ROYAL CENTRAL
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Critical passivity

a reparative feminist approach to dance criticism

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A thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London

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Abstract

This thesis choreographs critical passivity as a reparative theory for feminist criticism. I argue that critical passivity reorients discursive critical practices towards affective, bodily knowledges. I theorize critical passivity through an attention to how these often-feminized knowledges emerge within and through theorizing about watching dance. I articulate critical passivity through my close readings to reveal how one is moved by affective, material encounters with dance. I offer critical passivity as both a theory and as a feminist critical disposition. Critical passivity imagines a feminist approach to dance criticism that is reparative, affective, and moving. I contend that critical passivity imagines hopeful futures for feminist thinking that resist how white, patriarchal institutions historize, weaponize, or exorcise feminist thoughts and actions.

My research methods primarily draw upon reparative approaches to feminist critical practices, which I blend with expanded concepts of choreography. These modes resist patriarchal, logocentric thinking to center feminized knowledges that are otherwise epistemologically marginalized. Drawing upon Eve Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading, I similarly consider how critical passivity resists paranoid readings in favor of more localized, reparative readings. I draw upon femininity studies and femme theory to conceptualize passivity as reparative and hopeful. This feminist and queer scholarship offers an alternative lineage for theorizing femininity. I argue that passivity offers an empathetic critical ethos that promotes critical strategies for softness, surrender, surprise, and openness.

I utilize close reading in this thesis as a reflexive, iterative praxis predicated on openness and care rather than foreclosure and domination. I conceptualize spectating dance as "reading" dance to collapse distinctions between performance and text. I draw upon deconstruction and postcritique to maintain a necessary ambivalence towards paranoid feminist and dance-based critical practices. I suggest that critical passivity's ambivalent disposition situates reparative modes within and alongside paranoid readings to imagine hopeful futures for feminist criticism.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many peers and colleagues, though perhaps no support has been more crucial than that of my supervisors. Thanks to both Dr. Diana Damian Martin and Prof. Stephen Farrier for your continued and tireless support throughout the course of this thesis. I would be lost without your guidance, patience, and friendship.

I am similarly grateful for the various forms of support that senior colleagues and staff in the Research department have provided me. Many thanks go to Prof. Experience Bryon and Prof. Kate Elswit, both of whose guidance during the early stages of this project proved invaluable, and special thanks to Prof. Tony Fisher for encouraging me to undertake this PhD in the first place.

My sincerest thanks are also due to my peers, colleagues, and critical friends who listened to my thoughts, read my writing, shared their ideas with me, created professional opportunities for me, encouraged me, and showed friendship to me throughout this project. Special thanks go to Rachel Vogler, Nic Farr, Tilney Brune, Clio Unger, Dr. Joe Parslow, Molly Wilson, Dr. Rachel Cockburn, Dr. Farokh Soltani, Jo Leask, Dr. Sherrill Gow, Laura Kressly, Dr. Cathy Sloane, Laura Krauser, and so many others.

Lastly but certainly not least, my deepest thanks and love go to my friends and family who have supported me and cared for me outside of and perhaps even despite my long commitment to doing a PhD. There is no way to thank all of you adequately for the love that you have shown and continue to show me. I am and will always be grateful for all of you. Special thanks go to my friends and chosen sisters Grace, Aneesha, Katie, Sula, Sophie, Shaadi, Elly, and Helen, just to name a few, my sister Chelsea and her fiancé Vadim, my mom, and my dad, who passed away while I was writing this thesis. Dad, I am sorry that you never got to read this, but I know you would have told me that I used too many big words.

Introduction

The project of the thesis

This thesis explores how critical passivity emerges as a new, original theory for reparative feminist criticism and how it interacts with my critical encounters with dance. This exploration emerges out of a desire to resist how Anglo-European societies and institutions have increasingly trended towards modes of thinking that secure, imply, or otherwise benefit from sexist, racist, and anti-LGBTQ+ policies and practices. North American and British universities particularly have frequently co-opted or undermined feminist epistemic paradigms and their revolutionary desires. Alongside this, North American and British universities have increasingly moved towards policies and structures that fragment, isolate, and marginalize feminist, queer, and anti-racist thinking. As American indigenous scholars like K. Wayne Yang have noted, North American and by extension British universities are not just sites of education or knowledge exchange but also "land-capitalizing machines" that ensure settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism (paperson, 2017). American and British universities can be read as an active component in how white nationalist governments legitimize and enact patriarchal, colonial, and heteronormative control through neoliberal capitalist and neocolonial apparatuses. It should also be noted that these same universities can still harbor anti-institutional activity (paperson, 2017); however, as British feminist scholars like Alison Phipps and Liz McDonnell have argued, North American and British universities often co-opt liberatory feminist activities and twist them into tools of institutional discrimination and marginalization (Phipps & McDonnell, 2021: 2). What some scholars call a crisis of critique or even a crisis of the university gestures to how North American and British universities often weaponize or neutralize feminist, queer, and antiracist resistance to institutional coercion, isolation, and discrimination. This demonstrates in turn a growing need for hopeful futures for feminist theories that seek to revitalize rather than historize, weaponize, or exorcise feminist thoughts and actions. This thesis imagines critical passivity as one such hopeful future

for feminist theory that aims to foster and to support resistance to institutional forces that ensure and protect white, patriarchal, and heteronormative control over knowledge and how it is produced.

Through my thinking around passivity as a theory for critical practice, I aim to invigorate and to support existing work in feminist studies by engaging with feminist thinking that centers bodily knowledges and reparative critical modes. I invoke bodily knowledges here as a way of expressing felt, material, and experiential ways of thinking. These models for thinking and being in the world are often feminized, meaning that they are subsequently dismissed, marginalized, or even excluded from dominant critical paradigms. This project resists paranoid modes that attempt to frame theory through domination, fear, or suspicion. This resistance reflects two desires. Firstly, my theorizing embraces what is feminine or feminized about bodily knowledges, rethinking them as reparative modes of feminist thinking and being-in-the-world. Secondly, I invoke the marginalization of these feminized modes of knowing to call for a more ethical engagement with genres of theory and criticism. As a theorist however, I cannot avoid engaging entirely with those same paranoid critical modes that I wish to resist. In thinking through critical passivity, I maintain some critical ambivalence to paranoid thinking. This ambivalence creates critical space for me to negotiate how both paranoid and reparative modes appear and disappear within my reading and writing. As a critical position, this recognizes how both paranoid and reparative thinking work alongside rather than against one another. As an ethical position though, this ambivalence demands that I maintain a self-reflexive awareness of how I negotiate the limits of paranoid and reparative modes throughout this thesis. My original approach to feminist critique necessarily engages with paranoid critical modes and how they inform reparative modes while simultaneously imagining how reparative approaches offer new, hopeful futures for feminist thinking and practice.

I wish to approach critical passivity from a more tender, intimate, and haphazard negotiation with these two seemingly counterpoint modes of critique. The slow unfurling of my theory of critical passivity throughout this project intentionally negotiates the active delay between paranoid and reparative approaches to meaning-making. To achieve this, my writing throughout this thesis cultivates a slower temporality that

engenders moments of surprise through moments of strategic withdrawal. Taking time and enjoying one's reading constitutes a reparative approach to close reading that acknowledges how critical practices cultivate affective space-times of thought. Surprise and withdrawal invoke some of these affective qualities and intensities of critical passivity's temporal and spatial relationship to critical thinking. The time and place of thinking acknowledges the relationship between how thoughts occur within a body and how one's thinking unfolds through writing and reading. This means that critical passivity navigates the temporality and proximity of critique through an attention to slower, affective body-times of thoughts. The rhythms and tempos of critical passivity require one to negotiate how one makes sense through one's body in space and over a period of time.

Critical passivity can be understood as offering slower and closer enactments across various modes of coming to knowing. This approach allows my writing to unfold and to withdraw as one moves along with it. Critical passivity must invoke this ponderous, slower temporality of sense-making to encourage a close, durational attention to one's affective, bodily synthesis of thoughts. Across each of these chapters, thoughts emerge, disappear, and reappear at various intervals. When I introduce and explore concepts, I allow them to iterate upon each other with each new chapter, shifting them circuitously while evolving them with each new reflection. This creates opportunities for surprise as well, allowing me to be surprised by my own thoughts and in turn reframe them with the context of each new discovery. I write in this way to respect what happens when one takes the time to be close with, to return to, or to dwell on one's thoughts, even when that dwelling becomes haphazard, temporary, or incomplete.

Critical passivity both frames and unframes this research then: it informs my usual methodological impulses while simultaneously requiring me to surrender my critical paranoia to rework those impulses into opportunities for surprise. To do this, my critical lineage for passivity makes use of both Levinasian thinking around radical passivity and decolonial, queer, and feminist thinking around bodily knowledge. However, my emergent theory of critical passivity makes explicit use of feminist critical modes that emphasize repair. Critical passivity can be understood as a reparative mode, though this project also examines some of the limits of this characterization in later

chapters. Critical passivity manifests foremost throughout this thesis as a critical endeavor that seeks to bridge gaps between various forms of both paranoid and reparative feminist thinking and the critical practices that these same epistemologies both resist and utilize. I haunt but do not desire easy reoccupation of previously entrenched disciplinary lines between paranoid and reparative modes. Recognizing critical passivity as both the process and the emergent quality of this research reveals how bodies of knowledge and knowing bodies affect one another. This recognition necessitates that I maintain uneasy relations to hard divisions and unyielding epistemic grounds to negotiate both what is regenerative and what is harmful about paranoid and reparative critical practices.

My thinking here draws largely upon Eve Sedgwick's thinking on reparative and paranoid reading. Sedgwick articulates the difference between these modes as a difference of intention: the paranoid mode lashes out against a source of harm while a reparative mode attempts to reform the source of harm into something pleasing (Sedgwick, 2003: 145). This is why Sedgwick equates reparative modes with love and hope, as they attempt to reform or to transform that which it finds broken or harmful (Sedgwick, 2003: 128, 146). On the other hand, Sedgwick links paranoid modes with conspiratorial thinking, exposure, and harm avoidance. Paranoid positions assume that there is always some "enemy" who lives "out there" and therefore must be exposed and subsequently defended against or avoided (Sedgwick, 2003: 144-145)[1]. Sedgwick extends this to her characterizations of weak theory and strong theory as well, where weak and strong signify various affective intensities. Per Sedgwick's reading of Silvan Thomkins' thinking, strong theories are "humiliation-fear" theories that organize themselves around the avoidance of pain and negative feelings (Sedgwick, 2003: 133, 145). Weak theories by contrast are about seeking pleasure and other positive feelings, and they encourage artistic modes and speculative thinking (Sedgwick, 2003: 137, 145).

[1] This is not to say that paranoid modes are not also a form of love. Through a reading of Foucauldian paranoia, Sedgwick notes that paranoia is an ascetic form of love, one which "demands least from its object" (Sedgwick, 2003: 132). She articulates this as how paranoia becomes a kind of "vigilant scanning," whereby one loves or cares for oneself by anticipating what might potentially be exposed as harmful (Sedgwick, 2003: 132-133).

While paranoia and repair are often framed as opposing one another, Sedgwick notes that both paranoid and reparative modes come from the same critical positions or practices (Sedgwick, 2003: 150). Sedgwick acknowledges that paranoid strong theories are privileged as the "common currency of cultural and historicist studies," (Sedgwick, 2003: 144). However, she also insists that paranoid modes are already infused with and structured by reparative modes, even when paranoid modes disavow them as "merely" aesthetic or reformist (Sedgwick, 2003: 144-145). As such, Sedgwick refuses to draw clean divisions between the two positions, insisting that it is coercive and totalizing to limit critical practices to only one or two affects, be they paranoid, reparative, or both. The refusal to claim one position over the other leads Sedgwick to claim that engagement with both reparative and paranoid modes allows one to encounter "profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities" (Sedgwick, 2003: 146). For Sedgwick, this means that thinking, reading, writing, and art-making might be open to possibility and contingency. She calls this "queer possibility," or the possibility to engage with cultures or practices that sustain an individual and their communities even when those same cultures and practices have often failed to sustain them in the past (Sedgwick, 2003: 147, 150-151).

The openness to possibility and contingency mixed with a refusal to land clearly on either side of an imagined divide between repair and paranoia produces the necessary tension through which I theorize critical passivity. As I argue later in this thesis, critical passivity is a reparative mode and a weak theory: I discover it through my attention to and investment in love, hope, surprise, pleasure, and desire as necessary feelings that sustain critical lives. This means that critical passivity is ultimately concerned with the affective and material qualities of one's thinking and how that informs one's critical and creative practices. However, I cannot fully disavow my need for and commitment to what Sedgwick calls "paranoid hermeneutics," the paranoid suspicions that sometimes disavow the reparative modes that exist within and through them. My thinking distinguishes itself from Sedgwick's through my attention to how one moves and is moved by these modes, how one wavers or wiggles between them. Critical passivity gestures to the squiggly navigation of these critical, ethical, and affective movements between hope, love, and the paranoid reflex to expose potential harms.

Passivity has a double meaning here: it gestures both to passive reception and to the affective qualities behind how one might pass through various encounters, intensities, and investments. To pass or to pass through articulates another series of affective movements that invigorate critical passivity as a critical disposition. As Sara Ahmed notes, to pass through is to attend to how one receives and is received by others (Ahmed, 2016: 23). This is why I maintain and insist on critical passivity as an ambivalent disposition, extending Sedgwick's emphasis on paranoia and repair as affective-theoretical positions. Ambivalence in this sense is not about apathy or disinterest; rather, it is an affective adirectionality and a squirmy embrace. To echo Ahmed, ambivalence recognizes that "to pass through" is in a way to come to know how one attends to others and how others attend to us. This means that ambivalence highlights the capacity to feel not just multiple and sometimes conflicting feelings but to feel again or to feel new feelings. Critical passivity opens up another such queer feminist possibility then: it imagines thinking, reading, writing, and art-making as encounters with affective spacetimes that move me into new ways of feeling and thinking about theory, dance, and what it means to live a feminist life.

This line of thinking leads me to a series of questions. How might I map these affective qualities onto my critical reading and writing? How might I mark critical passivity's affective space-times across critique's capacity for interrelated, iterative, and sometimes overlapping matrices of thinking and rethinking ideas and concepts? How do I reveal what haunts my thinking if writing tidies one's thoughts or makes one's thoughts arrive too late or too early? When one attempts to cross the material and intellectual boundaries of a page, new pressures emerge. How might I avoid succumbing to the allure of what literary scholar Christopher Castiglia calls "critiquiness," a disposition of "mistrust, indignation, ungenerosity, and self-congratulation" (Castiglia, 2017: 214)? How might a theory of critical passivity avoid suspicious dispositions? Would avoiding suspicion not also reinscribe paranoid thinking? How would critical writing locate this affective, durational synthesis of thought through and across the material boundaries of the page? How might I even begin to manage multiple critical terrains and investments within the singularity of one body of writing without the proverbial risk of "closing the

book" on one's thinking? How might I maintain my fledgling theory without enabling or reinforcing disciplinarity or other such pre-organized categories of thought?

As a means of navigating these questions, I must attend to the affective and material dimensions of critical passivity to account for what exceeds or remains silent in my writing. Established epistemes move through and across bodily contingencies. As a white female scholar working within both US and British academic contexts, I realize that Anglo-European modes operate as a dominant framework within my own thinking despite my desire for a more diverse ecology of feminist thinking. Recognizing this scholarly position allows me to trace the multiple resonances between socio-historically determined bodies of knowledge and the knowing bodies that bear them. A reorientation to how these bodily contingencies affect one's thinking offers a necessary first step towards navigating across this epistemic tightrope. An attention to the haptic, kinetic, or sensual dimensions of bodily contingencies in my close readings engenders hauntings across these paratexts. These attentions thereby create relationships between knowing bodies and critical texts that will necessarily exceed the boundaries of these pages. Through critical passivity, I articulate a new orientation that turns one towards these intangible dimensions—namely affective, lived, and bodily forms of knowing—through a respect to their tangibility. Touch becomes an important locus for encountering these dimensions and coming to know them as both material and felt. Touching these textual hauntings does not grasp, trap, or capture though; rather, this touch corporealizes how meanings move across my writing and the readers who encounter it. As feminist scholar Penelope Deutscher articulates, touch formulates "the locus of a subjective project of relation to the world...with the aim of being surprised by, rather than possessing, objects and others" (Deutscher, 2004: 146). Critical passivity necessarily acknowledges how touching what one reads engenders affective bodily responses that will ultimately exceed the boundaries of this text.

Embracing a process-led research methodology

I turn to dance in this project as a means of addressing these affective, material dimensions of thought and how they appear within critical practices. Over the course of

this thesis, I will think through how both critical and creative methods overlap and inform one another as a means of working towards my emergent theory of critical passivity. This thesis actively negotiates how dance and feminist theory overlap and disrupt one another. To achieve this, I draw upon practice-based research methodologies throughout this thesis. I use practice-based research in this project to explore how a reparative feminist methodology can emerge from and through my research process. In my first chapter, I borrow the term emergent methodology from practice-based researchers Estelle Barret and Barbara Bolt to illustrate this (2007: 6). Emergent methodologies resist approaches that value predetermined strong theories that dominate or totalize one's reading of a text. This means that emergent methodologies constitute a reparative approach to research: emergent methodologies cultivate surprise and discovery without foreclosing one's thinking. As such, I take up calls from practice-based research and dance theory to engender this reparative approach to critical discovery and surprise within feminist thinking. This research methodology constitutes a necessary component of theorizing critical passivity throughout this research. As a research methodology and a mode of critical discovery, I uncover how critical passivity might offer a more reparative approach to doing feminist theory.

Throughout my close readings, I will engage with dance as both a text and an event. I consider how dance conceptualizes affective encounters between dancing bodies and a viewer. This attention to dance as both an affective, bodily encounter with other bodies and as a text draws upon Anglo-European dance scholars like Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein, who consider the relationships between dance and text less bounded and more haphazard (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 12). Drawing upon Brandstetter and Klein alongside dance scholars like Kélina Gotman, I examine how dance collapses traditional distinctions between performance and text, language and movement, and theory and practice (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013; Gotman, 2018a). To illustrate this, I take up Gotman's call to become a discursive choreographer (Gotman, 2018a: 306). I utilize this concept as a means of considering the interplay between body-based and discursive approaches to thinking through research. I find a common link between these two fields through choreography, which can be imagined as a graphic practice that both resists and reimagines discursivity (Gotman, 2018a; Ulmer, 2015).

Reimagining existing critical methods through choreography and choreographic writing ultimately allows critical passivity to emerge through my close readings of dance, creating interplay between writing about dance and the felt, material experience of watching dance.

I make use of both close reading and critical writing as research methods throughout this project. While both methods reflect modes traditionally associated with literary critique and theory, I reinterpret them through feminist, body-based, and reparative ways of knowing. I draw on Eve Sedgwick's thinking on reparative reading throughout this thesis, paying particular attention to how Sedgwick navigates the tension between surprise and vigilance within critical reading (Sedgwick, 2003). I situate Sedgwick's thinking alongside similar feminist reading methods, such as Elizabeth Freeman's concept of erotohistoriography and Heather Love's thinking around curatorial reading (Freeman, 2010; Love, 2017). I similarly borrow from postcritical reading practices like Castiglia's concept of hopeful dispositions and Ellen Rooney's thinking on symptomatic reading to consider how close reading might be iterative and self-reflexive (Castiglia, 2017; Rooney; 2017). These modes require a softer, more open relationship with critique that makes critical space for being moved or surprised. Rather than succumb fully to critical paranoia, I choose instead to follow these more reparative impulses, even while acknowledging that paranoid impulses will still emerge within my theorizing.

I reimagine these methods through practice-based and process-led perspectives for undertaking research. This means that I allow my close readings to unfold slowly my theory of critical passivity over the course of this thesis. To achieve this, I turn to performative writing practices to articulate critical writing as a process of working out one's thinking. I draw connections between performative writing, feminist critical writing practices like *écriture féminine*, and art-based writing practices like choreographic writing. I explicitly link feminist and dance-based approaches here to draw connections between the body that writes and the practice of writing one's thoughts. This leads me to consider choreographic approaches too, taking cues from dance theorists like Jasmine Ulmer and Victoria Watts who rethink choreography as a graphic practice that maps bodies through space (Ulmer, 2015; Watts, 2010). The

commingling of these various styles and practices ultimately articulates how my reading and writing reveal my theory of critical passivity and its various qualities, intensities, and investments.

Overview of the thesis

I turn now to the rest of this thesis to activate Ahmed's call to bring "theory back to life," (Ahmed, 2017: 10). As Ahmed suggests, one makes sense or meaning through bodily experience and "the usual activity of life" (Ahmed, 2017: 13). To enact this call, I come to know my theory of critical passivity through my affective, bodily encounters with dance. My first two chapters explore how critical passivity takes shape alongside feminist and dance-based epistemologies to consider how these lineages of thinking make space for knowing bodies and how bodies come to knowing. The three following chapters use my encounters with danceworks as excursions in thinking through and around critical passivity. These close readings demonstrate my commitment to practice-based modes and the emergent qualities of my thinking: they offer chances to practice doing theory and to apply my thinking around critical passivity. My close readings offer moments where I can test my thinking, offering chances to pose questions and to discover more about critical passivity. Tracing theoretical lineages and applying my thinking through close readings both offer opportunities for encountering my thinking around critical passivity while making sense of how concepts and practices move me.

