that was produced under the management of presenters and performance spaces in the 1980s and 1990s was surely that it seemed inauthentic and no longer critical in the way that dance improvisation had been as part of the counterculture. Citing the approach to institutional critique that the visual artist Hans Haacke developed in the 1970s, Foster argues that 'part of art's responsibility is to promote critical awareness of social issues and to question the relations of power that define public space'.[23] This is something that I argued, in the previous chapter, is an important aspect of some of the most interesting European work in the 1990s and 2000s. For Foster, 'improvised performances, whether in the tradition of contact, jazz, or the cabaret style of some performance art, most powerfully exposed the workings of the new management-dominated production of dance'.[24] This kind of performance didn't fit the new,

19. Ibid., 137.

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

21. Foster, n. 17, 139.

22. Foster, n. 19, 255.

23. Foster, n. 17, 132–33.

24. Ibid., 140.

product-oriented approach to dance making required by the newly formed neoliberal market for dance performance.

A different kind of market for contemporary dance performance developed at about the same time in Europe, particularly in France, Germany, Belgium, and, after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, in post-Communist countries in the Balkans. These are countries with a long history of state sponsorship of the arts, and cultural policies that recognise the value of the arts to society and the state's duty to support the arts. From a neoliberal point of view, this is interventionist. Trisha Brown Dance Company was a frequent visitor to major European arts festivals and theatres. John Killacky, managing director of the company in the mid-1980s, presented data to a congressional committee in 1984 to show that 'six weeks of touring abroad left the ensemble with $23,000 for rehearsal subsidy'.[25] *Winterreise* was co-commissioned by four European theatres or festivals and one American theatre: the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York; the Lucerne Festival; the Barbican Centre in London; the Sage Gateshead, in Newcastle in the north of England; and La Monnaie, Brussels. Foster's argument is that the management-dominated market for dance performance that emerged in the United States had the effect of marginalizing radical, experimental approaches to dance making and performance, minimizing any opportunities for ungoverning dance. Radical work that had the potential to promote critical awareness of social issues and to question relations of power was, in her opinion, disappearing. Dancers producing this kind of radical, critical ungoverning work were, however, able to find support within the funding system for dance in European countries, and this is one of the main reasons for the divergence of contemporary dance between Europe and the United States.

The first person to put in print what some in the European dance sector were beginning to think about emerging differences between dance in Europe and the United States was André Lepecki. In two closely related articles, published in Berlin and London in 1999, Lepecki drew attention to 'the slow but sure widening of an unprecedented gap between the way dance making and performing is done in Europe and America'.[26] Lepecki was careful not to dismiss American choreography. He singled out Meg Stuart as an American dance artist who was producing work that, in his opinion, had made a radical departure from what he considered the stultifying modernist concerns of US dance in the 1980s. He also mentioned Margarita Guergue, Donna Uchizono,

25. Camille Hardy, "Trisha Brown: Pushing Post-Modern Art into Orbit," *Dance Magazine*, March 1985, 66.

26. André Lepecki, "Crystallisation: Unmaking American Dance by Tradition," *Dance Theatre Journal* 15, no. 2 (1999); and André Lepecki, "Caught in a Time Trap," *Ballett International/Tanz Aktuell*, April 1999.

Jennifer Lacey, John Jasperse, and Dennis O'Connor as interesting emerging artists whose work he had seen on a visit to New York in 1992. By the end of the decade, when Lepecki returned to New York after living in Europe, he felt that there had not been any consolidation of the new ways of making and thinking about dance that had excited him there a few years earlier.

The target of Lepecki's criticism is the support system for dance in the United States, but he also questioned the vitality of American dance work. The problem with it, he said, was that it was trapped in a loop of restaging formalist modernist concerns, had an emphasis on choreography rather than investigating issues around performative presence, and had become out of touch with developments in the other arts, with visual art in particular. Choreographers in the United States, he stated, are incapable of thinking in an interdisciplinary way. He evidently did not find these problems in Meg Stuart's work, but it is less clear whether he found them in the work of the other younger choreographers he names. Although he doesn't mention it, Stuart, having danced for Randy Warshaw's company in New York between 1988 and 1992, had moved to Belgium and been based there since 1994. In Brussels and Berlin, her company Damaged Goods received a degree of recognition and level of financial and institutional support that she most probably would not have received had she stayed in New York. Tellingly, Lepecki notes:

> Dancers from Europe who come to New York usually voice the following commentary: 'It is a great place for classes, to increase the awareness of your body. It is a horrible place to see interesting dance, to increase your abilities as an inventive performer and as an artist.' [27]

The innovative approaches to movement training through developing bodily awareness, that emerged in the United States during the 1970s, had, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, become a deep and rich source of knowledge for dancers. Lepecki, in 1999, gave the impression that he believed that choreography in the United States, rather than movement training, was in danger of stultifying.[28]

27. Lepecki, n. 25, 33.

28. Jenn Joy writes about a number of dance artists working in the United States in the 2000s—including luciana achugar, Hilary Clark, DD Dorvillier, Miguel Gutierrez, Maria Hassabi, Heather Kravas, and Jeremy Wade—whose work is from her description lively and experimental and does not fall into the time-trap that Lepecki identified. I myself have not seen any of these artists' work. I was last in New York in 2002. Hardly any work by younger US-based dancers has appeared in London since then compared with the large number of American companies presented in London during the 1980s. Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014).

The main differences between Foster and Lepecki's analyses derive from their particular interests. Foster was concerned with what happened in the United States to the radical choreographic innovations partly initiated by dancers associated with Judson Dance Theater, and consolidated and developed by artists in the 1970s and 1980s, many of whom were working collectively. Lepecki was primarily interested in what had been happening in Europe during the 1990s and why something similar had not also been developing in the United States. Both Foster and Lepecki, in different ways, in effect, recognise that a key legacy of the 1970s has been the development of influential practices, such as contact improvisation, through which dancers can increase their awareness of their bodies in a productively creative way.

My discussions of the four works by Bel and Jasperse and Brown and Le Roy is informed by Foster's and Lepecki's critiques. A comparison of Jérôme Bel's *Jérôme Bel* and John Jasperse's *Fort Blossom* reveal the different ways in which European and American choreographers approach questions about the body. The men, but not the women, in the Jasperse piece are naked, as are all the performers in Bel's piece. Lepecki argued that European choreographers in the 1990s were plunging into the logic of performance, a logic that profoundly implicates presence. To what extent, therefore, do the ways in which *Jérôme Bel* and *Fort Blossom* stage naked bodies allow the dancers to investigate the logic of performance and with what implications for the kinds of presences that dancers project in each work? Another factor that Lepecki discusses is the relation between dance and other art forms, and artists' openness to interdisciplinary investigations. Trisha Brown's production of *Winterreise* and Xavier LeRoy's *Le sacre du printemps* present radically new ways of exploring the relationship between dance and European classical music. To what extent can the differences that Lepecki argues divide European and American work be found through comparing these two pieces? Lastly, drawing on Foster's argument, to what extent do any of these works promote critical awareness and question the relations of power that define public space in Europe and North America in the 1990s and 2000s? Has the critical potential of the dance practices initiated by members of Judson Dance Theater and developed as part of the counterculture been reappropriated by neoliberalism in the way Boltanski and Chiapello argue? Or do these works constitute sites of resistance against neoliberalism's destabilising effects? Do they ungovern dance?

Jérôme Bel (1995) and *Fort Blossom* (2000)

Jérôme Bel by Jérôme Bel, from 1995, is earlier than *Fort Blossom* and is the piece that established Bel's reputation as a choreographic innovator.[29] In

29. In 1994 Bel had created *Nom donné par l' auteur* (Name given by the author; i.e. a dictionary definition of 'title'). This, he has said, was an experimental piece that was performed little at the time.

his book *Exhausting Dance*, André Lepecki uses *Jérôme Bel* to explain the book's title, citing an unsuccessful civil prosecution in Dublin. It had been initiated by a member of the audience, Mr. Raymond Whitehead, who took the International Dance Festival of Ireland to court for, in his view, wrongly describing the piece as dance. The old-fashioned idea of dance underlying Whitehead's complaint is now, in Lepecki's view, exhausted.[30] This court case is evidence of the way *Jérôme Bel* (and more or less all Bel's pieces) invite controversy both through the conceptual propositions they perform and because of the material itself that is presented on stage.

Bel has said that he worked out all the material for *Jérôme Bel* (Figure 1) in advance on his own and only spent fifteen days teaching it to the dancers.[31] Having read Roland Barthes's 1953 book *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (*Writing Degree Zero*)[32] Bel asked himself what the degree zero of dancing in a theatre might be and decided that it requires three elements: bodies, light, and music. Where bodies are concerned, nakedness is degree zero of a dancer on stage. A naked, hand-held electric light bulb on a long extension lead, Bel decided, would represent the degree zero of lighting design. Thus Gisèle Pelozuelo carries this on stage at the start of the piece and writes the name 'Thomas Edison', the inventor of the light bulb, in chalk on a black wall at the back. Naked music could be seen as music without an instrument—performed with only the unaccompanied voice. Yseult Roch, having written 'Stravinsky, Igor' on the wall, sings the entire score of *Le Sacre du printemps*. The two dancers, Frédéric Seguette and Claire Haenni (Bel himself does not perform in the piece that bears his name) write, in chalk, their names, measurements, telephone numbers, and bank balances before performing a series of actions that foreground the materiality of bodies and the potential of these for signification. They start by pinching and stretching their skin, then proceed to writing on their bodies in lipstick. Haenni inscribes 'Christian Dior' down her leg, the name standing for an iconic brand of stockings she might otherwise have worn. Later, Seguette writes on his hand and then slaps it soundly onto her lower back, and after a pregnant pause removes it to reveal printed on her skin 'AEI!!!', the French vocalisation one might have expected her to make. This is typical of

30. See André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

31. Gerald Siegmund, "In the Realm of Signs: Jérôme Bel," *Ballet International/Tanz Aktuell*, no. 4 (1998): 37. Bel told Christophe Wavelet the same thing and discussed his process of working at home before the rehearsal period in a video interview for the CDN, Pantin.

32. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967). Bel told Christophe Wavelet that he also read at this time Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* and was fascinated by its discussions of the sociological habitus of the body.

Figure 1 Frédéric Seguette and Claire Haenni in *Jérôme Bel* (1995). Photo by Herman Sorgeloos.

the games with signification that take place throughout the piece. Towards the end the two dancers urinate on stage and use their urine to wash off some of the chalk letters on the black back wall, leaving the sentence 'Eric chante Sting' (Eric sings Sting), after which Eric Affergan, fully clothed, appears and sings, unaccompanied, the English pop star's hit song 'Englishman in New York'. He finishes it in the dark after everyone else, including the light carrier, have left.

Fort Blossom was made in 2000, and Jasperse revived it, adding a little more material, in 2012 as *Fort Blossom Revisited*. Whereas all the performers in *Jérôme Bel* are nude, *Fort Blossom* is performed in the 2000 version by two naked male dancers—Jasperse himself and Miguel Guttierrez—and two clothed female ones—Parker Lutz and Juliette Mapp. The dancers use as props shiny, inflated, transparent vinyl objects that are like large cushions or stools. These are manipulated in different ways during the piece. The dancers lie across them and swing them around. Early on, one man lies on top of the other with a cushion between them that has had its stopper removed (Figure 2). By pumping his pelvis into the cushion, the dancer on top gradually deflates the cushion until there is only a thin plastic membrane separating his crotch from the other's buttocks. This is performed in a neutral, task-like way that is asexual while nevertheless bringing to mind penetrative sex. The women use the cushions differently. At one point they sling them on their backs like back packs.

Figure 2 *Fort Blossom Revisited* by John Jasperse (2012).
Photo by Lindsay Browning.

Later they whirl them around 'inadvertently (or not) smacking the men with them' as Deborah Jowitt puts it.[33] The piece has an electronic score—a hum or buzz—that has an anonymous, almost industrial quality which increases in intensity as the male/male duet develops. There is also, briefly, some humorously light popular instrumental music during a later comic section while the women smack the men with the inflatable objects.

In a 2013 interview Jasperse said that he had initially wanted all four dancers to be naked but that the two women had said no.[34] This must have been at a very early stage, as the idea of binary opposites is immediately established in the piece and continues in many aspects of it. The stage floor is black with a white linoleum dance floor unrolled on half of it—for most of the piece perform the women on one side on white, the men perform on the black. Naked men contrast with clothed women. A substantial female/female duet consists of unison movement material with linear, gestural slices and clean, angular positions, while the men perform a very different, much slower duet involving lots of skin contact and the bearing of weight. Jasperse has said that the piece explores 'ideas about creating borders and changing borders and how groups get formed and how they dissolve'.[35] The last section involves all four dancers

33. Deborah Jowitt, "The Feistiness of Form," *Village Voice*, June 13, 2000, 79.

34. Wendy Perron, "John Jasperse on Dancemaking as 'an Estheticized Puzzle,'" *Dance Magazine*, January 1, 2013, 40.

35. Joyce Morgenroth, *Speaking of Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 197.

largely moving in unison, suggesting some sort of resolution, although the contrast between naked and clothed remains.

The most substantive section in *Fort Blossom* and the one that has attracted most critical discussion is the male/male duet. Like the earlier cushion-deflating sequence, it resembles sex but is performed in a slow, neutral way. It is choreographed so that one dancer places or slides the crack between his buttocks over the arm, or hand, or knee, or shoulder of the other dancer. If at first this might seem accidental, the beholder is left in no doubt as these touches emerge as a gradually recurring refrain, like the chorus at the end of each verse of a ballad. Jasperse developed this material through improvisation sessions. In line with Lepecki's comment that New York is 'a great place for classes, to increase the awareness of your body', Jasperse acknowledges taking advantage of this, through working with Lisa Kraus and Eva Karczag.[36] He has said that he generally makes material 'from a preconceived structure that guides the physical structure', often using 'painstaking micro-increments' in a process that 'is both physical and analytical'.[37] The extremely slow, patient progression of the duet does indeed proceed through micro-increments. Although this doesn't look like Japanese butoh, Jasperse once took classes with Yoshito Ohno at the Kazuo Ohno Studio in Yokohama. Alistair Macaulay, reviewing the 2012 production, wrote that the intimacy of contact in this duet was amazing:

> The cheek of one man's face is pressed tenderly to the cheek of the other's buttock. One man crouches on all fours while the other arches on top, lying on him back to back ... As these men part their legs, shift their pelvises, ripple their spines, there's little we don't know about their groins. And their bodies as a whole keep taking on new looks as we go on watching.[38]

The duet is presented in an anonymous and de-individuated way, an exploration of new potentials for bodies in motion. Underlying this, however, is a half hint at erotic sensations, and an intimacy of touch that, performed by two naked men, points towards homosexual practices without actually showing or representing this.

A comparison of these two pieces is instructive about the relation between contemporary dance in Europe and the United States at this time. *Jérôme Bel*

36. Jenny Dalzell, "Postmoderm Cross-Pollination: A Conversation with John Jasperse," *Dance Teacher* 33, no. 12 (2011): 30.

37. Morgenroth, n. 33, 191.

38. Alistair Macaulay, "Intimacy's Many Facets," *New York Times*, May 10, 2012.

by Jérôme Bel uses minimal theatrical resources: one hand-held light bulb, sung music, a black back wall to write on. *Fort Blossom* has costumes, a sophisticated lighting design by Stan Pressner, a set including the specially created inflatables, and a sound mix devised by Jasperse and Michael Floyd.[39] This contributes to the piece's atmosphere and helps generate intensity. Neither *Fort Blossom* nor *Jérôme Bel* is choreographed by setting steps to music and each eschews conventional rhythm. Bel's use of Stravinsky's instantly recognisable score is a reminder of a tradition of shocking avant-garde works, among which Bel must surely have hoped his work would take its place. The savage energy of *Le Sacre du printemps* when played by a large symphony orchestra with a full percussion section is ingeniously undermined by Yseult Roch's highly musical reduction of it, hummed in a calm female voice.[40]

What *Fort Blossom* and *Jérôme Bel* have in common is their presentation of naked dancers. I have been describing them as 'naked' rather than nude. The art historian Kenneth Clark suggested that whereas nakedness implies potential embarrassment and vulnerability, nudity does not because the nude is a recognised form in the canon of Western high culture.[41] Neither Bel nor Jasperse seem to aspire towards the creation of the kind of aesthetic transcendence that Clark values, and each dance piece in its own way addresses the social meanings of nakedness. In his essay on striptease, Roland Barthes argues that the 'tease' comes from what still remains concealed as the artist's clothing is gradually removed. The moment when all is revealed, he argues, no longer holds any mystery and is no longer seductive.[42] The naked men in *Fort Blossom* and all but one of the performers in *Jérôme Bel* reveal all and hide nothing. None of them seek to seduce as such. The dancers' nakedness in *Jérôme Bel* quickly becomes normal as Bel directs the beholder's attention to what the dancers are doing to their skin. Seguette pulls Haenni's long hair between his legs as she squats behind him, so that it appears to sprout out around his testicles. The result is comic rather than erotic. When they urinate so publicly—Seguette standing facing the audience, Haenni squatting in semi-darkness—and scoop up the urine with their hands, they challenge social taboos. But any frisson is quickly suppressed when attention is shifted towards the purpose of

39. Recordings by Ryogi Ikeda were used in the 2012 version.

40. Sadly, the Stravinsky Foundation objected to the music being sung in this way and in later performances a recording was played on a portable CD player through earphones that were placed beside a microphone.

41. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (London: John Murray, 1956).

42. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957), 147–50; *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (St. Albans, Herts: Paladin, 1973), 84–87.

doing so: the word play that emerges through the erasing of letters.[43] Jasperse, in contrast, continually reminds the beholder of the sensual contact of masculine skin on skin, and of the weight of body pressing on body. This may not be seductive in Barthes's terms because it leaves nothing hidden; there's little, as Macaulay puts it, that we don't know about their groins. The male/male duet, I suggest, doesn't set out to arouse. But just as the words 'Christian Dior' point to the silk stockings that, as a woman, Haenni might wear, so the pressure of a male hand so close to another man's anus implies homosexual sex.

The reception of the two works was very different. *Fort Blossom* was reviewed by leading US-based dance critics, including Deborah Jowitt, Anna Kisselgoff, and Alistair Macaulay, but it has received almost no scholarly attention. There is, however, lots of theoretically sophisticated scholarly writing about *Jérôme Bel*—by André Lepecki, Gerard Siegmund, Una Bauer, Laurent Goumarre. I've already noted that for Lepecki, the piece exemplifies the idea of 'exhausting dance', and in chapter 1 noted that, for Goumarre, it exemplifies deceptual art. Siegmund discusses it in terms of absence. Interestingly, Siegmund compares the stretching and pinching of skin in *Jérôme Bel* with Jasperse's similar use of nakedness in an earlier piece *Excesories* (1995).

Fort Blossom was made after the publication of two articles in which Lepecki mentioned Jasperse in a context that unfavourably contrasted his work with developments in Europe. Jasperse was undoubtedly aware of the way contemporary dance was developing in Europe, having danced in Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's company Rosas in the early 1990s and won European awards later in the decade for his choreography. *Fort Blossom* can almost be seen as a response to *Jérôme Bel*, picking up on its radical presentation of naked dancers but exploring this in a way that draws on somatically informed approaches to making movement. The production values of Jasperse's piece—its set, costume, lighting, electronic music—contrasts with the ironic asceticism of Bel's deliberately minimal use of theatrical resources. I noted earlier that members of the counterculture were ascetic in their rejection of the mass consumer goods of their day, and that this was something that neoliberalism had attempted to transform into a more individualised and seemingly authentic consumerism. *Jérôme Bel's* asceticism, together with its ironic references to Christian Dior stockings, hints at distaste with material consumption. The piece's humour brings out the extent to which the dancers and the beholders are in agreement

43. Una Bauer argues that 'it is very difficult not to feel physically disgusted' by this. It catches the beholder between the socially and culturally constructed response to urine and the possibility of thinking beyond it'. Una Bauer, "The Movement of Embodied Thought. The Representational Game of the Stage Zero of Significance in *Jérôme Bel*," *Performance Research* 13, no. 1 (2008): 40.

about consumerism; they would prefer a different kind of authenticity, that of the ordinary, everyday reality exemplified by the dancers' personal details—their height, weight, bank balances, and phone numbers. This is something they have in common. Revealing this through the performance is a kind of ungoverning.

The neutral presences of the dancers in *Fort Blossom* draw attention to the dancers' intensely sensitive focus on very small gradations within the movement material they are performing. While authenticity might not have been an explicit concern of Jasperse when he was making *Fort Blossom,* his use of somatically informed methods for developing movement material with his dancers through guided and structured improvisations derives from dancers' discoveries in the 1960s and 1970s. As I have shown, this grew out of a countercultural aspiration for authenticity which was subsequently captured and reappropriated by neoliberalism in order to create a new kind of consumerism. *Fort Blossom* does not suggest the kind of critical unease about neoliberalism that I have argued informs *Jérôme Bel*. This is a key difference between European and US contemporary dance as it has developed since the mid-1990s.

Winterreise (2002) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (2007)

Trisha Brown's 2002 production of the British baritone Simon Keenlyside's performance of the song cycle *Winterreise* and Xavier Le Roy's solo performance *Le Sacre du printemps* in which he conducts Stravinsky's landmark musical score, each present radically new ways of thinking about the relationship between dance movement and European classical music. In his 1999 essay, Lepecki argues that whereas European dance artists in the 1990s were interested in exploring the relation between dance and other art forms, dance artists in the United States were out of touch with developments in the other arts, visual art in particular. This could not be said of Brown, whose practice had included drawing as well as choreography since the 1970s.[44] As with Bel and Jasperse, the difference between Brown's and Le Roy's pieces is bound up with Le Roy's critical response to neoliberalism

I saw Trisha Brown's staging of *Winterreise* for the British baritone Simon Keenlyside at the Barbican Centre in London in September 2003.[45] Keenleyside had asked Brown to stage a concert of songs for him after he had created the eponymous role of Orfeo in Brown's 1998 production of Monteverdi's opera.

44. Brown had a close artistic relation with the painter Robert Rauschenberg, starting in the early 1960s and lasting until his death in 2008.

45. It was co-commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Lucerne Festival, Barbican Centre; Sage Gateshead, UK; and La Monnaie, Brussels.

In *Winterreise* he was accompanied by the pianist Pedja Muzijec and three dancers from Trisha Brown's company—Brandi Norton, Seth Parker, and Lionel Popkin—and the lighting design, which played a key role in the production, was by Jennifer Tipton.

Winterreise is a setting of twenty-four poems by Wilhelm Müller, which Schubert finished composing just before his death in 1828 at the age of thirty-one, Müller having died the year before, aged thirty-three. Both were tragically young. The poems express the self-pity of a young poet at the end of his first love affair. Unable to face reality, he trudges off on the winter journey that gives the cycle its title. It is generally acknowledged that while Müller's poems are of some literary value, Schubert's settings lift them to a higher level, giving them an almost Shakespearean resonance. The resulting dark work only became popular during the twentieth century—it was apparently Samuel Beckett's favourite piece of music. In the late 1990s, Brown became interested in the way movement can be used in narrative contexts—hence her opera productions and a collaboration with the experimental theatre company, the Wooster Group.[46] Although, as a Romantic composer, Schubert's sensibilities might seem far from those of Brown, his extremely economical and acutely sensitive musical settings of Müller's poems must have appealed to Brown's forensic interest in the way an abstract gestural vocabulary can contribute to the theatrical presentation of stories.

In *Winterreise*, the choreographed staging worked on several levels. It reflected on and complemented the words of the poems, which were sung in German (with English subtitles projected on screens). It sometimes complemented the music in a detailed, analytical way, while helping to define an overall structure within the cycle as a whole. In the first song, 'Gute Nacht' (Good night), Norton became first the lover about whom the poet was singing, and then, miming a line in the second verse—'A shadow thrown by the moon is my companion'—she cast a strong shadow on him so that he literally sang in darkness. These kinds of shadows are a recurring element in the production. At the end of the song, the poet and his love were physically distant but the lighting cast their shadows on the white back wall in such a way that their extended arms seemed to touch as if they are partners in an elegant minuet. Here and elsewhere Tipton's lighting design played a central role. 'Die Krähe' (The Crow) started with Keenlyside crouched over with wing-like arms so that his dark silhouette looked like a crow. In 'Irrlicht' (Will o' the wisp) the stage was almost dark but as Keenlyside or the dancers moved forwards or back they became momentarily caught like will o' the wisps in narrow beams of sidelight. During some songs Keenlyside sang while the dancers moved around

46. She created a dance for their 1998 production *House/Lights*—a version of *Dr. Faustus*.

him or they formed tableaux through which he moved. In some he danced with them and, in the third song about frozen tears, he danced on his own.

Some songs showed Brown and Keenlyside investigating how movement affects voice production, and how far they could push things. In 'Rast' (Rest) two dancers lay with their legs in the air and alternately supported Keenlyside on the soles of their feet as he gave them all his weight while continuing to sing. In the next song, 'Frülingstraum' (Dream of spring), the dancers formed a human mattress on which he lay back and sang, facing up, to the lighting grid. At other times the dancers lined up behind Keenlyside to form an interlocking mass of bodies that sprouted many arms like a statue of Kali. In 'Lindenbaum' these were the whispering branches of the linden tree whose message the poet didn't want to hear. Elsewhere, these many arms formed an abstract semaphore that created a movement counterpoint to the musical theme. Sometimes a dancer's hand seemed to press Keenlyside's heart, or the dancers' arms became like those of Japanese puppeteers, manipulating the singer's own arms and upper body. All these moments made one aware of the physicality and effort of concert singing, something that is generally hidden.

Before going to the performance I had listened to a recording of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau singing *Winterreise*. In a song about his beloved's footprints preserved in the snow, there is a moment when one word is sung on a prolonged high note that then rises still higher before sliding down a tone. Fischer-Dieskau used this to create a grandly virtuoisic climax. At this phrase Keenlyside went down on his knees and bent right over, his forehead almost touching the linoleum, as if looking for her frozen print. While Fischer-Dieskau slid in a grandly expressive way between the notes, Keenlyside cleanly articulated each separate note. Roland Barthes, no fan of Fischer-Dieskau, criticised him, and his Schubert recordings in particular, for being 'expressive, dramatic, sentimentally clear, borne by a voice lacking any "grain" in signifying weight'.[47] It is surely this missing 'grain' of the voice that Keenlyside succeeded in reviving by avoiding the sentimentality of which Barthes complained.

Brown's choreography and staging reinforced this with its cool, clear gestural movements and sculptural groupings. This *Winterreise* almost seemed as icily detached as a Robert Wilson production. As he sang, Keenlyside never tried to become the moping poet, never seemed to express any emotional pain of his own. Instead, he and Brown showed how the music itself does the work of creating an emotional climax. This comes in the penultimate song, when the poet sees three suns and, realising that two of them exist only in his fevered mind, rages that the third real sun doesn't leave him too. Three dancers, their

47. "The Grain of the Voice," in Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 185.

arms stretched out in a shape familiar from 'Lindenbaum' and other songs, were the suns. When two and then the third dancer left Keenlyside alone on stage, a huge, cold, grey circle of light filled the white cyclorama at the back of the stage, like the pale midday sun of an arctic midwinter. This powerful image was followed inexorably by the painful emptiness of the final song, when the shattered poet half-heartedly asks the organ grinder, whose music nobody listens to, if he can go away with him. The music itself is painfully sparse and repetitive, all its energy spent. Keenlyside sang from the shadows behind the piano while a dancer right at the back of the stage slowly spiralled. An oblique beam of light close beside him projected his uncannily elongated shadow so that it stretched out diagonally right across the backdrop, like the shadow of a vampire reaching towards his victim in a German expressionist film.

While Brown and Tipton came up with smart concepts for individual songs, this was not a cerebral production. Its radical edge came from its lack of sentimentality and from the way it stretched Keenlyside as a performer to sing while executing dance movements and thus reveal the physicality of his singing. Brown and Keenleyside's production of *Winterreise* should not be seen merely as a piece of choreography set to music. Just as Schubert created maximum effect with minimal musical means, Brown used dance material in a sparing way, hardly ever letting it take centre stage but only using it to support the singing in a kind of abstracted moving accompaniment. Too often, in more conventional concerts, singers and musicians either move woodenly on stage or are so charismatic and self-expressive that there is a danger that they themselves, rather than the music, demand our attention. This *Winterreise* suggests possibilities for rethinking dance's relationship with musical performance by acknowledging the physicality of performing music in ways that both respect and enhance the music itself.

The task that Xavier Le Roy executes in his 2007 solo *Le Sacre du printemps* is to present the movements of a conductor rehearsing an orchestra as they play Stravinsky's famous score. I have seen this solo twice, in 2007 and then again in 2013. Le Roy begins facing the back of the stage and conducting invisible musicians, but after a few minutes he turns to face and conduct the audience as if we ourselves are the orchestra. Loudspeakers have been placed under the rows of seating so that the sounds of different orchestral groups come from different parts of the auditorium. As he conducts, Le Roy turns to look at particular rows of seats, engaging beholders in eye contact as if they are playing the particular instruments he is bringing in at that moment in the score and directing his movements towards them. In a very different way from *Winterreise,* Le Roy proposes rethinking the relationship between the performance of music and the movements of musicians as performers. He proposes that what the conductor is doing is dance. To appreciate the complex sets of

ideas and meanings that Le Roy brings into play with this solo, it is necessary to consider his research process in developing the concept and material for the work.

Le Sacre du printemps is not the only work in which Le Roy has interrogated the relation between dance and music. In his 1999 lecture performance *Product of Circumstances* (which was discussed in the previous chapter), Le Roy mentions a series of early pieces he made using new music created by Stefan Schmidt. In 2003 he directed *Le Théâtre des repetitions*, a music theatre version of three pieces composed by Bernhard Lang, and in 2005 he worked again with musicians to stage an evening concert of music by the German music concrèt composer Helmut Lachenmann. This led in 2006 to an invitation from the Educational Project of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to make a youth dance work with Berlin school children using Edgar Varèse's avant-garde composition *Ionisation* (1931). The end result was a dance performance with Varese's score, performed live by the orchestra conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. While working on this, Le Roy was given a DVD of *Rhythm It Is!* which documented a previous youth dance project by Royston Maldoom, Rattle, and the orchestra that involved Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. An extra feature on the DVD showed footage of a public rehearsal of Rattle conducting the orchestra in *Sacre*, and this became the starting point for Le Roy's solo. Conductors are often more expressive in rehearsals when they are finding the qualities they want the orchestra to bring out, than they are in the final performance. Rattle seemed to Le Roy to be more expressive in this film than other conductors. At one point, it appeared to Le Roy that Rattle was behind the orchestra, so that his movements were not conducting the musicians but the latter were making him move. The process of conducting as a physical activity, for Le Roy, seemed to be about making music happen, but it could also appear to be a physical response to the music. In a 2007 essay, he proposes that the conductor's movements

> are often as much the cause as the effect or the function of the music. They can initiate, illustrate, amplify . . . they appear to weave a multitude of links between intention/expression/expressivity/affectivity/function; between the music/musicians/spectators. The sum of all these movements seems to constitute a choreography of *Le sacre du printemps*. Furthermore, the hundred and twenty musicians necessary to play this music are like an audience facing this man who performs for them.[48]

48. Xavier Le Roy, "Récit de travail sur Le Sacre du printemps," *Repères Cahier de danse*, November (2007): 22; my translation.

Significantly, Le Roy argues here that the involvement of the audience is an essential part of what makes the musical event into a choreography. It is this weaving together of audience, performer, and music which Le Roy explores in his solo.

Not knowing anything about conducting, Le Roy asked a professional conductor to teach him some rudiments, and after two weeks of instruction began on his own to work out how to beat the notoriously complicated and difficult beats of Stravinsky's score. He also identified different groups of musical instruments that the conductor brings in, and practiced the way that Rattle did this. The DVD of the rehearsal only shows Rattle some of the time, cutting back and forth between shots of him and the musicians. Le Roy had to try and work out what Rattle might have been doing when he was not on screen. Le Roy says that when he couldn't work something out, he turned to the way other choreographers had set movements to the beat. The section he found most difficult was at the end, the climactic, sacrificial solo of the Chosen One. For this he found he had to adapt the movements that Millicent Hodson had used in her reconstruction of Nijinsky's ballet.

At a seminar in 2013, Le Roy said that the music for his performance sounds different every night and that, while performing, he listens for the differences.[49] He was given access to the unmixed thirty-two-track recording of Rattle conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in *Sacre*. Sound artist Peter Böhm mixes these live during the performance using his own algorithms to direct particular strands of sound (which don't completely correspond with a particular group of instruments) to the different speakers underneath the audience's seats. No two theatres are the same size or shape, some are wider than others, some deeper, and this affects where the sounds, to which Le Roy is listening, emerge. Sometimes, if there is not a big audience, Le Roy finds himself turning to an empty row from which the particular sound that he is looking for is coming. This is a problem. The brief relations he has with beholders is key to the performance.

In his 2007 essay, Le Roy states:

> The first contact is a surprise—probably as much for me as for them [the spectators] since I can see them just as they see me. Some, who are sitting in a place that I turn to regularly and address one-to-one (for example the Piccolo Clarinet) can share a complicit smile with me after the second time that I focus on them; others seem uneasy or look as if they are ready to get

49. In May 2013 Le Roy participated in a two-day workshop that I was teaching in Bruges to mark the centenary of the first performance of *Le Sacre du printemps*. It was jointly organised by the Doctoral School of the University of Ghent and the Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bruges.

> up and move; or they react by looking back in a challenging way, while others close their eyes and listen. This multitude of interactions affects my performance and can even put me off the rhythm, which I don't find easy to maintain. A better outcome is when I can become absorbed by the interaction and challenge myself about particular postures.[50]

Le Roy observes that the sequence of changes in rhythm between one cell and another in Stravinsky's score are extremely difficult to remember.

> Evidently I make and will always make some errors, but this isn't such a big problem since what is at stake in the piece cannot be reduced to this on its own. I continually try to find ways of playing with the exchanges with spectators and try to find ways of prolonging the interplay [*les va-et-vient*] between us, investigating each time the relations brought into play by the piece's conceptual structure [*dispositif*].[51]

The approach to interacting with beholders that Le Roy describes is very similar to the approach he adopted in the first part of *Sans titre (2014)*. At stake in both pieces are not just an experience of sharing something between performer and beholder but the meaning of such sharings as well. It ungoverns the way that the institution of the theatre determines normative ways in which performer and beholder should behave.

Discussing his *Sacre* during a 2013 seminar, Le Roy insisted that he is not a musician. Where conducting is concerned, he is ignorant. What he is offering to the audience is the proposition that if he can teach himself a way into something about which he knows nothing, so can they. In his solo, Le Roy is therefore rethinking the connection between dance performance and musical performance in a way that creates a very different relation between performer and beholder from that in *Winterreise*. Brown presents a very sophisticated and moving spectacle in which, from a neoliberal point of view, the spectators are consumers of highly specialized services. Le Roy, however, deconstructs the idea of the performing artist as a provider of specialized services, proposing to spectators that they can become active participants sharing equal access to what Charlotte Hess and Nancy Ostrom (chapter 1) have called a 'knowledge commons'. The focus on the communal and relational in Le Roy's *Sacre* contrasts with the individualism encouraged by neoliberalism.

50. Le Roy, n. 46, 24.

51. Ibid.

Authenticity, Neoliberalism, and Critical Dance

A key difference that has emerged from these readings of the two pairs of contemporary dance works from Europe and the United States lies in the ways in which they each deal with the performer's physicality. *Winterreise* and *Fort Blossom* both exemplify an approach to dance that is informed by a somatically informed approach to movement research. Lepecki suggested that for dancers from Europe, this was a particular strength of the New York dance scene, and I have shown how this approach grew out of an aspiration for an authenticity that members of the counterculture had not found in the mass consumer society of the 1960s and 1970s. There is nothing, however, about the way Le Roy performs *Le Sacre du printemps* or the dancers perform in *Jérôme Bel* that suggests the kind of bodily awareness that is present in Brown's and Jasperse's works. Artists who work with somatically informed approaches to movement research tend to focus on ways of finding new kinds of movement material, often using improvisation. The question for them is not 'how is contemporary dance possible' but how is it possible to find new ways of moving. Bel and Le Roy have not been concerned with these approaches to movement, although others working in Europe at the end of the 1990s were exploring them. But for the Europeans the question was how to frame dance so that it could be meaningful within the social and political context of the time. The aspiration for authenticity that is suggested by the treatment of the body by Bel and Le Roy, is one that speaks of ordinary everyday experiences in *Jérôme Bel* and of a non-dancer, Sir Simon Rattle in *Le Sacre du printemps*. There is an asceticism in the appreciation of the ordinary and everyday that can be read as resistance to aspects of neoliberal consumerism.

I noted earlier in the discussion of Paxton's and Hay's work during the 1970s that the new dance practices developing at the time within the counterculture valued individuality and personal autonomy alongside meaningful communal engagement, this being particularly evident in Hay's *Circle Dances*. The highly individualistic nature of the new neoliberal consumer culture—exemplified by the Walkman and the iPod—is the antithesis of community and relationality. I posed the question earlier, to what extent have the meanings of the dance practices that developed as part of the counterculture changed with new circumstances? What this chapter suggests is that, following Foster, the way that the dance scene in the United States was institutionalized through the creation of a market for contemporary dance had the effect of marginalizing those aspects of new dance practices that were informed by the critical values of the counterculture. It is difficult to find in the two US pieces any of the critical potential that these radical dance practices had carried as part of the counterculture in the 1970s. Bel and Le Roy produce works that could be said to ungovern

dance through the relations they make between dancers and beholders—Bel's use of humour, Le Roy's use of eye contact. Such acts of ungoverning do not seem to be a significant aim for Brown or Jasperse. This is not to deny that all four of the pieces discussed in this chapter attest to the persistence of alternative ways of thinking about dance choreography and performance. Brown and Keenleyside open up new ways of thinking about the relationship between voice and movement, and Jasperse opens up new ways of expressing the sensuality of the male dancing body. Bel and Le Roy have reconnected with the avant-garde sensibility of the 1960s and transformed it in ways that allow their works to become sites of resistance against the effects of neoliberal consumerism and its consequences on community and relationality.

3

Rethinking Virtuosity

This chapter continues the discussion about the way dance circulates within dance markets. While chapter 2 examined discourses about neoliberalism in order to survey the relationship between dance performance and the development of a new postindustrial capitalist model, the focus in this chapter and the next shifts to discourses about post-Fordism and its implications for dance. Discussions of post-Fordism have been developed by philosophers associated with the Italian operaist movement, who have analysed the new kinds of immaterial work practices in postindustrial production. Workers use their virtuosity to generate profit through the circulation of knowledge rather than goods. Paulo Virno and Judith Revel, however, have argued that workers' virtuosity is not entirely captured by post-Fordist working practices. Dance performance is a field in which virtuosity, in the conventional sense of the display of exceptional technical accomplishment, is valued. The place and nature of virtuosity in dance performance has, however, been shifting in contemporary dance in line with the changes described by post-Fordist theorists. This chapter offers a way of rethinking virtuosity in dance that is informed by post-Fordist discourse.

To rethink virtuosity in dance, the chapter looks at new kinds of virtuosity in dance practices, at examples in which global corporations have tried to capture dance practices, and at dance works which suggest democratic alternative forms of virtuosity. One area in which dance artists have been rethinking virtuosity is improvisation. William Forsythe, with his 1994/1999 CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies,* and Steve Paxton, with the 2008 DVD *Material for the Spine,* have developed new, alternative means for circulating these new kinds of dance knowledges beyond the sphere controlled by the global media industries. By contrast, international corporations have tried to capture the virtuosity circulating in dance choreography and performance. Puma and Proctor & Gamble's 2013 advertising

campaign the *Puma Dance Dictionary* used breakdance and street dance, while Sony's music video promoting the 2011 hit single 'Countdown' by Beyoncé Knowles plagiarised choreography by the Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. A discussion of both these cases argues that key elements of the dancers' virtuosity escapes capture. Some contemporary dance performances can challenge conventional ideas about virtuosity in order to make critical interventions in the dance market. The chapter concludes with a discussion of two examples of this: Mårten Spångberg's *Powered by Emotion/After Sade* (2003) and *Fake It!* (2007) by the Slovenian director Janez Janša. At issue in all these discussions are ideas about the commons, about what virtuosity means in the post-Fordist workplace, and the way dance is affected by post-Fordism.

As Toni Negri and Judith Revel define it, the new postindustrial capitalism is one of 'cognitive capitalism, of immaterial work, of social cooperation, of the circulation of knowledge, of collective intelligence'.[1] Immaterial labour, in Maurizio Lazzarato's often cited definition, results from 'changes taking place in worker's labor processes in big companies' so that labor now increasingly 'produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity'.[2] Where the informational content is concerned, workers increasingly utilise skills involving cybernetics and computer control; the cultural content involves 'defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion'.[3] Immaterial labour therefore involves creative uses of cultural forms at a time when global media industries are increasingly focusing on establishing monopolies through high visibility on the World Wide Web.

The kinds of creative skills that workers need in this new economy are those that artists have. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne argue that 'the creative industry has come to epitomise post-Fordism and, according to a 2008 UNO [United Nations Organisation] report, has become the fastest-growing pool in economics. The artist is the model employee of the new work ethic'.[4] Versatility and opportunism, Paulo Virno points out, are much-valued qualities in post-Fordist workers: 'Immaterial workers,' he observes, 'are mobile and detached,

1. Antonio Negri and Judith Revel, "Inventing the Common," generation-online.org. May13, 2008. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_revel5.htm.

2. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," generation-online.org. March 13, 1999, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm.

3. Ibid.

4. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, "Introduction: Fresh Air and Full Lungs," in *Being and Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 8.

adaptable, curious, opportunistic and cynical, also toward institutions; they are inventive and share knowledge through communication and language.'[5] They need to be mobile because of the volatility of change within the market and increasing job insecurity. Artists have often chosen to work in this precarious way because of the freedom and autonomy it gives them in comparison with full time employment. It has allowed them to work in alternative ways that are sometimes either intentionally or implicitly critical of the effects of capitalism on people's lives.

In the last chapter I drew on Boltanski and Chiapello's argument about the way the new postindiustrial capitalism had recuperated some of the values of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture within which postmodern dance developed. This raises questions about the extent to which dance artists can take up positions that resist recuperation by the market. One way of investigating this is to look at parallels between the role of virtuosity in the post-Fordist workplace, and what I suggest are alternative approaches to virtuosity within recent contemporary dance practice as a commons.

Ideas about virtuosity and the commons are significant for understanding the optimistic view that many of the Italian operaists have of the political potential of the post-Fordist world of work. Paulo Virno uses the idea of virtuosity to describe the kinds of skills in immaterial labour that post-Fordist workers develop. It is through the virtuosity of their excellent communication skills and creativity that they are able to add value to the often immaterial products they produce. These skills are ones that they have developed in daily social life outside the workplace. They are common-pool resources that industries set out to capture. The adaptability and creativity which underlies this virtuosity, however, opens up a potential for new ways of thinking and living.

VIRTUE AND THE COMMONS

For Toni Negri and Judith Revel, 'Without the common, capitalism cannot exist. With the common, the possibilities of conflict, resistance and appropriation are infinitely increased.' This is because 'the resistance, the affirmation of the intransitive freedom of humanity is precisely to assert the power of subjective invention, its singular multiplicity, its capacity to produce, starting from its differences, that of the common'.[6] Revel, in a more recent essay, gives the following account of the common as a space where the community of

5. Paulo Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 17.

6. Negri and Revel, n. 1.

the common[7] can work together in ways that respect and value their singular differences from one another, rather than being reduced to uniformity and sameness:

> The 'common' requires being thought as a persistence of singular differences as differences, in a differential enactment of these differences. It has to be experimented with as a sharing of these differences, as the construction of a space—political, subjective and of life—where each reinforces by one's own difference the power of his community with the other. The common is a radically democratic construction of singularities.[8]

This common is a space where it is possible for workers to emancipate themselves and use their singular virtuosities to develop democracy from below. Although Jacques Rancière is not associated with the operaist movement, his discussions of emancipation and the creation of a community of equals, in his early work on radical pedagogy and in his subsequent work on aesthetics, have much in common with the operaist account of the commons, and his ideas are considered later in the chapter.

Virtuosity is a key example of something that is valuable but has no material existence. In dance (as in music and the other performing arts) the term 'virtuosity' normally refers to a highly developed technical skill or competence that is sufficiently rare and in enough demand that it can be exploited to create a monopoly within the market for performance. Gabrielle Brandstetter observes that descriptions of virtuoso performances invariably stress 'the sheer human impossibility of the perfection displayed in the performance, in the virtuosi's mastery of their instruments, voices, bodies'.[9] Virtuosity, however, has other related meanings. Karl Marx used it as a term with which to distinguish between the non-productive, servile labour of menial servants and the highly valued immaterial labour of artists, intellectuals, and similar specialists, which he suggested involved virtuosity. As Paulo Virno notes, Marx's book *Theories*

7. As I noted in chapter 1, I am treating the terms 'the common' and 'the commons' as generally equivalent to one another. Boston Common (singular) is the same kind of common land as an English commons. The idea of the English medieval commons was taken up in France and Italy, where the terminology for it did not already exist, and then translated back into English in translations of Italian and French texts, often as 'common' when it refers to what other English sources call a 'commons'.

8. Judith Revel, "Resistances, Subjectivities, Common," generation-online.org, June 2008, http://www.generation-online.org/p/fprevel4.htm.

9. Gabriele Brandstetter, "The Virtuoso's Stage: A Theatrical Topos," *Theatre Research International* 32, no. 2 (2007): 178.

of Surplus-Value (1863) argues that the labour of artists and intellectuals and the menial work of servants are both non-productive but that pianists, butlers, dancers, teachers, orators, doctors, and priests all produce virtuosic performances, and this virtuosity distinguished their work from menial servile labour.[10] Hannah Arendt, looking back to the democratic system of the Ancient Greek polis, defined virtuosity as the virtue and excellence with which some individuals, such as politicians and actors, made significant contributions to their societies through actions performed within the public space of the agora. Paulo Virno has combined Marx's and Arendt's ideas to provide an analytical framework with which to critique the workings of post-Fordist capitalism. According to Virno, almost all work in today's advanced economies is now immaterial and primarily concerned with creating surplus value through the use of communication skills that facilitate the flow of knowledge. Virno therefore argues that all workers should be valued for the virtue and excellence of the performance itself rather than for their potential to create surplus value.

Both Hannah Arendt and Gabrielle Brandstetter locate a shift in the meaning of virtuosity, from virtue to technical brilliance, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Brandstetter points out that during the Renaissance, the virtuoso represented 'the ideal of the cultivated human being' and denoted 'extraordinary ability, learnedness in all fields of knowledge and art'.[11] With the development of science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term *virtuoso* was applied to someone who discovers something awe inspiring and draws attention to it. Arendt points to Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*: 'the excellence with which man [*sic*] answers the opportunities the world opens up before him'. This, she points out, is 'an excellence we attribute to the performing arts (as distinguished from the creative arts of making) where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself, and not in the end product'.[12] What in her view distinguishes humans from animals is not, as poor translations of a famous passage in Aristotle imply, an ability to be social. Arendt's argument is that to be human is to take part in the public sphere of political action. To live an active human life, one takes part in this public sphere. Arendt believed this took its finest form in the Greek polis: being human meant living 'a life devoted to matters of the *polis*, in which excellence produces beautiful deeds'.[13]

10. Virno, n. 5, 55.

11. Brandstetter, n. 9, 180.

12. Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 446.

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 13. Whereas Arendt sees the political as 'a space of freedom and public deliberation', I follow Chantal Mouffe in seeing it as 'a space of power, conflict and antagonism'. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

Virtuosity, here, is a beautiful, performative contribution to the public sphere. Being alive and expressing this liveliness is political. Virno points out that this is a political potential that is not directly useful to post-Fordist industry. Capitalists, he writes, are only interested in the life of the worker for an indirect reason, for the profit that comes from its labour, so that 'the living body becomes an object to be managed'.[14] Reclaiming virtuosity from its control within the post-Fordist workplace, and valuing life itself, rather than estimating the surplus value that can be derived from it, becomes a political issue.

