

Figuration:

A Philosophy of Dance

By

Joshua M. Hall

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Approved:

John Lachs

David Wood

Charles Scott

Ann Cooper Albright

To all of my dancing families in the Magic City

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why Anyone (and in Fact Everyone) Should Care

Why, a skeptic might ask, should anyone care about dance? That depends, the philosopher might respond, on what you mean by “dance.” If by dance you mean the traditional performance art, inclusive of ballet, modern and postmodern dance, then the answer is that you probably shouldn’t care about it anymore than you care about opera or symphony orchestras. Which is to say, a certain demographic that cares about the fine arts in general should perhaps be interested in this kind of dance in the spirit of supporting all of the major fine arts.¹ Those interested exclusively in the philosophy of this kind of dance would do well to begin with Suzanne Langer’s *Feeling and Form* (for traditional ballet), Gerald Myers’ *Who’s Not Afraid of Martha Graham?* (for modern dance) and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone’s *Phenomenology of Dance* (for postmodern dance). Unfortunately, as far as book-length works in the philosophy of dance are concerned, one has pretty much had to stop there.

On the other hand, if by dance you mean folk dancing, broadly construed, such as would include tap, clogging, Irish step dance, jazz dance, hip-hop, and traditional African tribal dance, the answer as to who should care is anyone who belongs to any community for which a folk dance is important, or has a professional interest in the study of culture

¹ In this category I would also include the dancing of conductors, jazz musicians, people in parades, etc.

or society (such as social scientists and scholars in the humanities), or has a friend or relative who is taking or has taken dance classes as a child.

Or, if by dance you mean other, more informal kinds of social dancing, like that at a local ballroom dance, prom, senior citizen's community center, or house party, the answer (as to who should care) is anyone who enjoys social dancing for its own sake, or wants to have a better chance at having sex, making friends, or enhancing his or her social standing.²

Or, if by dance, you mean the skillful and orchestrated movements of combatants and warriors, in, for example, professional boxing, Asian martial arts and modern warfare, then the answer is anyone who cares about sports, fighting or war, such as professional and amateur athletes, sports fans, children in Tae Kwan Do classes, military generals and historians. This is also where I would locate the dance of destruction of the Hindu god Shiva and other similar deities throughout world history.

Or, if by dance, you mean the graceful, rhythmic and pragmatic activities that can be observed in non-human animals, such as the pollen dance of the bee, the stealthy approach of wild cats, the V-formation of ducks in flight, etc., then the answer is anyone who is interested, either personally or professionally, in such animals, including biologists, farmers, artists, pet owners, nature lovers, etc.

Or, if by dance, you mean the motions of the heavenly bodies, such as the planets in orbit around the sun, then the answer is anyone who is interested, for either personal or professional reasons, in astronomical phenomena, be they astronomers, followers of astrology, amateur stargazers, people in love on a blanket in a grassy field, etc.

² There are of course types of dance ranked in the traditional hierarchy of dances, such as tap, clogging, and jazz—the former two of which are an important part of my own dance background—which offer a mix of the pros and cons of both art dance and social dance.

Or, if by dance you mean the agile and vivacious quality of a piece of writing, a way of speaking or a style of thinking, then the answer is anyone who is interested in reading or writing or speaking or listening to excellent and pleasing language, such as professional writers, book lovers, impassioned conversationalists and perhaps even philosophers. This style of thinking is also where I would locate the dance of concepts in philosophers such as Hegel and Derrida.

Or, finally, if you actually mean all of these at once, if you are thinking about dancing, at least for strategic purposes, as including all of these various senses in a coalition of meaning—and this is exactly the case in this project—then the answer should be, and therefore is: everyone. In addition to the fact that most people have an interest in at least some of these areas, there is another, stronger sense in which I would argue that everyone should care. One way to express what all these kinds of dancing have in common is that they are all concerned with movement for its own sake, and since the person uninterested in these dances is probably not uninterested in movement either, that person would presumably be limited to moving always for the sake of one extrinsic goal after another without ever finding meaning or satisfaction in the process or experience of achieving those goals. Put simply then, everyone should care about dance in this broader sense because everyone wants to experience their lives as meaningful and satisfying.

But if our skeptic were to concede the relevance of dance, thus broadly understood, to the general reader, s/he she might still question whether there is any feasible and meaningful way to conduct such a philosophical investigation. After all, at least on the surface, these various senses of dance might seem only tenuously related, as might the aspects of the cosmos to which they respectively refer. The hope that this is

possible is what drove philosopher of art Francis Sparshott in his two books on the philosophy of dance, *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* and *A Measured Pace: Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance*. Although himself lacking any background in dance, Sparshott attempted in these works to collect all the raw materials, both concrete and conceptual, that a philosopher would need, and would need to address, in a systematic philosophy of dance.

As one would expect, the result of this assemblage is roughly the philosophical equivalent of dumping one's purse out onto the living room coffee table. There are likely important things in it, but there are far too many things, and far too little order or organization to evaluate those things individually, much less get a sense of how best to organize them in the best way possible. One reason Sparshott might never have found a suitable organizing principle is that he gives little consideration in these two books to the history of philosophy. (He does, however, have an excellent essay on this topic entitled "On the Question: Why Do Philosophers Neglect the Aesthetics of the Dance?") It is this factor, history, combined with sixteen years of experience as a dancer, competitor, instructor and choreographer, in several genres of dance, which will allow me to carry to completion the project that Sparshott envisioned.

Assuming for the sake of argument, that the skeptic is thereby convinced that dance, thus broadly construed, is not only relevant, but also feasible and meaningful as a subject of philosophical inquiry, s/he might still wonder wherein the benefit would lie in such a philosophical investigation. Would such a philosophy of dance make dance better? Would it make philosophy better? Would it make the lives of individuals and communities better? And finally, is there any truth to be gained through this

philosophical investigation? The answer to each question is a resounding “Yes!” which I will now articulate in greater detail.

Such a philosophy of dance would make dancing better primarily by (a) bringing more dancers to the floor, (b) inspire existing dancers to become better and (c) drawing attention to and celebrating underrated dancers and dances in the world. It would do so by making seem dancing seem more comprehensible, admirable, rewarding and interesting, by making it possible to identify skillful dance where it may have been previously invisible, and by making more appealing the idea of becoming (or becoming a better) professional dancer, social dancer, athlete, warrior, animal lover, stargazer, and connoisseur of language and thought.

Such a philosophy of dance would make philosophy better because it would (a) help various kinds of philosophers, such as philosophers of literature, language, religion, ethics and aesthetics, to take notice of the important roles that dance plays in their areas of expertise; (b) perhaps inspire a desire to be more of a dancer in one’s own philosophizing, regardless of the subject matter of the work; and (c) indirectly facilitate, as a result of its emphasis on and valorization of dancing, an increased emphasis on and valorization of politically disempowered communities which are associated in contemporary Western culture with dance, including women, non-heterosexuals, non-Caucasians, children and non-human animals.

Such a philosophy of dance would improve the lives of individuals and communities by (a) enriching those lives with the joys of various forms of dance, (b) facilitating more pluralistic and tolerant communities by indirectly valorizing the contributions of various disempowered communities associated with dance, and (c)

suggesting a set of psychological and political criteria that any individual and community must meet in order to support thriving dancing communities.

And such a philosophy of dance would also, as should be clearer from the previous few paragraphs, contribute to the pursuit of truth, especially truth about the various dancing parts of various lives.

Why this is Such a Good Method

It is widely acknowledged that dance is widely neglected in the history of Western philosophy and that the only significant treatment by canonical, familiar Western philosophers is found in Plato and Nietzsche. It is further acknowledged that resistance to this neglect has so far taken place primarily in studies of particular dances conducted by expert practitioners of these dances.³ Against this background, I have reexamined the major thinkers in the canonical history of Western philosophy, paying particular attention to thinkers close (chronologically, philosophically, stylistically, etc.) to Plato and Nietzsche. Out of this reexamination, I have constructed a genealogy of dance-relevant moments that could be woven into a more thorough account of dance in philosophy. This thoroughness will be achieved in part by my working on a more general level than that of one individual dance or dance tradition.

The reasons why I believe that dance constitutes (1) a potentially unified subject matter which is (2) relevant to philosophy in general despite its overt neglect are as

³ See, for example, *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader, Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*, Susan Leigh Foster's work, including *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, and that of Ann Cooper Albright, including *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, as well as a special issue of the journal *Topoi* dedicated to dance.

follows. (1a) It seems probable that there are some commonalities among the various dances which are investigated as resistant to dominant trends of analysis in Western thought, at least insofar as they are all termed “dances.” (This is not to suggest, however, that all dance is always resistant, and never compliant, but merely that some dances are, and can be productively analyzed as such. An analysis of dance in Western history with regard to its harmony with cultural and political traditions would be valuable, but it is beyond the scope of our project.) (2a) Plato and Nietzsche, who did write explicitly about dance, have had extensive influence on later thinkers. It seems likely that their work on dance has had some influence as well. (2b) Given the pervasiveness of dance in the world, it must have made itself felt in some way, even if only by its unexplained absence, in most if not all philosophy.

Given how little dance is explicitly dealt with in the history of Western philosophy, I have adopted an alternative strategy for connecting that history to dance as I have elaborated it above. This strategy consists of two stages. First, I performed a phenomenological analysis of my own sixteen years of amateur and professional experience in dance in order to generate a small cluster of concepts or constructs that could be considered as central aspects of dance. Second, I re-surveyed the canonical thinkers in the history of philosophy to try to find treatment of these constructs. The idea was—given the impossibility of a history of the philosophy of dance based on philosophers’ analyses of dance as such—to produce a history of the philosophy of dance derived from philosophers’ analyses of phenomenologically-generated core concepts of dance. Put differently, since I can’t build my philosophy of dance on several

philosophers' treatment of dance as a whole, I have developed categories to build a philosophy of dance on a variety of philosophers' treatment of aspects of dance.

I have termed these central constructs or aspects of dance "Moves," and have narrowed my focus to the three most distinctive and elaborate philosophers' conceptions of each of these "Moves." This yielded the following twelve figures (in order of appearance in this project): Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Condillac, Mead, Kristeva, Schiller, Dewey, Avicenna, Fanon, Butler and Deleuze. It seems promising to me, regarding the appropriateness of my choices for the Moves, that the philosophers already acknowledged as contributing helpfully to dance, especially Plato and Nietzsche, also appear in this survey.

I have named the Moves "pos(i)ture," "gest)(ure," ")grace(" and "(re)silience." By "pos(i)ture," I mean "the dynamic imitation of stasis." The point here is that any living animal, even when not obviously moving, is *always* covertly moving, at least internally, in the process of maintaining the appearance of rest. The parentheses are intended to remind us of the etymological link between posing and positing, and to illustrate that the "I" is only deceptively simple and separable. By "ges)(ture," I mean "the carrying-across f(o)unding language." By this strange word formation I am attempting to suggest the etymological meaning of gesture, "to carry across" in the context of the fact that all gesture, including linguistic gesture (speech and writing) is ultimately both "funded" or invested by, and also "founded" or created on the basis of, the movements of bodies. Thus, the movement of the animal's body carries gesture, including speech and writing, from non-being into being. The parentheses are intended to symbolize that *across which* the carrying moves. By ")grace(" I mean "a pleasing

figure/ground reversal.” The figure and ground here are the organism and its environment, because in consummately graceful movement, the environment seems to move seamlessly through the organism, in terms of the organism’s material (muscles, skin, etc.) and its form (the lines and shapes formed by the body), and, within teleological perspectives, even its purpose and efficient cause (i.e., that Nature, God or the world is using the dancer’s body as a perfect instrument of its will/design.) The parentheses are intended to represent the openness/permeability of the organism to its environment in graceful movement. Finally, by (re)silience I mean “a flourishing recirculation.” I am attempting to suggest its etymology of “leaping back” or “jumping again” as illustrative of its meaning of always springing back into shape, always ready for more, persisting through time’s deformations, like the agile body of the dancer, literally bounding and rebounding from every trial and setback. The parentheses are intended to emphasize the “back” or “again” dimension by isolating the prefix “re-” which means “back” or “again.”

The use of parentheses in spelling the Moves, on an occasional basis, is intended to symbolize their relationality, especially to multiple communities, and to draw the reader’s attention to the movement in his or her own thought in thinking through these concepts. The reader might object that these parentheses are more distracting than helpful, as has been suggested of several of Jacques Derrida’s graphic strategies, (especially that of striking through a word to indicate its being “under erasure”). Although sympathetic to this position, I believe that in the case of dance in particular, as an irreducibly non-entirely-discursive phenomenon, it is appropriate and helpful to instantiate visible reminders of thinghood or brute materiality, at any rate in the

construction of a philosophical approach that is attempting to encapsulate as much of its subject matter into its discourse as possible.

The reader might be concerned that these phenomenological constructs are entirely arbitrary and meaningful only for my own personal experience, a common criticism of various phenomenological analyses. In this regard, it seems encouraging that they align nicely, without any previous knowledge or research on my part, with the most widely-utilized theoretical apparatus for dance in Western history, the Movement Analysis of Rudolf Laban. Specifically, the four Moves correspond closely to what Laban called the Four Effort Dimensions—Weight, Space, Flow and Time—in the following ways. Pos(i)ture, like “Weight,” involves the muscular tension of the body; Gest)(ure, like “Space,” involves different degrees of direction and indirection in moving through space to accomplish a given task.)Grace(, like “Flow” has to do with whether a motion is executed freely or with the expectation of sudden interruption, since a perfect conduit-relation to the environment obviates sudden stoppage. And (re)silience, like “Time,” involves a distinction between sudden action and that which is sustained indefinitely

I will conduct the etymological and conceptual analyses of the Moves by examining the work of the twelve philosophers listed above, and will attempt thereby to ask four central questions. First, what can be learned about dance vis-à-vis poetry through analyses of the concepts of *positing* and *posture* in Plato, Aristotle and Nietzsche? Second, what can be learned about dance vis-à-vis language through analyses of metaphor’s essential corporeality in Condillac, Mead and Kristeva? Third, what can be learned about dance vis-à-vis ethics through analyses of grace as both a medium and a

manifestation of virtuous socialization in Avicenna, Schiller and Dewey? Fourth, what can be learned about dance vis-à-vis politics through analyses of mimetic madness in Fanon, Deleuze and Butler?

The answer to these questions, in turn, will constitute the philosophy of dance which I will term “Figuration.” The Oxford English Dictionary offers twenty-six numbered definitions for its root word, “figure,” derived from the Latin word for the Greek word *schema*. Included in these meanings are bodily shape, attitude, posture, mathematical form, conspicuous appearance, a diagram of the heavens, a move or set of moves in a dance, a musical phrase, and a metaphor. It thus encapsulates, via its etymological root, almost my entire project in one word.

There are three important, self-imposed limitations on the project which I will now briefly enumerate. First, it will not attempt an exhaustive history of the concept of dance in philosophy, but rather a linkage of several significant themes or aspects of that history. Second, it will not attempt an exhaustive interpretation of any of the thinkers considered, but instead consider primarily their treatment of the four aspects or Moves. Third, it will not exhaustively incorporate the wider interdisciplinary field of dance studies, since most of that work involves analyses of specific choreographers, dancers, and types and eras of dance. Such work is of course important and interesting, and will always inform (and frequently appear explicitly) in this investigation, but a thorough treatment is beyond its scope.

Ultimately, I believe this project will have been successful if (a) the four Moves seem in fact appropriate for a philosophy of dance; (b) the analyses of the Moves through the lens of the twelve philosophers opens up new possibilities for inquiry into each

figure's thought and the history of philosophy; (c) if the project inspires philosophers to take more seriously and have more appreciation for various disempowered communities with which dance is associated in contemporary Western culture, given that these communities do in fact make important contributions to dance; and (d) if Figuration seems an effective tool for improving in various other ways the lives of individuals and communities.

How These Insights Will Be Distributed Through the Rest of the Project

Each of the next four chapters has the same basic structure. First, the chapter provides an etymological analysis of one of the four Moves, supported by one or two philosophers' analyses of that word. Second, the chapter turns to conceptual analyses of the Move, supported by one or two philosophers' analyses of that concept. Third, the chapter presents a novel description of the Move formed by integrating these etymological and conceptual insights from all three philosophers. The resultant Move is one fourth of the Figuration philosophy of dance, and thus the basis of one of the four pillars of the holistic analyses that Figuration can offer of any dance. Finally, the chapter applies this new conception to one (repeatedly employed) example from each of the seven families or clusters of dance alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, for which I now offer the following provisional and strategic labels: concert dance, folk dance, societal dance, agonistic dance, animal dance, astronomical dance and discursive dance. The specific members analyzed from each of the seven families will be, respectively, ballet, clogging, salsa, Tae Kwon Do, the pollen dance, falling stars, and Pablo Neruda's

poetry. In this way, the fact that each of the four Moves offers different perspectives on each of the seven members of each of the seven families of dance can be observed.

The final chapter, titled “Performance,” will attempt, first, to show how the four Moves, analyzed separately in the previous four chapters, come together for a meaningful and holistic analysis of various dances. In this case the dances analyzed will be seven different members of the seven families of dance already considered one aspect at a time in previous chapters. Second, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate the upshot of the project for the lives of individuals and communities, which is that dance (and especially certain kinds) is one of the first and most thoroughly restricted activities in loci of both psychological and political oppression.

Chapter Two lays out the first of the four moves, *positure*, which constitutes the “what” dimension of analysis, the starting place and material situatedness of any practice/discourse and its phenomena. I am using “pos(i)ture,” (a respelling of “*positure*,” an older variant of “*posture*”) in order to draw out its etymological connections to *posture* and *position* (from dance), *positing* (from poetry via *poesis*) and *pose* (with meanings for both dance and poetry.) The parentheses-bound “i” is intended to make all three classes of meanings visible simultaneously and emphasize its subjective-as-volitional aspect. (Without the archaic spelling and the parentheses, I am concerned that my counterintuitive linkages—from poetry to *poesis* to *positing* to *posturing* to *posing* to dance—will be either forgotten or dismissed unreflectively.)

The paradigmatic philosopher of dance, Nietzsche, in his book *The Gay Science*, understands poetry as (a) a kind of potentiality, (b) which originates in magic practices, and which is (c) only apparently distinct from prose. These three attributes, in turn, make

the poet for Nietzsche into a maker of lies and myths. And since the entire world for Nietzsche rests on myth (if one can say it rests on anything at all) this further means that the poet becomes a maker of the world. In this “making”—which is the oldest use of *poesis* according to Plato in the *Republic*—Nietzsche’s poetics shows its inheritance from *poesis*. Similarly, *poesis* functions for Aristotle in the multiple senses of positing of claim, activity, a test of philosophical fitness, the active intellect, and as the being of beings via its connection to the soul.⁴ If (a) the soul is the activity of the body, (b) *poesis* for Aristotle is often translated as “activity,” and (c) the aforementioned body dances, then poetry and dance are linked via *poesis*. (Of course, Aristotle explicitly defines the soul as a kind of *energeia*, but that does not rule out the possibility that it also possesses at least an aspect of *poesis*.) The chapter then completes the circle from poetry back to dance, and from Nietzsche to Plato and Aristotle and back to Nietzsche. Dance for Nietzsche, (a) in *The Gay Science*, plays a number of interesting roles to be elaborated below, (b) in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is associated primarily with an excess of dissonant movement, and (c) in *Zarathustra*, is primarily associated with divinity (as evidenced by his famous lines about the first attribute of divinity being light feet, and wanting only a god that dances) and communication. (These claims are obviously difficult and complex, and will require the space of the actual chapter to elaborate in detail.)

Second, the concept posture, qua posture, is of course significant in discourses of dance. The beauty of the dance is undermined and the perfect execution of any movement is impossible without the body holding itself in the appropriate way from the

⁴ For examples of each sense, see 315b7 and 322b10 (in *On Generation and Corruption*), 211a7 (in the *Physics*) and 412b, 430a20 and 431b20 (in *On the Soul*). For complete analyses, see Chapter 2 of this project in the section entitled “Aristotle.”

beginning. Posture is also one of Aristotle's ten categories, which along with Possession applies only to animals, and primarily to human beings. But posture is of particular importance in Plato's conception of dance, for which posture (a) should be, according to the *Laws*, one of the primary goals of education in the actual state, (b) relates to the important figure of the puppet (as an image for humans in relation to the divine), and (c) is also effective as a means—by restraining the excessive, disruptive movements of children's restlessness, madness and dangerous aesthetic creativity—for achieving a kind of stillness as a defense against political anarchy.

In light of these analyses, I will suggest that pos(i)ture can be understood in a philosophy of dance as a *poetically creative, politically situated*⁵, *dynamic imitation of stasis*. (I acknowledge that the phrasing here, as at the end of all four Move-chapter summaries, is difficult and awkward, but my contention is that this phrasing is the direct result of reinvesting theoretical discourse with the dancing movement which is its origin, and an origin which it has heretofore hypocritically disavowed and fearfully fled). The presentation of Figuration will thus be one-fourth complete, and will have found its basis or general orientation, despite dance's trans-discursive nature, in its connection to the discursive art of poetry. The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that anything taken to be completely static and secure is in fact a dynamic process that merely gives the appearance of immobility.

Chapter Three provides the detailed analyses of the second Move, gesture. This second Move constitutes the “where” dimension of analysis, the other places phenomena go from out of their positures or starting places, the mechanics of communication among entities in their original positions in any practice/discourse. The etymology of

⁵ By “politically-situated” I refer to the above analysis of dance's relationships to the polis in Plato's work.

“gest)(ure,” from the French *gerère* meaning “to carry out, perform” reveals its close connection to the Greek word “metaphor,” meaning “to carry across.” The middle parentheses are intended to cause the reader’s mind to perform the carrying across performance that the word signifies. In other words, the intruding parentheses force the reader to mentally unite the visual-spatially separated halves of the word, which forcing is intended to remind the reader that gesture as a phenomenon performs a similar function in the world of bringing together disparate entities. A gesture is thus a physical performance enabling a poetic performance, a non-verbal performance of a verbal one (since the body must move in order to speak), a carrying out [gesture] of a carrying across [metaphor], and thus a carrying [gesture] of carrying [metaphor], a metaphor [carrying] of metaphor, a figure of figuration. This connection reaffirms the intimacy of poetry and dance established in Chapter One and the complementary legitimacy of deriving significance for dance from poetic/metaphoric analyses.

In Condillac’s *Essay on the Origin of Human Language*, for example, all thought is reduced to sense-perception and signs, and the arbitrary signs of language all evolve from poetry, which itself evolves from what he terms “the language of action” or gesture, which includes pantomime and dance. Dancing gesture carries language across to poetry, which carries language across to prose. In other words, gesture (non-verbal poetic language) creates poetry (verbal poetic language) which creates prose (verbal non-poetic language), which later becomes functionally synonymous in mainstream Western philosophy with language. Thus the sequence can be rewritten as gesture creates poetry which creates language.

Second, the concept of gesture also supports an understanding of speech as but one species of the genus bodily movement. Gesture is arguably the foundational concept of Mead's thought, understood as a form's act in response to which another (and/or the same) form reacts. If the form reacts the same way to its own act as another form would, then the gesture constitutes language. For example, If John were to ask himself "What is the name of the person speaking?" then John, just like any listener who knew him, might/could respond by saying "John." Language, in other words, is constituted by generalized responses to intersubjectively-meaningful stimuli. Though Mead restricts non-verbal language to the sympathetic, imitative work of the actor, I will argue that if one follows Mead's own reasoning, one is obligated to include the dancer as well. And though Kristeva agrees with Condillac and Mead that gesture is the precondition of verbal language, she understands this preconditioning or priority not as temporal, but as spatial. She is interested in gesture in its "indicative, relational, empty," aspects, which she terms "anaphora" (etymologically, a "carrying back"), and which according to the OED is linked to poetic repetition, grammatical substitution, and the ritual of mass. As in the second chapter, on posture, poetry and dance again come together; and as in Condillac and Nietzsche, there is a religious dimension to this intersection.

Synthesizing these observations, I will suggest that gest)(ure can be understood in Figuration as *border-organizing, sympathy-manipulating, f(o)unding* [funding/founding] *language*. The presentation of Figuration will thus be one-half complete, and will have found the primary activity that takes place on its poetic and dynamic basis, namely, communication understood as (various kinds of) carrying. The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that any non-spatial and immaterial

communication is always already carried out/in/through/by/for spatial and material support.

Chapter Four provides the detailed analyses of the third Move, grace, which constitutes the “how” dimension, the ways that phenomena move from their original postures or posited locations, the manners in which gestures communicate, the pinnacle of the aesthetic dimension of any practice/discourse. The etymology of “)grace(” is from the Greek *kharis*, from which the English “charisma” and “charm” derive, meaning both pleasing quality and/or authoritative power. It is the slash between the “and” and the “or” in the previous sentence (“quality and/or authoritative power”) that concerns Schiller’s treatment of grace, especially in his conception of the play impulse, characterized by living shape, lightness, superabundant vitality, joyous movements, and a leaping that “becomes a dance.” In short, Schiller uses the concept of grace to attempt to infuse Kantian ethics with sensuality, essential for both the individual and the community’s sociopolitical perfection. In addition to his Schiller-esque treatment of the dual ethical/aesthetic dimension, Dewey’s analysis of grace further suggests that this aesthetic/ethical excellence is produced by the organism’s rhythmic adaptation to its environment. In *Art as Experience*, he repeatedly emphasizes (constantly varying) rhythm, movement, tension, grace (both animal and moral), struggle, balancing, energy, the “motor sets” of dancers, and impulsion. It is because of this conception of grace as asymptotic permeability to environment, *as the organism and environment switching roles*, that I render this Move with outward facing parentheses.

Secondly, the meanings of grace cover virtually every conceivable dimension of freely giving, thereby performing the very semantic generosity it denotes; it can mean

attractiveness, pleasing quality, pardon, thanks, favor, goodwill, and giving freely and with kindness. Put differently, grace denotes what is given (a gift), three kinds of things given (favor, mercy, thanks), how it is given (freely, kindly), the condition for the possibility of the giving (goodwill), and the overall quality of the giver/giving/recipient (attractiveness, a pleasing quality). The graceful motion of the heavens is the phenomenon with which dance is most closely associated in medieval thought. This includes the motions of the planets (literally “wanderers”) as evidenced by elaborate court dances in which performers moved in complex formations to symbolize the heavenly bodies. And for medieval thinkers such as Avicenna, the planets were often understood as the perfect bodies (or material substrates) of the angels described in holy scripture. The most famous link between this activity of the planets and the supernatural beings is the following question, generally regarded today as a trick question, “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” I will attempt to show that the connection between medieval angels and dance, as suggested by this question, is actually stronger than the general reader would imagine. In addition to this planetary relation to grace as “pleasing quality,” angels qua messengers are also related to grace’s “giving” aspect, as well as to its “what is given” aspect, since they are often depicted in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition as giving “mercy” to humans and “thanks” to God. In short, angels in medieval thought are characterized with aesthetic grace as the planets of our solar system and divine grace as messengers of God.

Based on these observations, I will suggest that the)grace(can be understood in Figuration *as the superabundantly playful, figure/ground reversing, meta-human gifting*. The presentation of Figuration will thus be three-fourths complete, and will have found

its privileged mode of investigation (of the gesture-carryings that take place through posture-dynamic bases), which is modality itself, the manners or ways in which activity takes place. The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that careful attention to the process of activity highlights its aesthetic dimension and renders the lines demarcating subject and object, agent and recipient, etc., fluid.

Chapter Five provides the detailed analyses of the fourth and final Move, resilience, which constitutes the “when” dimension, the persistence of phenomena through time, the constant rebirth of any practice/discourse’s postulated entities’ aesthetically modulated gestures of communication. The etymology of “(re)silience” shows it to be a leaping back, and its meanings include recoiling, an elastic body’s return to its original position, and a rising back from depression into cheerfulness. I use parentheses around the “re” to draw attention to the root verb of “to leap” [*salire*] (closely related to *saltare*, which means “to leap back and forth continuously” or “to dance”) and emphasize the fact that resilience, as opposed to synonyms like toughness, consists in a constantly renewed activity of coming forward. (The emphasis on cheerfulness also brings us back full circle to Nietzsche’s poetics from Chapter Two.) In the case of dance in colonized societies, Fanon distinguishes between, on the one hand, dance’s common function as an outlet that perpetuates colonialist oppression and, on the other, a militant form helping to overthrow the colonizers. In his analyses of the apparent madness resulting from racism and colonization, one finds a description similar to that of dancer’s discipline, suggesting a potentially expanded role for dance in political resistance.

Second, the concept of resilience suggests a kind of continual struggling to maintain one's place through time. When successful, either the struggle going into the survival tends to be invisible to outsiders, or the effects of the struggle are re-inscribed as the community's essential madness. Butler develops this idea with an emphasis on the movement of bodies—through drag—in *Bodies that Matter*, in which it is a metaphorical “dancing” of discourse that produces the oppression, and a literal dancing that, though seemingly mad from the outside, is in fact a site of resistance. Finally, I will attempt to show that Deleuze and Guattari, understand madness, arguably, not as occasional dysfunction, but as the nature and production of reality itself. The self, like a dancer, circles around ever-reassembling centers of gravity; but the contemporary Self is prevented from knowing its dancing nature in two ways. It is first pressured to attempt the (easy to approach, but for Deleuze and Guattari impossible to complete) escape from the dance, which continuous attempt manifests itself as neurosis. Secondly, if the Self refuses to escape and insists on trying to dance, it is violently prevented from doing so, which prevention results in psychosis, manifested by the schizophrenic.⁶

The way to flourish, in short, is found in the flourishing of dance. In summary, we will see how (re)silience can be understood in Figuration as *an aesthetically militant, madness-impersonating, flourishing recirculation*. The presentation of Figuration will thus be entirely complete, and will have found that there are necessary, inescapable repetitions of grace-transformations of gesture-carryings in posture-bases. The critical

⁶ In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, society attempts to prevent the Self from engaging in its dance, but this is impossible, since the Self is Dance. While the Self *can* get close to stopping, the price it pays is the continuous and miserable self-disciplining efforts of the neurotic. The rebellion against the prevention, on the other hand, since the Self is too weak to consummate it in the reality of the intersubjective world, ends up in a psychotic break with the shared world and flight into an insane, private world—in the latter of which the Self accomplishes the dance imaginatively, but only at the price of complete sociological dysfunction.

dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that any analysis must account for the persistence of its subject-matter in time, and for the temporality of its subject matter.

The final chapter, after its holistic analyses of ballet, clogging, Latin dance, Tae Kwon Do, the pollen dance, falling stars and Neruda's poetry, will turn to the psychological and political prerequisites for individual and community flourishing through dance. In other words, what, given Figuration's valorization of dance, are the minimum conditions under which it seems probable that an individual or a community could fully support dance. And by "fully support" I mean not only *not* prohibiting dance, but also providing sufficient resources, both in terms of material and values, for every individual and every sub-community in a community (including the young, old, disabled, and those of non-dominant classes, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations, and even non-humans) to be able to engage in dance practices should they choose to do so.

Examples of obstacles to such flourishing include the prohibitions against swing dancing in Nazi Germany and the prohibitions against dance in general in some Protestant homes, churches and schools. In a fascist regime, or for a community whose members are sexually repressed, a person can often still write (at least certain kinds of) poems in secret in their own time, but organized community dances are often impossible. In other words, unlike many other practices which can be adequately carried out alone and in private, and without external stigma or internal shame, such as writing a poem or painting a still life, flourishing dance practices require relatively uninhibited social interaction in the broader community. Thus, for a philosophy of dance, as compared to a philosophy of poetry, to offer a thorough treatment of its subject matter, it must stipulate

a greater number of psychological and political preconditions in order for that subject matter to be instantiated again in the first place.

I will now briefly summarize these conditions for, first, the individual, and second, the community. At the level of the individual, pos(i)ture suggests that the individual is always in motion, and always in tension, despite apparent calm and stability, which means that individuals must always pay attention to their evolving needs and desires, especially at dramatic changes of life such as puberty. Gest)(ure suggests that psychological well-being is impossible without physical well-being, that the apparent foundation of the mind is built upon a complex and dynamic system of tensions in the active body.)Grace(suggests that any situation in which the environment is not able or allowed to flow through the individual and/or the individual is not able or allowed to flow through the environment will result ultimately in isolation and dysfunction, so psychologically supportive, evolving and challenging environments must be provided for the vulnerable and evolving individual. (Re)silience suggests that repetition is inevitable, and that what appears initially as madness may be crucial to survival and flourishing.

At the level of the community, pos(i)ture suggests that a flourishing polis must not deny equal participation to members based on—even non-accidental features of—embodiment. Gest)(ure suggests that a flourishing polis must not deny its residents' freedom of expressivity.)Grace(suggests that a society must actively (including economically) support its own self-consciously aesthetic dimension. Fourth, and finally, (re)silience suggests that a flourishing polis must possess some form of legal-political self-criticality, in the sense of stable institutions and/or persons, actual or discursive, with the ability and willingness to check and balance existing power structures. I am in no

way suggesting that these four conditions are sufficient for a flourishing individual or community only that they are necessary in order for any kind of dancing community to thrive, without which ideal flourishing is difficult to attain.⁷

By way of a conclusion for this chapter, I wish to address two likely objections to the project as described. First, it might appear to the reader that “dance” in this project is so broad that it becomes meaningless. My response would be that “dance” for Figuration includes only phenomena/discourses which can be accurately encompassed within the four Moves. This functionally excludes many important things in the world, about which I will elaborate below. Perhaps most important among these restricting conceptions are two that come from the first Move, posture.

First, posture stipulates that every dance has a poetic foundation in the sense of a fictional, artificial positing. Thus any phenomenon or discourse that is (or takes itself to be) foundational and/or natural, such as the experience of “true love” or achieving adulthood, does not qualify as a dance for Figuration. Second, posture also stipulates that every dance is politically-situated. Thus, any phenomenon or discourse that is (or takes itself to be) apolitical or politics-transcendent, such as one’s relationship to a personal God or the pursuit of absolute truth in science, would also not qualify.

And if someone were to object that all of reality is inherently, abyssally poetic and/or that everything is political, my response would be that this would say more about

⁷ This may seem like an overreaching claim, but I would argue that it holds for the broad meaning of dance I have articulated throughout (which, as I have noted above, includes all sports), and that any resistance to that broadest notion is most likely the problematic result of a person’s inculcated indifference or hostility to artful movement per se. The claim could also be paraphrased by saying that every flourishing individual and community must possess artful movement, which means it must both not prevent the possibility for artful movement (through excessive discipline, laws, stigmata, propaganda, etc.) and also must enable such movement (through exposure to variety of communities, training, encouragement, funding, etc.).

the radical viewpoint of the objector than about Figuration. In other words, Figuration would only constitute a philosophy of everything if one's views about the nature of everything were radical in a way that would exclude any philosopher I can think of (including even Nietzsche, at least on the assumption that he would resist even a poetic metaphysics). And even if that were the case, maybe that would not be a bad thing after all.

In addition to these two requirements from the first Move, similar points could easily be made about the assertions of (a) the second Move, that every dance involves embodiment and manipulation; (b) the third Move, that every dance must be playful and in some sense trans-human; and (c) the fourth Move, that every dance is in some sense both militant and apparently insane.