While I take the length of this thesis to unravel how I both deploy and come to know critical passivity, the first few chapters of this thesis begin to navigate the various rhythms, shapes, and intensities of critical passivity through both dance theory and feminist theory. In my first chapter "Reading dance: methodologies and methods," I examine the various methods that I employ throughout my research process and the emergent research methodology that underpins them. I begin by thinking through dance as a theoretical field of study, drawing from dance theorists like Brandstetter, Klein, and Gotman. Similarly, I link these theoretical perspectives with practice-based research to consider how my methodology is an emergent quality of my research. I connect Gotman's concept of a discursive choreographer with Barrett and Bolt's concept of emergent

methodologies to create a lineage for this thinking. Thinking through methodology as an emergent property or process allows my theory of critical passivity to emerge within and through my research without foreclosing or predetermining it.

From this perspective, I consider postcritical perspectives on close reading and critical writing. Throughout this chapter, I draw upon the thinking of postcritical feminist scholars like Toril Moi, Annemarie Mol, Elizabeth Anker, and Rita Felski, I examine both creative and critical modes that allow for a more fluid, process-oriented approach to coming to knowing, such as Rooney's thinking on symptomatic reading and Love's thinking on curatorial reading. These postcritical approaches make particular use of feminist and queer perspectives like Ahmed's concept of orientation and Castiglia's idea of a hopeful disposition for critique to embrace less paranoid and more reparative models for critique. I further consider how these methods may be refigured or recontextualized through dance-based approaches, drawing upon various approaches to choreography as writing (Gotman, 2017; Lepecki, 2007; Spangberg, 2017), dancewriting (Ulmer, 2015; Watts, 2010), and performative writing (Pollock, 1998). I make links between these performative writing modes and feminist writing practices like Hélène Cixous's *écriture féminine* to demonstrate the inherent relationships and alliances between these two perspectives on critical writing. This weaving of arts-based and feminist perspectives ultimately offers a reparative contextualization of these more traditional critical methods while simultaneously acknowledging how these methods are nonetheless dependent on or in relation to their more paranoid forms.

In the next chapter "Poetics of femme: critical passivity and feminist theory," I examine the various feminist epistemic paradigms that contextualize my thinking around critical passivity. My second chapter begins the work of theorizing critical passivity through feminist frameworks for knowing. I first examine extant feminist epistemic paradigms that make use of bodily knowing as a generative form of meaning-making or coming to knowing. I begin by thinking through the lenses of situated knowledges and epistemic multiplicity to argue that feminist thinking exposes how knowledge production is situated, subjective, and local to one's felt, bodily experiences (Haraway, 1988; Mol, 2002; Lang, 2010; Butler, 2002). From this understanding of the ambivalent relationship between feminist epistemologies and traditional critical paradigms, I trace

how feminist theory necessarily informs and situates my thinking around critical passivity. I attend first to how these situated, bodily forms of knowing are feminized and therefore marginalized or pathologized, rethinking femininity as something positive and life affirming rather than destructive or harmful. I draw upon trans and Black feminist scholarship here, such as Andrea Long Chu's thinking on transsexuality and Nalia Keleta-Mae's thinking on Black femininities to resist feminist perspectives that marginalize femininity and feminine ways of knowing.

Through this rethinking of femininity and passivity, I contribute to these perspectives by arguing how critical femininity studies might reimagine and reframe vulnerability and passivity as reparative, positive modes. I argue that femininity studies and femme theory offer approaches that highlight and rework patriarchal anxieties surrounding meaning and knowing through passivity and vulnerability. While this thinking through femininity studies and femme theory do not theorize critical passivity in its totality in this chapter, I nonetheless uncover how these fields reframe and rethink how feminine ways of knowing and being inform passivity as a critical mode. Influences such as Ulrika Dahl's concept of femmebodiment and Rhea Hoskin's thinking on femme contextualize my thinking here: I make use of these concepts to reimagine and reshape passivity into a positive and reparative form of knowing. This thinking through feminist theory and femininity studies produces a poetics that guides how I theorize critical passivity throughout the thesis. I contend in this chapter that this poetics offers a set of qualities that inform critical passivity and how I conceptualize it throughout my close readings.

Following my articulation of an ethos for critical passivity, my third chapter "Ambivalent ballerina: *Manon*, desire, and reparative touch" marks my first close reading of dance and my first excursion into testing my theory of critical passivity against my encounters with dance. In this chapter, I pose a few questions around forms of ambivalent and non-appropriative contact. What does it mean to come into contact with a character, a performance, or perhaps another person in the audience? What are the qualities of those touches, and how do they reshape my critical encounter with the performance? I read a performance of the Royal Ballet's *Manon* and consider over the course of this chapter how the ballet uses forms of reparative, non-appropriative touch.

Through this attention, I consider how critical passivity allows one to recognize what touches or affects one's thinking and how ambivalence materializes as an affective disposition through which I might think.

My narrative and choreographic analysis of the ballet uncovers how critical passivity may be figured as a material, lived, and ambivalent disposition materialized through reparative touch. I figure this disposition as an ambivalent ballerina, which I deploy as a metaphor to unpack how critical passivity might be understood as both an affective disposition and a material reality. I draw upon concepts such as Derrida's thinking around ambivalence and Susan Leigh Foster's reading of kinaesthetic empathy to consider how a dancer's skillful, aesthetically-conceived labor generates potentially new feelings within a viewer. I consider how this being touched by dance constitutes a form of reparative touch that emerges from my affective, sensuous experience of an aesthetically conceived dancing body. This reading of how reparative touch is used in the ballet discusses how critical passivity attends to how one touches and in turn is touched by others.

In my fourth chapter "Critical edgework: *Bluebeard*, emotional risk, and feeling again," I read a production of Tanztheatre Wuppertal's *Bluebeard*. Throughout this chapter, I expand on the questions posed in my previous chapter to consider the boundaries and risks associated with different kinds of material and affective contact. This leads me to ask new questions. What if my encounter with the performance feels harmful? What is risky about these encounters with dance, and what is risky about one's studies? How do I navigate those risks and boundaries? To explore these questions, I consider how critical passivity navigates what is risky about one's critical practice. I call this critically passive approach to playing with emotional risk within critique a practice of critical edgework. I read the various choreographic and dancerly choices in *Bluebeard* through the lens of emotional risk and affective impact, drawing upon Stacy Newmahr's thinking around emotional edgework to illustrate this.

I pay particular attention to how the performance makes use of duration and tempo, including how these affective rhythms generate a feeling of exhaustion within me as a viewer. I draw upon Elizabeth Freeman's concept of temporal drag and Kélina Gotman's thinking around anaesthesis to conceptualize the affective and metaphoric

registers of exhaustion. These registers include the political implications of exhaustion and how exhaustion might lead one to feeling again. This attention to feeling again leads me to ponder how the affective space-times of *Bluebeard* alter or impact how I come to know the performance through my affective, bodily experiences of its affective intensities. Through a consideration of Freeman's concept of erotohistoriography and Ben Davies's concept of slow reading, I consider the time and proximity of close reading, which in turn informs my thinking around critical passivity as an approach to critical edgework. As a reparative approach to forms of emotional risk present within critique, critical passivity reorients close reading towards what one risks taking the time to enjoy one's reading. This in turn leads me to consider how critical passivity might manage or navigate what is emotionally risky about one's critical practices through an attention to how one takes pleasure in encountering the affective space-times of one's studies.

My fifth chapter "Wiggly choreopolitics: *UNDA*, gestural anarchy, and going limp" undertakes my third and final close reading. In this excursion, I expand once again on the questions posed in my previous reading to wonder how we come together and collide with others politically. This raises new questions which I explore over the course of my close reading: what are the jumbled, disorganized ways in which we come together and move politically? When do communities and artistic forms break down? How might one do reparative work in wiggly or disharmonious ways? To explore these new questions, I read a new dance work titled *UNDA*, choreographed by Joy Alpuerto Ritter. My close reading in this chapter develops what I call a wiggly choreopolitics, which invokes how critical passivity resonates beyond the relationship between reader and performance to imagine a body politic. To illustrate this, I draw upon Marquis Bey's concept of anarcho-Blackness and Kélina Gotman's thinking on the alterkinetic.

I utilize these concepts to articulate forms of gestural anarchy and disorganized political movement that engender alternative modes of being and moving together. I examine how Ritter's choreography undoes the colonial, racist implications of Isadora Duncan's work while cultivating a new, hopeful future for dance practices situated within or alongside Duncan's aesthetic legacy. I draw upon Kélina Gotman's and Whitney Davis's thinking around postformalism to examine this further. Through postformalism, I consider how *UNDA* offers ways of rethinking and remixing relations between aesthetic

forms and the politics behind those forms. I theorize “going limp” as a kind of bodily stylization of a critically passive disposition. To illustrate my thinking, I draw upon Judith Butler’s thinking around non-violent political action and Sarah Whatmore’s concept of relational ethics. Throughout this chapter, I also contend with the ethical and theoretical dimensions of cultivating both reparative modes and modes of ruin or disrepair. I use Caitlin DeSilvey’s concept of positive passivity to articulate how one might orient towards the affective dimensions of one’s ethical decision making. Through this, I imagine how critical passivity offers a disposition or set of investments that might reconsider collective political action and imagine new horizons for shared futurity.

Following what I’ve learned about critical passivity through my engagement with these three danceworks, my final chapter "Towards a theory of critical passivity" returns to theorizing critical passivity from a methodological perspective. Throughout this chapter, I consider the implications of my research as a whole and how these implications inform my theory of critical passivity. Ultimately, I gesture here towards how critical passivity might formulate a reparative approach to criticism while recognizing how I might still offer opportunities for further thinking and research. I attend to critical passivity as a weak theory, attempting to keep it open to further development rather than foreclosing it. This means that I examine some of the limits of critical passivity, including what might emerge from the tension between offering critical passivity as a theory while refusing to foreclose it entirely.

This line of thinking in turn leads me to reflect on how theorizing critical passivity shifted my approaches to critical writing and close reading. For example, I examine in this chapter how critical passivity might engender new dispositions or attitudes towards received critical practice. I similarly argue for a studio-informed process for critical praxis that draws from feminist and dance-based practices to consider further some of the potential applications of critical passivity. This consideration includes thinking through what critical opportunities or approaches might become possible through critical passivity with further research. I note that what is unfinished perhaps about a theory of critical passivity is also its reparative desire to move and to be moved by the borders of one’s thinking.

Reading dance

methodologies and methods

Part I – Emergent methodologies: dance theory and art-based research practices

Before I begin thinking through my research methodology, I must be clear that I do not suggest in this thesis that dance practice or theory is a replacement for or an alternative to feminist theory. I also do not wish to claim how dance studies essentializes or reduces feminist theory into simply the materiality of the dancing body. As a feminist theorist based at a British conservatoire, I find it important to clarify and to explicitly state my investment in the value of feminist theory and what it offers performance-based study and practice. Over the course of this chapter, I engage with the allegiances between feminist theory and dance practice to consider what it means to reflect on what or how feminist critical modes can learn from arts-based thinking and practice and how in turn those feminist modes reshape arts-based modes. When one collapses these binaries of theory/practice, subject/object, and body/text, what new critical modes emerge? How might one parse feminist theory from artistic practice without falling into disciplinary paranoia? What would be the point of such a distinction anyway if they only draw paranoid borders around one's thinking?

For this research, I contend with how artistic practices inform feminist theory to imagine what might happen when one gets creative with her theorizing. Engaging with feminist theory through watching dance gives me the critical space to experiment more with feminist thinking while enabling opportunities for being surprised by dance. My earnest engagement with feminist theory also resists the idea that the material dancing body holds essential truths about feminism or gender more broadly. I similarly resist the notion that feminist theory and criticism must be replaced or superseded by dance practice or the perceived "truth" of dance's materiality. I embrace instead how feminist theory is an imaginative, hopeful, bodily, and lived mode of critical inquiry, even as I recognize the paranoia behind my refusal to sacrifice my investments in feminist theory.

I write this to gesture to how I can manage my paranoid impulses to arrive at a more reparative and imaginative approach to doing feminist theory. Collapsing distinctions between feminist theory and artistic practice enables me to work within a more reparative, process-led framework for thinking through and writing about feminism.

Following this attention to how feminist theory might learn from modes of artistic research, I want to start from an understanding that dance manifests as both a material event that can be studied and as a theoretical perspective with unique methodological opportunities that align with and inspire feminism. Dance theorists Gabriele Brandstetter and Gabriele Klein acknowledge Anglo-European dance studies as a field in which "many dancers and choreographers of western modern dance propagated...a clear division between dance and theory, and between practice and discourse" (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 11-12). However, Brandstetter and Klein argue that the result of this clear division between dance and theory in North American and Europe cultivated a disciplinary relation that "appears haphazard or at least without clear boundaries" (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 12). To Brandstetter and Klein, this haphazard boundary between dance and theory creates disjunctures between these practices while also reflecting a set of critical dispositions or investments within dance studies. Brandstetter and Klein term these dispositions "pre-positions," which invoke "questions of de-positioning and repositioning, order and dis-order, placement and dis-placement" (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 13). These pre-positions that Brandstetter and Klein identify are not purely conceptual though, as they also invoke "a material, physical process of shifting or dislocation" (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 13). These preformulated investments in uneasy and slippery divisions between dance and theory pose a problematic of their own: "Is a theory of practice or, as the case may be, a practice of theory, even possible?" (Brandstetter & Klein, 2013: 13).

While rethinking these relations may seem impossible, Brandstetter and Klein nonetheless consider the radical potential of dance theory to destabilize the perceived security and control of such seemingly totalizing bifurcations of theory and practice. Klein proposes that these practices of theorizing dance are not so dissimilar to the practices of dancing themselves. Klein argues that dance theory "lies somewhere 'in-between,' in a realm between artistic and scientific practices and their respective forms

and methods of reflection" (Klein, 2013: 138). In this collapse of distinctions between scientific and artistic modes, Klein notes that practice "only exists in a particular relationship to something other than itself" (Klein, 2013: 142), namely theory. From this perspective, dance theory approaches the question of how to map new critical theories onto dance by examining this tension between material, artistic practices of dancing and conceptual, discursive practices like theory.

To address this tension between theory and artistic practices, Klein argues that one must see dance theory as a praxeology, a term Klein borrows from Pierre Bourdieu. Klein argues that praxeology operates as "a confusion of the term 'practice' with the term 'field'" (Klein, 2013: 142). As such, Klein makes use of praxeology to bind creative and critical practice together, advocating for a "praxeological critical theory of dance, i.e. a critical practice of thinking" (Klein, 2013: 138). Klein notes that this comingling of practice and theory seeks a liminal space between these two modes (Klein, 2013: 140). This resists classical divisions between theory and practice, divisions which Klein articulates as "the criterion of reality versus theory" (Klein, 2013: 139). Klein argues that in this more conservative view that divides theory and practice, praxis is "the site of experience" while theory is "an act of reaching a verdict" (Klein, 2013: 141). Brandstetter similarly argues that considering dance theory as a praxeology articulates "a theoretically 'informed' practice" (Brandstetter, 2013: 198). Klein's call for a praxeology of dance theory advocates for the "logic of practice," or "an accumulation of procedures that…are connected by 'practical skill'" (Klein, 2013: 142). Through praxeology, Klein opens theory to artistic methods as well, reimagining critique as "an art that reveals the limitations of the epistemological field and sets itself in relation to its limitations" (Klein, 2013: 143).

I notice resonances here among Klein's turn towards praxeology, Barabara Bolt's concept of materializing practices, and Estelle Barrett's concept of emergent methodologies. For Bolt, materializing practices demonstrate how "the material practice of art has real material effects and there could possibly be a mutual exchange between the matter of bodies and the image of bodies" (Bolt, 2004: 168). This means that Bolt considers aesthetics to be an integral component of how one thinks through practice, since "the image is not a substitute, a sign of or for something other than itself" (Bolt,

2004: 168). Bolt instead considers how aesthetics and the significance of an image represent "the possibility that the image may actually be in a dynamic relation with matter" (Bolt, 2004: 168). Barrett however builds upon Bolt's attention to the relationship between representations of bodies and the bodies that produce those representations. Barrett argues that materializing practices reflect "relationships between process and text" (Barrett, 2007: 5). Artistic processes in this view emerge as material exchanges between process and product. Barret argues that these exchanges may also stage themselves as artworks, disturbing the boundaries between artistic product and processes of knowing through art-making (Barrett, 2007: 5). These exchanges between process, product, and material bodies reflect what Barrett calls "emergent methodologies" (Barrett, 2007: 6). Barrett articulates that in arts-based research, the relationship between researchers and objects of study can manifest as both a material or conceptual relationship (Barrett, 2007: 6). As such, this relationship often becomes one of the central methodological concerns within the research (Barrett, 2007: 6). This concern in turn formulates for Barrett the cornerstone of a reflexive methodological process that is "necessarily emergent and subject to repeated adjustment" (Barrett, 2007: 6).

Practice-as-research scholar Experience Bryon echoes this concept of an emergent methodology through her concept of an active aesthetic:

> The active aesthetic functions to allow *events* of knowledge to *float* in a space between the subject of the discipline & the object of the knowledge, temporarily held there to be *witnessed* as an active dynamic before grounding its knowledge 'tangibly' within vocabularies shared by any one of the discrete disciplines. (Bryon, 2018: 16)

This emphasis on witnessing leads Bryon to characterize an active aesthetic as an impulse "to witness the ways of doing before landing, categorising, or evaluating" (Bryon, 2018: 46). Drawing upon middle field theory, Bryon argues that the middle field of an active aesthetic activates "a shifting template that can be zoomed out and/or drilled down" (Bryon, 2018: 48). This means that the active aesthetic for Bryon is the zone where "knowledge *happens*" (Bryon: 2018: 41). Witnessing knowledge emerge within these zones between process and product embraces the conflict between these poles: an active

aesthetic longs for the "rubs and collisions that occur in the engagement across disciplines'' (Bryon, 2018: 28). Both emergent methodologies and active aesthetics similarly place emphasis on "the '*techne'* of an '*episteme*'" (Bryon, 2018: 13). My reading of active aesthetics resonates with Bolt's concept of emergent methodologies: an active aesthetic similarly exposes a different set of contingent knowledges that emerge in the collision across artistic practices and the art objects they produce. Barrett contends that critical and artistic interplay across disciplines necessarily create "conditions for the emergence of new analogies, metaphors and models for understanding objects of enquiry" (Barrett, 2007: 7). What is emergent within these zones of processual and material interplay becomes a critical boon as a result.

Dis/balancing dance and theory

Through this reading, both emergent methodologies and active aesthetics reveal research methodologies that articulate a different way of coming to knowing through arts-based research. To imply though that this relationship between process and product only occurs in artistic research would be to forget how critique also implies a researcher who lives, moves through, and is affected by the material world. This recognition of the lived, affective dimensions of critique is something feminist theory has long considered vital for feminist thought and practice. For example, feminist scholars like Sara Ahmed have argued that feminist theory necessarily comes from the rhythms of daily life, or how "feminism is about how to live, or about a way of thinking how to live" (Ahmed, 2017: 1). An attention to the bodily dimensions of arts-based research finds resonances with feminist research too; this draws links between the ways in the rhythms of daily life and how one moves through them, which might include making art as well as thinking, reading, writing, and living a feminist life. These links through an attention to lived experience and how one moves through affective, material realities create opportunities to articulate new relational models between subjects and objects within feminist frameworks through their allegiances and resonances with arts-based modes.

To illustrate how dance theory addresses these relationships between subject, object, and how one moves through affective, material realities, dance scholar Erin

Manning argues that "it is not 'I' who is in the process of creating a dance, but the dance itself that is in the process of creating 'me'" (Manning, 2014: 166). For Manning, thinking through dance recontextualizes the relationship between researchers and objects of study as moving and processual, displacing language or writing as the "final form" of critical thought (Manning, 2009: 5). Dance scholar Maxine Sheets-Johnstone similarly notes how dance might "bring to the fore the qualitative dynamics of movement, dynamics that are at the very heart of the 'process of creating the dance'" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2014: 201). For Sheets-Johnstone, this means that thinking through movement reveals how thoughts themselves are kinetic (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011: 421). For Manning, this shifts research from the ontological question of "who am I?" to the relational question "where am I?" (Manning, 2014: 167). In the case of dance studies, Manning articulates the "where" of research as "an ecology of relations, dancing the dance that dances me" (Manning, 2014: 167). Manning's thinking here offers how a bodily or spatial attention to ecologies of knowledge reconsiders how subjects and objects partner one another. This attention reveals how dance's bodily and spatial dimensions displace the dancer as a knowledge-producer and dance as a knowledge-product. This similarly echoes how Bryon notes that these liminal zones "collapse the subject and object binary," rethinking relations between "the doer and the done, the maker and the made" (Bryon, 2018: 40).