For many of the more experimental practitioners of contemporary dance, conventional virtuosity is a problem. Jérôme Bel, for example, admits:

> I can enjoy myself as a spectator of virtuosity, although it seems to me politically unacceptable, but I cannot re-enact that fatal scenario, because that virtuosity usually comes from the part of a dancer's work that I regard as alienating—infinite repetition of the same movement, and competition—not mentioning the ideology that underpins that practice . . . I try to emancipate these dancers from what tends to reduce them to functions, and turn them into subjects, and I try to remove them from the status of dancing objects that prevails in the type of 'artistic' education they have received as well as in their practices.[15]

Rethinking what virtuosity in contemporary dance might be in the context of post-Fordism involves, as Bel notes, emancipation, but this does not mean that there is no longer any place for dancing that demands high levels of technical skill and performance experience. Many of the dancers whose work I discuss have acquired a strongly focused and highly developed sense of bodily awareness, although, as I noted in chapter 2, this need not necessarily have come from either conventional dance classes or from working with so-called somatic practices. Dancers like Xavier Le Roy have a strong performative presence but one that is framed in ways that have an emancipatory potential. This kind of presence makes one aware that there are other valuable kinds of bodily knowledge and awareness that cannot be objectified and monetised because they don't resemble the kind of dazzling displays of technical skill that are conventionally marketed. These dancers create works that ungovern dance and open up possibilities for valuing alternative kinds of dance knowledge and experience that resist any attempt to estimate the surplus value that can be derived from them. Rethinking virtuosity in dance

14. Virno, n. 5, 83.

15. Jérôme Bel and Boris Charmatz, "Emails 2009–2010," in *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2014), 248–49.

means recognising the potential social and political value of virtue as a quality arising from dance practice.

The rest of this chapter looks at three different areas in which issues related to post-Fordist discussions of virtuosity are pertinent. First, it looks briefly at two examples of dance artists who have made their dance knowledge and experience available in a virtuous way that is not profit-making. It then discusses two attempts to capture and make profit from dance knowledge. Finally, after examining Rancière's ideas about emancipation, it looks at works that ungovern aspects of the dance market in order to emancipate dance audiences and enable them, in Revel's terms, to use their singular virtuosities to develop democracy from below.

KNOWLEDGE FREELY DISTRIBUTED: *MATERIAL FOR THE SPINE* AND *IMPROVISATION TECHNOLOGIES*

Steve Paxton and William Forsythe have both produced media resources that allow dancers to train themselves in the new kinds of working processes through which alternative dance knowledge and experience can be acquired and developed. Using interactive software interfaces, Paxton and Forsythe have worked with collaborators to create a CD-ROM and a DVD, respectively, that allow users to chart their own singular paths through dance exercises and discussions about ways of making dance. These have been distributed in a way that shares this experience at cost and not for profit.

During the 1990s and 2000s, Steve Paxton taught workshops in the United States and internationally about what he called 'material for the spine'. One of his starting points for this was his dissatisfaction with some elements of his own use of his spine in *Goldberg Variations*. In 2008, the Brussels-based dance organisation Contredanse published an interactive DVD of *Material for the Spine* which Paxton had developed with Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin. It is a pedagogical tool that consists of an opening lecture and a number of short video lectures about exercises that can help dancers develop the kinds of knowledge and experience that are least amenable to uninformed, external copying. While the DVD is not, strictly speaking, interactive, the way that the individual videos are accessible from the main menu gives users freedom to choose their own singular ways of navigating the contents. It encourages users to find their own way to explore some of the movement exercises that Paxton offers and to follow their own particular interests and needs. A note in *Material for the Spine* states, 'This DVD-ROM is the fruit of hard work and considerable investment' and forbids any copying because 'this could prevent the completion of other large scale projects dear to Contredanse and to the dance sector'. This is an emancipatory approach, in contrast with the hierarchical way in

which dance class is generally taught in conservatoires and institutionalised ballet and contemporary dance companies.

Another older, but similar, project is *Improvisation Technologies*, created between 1994 and 1999 by William Forsythe's company Frankfurt Ballet and media professionals, including Chris Ziegler at the Center for Arts and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe.[16] Like *Material for the Spine*, Forsythe's CD-ROM consists of a large number of video files that are accessible from menus. It contains an opening lecture, some examples of solos by Forsythe, and sixty short videos explaining different improvisatory processes for working with dance movements. In these Forsythe demonstrates and talks through processes he has devised for using a ballet-derived movement vocabulary to create unconventional spatial configurations through improvisations that deconstruct the ballet vocabulary. These processes are organised in four main categories: lines, writing, reorganising, and additions. One could say that the processes Forsythe offers in the CD-ROM do for dance what architects Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi have been doing with the built environment.[17] Each exercise in *Improvisation Technologies* demonstrates different ways of radically rethinking the conventional, Euclidian geometry of the classical ballet vocabulary; the dancer can fold the kinds of spaces created by an arm's or leg's trajectory through the space close to the body or can invert or reorganise it. The videos often include animated white lines as a visual tool for revealing what were until then unconsidered and in some instances counter-intuitive potentials for spatial transformation through movement. Like *Material for the Spine,* it encourages users to develop their own singular ways of navigating the contents.

Improvisation Technologies was first created as a resource for use by Forsythe's company. Because it attracted such attention, Forsythe and his collaborators at Karlsruhe Center for Arts and Media decided to release a revised (and slightly smaller) CD-ROM version as a special edition. This was offered for sale at a very reasonable price with the support of the German Dance Archive in Cologne. It was, in effect, made freely available for common use, just as *Material for the Spine* was subsequently. In both cases, the kinds of movement knowledge offered are ones that develop through physical exploration, so that each dancer develops their own singular approach rather than copying the look of a standardised movement style. In Arendt's terms, the virtuosity of both Forsythe and Paxton lies in the virtue and excellence they give to communities of dancers and in the encouragement they give to others to develop these ideas further and then pass on their own singular approaches to the underlying movement

16. ZKM stands for Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie

17. Forsythe and Libeskind have collaborated with each other.

concerns informing Forsythe's and Paxton's work. In Revel's terms, the CD-ROM and the DVD encourage the sharing of singular dance knowledges through the construction of a space for improvisation and choreography in which each dancer 'reinforces by one's own difference the power of his community with the other'.[18]

APPROPRIATING THE COMMONS

Two recent media events—the advertising campaign *Puma Dance Dictionary* and the video of Beyoncé's song 'Countdown'—exemplify corporate attempts to capture dance material. The *Puma Dance Dictionary* attempted to privatise dance material that is a common-pool resource, freely available and not legally owned by anyone. The *Dictionary* is a web-based project that uses street dance to generate interest in Puma Sync Fragrances, a range of cosmetics and toiletries manufactured by Proctor & Gamble. Puma is one of the oldest German sports shoe and sportswear companies, and Proctor & Gamble is also a major international corporation. The campaign was developed by the creative agency Grey London, which employed the Los Angeles–based street dancer and choreographer Super Dave. Under the slogans 'Don't say it, move it' and 'Translate your message into dance moves', the *Puma Dance Dictionary* invites people to send messages to one another via Facebook, Twitter, or email from the website.[19]

The website includes eleven 'dance sentences'. These include 'I love woman with heart', 'Hey bro your sister is hot', and 'What are you wearing to the party?' Each word in these sentences is mimed by a different dancer, and the word itself is spelled out in white. Twenty-five dancers were hired for the project, all young Americans of African American, Latino, Asian, white, and mixed-race ethnicities. Only some of them are identified by name, but there appear to be many more men than women dancers. Some are breakdancers; others perform popping, electric boogie, or similar mimetic hip-hop or street dance movements. As well as these 'dance sentences', the website also includes brief

18. n. 8. As well as being available on DVD or CD-ROM, however, most of the videos in *Improvisation Technologies* and *Material for the Spine* have subsequently appeared as unauthorised postings on video-sharing websites.

19. The trailer and other videos on YouTube show people selecting words from the online dictionary, which are then sent to the recipient as a video compilation. This may have been possible for a short period, but when I tried it, six months after the site's launch, all I got was an attractive message in the same style and typeface used on the website together with one of the lead images of StoryboardP with his arms stretched out wide in the main pose from 'Celebration'. I am grateful to 'Funmi Adewole for introducing me to the *Puma Dance Dictionary*.

profiles of four male dancers—StoryboardP, Ron Myles, PacMan, and King Charles—and there are videos teaching four movements—Cat, Celebration, Greasy, and Spaceship. The latter videos are posted, along with a 'Full Length Trailer', on Puma's YouTube channel. Puma post between thirty and sixty videos a month on YouTube, mostly short clips featuring young runners, athletes, and professional footballers whom Puma have sponsored. They all wear clothes and trainers with the Puma logo, but the videos mostly focus on the people and don't explicitly mention Puma or their merchandise. Usain Bolt, the Jamaican Olympic champion sprinter, is regularly featured on the channel, and in one video gives his endorsement of the *Puma Dance Dictionary*.

One small detail in the teaching videos of the *Puma Dance Dictionary* that seems to have been plagiarised from *Improvisation Technologies* is the use of white, animated dotted lines. In the videos in *Improvisation Technologies* these lines are superimposed over the dancer to make the underlying geometry of the movements clear. They are an aid, helping the dancer to find new ways of creating movement by improvising with a vocabulary that is usually set and fixed. In the *Puma Dance Dictionary* videos, the dotted lines are generally used in a somewhat unnecessary way to repeat information that is already very clear from the high-definition videos and the verbal explanations that the dancers offer. Where *Improvisation Technologies* uses the lines to open up new potentials that are not immediately apparent, in the *Puma Dance Dictionary* the lines merely restate the obvious. The revelation of angles at limb joints in the latter seems particularly redundant and decorative. It takes forms—breakdance, street dance—that are essentially improvisatory and reduces them to a set, codified, symbolic language. The white lines suggest that the approach is scientific, as if the dancer is a precision instrument whose efficiency can be increased with the help of Puma's and Proctor & Gamble's scientifically designed products.

In one of the teaching videos in the *Puma Dance Dictionary*, PacMan explains how to do a wave. This starts with the fingers of one hand and moves up the arm to the shoulder, across to the other shoulder, and then down the other arm to the fingers. It is a basic popping move that, like much of the dancing on the website, has no single owner but has been devised, developed, shared, and transmitted throughout international communities of street dancers. Its particular use of isolations, rhythm, and mime can be analysed and shown to exemplify African diasporic dance and music traditions. It is part of the commons that Proctor & Gamble, in association with Puma, is seizing and privatising. The *Puma Dance Dictionary* website includes a 3000-word legal statement of terms and conditions. One section concerns copyright infringement. It states that Proctor & Gamble respect the intellectual property of others and outlines five things that must be done if one wishes to claim copyright infringement.

These include 'a statement by you that you have a good faith belief that the disputed use is not authorised by the copyright owner, its agent, or the law'.[20] But who is the owner of PacMan's wave?

The movement forms that *Puma Dance Dictionary* draws on are not the private or professional property of individuals but have been in circulation since the 1980s, if not before. Even when danced by white dancers, they are part of black cultural heritage.[21] As such they are a commons that these corporations are trying to capture. One place where film of breakdance and street dance was already in circulation at the time of this advertising campaign was YouTube. Individuals and groups were posting their own footage of themselves dancing and of competitions, and they continue to do so. These films are often amateur, low resolution, sometimes filmed with a mobile phone and then uploaded unedited. In contrast with this low-quality material, the films on the *Puma Dance Dictionary* website are professionally produced and have good lighting and good sound quality and are filmed in high-definition video.[22] They are professionally edited and have high production values. *Puma Dance Dictionary* are not only capturing material that is the common-pool resource of a community but making that community's own videos look bad in comparison. The image of breakdance and street dance is becoming standardized and the dancers' singularities minimised. If, as Judith Revel writes, 'the common is a radically democratic construction of singularities',[23] then the treatment of breakdance and street dance forms in the *Puma Dance Dictionary* makes these singularities disappear.

While the dance material that the *Puma Dance Dictionary* have appropriated was not legally owned by anyone, Beyoncé's *Countdown* video caused controversy by taking material from an internationally recognised choreographer. This example offers another perspective on the various ways in which contemporary dance constitutes a common-pool resource. On October 7, 2011, Beyoncé's record label, Sony, released a YouTube video of *Countdown*, a song from what was then her new album *4*. Parts of the video bore a close resemblance to two films of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's choreography—Thierry

20. www.pumadancedictionary.com, accessed July 20, 2013.

21. Tommy DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez argue that 'while black performance may certainly become manifest without black people, we might best recognise it as a circumstance enabled by black sensibilities, black expressive practices, and black people'. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez, *Black Performance Theory* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 1.

22. This discussion is partly informed by Hito Steyerl's essay 'In Defence of the Poor Image'. I am grateful to Jospehine Bosma for drawing this to my attention. Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux.com* (2009).

23. Negri and Revel, n. 1.

de Mey's 1997 film version of her classic 1983 work *Rosas Danst Rosas* and her own film version of her 1990 piece *Achterland*. Similarities between *Countdown* and De Keersmaeker's work caused considerable discussion in the Belgian media and internationally. This was not the first time that Beyoncé had made a video of one of her singles that plagiarised existing choreography. *Single Ladies* in 2008 was, as she put it, inspired by a short Bob Fosse choreography from 1969.[24] Three days after the release of video of *Countdown*, on October 10, 2011, De Keersmaeker posted a statement on her company's website. She said that the video plagiarised her work, and speculated on whether it takes thirty years for ideas explored within experimental dance to make it to the mainstream. To understand what this reveals about the global economy in which dance knowledge circulates, it is useful to look more closely at the creation of *Countdown* and at De Keersmaeker's subsequent response to the affair.

Beyoncé's *Countdown* video was directed by Adria Petty who, in an interview with *GQ* magazine, talked about the process of making it.[25] Petty worked with Beyoncé and her creative team, which included choreographer Frank Gatson Jr. It appears that, rather than having total creative control over the video, a lot of negotiation between Petty and the creative team took place in advance. Petty showed Beyoncé a number of images and film extracts while planning the video. These included images of Audrey Hepburn, Diana Ross, and sixties English Mods, as well as some of De Keersmaeker's work. Petty first came across De Keersmaeker through friends who were members of the New York artists' collective Yemenwed. Impressed earlier that year by their work *No Image*, Petty was surprised to find that it had partly been inspired by De Keersmaeker's choreography. Petty may not have known of De Keersmaeker before that. Petty also explains that the actual filming of the video was done in a very tight time slot as Beyoncé was also filming other videos the same week. Petty notes that some things were planned out in advance, but 'I would just say that, you know, overall for like the million wardrobe changes you see in the video, I think a lot of that is spontaneous thinking and sort of creative play.'[26] The result is a very fast-paced video with a quick succession of highly colourful scenes with luxurious clothes and décor, and attractive dancers.

24. In 1969, Fosse choreographed a short number *Mexican Breakfast* for his wife Gwen Verdon, which was filmed and broadcast on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Beyoncé told Dan Cairns that she had found it on YouTube and used a lot of Fosse's choreography in the video for *Single Ladies*. See Dan Cairns, "Beauty Calls," *The Sunday Times* (London), May 10, 2009.

25. Dan Hyman, "Video Deconstruction: Director Adria Petty on Beyoncé's Countdown," *GQ* (2011).

26. Ibid.

The release date for the video was pushed forward so that because of other commitments, Petty was unable to be involved in the editing. She insists in the interview that 'it was always meant to be a straight homage' and that she was disappointed that De Keersmaeker was not credited in it because 'it was everyone's intention from the get-go. I'm assuming that's because they were still finishing it the day that it launched and stuff, it was basically an oversight'.[27] It may be that Petty had not realised how well-known *Rosas Danst Rosas* is within communities of dancers. She is also perhaps, like Gertrude in *Hamlet,* trying too hard to cover herself from accusations of plagiarism, although, given the fact that Beyoncé already had a previous history of unauthorised copying, Petty may have been trying to protect the singer. Petty states that 'in the end very little of Keersmaeker's actual choreography inspired the finished result', but this poses the question what Petty means by choreography.

Contemporary choreographers often devise a unique movement language for each new work, or may adapt or modify that of their previous work. Compared with the tight schedule for making and filming *Countdown,* De Keersmaeker spent four months making *Rosas Danst Rosas*. In a 2012 book of interviews with Bojana Cvejić, *A Choreographer's Score*,[28] De Keersmaeker recalls that she worked from January 1983 until May of that year in a building near the Brussels North Station creating *Rosas Danst Rosas* with the composer Thierry de Mey and the founder members of Rosas. All of them contributed to the creative process, with De Keersmaeker leading them. The singularity of a dance work is not just dependent on the particular configuration of steps and movements that the dancers perform but also on the work's underlying aesthetic style. In the interviews with Cvejić, De Keersmaeker methodically explains, in separate sections, the movements, structure, and choreography of *Rosas Danst Rosas*. People looking at *Countdown* would undoubtedly have recognised close similarities between many sequences in it and parts of *Rosas Danst Rosas* and *Achterland*, even during moments where there is no direct use of De Keersmaeker's choreography.

De Keersmaeker says she first became aware of *Countdown* when she got a message on Facebook asking 'if I were now selling out Rosas into the commercial circuit'.[29] There was evidently a potential for reputational damage. De Keersmaeker's reaction to the video was, perhaps intentionally, measured: 'Beyoncé is not the worst copycat, she sings and dances very well, and

27. Ibid. At the time of writing, Petty is no longer directing commercial dance videos.

28. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Bojana Cvejić, *A Choreographer's Score: Fase, Rosas Danst Rosas, Elena's Aria, Bartók* (Brussels: Mercator Fonds, 2012).

29. www.rosas.be/en/rosas (accessed October 10, 2011).

she has a good taste! On the other hand, there are protocols and consequences to such actions, and I can't imagine she and her team are not aware of it.'[30] She goes on to mention seeing a video on YouTube in which 'schoolgirls in Flanders are dancing *Rosas Danst Rosas* to the music of *Like a Virgin* by Madonna. And that was touching to see', implying that she preferred their video to *Countdown*. It is a low-resolution, amateur video in contrast with the high production values in Petty's film. What is perhaps touching about it is the way the singularities of the dancers in it are revealed, as they are in the Rosas film and in live performances of *Rosas Danst Rosas*, where all the dancers seemingly enjoy equal status. In *Countdown*, however, Beyoncé is the centre of attention and the dancers, both literally and metaphorically, remain in the background.

In June 2013, to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the premier of *Rosas Danst Rosas*, De Keersmaeker collaborated with the Belgian Youth Arts organisation fABULEUS on the project 'Re: Rosas!' where people were invited to make and film their own versions of *Rosas Danst Rosas* and post them on YouTube.[31] De Keersmaeker and dancer Samantha van Wissen explain the movements, structure, and choreography of the piece on videos embedded in the project's website. They even provide a downloadable fourteen-minute audio file of the music from the best-known chair section of the piece, although De Keersmaeker invites people to use whatever music they wish. All the resulting videos posted by October that year were shown in the Kaaitheater, Brussels, during a week when Rosas were performing the piece there for a short, anniversary season.

Rosas Danst Rosas and *Countdown* were made within very different organisational structures. Rosas is a flagship Belgian dance company that is well supported by public Belgian arts funding institutions, while Sony are a multinational corporation. In the contemporary dance sector, respect for De Keersmaeker's achievements would probably stop anyone from plagiarising her work in the unacknowledged way that Petty and Beyoncé did. Artists value originality for its own sake, while industries, including the larger media corporations, often recycle what has proved successful. Perhaps De Keersmaeker's careful comments about *Countdown* are informed by disappointment that Petty and Beyoncé had only copied her choreography and the style of the set and camera angles from De Mey's film, and not done something more original with it. De Keersmaeker would surely never have initiated the 'Re: Rosas' project had it not been for the *Countdown* affair.

30. Ibid.

31. "Re: Rosas!", interactive video dance project, http://www.rosasdanstrosas.be/en-home/ (accessed December 28, 2013).

Petty, Beyoncé, and her creative team had set out to capture De Keersmaeker's choreography as part of Sony's marketing strategy on the Internet and MTV. They were trying to exploit aspects of the two pieces they had plagiarised in order to maximise their investment in Beyoncé. It seems likely that Rosas used legal means to challenge Sony about their unauthorised use of their work. De Keersmaeker and fABULEUS subsequently responded to Sony's plagiarism by making the piece available and giving anyone permission to make their own versions of it. This response is, in effect, an acknowledgment that contemporary dance knowledge is a shared resource—a commons—rather than a commodity from which to generate financial profit. The videos submitted to 'Re: Rosas!' reveal the singularities of the dancers performing in them in ways that *Countdown* does not do. 'Re: Rosas!' attests to the persistence of singular differences, and to the virtuosity with which these are performed. This is an important characteristic of the commons, which these two corporate projects damage but fail to appropriate in their attempts to maximise their profits.

To sum up the argument so far, Sony, Puma, and Proctor & Gamble were capturing ideas that were (or subsequently became) part of the commons and attempted to privatise them in order to increase these companies' profits. De Keersmaeker and fABULEUS, Forsythe, and Paxton were making emancipatory acts by making their discoveries freely available to anyone. Their approaches encouraged dancers to use their movement ideas in their own singular ways rather than developing the kind of uniformity found, for example, in a corps de ballet. As I have already noted, Revel argued that workers could emancipate themselves and 'use their singular virtuosities to develop democracy from below'.[32] By, in effect, contributing their dance knowledge to the commons they were, in Revel's terms, enabling a radically democratic construction of singularities. One should value all breakdancers and street dancers, not just the stars in the *Puma Dance Dictionary*. One should also value all the dancers who contributed to the 'Re: Rosas' project in the same way that stars like Beyoncé are valued. These emancipatory acts are political ones because they challenge the deadening effect large corporations are having on dance knowledge as a common-pool resource, and by encouraging new ways of thinking and living.

Virtuosity and Emancipation

I have been arguing that the kinds of actions underlying Forsythe's and Paxton's teaching resources and the Re: Rosas project are emancipatory. Much of the recent interest in the idea of emancipation has come from writings by

32. Revel, n. 8.

the philosopher Jacques Rancière. Significantly, contemporary dance played a direct role in the development of Rancière's thinking. In 2004 the choreographer Mårten Spångberg invited Rancière to speak to the International Summer Academy of Arts in Frankfurt. Spångberg made the invitation because he was interested in the philosopher's 1987 book *The Ignorant School Master (Le Maître ignorant)*.[33] This concerns an experiment in radical pedagogy carried out at the University of Leuven in 1818 by Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840). For this, Jacotot, who spoke no Flemish, gave Flemish students with no knowledge of French an edition of *Télémache*, a book by Fénelon[34] that had been printed in French with a parallel Flemish translation. He asked them to use it to teach themselves French. Commenting on the successful outcome of the experiment, Jacotot argued that everyone is capable of teaching themselves anything without a master. This, Rancière proposed, exemplified what he called the 'emancipation of intelligence'. The subtitle of Rancière's book is 'five lessons in intellectual emancipation'. Revisiting his thesis in relation to the performing arts in response to Spångberg's invitation, he gave an address that was subsequently published as 'The Emancipated Spectator'.[35] In both publications, Rancière is concerned with sharing information among those who do not normally have access to it and recognising a potential for discernment in the latter that is normally only acknowledged in those of higher social status. The underlying political position informing Rancière's thinking here is that although inequality may be inherent in the social bond, people should be treated as equals; a community of equals, he argues, can be achieved contingently through intermittent acts of emancipation. This emancipation comes from below, whereas access to knowledge is normally authorised from above.

Jacques Rancière subsequently extended his proposals about emancipation to include a discussion of the aesthetic and developed the idea of the distribution of the sensible (le partage du sensible). Rancière uses the word 'sensible' here to refer to what Kant called 'the aesthetic', meaning literally what can be felt or sensed, including the experience of beholding a work of art. Distribution (*partage*) is a process that, in Rancière's view, takes place in every society concerning the existence of something shared in common. Different societies allot or apportion these common elements within different

33. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant School Master: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press., 1991).

34. *Télémache* (1699) by François Fénelon (1651–1715) is a classical tale, told in verse, that was written for pedagogical purposes and includes a treatise on good government. Jacotot was a political radical whose work for the French Republic necessitated his leaving France after the restoration of the monarchy.

35. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009).

groups in different ways, allowing or limiting the groups' members access to them. Rancière points out that in the Athens of Plato and Aristotle, slaves and artisans were not allowed to share common elements because it was said that they did not have the time to devote themselves to anything other than their work.[36] What is therefore at stake in any given society is who is allowed access to the arts, in what ways, and what it is possible for the arts to create, explore or mediate. An emancipatory gesture is one which opens up and distributes, or rather redistributes the aesthetic beyond the limits policed by the forces that maintain the unequal nature of society. This is, Rancière argues, a political question and, as his Greek example demonstrates, one that touches on the relation between art and work. This relation, we have seen, is also at issue in questions about virtuosity.

As Michael Hardt has pointed out, Rancière's idea of the emancipatory distribution of the sensible implicates the idea of the common:

> Rancière's notion of politics resides in the relation between 'the part' and 'the common', which is mediated by the operation of *partage*, simultaneously dividing and sharing. The common, of course, is not a realm of sameness or indifference. It is the scene of social and political encounter, at times characterised by agreement and at others anatagonism. Rancière thus establishes not an immediate link between politics and aesthetics but a parallel operation they both enact in common.[37]

When Rancière notes that the common 'is not a realm of sameness or indifference', he is in agreement with Revel's proposal, cited earlier, that the common requires the persistence of singular differences. The kind of emancipation that Rancière advocates is one in which people find their own singular ways of teaching themselves rather than accepting a model of the correct way of going about this that comes from the master as an authority set above them.

There are significant parallels between the kind of radical, experimental pedagogy that Rancière discusses in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and some of Spångberg's choreography. In *Powered by Emotion/After Sade* (2003), Spångberg taught himself to dance a version of Steve Paxton's *Goldberg Variations,* an improvised dance that Paxton performed between 1986 and 1992 to the pianist Glenn Gould's two celebrated recordings of *The Goldberg*

36. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 12.

37. Michael Hardt, "Production and Distribution of the Common," in *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 46.

Variations by J. S. Bach.[38] Spångberg learnt Paxton's sequence of movements from the video version of Paxton's dancing that was filmed and edited by Walter Verdin. This raises the question of what the differences are between Spångberg's appropriation of Paxton's dancing and the appropriation of De Keersmaeker's choreography in the *Countdown* video. The differences lie within the meanings created by the context in which *Powered by Emotion* was performed and by the aesthetic quality of Spångberg's performance. *Powered by Emotion* was not part of a corporate advertising campaign. It wasn't a video with high production values but a live performance presented mostly at small performance venues. I have argued that the videos for the *Puma Dance Dictionary* project and the *Countdown* film were produced in ways that standardised and generalised the dancers in a way that left no room for the kinds of lively singularities found in amateur videos. Spångberg's performance of Paxton's movements in *Powered by Emotion* was in effect amateurish and singular. Just as Jacotot's Flemish pupils had no knowledge of French, Spångberg had never taken a workshop with Paxton or with anyone who had studied with him. As an advocate of the open source movement in software, Spångberg treated the video recording as if it were covered by a Creative Commons licence.[39]

In Rancière's terms, Spångberg was committing an act of emancipation that proposed ways of redistributing and sharing the aesthetic experience of performing or watching choreography. I noted in chapter 2 that Xavier Le Roy's performance of orchestral conducting in his version of *Le Sacre du printemps* is a statement that if he can teach himself a way into something about which he knows nothing, so can those watching the performance. With *Powered by Emotion* Spångberg is in effect saying something similar to his audience. He is performing in a way that disrupts the normally hierarchical economy of the market for contemporary dance. Spångberg's performance in *Powered by Emotion* was not at all virtuosic in a conventional sense. Like Le Roy, Spångberg as a performer conveys a deep, embodied awareness, and one is forcefully aware of his focus as a performer and the discipline and commitment that have gone into preparing the performance. This is virtuosity but not of a kind that involves flashy, exclusive, technically brilliant execution but one that I am arguing has an emancipatory potential and can enable democracy from below. Rancière, following Jacotot, is concerned with the emancipation

38. For a discussion of this work, see Ramsay Burt, "Steve Paxton's Goldberg Variations and the Angel of History," *The Drama Review* 46, no. 4 (2002): 46–64.

39. Spångberg acknowledged what he was copying, whereas the makers of the *Countdown* video did not.

of intelligence and reason. What Spångberg proposes, when he applies an open source approach to Paxton's work, is an emancipatory rethinking of how virtuosity in dance can be used critically. It is to see virtuosity as a contribution to shared, common resources rather than as conventional technical brilliance.

I have heard that Steve Paxton saw Spångberg perform *Powered by Emotion* at a small dance festival in Belgium. He subsequently authorised another dancer, Jurij Konjar, who was more familiar with Paxton's way of working, to perform a version of *Goldberg Variations* in circumstances that I will describe shortly. There are limitations to Spångberg's method. His piece bore a resemblance to Paxton's piece because he had copied its external appearance and found a way to perform it with his characteristically infectious enthusiasm and energy. Many professional dancers have acquired the skill of learning choreography by watching it on video. Some companies' video-viewing rooms have a full-length mirror in order to help them do this. But some kinds of movements are easier to pick up in this way than others. An experienced, ballet-trained dancer, for example, can pick up ballet choreography from a video because she already knows the generic vocabulary. The kinds of movements that Paxton performed in *Goldberg Variations* are informed by the deep, internally focused knowledge of neuro-skeleto-muscular processes presented in the DVD *Material for the Spine*. These are least amenable to copying from video alone. This is particularly so in Spångberg's case because, unlike Konjar, he did not at the time have any understanding of this kind of approach to dancing.

POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN *FAKE IT!* (2007)

The context in which Konjar first came to perform part of Paxton's *Goldberg Variations* was the 2007 Slovenian piece *Fake It!* This is an instance where dance knowledge currently in circulation has been used to make a political intervention that encourages new ways of thinking and living. Devised and directed by Janez Janša (formerly Emil Hrvatin), *Fake It!* questions *who* is supposed to have access to advanced experimental practice and asks *what* is supposed to be distributed. By addressing these questions, it offers ways of rethinking virtuosity.

In *Fake It!* a group of Slovenian dancers under the direction of Janez Janša restaged excerpts of canonical works from recent dance history for a particular event, the 2007 Exodos Festival in Ljubljana. Its starting point was the desire to make a performative response to the fact that the government, at that time formed by the Slovene Democratic Party, had cut financial support for the Exodos Festival so that it was no longer in a position to program the kinds of international artists that it had for many years presented alongside Slovenian artists. In the summer of 2007, Emil Hrvatin and two other artists, Davide

Grassi and Žiga Karič, all legally changed their names to Janez Janša—the name of the then prime minister and leader of the Slovene Democratic Party, who had been elected on a conservative, nationalist manifesto.[40] This act was part of an artistic project of works made in the name of the prime minister, although the artists never directly stated this. Although *Fake It!* was not directly part of this project, it was nevertheless presented in the name of the political leader whose government's cultural policies had created the circumstances in which *Fake It!* came to be presented. These policies had made it necessary for Exodos to programme only local Slovenian artists.

The group of dancers working with Janša drew up a list of artists whom, had money been no problem, they would have liked to program in the festival; they identified Pina Bausch, Trisha Brown, William Forsythe and Steve Paxton, and Sankai Juku because it was a key company with which Tatsumi Hijikata had been associated. These artists or their administrators were then contacted with invitations to perform in Exodos and asked what fee they would charge. Because the invitations were extended so late, none of the artists were able to accept, though some fondly recalled previous visits to Ljubljana. During *Fake It!* the email correspondence was projected on a screen, together with contextual information about the works as well as statistics about the dance scene in Slovenia. Meanwhile the dancers performed their own "fake" versions to an audience seated in the round. For this they chose excerpts from Steve Paxton's *Goldberg Variations*, Trisha Brown's *Accumulation*, Pina Bausch's *Café Muller*, an improvisation based on those in William Forsythe's CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies*, and a solo choreographed by Tatsumi Hijikata. The piece *Monument for an Unknown Dancer* by a forgotten choreographer, Guido Carmelich, was subsequently added. With the exception of the latter, these pieces are part of the canon of recent dance history. Even if the audience for *Fake It!* had not seen these works they would have known the names of their choreographers. They are part of the collective memory of dancers and dance audiences. By creating their own versions of extracts from well-known works by leading international dance artists, *Fake It!* both conformed with a policy of, in effect, only supporting Slovenian work and at the same time corresponded to the stereotypical notion that work from off-regions is merely a derivative imitation. *Fake It!* was performed in the name of the Slovenian prime minister in such a way as to trouble and undermine the processes of national identity formation on which the government's nationalistic policies

40. The politician Janez Janša was the prime minister of Slovenia from 2004 to 2008 and again from February 2012 until March 2013. Earlier, he had been minister of defence during the Slovenian war for independence from Yugoslavia. In 2013 he was convicted of corruption in connection with an armaments contract.

depended. By revealing quantitative information about the dance market in Slovenia and its management through the government's cultural policies, *Fake It!* ungoverned dance.

By making their own unauthorised versions of works from the canon, *Fake It!* also challenges the ways in which the majority of large, institutionalised dance companies maintain their repertoire. I have already noted that in preparing the Forsythe section of *Fake It!* dancers referred to the 1994 CD-ROM *Improvisation Technologies*. Jurij Konjar, the dancer who created the *Goldberg Variations* section of *Fake It!* had, as a student, been taught by Steve Paxton when the latter was a visiting lecturer at the Brussels dance school P.A.R.T.S. While working on *Fake It!* Konjar also used Paxton's 2008 DVD *Material for the Spine*. Forsythe's and Paxton's generosity in sharing their creative processes and artistic experience through these digital resources enabled the Slovenian dancers to engage with its re-performance in a much more informed way than Spångberg did when he re-performed Paxton's work. I saw Paxton dancing *Goldberg Variations* twice and have clear memories of it, and found that Konjar strongly reminded me of him.

At the end of *Fake It!* the dancers invite the audience to join them in the performance space for a short movement class and to learn one of the approaches to movement informing Bausch, Brown, Forsythe, Hijikata, or Paxton's work. At the performance I attended, I joined a group in which Jurij Konjar taught an exercise from Paxton's *Material for the Spine*. The dancers, having claimed the right to situate themselves within their own revisionist account of recent dance history, in effect offered everyone in the audience an opportunity to become part of this themselves. Konjar subsequently spent time with Paxton in Vermont and, as I have already mentioned, with Paxton's support produced his own version of *Goldberg Variations*, which has been performed internationally.

On legal advice, Exodos Festival decided not to sell tickets to *Fake It!* but to offer free performances so that no one could accuse them of gaining financially from the performance of dance material for which they had not obtained the relevant permissions. *Fake It!* has subsequently been performed outside Slovenia. Walter Heun, who programmed it both in Munich and at the Tanzquartier in Vienna, has told me that Matthias Schmiegelt, who had previously been the managing director of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal, saw the piece in Vienna (see Figure 3). After the performance, when Heun asked him what he thought of the excerpt of *Café Müller*, Schmiegelt said that if he had still been with the company he would have sued. If one manages a company of that size and stature, that is presumably what the system expects one to do.

In Rancière's terms, *Fake It!* redistributed the sensible in political ways, intervening both in internal Slovenian politics and internationally, in the

Figure 3 The *Café Müller* section of *Fake It!* (2007) at the Exodos Festival. Photo by Nada Zgank.

relationship between the West and the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. *Fake It!* showed the virtuosity of Slovenian dancers in conventional terms and in the sense that Arendt and Virno use the term 'virtuosity'. Not only did they execute the difficult movement material of Paxton and Forsythe's choreography very well, but in doing so they demonstrated their versatility in the different skills required by each of the pieces that they 'faked'. Versatility, as Virno and others point out, is a much-valued aspect of post-Fordist virtuosity, along with opportunism. As Virno observes, 'Opportunists are those who confront a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities, making themselves available to the greater number of these, yielding to the nearest one, and then

quickly swerving from one to another."[41] Janša and the dancers displayed this in the way they were able to transform the damage that the Slovenian government had done to the Exodos Festival into an ingenious, politically radical, performative event. In Arendt's terms, the dancers' performances exemplified the virtue and excellence with which they answered the opportunities that were offered to them, and which they redistributed freely as something to be shared in common by all. The virtuosity, in all these instances, was not captured by the capitalist market and turned into surplus value. Instead it was shared with an audience, during the Exodos Festival, who would otherwise have been excluded from experiencing this kind of work. It is thus an emancipatory act that redistributes the sensible. The redistribution that *Fake It!* performs is one that, in Revel's terms, encourages beholders to recognise their potential and emancipate themselves, and use their virtuosities to develop democracy from below in what is otherwise an undemocratic, neoliberal dance market.

CONCLUSION

The chapter began by asking how dance circulates in the world created by post-Fordist capitalism, and it has looked at the way dancers use video-sharing websites and CD-ROMs and DVDs as non-profit-making resources for circulating dancing and information about ways of dancing. It examined the way corporations have tried to appropriate dance knowledge for commercial reasons. By concentrating on style and appearance rather than on dancers' immanent potential, however, corporations failed to capture the dancers' singular virtue and excellence. I have also looked at different ways in which dancers have made unauthorised but transparently acknowledged appropriations from the dance canon in order to make critical interventions in the market in which these canonical works circulate. A key difference between Spångberg's and Janša's appropriations and those of Sony, Puma, and Proctor & Gamble is that the latter ignored the fact that they were making appropriations.

If De Keersmaeker, Forsythe, and Paxton have all shared knowledge and information about their work freely or at cost price, the emancipatory politics underlying this is in stark contrast with the controlling way most choreography by internationally known artists is still regulated (as Matthias Schmiegelt's comment shows). Whereas the older, more conservative approach implicitly required dancers who are capable of conventionally virtuosic performance, these alternative approaches treat virtuosity as the singular virtue and excellence which everyone in their different ways can express. The dancers in

41. Virno, n. 5, 87.

Fake It! deliberately and transparently perform unauthorised copies of existing works in order to make political interventions within the economy through which dance circulates. Such interventions provoke a radical, politically informed rethinking of dancers' virtuosity. This creates a common place in which dancers can emancipate themselves. Such emancipation is the precondition for rethinking virtuosity.

4

Dance and Post-Fordism

I noted in the previous chapter that artists, because of their versatility and adaptability, are, as Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bryune put it, the model employees of the new post-Fordist work ethic.[1] This is because artists are versatile and adaptable when facing a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities and are often prepared to blur work and leisure activities. As Isabel Lorey has pointed out, during a virtual roundtable discussion, cultural producers and knowledge workers choose to have precarious working lives because of the freedom and autonomy it gives them in comparison with full employment. However, the application of neoliberal austerity measures, which have increased since the 2008 financial crisis, has led to a situation in which 'precarious living and working conditions are no longer "alternative", resistant, or unusual for the majority of workers'.[2] Austerity measures have led to the lowering of wages and benefits, an increase in part-time or short-term work, decreased security due to the dismantling of social security infrastructure, and higher health and safety risks. Neoliberal austerity has made peoples' lives more vulnerable, precarious, and exposed. In the same discussion, Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović argued that 'the marginal place of artists in society and their precarious conditions of work do not relieve them of their responsibility to deal critically with the working conditions of production'.[3] Post-Fordism has impacted on the relation between artists and society.

1. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, "Introduction: Fresh Air and Full Lungs," in *Being and Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 8.

2. Isabelle Lorey, contribution to Lauren Berlant et al., "Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roudntable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejic, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanovic," *The Drama Review* 56, no. 4 (2012): 163.

3. Ibid., 176.

This chapter considers two works in which artists have dealt critically with the effects of post-Fordism. These are the theatre piece *1 Poor and One 0* (2008) by BADco. and the video installation *Mass Ornament* (2009) by the media artist Natalie Bookchin. Both were made by artists with left-wing political views. BADco. is a performance collective based in Zagreb, Croatia. They grew up, as Goran Sergej Pristaš has explained,[4] at the end of the communist period in former Yugoslavia and witnessed, first, the development of radical progressive movements in the 1980s, and then, in the 1990s, with encouragement from the International Monetary Fund, experienced a neoliberal structural adjustment to the Croatian economy that included the dismantling of the social-welfare support structures of the former Communist state. Bookchin grew up in New York in a left-wing family, many of whom were involved in trade-union activities; her uncle, Murray Bookchin, was a libertarian socialist and a pioneer in the ecology movement.[5] Both Bookchin and the members of BADco. are very aware of current social and political issues, and the works discussed in this chapter each proposes a critique of post-Fordist labour.

BADco.'s *1 Poor and One 0* takes as its starting point the 1895 film *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (usually called, in English, *Workers Leaving a Factory*) by the pioneer cinematographers Auguste and Louis Lumière. During the piece, members of the collective offer a series of interlinked performative reflections on differences between leisure in a Fordist and post-Fordist economy. *Mass Ornament* is a video installation which is constructed out of found videos of dance material circulating on the Internet via the video-sharing site YouTube. Its starting point is an essay of the same name about the early twentieth-century chorus-line dance troupe, the Tiller Girls, written in 1927 by the German intellectual Siegfried Kracauer. In Kracauer's view, leisure activities are conditioned by the logic of work practices. Bookchin's installation proposes that when someone makes a video of themselves dancing in their bedroom and posts it on social media, this leisure activity is conditioned by the way post-Fordist work practices utilise workers' social skills. By citing these historical sources, each work uses the past as a reference point in order to provoke reflections on the differences between Fordist and post-Fordist work

4. Pristaš said this during the conference 'The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labor', Giessen, Germany, May 29–June 1, 2014. Video of the final discussion of the conference is available at https://vimeo.com/99667025 (accessed March 21, 2015).

5. Bookchin discusses her family's and her uncle's work in her 2011 interview with Blake Stimson. Blake Stimson, "Out in Public: Natalie Bookchin in Conversation with Blake Stimson," *Rhizome*, March 9, 2011, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/mar/9/out-public-natalie-bookchin-conversation-blake-sti/.

practices. They were doing this at a time when a clear understanding of these differences was still emerging. Each piece uses aesthetic means to explore or present experiences that involve ways of moving which derive from, or are related to, the problematic intersection of work and leisure.

This chapter continues the discussion of neoliberalism and post-Fordism and focuses, in particular, on potentials for artistic critique. To understand why artists are supposed to be the model post-Fordist workers, it is necessary to survey recent writing about the post-Fordist world of work. Paolo Virno's discussion of Marx's concept of the general intellect and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's work on networks offer a perspective on the blurring of work and leisure time and the increasingly precarious nature of labour under post-Fordism. Virno and Berardi are both associated with the Italian operaist movement, adapting Marxist theory to the conditions of post-Fordist production. *1 Poor and One 0* was made before the 2008 financial crisis, and *Mass Ornament* was made before the impact of the crisis had become apparent. Both nevertheless reveal the way the post-Fordist world of work was making workers' lives increasingly precarious.

POST-FORDISM AND THE GENERAL INTELLECT

Fordism refers to a process of streamlining factory production through standardisation, particularly that devised by Henry Ford in the early 1900s to manufacture the Ford Model T. The process often involves increasing efficiency by simplifying workers' operations on the production line. A well-known scene from Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936) where Chaplin is swallowed up by the machines on the factory assembly line has become the iconic image of Fordism. As Toni Negri and Judith Revel put it, Fordist factory work conjures up the image 'of a body that transforms itself into cannon fodder for serialized production, of repetition without end, of isolation, of exhaustion'.[6]

The term 'post-Fordism' is used to describe working and business practices that have arisen with the decline of heavy industrial and manufacturing in the developed West and the exploitation instead of information and communication technologies. In Negri and Revel's view, this is a world 'of cognitive capitalism, of immaterial work, of social cooperation, of the circulation of knowledge, of collective intelligence, [and] we are trying to describe both the new expansion of the capitalist plundering of life, its investment not only in the factory but also in the whole of society'.[7]

6. Antonio Negri and Judith Revel, "Inventing the Common," *generation-online.org*. March 13, 2008. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_revel5.htm.

7. Ibid.

An effect of this change has been a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have pointed out that management studies in the 1960s advocated a 'radical separation between the private world of the family and personal relations on the one hand, and that of professional relations and work on the other'.[8] By the 1990s, however, this separation was seen by management theorists as problematic because 'it separates dimensions of life that are indissoluble, inhuman because it leaves no room for affectivity, and at the same time inefficient because it runs counter to flexibility and inhibits the multiple skills that must be employed to learn to "live in a network" '.[9] As I noted in chapter 2, Boltanski and Chiapello point out that the new use of these kinds of social skills and affective labour within the workplace is, in effect, an answer to the criticism in the 1960s and 1970s by members of the counterculture that work was a boring and alienating experience. The new uses of social skills and affective labour are still alienating, but in a new way. Alienation, in Marxist terms, comes because the employer makes a profit when the value of what a worker produces exceeds the amount she or he is paid for doing it. This excess is what Marx called 'surplus value', which can also be derived from rent, tax, the licensing of products, royalties, and other related sources of income. Within Fordist production, surplus value came from material goods and property. Within the post-Fordist world of work, it increasingly derives from intangible sources, such as the use of intellectual property, social skills, and affective services.

Paolo Virno proposes that the skills which are exploited in the new, post-Fordist world of work are not ones that people learn in the workplace: 'Post-Fordist workers educate themselves outside the workplace and their entire lives become job competency and thus devoted to the labour process.'[10] This applies as much in the so-called creative industries as it does in other work situations. In his solo *Product of Other Circumstances* (2009), Xavier Le Roy gives a telling example of this. His friend and colleague Boris Charmatz, director of La Musée de la danse[11] in Rennes, had sent him an email recalling that Le Roy had once said that it would only take two hours to learn butoh

8. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 85.

9. Ibid.

10. Paulo Virno, "The Dismeasure of Art," in *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 31.

11. La Musée de la danse is currently one of nineteen Centres chorégraphiques nationaux. These were set up in 1984 by Jack Lang, then France's minister of culture, as part of his strategy for decentralising culture in France.

and offering him a fee to produce a piece *Xavier fait du rebutoh* (Xavier does re-butoh) for an upcoming festival. The result was a lecture performance in the same format as his earlier *Product of Circumstances.* In the more recent work Le Roy explained how, knowing nothing about butoh, he researched it using the Google search engine and YouTube video-sharing website. His process closely resembles the idea of teaching oneself in an unauthorised way discussed in chapter 3, which Rancière, following Jacotot, advocates in *Le maître ignorant* (The ignorant schoolmaster). Because Le Roy didn't have much time, he explains, he ended up working on the solo in his free time and on holiday. It was therefore, he said, an 'amateur performance' since it was the result of performance he had done in his free time.[12] Le Roy explains that although the fee had initially sounded generous, when he added up how much time he had actually spent on the project, the hourly rate was somewhat modest. Artists like Le Roy are thus exemplary employees because of their readiness to blur work and leisure activities, and because of their ability to be versatile and adaptable when facing a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities. These are the kind of qualities that employers value. They are also qualities that workers need to survive in the precarious world of work created by austerity. By discussing his fee and work schedule during the performance, Le Roy however reveals the normally unnoticed nature of the economy in which his work circulates.

Le Roy talks about the particularity of his work experiences in ways that allow others to relate to general aspects of them that are in common with their own experiences. This relation between the general and the particular is one that is discussed by theorists of post-Fordism. Paolo Virno says that the general is something that exists between people. Referring to Marx's concept of the 'general intellect', Virno argues that 'in modernity, the general in both art and philosophy is involved in a complex struggle to get away from the universal'.[13]

The universal is abstracted from the general. Marx's discussion of the 'general intellect' comes in the 'fragment on machines' in his book *Grundrisse* (1858). The term refers to the general level of knowledge about science and technology: thus when a particular technology has been fully adopted and knowledge of how to operate it can be taken for granted, this knowledge has become part of the general intellect. Capitalist industrialists exploit this knowledge when they invest in the machines for their factories, and this knowledge itself becomes a factor in enabling the creation of surplus value. In the factories of Marx's day, this knowledge was thus objectified through capital in

12. Marketing material for performance in Brussels, 2010, http://archive.kfda.be/2010/en/node/1081 (accessed December 8, 2014).

13. Virno, n. 10, 21.

the hardware of machinery. Political economist Will Hutton recently observed that British investment in intangible assets, such as computer code and patents has, since 2000, been 50 percent higher than investment in factories and machines.[14] Virno discusses the implications for the general intellect of this move away from mechanical industry to an economy based on cognitive and emotional labour. He argues that

> the so-called 'second generation autonomous labour' and the procedural operations of radically innovative factories such as Fiat in Melfi show how the relation between knowledge and production is articulated in the linguistic cooperation of men and women and their concrete acting in concert, rather than being exhausted in the system of machinery.[15]

Cooperation and acting in concert, Virno argues, constitute a necessary 'technology' for exploiting global flows of goods and services and so are also part of the 'general intellect'.

These qualities are developed outside of work, only for post-Fordist industries to capture and abstract them in order to create surplus value. At the same time, the shift to immaterial production has contributed to the increasing casualisation of labour and thus to increasingly precarious working lives. The way that workers cooperate and act in concert in the Fiat factory are exceptional in the post-Fordist world of work, which is generally one in which workers' experiences of increasing vulnerability and precarity lead to isolation and the fragmentation of social bonds. This undermines the kinds of social and political solidarity that Virno values. The process of the abstraction of the general intellect corresponds, in some respects, with the capturing and enclosure of a commons.[16] I noted earlier Negri and Revel's use of the idea of the community of the common within their account of post-Fordist labour.

Together with virtuosity, the 'general intellect' is something that Virno hopes can be repossessed for the good of the public in general rather than as a means for generating profits for industry. He asks, 'What aesthetic and political experiences can we develop to transfer from the universal to the general

14. WIll Hutton, "Give Our Cities the Power to Prosper and All Britain Will Flourish Too," *The Observer*, November 9, 2014, 38.