A second objection might be that this project seems to affirm dance in every case, and would therefore be forced to affirm things like fascist parades and wartime violence. My response here would be that both are among the phenomena excluded by the requirements I have just described. As for fascist parades, their movements are ruled out almost immediately because they are based on and symbolize an ideology that sees itself as naturally and firmly based in national character. In other words, fascism is by definition insufficiently aware of its status as fiction, and this disqualifies its various movements. And as for war, along with its factual/non-poetic character, it is too deadly serious to be sufficiently playful by grace's standards.

I will now turn, in the next chapter, to a full explication of the first Move, pos(i)ture.

CHAPTER 2

POS(I)TURE

As stated in the previous chapter, “positure” is an archaic spelling of “posture,” valuable in this context for making visible the etymological connections that link posture to posing to *poesis* to positing to poetry. Posture is a central focus of many conceptions of dance, including, as I will show below, that of Plato in *The Laws*. Posing is the activity of which any given posture constitutes an interruption or end result, and it is often used as the smallest meaningful unit of a dance. It is also a fair translation of one of the uses of *poesis* in Ancient Greek, including Aristotle’s word, *poiein*, for what a philosopher such as Thales makes or posits as the ultimate substrate of reality. (In Thales’ case, this would be the *stoicheon* or “element” of water). *Poesis* is also, most famously, the word Plato uses in *The Republic* to discuss poetry as its most paradigmatic case. Thus, one can reverse engineer, so to speak, the posing of dance from the positing of poetry as *poesis*.

Etymological Analyses of Pos(i)ture

This section will begin with Nietzsche’s *poesis*-driven conception of *dichtung*, or poetry/writing, as the art of positing and posing in *The Gay Science*, emphasizing its proximity to his commentaries on dance in that text. Perhaps surprisingly, I would argue that dance is treated more thoroughly and directly in *The Gay Science* than in either *The*

Birth of Tragedy or *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This section will then turn to the manifestations of *poesis* as positing in Aristotle's explicitly biological texts, including *On Generation and Corruption*, the *Physics* and *On the Soul*. In its resonances to Nietzsche's analyses, I will show that the fluid simultaneity of the two major etymological aspects of posture—posing and positing—suggests a similar fluid connection between dance and poetry that justifies the use of poetry to discursively approach dance.

Nietzsche

The title of *The Gay Science* is an appropriation of the phrase “gai saber,” used by the 11th to 13th century Provençal knight-poets, or troubadours—the first lyric poets of the European languages—to designate their *Ars Poetica*, or art of poetry.⁸ I will now (a) investigate four aphorisms in *The Gay Science* centrally concerned with poetry (84, 92, 299 and 301), (b) consider their connections to dance, and then (c) consider other related appearances of dance in *The Gay Science* as a whole.

The central thesis of aphorism 84 is that the *Ursprung* of poetry (origin, or perhaps “upspring,” if Heidegger's *Origin of the Work of Art* is to be trusted) lies in “the magical song and the spell” (84). Against the popular conception of poetry as currently useless, and therefore useless in its origins as well, Nietzsche asserts that poetry had originally “a very great utility,” and a utility that was “superstitious” or “mythological” [*abergläubische*.] Nietzsche claims that in ancient times, the awareness of rhythm as a mnemonic device for human beings was generalized to the belief that rhythm affected the

⁸ Kaufmann, Walter, “Translator's Introduction,” in *The Gay Science*, 5-6. Nietzsche confirms this allusion in a letter indicating that by “Gay Science” he “thought only” of the poetic artisans of Provence. (From “a letter to [Nietzsche's] friend Erwin Rohde, 1882-1883” in Kaufmann 6n).

gods in the same way, and that a “rhythmical prayer was supposed to get closer to the ears of the gods.” In short, rhythm was seen as a way to exert power and control over even the gods, an attempted *poesis* or making of alternate human destinies. “[*M*]an warf ihnen die Poesie wie eine magische Schlinge um: One threw, at the gods, poetry like a magical lasso.” Then just a few lines later, Nietzsche adds that “When one had lost the proper tension and harmony of the soul, one had to *dance* to the beat of the singer...” (emphasis original). Near the end of this same aphorism—right before the famous lines about how (a) philosophers use poetry to buttress their treatises and (b) it is more dangerous for a truth when a poet agrees with it—Nietzsche discusses a truth that “presents itself with a divine hop, skip, and jump” (86). In this way, poetry is used to posit (or make) a way to control human life, through manipulating fate and the gods, and this power is intimately linked to dance.

Aphorism 92 shows that Nietzsche’s conception of poetry goes beyond the literary genre of verse to include all discourse, all *poesis* or making in and with language. It begins as follows: “It is noteworthy that the great masters of prose have almost always been poets, too... Good prose is only written face to face with poetry” (90). Among these “masters of prose” listed in the aphorism, Nietzsche includes the American poet-philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose quote, “Language is fossil poetry,” anticipates the central thesis of this aphorism (296). Prose, writes Nietzsche, “is an uninterrupted war with poetry: all of its attractions depend on the way in which poetry is continually avoided and contradicted.” In other words, anything other than poetry can only be written by poetry against itself, so to speak, wresting the poetic away from poetry. On this view, poetry is thus a form of self-overcoming; and prose is one form of that self-

overcoming. As with the employment of rhythm to coerce the Fates, prose is merely a tool capable of perhaps bending the will of poetry, but never of fully overpowering it.

Nietzsche elaborates as follows:

Everything abstract wants to be read as a prank against poetry and as with a mocking voice; everything dry and cool is meant to drive the lovely goddess into despair. Often there are rapprochements, reconciliations for a moment—and then a sudden leap back and laughter. Often the curtain is raised and harsh light let in just as the goddess is enjoying her dusks and muted colors. Often the words are taken out of her mouth and sung to a tune that drives her to cover her refined ears with her refined hands. Thus there are thousands of delights in this war... (90).

This is a remarkable passage for several reasons. At one level, or on one analysis, the above text constitutes a piece of prose that is performative of the very warfare that it articulates between prose and poetry. One must keep in mind that for Nietzsche, following Heraclitus, “*War [thus, conflict, strife, opposition] is the father of all good things*” including “good prose” (92). Nietzsche’s prose dances and flirts with poetic imagery and devices such as metaphor and personification, as it laughingly describes the same process. But at another level, the block quoted above may also be read as itself poetry. It is a poetry masquerading as prose that is locked in battle with poetry, and a poetry which laughs secretly at the reader for assuming that he or she is reading prose, and for assuming that the struggle between prose and poetry symbolized by the sexual imagery and language constitutes a sort of rape of poetry by prose—when in actuality, the entire scene is a fiction deployed by poetry for her own pleasure.

To summarize aphorism 92, Nietzsche presents poetry as the true *arche* of prose in the dual sense of origin or source and of governing principle or ruling trajectory. To interlace Derridean and Nietzschean tropes, prose is the differing-deferring trace and

mask of poetry in its profundity. Just as dance, for many, consists of the human body assuming various poses (such as the formal vocabulary of poses in ballet) or posing as a variety of other beings (fairies, animals, historical figures, etc.), so prose for Nietzsche consists of poetry assuming various poses (such as philosophical essays, how-to manuals, speeches, etc.) or merely poetry posing as prose.

While aphorism 92 extends Nietzsche's conception of poetry from written verse to all writing whatsoever, aphorism 299 extends it radically further, to include all human action and life. I will now offer a careful analysis of the latter aphorism, quoted as follows in its entirety:

What one should learn from artists.— How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not? And I rather think that in themselves they never are. Here we could learn something from physicians, when for example they dilute what is bitter or add wine and sugar to a mixture—but even more from artists who are really continually trying to bring off such inventions and feats. Moving away from things until there is a good deal that one no longer sees and there is much that our eye has to add if we are still to see them at all; or seeing things around a corner and as cut out or framed; or to place them so that they partially conceal each other and grant us only glimpses of architectural perspectives; or looking at them through tinted glass or in the light of sunset; or giving them a surface and skin that is not fully transparent—all this we should learn from artists while being wiser than they are in other matters. *For with them this subtle power usually comes to an end where art ends and life begins; but we want to be the poets of our life—first of all in the smallest most everyday matters* (169-70, final italics added).

To go beyond the instructive example of the artist means to take the deceptive practices of the artist from the confines of art and extend them to every other practice in our world—to engage in a kind of *poesis*, or artwork-making, of our lives. This would, it seems, entail the joyful celebration of perspectives and the carefree utilization of deception where necessary in our lives. But this is no vague suggestion; Nietzsche offers

the following specific strategies: (a) to create distance between ourselves and a thing until we are forced to create parts of the thing that we can no longer perceive in order to perceive the thing at all—as in the literary criticism of ancient texts, for example; (b) to adopt an unusual perspective (considered inferior) on something—as in free-wheeling scientific experimentation; (c) to artificially frame a thing, or put it in a different context—i.e., to contextualize; (d) to arrange things in such a way that each thing obscures our view of the other things; (e) to examine things through tinted glass, or inferior media; (f) to examine things at unusual times; and (g) to intentionally obscure an otherwise clear view of something—all of which are possible descriptions of intentional, repressive, active forgetting. In other words, we are supposed to pose things in various ways and posit other aspects of things, and even other things entirely, in order to see the world in a more aesthetic way. Thus *poesis*, posing and positing come together again in Nietzsche's further extension of "poetry."

This aphorism seems to suggest that this is an "ought" rather than an "is," that the poets of life have yet to come on the scene. But aphorism 301 suggests something different. It treats of the "higher human beings" who "see and hear immeasurably more, and see and hear thoughtfully" (171). Despite these powers, such a higher being, according to Nietzsche, "can never shake off a *delusion*...He calls his own nature contemplative and overlooks that *er selbst auch der eigentliche Dichter und Fortdichter des Lebens ist*"—that he himself, also, the actual poet and ever-poet of life is.⁹ In this passage, appearing only two aphorisms after the one just considered, the reader finds that

⁹ 171. In Kaufmann's translation, the word *Fortdichter*, a Nietzschean compound of *fort*, "continually," and *Dichter* "poet," is omitted entirely; and *des Lebens* is rendered as "this life"; whereas, if the present author is correct, a more straightforward translation that would also expand the scope of the word "life" would be, simply, "life."

life-poetry is already being made, and that it is a making or *poesis* specifically of the “higher human beings,” the contemplative free spirits:

As a poet, he has...above all *vis creativa* [creative power (Kaufmann 241n)], which the active human being lacks... We [higher people] who think and feel at the same time are those who really continually *fashion* something that had not been there before: the whole eternally growing world of valuations, colors, accents, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations. *This poem that we have invented* is continually studied by the so-called practical human beings (our actors) who learn their roles and translate everything into flesh and actuality, into the everyday (301, final italics added).

Thus, the higher persons, in their continual acts of poetic creation, actually create the world of meaning, signification and value that all human beings inhabit. The deceptive aspect of the poetic impulse applied to life in general (by the higher human beings, to whom Nietzsche’s above exhortations are addressed) is thus not used primarily as a license to be destructive of society and the world, but as the power to create ever new worlds. In this sense, one can see how Nietzsche’s conception of poetry consists in a kind of positing, and moreover, a positing linked to posing. Our very own world, in fact, is the poem collectively posited by the “higher” persons, and posing as a non-poetic, objective real world. This resonates with the following passage from aphorism 22: “The day and the dance are beginning and we don’t know the programme! So we have to improvise – the whole world improvises its day” (46). The day is linked here to a dance, and then the world is described as improvising the day, so by syntactical extension, the world is improvising its dance too. Which is to say that this poetic world of ours is engaged in a dance, or is itself a dance.

To say that “it dances,” or that “it is itself a dance,” is certainly true, moreover, of *The Gay Science* as a whole. The first place dancing appears explicitly in the text is the “Prelude of Rhymes,” specifically the poems numbered 5, 13, 28 and 52. 5, “*To the Virtuous*,” begins “Our virtues too should step lively to and fro” (12). Dancing is thus linked to virtue, as a standard for worthy values. 13 is titled “*For Dancers*” and reads as follows:

Slipp’ry ice
is paradise
as long as dancing will suffice (14).

Given that one is able and willing to dance, the objectively meaningless world after God and metaphysics is not the hell that nihilism fears, but in fact, heaven. In poem twenty-eight, “*Consolation for Beginners*,” Nietzsche writes of a child, not long after being unable to walk, that “soon she’s dancing ‘round the clock!” Thus dance is used as an image for the culmination of skillful mastery. And aphorism 52, “*Writing With One’s Foot*,” reads as follows:

I do not write with hand alone:
My foot does writing of its own.
Firm, free and bold my feet engage
in running over field and page (21).

Thus dance, in an instance perhaps of synecdoche with the foot, is presented as having a kind of causal power in thought.

Moving forward to Book I, aphorism 54 claims, supporting my suggestion that the world is itself a kind of dance, that all of reality is a dream and a “dance of spirits,” that,

“among all these dreamers, even I, the ‘knower,’ am dancing my dance,” and, finally, that “the one who comes to know is a means of prolonging the earthly dance” (63-4).

Book II, aphorism 75 purports to quote from “an old dancing master,” to which reference I will return shortly. The next aphorism then discusses “the believers of the great common faith,” who, like the thinker in aphorism 54, “go on dancing their dance” (76, 77). In aphorism 105, Nietzsche diagnoses German philosophy as the by-product of a people who “would like to *dance*: these poor bears in which hidden nymphs and sylvan gods are at work – and at times still higher deities!” (103, italics original). Here, Nietzsche thus again links dance to both the animal and the divine. And in aphorism 107, the last in Book II, he claims that we need “dancing” art “lest we lose that *freedom* over things that our ideal demands of us” (104, italics original). This calls to mind Nietzsche’s account in aphorism 301 of the freedom of the “higher human beings” achieved through their poetic manipulation and creation of the world.

Located in Book IV, aphorism 324 defines knowledge as “a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings also have their dance- and playgrounds” (181). In Book V, 347 defines the “*free spirit* par excellence” as one who is capable of “dancing even beside abysses” (206). Thus, dance is again linked to the world-creating, posing-positing free spirits of aphorism 301. Then in 366, Nietzsche asserts that “we,” presumably “We Fearless Ones” from the title of Book V, are the ones whose habit it is to think “dancing” (230). After this interesting syntax, he adds that “Our first question about the value of a book, a person, or a piece of music is: ‘Can they walk?’ Even more, ‘Can they dance?’” (230). In this way, dance becomes explicitly the preeminent standard of evaluation.

Additionally, this explicit linkage of walking and dancing seems to justify a second look back to Book IV, at aphorism 282, entitled “*Gait*,” in which imposters (including, interestingly, Napoleon) are distinguished from truly great thinkers when one notices that “they cannot *walk*” (282). “It is laughable,” Nietzsche continues, “to behold those authors who make the ruffled robes of long sentences rustle about themselves: they are trying to hide their *feet*” (160, emphasis original).

But the most intense valorization of dance comes at the end of the entire text, in three important passages. First, in the next-to-last aphorism of the book, 381, Nietzsche writes as follows:

It is not fat but the greatest possible suppleness and strength that a good dancer wants from his nourishment – and I wouldn’t know what the spirit of a philosopher might more want to be than a good dancer. For the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his ‘service to God’ (246).

Second, in the middle of the last aphorism, Nietzsche asks, rhetorically, “Are we not surrounded by... the kingdom of the dance?” (247-48). Then in the last two sentences, he asks, “if you misunderstand the *singer*, what does it matter?” and then answers, “so much the better will you be able to dance to his pipe. Is that what you *want*?” (248, italics original).

Finally, in the appendix of songs added to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, there are poems which discuss the dullness of the “German stride” and the “dance” of bed-bugs, before the entire book draws to a close with a poem entitled “*To the Mistral. A Dance Song*” (251, 254, 258). The mistral is the name of a cold, mostly dry northern wind that blows through southern France. It creates, almost singlehandedly, the

distinctive climate of Provence, and its name means “masterly.” (This linkage of mastery to dance recalls the “old dancing master” from earlier in Nietzsche’s text). Among various others appearances of dance in the poem are a reference to dancing “‘tween God and Earth!” and the decision to exile from the free spirits’ “paradise” any “who cannot dance with twisters” (259). But the most extended and interesting treatment of dance in the poem is found in the sixth stanza, in which dance and poetry are explicitly united by an indirect reference to the book’s title, in the poem’s final line:

On a thousand backs we’re dancing,
billow-backs and backs of chancing –
hail to dances *new*, I say!
Let us dance in every manner,
Free – so shall be *our* art’s banner,
And *our* science – shall be gay! (259)

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of posture in Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* yields the first phrase of the amplified conception of posture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*posture is poetically creative*. Poetry will therefore serve as the privileged mode of linguistic access to dance for the duration of this project. It is hoped that this point will be reinforced by the poetic structure of the project itself, which includes an aesthetic emphasis in regard to word choice and sentence structure, as well as the repetitive structure of the four central chapters of the manuscript and the sections within them. If not for fear of hubris, I might even suggest, as has been suggested of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, that this project is itself, in the end, a kind of prose-poem. As to the appropriateness of this idea, I invite the reader to form his or her own conclusion at the end.

In an attempt to illuminate further etymological analyses of posture in the history of Western philosophy, I will now turn to the work of Aristotle. The primary connection between Nietzsche and Aristotle on this point is that both of them link the posture and positing within posture to poetry.

Aristotle

Having considered the links in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* among *poesis*, poetry, positing, posing and dance, I will attempt to illuminate a similar array of connections in Aristotle's "physical" texts. More specifically, I will show that *poesis* functions, in *On Generation and Corruption*, the *Physics* and *On the Soul* primarily in the following four ways: (1) as "making" or "postulating," particularly in terms of the first principle(s) of a philosophy; (2) as "activity," particularly in relation to the interactions of the elements and the contraries and in relation to the soul as the activity of the body; (3) as an aesthetic test of philosophical fitness via the poetic aspects of language; and (4) as the being of beings, via its connection with the soul. The question will then arise as to whether these different aspects of the word *poesis* constitute functionally independent concepts, or whether there is a way to understand them as aspects of a unified conception, in which case *poesis* as activity in these three texts could also be thought of as a kind of poetry, the dancing of Aristotle's physical philosophy.

Before turning to these texts of Aristotle, I will begin by considering the relationship of the ancient Greek word *poesis* to the concepts of *poetry*, *making in general* and *activity*. For the relationship between *poesis* and *making*, I turn first to Plato's *Symposium* 205C, in which Diotima addresses the young Socrates as follows:

You know that “making” has a wide range; for, you see, every kind of making is responsible for anything whatever that is on the way from what is not to what is....you know that not all craftsmen are called makers but have other names; and one part is separated off from all of making—that which is concerned with music and meters—and is addressed by the name of the whole. For this alone is called poetry [making]; and those who have this part of making are poets [makers] (35-36).

The two most important points in this passage for my purposes are as follows: for Plato, (1) *poesis* or making is a kind of creation, from non-being to being, “on the way from what is not to what is”; and (2) poetry is in some sense the paradigmatic case of making, which is evidenced by the fact that poetry and its practitioners hold the name of making and makers in general, respectively.¹⁰

Aristotle was no doubt familiar with, and likely even influenced by, Plato’s linkage of poetry and making, but does this linkage survive in any significant way in Aristotle’s own thinking? The most popular answer to that question, supported by superficial and cursory readings of Aristotle, would probably be a negative one. Stanley Rosen is probably representative of this most popular view in making the following claim:

In Plato, the whole (*to holon*) is exhibited within the dialogues by myth, and more comprehensively by the dramatic form of the dialogues themselves. Aristotle advocates the replacement of myth by *logos* and he gives up the dialogue form for what may most simply be called monologue (viii).

¹⁰ Heninger also finds in Plato the origin of the equation of poet and maker, but his focus is on the *Timaeus*. “When *Timaeus* first mentions the creating deity in this cosmogony, he refers to him with two epithets: ‘the poet and the father of this all’” (292).

It seems that this rejection of myth and the rejection of the dialogue form (in at least Aristotle's surviving texts) would seem to suggest that poetry, with its connections to myth and to literary genres such as the dialogue, is also rejected. But whether this simple rejection of *mythos* actually occurs is an issue to which I will return below.

Aristotle scholar and translator Joe Sachs states clearly that "Aristotle is not a poet," but nevertheless also claims that some of "Aristotle's phrases" "do something that is exactly analogous to the poet's word-play, but it is directed only at the intellect and the understanding" (4). And though Sachs admits poetic wordplay into Aristotle's oeuvre, one wonders whether Sachs's restriction of that wordplay to intellectual applications alone is not too narrow. Is it not the case, for example, that Aristotle's frequent uses of humor and irony constitute non-intellectual means of persuasion, not bound exclusively with the "intellect and understanding"?

One might wonder at this point why I am not focusing instead on what are probably Aristotle's two most direct texts on language—the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. One reason is the relative narrowness of their subject matters. The *Poetics* seems primarily concerned with what would now be called dramatic poetry (as opposed to epic and lyric poetry), and even more specifically with the sub-genre of dramatic poetry that is tragedy; and the *Rhetoric*, similarly, seems primarily concerned with persuasion in verbal discourse. A second reason why I am not focusing on the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* is that I am not primarily concerned with Aristotle's direct inquiry into poetry, but in the implicit and performative roles of *poesis* in his biologically-oriented texts, and what those roles reveal about Aristotle's connection to poetry. That being said, I will now briefly

consider two interpretive insights from the secondary literature on the *Poetics* that do seem relevant to my present concerns.

First, Robert Yanal insists that “Aristotle takes pains” in the *Poetics* “to disabuse his readers of the view that *poesis* must be in a poetic rhythm or meter...” (500) Furthermore, “[W]hen Aristotle cites some examples of *poesis* he includes certain sorts of texts which are clearly *not* covered by the English term ‘poetry’” (500). Not only does poetry seem too narrow to grasp what Aristotle is talking about, but there does not seem to be a word for Aristotle that does the job perfectly. Yanal quotes Aristotle as follows: “Now the art which imitates by means of words only, whether prose or verse, whether in one meter or a mixture of meters, this art is without a name to this day (1447b14-20)” (500).

Yanal then goes one step further to claim that “Aristotle’s attempts to pry *poesis* loose from its connotations of rhythm and meter are intended to pry it loose from its connotations of beautiful writing or style as well.” Yanal therefore suggests the phrase “‘literary artwork’ as the nearest and best English equivalent of *poiesis*” (501). While we do not wish to follow Yanal’s translation, it is helpful to remember that a simple equation of *poesis* and poetry for Aristotle is unwarranted and potentially misleading.

Second, J. M. Armstrong is interested in what makes poetry, as compared with history, more “philosophical” for Aristotle in the *Poetics*. Aristotle claims that the historian writes of actual events, while the poet *also* writes of possible events, and that the historian writes of particulars, while the poet writes of universals (447). Armstrong then argues, convincingly, that the universals with which the poet works are “are types of events or, more specifically, types of actions, and that [the] particulars are event- or

action-tokens” (448). This view is put forward against the majority of interpreters, such as Bywater, Gudeman, Janko, Halliwell, Woodruff and Butcher, who tend to understand the poet’s universals as generic truths about humanity.¹¹ Armstrong labels the two dominant versions of the mainstream view as “The Individuals and Their Properties View (ITP)” and the “Thematic View,” which consider universals to be properties of individuals and abiding themes such as “death is nothing to a philosopher,” respectively (449-50). Armstrong, by contrast, considers universals as types of events.

More specifically for Armstrong, this type of event or action that constitutes the poetic universal is “a plot as it exists before the poet adds the characters’ names and the details of the episodes” (452). The point of this analysis for this investigation is that Aristotle thinks of the poetic in relation to actions or processes in general, as opposed to what in conventional usage is the more specific action or process called making. Making, in turn, is a sub-category of activity that emphasizes the duality of the maker and that which is made, artisan and art object. I will argue shortly that in addition to linking poetry to making, as do Plato and Nietzsche, Aristotle also broadens the range of making into activity in general, thus identifying poetry with activity in general. And since, on a materialist reading of Aristotle, all activity is that of bodies, *poesis* becomes for him ultimately a kind of dance.

At this point, it is vitally important to note that I am not speaking of *energeia* here when I speak of activity. Instead, I am either speaking of the word/concept of activity in English, or of an entirely different Greek word, *poesis*, which is also commonly translated from Greek into English as “activity.” In other words, the English

¹¹ See Bywater, *Aristotle and the Art of Poetry*, 189; Gudeman, *Aristoteles Poetik*, 207; Janko’s translation of the *Poetics*, 12, 92; Halliwell’s translation, 41, 106; Woodruff, “Aristotle on mimesis,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, 73-92; and Butcher, *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 163, 194.

word/concept “activity” includes, in the minds of respected translators, both *poesis* and *energeia*. Thus, I maintain that *poesis* is, above all and per se, activity, whereas it is only derivatively the species of activity called making, with an emphasis on the sub-species of making that is (words-on-a-page) poetry. But this nevertheless means that poetry, via *poesis*, is indirectly linked to activity, and thereby to the kind of activity known as dance.

I will now begin the analyses of *poesis* in Aristotle’s biological texts with the two most frequent uses of the word (and its conjugations) in *On Generation and Corruption*, which appear in the contexts of discussing (a) Aristotle’s predecessors’ postulations of “first principles,” and (b) those things which “act and are acted upon” in the interrelations of the elements. Both of these uses occur most frequently in Book I, with which I will be concerned exclusively.

An early example of the former case occurs early, in I. 2, at 315b7, when Aristotle addresses Democritus and Leucippus’ treatment of “unqualified coming-to-be and passing-away”: “Democritus, however, and Leucippus postulate [*poiesantes*] the ‘figures’ and make ‘alteration’ and coming-to-be result from these, attributing coming-to-be and passing-away to their dissociation and association, and ‘alteration’ to their arrangement and position” (173). In other words, *poesis* is here understood as a kind of making of principles or sources, a postulating of origins. Democritus and Leucippus “make” the “figures” [*schemata*] into the source of alteration and coming-to-be.

Further, this making can most profitably be conceptualized as a kind of creation, similar to that in which a novelist “makes” the butler the murderer of a murder mystery. That this creative, poetic type of making is closer to what Aristotle is describing here (as opposed to something like “the discovery of preexisting order”) can be inferred from the

fact that *poesis* is used in various places in the text to refer to the efforts of several other philosophers whose views that are radically incommensurable with Democritus and Leucippus. For example, in I. 8, around 326b22, Aristotle writes, against the views of an unnamed group of thinkers, that it is “superfluous” and “ridiculous to postulate [*poiein*] pores at all” (249).

This use of *poesis* in Aristotle is not limited, however, to the views of Aristotle’s predecessors. In I. 5, around 320b13, Aristotle writes that “It is better to suppose [*poiein*] that matter in anything is inseparable, being the same and numerically one, though not one by definition” (209). Here Aristotle is using a form of *poesis* to refer to his own theoretical commitment, albeit in a rather tentative manner.

The other most frequent use of *poesis* in *On Generation and Corruption* is as “action,” “agent,” “activity,” and so forth, and this use appears first at I. 6, around 322b10. It originates in connection with a discussion of matter and the “so-called ‘elements’,” in an effort to “first deal with matters about which people at present speak only vaguely.” According to Aristotle, in order for generation (i.e., coming-to-be) to be constituted by some arrangement of primary elements, there must be a system of “association” and “dissociation” of the elements by which everything else more complex is formed, which in turn necessitates some form of “action” [*poiein*] and “passion” [*paschein*]. Further, the kind of change labeled “alteration” is also not possible “without an ‘agent’ [*poiutes*] and a ‘patient’ [*paschontos*]” (221). The simple observation I wish to make here is that *poesis*, at least according to the translators and editors of the Loeb Classical Library, can be legitimately translated by “action” or perhaps “activity,”

presumably because, as noted above, *activity* (in contemporary English usage) is a kind of genus of which *making* is a species.

In investigating acting and being acted upon, Aristotle makes three important moves. First, he analyses the phenomenon of contact, and concludes that it is possible for an agent [*poiutes*] to cause movement or touch something without being contacted or touched by that something (i.e., the patient). Aristotle illustrates this point with the following example: “we say sometimes that a man who grieves us ‘touches’ us, though we ourselves do not ‘touch’ him” (I. 6; 323a35; p. 227). I will return to this issue of agents which cause motion without touching their patients below.

Second, Aristotle argues that it is “contraries” (such as hot and cold, wet and dry) which constitute agents and patients, and “it is entirely these processes which constitute passing-away and coming-to-be” (I. 7; 324a9; p. 231). He goes on to claim that “in general, that [which] is active [*to poietikon*] assimilates that which is passive to itself; for the agent [*to poioun*] and patient are contrary to one another, and coming-to-be is a process, so that the patient must change into the agent [*to poioun*], since only thus will coming-to-be be a process into the contrary” (I. 7; 324a10-15; p. 233).

Third, and finally, Aristotle considers how there are two ways to speak of something being an agent. In the first, the agent is the matter or substratum; in the second, the agent is the purposive agent—“for we speak of the doctor, and also of wine, as healing” (I. 7; 324a31; p. 233). These can also be thought of as the first (the purposive) and the last (the efficient) agents. In this regard, note the following passage:

[I]n action, there is nothing to prevent the first agent being unaffected, but the last agent is itself also affected... (for example, the art of the physician which, while it

causes health, is not itself acted upon by that which is being healed), but food, while it acts, is itself all somehow acted upon, for, while it acts, it is at the same time being heated or cooled or affected in some other way. Now the art of the physician is, as it were, an original source, while the food is, as it were, the final mover and in contact with that which is moved (I. 7; 324a35-b4; p. 235).

Note that, according to Aristotle, the kind of agent that matches up with the art of the physician, what Aristotle also calls “the end in view,” “is not ‘active’ (hence health is not active, except metaphorically)...” (I. 7; 324b16; p. 235). Given the possible connection that I wish to draw out between *poesis*’ two senses of activity and poetry, it is interesting that the sole “active[ness]” attributed to health, which is itself a kind of *poesis* [action] is a “metaphorical” [and therefore poetically-oriented] kind of activity [*poesis*]. In other words, the agency of the first agent or “original source” (perhaps pre-source?) is a poetic one—thus “activity” and “poetry” interweave in the word *poesis* with regard to the first or purposive mover in an instance of acting.

To summarize these insights from *On Generation and Corruption* using a slightly different rhetoric, the elements or contraries are the building blocks of reality, and *poesis*, insofar as it is the acting of one element or contrary on another, is the basic actuality or being-engaged-staying-itself of those building blocks. And since for Aristotle the actual is always privileged over the potential, *poesis* as activity constitutes the various agencies from which the world as we experience it results.

I will next consider the *Physics*, which contains, in addition to both of these uses of *poesis* from *On Generation and Corruption*, a hint of a *poesis*-poetry connection vis-à-vis the idea that “speaking beautifully” is a sort of ultimate aesthetic test of philosophical fitness. With regard to this additional sense of *poesis* in the *Physics*—as the poetic

justification of philosophical fitness—I turn to IV: 4. Here, in the middle discussing his difficult conception of “place,” Aristotle makes the following remarks:

And it is necessary to attempt the investigation in such a way as to make what it is be delivered up, both so that the impasses be resolved and so that the things that seem to belong to place will belong to it, and further so that the cause of the headache and the impasses about place be made clear. Thus each thing would be brought to light in the most beautiful way (211a7, p. 100).

What I wish to emphasize first about this passage is that the beauty of the way things are “brought to light” seems intimately connected to the truth of a philosophical investigation for Aristotle. At the very least, the truth-of-the-activity of the investigation is bound up with this beautiful mode of disclosing.

The objectives that Aristotle states for an investigation are (1) “to deliver up” what the phenomenon is, (2) resolve the impasses about the phenomenon, and (3) reveal the cause of the difficulties and impasses in thinking through the phenomenon. If these three conditions are met, this means that the beautiful disclosure will have been accomplished. One could imagine other ways of stumbling haphazardly upon the answer or solution to a philosophical problem, but these would not constitute a thorough or excellent process of discovery because they would not be done beautifully. In this way, an aesthetic criterion—the beauty of the mode of disclosure—becomes for Aristotle a test of the satisfactory carrying out of a philosophical investigation. “Does this process show itself beautifully?” the investigator should ask her/himself. If the answer is negative, then the investigation has not been carried out properly.

To relate this analysis back to the use of *poesis* as “poetry,” we observe that since this disclosure occurs in language, in *logos*, the aestheticizing of this disclosure implies a

literary/poetic aspect. In the same way that speaking of the aesthetic in relation to oil suggests the art of painting, and speaking of the aesthetic in relation to blueprints suggests the art of architecture, speaking of the aesthetic in relation to language per se suggests the poetic. Therefore, it is not merely a generally aesthetic test of adequacy that Aristotle is proposing, but a more specifically poetic test. In other words, for Aristotle, *poesis* as poetry, as the poetic, serves as a sort of aesthetic ver-dict (truth-speech) with regard to the fitness of a philosophical investigation.

I now turn, finally, to three significant uses of *poesis* and its variants in *On the Soul* beyond the two uses (as pre-source for philosophy and aesthetic test of fitness) it shares with *On Generation and Corruption* and the *Physics*.¹² These new uses are (1) the soul's relationship to the body (which is to be the activity [*poesis*] of the body), (2) that which distinguishes the Active or Agent Intellect [*nous poetikos*] from other forms/aspects of intellection, and (3) the being of beings.

First, Aristotle suggests an even more interesting connection between the soul and *poesis* in his second, and most thorough, definition of the soul in II. 1. “[T]he soul is a

¹² *On the Soul* shares with the *Physics* the emphasis on the beautiful as a criterion for satisfactory philosophy. The text of *On the Soul* even begins with this consideration:

Since we consider knowledge to be something beautiful and honored, and one sort more so than another either on account of its precision or because it is about better and more wondrous things, on both these accounts we should with good reason rank the inquiry about the soul among the primary studies (I. 1, 402a-5, p. 47).

Again, Aristotle links knowledge, and thus thinking, to the beautiful, and asserts that any kind of thinking which is more precise or about more wondrous things is therefore more beautiful. If there were any doubt about the causal link between beauty and truth (or fitness) in philosophy in the preceding passage from the *Physics*, this passage should resolve them. Clearly beauty and truth (at least in terms of precision, accuracy or fitness) are intimately linked here for Aristotle. And insofar as knowledge and thinking are necessarily linked to language for Aristotle, the word *beautiful* here again therefore invokes the poetic, thereby invoking *poesis* as poetry.

Aristotle then makes a claim about the soul a few lines later in *On the Soul* that is particularly interesting given the considerations from *On Generation and Corruption* of *poesis* as a kind of pre-source for the sources or first principles of a given philosophy: “[T]he soul,” writes Aristotle, “is in some ways the governing source of living things” (I. 1; 402a7-8; p. 47). Aristotle is here postulating the soul as (in some ways) the source of all life. Thus, at least according to the passages from *On Generation and Corruption*, *poesis* as postulating-making gives Aristotle the ability to determine the soul as a kind of first principle.

being-at-work-staying-itself [*entelechia*] of the first kind of a natural body having life as a potency” (II. 1; around 412b; p. 82). This definition is especially interesting for the present investigation because “being-at-work-staying-itself” for Aristotle, like motion, is preeminently process and activity—and thereby linked to *poesis* as activity (as analyzed above regarding *On Generation and Corruption*).