From this view, a dancer as thinker does not generate knowledge extant of dancing; rather, a dancer-thinker moves through both critical and material relations between subjects and objects. Dance as a theoretical mode similarly articulates how one moves through or is drawn towards this critical, affective, and material interplay between process and product. An attention to how arts-based methodologies become emergent opens relations between practice and theory. Returning to Klein's thinking around praxeology, collapsing the binaries of theory/practice and subject/object through dance theory reveals these vulnerabilities. As Klein notes, collapsing the divide between theory and practice risks one's ability to define themselves as subject, which forces one to assume "an ontologically precarious, risky, and crisis-laden position" (Klein, 2013: 143). This vulnerability demonstrates how relations between theory and practice imbricate researchers. For Barrett, this vulnerability requires a degree of self-reflexivity

within one's research methodology, since the researcher's self-reflexivity maps what is emergent within one's research enquiry (Barrett, 2007: 5). Self-reflexivity in this regard does not lead to a paranoid self-consciousness though; rather, Klein makes explicit that critical self-reflexivity demonstrates the limitations of one's research and how one navigates those limitations (Klein, 2013: 143). This recognizes in turn how critique is a socio-political practice as well as a conceptual and material practice (Klein, 2013: 143). Practicing dance theory manifests for Klein as both an operation along "immanent borderlines of the epistemological field of dance" and within a potential space of "crisis in the institutions" (Klein, 2013: 147). To navigate along and across disciplinary borders cultivates a potential critical intervention in the demarcations of disciplinary and institutional boundary lines, particularly the lines between artistic practice and feminist theory.

Working around or across these epistemic boundaries between feminism and dance seems fraught then. Klein's framing of institutional crisis here echoes how one might become paranoid when faced with institutional or disciplinary limitations and boundaries. How might I cultivate a more reparative approach without succumbing to these paranoid dispositions? I argue that dance studies gestures to a fertile ground for exploring reparative approaches to feminist critique since dance studies actively negotiates that interplay between theory and practice within around these epistemic precarities. For Brandstetter, the juxtapositions and tensions between dance and theory intentionally throw dance scholars off balance, for "wherever one tries to take a balanced view from, a dis/balance is generated" (Brandstetter, 2013: 198). This unsteadiness or disbalance is maintained in the movement between theorizing and practicing:

> The observer whom the transition from observing to praxis - an imitation of movement - throws off his balance, out of his contemplation: the chiasm of theory in praxis, praxis in theory is in itself constantly deferred. In and out of balance. (Brandstetter, 2013; 199)

Setting concepts in motion becomes the unique terrain of dance theory; Brandstetter further articulates that "theory is implicit in dance and dancing" (Brandstetter, 2013: 200). Brandstetter notes that "thinking and dancing, dancing and thinking appear alternatively; a 'ballet mécanique' driven off balance to the point of collapse"

(Brandstetter, 2013: 199). This disbalance further blurs distinctions between looking and moving, as these disbalances "implicate movement in the viewing process" (Brandstetter, 2013: 200).

Dance theory moves through and around these precarities and boundaries while avoiding slipping into one side for too long. Brandstetter notes that moving between dance as theory and dance as practice can be joyful too (Brandstetter, 2013: 200). The limits or boundaries between practice and theory can be refigured as a more energetic, pleasurable, and dynamic process. Moving between dance as theory and dance as practice is reparative then: it takes joy in disturbing and reshaping the disciplinary boundaries between performance practice and performance studies. This joyful movement across the lines between practice and theory refuses stagnation and resists theoretical paralysis. This similarly speaks to institutional limits as well. When institutions enforce or ensure hard boundaries between practice-based and theoretical work, fields like dance studies work through and across those lines. These boundaries can be cultural, social, or material as well as intellectual; even my own thinking rests largely on American and European perspectives on both feminism and dance because I do scholarship within an Anglo-American context. To work across or alongside these cultural, social, and disciplinary boundaries allows dance to resist being confined to only theory or only practice. Navigating this similarly requires that one critically reflects on the interplay between these two modes, which may in turn draw one's attention to what boundaries one does or does not cross. One's movement across these institutional and disciplinary demarcations becomes as much a political act as it is an intellectual one: one chooses not to choose a side on the theory/practice divide to stimulate that reflection on why these boundaries exist or how they are maintained.

One resists institutional forces that aim to enclose theory and practice into discreet terrains by refusing to stay within the lines. Brandstetter articulates this kind of wayward or wandering thinker as "a 'movere' in the observer who...is 'set' in motion" at the "loss of hermeneutic control" (Brandstetter, 2013: 204-205). This movere—a slant rhyme that evokes the word "oeuvre," or the "body of writings" (Gotman, 2017: 158)—becomes manipulated here as well. Objects of study necessarily move researchers, even when they are otherwise unaware of how they do or do not cross disciplinary lines. When

one turns her attention to that movement, the work of the theorist and the work of the artist become more and more similar. This attention offers a bridge between theoretical and practice-based research modes. Brandstetter examines this attention as how a movere crosses back and forth between reflection and motion (Brandstetter, 2013: 207). These crisscrossed reflections mirror the way one might move between thinking, reading, writing, and artistic practice: in the act of critical reflection, one becomes aware of the interplay between theorizing and practicing. The movere haunts her theoretical and practical disciplines, catching her own reflection as she attempts to move between fields. My hauntology[2] of academic or institutional disciplinarity here encourages an attention to catching how one moves between critical and artistic practices. This in turn resists the idea that a hard distinction between the two can be maintained; rather, both theorists and artists cannot remain unmoved or fixed to one side of a disciplinary boundary. I argue that this attention is reparative as well since it cultivates potential for one to be surprised or affected by her studies or practices when one catches a glimpse of those movements. When one sees how the interplay of practice and theory sets one into motion, critical reflections on those movements between critical and practice-based modes constitute paratexts[3] through which one comes to know how they move between and haunt those disciplinary borders.

Becoming a discursive choreographer

[2] Hauntology can be understood as a form of "performative interpretation" (Derrida, 1994: 63), or "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" (Derrida, 1994: 63). According to Derrida, hauntology "spectralizes" (Derrida, 1994: 63): beingness is displaced by traces. Kelina Gotman extends Derrida's argument, contending that this spectralization forms "figures of thought hovering between presence and absence, existence and non-existence" (Gotman, 2018a: 306). Following Gotman's argument, hauntology is a being-with thoughts, which manifest as immaterial or as ghosts. These spectral thoughts "carry with them a new metaphysics...existence defined by these returns" (Gotman, 2015: 69-70). This reading echoes performance studies scholar Tawny Anderson's reading of hauntology as an attempt at materializing a "paradoxical state of physical absence and immaterial presence" (Anderson, 2017: 200).

[3] Here I extend Gérard Genette's definition of a paratext as that which "binds the text" (Genette, 1997a: 3). Genetter argues that a paratext provides "a (variable) settings and sometimes a commentary" that readers "cannot always disregard as easily as they would like and as they claim to do" (Genette, 1997a: 3). He further argues that paratexts represent how a reader and text form a "generic contract (or pact)" (Genette, 1997a: 3). I argue that Genette's thinking here recognizes how paratexts haunt how one engages with texts: paratexts provide contexts for readers that inform without necessarily residing within a text.

To articulate a lineage for how feminist theorists might take a more arts-informed, process-led approach to critique, I want to consider how dance theory refigures choreography as a theoretical framework for mapping bodily knowledge. Dance scholars like Brandstetter and Klein consider choreography to be a kind of discursive methodology that maps the movement of bodies in space. As a discursive research methodology, choreography functions as an extension of the space of writing to map how these (m)oeuvres dance across the page. Klein argues that choreography can take shape as a discursive practice through critique. Brandstetter similarly notes this, arguing that "the balance of a relation between...dance theory and dance practice...is thus relegated to the actions of dancing and choreographing" (Brandstetter, 2013: 200). Klein, echoing Brandstetter's earlier emphasis on precarity, locates how choreographic paradigms are "always precarious and contingent" (Klein, 2013: 145). This means that choreographic paradigms are "locked into a landscape defined by the crisis of the epistemological field" (Klein, 2013: 140). Klein observes that choreographic structures are often determined by how an audience shapes their materiality. Klein argues that an audience "takes an active role in performatively shaping the choreographic structure through corporeal practice within the framework of the material provided" (Klein, 2013: 145). Klein calls this relationship the "choreographic order of the ephemeral" (Klein, 2013: 145). This echoes Klein's earlier emphasis on praxeology, highlighting the contingencies between choreographic practices and critical practices like reading and writing.

As a theoretical framework, choreography is still necessarily bound to artistic practice (Klein, 2013: 138). Many choreographic practices have long traditions and deep ties to skilled artists and the unique aesthetic forms or cultures within and through which they create work. As dance educator Jacqueline Smith-Autard notes, most contemporary dance operates on a model that views choreography as "an art model which extends across, and draws from, a range of dance contexts – dance in the theatre, dance in the community and dance derived from specific cultural settings" (Smith-Autard, 2010: 4). As such, practical choreographic practice focuses not on simply the aesthetic beauty of movement but on how the composition of dance functions as an aesthetically unified "portrayal of emotions or ideas" (Smith-Autard, 2010: 7). By this, Smith-Autard means that "carefully selected movement content is an abstraction from actual feeling or

happenings to suggest meanings that are significant to the dance idea" (Smith-Autard, 2010: 7). From an aesthetic perspective, choreographic composition communicates how movements and bodies express ideas and feelings that require aesthetic appreciation or evaluation (Smith-Autard, 2010: 7). Form becomes an important aspect of how choreography communicates ideas: how something looks informs what ideas or feelings choreography maps. These aesthetic considerations crucially underpin choreographic practices and provide useful avenues for how one might critically read choreography through an attention to form.

I will make use of many of these considerations through my close readings in later chapters; however, I want to focus here on how choreography manifests as a critical methodology that might make space for emergent methodologies within feminist theory. I would like to interrogate more closely how choreography operates as a theoretical and methodological model for organizing thoughts, bodies, actions, and texts. To illustrate this, I extend William Forsythe's ideas of a choreographic object. Forsythe notes that choreographic objects are "open to a full palette of phenomenological instigations" since bodies are "wholly designed to persistently read every signal from its environment" (Forsythe, 2011: 91). As such, choreography as methodology functions with its own logics for organizing bodies, affects, and ideas that extends beyond dance composition. As a theoretical framework, choreography emerges as "an alternative site for the understanding of potential instigation and organization of action to reside" that can "draw an attentive, diverse readership" that will in turn "champion the innumerable manifestations, old and new, of choreographic thinking" (Forsythe, 2010: 92). Following Forsythe's thinking, I propose that choreography as a methodology presents useful ways of thinking through the material and spatial dimensions of feminist criticism, allowing the body to become a potential site through which one comes to know how one is affected by dance as an artwork. This line of thinking expands the space of thinking through choreography, meaning that choreography functions not only as a kind of "text" that one might "read" but also as its own mode of recognizing and thinking through bodily ways of knowing.

I notice how Kélina Gotman makes a similar argument for an expanded notion of choreography that might draw out and refigure disciplinarizing political investments.

Gotman reflects on how practices of reading, writing, and thinking might be choreographic, arguing that choreography functions as an apparatus that renders motion legible (Gotman, 2018a: 3). For Gotman, this includes the movement of concepts across space and time as well as "books, pens, people" (Gotman, 2018a: 3). Gotman's concept of choreomania echoes this, attending to how "concepts can gather steam, move and shift along routes of thinking" (Gotman, 2016: 19). While Gotman's concept sits within a historiographic lineage that considers and responds to concepts of modernity within critique, I find that choreomania resonates with dance theory through Gotman's reading of choreography's theoretical potential. Critiquing how notions of modernity are linked to colonialism, Gotman argues that recognizing how thoughts move also attends to how the movement of concepts is "often allied to colonial regimes and the vicissitudes of scientific societies, intellectual clusters, teacher–student relations" (Gotman, 2016: 19). This means that concepts do not move in neutral or apolitical ways; rather, they secure or imply both political investments and forms of socio-cultural power. Gotman's thinking here makes a Foucauldian intervention, demonstrating how choreography formulates an apparatus that can graph or trace these geopolitical histories and draw them out of their zones of power. Gotman articulates this zone of power or intensity as a choreozone, a "moving cluster of ideas" that can be political, theoretical, or material but nevertheless denotes "a capacity continually to reassemble and transform" (Gotman, 2018a: 2). The choreozone reveals a landscape upon which thinking might move, developing a terrain upon which concepts and their social and political power might be choreographed. Through Gotmnan's thinking around choreozones, I notice how thoughts are articulated within and mapped onto a more complex ecology of bodies, concepts, and investments.

To actualize this as a methodology, Gotman argues that one must become a "discursive choreographer" (Gotman, 2018a: 306). Drawing this mapping of choreozones back to discursivity, Gotman articulates choreography as "an apparatus of articulation" (Gotman, 2018a: 3). This means that Gotman considers choreography to be both a practice and a "zone of articulation" (Gotman, 2018a: 3). Extending this line of thinking, I propose that choreography also functions as a methodological approach to articulating the socio-political, artistic, and theoretical relations between bodies and concepts. This approach echoes what Gotman identifies as how "concepts and practices of organization

are deployed and move across disciplinary as well as geopolitical terrains" (Gotman, 2018a: 3). Extending her early Foucauldian intervention, I understand Gotman's approach to choreography as a methodology that extends discursive practices into material terrains. Reframing discursivity through the materiality of choreography organizes the relations between thinking bodies, bodies of thought, and performative texts. Gotman calls the choreography of these relations the "archival repertoire," a term that articulates "a more fluid and bodily 'repertoire' of oral and performative events...a mobile, piecemeal set of archival objects, including written texts, images, and live observations" (Gotman, 2018a: 8).

Gotman's thinking here articulates an approach to choreography that both respects its relationship to material and artistic forms while simultaneously imagining it as a theoretical, discursive framework. This approach has major implications for how I might rethink the relations between feminist theory and dance practices. I propose that being a discursive choreographer creates methodological opportunities for rethinking the work of feminist theory in relation to artistic practice without essentializing or reifying distinctions between theoretical modes and material practices. This keeps both feminism and dance studies interdisciplinary, working within and across relations rather than within only one side of the disciplinary divide. I see this resonate with Gotman's thinking as well: Gotman argues that dance theory retains its interdisciplinarity by moving across and through new archival repertoires (Gotman, 2018a: 13). This means that the discursive choreographers seek out these artistic and critical relations so that they might map them onto the lived, material terrains from which they emerge. Gotman argues that a discursive choreographer "discovers constantly renegotiated relations, played out as networks, imaginings, recuperations, and interactions; movements of thought" (Gotman, 2018a: 306). Becoming a discursive choreographer requires one to develop a choreographic impulse that moves beyond choreography as only an aesthetic practice. Within the context of feminist theory, discursive choreographers map how feminist thinking and political investments move through bodies to become bodies of thought. My reading of Gotman here formulates for me an important methodological step within this research. If I am to take up Ahmed's call to bring feminist theory back to life (Ahmed, 2017: 10), then I must approach feminist theory through an attention to how

theoretical modes might map the relations between knowing bodies and the knowledge that those bodies produce.

Part II – Research methods: approaches to close reading and critical writing

I turn now to interrogating the critical methods that I use throughout this thesis to illustrate how I aim to map these relations between bodies and knowledge through art-informed feminist research. Throughout this project, I will use feminist, postcritical close reading and critical writing methods as primary modes of investigation. Later in this chapter, I consider how dance-based approaches to bodily knowing reinterpret and find kinship with feminist close reading and writing methods. I articulate in this section how I refigure the literary traditions behind feminist critique, which later allows me to think new relations between dance and feminist critical practices. In this section, I argue how received literary methods like close reading and critical writing can be re-articulated through postcritical feminist paradigms. As tensions between paranoid/reparative and theory/practice re-emerge throughout this section, I note how this project continues to navigate the inevitable need for traditional, more paranoid critical forms alongside reparative and process-oriented approaches. Thinking through these received critical practices reveals how different investments and intensities towards critique in turn reveal new approaches to feminist theory and criticism. I ultimately move through these critical landscapes to arrive at how I theorize critical passivity throughout the rest of this thesis. While I consider these received forms of literary criticism necessary, I also desire to find modes or approaches that resist them. This does not divest from received critical practices but rather invests in them differently, creating possibilities for new feminist theories to emerge within and through these practices. To further that aim, this section explores extant approaches to reimagining or rearticulating close reading and critical writing methods. I do this to gesture towards the context that will allow me to explore how critical passivity formulates its own new, unique approach to critical practice later in this thesis.

I most closely link postcritique with this desire for new models for feminist critical practices. As an approach to literary criticism, postcritique can be understood as a

resistant scholarly response to paranoid or reactionary critical paradigms. As Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski acknowledge, postcritique is a methodological approach that signals a resistance to "suspicious hermeneutics" (Anker & Felski, 2017: 1). While Anker and Felski position the questions of postcritique within the scope of literary and cultural studies, postcritique also emerges from lineages of feminist, queer, and postcolonial critique. They explicitly note this, citing Eve Sedgwick's writing on affect theory and critique as an early example of postcritical scholarship (Anker & Felski, 2017: 11). Anker and Felski later go on to acknowledge other feminist thinkers who "continued to highlight the importance of feeling and embodiment even when such approaches fell out of favor" (Anker & Felski, 2017: 11). These feminist influences on critique signal just one lineage on how postcritique shifts attention from the "language game" of philosophical metacritique to "an alternative ethos, mood, or disposition" for critical practices (Anker & Felski, 2017: 10). This shift is important, as Anker and Felski note, since it shifts away from "a posture of vigilant self-scrutiny" that stymies critical reflection in favor of enabling new kinds of political and critical investments (Anker & Felski, 2017: 9). Postcritique offers a way of thinking about why critical practices matter without falling into a paranoid self-consciousness about the relative social or theoretical value of critique.

This also means that the "post" in postcritique acknowledges a tension: postcritique creates and navigates between both a desire for new models for critical interpretation and a dependency on philosophical critical traditions (Anker & Felski, 2017: 1). Postcrititical methods do not abandon traditional or received forms of self-reflexivity or metacritique; rather postcritique encourages a diversification and re-evaluation of perspectives and approaches to close reading and writing, which might include existing critical traditions. As Anker and Felski argue, postcritique articulates "an attempt to explore fresh ways of interpreting literary and cultural texts that acknowledges, nonetheless, its inevitable dependency on the very practices it is questioning" (Anker & Felski, 2017: 1). This means that postcritique still engages with received critical practices and often pays particular attention to the critical attitude that influences how one reads. Anker and Felski clarify that this ambivalence to received critical practices is "linked to, rather than at odds with, progressive commitments"

(Anker & Felski, 2017: 2). This means that postcritique ultimately offers a means of re-articulating received critical methods through different investments and intensities. These alternative dispositions towards critique in turn uncover new approaches to existing critical practices.

(Re)thinking close reading: paratexts. transtextuality, and critical dispositions

I draw upon postcritique in this section to attend to how feminist critical dispositions interact with critical traditions to offer ways of doing critique differently. To extend this thinking, I want to begin by examining how feminist dispositions rethink close reading as a method. I argue that feminist critical dispositions reinterpret how and why close reading impacts how one thinks through theory. To illustrate this, I draw upon postcritical feminist scholars here to note how other feminist thinkers have navigated between feminist dispositions and extant critical traditions in Anglo-American literary and cultural studies. Anker and Felski note that reinvesting in close reading as a research method "reassess styles and approaches to reading that have become routine over the past few decades" by "testing out new possibilities and intellectual alternatives" (Anker & Felski, 2017: 2). As a means of working towards those possibilities and alternatives, feminist postcritical literary scholars often articulate reading as an iterative and reflexive practice. Feminist literary scholar Toril Moi makes a distinction between theory and reading to articulate how reading might be formulated as a practice, claiming that "a theory is not a method" (Moi, 2017: 35). For Moi, different theoretical perspectives do not function as scientific methods but rather as "different thematic or political investments, and different views of what is important in literature (and in life)" (Moi, 2017: 35). Moi further contends that attending to one's critical investments creates readings that "no longer have to feel bound to the hermeneutics of suspicion" (Moi, 2017: 35). This reflects how Heather Love similarly articulates critical practices through careful and attentive observation (Love, 2017: 69); reading in this view encourages a more open and generous approach that soothes the paranoid desire to treat a text with suspicion. These investments inform how I might look at something and what I might care about or for when I read. I might imagine close reading as an active practice of looking carefully.

Looking carefully eschews the notion that close reading can only be done in particular ways or only produces particular kinds of knowledge. Moi echoes this approach to close reading as active and careful observation, arguing that "the only 'method' that imposes itself is the willingness to look and see, to pay maximal attention to the words on the page" (Moi, 2017: 35). This emphasis on active, attentive looking does not reject the idea of critique; rather, rethinking close reading methods through careful observation creates potential for iteration and invention within close readings.