15. Paulo Virno, "General Intellect," *Historical Materialism* 15, no. 3 (2007): 5.

16. As I noted in chapter 3 the operaists often speak about the common instead of the commons. By abstracting from worker's singular contributions and focusing only on the use value of their labour, postindustrial capitalism privatises something that would otherwise be part of the common pool of resources of a community of the common.

without consequently destroying the particular?'[17] Virno is calling for a reclaiming of personal abilities and competencies from the world of work and their return to the realm of social and political relations. Where dance performances are concerned, I propose that this means reclaiming the critical potential of particular experiences by creating works that speak of these experiences in ways that seem authentic to spectators and can thus inform and provoke thought. Furthermore, works that do this have a radical edge that prevents them from being absorbed into an abstracted, apoliticised worldview that tends to divert any critical potential into a too-often platitudinous, universal narrative about emotional experience and the individual's freedom to express this. The readings of *1 Poor and One 0* and *Mass Ornament* that follow show that the way each piece troubles preconceptions about leisure in post-Fordist times can allow beholders to imagine possibilities for renewing the common space for social and political relations.

1 Poor and One 0 (2008)

BADco. describe themselves as a collaborative performance collective, based in Zagreb, comprising four choreographer-dancers, two dramaturgs, and one philosopher. They focus in their work

> on research of the protocols of performing, presenting, and observing by reconfiguring established relations between performance and audience, challenging perspectival givens and architectonics of performance, and problematizing communicational structures.[18]

1 Poor and One 0[19] (Figure 4) is the second piece of a trilogy that BADco. have made around the topic of labour. The first, *Changes*, premiered in 2007, and the final part, *The League of Time*, premiered in 2009. All three combine dance material and film or other kinds of projections with spoken texts, from different performers, that are sometimes philosophical and sometimes political or take the form of a personal stream-of-consciousness narrative. All three also had extensive programmes with additional textual materials relating to the theme of the piece. Thus the programme for *1 Poor and One 0* included an

17. Virno, n. 10, 21.

18. BADco, "Provocation: The League of Time," *The Drama Review* 53, no. 4 (2009): 3.

19. A full length video of the premier of *1 Poor and One 0* at Dom im Berg in Graz has been posted on the dance-tech channel on vimeo, https://vimeo.com/24983376 (accessed December 4, 2014).

Figure 4 BADco. in *1 Poor and One 0* (2008).
Photo by Ranka Latinović.

essay by Harun Farocki, a passage from Samuel Beckett, and notes on diverse topics referred to in the piece, including the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, contact improvisation, and the relation between leisure and exhaustion.

As I noted earlier, *1 Poor and One 0* takes as its central reference point the 1895 film *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* by the Lumière brothers. The moment of leaving the factory is, as Farocki has pointed out, the point at which work finishes and leisure time begins. BADco.'s piece begins by showing all three versions the Lumière brothers filmed of their workers walking through the factory gates. This is immediately followed by a 'leisure' section in which all the company's members sit on low stools and perform choreographed arm and hand gestures that seem abstracted from the sorts of handcraft hobbies that one might engage in during one's spare time. This is accompanied by an audio track from a documentary about hobbies that sounds as if it had been made in the United States in the 1930s or 1940s. Its narrator has a slightly patronising tone as he reproves a teenager for wasting his spare time. His parents' generation, we are told, had less time because of all the chores they had to do before their long work shifts. Modern domestic appliances, such as washing machines, and modern automated factories give people more spare time, which should be put to good use. As the old-fashioned tone of the narrator and the rather dated hobbies he mentions suggest, this approach to leisure, and the idea that leisure is radically separated from the world of work, is now a thing of the past.

The footage of the Lumière workers is then shown again in short numbered segments, after each of which members of BADco. reconstruct the movement trajectories of the workers passing through the gate in that segment, and then the dancers return to their own starting points to wait for the next segment to play. To leave the factory, as a programme note suggests, is not just to leave the world of work; on a metaphorical level, it is to make a transition from a Fordist world of work to one in which one's image as a media object can be monetised. It is as if the BADco. members, by embodying the workers' movements, are trying to understand what the film means for each of them individually as cultural workers in a post-industrial or post-Fordist economy.

The rest of *1 Poor and One 0* consists of a series of scenes which each address this issue through movement or speech or through both together. Each of these begins with one of the numbered segments of the 1895 film. As Bojana Kunst observes, by continually going back and walking through the gates of the factory, BADco. are constantly drawing attention to the dividing line between work and leisure.[20] Each scene stages what the company call an unstable communicational exchange between movement and words. BADco.'s practice here recalls the politicised interrogation of image and text that the French film director Jean-Luc Godard and his collaborators engaged in during the early 1970s. Indeed, the title *1 Poor and One 0* comes from a discussion of capitalism in Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's 1974 film *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and elsewhere).[21] This, a voice in the film over explains, is how capital functions: 'Perhaps one poor [1] and one zero [0] equals one less poor; one poor and another zero equals one even less poor; one even less poor and one zero equals one richer; one richer and another zero equals one even richer.'[22] Expressed numerically this is a sequence: 1, 0, 10, 100, 1000, 10,000, 100,000. Serge Goran Pristaš explains this while writing the numbers with a clear marker on thin, fragile textile fabric, which looks like silk, stretched over a large frame. The fluid in the marker pen gradually eats into the fabric, dissolving it so that soon all that is left is a spreading hole in the screen, a big zero.

In another section, Ivana Ivković speaks a fragmented first-person narrative about capitalist working conditions as the choreographer Nikolina Pristaš and two other dancers stand beside her in a companionable way. Their hands

20. Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015).

21. In *Ici et ailleurs* Godard and Miéville revisited some film footage of Palestinian revolutionary fighters that Godard had shot in 1970 for an unfinished film project, *Jusqu à la victoire*.

22. The text of this narration from Godard and Miéville's film is quoted in the programme for *1 Poor and One 0*.

casually tucked into the side pockets of their dresses, they walk through little segments of the moves of three of the workers leaving the Lumière factory while Ivković is talking. They develop these movements, repeating the sequence and adding to it, rotating the directions of travel through a right angle, and expanding this into space, and Ivković joins in so that a trio becomes a quartet. There remains a curious mismatch here between the serious political nature of what Ivković is saying and the easy, casual familiarity of the dancers' interactions. But perhaps the mismatch is between the casualness of networking in a post-Fordist workplace and the alienating capture of the general intellect within this new capitalist business plan.

A programme note tells us that *1 Poor and One 0* 'interrogates the complicity between the history of contemporary dance and the history of post-industrialisation'. Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović have argued that the marginal place of artists in society does not put artists in a position where their work is automatically critical of the state of society but that they have a 'responsibility to deal critically with the working conditions of production'.[23] This, I suggest, is behind BADco.'s recognition of the complicit nature of contemporary dance. The history of contemporary dance is one in which innovators seek alternatives that are relevant to their historically specific experiences. BADco. draw attention to this complicated history. In a late section in the piece, Goran Sergej Pristaš adds or subtracts the years in which significant events in contemporary cultural history of dance and movement took place. This scene recalls the earlier scene where he added one poor and one zero. This time he writes each sum of years in chalk on the seat of one of the rectangular stools. The first is 1972–1947 = 1925. The year 1925 has an indirect connection with movement. As Pristaš explains, the Soviet Russian documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov claimed that in his avant-garde film practice, the movie camera is a 'kino eye', and, in 1925, the film director Serge Eisenstein replied that in his own revolutionary films he used the camera as a 'kino fist'. In this context 'kino' means moving pictures but could suggest movement in general. In 1947, Rudolf von Laban, having worked with the industrial consultant F. C. Lawrence to apply his approach to dance movement analysis to the analysis of factory work, published the book *Effort*. Steve Paxton first began to explore what became contact improvisation in 1972. A programme note states, 'The implicit understanding of communication between subjects in contact improvisation resonated with the changes of its age.' This, the note continues, was the early postindustrial age when society moved away from 'the class struggle model of social relations to post-antagonistic forms of social

23. Cvević and Vujanović in Berlant et al., n. 2, 176.

interaction' exemplified by the spontaneous, non-hierarchical nature of contact improvisation.

Contact improvisation appears elsewhere in the piece. In one scene Tomislav Medak and Ivana Ivković talk through an imaginary contact improvisation between the two of them, one saying what move they would do and the other replying what they would do in response. It is as if they were analysing the movement in the same way that the company analyses, through re-enactment, the movements of leaving the factory. In chapter 3, I argued, following Boltanski and Chiapello, that the radicalism of countercultural dance forms like contact improvisation was subsequently appropriated by neoliberalism. This debate is not spelled out in the performance itself. Here, as elsewhere, spectators are left to work out connections and references on their own. Much of this reflection may take place after the performance while one is reading through the programme. If one follows what BADco. are saying about these particular years, which is also explained on the back page of the programme, this is what emerges. If one takes contact improvisation's connections with early post-Fordism (1972) and takes away from it Laban's involvement in Fordist factory work (1947), this leaves revolutionary movement that can punch like a fist (1925). By subjecting their contact improvisation to this verbal analysis, Medak and Ivković are trying to understand and resist its current complicity with the post-Fordist world of work. They are trying to ungovern dance.

The format that BADco. devised for *1 Poor and One 0* means that running through all these scenes is a relation between, on the one hand, political and theoretical ideas and, on the other, actual dance material and discussions about dance and its history. I earlier posed Virno's question 'what aesthetic and political experiences can we develop to transfer from the universal to the general without consequently destroying the particular?'[24] BADco.'s choreographed movements convey the particularity of their experiences while their commentary on the latter invites beholders to recognise the general nature of the issues that *1 Poor and One 0* raises. BADco. do nothing to hide the fact that their words and movements come together on stage in awkward, unresolved relationships. The result is nevertheless thought-provoking and offers beholders opportunities to think about the ordinary contradictions in the everyday experience of work in a society that is created by post-Fordist work practices. *1 Poor and One 0* shows an onstage community who are thinking critically about movement in ways that help beholders imagine possibilities for ungoverning dance, and who by doing so are defending a common space for social and political relations.

24. Virno, n. 10, 21.

Mass Ornament (2009)

Natalie Bookchin's *Mass Ornament* is a video installation made from found video footage posted on the video-sharing website YouTube.[25] These videos were made by young people on their own and show them dancing in their bedrooms (or other parts of their homes). Bookchin has edited them, choosing short extracts which are lined up side by side with two or more other videos and placed against a black background (see Figure 5). Underneath each one, in white print, are details about how many views it has received or, in a few cases, the information that the video has subsequently been removed from YouTube by the user. The installation is shown in a fairly intimate blacked-out space that is the same width as the projection and has five speakers, three at the front and two at the back, so that there is a surround-sound effect. After a relatively slow introduction—or overture—featuring shots of empty rooms which wobble slightly as the young people, out of frame, adjust the angle of their cameras, a male voice is heard singing part of the song 'Lullaby of Broadway', and the title *Mass Ornament* appears. After this, the young people enter the individual frame of their videos, and after a slow build-up, start dancing. The soundscape for the installation is a montage from the soundtracks of two films from 1935, Busby Berkeley's Hollywood musical *Golddiggers of 1935* and Leni Riefenstahl's documentary about a National Socialist Party rally in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*). There are also thumps, footfalls, and other background noises as the young people move around in their rooms.

Bookchin selected extracts from the videos in which young men and women are doing the same dance movements, or other related actions, at the same time, and she has placed the videos side by side so that the young people appear to be performing in unison. Among the dance movements they perform are high kicks, jumps, turns, rhythmic shaking of the buttocks (twerking), vogueing arm gestures, and a wave that moves along one arm to the shoulders and then out along the other arm. There are also other less obviously dance-related movements, such as handstands, backflips, and aerobic exercises, performed in front of a television that shows a fitness class. People move close to the camera so that their face fills the frame as they make small shifts to the camera angle; they dance while ironing clothes, they dance in front of their Christmas trees.

25. Having used video footage found on the Internet in *Mass Ornament* and other projects, Bookchin likes to put some documentation of these back onto the Internet. A video of *Mass Ornament* can be found at https://vimeo.com/5403546 (accessed December 4, 2014). I am grateful to Bojana Kunst for introducing me to this work. It was only when I was making the final revisions to this book that her own book was published, and I found out that she too wrote about *Mass Ornament* and *1 Poor and One 0* in the same chapter.

Figure 5 Natalie Bookchin *Mass Ornament* (2009). Exhibition view *When We Share More Than Ever*, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, curated by Esther Ruelfs, Teresa Gruber, architecture and graphic design Studio Miessen, Studio Mahr ©Henning Rogge.

A few young people seem slightly out of control and fall over awkwardly—some of the videos are marked as having been taken off line by the user. Each extract from the found video footage is quite short and the number of videos in the line changes frequently, increasing to make more impact then focusing down onto a few featured dancers, swelling and declining in an almost natural flow. The montage is very musical. The second half of the piece is mostly set to a lush instrumental version of the song 'Lullabye of Broadway' from Busby Berkeley's film, and dancers' key movements are often synchronised with strongly accented beats or climactic moments in the music. As the music builds up to its finale, the line fills with more and more videos in a visual crescendo which then, with the final note, dramatically disappears.

As I noted earlier, the title of the installation cites a much-discussed essay from 1927, 'Ornament der Masse' ('Mass Ornament') by Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966).[26] In this essay, Kracauer discusses the Tiller Girls, the well-known, kick-dancing, chorus-line troupe, which he cites as exemplifying a

26. Siegfried Kracauer, *Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

popular phenomenon of 1920s stage revues and gymnastic displays in which a large number of people move in perfectly synchronised unison. The anonymous precision of the Tiller Girls, Kracauer suggests, is reminiscent of the kind of economical precision required of workers on a modern factory production line. He calls the dancers Taylorists, referring to the method devised by the European 'efficiency engineer' F. W. Taylor (1856–1915). In an interview, Bookchin told Carolyn Kane:

> I tend to look backwards, to history, in order to speak about the present. It has to do with the fact that my work grapples with the need to be reflective in the present, with something that we are right in the middle of. History allows us to gain perspective.[27]

Through citing Kracauer and the two films from 1935, Bookchin uses examples of the now historical Fordist era to gain a perspective about post-Fordism. Kracauer proposed a connection between Fordist (and Taylorist) production methods and the worker's leisure activities so that the worker's experience of the mechanised production line can be seen as equivalent to the precise, efficient synchronisation of the chorus-line dancers. By citing Kracauer, Bookchin implies that the same connection between work and leisure can be found in post-Fordism, although the nature of both work and leisure have now radically changed. During working hours, individuals use computers to make connections across the Internet in order to create profit for their employers and then, during their leisure hours, use their home computers to continue making connections over the Internet. These connections are apparent from the number of viewings that their videos receive. The line of videos of young people dancing alone in front of their computers becomes, through Bookchin's montage, a virtual chorus line, an Internet-age equivalent of the Weimar German chorus lines that Kracauer analysed.

The Tiller Girls' unison was, for Kracauer, not only an expression of the rhythm of modern times; it also filled a gap created by modern metropolitan life. Philosophically Kracauer draws on a Kantian account of the rational unitary subject of the Enlightenment and a sociological and philosophical critique of the alienating effects of modernity. Thus he argues that there is something worrying about the apparent de-individualisation of the dancers as they become as much as possible like the other members of the chorus line and are reduced to no more than a small, anonymous element in the mass ornamental performance. By doing so they no longer appear to be in a position

27. Carolyn Kane, "Dancing Machines: An Interview with Natalie Bookchin," *Rhizome*, no. 27 (2009): http://rhizome.org/editorial/2009/may/27/dancing-machines/

to make the kinds of disinterested judgments that, in Kant's philosophy, is an essential characteristic of rational, enlightened subjectivity. But, on the other hand, Kracauer nevertheless also found, in the dancers' harmonious interconnectedness, a utopian glimpse of new possibilities for social harmony that contrasted favourably with the alienation and fragmentation of contemporary the metropolitan social experience. If Kracauer, in 1927, was thus ambivalent about what he called the 'mass ornament', with the subsequent rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany in the 1930s, his views about it hardened into unequivocal criticism. In 1947, when he wrote *From Caligari to Hitler*,[28] his study of cinema in Weimar Germany, he no longer found anything utopian in the mass ornament. The anonymous mass of alienated workers walking into the lifts in Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis,* in Kracauer's view, had the same impact on the viewer as the massed ranks of marching party members that Leni Riefenstahl celebrated in *Triumph of the Will*. The mass ornament, Kracauer argued, prepared the German people for their acceptance of National Socialism. Submission to the Führer involves giving up individual agency through merging oneself within a larger group that is itself subordinate to his supposedly masterly leadership. The implication of this is the loss of any potential to exercise free and independent judgement.

The soundscape of *Mass Ornament* includes sounds from Riefenstahl's film, but I doubt that many visitors to Bookchin's installation are likely to recognise that, although they may learn what it is by reading information about the installation. Apart from this, there is no obvious reference to Hitler or National Socialism in the installation, nor has Bookchin mentioned this in any of the interviews with her that I have read. But the implied tension between the different ways in which mass ornaments are presented in Berkeley's and Riefenstahl's films is also present within the effect that Bookchin creates through her montage of found video material. There is an ambiguity in the installation concerning the virtual chorus line of otherwise isolated dancers who all appear to be doing the same things in perfect synchronisation. There is perhaps a pathos in their vulnerability as they dance in isolation. But does the fact that they are all doing the same movements imply a lack of individuality, or does Bookchin see in their dancing some potential for interconnectedness?

As Bookchin pointed out to Carolyn Kane, the dancers in the videos 'perform the same movements over and over, as if scripted, revealing the ways that popular culture is embodied and reproduced in and through individual bodies'.[29] When Bookchin was working on *Mass Ornament*, YouTube postings

28. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Cinema* (London: Dobson, 1947).

29. Kane, n. 27.

still largely consisted of user-generated content created by the users themselves. It was only later that commercial corporations and entertainment companies began using postings as part of their marketing strategy (see chapter 3), and its owners, Google, had yet to devise a way of generating revenue through targeted advertising. The user-generated content that Bookchin sampled was, in effect, ungoverning the media industry. Google's subsequent monetising strategies are attempts to enclose a commons.

One thing that appears to have been of interest to Bookchin was the non-hierarchical nature of the young people's creative practice. As she told Kane, the videos were produced by the consumer: 'There is no need for a director or choreographer (or foreman) to keep production flowing or to keep the dancers moving in sync. It is a perfectly individualized self-generated, self-replicating system.'[30] Bookchin's installation reveals evidence of the way this system functions as a network. A significant difference emerges here between the way the mass of people relate to one another in the society created by Fordist and by post-Fordist economics. The factory production line produces a flow of goods that is facilitated through mechanical means, whereas in the post-Fordist workplace, information flows through digital networks. To understand the social and political implications of these digital flows, it is useful to consider Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's discussion of the network and the swarm.

Whereas, on a philosophical level, Kracauer refers to a Kantian rational unitary subject, Berardi's account of subjectivity is Deleuzian. A network, for Berardi, is formed from 'a plurality of organic and artificial beings, of humans and machines who perform common actions thanks to procedures that make possible their interconnection and interoperation'.[31] Through operating together in this way, it becomes possible to keep enormous amounts of information in rapid circulation. The living beings who are part of this network behave in ways that 'follow (or seem to follow) rules embedded in their neural systems'.[32] In Bookchin's installation, the dancers are exhibiting what, following Berardi, might be called 'swarm behaviour', which, Bookchin argues, is self-generating and self-replicating. No one person is or could dictate what movements the swarm should perform, as these emerge out of the interconnections between different parts of the network. In a swarm, Berardi argues, 'it is impossible to say "no." It's irrelevant, you can express your refusal, your rebellion and your nonalignment, but this is not going to change the direction of

30. Ibid.

31. Franco Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e), 2008), 14.

32. Ibid.

the swarm, nor is it going to affect the way in which the swarm's brain is elaborating information.'[33] In the case of the dancers in Bookchin's installation, it is not just the swarm's brain on its own but the hybrid fusion of psyche and material flesh with circuitry and data that elaborates these dance movements. Its interconnection gives it speed and allows it to encompass huge complexity, too fast and too large for conscious human elaboration.

The ability to connect to and operate within the networks that Berardi discusses here is part of the general intellect that post-Fordist industries exploit. What Bookchin shows in her installation is the potential for these networked interoperations and interconnections to function as a commons. While the individual young people dance alone in their rooms, Bookchin places them side by side to allow us to imagine a commons. As she told Blake Stimson:

> The videos come from online social networks, which offer exalted promises of creating social relationships and making the world more open and connected, but instead, produce a cacophony of millions of isolated individual voices shouting at and past each other. What I am trying to do through my editing and compilation is reimagine these separate speakers as collectives taking form as a public body in physical space.[34]

Earlier, I cited Virno's hope that the general intellect could be repossessed for the public good and his proposal that this would involve a reclaiming of personal abilities and competencies from the world of work and their return to the realm of social and political relations. Bookchin's installation creates a virtual space which can help beholders become aware of the current form of the general intellect and imagine a new collective space—a commons—in which the affordance of this general knowledge and competency can be returned to the realm of social and political relations.

CONCLUSION

Virno and Berardi, by analysing aspects of the post-Fordist world of work from the point of view of the operaist movement, are optimistic in the way they theorise possibilities through which people can renew a public space for social and political relations. The two pieces I have discussed in this chapter were both made before the full impact of the 2008 financial crisis and of the consequent increase in the application of austerity measures had become clear.

33. Ibid., 16.

34. Stimson, n. 5.

Both pieces look back to early Fordism, to the Lumière Brothers' workers in 1895, to Eisenstein and Dziga-Vertov in 1925, Kracauer in 1927, and Busby Berkeley and Riefenstahl in 1935. This allows these artists to show how working conditions have changed since the early twentieth century, revealing how, in the twenty-first century, workers' alienation and isolation are taking different, less easily recognisable forms. Kracauer worried that Fordist production interfered with the worker's capacity for independent, critical thought. Post-Fordist labour exploits the capacity for thinking. The precarious, short-term, or casual nature of so much employment in the twenty-first century, however, particularly under austerity regimes, mitigates against the renewal of a collective social and political realm. It is this collective space for critical thinking that BADco.'s and Bookchin's works allow beholders to imagine. Both works respond to Cvejić and Vujanović's demand that artists should acknowledge that despite their marginal, precarious conditions of work, they nevertheless have a responsibility to create works that deal critically with these conditions. What *1 Poor and One 0* and *Mass Ornament* demonstrate is the potential for movement to make critical, political propositions. Both ungovern dance.

5

Laughter from the Surround

It looked like they had let us into the Borough Hall at Greenwich Dance Agency in London before it had been cleared and made ready for the performance. An upside-down sofa lay across some of the raked seating, and a half unrolled bright-orange carpet and a big advertising poster were on the floor. Bits of material were draped over the backs of the audience seating, piles of cardboard sheeting and primary-coloured clothes and scraps of material were lying on the small stage.[1] The seats were set out on all four sides of the hall for a performance in the round. I noticed some rather oddly dressed people sitting or standing close to where we were seated, who started laughing in an easy, unforced but continuous way. These, it became apparent, were the performers, who now started to bring other posters, more chairs, a table, and coloured clothes and material into the performance space; others all around the hall were also doing so. There were twenty-nine performers named in the programme, and they were an odd looking group. None of them looked as if they had anything in common with each other except for the fact that they were all gently laughing. What they were doing looked completely random and incomprehensible, and there were so many of them that though we in the audience at the edges of the hall surrounded them, it felt to me like I was surrounded by laughter. This was the beginning of a performance of Maria La Ribot's piece *40 Espontáneos* (2004) on October 27, 2005. This chapter discusses *40 Espontáneos* and La Ribot's other recent performative installation *Laughing Hole* (2006).[2]

1. The Borough Hall is a multi-purpose function room in what used to be Greenwich Town Hall. It is a ballroom with a sprung wooden dance floor but has a small stage with no wings for meetings, lectures, and musical concerts.

2. An earlier version of this chapter appeared as Ramsay Burt, "Preferring to Laugh," *Parallax* 46 (2008): 15–23.

While we don't live in a void, to what extent are we aware of who and what surrounds us? The spaces through which we move are not empty, but do we really know what fills them? How are we affected by the social and physical environments that surround us, and how do we affect them? Who counts or does not count enough to be noticed? Are there things going on in the surround that we don't notice and don't know about, let alone begin to understand? Or are we part of the surround and involved with things that are, from an institutional point of view, invisible and thus potential sites for resistance against the dead weight of a restrictive normativity? These questions, raised by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in their 2011 essay 'Politics Surrounded',[3] were already being explored performatively in *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole*.

Harney and Moten propose the idea of the surround in the context of their discussion of the 'undercommons'. They never directly define the 'undercommons', but it seems to embrace those who are outside, have escaped or been outlawed from a territory or institution, or resist or are opposed to the imposition of power by the state and by globalised, corporate interests. The people who constitute the undercommons are not just those who share a commons but are as well those whose involvement within that commons is incomprehensible to those who are enclosing it or settling it. The task of the undercommoners 'is the self-defence of the surround in the face of repeated, targeted dispossessions through the settler's armed incursion'.[4] Here Harney and Moten use the clever analogy of Hollywood films in which settlers find themselves under attack by American Indians or Zulu tribesmen. Michael Parenti, they note, has pointed out the ideological nature of such film portrayals, which make the settlers who are enclosing the commons seem to be defending themselves from attack, whereas instead it is the Indians and Zulus who are under attack.[5] 'The fort', they write, 'really was surrounded, is besieged by what still surrounds it, the common' which is beyond, beneath, and before enclosure.[6] The casts of *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole* are the besieging surround and their laughter is a strategy for self-defence.

In *40 Espontáneos,* a large group of up to forty amateurs, who have had no previous experience of performing, laugh for seventy minutes while carrying out tasks involving the pieces of primary coloured cloth, poster, the cardboard

3. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 2013).

4. Ibid., 17.

5. Michael Parenti, *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

6. Harney and Moten, n. 3, 17.

sheets and carpet mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter. In *Laughing Hole,* which is a durational performance that can last between two and eight hours, three professional performers laugh continuously while gradually attaching to the gallery's walls cardboard placards inscribed with captions that indirectly refer to precarious outsiders who don't belong, who are largely invisible, absent, and who often exist in illegality and poverty. While this is more evident in *Laughing Hole*, both pieces refer, in tangential ways, to outsiders, including those who are forgotten and ignored but at the same time exploited for their cheap labour; and those who are not accorded the same human rights as white Western citizens. However, the performers in *Laughing Hole* do not in any way become or represent these precarious others. Instead, the way La Ribot uses laughter in both pieces not only disrupts the position of detachment conventionally taken to be a prerequisite of aesthetic appreciation but, by doing so, raises critical questions about society's responsibility for these unsettling occupants of the surround. This chapter continues the discussion about dancing responses to the impact of neoliberalism and post-Fordism on everyday experience while introducing another central theme, responsibility. It does this through readings of *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole* which focus on two related issues: the potential for those in the surround to unsettle the settlers and the precariousness of life in the surround.

PRECARITY AND THE UNDERCOMMONS

The topic of precariousness or precarity has recently become the subject of much academic discussion. One of the first scholars to take it up was Judith Butler, in her book *Precarious Life* (2004).[7] Butler brings together a critique of contemporary crises—the war on terror, the invasion of Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—to point to the precariousness and vulnerability of the people caught up in these events. She then draws on Emmanuel Levinas's discussion of ethics to raise critical questions about the ways that states deal with these crises. Levinas argued that the biblical commandment not to kill involves restraining oneself from exploiting the other's vulnerability. Recognition of the other's vulnerability constitutes an infinite demand to be responsible for the other and to put the other's needs before one's own. After the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Butler argued, the United States and its allies ignored this fundamental responsibility. Their campaigns against the countries that they claimed had been responsible was an attempt to disavow the affects that these attacks had on the people of the United States. This led to a situation in which many peoples' lives—particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan, and

7. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

Gaza—were apparently not considered to be as valuable as the lives of those living in Western countries. La Ribot's *40 Espontáneos* was made the same year that Butler's book was published, suggesting that the philosopher and the dance artist were responding to similar contemporaneous events and issues.

Butler's argument that crises were, in effect, being used to justify a suspension of human rights has parallels with Giorgio Agamben's earlier account of *nuda vita*—bare or naked life. Agamben has argued that throughout the twentieth century, modern nation states used their sovereign position to declare 'states of exception' or 'states of emergency' that have become permanent and are used to justify progressive diminutions of their legal rights.[8] Agamben argues that moral and legal codes cannot define what it is to be human without shackling and repressing human potential. At the centre of the state of exception, in which he says we now live, there is, he argues, 'an empty space in which human action with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life'.[9] It is within this space that one can begin to re-evaluate what, as Agamben puts it, 'used to claim for itself the name of "politics".'[10] This space could also be called an aesthetic one in which some artists have set out to explore the impact of neoliberalism on lived experience.

Scholars and artists have both drawn attention to precarity in order to critique the way the policies and actions of Western governments have impacted on a range of vulnerable groups and individuals, including the citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries caught up in the so-called war on terror, as well as illegal migrants to Europe and North America from poor, often destabilized African, Asian, and Eastern European countries. Some of these individuals are directly referred to in La Ribot's *Laughing Hole,* and have also been represented or cited in works by other artists. Thus Isaac Julien's video installation *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007) focused on the plight of illegal immigrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean from North Africa to Europe in small fishing boats that are too often dangerously overloaded and unseaworthy. And Tanja Ostojić has created works that draw attention to the plight of citizens of post-communist European countries including Roma people who attempt to live in the European Union.[11]

8. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

9. Agamben, n. 8, 86.

10. Ibid., 88.

11. Isaac Julien's *Western Union: Small Boats* is a multi-screen video installation that was first exhibited in 2007. Tanja Ostojic's actions and performances on this theme include *Looking for a Husband with an EU Passport* (2000) and *Naked Life* (2004–2006).

The concept of precarity, as I noted in chapter 4, has been used to discuss the situation of workers within the neoliberal economy who are only able to obtain short-term, insecure, low-waged jobs in both Western countries[12] and in post-communist countries.[13] Their situations are made more precarious because the welfare state has been dismantled along with commercially unhelpful health and safety legislation. Precarity has also been invoked in discussions of the plight of Chinese workers in dormitory factories who assemble Apple iPhones and similar computer-related equipment.[14] Nancy Ettlinger has pointed out that precarity is not a new condition and is not just a product of neoliberalism and, in particular since the 2008 financial crisis, its austerity policies. There were people whose lives were precarious within a Fordist economy. It is only when middle-class people in Western countries have suffered a fall in living standards as a result of austerity measures that this has become a topic of widespread interest. Harney and Moten's discussion of the undercommons has focused on the precarious conditions of lecturers in universities, as the latter have been reformed along neoliberal lines.

> It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of—this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.[15]

In chapter 1, I noted Xavier Le Roy's observations about being in but not of the institutionalised market for dance. Harney and Moten articulate a similar left-libertarian approach to political activism that might be characterised as radical passivity.

> We are disruption and consent to disruption. We preserve upheaval. Sent to fulfil by abolishing, to renew by unsettling, to open the enclosure whose immeasurable venality is inversely proportionate to its actual area,

12. For example, workers in Amazon's packing warehouses. Sarah O'Connor, "Amazon Unpacked," *Financial Times*, February 9, 2013.

13. For example, textile workers in Štip, Macedonia. Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Gender, Labour and Precarity in the South East European Periphery: The Case of Textile Workers in ŠTip," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 1, no. 2 (2014), www.contemporarysee.org.

14. SACOM, "Workers as Machines: Military Management in Foxconn," http://www.sacom.hk/?p=740.

15. Harney and Moten, n. 3 26.

> we got politics surrounded. We cannot represent ourselves. We can't be represented.[16]

As I will show, this spirit of upheaval and unsettling disruption and of unrepresentability was present in the laughter and the seemingly senseless activities engaged in by the performers in *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole*. When the performers in these works prefer to laugh, it is as if they prefer not to reiterate callous ways of thinking that are, in effect, responsible for making the lives of vulnerable others precarious. By preferring not to, they open up a potential for thinking differently.

PREFERRING NOT TO

The fictional character Bartleby in a nineteenth-century novella by the US author Herman Melville, 'preferred not to'. In order to assess the ethical implications of the passive strategy I am identifying in La Ribot's work, it is useful to consider the novelist and critic Maurice Blanchot's reading of Bartleby. Blanchot used it to develop an account of the responsibility of literature that drew on the ethical writings of his friend the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. The two performative installations by La Ribot, I suggest, can usefully be read in the light of Blanchot's account of responsibility. In this account, responsibility comes from passivity. Thomas Wall, in his examination of the way that Blanchot, Levinas, and Agamben all discuss passivity, observes its underlying paradox, which can be seen in Blanchot's reading of Bartleby: 'Passivity in the radical sense, before it is simply opposed to activity, is passive with regard to itself, or submits to itself as though it were an exterior power'.[17] Passivity therefore has a potentiality that I argue has both political and aesthetic dimensions.

In his 1980 book *L'Écriture du désastre* (*The Writing of the Disaster*), Blanchot discussed the ethical efficacy of the aesthetic strategy of passively preferring not to reiterate normative discourses. He develops this proposition in a discussion of Melville's novella. In Melville's day, lawyers employed scriveners to make copies of legal documents. In the tale, Bartleby initially seems to perform this role diligently; but then, for no apparent reason, he gradually begins to withdraw his services. Although continuing to occupy his place in the lawyer's office, whenever he is asked to do any work he replies, 'I would prefer not to'. The story of Bartleby therefore suggests an ethical way of resisting the seemingly unstoppable

16. Ibid., 20.

17. Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), 1.

processes of the legal machine. Blanchot's reading of Melville's story, I suggest, offers a way of interpreting the ethical implications of La Ribot's pieces.

Blanchot points out that, when Bartleby says 'I would prefer not to', he disrupts the present through passivity. It is, Blanchot writes, 'an abstention which has never had to be decided upon, which precedes all decisions'.[18] In other words, coming from an untimely past, before the moment when decision becomes necessary, it creates the possibility of an alternative future, and an untimely politics. Blanchot explains the ethical implications of this strategy by focusing on Bartleby's passivity. He notes:

> 'I would prefer not to . . . ' belongs to the infiniteness of patience; no dialectical intervention can take hold of such passivity. We have fallen out of being, outside where, immobile, proceeding with a slow and even step, destroyed men come and go.[19]

Part of the difficulty of Blanchot's text here lies in the paradox of passivity and with the way that Blanchot plays, in French, with the multiple meanings and associations of the word *pas*. *Pas*, meaning 'not', is part of 'I would prefer not to'—'*J'aimerais mieux* ***pas***', while it also means 'step', as in the slow and even step (*pas*) with which destroyed men come and go. Passivity (in French ***pas****sivité*), and patience (*patience*, whose French pronunciation seems to begin with the sound *pas*) all complicate this poetic play on the associations of *pas*. Patience in this context seems to mean the ability to merely persist in being present while putting up with the impingements of modernity, using the potential within passivity to help imagine an alternative future. The patient performers in La Ribot's work can thus be seen, in Blanchot's terms, as 'destroyed' men and women, as people undone by the disaster of modernity but pointing towards the politics and aesthetics to come.

What Blanchot is doing here is blurring the boundaries between a poetic voice and the mode of discourse used to discuss philosophical ideas. The particular philosophical text in which his discussion of Bartleby intervenes is the 1961 book *Totalité et infini* (*Totality and Infinity*) by Blanchot's life-long friend, the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Passivity, for both Blanchot and Levinas, is an ethical human response that is connected to the disastrous effects of modernity. Blanchot writes:

> Passivity. We can evoke situations of passivity: affliction; the final, crushing force of the totalitarian State, with its camps; the servitude of the slave

18. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 17.

19. Ibid.

> bereft of a master, fallen beneath need; or dying, as forgetfulness of death. In all these cases we recognize, even though it be with a falsifying, approximating knowledge, common traits: anonymity, loss of self; loss of all sovereignty but also of all subordination; utter uprootedness, exile, the impossibility of presence, dispersion (separation).[20]

These are the qualities which Blanchot identifies in Bartleby; the legal system, which he passively resists, is equated with states that render individuals passive by removing their human rights.

As I have already noted, Giorgio Agamben has argued that states of exception should really be seen as the norm, as the only way in which modern states can function.[21] In his view, the idea that there are any universal human rights guaranteed by law is a delusion. Both Agamben and Blanchot have written about the need to find a new basis for existing together in communities that will avoid the mistake of trying to define a closed set of supposedly universal human characteristics, since any attempt to do so will inevitably exclude those who fall outside its bounds.[22] For Blanchot, Levinas's account of responsibility offered a way of imagining an untimely community that includes vulnerable outsiders who are also at present undone by the disaster of modernity. To join with them in their loss of rights can become an act of resistance because, as Blanchot points out, a loss of sovereignty can be turned into freedom from subordination.

For Levinas, ethics is first philosophy, the founding quality of being human, which manifests itself in the passivity with which one responds in an encounter with an other. Humanity, for Levinas, lies in the necessity of resisting the impulse to kill the other or exploit the other's vulnerability. For Levinas, it is this ethical passivity that obliges one to put the needs of the other beyond even one's own needs. In his account, this impossible responsibility is sacred. He likens it to hearing the voice of God. Blanchot's secular application of Levinas's philosophy to modern experience, I suggest, offers a way of understanding the ethical implications of La Ribot's two installations. Blanchot argues:

> In the relation of the self (the same) to the Other, the Other is distant, he is the stranger; but if I reverse this relation, the Other relates to me as if I were

20. Ibid., 17–18.

21. Agamben, n. 8.

22. Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1988). Both are responding to Jean-Luc Nancy's 1982 essay 'La Communauté désœuvrée' (The inoperative community). Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperable Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

> the Other and thus causes me to take leave of my identity. Pressing until he crushes me, he withdraws me, by the pressure of the very near, from the privilege of the first person. When thus I am wrested from myself, there remains a passivity bereft of self (sheer alterity, the other without unity). There remains the unsubjected, or the patient.[23]

The demand that one adopt a passivity bereft of self was one that Blanchot not only practiced in his own writing and identified in the writing of Samuel Beckett and others. It also characterised his one significant act of political commitment.

In 1960 Blanchot was the joint author of *The Declaration of the Right to Insubordination in the Algerian War*, which called for the right to refuse to accept the acts of war which the French state was carrying out in the name of the French people. He was arrested with his co-authors and taken to court for writing the *Declaration*. As Patrick Hanafin has argued, the actions advocated in the manifesto itself, and Blanchot's behaviour in court, exemplify 'a lack of unity, presence, and identity' which 'unsettle both the political machine and the machine of justice'.[24] Hanafin links this to Bartleby's passivity: 'Like Melville's Bartleby, his not saying, his passivity, his persistence just being there is enough to disrupt'. Blanchot's political commitment, Hanafin argues, exemplified a similar disruptive passivity: 'This giving up of the self in the service of an impossible responsibility is similar to the effacement of the self which, for Blanchot, was writing'.[25]

The passivity that Blanchot theorises has the effect of disrupting the legal machine by refusing to take up a subject position that can be represented. There are parallels here with the activist position that Harney and Moten articulate in their writing about the undercommons. They too refuse to be co-opted into playing a political game that they know has already been rigged against them. The passivity of Blanchot and Bartleby, however, is an aesthetic strategy that is very different from Harney and Moten's poetic activism. The performers in La Ribot's installations are not activists, but through their incessant laughter, which is to some extent a loss of self control, they exemplify the passivity bereft of self that Blanchot saw as the role of the modernist writer. Their otherness in relation to us in the audience troubles our sense of the coherence of our own identities and thus unsettles any confidence we might have in the normative. What might seem weak and submissive about preferring not

23. Blanchot, n. 18, 17–18.

24. Patrick Hanafin, "The Writer's Refusal and Law's Malady," *Journal of Law and Society* 31, no. 1 (2004): 8.

25. Ibid., 4.

to is in fact a principled strategy to avoid being interpellated into a supposedly normative identity. This passivity challenges those who are blind to the violence carried out in the name of the state and in the interests of liberal globalisation. By choreographing their laughing bodies, La Ribot makes beholders aware of their impossible responsibilities.

40 Espontáneos (2004)

Whereas *Laughing Hole* indirectly cites vulnerable outsiders through its captions, *40 Espontáneos* exemplifies an effacement of self through its use of inexperienced performers and through their laughter. As I briefly described at the beginning of this chapter, the space in which I saw the piece was very untidy. It was initially strewn with hundreds of brightly coloured pieces of fabric, a roll of red carpet, some astro-turf, twenty upright chairs, two armchairs, a sofa, and two tables. These were scattered indiscriminately across the floor and seating, knowingly disrupting the normal kinds of social behaviour that the arrangement of fixed seating conventionally prescribes. The gently laughing performers had met for the first time six nights previously and had rehearsed every evening since then. (To conserve their spontaneity, La Ribot avoids overrehearsing and limits the number of performances.) Gradually they collected the fabric, dressing themselves with it and arranging it, along with the furniture, into a seemingly random patchwork that slowly filled the performance space. This took quite a while, and when it was done, one by one the dancers lay down, stopping laughing when they had done so, holding against their shoulder or chest a piece of white paper that had a number on it. As they lay, they stopped laughing and, as I remember it, their silence came as an unexpected relief. Their objectified, anonymous bodies were thus identified by an impersonal number rather than a name, as they patiently merged with the fabric on which they lay and in which they were wrapped.

When they got up and started laughing again, they put away their numbers, gathered all the cloth together in the centre of the room, and rolled up the carpets. They then began to pick their way slowly through the pile, dressing themselves again in the same pieces of cloth and reassembling the patchwork in exactly the same way for a second time. There was then a section in which the dancers ran, laughing, across the space, embraced someone, and then slid slowly against that person down to the floor. Some ran to a table or chair and stood on it, holding up their number. Several large, brightly coloured posters were brought on and added to the patchwork. Finally, they carried on a stack of meter-wide sheets of brown cardboard with which they gradually covered over the whole patchwork, including fabric, posters, and furniture. What had been a brightly coloured, softly textured jumble of things was gradually submerged

beneath a unifying over-blanket of crisp brown card on which the performers finally lay down silently, clutching their numbers as the space was flooded with violet light.

The making and then remaking of the patchwork is the central task in *40 Espontáneos*. Patchwork, as Deleuze and Guattari's argue in *Mille plateaux* (*Thousand Plateaus*), is a loose, free form that is associated with migrants and the nomads of the surrounding commons, in contrast with weaving or embroidery which they associate with the more organised and regulated logic of settlers. Patchwork, they point out, is non-hierarchical: 'With its piece-by-piece construction, its infinite successive additions of fabric' patchwork constitutes 'an amorphous collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways'.[26] This is why it is so surprising when the performers reassemble the patchwork exactly the second time; since there are an infinite number of alternative ways in which it could have been done, there is no evident logic or sense in this particular arrangement. There is an interesting parallel here with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's discussion of the swarm (see chapter 4). These are people within a network who behave in ways that 'follow (or seem to follow) rules embedded in their neural systems.'[27] The performers in *40 Espontáneos* seem to follow some instinctive map but one without any apparent rules. Berardi argues that no one person can dictate what movement the swarm should perform, as these emerge out of the interconnections between different parts of the network. None of the performers in *40 Espontáneos* would be able to make the patchwork on their own. It is only through their co-operative interrelations that they are able to create it collectively. Their non-hierarchical way of working together is that of the surround rather than the settler.

In interviews and in a statement published on her website, La Ribot has explained some of the connotations that the Spanish word *espontáneo* has for her. In a bullfight, an *espontáneo* is a spectator who leaps into the ring while the bull is running, despite the danger and without any skills or means to protect themselves (except to run as fast as they can). *Espontáneos* can thus cause chaos in an otherwise highly ritualised event, sometimes making things dangerous for everyone in the ring. They do so, she says, to claim some of the public attention which the professional bullfighter enjoys. La Ribot also thinks of them as like film extras. She had come across production photographs of large-scale crowd scenes taken during the filming of big-budget 1950s feature films in which every extra is holding a piece of white paper with a number on

26. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 476.

27. Ibid.

it. Apparently the photographs were used for continuity and to establish which extras appeared in each scene and thus how much each should be paid. As La Ribot observed:

> The group of spontaneous [espontáneos] that is formed has an interesting political and social dimension. Unemployed people, university professors, athletes, teachers, sociologists, architects, housewives, shop keepers, retired people, poets, writers, etc. This heterogeneity plays an important role, it humanises and enriches the group and all of them suddenly form a compact unity full of complicity.[28]

Although we the beholders might have thought that the initial patchwork was random, when it re-emerges a second time exactly the same as the first one, we realise that what had seemed accidental and unstructured must have had some order to it that only the performers could understand. It is this kind of non-hierarchical network that the espontáneos in the piece seem to form, exemplifying what La Ribot calls the performers' compact unity full of complicity.

When La Ribot goes on to suggest interpreting the outsider position of the spontaneous in political terms, her description recalls those whom Blanchot called destroyed men. La Ribot puts it thus:

> I am speaking of the anonymous, of the person used, or hired, of that person that in the cinema for example, passes by as if he or she did not exist, who drinks in a party or kills a Roman, makes us believe that what we see is more real. I am speaking of the soldier used to defend illegal homelands, the worker who sews t-shirts in filthy factories for somebody else's homeland. I am speaking about the reality that is too big for us, out of our limits, out of our rules, a reality that is interpreted like in the cinema, an 'illegal' reality.[29]

Here La Ribot's description in many ways resembles the kinds of precarious jobs that more and more people have had to take as more secure employment opportunities have disappeared during neoliberal restructuring. In *Laughing Hole,* these precarious lives are cited in a more direct way through the cardboard placards that the performers hold up. The performers' behaviour in *40 Espontáneos,* as they executed their tasks and laughed, evoked what La

28. Maria La Ribot, "40 Espontáneos: Information,"http://www.laribot.com/laribot/40esp.php?tbl=espontaneos.

29. Ibid.

Ribot calls an illegal reality. In Harney and Moten's terms they were disruption and consent to disruption, and their anonymity made them, in effect, unrepresentable.

Laughing Hole (2006)

Whereas the patchwork in *40 Espontáneos* stretched right across the performance space, *Laughing Hole* began with another kind of informal, all-over, horizontal spread;[30] hundreds of long, thin, brown cardboard placards, each the same size, were spread across the floor. They were scattered at all angles, sometimes three or four deep, their top surfaces blank, and their captions only revealed when La Ribot, Marie-Caroline Hominal, or Delphine Rosay picked one up and showed it to us, the beholders. Gradually, these were attached with adhesive tape to the walls, butting against one another in a haphazard and sometimes slightly crooked way. When I saw this installation at Toynbee Hall in London, in June 2007, it was in a studio with windows on three sides. The performers attached placards across the windows, sometimes bending them so that they followed the contours of the window frames. The dancers also sometimes stuck them over central heating radiators. The form that the resulting collage of placards took was thus largely independent and uninfluenced by the conventional form of the room. It flagrantly disregarded architectural hierarchy.

The captions also took a non-hierarchical form and suggested anti-hierarchical attitudes. They were handwritten in capital letters with marker pens of different colours, some with a second colour scribbled over them. Jenn Joy remembers 'hundreds of handwritten statements about war, about torture, about economics, about family, about debt, about secrets, about politics, about love'.[31] Grammatically, these consisted of two halves, a noun and a word or words that described or modified it, and each of these parts was repeated in many different combinations, as if any particular half could go with any of the others. There were a number of captions about holes, including the piece's title, LAUGHING HOLE. There were BLACK HOLE, TOYNBEE HOLE (a sly reference to the venue, Toynbee Hall), GUANTANAMO HOLE, SUNNY HOLE, DISTURBING HOLE, and so on. Women can be called, in crude vernacular, holes. The piece's title, *Laughing Hole* therefore suggests a hysterical female sex object. Other captions included DISTURBING BEACH, DISTURBING BAY,

30. André Lepecki gives a long analysis of Ribot's use of horizontality in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

31. Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014), 84.

DISTURBING WAR, DISTURBING SALE. Some took a different form, including STILL LAUGHING and LOOK AT ME, FOR SALE. Each new caption, regardless of whether it carried happy or painful connotations, was greeted by the performer as if it were hysterically funny. The implicit social and political concern in *40 Espontáneos* became explicit in *Laughing Hole* through captions like GUANTANAMO DETAINEE, LEBANON WAR, and GAZA REFUGEE,[32] all referring to the precarious life of those in the surround.

The two parts of the caption sometimes came together to create a striking meaning, but after a while, the repetitive play with words began to make the meaning of the captions seem increasingly arbitrary. Their simple combinatory principle resembles that implied by the patchwork in *40 Espontáneos*. Just as there are an infinite number of ways in which the pieces of cloth and objects could have been put together, so there are an infinite number of ways in which words can be put together. Underlying the seemingly arbitrary combinations of words written on the cardboard placards was the same non-hierarchical approach evident in *40 Espontáneos*.