The reader may be tempted to object here that Sachs’ controversial translation of *entelechia*, inspired by Heidegger, as “being-at-work-staying-itself,” is hopelessly problematic. In particular, it might be objected that “work” connotes an activity directed toward an end-product, as opposed to Aristotle’s sense of *energeia* as an activity that is an end in itself. While this seems a fair and appropriate criticism, it is worth noting that Sachs’ stated primary purpose in thus translating *entelechia* is to allow Aristotle’s text to present itself to a contemporary lay reader unvarnished by interpretation-saturated jargon. Additionally, Sachs is attempting to recapture the dynamic quality of Aristotle’s concept, which the Latinate “activity” lacks in English. In order to meet this criticism while nevertheless pursuing Sachs’ worthy objectives, I would suggest a third possible translation of *entelechia*, “being-engaged-staying-itself,” and a corresponding translation of *energeia* as “being-engaged.” In this way, the product-oriented connotation of work is avoided, but so is the reified jargon, while the hyphenated dynamism is preserved. As to the helpfulness of this strategy, the reader may judge for him/herself.

Aristotle’s emphasis on *energeia* as activity is probably the reason that this definition is often paraphrased into English as “The soul is the activity of the body.”¹³ The body has the potency to be alive, which its soul makes possible or activates. One

¹³ This paraphrase was used, for example, by Dr. Christopher Long in his spring 2005 Aristotle course at Penn State.

might say that the soul is the poetry [*poesis*] of the body. Or to use an old phrase with a new twist, the soul can be thought of as “poetry in motion,” which is of course a paradigmatic description, in contemporary Western culture, of dance. Put differently, *poesis*, elsewhere linked to making and positing and poetry, when considered as the specific activity of the (for example) human body—becomes dance.

The second of the new uses of *poesis* in *On the Soul* is found in the fact that a variation of *poesis*, *poetikos*, is the adjective that distinguishes the active from the passive intellect, which Aristotle famously and controversially treats in Book III, Chapter 5. He introduces the former intellect as one example of a “causal and productive thing by which all [things] are formed” and which is “intellect” by virtue of “forming all things, in the way an active condition [*hexis*] such as light does, for in a certain way light too makes the colors that are in potency be at work as colors” (142). So the Poetic Intellect [*nous poetikos*], as I will translate it somewhat loosely here, forms in a very particular way all things, and this way is something like the way that light causes appropriately pigmented images to be actively colorful (which means, perhaps, to be experienced as colors by an observing organism.) In other words, the Poetic Intellect makes potentially known things actually/actively known. Aristotle goes on to claim that this Poetic Intellect is “separate, as well as by being without attributes and unmixed, since it is by its thinghood a being-at-work” (or “being-engaged” or “activity”) (142).

The third and final important new use of *poesis* in *On the Soul* occurs in III, 7, around 431b20, when Aristotle makes the following claim: “[T]he soul is in a certain way all beings, for beings are either perceptible or intelligible, while knowledge in a certain way is the things it knows, and perception is the things it perceives; but one needs to

inquire in what way this is so” (148). In some way, then, the soul, as a kind of *poesis*, is all beings. But this is a carefully and repeatedly qualified assertion. Aristotle elaborates on “what way this is so” a few lines later. “[T]he soul is like a hand, for the hand is a tool of tools, while the intellect is a form of forms” (III, 7; 432a; p. 149). The hand is not all of the tools it uses or actualizes, but a kind of tool that uses tools, a second-order tool or meta-tool. To map this analogy directly onto the previous claim, one might say that instead of simply being all of the various beings in the world, the soul is *the being of beings*—the activity of the beings, the making of life, the poetry of the living world. If so, this “poetry” of Aristotle dovetails perfectly with that of Nietzsche in regard to the free spirits’ poetic dancing world.

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of posture in Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption*, *Physics* and *On the Soul* yields the second phrase of the amplified conception of posture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*posture is a dynamic imitation of stasis*. This formulation becomes clearer when one thinks of the way that Aristotle uses *poesis* to denote the first principles of various philosophies and the underlying activity that manifests itself as the soul and even the world. Any claims of ultimate stasis or immobile foundation will therefore be regarded, throughout this project, as an opportunity to seek the dynamism underlying the apparent stability and foundation. Having concluded the etymological analyses of posture, I will now turn to conceptual analyses of posture, focusing on Plato after a brief look at Aristotle’s *Categories*.

Conceptual Analyses of Pos(i)ture

This section will begin with a brief analysis of the role of posture [*keisthai*] in Aristotle's so-called "Categories," the upshot of which analysis will be that since (a) posture is one of the ten fundamental kinds of being, and (b) posture is also fundamental to dance in virtually all discourse and theories of dance, then (c) dance by implication is a central activity for reality. For the majority of this section I will then examine Plato's emphasis on posture as fundamental for physical education—which features dance—and which is in turn fundamental for the overall education of citizens of the ideal polis.

Posture is a common translation of the category *keisthai* (rendered as "being-in-a-position" in the Ackrill translation). It is famously, along with "state" [*echein*], absent from several discussions of the so-called "Categories," and has been argued to apply only to animals (and especially humans) and therefore to suggest that the human being is the subject Aristotle has in mind throughout the text (Loeb 3-4). The examples Aristotle gives of *keisthai* are "is lying" and "is sitting," but as Ackrill points out in his notes to the text, the verb itself is used much more generally, so it is unclear exactly what extension Aristotle intended (Loeb 19, Ackrill 78).

Posture appears again under the heading of another category, namely "relative," which includes all things that "are called just what they are, *of* or *than* something else—or in some other way *in relation* to something else" (Akrill 17). Ackrill points out in his notes that Aristotle uses no substantive (such as "relation" in English), but always a prepositional phrase to indicate relativity. Posture is always the posture of something, the

position of some body or other. There is no such thing as absolute posture or posture in itself for Aristotle.

Aristotle also notes “in passing” that although “lying and standing and sitting are really specific positions, position itself is a relative. To lie and to stand and to sit, these are not themselves really positions; their names are, however, derived from the attitudes just now referred to” (Loeb 49). What Aristotle seems to mean is that although there are different ways to be posed or to position oneself, they are not things or substances. They are not being-this-or-that or the possession of thing-being, but are instead particular ways of being-related. The point here is that there is no bedrock of substance or foundation represented by infinitives such as “to lie,” or as Ackrill renders it, “to-be-lying” (Ackrill 18). To think otherwise is to be fooled by language, by a common way of speaking.

Plato

Having just shown briefly the importance of the concept of posture for Aristotle, as well as its etymological importance (in the previous section’s etymological analyses of posture), I will now show how posture is of particular importance in Plato’s conception of dance. Posture (a) is a condition for the possibility of the Platonic dialogue via the positive “disposition” of the supporting characters in the dialogue, (b) relates to the dance-connected figure of the puppet and (c) should be, as foundational aspect of dance, the primary educational goal of the ideally lawful polis, so much so that Plato equates dance education with education per se.

Toward the beginning of the *Laws*, the Spartan citizen Megillos mentions to the Athenian Stranger that Megillos’ home is the site of the consulate [*proxenus*] of Athens,

and that he and his kin have a kind of natural “friendly disposition toward the city,” and then Kleinias, a Cretan from the city of Knossos (source of the Labyrinth myth), chimes in that his “family felt well disposed toward your people” (22, 23). “Disposition” is a form of “position,” which is a substantive of “to posit,” and “disposed” is the past participle of “to dispose,” which is a combination of the prefix “dis-” and “pose.” All of this leads the reader back to the two halves of the etymology of posture—posture and positing—here at the beginning of the *Laws*, whose central concern with posture is nevertheless more conceptual than etymological. Furthermore, this means that the two supporting characters in the dialogue, Megillos and Kleinias, are performing the acquisition of the same attribute, posture, that they are about to advocate for the citizens of their ideally lawful polis. In other words, the characters in the dialogue have taken the appropriate posture to conduct the dialogue’s valorization of posture per se.

Just below this passage, the dominant character of the dialogue, the Athenian Stranger, suggests thinking of all living beings as “divine puppets” whose “passions work within us like tendons or cords, drawing us and pulling against one another in opposite directions toward opposing deeds, struggling in the region where virtue and vice lie separated from one another” (25). The figure of the puppet recurs later in the dialogue in the context of an imaginary contest to decide whose art can bring the polis the most pleasure. “[I]t wouldn’t be surprising,” the Stranger observes there, “if someone thought he could best win by presenting puppets,” which is exactly what the Stranger predicts would happen if the judges for the imaginary contest were “very little children” (38). And the figure of the puppet makes a third appearance in the text when the Stranger again compares humans to puppets “for the most part,” and then immediately apologizes for

“belittling our human race” under the influence of “the god,” probably referring to Apollo or Dionysius, whom I will consider more extensively below (194).

The puppet is relevant to my concerns because it is the perhaps paradigmatic image of controlled posture, insofar as the puppet is a kind of material potentiality for the puppeteer to actualize some series of specific postures. Plato’s analysis of the puppet also has a further connection to dance given that the figure of the puppet is often invoked as a metaphor for dance; dancers are puppets at the mercy of their puppet master choreographers, instructors, librettists, etc. On a more concrete note, one popular exercise for training dancers in proper posture, in which I myself was trained, and which becomes a critical aspect of the Stranger’s philosophy of education, is to tell dancers to imagine that they are puppets, with a string extending upwards from the center of the top of each of their heads, and that the rest of their bodies hang limp beneath the string. In other words, being a good dancer means being like a puppet under the authority of a superior guiding being (like an artist or a god); and being a good puppet is a good way of achieving the “fine” and “straight” posture imperative in a proper education.

Sticking with the theme of actual dancers, near the beginning of Book II, the Stranger claims that the chorus (for which, as I will show below, dancing was essential) is the gift of Apollo, Dionysius, and their servant-gods the Muses, whom the Stranger describes as “fellow-dancers” who have

given us the pleasant perception of rhythm and harmony. Using this they move us, and lead us in choruses, joining us together with songs and dances; and that is why they bestowed the name “choruses”—from the “joy” [*charā*] which is natural to these activities (33).

Inspired by this speech, the three interlocutors of the dialogue all agree that “the first education comes through the Muses,” and accept the Stranger’s definition of “the educated” as “the one sufficiently trained in choral performances,” where the chorus is explicitly defined as “the combination of dance and song taken together as a whole” (33).

One aspect of this aesthetic education, the claim that “it’s necessary for the young in the cities to practice fine postures,” seems especially linked to conventional dance, whether one is thinking of the rigid lines of ballet or the loose flexibility of hip-hop (37). Further, reminiscent of Aristotle’s aesthetic test of philosophical fitness, the beauty of a posture is considered evidence of its virtuousness. “[L]et’s simply let all the postures...that belong to virtue of the soul or of the body (whether they belong to virtue or to an image of it) be beautiful...” (35) The more beautifully the citizens are disposed, the more beautifully they carry themselves, move through the polis, etc., the more virtuous they are. Put differently, the more beautiful a dancer’s postures, the more virtuous the dancer.

If this interpretation seems like an exaggeration, it might help to look at the end of Book II, where the Stranger claims that “the choral art,” which is to say the art of a group of singer/dancers, “is for us the same education as a whole” (55). This seems to suggest, however counter-intuitively, that music/dance education and education per se are in fact coextensive terms. It might seem less counter-intuitive to paraphrase this by saying that the education of a citizen amounts to training them to perceive accurately and respond beautifully to, the rhythms of the community. At any rate, it is difficult to imagine a more intense valorization of dance. To show why this is the case, I will now offer an examination of the following four justifications: (a) dance is the best practical alternative

given that complete stillness is impossible, (b) can have therapeutic effects for the psychologically distressed and disturbed, (c) can enhance the polis' spiritual life, and (d) can minimize dangerous movement in the polis.

Regarding the first of these reasons, the Stranger notes that, since "every young thing, so to speak, is incapable of remaining calm in body or in voice, but always seeks to move and cry: young things leap and jump as if they were dancing with pleasure," hoping for complete stillness is less practical than attempting to introduce productive order and control to the inevitable movement (33). And according to the beginning of Book VII, it is not only children that benefit from intentional movement; on the contrary, "all bodies benefit from the invigorating stir produced by all sorts of shaking and motions" (176). For this reason, the Stranger asserts that "motion should be as continuous as possible" for nursing-age children (177).

This logic also leads us to the second reason for the valorization of dance, namely its benefits as a cure for madness.

[P]resumably when mothers want to lull their restless babies to sleep they don't provide stillness but just the opposite, motion; they rock them constantly in their arms, and not with silence but with some melody. It's exactly as if they were charming the children with aulos-playing [a type of flute, often with two pipes], even as is done for the maddened Bacchic revelers, to whom they administer this same cure, which consists of the motion that is dance and music (178).

This therapy works, the Stranger explains, because "the motion brought from without overpowers the fear and the mad motion within, and having overcome it, makes a calm stillness appear in the soul..." (178) Initial motion, at least in the young and the mad, is unavoidable, but the exertion of additional, ordered motion can counterbalance

that initial motion into a kind of stillness. In the case of madness, this overpowering “process incites to dancing... it thereby replaces our mad dispositions with prudent habits” (178). Note that posture reappears here in connection to madness by way of “dispositions.”

Now for the third reason for the valorization of dance, its usefulness in buttressing the spiritual life of the polis—dancing activities must be more than just ordered, they must also be sanctioned and sanctified by the polis, and defended against disruptive, creative innovation. The Stranger acknowledges, in line with the contemporary reader’s probable reaction, that this position is “frightening to utter” (185). “At any rate, this is to be the dogma about it: let no one voice anything or make any dance movement contrary to the public and sacred songs...” (189).

The fourth and final reason is the one based on reducing problematic movement in the polis. On the one hand, “every human being presumably moves his body more when the pleasures are greater...” On the other, however, “the human being who is more orderly and who has a better gymnastic training”—including dance—“in courage moves his body less” (207). The Stranger seems to be suggesting that in battle, it is fear which inspires excessive and unhelpful movement, including perhaps retreating unnecessarily, whereas a disciplined body helps a person move only to the degree that movement is necessary. This observation foreshadows my analyses of grace in Chapter Four, for which aspect of dance an economy of movement is the *sine qua non*. The very next sentence in the dialogue provides a link to another area of my analysis, in this case of gesture in Chapter Three, with the claim that “as the imitation through gesture of what is

being said came into being, it gave rise to the whole art of dancing” (207). Thus, Plato is locating gesture in immediate, and even causal, proximity to dance.

In addition to these analyses, other references to dance and movement in the *Laws* should be noted. In Book I, the Athenian speaks of four lesser and four divine “goods” (10). Of the former four goods, the second is beauty—which is intimately related to dance—and the third is “strength, both in running and in all other motions of the body,” which clearly implies dance (10). Additionally, of the latter four goods, the second is “a moderate disposition of the soul,” thus supporting again the claim of my entire project that dance (via posture) is directly linked to the goods, both “lesser” and “divine,” of human beings.

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of posture in Plato’s *Laws* yields the third and final phrase of the amplified conception of posture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*posture is politically-situated*. There is always a community, a society, a polis or sovereign state, under the umbrella of which human posturing and positioning takes place, and given that movement is inevitable, it should be recognized that it will always affect the political realm. I will therefore be alert to consider the political causes and effects of any dancing throughout the rest of this project. Having concluded both the etymological and conceptual analyses of posture, I will now turn in this chapter’s final section to the construction of posture as a Move of Figuration and its application to the seven members—ballet, clogging, salsa, Tae Kwon Do, the pollen dance, falling stars and Neruda’s poetry—of the seven families—concert, folk, societal, agonistic, animal, astronomical and discursive—of dance.

Construction and Application of Pos(i)ture to the Members of the Families

Synthesizing the etymological analyses of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* and Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, *Physics* and *On the Soul* and the conceptual analyses of Aristotle's *Categories* and Plato's *Laws*, I now offer the full definition of the first of the four Moves of Figuration.

pos(i)ture: poetically creative, politically situated, dynamic imitation of stasis

To rehearse the insights elaborated above, posture is poetically creative because of its kinship to poetry via its character of positing reality (Nietzsche), it is politically situated because all movement takes place within a community with which it is reciprocally determining (Plato), and it is a dynamic imitation of stasis because both philosophical accounts of the world and also the world itself are constant activities that only appear to be a static collection of stable things or objects (Aristotle). The parentheses are intended to remind the reader of the etymological link between posing and positing, and also to illustrate that the "I" is only deceptively simple and separable.

To relate pos(i)ture to other theoretical discourses on dance, it is closely related to (a) Laban's Movement Analysis' concept of "Weight," which involves the muscular tension of the body; (b) Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's concept of "tensional" movement quality and (c) Suzanne Langer's concept of that which animates the dancers as "dance-beings." With regard to (a), in *Laban for Actors and Dancers*, Jean Newlove, a longtime student of Laban, offers a breakdown of his movement system. The chapter on Weight

begins by noting that “Our ability to stand upright depends on the tension between the upward force of our bodies and the downward pull of gravity” (64). Thus even standing up, which appears completely still and inactive, is the result of a constant striving of opposing forces. Newlove observes that this position, as with posture as basis of Figuration, “clears the mind and body for action” (64).

With regard to (b), Johnstone elaborates less on the “tensional” quality than any of the three other movement qualities, but this self-effacement is at the heart of the concept. “For example,” Johnstone writes, “the linear quality of any movement,” by which she means the way abstract visual lines are created by the dancer’s body, “does not exist apart from the tension required to project the line” (51). And although one could measure quantitatively this “amount of effort exerted by the body through muscular contraction,” Johnstone insists that “it is only as quality that tension can function in dance” (51). Put differently, the effort must be phenomenologically available to the viewer; the positing and posturing must be seen as such, as “the manifest dynamic of the projection itself” (52).

And with regard to (c), Langer claims that dance’s domain is virtual gestures expressive of virtual powers. “The spontaneously gestic character of dance motions is illusory,” she explains, “and the vital force they express is illusory; the ‘powers’ (i.e., centers of vital force) in dance are created beings—created by the semblance gesture” (175). Put more simply, dancers imaginatively imitate expressive movement, which creates the illusion that there are forces or beings, as it were, behind the dancers moving them like puppets. These forces are not a stable foundation for the dance, but rather the product of concrete, imaginative, mindful bodies.

To rephrase these insights in a way consonant with all three of these theoretical discourses, pos(i)ture constitutes the “what” dimension of analysis, the starting place and material situatedness of any practice/discourse and its phenomena. The unusual phrasing, to repeat, is the direct result of reinvesting theoretical discourse with the dancing movement which is its origin, and an origin which it has heretofore hypocritically disavowed and fearfully fled. The presentation of Figuration is thus one-fourth complete, having found its (albeit abyssal) basis, despite dance’s trans-discursive nature, in its connection to the discursive art of poetry. Figuration, like all philosophies and discourses, needs some such basis in order to (a) endure through time, (b) maintain a kind of stable identity, and (c) distinguish itself from other discourses and philosophies. As for why these three objectives are desirable, Figuration needs to persist in being itself in order, if for no other reason, to help remedy the marginalizing of dance in philosophy.

The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that anything taken to be completely static and secure is in fact a dynamic process that merely gives the appearance of immobility. I will now show how this critical function plays out in actual analyses of the seven members of the seven families of dance mentioned above. I will begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the Move, then consider the two adjectival aspects and the one substantive core of the amplified, philosophical construct. In the case of pos(i)ture, the commonsense meaning is posture or position, the first amplified aspect is poetic creativity, the second amplified aspect is political situatedness, and the substantial core is the dynamic imitation of stasis.

For ballet, my example throughout this project of what I have termed “concert dance,” the commonsensical account of pos(i)ture leads to the obvious role of posture and

position in ballet, which is the formalized “syntax” of possible ballet poses and positions. Most people are familiar the starting point of ballet, the first five positions, which refer to the proper placement of the feet on the floor. Pos(i)ture finds ballet’s poetic creativity in the fact the carefully trained movements of the ballet dancer can be utilized to imitate anything (such as other animals, fairies, machines, gods, etc.) express emotions, and/or give the appearance of near-complete freedom from gravity in leaps across the stage. The political situatedness of ballet can be found in the fact that it arose in a highly patriarchal society, and reflects to some degree the various ways in which women have been trained, at great personal sacrifice and suffering, to be the visual objects of heterosexual men, and to efface their own physicality in favor of a reified image of perfect femininity. And dynamic imitation of stasis of ballet lies in the years of grueling training, the extreme brevity of a professional ballet dancer’s career, and the extreme muscular efforts required for any given performance of ballet, with its images of perfect and elegant creatures in perfect and elegant poses. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of concert dance consists in representational/mimetic/expressive performances, which grow out of a tradition of patriarchal voyeurism, and which mask years of grueling training and physical suffering through immediate virtuosity.

For clogging, my example throughout the project for what I have termed “folk dance,” the commonsensical posture or position is of a rigid upper body with arms folded behind the back, legs always lifted high with bended knees, and constant effervescent smiles. Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in clogging’s ability to create extremely loud and intricate percussion music conjoined with an apparent utter lightness through two

thin pieces of metal barely separated by nails hammered into the shoes. Political situatedness can be found in the fact that clogging is the result of a fusion of dances created in politically disempowered ethnic and racial communities (Scottish, Irish and African-American) whose manual laborers, persecuted for their embodiment, forcefully pounded their bodies into the ground to make a unique music, while rising to lightness and happiness in the experience. And dynamic imitation of stasis in clogging lies in the apparently infinite energy and carefree attitude of the dancers despite the exhausting and extremely difficult nature of the dance. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of folk dance consists in performances at the border between music and dance, which grow out of traditions of politically/economically/racially/ethnically disempowered communities, and which mask exhaustion through overflowing energy.

For salsa, my example throughout the project for what I have termed “societal dance,” the commonsensical posture or position is of an apparently simultaneously rigid and comfortable “dance frame” created by the bodies of two partners which are nevertheless relaxed enough to allow for the extensive and sinuous hip movements that accompany the basic steps of the dance. Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in salsa’s ability to sustain in each couple a constant romantic and/or sexual tension that never (a) finds full release or expression, (b) spills over problematically to other couples, (c) fades into boredom and weariness, or (d) abandons the music that is its central inspiration and controlling source. Political situatedness can be found in the fact that contemporary salsa dance in the United States is a fusion of dances from Western Africa, especially-Muslim Spain, the slave cultures of the Caribbean Islands, and the United States (especially New

York), and it is one of few aspects of Afro-Latin culture that has received significant respect and enthusiasm from Caucasian America despite concerns over the sensuality of the dance. And dynamic imitation of stasis in salsa lies in the fact that the apparently spontaneous improvisation of moves on the dance floor, often between strangers who have never danced with each other before, is the result of many hours of practice to learn common moves and train the body to guide and/or be guided by unfamiliar physical cues or “leads.” To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of societal dance consists in performances of controlled social tensions, which grow out of the fusion of various cultures and subcultures, and which mask extensive training through spontaneous improvisation.

For Tae Kwon Do (as taught today to children in the United States) my example throughout the project for what I have termed “agonistic dance,” the commonsensical posture or position is of a constant tensed readiness to perform any of the various attacks and blocks of this martial art form. Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in Tae Kwon Do’s ability to take a series of strategies originally devised for person-to-person combat and turn them into a method for physical well-being, flexibility, strength and self-protection, as well as psychological discipline and confidence. Political situatedness can be found in the fact that Tae Kwon Do was introduced to the United States by soldiers who returned from the Korean War having learned from Korean instructors who intentionally left out of their training the specific environmental elements which make the entire effort effective in personal combat.¹⁴ And dynamic imitation of stasis in Tae Kwon Do lies in

¹⁴ An example is a block in which the fist moves from being extended at waist level by a slightly bent arm to being held a few inches in front of the forehead at the end of a ninety degree bend at the elbow. This was originally an attack move in which the assailant grabs the opponents finger by their side and then snaps it upward to inflict great pain and render the opponent defenseless.

the fact that what comes to appear as an elaborate and elegant testament to stamina and self-control is only made possible by techniques extracted from life and death one-on-one combat. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of agonistic dance consists in performances of violent aggression, which grow out of deceptive encounters between cultures, and which mask the fight for individual survival through socially beneficial personal discipline.

For the pollen dance of the honey bee, my example throughout the project for what I have termed “animal dance,” the commonsensical posture or position is of one worker bee hovering in mid-air, surrounded by a group of other bees awaiting her performance in order to find out where to find nectar (with the unintended consequence of accumulating and redistributing pollen, thus the name of the dance). Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in the pollen dance in its ability to convey from one bee to multiple others the exact spatial location of the desired substance through manipulation of the three-dimensional space in which the performing bee hovers. Political situatedness can be found in the fact that the pollen dance only has meaning and efficacy if there is a group of organisms ready to interpret the performance of the first bee.¹⁵ And dynamic imitation of stasis in the pollen dance lies in the fact that what has traditionally interpreted as a hard-wired instinct of the worker bee to “automatically know” how to

¹⁵ This point presents a good opportunity for me to address the fact that I am using the word/concept “political” in at least two (frequently) distinct senses, that of “membership in a community” and “oriented toward the public good.” I would argue that these senses are two sides of the same coin, in that any being belonging to a community is necessarily oriented toward the public good in some way, even if only in a gesture of renunciation (as would be the case with a hermit) or through attempting to subvert and exploit it (as would be the case with a mafia boss). Every member of every community, and therefore also a drone bee in a hive, is the kind of thing that it is only because of its community, insofar as it owes at least existence and socialization to that community, even if it thereafter rejects that community and/or pursues exclusively private goods.

make honey is actually the result of an elaborate performance and interpretation without which the nectar needed to make the honey would never be found in the first place. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of animal dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of animal dance consists in (especially spatially) minimal performances with (especially spatially) maximal results, which grow out of a necessarily social setting, and which mask animals' intellectual adaption through what has historically appeared to humans as instincts.

For “falling stars” or “shooting stars,” my example throughout the project for what I have termed “astronomical dance,” the commonsensical posture or position is actually nothing at the moment of the falling, but is retroactively inferred to have been a position as one of the numerous stars, perceived as pinpricks of light in the night sky. Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in the phenomenon of “falling stars” in the fact that bits of solid debris the size of boulders, caught by the gravitational field of the earth, appear to human observers to be objects which are in reality luminous balls of plasma as large as millions of miles across.¹⁶ Political situatedness can be found in the fact that falling stars can only be experienced, paradoxically enough, by politically conditioned humans in technologically minimal conditions—which is to say, a person is only told about falling stars by others living in some sort of political society, but can only see the falling stars from areas with little to none of the light pollution that accompanies politically-dependant scientific technology. And dynamic imitation of stasis in “falling stars” lies in the fact that it is only because humans cannot see the constant flight of the meteoroid before it is transformed by the earth's gravity into a flaming meteorite that a brief fall from the

¹⁶ That is, actual stars are as large as millions of miles across, so when a human observer refers to a meteorite as a star, that observer is attributing such potential size to an entirely different object, the actual size of which ranges from the size of a grain of sand to that of a boulder.

heavens appears to have occurred. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of astronomical dance consists in performances of mistaken identities, which grow out of a politically facilitated awareness, and which mask human ignorance through visual spectacle.

And finally, for Neruda's poetry, my example throughout the project for what I have termed "discursive dance," the commonsensical posture or position is the words on the page and the sounds heard by the human ear. Pos(i)ture finds poetic creativity in Neruda's surrealistic transformation of language from a transparent vehicle of ordinary experience into a distorted tool that re-carves into the reader/listener marks which are structurally similar to the marks already carved into the reader/listener by the pulsing phenomena of the world. Political situatedness can be found in the fact that it was Neruda's embracing of communism as a political ideology that inspired him to return to the non-commercial values and experiences of the most ordinary aspects of his reality. And dynamic imitation of stasis in Neruda's poetry lies in the fact that it is only through revolutionary personal experiences that the words came to be frozen in just the way that they are now on the lifeless page. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, according to Figuration, the pos(i)ture of discursive dance consists in performances of language as a non-transparent entity, which grow out of subversive political movements, and which mask transcendent experiences in drab black and white pages.

Having offered a posture analysis of each of the seven members of the seven families of dance, my analysis of pos(i)ture as separate Move is hereby concluded. I will

now turn in my next chapter to similarly-structured analyses of the second Move of Figuration, gest)(ure.

CHAPTER 3

GEST)(URE

As stated in Chapter 1, the etymology of “gest)(ure,” from the French *gerère*, meaning “to carry out, perform,” reveals its close connection to the Greek word “metaphor,” meaning “to carry across.” The middle parentheses are intended to cause the reader’s mind to perform the carrying across performance that the word signifies. In other words, the intruding parentheses force the reader to mentally unite the visuospatially-separated halves of the word—which forcing is intended to remind the reader that gesture as a phenomenon performs a similar function in the world of bringing together disparate entities. A gesture is thus a physical performance enabling a poetic performance, a non-verbal performance of a verbal one, a carrying out of a carrying across, a carrying of carrying, a metaphor of metaphor, a figure of figuration. This connection reaffirms the intimacy of poetry and dance established in my first chapter as well as the complementary legitimacy of deriving significance for dance from poetic/metaphorical analyses.

Reaffirming the connection to poetry yet again, this chapter will begin with Kristeva’s *Poetic Revolution in Language* and its conception of choreography via the concept of the *chora*. Through this analysis I will show that choreography, in its movement of providing a nurturing space, draws on the “carrying” of gesture in order to carry [*gerère*] the semiotic into the symbolic. (I will explain Kristeva’s particular use of these two terms at length at the beginning of this first section). The second section of this

chapter, after a brief analysis of Kristeva's early work on gesture as a concept, will then turn to the writings of Condillac and Mead on gesture.

Etymological Analyses of Gest(ure)

Kristeva, in "Gesture: Communication or Practice?" is interested in gesture in its "indicative, relational, empty," aspects, which she terms "anaphora" (etymologically, a "carrying back"), and which according to the OED is linked to poetic repetition, grammatical substitution, and the ritual of mass. Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Language*, secondly, reduces all thought to sense-perception and signs, and traces the arbitrary signs of language from poetry, which it turn is descended from what Condillac terms "the language of action" or gesture (which includes pantomime and dance). And finally, gesture is arguably the central concept of Mead's *Mind, Self and Society*, wherein it is understood as the genus of which verbal language is but one species; another species in this genus is non-verbal language, and thereby dance.

Kristeva

I will work backwards to Kristeva's etymological analyses of gesture in *Revolution in Poetic Language* by beginning with how the activity of dance could be understood to fit into her philosophy as a whole, specifically with regard to her famous distinction between the semiotic and symbolic aspects (or modalities) of language. More specifically still, I will show how dance can be situated at the border of the two aspects, with a particularly strong connection to the concept of the *chora*. This latter concept is at

the heart of the semiotic for Kristeva, and has close etymological connections of its own to the architectural art of performance dance, choreography. Choreography, finally, takes as its building blocks, or smallest individualized units, gesture.

As is frequently the case with creative philosophers, it is difficult to find a clear and concise explication of the two crucial concepts of the semiotic and the symbolic in Kristeva's writing. She offers a near-infinite number of allusions, illustrations, metaphors, and extended discussions, but no definitions. For this reason, turning briefly to the secondary literature seems warranted. Kelly Oliver characterizes the semiotic as "drives as they make their way into language; associated with rhythm and tone, nonreferential" (4). The semiotic is the body becoming mind, soma meeting psyche, the process that generates reference without itself being referential. The symbolic, in turn, according to Oliver, is the "position of judgment that makes reference possible; associated with grammar and syntax, referential" (4). The symbolic is a kind of break in the semiotic production of signification.

Put differently, the semiotic is the natural bodily process that infuses the symbolic's artificial, intellectual product. The semiotic is productive, creative, self-multiplying, and possesses a kind of temporal, musical ordering function. The symbolic, by contrast, is organizational, editorial, self-unifying and possesses a kind of spatial, architectural ordering function. The semiotic is the fire in the symbolic blood. The process character of the semiotic makes it impossible to freeze it into a sufficiently immobile state for analysis, and this is probably the main reason Kristeva never offers a simple definition of it. Additionally, the editing function of the symbolic makes it

difficult, but not impossible, to see the semiotic flow at work; opportunities arise, for example, in language at its most creative, as in poetry.

It seems that dance, taken in three different senses of the word, could be understood to belong essentially to the semiotic, the symbolic and the borderline between them, respectively. First, in the broad sense of rhythmic human movement, dance resonates with the semiotic modality of language as spontaneous expressive bodily motion. This is also where one could locate the process or activity of choreography, in which the choreographer physically moves in space, drawing on her kinesthetic awareness, bodily memory, and imaginative projections of her bodily schema, and perhaps also moving with a partner or a group of other dancers. Second, in the narrower sense of a premeditated sequence of movements—i.e., professional choreography qua product (as opposed to choreography qua kinesthetically-guided process)—dance exhibits the symbolic modality of language in the fully articulated rules, steps, phrases and directions of a given composition. And, finally, in the historical act of a person channeling her energy into the basic step of the Latin rumba, dance crosses the borderline of the semiotic-symbolic as the rising of the soma's spontaneous motion to the psyche's structured choreography.

The seat of the semiotic modality of signifiante is the “*chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated...as rupture and articulations (rhythm), [it] precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality” (35). Kristeva cites Plato's usage of the word in the *Timaeus* as an inspiration for her own choice, which suggests to me the possibility of examining briefly John Sallis's extensive and meticulous treatment of the *chora* in his work on the

Timaeus. Sallis argues there that although the word *chora* essentially lacks any clear, specific meaning, there are nevertheless several images that clarify its meanings, including that of the “receptacle,” “nurse,” “matrix” and “the country” (as opposed to the city). Sallis also describes the *chora* as that in which things come to be, that which makes room for another. The *chora* also “moves” the traces or powers it supports, “grants an abode,” to something, and “is itself in movement” which includes “sway[ing] unevenly.” (Sallis 1999, 113-130).

In its aspect as (a) nursing, (b) a space of support for the other, and, especially (c) movement, one can detect the *chora*’s kinship to *choreia*, origin of the English word choreography—etymologically “the art of dance” or “the writing of dance.”¹⁷ Before elaborating on these three aspects, it might be helpful to note, from the perspective of a professionally-trained choreographer, that the scope of choreography includes not only systematic, formalized movements in a completed piece, but also informal dancemaking and even (perhaps especially) the extemporaneous, spontaneous and serendipitous movements of the choreographer and/or other dancers. Put simply, the rules or algorithms of choreography most often begin with quasi-regulated movements.

First, like a nurse, which provides the material ground and lifeline for the infant, connecting it to the world (and like the *chora*, which provides the semiotic foundation to the law-like organization of the symbolic) choreography provides the necessary material to turn a human into a professional dancer. This is especially true in virtue of the fact that choreography, again, almost always begins with (at least) the choreographer’s body moving in physical space. Formal routines are generated by the embodied imagination of

¹⁷ Thomas Rickert draws on the work of Indra McEwen in referencing a passage in Book XVIII in the *Iliad* describing a “lovely dance” [*choros*] and “dancing-floor” [*choros*] (254).

a dancer according to the functional capacities of a human body. Further, in group dances with elaborate formations, the concrete embodiment, including height, weight, body shape, and (often) attractiveness of the individual dancers influences the design of those formations.¹⁸

Second, choreography is a kind of space of support for the other in that it supports the natural inclinations of the human body with its formal structure. In other words, a choreographer does not merely imagine a place in the routine where the dancer will spin thirty-six times simply because that would be impressive; rather, an implicit awareness of what is possible for the human body (and often for one body in particular, as choreographers frequently design dances with particular dancers in mind) pre-determines which formal possibilities will be explored. And third, choreography has as its essence a formalization of human movement; it is not just a static or rigid structure, but one which sways with that which it sways.