Moi and Love's thinking on close reading here constructs a foundational attention to and investment in how one uses close reading as a method. Their emphasis on attentive looking and care means that close reading methods cannot be maintained as fixed and inflexible, particularly along disciplinary lines. Moi argues that literary criticism often confines and obscures close reading even within its own disciplinary boundaries, which actively misconstrues how close reading functions as a method:

> In my view, literary criticism—by which I mean what we now call "reading"—doesn't have anything we can plausibly call competing methods, at least not in the sense widely used in the sciences and social sciences: a set of explicit strategies for how to generate new knowledge. This is why literary critics often have trouble explaining their "method" to colleagues in other disciplines...Critics clearly have specific thematic interests and political investments. But whether I do a postcolonial or a feminist or a psychoanalytic reading, methodologically I do the same sort of thing: I look and think in response to particular questions. (Moi, 2017: 34).

Moi's assessment of reading as a method of criticism articulates an important distinction around close reading. As Moi acknowledges, the practice of how one does a close reading articulates how one looks through a particular set of investments. This acknowledgment in turn flips how one considers the role of disciplinarity in close reading: literary criticism's disciplinary approaches to close reading represent a set of critical investments and not the totality of reading's potential as a method. Close reading hinges on one's situated, perspectival engagements with a field or an object of study. This similarly reflects Annemarie Mol's recognition of the critical need to shift from the totalizing diagnosis of the doctor to the performative enactments between doctor and patient; in this shift, the doctor's diagnoses changes when the patient's own reading is brought into

view (Mol, 2002: 152). Close reading must actively negotiate the interplay between a reader and what is read, which includes recognizing how one's reading can obstruct or ignore other views on what is being read. Attending to how a reader attends to and in turn interprets an object of study reveals how one's close readings constitute situated acts of meaning-making, which multiplies the number of meanings possible within a single reading.

Close readings must remain fluid and open to iteration from this perspective; one must actively look at something and attend to how that looking is situated within a larger ecology of readings. This attention is bodily as well as intellectual too, remembering how Sara Ahmed notes that theory emerges from bodily labor and physical, material contact with the world (Ahmed, 2017: 10-13). Reassessing close reading as a careful, attentive practice of looking also implicates the reader too. Readers become more active agents in this view, as a reader's particular investments and labors become necessary components of one's reading. A reader must no longer sequester herself behind predetermined disciplinary attitudes or gestures, and her readings become more liberated.[4] Within the context of this thesis, I must contend with what it means to give up my more literary impulses to "read" dance. Reading as careful, attentive looking becomes less abstract when watching dance: looking in this context is not a metaphor but rather a material action that I as a reader must undertake. This further collapses the distinction between reading as a "literary method" and reading as a kind of critical and careful looking. Reading in this sense is no longer just about applying a theoretical text to an artwork but rather about watching, paying attention to, and experiencing dance. Within the context of watching dance, the material dimensions of close reading become most obvious, taking reading from an intellectual act to a physical act of watching or looking.

[4] This kind of "liberated reader" is not necessarily the same as Roland Barthes' liberated reader. Barthes did articulate a similar problem of foreclosure within critique: he saw how the perceived supremacy of authorial intent foreclosed one's critical readings (Barthes, 1977: 147-148). Barthes argues that the critic who "explains" or "uncovers" a text must be replaced by a liberated reader who refuses "to assign…an ultimate meaning" (Barthes, 1977: 147). However, Barthes's imagining of a liberated reader is idealistic and disembodied, assuming the reader to be "without history, biography, psychology" (Barthes, 1977: 148). Attentive, careful reading practices mark a shift away from the dogmatic, paranoid readings that Barthes considers classical criticism. This approach to close reading liberates critics too, encouraging them to consider how one's close readings might be iterative, partial, and situated. A liberated reader in this view does not resist meaning but rather resists the foreclosure of meaning in favor of critical iteration and reflexivity.

Liberating close reading methods from literary disciplinary attitudes does not undo the myriad ways in which these theoretical traditions and critical practices are bound together though. As literary scholar Ellen Rooney notes, critical practices are deeply bound to scholarly attitudes, and even resistances to received critical paradigms often enfold the dominant, paranoid attitudes they reject. Rooney calls these paranoid, diagnostic approaches symptomatic reading (Rooney, 2017: 130). Rooney argues that symptomatic readings are aligned with rather than antithetical to postcritical reading methods, as symptomatic readings also produce situated, iterative readings (Rooney, 2017: 130). Rooney's thinking here reflects how form shapes critique: symptomatic reading "combines critique with an attention to the work of form that displaces the apparently purely propositional or conceptual movement of critique as such" (Rooney, 2017: 130). For Rooney, this means that "no reading is innocent," (Rooney, 2017: 131). Rather, close readings converge and disrupt one another, creating friction between a text, a reader, and extant readings that may or may not overlap. These overlaps create ruptures between and across various close readings, which demonstrates how close reading both breaks from text and enfolds it. Rooney articulates this as how "reading against the other reader is always also reading with the other reader, as reading against the text is always also reading with the text" (Rooney, 2017: 131). Following this line of thinking, readers are always reading in relation to other readings, and that resulting proximity and friction between readings produces the various forms that one's reading might take.

I argue that resistance to close reading can be enfolded into a larger ecology of knowing. Even resistant strategies to critique are complicit with disciplinary traditions: "the other reading makes it impossible for me to forget that I am also a symptom" (Rooney, 2017: 131). Rooney does not see this as a cynical inevitability though; rather, Rooney examines how a reader's complicity with disciplinary traditions problematizes the notion of disciplinarity. Rooney contextualizes this through an attention to the problematics that emerge when one reads. Rooney states that "the problematic defines the objects within a field, fixes lines of inquiry, and delimits the form of the solutions" (Rooney, 2017: 133). Following this line of thinking, Rooney argues that "every idiom of reading...enacts a problematic" (Rooney, 2017: 133). Rooney therefore attends to how

reading plays with form to disrupt disciplinarity. Playing with form makes reading playful: it shifts the problematics that limit potential forms and lines of questioning. Rooney claims that "there is no reading that works innocently beyond, before or beneath the theoretical, no reading that can put itself out of play" (Rooney, 2017: 135). I contend that this playful reading even mirrors the linguistic playfulness of Algerian-born Jewish philosopher Jacques Derrida. Reading here comes into view through the conflict between signifier and significance, revealing traces of other readings in its wake. Close reading "anticipates its own displacement" since one's readings are "necessarily addressed to another reading, never simply to "the text" (Rooney, 2017: 137). I notice how this also echoes Derrida, who argues that any given text develops a "performative interpretation...an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" (Derrida, 1994: 63). Through this understanding of the transtextuality of close reading, this displacement reveals in turn how close readings are hypertextual, undoing and redoing themselves within an ecology of both disciplinary and anti-disciplinary readings.[5]

I contend that close reading in this view is not a foreclosed form or genre that fixes its production of knowledge; rather, close reading is a performative, iterative, and reflexive praxis. By this I mean that close reading methods anticipate their undoing, refusing foreclosure so that they might continue to iterate upon themselves. As Rooney examines, close reading methods are necessarily situated within a particular context, even when that situatedness is antagonistic or partial (Rooney, 2017: 136). This situated transtextuality constitutes for Rooney a rupture with the assumed foreclosure of close reading, recognizing instead how those reading practices are iterative and lacking a smooth or direct temporal continuity (Rooney, 2017: 140). Rooney articulates this iterative, reflexive approach to close reading as "a productive practice that anticipates its undoing, undoing itself, again and again" (Rooney, 2017: 147). I argue that this anticipatory undoing necessitates a hauntology of readings, to borrow from Derrida's thinking again, since one's close reading "spectralizes" (Derrida, 1994: 63). I extend

[5] I borrow the concepts of transtextuality and hypertextuality from literary theorist Gérard Genette. Genette defines transtextuality as "all that sets the text in relationship...with other texts" (Genette, 1997a: 1). Genette defines hypertextuality as "any relationship uniting a text B...to an earlier text A...grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette, 1997a: 5). Transtextuality and hypertextuality in this view address the relationships between different texts and how those relations inform one another.

Derrida here to consider how transtextual disjunctures cause these various, overlapping readings to haunt one another. This diffuses disciplinary lineages, or what Derrida calls "critical inheritance" (Derrida, 1994: 69). I contend that this diffusion of how one comes to gain or to inherit meaning through close reading reveals what meanings cannot be grasped when only situated within literary criticism's disciplinary boundaries. I consider this diffusion akin to what Derrida calls a "deconstruction of the critical limits," which in Derrida's view are "the reassuring limits that guarantee the necessary and legitimate exercise of critical questioning" (Derrida, 1994: 204). Through this deconstructionist approach to the limits of critical questioning, close reading allows readers to do close reading across disciplinary boundaries.

Deconstruction here also demonstrates how reading necessarily produces disruptions and disjointments that destabilize one's ability to totalize a text on a disciplinary level. Even to invoke Rooney and Derrida here is to invoke a particularly white and Eurocentric perspective on philosophy or literary theory, despite how deconstruction and postcritique desire to reframe or to resist the perceived ubiquity of invoking white, Eurocentric thinking. This quagmire does not render deconstruction or similar critical modes obsolete or hypocritical though, as both deconstruction and postcritique offer avenues for navigating this critical self-reflexivity without sliding completely into self-conscious metacritique. I argue instead that reading across this transtextuality produces a hauntological multiplicity, one which situates not just other readings but the critical traditions that those readings might invoke. This ecology of readings that haunt each other ultimately breaks the notion that close reading can make any one perspective absolute, closed, or fixed. I contend instead that close reading as a research method favors interpretation, valuing what is contingent and situated about one's readings. Close reading must not emphasize what can be cleanly delineated along disciplinary boundaries, such as those between literature, philosophy, and dance, nor should it reinforce or secure how Eurocentric perspectives impose boundaries around knowledge and meaning-making. One must attend instead to how close reading creates openings or disruptions within academic disciplines and other paradigms for knowledge, which in turn recognizes how one's readings exist alongside a multitude of critical perspectives and lineages.

On a methodological level, I take up close reading as a method that carefully attends to one's affective, bodily knowing as a primary source for one's research. To unpack my meaning, I want to consider how I can read bodily knowledges as paratexts that sit alongside or around my theorizing. I deploy the term "paratext" here to reframe a more literary critical tradition within feminist modes of bodily knowing. Within an Anglo-European context, the dominant conceptualization of a paratext is usually ascribed to French literary scholar Gérard Genette. Genette identifies paratexts as materials that relate to but are separate from a primary text, such as pamphlets, author's notes, biographies, and acknowledgements (Genette, 1997b). For the sake of this thesis though, I define a paratext as an affective material that informs how one comes to know or to read an object of study. My definition extends Genette's argument that a paratext constitutes a "threshold" (Genette, 1997b: 2). By this, Genette means that paratexts form liminal spaces between readers and texts wherein a reader comes to know a text. In Genette's own words, a paratext is "an 'undefined zone'...without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned towards the text) or the outward side (turned towards the world's discourse about the text)" (Genette, 1997b: 2). Genette's argument here indicates how paratexts determine one's direction towards texts, which similarly indicates that paratexts might offer affective resonances or a set of investments that influence how one reads.

Following this line of thinking, I contend that paratexts are slippery and lack foreclosure as independent texts, which allows me to rethink them as affective, bodily responses and as a set of critical and political investments. My reading here expands Genette's own argument: Genette also notes that paratexts are always "at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (Genette, 1997b: 2). Genette's thinking here echoes my own, attending to how paratexts offer directions or investments that shift or determine the disposition with which one reads. The difficulty comes from the inability to precisely determine what makes paratexts discreet from other materials or investments that surround one's reading of a text. To navigate this, I argue that paratexts form their own genre of extra-textual affective materials that inform one's readings. This mirrors Genette's argument as well, who proposes that paratexts form a "heterogenous group of practices and discourses of all kinds...a convergence of

effects" (Genette, 1997b: 2). Genette's attention here to practices and convergences is useful, as it draws focus to how paratexts form a larger ecology of not just texts but also feelings, thoughts, sensations, and experiences. From this expanded view, the sensuous, feeling body becomes another paratext within this larger ecology. Following Genette's argument again, the body as a paratext constitutes a "zone between text and off-text...not only of transition but also of transaction" (Genette, 1997b: 2). Extending Genette's thinking, I propose that identifying one's affective, bodily responses form paratexts that sit within a larger ecology of transtextual materials. My reading here also rethinks what might be considered a "text" and what therefore may be available to be read. Within the context of my research, fleshy, sensuous bodies, including their experiences, sensations, and thoughts, constitute paratexts that haunt my readings and inform how I receive or read texts.

In this thesis, my close reading chapters feature a "preface" that attends to my lived, affective experience of watching dance. These anecdotes dialogue with my more conventional close readings to reconsider or to reframe my encounters with dance. I call these anecdotes "prefaces" to gesture towards a Derridean concept of the preface as a reading of a text that repeats or iterates upon that same text. Reading Derrida, Gayatri Spivak contends that a preface re-enacts or repeats a text, arguing that "each act of reading the 'text' is a preface to the next" (Spivak, 1997: xii). However, Spivak also considers this repetition to be iterative. According to Spivak, a preface locates how one's reading reframes or reinscribes a text through an attention to its transtextuality (Spivak, 1997: xii). I begin these close reading chapters with these anecdotal prefaces to attend to paratexts that reframe or situate my thinking. These prefaces reframe and situate my more conventional, textual close reading through my affective, lived experiences. This similarly evokes feminist critical writing methods like fictocriticism that place emphasis on how lived experience informs or alters one's approach to critical thinking. Feminist scholar Anna Gibbs echoes this, drawing upon Derrida as well to argue that the use of personal narrative or anecdote in fictocriticism hybridizes or interrupts a text to offer a "critical commentary" on the dialogics of writing (Gibbs, 2005: 3). In these prefaces, I offer experiential forms of knowing that reframe or situate the dialogue between my writing and the affective, material knowledges that exceed the boundaries of the page.

Remembering Anker and Felski's argument that postcritique is concerned with critique's mood or attitude (Anker & Felski, 2017: 10), I want to consider what role critical disposition plays within my more open approach to close reading. Reframing critical practices around bodily and experiential knowledges requires recognizing how critical disposition necessarily informs how one does close reading. This includes noticing how some critical dispositions like feminism allow one to imagine new ways of thinking through or approaching critique. Critical disposition here refers to the various investments or conditions that predicate how one reads, which may be political, affective, intellectual, or material. I argue that this definition echoes how literary scholar Christopher Castiglia understands critical disposition. Castiglia defines critical disposition as "the attitude with which critique is approached" that has a "corollary in methodology" (Castiglia, 2017: 212). This means that critical disposition can be understood as akin to a "cultivated frame of mind" or an "orientation toward the text" (Castiglia, 2017: 213). I see Castiglia's use of orientation here as evoking Sara Ahmed's concept of critical orientation, or how "orientations involve different ways of registering the proximity of objects and others" (Ahmed, 2006b: 3). For Castiglia, emphasizing disposition calls into question the dogmatic or diagnostic ways in which critique might be deployed. This acknowledges how the "same methodology approached from different dispositions will produce dramatically different results" (Castiglia, 2017: 213). I again notice resonances between Castiglia and Ahmed here: the recognition of how one turns towards or receives a text produces a range of possibilities for how one reads. Ahmed articulates this recognition as how "the approach...is also how we turn toward that object" (Ahmed, 2006b: 2). Reimagining or re-investing in how one turns towards texts therefore allows for new sets of approaches and investments.

I contend that how one turns towards a text or object of study constitutes its own methodological possibilities. Methodologically, this appears within my research on multiple levels. When I consider how dance and other arts-based practices inform or shift feminist criticism, I notice new sets of relations between and across these approaches. Thinking about dance practice through theory produces new attentions to the white, Anglo-American literary and cultural studies scholarship that influence how I think about feminist theory and its theoretical lineage. In return, thinking about dance as a text that

I can read offers new lineages between performance practice and literature that make felt, material knowledges more present within both disciplines. I use dance here to rethink how I approach traditions of feminist literary and cultural criticism, and I use those same feminist literary traditions inform and reshape how I approach dance as an artwork and as a theoretical paradigm. This ecology of knowledge haunts my research, providing multiple directions that overlap and inform one another in both direct and indirect ways. This is perhaps why critical disposition becomes paramount within this hauntological multiplicity: when the boundaries between disciplines become soft, an attention to how and from where one looks resists redrawing those limits and instead enables one to imagine new relations between thoughts.

By this I am arguing that attending to one's critical disposition promotes speculative or imaginative thinking. As Castiglia notes, attending to one's critical disposition can "encourage the risky speculations that would make critics active participants" (Castiglia, 2017: 212). Castiglia further articulates that developing new critical dispositions does not necessarily mean that new or different attentions or investments will be grafted onto pre-existing ones. Attending to one's critical disposition also does not mean becoming apolitical or navel-gazing; rather, critical disposition intervenes in politics since "political engagement is signified through disposition" (Castiglia, 2017: 214). Castiglia also contends that critical disposition is not a performance of politics either, since "textual politics...reinforces a cycle of expectation about the way the world—and the text—works without acknowledging the existence of experiences that vary from or defy those expectations" (Castiglia, 2017: 214). Castiglia's argument that one's politics works through one's critical dispositions clarifies how it functions within one's reading methods. Critical disposition does not shrink the politics of critique but rather imagines new politics or political investments through reading practices. Castiglia articulates this as how developing new or alternative critical dispositions "might involve a different conception of the political role of literary and cultural studies" (Castiglia, 2017: 214). My reading of Castiglia here points to how critical dispositions demonstrate both a set of political investments like feminism as well as a way of imagining the world otherwise. This informs methods like close reading in turn, embedding those hopeful imaginaries or investments within one's critical thinking.

Within the context of my thinking, I make use of critical disposition as a means of expressing how I can imagine new, more hopeful feminist futures within and through critique. This in turn expresses how I might resist modes that would other otherwise coopt or neutralize feminist thought and practice: a feminist critical disposition here necessarily informs and reshapes the critical methods with which it engages. This articulates how a feminist critical disposition can enact a different kind of politics through critical reading, and how in turn I might consider how feminist dispositions work alongside or across other disciplines like dance, philosophy, and literary criticism.

Recognizing how I can use a feminist critical disposition to reshape or to reimagine close reading also implies another recognition though: critical dispositions are neither apolitical nor immune to institutional control and disciplinarity. Institutionalized, nationalized, or disciplinary beliefs, attitudes, or postures also manifest as critical dispositions. Castiglia articulates these institutional dispositions as "the state's imperative and totalizing explanatory powers" (Castiglia, 2017: 215). I propose that Castiglia notices here how these institutional dispositions make a paranoid gesture, as these disciplinarizing forces find something to say about everything in an effort to control or to explain. For Castiglia, imaginative and speculative thinking become the antidotes to this kind of paranoid, institutional disposition since imaginative thinking produces new political futures. I argue that imaginative thinking in this view leans more towards playful experimentation or speculation rather than utopic thinking. Castiglia echoes my thinking, arguing for imaginative thinking as "a critical refusal of presentations of phantasms as realities" in favor of "more inventive and experientially diverse versions of the possible" (Castiglia, 2017: 217). Rather than imagining utopia, this imaginative thinking is hopeful: it takes up thinking and rethinking possibilities as a set of optimistic political and critical investments. For Castiglia, these hopeful dispositions offer "an imaginative space coexisting with and perpetually troubling the imperative here and now within which new ideals, new versions of the real, can be envisioned" (Castiglia, 2017: 218). Per Castiglia's thinking here, I similarly contend that these imaginative dispositions also necessarily resist or displace those paranoid, institutional dispositions that attempt to control or to discipline one's thinking. The desire to develop new ideals and new potential realities formulates its own kind of critical disposition, one which I might take up alongside

feminist investments. Imagining new critical dispositions also orients one towards these investments: this framing turns close reading into a speculative project that enables ones to think differently. Critical dispositions give close reading its imaginative potential, allowing one to speculate on new questions and approaches without adopting a paranoid posture.

As a set of critical investments, a feminist critical disposition invokes how I might look at and speculate on the affective, bodily knowledges that haunt my readings. Investing in a hopeful feminist critical disposition also imagines new possible ecologies for knowing bodies and bodies of knowledge. Engaging in this kind of speculative thinking might make one feel groundless, might become dizzying: a feminist critical disposition creates an epistemological disorientation. I see this disorientation as echoing how Ahmed notes that orientations might leave one feeling as though they have no origin or beginning, or how one "might notice orientations as something we do not have" (Ahmed, 2006b: 6). This disorientation can be uncomfortable, though Ahmed argues that "to be uncomfortable is precisely to be affected by that which persists in the shaping of bodies and lives" (Ahmed, 2004: 155). If feminist critical dispositions create discomfort, noticing those discomforts attends to how one is moved by feminist investments. Attending to how one is moved by feminist critical dispositions becomes a reorientation. Ahmed articulates reorienting, or determining a new starting point, as an "act of perceiving the object" that "depends on the arrival of the body that perceives" (Ahmed, 2006a: 549). This bodily arrival returns me to my earlier recognition of how one's knowing body might form a paratext that haunts one's readings. I read this as grounding affective, bodily knowing in one's critical orientations: affective resonances and bodily sensations make one's imaginative political and critical investments material and felt. Reorienting to how one feels about critical dispositions similarly draws one towards reading's affective spacetimes. As Ahmed argues, this attention to the space and time of reading can "re-animate the very concept of space" (Ahmed, 2004: 12). This orientation to space and time frustrates and collapses the perceived distance between a reader and a text, allowing one to imagine new critical relations between bodies and concepts as a result. Orienting towards how my feminist investments move me allows me to imagine

not only new feminist theories like critical passivity but also new feminist critical ecologies not previously explored.