Each performer had a small microphone taped inconspicuously to her cheek. The sound of the performers' laughter was mixed in real time by Clive Jenkins, a sound engineer, who sat with his mixing desks and laptop prominently in the studio, broadcasting laughter through speakers that were arranged on the walls. As well as changing where the sounds seemed to be coming from, he played with their density, sometimes echoing, overlaying, or repeating sounds. Generally, he was absorbed in his equipment, but occasionally he appeared to become fascinated by what the performers were doing, and smiled or laughed with them. This often seemed to be at quiet moments. My impression was that what he found involving was the way each performer's laughter developed in counterpoint to that of the others', creating improvised duets and trios. Every half hour or so, he built up the sounds gradually until it was as if there were thousands of people laughing, then dropped it down again to nothing. (He used a similar effect at the close of the event to signal an ending.) Without this, the installation would have seemed entirely formless, since the performers' incessantly repeated actions caused me, as a beholder, to lose track of any overall progression, despite the fact that more and more placards were gradually being fixed over the walls and windows.

32. The references here are to the detainees who have been held by the US military in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, since 2002; the Israel–Hezbollah War in Lebanon that started in July 2006 (a few months before the performance I saw of *Laughing Hole*); and Palestinian refugees from Gaza following military campaigns by the Israeli Defense Forces in retaliation for rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel.

Whereas the inexperienced performers in *40 Espontáneos* seemed to use laughter largely as a way to bond and support one another, La Ribot, Hominal, and Rosay were able to focus their laughter towards beholders in a stronger way. Often, their intention seemed to be to make beholders laugh. At times, this was because something seemed genuinely funny—a coincidence, or the fact that the performer had accidentally slipped. At other times, the laughter was, ironically, in opposition to the meaning of the caption. A performer kneeled in front of me, laughing hard, and thrust towards me a placard on which LEBANON SPECTATOR was written. As a British citizen I was especially aware of the British government's dismal failure, a few months before this performance, to do anything to stop the 2006 war in Lebanon between the Israeli army and Hezbollah militants. I therefore found this caption an uncomfortable one. Yet all the same, just as it was difficult not to be affected by the plight of civilians and refugees during this war, it was also hard not, at least, to smile when someone close to me was laughing so hard. It was almost as if the performer were saying to me, 'Why feel any obligation towards a government that acts in your name regardless of your beliefs?' Laughter thus became a performative assertion of a right to insubordination similar to the one Blanchot had advocated in 1960.

La Ribot says that there have sometimes been stow-always in performances of *40 Espontáneos*, members of the audience who, like *espontáneos* at a bullfight, chose to join in the performance. I did not notice any during the performance I attended, but while watching video documentation of a production in Rio de Janeiro in 2004, I spotted a child tucking herself under a piece of material the size of a blanket that was right in front of where she had been sitting, and, of course, laughing at what she was daring to do. At one moment in *Laughing Hole*, after about two hours in the studio, I found myself the only beholder, alone with the three performers, sound engineer, and technician. I found myself appreciating quiet moments and laughing along with the performers and crew. It was as if I was encouraging them to keep on going. As a beholder, laughing with the performers was like stowing away in *40 Espontáneos*. Both these installations of laughing bodies provoke beholders, for as long as they choose to stay within the studio or gallery space in which the work is presented, to respond to the performers' alterity and witness their patient approach to the problem of surviving the current (dis)organisation of modern society. In *Laughing Hole* as in *40 Espontáneos,* the laughing performers were disruption and consent to disruption. The clever references evoked by the sometimes arbitrary captions on the cardboard placards referred to those in the surround who can be alluded to but not represented.

PREFERRING TO LAUGH

The performers' laughter in *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole* was central to the unsettling and disruptive effect that each piece had, framing the performers' tasks. The fact that in both this piece and *40 Espontáneos* the performers laughed for such a long time shows that they were not laughing about anything specific and not giving expression to any psychological motivation but merely executing a task. They were performing laughter. I argued earlier that the performers, through their incessant laughter, exemplify the passivity bereft of self that Blanchot saw as the role of the modernist writer. It is useful therefore to investigate briefly the nature of laughter. The anthropologist Mary Douglas identified two main aspects of laughter. First, she noted, it is 'a process that begins in a small way, observable on the face, and is capable of ending in involving the whole body. Second, it is normally a social response; private laughter is a special case'.[33] As a dancer, La Ribot has analysed the physical act of laughter as a neuro-musculo-skeletal action and developed a laughing technique which she teaches to performers. The dancers in *Laughing Hole* often laughed so hard that they could hardly stick each placard to the wall, and they had to keep trying again and again before they managed to do so. Jenn Joy observed that 'as the dancers stumble and fall, we as spectators, struggle to make sense of this vertiginous vibrating world that is filled with laughter, and yet, never funny'.[34] In both pieces, beholders thus became aware of the process through which the performers kept themselves in a state of laughter and of the effort and skill involved in continually sustaining and remaking this state.

Douglas explains the social significance of laughter by placing it in the context of the discourse of bodily communication. Her argument is that as we read bodily actions within social situations, we screen out things like hiccoughs, sneezes, and throat-clearings as insignificant noise. But laughter, she argues, 'is a unique bodily interruption which is always taken to be a communication'. This, she suggests, is because

> a laugh is a culmination of a series of bodily communications which have had to be interpreted in the usual way as part of the discourse. The final erupting laugh cannot be screened off, because all the changes in bodily posture preceding it have been taken as part of the dialogue.[35]

33. Mary Douglas, "Do Dogs Laugh? A Cross-Cultural Approach to Body Symbolism," in *Social Aspects of the Human Body*, ed. Ted Polhemus (Harmondsworth: Penguin,1978). , 298.

34. Joy n. 31, 79–80.

35. Douglas, n. 33, 299.

Douglas goes on to suggest that if one compares the way people in different societies allow themselves to let go as they laugh, one finds that the way people laugh can be read as an indication of the degree of social control operating within a society. The looser the social structures, Douglas argues, the more likely it is that people will laugh in a free and abandoned way.

It is this relation between laughing and social control, I suggest, which enables La Ribot to use laughter in a critical way. The laughing performers in both these pieces are making a prolonged interruption of the discourse of bodily communication that lasts for the length of the performance. This suspension of the kind of socially sanctioned self-control is passive in the radical way Blanchot identifies in Bartleby: the performers prefer not to exercise normative self-control. They ungovern the way social conventions are mediated and reinforced through cultural forms. Why should these performers exercise self-control? As outlaws in the surround, what stake do they have in a system that reduces them to precarious lives without rights? While Douglas suggests that laughter is a licensed exception from normal social behaviour, for the duration of these pieces, the exception becomes the norm. In this way, the pieces create a time and space where it is possible to imagine an alternative way of thinking and living. This, I suggest, has particular ethical significance because it involves the kind of passive, selfless state of being that Levinas and Blanchot argued is the condition for acknowledging infinite responsibilities to others.

CONCLUSION

The two pieces by La Ribot that I have discussed in this chapter explore some of the concerns that have subsequently arisen around the idea of precarity. *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole* make what Giorgio Agamben, in his discussion of the state of exception, calls 'an empty space in which human action with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life'.[36] This, I have suggested, can be seen as an aesthetic one in which artists like La Ribot can draw attention to the problem of precarity and articulate strategies for defending the commons against neoliberal enclosure. The pieces evoke the outlaw life in what Harney and Moten call the surround and the disruptive and unsettling tactics employed in self-defence. The main tactics of self-defence in both pieces are laughter and passivity. What is striking about *40 Espontáneos* and *Laughing Hole* is the non-hierarchical, cooperative nature of relations between the performers. Their passivity enables them to recognize others' needs and to take responsibility in a responsible,

36. Agamben, n. 8, 86.

ethical way. Like outlaws in the surround, reduced to precarious lives without rights, the performers use the potential that underlies passivity to explore alternative ways of thinking and living and become, for the duration of the performance, the change they want to see. The aesthetic forms that this responsibility can take are explored further in the next three chapters.

6

Alone to the World

The Solo Dancer

The title of this chapter, 'Alone to the World' is a loose translation of 'Seul(e) au monde', the French title of a public dialogue between the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy and the choreographer Matthilde Monnier about the solo dance.[1] The solo, they propose, reveals truths about a potential for relating to the world. The solo is also, as Claire Rousier observes, one of the most singular and emblematic figures of modernity in dance.[2] There is a tension in some recent solos between the existential openness of the solo dancer towards the world that Nancy and Monnier theorise and the way the solo has become a form in which the dancer is expected to express herself and reveal her authentic self. The ideas of an authentic self and of individuality are ideological constructions that the solo can sometimes reinforce but can at other times have a potential to challenge and question. It is my contention that radical, progressive dance solos can trouble and call into question rigid and normalising ways of thinking, and thus open up alternative ways of relating to others and to the world. In his dialogue with Monnier, Nancy talks about the solo dancer making a move out of solitude towards the world. This chapter discusses three solos: Xavier Le Roy's *Self Unfinished* (1998); Maria La Ribot's *Piezas Distinguidas* (1993–2003); and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's piece *3Abschied* (2010), which she made in collaboration with Jérôme Bel, all of which propose different ways of moving out of solitude towards the world.

1. Mathilde Monnier and Jean-Luc Nancy, "Seul(e) au monde: Dialogue entre Mathilde Monnier et Jean-Luc Nancy," in *La Danse en solo: Une figure singulière de la modernité*, ed. Claire Rousier (Pantin: Centre national de la danse, 2002).

2. Claire Rousier, "Avant-Propos," in *La Danse en solo: Une figure singulière de la modernité*, ed. Claire Rousier (Pantin: Centre national de la danse, 2002).

Within the history of modern dance, the solo, often danced by its choreographer, has become a key image of freedom and individuality while at the same time being marked by its particular social and historical context. Paris society did not go to the opéra in the nineteenth century because they wanted to see the latest developments in choreography by the leading choreographers but to see the ballerina of the moment. Authorship, or the 'author function' as Michel Foucault called it in his essay 'What Is an Author?',[3] is a relatively modern invention, particularly where theatre dance is concerned. Choreographers were turned into stars in the twentieth century by the way ballet and modern dance were promoted. In a nineteenth-century ballet, a soloist performs with a partner watching or in front of other principals representing the court of public opinion; or, an immobile corps de ballet may be on stage with her, shifting from time to time from one still, massed shape to another in order to form a visual frame for her dancing. The ballerina soloist thus performs as part of a company just as a solo violinist or pianist, during a concerto, is accompanied by the orchestra. It was initially in modern dance, rather than ballet, that the dancer performed alone on the stage, often, but not always, dancing her own choreography for which she had developed her own unique movement vocabulary.

During a conversation with Matthilde Monnier which addresses philosophical questions, rather than choreography, Jean-Luc Nancy highlights the singular solitude of the solo dancer, who, he argues, is alone in ways that other artists are not. Whereas a violinist plays from a musical score and an actor interprets a play text, the solo dancer performs with her own body as her instrument and has nothing to interpret other than herself. The solo dancer is, in Nancy's view, more solitary, while nevertheless revealing herself in a more direct and unmediated way than do artists in other disciplines; hence, 'alone to the world'. Nancy's account here is a development of Heidegger's aesthetic theories, in particular his lectures in 1935 and 1936 on the origins of the work of art. For Heidegger, art allows truth (*alētheia*) to come forth, where *alētheia* means the unconcealment and opening up of 'Being' to the world. So for Nancy, the solo dancer reveals herself and thus allows the truth of moving to open up as a movement towards the world from a position of existential solitude. The account of solitude that Nancy develops with Monnier is in line with the responses to the problem of existence posed by Heidegger, and interrogated in the second half of the twentieth century by his one-time pupil

3. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113–38.

Hannah Arendt and by the friends, writer Maurice Blanchot and philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.[4]

Solitude played an important role in Arendt's and Blanchot's accounts of existence. Arendt argued that when one is on one's own, the ability to think to oneself is an important human characteristic. In her last, unfinished book, *The Life of the Mind*, she wrote:

> Thinking, essentially speaking, is a solitary but not a lonely business; solitude is that human situation in which I keep myself company. Loneliness comes about when I am alone without being able to split up into the two-in-one, without being able to keep myself company, when, as Jasper used to say, 'I am in default of myself' (*ich bleibe mir aus*) or to put it differently, when I am one and without company.[5]

The ability to think to oneself, to keep oneself company, to be able to live with oneself is in Arendt's view, an ethical task. People who committed terrible crimes, she suspected, couldn't live with themselves because they lacked any ability to make ethical judgements.[6] Although Arendt was not referring here to the dancer or artist, I shall argue that there are ways in which a solo dance can exemplify this ability to keep oneself company and live with oneself. The solitude of existence, and the consequent problem of relating to the other, was a shared theme in the intellectual friendship between Blanchot and Levinas. One of Nancy's key terms, as I will show shortly, was suggested to him by Blanchot. There are significant parallels between Nancy's discussion of the solitude of the solo dancer and Blanchot's discussion of the solitude of the artist.

Alone on the stage, the dancer is, of course, in motion, and Nancy, echoing Mallarmé's description of Loie Fuller, proposes that the dancer 'makes her

4. It would be interesting to know whether Arendt and Levinas were acquainted. Both had studied with Husserl at Frieburg University in the late 1920s, as well as with Heidegger. Levinas lived in Paris from 1931, Arendt was there from 1933 until 1940 when she escaped via Portugal to the United States.

5. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt, 1978), 185.

6. Arendt mentions in this context Adolf Eichmann, the SS bureaucrat who was responsible for administering the Nazi holocaust. Eichmann's crime, she argues, was his inability to think. She makes a similar criticism of her former teacher and, for a while, close friend, Martin Heidegger, who while rector of Heidelberg University reorganised it along National Socialist lines, including dismissing his former Jewish mentor, the philosopher Edmund Husserl. For Arendt, Heidegger, despite his immense intellect, lacked an ability to make ethical judgements.

body'—se faire corps—or invents herself as a body in motion.[7] This is because of her relation or inclination towards the world. Whereas a hermit by withdrawing into himself moves out of the world, the solo dancer moves into the world out of herself; and the world itself, as Nancy points out, is also in motion. The early Greek philosopher Democritus, Nancy notes, proposed the beautiful but unreasonable idea that while atoms fall through the void, it is only because they have an inclination towards one another that they can form matter. Metaphorically, the dancer thus has a dancing inclination towards a world in motion that has a similar inclination towards her. Nancy concludes, 'If the dancer is truly alone, truly dancing a solo, there is always a relation with somewhere else, a relation with the alterity of the world.'[8] In this way the dancer is alone to the world.

Nancy's ideas about inclination appeared in an essay first published in 1982, '*La Communauté désoeuvrée*' ('The Inoperative Community'). There is no one English word that translates *désoeuvré,* a French word which means not doing anything and not looking for anything to do. This might be interpreted as idleness, but Nancy is referring to an intentional refusal of action, which some translators have conveyed through inventing the words *unworked* and *unworking. Désoeuvré* contains the French word *oeuvre*, meaning 'work', so that the verb *désoeuvrer* might be literally translated as 'to unwork' but implies indifference and passivity towards working. Nancy defines *désoeuvré* as 'that which, before or beyond work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension'.[9] These are qualities that I will identify in the solos discussed in this chapter. Nancy acknowledges that it was Maurice Blanchot who first suggested to him this particular use of the word *désoeuvré*.[10] In his earlier essay, Nancy argues that the idea of community needs to be *désoeuvré*—unworked. Nancy therefore uses this idea of unworking as part

7. 'The enchantress creates the ambience, draws it out from herself and returns into it [*la tire de soi et l'y rentre*], in a palpitating silence of crêpe de chine.' Stéphane Mallarmé, *Igitur, Divagations, Un coup de dés* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), 200; my translation. One of the allusions that resists translation is that *soi* meaning 'self' sounds like *soie* meaning 'silk', while *crêpe de chine* is a kind of silk.

8. 'Si le danseur ou la danseuse reste vraiment seul, même s'il agit vraiment d'un solo, il y a un rapport à l'autre quelque part, un rapport à l'altérité du monde.'Monnier and Nancy, n. 1, 59; my translation.

9. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperable Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 31.

10. It is also an expression that, from the early 1930s onwards, frequently occurs in the writing of Georges Bataille.

of an existential inquiry into the nature of being, one that becomes a discussion of the ethics of the relation between self and other; this, in turn, touches on political questions about how relationality forms a basis for community. I will argue that the way in which recent radical solos unwork dance is, therefore, not just a way of characterising their stylistic qualities and conceptual approach; it is also a means of indicating the way that these solos rethink the relations between dancer and beholder. To understand how unworking might contribute to this, it is necessary to look briefly at Nancy's discussion of the problematic nature of community in the modern world.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, Nancy belongs to a generation of French intellectuals who became disillusioned with the politics of the established left during the 1960s, and whose philosophy is marked by the problem of nihilism and political disappointment. Nancy observes that the idea of community is haunted by nostalgia for a sense of communal coherence and identity that has been lost in modern times. In his view, the desire for a community that could regain a sense of wholeness and fusion is dangerous and can lead, in extreme cases, to totalitarianism. 'Fascism,' he writes, 'was the grotesque or abject resurgence of an obsession with communion; it crystallised the motif of its supposed loss and the nostalgia for its image of fusion.'[11] In the face of this danger, Nancy believes it is necessary to rethink the nature of the relations and modes of sharing through which a community might found itself. Nancy argues that 'the experience through which the individual has passed . . . is simply this: that the individual can be the origin and the certainty of nothing but its own death'.[12] Nancy, nevertheless, resists nihilism, arguing that there remains a minimal potential for relating with others: 'There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one towards the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other.'[13] In his conversation with Monnier about the solo, Nancy suggests that this inclination towards others manifests itself in the relationship that the dancer creates with the alterity of the world through her performance of the choreography.

The French dance theorist Frédéric Pouillaude has drawn on Nancy's writings to develop a concept which he has called *désoeuvrement chorégraphique*—this roughly translates as 'the state of choreographic inactivity'. Pouillaude argues that this inactivity is not just a property of the dance performed but also involves the audience. He poses the question: 'To what extent is there an event when I do something—or not—in front of somebody who does not do

11. Nancy, n. 9, 12.

12. Ibid., 3.

13. Ibid.

anything?'[14] In his view, when faced with a radical performance like many of those discussed in this book, the audience find themselves waiting for something that will transform them from a heap of people, who happen, for entirely contingent reasons, to be sitting together, into something that finds some commonality:

> One waits for something of Truth, of Presence . . . to redeem the slightest bit of the initial contingency and give it back under the form of a recognised community, of a present truly shared. The applause, which at the end will finish off the matter, is the delayed indication of such a hope, its ultimate and disappointed substitute.[15]

Pouillaude is describing the kind of community that Nancy argues should be unworked. The kind of solo that might convey the problematic and potentially dangerous sense of completeness, which Nancy warns against, is an expressive one in which the dancer performs her struggle to reveal the essence of who she is, as if that essence is pre-existent and complete. A solo that exemplifies unworking, however, is one that keeps meanings open and indefinitely postpones completion. I will argue that the solos discussed in this chapter can bring about an unworking of community by placing those who behold them in positions where it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a sense of wholeness and completeness and therefore not possible for them to recognise themselves as a community.

Another concept that needs to be unworked is the idea of the choreographer, particularly when one considers who contributes to the authorship of a piece of choreography. I am assuming here that because making and performing are distinct activities, dancer and choreographer have different roles, even when they are the same person. If one sees the choreographer as author, that is to say as sole source of authority and authenticity in the work, then the dancer's responsibility is merely to give a performance that is as faithful as possible to the choreographer's intentions. This is to ignore any creative contribution that dancers might make during the choreographic process, or what they invariably add in performance through their interpretation of the choreography. Within the twentieth and twenty-first-century dance market, the more that value and importance accumulate around the role of the choreographer, the more the dancer becomes reduced to the status of transparent medium of the choreographer's art. This

14. Frédéric Pouillaude, "Scène and Contemporaneity," *The Drama Review* 51, no. 2 (2007): 132.

15. Ibid.: 129.

recent fascination with the choreographer at the expense of the dancer is the opposite of the nineteenth-century fetishisation of the ballerina. The creative role of the dancer as collaborator during the making of the choreography is also obscured. Ideas about authorship and authenticity that are a product of the market can therefore have a distorting effect on the dance works that circulate within it. Some radical, experimental solos, as I will show, have a potential to unwork (to use Blanchot's and Nancy's term) these ideas about authorship. By doing so, they create spaces in which dancers and choreographers are primarily responsible to the needs of art and the aesthetic. This responsibility is one that Maurice Blanchot attributed to the writer in an essay on Samuel Beckett:

> Art requires that the person who practices it should be immolated to art, should become other, not another, not transformed from the human being they were into an artist with artistic duties, satisfactions and interests, but into nobody, the empty, animated space where art's summons is heard.[16]

The artist's responsibility is to unwork the ideologically constructed expectation of expressing an individual, authentic self. The solitude of the solo dancer, alone on the stage with an inclination towards the world, is the condition of possibility of this empty animated space. It is this inclination that I will examine in the solos discussed in the rest of this chapter.

PRIVACY AND TRUTH

A central theme in Hannah Arendt's philosophy is the question of how truth appears. She criticises the way in which the boundaries between public and private were becoming increasingly blurred in the modern world. This is particularly clear when she looks at the status of the body. In classical Greece, she writes, 'hidden away were the labourers who "with their bodies minister to the [bodily] needs of life" (Aristotle) and the women who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the species.'[17] This clear division between public and private, Arendt feared, is no longer maintained in modern industrial society: 'The fact that the modern age emancipated the working classes and the women at nearly the same historical moment must certainly be counted among the characteristics of an age which no longer believed that bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden.'[18] For Arendt, the consequent

16. Maurice Blanchot, *The Siren's Song* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 73.

17. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 72.

18. Ibid., 73.

loss of privacy, nevertheless, has negative consequences: 'A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden against the light of publicity in a real, non-subjective sense.'[19] Underlying her argument is a concern with disclosure and the privacy that grounds the performance of self in the space of appearances. Her idea of the self 'rising into sight from some darker ground' recalls the title of her 1968 book *Men in Dark Times.* Explaining the title, she wrote that 'even in the darkest of times we have a right to expect some illumination' and that this can come from the often 'weak light some men and women, in their lives and their work, may kindle'.[20] So even in times when the space of appearances is endangered, it is still possible to do things that make a difference and rise into sight, as Arendt puts it, from some darker ground.

Arendt's account of these acts of appearing can be seen as her response to her teacher Martin Heidegger's discussion of *alētheia*.[21] Heidegger points out that this Greek philosophical concept is often incorrectly translated as 'truth', whereas etymologically it means 'unconcealment', *a-lēthe* coming from *lēthe*, which means 'concealment'. Truth, he argues, is not just a matter of the correctness of statements but something more fundamental and existential. *Alētheia*, he argues, is the grounding for Being, the unconcealment and opening up of Being to the world. Arendt argues that Heidegger sees identity arising from a relation between itself and nothingness, that 'along with its relation to something it is not, it looses its reality and acquires a curious kind of eeriness'.[22] In her view, however, identity arises from difference, from otherness, and thus from the relation between self and other. So whereas Heidegger gives an account of Being arising from unconcealment into a relation with the world, Arendt proposes that identity arises from the sense of difference and otherness that comes from the actions that one makes in public. What both accounts have in common, however, is the idea of the self emerging from a grounding (Heidegger) or concealed intimacy (Arendt) into a state of revelation and unconcealment that involves opening up to the world (Heidegger) or to others with whom one engages in public appearance (Arendt). Nancy, like Arendt,

19. Ibid., 71.

20. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace, 1968), ix.

21. Heidegger discusses the concept of *alētheia* at various stages of his career. He discusses it in his first and most famous book *Being and Time* but then returns to it again and again. See David Farrell Krell, ed. *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), esp. 127–28, 387–89.

22. Arendt, n. 5, 184.

sees identity arising from relations with the world rather than with nothingness, hence his proposal that the solo dancer is alone with an inclination that, in Arendt's terms, moves out of intimacy towards revelation.

INTIMACY AND PUBLICITY: MARIA LA RIBOT'S *PIEZAS DISTINGUIDAS*

A three-part series of solo dances that explore the movement from intimacy towards revelation is Maria La Ribot's *Piezas distinguidas* (Distinguished pieces), the short solos that she worked on and put together into programmes between 1993 and 2003. The first few were performed on a conventional theatre stage, the rest were presented in art galleries and museums with the audience informally gathered around her. In all of them, La Ribot performs naked. Three in particular exemplify the way she exploits a tension between intimacy and revelation. In *No. 2, Fatelo con me* (Do it with me), from the first theatre-based series *13 Piezas distinguidas* (1993–1994), La Ribot enters and exits the stage wearing nothing but carrying a large piece of corrugated cardboard by her side with which she blocks the audience's view of her breasts and buttocks. To the sound of a Spanish pop song, she walks out of the wings from the left (house left) in a straight line with her face and body in profile, then makes sudden, unexpected turns, always of 90 or 180 degrees, keeping the cardboard facing the audience in a slightly nervous but ironic and comic way. After a while she disappears into the wings again on the same side and reappears, after a significant pause, walking a little faster. Gradually, as the piece develops, she becomes faster so that by the end she is running.

In *No. 26,* from the second series, *Más distinguidas* (More distinguished), of 1997, she stands in the middle of a crowd of onlookers. While a recording of some bombastic, romantic, nineteenth-century orchestral music played, La Ribot draws scribbled lines on her body and face with coloured sticks of theatrical greasepaint. In *No. 27 Another Bloody Mary,* from the final series *Still Distinguished* (2000), she slowly and carefully lays out on the floor red-coloured objects—a box; a book; some plastic children's' bricks; and red aprons, blankets, a dressing gown, and other items of red cloth. She then puts on a long, shaggy, blonde wig and attaches some matching long blonde hairs to her own pubic hair. Putting on a pair of pale-green sequinned high-heeled shoes, she stands precariously over her patchwork of red objects and cloth[23] before slowly but awkwardly going down into splits so that her body is splayed

23. This seems to be an early manifestation of the patchwork created in *40 Espontaneos* (see chapter 5).

in a wide open and vulnerable posture. The effect is somewhat pornographic although her vulva is covered by her artificial blonde pubic hairs. In the performance I saw, she stayed in this position for a long time, long enough, as I remember it, to make us in the audience begin to feel uncomfortable.

Piezas distinguidas all disregard traditions and break rules or turn them upside down in a way that is typical of other experimental dance artists at the time, such as Jérôme Bel and Vera Mantero. In Pouillaude's terms, they bring about a *désoeuvrement chorégraphique*. In all the *Piezas Distinguidas,* conventional elements are pulled apart and recombined in previously inconceivable ways. The resulting, highly condensed, almost epigrammatic series of mini-events are performed with the dynamic energy and will power of a bullfighter delivering the coup de grâce, a point of reference that La Ribot often cites. La Ribot's solos show that our bodies are constructed by social conventions that enforce acceptable modes of self presentation. A dancer's body, in particular, is formed by others and through teaching long before the student can begin to feel it is her own. In *No. 26*, the coloured scribbles that La Ribot draws on her body defy these social rules, refusing to distinguish between the polite front and inferior back, or to acknowledge the special and separate status that the face has as emblem and bearer of personal identity. By drawing indiscriminately all over her body, it is as if La Ribot is defacing public property. At the same time, however, she is doing what dancers are supposed to do, responding sensitively to the music, though here she does not do so through interpretation of conventional dance movements but through the ebb and flow of the coloured lines that she draws.

Beholders of the second and third series of distinguished pieces that have been presented in art galleries and museums are deprived of the safety usually afforded them by the architectural division between stage and auditorium. The objects that she uses for each of the short solos are placed against the wall or on the floor in different places around the gallery. When one short piece is finished, she crosses the gallery to find the objects for the next one and then starts again in this new position. And each time, we in the audience have to choose how we look at her. This troubles the normative gaze and offers us opportunities to become aware of the ideologies underpinning the gaze. With *No. 27. Another Bloody Mary* and some of the other similar distinguished pieces, it is true that La Ribot has chosen to use ways of presenting herself that carry an erotic charge. She does not, however, perform this in a sexual way, as for example one finds in some of the choreography of Bob Fosse. Her presence is very neutral, as if she is doing everyday household chores.

Her neutrality troubles normative ideas. In *No. 26,* as she passes through the audience, we find ourselves having to respond by getting out of her way or needing to follow her so as not to miss what she is doing. She is invading our space,

and making us part of her space which her nakedness charges with intimacy. In a documentary by Luc Peter, La Ribot talks about the relationship she makes with her beholders in *No. 26*. She says that as she walks close to them, she gets sudden, unexpected thrilling feelings, but her nakedness, she says, paradoxically saves her and protects her. She might say something similar about *No. 2* and *No. 27*. What she is doing in particular during *No. 26* is, she recognises, violent towards the beholder. The piece deprives both dancer and beholder of their safety, exposing their vulnerabilities to each other. On the one hand, the violence is necessary in order to break through normative social behaviour. On the other hand, the shock of violating her own intimacy and walking naked so close to others saves and protects her, separating her from them. There is a deliberate paradox here that troubles Arendt's ideas about the boundaries between private intimacy and public revelation. On the one hand, La Ribot's naked actions are acts of unconcealment; on the other, through violation, they draw attention to the boundaries between public and private precisely because these actions threaten to transgress them. The boldness with which La Ribot breaks through (and unworks) conventions as she engages with the public sphere makes those who experience her work see the world differently. She is thus a source of light in dark times, in Arendt terms, as she rises into sight from some darker ground. In Nancy's terms, in the *Piezas distinguidas* a solo dancer's movement out of solitude towards the world is one that reveals and uncovers an underlying inclination from one towards the other.

SOLITUDE AND THE UNWORKING OF BEING HUMAN: XAVIER LE ROY'S *SELF UNFINISHED*

In Nancy's terms, an unworked solo is one that no longer has to do with either production or completion but embraces incompletion. For Nancy, incompletion in an active sense designates

> not insufficiency or lack, but the activity of sharing, the dynamic, if you will, of an uninterrupted passage through singular ruptures. That is to say, once again, a workless and inoperative community. [. . .] It is a matter of incompleting its sharing. Sharing is always incomplete. For a complete sharing implies the disappearance of what is shared.[24]

It is this incomplete or unfinished sharing with the audience that, I suggest, takes place during performances of Xavier Le Roy's 1998 solo *Self Unfinished*. In Pouillaude's terms, it makes it impossible for the audience to find a sense of wholeness and completeness, and therefore it is not possible for them to

24. Nancy, n. 9, 35.

recognise themselves as a community. This means instead, as I have just argued is the case with La Ribot's solos, that beholders are offered opportunities to become aware of different possibilities for forming relations.

Made in collaboration with video artist Laurent Goldring, *Self Unfinished* has been performed many times in theatres and during dance festivals around the world. It was Le Roy's breakthrough piece and has become, in effect, a contemporary classic. Its set is a cold, brightly lit, almost clinical, white box with white walls and a white linoleum floor—an inversion of the classic black box studio theatre. Towards the back on one side is a square table with black metal legs and a white top, and beside it is a black, plastic, stackable, metal-framed chair. At the beginning Le Roy switches on a portable radio cassette player at the front of the stage, but it plays nothing. At the end he presses the button again to play Diana Ross's 'Upside Down', which continues as he leaves the stage. By then the beholder will have indeed seen Le Roy upside down a few times, and the song's lyrics will seem to offer an ironic commentary on the rest of the movement material he has just presented: 'Upside down, Boy, you turn me Inside out And round and round'. The choreography consists of three sections, all of which perform modes of behaviour that seem almost inhuman. In the first section, Le Roy mimes robotic movement while accompanying himself by making the kind of mechanical noises that a child might produce while playing with toys. In the second, he uses a strange tight, black, tubular costume to hide his head so that he become a four-legged, or four-armed being, or two beings in one body. In the last, he becomes a strange, naked, upside-down, crab-like being which moves tortuously around on the floor.

When I say that Le Roy performed modes of behaviour that are almost inhuman I mean that they do not conform to normative ideas about human exceptionalism. One does not see people as social beings moving in the way Le Roy moves in *Self Unfinished*. Judith Butler has recently discussed an idea of the inhuman running through some of Theodore Adorno's writings on morality. When Adorno was invited to join the Humanist Union, he replied: 'I might be willing to join if your club had been called an inhuman union, but I couldn't join one that calls itself "humanist".'[25] Butler suggests that Adorno thought the inhuman at least identified a starting point for critically interrogating how the human is defined, and for investigating the factors that determine the limits of any such definition. The inhuman, Butler argues,

> becomes a way of surviving the current organisation of 'human' society, an animated living on of what has largely been devastated; in this sense, 'the

25. Theodore Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 169.

> inhuman' facilitates an immanent critique of the human and becomes the trace or ruin through which the human lives on.[26]

Adorno was, of course, deeply pessimistic in his view of the difficulties surrounding subject formation under the conditions of twentieth-century modernity which had led to the Holocaust. In the twenty-first century, one key concern is the unsustainability of current life styles. In this context one might interpret the process of becoming inhuman during *Self Unfinished* as a challenge to the idea that the human is at the centre of experience. This self is unfinished because of the way it shares. As I have just noted, sharing is always incomplete because 'a complete sharing implies the disappearance of what is shared'.[27]

Each section of *Self Unfinished* starts with Le Roy dressed in black jeans and a purple shirt sitting at the table in a particular position in profile. Hands, palm down, on the table in front of him, he slowly bows forward until his forehead touches the table between them. Just as slowly he then returns to an upright position. This provided a prelude for a series of abstract movement sequences that all contained roughly the same kinds of actions along a fairly similar track through the space: up from the table, along the back to a point where he sometimes lies down full length with his back to the audience, then moving on diagonally across the floor to a position down stage from the table, then back to it. Each of the sections consists of a long, unbroken sequence which Petra Sabisch likens to a long, uncut film take during which the dancer goes through a series of transformations. This sense of linearity is heightened at one point when Le Roy rewinds a movement, slowly walking backwards to the table from which he has just come.[28] Throughout *Self Unfinished*, Le Roy proceeds at a slow pace performing similar kinds of unusual but seemingly everyday, unimpressive and coldly inexpressive movement sequences of unworked choreography. In Nancy's terms, Le Roy performs the dynamic of 'an uninterrupted passage through singular ruptures'.[29]

How Le Roy moves is, of course, the crux, because he doesn't show any obvious signs of conventional training. In his autobiographical lecture demonstration *Product of Circumstances* (1999), he explains that in the past he had

26. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 5–6.

27. Nancy, n. 9, 35.

28. Petra Sabisch, *Choreographubg Relations: Practical Philosophy and Contemporary Choreography* (Munich: Epodium, 2011), 168–79.

29. Nancy, n. 9, 35.

taken a lot of dance classes, many in Cunningham technique. With his long, gangling body, he found his back lacked flexibility, and he was never able to achieve the kind of polished mode of performing that is generally looked for during an audition for a mainstream dance company. When I saw Le Roy in 2007 present the dry, abstract, task-like movements that make up the unworked choreographic material for *Self Unfinished*, I couldn't but be aware that he has performed it many, many times; he has the kind of focused bodily awareness about what he is disclosing to the beholder that I find compelling to watch. It exemplifies an alternative kind of virtuosity that I discussed in chapters three and four. *Self Unfinished* is thus very low tech, both in terms of the technical demands it makes on theatrical resources and in terms of conventional dance technique. At the same time, however, it is extremely rigorous in its exploration of what bodies can do, and surprising in its range of new ways of moving. I do not mean by this that he extends our experience of aesthetically pleasing kinds of contemporary dance movement, merely that we generally don't see people as social beings moving like this. Le Roy has found movement possibilities whose blankness suggests an emptying out of the self, so that he becomes, as Blanchot puts it, 'a nobody, an animated space where art's summons is heard'.[30]

In an extract from an email to Le Roy, reproduced in the programme and on Le Roy's website, Yvonne Rainer writes, 'By the time you're into the contortions with the dress, we're given this extraordinary hybrid creature that confronts us with a multiplicity of interpretations. For me it alternated variously as insect, martian, chicken, watering can, caterpillar into pupa, et al.'[31] As the dancer progresses from anthropomorphic robot to four-legged being and then to the floor-bound, headless, upside-down creature, the audience witness a gradual process of becoming inhuman. The first sequence, with its robotic movements that articulate, one at a time, an arm, head, torso, or leg is accompanied with childlike vocalisation. The middle sequence is more disturbing. Pulling at his purple shirt while still wearing it, Le Roy transforms it into a black stretch cotton tube that goes up his arms to hide his head. Becoming a tight black dress, it turns his arms into legs, or turns his body into two pairs of legs connected with a bare midriff (see figure 6). As he negotiates the stage it is not clear how well he can see, particularly when he backs up to the table and then crawls under it to reach the back wall against which he does a handstand. The head and face are usually considered the centre of a person's individuality. Uprightness, within Western society, is conventionally considered

30. Blanchot, n. 16, 73.

31. Yvonne Rainer, email, December 22, 1999, "Performances," "Self Unfinished," Xavier Le Roy website, http://www.xavierleroy.com/ (accessed August 21, 2012).

Figure 6 Xavier Le Roy in *Self Unfinished* (1998).
Photo by Katrin Schoof.

a sign or rationality and civilisation. The headless upside-down being is the antithesis or inversion of these normative values.[32] This inversion continues in the final sequence which begins with Le Roy moving while upside down again and curled up in a foetus-like position. He looks particularly crab or insect-like when he reaches up with his left hand to manipulate his right leg while his right hand manipulates his left one. Then, having undressed, he progresses in this inverted posture around the floor, slowly and with difficulty coordinating his limbs to kick the detachable top off the table and then do another handstand against the back wall.

Self Unfinished, with its distinctive black and white set, proceeds through a series of strong black and white visual images. For example, there is Le Roy sitting in profile at the table; there is the upside-down black silhouette against the white back wall; and there is the naked, crouching creature upside down beneath the chair stretching its legs up to kick it. These are choreographed

32. Georges Bataille in the 1930s was interested in the idea of a man without a head an 'acephale', founding a journal and a secret society with this name. For Bataille this inversion was the antithesis of humanist values. See Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Manchester UK: Manchester University Press, 1985).

interactions with the piece's environment. *Self Unfinished* presents a blank, neutral interaction rather than a sensual one. Because of the object-like treatment of his body and the demotion or inversion of the head, and because of the way that throughout the piece, the dancer seemed to be continually in process of transformation from one allusive state to another, the dancer seems to become an element in the set alongside others. This, I suggest, can only happen because the piece is a solo; if there were more than one dancer, the choreography would read as an exploration of the relation between them rather than one with the set. Alone on the stage, the inhuman being in *Self Unfinished* inclines, in its alterity, towards the world.

Le Roy's solo constitutes an open-ended sharing through the way it exemplifies what Nancy called the dynamic of an uninterrupted passage through singular ruptures. It unworks many of the ways in which contemporary dancers might normally express their individuality. One could therefore argue that Le Roy's performance of this arduous, de-individuating movement material generates a melancholy ambience, as if it is haunted by what it knows it cannot release and can only incompletely share. It is as if he sadly recognises the necessity of not allowing beholders to experience wholeness and completion or recognise themselves as a community. All that is left is the urgency of his physical confrontation with isolation shown in the way he executes the movement—the rigour of his performance and the clarity with which he forms the strangely contorted positions of the choreography. His face stays mostly hidden during the section when he is wearing the black tube and when he dances in the naked, crab-like section of the piece, whereas his buttocks are given prominence. In polite Western society, body parts like buttocks and armpits are considered inferior. There is perhaps a humorous edge amidst this impersonal, inhuman performance, a wry appreciation of the solo's ironic debasement, the head subordinated to the buttocks, and the body turned upside down.

In Blanchot's terms, the solo dancer, through his solitude, has transformed himself into a 'nobody, the empty animated space where art's summons is heard'. Art, in Blanchot's view, comes from this solitude, this vacating of the self that is the duty of the artist. In the essay 'The Essential Solitude and Solitude in the World', he writes:

> When I am alone, it is not I who am there, and it is not from you that I stay away, or from others, or from the world. I am not the subject to whom this impression of solitude would come—this awareness of my limits; it is not that I tire of being myself. When I am alone, I am not there. This is not a sign of some psychological state, indicating loss of consciousness, the disappearance of my right to feel what I feel from a centre less myself, but

> rather something which there is 'behind me,' and which this 'me' conceals in order to come into its own.[33]

This idea that there is some level of existence behind the performance of self echoes Blanchot's friend Emmanuel Levinas's account of existence. For Levinas, solitude is a basic fact of existence: 'In reality, the fact of being is what is most private; existence is the sole thing I cannot communicate; I can tell about it, but I cannot share my existence. Solitude thus appears as the isolation which marks the very event of being.'[34] In his solo, Le Roy does not try to escape the solitude of being alone on the stage. Levinas argued, 'The very expression "to elude one's solitude" indicates the illusory and purely apparent character of this escape from the self . . . It is not a matter of escaping from solitude, but rather of escaping from being.'[35] One escapes from being when one acknowledges an inclination towards the world. What I propose Le Roy's solo enacts is an incomplete sharing of an unfinished existence in which the dancer, alone to the world, is becoming one with his environment.

Earlier in the chapter I suggested that the solo dancer's inclination towards the alterity of the world is the converse of the hermit's withdrawal from the world. To say that the solo dancer has this inclination does not necessarily mean she has any direct involvement with her audience. Nancy, I noted earlier, proposes that the solo dancer performs her own body in an instrumental way and has nothing to interpret other than herself. I have been arguing that even if dancer and choreographer are the same person, these are two separate roles, so that when, in Nancy's terms, a soloist interprets herself during the performance, one could say she is having a danced conversation with her memory of herself in this other role. In the case of someone dancing a solo created for and with them by a choreographer this would be a conversation with her memory of herself as a collaborator with the choreographer during the making of the solo. This is what Arendt has described as thinking to oneself and being able to live with oneself. In Arendt's terms, what Le Roy's solo exemplifies is not loneliness but solitude in the world, as exemplified through the ethical virtuosity with which the dancer keeps himself company, and demonstrates that he is able to live with himself and be part of the surrounding environment. Following Levinas, Le Roy cannot completely escape from solitude but, rather,

33. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 251.

34. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburg, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 57–58.

35. Ibid., 59–60.

can escape from being. By doing so, as Blanchot puts it, he allows something which is 'behind him', and which his sense of self conceals, to come into its own. This is where, I suggest, Le Roy's uncanny robotic and crab-like sections are significant. It is as if, through the process of dancing that is a necessarily incomplete sharing, he has escaped being in order to allow the emergence of an inclination towards something other. By doing so, the solo offers ways of rethinking the relation between an ethical way of being in the world and an aesthetic articulation of this experience. The movement out of solitude that Le Roy performs in this solo is one that leaves behind normative ideas about human exceptionalism in order to become more open to potential relationships with the surrounding world of other organic beings and the environment.

LOOKING AFTER THE WORLD: ANNE TERESA DE KEERSMAEKER AND JÉRÔME BEL'S *3ABSCHIED*

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Jérôme Bel's *3Abschied* (2010) is a lecture performance consisting of three versions of the final song 'Der Abschied' (The farewell) from Mahler's symphonic song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of the earth) which Mahler wrote in 1908–9 and received its first performance in 1911, six months after his death. Setting German translations of Chinese poems, the underlying theme of Mahler's work is the beauty of the natural world in contrast to the transience of human life. As the words of 'Der Abschied' put it, the world 'Revives in spring and blooms anew, All, everywhere and ever, ever, Shines the blue horizon, Ever . . . ever . . .' As De Keersmaeker and Bel told Jean-Luc Fafchamps, 'What is at stake for us is to give the work a current vision rather than to preserve it as it is, . . . What we want is to understand what it says to us today, to see how this work, composed a century ago, can still help us to understand our own reality today.'[36] As De Keersmaeker herself explains early in the piece, one of her starting points was the contrast between Mahler's assumption of the perennial nature of the world, and the current, looming threat of ecological disaster. Mahler had written his song cycle after the death of his eldest daughter Maria and at a time when he knew that his own life was threatened by a congenital heart defect. Now, De Keersmaeker explains, the earth itself is sick. She mentions some Australian Aborigines that Bruce Chatwin mentions in his 1988 book *The Songlines*[37] who use song to map the world and who look forward to a time when the sick earth and its people will be healed. *3Abschied* is a solo that aims to heal the earth.

36. Jean-Luc Fafchamps, "An Interview with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Jérôme Bel," in the performance programme for *3Abschied* (London: Sadler's Wells Theatre, 2011).

37. Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1988).

This concern with the sickness of the earth also appears in Jean-Luc Nancy's 2002 book *La Création du monde ou la mondialisation* (*The Creation of the World or Globalization*).[38] Where Heidegger saw humans as world making,[39] Nancy sees humans as creating the world through their inclination towards it. His book acknowledges that this relation is not always a good one, especially in the impact of human development on nature itself, and the threat of 'its complete denaturation, whether by mutation or by total destruction (biological, ecological, ethological engineering)'.[40] As in his subsequent discussion with Matthilde Monnier, Nancy sees the relation with the world as 'the opening of an empty space where the infinite "creation" of the world is (re)played—unless the possibility arises that the symbolic is barred there and disappears there and with it humanity itself'.[41] He returns to this thought in the later dialogue:

> To be detached from everything, is no longer to have any ties but at the same time to be exposed to a huge space, which we call the world. I therefore see a dance solo as the relation with the world of an absolute solitude. So, a solo can begin to make the world, to see, to look after the world, maybe even shout it. Perhaps there is a creation of the world each time there is a solo on stage.[42]

There are clear parallels here between De Keersmaeker and Bel's piece, which aims to heal the world, and Nancy's idea that a solo dancer, advancing from a position of detached solitude, can make a world and look after a world.

As I noted earlier, three versions of Mahler's 'Der Abschied' are presented in the course of *3Abschied*. The first is a famous, poignant recording of it that Kathleen Ferrier made in 1952, shortly before she died of cancer. Members of the small chamber orchestra Ictus, who often work with De Keersmaeker, come on stage with their instruments, followed by De Keersmaeker in jeans

38. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*., trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). First published in France as *La Création du monde ou la mondialisation* (Paris: Galilée, 2002).

39. Whereas animals, for Heidegger, are poor in world (*weltarmut*), humans are world forming (*weldbildend*).

40. Nancy, n. 37, 89–90.

41. Ibid.

42. My translation. 'Etre détaché de tout, c'est n'avoir plus aucun lien et en méme temps être exposé à un espace immense, ce qu'on appelle le monde. Je vois donc un solo de danse comme le rapport au monde d'une solitude absolue. Du coup, il peut se mettre à faire du monde, à voir, à occuper le monde, peut-etre même à le crier. Peut-être y a-t-il une création du monde à chaque fois qu il y a un solo sur scene'. Monnier and Nancy, n. 1, 53.

Figure 7 Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in *3Abschied* (2010).
Photo by Anne Van Aerschot.

and a T-shirt and, rather than present the music live, De Keersmaeker plays this historic recording, stopping it before the end then explaining the context and development of the piece. The second version is sung live by Sara Fulgoni. She is accompanied by Ictus in a reduced orchestration made by Arnold Schoenberg. As this is performed, De Keersmaeker picks her way among the musicians, twisting and turning as she performing light, almost marked dance movements (see figure 7). These are phrased with the musical melody in a characteristically intelligent way, and, in places, they respond to the words of the poem. Thus with the lines 'I shall no longer seek the far horizon. My heart is still and waits for its deliverance' De Keersmaeker kneels down and arches her back, her head staring upwards. This is an expressive gesture that conventionally suggests strong emotions.

De Keersmaeker has always been a very musical choreographer, creating pieces with music by contemporary composers, such as Steve Reich and Ligeti, early twentieth-century ones, such as Schoenberg and Bartok, and seventeenth- and eighteen-century composers. As she explained on a French television programme,[43] until *3Abschied* she had never before worked with romantic

43. Metropolis, Arte, March 20, 2010, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xcnuy3_anne-teresa-de-keersmaeker-jerome-b_creation.

music. Because she was finding it difficult to deal with this, she invited Bel to collaborate with her. To find out how Mahler's powerfully melancholy song might relate to twenty-first century realities, it was clearly necessary to defuse its lush, romantic chromaticism. De Keersmaeker's jeans and the informal clothes that the musicians wear contribute to this, as does also Bel's intervention that follows Fulgoni and Ictus's performance. Bel, as De Keersmaeker had done earlier, gives his account of their joint artistic concerns. Since the song is the farewell of a dying artist, Bel sets the musicians of Ictus the comic task of playing the last few bars of the music and while doing so, leaving the stage one by one, so that the music tails off. He then asks them to repeat the music but this time, one by one, miming a slow-motion death, slumping over in a way that their instrument allows until they appear to be dead. Bel then introduces the last section where De Keersmaeker, an amateur singer, performs the song herself, alone on the stage with a pianist.