With regard to two other elements of Sallis' analysis of the *chora*, choreography can also be thought of as treating the space of the body as possibility for movement, the body which acts as the "country" [*chora*] to the soul's "city." This analogy would suggest an understanding of human *being* in which (1) the mind or soul is the capital, the source of executive, political power for the human being; (2) the current regime in the city's administration is that of a particular piece of dance choreography; and (3) the body

¹⁸ It is worth emphasizing that this nursing aspect is also the place in Kristeva's thought where dance most closely intersects with her feminist concerns. Choreography as nursing is a kind of maternal activity, a loving coordination of the dancer's movements into a desired form. Thus dance is not linked directly to the feminine for Kristeva, as it is for many thinkers in terms of the predominance of female dancers in the history of performing arts in the West, but indirectly through the maternal-feminine guidance of the choreographer as nurse. Although a full analysis is beyond the scope of this essay, one could also suggest that choreography as nursing could be understood as a kind of "maternal function" that is the precondition for the paternal function she takes up from Lacan.

constitutes that which is governed, in its production of natural resources, for the mind's flourishing under a dance's administration. From a different direction, Rickert discusses McEwen's analysis of the ancient Greek *polis* as ““a surface woven by the activity of its inhabitants”” through ritual processions “much like the dance ‘weaves’ the dance floor” (81, 254). In other words, the movements of the mind through the body, metaphorically rendered as citizens traveling into the country, are constitutive of both the mind and the body; the city is what it is only in traversing its boundaries.

At the end of this discussion, Rickert also refers to the *chora* as “the matrix or mother of all becoming” (254). Linking this last sentence of this section in Rickert's essay to that section's title, “Dances with the *Chora* Before Plato,” choreography can be thought of as the matrix [*chora*] in which each possible movement of the human body finds its systematically ordered home. I am suggesting, in summary, that the *chora*—as locus of the semiotic, and thereby the semiotic *simpliciter*—is kindred to dance and especially to the embodied process of the art of constructing it.

Kristeva goes on to associate the *chora* with kinesis (a central concept in her essay on gesture, including dance gestures), which supports my linking of the *chora* to choreography and dance. “[T]he *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm...the kinetic functional stage of the *semiotic* precedes the establishment of the sign...” (1984, 36). Put differently, the movement of the drives sets up and underlies the signifying of verbal or written language, and what art form could be better than dance to symbolize this process-modality of discourse?

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of gesture in Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* yields the first phrase of the amplified conception of gesture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*gesture is border-organizing*. In other words, gesture constitutes a kind of choreographing of borders, most importantly the border between the mind and body, or better put, between the artificially segregating concepts of “mind” and “body.” By “choreographing of borders” here, I mean only that dances, which tend to operate according to choreography, and which can be understood as being constituted by gestures (in the broadest sense of the term), are practices that occur at various borders (such as the borders between human and non-human, mind and body, and art and religion in ritual). To restate the point, since choreography structures the gestures that make up dance, and dance constitutes a kind of pluralistically borderline practice, then gesture can be understood as a kind of border-choreographing activity. I will now turn to the second section of this chapter, with its three conceptual analyses of gesture, and I will begin by finishing up with Kristeva.

Conceptual Analyses of Gest)(ure

This section will begin with a brief look at the role of gesture per se in Kristeva's analysis of the concept in her early essay, “Gesture: Communication or Practice?” The upshot of those considerations will be that gesture is kind of poetic carrying-back-to-the-body. The majority of the section will then examine Mead's and Condillac's explicit treatments of gesture, which treat it as the foundation of all language, and a foundation which is linked to the activity of dance.

Kristeva begins “Gesture: Communication or Practice” by stating that Western thought has historically shown a marked bias in which “all *gestural* is presented as mechanical, redundant in relation to the voice, the illustration or duplication of speech, and so visibility more than action, what Nietzsche called ‘accessory representation’ rather than process” (266). From this perspective, all non-verbal movement is inferior, because only the (verbal) product is of inherent value. Using the later language of *Revolution*, the symbolic has been privileged absolutely over the semiotic. However, in modern semiotics, according to Kristeva, “a tendency is establishing itself more and more clearly towards tackling semiotic practices *other* than those of verbal languages” which includes “non-phonetic semiotic practices (script, graphics, behavior, etiquette)” (266-7). What is at stake in this trend, according to Kristeva, is an attempt to “revise the very notion of language, understood no more as communication but as production” (267). This would be an understanding of language more sensitive to its semiotic mode, where poetry and dance disturb the static structure of the linguistic-social code.

For Kristeva, gesture is particularly well suited to this emphasis on process. “Gestural, more than phonetic discourse or the visual image,” she writes, “can be studied as an activity in the sense of a *spending*, of a productivity anterior to the product, and so anterior to *representation* as a phenomenon of significance in the circuit of communication” (267). More specifically, gesture accentuates how communication happens, how the story is told, the work that goes into any communication. “[G]esture transmits a message...but more than this message already there, it is – and it can make conceivable – the *elaboration* of the message, the *work* which precedes the constitution of the sign (of the meaning) of communication” (267). Similarly, of all the canonical art

forms, such as literature, music, visual art and architecture, one could argue that dance is the most reliant on the *how* as opposed to the *what*, insofar as dance operates through the most restricted medium, namely particular human bodies (compared to the entirety of words and word fragments, for example, which makes up the medium of poetry).

Kristeva valorizes this trend in semiotics toward gesture as a movement away from a kind of modal hegemony of the vocal, which she describes as the “necessity” of moving “towards a ‘way out from speech’ ” (268). This comment is particularly striking given that it is coming from a practicing analyst, and therefore a descendant of Freud, the originator of the “talking cure” of psychoanalysis. Turning to ethnological support for this valorization of physical movement as signification, Kristeva then references the mythology of the Dogon culture. According to the Dogon, “the finger of [the goddess] Amma creating the world in *showing* it’ ” (268, emphasis original). In other words, indexing for this culture is the very force of creation itself, which shows up in the etymology of the goddess’ name, “Amma,” a name which in their (verbal) language, “means ‘opening’, ‘extension’, and ‘bursting of a fruit’ ” (270).

Generalizing these observations, Kristeva claims that what is anterior to “the semiotic system” is “a gesture of *demonstration*, of *designation*, of *indication of action* in relation to ‘consciousness’ and idea. Before the sign – this ‘before’ is a spatial and not a temporal anteriority...[there is] a practice of *designation*, a *gesture* which shows not to signify, but to *englobe* in one and the same space...‘subject’ and ‘object’ and practice...” (270, emphasis original). Like the *chora*, gesture as “englobing” sweeps what will have been signified into a nurturing space of proximity or nearness, “includ[ing] them in an

empty relation...of an indicative but not signifying type...” (269) Before something can signify, it must be shown.

Put differently, Kristeva suggests that semiotics “leave *structure* – and try to reach what is not structure, what is not reducible to structure or what escapes it completely...” Kristeva christens this “basic function – indicative, relational, empty” as *anaphora* (269). Anaphora, literally a “carrying back,” is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, associated with poetic repetition, grammatical substitution, and the ritual of mass. Gesture is a carrying whose anaphoric function is the carrying back of the process of significance, and “constitutes the ground – or the stratum – on which a process unfolds...” (270) Kristeva is careful to note, however, that hers is not a reductive analysis of gesture. “We are far from defending the thesis – current in certain studies on gesture – that would see in gesture the origin of language” (271). It is to two other philosophers who do see in gesture the origin of language, Condillac and Mead, that I now turn.

Condillac

Having just shown briefly the importance of the concept of gesture for Kristeva, as well as its etymological importance (in the previous section on the etymological analyses of gesture), I will now explore how gesture and dance are of central importance to Condillac’s conception of language in his major early work *Essay on the Origin of Human Language*.¹⁹ According to Condillac, dancing gesture carries language across to

¹⁹ It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the thorny issue of Condillac’s shift in his later work, especially *Treatise on Sensations*, epitomized in his famous Letter to Maupertuis (June 25, 1752) claiming that the *Essay* “was mistaken and [has] given too much to signs” (536, qtd. in Jacques Derrida, *The Archeology of the Frivolous: Reading Condillac*).

poetry, which carries language across to prose. In other words, gesture (non-verbal poetic language) creates poetry (verbal poetic language) which creates prose (verbal non-poetic language), and then this latter term (prose) eventually becomes functionally synonymous in mainstream Western philosophy with “language.” Thus the sequence can be rewritten as gesture creates poetry which creates language.

There are, according to editor/translator Hans Aarsleff, two central principles in Condillac’s *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, “the connection of ideas and the language of action” (xi). The latter of these two, “the spontaneous movements and gestures of both voice and body,” is what I intend to analyze under the simplified name “gesture” (xi). Although “the connection of ideas” dominates Part I, and it is not until Part II that gesture is treated at length, there are moments foreshadowing gesture early in the book. For example, in the section introducing his conceptions of “Imagination, contemplation, and memory,” in the last footnote of the section, Condillac claims that “The brain can work only by motion” (30n14). This comes in the context of his referencing “the shock to the fibres of the brain,” which Condillac assumes to be the physical cause of mental events (and which also seems a fair, if rough, description of the neural psychology). The point for this investigation is that motion is not limited for Condillac to social gestures in the macro-world, but also has a fundamental place in neural communication in the micro-world.

Gesture comes up again in an editor’s footnote two sections later. “It is sympathy,” Aarsleff claims, “that enables the spontaneous language of action [i.e., gesture] to become the proto-language for the language of intentional signs. By its nature language is always interpersonal and social. Sympathy is embedded in rhetorical

expressivism” (37nd). This concept of sympathy is obviously at work at the beginning of Condillac’s account of the origin of language in Part II, which opens with the following strange passage:

Adam and Eve did not owe the operations of their soul to experience. As they came from the hands of God, they were able, by special assistance, to reflect and communicate their thoughts to each other. But I am assuming that two children, one of either sex, sometime after the deluge, had gotten lost in the desert before they would have known the use of any sign. The fact that I have just stated gives me the right to make this assumption. Who can tell whether some nation owes its origin to such an event? The question is to know how this budding nation made a language for itself (113).

Condillac, himself an abbot in the Catholic church, is trying to reconcile (or at least give the appearance of trying to reconcile) his own account of the origin of language with church dogma. “The fact” probably refers to the first sentence about the special condition of Adam and Eve. The uncertainty expressed in the next-to-last sentence suggests thinking of this entire passage as the backdrop and beginning of a kind of thought experiment, and the last sentence supports this reading. There is also a footnote by Condillac, placed after the word “question,” which supports this interpretation. “If I suppose two children under the necessity of imagining even the first signs of language,” he writes, it is because he feels it is the philosopher’s duty “to explain how it could have come about by natural means” (113n34). Finally, near the end of his analyses of the language of action in Part II, Condillac expresses the following thought: “Perhaps this entire idea will be taken for a romance, but at least its plausibility cannot be denied” (194). I will therefore proceed on the assumption that Condillac is offering the reader a likely story whose own results can be used to accept or reject it as a method.

Condillac writes of these two hypothetical children that “their mutual discourse made them connect the cries of each passion to the perceptions of which they were the natural signs. They usually accompanied the cries with some movement, gesture, or action that made the expression more striking” (114). In other words, each child observed in the other a simultaneous combination of (a) an involuntary verbal response (such as a scream), (b) a perception (such as seeing a dangerous animal approaching) and often also (c) a movement accompanying the response (such as pointing at the animal). “Moved by this display,” Condillac's account continues, “the other fixed the eyes on the same object, and feeling his soul suffused with sentiments he was not yet able to account for to himself, he suffered by seeing the other suffer so miserably” (114). Here one sees the role of sympathy referenced earlier. It is the second child's innate sympathy for the first child that facilitates the connection between the verbal response (the scream) and the external stimulus (the dangerous animal). Continuing on, “The frequent repetition of the same circumstances...make it habitual for them to connect the cries of the passions and the different motions of the body to the perceptions which they expressed in a manner so striking to the senses” (115). In this way, “the passions” naturally produced “the language of action, a language which in its early stages...consisted of mere contortions and agitated bodily movements” (115).

Although for these children, who become the first generation of language users for this new language, “the first progress of this language was very slow,” when they grew up they “had a child” whose “very flexible tongue bent in extraordinary manner and pronounced an entirely new word” (116). Note the muscular focus here, on the “extraordinary manner” in which the child's tongue is “bent”—once again a kind of

physical motion, a kind of gesturing (this time with the tongue) facilitates the more rapid development of the new language. It is not the case that the hypothetical parents lacked intelligence, but rather that their “organ of speech was so inflexible that it could articulate only very simple sounds with any ease” (115). Language fluency, Condillac is suggesting, thus requires a simultaneous development of motor and verbal capacities. The point is that gesture is not just some primitive ancestor of speech in historical time, but is also coextensive with speech in the developmental time of an individual.

Because the flexibility of their tongues decrease rapidly as children age, their capacity to supply new sounds to be made into words is very brief, and the expansion of the language’s vocabulary therefore still proceeds very slowly, and takes “many generations” (116). Only when “the language of articulated sounds became richer” and was thus “better suited to exercise the vocal organ at an early age and to preserve its initial flexibility,” did verbal language “prevail” over gestural language (116). And since this took many generations, “there was a time when conversation was sustained by discourse that was a mixture of words and actions” (116).

This hybrid discourse, Condillac speculates, “was chiefly preserved to instruct the people in matters that most deeply concerned them, such as government and religion,” because as a result of the hybrid language’s “acting with greater force on the imagination, the impression was more lasting” (118). In other words, verbal language augmented by gesture makes a more strikingly visual, and thereby more sympathy-inducing, impression than the primarily auditory impression of verbal language alone. As a greater number of senses are stimulated, the person is more stimulated overall, and therefore more likely to remember the experience, and therefore the content of the message. “The ancients called

this language,” Condillac notes, “by the name ‘dance,’ which is why it is said that David danced before the ark” (118).

Condillac then goes on to give a brief history of this activity.

As their taste improved, people gave greater variety, grace and expression to this ‘dance.’ They not only submitted the movements of the arms and the attitudes of the body to the rules, but even marked out how the feet should be moved. As a result dancing was naturally divided into two subordinate arts...the ‘dance of gestures,’ which as maintained for the communication of the their thoughts; the other was chiefly the ‘dance of steps,’ which was used for the expression of certain states of mind, especially joy; it was used on occasions of rejoicing, pleasure being its principle aim (118).

There are several things worthy of note here. First, the activity evolved as a result of “taste” improving, which could only happen, as contemporaries of Condillac such as Hume remind us, through much experience with the activity. Simply put, doing a lot of dancing, moving the body extensively, practicing the gestures as a physical performance, was the condition for the possibility of the intellectual advancement that resulted.

Second, the division that resulted was also based on brute physicality, in this case a division between parts of the body, namely the arms and trunk versus the feet. Third, the end result of the division was a functional one, between a pragmatic means of communication and an aesthetic and hedonistic celebration. Fourth, both varieties were still mental and intellectual activities, one being a communication of thoughts and the other being an expression of mental states. In other words, both the hands and the feet were engaged in movements of the mind.

Further, as the next paragraph’s first sentence makes clear, this division is not a purely horizontal one. Rather, “The dance of steps therefore stems from that of gestures,

whose character it retains” (118). This means that the dance of the steps, of the feet, of pleasure and celebration, is still involved in the communication of thoughts, and that all dance, regardless of which type, descends originally from gesture and the natural beginnings of language. Condillac then goes on to talk about the “different genres of dance,” organized around their expressive capacities, insofar as “the degree of their perfection increases with the variety and scope of the expression” (118).

Dancing and gesture do not simply come to an end, according to Condillac, when verbal language succeeds this first language of action. “When speech succeeded the language of action, it preserved the character of its predecessor,” and more specifically, “to take the place of the violent bodily movements, the voice was raised and lowered by strongly marked intervals” (120). To make up for the loss of the rest of the body, verbal language, as it evolved beyond the language of action, became musical, and its “manner of articulation partook of the quality of chant” (121). And by “chant,” as his footnote clarifies, Condillac “refers to the entire range of the verbal language of action” and includes “music,” “song” and “singing” (121nr). It is therefore “one of the two primary, natural modes for the expression of sentiment, the other being gesture” (121nr). Thus, all expression can be classified as either gesture or chant, and the latter comes from the former. All expression, according to Condillac, begins as gesture.

In the context of chant, Condillac then discusses the “declamation,” or musically-marked speech (often accompanied by an instrument) of the ancient Greeks and Romans, whose pronunciation “in everyday conversation came so close to chant that their declamation may be called chant in the strict sense” (130). And it is to this prosodic aspect that Condillac finds the reason “the Roman orators who delivered their orations in

the public forum could be heard by the entire crowd” (131). The reason this analysis matters for my own analysis is that Condillac goes on in the next section to claim that, since

it is natural for the voice to vary its inflections in step with an increasing variety of gestures, it is also natural for a people who speak a language whose pronunciation is much like chant to have a greater variety of gestures (132).

This point is further supported by the comparatively greater emphasis on, and meaningfulness of, gesture in ordinary conversation among peoples speaking comparatively more “musical” languages such as Italian and Chinese. Condillac leans in this direction himself when quoting the Abbé Du Bos' observations that “conversations of all kinds carry along with them more outward show and speak much more to the eyes, if I may be permitted that expression, in Italy than in our part of the world” (135). The implication here is that there is a communicative gain to be had—specifically regarding the *how* (as opposed to the *what*) of both subject matter and speaker—when the rest of the body joins the voice in expression in a veritable dance of conversation.

Moreover, “their gestures could be sufficiently distinct to be measured,” which is, according to Condillac, the condition for the possibility of a rich heritage of pantomime, a sister art of dance. More specifically, pantomime originated in the ancient world because the Greeks and Romans “divid[ed] the chant and the gestures between two actors,” the latter actor eventually evolving into the mime (133). In this way, the ancients “came to imagine, as an entirely new invention, a language which had been the first mankind spoke,” differing “from it only by being suitable for the expression of a much larger number of thoughts” (134). This means that gesture, which gave birth to both articulate

verbal language and what I have called the hybrid language of “dance,” is then recreated at a higher level of sophistication by its own linguistic descendents. Noting the immense popularity (however surprising to the contemporary reader) of this new language, which “lasted as long as the empire,” Condillac claims its great power consists in its “giving greater pleasure, because the imagination is more deeply affected by a language that is all action,” that is, gesture (135).

Condillac’s focus on gesture ends in the section of the book entitled “The origin of poetry,” in which he claims that, at the origin of each language, “the style was a virtual painting, adopting all sorts of figures and metaphors” (150). Thus, just as spoken language became musical as it evolved away from pure gesture, so written language became poetic. Again in this project, then, dance and poetry come together in a striking way. “These two arts” or music and poetry, Condillac concludes, “allied themselves with gesture, which is older than either and called by the name of dance” (151).

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of gesture in Condillac’s *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* yields the second phrase of the amplified conception of gesture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*gesture is f(o)unding language*. In other words, gesture both funds (invests materially) and founds (is the material precondition for) verbal language. In connection to this economic/financial rhetoric, I will be alert to the economic factors at play in dance throughout the rest of this project. I will now turn to the final conceptual analysis of gesture, that of George Herbert Mead.

Mead

Having just shown briefly the importance of the concept of gesture for Condillac, I will now show its absolute centrality in the thought of George Herbert Mead. The most clear and concise account of gesture is found in a footnote to an early section of the book entitled “The Behavioristic Significance of Gestures.” There Mead defines gesture as “the basic mechanism whereby the social process goes on” (13n9). He also defines gestures in this long footnote, in the context of an encounter between two organisms, as “movements of the first organism which act as specific stimuli calling for the (socially) appropriate responses of the second organism” (14n9). Paraphrasing, gestures are socially stimulating movements that generate appropriate responses. Central to this phenomenon—and to the way in which it will augment this second Move—is the receptive power, or sympathy, of the second organism; gestures according to Mead, as well as Condillac, only work because of the sympathetic connection among organisms. Immediately after this definition, in another sweeping statement, Mead remarks that “The field of the operations of gestures is the field within which the rise and development of human intelligence has taken place throughout the process of the symbolization of experience” (14n9). Human intelligence, which is a making-symbolic of organism-environment experience, is entirely indebted to gesture. Finally in this footnote, Mead attributes to gesture even “the origin and growth of present human society and knowledge, with all the control over nature and over the human environment that science makes possible” (14n9). A more fundamental concept, and an account more sympathetic to that of Condillac, would be difficult to imagine.

Also worthy of note in this section, Mead uses “gesture” as synonymous with “attitudes.” He defines “attitude” at the beginning of the book as “the beginning of acts” (5). In the central nervous system, which Mead describes as “a whole series of neurons,” an attitude corresponds to, for example, “the exact way in which the astronomer approaches the [telescope] under certain conditions” (5). In one of the “Supplementary Essays” at the end of the book, Mead defines “attitude” again, this time as “the adjustment of the organism involved in an impulse ready for expression” (362). For an example of an attitude in the real world, Mead notes that, “A person who is familiar with a horse approaches it as one who is going to ride it. He moves toward the proper side and is ready to swing himself into the saddle” (12).

Importantly for this project, the word *attitude* can also mean posture or bearing, as does its cognate in French, from which it is derived. Thus, speaking only barely figuratively, one could paraphrase Mead's account here as claiming that on the human stage there are millions of dancers, called neurons, which are choreographed into various positions or attitudes, resulting in observable acts in the social world. Also by this route, pos(i)ture and gest)(ure become knit together, in the dancing “connection of neurons,” which connections manifest themselves as “attitudes” or “gestures” (12).

Attitude comes up again in Mead's approving reference to William James' theory of emotion, according to which “an attitude in the organism” corresponds to “emotional states” (20). In sympathy with this view, Mead claims that “all that takes place in the body is action,” and that there is “nothing there [in the body] that is itself simply a state, a physiological state that could be compared with a static state” (21). Summarizing James, Mead claims that the “result of this analysis was to carry psychology from a static to a

dynamic form” (21). (Note here the etymological meaning of gesture, “to carry,” appearing in the context of a philosophical work founded on gesture).

In Section Seven, “Wundt and the Concept of the Gesture,” in Part II of the book, entitled “Mind,” Mead begins to use, in the context of discussing the example of a “dog-fight,” the important phrase “a conversation of gestures” (42). In the dog-fight, these gestures “are not, however, gestures in the sense that they are significant” (43). Rather, there is simply “an actual change in [each dog’s] own position” (43). Significance is only gained when the gesture “means this idea behind it and it arouses that idea in the other individual” (45). This is also, for Mead, the place where “what we call ‘language’” begins (46). With language, the conversation of gestures that had previously been carried out between individuals now becomes “internal (between a given individual and himself)” (47). Mead’s first example of this internal conversation is “thinking—which is simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of gestures” (47). Even something as abstract as thought for Mead comes down to gestures, much as thought for Condillac, as I have noted, comes down to movements in the brain.

Note further that these conversations of linguistic gestures not only rely on the sympathetic orientation of the participating organism(s), as all gestures do for Mead, but also function by the linguistic organism's intentionally taking advantage or manipulating the sympathy of itself and/or another organism. Put differently—and using a phrasing that I will return to shortly in constructing this second Move—when we use language to accomplish things in our minds and in the world, we do so by consciously manipulating our own sympathy to gesture.

Mead's next examples of conversations of gestures are boxing and fencing, which are often thought of as the most dance-like sport and form of combat, respectively. He then immediately turns from these dance-like activities to the situation of the actor, who consciously exploits the expressive potential of the gesture, a potential which is a mere byproduct for the dogs, the boxers and the fencers. Mead's analyses of the actor are important for this investigation both because actors have historically also sung and danced in their performances, and also because dancers are nowhere explicitly treated in the text.

The actor is in the same position as the poet: he is expressing emotions through his own attitude, his tones of voice, through his gestures, just as the poet through his poetry is expressing his emotions and arousing that emotion in others" (44).

I have already elaborated on the relationship between posture, position, poetry and dance in Chapter 2, and between posture and attitude in this chapter, and here one finds them all together in a single sentence. Importantly in this context, Mead mentions earlier in the book that for actors, non-verbal gestures "may become definitely a language" (17). Mead also emphasizes how, in the example of an angry gesture, the actor "is not expressing his own emotion, but simply conveying to the audience the evidence of anger," and sometimes doing so more successfully than "a person who is in reality angered" (17).

This latter point calls to mind Langer's analysis of "virtual gesture" as the basic abstraction, or foundational symbolic transformation of the art of dance. And although Mead claims in the next section that "It is only the actor who uses bodily expressions as a means of looking as he wants others to feel," and that this effect is achieved "by

continually using a mirror,” it is clear that dancers use such expressions similarly, through literal mirrors (in the professional studio) and/or metaphorical mirrors (other dancers engaged in the same dance) (65). “When he later makes use of the gesture,” Mead continues in reference to the actor, “it is present as a mental image” (66). Professional or performance dance, similarly, has been argued to boil down to nothing but a series of gestures producing mental images for the audience.

Returning to Section Seven of Part II, Mead makes another claim about gestures which has strong resonances with the practices of dance. “In the very beginning the other person’s gesture means what you are going to do about it. It does not mean what he is thinking about or even his emotion” (49). Even for human beings, intellectually sophisticated, masters of verbal language, gesture is fundamentally material, bodily and social. In each metaphorical dance of communication, the most important thing one gets from a partner is the cue for how to move in response. It is through this “communication by a conversation of gestures in a social process or context of experience” that mind always “arises” (50). First, for Mead, there is sociality, then gestures, then mind.

In Section Ten, Mead offers another dance-like analysis, this time of “our conduct” as “made up of a series of steps which follow each other,” in which series “the later steps may be already started and influence the earlier ones” (71). This sounds very much like a choreographed dance routine. His summary in the following sentence, “The thing we are going to do is playing back on what we are doing now” also contains a core phrasing that could be used to characterize dance in general, namely, “playing back on what we are doing now” (71). The temporality implied here is complex and interesting, and it involves the future erupting playfully somehow from within the present. Dance,

too, seems to be a playful eruption of the moves one is about to make into one's present movement, whether the dance be improvised or systematically planned.

Finally, in Section Twenty-Three, “Social Attitudes and the Physical World,” Mead offers a justification for the importance of internalizing “the conversation of gestures,” a justification which reminds one of Plato’s justifications for the centrality of dance education in his curriculum in the *Laws*. The value of this process, according to Mead, “lies in the superior co-ordination gained for society as a whole, and in the increased efficiency of the individual as a member of the group” (179). Simply put, internalizing gestures makes the body politic dance. And it makes each “self,” which Mead defines in this section as “a process in which the conversation of gestures has been internalized within an organic form,” a better dancer.

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of gesture in Mead’s *Mind, Self, and Society* yields the third and final phrase of the amplified conception of gesture for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*gesture is sympathy-manipulating*. To gesture, for a minded organism or self, is to exploit the result of the social process that made the organism a self to begin with. Put differently, because we are what we are in virtue of the manipulation of society, we can manipulate our shared manipulations to communicate through gesture. I will therefore be alert to issues of social conditioning and psychological manipulation throughout the rest of this this project. Having concluded both the etymological and conceptual analyses of gest)(ure, I now turn in this chapter’s final section to the construction of gest)(ure as a Move of Figuration, and to applications of this Move to the seven members of the seven families of dance.

Construction and Application of Gest)(ure to the Members of the Families

Synthesizing the etymological analyses of Kristeva's *Poetic Revolution in Language* and the conceptual analyses of Kristeva's "Gesture: Communication or Practice?", Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Language* and Mead's *Mind Self, and Society*, I now offer the full definition of the second of the four Moves of Figuration.

gest)(ure: border-organizing, sympathy-manipulating, f(o)unding language

To rehearse the insights elaborated above, gesture is border-organizing because of choreography's connections to the *chora* as that which carries the semiotic aspect of language into the symbolic aspect (Kristeva), it is sympathy-manipulating because it is an organism's use or exploitation of the shared manipulations that are the conditions of its being (Mead), and it is funding-and-founding language insofar as it is the historical and developmental *arche* of verbal language (Condillac). The opposing parentheses in the middle of the word are intended to symbolize that *across which* the carrying moves.

To relate gest)(ure to other theoretical discourses on dance, it is closely related to (a) Laban's Movement Analysis' concept of "Space," which involves the movement of the body through space; (b) Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's concept of "aerial" movement quality, which involves representations made in the space around the dancer's body, and (c) Suzanne Langer's concept of "virtual gestures." To rephrase these insights in a way consonant with all three of these theoretical discourses, gest)(ure constitutes the "where" dimension of analysis, the other places phenomena go from out of their postures or

starting places, the mechanics of communication among entities in their original positions in any practice/discourse.

The presentation of Figuration is thus one-half complete, and has found the primary activity that takes place on its poetic and dynamic basis, namely, the carrying out, in various senses, of communication. The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that any non-spatial and immaterial communication is always already carried out/in/through/by/for spatial and material support. I will now show how this critical function plays out in actual analyses of the seven members of the seven families of dance mentioned above. As a reminder, I will again begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the Move, and then consider the two adjectival aspects and the one substantive core of the amplified, philosophical construct. In the case of gest)(ure, the commonsense meaning is a significant movement used to communicate something to an observer, the first amplified aspect is border-organization, the second amplified aspect is sympathy-manipulation, and the substantive core is f(o)unding language.

For ballet, the commonsensical account of gest)(ure leads to the role of significant gestures in ballet, the formalized “semantics” of symbolic visual elements. Examples include arms flexed to convey strength, a hand over the mouth to signal fear, and the chin lowered to the chest, head turned to the side, to express sadness. Gest)(ure finds ballet’s border-organizing in ballet’s carrying individual bodies, with their variety of movement styles and capacities, across the border into the world of the precise and exacting vocabulary of balletic poses and gestures. The sympathy-manipulation of ballet can be found in the way it taps into audiences’ and performers’ shared ideals of beauty, grace,

strength, etc., which evoke envious admiration from the audience. And the f(o)unding language of ballet lies in the fact that individual human dancers are required in order to produce the visual images at the heart of the individual piece or work in ballet's gestural, visual language. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of concert dance consists in persons' reprogrammed bodies manipulating the ideals of an audience, whereby their full personhood is sacrificed to offer up idiosyncratic expressions in an imagistic language.

For clogging, the commonsensical gestures are the fast and complex steps executed by the feet, legs and lower body in general. Gest)(ure finds border-organizing in the recalibration of the boundary between the upper and lower body in which the upper body becomes a stable visual spectacle of calm and confidence, while the lower body becomes an auditory spectacle of dynamism and virtuosity. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact that clogging taps into and draws energy and approval from one's urge to respond to the upbeat and percussive music accompanying the dance with a percussive music of one's own (such as by involuntarily tapping one's feet). And f(o)unding language in clogging lies in the fact that the series of complex sounds which communicate the Afro-Irish step-dancing traditions of the performers are clearly dependent upon the entire body of the performer. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of folk dance consists in its redefining the parts of the performers' bodies to express impulses shared and enacted vicariously by the audience members and communicate ideas of cultural heritage with material bodies.

For salsa, the commonsensical gestures are the ways the extremities of the body move during the execution of formalized steps. Gest)(ure finds border-organization in salsa's distillation of abstract ways of relating to the other that can be instantiated with an indefinitely large variety of specific partners. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact that every move is made by attempting to imagine what would elicit a positive and energetic response from one's partner, but is presented as something which is done effortlessly and for one's own sake. And f(o)unding language in salsa lies in the fact that even though the most impressive moves appear as dynamically-evolving, non-human lines and shapes, these moves are all produced by the elaborate interconnection of individual bodies. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of societal dance consists in randomized abstract relationships instantiated in each case according to the imagined responses of a particular partner in order to produce an apparently effortless display of the play of pure, dynamic visual form.

For Tae Kwon Do, the commonsensical gestures are its various attacks and blocks, especially when organized into what are termed “forms,” or sequences of choreographed positions. Gest)(ure finds border-organization in Tae Kwon Do’s ability to reorient the mind from abstract thought towards the ideal execution of the body for the mind and body's shared defense. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact that Tae Kwon Do bases each movement on the ways that all human bodies share roughly the same predictable strengths and weaknesses. Unlike preparing to fight a member of another species, learning how to attack more skillfully another human makes one simultaneously better prepared to defend oneself against another human’s attack. And

f(ounding language in Tae Kwon Do lies in the recognition that one's body communicates constantly and involuntarily, including to one's opponent, and that learning how to survive and flourish is a matter of reducing the unnecessary and dangerous hyper-communicability of one's body. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of agonistic dance consists in appropriating all mental energy to the body in order to capitalize on the weaknesses shared with the opponent by reducing the unnecessary, unintended and endangering communication of the body.

For the pollen dance of the honey bee, the commonsensical gestures are the movements which indicate the geographical location of the source of the nectar (and thus also pollen). Gest)(ure finds border-organization in the pollen dance in the dance's transformation, both of a random area of space into a stage for the communication of socially vital information, and also of various parts of the body into spatial indicators. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact that the pollen dance can be carried out by any worker bee, since all of them respond identically to the same performance; they are only performers because they can be the audience as well. And f(ounding language in the pollen dance lies in the fact that it requires the entire bodies of both the performer bee and the audience bees to constitute a meaningful language for survival. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of animal dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of animal dance consists in the commandeering of body parts and environments into communicative functions which can be performed by various members of the same society and which require the engagement of entire bodies for any meaningfully linguistic phenomenon to arise.

For “falling stars” or “shooting stars,” the commonsensical gesture is the actual “falling” or the streak across the sky. Gest)(ture finds border-organization in the transformation of the deepest reaches of outer space into a two-dimensional grid onto which a trajectory aimed at the viewer appears as a horizontal flash. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact that falling stars, as pointed out by Charles Scott in *The Lives of Things*, can only be perceived by eyes formed out of minerals found in the remains of previous stars. And f(o)unding language lies in the fact that it is only because of the movements of stars, especially our sun, that humans are able to survive on the earth and form the very languages with which they speak of, and thereby share the experiences of, falling stars. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of astronomical dance consists in foreshortened motions appearing to constitutionally similar beings only because of ongoing similar motions that sustain the lives of those beings.

And finally, for Neruda’s poetry, the commonsensical gestures are the words and phrases of the poems. Gest)(ure finds border-organization in Neruda’s reorientation of words in the Spanish language by placing them in novel positions relative to each other. Sympathy-manipulation can be found in the fact it is only because of various semantic, phonetic, syntactic, and other sympathies between otherwise highly dissimilar words and phrases that Neruda is able to hold them together in novel configurations. And f(o)unding language lies in the fact that it is the minded body of Neruda that made such novel assemblages both seem desirable to express and also be physically possible to record. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, according to Figuration, the gest)(ure of discursive dance consists in novel

combinations of words and phrases made possible by both their own sympathetic interrelationships and the body of the writer who both finds those combinations meaningful and physically records them.

Having offered a gesture analysis of each of the seven members of the seven families of dance, my analysis of gest)(ure as a separate Move is concluded. I will now turn in the next chapter to similarly-structured analyses of the third Move,)grace(.