"Reading" dance and the choreographic dimensions of close reading

From this consideration of how my feminist critical disposition affects my close readings, I turn now towards how I apply my approach to close reading to watching dance. I explore the implications of applying literary methods to performance practices later in this section, but I begin thinking about close reading and dance through this new attention to how my feminist critical investments affect me. To illustrate this, I draw upon bodily forms of knowing while reading. Affective, bodily forms of knowing haunt one's readings, which articulates close reading as a kind of body-based practice in turn. Extending Gotman's notion of a discursive choreographer, I articulate close reading as a choreographic practice through this reorientation towards bodily knowing. When I articulate close reading as choreography, I intend the double-meaning that this implies. Articulation here implies that close reading is both a movement of thoughts and an organization of bodily movements. Linking together bodily movements and thinking locates how close reading brings one back to the body. To illustrate this, Gotman makes a connection between reading and Étienne Decroux's mime techniques, arguing that "this act of reading is a choreography seeking to hear and echo those rhymes" (Gotman, 2017: 152). Gotman maps small bodily movements to the act of reading, drawing attention to how reading is a material and bodily practice as well as intellectual one. This mapping of bodily movements while reading creates for Gotman a "musical score" that marks "the way the eyes move between objects (marks on a page) and coffee stains" (Gotman, 2017: 152). This choreography of eyes dancing across a page is musical because it contains a relationship to time. Gotman argues that one's tempo and rhythm for reading mark "the choreography of the page" (Gotman, 2017: 152). These tempos and rhythms add weight to one's reading, shifting reading into "a chorus of voices re-articulating, echoing, gesturing towards what was perhaps 'originally' swiftly penned" (Gotman, 2017: 152). Gotman's articulation here of rhythmic eye movements returns to the physical, material labor of reading and looking, making connections between bodily and conceptual

movements explicit. Reading as a choreographic practice composes its own dance: concepts and thoughts emerge and fade, while hands touch and move the pages of a book. The eye moves to its own beat. Breath catches and starts.

Gotman's thinking here demonstrates how bodily sensations and feelings form a paratext when one attends to how bodily movements create a score or choreography that runs alongside one's reading of a text. Reading the body as a dynamic paratext enacts these affective, material encounters. Choreography in this view frames these encounters through close reading. To unpack this notion, I want to consider further how Gotman articulates the choreographic dimensions of close reading. Gotman articulates close reading through tactile encounter: "the whole edifice of touch and thought collapsed into this one trope, 'sense'" (Gotman, 2017: 151). Following Gotman's thinking here, I argue that close reading materializes conceptual movements through bodily sensations such as touch. The body becomes a new dynamic line, a term I borrow from Maxine Sheets-Johnstone to articulate the physical labor of touch and movement as "an ongoing projection of forces from a beginning point" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 71). A dynamic line might create a new shape, a new flow of energy, or a new tension or contraction. Close reading marks a dynamic line that similarly creates opportunities to develop new physio-textual relationships. As Gotman acknowledges, attending to reading as haptic and sensual allows one to find a text's "body, its corpus, with all its myriad senses: its touch, its taste, its proprioception, its kinesthetics... perhaps, its dance. And its mise en scène" (Gotman, 2017: 153). Extending Gotman's argument, I propose that close reading forms a dynamic line between a reader's bodily sensations and feelings and a text's materiality—its "body," to extend Gotman's language. Relationships between reader and text, or movere and oeuvre so to speak, appear more affective and material when one looks at close reading's choreographic dimensions.

Approaching close reading choreographically reveals in turn how dancing bodies become apparent as texts. This becomes particularly apparent when I take Gotman's metaphorical "body" of a text and substitute it for dancing bodies on a stage. My substitution here contextualizes dance and by extension performance as a more ephemeral but nonetheless material text produced by moving bodies. This substitution of metaphorical bodies for material bodies is not to misread or to read against Gotman's

thinking though; rather, Gotman also defines performance through its relationship to both materials and temporalities. Gotman argues that performance is "a form of writing that moves between surfaces, between temporalities and ontological planes, inscribed into material stuff always referred back to an imaginary time before object being, and always eluding it" (Gotman, 2017: 149). Per Gotman's thinking, this means that performance moves through the liminal spaces between object and event (Gotman, 2018a: 307). Performance maintains a slippery textuality; it moves between the material and immaterial, the tangible and intangible[6]. I propose that close reading traces those movements between bodies and ideas when one watches performance. Framing close reading in this way also reframes performance's "text" as existing in a liminal space between object and event, a space which is mediated the relationship between how one thinks and feels and how one watches or looks. This framing further refigures looking or watching as attentive observation, since watching in this context conveys an attention to how performance makes one feel or think.

Concepts reveal themselves as moving bodies just as dance might reveal itself as text, and close reading provides a method of organizing these encounters with respect to both their material and conceptual relations. To further illustrate how rethinking watching as close reading refigures these relations, I want to examine how choreography as a theoretical framework stages close reading as a transtextual encounter with performance. Returning to Heather Love's thinking, fieldwork can be characterized as careful observation (Love, 2017: 69). I see this as echoing Gotman's thinking: Gotman positions fieldwork not simply as looking or observing but as "its own method of choreography" (Gotman, 2018a: 307). This view characterizes fieldwork as an "embodied spatial practice" that must be "constantly remapped—discursively—and corporeally negotiated" (Gotman, 2018a: 307). Following this link between Gotman and

[6] My reading here echoes existing perspectives and debates on performance's "textuality." Performance scholars like Peggy Phalen emphasize performance's ephemerality, while others like Philip Auslander focus on performance's liveness (Phelan, 2005; Auslander, 2008). Within the context of dance studies, scholars like Sheets-Johnstone have argued for phenomenological approaches to studying dance, highlighting how dance emerges as a lived experience through watching (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015). Alternatively, scholars like Kate Elswit articulate dance as a kind of bodily archive, attending to how dance takes on multiple meanings depending upon who dances, who watches that dance, and how those audiences watch (Elswit, 2014).

Love's thinking, I argue that fieldwork articulates a method of paying maximal attention while negotiating one's body in relation to objects of study. This articulation of fieldwork and its link with choreography collapses the distinctions between carefully looking, sensing, feeling, and thinking. Through an attention to its choreographic dimensions, close reading takes on these qualities too, collapsing distinctions between reading text and watching performance. Close readings also choreograph seemingly intransigent concepts as moving bodies of thought. Brandstetter clarifies this by noting how dance makes corporeal that which appears immaterial: "the 'flow' of the movement...makes the exertion directed at the resistant material tangible" (Brandstetter, 2011: 126).

This view highlights how choreography makes dance legible as a moving text. Choreography here functions not simply as a system of dance composition; rather, choreography reframes and reinterprets close reading. This echoes how dance scholar Victoria Watts argues that dance forces one to think with the body rather than with text. Watts contends that reading dance is "a form of reading in which bodily awareness is heightened" (Watts, 2010: 15). This heightened awareness also "exists on a continuum," with one end containing "a practice in which the body has been repressed, denied, exiled" (Watts, 2010: 15). For Watts though, reading dance as a text does not produce a problematic but rather an opportunity to expand choreography beyond its role as a tool for dance composition. Watts argues that a choreographic approach to close reading functions as "a valuable research tool for work that aims to avoid both the bloodless trap of representation and textuality and the solipsistic cul-de-sac of experience" (Watts, 2010: 15). Extending Watt's thinking, I propose that a choreographic approach to close reading organizes relations between bodies and concepts across a transtextual ecology of readings. This reading echoes a similar observation that dance practitioner Marten Spangberg makes: Spangberg argues that choreography operates as a critical and practical technology that offers "a set of opportunities that are interrelated but non-directional" (Spangberg, 2017: 366). Dance scholar Andre Lepecki also echoes this line of thinking, noting how choreography functions as an apparatus of capture (Lepecki, 2007). By this Lepecki means that choreography is "a mechanism that simultaneously distributes and organizes dance's relationship to perception and signification" (Lepecki, 2007: 120). While Lepecki and Spangberg note that this organizing principle of

choreography might also function as a disciplinary force (Lepecki, 2007; Spangberg, 2017), the imperative to attend to objects of study with care resists dominating or totalizing readings. I note these three readings to draw relationships between choreography as a technology or apparatus for organizing bodies and Gotman's concept of the discursive choreographer. While all three of these perspectives offer a particular conceptual approach to dance that gained popularity in the early 2000s, they nonetheless point towards existing approaches to thinking through conceptual frameworks for choreography. I point to these perspectives here as a means of gesturing towards a lineage for how choreography offers a theoretical framework for reading bodies and thoughts within and through dance.

In the case of my research, dance as an artwork or performance form takes shape as the "text" that I will "read" to generate knowledge around my theory of critical passivity. At this juncture though, many of these terms are breaking down. Since performance moves within a liminal space between material and immaterial, I argue that close reading constitutes a method of attending to the affective, bodily relations between one who feels and thinks through watching and the performance that one reads. Gotman more succinctly articulates my thinking here as the "haptic labor of thought" (Gotman, 2017: 159). By this Gotman means that performance reaches "towards the always implicit reader" (Gotman, 2017: 161). I see Gotman's emphasis on how a performance reaches towards an observer as echoing dance scholars like Susan Leigh Foster. Foster proposes that dance evokes strong feelings within an observer through its careful aesthetic construction (Foster, 2011: 30). Foster contends that a dancer's physical labor and skill draws out these feelings from observers: "the dancer's performance draws upon and engages with prevailing senses of the body and of subjectivity in a given historical moment" (Foster, 2011: 30). This enfolds both a dancer's aesthetic choices as well as a choreographer's choices since both create the overall composition and execution of dance in a theatrical setting. Dance's affective capacity finds support from other elements that inform the performance's aesthetic construction too, such as lighting, sound, or setting. "Reading" dance with this view in mind creates an attention to how dance as an artwork actively constructs aesthetic choices that impact an observer and construct meaning. I also use close reading as a method of attending to dance's intentional aesthetic

choices and how they affect me. This approach manages the relationship between dance as a material, affective artwork and a conceptual framework that maps bodily ways of knowing that emerge during my transtextual encounters with dance.

(Re)imagining critical writing: performative writing and feminist body-writing

Up to this point, I have considered close reading, one of my methods, and how I reimagine and reinterpret it through both feminist critical dispositions and choreographic frameworks. This thinking has also included one of my other methodological orientations, which considers how thinking through a choreographic approach to close reading reconfigures distinctions between performance/text and reading/looking. This leads me to critical writing, my final method, and my methodological orientations behind it. I turn now to critical writing practices to think through how writing locates my close readings as affective, bodily encounters with dance. I want to consider here how critical writing can be reoriented towards an attention to feminist dispositions, choreography, and affective, bodily forms of knowing. Throughout this section, I examine how feminist, choreographic, and body-based approaches to critical writing inform my approach to how I do critical writing. I draw upon feminist writing methods, like *écriture féminine* and body-writing, performative writing, and choreographic writing throughout this section to formulate my approach to critical writing and its methodological relationship to my approach to close reading.

Before I arrive at feminist writing practices, I begin here with thinking through choreographic approaches to critical writing. Later in this section, I will locate how these perspectives might shift or reframe feminist methods of critical writing. I want to consider first Brandstetter's thinking around how choreography as a methodological framework informs writing practices. Brandstetter observes how writing and choreography meet in relation to their haptics; however, both theoretical and practical tensions emerge when one links choreography with writing (Brandstetter, 2011: 120). Brandstetter notices how the physical act of writing requires bodily movement and physical exertion like a dancing body. Though moving a pen and dancing are different

kinds of bodily labors, Brandstetter examines that the physical, kinetic dimensions of writing reveal "the complexity of this 'action' as a movement of the body as a graphic act" (Brandstetter, 2011: 121). Brandstetter also considers how the physical act of writing "doesn't take place in a single, dynamic movement" (Brandstetter, 2011: 121); however, Brandstetter nonetheless formulates writing here as its own articulation of movements that are distinct from the labor of dancing or choreographing.

I see similar resonances here between choreography and writing through the way Brandstetter extends dance and choreography into writing. Brandstetter claims that dance manifests an "aspect of showing and showing-oneself in the act of movement" (Brandstetter, 2011: 122). I contend that this line of thinking implies that dance and writing mirror each other; both dance and writing mark one's body and ideas in space through their physical labor and actions. Unlike written text though, dance operates as an ephemeral form of this physical writing. Brandstetter similarly observes this, arguing that dance is rarely observed as writing because of its ephemerality: "writing as movement...eludes observation by an audience" (Brandstetter, 2011: 122). This leads Brandstetter to argue that "a dancer does not read himself or herself, i.e. the traces of what his or her movement in space has 'written'" (Brandstetter, 2011: 122). I contend that this further frustrates the idea that dance as an art form can be fixed or foreclosed. Extending Brandstetter here, dance has "no original version that an author...could be responsible for" (Brandstetter, 2011: 125). This includes how one receives dance's disappearing writing: both writing and dance are performances that an audience cannot fully control or dominate through observation alone. I propose that dance functions as a disappearing or ephemeral writing, one that stages itself as an event while remaining invisible or illegible to both dancers and audiences.

My reading of dance as an ephemeral form of writing echoes dance scholar Laurence Louppe, who similarly notes how dance as writing disappears. Louppe however sees this disappearance as a kind of "counter-writing" (Louppe, 1994: 10). By this Louppe means that dance confounds traditional notions of textuality by constructing a "gestural glossary through the poetic emanation of an event" (Louppe, 1994: 9). Since this line of thinking constructs dance as an event that counters or displaces writing, Louppe also sees returning dance to writing as "grave" (Louppe, 1994: 11). Brandstetter takes a less

paranoid perspective however, arguing that the translation of dance to writing offers an opportunity to reinterpret dance *as* writing. For Brandstetter, the disappearance of dance as writing manifests as a "presentation of difference" (Brandstetter, 2011: 123). This presentation or performance of difference or *différance*, which makes the Derridean intervention in Brandstetter's argument more explicit, produces "an excess of alternatives of meaning and comprehension in such a process" (Brandstetter, 2011: 124). I propose that dance as writing constitutes a performance of *différance*: it produces a plurality of meanings when it marks bodies in space and time.

My thinking here resonates with a trend in contemporary dance scholarship that considers how choreography and dance by extension can operate as an interdisciplinary critical methodology. I propose that thinking methodologically about choreography and dance reframes more literary notions of textuality to create a more open approach to critical writing. Brandstetter echoes this, arguing that dance as writing reveals "the openness of meaning in choreographic work" (Brandstetter, 2011: 124). This means that dance as writing resist textual foreclosure as well, which Brandstetter expresses as "the resistance of a choreographic performance to objectifying, unequivocal interpretation" (Brandstetter, 2011: 124). I contend that this view of choreography offers a mode of uncovering or locating how dance reframes writing. My characterization here does not misrepresent the work of choreography: this approach expands rather than diminishes what choreography does or can do. Dance practitioner William Forsythe echoes my reading here, claiming that "to reduce choreography to a single definition is not to understand the most crucial of its mechanisms: to resist and reform previous conceptions of its definition" (Forsythe, 2011: 90). As Brandstetter observes, dance as writing reveals how "the dynamic relationship of text and body, of writing and dancing is situated in the open field of translatability: as a never-ending process of transcriptivity" (Brandstetter, 2011: 125). This expansion and translation of the methodological scope of choreography again echoes these trends in contemporary dance scholarship that advocate for more interdisciplinary, conceptual approaches to what dance and choreography do to one's research methods.

This expanded methodological scope allows me to frame both dance and writing as material, performative acts through choreography. I want to draw on Brandstetter

once again to give an example of how other dance scholars engage with this. Brandstetter examines how choreography navigates this ephemerality, since choreography reveals how the "ambivalences, attractions and repulsions between dance and text occur – an ongoing process that creates friction" (Brandstetter, 2011: 123). As a practice of mapping relations between moving, material bodies, I understand choreography as a kind of performative writing. I see this as echoing how cultural studies scholar Della Pollock defines performative writing as "an analytic, a way of framing and underscoring aspects of writing/life" (Pollock, 1998: 75). Pollock's argument here articulates how writing performs, how it articulates and self-reflexively frames what it constructs and how it conveys meaning. This means that performative writing functions as "a way of describing what some good writing *does*" (Pollock, 1998: 75). Pollock contends that performative writing works "in excess of norms of scholarly representation" and goes "beyond textuality into what might be called social mortalities" (Pollock, 1998: 79). Following this line of thinking, performative writing has a lived, material dimension as well. Pollack acknowledges this too, noting how "the writer and the world's bodies intertwine in evocative writing, in intimate coperformance of language and experience" (Pollock, 1998: 81). Pollock's articulation here exposes how performative writing is writing that moves and affects bodies, and it evokes rather than dictates the lived dimensions of thinking and being-in-the-world. Performative writing per Pollock's thinking creates possibilities where writing "moves *with*, operates alongside, sometimes through, rather than above or beyond" (Pollock, 1998: 81).

Pollock's attention to how lived, affective experiences inform one's writing gestures to how writing articulates both thoughts and feelings. Pollock's argument positions performative writing around the way it translates lived realities into graphic forms that inhabit their own time and place. I propose that Pollock's approach to performative writing here notices how writing inhabits a page much like how dancers inhabit a stage. This echoes the thinking of dance scholars like Jasmine Ulmer, who also attend to how a choreographic lens reveals how writing has lived, material dimensions. Ulmer articulates this choreographic approach to performative writing as choreographic writing. Choreographic writing, like performative writing, brings spatial and temporal dimensions to written forms. Ulmer's concept makes these dimensions more explicit

than Pollock though. Ulmer considers how choreographic writing extends performative writing: "writing is, by nature, a performative act; the addition of a visual dimension simply expands what is already possible within writing" (Ulmer, 2015: 45). As a writing method, Ulmer argues that choreographic writing considers a "visual text in which words move, pause, gain emphasis, and flow as if dancing across the open page" (Ulmer, 2015: 35). This means that choreographic writing also considers the affective impact of writing's spatial and temporal dimensions. Ulmer argues that choreographic writing figures not only what writing does but also its rhythms and intensities, how it takes up space. For Ulmer, the page constitutes a kind of theatrical setting or *mise-en-scène* for writing. How writing takes up space is crucial to Ulmer, since "an expansion of space may create room for agency within writing—agency on the part of the writer and on the part of the words themselves" (Ulmer, 2015: 43). For Ulmer, examining writing through a consideration of space and time allows for "varied dimensions of time, space, and movement to writing, thereby allowing the reader to flow along with the text" (Ulmer, 2015: 36). This dynamic flow extends the affective dimensions of writing in return, enfolding the writer's bodily space and rhythm as well. Ulmer echoes this, arguing that "this materiality extends beyond physical, bodily space into space for composition" (Ulmer, 2015: 43). Ulmer's approach to writing notices how one flows with writing, which informs how one composes and stages writing.

Ulmer's thinking around choreographic writing evokes other dance-based approaches to writing practice that also consider how writing stages bodily rhythms and knowledges within the *mise-en-scène* of a page. Brandstetter for example makes similar observations as Ulmer about writing's spatiality and temporality. Brandstetter however articulates what Ulmer calls choreographic writing as "dancewriting" (Brandstetter, 2011: 130). Dancewriting for Brandstetter offers a choreographic reframing of how writing flows and takes up space. Brandstetter's concept articulates similar investments as Ulmer's approach though: Brandstetter argues that dancewriting "becomes visual poetry, which – in the style of its markings, the rhythm of its lines and their orientation – is itself choreographically conceived" (Brandstetter, 2011: 130). Brandstetter's thinking also calls to mind other choreographic considerations of dance as writing, particularly dance notation. Choreology, or the study of dance notation, can be most easily defined as

the study of dance through archival notation practices. Choreologist Victoria Watts notes that choreology is "etymologically connected to the notion of the logos from which the voice derives its authority" (Watts, 2010: 10). Watt's attention here once again collapses distinctions between speaking, writing, and dancing. Watts argues that dance notation both utilizes and obfuscates writing practices, since it attempts to capture dance in a written, graphic form that is nonetheless illegible as written language (Watts, 2010: 15). For Watts, this means that dance and text cross the divide between discursive and non-discursive through an "affinity with the body and 'writing'" (Watts, 2010: 10). Watts reconfigures dance notation as the *logos* and choreography as the *graphos* of dance, though Watts also recognizes that this configuration favors the body as the primary means of understanding and reperforming dance as text (Watts, 2010).