Many dance critics, particularly those reviewing the performance at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London, strongly disliked these parts of the piece. Clifford Bishop in the *Evening Standard* commented, 'Her final attempt is pathetic, touching and private—an air-guitar Abschied which she sings, crazily, to herself.'[44] Louise Levene in the *Sunday Telegraph* observed, 'Keersmaeker galumphed brokenly about the stage to solo piano, hurling chairs and tunelessly squeaking her way through Der Abschied (the last movement of Mahler's Song). Trapped animals have chewed off their own feet for less.'[45] Levene is referring to the fact that De Keersmaeker, while singing, repeats dance material from her earlier solo, and at one moment clears a space for herself among the abandoned music stands and chairs, a moment reminiscent of the moving of chairs in Bausch's *Café Muller.* Audience members walked out of the performance at Sadler's Wells that I attended. I myself found this final 'Abschied' extremely affecting, not just on an aesthetic level but also because of the way it so decisively contradicted the conventions of classical music performance. This is something that the Viennese dance writer Helmut Ploebst noted: 'The bourgeois clientele expects some added value from culture which should be transferred to it in an equally stimulating and frictionless manner. But what happens when . . . the service taken as a matter of course by the largely well-off

44. Clifford Bishop, "Wrong Moves Hit the Right Note," *Evening Standard*, November 22, 2011.

45. Louise Levene, "Fresh Fields of Asphodel," *Sunday Telegraph*, November 27, 2011. Both Bishop and Levene compare *3Abschied* unfavourably with Kenneth MacMillan's ballet *Gloria*, which also uses Mahler's song cycle and had been performed by the Royal Ballet two weeks earlier.

audience celebrating itself, is denied?'[46] For me, De Keersmaeker appeared to be trying hard to sing, struggling awkwardly but compellingly to render this difficult score. In general, where live singing and dancing are brought together, the result is particularly affecting. The fact that De Keersmaeker was singing had a powerful impact not only aesthetically but also ideologically.

The philosopher Adriana Cavarero, in her book on the voice, notes the conventional prejudice that women should be seen and not heard: 'The perfect woman would be mute—not just a woman who abstains from speaking but a woman who has no voice.'[47] For some people, dancers should also be seen and not heard, and De Keersmaeker herself has no voice insofar as she does not have the trained mezzo-soprano voice for which Mahler's work was written. Cavarero notes that the Greek myth of the sirens points to the transgressive role that women's voices can play. Modulating themselves in song, 'women's voices come to show their authentic substance—namely, the passionate rhythms of the body from which the voice flows.' She goes on, 'The female singing voice cannot be domesticated; it disturbs the system of reason by leading elsewhere. Potentially lethal, it pushes pleasure to the limits of what is bearable.'[48]

De Keersmaeker's voice, like a siren's, is also disturbing and, for those who walked out, unbearable. This is not just because of the aesthetic and affective qualities of the third farewell, but also because of the message it was conveying about the environment. De Keersmaeker works within the possibilities for sound and space that gender norms permit to women, and uses the potential for inverting and exploiting these restrictions. I cited two negative reviews by London critics because these exemplify a tendency to blame the messenger for bringing news that one does not to want to hear. There are still some who deny that environmental change is happening or is a problem; others don't want to face up to what is happening; others still are so disillusioned with the political system that they don't feel it is worth trying to bring about change. Overall, it is a complicated and confusing issue. De Keersmaeker presents herself in this work as completely, uncompromisingly idealistic, in a position of detachment and solitude that seemingly leaves her insensitive to other people's confusion. The movement out of solitude that De Keersmaeker performs in her solo is one that sings, dances, and maps her inclination to a world, and her performance constitutes a challenge to others to look after and take care of it.

46. Helmut Ploebst, "'In a State of Unrest: Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Jérôme Bel Irritate with Their Co-Operation '3Abschied,'" *Corpus* (2010), http://www.corpusweb.net/im-zustand-der-unruhe-2.html.

47. Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Warwick Studies in European Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2000), 117.

48. Ibid., 118.

CONCLUSION

I have pointed to ways in which these solos have troubled and called into question rigid and normalising ways of thinking, and thus opened up alternative ways of relating to others and to the world. This is the condition of possibility of sharing responsibility for dancing that makes and remakes the world as a common shared resource. Maria La Ribot's *Piezas distinguidas* show that a solo dancer's movement out of solitude towards the world is one that reveals and uncovers an underlying inclination from one towards the other. The movement out of solitude that Le Roy performs in *Self Unfinished* is one that leaves behind normative ideas about human exceptionalism in order to become more open to potential relationships with the surrounding world of other organic beings and the environment. De Keersmaeker and Bel's *3Abschied* makes us aware of the normative constrictions on expression surrounding socially constructed ideas about femininity through the rupture that De Keersmaeker's solo makes within them. The movement out of solitude that she performs in her solo is one that sings, dances, and maps her inclination to a world in need of greater care and respect. Alone on the stage, these soloists exemplify in their solitude an opening up towards and responsibility before the world.

7

Performing Friendship

This chapter offers readings of a selection of dances which I will call 'duos' rather than 'duets' that have been made since 2000 by two collaborators of the same sex but different backgrounds. *Gustavia* was choreographed and performed in 2008 by Matthilde Monnier and Maria La Ribot. Monnier has been a leading French contemporary choreographer since the 1980s, while La Ribot's work lies somewhere between live art and so-called conceptual dance. They appear to enjoy, on stage, an easy companionship or friendship. Jérôme Bel and Pichet Klunchun collaborated in 2004 to make *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*. Bel and Klunchun come from opposite sides of the world. Klunchun has trained in Khon, the traditional Thai court ballet, while Bel's work, like La Ribot's, lies somewhere between live art and so-called conceptual dance. Their performance reveals significant differences in their cultural values while managing to avoid some of the problems of intercultural performance. In 2005, Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui premiered *Zero Degrees*. Khan is a British Asian dancer and choreographer with training in Kathak, while Cherkaoui is Belgian, from a Moroccan family, and is a long-term dancer and choreographer in the Belgian dance theatre company Ballets C de la B. Their piece also deals with issues of cultural diversity. Dancer Jonathan Burrows and composer Matteo Fargion have, to date, made and performed together in ten works, starting in 2003 with *Both Sitting Duet*. Theirs is probably the oldest of these partnerships, as Fargion first composed music for Burrows in the late 1980s (though he did not at that time perform with him). I have chosen to discuss two linked pieces by them from 2009, *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*.

I am calling these works duos as the label 'duet' does not seem appropriate. Duets are generally made for a male and female partner. Even when the choreography is seemingly abstract, a duet can sometimes nevertheless betray some residue from the ballet pas de deux or adagio and suggest some sort of universalised romantic meaning. The duos in this chapter are about friendship and

so are also different from some older male-male duets like DV8's *My Sex, Our Dance* (1987), or Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane's *Rotary Action* (1982). Made at a time when the majority of people in Western countries were still antagonistic to homosexuality, these duets were about gay sexual relationships and explored the difficulties gay people in a homophobic society experience in finding emotional intimacy. They drew attention to the binary heterosexual/homosexual as part of a single-issue identity politics. The more recent duos have been made at a time when identities are generally seen as plural, complex, and more fluid than they were seen in the 1980s. Rather than explore either romantic love or sexual relationships, dancers in these more recent duos are presented as friends whose differences from one another are not hidden. One perhaps likes to think that the performers do indeed enjoy a close friendship, but they are of course, in effect, only performing friendship on stage. This chapter investigates what it means to perform friendship in the twenty-first century.

I have chosen to write about these duos because of what they reveal about twenty-first-century relationships. This, I suggest, is part of their appeal, as all of them are popular works and have been performed widely, most of them in the United States as well as in Europe and elsewhere. I have been discussing dance works using Emmanuel Levinas's account of responsibility as an infinite demand that the other makes to the self (see chapters 5 and 6). Levinas's account underlies a statement by Maurice Blanchot on friendship: 'I think one knows when friendship ends with a disagreement . . . but does one know when it begins? Friendship does not begin with a bolt from the blue, but rather, little by little, the slow work of time. We were friends and we didn't know it.'[1] Simon Critchley points out that in this passage, neither individual decides actively to be friends with the other but passively acknowledges a call from the other to be a friend.[2] Blanchot here is effectively troubling conventional ideas about friendship in order to rethink what friendship might be. I will argue that some of the duos I discuss have a similarly troubling effect on conventional ideas about danced duets and, by doing so, open up a space for exploring the underpinnings of relationships in contemporary society.

Recent discussions in philosophy and sociology about the nature of friendship are helpful for understanding what takes place in these duos. There are sociological discussions that focus on the impact of modernity or of neoliberal globalisation and networked communications on individuals' need for, and ability to form, relationships. I will argue that the appeal of some of these duos

1. Blanchot, quoted in Simon Critchley, *Ethics Politics Subjectivity* (London: Verso, 1999), 256.

2. Ibid. In French, friends address one another as *tu* rather than the more formal *vous* (in older English usage 'thee' and 'thou'). What Blanchot describes is the experience of finding oneself being addressed by someone for the first time as *tu*.

rests, in part, on perceived problems in contemporary relationships when these are measured against a traditional ideal of friendship. Philosophical problems and contradictions within this ideal are the starting point for recent philosophical discussions about friendship. Some of the duos, I shall argue, ungoven in order to propose alternative ways of relating to another as a friend that resonate with these philosophical discussions.

ON FRIENDSHIP AND ITS PERFORMANCE

Some sociologists have been concerned that pressures within modern society tend to have a harmful effect on social relations. Anthony Giddens has discussed the alienating effects of the development of large, impersonal, commercial or governmental organisations, which, he argues, create situations in which social life is run along impersonal lines over which individuals have little or no control. In such contexts, he proposes, 'a flight into intimacy is an attempt to secure a meaningful life in familiar environments that have not been incorporated into these larger systems'. Intimacy, or the quest for it, Giddens argues, 'is at the heart of modern forms of friendship and established sexual relations'.[3] Compared with the kinds of close personal ties or kinship that Giddens suggests are found in traditional contexts, people often relate to one another in modern society in what he calls 'pure relationships' that are about the satisfaction of personal needs. 'A friend is defined specifically as someone with whom one has a friendship unprompted by anything other than the rewards that that relationship provides.'[4]

Zygmunt Bauman characterises 'pure relationships' as expedient, short-term relationships in which partners have little long-term commitment to one another, maintaining the relation only as long as he or she derives satisfaction or benefits from it. He argues that 'pure relationships' are symptomatic of the destabilising effects on society of what he calls liquid modern times, and in particular the effects of mobile communication networks and the Internet. Thus, he argues, 'the advent of virtual proximity renders human connections simultaneously more frequent and more shallow, more intense and more brief'. In the post-Fordist work place, the ability to make short-term, mutually beneficial connections may be a skill that employers value, but

> as the skills needed to converse and to seek mutual understanding dwindle, what used to be a challenge meant to be confronted head-on and patiently

3. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 94.

4. Ibid.

> negotiated increasingly becomes a pretext for individuals to break communication, to escape and burn bridges behind them.[5]

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, makes a similar argument about the way the Internet affects an individual's ability to form relations. He emphasizes the increased speed and intensity that the Internet gives to the course of relationships. He cites as an example *The Social Network* (2010), David Fincher's film about the early development of Facebook, the leading online social-networking platform, and its founder Mark Zuckerberg. Berardi points to the irony shown in the film that an Internet application which encourages individuals to accumulate larger and larger numbers of friends was developed by someone who, in the process of enlarging his business, alienates his friends and, according to the film, eventually betrays his best friend.

The relationships that people have with their Facebook 'friends' are as thin on commitment as 'pure relationships'. Berardi sees a political truth in Fincher's film, arguing that it isn't just about a billionaire but tells the story of the social conditions of labour, revealing 'the impossibility of friendship in the present condition of the virtual abstraction of sociality, and the impossibility of building solidarity in a society that turns life into an abstract container of competing fragments of time'.[6] Berardi is particularly interested in workers' solidarity as a basis for political engagement. The speed and intensity of Internet communication has allowed social media to play a productive role in many recent radical political events (an example of this is considered chapter 8). The kind of relations fostered by social media, like those in the post-Fordist workplace, however, are not ones in which people are encouraged to take responsibility in Levinas's terms—that is, taking responsibility for the other's needs. It is this kind of ethical problematic that is at stake in these duos, which, I argue, perform friendship.

A number of philosophers who have been influenced by and have commented on Levinas's philosophy have written about how to rethink friendship in ways that are useful for understanding these duos. Jacques Derrida, in his book *The Politics of Friendship* (1997),[7] points out that the Greek ideal of friendship was based on brotherhood. Not only does this implicitly exclude women, but it is a relationship in which the same recognises and responds to

5. Zygmunt Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 90.

6. Franco Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Semiotext(e), 2008), 119.

7. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997).

the same from the same, leaving no room for any acknowledgement of otherness or difference. The dance duos, as I noted, have each been created and performed by dancers of the same sex who are otherwise significantly different from one another. What is at issue in them is how the performance deals with these differences. Recognition of difference, Luce Irigaray points out, necessitates mutual valuing of the distance that difference produces: 'Between us is something that will never be mine or yours. . . . I want to live in harmony with you and still remain other. I want to draw nearer to you while protecting myself for you.'[8] In this passage Irigaray is discussing heterosexual love, but her proposal nevertheless resonates with the differences between dancers in the duos I discuss here. Irigaray's proposal suggests seeing the performance itself as something between the dancers in each duo that allows them to draw nearer while, paradoxically, also acting as protection. This is a way of taking responsibility in relationships through acknowledging difference.

Simon Critchley points out that 'the real sin against friendship is a breach of trust',[9] and Blanchot mentions a responsibility that 'does not allow us to speak of our friends, but only to speak to them, not to make them a topic of conversation (or articles), but the movement of understanding'.[10] While Irigaray identifies something between partners in a relationship, for Blanchot, a subject internalises the other so that there is a stranger inside who responds to the other's demand:

> When the other is related to me in such a way that the utter stranger in me answers him in my stead, this answer is the immemorial friendship which cannot be chosen, nor can it be lived in the present. It is an offering; it offers a share of the passivity which has no subject. It is dying, dying outside of the self—the body which belongs to no one, in nonnarcissistic suffering, and joy.[11]

This is a complex passage that raises issues that are relevant to the danced duos. As I will argue, the friendship performed in these duos is one where the two dancers relate to one another through the kind of passivity that Blanchot posits. This is the kind of friendship about which Blanchot wrote, as I noted

8. Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, trans. Monique M. Rhodes and Marco F. Cocito-Monoc (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 13.

9. Critchley, n. 1, 256.

10. Ibid., 268. Critchley is translating Maurice Blanchot, *L'amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 328.

11. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press., 1995), 28–29.

earlier, 'We were friends and we didn't know it.' Blanchot's idea about passivity was a central theme in the discussion of La Ribot's two laughing pieces in chapter 5. The performers in both shared a mutual complicity in their relationships despite apparently having nothing in common with one another. They constituted what Blanchot has called a 'community of those who have no community'.[12] So the passivity that Blanchot suggests is at work within friendship is also at work within these kinds of complicit communities. This raises the question for Blanchot, 'can one distinguish . . . between private and collective relations?'[13] In other words, Blanchot is suggesting a kind of friendship and a kind of community in which the traditional distinction between camaraderie and friendship has no relevance. Rethinking friendship can offer ways of rethinking the kinds of relations that enable political solidarity.

The readings of the performance of friendship in each of the duos discussed in this chapter are framed by questions rising from these sociological and philosophical discussions. To what extent are the friendships short-term, expedient ones? Does their performance breach the trust not to speak about the other? Do they suggest a friendship in which the same recognises and responds to the same from the same, or one grounded in an acknowledgement of difference and otherness? To what extent does the friend, as Blanchot proposes, answer a call that precedes any conscious decision, and is there a passivity about the friendship? Or, in Irigaray's terms, is there something between the two dancers that belongs to neither? Acceptance of differences offers a basis for rethinking the nature of community and the political.

One more issue that is raised in Blanchot's discussion of the offering of friendship is the connection between friendship and death. All the dance duos discussed in this chapter make some passing reference to death, though in most cases this is only a very minor one and is not central to the piece as a whole. While death is a topic that people often find unsettling and may prefer to avoid, it seems no accident that these performances of friendship seem to require references to death. Here is how Critchley introduces the connection between friendship and death: 'The time of friendship is strongly linked with the experience of ageing, of senescence, of old friends leaning together like bookends, of being an old friend when one is relatively young.'[14] Derrida discusses

12. Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press 1988), 24. Blanchot raises this in an essay in which he responds to Jean-Luc Nancy's essay 'La communauté désoeuvré'.

13. Critchley, n. 1, 266. This is Critchley's translation of Blanchot, *L'amitié*, 112.

14. Critchley, n. 1, 257.

at length Cicero's statement that the dead live because they are recalled by friends. The longevity of friendship here contrasts with the short-term nature of what Bauman and Giddens call 'pure relationships'. The ways in which the unsettling topic of death appears in each duo, I will argue, is key to the way that their ungoverning of dance has a potential to open up ways of thinking friendship differently.

PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP 1: *GUSTAVIA*

Gustavia (2008) consists of a series of comic scenes in which Mathilde Monnier and Maria La Ribot explore aspects of the burlesque tradition (see figure 8). It is an experimental piece that is comic but sometimes deliberately slow and prolonged with endless repetitions. Thus at the beginning each dancer takes it in turns to totter on high-heeled shoes across a dangerous-looking, rucked, black-velour floor covering towards a microphone on a stand and tries to say something about why they are so sad. They are sobbing so much, however, that

Figure 8 Mathilde Monnier and Maria La Ribot in *Gustavia*. Photo by Marc Coudrais.

the message becomes almost incoherent.[15] They each wear a black leotard but bare legs and has an oversize black handkerchief to dab their tears. The set is all black with loose curtains on three sides, behind which at one point the dancers become momentarily lost, and black props, including a swivel chair and a polystyrene plank. In a later scene La Ribot carries this plank on her shoulder, walking slowly and carelessly with an innocent deadpan expression, and turning unpredictably so that the plank lightly thwacks Monnier's head and precipitates a pratfall. Monnier falls completely with the studied concentration of an experienced dancer who breaks every movement down so that the beholder sees each part clearly. The result looks almost like slow motion. But La Ribot goes on seemingly accidentally knocking Monnier over. Every time they both happen to be looking in the opposite direction so that apparently neither sees what is coming. This happens twenty or more times, each fall as carefully complete as the first and always subtly different. Repetition is a comic device but was used in *Gustavia* so excessively that it became decreasingly funny and one became increasingly aware of the effort going into the execution. *Gustavia* is a comic piece but with many disconcerting moments like this.

Underlying *Gustavia* is a subtle intervention in the politics of gender representation. There is a long tradition of popular comic entertainment which is often very physically based and includes dance elements; it is effectively a male genre, famous exponents including Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy were all men, but here it is appropriated by women. Two parts of the piece directly address gender performance. The first is a deadpan, un-titillating 'striptease'. To prolonged, throbbing bass guitar music that has the right rhythm for striptease but uses some chords that one might find in a horror movie soundtrack, Monnier and La Ribot recline on the stage staring emotionlessly at the audience. In a somewhat mechanical way, they repeatedly pull one leg of their black trousers up and down to reveal and hide their knee. Since they are wearing calf-length boots, all they actually show are a few inches above and below the knee. La Ribot, close to the front of the stage, looks back nervously at Monnier, towards the back, as if to check out what she's doing. There is an element of competitiveness here that occurs elsewhere in the piece and is particularly evident at the end, when the two women stand side by side on stools and engage in a simultaneous comic duologue in which each sentence begins, 'A women . . . '. Sherri Kronfeld, reviewing a New York performance, quotes some of these:

> 'A woman fucks with her navel.' 'A woman has three tits.' 'A woman has no shoulders.' 'A woman cooks only organic food.' 'A woman has no plastic

15. In the first version of La Ribot's *40 Espontaneos*, there were sections where the dancers cried as well as ones where they laughed.

in her house.' 'A woman puts a carrot in her ear, it comes out her mouth.' 'A woman has hair all over her body.'[16]

The piece was made in French, Monnier's first language, and this simultaneous outpouring of sentences is more rapid in the French version than when delivered in English, a language that Monnier, at the performances I saw, seemed less confident speaking than La Ribot. In French Monnier speaks fast and passionately, while La Ribot waits and then interjects little, condensed punch lines. In English the pace was slower and La Ribot understandably took the lead more often. Each seemed to be pushing the other to greater extremes, more bizarre statements, more intense delivery building to a climax. The last statement was different in each performance that I saw but always referred to death—for example 'a woman in a cemetery', 'a woman in the dark'—and was followed by a blackout.

There were a few references to death in some of the dialogue. There was the woman in the cemetery at the end, while at the start the two performers seemed to be crying about someone who had died, and the black set and costumes suggested mourning. At one section, after Monnier performed a complicated sequence of contemporary dance movements, La Ribot delivered a series of statements to the audience in a tone that suggested that she had had enough and was leaving. All the statements, however, were titles of pieces by the Polish painter and theatre director Tadeusz Kantor or refered to his work: *I Will Never Return, The Dead Class, Let The Artist Die, Today Is My Birthday.* While this was happening, Monnier, who had left the stage, came back as a black ghost.

Some of reviewers called Monnier and La Ribot sisters, and a few even called them twins, while nevertheless stating their different backgrounds and nationalities.[17] What these reviews point towards, I suggest, is how the two of them performed friendship through their evident closeness and easy cooperation in performance. At a narrative level, they appeared to be in competition with one another. This emphasised their differences while also exemplifying

16. Sherri Kronfeld, "Mathilde Monnier and La Ribot's *Gustavia* at the French Highlights Festival," *Culturebot: Maximum Performance*, online, January 11, 2013, http://www.culturebot.org/2013/01/16449/mathilde-monnier-la-ribots-gustavia-at-the-french-highlights-festival/.

17. Chloé Malgras, "Gustavia, le burlesque au féminin," *info-culture.biz*, October 26, 2014, http://info-culture.biz/2014/10/26/gustavia-le-burlesque-au-feminin/#.VKQltCiPDZa; Luke Jennings, "Body_Remix/Goldberg_Variations; Gustavia; Susan and Darren," *The Observer*, May 16, 2010; Thomas Hahn, "Black Humour," *Ballettanz, suppl. Jahrbuch 2008/ Yearbook 2008*.

how closely they were working together. The use of the device of interrupting one another or playing at one-upmanship helped to keep up the pace of their performance, and thus, in effect, they assisted one another when things were in danger of flagging. So their friendship was not one of the same responding to the same, but of one responding selflessly to the needs of another from a position of strangeness and distance. Nor were they breaking any trust by revealing private truths about the other in performance since they seemed to be creating together a persona called Gustavia that was separate from each of them. In Irigaray's terms, this was something between them that belonged to neither of them.

FRIENDSHIP AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The argument that I am putting forward is that the kind of non-traditional friendship performed in the duos I discuss is one where friends acknowledge and respond to the other's strangeness and difference rather than responding to the same from the same. In Jerôme Bel and Pichet Klunchun's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* and Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Zero Degrees* there are significant differences of ethnicity between each partner in the duo. This raises questions about the potential for intercultural friendships. To what extent can Bel as a European avoid relating with Klunchun in the way that a coloniser is positioned in relation to a colonial subject? How do Khan and Cherkaoui, as European-born members of immigrant communities, understand each others' difficulties in relating to the countries from which their families migrated?

Pichet Klunchun and Myself was commissioned by the Singaporean artistic director Tang Fu Kuen for the Bangkok Fringe Festival in 2004. In it, Bel and Klunchun, dressed in casual clothes, sit on chairs opposite one another and have a conversation in which they exchange information about their work. It begins with Bel asking Klunchun questions about himself and his art form, the Thai Court Ballet style Khon. This develops into demonstrations by Klunchun and a short on-stage introductory lesson in Khon for Bel. During the performance I saw in November 2007, I thought I detected a little impatience coming from Klunchun at some of Bel's questions, not least the fact that all Bel had done to research Khon before their meeting was to read about it in a popular tourist guidebook. When Klunchun demonstrates dance material for Bel, he reluctantly accompanies himself in an English translation of what a singer would ordinarily recite for him in Thai during a Khon performance. In a telling early exchange, Klunchun explains that he began dancing to honour a God to whom his mother had prayed to ask to become pregnant with a boy, and he adds that Khon dancers historically are servants of the king of Thailand. Bel retorts that in his country, France, they cut off the head of their king (during

the French Revolution). Thailand appears from this exchange to be a country rooted in ancient traditions and superstitions, while France has for over two hundred years been a modern secular democracy where separation of religious institutions from the state—*laïcité*—is a political principle valued by both left and right.

After about forty-five minutes they swap roles, and Klunchun, in turn, asks Bel about his work, starting with the same questions that Bel had previously asked him. Despite the efforts Klunchun had made to accommodate Bel's requests, when Klunchun asks him to show something in return, Bel doesn't want to. He says that he himself doesn't dance much now and that his recent works are all performed by others. After Klunchun shames him into showing something, Bel reverts to his familiar trickster role, revelling in his ability to wittily subvert expectations. At one moment, when Bel shows him part of *The Show Must Go On*, Klunchun expresses his amazement that all Bel does is to dance along to David Bowie's song 'Let's Dance' as if he were in a discotheque. Anybody could do that, Klunchun complains; why should people pay money to see it? Bel proudly replies that people sometimes walk out and demand their money back. He goes on to explain how he understands the positioning of the avant-garde artist in the European subsidised art world. In his view, making experimental work is a kind of research that aims to produce something new and unprecedented. The piece has an abrupt ending. Bel's early breakthrough piece, *Jérôme Bel* (see chapter 2), was performed by four naked dancers. When Bel begins to take off his trousers to show something from this, Klunchun stops him. He doesn't wish to see nakedness, he explains, because it is against his cultural values. Bel says he has seen semi-naked girls in Bangkok bars. Klunchun observes that they are working for Western customers, not for Thai ones. Klunchun says he has no more questions. With this unresolved confrontational atmosphere still lingering, they both walk off stage and the piece comes to an end. It is as if the friendship that they had seemed to enjoy during the performance was much less grounded than it had appeared and could be quickly abandoned.

The topic of death is introduced in both halves of the performance. Death as a theme occurs in some of Bel's works. He has written, 'I sometimes think that art is for preparing yourself for the last five minutes before you die. It's as if, as a spectator, art enabled us to do a rehearsal of this final moment, and learn to know what to do and think in that ultimate moment.'[18] When Bel asks to see how Klunchun dies on stage, he is told, 'We don't die on stage.' To do so would

18. Jérôme Bel and Boris Charmatz, "Emails 2009–2010," in *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Prsses du Réel, 2014), 241. In chapter 6, I discussed Bel's request that the musicians should 'die' in a similar way during *3Abschied*.

be bad luck but, Klunchun explains, they have a device for dealing with this. The blow or event that kills a character happens on stage but then the dying character dances backwards to expire in the wings, out of sight. In the second half, when Bel is telling Klunchun about *The Show Must Go On*, he describes one section of it in which the cast dance to Roberta Flack's classic song 'Killing Me Softly', literally interpreting the song's lyrics so that each 'dies' a little every time the words 'killing me softly' are sung. As Bel explains, in the piece, the dancers die quite early in the song, leaving the audience just looking at them lying on the floor for the remaining two-thirds of it. Klunchun then makes a very touching comment about how it reminded him of the gradual and peaceful way in which his own mother had died, and what a relief it had been to him because it had come at the end of a long, painful illness. Interestingly, Klunchun found something quite unexpected and personal in this extract from Bel's piece, perhaps quite outside the sorts of things that Bel might have expected beholders to pick up.

Susan Foster notes that 'the dialogue between [Bel and Klunchun] makes over the inequalities between their histories as dancers. It suggests that each artist and art form has had equal access to the world stage, whereas the vast majority of funding and visibility for concert dance are generated from within Europe and the US.'[19] It is as if Bel believes that by deciding to place the pieces said by side and giving them equal time and space, this will make them equal. SanSan Kwan, however, points out that the word 'myself' in the Bel's title presupposes his privileged vantage point.[20] While the idea of equality has its roots in the Enlightenment, orientalist ideologies at work in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* seem to make an East/West binary seem natural. Kwan suggests that the piece manages to avoid some of the more obvious problems inherent in intercultural performance that scholars like Rustom Barucha were criticising in the 1990s.[21] However, she argues, *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* 'is not an ideal model of "good" interculturalism', because 'it does not succeed in levelling inequity: it merely serves to lay it bare'.[22] In *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*,

19. Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinasthesia in Performance*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster, Worlding Dance (London: Routledge, 2011), 203.

20. SanSan Kwan, "Even as We Keep Trying: An Ethics of Interculturalism in Jérôme Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*," *Theatre Survey* 55, no. 02 (2014): 185–201. For other similar discussions of interculturalism in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*, see Roslyn Sulcas, "Thai Spars with French in Cultural Exchange," *New York Times*, September 9, 2007; and Yvonne Hardt, "Staging the Ethnnographic of Dance History," *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 1 (2011): 27–42.

21. See Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990).

22. Kwan, n. 20, 195.

Bel's responsibilities towards Klunchun as his friend should have made him recognise the need to level inequity. The failure to do this reveals the expedient, short-term nature of their relationship—a 'pure relationship' which they appear to abandon when things get difficult and they are no longer deriving satisfaction or benefit from it. There is no evidence that either has the potential to respond selflessly to the needs of another from his position of strangeness and distance.

Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Zero Degrees* consists of a series of danced interactions between Khan and Cherkaoui that are interspersed with sections in which Khan narrates a story about a recent visit to Bangladesh—the country from which his grandparents had emigrated to Britain. Khan is a charismatic, virtuoso dancer who trained as a child in the classical Indian dance style Kathak, and in his early teens performed the role of the child in Peter Brook's production of the *Mahabaratha*, whose plundering of Indian traditions Rustom Barucha denounced. Khan then went to university to study contemporary dance. Cherkaoui is also a highly acclaimed dancer and choreographer, whose artistic development was initially fostered by Alain Platel, a Belgian choreographer and founder of the Ballets C de la B. Platel's approach to dance theatre was strongly influenced by that of Pina Bausch. Cherkaoui and Khan were born in Europe to immigrant families of Moroccan and Bangladeshi heritage. Both therefore come from an Islamic background and share a love of Sufi poetry and music.

Khan has said he found that the experience of learning contemporary dance while already having a deep knowledge of Kathak left him with feelings of bodily confusion. When working with contemporary-trained dancers in his company, he says he has sometimes used this sense of confusion as a methodology for generating a new movement vocabulary. Although he insists his intention has not been to create an intercultural fusion, that is in effect what he has done in much of the material he creates for himself and other dancers in many of his works. There is no fusion of dance styles in the material that he and Cherkaoui perform together in *Zero Degrees*. Khan performs some Kathak solos, Cherkaoui dances in an extremely fragmented, sometimes violent way, and there are some fast, often tense duets. There are moments when they dance together, and here the vocabulary is often in a generic contemporary dance style, one in which Khan and Cherkaoui are equally at home.

The piece in general alternates between sections of dancing and sections of storytelling, and there are also parts in which they interact with, or manipulate, two white, life-sized, articulated, rubber casts of their bodies that were made for them by the British sculptor Anthony Gormley. Whereas in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* an East/West split figures into the difference between Bel and Klunchun, in *Zero Degrees* this split is presented through Khan himself,

who narrates his experiences, as a Western-born and university-educated young man, on a train journey from Bangladesh and India. During this, he finds himself witnessing a man dying in his railway carriage. As Lorna Sanders explains, 'Against Khan's will, his cousin and travel companion advises him not to get involved as he is a "foreign" witness, in order to avoid bureaucratic hassle.'[23] In the story, Khan's trauma is caused by his inability to help the companion of the dead man. In Levinas's terms, he is unable to respond to the call of the other's needs. Khan's cousin, however, fulfils the responsibilities of friendship in a situation whose implications he knew Khan didn't fully understand. At one climactic moment in the narrative, when Khan watches his passport being passed from one border guard to another, he and Cherkaoui tell the story in unison, sitting side by side on the stage, their knees touching, and they each emphasise words with exactly the same seemingly naturalistic gestures.[24] This is typical of the way that, on stage, Cherkaoui fulfils the role of witness to Khan's need to retell his story. He helps Khan face the traumas it contains. Because Cherkaoui has also grown up in the West in an immigrant family, he is in a position to appreciate nuances that white Western spectators might not completely grasp. Both the cousin and Cherkaoui, however, relate to Khan from positions of difference—the cousin as a Bangladeshi, Cherkaoui as a Belgian.

I have shown that the difference between East and West in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* rehearses and reinforces a binary trope that is ideologically created within Orientalist discourse. In *Zero Degrees*, this binary is complicated. Whereas Klunchun is made to carry the burden of representing the exotic oriental other, Khan escapes it. Kwan comments that *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* failed to level the inequity between Bel and Klunchun, but also notes that the piece raises issues that hark back to debates about interculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s. As I've already noted, that was a time when single-issue pressure groups were working to change society's attitudes towards particular identities, mainly in terms of gender, ethnicities, or sexualities. Some artists at the time chose to make works in support of this by exploring the politics of individual identities, including, for example, the two duets, *My Sex Our Dance* and *Rotary Action* mentioned earlier in this chapter, which explored male sexualities. Western society in the twenty-first century believes it has taken these issues on board and is now more tolerant. While some people still hold some of their old prejudices about non-normative identities, the strategies employed by

23. Lorna Sanders, "'I Just Can't Wait to Get to the Hotel': Zero Degrees (2005)," http://www.akramkhancompany.net/html/akram_essay.php?id=16.

24. This is a device that Cherkaoui has used in other works.

artists to challenge prejudices in the 1980s and early 1990s no longer have the same impact. It is now generally recognised that individuals think of themselves as having multiple overlapping identites. *Zero Degrees* is about Khan's complicated identifications as someone British, with a middle-class education, of Muslim cultural heritage, and from an immigrant Bangladeshi family. *Zero Degrees* acknowledges the complexity of these identifications, while in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* Bel's white European identity is presented as normal and thus implicitly unmarked, in contrast with Klunchun's oriental otherness.

I argued that Monnier and La Ribot perform a non-traditional friendship in which each friend responds selflessly to the needs of another from a position of strangeness and distance. A non-traditional friendship occurs in the story that is told in *Zero Degrees* but not, I suggest, in the actual performance of friendship on stage. The story tells of Khan's acknowledgment of the implicit ethical demand made by the relative of the dead man on the train. It also tells of Khan's cousin's recognition of Khan's own vulnerability when faced with the border guards. On stage, however, while Cherkaoui supports Khan, the piece is clearly Khan's, just as *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* is Bel's piece. In neither *Zero Degrees* nor *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* can one find the kind of shared collaboration exemplified by *Gustavia.* Monnier and La Ribot, I have argued, seem equal but different from one another. Bel and Klunchun are very different from one another but, as Foster points out, the dramaturgy of the piece does not adequately address the lack of equality between the two dancers. The choreography and dramaturgy of *Zero Degrees,* however, work to minimise the differences between Cherkaoui and Khan so that the performance of friendship between them on stage is fraternal, where like responds to like.

What emerge from this reading of the two pieces are problems in the way each performs friendship. In *Zero Degrees* the problem is partly a consequence of the way that the differences between Cherkaoui and Khan are minimised rather than acknowledged, and of the comparatively conventional, narrative structure of the piece and its reliance on affecting but ultimately conventional storytelling. It focuses on the emotional aspects of the incident on the train but seems to accept that these things happen without analyzing why. By doing this through a performance of a traditional fraternal friendship, it effectively closes down a potential for thinking differently about responsibility in relationships. *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* seeks to take an alternative position by utilising a deconstructive dramaturgical structure that does not try to gloss over the differences between Bel and Klunchun. However, it fails to recognise the inequities that, as Kwan points out, are laid bare but not overcome in the piece. Bel and Klunchun perform a friendship that is non-traditional and not fraternal but which, problematically, turns out to be a short-term, expedient, pure relationship. As Kwan suggests, their performance reveals a problem but does not

seem to recognise the requirement of taking responsibility. Performances of friendship that ungovern, I am suggesting, are ones that recognise difference and take some kind of responsibility.

PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP 2: *CHEAP LECTURE* AND *THE COW PIECE*

The on-stage partnership between Burrows and Fargion, which first appeared with *Both Sitting Duet* in 2003, exemplifies the kind of passivity that Blanchot identifies in relationships. As I will show through readings of *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*, this passivity makes the ethics of their performance into something aesthetic.

Cheap Lecture (see figure 9) is a lecture performance based on a musical structure derived from John Cage's 1950 *Lecture on Nothing*, and is performed with recorded and live piano music that makes reference to the music of Franz Schubert (1797–1828). A succession of key words from the spoken text are projected from a slide presentation on a screen behind the two performers. The spoken text is read out from a score, whose pages are dropped to the floor when completed. *The Cow Piece*, which was made at the same time and is generally performed immediately after *Cheap Lecture* without an intermission, also makes reference to Schubert and uses the same Cagean structure. Whereas in *Cheap Lecture* the spoken word is predominant, *The Cow Piece,* which Burrows and Fargion perform side by side from behind small tables, is a spectacularly unpredictable, almost chaotic combination of different kinds of material including singing, playing folk music on a mandolin, mouth organ, and harmonium, spoken text (including an extract from Shakespeare's *Richard III*), gestures, dance steps, and the movements of twelve children's plastic toy cows, six each for Burrows and Fargion, which, as Deborah Jowitt puts it, are handled 'rhythmically, decisively, and often violently'.[25] Schubert's music is cited in both pieces, which were commissioned for an arts festival in a Belgian castle that has a rare piano from 1826 which Schubert once played.

In *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*, Burrows and Fargion set about deconstructing and unworking elements of contemporary dance and conventions that have developed around its performance that might up until then have been thought to be essential. Part of the popularity and success of the ten duos

25. Deborah Jowitt, "Pairs Made in Heaven: Reitz & Rudner, Burrows & Fargion," *Dancebeat* blog, *Arts Journal* online, November 6, 2011, http://www.artsjournal.com/dancebeat/2011/11/pairs-made-in-heaven-reitz-rudner-burrows-fargion/

Figure 9 Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion in *Cheap Lecture* (2009). Photo by Herman Sorgeloos.

that, at the time of writing, Burrows and Fargion have made together[26] is that they trouble normative ideas about dance in a subtle but infectiously humorous way. Burrows and Fargion are generous artists in ways that two quotations from Burrows's *A Choreographers Handbook*, articulate. This book was written around the time that *Cheap Lecture* was being made and sections of the same text appear in both. In his book Burrows writes, 'Dance, as a whole, is a generous art form' and 'human-scale is one of the most generous things that dance can offer an audience.'[27] Both *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece* are human-scale pieces. The performers are close to the audience and most of the individual actions that are performed are within the capabilities of most people; they are performed with the democratic virtuosity that was discussed in chapter 4. *Cheap Lecture* is also generous to the audience in so far as, during the course of it, Burrows and Fargion explain exactly what they're doing and give a lot of information about the sources of the artistic ideas in it—such as the Cagean structure, and Schubert and the piano—while offering helpful hints about how to relax and enjoy the performance.

26. These are *Both Sitting Duet* (2002), *The Quiet Dance* (2005), *Speaking Dance* (2006), *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece* (2009), *Counting to One Hundred* and *One Flute Note* (2011), *Show and Tell* (2007/2013), *Rebel Against Limit* (2014), and *Body Not Fit for Purpose* (2014).

27. Jonathan Burrows, *A Choreographers Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2010), 207, 203.

If *A Choreographers Handbook* is, in effect, a self-help book for choreographers, based on Burrows's notes from the workshops he has led for many years with early career choreographers, one of the things that *Cheap Lecture* does is to offer self-help advice to audiences. Neither book nor performance tells people what to do. Much of *A Choreographers Handbook* consists of questions and, rather than answer these, the book suggests processes by which one might think through the issues that the questions raise and recognise where one stands in relation to these. It often, for example, notes that many people approach an individual problem in a particular way, and then points out that there is another diametrically opposed way of dealing with it which some people find more useful. If *A Choreographers Handbook* is very even-handed and fair in the way it validates many different ways of making dance, *Cheap Lecture* is just about Burrows and Fargion's own processes and the philosophy underlying them. What the two of them do in these two duos is radical and subversive, but the way they do it is generous and ethical in a radically passive way.

There is an ethical dimension to the performance of friendship in *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*. One of the things that critics and scholars have commented on in Burrows and Fargion's previous duos is the pleasure to be derived from observing the friendly way in which they interact on stage. Burrows, in an interview with Ixiar Rozas, comments on this relationship and how it changes in *Cheap Lecture*. Burrows explains that they found by accident

> what we had been waiting and looking for, which is a different relationship between each other than this transparent, friendly relationship of the trilogy. In *Cheap Lecture* it's mainly Matteo who speaks, and my relationship to him is more or less entirely through the 139 slide projections [of key words from the spoken text] which I have to coordinate precisely to his words. I like this passing of communication through another medium before it arrives at the other person; it's liberating after the 'on your skin' ethos of the previous pieces, and it lets the audience in in a different way.[28]

It is significant that Burrows and Fargion are evidently conscious of the way their relationship has become part of their performances. What Burrows says here, that in *Cheap Lecture* they relate to one another through another medium, resonates with Irigaray's proposal about there being something between partners that will never belong to either of them. Their performance of friendship

28. Ixiar Rozas and Jonathan Burrows, "Interview on Voice, Language and Body", http://www.jonathanburrows.info/#/text/?id=45&t=content.

is therefore not one that betrays any intimate confidences. Burrows's on-stage operation of a laptop computer to change the slides is, of course, not the only thing that allows him to relate to Fargion from a position of difference. The piece as a whole makes its demand on the two performers, and, by working to do the best they can to perform it, they let go of something individual and become more impersonal than they have been in earlier duos. Their singularities are nevertheless apparent, and the ease with which they are able to work together is evident by default rather than by intention.

Their working relationship is explored in another way in *The Cow Piece*, where Burrows and Fargion each made his own solo independently, and then they had to work out how to perform them together, finding the chance moments where there seemed to be connections. Burrows told Gia Kourlas:

> We're interested in formal musical counterpoint which we disrupt and distort through the act of performing. Our thought is that we're not trying to express ourselves but rather to lose our selves in a field of expression. In a theoretical world that might sound idealistic, but its interesting politically and we recognise that that loss of self into the whole underpins a lot of shared dance and music practice. Paradoxically of course the result is that you become more present and visible, because you've escaped your expectations of what you thought you should be doing.[29]

Burrows and Fargion's friendship becomes apparent in the kind of radically passive way Blanchot identifies when he says, 'We were friends and we did not know it.' This kind of passivity underlies Blanchot's of idea of the relation between ethics and aesthetics that has been discussed in previous chapters. In chapter 6, I noted Blanchot's discussion of the artist's responsibility to art as a responsibility to allow oneself to be transformed 'into nobody, the empty, animated space where art's summons is heard'.[30] The loss of self that Burrows mentions in his discussion with Kourlas not only allows his relationship with Fargion to become evident but is, in effect, inextricable from the kind of artistic practice underpinning the creation and performance of works like *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*. To more deeply appreciate how this happens, it is necessary to look at the structure of these pieces and their relationship with Cage's *Lecture on Nothing*.

29. Gia Kourlas and Jonathan Burrow, "Interview with Gia Kourlas for the *Village Voice*, New York, 2011," http://www.jonathanburrows.info/#/text/?id=115&t=content.

30. Maurice Blanchot, *The Siren's Song* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 73.

Cheap Lecture, The Cow Piece, and *Lecture on Nothing* all share the same structure both at macro and micro levels. Each piece is made up of five sections of a predetermined number of measures in the proportion 7, 6, 14, 14, 7. The sum of these is 48, and each measure is similarly made up 48 individual units or segments also in the proportion 7, 6, 14, 14, 7. Cage's printed version of *Lecture on Nothing* arranges these into a table with twelve rows, divided into four columns, as the following table shows:

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	1
2	3	4	5
6	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	1
2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13
14	1	2	3
4	5	6	7

Burrows and Fargion did not lay out the score for *Cheap Lecture* in this format,[31] but, to clarify the way they use Cage's structure, I have arranged the opening measure of their piece into a twelve-row, four-column table.

As James Pritchett explains in his study of Cage's music, this structure treats *Lecture on Nothing* 'as a piece of music, thus using the same structure and methods as for a musical composition'.[32] Burrows and Fargion use this structure and method in a similar way in *Cheap Lecture*, while in *The Cow Piece*, as already noted, a much greater diversity of different kinds of material are arranged in this format, as if they are finding out how they feel about Cage's

31. Full scores for both *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*, together with scores for some of their other duos, are available from the Motion Bank, "Online Scores," http://scores.motion-bank.org/ (accessed January 25, 2015).

32. James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55.

*	*	When we least think	we are working is
when we be-	gin to work.	*	Accepting what comes
easily is	not the same	thing as ac-	cepting what is
easy.	Accepting what comes	easily means	not confusing
effort and	result:	things made	with effort
sometimes show only effort	things made with	ease are	not necessarily
easy.	*	*	Some
things made with effort	also ar-	rive at ease,	some
things made with	ease	*	*
are effortless.	*	*	*
*	The proceeding	sentence,	about what comes
easily,	for instance,	did not	come easily.

process and testing how far his structure can be pushed. The structures they devised for subsequent duos have sometimes used the 7, 6, 14, 14, 7 form but without the same close dialogue with Cage's work.

Pritchett argues that in Cage's *Lecture* each of the five sections deals with a different aspect of musical composition: 'The first, second, and third sections deal with form, structure, and materials, while the fifth section deals with method.'[33] The fourth section, he suggests, is different, taking a more meditative form of a repeated, soporific mantra that relates to Cage's interest in the American-inflected approach to Zen Buddhism that he was introduced to by T. D. Suzuki. What Burrows and Fargion did was to translate Cage's lecture into choreographed gestural material, just as, in *Both Sitting Duet*, they had translated Morton Feldman's *For John Cage,* a piece for piano and violin. *Cheap Lecture* not only works with the structural principle of *Lecture on Nothing* but also translates it at the level of individual bits of material and sets up a dialogue between Cage's philosophy and their own. Thus one of the most memorable lines in Cage's lecture, 'this is a lecture on nothing and I am saying it', becomes 'we don't know what we're doing and we're doing it.' Both statements are about emptying the self in order to become more open to something from outside. For Cage, emptying the self and embracing nothingness is a step in a process towards transcendence and enlightenment.

33. Ibid., 56.

Burrows and Fargion's statement suggests a pragmatic openness to new possibilities that are not yet understood. They in effect secularise Cage's mysticism while testing his structural principles to breaking point. Their translation of Cage's structure and method, and their dialogue with his philosophy produce a situation in which they are able to move beyond the kinds of performances of friendship in their previous duos and find a new unworked approach.

In her review of a New York performance of *Cheap Lecture* and *The Cow Piece*, Deborah Jowitt cleverly detects a theme of love and death in *The Cow Piece*:

> Burrows actually says those words [love and death] at one fast-paced point. Then there's the dialogue that Fargion conducts in two voices between death and an unwilling victim; it sounds like a clumsy translation of the Schubert lieder "Death and the Maiden" (sample: "Go away, you fierce skeleton!"). To a foot-tappingly jaunty tune, the men tell us "Don't fear the reaper." Oh, right. We saw how you two toyed with those cows. We're ready to be very afraid. As soon as we stop laughing.[34]

Jowitt is referring to a song that Schubert composed in 1817 whose main themes he subsequently reworked for the better-known string quartet of 1824; Schubert's chord sequences are sampled in both duos. Fargion enacts the dialogue between Death and the frightened maiden while pointing back and forth between two of his cows, one black and white, the other brown and white, which he has placed confronting one another head on at the front of his little table. At the end of the sequence he knocks one of them so that it falls onto the floor. Other references to death in the piece include a popular comic song 'The Mother's Lament' in which a mother gives her baby a bath but it is so tiny that it goes down the plug hole and ends up in heaven; the words of the song 'Cheek to Cheek', made famous by Fred Astaire, which include 'I'm in heaven'; and Dido's lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* ('when I am laid, am laid in earth'). Just as in *Cheap Lecture* in which Burrows and Fargion secularise Cage's mysticism, *The Cow Piece* debunks the sentimentality of the German Romantic view of love and death.

34. Jowitt, n. 25.

FRIENDSHIP AND DEATH

I've noted the ways in which the theme of death appears in all of the duos I've discussed. Klunchun talked about his mother dying, and Khan witnessed a man dying in the railway carriage. Monnier, La Ribot, and Bel, like Burrows and Fargion, treat death either in a secular, matter of fact way or for comic effect, debunking any potential for sentimentality that the idea might contain. It is no accident that all these duos in which the performance of friendship is central also touch on the topic of death. Blanchot writes of 'death suddenly powerless, if friendship is the response that one can hear and make heard only by dying ceaselessly'.[35] This is a typically paradoxical statement from Blanchot which nevertheless is suggestive when applied to danced duos; thus the performance of friendship can make death powerless by showing the dancers dying ceaselessly. From an existential point of view, we are all dying or, to put this another way, to be human is to know that one is going to die. The liveness of performance is therefore defined by its relation to death, but if the dead live because they are recalled by friends, then the performance of friendship is one that, as Blanchot suggests, makes death powerless.