CHAPTER 4

)GRACE(

As stated in Chapter 1, according to the OED, “grace” comes from the Greek *kharis*, which is the root for the name of the ancient Greek goddesses of charm, beauty, nature, human creativity and fertility. They were called the Karites, from which the English “charity” derives, and are more commonly known by their Romanized name, “the Graces.” Later in Greek history these goddesses were reduced in number to three. Their names are Algaea (which means “beauty” or “splendor”), Euphrosyne (“mirth” or “joy”) and Thalia (“good cheer” or “flourishing”), and they were understood to be the daughters of Zeus and an Oceanid named Eurynome. Sparshott’s essay on the neglect of dance in Western philosophical aesthetics devotes considerable time to discussing how often the Graces are depicted as dancing in the history of Western art. This mythological fact is also another route by which grace descends from divinity, along with the already discussed “grace of God” from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Kharis, also the source of the English words “charisma” and “charm,” means etymologically both pleasing quality and/or authoritative power—and it is this slash between quality and power that sets the stage for the first section of this chapter. It will consist of an examination of the etymology of grace in three of Schiller’s major works, namely *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry” and *Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner*. I will try to show how grace as beautiful force or pleasing power is at the heart, in these texts, of (1) the play impulse,

(2) the naïve way of thinking/being/writing, and (3) the perfect transformation of matter in beauty, respectively.

The second section of this chapter will begin by exploring the centrality of the concept of grace in Dewey's *Art as Experience*, almost always found in close proximity to his discussions of dance. (The latter, furthermore, are more numerous than in any other major text in the history of Western philosophy of art). This section will conclude by showing how Avicenna's treatment of angels/astronomical beings deploys the various conceptual meanings of grace in interesting ways that affirm its connection to dance. These meanings, as mentioned in my first chapter, include attractiveness, pleasing quality, pardon, thanks, favor, goodwill, and giving freely and with kindness.

It is worth noting that, for the first time in my analyses of the Moves, there is a direct and explicit overlap here between the etymology of grace and its conceptual meanings. Both attractiveness and goodwill are present in both, so there is less difference between the etymological and conceptual analyses than in the previous two chapters. (Another way of putting it would be to say that attractiveness and goodwill bounce back and forth between etymology and concept, or that there is a swaying or dancing of these qualities across the topography of etymology and conceptuality). Finally, anticipating the language from the Dewey section, one could say that there is an *intra-theoretical* figure/ground reversal going on *inside* the Move whose theoretical role in Figuration includes analyzing *extra-theoretical* figure/ground reversals in the *outside* world of other dances.

Etymological Analyses of)Grace(

Schiller

The first two of the three texts that I will analyze from Schiller are in the form of a series of letters, and each thus constitutes a kind of back and forth, or a reversal of communicating figure and reposing ground. Adding another such layer, the first paragraph of *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, which Schiller describes as a series of “enquiries into Beauty and Art,” proclaims its task as one “where one is compelled to appeal as often to feelings as to principles” (23). This time, then, the back and forth happens at the level of content.

Important for the larger goals of this project, in the first paragraph of the second letter, Schiller directs the reader to the political world, which is described as “the most perfect of all works of art” and as “the building up of true political freedom” (25). The letter also ends by uniting aesthetics and politics, noting that “it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom” (27). To connect this point back to the concerns of this chapter, in this formula of Schiller one already finds the two etymological halves of grace, the power (to be free) and the pleasing quality (of beauty).

The next two letters, in turn, introduce the specific aesthetic-political strategy or coalition that the rest of the letters will develop. “Man,” according to the Third Letter, “does not rest satisfied with what Nature has made of him, but possesses the capacity of retracing again, with his reason, the steps which she anticipated with him, of remodeling the work of need into a work of free choice” (27-28). Note that this is a kind of circular or spiral project. The idea is not to make ourselves into objectively new beings, but to

retrace our objectivity with our subjectivity so that we may rationally affirm what already exists in us. The Fourth letter restates this project at the political level, defining the “pure, ideal man” as “represented by the State” (31). The “unalterable unity” of this ideal man is that which “his existence” is supposed to “to harmonize” (31). Here, politics and aesthetics, through music, are brought together again, via the language of “harmony.”

Using a verb which possesses similar musical denotations, but which adds connotations of concrete physicality, the Sixth Letter speaks of “even tempering” as necessary for happy lives, a foreshadowing of dancing yet to come in the letters. For a very different reason, namely because dancing has long been strongly linked in the Western imaginary with “Negroes” and “savages,” the Seventh and Tenth Letters also foreshadow his discussion of dance. The former letter, in the Romantic tradition of idealizing the “noble savage,” speaks of how “humanity may be respected in the negro, while it is dishonoured in the thinker” (47). A similar tone is struck in the latter letter, when Schiller notes that “the pinions of genius” “border very closely upon savagery” (58).

Another moment along these violent lines is found in the following Nietzschean passage from the Eighth Letter:

If Truth is to gain the victory in the struggle with Force, she must first become herself a *force*, and find some *impulse* to champion her in the realm of phenomena; for impulses are the only motive forces in the sensible world (48, emphasis added).

Force is clearly a physical phenomenon, and impulse is certainly a bodily one. Thus, given that Schiller is advocating an aesthetic solution to the problem of truth's "victory," dance seems like an ideal candidate for the job.

Additional insights related to violence and physicality are found in the Ninth Letter, in which Schiller hearkens back to Plato's arguments in the *Laws* by arguing for a driving "away lawlessness, frivolity and coarseness from [peoples'] pleasure" in order to "imperceptibly banish [these qualities] from their actions and finally their dispositions" (54). Schiller's admonition continues as follows: "Wherever you find them, surround them with noble, great and ingenious forms, enclose them all round with symbols of excellence, until actuality is overpowered by appearance and Nature by Art" (54-55). The opposites of the above three negative traits are those of lawfulness, seriousness and smoothness, and all of these positive traits are appropriate descriptions of the disciplined movements—contra the untrained, reckless and restless ones of everyday life—of dance. Using this suggestion to flesh out Schiller's suggestion, one could easily imagine a ring of dancers closing in on the ignorant novice in a great circle, as a symbol of the Art of political life transforming the human animal in its state of nature.

Having considered various moments in this texts which are dance-resonant in general, I move now to explicit accounts of grace in particular. The following letter marks the first of seven appearances of the words "grace" and "the Graces" in the text:

The man lacking in form despises all grace of diction as corruption, all elegance in social intercourse as hypocrisy, all delicacy and loftiness of demeanor as exaggeration and affectation. He cannot forgive the favourite of the Graces for brightening every circle by his company, for turning all heads towards his designs in public affairs, for impressing his spirit perhaps on his whole century by his

writing, while he himself, the victim of drudgery, can with all his knowledge enforce no attention, move no single stone from its place (56-57).

There are several things here worthy of note for this investigation. First, Schiller links grace and the Graces in the same sentence, invoking divinity in the arenas of both “microscopic” and “macroscopic” social worlds. (This connection is reinforced by the subsequent letter’s assertion that “the path to divinity...is open to [the human] in his *senses*” [63, emphasis original]). Second, the individual grace of one person’s grammar is linked to the political grace of a savvy citizen. Third, grace is again “cashed out” in terms of physical force in the actual world, this time more metaphorically with the example of the movement of a stone. Fourth, the person who penned this passage remains himself an insider-outsider in the philosophical world, a being straddling the literature/philosophy fence, in large part perhaps due to the gracefulness of his thought and writing. And fifth, if one assumes Schiller to have been self-aware on this latter point, then perhaps this entire passage constitutes a recognition of mainstream philosophy’s studied blindness to existence’s more graceful aspects, including dance.

To witness how grace functions in Schiller’s thought one must turn to the Fourteenth Letter, which introduces his centrally important concept of “the play impulse,” an impulse combining his Kantian “sensuous” and “formal” impulses. The former, for both Kant and Schiller, seeks variety through matter. The latter seeks freedom through morality. In that the play impulse is a combination of these other two impulses, according to Schiller, “the play impulse will endeavor to receive [from the material world] as it would itself have produced, and to produce [with its moral freedom] as the sense aspires to receive” (74). On the one hand, as Schiller explains later,

“everything actual,” when “it comes into association with idea...loses its seriousness, because it grows *small*” (78). On the other, and simultaneously, everything necessary, “as it meets with perception...puts aside its seriousness, because it grows *light*” (78).

Another helpful way of understanding the relationship among the three impulses for Schiller, as well as the centrality of the play impulse, is to look at these impulses' objects. In the Fifteenth Letter, Schiller explains that the object of the sense impulse “may be called *life* in the widest sense of the word; a concept which expresses all material being and all that is immediately present in the senses” (76). The object of the form impulse, on the other hand, “may be called *shape*, both in the figurative and in the literal sense; a concept which includes all formal qualities of things and all their relations to the intellectual faculties” (76). And the object of the play impulse, finally, “can therefore be called *living shape*, a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena and—in a word—what we call *Beauty* in the widest sense of the term” (76, italics original). Beauty is thus, for Schiller, “living shape,” and there is perhaps no more fitting symbol for living shape than that of the dancer in motion.

Schiller reemphasizes the play impulse later in the Fifteenth Letter through his (perhaps surprising) claim that “in every condition of humanity it is precisely play, and play alone, that makes man complete” (79). As if this were not a strong enough claim, he then goes on to assert that “Man plays only when his is in the full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly Man when he is playing*” (80, emphasis original). This latter claim seems less overreaching, though, in light of Schiller’s reference, two sentences later, to “the whole fabric of aesthetic art, and the still more difficult art of living” (80). In other words, if one accepts that everyday life and the business of politics are also

dances, then given that dance is a playful comportment to the world, one might be willing to consider play as the ultimate register of humanity.

Coming down from this pinnacle at the beginning of the next letter, however, Schiller concedes that “the utmost that experience can achieve will consist in an oscillation between the two principles [of sense and form]” (81). So the play impulse is never fully realized at any given moment, but is rather a process of oscillating or wavering, much like the bodies of dancers swaying to the rhythms of their music. Even more specifically appropriate to dance is the rhetoric of “relaxing” and “tightening” in the next paragraph, in which Schiller claims that the play impulse “must relax by tightening both [sensuous and moral] natures evenly, and it must tighten by relaxing both natures evenly” (82).

Schiller closes this letter by reference to the “melting Beauty” necessary for the “tense man” and the “energizing beauty” vital for “the languid man,” which are both intended to “dissolve” “in the unity of the ideally beautiful, just as those two opposite forms of humanity are absorbed in the unity of the ideal man” (84). Again, the personal and political are seamlessly brought together, and again this is achieved with language of aesthetic physicality appropriate to dance, including words such as “tense,” “languid,” “dissolve” and “absorbed” (84).

With a similar choreography, Schiller writes in the Seventeenth Letter of a lack of “harmony” and “a lack of energy” as the sources of imperfection, and of the (either sensuously or intellectually) “taut” condition of a person in need of relaxing beauty. Schiller beautifully summarizes all of these ideas in the following, first sentence of the Eighteenth letter: “Through beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought;

through beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense” (87). Dance, one could argue, seems particularly well equipped to reinforce sensuality to the spiritually drifting, as well as to inspire reflection in the divinity-suggesting, cosmos-evoking lines and movements of dance's most abstract offerings.

Near the end of the entire text, grace starts to take on a new dimension, with Schiller referring to the “grace of Nature” as that which allows human beings the opportunity to achieve moral freedom, provided that beauty has tamed the restless impulse and brought the abstract impulse back to everyday life. Schiller also describes “the faculty which is restored to [the human] in the aesthetic disposition” as “the highest of all gifts” and even “the gift of humanity” (101). In this way, Schiller’s analyses in line with the etymology of grace open directly onto grace’s conceptual meanings of giving and the gift.

The end of *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* also boasts more privileging of dance, the counterpart to the foreshadowing earlier in the letters. Consider the following passage from the Twenty-second Letter:

the real artistic secret of the master consists in his *annihilating the material by means of the form*, and the more imposing, arrogant, and alluring the material is in itself...the more triumphant is the art which forces back material and asserts its mastery over form (106).

What more resistant source, and therefore what more triumphant accomplishment, could there be than the aesthetic transformation of the human being through dance? After all, dance has as its material the human being per se, body, mind and soul, moral freedom

and sensuous existence. In support of this suggestion, I will now draw attention to the prevalence of dance rhetoric in the final few letters of this text.

First, Schiller writes in the Twenty-sixth Letter of how “the intellect leaps out over the light to the objects”; as will be even clearer in my next chapter, leaping has always been an integral part of dance, at least as far back as Plato and continuing to the virtuosic performers in the present (126). Second, the Twenty-seventh letter refers to how animals “squander” their “superabundant life” “in joyous movements” and of “the leap to aesthetic play” (133, 134). Almost every expression of joyous movement invites comparison to (or even identification as) dance, and the reader has seen how suggestive of dance is Schiller’s play impulse. Finally, in the final letter, invoking dance by name for the first time in the letters, Schiller observes how this “lawless leap of play,” mentioned earlier, “becomes a dance” (136). Moreover, in support of my identification of grace as a central phenomenological construct of dance, this last letter, in which dance is finally named, contains in its final two paragraphs three more references to grace (139, 140).

Before concluding my etymological investigation of Schiller on grace, I wish to discuss briefly two themes from two of his other major works. First, in “On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry,” one finds grace early on in the discussion of the naïve poet and poetry. Schiller defines, first, “the naïve manner of thinking” as that which “combines *childlike* with *childish* simpleness” and evokes “a feeling in which cheerful patronizing, respect and melancholy flow together” (182, 183, italics original). Schiller then defines naïveté per se as “a *childlikeness, where it is no longer expected*” (184, italics original).

In a footnote to this discussion, and to return to the direct focus of this investigation, Schiller contrasts the (positive) naïveté of “a free and healthy” child who “dispenses with” “overly affect manners” to the (negative) quality evidenced by “the stiff posturing of the dance-master” (185). Thus grace and dance are linked for the first time in this essay, and the playful dance of the child is valorized over the formal dance of the professional. Continuing the trend of philosophers’ projection of dance onto members of disempowered communities, Schiller claims shortly thereafter that “Nature has assigned to the opposite sex [i.e., women] its highest perfection as far as the naïve character is concerned” (190). This claim makes sense given the stereotype of women as superior dancers along with Schiller’s contention that dance partakes heavily of “this naïve grace” (190).

Secondly, in the *Kallias* letters, Schiller again moves towards dance when he claims that “Beauty is nothing less than freedom in appearance,” insofar as movement showing itself as free is a typical way of describing dance as an art form (152). Further, in the subsequent letter, Schiller’s claim that it is different “*to give a concept of beauty and to be moved by beauty*” also gestures toward dance via a combination of (a) its emphasis on motion and (b) its use of the rhetoric often reserved for the romantic experience of encountering a beautiful person (153, emphasis original). The same letter also defines “form” as “*an exhibition of freedom,*” and then defines a “beautiful” form as only that which “*explains itself without a concept*” (154, emphasis original). It is to be hoped that the appropriateness of these descriptions to the dancer’s freedom of movement and self-explanation are, at this point, obvious.

In the same vein, several letters later, Schiller uses an extended comparison of a “workhorse” and a “palfrey” (a type of riding horse) to show the connection between external constraints and a natural freedom of movement. Schiller observes that the workhorse’s “movement no longer springs from its nature,” whereas the palfrey “has never become accustomed to exerting greater effort than it feels like exerting in its most perfect freedom,” and therefore, “it moves ever so lightly, as if it weighed nothing at all” (164). If the description thus far does not already sound like a dance, consider the next sentence, which Schiller sets off in quotes: “The specific form of the horse has overcome the nature of bodies, which must follow the rules of gravity, to such an extent that one is not reminded that it is a *body* at all” (164, italics original). This is exactly what happens in, for example, skillful ballet—gravity is so much overcome that the spectator (in a kind of perceptual shift like that involved in viewing Wittgenstein’s duck-rabbit) begins to see lines, shapes and movement instead of persons.

Finally on this note, Schiller argues that, since a perpetually curving line is more beautiful than a jagged one—because a “movement seems free” if “one cannot name the particular point at which it changes its direction”—one is therefore “bothered by every dancing-instructor’s intrusion into positions” (173). The reader might at this point object that it seems like Schiller is actually critical of dance per se. I grant that his meaning is unclear in this context, but the issue is resolved in the next paragraph. In it, Schiller returns to the oscillation between the personal and the political already noted in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Thus, it will serve as an appropriate place, with its reuniting of dance and grace, to close my investigation of Schiller:

It is striking how one can develop gentility (beauty in social relations) from my concept of beauty. The first law of gentility is: *have consideration for the freedom of others*. The second: *show your freedom*. The correct fulfillment of both is an infinitely difficult problem, but gentility always requires it relentlessly, and it alone makes the cosmopolitan man. I know of no more fitting an image for the ideal of beautiful relations than the well danced and arabesquely composed English dance. The spectator in the gallery sees countless movements which cross each other colourfully and change their direction willfully but *never collide*. Everything has been arranged such that the first has already made room for the second before he arrives, everything comes together so skillfully and yet so artlessly that both seem merely to be following their own mind and still never get in the way of the other (174).

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of grace in Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" and *The Kallias Lectures* yields the first phrase of the amplified conception of grace for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*grace is superabundantly playful*. In every sense, dance is engaged in overcoming gravity and heaviness. This is particularly evident in children's play, social and romantic dances, and the acrobatic leaps of professional ballet dancers. But even apparent counterexamples, such as dances of mourning or war, are not, it should be noted, the unreflective activities which they depict or reformulate. This is the case because the conscious act of pantomiming and/or the pursuit of detached skill lifts the dancer at least slightly above the direct and unmediated experience of the event. Dance and the dancer play with dance and the danced with an energy and a drive stronger than the dancer's body possesses in any other setting. I will therefore be on the look out for lightness and playfulness in unexpected places throughout the rest of this project. Having considered the etymological importance of grace for Schiller, I will now show, in my final etymological analyses of grace, how it holds an equal or greater importance for John Dewey.

Dewey

Grace for Dewey is, above all, the condition whereby an organism moves so smoothly and adaptively through its environment that it appears to a human observer almost as if the environment were moving through the organism. The keys here are economy and continuity of movement, which are both paradigmatic characteristics of dance, and it is presumably for this reason that almost every time grace is invoked in *Art as Experience*, dance is invoked as well. In fact, *Art as Experience* boasts more references to dance than any other classic text in the (Western) philosophy of art. The words “dance,” “dancer” and “dancing” appear twenty-five times in total in *Art as Experience*, and they only appear an average of five times in all of the others. This means that *Art as Experience* mentions dance 500% more often than the average canonical text in the history of Western aesthetics.²⁰

The first chapter of the book, “The Live Creature,” opens with the claim that “the existence of works of art upon which the formation of an esthetic theory depends has become an obstruction to theory about them,” when in fact, “the actual work of art is what the product does in and with experience” (Dewey 1934, 1). In his own contribution then (and in a passage that could apply similarly well to its role in this project) Dewey’s stated task is “to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art, and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are

²⁰ This figure is based on word searches for all appearances of the words “dance,” “dancing” and “dancer.” The “canonical” texts consulted consisted of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (4), Aristotle’s *Poetics* (6), Bell’s *Art* (7), Collingwood’s *Principles of Art* (18), Croce’s *Guide to Aesthetics* (0), Danto’s *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (6), Goodman’s *Languages of Art* (20), Hegel’s *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (0), Heidegger’s “Origin of the Work of Art” (3), Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” (0), Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (4), Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* (13), Plato’s *Republic* (2), Plotinus’s *Ennead V.8*, “On Intelligible Beauty” (0), Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation* (6), Tolstoy’s *What is Art?* (5) and Wollheim’s *Art and its Objects* (0). If one brackets Dewey’s fellow pragmatists/process philosophers, Nietzsche and Goodman, as well as Collingwood (given his idiosyncratic focus on community theater), the average for the rest of the texts is only three references each.

universally recognized to constitute experience” (2). This task implies that any sufficiently rarefied and/or intensified form of experience will count for Dewey as a work of art, and one of his first and most memorable examples demonstrates just that.

“The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd” (Dewey 1934, 3). If one reads this sentence carefully, one finds that Dewey is locating the artwork in the position of the *how* of the infecting and/or in the observer’s *learning* of said infection; the adjective doing most of the aesthetic work in the quote is nothing other than *grace*. On the next page is the first occurrence of Dewey’s other central aesthetic concept, *rhythm*, in a discussion of “feasting,” “fighting” “worship” and all the other “rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living” (5). Obviously dance, in its relationship to music, is also centrally concerned with rhythm, so both of Dewey’s central concepts have strong resonances with dance. Appropriately, then, immediately after this first reference to rhythm one finds the first of the many references in the book to dance.

In the second section of this first chapter, on (arguably) the most important concept in Dewey’s entire philosophy, namely *experience*, grace and rhythm reappear, again in that order, in the first two pages, and with the rhetoric of dancing between them. “The organs with which [the human] maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry” (Dewey 1934, 12). In other words, what seem like objects, human organs, are actually the manifestation of our evolutionary ancestors’ adaptive actions. Dancing rhetoric then shapes Dewey’s subsequent claims that life “consists of phases in which the organism *falls out of step* with *the march* of surrounding things and then recovers *unison* with it,”

and then “grows when a temporary *falling out* is a transition to a more extensive *balance* of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lived” (12, emphasis added). That through which this “balance and harmony” are achieved is, naturally, “rhythm” (13).

In the final three pages of Chapter One, rhythm and grace make one final appearance each. Though the later Dewey would probably have used the word “transactions” instead, the Dewey of 1934 writes that all “interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms,” (Dewey, 15). Again his exemplars of the aesthetic are non-human animals, “motion merging into sense and sense into motion—constituting that animal grace so hard for man to rival” (18). To go seamlessly from action to rest and back, not privileging either is for non-human animals an effortless grace.²¹

To summarize these analyses of Dewey’s first chapter, I understand “grace” as constituting the “how” dimension of aesthetic experience, as well as, thereby, its “evaluative” dimension. Rhythm, in contrast, I understand as the “what” of aesthetic experience, and thus its “ontological” dimension. Put differently, rhythm tells one if something in the course of experience counts as aesthetic or not; it is the quality which makes something aesthetic, later identified by Dewey with “form,” “rationality,” “balance” and “symmetry” (Dewey 1934, 153, 175, 185). Grace, by contrast, describes

²¹ Dewey's own writing, incidentally, though it has its moments, performatively undercuts his emphasis on graceful rhythm. Its near-endless recapitulations fail what might be called the “economy of movement” test of grace, and its monotony, repetition and predictability fail what might be termed, in an entirely graceless and arrhythmic way, the “varied-and-interrupted regularity” test of rhythm. On the other hand, one could argue that Dewey's writing actually performs the complexity and plurality that his thought finds the world to be, and is therefore graceful in its own way. My response to this objection would be that complexity and plurality come in various forms, with various degrees of aesthetic desirability, and that our world's often unattractive complexity and plurality does not necessarily mandate a similar unattractiveness in our own discursive attempts, in the wake of Dewey, to ameliorate that world.

the success, goodness, or perfection of that which is aesthetic (as a result of its rhythm). Put symbolically: if X is not sufficiently rhythmic, then $X \neq$ art; if X is rhythmic but is not sufficiently graceful, then $X =$ bad art. Dewey's aesthetics could then be summarized simply as follows: "That which is rhythmic is art, and that which is also graceful is good art."

Chapter Four of *Art as Experience* also contains two points germane to this investigation. First, Dewey explicitly applies his concept of "transdermal transaction," elaborated in his later *Knowing and the Known*, to his aesthetics. In the later work, Dewey and co-author Arthur Bentley elucidate this concept as follows: "Organisms do not live without air and water, nor without food ingestion and radiation. They live, that is, as much in processes across and through 'through' skins as in processes 'within' skins" (128). Back now to the earlier text. "The epidermis is only in the most superficial way an indication of where an organism ends and its environment beings," Dewey argues, since "a living creature" "cannot secure what belongs to it without an adventure in a world" (Dewey 1934, 61). This is, I would argue, Dewey's most significant contribution to the concept of grace, a re-understanding of the organism and its boundaries with the environment wherein the physical limits of the body, the skin, do not mark the functional or metaphysical limits of the organism. The porous nature of the organism, in other words, is the condition for the possibility for grace as a kind of figure/ground reversal.

The second point from Chapter Four is found later in the chapter, in a discussion of specific expressive arts. Among them Dewey lists "dance and sport," which he collectively defines as "activities in which acts once performed spontaneously in

separation are assembled and converted from raw, crude material into works of expressive art” (66). Note the proximity of dance (and sport) to everyday reality, calling to mind Dewey’s aforementioned goal of restoring continuity between art and everyday aesthetics. Dewey elaborates on this point in regard to dance in particular a few pages later, while asserting the necessity of external communicability for a genuine act of aesthetic expression. “The war dance and the harvest dance of the savage,” Dewey observes, “do not issue from within except there be an impending hostile raid or crops that are to be gathered” (69). As Schiller did, Dewey problematically invokes the “savage” as the connection between dance and contemporary Western aesthetics, although again, as with Schiller, the connotation is valorizing. Dewey also follows Schiller a few pages later in emphasizing the connection between dance and childhood, speaking of the “dancing” of “little children,” and in the same paragraph, the “rhythmic movement of happy childhood” (75). These remarks in combination also suggest further evidence of the tendencies in Western philosophy to (a) project a tendency to dance onto members of disempowered communities, such as women, non-whites, non-heterosexuals, children, the insane, etc., and (b) suggest by syntactic proximity a connection between tribal African people and Western children, namely that Africans represent the stunted childhood of humanity.

Several other references to dance in the text are worth mentioning briefly.

Chapter Three, “Having an Experience,” refers to “going through rhythmic movements in the dance,” and the reader has already seen how closely linked grace and rhythm are for Dewey. This chapter also mentions “dances” in a litany of aesthetic activities

emblematic of the balanced relationship between “doing” and “undergoing” that makes aesthetic experiences so fulfilling.

Chapter Five, “The Expressive Object,” refers to the “meaning” of works of art as exemplified by “flags when they are used to decorate the deck of a ship for a dance” (87). The activity of dance is what grants the aesthetic trait, namely meaning, to the (in that context) non-aesthetic object, namely the flag. Chapter Five also discusses, as the first item in a list of necessary conditions for a successful expressive act, “the existence of motor dispositions previously formed” in “[a] surgeon, golfer, ball player, as well as a dancer,” and, in the same paragraph, “a graceful deer” (101). Thus, the “tense grace” of the baseball pitcher from Chapter One is here tied directly to the grace of a dancer.

Chapter Seven, “The Natural History of Form,” discusses how “the participation of man in nature’s rhythms” eventually “induced him to impose rhythms on changes where they did not appear. The apportioned reed, the stretched string and taut skin rendered the measures of action conscious through song and dance” (154). Dance is thus vital for Dewey in humanity’s creating its own rhythms instead of being shackled entirely to those of nature. This same paragraph also attributes to being “enacted in dance” the power to bring “the very essence of the lives of [serpent, elk, boar] to realization” (154). Thus dance helps us to understand the very nature from which it helps partially emancipate us. Finally, Chapter Seven asserts that “in all times and places, there have been,” among other popular artforms, “dance” (158).

I will conclude my investigation of *Art as Experience* with an analysis of dance’s place(s) in Dewey’s observations regarding the classification of the arts. Before beginning his own, provisional, attempt at such a classification, Dewey claims that

dance's having been classed as "a mixed art" (as a result of its having to do with both spatiality and temporality), constitutes "a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole rigid classificatory business" (Dewey 1934, 231). Such is the power of dance for Dewey, that it can single-handedly reduce a philosophy of art to ruins.

Dewey's novel approach to this classification task involves only two types of art, the "automatic" and the "shaping" (Dewey 1934, 236). The former arts take the "mind-body" as medium, and the latter "depend to a much greater extent upon materials external to the body." The former type, of which "dance" is Dewey's first example, also includes "[c]ultivation of voice, posture, and gesture that add grace to social intercourse in another" (236). Counter-intuitively, the latter group of arts—which includes the customary pantheon of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry—depend *for their very aesthetic status* on the former group—including almost nothing that is usually considered fine art. "Something of the rhythm of vital natural expression...must go into carving, painting, and making statues, planning buildings, and writing stories...something as it were of *dancing*" (237, emphasis added).

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of grace in Dewey's *Art as Experience* yields the second phrase of the amplified conception of grace for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*grace is figure-ground reversing*. In other words, grace as a phenomenon is the result of a kind of gestalt switch (as with Wittgenstein's example of the duck/rabbit) through which what is normally the subject/figure/foreground, or what is perceived as such, becomes the context/ground/background, and vice versa. This switch is something akin to the moment, during the viewing of an Impressionist painting, when one stops seeing the brushstrokes as the inert application of color to the canvas, and

begins seeing the carefully shaped mounds of acrylic paint as themselves the central aspect of the artwork. An organism is graceful, in this sense, when it effaces its own particularity to such an extent that it becomes merely a presentation of something that both conditions and transcends it. A graceful dancer, then, is like one of the dancers in Renoir's famous painting *Moulin de la Galette*, a mere occasion for the virtuosity of both material and shaping intellect.

Put differently, aesthetic gracefulness always takes place against a certain backdrop, a complex environment. And it is only through the organism/artist/artwork's transactions with this environment—transactions that highlight the raw materials that have been artistically reworked—that expression becomes aesthetic, as opposed to being merely what might be called emotional vomiting. I will therefore be alert to the ways in which backgrounds and foregrounds switch places in various dances throughout the rest of this project. Having thus concluded the etymological analyses of grace, through Schiller and Dewey, I will now turn to the second section of my chapter, conceptual analyses of grace.

Conceptual Analyses of)Grace(

The majority of this second section is dedicated to Avicenna's treatment of angels/planets, or celestial beings, focusing on how the various lexical or conceptual meanings of grace come together in these complex entities. But to offer a bit of background to Avicenna's complex treatment, and to show how prevalent this conception is in Medieval philosophy, even among opposing traditions, this section will begin with a

brief discussion of the role of celestial beings in the earlier and more accessible work, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, by the so-called Pseudo-Dionysius. In this text I will show that, much more than serving as a disparaging commentary on high Scholastic philosophy—by way of the infamous “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?”—celestial beings are actually brought into explicit discursive communion with dance.

To indicate the impossibility of overstating Pseudo-Dionysius’ influence on medieval conceptions of the hierarchy of celestial beings, it is perhaps sufficient to mention that he coined the word “hierarchy,” based on the analogy he made between the ecclesiastical ordering of bishops (or hierarchs) and the ordering of the cosmos (1). In his preface to *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Rene Roques notes that for Dionysius “indeed, all reality is hierarchic and triadic” (5). If the reader needs more convincing, perhaps it will suffice that, according to Jaroslav Pelikan, Aquinas alone quotes Dionysius about 1,700 times (21). Further, Jean Leclercq asserts that Duns Scotus’ work shows a considerable Dionysian influence, and observes that “Saint Bonaventure hailed him as ‘the prince of mystics’” (27, 29). Finally on this note, Karlfried Froehlich claims that, “[e]xcept for the Bible and perhaps the works of Boethius, no writing of the early Christian era received similar attention in terms of translations, excerpts, commentaries...” (33). I belabor this point simply in order to quell any doubts that the non-medievalist reader might hold regarding my claim that the identification of (a) angels and (b) planets-as-wandering-stars—for which “celestial beings” is shorthand—is near-omnipresent, not only in Judeo-Arabic Medieval philosophy, but in Latin traditions as well.

Chapter One of Dionysius’ text begins with a discussion of “the Light,” which Dionysius quickly links to Jesus Christ as “the Light of the Father,” whose function is to

“enlighten us,” (146). Interestingly, though, this Light supposedly carries out its function “only by being upliftingly concealed in a variety of sacred veils which the Providence of the Father adapts to our nature as human beings” (146). This is the case, Dionysius reminds the reader, because the direct and immediate glory of the Christian god is more than a human being could bear or even survive. Continuing the discussion, Dionysius asserts in the next paragraph that “any thinking person realizes that the appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness. The beautiful odors which strike the senses are representations of a conceptual diffusion” (146). Here one finds the first hint as to the connection between astronomical bodies and angels; the former are visibly lovely (in a clear night sky) and the latter are invisibly lovely (as spiritually magnificent beings).

The combination of the image of the veil with the rhetoric of loveliness (inclusive of olfactory loveliness) in this discussion, coming from an alleged Church father writing in Greek, might suggest a connection to the famous “Dance of the Seven Veils” as described in the Gospel of Matthew, in which the beautiful Salome tries to persuade King Herod to give to her, on a silver platter, the head of John the Baptist. That Dance of the Seven Veils, ultimately successful in Salome's case, was a prominent trope in ancient Middle Eastern culture, and as is evidenced by its presence in both Assyrian and Babylonian myth.

These celestial veils for Dionysius are one example of a hierarchy, first defined in general in Chapter Three as “a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine” (153). As I will observe shortly, this triadic structure is similar to that employed by Avicenna, in his case with celestial intelligences, celestial souls and celestial bodies. Dionysius describes the celestial

hierarchy in particular (as opposed to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for example) as “forever looking directly at the comeliness of God,” and as being constituted of members which are “clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light” (154). Again the conjunction of the two phrases here gives us angelic and astronomical traits in one entity, and again (as the reader will see shortly) the rhetoric matches perfectly with Avicenna’s descriptions of these beings.

Controversially, in the context of orthodox Christian theology, Dionysius goes on to describe the celestial hierarchy, as a “fellow workman for God,” thereby quoting 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 1 Thessalonians 3:2 out of context (154). Dionysius then elaborates, using the dance-sympathetic rhetoric of mimesis, that each member of the hierarchy “will actually imitate God in the way suitable to whatever role it has” (154). And later, invoking my key concept of grace for the first time, Dionysius claims that the celestial hierarchy, “[b]y grace and a God-given power,” performs actions “which belong naturally and supernaturally to God, things performed by him transcendentally and revealed in the hierarchy for the permitted imitation of God-loving mind” (155). In other words, the angel-planets, or celestial beings, dance for the love of their god in a way that inspires us to dance in our own in imitation of his divinity.

In case there is any doubt in the reader's mind that Dionysius is referring here to the angels of the Bible, I will now turn to Chapter Four of his text, which deals with what exactly “*the designation ‘angel’ signifies*” (156). Dionysius then references various passages from the Old Testament regarding angels, and also notes that “the Law was given to us by the angels” (157). He further claims that Moses as Lawgiver and Jesus Christ as Law-Fulfillment are both also “angels,” primarily because both are “announcers

or revealers,” which is the literal meaning of the ancient Greek word, *angelos*, from which the English word angel derives (157-159). In describing his classification of the angels into three orders of three (the [a] seraphim, cherubim, thrones, [b] authorities, dominations, powers, [c] principalities, archangels and angels) Dionysius notes that “the holy name ‘seraphim’ means ‘fire-makers,’ that is to say, ‘carriers of warmth’” (161). Here one can see at least one etymological connection between the two aspects of the celestial beings. Dionysius then elaborates on the seraphim’s movement as

a perennial circling around the divine things, penetrating warmth, the overflowing heat of a movement which never falters and never fails, a capacity to stamp their own image on subordinates by arousing and uplifting in them too a like flame, the same warmth (162).

The language of tireless circling and movement infused with warmth is suggestive of dance in general, and the description of stamping one's own image on subordinates suggests more particularly the activity of a dance-instructor and/or choreographer vis-a-vis their students, “arousing and uplifting in them too a like flame” of passion and excellence in dance.