These methods of choreographic writing, dancewriting, and dance notation all similarly reveal how choreography reflects what dance scholar Andre Lepecki calls a "movement-language," (Lepecki, 2007: 121). Lepecki's concept of movement-language reveals how:

> movement and words exchange affects and powers, thus producing specific resonances that invent a theoretical-perceptive body apt to explore and restore to view those dancing subjects that had been otherwise eliminated, or made obscure, by the choreo-theoretical perceptive apparatus. (Lepecki, 2007: 121)

Following Lepecki's argument, articulating choreography as a movement-language reflects how bodily ways of knowing emerge through writing to produce new forms of theoretical consciousness or perception. Spangberg echoes this sentiment, arguing that choreographic approaches "enable forms of navigation in the world" (Spangberg, 2017: 377). This conceptualization refigures dance composition as well, reimagining choreography as "moving it away from its majoritarian origins and imperatives" to navigate "out of the tyranny of kinetic-ontological habit" (Lepecki, 2007: 123). While these models for choreography sit neatly within a trend in contemporary dance studies towards expanded methodological views on choreography, they nonetheless offer avenues for thinking through choreography as not only an artistic practice but also as a set of investments, feelings, or attitudes through which one reframe critical writing.

According to these various dance-based perspectives, choreographic approaches to performative writing articulate how affective, bodily knowledges and investments emerge through writing. Choreographic approaches to writing reconfigure not only how writing unfolds on a page but also how a writer perceives concepts and experiences. Choreography in this view expresses a particular way of being-in-the-world, which might be contextualized as one's disposition, one's political, critical, and material investments or orientations. Approaching writing through these choreographic dispositions not only refigures how one approaches writing practices but also how one orients their attentions and experiences within writing. My argument for viewing choreographic approaches as critical dispositions also notices how choreographic investments might be aligned with or operate alongside feminist investments without needing to resolve the differences or discrepancies between the two. This means that both choreographic and feminist approaches to understanding the felt, material dimensions of thinking through the body find alliances and resonances through their shared interests and investments in how the body stages and shapes critical writing practices. What I am offering in this attention is a reparative approach to thinking between and alongside both feminist and choreographic writing practices, noticing how both modes refigure and inspire one another rather than ascribing control or dominance to one form over another.

Following this line of thinking, choreographic approaches to writing are akin to feminist critical writing practices. To unpack my meaning, I want to draw upon a set of concepts and practices that Karina Quinn calls "body-writing," (Quinn, 2015: 4). Quinn draws from queer feminist critique to consider how writing might map the poetry of the body. Quinn sees the body's poetry as that which "belongs only to process, to becoming, to stories, to breath, to desire, to hope" (Quinn, 2015: 10). Body-writing therefore formulates for Quinn a "cartography of the corporeal" (Quinn, 2015: 4). This corporeal cartography maps the flow and exchange of bodies and ideas, grafting these affective, bodily encounters into written text. Quinn's body-writing also draws upon feminist writing practices like Heléne Cixous's *écriture féminine*, or feminine writing. For Cixous, *écriture féminine* constitutes a "practice…prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful" (Cixous, 1976: 876). Cixous claims that "I write

woman: woman must write woman" (Cixous, 1976: 877). However, Cixous clarifies that the "woman" that she must write is "no general woman, no one typical woman" (Cixous, 1976: 876). To understand Cixous's meaning here, I turn to Julia Kristeva, who argues that "it probably comes closest to our 'female' as defined by Elaine Showalter" (Kristeva, 1981: 16).[7] To elaborate on Kristeva's meaning, I turn to Showalter's term "female literature," which comes closest to Cixous's concept of "feminine writing." Showalter defines female literature[8] as not "a romantic or Freudian abstraction" but rather "a form that itself is subject to a network of influences and conventions, including the operations of the marketplace" (Showalter, 1977: 12). Cixous examines literature written by women through its relationship to other existing literature, concluding that writing by women bears "the mark of…a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (*la nouvelle de l'ancien*)" (Cixous, 1976: 875). Cixous formulates this writing by women that breaks from patriarchal conventions as "*l'écriture féminine*."

Cixous's *écriture féminine* attempts to navigate the tightrope between critical and creative writing. Mirielle Calle-Gruber echoes this, noting that when it comes to Cixous's writing, there is a "misunderstanding about the term 'theory': the writing you [Cixous] practise is more like a form of philosophical reflection that you lead through poetry" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 4). Through *écriture féminine*, Cixous argues that "your field of action, indeed your combat, takes place in poetic writing, language, fiction" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 7). Cixous considers this poetic writing to be reparative.

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[7] Many contemporary feminist theorists have critiqued early poststructural feminists such as Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous for how they homogenize or essentialize womanhood into white, heteronormative femininity through their readings of literature written by the women of their time (Butler, 2002; Fraser, 1992; Trayhurn, 2017). For example, Butler argues that Kristeva's writing "safeguards the notion of culture as a paternal structure and delimits maternity as an essentially precultural reality" (Butler, 2002: 103). Butler argues that this is due to the way in which Kristeva subordinates the maternal to the paternal in her writing (Butler, 2002).

[8] Some context is needed to fully understand both Showalter's meaning here and the implications that terms like "female literature" carry with them. Terms like "female literature," "feminine writing," or "women's writing" should be historicised as common feminist terminology at the time Kristeva, Cixous, and Showalter were writing. These terms were often used by these thinkers to describe literature written by the women of their time. Many contemporary feminist scholars like Butler nonetheless have argued for how this language capitulates to or essentializes Anglo-European notions of white, heteronormative, and middle-class womanhood. Only through recognising the complex interrelations of race, gender, class, and sexuality can Cixous, Kristeva, and Showalter's political and historical moment be fully understood. This context does not foreclose or negate their thinking: one can also use this context as a means of procuring and reimagining their concepts and practice through contemporary feminist thinking. Feminist scholars like Quinn exemplify this, offering both a critique and reimagining of Cixous's *écriture féminine* through her concept of *écriture matiere* (Quinn, 2015).

Cixous argues that poetic writing is a "*positive incomprehension*...what we discover in love; or in friendship-love: the fact that the other is so very much other. Is so very much not-me" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 16). As such, Cixous's writing is not "the writing of clear-cut truths nor representations in majesty" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 160). Rather, Cixous's love-making gesture articulated through poetic writing evokes a "writing of preservation, risen to the edge of the abyss; of watchfulness; of mourning and of the hope of beginnings" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 160). Cixous's attention to the poetic qualities of writing is not simply an aesthetic consideration but rather echoes Pollock's claims that performative writing "collapses distinctions by which creative and critical writing are typically isolated" (Pollock, 1998: 79).

Theory and poetry are entwined in Cixous's writing practices, and this link is made explicit through an attention towards bodily sensations and pleasures. Cixous echoes this, arguing that *écriture féminine* overflows and disrupts clear distinctions between poetic and critical writing when one focuses on how writing can produce pleasurable, ecstatic feelings akin to love-making feelings. Pollock reinforces Cixous's claims here, attending to how performative writing may produce feelings of ecstasy:

> She reads/writes in body-time, moving the reader into (e)motion, into what can only be called critical ecstasy (*ex-stasis*) through the performance of her own subjectivity within the scene of reading-writing an image performing. (Pollock, 1998: 82)

Pollock's argument here demonstrates how critical ecstasy creates the potential for jouissance. While jouissance is an intentionally difficult term to define, it is most usually utilized in feminist thinking as a way of speaking towards forms of indescribable pleasure. This echoes Kristeva's thinking, who defines jouissance as "that word for pleasure which defies translation" (Kristeva, 1981: 16). While these pleasures can be both material and figurative, feminist scholarship often uses jouissance as a critical way of speaking about bodily or sexual pleasures like orgasms. According to Pollock, performative writing speaks "to, of, and through pleasure, possibility, disappearance, and even pain" (Pollock, 1998: 79). Pollock extends this notion further, claiming that this possibility for critical and bodily pleasure "confounds normative distinctions between

critical and creative (hard and soft, true and false, masculine and feminine)" (Pollock, 1998: 81). I contend here that jouissance offers a link between performative writing and *écriture féminine*. Following Pollock's attentions to how this ecstasy is both critical and bodily, jouissance locates the body within writing through this feminist attention to and investment in bodily pleasure. Pollock takes this investment a step further though, arguing that an investment in bodily pleasure is also a critical investment that shapes how one writes and in turn experiences others' writing. In this turn towards bodily pleasure, Pollock's emphasis on critical ecstasy entwines critical and felt, bodily knowledges within writing practices.

From this understanding of critical ecstasy and how Pollock's thinking can be applied to *écriture féminine*, I now want to bring this reading of Cixous's methods into conversation with other contemporary feminist body-writing practices. Reading Cixous, feminist scholar Samantha Trayhurn argues that "all bodies, not just women's, become the victims of a society that praises universality" (Trayhurn, 2017: 12). Trayhurn turns to Quinn's thinking on body-writing, which Quinn calls *écriture matière*, to recontextualize Cixous's thinking. Trayhurn notes that Quinn's *écriture matière* is "a writing of matter, of body...a call to bring all bodies to writing, to expel boundaries and binaries through sheer diversity rather than neutralisation" (Trayhurn, 2017: 14). Through *écriture matière*, Trayhurn finds a more intersectional approach to Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*. CIxous's *écriture féminine* can be considered as one particular form of feminist body-writing that sits alongside an array of feminist body-writing practices, though Cixous's influence is nonetheless felt in all of these later approaches too. Trayhurn argues that *écriture matière* is more "fitted to our times, a resounding cry to be oneself and speak oneself, whatever that may be" (Trayhurn, 2017: 15). However, other contemporary intersectional feminist approaches also navigate this desire to "speak oneself" through body-writing and life writing, such as Ulrika Dahl's concept of "écriture femme-inine," Lauren Fornier's feminist reimagining of autotheory, and Anna Gibb's approach to fictocriticism (Dahl, 2016; Fornier, 2021; Gibbs, 2005).

I see Sara Ahmed's concepts of "becoming feminist" and "sweaty concepts" as similarly evoking this desire to speak oneself through forms of body-writing. Ahmed argues that one becomes feminist by "coming up against the world" (Ahmed, 2017: 19).

This in turn determines "how we redescribe the world we are in" (Ahmed, 2017: 27). All of these forms of body-writing might signify ways in which one attempts to rearticulate how one comes up against the world. By extension, Ahmed's notion of "sweaty concepts" highlights the materiality of body-writing. Ahmed argues that concepts "come out of a bodily experience that is trying" (Ahmed, 2017: 13). Ahmed articulates here the bodily labor of theory as well as its lived-ness, recognizing "how we make sense of things also unfolds from 'the usual activity of life'" (Ahmed, 2017: 13). Ahmed's notion of lived theory born from the toil and labour of bodies reveals the logics of possibility behind feminist body-writing practices. Body-writing disrupts the need to "tidy our texts, not to reveal the struggle we have in getting somewhere" (Ahmed, 2017: 13). This reveals how one's lived body affects one's thinking and writing: "in how we generate knowledge; in how we write, in who we cite...if our texts are worlds, they need to be made out of feminist materials" (Ahmed, 2017: 13). I contend that this form of feminist world-building begins through body-writing practices. Writing unfolds one's bodily toil to attend to how bodies evoke both lived realities and concepts or theories: "the personal is theoretical...We might then have to drag theory back, to bring theory back to life" (Ahmed, 2017: 10).

Part I – Feminist epistemologies: extant feminist approaches to bodily knowledges

I turn now to the question of how critical passivity can "bring theory back to life," or how it can offer new, reparative feminist approaches to body-based knowledge production. To do this, I first want to turn to the theoretical lineage behind feminist epistemologies and how bodily knowledges emerge within them. In this section, I begin by unpacking Donna Haraway's concept of feminist objectivity to understand how posthumanist feminist epistemologies emerge from and respond to existing feminist epistemic paradigms. From this reading of feminist objectivity, I draw upon feminist scholarship that draws these ideas towards the material, sensing body as a locus of meaning-making and coming to knowing. Drawing upon Annemarie Mol's concept of ontological multiplicity, I examine how bodily knowing constitutes an interpretive practice of meaning-making that resists and reframes more traditional epistemic paradigms. I extend this reading of Mol's thinking to consider how practices of care and ambivalence might be incorporated into these body-based approaches to meaning-making. Through an examination of Heather Love's reading of Haraway, I articulate critical approaches that provide opportunities for new critical modes that similarly center bodily knowledges while existing in conversation with extant feminist epistemic paradigms. This argument that I draw creates a lineage of situated, perspectival, and body-based approaches to feminist knowing. This lineage in turn offers a means through which I can theorize how critical passivity emerges as a new, reparative feminist theory that articulates body-based thinking and knowing within this broader feminist context for knowledge production and meaning-making.

Feminist objectivity: bringing bodies to knowledge making

One cannot talk about the borders of thinking without first speaking at the border, and feminists have long situated themselves and their thinking at the borders of dominant discourse. When feminist scholar Donna Haraway articulated the term "situated knowledges," she sought to articulate a discourse of knowingness that resisted "when one language (guess whose?) must be enforced as the standard for all the translations and conversions" (Haraway, 1988: 580). Haraway noticed how feminist thinking often tends toward a paranoid impulse to position the notion of scientific objectivity and by extension theory as an imagined "conspiracy of masculinist scientists and philosophers" that posited feminist thinking as finite and niche (Haraway, 1988: 575). However, Haraway also noticed that these paranoid suspicions were not entirely unfounded, as some philosophers and politicians trended towards a perspective that feminism's "insider perspective" was "an inevitably disqualifying and polluting bias in any discussion of consequence outside our own little circles" (Haraway, 1988: 575). Even as she recognizes these paranoid gestures though, Haraway finds that she cannot shake the suspicion that science and philosophy are rhetorical games meant to control knowledge and to weaponize it as a form of socio-cultural power (Haraway, 1988: 577). Haraway argues this as how "all knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field" (Haraway, 1988: 577). In a search for an alternative though, Haraway ultimately argues not for "a theory of innocent powers to represent the world" but rather a critical model that speaks to and through "how bodies and meanings get made" (Haraway, 1988: 579-580). In the return to the critical value of theory, Haraway posits a space through which feminists might reinvest in and in turn reimagine the theoretical and epistemic logics that masculinist paradigms had weaponized against them.

As a way of both resisting paranoid feminist modes that were suspicious of theory and masculinist philosophers and politicians who abetted these suspicions, Haraway sought to articulate the situatedness of knowing as a form of "feminist objectivity" (Haraway, 1988: 581). Haraway envisioned that the project of developing a feminist objectivity was reparative, since it would "reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere"

(Haraway, 1988: 581). This meant that for Haraway, feminist objectivity was quite simply an "embodied objectivity" (Haraway, 1988: 581). By this Haraway argues that objectivity might be reformulated as a multifocal envisioning of knowledge-in-the-making that emerged out of the particularity of being-in-the-world. Haraway therefore envisioned this embodied, feminist objectivity as constituting:

> an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real' world. (Haraway, 1988: 579)

For Haraway, the project of developing a feminist objectivity was to uncover new critical feminist paradigms for the relationships between knowing bodies and bodies of knowledge that did not subscribe to a feminist paranoia over the perceived value of critical practices (Haraway, 1988: 580). This meant that feminist objectivity emerged for Haraway out of a reparative desire, one that wishes to "build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" (Haraway, 1988: 580). The project of a feminist objectivity then is a reparative project of bringing bodies to knowledge and knowledge to bodies; it does not validate traditional, masculinist paradigms of transcendent objectivity nor the paranoid feminist perspectives that decry the possibility for any radically hopeful perspectives on critical theory.

This lineage of bringing together bodies and meanings to create new critical perspectives has materialized politically within feminist thinking and discourse. For example, many feminist thinkers have taken up the question of how bodily difference and privilege shape epistemes—how particular bodies articulate forms of knowing and who in turn listens to or recognizes those knowledges. From a postcolonial perspective, Gayatri Spivak articulated strategic essentialism as a means of thinking about how one might use political identity as a means of subtly resisting colonial regimes and how those regimes impact one's life and thinking (Spivak, 1990). On the other hand, many Black American and British feminists make use of intersectionality as an alternative approach that also uses the lived, material body as a political and theoretical site of meaning-making, albeit in different ways than strategic essentialism. Black American feminists like Kimberlé Crenshaw figured intersectionality as a means of acknowledging how Black

women can be recentered within dominant discourses when one reimagines race and gender as inseparable phenomenon (Crenshaw, 1989). These frameworks operate on different logics while maintaining a shared emphasis on an individual's situated relationship to both political identity, material bodies, and lived experiences. For example, strategic essentialism responds to the specific constraints of colonialism and how it controls, shapes, and racializes bodies; intersectionality on the other hand responds to the material, social, and intellectual erasure of Black women's lives within American society and politics. However, both intersectionality and strategic essentialism nonetheless reflect Haraway's emphasis on bringing bodies and meanings together while rejecting the notion that feminism reflects only specialized or special-interest concerns. These extant frameworks take up identity and bodily difference as both political and theoretical approaches to addressing what Haraway identifies as the leap from a marked body to a generalizable view or lens (Haraway, 1988). Following this line of thinking, both strategic essentialism and intersectionality articulate opposing but nonetheless related frameworks for how both theory and politics mobilize Haraway's interest in feminist objectivity.

I want to turn slightly from this lineage though and instead address Haraway's central concern more directly. Haraway's interest in a feminist objectivity emerges largely from her desire to destabilize hierarchical epistemic regimes that categorize and value various forms of knowledge (Haraway, 1988: 580). More traditional, oftentimes discursive, epistemological traditions often undervalue or ignore bodily forms of knowing despite the historical work of feminist theory to mine the potential of bodily knowledges in political and theoretical contexts. Domineering epistemic paradigms often reduce bodily knowledge to limiting or simplified identity-based experiences that cannot be examined or deployed beyond their unique, subjective contexts. James C. Lang, reading Haraway's writing on feminist objectivity, reflects instead on how feminist objectivity gestures from the locus of the material, lived body to larger paradigms of thinking and knowing. For Lang, these unique subjectivities also actively construct knowledge through their material and discursive encounters with others in the world. Lang observes that "our perspectives are necessarily embodied, always views from embodied subjects who are situated in multiple ways" (Lang, 2010: 316). Further, Lang

notes that these processes "extend beyond geographical, social, and cultural locations" (Lang, 2010: 310); this reveals how one's lived, affective, and bodily knowledges cannot be reduced simply to socio-political identity markers with no bearing on epistemic paradigms. To articulate how knowledge is situated within a particular lived body is to note how epistemic paradigms are ultimately constructed through specific bodily encounters with other bodies (Lang, 2010: 310).

Following Lang's argument, emphasizing how bodies construct meaning through encounters with other bodies articulates how bodies perform this knowledge through both social discourse and material encounters. Lang examines this shift from the personal to the paradigmatic as not only bodily or material but also discursive. Lang takes up Haraway's attention to the rhetorical game through which institutions and by extension governments control knowledge, arguing that this transmission and development of knowing between bodies happens "primarily via social intercourse" (Lang, 2010: 310). This similarly evokes Judith Butler's recognition of the speech act as "an instance of power" that "invariably draws attention to both its theatrical and linguistic dimensions" (Butler, 2002: xxv). This recognition of the movements between particular knowing bodies and larger epistemic paradigms draws feminist objectivity towards claims about how one constructs knowledge in and across bodies in relationship to one's lived experience of being-in-the-world. Per this view, Haraway's concept of feminist objectivity does not make a claim for the universality of particular knowledges across a range of political identities. Rather, I argue that Haraway's concept of feminist objectivity offers a framework for understanding how performative speech acts shape and frame bodily knowing. This links bodily knowing with social discourse, drawing together bodily and discursive knowledges through their relationship to socio-political power. My reading here echoes Haraway's thinking on how politicians and thinkers perform knowledge discursively to control it and in turn weaponize it as a form of social power. Haraway argues this as how "science...is rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one's manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power" (Haraway, 1988: 577). Reading Haraway's concept of feminist objectivity in this way does not privilege bodily knowing as essential to specific bodies. Instead, I take up feminist objectivity here as how paradigms of knowing circulate within

ecologies of social and political power and how in turn those paradigms shape the ways social actors exchange lived, material knowledges with one another.

From this reading of feminist objectivity, I feel it is important to recognize the interpretive dimensions of knowledge-making and what this implies for how epistemic paradigms shape ways of knowing. Unraveling distinctions between discrete forms of discursive knowledge and bodily knowledge constructed through one's lived materiality necessarily challenges the social power behind normative, discursive models of knowing. Since the transmission of bodily knowing hinges on how speech acts are deployed and transmitted, bodily forms of knowing are necessarily constituted inter-socially through performative and oftentimes discursive articulations. My thinking here echoes Lang, who also notes that emphasizing the rhetorical, performative nature of knowledge reveals how epistemological control is contingent on socio-linguistic and discursive transmission (Lang, 2010: 316). As Lang observes, these intimate epistemic relations between bodily and discursive knowledges are "in stark contrast to traditional epistemology, which assumes that identical truths can be achieved by all rational knowers" (Lang, 2010: 316). This similarly echoes how Butler notices how speech is contingent on the body, or how "speech itself is a bodily act with specific linguistic consequences" (Butler, 2002: xxv). Furthermore, Butler argues that this performative, bodied speech is "necessarily ambiguous" (Butler, 2002: xxv). Following this line of thinking, the necessary ambiguity of performative, bodied speech leads Butler to argue further that such speech must be "subject to interpretation" (Butler, 2002: xxv). With this view, one cannot interpret bodily knowing without drawing upon discursive knowing, and vice versa. This argument has implications for how critical passivity operates within these epistemic frameworks, necessitating that I think through these bodily knowledges in relation to how discursivity shapes their forms and appearances. This also means that I must consider how critical passivity navigates the forms of social and institutional power that also shape and conform bodily knowledge into discursive forms. Navigating these forms of social and institutional power is especially pertinent if I am to resist those same disciplinary forces that might attempt to coopt or to neutralize feminist thinking.