As I noted earlier, for Blanchot, a friend's answer to a call precedes any conscious decision. What answers this call is something that, for Levinas, is instinctively ethical within the subject. Levinas argued that responsibility is 'the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity'.[36] The core of being that responds to the call from the other is finite, death bringing it to an end. In my discussion of all the duos, I have investigated the ways in which dance artists have responded to this demand. In *Gustavia, Cheap Lecture*, and *The Cow Piece*, individuals responded in a more impersonal way than in the more traditional one in *Zero Degrees* and the limited, 'pure relationship' in *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*. Blanchot's and Derrida's discussions of friendship offer a model for this ethical responsibility, the response that the self makes to the infinite demand of the other. The impersonality of the ethical response, for Blanchot, can blur the boundaries between private and collective relations. This is why both he and Derrida discuss the politics of friendship. For Burrows and Fargion, and also for Monnier and La Ribot, although they have not articulated it in these terms, the politics of their friendship is

35. Blanchot, n. 11, 29.

36. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburg, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 95.

significant because it exemplifies an openness towards the new and unconventional. Their duos ungovern the conventions and traditions of dance performance, debunking sentimental, romantic ideas about love and death. The ethics of their performances of friendship are aesthetic. This is something that *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* and *Zero Degrees* fail to achieve. The next chapter investigates the choreography of an ethical aesthetic within the political context of the Egyptian Revolution during the so-called Arab Spring.

8

Dancing Relationality

Responsibility without Obligation

Insurrections and uprisings at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century have captured the imagination of the Western left. This was particularly the case with those that took place in Arab countries during the so-called Arab Spring[1] and other European protests, including those against austerity and neoliberalism by Los Indignados in Barcelona, Madrid, and other cities, and the related Occupy Movement in the City of London and in New York's financial district. At the time Michael Hardt and Toni Negri hailed the Arab uprisings as an example of a new way of thinking about politics. In their article 'Arabs Are Democracy's New Pioneers', published in *The Guardian* newspaper on February 25, 2011, Hardt and Negri commented on the non-hierarchical nature of the events in Tunis, Cairo, Bahrain, and Benghazi. 'The multitude,' they wrote,

> is able to organise itself without a centre . . . the prevalence in the revolts of social network tools, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, are symptoms, not causes, of this structure. They are the modes of expression of an intelligent population capable of organising autonomously.[2]

1. On a visit to Cairo in February 2015, I asked whether the term Arab Spring had any currency in Egypt. It was cold, and during the first two days of my visit, there had been a sand storm. This was spring weather, I was told. Spring was not, therefore, a meaningful metaphor, in an Egyptian context, for uprising and revolution.

2. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "Arabs Are Democracy's New Pioneers," *The Guardian*, February 25, 2011, 14.

Hardt and Negri here are discussing alternative, non-hierarchical forms of social organisation that became possible through the use of social media. The Arab countries to which they refer had encouraged the development of their Internet infrastructure to attract international investment without realising the uses that educated young people would make of it. In Egypt, unlike many other countries in the Arab world, there was no government surveillance or censorship of the Internet before the 2011 Revolution. Therefore, as Helga Tawil-Souri notes:

> The revolutionary role of the media was not that in and of itself it managed to uproot Mubarak's dictatorship but that it allowed for the uprooting and the deterritorialization of state-controlled and anti-regime communication.[3]

But revolutions, as Mohamed Samir El-Khatib and others point out, don't take place from behind a keyboard but happen when people take to the streets and actively engage in demonstrations.[4] Revolutions are about the occupation of spaces, not only through the physical presence of the crowd but generally also through the politically symbolic value of the spaces that are being occupied.[5] The insurrection has an energy of its own that comes from the kinds of relations that it enables. The exchanges of information and the articulation of complaints, hopes, and aspirations that were being shared on social media informed and fed into the energies evolving on the streets. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, argues:

> No one will be able to stop or guide the insurrection, which will function as a chaotic reactivation of the energies of the body of the socius, which has for too long been flattened, fragmented, lobotomised.[6]
>
> In street demonstrations, the social and erotic body . . . is finding rhythm and empathy. The main stake of street demonstrations is the reactivation

3. Helga Tawil-Souri, "Egypt's Uprising and the Shifting Spatialities of Politics," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 1 (2012): 166.

4. Mohamed Samir El-Khatib, "Tahrir Square as Spectacle: Some Exploratory Remarks on Place, Body and Power," *Theatre Research International* 38, special issue no. 2 (2013): 104–15. See also Khalid Amine, "Re-Enacting Revolution and the New Public Sphere in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco," *Theatre Research International* 38, special issue no. 2 (2013): 87–103.

5. El-Khatib discusses the political, historical, and cultural centrality of Tahrir Square. El-Khatib, n. 4.

6. Franco Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e), 2008), 49.

> of the body of the general intellect. Bodily sensibility, blurred and stressed by precarity and competition, are finding new modes of expression so that desire may begin flowing again.[7]

Berardi shares hopes that are very similar to Hardt and Negri's about the potential of recent uprisings, but places the feeling and expressive body at the centre of his analysis rather than Internet-based networks. Indeed, Berardi, in his focus on bodily sensibility, could almost be discussing dance. It is a particular connection between dance and an uprising that is the subject of this chapter, which brings together a canonical improvised dance performance, Steve Paxton's *Magnesium* (1972) and a blog by the Cairo-based dance artist Adham Hafez, where he talks about his experiences as part of a revolutionary Egyptian crowd on January 25, 2011.

I have deliberately chosen here to discuss a dance work that is much older than any other in this book because it shows the emergence of something that is now so familiar and central to contemporary dance practice but that was, at the time, so new that it didn't yet even have the name contact improvisation. Similarly, Hafez's account of the Egyptian Revolution was written at a time when its outcome was unknowable. Embracing the unknowable and not trying to make it conform to the known and familiar is an important principle that I will return to later in this chapter. These two examples have also been chosen because both blogging and dance work involve responding to complex, shifting, unstable, and sometimes violent circumstances. As the participants in these initiate an approach towards the other across barriers of difference, they take responsibility in a way that is, I argue, political. These are situations which raise issues that are simultaneously ethical and aesthetic.

It is around questions about the nature of responsibility that the fields of ethics and aesthetics overlap. They do so where responsibility functions without obligation. This is the opposite of the way responsibility is generally viewed in contemporary society, as a matter of moral and legal obligation. Obligation implies some sort of social contract. The idea of ethical responsibility, which derives from the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, is about an involuntary response that comes before any conscious decision is made. Contact improvisation, as I will show, is a form that deliberately attempts to engineer situations in which instinctual, pre-conscious movements initiate the dance. In his account of being part of the crowd on the streets of Cairo during the revolution, Hafez describes a similar kind of instinctual, pre-conscious

7. Ibid., 143. For discussion of Berardi's concept of the general intellect, see chapter 4 .

responsiveness, and writes about his experiences as if he is dancing. Both, I suggest, exemplify what Levinas calls responsibility.

The dancer has responsibility towards the others with whom she performs—I have discussed this in relation to duos and group pieces—and a responsibility towards her audience and to her art. A person's acknowledgment of these responsibilities does not involve giving anything up but is about being unselfish. This unselfishness takes place in a space between responding and taking responsibility. Sandra Noeth has written about a state between response and responsibility, between decision and obligation, between parting and participating.[8] When someone responds to an other and moves towards them from her or his position of singularity, both the fear of difference and the fear of loss of self become sources of uneasiness. Artists in their creative practice make a similar passage as they respond to the needs of art, and this is also uneasy going because of the risk involved in approaching the new and unknown in an unselfish way. Where contemporary dance is concerned, dance artists put their own dancing bodies at risk. This is to move beyond what the dancer already knows about her or his physical potential.

My aim in this chapter is to reflect on these instances where artistic practice foregrounds questions regarding a kind of responsibility that is not about obligations or judgements but about an ethics of relationality. This is something, I argue, that Paxton's *Magnesium* and Hafez's description of his participation in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution both exemplify. In *Magnesium*, the dancers distribute and share amongst themselves flows of energy by making instantaneous reactions in response to situations of risk and violence. These arise because the dancers spend most of the piece deliberately colliding with one another in ways that, retrospectively, can be seen to anticipate the development of the form contact improvisation. *Magnesium*, I suggest, offers a performative model of the way responsiveness leads to a kind of responsibility which seems to be either without or beyond obligation. As *Magnesium* does this, however, it generates disquietude because of its violence. A potential for violence, following Levinas, is inherent in the uneasy relation with the other. My argument is that the kind of responsiveness that Hafez and the crowd of young people found themselves embodying on the streets of Cairo during the revolution allowed them to perceive alternative models of political relations. A similar responsiveness occurred through *Magnesium*'s sometimes violent collisions that can also allow us to imagine the new kinds of relations that Hardt and Negri posit.

8. Noeth 2011 Vienna. The first version of this chapter was written in response to a position paper written by Noeth and was presented at a colloquium which she and Walter Huen organised at Tanzquartier Wien in April 2011.

The first version of this chapter was a conference paper presented a few weeks after the events that Hafez describes in his blog.[9] It was revised during and after a trip to Cairo in February 2015, four years after the 2011 revolution and now concludes with a brief discussion of a short film *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* by the Egyptian film-maker Lana Al-Sennawi that was made after the revolution. Thinking through the kind of ethics underlying the danced relationships in *Magnesium* offers opportunities for rethinking, in retrospect, the creative potential of the 2011 Revolution and in Al-Sennawi's film, and to validate subsequent, ongoing, and persisting attempts to find responsible ways of being and acting with and for one another, and the role that dance has been playing to help imagine these alternatives.

WHAT THE BODY CAN DO

Since relations between bodies are central to these reflections, I begin with two approaches to questions about ethics in which the body is a central concern, looking first at Spinoza and Deleuze, and then at Levinas. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza pointed out that no one understands the totality of what the body can do:

> For what the body can do no one has hitherto yet determined, that is to say, experience has taught no one hitherto what the body, without being determined by the mind, can do and what it cannot do from the laws of nature alone, insofar as nature is considered merely as corporeal.[10]

Gilles Deleuze, in his 1980 seminar on Spinoza, took up this idea that our potential as embodied beings always exceeds our understanding of our bodies. In exploring this idea that the body's potential remains open and unknowable, Deleuze takes up a left-libertarian position by contrasting morality and ethics:

> Morality is the system of judgement. Of double judgement, you judge yourself and you are judged. Those who have the taste for morality are those who

9. The conference 'Scores No. 3: Uneasy Going' was held at Tanzquartier Vienna, April 4–9, 2011. A version of the paper was published as 'Reflections on Steve Paxton's *Magnesium*' in Walter Heun et al., eds., *Scores No. 3. Uneasy Going* (Vienna: Tanzquartier Wien, 2013), 6–15.

10. Spinoza *Ethics* 3, prop. 2, scholium Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. W. H. White, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), 101. 'Etenim quid corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit hoc est neminem hucusque experientia docuit quid corpus ex solis legibus naturæ quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere et quid non possit nisi a mente determinetur.'

> have the taste for judgement. Judging always implies an authority superior to Being, it always implies something superior to an ontology. . . .
>
> . . . In an ethics, it is completely different, you do not judge. In a certain manner you say: whatever you do, you will only ever have what you deserve [quoique vous fassiez, vous n'aurez jamais que ce que vous méritez]. Somebody says or does something, you do not relate it to values. You ask yourself how is that possible? How is this possible in an internal way. . . .
>
> . . . The point of view of an ethics is: of what are you capable, what can you do? Hence a return to this sort of cry of Spinoza's: what can a body do [qu'est-ce que peut un corps]? We never know in advance what a body can do. We never know how we're organised and how the modes of existence are enveloped in somebody.[11]

So for Deleuze, there is no moral obligation to behave in an ethical way. Morals limit individuals, whereas a Spinozan ethics—as a doctrine of the happy life—encourages individuals to realise their potential. In Spinoza's philosophy, good relations with like-minded individuals increase joy which, as Brian Massumi points out, is not a synonym with positive emotion; it does not mean 'happy'.[12] For Deleuze, judging oneself in relation to higher, transcendent values diminishes affect. The encounter with the other is therefore an encounter with something unknowable that is a potential source of intensification of affect. Both of my examples, *Magnesium* and the experiences described in Hafez's blog, are instances where there is an openness to the potential available through encounters with the unknown.

Emmanuel Levinas would appear to hold a very different view of ethical responsibility. In his philosophy, I respond to an infinite demand to take care of the needs of the other. What compels me to acknowledge my responsibility is something that Levinas calls 'Face', which is in effect the expressiveness of the other's body. The way the body of the other expresses its precariousness and vulnerability places a responsibility on me to take care of the needs of others. Recognition of this precariousness and vulnerability, Levinas notes, might seem to invite me to commit an act of violence; at the same time, this recognition is what forbids me from killing.[13] I have mentioned a passage between response and responsibility. Reading through my earlier paper, Hafez commented that in Arabic the word

11. Gilles Deleuze, "Le Cours De Gilles Deleuze. Spinoza Ontology—Ethics:.21/12/1980," http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=190&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2

12. Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 208.

13. "The face is what one cannot kill, or at least that whose *meaning* consists in saying 'Thou shalt not kill.'" Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburg, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 87.

Mas'oleya meaning 'responsibility' shares the same root—*Sa 'a la*—as the word *So'al* meaning 'question'. In English *response* is synonymous with 'answer' and 'reply' rather than question. So in Arabic, the meaning of responsibility lies in the account of oneself that one is called to give before the other.

If the encounter with the other and the questioning that responsibility involved are uneasy going, so too is existence itself. In the 1940s, Levinas wrote about the rumbling of being 'un bruit revenant après toute negation du bruit' ('a ghostly sound that remains after all negation of sound').[14] This is closely related to what his friend Maurice Blanchot called the disaster of existence. Levinas gives insomnia as an example: 'Dans l'insomnie, on peut et on ne peut dire q'il y a un "je" qui n'arrive pas à dormir . . . Je ne veille pas: "ça" veille' (In insomnia, one can and cannot say that there is an 'I' which cannot manage to fall asleep . . . I do not stay awake: 'it' stays awake').[15] The French word *la veille* not only means being awake but also wakefulness, watchfulness, a vigil, staying up in the night, or watching all night over a corpse before a funeral. *La veille* is thus related to *surveiller* and to the English word 'surveillance'. Responsibility before the other, Levinas suggests, derives from this impersonal watchfulness or surveillance and such responsibility seems to stop this anonymous and senseless rumbling of being. Levinas speaks of this, in terms of the French phrase, *il y a* (there is). '*Il*' here is like the impersonal 'it' as in *il pleut* (it rains). The social relation with the other, he argues, is a disinterested relation. The uneasy 'it' that stays watchfully awake is the same as the being that is disinterestedly responsible for the other.[16] This uneasy 'it', I will show, is watchfully observant both in *Magnesium*, and in the experiences Hafez describes in his blog.

Erin Manning points out that in Levinas 'responsibility is always the question of the response elicited by the face of the other and the face always remains without content'.[17] She suggests that the chapter 'Year Zero Faciality' in Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus* is a critique of the humanism in Levinas's concept of 'the face'.[18] In order to avoid personalising the face of the

14. Ibid., 49; *Éthique et infini* (Paris: Libraire Arthème Fayard et Radio-France, 1982), 39.

15. Levinas, n. 13, 49; Levinas n. 14, 39.

16. This discussion is informed by the chapter 'Il y a' in Simon Critchley, *Very Little . . . Almost Nothing* (London: Routledge, 2004), 35–98.

17. Erin Manning, *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 72.

18. Deleuze and Guattari write, 'Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations.' Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 168.

other, she distinguishes between being responsible *for* the other and responsible *before* the other. Being responsible *for,* she argues 'reeks of benevolence', whereas being responsible *before* 'is to engage at the nonhuman limit of the barely active where a *life* is restlessly agitating'.[19] The uneasy 'it' in the self is responsible before the uneasy 'it' that is the face of the other. It is this neutral, secularised kind of responsibility that I am concerned with in Paxton's *Magnesium* and in Hafez's account.

As I noted earlier, ethics meets aesthetics where the individual's responsibility before an other meets the artist's responsibility to their art. In chapter 7, I noted Maurice Blanchot's discussion of the artist's responsibility. Blanchot has argued that it is a mistake to believe that artists must sacrifice everything for (or before) their art or exhaust themselves for its sake. He notes instead that 'if the artist runs a risk it is because the work itself is essentially a risk. By belonging to the work, it is likewise to the risk that he belongs'.[20] Being responsible here means recognising this belonging to the work. Responsibility is not the same as agency. Trying to make things happen can sometimes have negative consequences if one does not understand or is not sufficiently sensitive towards the situation as a whole. The artist, in Blanchot's account, does not make the work of art, it makes itself through her or his unselfish commitment to it. The kind of responsibility and, from its meaning in Arabic, questioning, that I will argue is exemplified in both the practices invented in *Magnesium* and recorded in Hafez's blog, is responsibility for making sure that things happen, and ensuring that people or things realise their potential. Rather than acting, responsibility is primarily about having an awareness and moving in ways that help to see things through.

THE ETHICS OF KEEPING IT GOING: *MAGNESIUM*

Following Deleuze and Levinas, my proposition is that the disquieting passage from responsiveness to responsibility is both one of potentiality and a watchful recognition of precariousness, and that watchfulness enables the realisation of potentiality. Neither Deleuze nor Levinas describes the kind of responsibility that forms the basis of the moral codes inscribed in Western society through organised religion and the judicial system. Their non-judgmental approach to responsibility and relationality—one that is ethical rather than moral—offers

19. Manning, n. 17, 72.

20. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 236.

a useful basis for analysing the kinds of relations that come about during performances of works like Paxton's *Magnesium*.[21]

Magnesium was a performance in a large gym that was the culmination of a series of workshops in January 1972 that Steve Paxton had run with male students at Oberlin College in Ohio. This was part of a three-week residency at the college by the improvisation collective the Grand Union, of which Paxton was a member. The action mostly takes place on gym mats that have been pulled together in the middle of the space. The audience is hardly visible, leaning against the walls at the edge of the room or standing looking down from first-floor balconies overlooking the space. The men are dressed in their own loose, comfortable clothes rather than a uniform costume. During part of the workshop, out of which the piece evolved, Paxton had been working with the dancers on the martial art form aikido, and in particular aikido rolls. For most of the piece, the dancers engineer collisions between themselves and their fellow participants, sometimes jumping up and aiming their pelvises at a nearby body, sometimes just falling onto that body, and occasionally precipitating multiple collisions. Falling to the mats, they channel the energy of the collisions into rolls inspired by aikido. The piece ends with a five-minute section in which all the participants stand still in what Paxton calls 'The Stand'.[22]

Magnesium has been canonised as the origin of the form contact improvisation. Because of this canonisation, there is a danger of looking at it only for traces of what it is now known that contact improvisation would subsequently become. It is, however, hard to imagine that out of the raw and seemingly chaotic series of collisions in *Magnesium* would come the dynamic, fluid practice of lifting and supporting a partner in close contact. Whereas contact improvisation is a duet form, *Magnesium* is a group piece. Its ending, where all the performers stand still, recalls an earlier piece by Paxton, *State* (1968), in which forty-two performers stand still for three 2-minute sections, with a fifteen-second blackout between each in which to relax and shift or move to a new position. Paxton has explained that after leaving the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1965, he continued taking dance technique classes for about a year and then stopped. 'All that was left of what I had been doing,' he said, 'was

21. A video of *Magnesium* is available from Videoda Contact Improvisation Archive DVD #2 Magnesium, Peripheral Vision, Soft Pallet. Videoda, East Charleston, VT.

22. See Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 60–62; Danielle Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Pratcice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 105–7.

standing, walking and sitting—three pedestrian activities.' But he adds that 'standing I found more and more unpedestrian'.[23] It was through analysing the experience of standing that he found a way on from the more minimalist, pedestrian dances like *State* that he had been making throughout the 1960s, to the anatomically focused exploration of movement—of what the body can do—that has preoccupied him since around the time he created *Magnesium*. We never really stand still, he points out,

> we call it standing still because everybody knows what that means . . . [but] in the midst of standing still something else is occurring and the name for that is the small dance and it is the skeletal muscles that are holding you upright after you have relaxed all the voluntary muscles.[24]

In describing something that remains when all conscious volition is suspended, Paxton identifies something in the experience of moving that bears a remarkable correspondence to what Levinas discusses in terms of 'il y a'. An impersonal 'it' goes on acting at the threshold between instinct and consciousness.

As I mentioned earlier, during the rehearsals for *Magnesium*, Paxton and the dancers took as their starting point aikido rolls, which they practiced in order to be able to fall without hurting themselves. They did not, however, practice a uniform way of colliding. No attempt was made to impose any uniformity. When dancers learn to perform in unison with other dancers, there is a danger that in order to appear more like the others, they might become less like themselves. This is the cost of aspiring towards the attainment of an ideal or the expression of supposedly universal values. In Deleuze's terms, this is to judge oneself in relation to a superior being. Paxton's concerns, by contrast, were ethical in Spinoza's sense of the term. Paxton was seeking something previously unknown about what the body can do without being determined by the mind. Consequently, the dancers in *Magnesium*, as in his earlier group piece *State*, reveal their singularities while creating a common space in which these can appear.

Unlike the relatively neutral ambiance of *State*, the common space that comes into being during *Magnesium* is created out of risky collisions and unpredictable interactions. The performers have to respond to the unexpected in the moment as best they can, without having any time to think about it. Many

23. Steve Paxton, *In the Middle of Standing Still: An Interview with Peter Hulton*, vol. 1, Theatre Papers (Dartington, Devon: Dartington College of Arts, 1977), 6.

24. Ibid., 3.

of these collisions are violent. What Paxton has written about contact improvisation also applies to *Magnesium*:

> Contact improvisation resembles Aikido a lot, in that they are both partnering forms and are both concerned with a very light and appropriate use of energy in fairly dangerous situations, one an act of aggression and the other an act of dance. They both rely on training or manipulating the instinctual reactions in some way.[25]

In a combat situation in a martial art like aikido, one's focus is on reading what the opponent's body is doing in order not just to deflect an attack but also to use its energy rather than one's own to undermine and defuse it. In contact improvisation, the focus is on how the partner's body is moving and on allowing oneself to respond without trying to make anything happen. This poses questions about the kinds of responsibilities that each performer in *Magnesium* has towards those with whom he is colliding. Is it the infinite responsibility that Levinas theorised? How can they be responsible if, following Deleuze and Spinoza, they never know in advance of what the body is capable? Paxton, in effect, addresses this problem in a section of his documentary *Fall After Newton* (1987). He discusses a moment during a duet being danced by Nancy Stark Smith and Curt Siddall when she makes a dangerous fall. (Siddall, incidentally, was also one of the men in *Magnesium*.) The video extract begins at a moment when Siddall seems to have caught Stark Smith in the middle of a jump in front of him. He turns her round through 180 degrees, so that she is falling head first towards the floor. She curves her spine so that she falls on her back with spread arms; Siddall immediately collapses on top of her but she rolls out from under him and sits up.

In the voice-over, Paxton says:

> There are hazards. One of them is thinking ahead. What the body can do to survive is much quicker than thought. It is useful to retrain the reflexes to extend the limbs rather than contract them during a fall. This fall [Stark Smith's] is very disorienting. Nancy's arms manage to cradle her back and this spreads the impact onto a greater area. And she doesn't stop moving. That helps to disperse the impact over a slightly longer time. She doesn't seem bothered.[26]

25. Steve Paxton, *Contact Improvisation*, ed. Peter Hulton, vol. 4, Theatre Papers (Dartington, Devon: Dartington College of Arts, 1981–82), 13.

26. A video of *Fall After Newton* is available from Videoda Contact Improvisation Archive DVD #1 *Chute, Fall After Newton*, Videoda, East Charleston, Vt.

Paxton seems to be with Deleuze and Spinoza in his wonder at the unknowable potential of the dancing body. Just as insomnia makes one aware of the rumbling of being as the disinterested 'it' that stays awake and observant, so the contact improviser witnesses what Paxton calls 'the small dance'—the body's potential to carry out relatively autonomous movements as it adjusts to changing situations such as the fall discussed here.

Levinas speaks of the rumbling sound of existence that persists after all sounds cease, while Paxton speaks of the relatively autonomous movements that remain after all conscious movements are stilled. The dancer puts herself at risk by not consciously making something happen but being responsible for whatever happens—for whatever their body can do. For Levinas and Blanchot, this bare existence is terrible and a disaster, while for Paxton it is affirmative. In his voice-over commentary, Paxton testifies to what was happening for Stark Smith, noting the relatively autonomous responses that stop her landing on her head. As Paxton does so, he does not consider Siddall's role as her partner. This does not mean that Paxton felt Siddall was not taking responsibility. While Stark Smith was falling, Siddall would have been completely aware of what was taking place without knowing precisely what would happen next. The fact that Paxton does not refer to Siddall seems to imply that, during Stark Smith's fall, any attempt by Siddall to stop what he was doing and intervene would almost certainly have made things worse. Keeping going, Paxton points out, helps disperse the impact over a longer time. In such situations it is safer and more productive for everyone to be responsible before the other, to take care of themselves and keep 'it' going, where 'it' is the disinterested watchfulness that I am equating with Levinas's notion of 'il y a'. An impersonal 'it' witnesses the improvisation that is in process of becoming in the space between Siddall and Stark Smith. Keeping this going allows the relatively autonomous motor actions to take their course and allows the work to continue making itself through the dancers' commitment to it.

The passage between responding and taking responsibility, as I noted earlier, is uneasy going and a source of disquietude. Both *Magnesium* and this fragment of a contact duet exemplify the potential for violence in the encounter between self and other. In *The Politics of Touch* (2007), Erin Manning reflects on the violence that takes place when we touch. Touch, she writes, creates

> a reciprocal body-space that challenges the limits of both self and self as other. Touch implies a simplified condensation of the encounter between you and me, refuses to speak only about the point of departure and the point of return. Touch grapples with the impossibility of fusion in the moment of desire that is directed toward you and, reciprocally, toward myself. The violence is not in the moment of apprehension (if touch is reciprocal, I cannot

> touch you 'violently,' that is, without your consent), but in the decision to reach toward. The violence exists in the reaching out toward that which will remain unknowable.[27]

This is an account of the violence inherent in a non-hierarchical encounter when one opens oneself up to the unknowable. It is this risky opening up that, I suggest, was taking place during *Magnesium*. Manning contrasts this with the way that the modern nation-state uses fear of the threat of violence from those who are not like 'us' and wants 'us' to believe are trying to intrude in 'our' space. Within the vocabulary of nationalism and the nation-state, she argues, 'violence reigns as the constant signifier of (in)security'.[28] When the other is defined as an adversary, there is a tendency to see violence as 'the intrusion of the other who must remain outside the bounds of my territory (usually the nation state)'.[29] So, whereas reaching out to touch the other is reaching towards something that will remain unknowable, Manning argues that

> state violence, on the other hand, seems to rely on the pretence that the unknowable could simply be the unknown and therefore potentially conquerable through comprehension and domination.[30]

So whereas Manning condemns the violence that the state exercises to try to maintain its hierarchical system of sovereignty and security, she does not wish to condemn this alternative kind of violence inherent within the gesture of reaching out to make contact with another. This latter, she argues, should not be considered a threat to difference: 'Rather violence can work as a reminder of that very difference that prevents me from being subsumed into the self-same.' And I would add here that disquietude and uneasy going can fulfil a similar function. She goes on, 'Violence can be a manner of writing a body that defies the imposition of stability, that challenges space and time through its sensuality.'[31] The politics of touch that Manning is theorising is therefore one in which an ethics of relationality becomes a model for non-repressive, non-hierarchical, and thus literally anarchic forms of social organisation.

27. Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 52–53.

28. Ibid., 52.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 53.

31. Ibid., 56–57.

Danielle Goldman, in her book on improvised dance, argues that there are parallels between the practice of contact improvisation and non-violent protest:

> At its core, contact improvisation is a practice of making oneself ready for a range of ever-shifting surprises and constraints. When one looks to historical situations in which people have strategically 'put their bodies on the line,' one begins to see the power of a bodily training such as contact improvisation that seeks choices and opportunities for agency—the calmness that gets practiced in The Stand—even in unfamiliar structures of physical duress.[32]

Interestingly, Goldman speaks of making oneself ready rather than of responding or taking responsibility. While I agree with her about the ever-shifting nature of events that improvising dancers confront, I argue for a more complex understanding of what happens in the encounter with the other, which Goldman here sees only in terms of choice and agency. In *Magnesium*, The Stand comes at the end of the piece and is used not as a tactic for dealing with situations of physical duress but to bring closure to a series of violent encounters. Following Manning, I therefore suggest that the dancing bodies in *Magnesium* do not engage in violence in order to comprehend and dominate the other and thus impose stability. Because they find themselves thrown from one collision to another, the men put themselves into situations of risk and instability where the body's relatively autonomous responses take over from conscious control. By breaking out of habitual ways of relating to the other, new potentials for movement emerge. If there is agency here, it arises from letting go and being watchful so that one recognises opportunities, instead of searching for and making deliberate choices. The energy generated and shared within *Magnesium* creates the conditions of possibility for imagining the alternative forms of social organisation that Manning and Hardt and Negri theorise. These are ones in which it becomes possible to acknowledge singularities without subsuming these into the knowable kind of uniformity that Manning calls the self-same.

THE ETHICS OF KEEPING IT GOING: 'THE DAY OF WRATH'

Events in the Arab world in the first few months of 2011 were another terrible example of the kind of repressive state violence that Manning has analysed.

32. Goldman, n. 17, 111.

Each time dictators or a ruling elite were challenged by a mass protest, they tried to characterise those rising against them as Islamic fundamentalists or terrorists—as enemies within. This led to deadly situations in which the security forces violently attacked the people whose security they claimed to ensure. These were states that were said to be spending more money on internal security equipment, much of which was supplied by British arms manufacturers, than on protection against external threats. Paradoxically therefore, to maintain the people's security and stability, the people became the target of violent and deadly assault. In Yemen and Dubai, revolutionary uprisings were unsuccessful, while protests against President Asad's government in Syria led to an increasingly deadly and destabilizing civil war that is, at the time of writing, still going on. In Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, the autocratic governments of long-term dictators were overthrown and there have been attempts, with varying degrees of success, to develop new democratic procedures.

This is the context in which Michael Hardt and Toni Negri wrote their newspaper article about the Arab uprisings and social media. It was during the crucial early days of the Egyptian Revolution that Adham Hafez wrote about his experiences on the streets and posted them on Amchoreo—an English-language blog set up to allow exchange between choreographers in Cairo and Amsterdam. I see Hafez's blog as a contribution to European contemporary dance, not only because it was written in English for European readers but also because Cairo is part of the Mediterranean world and thus can be counted as part of Europe.[33] Hafez's posting is a description of what was taking place on the streets on January 25. What he describes shares some of the characteristics Manning attributed to the alternative violence of touch. Although the post was written at a time when the Egyptian state was ordering Internet service providers to switch off the Internet and mobile phone networks, Hafez saved it and managed to post it on February 14. I have selected some quite lengthy extracts from this posting.

> Today was "Day of Wrath" in Cairo [January 25], where Egyptians went out on the streets demonstrating against depression. Whatever political slogan a group carried was not really what mattered. It was (and still continues as

33. Although I am thus envisioning Europe as overflowing national borders, it is of course more complicated than that. In March 2015 I saw Hafez's *2065 BC*, commissioned by the Hau Theatre, Berlin, for events commemorating the Berlin Conference in 1884, which divided up Africa between European colonial powers. Egypt is a former British colony and part of Africa. The fact that there were a few black audience members, however, made me aware that I had been thinking of Hafez and his cast as European rather than African; depending on the context, they can individually or collectively be perhaps either or both.

I hear from my window) about getting together and screaming. I was never part of any demonstrations or revolutions, since I never trust what this could bring, but today I went out on this day. I found myself running and screaming and crying. We were beaten up, thrown with Tear-gas bombs, hosed down with gushing water, until a state security car hit three young Egyptian males. Then people carried one of the three bodies, and walked in streets, lifting him up like to an altar, and screaming even more. We started then hitting the police men, the state security cars, and eventually began throwing the Tear-gas bombs back at the state security when we received them. . . .

I have not learned about dance or theatre before the way I did today. I must have had a few dance and theatre revelations in my life, of course, but today was something that I learned a lot from. An afternoon of very accelerated learning. People come together, people run in fear, people come together again in pain and in anger, people stop believing suddenly and they stop moving, people get motivated again and they move violently, people are beaten up violently, people throw their bodies at cars, people sleep together on streets until tomorrow morning. No internet, telephone networks keep failing and restarting, and the threat of cutting down power off Midan Tahrir and Talaat Harb Squares is very plausible. Twitter, Facebook, and the independent newspaper websites were shut down in Cairo repeatedly, but restarted again I don't know how. . . .

We ran, we ran so far. I ran also. Because of anger, because of a few women who suddenly started screaming "Horreya, Horreya" (Liberty, Liberty), and I ran to that sound of such a word, and I ran to the movement of a running crowd. We ran from Talaat Harb square to Midan Tahrir, running into a barricade of State Security officers, hundreds of soldiers, and a few huge cars hosing us down with water again. We ran into something violent, but it seemed ok. I learned about where running starts in my body. It starts close to my spine, in my throat sometimes. . . .

This feeling is like the feeling of flying for the first time. Running so fast, into something scary, exhilarating, promising and very unsure of its results. It also feels like stepping from the wings and onto the stage, where my skin pores are as present as my eyes are.[34]

This is a very beautiful, poetic, but also quite humbling description. Hafez draws on his knowledge of dance to try to make sense of his experiences on

34. Adham Hafez, "just to remember, some weeks ago", https://amchoreo.wordpress.com/2011/02/14/just-to-remember-some-weeks-ago/ February 14th 2011.

the streets. The dynamic flow, the rhythm and pace, the rise and ebbing away of energy within the common public space of protest is implicitly equated with the experience of improvisation. In Danielle Goldman's terms, training in improvisation had helped Hafez to be ready for a range of ever-shifting surprises and constraints. Inspirational shouts became the musical accompaniment of this danced intervention in the political whose direction was that of the running crowd. The somatic roots of running are described in a disinterested way that recalls the use of images in a release-based dance workshop. Running, as a relatively autonomous activity, reveals new potentials for what the body can do. Revolutionary political engagement is likened to the thrill of making an entrance onto a theatrical stage.

On January 25 so many people came out to a protest that started around the Supreme Court and the headquarters of the Syndicates of Journalists that there was not enough space in the streets. The protesters walked to Tahrir Square, and even then the streets kept filling up. Hafez later told me that at first the police chased the protestors around Tahrir Square, playing cat and mouse with them.[35] After a while, when the protesters were getting tired, Hafez recalled, they spontaneously, without anything being said, decided as if as one to turn around and run towards the police, who then turned round and ran themselves. The protesters chased all the police out of the square and there was no more police presence there for several months. In his blog he wrote:

> Our dispersed population was then penetrated by the State security squads, and we ran into them again, and they retreated. The minute I pass a place where a state security officer stood, I would feel that I just ate a living human being. A violent exhilarating absorption of surrounding conditions into my body. I suddenly remembered how angry I was to have been stopped on the street many times by the 'security officers'. I was stopped because of the most absurd actions and behaviors. Today I remembered. I remembered I have been angry for a long time.[36]

Just as Hafez describes running as a sensual experience, the violent exhilarating absorption of the experiences around him into his body is also described as in a sensual way. This resonates with Manning's comment about violence defying an imposition of stability through a challenging sensuality. The revolutionary crowd in effect denied the police's imposition of repressive

35. Adham Hafez, conversation with the author, February 14, 2015, Cairo, Egypt.

36. Hafez, "just to remember, some weeks ago" n. 34.

stability by the challenge they were making concerning who could occupy the public space of the square, doing so with the sensuality of their experience.

Manning distinguishes between state violence and the violence of reaching out to touch. Hafez writes that 'we ran into something violent but it seemed ok'. The teargas bombs, water canon, and bullets, whose use had been authorised by the state, were directed indiscriminately against the crowd of protestors marking all of them, uniformly, as enemies. The violence of the protestors, however, seems to have taken the form of what Manning calls 'reaching out towards that which remains unknowable'.[37] This is what I understand from Hafez's statement that he experienced 'something scary, exhilarating, promising and very unsure of its results'. They didn't know what the outcome of the revolution would be but hoped that their violence would transform society. The state, however, used violence to create fear in order to close down and contain the potential that the revolution was opening up. Like the dancers in *Magnesium*, the protestors had to respond to the unexpected in the moment as best they could, without having time to think about it; and, like the *Magnesium* dancers, the protestors in Hafez's account had to take care of themselves and keep it going, where 'it' was the revolutionary energy that had come into being between protestors in the streets.

In his blog Hafez writes about the collective nature of this revolutionary energy:

> I learned what it is to hold space, to make space. I learned the power of moving together. In me, I felt where togetherness could start sometimes, where the place of 'connecting' to another person could be. Sometimes it was in the eyes, sometimes in the whispers or screams. But, most of the time it was desire. It was in attraction. And, perhaps in the space between self-survival instinct and making peace with the fear of pain and of being terminated.[38]

When Hafez writes about the power of moving together and connecting with others, he is describing a crowd of protesters who were behaving in the way that Franco 'Bifo' Berardi attributes to a swarm 'whose behaviour is automatically directed by connective interfaces'.[39] The crowd were taking responsibility, answering the questions that, in the Arabic sense of responsibility, were being asked of them. Hafez gave another example of this call to responsibility.

37. Manning, n. 27, 53.

38. Hafez, "just to remember, some weeks ago" n. 34.

39. Berardi, n.6, 14.

After the day of wrath, the protesters in the streets began to shout up to people looking down on them from the balconies of their apartments, telling them 'you are our family' and calling them to come down and join them. It was a call to become part of the events and allow themselves to become physically involved in the revolution. Here and in his blog Hafez acknowledges the unknowable potential of what the body can do. The feeling and expressive body rather than Internet-based networks was at the centre of the process of politicisation that he describes, leading the search for new ways of relating with one another and thus for these new social and political structures.

As Amy Austin Holmes argues, the occupation of Midan Tahrir 'did not merely serve a practical purpose in the sense that every protest needs a place, a space to exist'. In her view it created a utopian time space:

> The collection of tents became a community. And the community became an experiment: a new way of being together. It was not merely injustice that fuelled the protest movements but also the millenarian belief in the possibility of change, the yearning for a better life. On the midans the people's dream of a better life was however momentarily and imperfectly—made real.[40]

What Hafez describes in his blog is the performing in space of this utopian moment.

When I visited Cairo in February 2015, Hafez told me that he thought one of the lasting legacies of the 2011 Revolution was that people lost their fear of the police. People on the streets had lost their innocence and become much more politically aware, and he himself stated that the body was central to this new awareness. He remembered that, initially, when he asked people in the crowd why they were there, they would mention individual grievances, things that they didn't have but felt they deserved or needed. Later, however, they would reply that they didn't feel represented. The etymology of the Arabic word *Momathel*, which means both 'representative' and 'actor', comes from *Ma tha la*. Acting in a play and being a political representative thus have the same root, which they also share with *Tamtheel be* meaning 'deformation/ mutilation' and *Tamtheleyya* meaning 'play'. People would say about their political representative that he did not really represent them, that he was just acting as if he did. Acting involves not just the voice but the whole body, as the allusions to deformation and mutilation suggest.

40. Amy Austin Holmes, "On Military Coups and Mad Utopias," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, no. 2 (2014): 383.

What emerges from these discussions of Cairo's day of wrath and of *Magnesium* is the way a potential for openness about what the body can do is linked to an ability to recognise and respond, in an unlimited way, to the needs of an other. The disquietude generated during 'the day of wrath' and in *Magnesium* is a reminder, as Manning puts it, of those very differences that prevent me from being subsumed into the self-same. Difference itself is a source of uneasiness. In Levinas's account, a disinterested recognition and witnessing of the other's difference and precarious vulnerability prevents me from wanting to act violently towards something that I feel threatens me. The violence in *Magnesium* is not, however, a defensive reaction against a perceived threat but a consequence of engaging in a situation involving physically risky interactions. Hafez describes the violence of the day of wrath as an outburst of screaming and anger at the police and an outpouring of desire for togetherness with fellow protesters.

AFTERMATH

The 2011 Revolution was followed by a period of military dictatorship, then, after an election, the presidency of Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood administration, and then the 2012 Revolution or coup d'état and the presidency (or some would say dictatorship) of General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi. At the time of writing, in 2016 the freedoms that the anti-Mubarak protesters had hoped for in 2011 have still not materialised, and the state continues to act in a repressive and violently coercive way. One thing that struck me during my visit to Cairo was that despite all this, Hafez and all the Egyptian dancers, actors, film-makers and visual artists I met during my stay, together with Europeans who had lived and worked in Cairo for many years, had all chosen to go on living there rather than leave. Cairo, Egypt, and contemporary Arab art are important to them.

In his blog, Hafez describes a moment on January 25, 2011, when the crowd started singing the Egyptian national anthem. 'I could not stop crying when I was on the street, I could not sing my national anthem "Beladi, Beladi" (Our lands, our lands). I could not sing my national anthem.' This, he later told me, was partly because as a child, he had been made to sing it every day at school in front of the Egyptian flag. This raises questions about identification, which his blog goes on to explore:

> It is not that I disbelieve in what 'our lands' have become now, as much as I don't see myself easily part of one of 'our lands'. I perhaps might belong to a few, or am composed of a few, but I can't stand and sing the anthem of any

> of those. . . . I don't see my nationhood seated comfortably in my genetic make-up anymore.[41]

Singing 'Beladi, Beladi' only exacerbated the violence that the police inflicted on the protesters. It was a performance of nationality and citizenship that contradicted the meaning of the state violence directed against those singing it. At this point, Hafez later told me, he had realised that he had no rights at all as a citizen of Mubarak's Egypt. Yet he and so many others chose to stay in Egypt and to make work that continued to draw on their now politicised awareness of what the body can do. They have persisted in looking for new ways to create meaningful representations of themselves rather than identify with the deformed and mutilated representations put into circulation by the Egyptian democratic process.

Manning, as I noted, proposes that violence 'is a manner of writing a body that defies the imposition of stability, that challenges time and space through sensuality'. I have discussed the way that Hafez's experience during the day of wrath exemplified this challenging sensuality. The spirit of this persists, as my final example demonstrates. *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso: A Tribute to Classical Egyptian Cinema* is a short film by Lana Al-Sennawi that was screened during the 2013 TransDance Festival, which Hafez founded and curates. The film's title refers to the 1988 Italian film of the same name, directed by Giuseppe Tornatore and, in particular, the famous kissing sequence with which it ends. In it, the protagonist, a famous Italian film director, watches a reel of old, scratched, black-and-white film, edited for him by the projectionist at the cinema in his small home town when he was a young boy in the 1940s. It contains all the kisses that the local priest had ordered to be cut from films before they could be shown there. Al-Sennawi has made a similar compilation that consists of kisses from famous Egyptian films of the same period, and she uses the same nostalgic musical soundtrack used in Tornatore's film. Whereas in Italy in the 1980s, it seemed quaint that anyone should want to censor kisses, in Egypt in 2013, because of the increasing influence of Islamists, what had been acceptable in the middle of the twentieth century was now a source of anxiety and fear. As Al-Sennawi explained to May Sélim, she had made the film at the end of 2011, 'It was a way of responding to the Muslim Brotherhood who were in power at that time and who were trying to censor love scenes in Egyptian films. . . . Film classics are often shown on television. Children often

41. Hafez, "just to remember, some weeks ago" n. 34.

watch them with their parents. There are no immoral scenes in them. It is quite normal to express love in film and in society.'[42] The state, under the influence of Islamists, were trying to turn what seemed normal and socially acceptable into something intolerable, an offence against decency.

Hafez gave the TransDance Festival 2013 the subtitle 'Oblivion and Resistance', and used Al-Sennawi's film to explain the idea behind it:

> The sight of the kissing actors produces questions on memory, identity, fear and desires: Can we present this in Egypt now? What happens when a collage of kisses is screened in an Arab capital, almost a century after the production of those kissing scenes?[43] What did we forget, what were we told to forget, what do we care to remember? These questions announce a shift in paradigms, that manifest itself in myriads of ways. Whether articulating body-taboos of the Egypt under-construction, to announcing the current ethical concerns, or to understanding a socio-political series of ruptures that re-wrote the body of the Arab subject repeatedly, reaching to the point that the display of 'historical kisses' from Film history produces trouble, of unequal proportions of fear, desire and political confrontations.[44]

He told me that when the film was screened at the festival, everybody cried. The sensuality of Al-Sennawi's film was a challenge to occupy the common cultural space that conservative forces within the state were trying to close down and eliminate. Screening the film was an act of selfless responsibility, not only to the artistic and intellectual community of Cairo, but also to art itself. Showing it was a risk. I noted earlier Blanchot's proposals about the responsibility artists have to their art and to the risk it involves. 'By belonging to the work,' he wrote, 'it is likewise to the risk that [the artist] belongs.'[45] Al-Sennawi's film, like *Magnesium* and Hafez's blog about the day of wrath, brings together the ethics of this kind of responsibility, the aesthetics of a challenging artistic production, and the politics of the search for new democratic values and procedures.

42. May Sélim, "Festival Transdance: la résistance par les corps et par les âmes," *Hebdo Al-Ahram en ligne*, October 30, 2013, http://hebdo.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/997/5/25/4068/Festival-TransDance--la-r%C3%A9sistance-par-les-corps-e.aspx.

43. The Golden Age of Egyptian cinema is generally considered to be the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The films that Al-Sennawi sampled were over fifty years old.

44. Adham Hafez, "Td13: Oblivion and Resistance," TransDance, http://www.transdance.org/td-2013--2013-1583160815851577.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2015.

45. Blanchot, n. 20, 236.

9

The Politics of History and Collective Memory in Contemporary Dance

A large and still growing number of reconstructions, restagings, re-enactments, revivals, reinventions, and rereadings of dance works from the past have recently been presented, citing pieces that were often, but not always, avant-garde in their day. I shall use the word 're-works' to refer collectively to these kinds of performances. They are a particular kind of adaptation. Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as 'an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art'.[1] Generally, these deliberately revisit pieces that are still within living memory; or, the dance artists who made them are still remembered by some older people so that there is some trail of memories on which the re-work can draw. I am not referring here to revivals by large modern dance or ballet companies of older works that have remained in their repertoires. Nor am I thinking of works like Mats Ek's *Giselle* (1982), Mark Morris's *The Hard Nut* (1991), or Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* (1995) in which choreographers have made adaptations of canonical nineteenth-century ballets that re-work and update their well-known narratives while retaining their popular classical scores. The dance performances that are the subject of this chapter have been produced by independent dance artists working outside the official dance world made up of institutionalised ballet and modern dance companies. In most cases these re-works are adaptations of pieces which in their day were themselves produced outside this dance world, and, because of their radical, critical stance towards it, have therefore not been taken into any company's repertoire. Re-works thus attest to the persistence outside the

1. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, with Siobhan O'Flynn (London: Routledge, 2006), 176.

centre ground of contemporary dance production of different, generally more radical ways of making and thinking about dance.

As deliberately announced revisitations, re-works engage in a politics of history by purposely or inadvertently commenting on what has changed since the early work to which they refer. The generation of European dance artists who started making work in the mid-1990s had at their disposal many more resources about the history of dance than their predecessors, and, as I will argue, making re-works gave them opportunities to situate themselves within their own sometimes revisionist histories of choreography and performance. In chapter 3, I argued that this was the case with Slovenian dancers in Janez Janša's *Fake It!* Dance history and the collective memory of choreography and performance has, in effect, become a knowledge commons that dance artists share. In this chapter, I focus on issues relating to the politics of history and memory that these re-works raise, focusing first on history and then on memory.

There have been a large number of re-works by dance artists since the 1990s. Two of the earliest examples were the rereading of Steve Paxton's *Satisfyin' Lover* (1967) and Yvonne Rainer's *Continuous Process Altered Daily* (1970) produced in 1996 by the French group Quattuor Albrecht Knust.[2] This was a project that crystallised the emergence of some concerns around conceptual rigour and theoretical sophistication among younger French dance artists. The close relation between Judson Dance Theater and the development of visual and conceptual art in New York in the 1960s afforded a precedent for these French dance artists, who were also orienting themselves towards the conceptual sophistication of some contemporary visual art practice. This is the context in which Goumarre's article on deceptual dance (see chapter 1) was written.[3] This orientation was very different from the concern with movement invention and with the formal and expressive potential of contemporary dance vocabularies that underpinned the work of the generation that pioneered contemporary dance in France from the late 1970s, in whose companies many of the younger generation of dance makers had begun their careers. Judson Dance Theater and the new American dance of the 1960s became a significant reference point for many European dance artists in the late 1990s and 2000s.[4]

2. Christophe Wavelet, a core member of the group, called them rereadings because they were based on existing scores. Christophe Wavelet, personal comm., Paris, May 2002.