In the same chapter, Dionysius also refers to the seraphim’s “own order” as one “which is eternally self-moved according to the immutable love for God” (163). Finally, and of critical importance for our investigation, Dionysius writes of the seraphim, along with the cherubim and thrones, that “[s]imply and ceaselessly it *dances* around an eternal knowledge of him. It is forever and totally thus, as befits angels” (165, emphasis added). Here Dionysius explicitly invokes dancing as the (metaphorical?) activity appropriate to the celestial beings. In light of this statement, one could think, with Dionysius, of the

entire cosmos as a kind of dance floor, on which almost unimaginably magnificent dancers perpetually move. Perhaps this is where dance, so absent from their accounts of the human world, has fled in medieval philosophy in general, from the earth to the heavens, from the mortals to the angels.

Later moments in Dionysius' text support this celestial-dancing connection. First, he remarks that fire is a particularly apt image for the celestial being, because fire “rises up irresistibly and, losing nothing of itself, it communes joyfully with everything” (184). This language of joyful communion resonates with Schiller’s joyful descriptions of dance. Second, Dionysius notes a few pages later that “the harmonious ease with which they [the celestial beings] tirelessly circle about their own identity” (186). This sounds much like an aesthetic appreciation of dance, such as the one we observed above in Schiller. For further support of this contention, I now turn to a detailed consideration of the connections among grace, dance and these angelic/astronomical beings in Avicenna.

Avicenna

Before beginning my analyses of Avicenna, I wish to note that their primary purpose is to illuminate how dance-sympathetic thought can be found in every era in the history of Western philosophy, even the medieval one. Although rich in concrete differences, Avicenna's text does not offer a substantial departure from that of Dionysius in regard to the figure of the angel/planet as cosmic dancer. Therefore, the reader without any particular interest in Avicenna in particular, or medieval philosophy in general, may wish to skip over the following detailed exegetical remarks and go straight to the summarizing paragraphs at the end of this section.

In the “Translator’s Introduction” to *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, Michael Marmura observes that Avicenna’s emanative theory, which details the nature of celestial beings, “was greatly influenced by his predecessor, al-Farabi (d. 950)” (xxi). Avicenna’s main innovation, however, is that while his predecessor “formulated a dyadic emanative scheme,” Avicenna “transforms” it “into a triadic one” (xxi). Marmura then goes on to summarize Avicenna’s system, which may prove helpful as I move on to finer points of analysis shortly. “Each triad consists of an intellect, a soul, and a sphere. Each member of the triad...constitutes the only member of its species. This point is vital for understanding ...that God and the celestial intellects (as distinct from the celestial souls) know particular ‘in a universal way’” (xxi). In other words, “God and the celestial intelligences know all the universal qualities of a terrestrial particular but not the particular itself” (xxi). The celestial souls, on the other hand, “are the movers of the celestial spheres and are the causes of particular events in the terrestrial realm” (xxi). Further, and as opposed to orthodox Christianity, the celestial souls “[a]s causes of these particulars,” additionally “have knowledge of future terrestrial events. Such knowledge emanates from the celestial souls to the imaginative faculty of prophets” (xxii). Here one sees again the connection between the astronomical and the angelic, the secular and the religious.

Marmura also notes, at the end of this introduction, that Avicenna’s political philosophy is derived directly from this “emanative cosmology,” and that at its center is “the concept of the philosopher-prophet, the recipient and conveyor of the revealed law” (xxiv). Put more succinctly, “In Avicenna’s cosmology, the prophet becomes the human link between the celestial and the terrestrial worlds” (xxiv). And as is clear from al-

Farabi as well as Avicenna, this revealing power of the prophet is a direct result of his hyper-developed imaginative faculty, and is a kind of poetic power.²² This, then, constitutes yet another link between dance and poetry, first elaborated in Chapter Two of this project. In this case the dance is that of the celestial beings, and the poetry is that of the prophets inspired by said dance.

Avicenna's text begins by distinguishing metaphysics from the other two Aristotelian theoretical discourses, physics and math, on the basis of its subject matter, which is the existent as such, "the existent inasmuch as it is an existent" (2). The subject matter germane to this investigation is first explicitly mentioned in Book One, Chapter Three, "the spiritual angels and their ranks, and knowledge of the order of the arrangement of the spheres" (13, 15). Here the angelic and the astronomical are joined by a comma, and continuity with (if not direct influence of) Dionysius seems clear. The next chapter of the *Metaphysics* elaborates on this subject in referring to "how the existents from Him are ordered in ranks, commencing with the angelic intellectual substances, the angelic substances soul, then the celestial spherical substances" along with "the manner in which He [God] is for them [both] an efficient principle and a perfecting principle" (20, 22). It seems in this elaboration that the biblical angels are most likely found in the celestial souls, while the planets (understood as mobile stars) would be the spherical substances. In other words, the angels would be the souls of the planets, and the planets would be the bodies of the angels.

²² One this note, one finds in al-Farabi's *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, after an extended discussion of rational virtues followed by a brief interlude on rhetoric and the ability to produce excellent imaginative impressions, the claim that "All poetry has been invented to produce an imaginative impression of the object" (49). Al-Farabi then describes three "praised" and three "blamed" types of poetry, and explains that the praised kinds improve the rational faculty and direct it "toward happiness" and aim at "breaking down of [the passions of the soul] until they become moderate" (49). This is presumably why the perfect ruler, according to al-Farabi, should be "able to rouse imagination by well-chosen words," interestingly followed immediately by the ability to "lead people well along the right path to felicity" (247).

Avicenna later modifies his concept of body considerably, however, when he observes that for an existent to count as a body it “must either be a heaven or within a heaven” (50). Thus, the heavens in Avicenna’s conception can also be bodies. Further complicating matters, Avicenna also refers to “the heavens” much later in the text as “the rational soul of the whole (146). Clearly Avicenna is working with a conception of body radically broader than that of contemporary Western usage, which suggests the possibility of a kind of dancing for that body which is analogously broader than the dancing recognized by the contemporary West.

A further complication to Avicenna's view of celestial beings occurs when he names them later as “separate substances,” “denuded of matter and is accretions, not requiring the mind to undertake an abstraction [of them]” (109). This latter attribute, not requiring abstraction to be cognized, stands in diametric opposition to all non-separable, terrestrial substances. In order, for example, to conceptualize a dog from one’s neighborhood, one must “abstract” the idea or form of the dog, “dogness” in general, from the corporeal matter in which that one particular dog is instantiated. The celestial substances, by contrast, are therefore nothing other than ideas already, requiring no act of mental separation to conceive them.

Avicenna is clear, however, that humans are necessarily incapable of intellectually apprehend the “essence” of these celestial substances. If a human could do so, and the celestial soul were thus “to become a form” in the soul of the human, then given that the celestial soul know all terrestrial events, “the form of all things would have been realized for that [human] soul, and it would know all things in act” (109). Put simply, since the celestial substances possess God’s omniscience, to possess one of them

as a form in one's soul would be to share that omniscience, which is impossible for the soul of a human on Avicenna's conception. Instead, "it is only the ideas of their quiddities, not [the quiddities] themselves, that are realized in the human minds," which realization results in "the soul [of the human] becoming imprinted by [the celestial soul]" (110). This, in brief, is Avicenna's understanding of how we humans acquire knowledge, emanating from the Islamic god, down through the celestial hierarchy, and shining most immediately on us from the Aristotelian Poetic (or Active) Intellect.

Avicenna reemphasizes this "imprinting" of the celestial souls on human beings in the next paragraph, asserting that "the mere existence of these separable things is not [what constitutes] our knowledge of them; *rather we must be influenced by them* so that the effect of their influence would constitute our knowledge of them" (110, emphasis added). And returning to the concept of mimesis I noted above in the analyses of Dionysius, Avicenna elaborates that "what exists for us from them are the influences *that inevitably imitate* them" (110, emphasis added). Put differently, just as the celestial beings dance perpetually through the heavens in imitation of God, so do their influences on a human being, "accidents in the soul" of that human, seek to imitate those celestial beings (110). Indeed, for Avicenna in general, "knowledge imitates the state of the thing known, sensation the state of the thing sensed" (117). Imitation for Avicenna is quite simply foundational for human knowledge and experience.

Intimately linked to imitation, of course, is the activity of the imagination, since one cannot strive to imitate something of which one cannot form an image in one's mind.²³ Avicenna later makes a passing reference to the imagination to which he returns

²³ Although one might object that we often speak of imitating non-imaged things, such as the love, generosity, etc., of a divine being, it seems to me that in those cases what occurs is, instead of a direct

much later in a direct discussion of the celestial beings, remarking that “a man may imagine in himself the form of his meeting a friend of his and would thus long for” this meeting to take place (221). Note how broadly here Avicenna is using the concept of form, to describe an event captured more easily by narrativity than by imagery.

Having considered all of the relevant moments in the rest of the text, I will now turn to Avicenna’s comprehensive treatment of celestial beings, which occupies much of Book Nine as well as a significant portion of Book Ten. Though Avicenna initially sides with Aristotle (in arguing for the temporal infinity of the universe, and in conceiving time as secondary to and derived from motion) Avicenna soon moves away from him, with the claim that “heaven is an animal obedient to God” and as such, “the proximate cause of the first movement is soul, not intellect” (307). Avicenna’s universe is fundamentally one of desire and action rather than beatific contemplation. His universe is also, therefore, an animistic one, in that even non-biological parts of it, such as regions of interstellar space, act on their own wants and needs. The cosmos, then, for Avicenna is a spirited animal, not a spiritless machine. He supports this animistic conception with the claim that “circular motion is not natural,” entailing that something in excess of nature’s “way of enforcement” is necessarily at work in celestial orbits. However, this is not, Avicenna cautions the reader, to say that the movement may not be “by nature—that is, that its existence in its body is not contrary to another nature belonging to its body”

imitation, rather a three-step process of indirect imitation. A rough sketch of this process might be as follows: (1) a non-imaged concept of something like a god is defined, for example, as being generous; (2) an imaged example is linked to this definition, such as a rich person offering money to a poor person; and (3) someone is told that imitating the attribute abstracted from this concrete, imagined example is exactly what constitutes an imitation of the original, non-imaged concept. In short, to imitate an invisible god is to imitate imagined exemplars of the attributes of that god. To whatever degree this account is accurate then, the imagination is to the same degree indispensable to imitation.

(308). Thus, that which motivates the circuit in excess of nature does so in accord with, not in opposition to, natural motion.

The motor behind this motion, not surprising if the universe is literally “spirited,” Avicenna identifies as “inclination,” defined as “the idea sensed in the mobile body” (308). Based on what the body senses, the soul is inclined to further motion, and “its mover”—which for the celestial spheres consist of the celestial souls—continues to create in its body “one inclination after another” (308). More specifically, the celestial sphere’s motion is ever “renewed in accordance with the soul’s act of acquiring representation” or an image in the soul’s imagination (308). In short, “the heavenly sphere” for Avicenna, is “necessarily [moved] by a will” (308).

This celestial will is further specified in the subsequent paragraph as “a renewed, particular will,” as opposed to a universal will or World Soul, “for there is no dispensing with a psychological power which would be the proximate cause of the motion (309, 311). Here again the planets can be seen in their angelic aspect. Each angel-flung planet, according to Avicenna, is perpetually “engaged in [the act of] estimation—that is, it has an apprehension of the changing things, such as particulars, and a will toward specific particular things” (311). (For the reader unfamiliar with Scholastic psychology, it should be noted that apprehension here simply means a becoming aware of, not any kind of anxiety).

Defining the celestial soul in another way in this passage, Avicenna calls it “the perfection of the body of the heavenly sphere and its form” (311). This soul is “corporeal, transformable, and changeable, and it is not denuded of matter,” its “imaginings and [things] similar to imaginings are true,” and “its apprehension is by the

body” (312). The celestial soul is thus after all an Aristotelian kind of soul, the activity of its body. And what inclines each celestial soul to make its celestial body move is its own “intellect preceding it,” which is its “object of love” and “the good for the lover” (311, 312). Simply put, the celestial soul moves its sphere out of what is good for it—expressing love for its respective intellect. This purpose (or good) of the celestial soul is what Avicenna calls a “good sought through motion,” one which is “self-subsistent” and “not of [a sort] that one attains” (313). Rather, he writes, the celestial soul “seeks its imitation” of the intellect “only to the extent that is possible” (313). In other words, the movement is a perpetual end-in-itself, a dance in imitation of its god always being danced for the good of the heavens.

Just like a dedicated human dancer, the sphere’s “principle is the desire to imitate, to the extent that this is possible, the ultimate good by enduring the [state of] the most perfect perfection” (314). Keep in mind that this motion, according to Avicenna, is directed by a particular psychological will, by a corporeal soul, a voluntary act not required by its nature. “These particular acts of imaging” of the intellect, Avicenna writes, “are followed by [those] motions in terms of which transitions [of movement] take place” (315). He (a) terms these constant renewals of motion “upsurges,” (b) claims that there are “remote [phenomena] similar to them in our bodies,” and then (c) offers the following (aforementioned) example:

when the desire for a friend or for something else becomes intense; this is followed in us by imaginings by way of an upsurge followed by motions that are not motions toward the object of desire himself, but motions toward something in his path and way, and [toward] what is closest to him (316).

In addition to being a lovely description of friendship, one could also easily read this passage as an accurate phenomenological account of expressive motion in dance. In an expressive dance performance, one does not use one's body to directly achieve a utilitarian end, but instead moves one's body in sympathy (or resonance) with that which is being imagined in one's mind (or that of the choreographer). "This motion," the dancer could agree, "is as though it is a kind of worship" (316). And, as is also the case with individual dancers and choreographers, "there is for each of the celestial spheres a proximate mover appropriate to it, and an object of desire and love proper to it" (317). Thus, returning to the ironic question with which I began this section—"How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"—Avicenna's answer might be, in sympathy with Dionysius, that though angels, as celestial beings, do in fact dance, they do so not on tiny pins trapped by the gravity of the earth, *but as pinpricks of light gracefully arcing through the heavens.*

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of grace from Dionysius's *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Metaphysics* of Avicenna's *The Healing* yields the third and final phrase of the amplified conception of grace for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*grace is meta-human gifting.* The grace of dance is something that precedes humanity, both in the sense of animality and also of divinity; it transcends what it is to be human and resituates it in relation to the rest of the cosmos. I will therefore be especially alert to trans-human and divine aspects of dance throughout the rest of the project. Having concluded both the etymological and conceptual analyses of grace, I will now turn in this chapter's final section to the construction of grace as a Move of Figuration and its application to the seven members of the seven families of dance.

Construction and Application of)Grace(to the Members of the Families

Synthesizing the etymological analyses of Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner* and *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* and Dewey's *Art as Experience* along with the conceptual analyses of Avicenna's *Metaphysics of the Healing*, I now offer the full definition of the third of the four Moves of Figuration.

)grace(: superabundantly playful, figure/ground reversing, meta-human gifting

To rehearse the insights elaborated above, grace is superabundantly playful insofar as grace has to do with living shape, or beauty, which is the object of the play impulse (Schiller); it is figure/ground reversing insofar as it is the result of an organism-as-figure adapting so perfectly to its environment-as-ground that the latter seems to be moving through the former instead of vice-versa (Dewey); and it is meta-human gifting insofar as it is the mark of the celestial beings, who give the terrestrial world their sacred revelations through divine revolutions around the godhead (Avicenna). The parentheses opening outwards from the edges of the word "grace" are intended to symbolize the dancer's playful opening out onto the more-than-human environment through which dancing moves.

To relate grace to other theoretical discourses on dance, it is closely related to (a) Laban's Movement Analysis' concept of "Flow," which involves the degree to which a given movement of the body through space is restrained or free; (b) Maxine Sheets-

Johnstone's concept of "projectional" movement quality, whose descriptors include "abrupt" "sustained" and "ballistic" (56), and (c) what Suzanne Langer conceives of as the "primary illusion" of dance, namely, "a virtual realm of Power" or "virtual Powers," elaborated as "divine or semidivine Beings, whose wills determine the course of cosmic and human events" (175, 187, 189). To rephrase these insights in a way consonant with all three of these theoretical discourses,)grace(constitutes the "how" dimension of analysis, the way phenomena go from place to place, from out of their postures or starting places, the modalities of communication among entities in their original positions in any practice/discourse.

The presentation of Figuration is thus three-fourths complete, and has addressed the manners, styles or qualities of its carryings-out of communication on its poetic and dynamic basis. The critical dimension of this aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that the aesthetic dimension of an activity always involves transgressing the integrity of the human, which includes (a) seriousness and gravity, (b) the physical boundaries with the environment, and (c) the metaphysical boundaries with the opposing poles of the animalistic and the divine. I will now show how this critical function plays out in actual analyses of the seven members of the seven families of dance mentioned above.

As a reminder, I will again begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the Move, and then consider the two adjectival aspects and one substantive core of the amplified, philosophical construct. In the case of)grace(, the commonsense meaning is an aesthetically pleasing and seemingly effortless quality of

movement, the first amplified aspect is superabundant playfulness, the second amplified aspect is figure/ground reversal, and the substantive core is meta-human gifting.

For ballet, the commonsensical account of)grace(leads to the ease, beauty and apparent weightlessness with which the dancers move through space. Examples include the fluttering steps taken En Pointe and the bounding leaps of virtuosos such as Mikhail Baryshnikov.)Grace(finds ballet's superabundant playfulness in the frequency with which the dancers imitate imaginary beings and symbolize light and airy non-human aspects of the world. The figure/ground reversal of ballet can be found in the way it almost completely hides the awkward and bulky humanity of the dancers in lines and flows. And the meta-human gifting of ballet lies in the fact that it transforms the human dancer into a kind of holy animal, like a pure dove, devoid of speech and possessed of a radiance such as might result from staring into the face of a god. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of concert dance consists in a playful ritual in which the outlines of a human world dapple the backdrop of self-effacing human beings, crisscrossed and transcended by a play of forces that both predate and spring beyond mundane human existence.

For clogging, commonsensical grace is found in the unwavering smiles, uncompromisingly erect upper bodies and untiring whirls of legs and feet under piston-like knees.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in the strenuous legwork pounding into the ground toward no practical end. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the strong emphasis placed (visually) on the bending and rising of knees and (audibly) on the contact of feet with ground—two core aspects of human locomotion, without which the entire edifice of civilization would be impossible, but which must fade into the

background in everyday life to permit focus on the sophisticated work of the hands, mouth and frontal lobes. And meta-human gifting in clogging lies in the fact that the dancers' bodies are transformed into, and re-presented as, precision machines like those on a Ford assembly line or in a steel mill, symbolic of the ruckus made when human being is channeled into unmediated production. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of folk dance consists in its making light, in every sense, of the community's practical pursuits by emphasizing the stylistic aspects of practical movement, thereby emphasizing the non-human forces that sustain those pursuits.

For salsa, commonsensical grace is the smoothness with which bodies move individually, in partnership, and in communal manipulations of space.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in salsa's redeploying of erotic, romantic and athletic skill sets in a public space dedicated to intimate entertainment. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the fact that such skillful movements, which normally work best by appearing effortless and self-effacing (in actual courtship, seduction and athletic competition) are here the phenomena behind which the dancers attempt to suppress their complex individuality. And meta-human gifting in salsa lies in the fact that the best dancing requires both surrender to one's animal instincts and also offering up one's own finite body to godlike ideals of beauty and prowess. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of societal dance consists in practicing in a casual public setting, as though they were merely ornamental, vital intimate skills based in abilities much older than humanity and symbolizing perfection infinitely beyond it.

For Tae Kwon Do, commonsensical grace is the smooth and apparently effortless breaking of wood and the transition from one move in a “form” to another.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in the fact that these activities designed for combat and warfare are situated in controlled settings with either imaginary or staged opponents. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the fact that the movements useful for defense against physical violence are systematically pursued for the expressly stated purpose of achieving psychological discipline and tranquility. And meta-human gifting in Tae Kwon Do lies in the attempt to take a god-like comprehensive view of combat that will allow the human to compensate for the evolutionary loss of “animalistic” means of self-defense such as fur or claws. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of agonistic dance consists in make-believe reenactments of combat facilitated by emphasizing said reenactments’ non-combative benefits, which can be understood as a divinely ambitious recreating of humans in the image of their evolutionary forbears.

For the pollen dance of the honey bee, the commonsensical grace is the ability of such brief and localized activities to enable the nutritional continuity of the hive.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in the pollen dance in dramatic recreation, inside the home, of the actual foraging for nectar (and thereby pollen) outside that home. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the fact that the pollen dance works by subordinating the individuality of the dancing bee to into its function as a literal road-map of the environment it has just successfully traversed. And meta-human gifting lies in the fact that the complex and sophisticated activities of a non-human animal have been instrumental in furthering the education of human animals through careful study. To

paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of animal dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of animal dance consists in its hyper-dramatization of practical activities, highlighting the species-importance of activities which far surpass the importance of any particular organism performing it, and suggesting an analogously greater importance of entire non-human species relative to any particular human.

For “falling stars” or “shooting stars,” commonsensical grace is their smooth and rapid progress through the night sky.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in the apparently nonchalant end of the (so-called) star’s existence. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the fact that stars, which normally fade into the background to illuminate scenes of purposeful human activity, here take on a more robust sense of agency and redirect the human mind to a cosmic world beyond earth. And meta-human gifting lies, following Charles Scott from *The Lives of Things*, in the fact that it is the very minerals which make up former stars from which human eyes are made, which are then free to gaze on (what appears to be) the last moments of life of other stars light years away (99-112). To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of astronomical dance consists in the apparent triviality to human perception of cosmically significant phenomena, which nevertheless foreground the cosmos as a site of independent meaning that makes the human observation of it possible in the first place.

And finally, for Neruda’s poetry, its commonsensical grace consists of the smooth transitions, in the reader or listener’s experience, among images, sounds, denotations and connotations, and among physical, personal and social aspects of reality.)Grace(finds superabundant playfulness in Neruda’s democratization and seemingly chaotic

intermixing of all these aspects of language and reality. Figure/ground reversal can be found in the fact that the humanly-meaningful becomes the background against which the antics of the non-human and meaningless are staged for their own sake. And meta-human gifting lies in Neruda's redirecting of the divine destiny of poetry into the pre-human, non-human and trans-human layers of the earth. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, according to Figuration, the)grace(of discursive dance consists in the equalizing of all aspects of reality under language which has slipped its yoke of practicality to gesture toward the non-human forces that constitute and constantly reweave the human.

Having offered an analysis of each of the seven members of the seven families of dance, my analysis of)grace(as a separate Move is concluded. I now turn in the next chapter to similarly-structured analyses of the fourth and final Move, (re)silience.

CHAPTER 5

(RE)SILIENCE

As stated in my first chapter, the etymological meaning of resilience is “leaping back” or “jumping again,” and the parentheses in the Move (re)silience are intended to emphasize the “back” or “again” dimension by isolating the prefix “re-” which is the source of this dimension. The dancer’s body, for example, is always springing back into shape, always ready for more, persisting through time’s deformations, literally bounding and rebounding from every trial and setback. Two more facets of resilience’s etymology are also worth remembering from Chapter One. First, the Latin root verb of “to leap” [*salire*] is closely related to the verb *saltare*, which means both “to leap back and forth continuously” and also “to dance.” Second, resilience, as opposed to synonyms such as “toughness,” consists of a constantly renewed activity of coming forward; much like posture-as-basis, resilience-as-durability is in no way static.

This first section of the chapter will consist of two accounts of resilience and dance in the work of Franz Fanon. First, I will explore how Fanon’s account of the effects of racism in *Black Skins, White Masks* (hereafter, BSMW) aligns closely—*despite multiple, important differences*—with a phenomenological description of the effects of (especially professional) dance training. The point of my analyses will be to suggest a potentially greater role for dance in the subversion and re-signification of racial oppression. Second, I will suggest that a similar effect occurs in *The Wretched of the Earth* (hereafter, WE) in terms of the experience of the colonized subject.

Etymological Analyses of (Re)silience

Fanon

I wish to emphasize at the beginning of this section that the upshot of these dance experience/black experience comparisons is not that the experiences of dance are forms of oppression *in the same way, or to the same degree, as* experiences of racism. Rather, my goal is the much more modest one of trying to show that (especially professional or concert) dance, though for the most part a voluntary and empowering activity, bears important phenomenological resemblances to Fanon's characterization of black embodiment in racist and colonized cultures in BSWM and WE.

I do not attend to these limited and conditional similarities thoughtlessly, or because of a reactive and regressive desire to construct a gigantic-gelatinous-lump-of-all-oppressions theory, according to which a straight, white, male Wall Street executive can note, with satisfaction, that he is just as oppressed as anyone else. On the contrary, what animates these analyses is the hope that some political effectiveness might be garnered, especially in regards to those who suffer constantly, and in their very being, in contemporary Western society. More specifically, these resemblances seem to suggest the possibility for black persons' attempting strategic resistances to political oppression by both seeking additional opportunities for performative resistance, and also acknowledging ways in which oppression conveys (especially epistemological) advantages. (I am thinking here, for example, of W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of the double-vision or double-consciousness achieved by black people in the United States as a

result of living behind the veil of anti-black racism).²⁴ In short, I am trying, but only in a sense, to close here the gap between racism-oppression and dancing embodiment.

Ultimately, of course, these strategies are variations on strategies both as old and habitual as the oppressions themselves (including U.S. slaves' mocking improvisations on white European dances) and also famously put forward by great thinkers on race such as Du Bois. The best case scenario for my efforts, then, might be merely to have reached the same conclusions by a different theoretical route, thus affirming the multiplicity of resistances available to oppressed persons and communities.

Finally, my claims are based, not on some pretense of intuitive insight into black experiences, but on the phenomenological accounts of Fanon, and can only be relevant and worthwhile insofar as the reader finds those accounts to be so.

Although dance appears outright only twice in BSWM—and both appearances are extremely negative—the related theme of embodiment is one of the central themes of the entire book.²⁵ And as stated above, Fanon's overall description of black embodiment

²⁴ The following famous passage from Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* is worth quoting in full: "After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (5). Consequently, if the black person in the U. S. is able to achieve self-consciousness, he or she then possesses it in addition to this "second sight," and thus attains at least one epistemological advantage relative to white people, in that the latter lack such "second sight."

²⁵ The first appearance is in Chapter 5, "The Fact of Blackness," in the later part of the chapter where Fanon is describing the Negro man's rejection of white culture after its rejection of him, throwing himself instead into the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa. "I had rationalized the world and the world had rejected me on the basis of color prejudice. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, I threw myself back toward unreason" (123). What follows is a lyrical, prose poetry section of the chapter full of Negritude quotations from Césaire's poetry and Senghor's prose.

It seems important to distinguish here between Fanon the author of the book as a whole, and the "speaker" of this section, the autobiographical-sounding "I," because the literary, poetic quality of this part of the text suggests the possibility that Fanon could be using a fictional narrative voice to achieve his effects. Given that possibility, one should not assume that he is necessarily purveying his own views, although that cannot be hastily ruled out either. The speaker, then, describes himself as going "overboard" in his immersion in the irrational and magical aspects of African culture, although it is not entirely clear to what degree this irrationality is a perception of Fanon, to what degree a perception of the

seems to line up extremely well with the experiences of (especially professional) dancers. Insofar as this is the case, what might it suggest about the practices of racism and dance training, about the experiences of black persons in anti-black racist societies and the experiences of dancers of all races and ethnicities? Is dance, or at least professional dance, after all, an essentially oppressive practice? Could there be something of value gained from the otherwise disempowering experience of racism? Are there ways of understanding the convergence of dance experiences and black experiences which do not support racist stereotypes of essential biological superiority or athletic predispositions in black persons and also do not condemn dance to the status of a mindless release of resentment from oppression and disenfranchisement?

I will now consider Fanon's account of black embodiment in an anti-black racist culture as a constellation of the following six related features or characteristics, in both his original signification and my re-signification vis-à-vis dance experience, to highlight the internal resonances between the two domains: (1) total objectification, (2) impeded

speaker, and to what degree a perception of the white racist hegemony. At any rate, the speaker ultimately concludes that a person has to "distrust rhythm, earth-mother love, this mystic, carnal marriage of the group and the cosmos" (125). Nevertheless, the description of the schizophrenic immersion continues, including the speaker's experience that "[f]rom every direction I am assaulted by *the obscenity of dances and of words*" (126, emphasis added). Why, one might ask, should dance be an obscenity? Is this the speaker's view alone, or also that of Fanon? Why is this immersion that includes an experience of dance deemed by the speaker as a form of "regression"?

The second occurrence of the word *dance* is found in Chapter 6, "The Negro and Psychopathology," in Fanon's discussion of the work of his contemporary psychoanalyst Desoille, whose therapeutic method consisted of having the patient enter a state of "waking dreams," pseudo-hypnotic, therapist-guided daydreams. Adopting the voice of a hypothetical patient of Desoille experiencing a waking dream—another fictional narrative strategy—Fanon writes the following: "When I descend, I see caverns, grottoes where savages dance" (189). Although Fanon is here critiquing the racist cultural association of blackness with lowliness and baseness, it is again unclear whether the savage-dance connection is made solely in the mind of the speaker (the hypothetical patient) or also in the mind of Fanon the author of the sentence. In other words, to what degree, for Fanon, does black dance belong inextricably to the racialized stereotype of the "savage," and to what degree can or is it liberated for other potential significations?

bodily schema, (3) symbolizing the race, (4) over-determination from without, (5) perpetual waiting, and (6) bodily suffering.

(1). Total Objectification: “I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects” (109). As opposed to being a meaning-making subject, the black person in an anti-black racist society according to Fanon is delegated to being part of the furniture of the white world. The dancer too deals in objectification, but in order to achieve art, and through self-objectification. Dancers make *themselves* into objects instead of being passively made into them, or at least voluntarily enter a space, a practice, and a discourse in which objectification will occur. It is arguably this acquiescence to the movement of objectification which distinguishes the craft of the dancer from the black person’s experience of racist objectification.

However, this contrast also provides an opportunity to wonder how a black person in a racist society might improve his or her situation, by attempting to find ways to self-objectify, alter the mode of objectification, or alter the conditions under which s/he enters into a space of objectification, such as by producing objects or performing intentional objectifications for white consumption which parody, or open to critical reflection, the stereotypes that ordinarily objectify black persons without consent. Dance: Aesthetic Self-Objectification.

(2). Impeded Bodily Schema: “In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema” (110). The bodily schema is the experienced procedure or “implicit knowledge” of making one’s way in the world as an embodied being. Fanon defines the schema as a “slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world” (111). He also refers to it as a “real

dialectic between my body and the world” (111). The black person’s consciousness, Fanon claims, is a “third-person consciousness,” feeling his/her body, as it were, from the outside, from the perspective of the imagined white spectator. One could argue, similarly, that the dancer is *nothing but bodily schema*, nothing but the dialectic between body and world. The dancer’s training consists largely in learning to see her or his body as it is literally seen from the outside; hence the solid wall of mirrors standard in most professional dance studios, as well as the constant feedback from choreographers and teachers throughout a professional dancer’s career. This acquisition of a double-consciousness, recalling again Du Bois’ concept, is essential to the dancer’s performance.

And, as with black people in an anti-black racist society, the third person schemata often disrupt the first person schemata—witness the typical coexistence of on-stage grace and off-stage clumsiness in accomplished dancers. An overemphasis on moving-in-relation-to-being-perceived seems to interfere with the ability to move-successfully-when-not-being-perceived. Nevertheless, there are obvious advantages to incorporating this “outsider’s perspective” (in multiple senses of the expression), such as the additional beautification of the world that occurs with each person who learns to move with more aesthetic grace. And perhaps the impeding of the bodily schema need not be a resting place, but instead a moment in the dialectic from (a) un-self-conscious natural gracelessness to (b) self-conscious unnatural gracefulness to (c) self-conscious natural gracefulness. Perhaps the consciousness gained by black persons through white oppression has enhanced their ability to perceive human movements from various informative perspectives, thereby enabling them to acquire potentially socially valuable

information largely invisible to the oppressing white persons. Dance: Pluralized-Enhanced Bodily Schemata.

(3). Symbolizing the Race: “I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors” (112). The black person is perceived not as an individual, for Fanon, but as a mere token of the type Negro, bearing in his/her very corporeality the writing of the entire past and present of their race. “A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man—or at least like a nigger” (114). To be an individual in general is to be a token of a type too, namely human being, a universal whose higher abstraction gives it a much more limited content. But this more limited content means that this type interferes less with someone else’s perception of one of its tokens. Another way of putting it is that the black person, by being perceived as *above all* black, is prevented from being seen as *above all* a human being, thereby making the human being a privileged category for non-black persons.

In a similarly symbolic move, dancers become aesthetic objects—indeed dance first emerges as an art—by subsuming particular bodies under the universals of aesthetic surfaces, epitomes of muscular control, and symbols of human physical perfection. In other words, though it involves a privileging of the visual and physical, the dancer is perceived as a symbol of human being. Consequently, perhaps by engaging in dance as an art form, black persons have the capacity to take advantage of the dancer’s privileged role as symbol of the human in order to subvert and problematize the black person’s role as symbol of the race. Dance: Symbol of the Species.

(4). Overdetermination from Without: “I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not to the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (116). By

“overdetermined” here, Du Bois seems to mean that the skin color of a black person in an anti-black racist society is taken to be the symptom, if not the outright effect, of as many negative characteristics as there are negative stereotypes of black people. In other words, if one believes that black people are lazy, hyper-athletic, hypersexual, etc., then “black” is determined as signifying not only a mere color, but also “laziness,” etc., and is thus an overdetermined concept. As opposed to oppressed groups with less visible markers of group membership, who can resist conformity to oppressive stereotypes as a strategy to resist oppression in general, Fanon argues that the moment of visibility and the moment of oppression are simultaneous for anyone perceived as black in an anti-black racist society, which means that all work to resist oppression must actively confront a horde of stereotypes always already in place, and that even successful resistance can never do more than coexist with the visible marker.

Dancers are also determined from without, not just in their movement but in their comportment, demeanor, attire, etc., by dance partners, choreographers, instructors, the rituals handed down through cultural traditions, and the various aspects of the music to which they dance. With many of these different causes active at once, it seems that dancers are not only determined from without, but also overdetermined. And the latter two examples in this series demonstrate that this overdetermination also occurs with amateur dancers, non-Western dancers, improvisation artists, and spontaneous participants.

The primary differences between these two types of experience are that, in the case of dance, (a) it is more obvious and widely acknowledged that the status of “dancer” is the *result of a process or performance* of overdetermination from without, and (b) in

many, though not all, cases this process and its result are primarily voluntary on the part of the dancer. In the case of anti-black racism, on the other hand, it is more popularly believed that racist overdetermination is instead an immediate and accurate perception of an inherent group of characteristics. This suggests the possibility that black dance performances, by putting black bodies into a discursive and artistic space that privileges the performative, could encourage—by showing—a performative (as opposed to essentialist) interpretation of blackness, much as Judith Butler suggests onstage drag performances do for offstage performances of gender and femininity.²⁶ Dance: External Overdetermination Made Visible.

(5). Perpetual Waiting: “And in one sense, if I were asked for a definition of myself, I would say that I am one who waits” (120). According to Fanon, the black person waits for the white world’s acceptance, finds hopes of genuine equality repeatedly buoyed only to have those hopes repeatedly dashed.