Ontological multiplicity: epistemic paradigms and practices of coming to knowing

Considering the contingent relations between bodily and discursive ways of knowing therefore forms, informs, and reforms how I can approach these epistemic paradigms and how they shape thinking and knowing. Since knowing bodies perform their knowing through and across discursive acts, monolithic epistemic claims about discursivity cannot hold. These epistemic paradigms fissure into a plurality of subjects, objects, and actions when one pays attention to these contingencies. Feminist medical anthropologist Annmarie Mol articulates this attention to epistemological multiplicity through the observation of how practices of knowing produce a multiplication of subject-objects:

> If practices are foregrounded there is no longer a single passive object in the middle, waiting to be seen from the point of view of a seemingly endless series of perspectives. Instead, objects come into being—and disappear—with the practices in which they are manipulated. (Mol, 2002: 5)

In this way, Mol turns knowing away from solely discursive or linguistic acts and towards bodily enactments and material practices. For Mol, knowledge-making is an active, material practice of manipulation and interpretation: "knowledge is not understood as a matter of reference, but as one of manipulation. The driving question no longer is 'how to find the truth?' but 'how are objects handled in practice?'" (Mol, 2002: 5). Mol's line of questioning here draws particular attention to how bodily enactments actively shape practices of knowing. These practices may not manifest solely through either speech acts or discursive modes, drawing back to the importance of bodily and material practices highlighted in approaches like Haraway's feminist objectivity. From Mol's view, epistemic paradigms emerge through practices where one must "keep track as persistently as possible of what it is that alters when matters, terms, and aims travel from one place to another" (Mol, 2002: viii). Per Mol's thinking here, active, practical enactments of meaning-making transform, interpret, and constitute broader paradigms of knowing. This means that Mol ultimately argues that examining the bodily construction of knowledge as a practice traces these performative enactments across their various discursive and social movements and interpretations.

Mol's attention to how knowledge is an active practice similarly articulates how different perspectives on meaning-making reflect and refract how one constructs different perceptions or perspectives on reality or what constitutes as real. Mol places particular emphasis on performative enactments between subjects and objects since Mol considers meaning-making to be an interpretive practice of making sense of the multiple valences of reality. Mol states that "attending to the multiplicity of reality is also an act. It is something that may be done—or left undone" (Mol, 2002: 6). Following Mol's view, I argue that knowledge creation can be understood as a practice of tracking how one enacts meanings across one's lived, subjective interpretation of reality. With this definition in mind, knowing and meaning-making must be seen as an irreducible multitude of practices, where knowledge is always situated within one's unique interpretations of lived reality. Mol articulates this multiplicity of situated interpretations as an ontological politics, which she defines as "a politics that has to do with the way in which problems are framed, bodies are shaped, and lives are pushed and pulled into one shape or another" (Mol, 2002: viii). Mol's ontological politics returns to Haraway's interest in how epistemic paradigms shape and control knowledge; however, Mol takes a more particular interest in how meanings can be attributed, particularly to bodies, in multiple ways, instead of how bodies produce meanings. Furthermore, Mol does not believe that these multiple realities need smoothing over through totalizing epistemic regimes; rather, she considers these epistemic paradigms to be multiple as well since they are necessarily informed by the multiple practices of knowing that constitute them.

Mol's thinking here on epistemic multiplicity gestures to how the social power of these masculinist regimes of knowledge can be diffused through an attention to how unique practices of knowing shape them. With this view, I argue that knowing bodies shape epistemic paradigms as much as they are shaped by them, diffusing white patriarchal control over knowing while producing opportunities for imagining new feminist frameworks for knowing through the body. To illustrate how Mol's thinking gestures to this possibility, I want to attend to how Mol articulates means of diffusing these epistemological powers that shape knowing bodies. Mol focuses on how one performs epistemological multiplicity through situated, material encounters between

meaning-makers. Examining how doctors diagnose patients, Mol notes that doctors "attribute meaning to what happens to bodies and lives" (Mol, 2002: 11). The job of the doctor, according to Mol, is that of an interpreter, one who reads the symptoms of the patient to diagnose them with their disease. Mol examines how this leaves the object—in this case the patient's body—itself unmarked and multiple, as "the power to mark physical reality, after all, is no longer granted to medical doctors, it is granted to nobody" (Mol, 2002: 11). Instead, Mol argues that the doctor's inability to alter material realities "multiplies the observers—but leaves the object observed alone" (Mol, 2002: 12). If the doctor is nothing more than a skilled interpreter of reality, Mol argues that meanings emerge when social actors—in this case the doctor and patient—exchange their interpretations: "when doctor and patient act together in the consultation room, they jointly give a shape to the reality of the patients' hurting legs" (Mol, 2002: 27). For Mol, this marks a shift: "instead of the observer's eyes, the practitioner's hands become the focus point of theorizing" (Mol, 2002: 152).

This turn from the singular, perhaps myopic even, view of the doctor to the materiality and haptics of the doctor's hands marks an important shift for Mol: this shift marks how one's practices of knowing become "primarily about partaking in a reality" (Mol, 2002: 154). Per Mol's attention to the exchange of interpretations of reality, meanings and readings emerge through one's investment in and practice of coming to knowing. I argue that Mol's attention here articulates a means through which one practices knowledge in relation to—rather than in service of—an ecology of multiple interpretations and frameworks. By this I mean that how one practices knowing or how one practices thinking shapes epistemic paradigms, even as one's thinking is in turn shaped by them. This creates an opening that diffuses the power imbalance between knowers and epistemic regimes, which in turn offers opportunities to consider new practices for feminist thinking and knowing that work across and in relation to existing epistemic frameworks. My reading here has serious implications for my project of theorizing critical passivity, as it creates an opening or a crack through which I can imagine my own reparative approach to feminist thinking while necessarily engaging with and across a larger ecology of extant knowledges, both feminist and otherwise.

Observation as practicing care: epistemological ambivalence & critical attentiveness

Considering how Mol's example of the doctor and patient draws attention to practices of both looking and touching, I want to consider now how I as a feminist researcher can cultivate a critical attentiveness to practices of interpretation and use those practices when reading my affective, material encounters with dance. To do this, I want to consider how other feminist theorist have read Haraway's concept of feminist objectivity to articulate how I can imagine a space for critical passivity within a wider ecology of thinking. Like Mol, Haraway also takes great interest in metaphors of looking and seeing. Haraway argues that "not giving in to the tempting myths of vision as a route to disembodiment and second-birthing allows us to construct a usable, but not an innocent, doctrine of objectivity" (Haraway, 1988: 582). Literary theorists like Heather Love take great interest in Haraway's ideas of looking as well; in Love's case, she imagines Haraway as a literary critic. Love examines Haraway's fieldwork, noting how Haraway has "not only respect but also love" for the practices of observations, particularly as practiced by primatologists (Love, 2017: 61). Love notes that Haraway's interests in fieldwork and observation position objectivity as the "dialectical partner of empathy" (Love, 2017: 62). Practices of observation and fieldwork become "the site for extended practices of attention, for experiments in producing new objects of knowledge, and for experiments in cohabitation and care" (Love, 2017: 62). Love's return to the care, attention, and empathy within Haraway's theorization of feminist objectivity reveals an important turn for the labor of knowledge production: that epistemological structures revolve around the care and toil of the bodies that produce and interpret knowledge. This emphasis on the importance of care and bodily labor in coming to knowing emerges for Love as "a dynamic field, bound up with love, knowledge, and power, and not reducible to any one of these dimensions" (Love, 2017: 63). Through this lens, Haraway's interest in observation and objectivity do not reinvest in totalizing claims around universal truth or epistemological purity. Rather, feminist objectivity materializes as a recognition of the manipulation and influence of the observer-interpreter.

Returning to Love's assessment of Haraway's interest in fieldwork, Love notes that the care and concern present within Haraway's ambivalence toward scientific practices reveals an openness and fluidity not only to structures of thinking and knowing but also to the ethical and political investments that might underpin one's situated epistemes:

> Haraway suggests that there is no stable connection between forms of knowledge production and particular ethical attitudes or political commitments; there are different kinds of critique, just as there are different kinds of objectivity, and one cannot judge in advance whether empirical research or Derridean deconstruction will do justice to its objects, or will make an opening for social transformation. (Love, 2017: 64)

Through this slippery malaise of critical ambivalence and contradiction, Love reflects on this flux between political investment and critical observation as a chance for a new form of productive critical engagement. Love notes that "such experiments in ways of looking" (Love, 2017: 66) might be re-examined through "the value of attentive, close, careful attention to objects, the form of attention that adds reality rather than taking it away" (Love, 2017: 66). Love argues that this approach "extols the patience, fidelity, reflexivity, and care that characterize their acts of observation, recording, and description" (Love, 2017: 66). As such, careful, attentive critical observation coupled with an ambivalence to critical paradigms offers a means through which one can practice meaning-making within a larger ecology of knowledge.

For Love, this ambivalent attention to one's critical endeavors reevaluates care as a necessary element of epistemological labor. In Love's view, this attention to forms of critical labor reflects "a way of reaching toward new possibilities not yet materialized in the social world" (Love, 2017: 65). Drawing this critical attentiveness back to the practices of literary criticism, Love considers how care impacts one's epistemological labor when reading. Love extends Nathan Hensley's concept of curatorial reading, making connections between Hensley's commitment to intrinsic and extrinsic forms of engagement with objects and Eve Sedgwick's strategies for reparative reading (Love, 2017: 65). For Love, this careful attentiveness to critique couples with an ambivalence to epistemic tradition. This reflects not an epistemic problem for Love but rather an

opportunity for new forms of critical and theoretical engagement. Love contends that practices of situated, careful, attentive critique "represent a commitment to tracing social arrangements in-the-making" (Love, 2017: 69). This echoes both Haraway's thinking and Lang's reading of Haraway, drawing attention again to how knowledge is constructed not only in a situated, lived body but within and across social discourse and other forms of material engagement with other bodies. Remembering Mol's argument that these practices of knowing shape epistemic regimes as much as they are shape by those regimes, Love's critical attentiveness imagines a way of tracing those relations between material realities, knowing bodies, and a larger ecology of knowing. When this careful, attentive commitment to critical practice commingles with epistemological ambivalence, a reparative strategy for engaging with this epistemological multiplicity emerges. Through Love's commitment to critical attentiveness and epistemological ambivalence, close reading operates as a way of looking at how knowing bodies shape and in turn are shaped by epistemic paradigms. Following this line of thinking, I articulate in my next section how I theorize critical passivity as a new reparative feminist theory that both challenges and envelopes these tensions between and relations with knowing bodies and extant epistemic paradigms.

Part II – Critical femininity studies: rethinking femininity, vulnerability, and passivity

In the previous section, I have been critically attentive to how situated, body-based modes of knowing shape and are shaped by a multiplicity of epistemic traditions. Over the course of this section, I trace a lineage of relations among femininity, vulnerability, and ultimately passivity to unpack how these frameworks play out within and around feminist theoretical paradigms. The critical lineage that I trace will situate my theorizing around critical passivity for later exploration. I examine and critique how feminist theory has previously attempted to expunge or to disavow passivity and vulnerability as expressions of patriarchal and colonial femininity and how critical femininity studies contend with these claims. This examination reveals how femininity studies offer an alternative history for thinking through and about femininity and

feminized knowledges that reimagines vulnerability and passivity as reparative critical gestures. I arrive at a deconstruction of femme as a poetics that articulate a set of affective investments and qualities, such as surprise, care, and vulnerability. This poetics of femme articulates a theoretical landscape from which my thinking around critical passivity emerges alongside other forms of feminist thinking and practice.

Depathologizing femininity through critical femininity studies

There is a long history of feminist writing that examines how qualities of passivity and fragility have been taken up as qualities of white, heteronormative womanhood. White scholars like Laurent Berlant have noted how optimistic attachments to gender expressions like conventional femininity are made felicitous when they are naturalized in one's body (Berlant, 2008: 2011). Berlant understands conventional (by which she means white and heteronormative) femininity as colonial and patriarchal in its expressions and argues that these are legitimized through anxious attachments to their perceived essential truths of gendered existence (Berlant, 2008; 2011). This evokes Butler's notion of gendered performance as an essence that is reproduced in the anticipation of the phenomenon, or how "the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself" (Butler, 2002: xiv-xv). Berlant names this fidelity to conventional femininity a "feminine sentimentality," or "a sentimental account of the social world as an affective space" (Berlant, 2008: 2). Per Berlant's reading, this anticipatory relationship to white, heteronormative ideas of femininity as passive and fragile forms an anxious optimistic attachment to passivity as an essential quality of white, heteronormative womanhood. As Berlant observes, this in turn means that one's affective attachment to this anxious optimism ultimately maintains these oppressive connotations, producing "some fidelity to the world of distinction and desire that produced such disappointment in the first place" (Berlant, 2008: 2). In Berlant's view, this sentimental attachment to white, heteronormative femininity thereby legitimizes and reinforces the white patriarchal authority behind these historical linkages. In Berlant's view, these anxious optimistic attachments trap women within oppressive regimes of white patriarchal power rather than liberate them.

With such a pathologizing framework for femininity, it is no wonder that feminists like Berlant have sought to free women from such depressing attachments to patriarchal and colonial power. However, Julia Kristeva notes that the term "feminine" (*le féminin*) "does not have the same pejorative connotations it has come to have in English" in non-Anglophone societies (Kristeva, 1981: 16). Kristeva's reading here reveals the geographical and socio-political contexts of femininity that determine its meaning[9]. Femininity studies scholar Ulrika Dahl similarly notes that viewing femininity as overly sentimental forgets how femininity exists outside of models of white patriarchal domination. For Dahl, this includes recognizing how a wide variety of people, not just women, embody and perform femininity in complex ways (Dahl, 2012: 60). Dahl notes that some examples of this historical pathologizing of femininity particularly target Black and brown women and transgender women (Dahl, 2012: 59). For Black and brown women, positing white femininity as a hegemonic standard often pathologizes or obscures non-white expressions of femininity. This in turn reproduces forms of racist, colonial power exerted against Black and brown women: decolonial feminist scholar Maria Lugones identifies this as how the "tension between hypersexuality and sexual passivity defines one of the domains of masculine subjection of the colonized" (Lugones, 2010: 744). Dahl and Sara Ahmed both note that transgender women are similarly pathologized, though in this case a fixation on the artifice of femininity reduces trans women's gendered expressions to superficial aesthetics. Ahmed notes that such a view of transgender femininities reduces the perceived personhood of transgender women, as they are instead viewed through this lens as "a monstrous parody of an already monstrous femininity" (Ahmed, 2016: 29). As scholars like Dahl and Ahmed examine

[9] Maria Lugones further de-centres Anglo-European notions of femininity by emphasizing how a colonial theorizing of gender "does not travel away from colonial modernity" (Lugones, 2010: 746). Lugones clarifies this as how "the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender exceeds the categories of modernity" (Lugones, 2010: 743). Lugones notes that a colonial lens furthers a logics of oppression and "its use of hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logic" (Lugones, 2010: 742). Lugones equally resists idealizing a non-colonised, indigenous social order (Lugones, 2010: 743). Instead Lugones argues that decolonising gender requires a move towards the "praxical task...to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social" (Lugones, 2010: 746). This means that North American and European notions of gender are not only deeply colonial but also require a transformation of colonial logics if one is to re-contextualise or decolonize white patriarchal notions of femininity.

though, these pathologizing views fail to capture the complexities of how both Black and brown women and transgender women embody their unique performances of femininity. This includes a failure to acknowledge how these embodiments do not necessarily always reproduce the white, heteronormative forms that they may reference (Ahmed, 2016; Dahl, 2012).

Trans feminist scholars Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager illustrate this disconnect between pathologized and life-affirming views of feminine subjectivities through the figure of the transsexual. Chu and Drager argue that the figure of the transsexual is always viewed as "archaic and anachronistic" and as always figured as a woman (Chu & Drager, 2019: 109). As Chu and Drager identify, this view of the transsexual produces a subsequent "antipathy...for woman as a political category" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 109). This antipathy reflects for Chu and Drager how feminine gender expressions are pathologized and dismissed by refusing "woman" as a legitimate or valuable social category. Chu and Drager instead re-invest in how the figure of the transsexual woman "both recalls and displaces womanhood" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 110). Chu and Drager note that trans feminist scholar Sandy Stone's concept of the posttranssexual sought to disentangle itself from oppressive gendered norms that trans people were seen as perpetuating (Stone, 2006). However, they see Stone's concept as skipping an important theoretical step that evades women as a social category altogether (Chu & Drager, 2019: 107). They instead return to the figure of the transsexual, claiming her as "a key to understanding norms and how they function" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 108). In the case of the transsexual woman, Chu and Drager argue that even the reproduction or desire for a norm reveals how "the desire for the norm consists, in terms of its lived content, in nonnormative attempts at normativity" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 107). More plainly, Chu and Drager explain that this nonnormative desire for normative womanhood demonstrated how "her nonnormativity was what wanting to be normal actually looked like" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 107).

Chu and Drager's reading of the transsexual woman as a reinvestment in the radical political and theoretical potential of woman as social category can be extended further to include Black women as well. Black feminist scholar Naila Keleta-Mae, citing Aisha Durham, notes that for young Black women, the intersections of race and

femininity highlight "the particular constraints that exist for Black girls and women who also want to express their sexuality in a society where Black bodies are always marked as deviant" (Durham, 2012: 37, in Keleta-Mae, 2017: 238). For Keleta-Mae, both how and why Black and brown women engage with their figurations of femininity often clash with normative white expressions of femininity. This is seen most explicitly when Black women are expected to conform to white feminine norms (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 238). Keleta-Mae therefore argues that feminine Black women are often enmeshed in conflicts between white and Black forms of femininity. Keleta-Mae argues that Black expressions of femininity often emerge from a desire for self-expression or self-actualization, which she articulates through a socio-economic axis of power (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 239). She notes these expressions as the desire for "the right to a full professional career, her own body, and the space to define the parameters of her existence" (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 239). Following Keleta-Mae's argument, Black femininities both reference and rework white femininities even as patriarchal, colonial, and capitalistic powers exploit Black and brown women and their bodies. As Keleta-Mae states, Black femininities are in "constant reference to and exploitation of those same 'racial-sexual codes' historically produced on auction blocks that emphasized physiological differences" (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 239). This echoes what decolonial scholar Anibal Quijano notes as a "racist distribution of labor in the interior of colonial/modern capitalism" (Quijano, 2000: 536). As Lugones reminds, these intersections of race and gender, when viewed through this lens, reveals "the absence of black women rather than their presence" (Lugones, 2010: 742). As Keleta-Mae examines, these expressions of Black femininities ultimately reflect "a profound expression of sisterhood that longs for critical space to be Black, feminist, and fly" (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 245). Even when Black and brown femininities must exist within a white, hypersexualised, and neoliberal capitalist society, they nonetheless reflect desires for autonomy, self-actualization, and sisterhood. Through this attention to how Black and trans women articulate and embody their femininities, I argue that white patriarchal notions of femininity may be reframed through Black and trans reinvestments in and embodiments of femininity.

Following this line of thinking, I might extend Ahmed's thinking to note how these various critiques of feminine embodiments reveal that femininity becomes reductive or

oppressive only when "criterion has already become a technique for exclusion because it is not a criterion that will be shared by others" (Ahmed, 2016: 30). To counter this exclusionary approach to femininity, I might also contextualize gender as an affective structure that begins at the level of one's body. By this I mean that one's affective relationship or attachment to unique, situated gendered embodiments necessarily inform one's socio-political subjectivity. This notion is best illustrated through feminist scholar Jami Weinstein's reimagining of the term "body genre," a term originally coined by film theorist Linda Williams. Williams developed the term originally to articulate filmic genres that "have an affect on the spectator's body such that the body reacts physically, affectively, and emotionally to the events taking place on screen" (Weinstein, 2011: 97). However, Weinstein considers how the term "gender" might be replaced with the term "genre," as the terms share a linguistic link in the French language. For Weinstein, shifting from gender to genre "entails grafting genres onto bodies...thus reframing the body as genred rather than gendered" (Weinstein, 2011: 97). This formulates gender not simply as a hegemonic structure; rather, Weinstein observes gender as "affective: open to possibility, contradiction, reinterpretation, flux, multiplicity, and forces" (Weinstein, 2011: 97). This resonates even with Berlant's argument that a socio-linguistic turn unravels "normative social convention in relation to genre" (Berlant, 2011: 7). Following this line of thinking, the multiplicity of gendered embodiments presents possibilities for affective genres of being-in-the-world. Weinstein articulates these affective genres of gender as unfaithful citations that fail to constitute fully normative gendered conventions (Weinstein, 2011: 96). Even embodiments that seem to adhere to gendered conventions can be recontextualised through the unfaithful ways in which their unique, situated material realities reference affective genres of gender.