3. Laurent Goumarre, "L'Art déceptif," *Art Press*, 238 (September 1998): 47–51.

4. For example, Xavier Le Roy, who had performed in these two pieces by Paxton and Rainer, went on to include the 'Chair Pillow' section from *Continuous Process Altered Daily* in *Product of Circumstances* (1999).

Other significant explorations of work from the Judson period include the 2008 reinterpretation by a group of European and American dancers of Anna Halprin's *Parades & Changes* (1965)—which they called *Parades & Changes, Replays*. Mårten Spångberg's *Powered by Emotion/After Sade* (2003), discussed in chapter 4, reconstructs Steve Paxton's *Goldberg Variations*, an improvised performance which Paxton danced between 1986 and 1992. These last two reworks explored the potential for open form that they found in Halprin's and Paxton's work. They are instances of European dance artists connecting with an older American tradition of improvisational work. In another way, this is also a concern of Myriam van Imschoot's research project 'Crash Landings Revisited (and more)'. She interviewed participants in the *Crash Landings* series of improvised dance performances curated by Meg Stuart, Christine De Smedt, and David Hernandez between 1997 and 1999 that brought together a number of European and American dancers. The outcome of van Imschoot's research was an installation, titled *Black Box*, in which a juke box played extracts from the interviews, and a video, *Pick Up Voices,* in which Christine De Smedt, who had found it very difficult to remember any details about the *Crash Landings* series, performed a monologue assembled, it gradually became clear, from transcripts of others' memories. Another project that focused on dancers' memories was Vincent Dunoyer's *Sister* (2007), which drew on recollections of about Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's choreography by ex-dancers from the Rosas dance company. None of these were straightforward reconstructions. Imschoot's and Dunoyer's works were analogies that shifted ideas from the original works into another context so that little of the original choreography was identifiable, and yet this remained their central point of reference.

Both history and memory are underlying concerns in these works. By reconnecting with persisting traditions of radical, critical, artistic practices, dance artists have legitimated their own current oppositional projects, and in some cases raised questions about who 'owns' the history of dance. Where memory is concerned, this reconnection involves dancers finding in their own bodies some aspects of the collective memories of the dance community to which they belong, memories about ways of moving and performing that are no longer current. This chapter therefore begins by looking more closely at issues concerning history and a disenchantment with the idea of progress. A key text on this disenchantment is Walter Benjamin's allegory of the Angel of History, and Benjamin's discussion of blasting works out of the past in order to reveal oppressive relations of power. This, I argue, is what happens during Faustin Linyekula's 2012 work, *La Création du monde 1923–2012.* The chapter then focuses on issues around memory and discusses three works in which this is a central concern. These are Olga de Soto's *histoire(s)* (2004), which draws on the memories of people who attended the first night of Roland Petit's

1946 ballet *Le Jeune homme et la mort*; Martin Nachbar's two works *Affects/Rework* (2000) and *Urheben Aufheben* (2008), in which he performs sections from Dore Hoyer's solo dance cycle *Affectos Humanos* 1962–64; and Fabián Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* (2010), for which he reconstructed solos created by Mary Wigman during the 1920s. Nachbar and Barba interrogate issues that arise when they, as dancers trained in the late 1990s and early 2000s, try to access with their bodies older ways of moving and performing.

These works illustrate four different approaches to re-working earlier performances. Barba has tried as hard as possible to perform Wigman's choreography in a theatrical context that is close to that in which Wigman's audiences would have seen her work in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In doing so, however, he is fully aware that this will clash with the experiences of his twenty-first-century dance audience. Whereas Linyekula and Nachbar also present the original choreography as faithfully as they can, their pieces transplant this into frameworks that suggest a critical interrogation—in Linyekula's case through the addition of other choreography and dramatic performance, and for Nachbar through the format of a lecture performance. De Soto's piece transplants memories of an earlier work without presenting any of its movement material, creating instead a new work that is analogous to the 1946 ballet whose central concerns it has nevertheless adapted.

MEMORY, PROGRESS, AND THE ANGEL OF HISTORY

I have noted that one consequence of the re-work phenomenon is the new wave of conceptually oriented dance work that has resulted, in part at least, from reconnecting with the Judson Dance Theater and the new American dance of the 1960s. Re-enacting past works can provide opportunities to dance again, or to revisit certain kinds of virtuosity or modes of expressive performance that seem 'historical', and thus raise questions about the relation between past and present. There are some parallels (as well as significant differences) between the concerns of these dance artists and of those working in the field of Live Art who have also been making re-works—for example Marina Abramowic's *Seven Easy Pieces* and three recent reinvention of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Re-works in both the dance and Live Art sectors make visible and sometimes trouble the often tacit processes through which histories are constructed and disseminated. This raises questions about the status of re-works in relation to the works to which they refer.

A reinvention is never the same as the original—and it is in the areas in which it is most noticeably different that one can become aware, by default, of what is new and different about the present. There is no one *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Instead there are multiple and overlapping versions and instances

of it. There is Kaprow's 1959 happening and the reconstructions and reinventions of it during the 2000s by André Lepecki, Steven Roden, and Rosemary Butcher.[5] Kaprow himself made a Live Art reinvention of it during the 1980s, and drew together his scores, which are now in the collection of the Getty Research Institute. These formed, with permission from Kaprow's estate, the starting point for these recent reconstructions and reinventions. In addition to these productions and scores, there is also the idea of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* that is found in many art history books and histories of Live Art. The iconic first happening[6] is associated in many people's minds with a handful of much reproduced black-and-white photographs. Kaprow's 1959 happening was intended to be an immaterial art work where the actions themselves were of value but not the materials used in performing them. One could therefore say that there is, in effect, a conjunction of abstract ideas constituting *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* that underpins all the instances of it and which is itself, in turn, expanded and reinvented with each new addition to the series. Lepecki's, Roden's, and Butcher's reinventions are all examples of the way in which this conjunction of ideas has a potential for reactivation during the early twenty-first century.

Jérôme Bel's 1998 work *Le Dernier spectacle* (The last performance) raises similar issues to these re-works of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Towards the end of Bel's piece, one by one the cast of four performed a solo, *Wandlung*, created by Susanne Linke in 1978 as an homage to Mary Wigman. Bel and his fellow dancers had learnt the solo from watching a video recording, and they introduced themselves each time by saying 'Ich bin Susanne Linke' (I am Susanne Linke). Each of their interpretations of *Wandlung* shows, through the dancer's performance, different qualities and potentials in the choreography. Each is a different instance of *Wandlung*. These different instances of *Wandlung* and *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* have a relation to the earlier works to which they refer through what Hutcheon calls an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation.

5. André Lepecki made what he calls a 're-doing' of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* in Munich in November 2006, remounting it for the Performa Festival in New York in November 2007. Steve Roden presented a reinvention of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* for LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), in Los Angeles in April 2008. Rosemary Butcher's reinvention was commissioned to accompany the exhibition *Move: Choreographing You* curated by Stephanie Rosenthal at the Hayward Gallery, London, and was performed in the Royal Festival Hall in November 2010.

6. *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* can be said to be the first happening since it initiated a pioneering series of happenings in New York by artists who mostly came from a visual art background. An equally famous event at Black Mountain College in 1952 with Cunningham, Cage, Rauschenberg, and others is also sometimes called the first happening.

They are not copies of an authentic original or attempts to perform the works as if nothing has changed since they were initially created. Instead they implicitly interrogate the meaning of history through the way that they pose questions about the meanings these works might have now, and how this might have changed. By presenting re-works rather than creating new ones, they problematise the idea that the new is without question an improvement on the old because it represents progress. They thus challenge the way that the ideology of progress devalues history and memory.

Knowledge of history and the existence of collective memory are prerequisites for critical thinking and collective political action. The situationist theorist Guy Debord, in his *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988), argues that one of the effects of the spectacle created by the capitalist consumer market is a flattening of history:

> The construction of a present where fashion itself, from clothes to music, has come to a halt, which wants to forget the past and no longer seems to believe in a future, is achieved by the ceaseless circular passage of information, always returning to the same short list of trivialities, passionately proclaimed as major discoveries. Meanwhile news of what is genuinely important, of what is actually changing, comes rarely, and then in fits and starts.[7]

From a situationist point of view, the distraction of consumer culture minimises the potential for people to think critically about the present state of affairs. Whereas Debord is concerned with consumer culture, others writing about these issues have drawn attention to the effects of modernity and progress. Philosopher Simon Critchley has recently argued that progress is the ideology of capitalism that is directed towards an ideology of the future. 'I think what we have to do,' he writes, 'is refuse the idea of the future. What we should be concerned with is the cultivation of the past, of memory.'[8] There is increasing disenchantment with the modernist belief that technological progress and industrialisation will generate ever greater prosperity and thus create the resources with which to solve the world's ills. The way contemporary dance was marketed in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s often stressed its progressive nature, in effect implying that each new dance work made all previous ones obsolete. The re-work phenomenon can be seen, in part, as a reaction

7. Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (London: Verso, 1990), 22.

8. Simon Critchley, *How to Stop Living and Start Worrying: Conversations with Carl Cederström* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 116.

against such marketing practices and, by implication, as a critique of modernist ideologies of progress.

A key text in the discourse on modernity and progress is Walter Benjamin's late essay 'On the Concept of History' (its title previously mistranslated as 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'), and in particular the well known section in it about the Angelus Novus, the Angel of History. His wings spread and his mouth open, Benjamin's Angel stares fixedly, contemplating something, though he seems about to move on. What he stares at is the past:

> Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skywards. This storm is what we call progress.[9]

Progress is a rupture with the past that hinders a critical understanding of history. Dance artists who engage in re-works, like Benjamin's Angel, aspire to make whole what has been smashed.

Jonathan Crary has pointed out that one of Benjamin reference points in the essay is Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. Crary proposes that Benjamin saw Bergson as 'attempting to overcome the degradation and devaluation of experience within a modernising culture founded on amnesia and obsolescence'.[10] Benjamin lamented 'the increasingly impoverished role of memory on an individual level and the decay of traditional forms of collective memory'.[11] In his view, modernity produced situations in which memories were accessed in a reactive, unthinking way to deal with immediate demands rather than enabling subjects to engage actively and creatively. As Crary observes, 'The more conditioned and predictable human behaviour became, the fewer openings [Benjamin] saw for memory to play an inventive role within it.'[12] What interested Benjamin was Bergson's discussion of moments of discontinuity: 'A rift (*une fissure*) that can occur between [perception

9. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973), 259–60.

10. Jonathan Crary, *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 327.

11. Ibid., 318.

12. Ibid.

and memory] when a memory transforms present perception in ways that detach it from the service of adapting the present.'[13] Benjamin writes about blasting 'a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history, blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework'; when this is done, he suggests, one can recognise 'a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'.[14] Re-works cite the oppressed past. As they do so, they can be strongly affective and make a powerful intervention within the kind of linear history and within the notion of progress that Benjamin critiqued in his essay. Re-works draw attention to discontinuities and rifts as they blast the works to which they refer out of the past into the present. By doing so they have a potential to reveal some of the ways in the present is itself the product of the relations of power that oppressed the past.

La Création du Monde 1923–2012

A piece which exemplifies the way re-works can reveal previously hidden, repressive relations of power is Faustin Linyekula's 2012 work *La Création du monde 1923–2012*. In this, Linyekula, who was born and works in the Democratic Republic of Congo, engaged in what could be termed a postcolonial critique of the circumstances surrounding the 1923 Ballet Suédois production of *La Création du monde*. This 1923 ballet, created for Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois, was a collaboration between the avant-garde painter Fernand Leger, the composer Darius Milhaud, the writer Blaise Cendrars, and the choreographer Jean Börlin. Their common focus was around the idea of African creation myths. Linyekula's work built on two previous works, a reconstruction of the 1923 ballet by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, and his own contribution to the 2006 exhibition Montparnasse Noir 1906–1966.

In 2000, Millicent Hodson and her husband the art historian Kenneth Archer worked with Cynthia Odier and her Fluxum Foundation to reconstruct the set and costumes and choreography of the 1923 ballet. This led to performances by the Ballet du Grand Theatre, Geneva, and, in 2003, by Maggiodanza in Florence. Hodson and Archer are probably best known for their reconstruction of Nijinsky's choreography for the 1913 production of *Le Sacre du printemps*. The lost ballets that are the subject of their research were not only avant-garde in their day but generally involved ritual and had significant set and costume design by a major modernist painter. As well as Nijinsky's ballets, they have also focused on Jean Börlin's choreography

13. Ibid., 322.

14. Benjamin, n. 9, 265.

for Les Ballets Suédois. Leger's costume designs for *La Création du monde* were at the time extreme in their depersonalisation and in the way they concealed the dancers who were largely confined to manipulating their primitivist cardboard robot-like suits. Faustin himself says that the 1923 ballet totally negated the dancers' bodies as they disappeared behind the costumes.[15] While African sculpture and masks were important sources for Picasso, Vlaminck, and other modernist painters around the time of the ballet, they feature little in Leger's painting apart from these designs. Its composer, Darius Milhaud, had been inspired by Brazilian music while acting as secretary to Paul Claudel, when the latter was the French ambassador to Brazil from 1917 to 1919, and Milhaud subsequently heard jazz music for the first time on a visit to New York in 1922. His score includes explicit jazz references and is strongly influenced by the music he heard in New York. Blaise Cendrars published *L'Anthologie nègre* in 1921 imposing his own primitivist vision of Africa by freely adapting stories, legends, and myths that French missionaries had collected in the previous century. He drew together some of the creation myths from his anthology to form the libretto for the 1923 ballet.

The 2006 exhibition Montparnasse Noir 1906–1966 for the Musée du Montparnasse-Paris consisted of paintings by modernist Parisian artists of the time together with African art works, and other objects and photographs.[16] Linyekula was one of a number of contemporary black and African artists who were invited to contribute a letter written to one of the historical figures featured in the exhibition. He chose to write to Jean Börlin and Blaise Cendrars about the 1923 ballet.[17] The main criticism that Linyekula makes is that Cendrars invented his ideologically problematic vision of Africa without making any attempt to find out about what was happening at that time on the continent itself. The same year that Cendrars published *L'Anthologie nègre,* René Maran, a Martinique-born poet and intellectual who was a colonial administrator in what is now the Central African Republic, published a poetic novel *Batouala—veritable roman nègre*. Maran won the Prix de Goncourt in 1921. This is one example of the kinds of literary material based on first-hand knowledge of Africa of which, Linyekula argues, Cendrars would have been aware but ignored. Cendrars and other French artists featured in the 2006

15. Faustin Linyekula, interview during promotional video for the 2012 Holland Festival, where his piece was performed.

16. The start and end dates of the exhibition's title refer to key events. The first Colonial Exhibition in Marseilles, as well as the births of Léopold Senghour and Josephine Baker, took place in 1906. In 1966 the Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres was held in Dakar.

17. Faustin Linyekula, "The Dialogue Series II. Vérirtable Ballet Nègre," in *Montparnasse Noir* (Paris: Musée de Montparnasse-Paris, 2006).

exhibition created a strong and influential modernist discourse about primitivist Africa that Linyekula and other contemporary African artists, who grew up speaking French and learning about European art and literature, have to deal with as they develop themselves as artists and situate themselves as postcolonial subjects within the history of European modernist culture.

Linyekula's letter to Börlin and Cendrars, although clearly based on thorough research and intellectual reasoning, is a powerful, accusatory rant. In the first paragraph Linyekula says he dreams of making a piece for the Paris Opéra Ballet. If *La Création du monde* in 1923 claimed to be the first 'ballet négre', what did it have to do with what was happening that year in what was then the Belgian colony of the Congo? What agendas did it set for Linyekula, a choreographer from the African continent? Linyekula was subsequently approached by Ballet de Lorraine who invited him to follow up his letter in a work for them, which became *La Création du monde 1923–2012* and included a new version of Archer and Hodson's reconstruction of the 1923 ballet, prepared under their supervision.[18] As an introduction to this, Linyekula choreographed a slow, meditative section where a Congolese dancer Djodjo Kazadi gets to know the dancers and unpacks with them their costumes. As an African, Linyekula was aware of traditions associated with putting on and taking off masks for a masquerade of which Börlin would probably have been oblivious. After the reconstruction is performed, Kazadi performs a version of Linyekula's letter as a powerful, screaming harangue directed towards Cendrars. His screaming voice is, from a European point of view, shocking and oddly unaccountable given the complex, multilayered sophistication of the production's conceptual premises. This disruption is deliberate and the screaming is also in line with contemporary Congolese aesthetics. As the philosopher Achille Mbembe notes in his essay on Congolese music:

> Screaming, howling, throughout the last quarter of the 20th century and into the new millennium, part noise-sound, part musical scream, Congolese music has endeavoured to account for the terror, the cruelty and the dark abyss—for the ugly and the abject—that is its country.[19]

18. Although Linyekula is based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, he lived for a while in France and has a French partner. Because the piece was commissioned by and for a French company and made and performed in Europe, I see it as part of European contemporary dance just as, in chapter 8, I saw Hafez as someone contributing to European contemporary dance.

19. Achille Mbembe, "Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds," *Politique Africaine*, no. 100 (2005): 79. I am grateful to Sabine Sorgel for drawing this essay to my attention and pointing out is relevance to Linyekula's work.

In other pieces, Linyekula has collaborated with live musicians from the kinds of musical genres that Mbembe discusses in this essay.[20] Kazadi's harangue not only reframes a 'ballet nègre' that had nothing to do with the African continent of its day, but introduces something of the contemporary Congo into a contemporary 'ballet nègre' in order to acknowledge 'the ugly and the abject' legacy of European colonialism. In Walter Benjamin's terms, it blasts the 1923 ballet out of an era when it exemplified primitivism in order to create what Benjamin calls 'a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past', in this case Congo's past as a Belgian colony.[21] Linyekula, as an artist and intellectual educated in a former European colony, who surely knows as much about European high culture as he does about the cultural traditions of his own country, was able, through a re-work, *La Création du monde 1923–2012*, to enter the heart of European high culture and intervene in it. The dance work makes visible the relations of power that maintain Western cultural hegemony and challenges them. Janez Janša and his Slovenian colleagues were able in *Fake It!* to intervene within a Western European–oriented account of radical experimental choreography and performance that in effect marginalises Slovenia. Linyekula, by creating this work for a French ballet company, has been similarly able to put forward a revisionist Afrocentric account of the modernist tradition, making a space in it for artists from the African continent.

RE-WORKS AND MEMORIES

While history is a central concern running through most recent re-works, another key concern is memory. The specificity of history and memory in theatre dance lies in the embodied experience of dancing; that is to say in sensations of motor actions and associated muscle memories. These sensations often carry affective associations so that histories of dance include the history and memory of the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that informed the creation and performance of choreographies. Some dance artists are explicitly interested in the way memory operates either on a personal level or as collective memories persisting within the world of dancers and spectators. Even where this is not the intention, re-works invariably reveal the role that memory plays for individuals and communities.

20. See Ariel Osterweis Scott, "Performing Acupuncture on a Necropolitical Body: Choreographer Faustin Linyekula's Studios Kabako in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo," *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2, (2010): 13–27.

21. Benjamin, n. 9, 265.

One key factor affecting my response while watching a dance performance is the way that my memories are brought into play. As I watch someone dance, I often not only remember others dancing like this, but also remember the people with whom I saw the earlier performances, and the discussions I had with them about it afterwards; or I remember hearing from other friends about an artist or company that I didn't see but who I suspect might have danced like this. Or I think of another friend who I am sure would like this performance and wish that she were here to see it herself. So although I may perhaps be sitting on my own, there are others with whom I share memories that contribute to my response to the present performance.

Re-works, more so than other dance pieces, draw on collective memories. They do so in a tactical way, to use Michel de Certeau's concept. Certeau has written of an art of memory that employs what the ancient Greeks called *metis*. This is knowledge and experience, and the ability to use this to grasp the right moment. As Certeau puts it, *metis* involves using one's memories,

> whose attainments are indissociable from the time of their acquisition and bear the marks of its peculiarities. Drawing its knowledge from a multitude of events among which it moves without possessing them (they are all past, each a loss of place but a fragment of time), it also computes and predicts "the multiple paths of the future" by combining antecedent or possible particularities.[22]

As I watch a dance performance, the memories that I draw on are not preserved images that have an independent existence but something that I have to actively work to remember. As Certeau suggests, this process is not necessarily systematic in a formal way but can be opportunistic and depends on circumstances:

> Perhaps memory is no more than this 'recall' or call on the part of the other, leaving its mark like a kind of overlay on a body that has always already been altered without knowing it. This originary and secret writing 'emerges' little by little, in the very spots where memory is touched: memory is played by circumstances, just as a piano is played by a musician and music emerges from it when its keys are touched by the hand.[23]

22. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 82.

23. Ibid., 87.

The performance I watch can therefore play with my memories, reminding me of things that I might not otherwise have brought to mind. Although I may be skilled and experienced in the way I am able to bring past experiences to mind, my memories are not entirely unique to me. As I have just suggested, they concern things that I have seen with others or heard about from others. One of the pleasures of talking about performances with others are moments when there is a flash of shared recognition.

The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argued that most memories are collective. This means that we have very few memories that we do not also share with others. He argued that 'our confidence in the accuracy of our impressions increases . . . if it can be supported by others' remembrances also. It is as if the very same experience were relived by several persons instead of only one'.[24] I mentioned earlier that almost all re-works cite pieces from the past that are still within living memory, or that were created by people who have died within living memory. Re-works therefore make space in the present in which to keep alive collective memories of a radical or alternative nature at a time when such memories still have the potential to challenge normative ways of thinking. One's confidence in the power of these radical or alternative ways of thinking and feeling increases if it seems to be supported by collective memories. This is the political significance of Simon Critchley's exhortation to refuse the future and to cultivate instead the past and memory.

The rest of this chapter presents readings of three recent re-works in which these concerns with history and memory are central. It discusses the critical rereadings of the past that de Soto has presented and interrogates the ways in which Barba and Nachbar have reactivated the potential of Wigman's and Hoyer's choreography. Underpinning these reactivations and critical interrogations are physical memories within the contemporary dance community. Together with this, *metis* is at work using memory to grasp the opportunities of the present moment in creative and resonant ways. The politics of history and memory that these works articulate is grounded in acts of remembering that challenge the ideology of progress.

HISTOIRE(S) (2004)

The act of remembering is often not an easy one, as Olga de Soto's *histoire(s)* (see Figure 10) demonstrates. A documentary video performance, *histoire(s)* is about a ballet, *Le Jeune homme et la mort*, that was created in Paris in 1946.

24. Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. DitterJr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 22.

Figure 10 Olga de Soto holding up a screen on which is projected a video of Suzanne Batbedat in *histoire(s)* (2004).
Photo by Dolores Marat.

It was a duet, danced by Jean Babilée and Nathalie Philippart, that was choreographed by Roland Petit from a libretto by Jean Cocteau. It was the first new ballet created in Paris after the end of the 1939–45 war. De Soto found and interviewed eight people who had seen the ballet's premier on June 24, 1946. Videos of these interviews were projected during the performance onto a variety of different screens by de Soto and a male partner (initially Vincent Druguet) who raised or moved these screens in different parts of the performance space. Their careful, economic, task-based movements in effect create a minimalist duet that is analogous to the balletic duet that the people on the screens are remembering. What emerges from the interviews, which juxtapose one person's memories with another's, is how little any of them remember about the choreography, staging, costumes, or other details of the ballet itself. At times they seem to remember nothing about it, or they remember things that almost seem to contradict others' memories—about the colour of the costume, or the sequence of events that make up the ballet's narrative. As a dance historian these are the kinds of factual details I would have been most interested in establishing so as to add more information to that already existing in the archive. In order to do this, I would have shown them photographs, programmes, read out parts of reviews, and tried similar strategies to help them

remember new information. I might perhaps have tried interviewing some of them together so that they could talk to each other about the performance. By not prompting them in this way and interviewing each of them on his or her own, de Soto reveals things that a more conventional historical approach would have missed. The poignant situation *histoire(s)* presents is that these people's memories are fading. But while the details have almost disappeared, the emotions they experienced while watching the ballet can still be recalled.

Audiences watching *histoire(s)* are presented with different kinds of information about *Le Jeune homme et la mort*. All the people de Soto interviewed remember going to the premier clearly and when they talk about it they reveal that it made a strong impression on them. De Soto also asked them about what they had done during the war and about the circumstances that had led to them attending this performance. As one listens to their individual stories, what emerges is that they have all led very interesting lives. One of the people interviewed had been a teenage nurse who had lied about her age and seen some horrendous injuries which she describes as 'la charcuterie de la guerre'—metaphorically likening it to the delicate slicing of cooked meat rather than the more robust hacking apart of a carcass. Going to see the ballet, it transpires, seems for each of them to have come at a turning point between their war-time experiences and their post-war careers. Cocteau's poetic story about a lover's death, one of them observes, bore no relation to the reality of death during the war. The ballet seems to have opened up for them a space in which to acknowledge feelings that had had no place in their lives during the war. Thus *histoire(s)* gives new insights into the role that the event of going to a dance performance can play in people's lives. It offers a fascinating insight into the manner in which individuals can recall memories of such events. In a relatively modest way, *histoire(s)* suggests a new and different way of thinking about dance history. But it is also a theatrical experience. With its carefully choreographed series of moving screens on which the video interviews appear, and the subtle duet between de Soto and her partner, it is a powerful affirmation of the value of memories, and those of older people in particular. It attests to their affective power within a cultural climate where, under the influence of neoliberalism economics, memories are devalued in the interests of continuing progress.

There is one last significant set of circumstances that *histoire(s)* reveals. When she was in the final stages of creating *histoire(s)*, de Soto received a letter from a lawyer representing Roland Petit, who had choreographed the original ballet in 1946. It informed her that Petit would sue her if she mentioned his name or his ballet in connection with her piece or made any reference to it. Petit was eighty years old in 2004 and had spent his entire career working within major international ballet companies. His whole working life had been spent in hierarchical

institutions, where choreographers are at the top of the pyramid and have complete artistic control over their work. He probably had no understanding of what de Soto was doing. De Soto had created a first version of *histoire(s)* as part of the '!Hommages!' series during the Culturgest festival in Lisbon in 2003. Her new version of the piece had already been advertised in the programmes of the Kunsten Festival des Arts in Brussels and the Centre National de la Danse in Pantin, Paris, mentioning Petit and the name of his ballet.[25] De Soto found she had no choice but to pay a lawyer who specialises in intellectual property rights to give her legal advice, which allowed her to go ahead with the performances. Compared with the art world, there is very little money circulating in the dance economy, particularly that part of it that concerns independent dance artists. De Soto's legal experience raises questions about which aspects of a dance work a choreographer can expect to go on controlling once their work has been performed and become part of the public realm, and what relations of power operate within it. De Soto was doing something very different from what Petty and Beyoncé (see chapter 3) did with De Keersmaeker's two pieces. Whereas Beyoncé did not admit that her video *Countdown* included parts of someone else's choreography, De Soto acknowledged that Petit was the choreographer of *Le Jeune homme et la mort* and did not actually use any choreography from his ballet in her performance. There was no danger of *histoire(s)* doing any reputational damage to Petit. Indeed, de Soto's piece demonstrated what a powerful and enduring impact Petit's ballet had had. Histories and memories of theatre dance are, in effect and by default, a shared resource, a knowledge commons, and not something that can be bought or sold as private or commercial property.

FABIÁN BARBA AND MARTIN NACHBAR

Fabián Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* reconstructs solos choreographed by Wigman in the 1920s. Martin Nachbar's *Affects/Rework* (2000) and *Urheben Aufheben* (2008) include his reconstructions of dances from Dore Hoyer's solo dance cycle *Affectos Humanos* (1962–64). Hoyer studied modern dance in the 1930s with Wigman's student Gret Palucca and created the central role of the Chosen One in Wigman's *Sacre du Printemps* in 1957. Barba and Nachbar were both therefore reconstructing solos that exemplified a highly expressive dance style of an earlier period, blasting works out of the past into a European present in which expressive dance was marginal. The following section investigates the different answers each dance artist poses to

25. De Soto told me this in conversations at Tanzquartier, Vienna, in April 2011. She also told me that another independent dance artist, Rachid Ouramdane, who was also working on a piece that referred to *Le Jeune homme et la mort*, had received a similar threatening letter.

questions about the relevance and significance of emotionally expressive dancing in the 2000s.

Hoyer's *Affectos Humanos* is conventionally seen as a direct development of the new German dance of the 1920s and 1930s, part of the lineage of Hoyer's teacher, Gret Palucca, and of Mary Wigman. Nachbar's two projects exploring Hoyer's solos investigate the meaning of this tradition in the twenty-first century. The first of these, *Affects/Rework* is an extended deliberate and announced revisitation of three solos from *Affectos Humanos*. He danced these in silence as part of a performance that also included additional material by Tom Plischke and Alice Chauchat. Plischke performed a solo in which he jumped energetically but not very precisely on the spot repeatedly for a couple of minutes, and also contributed a digital film of him shaving with foam and razor projected on its own later in the performance. Chauchat's contribution was to quietly announce each part, and to declare the end. The result was a recontextualisation of Hoyer's solos, purging them of their theatricalisation of affect, both through their relation with these other components of the performance and in the way Nachbar danced the solos. Whereas in the film Hoyer dances the section *Angst* (Fear) of *Affectos Humanos* to a percussion accompaniment whose rhythm seems to drive the movement, in *Affects/Rework* Nachbar danced it in silence punctuated by footfalls and the sound of breath. Hoyer's flapping skirt in the film contrasted with Nachbar's black T-shirt and black trousers, the same as those worn by Plischke sitting at the back, and matching Chauchat's black clothes. Hoyer danced in isolation, Nachbar presented solos in a space shared with two other performers who watched him dancing. No longer connected with the particular rhythms and explosive accents of the percussion score, Nachbar's performance looked cool and detached as a consequence of the piece's dramaturgy. Although Nachbar performed Hoyer's solos with the kind of neutral presence with which, for example, Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1966) was performed, the actual movement language of the solos and the conventional technical demands it makes on the performer require a kind of conventional dancerliness and virtuosity that is not common in more conceptually oriented twenty-first-century choreography. *Affects/Rework* raised questions about why this should be so, as did his later *Urheben Aufheben* and Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*.

In *Urheben Aufheben* (see Figure 11), Nachbar presents a lecture demonstration, with a blackboard, in which he narrates the history of his involvement with *Affectos Humanos*, how he had come across an old film of Hoyer dancing and went through an arduous process of getting permission to dance the cycle from Waltrand Luley, the guardian of Hoyer's legacy. He explains how Luley, having eventually given permission, worked with him closely to ensure that he got the dances right. As he introduces each solo, he talks about it in a very

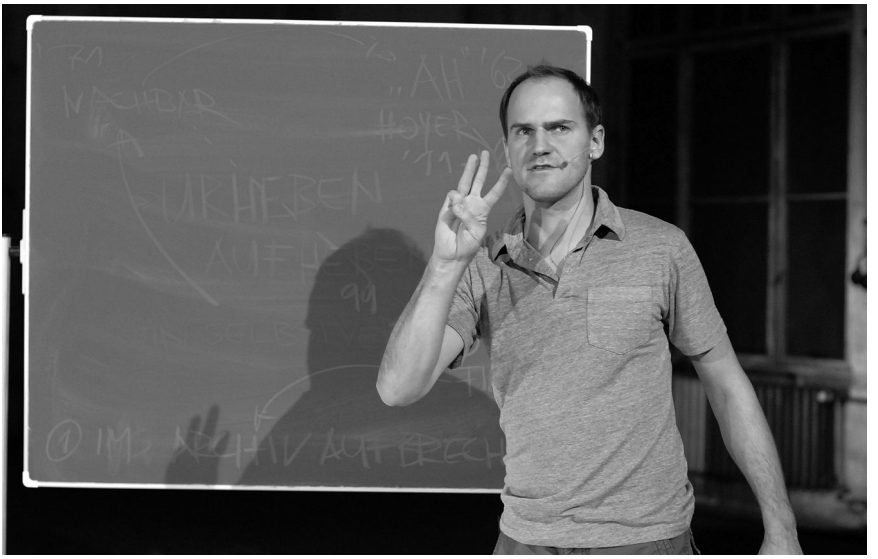

Figure 11 Martin Nachbar in *Uhrleben Aufleben* (2008).
Photo by Susanne Beyer.

personal way, including how he feels about it, and about difficulties he found trying to get it right. He has learnt two more of Hoyer's solos in addition to the three he learnt in 2000, but he does not feel ready yet to dance her solo on the affect love. This has the effect of making his virtuosity seem ordinary and human, almost slightly humble. At the same time, his lecture is witty and engaging. He makes subtle word plays with the words he writes on the blackboard, and he makes the audience laugh.

The title *Urheben Aufheben* is an elaborate word play that cannot be directly translated into English. As Nachbar explained to André Lepecki, 'Urheben Aufheben is a play with words and can mean three things: 1. To pick something created up from the floor. 2. To keep it. 3. To suspend the notion of authorship.'[26] As Lepecki points out in an essay on re-enactment and re-performance,[27] a major concern in *Urheben Aufheben* is the nature of the archive, particularly for Nachbar, in the sense that Michel Foucault used the term in his early book *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. As Nachbar explains in his lecture, 'I go into the archive and a difference emerges, the archive gets

26. Lepecki 2010, 36. "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances" *Dance Research Journal*. 42 / 2 winter 2010.

27. Lepecki ref.

messed up. At the same time it becomes visible through my body. . . . My body makes the archive visible and at the same time, creates this difference.'[28] The difference here is between the way Hoyer danced in the 1960s and how he dances in the 2000s. Foucault developed the idea of the 'archive' as a discursive formation which encompasses the whole of what at any given time is sayable. This is how he defines it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

> We have, in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domains of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). It is all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*.[29]

The archive is not just a storehouse but a mechanism that enables the production of meaning while defining the field of possibilities for making sense. So when Nachbar thinks of the archive of contemporary dance and his explorations of it, he is reflecting on what he is able to do and what the archive circumscribes. Lepecki argues that Nachbar's piece, along with other re-works that he discusses, exemplify 'the will to re-enact as a privileged mode to effectuate or actualize a work's immanent field of inventiveness and creativity'.[30] In my view, this field of inventiveness and creativity only becomes possible through the process of reflecting on history and memory, and the relations of power that affect them. This is at the heart of Nachbar's lecture and comes out of his prolonged work on Hoyer's choreographic legacy.

Fabián Barba's *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* reconstructs nine of Wigman's solos from the 1920s. Barba learnt three of these from surviving film of them, choosing not to dance *Hexentanz* (Witch dance) because it is too well known. The other six were reconstructed using archival sources including descriptions in reviews, photographs, and surviving musical scores. Barba also contacted dancers who had studied with Wigman towards the end of her life. He researched the dance exercises which she had taught them so as to understand better her movement style. *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* is a seventy-minute performance based on the concert format in which Wigman showed her work in the 1920s. Thus, for each solo, Barba wears a different costume and there is a short interlude between the solos for costume changes during which a short piano piece by Erik Satie is played. Barba found two old-fashioned candelabra

28. English translation handed to me at a performance in German in Munich, 2012?

29. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1974, 128

30. Lepecki, n. 26, 45.

which hang in the auditorium and, during the interludes, it is these that are illuminated rather than the house lights. The solos themselves are lit on stage in a way that suggests the kind of lighting effects that might have been used in Wigman's day. The small programme, that each member of the audience is given as they enter the auditorium, is closely modelled on the typography of programmes used for Wigman's performances in the 1920s. *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* does not therefore merely revive or reconstruct Wigman's solos but attempts to remember the historical event of their performance.

Despite the fact that Barba was wearing a female costume and wig, I found nothing camp or effeminate about his performance. Wigman had a forceful personality and Barba is a strong dancer. *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* is a strongly theatrical experience for the spectator in which all the seemingly authentic details create an immersive experience. The solos are much shorter in duration than most dance pieces today, and Barba takes an elaborately stylised bow after each one regardless of whether the audience applaud. There is, however, a strange sense of distance about his performance. On the one hand, he appears to be completely involved in executing the choreography and creating an illusion of Wigman dancing; on the other hand, however, he has a masculine face and body—the costumes do not disguise the fact that he is flat chested. He is also evidently conscious of the fact that he is performing a role. One of the reasons why Barba, despite his wig and costume, does not become Wigman is because he is not German but is from Quito in Ecuador and looks South American. This fact was invariably mentioned by theatres when they promoted the performance—it is a popular work that has been performed many times across Europe and internationally. Many reviews have also mentioned his South American origin. A subtext of this seems to be how surprising it is that someone from Ecuador has produced such a conceptually sophisticated and fashionably up-to-date dance work. The origin of dance artists from Western Europe or North America is not commented upon in this way, a point to which I will return.

Barba has written very perceptively about differences between the kind of presence that Wigman and her pupils had and that of dancers trained in the 2000s. He found the following sentence in a newspaper review of a performance that Wigman gave in London during the late 1920s: 'When the curtain went up yesterday at the Globe Theatre, it disclosed a young woman of stern aspect and strong limbs who thereupon began to walk downstage heavily on very flat feet to the sound of a piano and oriental gongs.' What follows is his commentary on this from a lecture he gave at the Tanzarchiv in Leipzig.

> This is an image of Wigman walking downstage at the beginning of her solo Anruf. And yet, the moment I had to re-enact this dance, how would I walk downstage heavily on flat feet? What kind of walk did I have to do?

> If I imagine a dancer coming from my school—as if s/he would be the incarnation of some imagined stereotypical PARTS student—and this dancer would be given the task 'Imagine you're in a performance situation and you have to walk downstage heavily on very flat feet', I can imagine that this student would do something as follows: 1) s/he would place first the heel and then the ball of the foot on the floor, 2) s/he would let her/his arms hang at the sides of the body without trying to stop the residual swinging movements from the walk, 3) s/he would allow her/his gaze to wander freely around the space, s/he would look at a side wall, floor or towards the audience and acknowledge their presence, and 4) maybe s/he would add to this 'casual' walk images of her/his bone structure, visualising how bones are articulated and the weight transferred through them.
>
> How would an imagined stereotypical student of Wigman in the 30s have performed the task of walking downstage heavily on very flat feet in a performance situation? Based on the research I've done, I'd imagine the following: 1) this student would place first the ball of the foot on the floor and then the heel, 2) her/his arms would be held at the sides and wouldn't be allowed to swing along, but would be connected to strong abdominal muscles in such a way that the whole body (almost as a block) could advance forward as if pressing the air in front of it, 3) her/his gaze wouldn't wander loosely about, but would focus on a single point in space, either down to the floor, or straight in front or slightly upwards; the moment a focal point is chosen it would be sustained over a certain period of time. If the focal point would be placed right in front of the performer, I suppose that this hypothetical dancer wouldn't yet acknowledge the presence of the audience, but s/he would 'pierce through' as if gazing towards a distant horizon or a beyond. 4) This movement wouldn't be casual or 'empty', but would necessarily express a subtext.[31]

So, to reconstruct the opening of *Anruf*, Barba had to rediscover a way of moving that is different from what he learned as a student. This includes not only specific physical directions—concerning the heel and ball of the foot, or whether the arms sway or not—but also deals with the performer's focus and the manner in which she relates to the audience. The P.A.R.T.S-trained dancer is open to what may happen in her body and in the space in which she is situated, as if prepared for any contingency. In contrast, the Wigmanschule-trained dancer knows what she is making happen, and, rather than being part of the environment, presses forwards against it. While the P.A.R.T.S-trained

31. Fabián Barba, "Lecture at the Tanzarchiv in Leipzig," (April 26, 2010).

dancer acknowledges that she and the audience are all in it together, the Wigmanschule-trained dancer focuses away or beyond them towards something transcendent of whose existence she aims to make them aware—this is how I interpret Barba's comment about the movement in *Anruf* expressing a subtext.

The task Barba set for himself was to work out the differences between the conventions underlying Wigman's work and those generally underlying European contemporary dance works performed in the 2000s by dancers of his generation. This task, in itself, might not seem a particularly difficult one but, I suggest, his aim was also to try to re-present these conventions as if they had not yet hardened and become routine—had not yet become conventional. Barba calls the process he describes here—of imagining how he would have moved if he had been one of Wigman's students—as one of being a subjunctive dancer. On a grammatical level, to say 'I would have' or 'I might have' is to use the subjunctive tense. To dance in the subjunctive is not to dance what was but what might have been. It is, therefore, to engage in an imaginative dialogue with a reimagined past. To engage in this way also has consequences for the way one makes sense of the present. This, I suggest, is why Simon Critchley says we need to be concerned with the cultivation of the past and of memory. This is what I think happens when one watches *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening*. Barba's piece has a disruptive effect by insisting on making room for a kind of expressionist dance that is not currently part of the innovative European dance scene, although it had still been part of it within living memory. In Walter Benjamin's terms, the performance blasts Wigman's work out of the past. By doing so, it makes one aware of a broader range of artistic possibilities than one might otherwise acknowledge, and perhaps also makes one conscious of the latent restrictions that have been inhibiting one from perceiving this. One's confidence in embracing this broader range are supported by the way Barba's piece plays with one's memories and puts one in touch with collective memories of an older expressionism and with other ways of thinking and feeling in and through dance.

In November 2011 Barba performed the piece in Quito, this being the first time that he has performed there since leaving to study at P.A.R.T.S in Brussels eight years earlier. In an email shortly afterwards Barba has told me that while he was there, he talked to a group of dancers who had seen his performance. He says that they could recognise the historical distance between Wigman and today, but in a different way to European audiences. Whereas Europeans sense a distance between Wigman's expressive manner of performing and the cooler, more matter-of-fact manner in which innovative European dancers generally perform today, the audience in Quito did not feel this kind of distance. They told him that

> audiences in Quito, would hardly accept a dance without emotional intensity and without the construction of a character, as if those were indispensable elements of dance. Talking about this idea of intensity we got to say that as a widespread notion, for audiences in Quito, that intensity is dance.[32]

This is not something that most audience members in Europe or the United States might say, but, Barba observes, he came across a similar idea that dance is emotion and character when he performed *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* in India.

> What I think important is that these two broadly sketched dance traditions (one that places intensity as central, and the other one that pushes it aside) don't need to be placed in two distinct geographical places, or in two very distinct dance audiences: the borders seem to be less clearly delineated than that.[33]

It was because he was thinking about these differences that he initially became interested in reconstructing dances by Wigman. There is no connection or direct association between Wigman—or early German modern dance in general—and the pioneers of contemporary dance in Quito; but Wigman's expressive dance work and Ecuadorian contemporary dance are both characterised by the expression of emotional intensity while this is not currently a feature of innovative contemporary European dance work. Like Linyekula, Barba offers his audiences opportunities to be aware of the relations of power that define hegemonic Western aesthetics.

CONCLUSION

The pieces by de Soto, Nachbar and Barba each reveal different ways in which memory operates within communities of dancers and dance audiences. De Soto discovered how little factual information the people she interviewed could remember about a famous ballet nearly sixty years after they had seen it. Nachbar and Barba in their different ways reflect on finding within their own bodies that have been developed through late twentieth- and twenty-first-century dance training, residual memories of older, now seemingly unfashionable ways of dancing expressively. The kinds of memories which all three dance artists brought into play are ones that dancers and their audiences share

32. Fabián Barba, personal email comm., January 13, 2012.

33. Ibid.

with others and which therefore constitute a common, collective resource. The legal issues that I have mentioned briefly in connection with *historie(s)* point to a conflict between the position of the choreographer in a large, institutionalised ballet company and the non-hierarchical nature of the dance sector in which artists like de Soto work. At stake here is the difference between a hierarchical system and one in which knowledge and resources are shared for mutual benefit.

What my discussion of all the pieces in this chapter reveals are the consequences of the cultivation, that Simon Critchley advocates, of the past and of memory. *A Mary Wigman Dance Evening* and *La création du monde 1923–2012* both ungovern canonical histories of dance which assume that countries like Ecuador and Democratic Republic of Congo are 'off-regions', incapable of supporting innovative artistic practice. By contrast, *histoire(s)* celebrates the persistence of affective memory, while Nachbar's and Barba's works attest to a seemingly unfashionable or untimely ability to affect audiences through their dancing. By blasting works out of the past, each in their different ways, remind their audiences of the potential for alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and living, and the relations of power whose aim is to regulate these, as exemplified, not least, by Roland Petit's failed legal intervention. The collective nature of these experiences increases our confidence that these values will persist.

10

Virtual Dance and the Politics of Imagining

This chapter examines the virtual nature of dance performance and its potential to trigger the process of imagining. If something is virtual it is immanent—not yet actual but about to become so. In current usage, the word virtual often suggests something that makes integral use of new, digital technologies. Thus for example virtual reality is a term used to describe the illusion created of a three dimensional environment using computer generated imagery. The term often therefore seems to suggest something that seems uncannily real but is false and deceptive. In this chapter, however, I use the term *virtual* in an older sense according to which a thing is virtual when it has a potential to become something in the moment that is not yet but about to arrive. The virtual is not therefore false or deceptive but in the process of becoming actual. Until it is present it is never entirely known or predictable because it may have the potential to develop into a multiplicity of different outcomes. It thus provokes one to imagine what is incipient and not yet present. This chapter explores the artistic potential of the virtual in dance performance through discussions of two recent dance pieces—*The Visible Men* (2007) by New Art Club and *While We Were Holding It Together* (2008), a group piece created by Ivana Müller—each of which in different ways is concerned with memory and the imagination.

These two works make us aware of the virtual potential of dance to draw attention to the present. It is often too easy in everyday life to become distracted and not aware of what is actually happening in the present moment, and thus to fail to notice an exciting new possibility that may potentially be emergent. This may happen when one is trying to do more than one thing at the same time and thus misses something. But there is also a tendency to reduce the uniqueness of the moment and what may be inherent in it through seizing on the familiar and normative. This is thus to try to turn it into the known and predictable rather than being open to what may be potentially new and different. *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together*, I shall

suggest, invite beholders to be open to the virtual and its incipient potential through using their imagination. I am calling this a 'politics of imagining', not to suggest that these works express or signify political content but because they afford opportunities for new ways of thinking and living.

New Art Club's *The Visible Men* (2007) is based on an audience participation device. Dancer Pete Shenton tells us when to close our eyes and when to open them again, and if we do what we are told, objects materialise and dematerialise while a comically magical story unfolds in a series of humorous tableaux. Tom Roden is sitting idly at a table. A book appears, two books, a pile of books, two piles of books. Roden is reading one. Then he has a laptop computer open in front of him, a packet of cereal, two packets, a bowl, and a spoon. He is eating. Further along, a Scottish woman enters into the story; she is played by Shenton wearing a wig. This is incongruous since he has a light beard. Audience members also get invited up on stage to pose in concise tableaux. *The Visible Men* makes particular demands on its beholders to imagine something that goes over and above what actually appears on stage. Opening and closing one's eyes resembles the kind of cinematic editing that the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) called an irrational cut. This is one that makes 'connections and breaks that [do not] belong to the waking world, but not to dream either or to nightmare. For a moment they border on something connected with thought . . . as it unfolds, branches out, and mutates'.[1] Thus *The Visible Men* is not just about what is visible when one opens one's eyes; its gentle humour depends on the use of memory to imagine what must have taken place in order to link what is visible now with what was visible before you closed your eyes.[2] One imagines a narrative that, while it unfolds, branches out, and mutates, might explain the absurd relation between one tableau and the next.

In Ivana Müller's *While We Were Holding It Together* (2008), five dancers stand or lie still in awkward, unchanging positions on stage for seventy minutes and, one by one, recount different scenarios that might explain the tableau they are creating. At the start, nothing happens for a long time and then finally one of the dancers announces, 'I imagine we are in the middle

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 149.

2. 'Tom and I used music in movement sequences to suggest a continuity of time and thus to emphasise the unbroken nature of the (actually broken) dance sequence. However, in the narrative sequences we use music in the way a film might use a piece of music to allow us to travel through time from one scene to another jumping forward through time and narrative information, skipping over the unnecessary, compressing the actual time in which we experience a sequence of events that might take days or weeks or years.' Pete Shenton, personal email comm., September 9, 2011.

of a forest. We are on a sunny weekend and we haven't seen one another for a while. We have just had lunch and we are about to continue our trip up the hill.' After a pause, one dancer after another imagines an elaboration of this scenario, and then an entirely different one is introduced. These generally encompass past, present, and future. Beginning with 'I imagine we are . . .' or, occasionally, 'I imagine I am . . .', more and more explanations of what they are doing or why they are posing like this follow as the piece progresses. For example, 'I imagine we are in a minefield. We have all heard a click, but we don't know which of us stepped on it.' Sometimes the explanations build on the previous one. One woman says, 'I imagine we are a rock group on tour. We are called Barbarella and the Bandits' and another adds, 'I imagine I am Barbarella. We are now in Holland. Everything seems to be going according to plan.' Regularly, an entirely new scenario is introduced. A strong sense of collective identity nevertheless emerges because of the way they are speaking about 'we'. There are regular blackouts, but when the lights come back on, the dancers haven't moved, or have briefly relaxed and returned to their position before the lights come up again. To be more accurate, while they are visible they try to hold their poses but inevitably their arms or legs shake with the effort of trying not to move. Also, when they speak their eyes move and they move their heads a little to address the audience. Towards the end of the piece, the strain of holding their awkward positions for so long is obvious as outstretched arms and legs tremble erratically. As one dancer wryly observes, 'I imagine a different position of my hands would have been a better choice.'