The dancer, too, essentially waits. Waits for the opportunity to dance, for the inspiring moment in the music, for a favorable response from the partner(s), for a choreographer (without or within) to stumble upon the ideal movement, for all of these audiences (in the broadest sense of the term) to accept the performance in order, among other things, to transcend the self as subject into the self as art. But there is no real point of rest, even if achieved, since the art must always be renewed; each next movement must find its place. From a different angle, it is also true of the dancer that in executing a movement perfectly, it is often more important to maintain stillness in the rest of the body

²⁶ This argument follows Thomas DeFrantz in “African-American Dance – Philosophy, Aesthetics and ‘Beauty,’” in which he suggest that “The performance of blackness, then, may refer constantly to absent, discarded, and elided performances which form an offstage background to the social category of ‘black’” (96).

than move the part(s) intended to be moved. The key to gracefulness, as elaborated in my previous chapter on grace, is moving no more of the body than necessary and moving the necessary parts no more than necessary; whenever one part (or group of parts) of the body is moving to execute a movement, the rest of the body must wait, so that the movement may move seamlessly through the body instead of the body moving awkwardly and uneconomically through it. Anything else does not even qualify as a successful, artful instance of said movement.

Similarly, in order for social justice to proliferate, black persons and communities must know when and how to act, and when to wait, when to exercise muscular control in the broadest sense, so that the movement of amelioration may flow in as unimpeded a way as possible. As Fanon famously writes in *WE*, “Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity” (145). There is no mission so opaque to outsiders as prudent waiting. *Dance: Dynamic Waiting*.

(6). Bodily Suffering: “...the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man” (138). For Fanon, there is not merely an idea or principle of inequality, and racism is not merely a theoretical prejudice—it infiltrates, penetrates the bodies of the oppressed. This is the internal correlate to overdetermination from without; not only is oppression immediate upon visibility, but the pain of the oppression is as immediate and pervasive as proprioception. The justification for the oppression is rooted, not in some belief or practice over which the oppressed person has any possible control, but in his or her body itself, and thus, Fanon writes, “it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked” (163). The black person is attacked, not just on the basis of, but within the psychosomatic interior of, the body.

Dancers too suffer in a unique way which remains invisible to non-dancers, in order to achieve themselves. The other side of the beautiful appearance of dance is the discomfort, pain and often agonizing physical injury attendant upon preparing the body to achieve beauty and grace in movement. This is true of the bleeding feet of both ballerinas En Pointe and social dancers in high heels, old men with respiratory conditions and children with heat exhaustion, clogging dancers with no more cartilage in their knees, and tribal dancers with muscle strains. In short, the effecting of graceful movement necessarily hides the pain that makes the movement possible, otherwise the grace would be compromised. And this outwardly-invisible pain bonds the communities of the graceful more tightly qua communities of bodily suffering. As African-American theorist and choreographer Thomas DeFrantz argues, this suffering, if successfully represented in an artistic space, can itself be transfigured into a form of beauty—the beauty of struggle and survival.²⁷ *Dance: Beauty-Disguised Suffering.*

A related account of embodiment, this time at the group level, occurs in WE. It has a similar phenomenological relevance to dance, in this case to dance's social-communal aspect, and it suggests similar opportunities for cross-fertilization between the two arenas. I grant that these analyses, even more so than those of BSWM, concern a specific set of historical circumstances, but these circumstances were sustained by ideological structures of racism that have far outlasted the end of political colonization; cultural imperialism toward black communities by white hegemonies persists to the present. My analysis of Fanon's analysis consists of the following additional four points:

²⁷ "...dance performance may refer to the spiritual (sacred) and spontaneous (unprecedented) choreographies that have sustained generations of African American dancers in the context of harsh everyday racialized interactions (its life-saving feature) (94). His analysis of Ulysses Dove's choreography: "it proposes 'beauty' as an ability to survive" (98).

(7) valorization of the spatial, (8) non-individualism, (9) showing vs. saying, and (10) perpetual muscular tension.

(7). Valorization of the Spatial: “For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land” (9). One must first fight, according to Fanon, for brute physical space, the space so unequally distributed prior to liberation. Fanon describes the “colonist’s sector” as one in which “trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of leftovers,” indicating how even the refuse of the white world runneth over (4). The “colonized’s sector,” by stark contrast, Fanon paints as “a world with no space, people are piled on top of one another, the shacks squeezed tightly together” (4). The two points in conjunction reveal that the colonists have more space for, and a higher quality of, garbage than the colonized do housing.

Obviously spatiality is central to dance as well, not only because the dancers must move through space, but because this movement can only gain the status of art when there is space for display. Only against a relatively stable and uncluttered background can the dancer’s movements be clearly seen and appreciated for their aesthetic qualities. And this space is one that must be set apart, made sacred (in the etymological sense) by the community, foregoing the use of the space for more functional, practical ends. One could go farther and say that dance is what occurs when space is liberated from all subservient functions—including even foundational human movements like walking and breathing performed unconsciously to sustain life—and can be seen and experienced qua spatiality. Only in this way can the dancer’s use of space be exclusively aesthetic.

Perhaps political goals for black communities can be achieved, in a similar way, by emphasizing the aesthetic contours of polymorphous spaces of blackness: living spaces, psychic spaces, metaphorical spaces, contested spaces, by opening these spaces to greater representation. Along these lines, DeFrantz asserts that “[b]eauty’ – in any definition – cannot flourish without representation. It has to be reflected, pursued, and circulated to be engaged, it has to be assembled in its component parts to fulfill itself, it must be remembered to construct its effects” (100). *Dance: Liberation of the Spatial*.

(8). Non-individualism: “[D]uring the struggle for liberation...All the Mediterranean values, the triumph of the individual, of enlightenment and Beauty turn into pale, lifeless trinkets” (11). Thus, Fanon asserts that a focus on the individual is replaced by a focus on the community. As opposed to these “white” values, he writes, “colonized intellectual” comes to learn “the strength of the village assemblies, the power of the people’s commissions and the extraordinary productiveness of neighborhood and section committee meetings” (11). Although many popular instances of dance in Western culture may make dance seem like an inherently individualistic activity, even in the solo performance of a Fred Astaire or Michael Jackson the soloist is dependent upon the audience (and usually the live or pre-recorded music) as well as the choreographer and instructor that prepared the dance for performance, not to mention the tradition(s) of dance practices informing and guiding the performance.

Most often, moreover, in the West and beyond, dance is a thoroughly social practice, with partners, groups of dancers and observers interacting symbiotically with the performers through cheers, comments, silence, palpable energy, intensified movements, etc. In most of its realizations, and in the many incentives it offers for

community and socialization, dance could be argued to serve in the cause of resisting the hyper-individualism of traditional white cultures. To promote dance, then, might mean indirectly to promote a set of values with the potential to bring white and black communities into greater commonality and respect. Dance: Trans-Individualism.

(9). Showing vs. Saying: "...the unemployed and starving do not lay claim to the truth. They do not say that they represent the truth because they are the truth in their very being" (12). The wretched of the earth are the very performances of their own truth, the Wittgensteinian "showing" to the "saying" of the colonizers. And this is the only hope of the wretched, insofar as their voices, along with black voices up to the present, tend more often to be silenced and ignored than do white voices.

Similarly, it probably goes without saying that dance is an art form completely accustomed to going without saying, or at least an art form largely independent of verbal language. Dance achieves by choice that on which black persons and communities have historically been forced to rely without any choice, namely the communicative power of visible demonstration. Black dance performance harnesses a professionally chosen form of showing to emphasize and valorize a racially unchosen one, retroactively legitimizing the truth that is possible despite verbal silence. Dance: Showing In-and-for-Itself.

(10). Perpetual Muscular Tension: "Hence the dreams of the colonized subject are muscular dreams" (15). Repressing their rage toward their oppressors, Fanon claims, the stress builds in the very bodies of the oppressed, and thus the "muscles of the colonized are always tensed" (16). Similarly, Fanon later describes the withdrawal from Westernization of the colonized intellectual who "feels he must escape this white culture," a movement which, he claims, "above all calls to mind a muscular reflex, a

muscular contraction.” For this reason, the colonized intellectual’s style, according to Fanon, is an “energetic style, alive with rhythms, bursting with life” in preparation for a “swift, painful combat where inevitably the muscle had to replace the concept” (157). To be a dancer, similarly, is to be in constant muscular ready awareness, storing energy in tension to be released in a display of powerful grace or desperate aggression. This muscular, physiological awareness is important in the struggle of black persons and communities for genuine equality, as a significant marker or litmus test for the success of that struggle. Dance: Beautiful Tension.

Given the easy applicability of Fanon’s analyses of black embodiment in anti-black racist cultures to the experience of dancers, it is interesting that in the contemporary white United States, there is a stereotype that black persons are essentially better dancers than white persons. It is also interesting that dancing is generally understood to be the privileged province of other oppressed or disadvantaged groups as well, including women and gay men. Women more than men, the alternatively-oriented more than the exclusively heterosexual, non-Westerners more than Westerners, urbanites more than suburbanites, the unconventional more than the conventional, are perceived as being both interested and proficient in dance. Complementarily, a straight, white, suburban conventional Western man who is passionate about and gifted in dancing is most often suspected of merely passing as belonging to one of the latter groups, as being interested in dance only for sexual conquest, or as being an anomaly of the striking variety.

It is possible that something about being in an oppressed minority serves as a strong motivating force for engaging in dance? Is Fanon right after all in finding in oppression the “sole purpose” for the tribal dances he describes? Without oppression,

would there be no dance? Can dance be beautiful only against a backdrop of oppression for which it acts as a catharsis? Whatever the case may be, whatever its origins, do we not err in denying any value of a purely aesthetic nature to the practice of dance?

Synthesizing these etymological analyses of resilience in Fanon's BSWM and WE yields the first phrase of the amplified conception of resilience for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*resilience is aesthetically militant*. Dance is necessarily politically active, since it takes place in the public sphere, and it essentially involves combat, at the very least between bodies and the incessant flow of time, as well as between bodies' energy and exhaustion, and often between structures of political power as well. I will therefore be attentive to this combative dimension for the remainder of this project. I now turn to the second section of this chapter to offer conceptual analyses of resilience.

Conceptual Analyses of (Re)silience

A majority of the first half of the current section involves dance-related analyses of resilience in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, which analyses are clustered most tightly in the fifth section (entitled "Territorial Representation") of Chapter Three, entitled "Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men." However, given that (a) the subtitle of the book is *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (b) Artaud, along with Nietzsche, is the authors' most frequent example of the schizophrenic and (c) Artaud's concept of a "theater of cruelty" (an approach to theater focused on physicality, gestural expression, and the "cruel" shattering of the illusions of a degenerated public) appears frequently in the book, I will try to enter into Deleuze and Guattari's monstrously difficult text through Artaud's

comparably approachable text, *The Theater and its Double*, focusing on its account of dance in relation to that of *Anti-Oedipus*. The second half of this section will explore dance and resilience in Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter*, focusing on her essay, "Gender is Burning," and introduced by brief looks at both Jennie Livingstone's film, *Paris is Burning*, and bell hooks' essay, "Is Paris Burning?" which jointly inspired Butler's essay.

As early as Artaud's "Preface," it becomes clear that his inspiration for the theater of cruelty comes from a place where this project has often encountered dance. "[A]ll true culture," Artaud writes, "relies upon the barbaric and primitive means of totemism whose savage, i.e. entirely spontaneous, life I wish to worship" (10). (Before assuming that Artaud intends the words "barbaric," "primitive" and "savage" in entirely pejorative way, it should be kept in mind that he, like Nietzsche, is centrally concerned with revaluing values). Dance comes closer to the surface on the next page, when Artaud writes of Mexico as a place with "no art" but "perpetual exaltation," insofar as Mexico in the European imaginary has been linked to Latin dance, and since the verb "exaltation" connotes an bodily celebration as can occur in dance (11).

Further, the rhetoric at the end of Artaud's Preface resonates strongly with dance, in places such as his description of (a) the theater as that which "prepares the way for a new generation of shadows, around which assembles the true spectacle of life," (b) how the theater seeks to "break through language to touch life" and (c) his definition of life as "that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach" (13). Shadows assembling in spectacle, a contact with life unmediated by language, and a fragile fluctuating center, in other words, all seem appropriate to descriptions of dance. But these are mere

intimations, and will seem more relevant once I point out a few of the many discussions of dance in the rest of the text.

Dance first appears by name in *The Theater and its Double* in Chapter Two, “Metaphysics and the Mise en Scène,” just after Artaud critiques Western theater for failing to “see theater under any other aspect than as a theater of dialogue” even though “the stage is a concrete physical space which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak” (37). This concrete language Artaud terms “a poetry of the senses,” a sensuous poetry which “consists of everything that occupies the stage,” a “poetry in space” that includes “pantomime”—and “dance” (37, 39). Fittingly, then, at the end of the chapter, Artaud augments his conception of concrete poetry as “language...in movement” (45).

The most extensive treatment of dance, however, is found in Chapter Four, “On the Balinese Theater,” wherein Artaud holds up the Balinese tradition as an inspiration for his theater of cruelty. First, at the beginning of the chapter, in describing the movements of the Balinese theater, Artaud writes of a “rippling of joints, the musical angle made by the arm with the forearm,” of movements “in which human limbs seem resonant with echoes” and of a “sonorous interlacing of movements” in which there is “no transition from a gesture to a cry or a sound: all senses interpenetrate” (56, 57). Collectively, Artaud describes these “ritual gestures” as “a kind of superior dance, in which the dancers were actors first of all” (57, 58). (Note the emphasis here on gesture reminiscent of my analyses of Condillac, Mead and Kristeva in Chapter Three of this project).

The rest of the chapter is filled with brilliant and striking images of dance and dancers, beginning with Artaud's comparison of a Balinese dancer to "a sopping rag being wrung out in tempo," which is perhaps his most striking description of the bodily energy necessary for dance (58). Second, a few lines later Artaud writes of "the dancer bundled into his costume" who "seems to be nothing more than his own effigy," which effectively evoke the vivacious expenditure of that bodily energy (58). Third, again hearkening back to this project's previous analyses of gesture, Artaud writes of "[s]peech before words" (60). Fourth, in resonance with this project's exploration of Aristotelian physics, Artaud refers to "a sort of primary Physics, from which Spirit has never disengaged itself" (60). Fifth, in harmony with this project's previous analyses of grace, Artaud describes the experience of such theater "an exorcism to make our demons FLOW."²⁸ Sixth, Artaud compares the Balinese dancer-actors to "moving hieroglyphs" that are "brocaded with a certain number of gestures" (61). Finally, towards the end of the chapter, one finds the following extended passage on dance:

These metaphysicians of natural disorder who in dancing restore to us every atom of sound and every fragmentary perception as if these were now about to rejoin their own generating principles, are able to wed movement and sound so perfectly

²⁸ 60. This appearance of the word "flow" suggests Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's famous positive psychology book of the same name, which bears significantly on both this project in general, and on grace in particular. For one thing, much of the feedback Csikszentmihalyi quotes from his surveys comes from dancers, and the concept of flow allegedly received its name from the repeated usage of the word in such surveys' descriptions of optimal experiences (53, 59, 60, 66, 73, 100). For another, on the same page that he mentions this origin of the name "flow," and in line with my own analyses of grace, Csikszentmihalyi describes flow movement as "seemingly effortless motion" which is nonetheless "far from being so" (54). Finally, the author not only quotes medical surgeons as describing their own flow experiences in surgery as "a 'ballet'," but also himself characterizes flow-maximizing societies as made up of people who "moved through life with intricate grace, and derived perhaps the same enjoyment from the challenging harmony of their actions as they would have from an extended dance" (81). Thus, *Flow* not only describes the kind of optimal experiences which this project has repeatedly suggested that dance can provide, but devotes significant time to linking such experiences explicitly to dance.

that it seems the dancers have hollow bones to make these noises of resonant drums and woodblocks with their hollow wooden limbs (65).

The emphases here on disorder, on the naturalness of disorder, on the blending of movement and sound, on generation, and on the schizophrenic imaginative transformation of the dancers into hollow wooden dolls—already in the direction of a body without organs—seem appropriate to constitute collectively a transition to *Anti-Oedipus*.

Deleuze (and Guattari)

Having just noted the importance of dance for Artaud, I now turn to the text for which Artaud is a centrally heroic figure, Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. "(It can happen that one lone man functions as a flow-schiz, as a subject group, through a break with the subjugated group from which he excludes himself or is excluded: Artaud-the-schizo)" (383). Before turning directly to the centrally important Section Five of Chapter Three, where dance makes its first explicit appearance, it will be helpful to note a few important passages earlier in that chapter.

First, at the beginning of Section One, "Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men," the authors define the earth as "the primitive, savage unity of desire and production" (140). Desiring-production, the essence of the desiring-machines which form the theoretical basis of this text, is thus for the earth an un-hyphenated simplicity. Correspondingly, a few paragraphs later they define "society" as "first of all" "a socius of inscription where the essential thing is to mark and be marked" (142). So for Deleuze and Guattari, the earth is desire-as-production and society begins with bodies being marked in their skin as

belonging to a certain part of the earth, with, for example, tattoos, piercings, body paint, circumcision, and other forms of visible body alteration.

Significant in connection with my earlier analyses of Artaud, this first section of Chapter Three ends by defining cruelty as “the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them” (145). In addition to referencing the perhaps central concept for the dance-intoxicated creator of the “theater of cruelty,” the rhetoric of this passage resonates with dance experience in general, in that the passage begins with “movement,” continues with the phenomenon of bodily realization, and ends with an activity of “belaboring” those bodies. Simply put, dance is nothing if not movement realized in bodies through belaboring them.

Further, Section Two of Chapter Three, in the context of a discussion of rituals and ritual objects, asserts that “[s]urplus value of code is the primitive form of surplus value” (150). What this refers to is the fact that ordinary objects and aspects of life are transfigured into super-significant events by virtue of communal practices, which form “an oscillating equilibrium,” whose function (as stated in the first paragraph of Chapter Three) is “to code desire—and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows” (150, 139). Put (comparatively) simply, society functions by channeling pure and meaningless desire/creation into fictitious and fabricated ritualistic practices. The truth, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is chaos, and lies are what enable human civilization to continue. Dance, too, especially folk dance, imposes fabricated order onto disorganized desiring bodies, resulting in a surplus of code (or meaning) that aids in the oscillating equilibrium (or dynamic harmony) of the society in which it takes place.

The fifth and most important section for my purposes, “Territorial Representation,” returns to the issue of society as inscription, “marking bodies, which are part of the earth” (185). Society, in other words, according to the authors, is merely earth which has been written on, or carved into, in a particular way. Buttressing my provisional interpretation of *Anti-Oedipus* as concerned with dance, consider the following sentence: “Savage formations are oral, are vocal, but not because they lack a graphic system: *a dance on the earth*...[is] a graphic system, a geo-graphism, a geography” (188, emphasis added). Put differently, every so-called “prehistoric” society is above all a kind of dancing on the earth, constantly borrowing dancing bodies from the earth and then afterward returning them. Each such society is a “magic triangle” that is—quoting Artaud—“a *theater of cruelty*” (189, italics original). Shortly after this Artaudian moment, Section Five ends with a reference to the paradigmatic dancing philosopher, Nietzsche, as the author of “the great book of modern ethnology,” namely “*On the Genealogy of Morals*” (190). Thus Deleuze and Guattari pay their intellectual debts to the dancing philosophers, and thereby to dance as well.

Two sections later in Chapter Three, the authors return to dancing in the context of differentiating “territorial representation” from other historical types of representation. First, they note that the “primitive territorial sign is self-validating...it is rhythm and not form, zigzag and not line, artifact and not idea, production and not expression” (203). Dance, too, (a) is rhythmic, (b) zigzags and (c) is involved, as Kristeva elaborates, in a gestural language concerned with production instead of expression. Second, with the historical-political “crushing of the magic triangle,” i.e., the beginning of recorded history, the authors claim that “the graphy no longer dances, it ceases to animate bodies”

(205). That which is lost in this transition is dancing-writing—something to make people move, to nourish their spirit, akin to what I have termed discursive dance.

I will now conclude the first section of this chapter of the project by returning to its overarching emphasis on the conceptual dimension of resilience. One can understand resilience to be operating throughout *Anti-Oedipus*, from the earth's incessant desire-production, to the ever-renewed marking of the earth that is society, to the tirelessness of capitalism's decoding and reterritorialization, to the schizophrenic dance that capital engenders, and finally to the discursive dance which the authors of this book both call for and begin to perform themselves.

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of resilience in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* yields the second phrase of the amplified conception of resilience for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*resilience is madness-impersonating*. From the outsider's perspective, there will always be something a little crazy about dance. But that which allows the dance to be perceived that way, which mimics madness in dance, is essential to dance's way of being in the world. I will therefore be concerned with madness and its proximity to dance for the remainder of this project. I turn now, in this chapter's final section, to further conceptual analyses of resilience, inspired by and revolving around the work of Judith Butler.

Butler

Having just shown briefly the importance of the concept of resilience for Deleuze and Guattari, I will now begin to suggest its importance for Butler. But to arrive at that point, I will begin where her most pertinent analyses in *Bodies that Matter* do—namely,

with a brief look at both the documentary *Paris is Burning* and bell hooks' commentary on it. The title of the film comes from the title of a drag ball held in 1968 by Paris DuPree, who appears briefly (and unnamed) in the film. It is a documentary set in the 1980's about the golden age of drag balls in New York City and the persons and communities involved therein. It has elicited strongly mixed reactions from both critics and the public, and two of the more famous academic responses have come from bell hooks and Judith Butler.

Before moving to these two critiques, however, I wish to briefly discuss the film itself, beginning with the issue of how to describe the central activity in the film, the drag ball. The interviewees in the film repeatedly use the words "ball" to describe these events, and according to the OED, the word means, first, "a dance or dancing," secondly, "a social gathering for dancing," and thirdly, in "extended use," "a very enjoyable time." In other words, the drag ball is quite simply a dance itself. Furthermore, the word "ball" comes from the Old French "baler," which means to dance, and which itself either comes from the ancient Greek verb for dancing, *ballahain*, or from the French word for "ball" "on the alleged ground that, in the Middle Ages, tennis was accompanied with dancing and song." Another possibility, however, is that the "ball" of tennis, basketball, football, etc., is actually derived from *ballahain*, perhaps because dances often took place in circles, and the ball is a sphere and therefore circular. Similarly, dancers are sometimes seen as "throwing themselves through the air," much as one might throw a ball. This would also suggest an interesting connection to the dance of the celestial spheres, i.e., balls, in Avicenna. At any rate, the fact that dancing is fundamental to the film should be

already obvious from its title, even though it seems not to have been obvious to critics such as hooks and Butler.

There are many other indications of the centrality of dance in the film throughout the film. To begin with the beginning, after a few shots of the nighttime skyline of New York, the first action of the film consists of various people on the street dancing, immediately before a transition to the first shots of participants “walking”—with stylized movements, and to dance music—in a drag ball. The visual suggestion, then, is that what is going on inside, like what was just viewed outside in the streets, is also a dance. Additionally, two of the interviewees with the most face-time in the film, Willie Ninja and Dorian Corey, mention dancing as their current or past professions. Ninja makes money by teaching dance and Corey describes himself/herself as having been a professional dancer. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, one of the longest scenes (and the middle one) in the film takes its title from a recognized dance, voguing, which is described as a core element of the ball experience. For the purposes of this investigation, this dance in particular is worth extended attention.

Voguing is defined, toward the end of the film, as a dance form that originated in Harlem, and one interviewee explains that the name of the dance comes from its poses having being inspired largely by the magazine named *Vogue*. But voguing is first presented near the beginning of the film, and is introduced discursively in the middle of the film (in the scene entitled “Reading and Voguing”) by way of its genealogical relationship to ritualized, exaggerated critique and insult at the balls. I will now discuss briefly this genealogy and what it helps illuminate about the role of dance in both the film and in the actual practice of the drag ball. There are four distinct steps in the story of this

criticizing practice, beginning with “insult,” then “reads,” then “shade” and finally “vogue”; I will discuss each in turn.

First, the background on which the other three layers rest is the phenomenon of straight (especially male) persons insulting gay men in everyday life. Such insults are typically centered on the objection to gay men failing to comport themselves in stereotypically heterosexual masculine ways. Second, when such insulting comes instead from another gay man—more specifically, when an attendee at a drag ball criticizes a participant for not appearing “natural” or “real” by pointing out and exaggerating some perceived flaw or imperfection in the participant—this is called a “read,” or “reading” the participant. Third, when the criticism becomes more indirect or subtle, it is dubbed “shade,” which is described syntactically as being “thrown” by one person at another. Finally, when “shade” is expressed in the form of dance, typically between two dancers moving together in the spotlight, then it is called “vogue.” In other words, voguing is intended to be a form of aesthetically pleasing critique, much like the practice of “signifying” in various African-American artistic practices. Such practices, which in dance include the tap challenge, often focus on social criticism, as in Ralph Ellison’s signifying on fellow novelist Richard Wright in Ellison’s novel, *Invisible Man*. Thus, since vogue is directly connected to aesthetic social critique, and vogue is a dance that pervades the film, if one does not linger over the significance of dance in *Paris is Burning*, one misses a critical dimension of its self-awareness and political efficacy. My first example of such a failure to see is “Is Paris Burning?” from bell hooks’ collection of essays, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*.

To begin again with the increasingly interesting and problematic issue of the title, it seems worth noting that the title of hooks' first essay, "Is Paris Burning?" is the same as that of a 1966 U.S. film about the 1944 liberation of Paris by Allied forces during World War II. And the title of that film, in turn, is a direct quote from Adolf Hitler, addressed originally to his chief of staff, regarding whether his orders to General Dietrich von Choltitz had been carried out. As history shows, the general disobeyed, unwilling to enter history as the destroyer of the City of Lights. There is no mention of any of this in hooks' essay, so it seems like that the identity of the two was unintentional. One could say, then, that hooks in that decision allies herself, albeit inadvertently, with fascism, which the following analyses will try to show amounts to more than facile wordplay.²⁹

Hooks herself dips into the well of linguistics for one of the essay's first criticisms of *Paris is Burning*. "Just to look at the ways the word 'drag' is defined," she suggests, "reconnects this label to an experience that is seen as burdensome, as retrograde and retrogressive" (146). Reading this as an invitation, I wish to look for a moment at what the OED, for example, illuminates about the meanings and usages of the word "drag." Although the first definition begins with "something heavy" that is "dragged," which admittedly sounds negative, it continues by noting that this heavy, dragged thing can be "used for breaking up ground," or as "a float or raft." "Drag" is also apparently (a) the name for a kind of stage coach, (b) slang for a car, (c) a device for collecting oysters from a riverbed, (d) a street or road, (e) influence or "pull," (f) a dance event (such as a drag

²⁹ This issue also raises the question as to the intentions of Paris DuPree in naming his/her 1968 drag ball. Was DuPree aware of the historical source of the phrase? If so, and the naming was intentional, how would the analogy work? What would stand in the place of the city of Paris? Would it be the individual person named Paris (DuPree)? Or perhaps New York City as another City of Light across the Atlantic? Or maybe the drag ball itself, expressing DuPree's fear that it was or would soon fall into, the kind of decline or even extinction that the film portrays and discusses? And who or what, if anything or anyone, would stand in the place of Hitler?

ball), and (g) a name for a slow dance, among other things. So a drag can be used as something for breaking up monolithic ground (like homophobic public opinion) or getting from point A to B like a car or road, or finding valuable treasure. It can be the power to make change. It can even be a dance. Collectively, then, the usages of the word “drag” do not seem like to support hooks’ suggestion, namely that the definition of the word “drag” connects the practice of drag primarily to antiquated ideas and negative experiences.

Hooks then moves on to one of the central criticisms of the essay, namely, that drag is above all an exploitative racist and misogynist practice wherein black gay men duplicate feminism’s “male gaze” in objectifying each other in a collective idolizing of white supremacist femininity. *Paris is Burning* is thus, for hooks, just one more example of how “the idealized notion of the female/feminine is really a sexist idealization of white womanhood” (147). She also notes as a parallel to the drag ball phenomenon the woman-belittling drag performances of straight black comedians such as Eddie Murphy and Redd Foxx (146). “Appearing as a ‘woman’ within a sexist, racist media,” hooks claims, “was a way to become in ‘play’ that ‘castrated’ silly childlike black male that racist white patriarchy was comfortable having as an image in their homes” (146).

Hooks also points out that the aforementioned Dorian Corey (whose name hooks misspells more than once as “Carey”) “names it by saying no black drag queen of his day wanted to be Lena Horne,” a famous black actress during the golden age of Hollywood. Hooks fails to mention, however, that Corey also says immediately afterwards that, although Corey himself didn’t know it at the time, he, for one “really wanted to look like Lena Horne.”

In addition to this, there are numerous other affirmations of African-American female beauty throughout the film. To take one example, in the many photographs in the bedroom of one of the interviewees, along with an admitted majority of white celebrities, there is also a brief shot of a fashion photograph of African-American recording artist Diana Ross. Among other cases of blindness that hooks attributes to the film only because of having herself apparently missed something in the film, one is the “the white male patriarch” that hooks claims is “never visible in the film,” even though there are, to take two examples, multiple shots of both white male New York executives and white male potential clients for prostitutes (148).

The two times that hooks comes close to analyzing dancing in “Is Paris Burning?” are when she complains about a majority of (presumably white) reviewers’ finding the “pageantry of the drag balls” “compelling,” and when she criticizes the way that “voguing” “fascinate[s] white audiences” and thereby produces “a market for both Madonna’s product and Livingstone’s (152). Thus, the brief moments that hooks actually spends on the activity that is the primary subject of the film are spent associating it negatively with white people and a racist, exploitative practice on the part of both filmmaker and audience.³⁰

³⁰ Dance functions similarly, unfortunately, in hooks’ next essay in the collection, the subject of which is Madonna, the popular U. S. entertainer. Dance’s first appearance in that essay is found in a reference to “those Shirley Temple films where Bojangles was trotted out to dance with Miss Shirley and spice up her act,” followed in the next sentence by a description of Madonna as “a modern day Shirley Temple” because of a similarity hooks sees in Madonna’s use of African-American dancers (162). Thus, hooks again presents dance as the activity of racist white heroes of both the U. S., past and present. In the next paragraph hooks goes on to describe as “tragically ironic” Madonna’s choice of music video dance partner “a black male with dyed blond hair” (162). Again dance is immediately linked, within one sentence, with white racism. Finally, toward the end of this same paragraph, hooks offers the following problematic and perhaps even racist passage on the same subject: “Joking about the film with other black folks, we commented that Madonna must have searched long and hard to find a black female that was not a good dancer, one who would not direct attention away from her” (163). It seems that hooks is here playing

In my second example of a critic of *Paris is Burning* somehow missing the dancing, Butler affirms many of hooks' important criticisms (which are beyond the scope of this project) and also shares several of the criticisms of hooks' criticisms that I have already discussed. Although Butler too fails to give an explicit and positive account of dance (neither in the film nor in hooks' essay), as early as the second sentence of the "Preface" to *Bodies that Matter*, one can already see a potential relevance for dance in Butler's work. "I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought," she notes, because "this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies 'are'" (ix). Slightly rephrased, Butler is acknowledging that she was trying to make the body stand still, but since the body simply would not stop dancing, perhaps dancing is at the core of embodiment after all. However, nowhere in the book does Butler attend to dance as such.

In the essay devoted to *Paris is Burning*, entitled "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," Butler asserts contra hooks that the "compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat the injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury" (124). In other words, when black gay men compulsively repeat white gender norms in their dancing (inclusive of both voguing and stylized "walking" to music) it does not mean that there is no innovation, playfulness or critique in that repetition. Indeed, this coexistence of compulsion and innovation could be considered, Butler argues, as "the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency...is derived from the *impossibility of choice*" (124).

into the racist stereotype that all black people are essentially good dancers, after having just condemned the racism of white people in valorizing the spectacle of black dancers, as in the case of *Paris is Burning*.

In the essay's first titled section, "Ambivalent Drag," Butler concedes (to critics such as hooks) that "there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion" and that "[a]t best, it seems, drag is a site of a certain ambivalence" (125). These two moments, combined with the claim in that next paragraph that "all gender is like drag, or is drag" seem to reify the concept of drag into a stable, static substantive. In this way, Butler, who throughout her work is self-conscious about the way grammar controls meaning, and who struggles to subvert problematic grammar even at the cost of clarity and readability, seems to be missing the dancing in drag, the ball of the drag ball, the music and stylization of the participants as they move across the floor. This is not to say that Butler's (and hooks') explicit claims are not true, merely that they are also a site for the disappearance of dance from one of its acknowledged homes.

Moreover, Butler's use of the phrase "drag pageantry" a few pages later, perhaps following hooks, supports my reading of the previous passage (128). To the best of my knowledge, neither the word "pageant" nor the word "pageantry" are ever used by film's interviewees; rather, as I noted above, the reference is always to the "balls" or "walking." Of course, given various aspects of the ball, analyzing the ball as a kind of pageant seems entirely appropriate, and perhaps even obligatory—*but not at the expense of eliding an analysis of the event and activity as dance.*

The mystery to me is that Butler, with her impressive conceptual repertoire of performativity, misses the opportunity—when discussing a film obsessed with dancing—to discuss dance performativity, or the way that performativity per se, inclusive of gender performance, is itself a kind of dance. But at least Butler, with help from hooks, directs

helpful attention to a film where the connection between dance and resilience is thoroughly explored.

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of resilience in Butler’s “Gender is Burning” yields the third and final phrase of the amplified conception of resilience for the Figuration philosophy of dance—*resilience is flourishing recirculation*. The way to flourish is to keep moving, which of necessity means starting out on well-worn circuits while doing whatever possible to make those pathways one’s own, more suited to one’s own body, and to one’s own way of moving through the world. It is hoped that the reader will see, in looking back over the results of the project so far, the intimate connection between circulation and flourishing made evident in a variety of ways in dance. Having concluded both the etymological and conceptual analyses of resilience, I will now turn in this chapter’s final section to the construction of resilience as a Move of Figuration and its application to the seven members of the seven families of dance.

Construction and Application of (Re)silience to the Members of the Families

Synthesizing the etymological analyses of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* and the conceptual analyses of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* and Butler’s “Gender is Burning,” I now offer the full definition of the fourth and final Move of Figuration.

(re)silience: aesthetically militant, madness-impersonating, flourishing recirculation

To rehearse the insights elaborated above, resilience is aesthetically militant because it is a constant combat against violent and oppressive forces (Fanon), it is madness-impersonating in that it taps into a relentless, schizophrenic energy directed against late capitalist norms (Deleuze and Guattari), and it is a flourishing recirculation in that it finds well-being in accepting, while constantly modifying, the circular nature of both itself and reality (Butler).

To connect (re)silience to other theoretical discourses on dance, it is closely related to (a) Laban's Movement Analysis' concept of "Time," which involves the alternative qualities of "sudden" and "sustained"; (b) Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's concept of "linear" movement quality, which involves the use of the dancer's body to create abstract geometric lines, which in turn requires years of grueling training to develop and maintain; and (c) Suzanne Langer's concept of "the dynamic line," the series of sounds a choreographer/dancer makes, either aloud or in the mind, correlated with the movements of the choreography. (For example, the dynamic line for a basic "step-ball-change" in tap dancing might be performed as the series of phonemes "Bah-pah-DAH"). To rephrase these insights in a way consonant with all three of these theoretical discourses, (re)silience constitutes the "when" dimension of analysis, the durations of the ways of the goings from starting places of any discourse/phenomenon.