Memory and imagination are central to *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together*. Both pieces explore the choreographic premise of imagining narratives about things that have not actually been physically presented on stage. They do so by drawing on spectators' memory and imagination. New Art Club ask us to remember what is there on stage each time we close our eyes, while Müller's piece makes use of memories of the many different explanations the dancers have given us for the tableau they are presenting. Memory and imagination are virtual processes that create and use a kind of temporality that is virtual. Both pieces direct spectators towards things that are virtual because they could only have happened in a different temporality from that of the spectators in the auditorium. *While We Were Holding It Together* is a virtual dance because it exploits the potential of the immobile positions in which the dancers are posing to become each new situation that the dancers describe. In *The Visible Men*, each time we obediently close our eyes, we wonder how our memory of what we have just seen will metamorphose into something new and comically unexpected in the moment that is about to come when we open our eyes again.

To theorise the virtual in these two pieces, I draw on a discussion of the virtual in a classic book *Feeling and Form* by the philosopher Susanne Langer (1895–1985). Langer argues that when we behold a dance performance, we not only see the actual movements that dancers perform but also sense virtual powers that seem to move them. As an example, she points out that in a pas de deux, although 'the two dancers appear to magnetise each other; the relation between them is more than a spatial one, it is a relation of forces; but the forces they exercise that seem as physical as those which orient the compass needle towards the pole, really don't exist physically at all. They are dance forces, virtual powers'.[3] Langer doesn't mean here that the duet is false or deceptive. She uses the term *semblance* to identify the coherent image that the art work creates—in this example a semblance of moving forces. Brian Massumi says that 'semblance is the form in which what does not appear effectively expresses itself, in a way that must be counted as real'.[4] Langer explains:

> The function of 'semblance' is to give form a new embodiment in purely qualitative, unreal instances, setting them free from the normative embodiment in real things so that they may be recognised in their own right, and freely conceived and composed in the interests of the artist's ultimate aim—significance, or logical expression.[5]

Freeing them from normative embodiment is a process of abstraction which allows them to be appreciated in aesthetic terms, freed from their everyday uses. As Langer goes on:

> All forms in art, then, are abstracted forms; their content is only a semblance, a pure appearance, whose function is to make them, too, more apparent—more freely available and wholly apparent than they could be if they were exemplified in a context of real circumstances and anxious interest.[6]

By abstracting something so that it functions as a semblance, one can turn something known and predictable into something potentially new and

3. Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 175–76.

4. Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Ocurrent Arts* (Cambrindge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 23.

5. Langer, n. 3, 50.

6. Ibid.

different. This is what I argue happens in *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together.*

When Langer writes about the virtual power of dance, she is referring to the potential energy in the dancing. This is something inherent that the beholder can feel before it becomes actual. Erin Manning calls this 'preacceleration', which she defines as

> the virtual force of movement's taking form. It is the feeling of movement's in-gathering, a welling that propels the directionality of how movement moves. In dance, this is felt as the virtual momentum of a movement's taking form before we actually move.[7]

What Langer, Manning, Massumi, and others who have theorised the virtual offer are useful concepts like 'semblance' and 'preacceleration' which enable a close analysis and understanding of our perceptions of movement that is in process of becoming. Using these concepts makes it possible to grasp the flow of dance performance in the passing moment.

Langer's account of the virtual nature of dance was published in 1953 and is not cited today as often as it was thirty or forty years ago. This is largely because the way she approached her dance examples now seems outmoded. On a theoretical level, however, her work can provide a useful framework for evaluating virtual aspects of recent dance works. Both Langer and Gilles Deleuze developed their ideas through engaging with the philosophical discussion of memory and temporality by Henri Bergson (1859–1941). By identifying common ground within Langer's and Deleuze's theories, it becomes possible to analyse the two approaches to virtual dance that *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* explore. Both pieces create what are in effect tableaux; but whereas in eighteenth-century European art theory, a tableau condenses narrative time into a single pictorial moment, these two pieces open up and disperse many diverse and slightly disconnected narrative moments across multiple discontinuous temporalities. This chapter thus presents readings of *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* that focus on the virtual and on multiple spatio-temporalities. It looks first at virtual temporalities and duration, then at the condensation of spatio-temporal elements in a tableau and the role of memory and imagination in the transitory moment. Finally, it considers the discussion of the 'beautiful semblance' by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940). This offers a way of understanding the political potential of the virtual.

7. Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 2.

MEMORY, DURATION, AND VIRTUAL TEMPORALITIES

The way *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* intervene with the spectator's experience of temporality is key to the virtual effects they initiate. As I have explained, *The Visible Men* exploits the beholder's ability to feel the virtual momentum of movement—its preacceleration—before it actually happens. Erin Manning offers this concept as 'a way of thinking the incipiency of movement, the ways in which movement is always on the verge of expression'.[8] In *While We Were Holding It Together* the audience is affected by the absence of the movement that they might conventionally expect, and their empathetic response to shaking limbs causes this piece, in a more complicated way, to generate a semblance of the energy in dance movement. At issue here is how memory is involved in perception of temporality. Henri Bergson suggests that perception is not instantaneous; rather, 'There is already some work of our memory, and consequently, of our consciousness, which prolongs into each other, so as to grasp them in one relatively simple intuition, an endless number of moments of an endlessly divisible time.'[9] This prolongation through memory is key to the way *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* create their semblances.

Much of Langer's discussion of dance in *Feeling and Form* focuses on the potential of theatre dance to express emotions through spatial rather than temporal means. Among the principle examples she discusses are the innovations of early modern dancers like Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman and she refers to dance literature from the 1930s, including Merle Armitage's 1935 collection *Modern Dance* and Curt Sach's 1937 book *World History of the Dance*.[10] Appearing in the early 1950s, Langer's book came just before the emergence of a more avant-garde approach to dance, developed by Merce Cunningham and the artists of Judson Dance Theater whose work contradicted the assumptions that modern dance's primary concern was the expression of emotion. The problem with the idea that dance expresses emotion is that this implies that modern dance reveals a universal truth. It is this idea that avant-garde works deconstruct by emphasising the reality and materiality of the dancing body to reveal its mundane singularity, rather than what Brian Massumi characterises as 'the universal reign of emotional generality'.[11] Describing the

8. Ibid., 14.

9. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2004), 76.

10. Merle Armitage, ed. *Modern Dance* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1935); Kurt Sachs, *World History of the Dance* (New York: Norton, 1937).

11. Massumi, n. 4, 177.

minimalist quality of her well-known *Trio A* (1966), Yvonne Rainer writes that its movements should be executed in a way that draws attention to the actual time it takes the actual weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions.[12] The same could be said about the way that the effort to remain still in *While We Were Holding It Together* makes the spectator aware of duration. An emphasis on the durational and physical aspects of these performances draws attention to the immediacy of the dancer's effort. While it might seem that this is achieved through a denial of the virtuality that Langer posits, this is not the case.

While Langer's example of a pas de deux concerns a primarily spatial manifestation of the virtual, the emphasis in works like *While We Were Holding It Together* is on a spatio-temporal manifestation. Langer acknowledges that dance is a spatio-temporal form whose 'constituent elements—motions—are both space and time'.[13] However she only examines virtual temporalities in her discussion of music: 'The realm in which tonal [musical] entities move is a realm of pure duration.'[14] Pointing out that this experience is virtual rather than actual, she says that musical duration 'is an image of what might be termed "lived" or "experienced" time'.[15] Music, she continues,

> spreads out time for our direct and complete apprehension, by letting our hearing monopolise it organise, fill and shape it, all alone. It creates an image of time measured by the motions of the forms that seem to give it substance, yet a substance that consists entirely of sound, so that it is transitoriness itself. Music makes time audible, and its forms and continuity sensible.[16]

Dance, which is as transitory as music, might similarly be said to make time visible and its forms and continuity—or fragmentation and discontinuity—sensible. Indeed, much of what Langer suggests here about the experience of listening to music might, with a little adaptation, be applied to the experience of beholding dance. The static durational quality of *While We Were Holding It Together* amounts to the replacement of a particular kind of temporal illusion of theatrical or narrative time with a lived experience of weight and long

12. Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961–73* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of Novia Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 67.

13. Langer, n. 3.

14. Ibid., 109.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 110.

duration. By drawing attention to the singularity of a tiring period of effort, *While We Were Holding It Together* disrupts any normative expectation of performances that they might give beholders a generalised feeling of effortless freedom from the mundane experience of clock time.

Both *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* put beholders in a position where they become conscious of selecting and filtering their experiences in order to progress through time. For Bergson, the idea of progression and continuity is a product of consciousness, of the way we slice up or make a selection from the sense data of our perceptions. As Bergson proposed in a thought experiment:

> If you abolish my consciousness . . . matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and travelling in every direction like shivers. In short, try first to connect together the discontinuous objects of daily experience; then, resolve the motionless continuity of these qualities into vibrations, which are moving in place; finally, attach yourself to these movements, by freeing yourself from the divisible space that underlies them in order to consider only their mobility—this undivided act that your consciousness grasps in the movement that you yourself execute. You will obtain a vision of matter that is perhaps fatiguing for your imagination, but pure and stripped of what the requirements of life make you add to it in external perception.[17]

Bergson could almost be writing about dance movement when he describes experience as vibrations that are not to be confined to specific locations because of their mobility. Being aware of everything that is happening in what Bergson calls its pure form is, he says, a difficult and demanding task compared with the filtering process of normal consciousness. He goes on to describe the latter:

> Re-establish now my consciousness, and with it, the requirements of life: farther and farther, and by crossing over each time enormous periods of the internal history of things, quasi-instantaneous views are going to be taken, views this time pictorial, of which the most vivid colors condense an infinity of repetitions and elementary changes. In just the same way the thousands of successive positions of a runner are contracted into one sole symbolic attitude, which our eye perceives, which art reproduces, and which becomes for everyone the image of a man who runs.[18]

17. Bergson, n. 9, 276.

18. Ibid., 276–77.

In Langer's terms, this one, sole symbolic attitude is a semblance, a semblance of a man who runs. When the spectator watches dance works like *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together*, this habitual process of selection and condensation does not take the kind of normal course Bergson describes here but a more complicated one. Because the pieces don't look like conventional dance works, it becomes more difficult to turn them into series of normalised images of dancing. Instead, spectators become aware of a need to make active decisions about what to select and how to condense their perceptions of the performance into their own singular idea or reading of its temporal progression.

THE TABLEAU

Key to the way that *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* articulate spatio-temporalities is their use of the tableau. In eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, a tableau condenses the elements of a story into one significant moment. As art historian Michael Fried notes, unity of time in a painting was considered essential. He gives as an example of this Diderot's description of Carl Van Loo's 1757 painting *Sacrifice d'Iphigénie*:

> I said that the artist had only an instant, but that instant can coexist with traces of the one that preceded it and with signs of the one that will follow. Iphigenia has not yet been slaughtered, but I see approaching the sacrificer bearing the large bowl that will receive her blood and this accessory makes me shudder.[19]

Diderot describes here a tableau that brings past, present, and future together, just as they are in, for example, the initial forest picnic scenario in *While We Were Holding It Together*. In Müller's piece, however, this is not immediately conveyed by the poses which the dancers present but through words spoken which, with each new scenario, make one look at the dancers differently. Diderot would probably have expected an artist to compose a uniquely appropriate composition for a particular story. In Müller's piece, however, the same composition serves for all.

The Visible Men and *While We Were Holding It Together* both conform to the eighteenth-century idea of the tableau but do so in a somewhat literal way that is not in keeping with the spirit of what Diderot and his contemporaries would have appreciated. For example, at one moment in *While We Were*

19. Diderot, quoted in Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press., 1980), 214.

Figure 12 Ivana Müller's *While We Were Holding It Together* (2008). Photo by Karijn Kakebeeke.

Holding It Together (see Figure 12) one dancer after another develops the idea that they are figures who have been buried together for hundreds of years, recently excavated in a third world country and restored at the British Museum. One says, 'I imagine we have been sold at auction to different collectors. After all these years this is probably our last night together. Three of us will be taken to Switzerland tomorrow.' This offers a striking explanation of their rather awkward and disconnected poses. One dancer seems about to push herself up from the ground with both palms flat on the stage floor. Another sits on the floor with his left hand on the ground and right hand stretched out for no apparent reason. The other three performers are standing. One holds out an arm with his hand curved as if holding an imaginary pole or spear. Another holds both arms out as if making a gesture that emphasises a point in a conversation. The third holds her arm out as if to touch a wall beside her. While they all appear to be engaging with someone close to them, there is no one there and their gaze is directed towards a void. Viewers of paintings in Diderot's day would have expected a composition to conform to notions of harmonious proportion, whereas the composition in *While We Were Holding It Together* is deliberately awkward. There is a little too much empty space around each dancer so that they seem isolated from each other. Compositionally, they fail to create the kind of unified whole that was essential to the eighteenth-century tableau, and this lack of harmony produces a dramatic tension which helps maintain

the spectator's interest. It is more in keeping with the nature of twenty-first-century experience.

What separates the sensibility that informed painters and public in Diderot's time from that of *While We Were Holding It Together* is an awareness of the rupture of modernity. The experience of everyday, modern urban life has an effect on the way people understand their subjectivity. This is something that the art historian Jonathan Crary has diagnosed in a scene from Edwin S Porter's classic early silent film *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). In this film, Crary points out, the camera's changing point of view is one that no single spectator could have witnessed. In one section, it starts from a position as if standing near the railroad tracks, but then shifts to a number of unconnected positions, on top of the train as it is moving, and then inside the coach where the money bags are stored. Crary observes that

> we can identify what is of course a larger process of perceptual displacement and re-creation of positions and relations. It is hardly a question of a mobile point of view, but instead the serial reconfiguration of a kinesthetic constellation of moving forces, in which the idea of a coherent subject position is as irrelevant as the idea of Cartesian coordinates in a kaleidoscope. And I have given just the barest outline of a complex dynamic-kinetic framework, within which additional systems of movements of forces operate—of bodies, bullets, an explosion (which in some prints of the film are tinted red and orange).[20]

Rather than view from one coherent subject position, the film's audience easily transfer across the multiplicity of positions presented. Spectators of *While We Were Holding It Together* need to have a comparable ability to make sense of the serial reconfigurations that the dancers propose.

Crary argues that the 1903 film presents ruptures in spatial coordinates while the passage of time proceeds smoothly. In his view, *The Great Train Robbery* exemplifies the impact of modernity on lived experience. The complication and intensity of experience, he argues, causes a sense of distraction, and he draws on Guy Debord's critique of the society of the spectacle to theorise this. Here Crary seems to be arguing that the kind of consumerist spectacle that Debord identifies in the 1960s and 1970s was already present at the beginning of the twentieth century. This raises questions about how lived experience in the early twenty-first century differs from this earlier period. A key difference is undoubtedly the impact of the internet and mobile communications and the

20. Jonathan Crary, *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 347.

experience of living in a networked society. This leads to much more complex dynamic-kinetic frameworks for experience than those which Crary identifies in Porter's film. I have noted in earlier chapters Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's ideas about swarm behaviour: 'In conditions of social hypercomplexity,' he suggests, 'human beings tend to act as a swarm.' And when inundated with information that is too dense and comes too quickly, 'people tend to conform to shared behaviour'.[21] Both *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* present their audiences with large quantities of seemingly unconnected information. Rather than coming in the fast, intense way that Berardi describes, however, it is presented with lots of pauses and what Deleuze calls irrational cuts in a way that draws attention to the present moment. Whereas *The Great Train Robbery* presents spatial discontinuities but maintains temporal unity, there are temporal discontinuities as well as spatial ones in *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together.* Each piece, in different ways, invites its audience to become aware of emergent potentials that they might be less likely to notice within everyday working situations of networked sociality.

The dramaturgical progression that each dance work proposes has its own quality, and these qualities themselves have social resonances. Each, I have argued, is fragmented and discontinuous and bears witness to some kind of rupture. Writing about Nietzsche's concept of the eternal recurrence, Deleuze discusses Hamlet's melancholy lament about the time being out of joint. Deleuze's interpretation here bears an uncanny relation to the kinds of temporalities I have been identifying in *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together.* Time that is out of joint, Deleuze proposes, is

> demented time or time outside the curve which gave it a god, liberated from its overly simple circular figure, freed from the events which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned, in short, time presenting itself as an empty pure form. Time itself unfolds (that is, apparently ceases to be a circle) instead of things unfolding within it (following the overly circular figure).[22]

Deleuze, following Nietzsche, welcomes the possibility that time can be out of joint because it affords the subject a way of dealing in an active way with what Nietzsche called the eternal recurrence or eternal return. This is the inevitable, cyclical nature of time whereby history seems to repeat itself and one can find oneself making the same mistakes as the same situations endlessly recur. The eternal return can in effect be 'business as usual'. However, in his 1962 book,

21. Franco Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e), 2008), 15.

22. Deleuze, n. 1, 111.

Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze stresses the need to utilise an active will when faced with the fact of eternal recurrence. He writes, 'Whatever you will, will it in a way that you also will its eternal return.'[23] This is because the eternal recurrence has the effect of purging the reactive elements out of events:

> Laziness, stupidity, baseness, cowardice or spitefulness that would will its own eternal return would no longer be the same laziness, stupidity etc. How does the eternal return perform the selection here? It is the thought of the eternal return that selects. It makes willing something whole.[24]

Here it is the event of the eternal return rather than the individual whose will is active. Both pieces use repetition to create multiple temporalities that purge reactive elements and break out of the circle of simple repetitions to disrupt 'business as usual'. This allows time to unfold in the way Deleuze describes here. It is some aspect of modernity and progress which causes this disruption.

At any moment of this unfolding of space and time in the series of tableaux presented in *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together,* both virtual and actual elements are present. Langer writes that 'in the dance, the actual and virtual aspects of gesture are mingled in complex ways'.[25] Henri Bergson argues that every perception evokes memories and that 'recollection is capable of blending so well with the present perception that we cannot say where perception ends or where memory begins'.[26] Deleuze takes this idea further to suggest that 'purely actual objects do not exist', and 'an actual perception surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images, distributed on increasingly remote, increasingly large moving circuits which both make and unmake one another'.[27] This inseparable presence of actual and virtual elements is key to the way *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* work.

For Pete Shenton, these elements are activated in the gaps between the tableau in *The Visible Men*:

> There are some movement sections in *The Visible Men* which deal very directly with this notion where we ask the audience to close their eyes during

23. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 68.

24. Ibid., 69.

25. Langer, n. 3, 180.

26. Bergson, n. 9, 106.

27. Gilles Deleuze, "The Actual and the Virtual," in *Dialogues Ii* (London: Continuum, 2002), 112.

> dance movement sequences and therefore to imagine the gap between one piece of material and the next. If they do not close their eyes when instructed they see a series of (more or less) short sequences. If they do close their eyes when instructed, the experience is more like watching an unbroken dance sequence that they have chosen to deconstruct by omitting some of the information or that they complete with their imagined movements filling the gaps.[28]

Watching *The Visible Men*, when I am waiting for the permission to open my eyes, I am particularly aware of the cloud of virtual images Deleuze describes as I anticipate what I might see when I open my eyes again. When I do open them, I compare my memory of what was on stage before with how the stage appears now. There had been four chairs around a table set for breakfast. Now the table and chairs sit on their sides, the breakfast things scattered along a diagonal line across the stage. I know that Roden and Shenton must have silently and efficiently arranged all this, but I much prefer to think things magically got where they are now all on their own. In this way the actual and the virtual are folded into one another. Similarly, in *While We Were Holding It Together* each time a dancer uses the formula 'I imagine we are. . .' and gives a new explanation, we remap the dancers' positions on stage onto the new narrative so that the dancers seem qualitatively different. They may not have altered their poses but what has changed is that we now have more explanations to remember as more and more virtual elements are put in circulation while the performance proceeds. This also has the effect of folding the actual into the virtual.

The power of these theatrical semblances comes from retrospectively reverse-engineering the present from the past. Deleuze suggests, 'The past is constituted not after the present that it was,' but rather 'the past has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past.' Time has to split 'in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past'.[29] In this passage from his book *Cinema 2*, Deleuze uses a startling image of time as a flow of water that splits into two jets 'one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves the past'.[30] It is this linkage that Bergson and Deleuze make between the virtual flow of events and the tide of memory that underlies my readings of Müller and New Art Club's pieces. While Roden and Shenton were rearranging objects on stage, I could have cheated and kept my eyes open to see what was actually happening. Indeed, I didn't need to open my eyes to know what was happening. The

28. Shenton, n. 2.

29. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image* (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 81.

30. Ibid.

parallel virtual story unfolding through each successive tableau, however, was just as apparent despite not being real. The elements of the piece were splitting in two. The rearranging on stage was falling into the past while the coalescing semblances launched towards the future.

ENLIVENING AND DEADLY SEMBLANCES

Brian Massumi argues that there are different kinds of semblances, ones that are enlivening and ones that are deadly. In this he draws on the concept of the 'beautiful semblance' which is found in some essays by the German philosopher Walter Benjamin.[31] Among these is the following epigrammatic fragment on beauty and semblance:

> I. Every living thing that is beautiful has semblance.
>
> II. Every artistic thing that is beautiful has semblance because it is alive in one sense or another.
>
> III. There remain only natural, dead things which can perhaps be beautiful without semblance.[32]

This is not an easy passage to interpret, particularly the third melancholy proposition. Benjamin seems to be saying that beauty is a semblance, a surface covering a deeper, profound content or meaning. What makes the semblance in art beautiful is its aliveness, and elsewhere Benjamin talks about the liveness of the semblance as quivering with tension. In the third proposition, it is not clear what is responsible for the death. Massumi suggests that a deadening semblance is one that is oppressed by the heavy weight of normative ideas and values. By resembling (re-sembling) a universal idea or truth, the art work is already appropriated into a pre-existing value or norm before it has a chance to coalesce. It is thus constrained from realising any new potential in the moment when it coheres as a semblance. As Massumi explains:

> Benjamin calls a semblance that contrives to make a universal harmonic order effectively appear a 'beautiful semblance'. A beautiful semblance is one

31. Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, vol. 1, *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), "Beauty and Semblance," 283, and "On Semblance," 223–25; and Walter Benjaminin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, *1935–1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Boston, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002),"The Significance of the Beautiful Semblance," 137–38.

32. Benjamin, n. 30, 283.

> purporting to offer a transparent window onto a great absolute. A beautiful semblance 'quivers' with the tension of this pretension to greatness. The tension is such that the moment its harmony is 'disrupted' or 'interrupted' it 'shatters' into fragments. It then shows that the 'smallest totality'—like each of its infinitely included other worlds whose status as real potentialities has been effectively 'veiled' by the apparent harmony of its virtually unlimited order.[33]

So a dance work that creates a 'beautiful semblance' would be one that reinforces 'the universal reign of emotional generality'.[34] In contrast, there are other art works whose starting point is the artist's recognition of the problematic nature of the 'beautiful semblance' and the artist makes a conscious decision to work instead with the fragments. In chapter 9, I discussed Benjamin's allegory of the Angel of History at whose feet the dust and fragments of history pile up. One can infer from this a commonality between the fragments that come from the shattering of the beautiful semblance and the fragments at the Angel's feet that are the result of the processes of history and progress. What shatters the beautiful semblance is surely also history and progress. Rodney Livingstone points out that Benjamin's first essay on semblance is intimately related to an essay on Goethe's *Elective Infinities* that Benjamin was working on around the same time. In both, 'Benjamin plays on the words *Schien* (mere semblance but also the glimmer of the numinous in the Romantic symbol) and *erscheinen* (to appear).'[35] Massumi suggests that Benjamin developed his idea of the beautiful semblance because he was analysing beauty and harmony in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature. The kinds of eighteenth-century tableaux that Diderot discussed could also be said to produce beautiful semblances. I noted earlier that Müller used tableaux in *While We Were Holding It Together* that failed to achieve the kind of harmonious beauty that beholders in Diderot's time would have expected. For Müller, the old harmony has evidently shattered. It is the rupture of modernity that shatters the beautiful semblance. If, as Benjamin proposes, all semblances in art are alive in some way, it is this enlivening potential that animates *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together.*

At the centre of *The Visible Men* is a scene about a dead body that occurs twice in the show's fragmented narrative. It is the kind of content that could have been used in a sentimental way that reinforces 'the universal reign of emotional generality'.[36] The fragmented, deconstructive narrative of *The Visible*

33. Massumi, n. 4, 60.

34. Ibid, 175.

35. Benjamin, n. 30, 225 fn.

36. Massumi, n. 4, 177.

Men allows instead an unveiling of its potential to help beholders imagine new ways of thinking and living. Massumi's concept of an enlivening semblance is useful for understanding this climactic moment.

Pete Shenton has told me that a starting point for *The Visible Men* was an incident when, walking through a town, he turned a corner to find himself in a crowd who had gathered around a dead body lying in the road. It was an unexpected, random, meaningless occurrence that, understandably, he nevertheless found disturbing. This incident is introduced in a very tangential way early in *The Visible Men* and then restaged towards its end. The first mention of it comes when the two dancers are explaining how the piece works—that they move from one spot on stage to another while we have our eyes closed and change into a semblance of a new persona just as we open our eyes again. Shenton demonstrates by becoming, one after another, well-known pop and football stars (naming them but not actually miming anything related to these roles, not unlike the tableaux in Müller's piece), while Roden becomes people he remembers from his school days. In the middle of this, he says he has become 'a man lying on the ground in the middle of the road with blood running out of his ear and his nose with a Lidl shopping bag by his side and a crowd looking at him'. In the later scene, we open our eyes to find three spectators from the front row of the audience, who have been persuaded to stand beside Shenton on stage, looking down at Roden, who lies prone on the stage floor. The sudden appearance of audience members is unexpected but amusing, and this takes the edge off what would otherwise have been disturbing about the tableau.

Roden and Shenton might have sentimentalised this representation of death. While it is extremely unlikely that anyone in the audience had been in the street at the same time as Shenton and also seen the dead man, many of us might, however, at some point, have been confronted with something comparably random and disturbing. By emphasising the universal nature of mortality, Roden and Shenton would have created a 'beautiful semblance'. This would have been 'great art' doing 'business as usual'. The repetition of this image of the dead body, however, shatters the 'beautiful semblance' and unveils new potentials. The second appearance of the body is the central moment of the piece because it transforms everything that Roden and Shenton had done up until that moment. The series of events that they had presented through tableaux had seemed random and merely there to give the audience pleasure and make them laugh. *The Visible Men* is only superficially superficial. When the idea of the dead man lying in the street becomes a tableau with audience members, one's memory of its earlier appearance and, with it, all the other comic though sometimes disturbing moments we have witnessed completely rearrange themselves. We realise that there had been an underlying intention

all along to return to this scene and emphasise its significance. Like *While We Were Holding It Together,* the piece inundates the beholder with lots of seemingly random and unconnected details only for it to cohere within enlivening semblances in new and unexpected ways.

A similar dramaturgical device is used in *While We Were Holding It Together.* Towards the end of the seventy-minute piece, after a blackout, I suddenly notice that the dancers have changed places with one another. Little chuckles from others in the audience shows that I am not the only person to have noticed this. What is surprising, however, is how little difference this actually makes. The overall composition made with the dancers' bodies is unchanged, though it is now different bodies holding themselves in the now familiar poses. This unexpected occurrence brings about the realisation that it doesn't matter which individual offers us each new explanation; what is important are the semblances that they are concretising. The dancers continue, with the same regularity and after the same pauses, to say 'I imagine we are. . . '. Each new scenario is still refusing to do 'business as usual' and doing so in an enlivening way, putting time out of joint and prompting new ways of thinking and living.

These repetitions are examples of the eternal return. For Deleuze, the eternal return is an event and an action that possesses

> a secret coherence that excludes that of the self. In this manner, the I which is fractured according to the order of time and the Self which is divided according to the temporal series correspond and find a common descendant in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I.[37]

The dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together* are men and women without names, without family, without qualities, without self. They are defined only by the ever changing contexts which they repeatedly ask us to imagine that they are embodying. Early on in *The Visible Men* we get to know that Roden's first name is Tom and Shenton's is Pete, and are quickly introduced to their on-stage personas. In *While We Were Holding It Together*, we never get to know anything like this about the dancers. They remain anonymous, speaking English as a foreign language with varying degrees of awkwardness; I myself could only hazard a guess at what their nationalities might be. The only thing that is clear about them, because they keep referring to themselves as *we*, is that they seem to have a sense of collective identity.

37. Deleuze, n. 1, 112.

Another aspect of the semblance mentioned earlier, its abstraction, is at work here. Susanne Langer pointed out that the semblance gives a 'new form of embodiment . . . setting the form free from the normal embodiment'.[38] The choreographer's artistic use of forms, abstracted from their normal context, sets her or him them free to create something new that would not have been possible 'in a context of real circumstances and anxious interests'.[39] When the dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together* change places they become even more anonymous than they were already, demonstrating that the semblances they were creating were not dependent on anything particular about their bodies but could equally be made by almost any body whatsoever, or to put it another way, by the bodies of others whose singularities might be equally difficult to identify, neither easily recognisable nor familiar from a normative point of view. There is something ethical here, in the Levinasian sense discussed in the central section of this book, about acknowledging the difference of others and not trying to reduce it to what one considers to be the same as oneself, and thus to the known and predictable. In effect, the dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together* exemplify the complete opposite of the idea that the contemporary dancer expresses, through their individuality, some universal truth. Instead, recalling the account of artistic responsibility proposed by Blanchot (that was introduced in chapter nine) the dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together* are 'immolated to their art' and have become 'nobody, the empty animated space where art's summons is heard'.[40] By becoming nobodies, they create a space in which their audience of beholders can use their imaginations by responding to the enlivening semblances that the piece offers.

The dancers' anonymity in *While We Were Holding It Together* in some ways parallels that of the 'extras' in Maria La Ribot's *40 Espontaneos* (see chapter 5). One could say that, like them, the dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together* occupy 'the surround' and utilise tactics of disruption in defence of their undercommons. It is because of this that one can say there is a politics of imagining at work in the enlivening semblances that coalesce in *While We Were Holding It Together*. Brian Massumi calls imagination 'virtual events of foretracing', pointing to the ability of imagination 'to marshall powers of the false, not in order to designate the way things are but to catalyze

38. Langer, n. 3, 50.

39. Ibid.

40. Maurice Blanchot, *The Siren's Song* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 73.

what's to come, emergently, inventively, un-preprogrammed and reflective of no past model'.[41] *The Visible Men* and *While We Were Holding It Together* invite beholders to be open to such virtual acts of foretracing through using their imagination. Through the semblances that they bring to life they initiate a politics of imagining because of the ways in which these afford opportunities for new ways of thinking and living.

41. Massumi, n. 4, 173.

11

Conclusion

Keywords

LIFE

Ideas and discussions of life and living appear throughout this book.[1] For Paulo Virno, in chapter 3, 'the living body becomes an object to be managed',[2] and it is this kind of management that the works discussed in this book seek to ungovern. The amateur videos of *Rosas Danst Rosas* and of breakdancing have a liveliness that is absent in the professionally produced commercial videos that seek to capture, for commercial purposes, the physical expressiveness of these instances of dance. Such management has a deadening effect. A similar tension emerges in chapter 10 around enlivening and deadly semblances, the former reinforcing ideologically determined, normative aesthetic values while the latter, through the fragmentation of the beautiful semblance, afford opportunities for new ways of thinking and living. Radical, experimental dance works like *While We Were Holding It Together* and *The Virtual Men* are on the side of the vitality that is deadened by the imposition of the normative. For Levinas, in chapter 8, a minimal instance of living is present in the rumble of being that emerges for the sleepless in the middle of the night when one is unsure whether or not one is still awake. It is this pre-conscious, impersonal

1. This brief concluding chapter is inspired by Raymond William's classic book *Keywords* as well as 'Conclusion: Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines', in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 501–14.

2. Paulo Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (New York: Semiotext€, 2004), 83.

existence that emerges in Hafez's account of the revolutionary Egyptian crowd and is also at work in the dancers' interactions in *Magnesium*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* divides the subsidiary meanings of the word *life* into thirteen clusters, including a few meanings which are now defunct. It is one of the oldest English words, found in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon texts. In so far as dance is invariably an expression of life, the definition that seems most useful is this:

> The condition that distinguishes animals, plants, and other organisms from inorganic or inanimate matter, characterized by continuous metabolic activity and the capacity for functions such as growth, development, reproduction, adaptation to the environment, and response to stimulation; (also) the activities and phenomena by which this is manifested.'[3]

Dance performances that express life and vitality can therefore acknowledge a connection with life in general and not just with human life. To think about life is to include the world whereas to think about humanity is to focus on the latter's exceptional attributes that in effect exclude the rest of animate existence. The dancers in *While We Were Holding It Together,* at one moment, said that they were (inanimate) sculptures excavated from a third world country, restored at the British Museum before being sold to collectors; but the fact that the dancers, as they explained this, were trembling in their efforts to keep their arms and legs still was in itself a sign of this animate existence.[4] An inclusive openness towards the animate world is identified in chapter 6 in Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's performance in *3Abscheid* and in the affects generated by the mobile, animate object presented in performance by Xavier Le Roy in *Self Unfinished* and *Sans titre (2014)* Works like these open up potentials for new ways of thinking and living. (see the section 'Open').

THE POLITICAL

A slogan that emerged in second-wave feminism has it that the personal is political, not in the sense that it engages in the kind of political issues that are the subject of party politics, but because of the way that normative ideologies influence people individually and collectively—at micro and macro levels.

3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s. v. "life."

4. The word *exhausting* in the title of André Lepecki's book *Exhausting Dance,* has the unfortunate but doubtless unintended side effect of suggesting that dance might be becoming a form which is no longer able, or has a dwindling ability, to express liveliness.

Two works by La Ribot, *Laughing Hole*, in chapter 5, and *Gustavia*, made with Matthilde Monnier, discussed in chapter 6, reveal relations of power operating around gender norms. Cultural forms are an area within and through which ideologies are reinforced, challenged, and changed. All art is political. Because corporeal expression is a particular focus in dance, it is a field in which there is potential to reveal the way that the body is subject to relations of power. Many of the examples discussed in this book make such revelations.

Xavier Le Roy, in works like *Product of Circumstances, Product of Other Circumstances*, and *Sans titre (2014)*, makes visible, in a critical way, the relations of power that produce and constrain the market for contemporary dance. *1 Poor and One 0* and *Mass Ornament*, discussed in chapter 4, reveal relations of power through their respective focus on the effects of neoliberalism and austerity, while *Fake It!*, discussed in chapter 3, intervenes within domestic Slovenian politics while revealing the relations of power that determine the supposed state of the arts in post-communist countries. Faustin Linyekula's work, discussed in chapter 9, reveals what is at issue for contemporary artists from postcolonial African countries because of the residual effects of the primitivist aesthetic developed, in the early twentieth century, by modernist artists working in metropolitan centres of former European colonial powers. Hafez's blog, discussed in chapter 8, reveals the process of politicisation that took place on the streets during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. To take responsibility through approaching the other across barriers of difference is political. To reveal, through dance, the hidden relations of power that produce precarious lives is political. Beyond these explicit instances of the political in contemporary dance works, it can also be political to perform the alternative society one would wish to be part of. Lastly, chapter 7 argued that the politics of friendship can offer a model for rethinking the political.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a comparatively recent word, first occurring in print in 1642. Its usage then is a consequence of an emerging modern definition of the legal status of the subject. Responsibility, in a non-legal sense, is the central theme of chapters 5 to 8, which all draw, in similar ways, on the account of ethics proposed by Emmanuel Levinas. Responsibility, in this account, is not a matter of legal or moral obligation but a pre-conscious response from an impersonal 'it'—which Levinas identified with the rumble of being—to a call or demand that arises in the moment of exposure to the other's difference. Furthermore, responsibility here does not entail being personally responsible for an individual but, as the etymology of the Arabic word for responsibility, *Mas'oleya*, suggests, it may entail an event

where one gives an account of oneself as an ethical being before the other. This manifested itself, in the Cairo crowd during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and it is also the challenge which La Ribot's laughing pieces make to their beholders. In the solos discussed in chapter 6, this responsibility is present in the dancer's inclination towards the world while, in the duos discussed in chapter 7, it emerges through the politics of non-normative friendship. In both cases this responsibility is equally present in artists' commitment to their art so that, as Maurice Blanchot argues, artists' responsibility has a radically passive character, an acknowledgment that they are becoming the empty, animated space where the needs of the work itself override an artist's individual preferences. Responsibility, in all the dance examples discussed in this book, entails an openness to difference that manifests itself in an inclination beyond the self towards the world (see the section 'Open'). Through this inclination comes acknowledgment of a responsibility to recognise the other's right to have a liveable life rather than a precarious one (see the section 'Life'); works like the solos and duos discussed in chapters 6 and 7, and like *Magnesium,* in chapter 8, perform the kinds of responsibility that helps beholders imagine new ways of thinking and living (see the section 'Life'). A propensity to share responsibility is a precondition for maintaining and defending a commons.

THE COMMONS

The commons initially referred to the common people and, by association, with the common pasture that was shared by them.[5] There is a long tradition of radical thinking around the idea of the commons. Protests against the enclosure of the commons were made by radicals in the political debates following the English Revolution in the mid-1600s.[6] Works like *Mass Ornament* and *1 Poor and One 0* (chapter 4), La Ribot's laughing pieces, (chapter 5) and all the pieces by Xavier Le Roy discussed in the book are, in varying ways, beneficiaries of this radical tradition.

I have argued that, although professional dance artists earn their living through the practice of their art, they share knowledge about dance techniques and approaches to movement research and about improvisation and choreographic processes. Dance artists benefit mutually from the existence of

5. *Common* is one of the keywords that Raymond Williams discusses.

6. The Parliamentary army in the English Civil War (1642–51) were fighting on behalf of the common. Gerard Winstanley (1609–76) wrote extensively against the enclosures of the commons and advocated a return to 'commoning', setting up colonies in 1648 with his followers, called 'Diggers', on vacant common land in the South East of England.

other like-minded artists. I noted in chapter 3 the request that people should not make copies of *Material for the Spine* because it was 'the fruit of hard work and considerable investment', and if its costs weren't recuperated 'this could prevent the completion of other large scale projects dear to Contredanse and to the dance sector'. This exemplifies the way that, although there are costs and wages in the contemporary dance sector, a common pool of resources is shared through respect and through recognition of mutual benefit. It is in this way that the contemporary dance sector can be seen as a knowledge commons.

When Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker initiated the 'Re: Rosas' project she was, in effect, acknowledging that contemporary dance knowledge is a shared resource—a commons—rather than a commodity from which to generate financial profit. Similarly, Roland Petit's attempts to stop Olga de Soto's *histoire(s)* flagged up the non-hierarchical nature of the contemporary dance sector in which artists like de Soto are working, compared with the top-down managerial structures of institutionalised ballet companies. The interactions between Petit and de Soto highlight the fact that the public effects of dance performances are, in effect, a common, collective resource rather than the private property of any one individual. Because contemporary dance artists share these resources as a commons, I have argued, some of the artists whose work has been discussed in this book are alert to the need for self-defence of the commons in general. In the face of attempts to close it down, they work towards keeping it open (see the section 'Open').

UNGOVERNING

The word *ungoverning*, which is ambiguously both a verb and an adjective, suggests something ongoing and in process of becoming. Its meaning lies in the same area as the term *deconstruction* and the French word *désoeuvrement* that is inadequately translated as 'to unwork' or 'to render inoperative'. In this book, *ungoverning* is used to identify a process of either deconstructing or unworking artistic or aesthetic conventions that is in some way political. This political aspect can take the form of institutional critique or critique of neoliberalism, or a general revelation of relations of power. In Shakespeare's plays an ungoverned youth or someone giving vent to ungoverned passion has negative associations because of the way these characters disturb social or cosmic harmony. Ungoverning dance in this book, however, yields positive effects by restoring the balance of the social and the political that has been disturbed by the effects of neoliberalism and by the imposition and reinforcement of normative ideologies. Thus Le Roy's *Sans titre (2014),* with which this book began, was ungoverning the effects of the market for contemporary dance through the way Le Roy's actions deconstructed the relations between performer and

beholder, opening up potentials for thinking these relations differently. By ungoverning the unbalanced 'pure relatonships' that Bauman and Giddens suggest are a negative effect of neoliberal work practices, the duos discussed in chapter 7 open up potentials for imagining new kinds of non-traditional friendship. La Ribot's use of laughter in *40 Espontanéos* and *Laughing Hole* ungoverns the way social conventions are reinforced through cultural forms. By doing so these works generate some awareness of the precarious lives produced by neoliberalism and globalisation. Works like *Fake It!, A Mary Wigman Dance Evening,* and *La Création du monde 1923–2012* deconstruct ways of thinking that marginalise the work of artists from 'off-regions', such as Slovenia, Ecuador, and Democratic Republic of Congo. By doing so, they ungovern the way international relations influence the writing of dance history. Lana Al-Sennawi's short film *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso: A Tribute to Classical Egyptian Cinema* ungoverns the institutionally sanctioned fear and shame that is a consequence of Islamist influence on the Egyptian state. By doing so, it enables a reappropriation of the sensual and expressive heritage of Egyptian cultural history. The term *ungoverning* is useful if it reveals the social and political potential of the deconstruction or *désoeuvrement* of aesthetic and artistic forms and the way such processes open up new ways of thinking and living.

OPEN

The idea of openness is at the heart of one of the main claims made in this book, that ungoverning dance opens up new ways of thinking and living. *Open* is one of the older words in the English language. Like *life*, it appears in Beowulf and has many subsidiary meanings. Two of the more general ones are relevant to the claim about ungoverning dance. To be 'open-minded' means to be receptive to new ideas and experiences. Such openness includes openness to different ways of thinking and to those who think differently. This is to be generous and open-handed, as in having an open house. These are warmly reassuring qualities. There are two specialist meanings of *open* that extend this argument.

First, the word *open* has a specific meaning in dance terminology. In ballet, for example, one opens into a second position or into an arabesque. In this specialist sense, dancers use codified forms to open the limbs and torso to reveal themselves. In this way, the ballet vocabulary enables formal self-presentation on a proscenium stage. In recent contemporary dance works, such as the solos discussed in chapter 6, the dancer opens herself before and towards the world to which she is inclined. This exemplifies dancers' responsibility not only before the world but also to the needs of their art, which literally, in terms of the physicality of dancing, opens them.

Second, in a comparatively recent usage of *open* within art and literary criticism, an 'open' work or text is one that invites or requires its readers or beholders to engage actively with it in order to develop their own understanding or interpretation of it. In the works discussed in this book, dancers open themselves before the world in open works which invite their beholders to be open minded and receptive towards what the performance has to offer. These works create a space in which performer and beholder can open up to new ways of thinking and living. This not only embraces thinking and living differently but, by doing so, reveals the open. For Heidegger, only the human, and not the animal, can see the open:

> Plant and animal depend on something outside of themselves without ever 'seeing' either the outside or the inside, i.e., without ever seeing their being unconcealed in the free of being. It would never be possible for a stone, any more than for an airplane, to elevate itself towards the sun in jubilation and to stir like the lark, and yet not even the lark sees the open.[7]

But, as Giorgio Agamben observes in his commentary on this passage, Heidegger is in fact ambivalent about the border between human and animal: 'Poverty in world—in which the animal in some way feels its own not-being-open—has the strategic function of ensuring a passage between the animal environment and the open.'[8] This leads Agamben to interrogate the way that definitions of what it is to be human depend on a distinction between human and animal that is complicated by the fact that the human is animal. What is at stake, therefore, is the relationship between these categories: 'If man can open a world and free a possible . . . [and] if at the centre of the open lies the unconcealedness of the animal, then at this point we must ask what becomes of this relation.'[9] Since relationality has been a central concern identified in the dance works discussed in this book, it is productive to reflect on how these works themselves propose creative answers to Agamben's question.

The relations at play in these dance works include those between performer and beholder; those between partners in a duo and the relations within the swarm; the complicity of contemporary dance in Fordism and post-Fordism and in the way that neoliberalism creates precarious lives; the relation between

7. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 150.

8. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004) 61.

9. Ibid., 91.

performers and beholders in the present and the history and shared memories of dance in the past; the relation between being in the present and the potential of what is about to become. In the section 'Life' it was noted that some of these works generate a liveliness that humans share with the rest of animate existence. Works that ungovern dance open up a liveliness that is otherwise deadened by ideologically determined impositions of normative values. To live the open is a political matter, and it is spaces in which to imagine living the open that the dance works discussed in this book propose.

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Many of the chapters of this book began life as visiting lectures or presentations at conferences and symposia in Europe, often ones that accompanied dance festivals. These festivals afforded me opportunities to see dance works that I subsequently wrote about in this book, and chances to meet with the artists performing them. Chapter 9 on re-enactments has a long history. Christophe Wavelet first made me aware of this phenomenon in 2002, and I first wrote about it in a paper presented at the Tanzquartier in Vienna that year, which was published in *Performance Research* in 2003.[1] I revisited this in 2009, when I was invited by Janez Janša to present a paper at the Soking Gala Sov in Ljubljana, where I saw *Fake It!* and *1 Poor and One 0*. I revised it for a seminar as part of the Oktoberdans Festival, in Bergen in 2010, where I saw *Gustavia*, and again in 2012 in Munich during the Tanzwerkstatt Europa festival, which I attended at the invitation of Walter Huen, where I saw work by Martin Nachbar and Olga de Soto.

Chapter 6 on the solo started as visiting lectures on the MA SODA (Solo Dance Authorship) in Berlin at the invitation of Rick Alsopp, and a paper at the 2009 conference 'Solo? in Contemporary Dance' accompanying the iDans festival in Istanbul organised by Gurur Ertem, where I saw Xavier Le Roy's *Self Unfinished* and *Product of Circumstances*. I then revisited the topic for my contribution to a conference accompanying the Gdansk Dance Festival, in 2010, programmed by Kasia Pastuszak, where there was a solo dance competition. Once more at Kasia's invitation, I presented the first version of part

1. Ramsay Burt, "Memory, Repetition, and Critical Intervention: The Politics of Historical Reference in Recent European Dance Performance," *Performance Research* 8, no. 2 (2003).

of chapter 7 at the 2012 Gdansk Dance Festival. Chapter 8 began as a paper in 2011 at the symposium 'Scores No3: uneasy going' at Tanzquartier in Vienna, which I attended at the invitation of Walter Huen and Sandra Noeth.

The discussion of *40 Espontaneos* and *Laughing Hole* in chapter 5 was developed from an essay published in *Parallax*.[2] The discussion of Xavier Le Roy's *Self Unfinished* in chapter 6 was developed from a 2008 essay that appeared in *Forum Moderne Tanz*.[3] An early draft of some of the ideas discussed in chapter 10 appeared as part of a 2009 essay in *Dance Chronicle*,[4] while chapter 8 was expanded from a shorter essay published in 2013 in a publication following the symposium at Tanzquartier in Vienna.[5]

I owe a great deal to a number of the dance artists whose work I have discussed; in many cases I have been lucky enough to engage in dialogues with them about their work over an extended period. They often gave me useful extra information; some shared with me pieces they had written, or commented on drafts of my own writing. I would particularly like to thank Fabián Barba, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Adham Hafez, Janez Janša, John Jasperse, Faustin Linyekula, Mathilde Monnier, Martin Nachbar, Xavier Le Roy, Maria La Ribot, and Olga de Soto. I owe a debt of gratitude to my first readers, Michael Huxley, 'Funmi Adewole, Martin Leach, Josephine Bosma, Erin Manning, and my anonymous reader. At De Montfort University I am lucky to have a position that enables me to do research and supports me in all the activities that this book has entailed. Finally, I am extremely grateful to my editor Norm Hirschy and series editor Mark Franko for their initial enthusiasm about my proposed project, invaluable comments and suggestions, and patient support over the five years it has taken from original conception to the completion of the manuscript.

2. "Preferring to Laugh." *Parallax* 46 (January–March 2008): 15–23.

3. "Revisiting 'No to Spectacle': Self Unfinished and Véronique Doisneau," *Forum Modernes Theater* 23, no. 1 (2008): 49–59.

4. "History, Memory, and the Virtual in Current European Dance Practice," *Dance Chronicle* 32, no. 3 (2009): 442–67.

5. "Reflections on Steve Paxton's Magnesium," in *Scores 3: Uneasy Going*, ed. Walter Heun, et al. (Vienna: Tanzquartier Wien, 2013).

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