My presentation of the four Moves of Figuration is thus entirely complete, having addressed the temporality of the styles of the carryings-out of communication on its dynamic, poetic basis. The critical dimension of this final aspect of Figuration for philosophy is its claim that no analysis of a practice or discourse is complete without taking into account the temporality and historicity of that practice or discourse. I will

now show how this critical function plays out in actual analyses of the seven members of the seven families of dance. As in the previous three chapters, I will begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the Move, then consider the two adjectival aspects and one substantive core of the amplified, philosophical construct. In the case of (re)silience, the commonsense meaning is the ability to continually rebound from hardships, the first amplified aspect is aesthetic militancy, the second amplified aspect is madness-impersonation, and the substantial core is flourishing recirculation.

For ballet, the commonsensical account of (re)silience leads to the stamina and endurance of dancers, who endure long rehearsals and multiple performances while still performing at their peak. (Re)silience finds ballet's aesthetic militancy in a perpetual staging, which Langer rightly emphasizes, of a war of meta-human forces, such as gods, armies, geometric shapes and emotional archetypes. (Re)silience finds ballet's madness-impersonation, relatively straightforwardly, in its presentation of (relatively) sane human beings sashaying and leaping about in a way that in any other context would appear insane. And the flourishing recirculation of ballet lies in its repeated performances, each slightly different, of the same pieces and repertoires, which continue to educate, delight and challenge a re-circulating public. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of concert dance consists its presentation of endurance against perpetual warfare, perceptually indistinguishable from insanity but necessary for an overflowing well-being.

For clogging, commonsensical resilience is the stamina of the dancers, despite the exhausting aerobic workout and fatiguing of the lower body. (Re)silience finds aesthetic

militancy in clogging's perpetual war against the both the ground, which would muffle the intricate sounds of the steps without a pounding force, and also the gravity that tries to keep the dancers' knees from rising to their appropriate height, which is at least waist-high if not higher. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that clogging is extremely repetitive, seemingly compulsive, and extremely loud, like the incessant, disruptive ranting of some severely mentally ill people. And flourishing recirculation in clogging lies in the way that the literal circles described in the air by the dancers' knees, always slightly different each time, are the sources of consistent happiness for both performers and audience. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of folk dance consists in its perpetual combat with earth and sky, a compulsive and garish circling on the ground as ground of community satisfaction.

For salsa, commonsensical resilience is the discipline required to recreate the (genuine or fabricated) sexual/romantic tension between the partners by means of a variety of songs, genres, tempos, styles, etc. (Re)silience finds aesthetic militancy in salsa's ability to sustain in each couple a kind of war for control and dominance. Madness-impersonation can be found in the ability/willingness of the couple to fabricate sexual/romantic tension with a stranger, friend or relative and/or remain on the precipice of romantic and sexual surrender each time a new song is played. And flourishing recirculation in salsa lies in how the repetition of similar moves to similar songs with similar persons on similar evenings nevertheless creates buoyancy for the societies in which it takes place. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of societal dance consists in its

repeated struggles for dominance and control, requiring quasi-delusional role-playing and intense repression, but nevertheless enjoyably greasing the wheels of society.

For Tae Kwon Do, commonsensical resilience is the discipline required to attend classes regularly and repeatedly attempt to pass tests in order to attain higher ranks of mastery. (Re)silience finds aesthetic militancy in Tae Kwon Do's very essence as a martial art; it is an art, and thus a kind of aesthetic pursuit, of excellence in combat. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that a majority of the practice of Tae Kwon Do takes place without an opponent, which would give the impression to the untrained observer that the practitioner is fighting an invisible or imagined enemy. And flourishing recirculation in Tae Kwon Do lies in the fact that victory in a real-life conflict is quite simply a modified version of the practitioner's repetitive circling through an enormous number of moves, forms and sparring techniques. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of agonistic dance consists in preparation for combat through aesthetic perfection, often by the seemingly insane avoidance of other combatants, with the goal of making actual combat nothing more than a variation on cyclically repeated practice.

For the pollen dance of the honey bee, commonsensical resilience is the indefinite repetition of enabling the search for nectar (and thereby pollen). (Re)silience finds aesthetic militancy in the pollen dance in its aesthetically-rich dramatization of the conflict between the bee and the environmental factors (such as wind, limited sunlight, etc.) that stand in the way of the forager. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that the pollen dance appears, to an uninformed human, as the spastic and confused fluttering of one bee surrounded by a group of her more controlled hive-mates. And

flourishing recirculation in the pollen dance lies in the fact the literal circles and swerves of the dancing bee make the well-being of future inhabitants of the hive possible. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of animal dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of animal dance consists in hyperbolic imitations of actual conflict, which appears random and insane beyond those familiar with the species, consisting often of physical circular movements enabling temporal cycles of life to continue.

For “falling stars,” commonsensical resilience is the unwavering movement of light across the sky, until the moment it suddenly ends in darkness. (Re)silience finds the aesthetic militancy of “falling stars” in the way that they compete with the “stationary” stars for the attention of human observers by fighting their way brightly and beautifully across the cosmos. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that “falling” in this context can suggest “falling to one’s death,” and thus a kind of “suicide” of the “star,” which likely seems crazy from a human perspective, according to which being a star is one of the greatest kinds of being imaginable. And flourishing recirculation in “falling stars” lies in the fact that their periodical “fallings” mark interesting cycles in the rhythms of the cosmos, thus increasing the stargazer’s satisfaction with existence. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of astronomical dance consists in an ongoing fight for terrestrial attention, at the cost of apparent insanity in the cosmos, which nonetheless makes human life seem more bearable.

And finally, for Neruda’s poetry, the commonsensical resilience is the poet’s prolific struggle to enunciate his world in an enormous variety of ways. (Re)silience

finds aesthetic militancy in Neruda's constant wrestling of new meanings and effects from old words and usages. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that anyone quoting Neruda's condensed, provocative and surrealistic poetry in everyday life would be thought insane. And flourishing recirculation in Neruda's poetry lies in the fact that an individual, a generation, multiple generations and even multiple cultures (through translation) can return to Neruda's work and find new meanings and new ways of being joyfully in the world. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, according to Figuration, the (re)silience of discursive dance consists in an infinite war against ordinariness funded by courting folly to pioneer new circles of reading and living well.

I will now turn, in the final chapter, to a series of four-Move holistic analyses of seven different dances, followed by a fuller exploration of the psychological and political prerequisites suggested by those Moves.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the project, I have two primary objectives. In the first section, I will offer holistic Figuration analyses (inclusive of one aspect for each of the four Moves) of seven additional members of the seven families of dance—concert, folk, societal, agonistic, animal, astronomical and discursive. In the second section, I will elaborate four psychological and political prerequisites for any flourishing society, as suggested by the foregoing philosophy of dance. In outline, this latter exploration will consist in (a) identifying at least one non-exclusively-philosophical theoretical discourse with which each prerequisite causes Figuration to align; (b) naming one theorist in the interdisciplinary field of Dance Studies whose work considers the intersection of this theoretical discourse and dance; and (c) briefly suggesting ways in which Figuration might strategically benefit this theoretical discourse in its pursuit of psychological and political virtue.

But before moving on to these four objectives, it might be helpful to take a quick look, in an easily-digestible visible form, at what has been established so far, namely the philosophically-elaborated conceptions of the four Moves of Figuration.

The Four Moves of Figuration

pos(i)ture

poetically creative

politically situated

dynamic imitation of stasis

gest)(ure

border-organizing

sympathy-manipulating

f(o)unding language

)grace(

superabundantly playful

figure/ground reversing

meta-human gifting

(re)silience

aesthetically militant

madness-impersonating

flourishing recirculation

Holistic Analyses of Seven Additional Dances

It should be noted at the beginning of this section that several of the following dances are more peripheral to my own experiences and expertise than the seven I have been analyzing throughout this project. I do not claim, therefore, that my observations regarding these new dances are perfectly accurate or complete. My primary purpose here is to allow the reader to engage with the Moves with fresh eyes, and to demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability of Figuration. I would be only too happy if others more qualified than I should come along and try their own hands (and feet) at a Figuration analysis of any of these additional dances. I have also attempted to recommend to the

reader at least one theorist from the interdisciplinary field of Dance Studies for further reading about each dance.

Classical Indian (Concert)

The pos(i)ture of classical Indian dance (and I am thinking in particular of the specific dance known as Bharata Natyam) might be found in the tension between the Aryan patriarchal aspects of Hindu practices and the female bodies that re-perform them in dance. This gender duality is also replicated in the dynamic equilibrium established between the female dancer(s) and the male drummer(s). The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in how its entrancing vocabulary of micro-gestures, especially in the hands and fingers of the dancers, helps to suspend viewers' sense of everyday life (or *samsara*) and orient them toward spiritual liberation (or *nirvana*). The)grace(of this dance might appear in the way that the dancers' bodies' assumption of abstract lines and shapes evokes non-human aspects of the cosmos, from other animals to trees to gods. And the (re)silience of this dance could be understood as the dramatization of, at one level, the struggle of the soul (or *atman*) through numerous lifetimes, and at another level, the struggle of women in particular through this one.³¹

Reggae (Folk)

The pos(i)ture of reggae dance might be found in its suspension, or at least relaxing, of the vigilant tension and inexpressible weariness of both a heritage of colonization and also a present of cultural imperialism. The gest)(ure of this dance might

³¹ For in-depth analyses of *Bharata Natyam*, see the work of Avanthi Meduri, perhaps beginning with the essay, "*Bharata Natyam – What are You?*"

lie in the perpetual looseness of limbs and smooth motions of the dancers, in the fact that there seems to be no meaningful dancer/audience division, and in the way that the pervasive sense of communal freedom thereby established constitutes a chain of bodily memory extending to before the Middle Passage. The)grace(of this dance might appear in carefree indifference to the stresses and strains of (especially black) lives, achieved through harmonization with an omnipotent and benevolent deity. And the (re)silience of this dance could be understood as its non-violent strategy, similar to that of Stoicism or Daoism, consisting in survival through adaptability and an emphasis on controlling one's perspective (instead of challenging what are perceived as uncontrollable circumstances).³²

Swing (Societal)

The pos(i)ture of swing dancing, as popularly practiced today by (especially) college students, might be found in the way that socially rejected dancers affirm an early-twentieth century cultural form to compensate for their rejection by the mainstream and also thereby minimize their social awkwardness in the interests of finding sex/romance. The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in attempts to communicate effortless physical and interpersonal prowess under the guise of an effortful mastery of an antiquated set of dance techniques. The)grace(of this dance might appear in its foregrounding of the past, silliness and jerky movement style in order that the silliness and awkwardness of the dancers as persons in the present might appear respectable and smooth by contrast. And the (re)silience of this dance could be understood as the (surprisingly successful)

³² For a more in-depth analysis of reggae, see David Kapp's essay, "Reggae Against Racism...but What about Sexism?"

persistence of socially marginalized persons in attaining a sense of community belonging, by pretending to be persons in roles that would make the dancers even more ostracized if they were to take on these roles in everyday life.³³

Basketball (Agonistic)

The pos(i)ture of basketball, given that it is a team sport, might be found in the way that the model for the competing teams is presumably inspired by army combat, even though the sport was invented (by Dr. James Naismith) to maintain the physical fitness of his YMCA kids. The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in the way that players playing offense (typically) try to distract their opponents with other parts of their bodies, especially the face, to prevent the opponents from guessing their scoring strategy. The)grace(of this dance might appear in the fact that expertise in simulated combat between teams is garnered through intensive training, which is advocated on the basis of its physical and psychological benefits to the individual players, and which makes them into superhuman athletes by cultivating the comparatively superior strength, speed and reflexes of non-human animals (such as lions or eagles). And the (re)silience of this dance could be symbolized by the indefinitely many hours spent alone in front of the basket, perfecting the graceful arcing of the ball into the net, so that such aesthetic perfection will be indistinguishably present during actual competition.³⁴

³³ For in-depth historical analyses of swing, as well as other similar dances, see Marshall and Jean Stearns' classic, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*.

³⁴ For an intriguing exploration of the dancing aesthetics of basketball, see John Updike's descriptions of the protagonist in his classic novel, *Rabbit, Run*.

Cat-Playing-with-a-Laser-Pointer (Animal)

The pos(i)ture of the way a cat plays with a phenomenon such as the point of light from a laser pointer might be found in the way that an entirely artificial social setting, including a human being and a socially-produced human artifact (the pointer) nevertheless allows the cat to hone its intelligent survival skills. The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in the meaningful cross-species communication the dance engenders between human and feline, via the pointer, in order to enhance the feline's ability to reduce its unintentional cross-species communication to its living prey. The)grace(of this dance might appear in the way that the staging of the cat's predation both highlights the cat's participation in this genetically-vital practice and also reveals the comparatively small importance of any one individual human's problems. And the (re)silience of this dance could be understood as the unquenchable persistence of predatory activities in an otherwise domesticated animal, which, as such, and in such a context, appears crazy in its ever-circling closing-in on its shining red prey, even though without this activity the cat would likely die, along with the rest of its species, outside domestication.

Sun (Astronomical)

The pos(i)ture of the daily apparent movement of the sun through the sky might be found in the mistake, useful to polis-dwelling humans, of perceiving the massive central object around which the earth revolves as a small peripheral object revolving around the earth. The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in the fact that false motion is attributed to the living star (the sun) due to the massive and rapid circling of the stardust (the earth) that is the home of the bits of stardust (humans) making the attribution—a

charade of starborn by starborn for starborn, a shining republic of deception. The)grace(of this dance might appear in the way that this motion of the earth sustaining all known life in the cosmos is reduced by human perception to an object that can be obscured by a finger and ignored indoors, even though that object, despite its drastically reduced apparent size and power, can nevertheless reorient a human being in one instant, through its shining, to nature and the divine. And the (re)silience of this dance could be understood as the sun's incessant struggle to be seen by humans for what it is, at the cost of symbolizing the apparently inane, seemingly infinite and possibly meaningless repetition of daily existence, but with the benefit of symbolizing also the reasons for human beings to soldier on in existence.

Hegel (Discursive)

The pos(i)ture of what John Lachs (among others) terms Hegel's "dance of the concepts" (which characterization is a partial inspiration for these analyses) might be found in how Hegel's difficult and often opaque language, in boring black and white print, often covers over both that language's having been inspired in part by political revolutionaries like Napoleon Bonaparte, and also that language's representation of limit-experiences, including such phenomena as Protestant sermons and provocative sculpture.³⁵ The gest)(ure of this dance might lie in the ways that Hegel's circumstantially-situated body physically marked pages to reveal connections among

³⁵ For a few other examples of the use of dance as a metaphor for Hegel philosophy in general (and his dialectical method in particular) see Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, 215; Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel's Theory of the Imagination*, 40; John W. Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion*, 71; Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, 277; Werner Hamacher, *Pleroma: Reading with Hegel*, 183; Christopher M. Gamerchak, *The Sunday of the Negative: Reading Bataille Reading Hegel*, 125; and Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx' Method*.

words and phrases never realized before and awaiting discovery. The)grace(of this dance might appear in how the democratizing power of Hegel's language, freed from practicality by his academic position, brings in virtually every aspect of reality, and is thus able to show—even though it is a human product—the meta-human forces that make humans and our language possible in the first place. And the re)silience of this dance might be understood as its undying resistance to ordinary expression and thought, at the cost of its appearing ridiculous, in order to open up new and better way of reading and living for the dedicated reader.

Psychological and Political Prerequisites for Flourishing

As I noted at the end of Chapter One, what I mean by the psychological and political prerequisites for ideal flourishing—understood as necessarily inclusive of dance flourishing—are the minimum conditions under which it seems probable that an individual or a community could fully support dance. And by this I mean the absence of obstacles to, as well as the presence of facilitators of, every community member's ability to engage in dance practices of his or her choosing. One example of such an obstacle, and a common one in this culture, is a parent's decision that his or her son should not be allowed to dance because dance is too effeminate and might incline him to homosexuality. Another example would be the recent decision of a principal in Mississippi to cancel a junior high prom (and thereby prevent the occurrence of dancing) because one of the school's students expressed the intention of bringing her lesbian partner to the dance.

As these examples illustrate, dance, given its irreducibly social and political dimension (since it has to at least be taught by someone else, and usually at a business or event in the public sphere), requires for its actualization both positive and negative sociopolitical conditions. Consequently, an attempt to construct a philosophy of dance from the scattered treatments of aspects of dance in the history of philosophy must address not only the theoretical or philosophical, but also the practical or political, prerequisites of, and obstacles to, the continued existence of its subject matter. Put differently, a comprehensive philosophy of dance, just like a comprehensive philosophy of architecture or sculpture, needs to address the materials used in its art, and the materials of dance include human beings whose bodies and minds are formed for the possibility, and liberated from the impossibility, of engaging in dance.

I will now briefly re-summarize these conditions for, first, the individual, and second, the community. For individuals, (1a) pos(i)ture suggests that individuals perpetually move and change, and thus requires a psychological preparedness for change and capacity to adapt flexibly; (2a) gest)(ure suggests that psychological health requires physical health, and thus requires bodily stimulation and discipline; (3a))grace(suggests that permeability to the environment is beneficial, and thus requires the promotion of environments with which fusion is desirable; and (4a) (re)silience suggests that cycles and patterns will always be repeated, and thus requires a tolerance of repetition and compulsion per se, though not of any particular form thereof.

For communities, (1b) pos(i)ture suggests that stability is a function of tolerating perpetual and shifting tensions, and thus requires societal tolerance at the fundamental level of human embodiment; (2b) gest)(ure suggests that both nonverbal and verbal forms

of linguistic expression are crucial release valves for bodily drives, and thus requires that society protect its citizens' freedom of both nonverbal and verbal expression; (3b) grace suggests that aesthetic flourishing requires an open and holistic comportment to one's borders, and thus requires that a society not compartmentalize and/or neglect the aesthetic aspects of life; and (4b) (re)silience suggests that, given that a resurgence of dangers (including dangers from within) is inevitable, a resurgence of protections against such dangers must be guaranteed for its citizens. I will now look at each of these requirements in detail.

Starting with the psychological prerequisites, the foremost friend of prerequisite 1a—which might be termed **flexible adaptation**—among non-exclusively-philosophical theoretical movements might be the relatively new interdisciplinary field of Disability Studies. For the unfamiliar reader, a good introduction to the field can be found in *The Disability Studies Reader*. And for a good example of the explicit intersection of Disability Studies and dance, see the work of Ann Cooper Albright, including her essay “Moving Across Difference: Dance and Disability,” in her book *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. Potential support that Figuration might offer to Disability Studies, organized around the four Moves, include its undermining of the appearance of any foundation as permanent, stable and perfect, including the bodies and minds of “healthy” people; its emphasis on the centrality of bodily influence, even on those whose bodies seem no direct hindrance to their happiness; its stressing of the role of environments in shaping lives, thus undermining attributions of essential inferiority to certain persons; and its illumination of the ways that

compulsive repetitions of various kinds make the appearance of “ordinary life” possible, even as these repetitions obscure their own operations.

The foremost friends of prerequisite 2a—perhaps, **bodily wisdom**—at the level of other intellectual movements are probably the theoretical strands of what the NCCAM (U.S. National Center for Complementary Alternative Medicine) has termed “Mind-body interventions.” Included in this classification is the Feldenkrais Method of “somatic re-education,” as promoted and practiced by pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman, author of *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. In addition to referencing dance almost 200 percent more often than the average classic of Western aesthetics, its dedication reads “For Three Dancing Graces.” Furthermore, in his preface Shusterman explains that he converted to Pragmatist aesthetics (from Adorno) while teaching a seminar half-full of dance majors. One form of support that Figuration might be able to offer these Mind-body interventions is the additional support of the twelve principal philosophers from whom Figuration is constituted—namely Nietzsche, Aristotle, Plato, Kristeva, Condillac, Mead, Schiller, Dewey, Avicenna, Fanon, Deleuze and Butler—in terms of both theoretical resources and, perhaps more strategically importantly, the greater perceived legitimacy that philosophy seems to confer on any discourse that draws on it.

One important theoretical friend of prerequisite 3a—maybe, **virtuous environments**—would probably be Environmental Ethics. A good anthology from this field is *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. For in-depth analyses, see the work of David Wood, including the essay, “What is Ecophenomenology?” from his book, *The Step Back: Ethics and Politics After*

Deconstruction. Potential support that Figuration might offer to Environmental Ethics include its definition of dance as a family of human-transcending phenomena; its account of humans as dynamic equilibria, and thus closer to non-human dynamic equilibria; its de-privileging of disembodied mentality and language, given their historical justification of unsustainable practices; its central emphasis on environments in regard to aesthetics; and its valorizing of certain compulsive repetitions even though compulsive repetition per se (inclusive of various so-called addictions and anxiety disorders) is traditionally stigmatized in humans and used to distance humans from non-human reality.

The primary theoretical friend of prerequisite 4a—**compulsion tolerance**—would probably be “Anti-Psychiatry,” the two central figures of which are R. D. Laing and Michel Foucault. The best place to both start and linger in this movement is Foucault’s classic text, *Madness and Civilization*. Figuration’s primary support for Anti-Psychiatry would probably be the same as the one it is intended to offer to postmodernism in general, namely, a positive construction in the wake of the negative critiques of deconstruction. Every basis is constantly dynamic, so there is little risk of foundationalism; every signification presupposes a materialist production, so there is little risk of anti-embodiment idealism; organisms and environments intermix, so there is little risk of atomism; and all activity is caught up in infinite repetitions, so there is no totalizing, external end. If persuaded that Figuration is thus invulnerable to the traditional maladies of constructive philosophy (albeit by walking a tightrope over madness-inducing abysses), postmodernism might be willing to welcome Figuration into its family and thus offer the seeker of truth more than just the standard postmodern fare—paralyzing silence in the void.

Moving on to the political prerequisites, two major theoretical friends of prerequisite 1b—*embodiment tolerance*—should be Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory. Good introductions can be found in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, and *The Essential Feminist Reader*. For in-depth analyses of the intersection of dance, gender and race, see Susan Leigh Foster’s fascinating book, *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*. Figuration’s support for Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory might include its identification of the human/body as necessarily a site of negotiated tensions and identities; its emphasis on the bodily particularity and situatedness of even the most abstract expressions; its vision of aesthetic flourishing as requiring sensitivity and permeability to politicized environments; and its unwillingness to accept accounts of instantaneous change ignorant of the stubborn resurgence of habituated ways of being.

The foremost friend of prerequisite 2b—**expressive freedom**—is perhaps Queer Studies, a good introduction to which can be found in the anthology, *Queer Theory*, and a classic example of which is Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*. A recent example of the intersection of Queer Studies and dance is Fiona Buckland’s book, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-making*. Figuration’s potential support for Queer Studies might include its conception of individual identity as based in a creative and effortful performance; its attentiveness to the ways that every abstract expression covers over bodily drives; its emphasis on the lightness and playfulness necessary for an aesthetically successful life; and its insistence that suppressed phenomena are always busy beneath the surface and waiting for opportunities to make themselves known.

One prominent friend of prerequisite 2c—**aesthetic holism**—would perhaps be Communitarianism. Two classic texts that inform this political ideology are Charles Taylor’s book, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. And although it is not about conventional dance, Robert Booth Fowler’s book on the history of the concept of community in U.S. American politics is perhaps significant merely from its title, *The Dance with Community*. Perhaps this could be interpreted as an invitation for further investigation. In the meantime, Figuration’s initial contribution might include its emphasis on the political situatedness of the bases of all phenomena, including citizens; its positing of a core sympathetic relationship among organisms as a precondition for communication; its insistence on the necessity of something beyond humanity for aesthetic flourishing; and its diagnosis of the militancy and collective madness of societal survival.

Finally, one prominent friend of the last prerequisite 2d—**resurgent critique**—would perhaps be Democratic Theory, the classic foundation of which is Robert Dahl’s *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. For an explicit consideration of how dance functions in relationship to a democracy such as the United States, see Randy Martin’s book, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. The potential support to Democratic Theory of Figuration in particular might include its emphasis on the necessity for a flourishing society of the capacity for dynamic responsiveness, a perpetual ability to renegotiate ever-changing borders, a willingness to shift the nature of the debate when the environment changes, and a constant preparedness to engage in internal warfare to protect or establish political freedoms.

Abstracting from these eight prerequisites, in the interest of economy and mnemonics, and at a level for which the psychological and political are only negligibly distinct, (1) pos(i)ture valorizes/demands tension, (2) gest)(ure valorizes/demands embodiment, (3))grace(valorizes/demands permeability, and (4) (re)silience valorizes/demands repetitiveness.

A Necessarily and Ideally Dancing Society

Perhaps the best way to synthesize the sweeping claims of this final chapter, and connect them back to the overall goals of this project, would be to offer a sketch of what a society reshaped in the form of Figuration might be like. I want to begin with three preliminary observations. First, given how broadly the concept of dance is used in this project, it should be noted that an ideally dancing society for Figuration would be one which danced in every aspect, and in every register, of its being. This means that each of the seven families of dance would have to be actively involved. Therefore, the descriptions that follow will be organized around the seven families of dance. Second, although I have argued for the relevance of dance at the very beginning of the project, and have discussed the potential benefits of dance at various moments throughout it, I have not yet made a case for the necessity of dance. Why dance specifically, instead of painting, or rock-climbing? Thus, the first half of each of the following descriptions explains why dance is necessary for the aspect of reality named in each family of dance—such as concert performance in general for “concert dance.” And third, many of the differences between this ideal society and the contemporary United States do not

involve objective states of affairs, but rather intersubjective perceptions and awareness. In other words, we are already halfway there, objectively, to an ideally dancing society, but until the various dancings that make it up are recognized, acknowledged, supported, and celebrated, the existence of the practices themselves are insufficient. Thus, the descriptions involve both alternative ways of understanding and appreciating existing dance practices as well as pragmatic suggestions for concrete change.

It is necessary that concert performance include concert dance because, firstly, it is always already necessarily there, at least insofar as any artistic performance requires the disciplined movements of the human body. This is especially the case even where it is especially invisible, namely musical performances. The rigid posture of the woodwind section of the symphony orchestra is nevertheless the tensely-held posture of a performer, and the passionate gesticulations of the conductor are more obviously so. This minimalism of so-called classical music performance also suggests the second point of this necessity, however, which is that the more dancing is explicitly involved, the larger will be the reach of the concert performance. In the comparatively more popular salsa band, for example, at least one of the musicians/singers actually dances salsa on stage during the performance. Though there is much disagreement as to which kind of concerts people should be attending, and which performers should be supported, it seems universally acknowledged that patronizing concerts is a good thing, and finding a greater role for dancing in those concerts would do just that. This emphasis on embodiment would also facilitate greater tolerance toward variously embodied persons along axes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and thereby remove obstructions

to democratic practices that could be based more on ideas and arguments than on irrational prejudices.

Although Figuration's ideally dancing society might feature more concert dance, the kinds of dances performed would be more responsive to, and rewarding for, the interests and tastes of its communities than is currently the case. This is not to say that traditional concert dance, including ballet, would not have a place in such a society, only that such a place would occupy a smaller proportion of the total space allotted to concert dance as a whole (including in terms of community funding). Ballet, for example, would become (recognized as) a more specialized practice, for a specialized audience, and be funded and supported as such. The primary difference, then, would be an image makeover, whereby the populace would no longer associate dance performances with exclusively so-called "high-brow" entertainment. The new concert dance would be to contemporary concert dance what rock-and-roll concerts are to opera performances, namely, the former phenomenon would remain more prominent as long as it matched the wishes of the community. This would, in turn, increase the egalitarian spirit of the polis by weakening the importance and privilege of class.

It is necessary that folk art include folk dancing primarily because dancing is already central to the folk art of most of the marginalized communities in contemporary U. S. culture, including hip-hop and jazz in African-American communities, step dancing in Irish communities, and disco and pop, among other forms, in gay communities. A greater recognition of the aesthetic value of dance would facilitate a greater appreciation for those marginalized communities given that they have historically engaged in dance,

which would thus contribute to greater harmony and social cohesion among mainstream and marginalized communities in our society.

Figuration's ideally dancing society would also be erupting with new and varied forms of contemporary folk dance, focusing on the new forms that are being created in actual communities today, such as reggaeton and various other hip-hop forms. It would also encourage a revivification of old and forgotten folk dances from all over the world, by recreating them for contemporary contexts and attempting to fuse them with existing dances. Perhaps competitions could be arranged in which neighborhoods and towns would exercise local pride and flex their creative muscles to celebrate the distinctive movement styles of diverse locales. This, in turn, would encourage community involvement and solidarity in the polis.

It is necessary that societal rituals, leisure activities and recreation include societal dance primarily because of the considerable improvement to both physical and mental health that social dancing can provide. This is especially true as opposed to the currently more popular varieties of formal social gatherings, such as hanging out at bars, playing cards, and attending parties and dinner parties without dancing. Most of the worst health problems facing the contemporary United States, including heart disease and diabetes, are exacerbated, and often even created, by obesity, sedentary lifestyles and poor diets; regular dancing naturally leads to weight loss, it is necessarily non-sedentary, and the enjoyment it produces reduces the desire and opportunity for comfort or emotional eating. And exercise regimens and stimulating social interaction are also frequently prescribed to improve psychological functioning and well-being, even among those labeled severely mentally ill. A polis whose citizens are physically healthy would be

more productive and better able to flourish through major crises such as natural disasters and wartime conditions. And one whose citizens are psychologically healthy would bring greater peace and harmony, along with more unimpeded decision-making, which in democratic societies includes decisions at the polls.

Figuration's ideally dancing society would naturally encourage a wide array of societal dances, including dances popular for each living generation as well as dances that went out of style generations ago. This would encourage a greater historical awareness and feeling of inter-generational solidarity (via the revival of previous generations' dances) as well as creativity (in the creation and fusion of new dances). The emphasis would be on a highly pluralized environment of clubs and organizations where people could try out various forms and experience unique ambiances. If all major social organizations, including churches, community centers, and bars, would be willing to incorporate some form of dancing entertainment into their schedules just one night per week, then this would be relatively easy to achieve. And as mentioned above, a polis in which more of the citizenry dances is one which would be healthier, saner and more harmonious, active, and effectively deliberative.

It is necessary that agonistic activities be understood as including agonistic dance for three main reasons. First, for a stereotypical athlete in a mainstream sport, such as a linebacker on a high school football team, understanding his sport as an aesthetic pursuit defined in part by its graceful movements would presumably increase his tolerance for, and appreciation of, other dancers, such as the performers in his school's theater program. Second, a greater emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of sporting activity could help shake up the current canon of sports, wherein team sports involving playing with balls are

“real” sports, and anything done by individuals, such as tennis, or not involving balls, such as most gymnastics, is only peripherally a sport. This would also help break down the problematic gender dynamics of sports today, as women on average seem to tend to be more interested in non-orthodox sports (as currently understood). Third, this aesthetic understanding of sports could also be used pedagogically to develop classes in school curricula that teach sports by presenting it as a kind of dance, thus reaching a wider audience for the beneficial effects of sports, the members of which might be intimidated or turned off by misogynistic, homophobic and otherwise discriminatory approaches. This would of course contribute to the tolerance and open-mindedness of the polis.

Given Figuration’s definition of agonistic dance, most of the activities that fall under this heading could hardly be more popular in contemporary U. S. society, especially professional and college-level sports. Thus, as already stated, the primary challenge here for Figuration’s ideally dancing society would be pedagogical, teaching people to orient themselves to such activities as, *additionally*, forms of dance. This approach would obviously be beneficial at least in terms of improved physical fitness and bodily confidence, especially in regards to children in the educational system. And, as Dewey famously believed, the education/socialization of children is the most effective locus for energy aimed at meaningful political change.

It is necessary that animal activity be understood as including animal dance for two primary reasons. First, it offers a broader and more secure foundation for connecting human animals to our non-human relatives than most existing strategies. In the case of language, for example, there are far fewer animal species that engage in linguistic communication (mostly just mammals) than there are that engage in dancing behavior

(including even invertebrates). And even for animals that we can understand as communicating through language, it seems to me that it is primarily through their movement styles, or dances, that we feel the most resonant kinship with them. Think, for example, of the way a cat lazily crosses a room, while stretching, after a nap; does one not feel more connected to the cat while watching that behavior than when hearing the cat meowing in the next room? Second, this enhanced connection between humans and other animals would intensify our society's feelings of moral outrage at pervasive animal abuse and neglect, and perhaps even facilitating meaningful change.

Similarly to the case of agonistic dance, it is difficult to imagine, and virtually impossible to produce, more dancing activity in the rest of the animal kingdom, therefore Figuration's ideally dancing society would differ from contemporary U. S. society primarily in terms of an orientation towards animal life as dancing-being. The primary benefit here, as stated above, would be to help close the perceived gap between human and non-human being, thereby facilitating a more holistic, sustainable, and environmentally ethical relationship between that human society and the rest of nature. If we are more essentially (or at least originally) dancers than humans, then all of the other dancing animals on earth are members of our family in a much more resounding and meaningful way than we typically think. This would also encourage a more integrated form of human and non-human habitats, as the human dancers would presumably feel a natural longing to be surrounded by more of their dancing kin. Urban planning and architectural design in the polis could conceivably be affected as well.

It is necessary that astronomical activity be understood as including astronomical dance primarily because it offers a more effective way of making us feel connected to

celestial objects than just thinking of them as made up of the same kinds of matter, namely by thinking of them as engaged in the same sort of activity. If the other parts of the cosmos, even those that are inanimate and light years away, are circling with their own distinctive patterns, because pulled by similar forces, then we have less reason to feel metaphysically lost and alone. When we dance, we engage our entire being, just as the planets and stars do in their continuous dancing. And a metaphysically-secure polis is one with greater stability, harmony and solidarity.

Even more so than agonistic or animal dance, the prevalence of astronomical dance in the cosmos is, probably fortunately, out of human hands. Figuration's ideally dancing society, though, would recognize more thoroughly this dancing being of the celestial bodies and celebrate it as such. The benefit here, as stated above, is a deeper sense of connectedness to the cosmos, which could do for the metaphysical angst of human beings what I have argued an awareness that animal dance is all around us could do for our sense of environmental isolation and alienation. This perspective would also presumably offer a more intimate and relational motivation for the study of astronomy and the rest of the sciences, since if even barren crags of rock and mind-bogglingly large spheres of plasma are dancers like we are, then studying them is no dry investigation of cold alterity, but instead a self-illuminating exploration of our shared being in the world. And a more scientifically-oriented polis, all other things being equal, is one better prepared to adapt in flexible and creative ways to inevitable change.

It is necessary that speech and writing be understood as including, and include more, discursive dance primarily because the pursuit of a physically-oriented virtue in a mentally-oriented domain facilitates greater mind-body integration and holism, which in

turn contributes to a more stable, satisfying and aesthetically pleasing polis. Stable, because when the mind and body are in harmony, there is less disruptive and erratic behavior created by switching between conflicting actions motivated by the body and mind separately. Satisfying, because engaging in an activity dominated by mind would not require neglecting the sensibilities of the body. And aesthetically pleasing, because the more the senses can be involved and stimulated in our daily lives, including even our inner monologues and personal communications, the more pleasure we take in our own lives and create in the lives of others in our communities.

Finally, figuration's ideally dancing society would not only encourage dance as a topic for writing, but also place a much greater emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of writing and speech—not just in poetry, but in fiction, non-fiction and even journalism, political addresses and skillful conversation. It would also offer an additional incentive to the pursuit of abstract studies such as philosophy in the polis, given the knowledge that there is a kind of attainable grace and beautiful prowess to be pursued, not just alongside, but as an enhancement and perfection of, the dedication to truth.

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