These various refigurations and reinterpretations of feminine embodiments therefore reveal how femininity might not be a gendered sentimentality for patriarchal, colonial power but rather a complex, and oftentimes messy, set of bodily practices. A more life-affirming approach to feminine embodiments might entail a recognition of how one might "position and re-position herself for the consumption of her audience's boundless fantasies of her gender, sexuality, race, class, and age" (Keleta-Mae, 2017: 244). This fluid positioning might evoke neoliberal ideals of commodified individualism

that queer scholars like Jack Halberstam warn against (Halberstam, 2005: 20-21); however, this fluid positioning could be further denaturalised through what Lugones terms a resistant subjectivity, or "the relational subjective/intersubjective spring of liberation" (Lugones, 2010: 746). As Lugones examines, a resistant subjectivity manifests through "the tension between subjectification...and active subjectivity" (Lugones, 2010: 746). Resistant subjectivities therefore opt for messy resistances within oppressive structures rather than further investment into the logics of coloniality. As Lugones notes, examining marginalized groups only through the logics of oppression "enables us to think of historical beings only one-sidedly, understood as oppressed" (Lugones, 2010: 746). Instead, Lugones's concept of resistant subjectivities emphasizes how marginalized groups may develop liberation or self-actualization by reworking oppressive structures from inside. This sentiment echoes Rhea Hoskin's and Allison Taylor's call for the desire for resistant feminine subjectivities that "carve out spaces wherein femininity can break away from reductive patriarchal feminine norms" (Hoskin & Taylor, 2019: 15-16). More provocatively, the messiness of this resistant subjectivity also demonstrates Chu and Drager's desire for "a methodology that would start from the premise that everyone's gender is a political disaster and refuse to fix it" (Chu & Drager, 2019: 112). Through this understanding of resistant subjectivities, femininity can begin to be understood in a life-affirming, positive way that is separable from patriarchal and colonial axes of power.

This turn towards more positive genres of feminine embodiments could also be understood as extending intersectional calls to reconsider or reimagine categories of femininity or womanhood. Such a notion would perhaps deploy Ahmed's recognition of how "to exist as a woman would require chipping away at the walls that demarcate who resides there, who belongs there," (Ahmed, 2016: 32). The repositioning of normative or non-normative formations of one's subjectivity in relation to one's bodily practices constitutes a reimagining of the social category of women. Even when said practices might have been contextualized originally as hegemonically oppressive, the intra-political turn towards a resistant subjectivity. This echoes what Lugones notes as how a recognition of resistant subjectivities "shows the power of communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning and each other against the constitution of meaning and social organization by power" (Lugones, 2010: 746). Following this thinking, I wish to

extend Ahmed's claim that "feminism is about how to live, about a way of thinking how to live" (Ahmed, 2017: 1). Considering feminism as a lived, material mode of being-in-the-world reflects how resistant approaches to feminine embodiment can also formulate the possibility for a feminist life or politics. The affective endurance of femininity in non-normative embodiments thereby positions its embodiments as ultimately life-affirming and resistant, even if that resistance is somewhat haphazard or messy, while simultaneously existing within patriarchal, colonial, and capitalistic structures.

Femmebodiement: material bodies and femme shapes of vulnerability

Following this recognition of femininity as resistant and life-affirming, I want to examine how other scholars have engaged with critical femininity studies to reimagine the theoretical and methodological potential of femininity. For many feminists studying femininity, aesthetics and the material body formulate generative sites for critical examination. As Lauren Berlant notes, aesthetics is not solely about stylistic refinement; rather, one's aesthetic inclinations and practices inform one's relationship with the world and one's desire to impress oneself upon that world:

> Aesthetics is not only the place where we rehabituate our sensorium by taking in new material and becoming more refined in relation to it...it provides metrics for understanding how we pace and space our encounters with things, how we manage the too closeness of the world and also the desire to have an impact on it that has some relation to its impact on us. (Berlant, 2011: 12)

Navigating from these affective relations between bodies and aesthetics produces the possibility for the formation of affective bonds between bodies and meanings. As Ahmed notes "the bond itself is the scene of optimism; a cluster of promises that can surround an object (an idea, a thing, a person, a relation)" (Ahmed, 2017: 195). However, Ahmed also identifies that bonds can become binds when they become toxic or destructive, even if they were previously life-giving (Ahmed, 2017: 193). As such, the bond is not necessarily a site of utopia but rather a means of constant re-investment into particular objects, people, ideas, or embodiments. Ahmed considers that the choice not to invest in these bonds can often be judged as "a way of depriving yourself of a connection, and thus

a form of violence you direct against yourself" (Ahmed, 2017: 195). As such, the risk involved in forming these affective bonds becomes vulnerable-making. As Patricia Schweickart examines, the desire for a bond despite the risk of vulnerability indicates the need for personal relationships (Schweickart, 1993: 184). According to Schweickart, this means that vulnerability forms a way of "soliciting care" (Schweickart, 1993: 184). Following her thinking, risking these life-affirming social or bodily bonds requires a degree of care, where one risks being vulnerable to ask for or solicit care from another.

A degree of vulnerability and by extension passivity provides avenues and orientations to risk different kinds of bonds. Vulnerability often requires a degree of care between bodies as well as a degree of risk. The production of new intimacies and bonds becomes risky and requires a careful approach. To illustrate how vulnerability and risk manifest in the creation of these social bonds, scholar Margrit Shildrick highlights this risky degree of vulnerability as "a contingent physical dependency" (Shildrick, 2000: 221). This attention to vulnerability as a corporeal, interrelational dependency echoes what Sarah Whatmore defines as a "difference-in-relation" (Whatmore, 2002: 153). By this, Whatmore articulates mutual dependencies across discrete bodies as an intersubjectivity determined by the material and practical manifestations of self and community (Whatmore, 2002: 153). Through this valuing of the mutuality of lived subjectivity, Whatmore takes an approach to vulnerability and mutual dependencies through care, which in response turns her to the ethics of risk. Whatmore states that "an irreducible vulnerability as the very possibility of a fully corporeal becoming...calls finally for the willingness to engage in an ethics of risk" (Shildrick, 2000: 227). In this turn towards an ethics predicated on care, risking vulnerability across bodies and communities becomes a kind of relational care ethic for Whatmore. Whatmore even notes how this kind of care ethics has gendered implications: this relational care ethic predicated on risk and vulnerability is "what has become known as the 'feminine care ethic'" (Whatmore, 2002: 155). This feminine care ethics demonstrates for Whatmore how an attention to mutual dependencies and shared vulnerabilities "knits together multiple and apparently fragmentary collective identities" (Whatmore, 2002: 155), This understanding of feminine care ethics through vulnerability and risk results in a

multiplicity of affective bonds, which, as Whatmore has shown, are determined through vulnerable-making encounters or engagements between bodies and communities.

From Whatmore's thinking around feminine care ethics, the linkages between femininity and vulnerability become apparent. Sara Ahmed articulates that when femininity is linked to vulnerability or fragility, the assumption is that vulnerability is feminizing or that femininity necessarily implies vulnerability. As such, Ahmed notes that "the assumption of fragility can make something fragile" (Ahmed, 2017: 169). When femininity is framed as vulnerable-making, "a consequence of power is recruited as the cause. She is treated with caution and care because she is fragile; because she is treated with caution and care, she is fragile" (Ahmed, 2017: 170-171). As Hoskin notes, connotations of femininity as vulnerable-making have often been considered as "synonymous with female subordination, with male right of access, and with disciplinary practices enforced under patriarchal rule," (Hoskin, 2017: 96). Such notions similarly link vulnerability to passivity as well, as passivity becomes seen as a response to patriarchal control over vulnerable, feminine bodies. Ulrika Dahl notes however that the bonds between vulnerability, passivity, and femininity do not bind them together. Rather, Dahl argues that "vulnerability, while feminising, is not 'something' femmes simply 'carry around' as a deep interior 'truth' about morphologically defined sexual difference" (Dahl, 2017: 50). Dahl instead contends that vulnerability offers "a complex field of pleasure and danger," where "touch is central and where cracks, rather than toughness and its removal, are what we must attend to" (Dahl, 2017: 50). While vulnerability can be understood as feminizing, vulnerability is therefore not essential to women or to feminine bodies. Rather than view femininity as always vulnerable-making, vulnerability formulates an affective orientation towards other bodies. As an affective orientation, vulnerability determines how one engages with feminine shapes of knowing and being, even when those relations to others have already passed, are yet to arrive, or are under threat.

This bond between vulnerability and femininity is also not an attempt to reinscribe white, heteronormative, or bourgeois femininity as the only valid form of femininity. Rather, noting how vulnerability emerges as a quality of feminine relations

locates foregrounds how particular modes of being-in-the-world relate to their unique embodiments:

> an understanding of vulnerability tied to femininity also marks an orientation to a regulatory ideal which bears traces of a white bourgeois heterosexual respectable femininity...This femininity is certainly not universally available or even desirable, but as an ideal it is a shape that can generate vulnerability precisely within the affective relationship with or proximity to the ideal. (Dahl, 2017: 42)

As Dahl examines here, vulnerability functions as a kind of affective relation between one's body and one's proximity to extant social or gendered norms. Dahl further frames vulnerability as an affective relationship to feminine norms through an acknowledgement of how vulnerability has been previously deployed in racialized contexts. As she examines, "white femininity has always been understood as vulnerable, as in need of protection from black men by white men" (Dahl, 2017: 43). Furthermore, Dahl paraphrases Ahmed to trace these racialized histories, noting how one's embodiment of vulnerability "differs depending on racialisation, class position, age and body shape, not to mention location in the world and time of day" (Dahl, 2017: 43). For Dahl, this reveals how "bodies of knowledge and of flesh cannot be disentangled from, but rather engage with and respond to, the readings that their aesthetics, their surfaces and their bodies invite and anticipate" (Dahl, 2017: 43). This historical linking of femininity and vulnerability to patriarchal and colonial control reveals how bodily aesthetics and affective relations are necessarily entangled with hegemonic axes of power. If these various affects and embodiments are entangled with forms of hegemonic power, how then might femininity emerge as a positive, life-affirming mode of engaging in these vulnerable relations between bodies and meanings?

To address these entanglements, femininity studies scholars like Dahl have imagined new theoretical approaches that might navigate these complex terrains. As a means of rethinking femininity as a fleshy, sensuous subjectivity that is not dependent on patriarchal and colonial power, Dahl offers the concept of "femmebodiment" (Dahl, 2017). Dahl theorizes femmebodiment as a means of examining the lived materiality of femininity. For Dahl, femmebodiment reflects how one's body might function as "a

surface boundary, a canvas for femme-inine expression...that in its nakedness (beneath the shield) both undoes and empowers figuration" (Dahl, 2017: 37). To develop this neologism, Dahl deploys the term femme as a concept which might undo patriarchal and colonial expression of femininity. Dahl acknowledges that patriarchal and colonial contexts for femininity have overdetermined femininity as "a property or an essence, or the visual representation of an authentic inner core" (Dahl, 2012: 59). She deploys the term femme to craft an alternative lineage for femininity. As Hoskin notes, femme emerged originally as a term for feminine lesbians; however, the term has more recently been extended to feminine-identifying people whose embodiments subvert patriarchal, colonial, or heteronormative notions of femininity (Hoskin, 2017: 99). Hoskin notes that femme therefore reveals how femininity "is applicable to diversely positioned bodies and describes a range of experiences across various intersections of difference" (Hoskin, 2017: 99). Through the term "femme," femininity might be positioned as "femininity reworked, (re)claimed as one's own" (Hoskin, 2017: 99). As a reworking of femininity, femme emerges as a conceptual framework for "challenging and disentangling the naturalised associations of patriarchal femininity" (Hoksins, 2017: 100). Through this use of femme, Dahl's concept of femmebodiment expands and rearticulates forms of feminine embodiment as a positive, agential mode of being-in-the-world. Dahl argues that femmebodiment recognizes how "beyond the idea that 'we', the feminised, experience our bodies primarily as things/objects and in ways that are above all restrictive" (Dahl, 2017: 37). This life-affirming, self-determined desire for one's feminine embodiments reinforces how femme and femmebodiment manifest as theoretical approaches to femininity, vulnerability, and passivity that do not hinge upon patriarchal or colonial power.

Dahl's concept of femmebodiment ultimately draws attention to the fleshy, material body as a site from which femininity may be unhinged from patriarchal control. Following Dahl's thinking, vulnerability can be understood as a soma-technology that shapes bodies through their affective encounters with other bodies. By this I mean that vulnerability could therefore be understood as both a theory and a lived materiality that shapes one's sensuous engagement with the world. Dahl echoes this, arguing that femme shapes of vulnerability emerge "as a figuration...through what sticks affectively between

bodies of flesh and bodies of knowledge" (Dahl, 2017: 40). Remembering Berlant's notion of how aesthetics functions as a way of managing the too closeness of the world (Berlant, 2011: 12), the color and contour of femininity becomes both an agential refiguration of patriarchal control and an affective, bodily practice. This resonates with Ahmed's thinking on the stickiness of affects: "we are affected by 'what' we come into contact with" (Ahmed, 2006: 2). Remembering that vulnerability is often linked to femininity, vulnerability might be understood as a form of affective contact with the world. Dahl echoes this notion, arguing that vulnerability operates as a soma-technology, since vulnerability is "constituted through the technologies of femininity, and involves the incorporation of certain objects...and signs, and manifests in a certain stride or self-defence" (Dahl, 2017: 43). I propose that these moments of affective contact shape how bodies engage vulnerably and passively with one another. Dahl echoes this, arguing that vulnerability constitutes "an affective state of openness" that "makes relations between bodies" (Dahl, 2017: 44). Rethinking vulnerability as an affective soma-technology articulates how bodily and social relations are made through an attention to forms of affective, bodily contact.

When I consider vulnerability as a form of open, affective contact that shapes bodily relations, another set of questions arises: what happens when this affective contact comes too close? What happens when such vulnerable-making contact becomes too great of a risk? Alternatively, when might there be too much distance to risk this vulnerable-making contact effectively? Considering how Berlant positions "too closeness" as a condition for optimistic attachments, there is the potential for vulnerable-making affective contact to be too risky, too costly, or too far away to be effective. Dahl considers this through the possibility for harm within these forms of contact, arguing that "to be feminine or femme is to negotiate 'the possibility of attack' on a daily basis in a patriarchal world" (Dahl, 2017: 42). Dahl equates this negotiation of harm with such material choices as wearing flat shoes instead of heels to ensure that one might be able to run away from an attacker (Dahl, 2017: 42). Alternatively, Ahmed questions who might determine what contact is life-giving and what contact is toxic: "How do we know what diminishes us? How do we know when a life is working or not working? Who judges whether a life is working or not working?" (Ahmed, 2017: 195). These framings, however,

position vulnerability as something that can only be determined from the outside or from the position of the other. This means that vulnerability in this view is something that must be protected against to avoid harm—a paranoid notion that should be reframed as destructive.

When vulnerability is framed as something that one must protect against, one develops a paranoid expectation that she will be harmed. Echoing this, Simone Drichel argues that the paranoid desire to protect against vulnerability to avoid harm reinforces what she calls a traumatic disposition. Drichel claims that defending against one's vulnerability is not self-protection but rather "defense against the defense, and thus further erodes the very sense of self the defense was supposed to protect" (Drichel, 2013: 50). Borrowing from Levinas, Drichel articulates such a defense against vulnerability and harm as a traumatic disposition. She defines a traumatic disposition as "the subject's affective disposition towards an ungraspable alterity...a disposition that threatens to traumatize, to wound, the subject" (Drichel, 2013: 53). Drichel further contends that defending against the risk of harm encourages "a further erosion of its sense of safety in the world" (Drichel, 2000: 50). This erosion of one's sense of safety reveals how a traumatic disposition underpins an anxiety around vulnerability that takes both bodily and epistemological shape. There is a paranoid gesture operating within these traumatic dispositions: one becomes suspicious of vulnerability and anxious about harm, drawing borders to protect against both real and imagined threats. As Drichel notes here though, what becomes most harmful is the paranoid belief that one will be harmed, regardless of how likely or possible. This is what Drichel means by how traumatic dispositions erode one's sense of safety and self: the anxious defense against harm leaves one trapped within a paranoid prison of her own making.

Following from this line of thinking, one draws up paranoid borders to protect from harm to find themselves left with only the paranoia that harm will come. This paranoia gestures to a kind of existential dread that carries epistemological implications, which I examine in the next section. Shildrick echoes my argument here: she notes that vulnerability is often framed as a kind of existential or ontological anxiety (Shildrick, 2000: 223). Dahl also observes something similar, particularly how vulnerability "connotes a kind of interiority at risk" (Dahl, 2017: 44). Shildrick argues that this anxiety

highlights anxieties around contamination and the body's inherent leakiness (Shildrick, 2000: 218, 221); Dahl on the other hand articulates this anxiety affective registers, such as shame, fear, and paranoia (Dahl, 2017: 41). This leads Shildrick to articulate openness as a resistance to this paranoia (Shildrick, 2000: 222). This attention to openness recalls Dahl's earlier assessment of vulnerability as a soma-technology: as a site of affective openness, vulnerability presents a recognition of or surrender to interpersonal dependencies. These dependencies do not imply the imposition of the other; rather, as Shildrick recognizes, vulnerability forms a necessary quality of social relations, as social structures leave one dependently intertwined with others in a community (Shildrick, 2000: 226). What both Dahl and Shildrick acknowledge here is how anxieties around vulnerability are often paranoid beliefs that shut down or even destroy the potential for life-giving vulnerabilities that engender healthy, generative social relations. Alternatively, embracing openness and affective, bodily contact resists this paranoid, traumatic disposition, creating opportunities instead to find how vulnerabilities can offer shared, communal pleasures between bodies.

Risking vulnerability does not imply that one will be harmed by the too closeness of the world: this is an existential anxiety that plays out at the level of bodily relations. Vulnerability instead produces an affective openness through interpersonal dependency. Drichel calls this openness "an ethical site of hospitality," or how "the very breach in defense...is ultimately what defends the living organism" (Drichel, 2013: 61). One might think of vulnerability not as the promise or potential promise of harm but rather as a live-giving desire that produces pleasure between bodies. Ann Cvetkovich similarly articulates how vulnerability produces pleasures through structures of butch-femme desire. Dahl, paraphrasing Cvetkovich, notes how desire, intimacy, and sex all reveal the transformative potential for vulnerable-making, affective contact: "through a kind of undoing that occurs in the intimate, private and erotic realm of fucking…femmes are able to be vulnerable and thus transformed" (Dahl, 2017: 44). Cvetkovich posits vulnerability as positive, desirable, and often difficult to achieve (Cvetkovich, 2003: 58, in Dahl, 2017: 44). That vulnerability might be desirable or pleasurable similarly mirrors notions of pain as transformative. When writing about BDSM cultures and practices, feminist scholar Staci Newmahr notes experiencing bodily pleasure actively "modifies the

pain...by turning it into *not* pain," an act that ultimately registers that original sensation of pain as pleasurable (Newmahr, 2011: 137). Newmahr's reading of pain and pleasure attends here to how experience of pleasure shapes pain into something pleasurable, which might be applied to rethinking vulnerability through an attention to pleasure.

This formulation of vulnerability as pleasurable or desirable emphasizes how vulnerability might transform the potential pain of harm into a production of pleasure through desire. Dahl illustrates this notion through the same butch/femme sexual dynamic that Cvetkovich considers:

> The very understanding of femme here presumes a certain desire structure (butch/femme) and, more notably, a particular understanding of sexuality as the intersubjective dimension of giving and taking...replacing...penetration and passivity with enveloping and receptivity, and a transformation of trauma into healing. (Dahl, 2017: 44-45)

However, Dahl argues that this domesticating of feminine sexuality ignores how desire might also be public. Dahl proposes instead that femme desire should be refigured as "how desire operates in how femmes relate to one another" (Dahl, 2017: 45). For Dahl, this understanding of femme desire does not necessarily imply sexual desire but rather a desire for sisterhood (Dahl, 2017: 45). This desire for belonging transcends normative structures of sexual desire, manifesting instead as "the desire to be like other femmes" (Dahl, 2017: 46). Similarly, Newmahr considers how framing pain as something which must be altered or withstood ignores how pain can be autotelic (Newmahr, 2011: 139). In contrast, Newmahr defines autotelic pain as pain that "begins as pain, ends as pain, and is enjoyable nonetheless" (Newmahr, 2011: 140). This means that "the pain itself is not the primary experience, objective, or tool; it is not processed or perceived as a provision unto itself" (Newmahr, 2011: 142). With pain and vulnerability reframes as both pleasurable and desirable, femme shapes of vulnerability can begin to reframe and to repair these anxieties that pathologize vulnerability and by extension passivity.

Through this experience of desiring or deriving pleasure from one's vulnerable-making relations, receptivity and passivity become affective states that should be embraced rather than feared. The critical lineage that I have traced here through critical

femininity studies and femme theory gestures to how vulnerability, openness, and passivity may be refigured as hopeful and live-giving dispositions. Paranoid, traumatic dispositions break down social relations and isolate individuals, creating silos that prevent community. Vulnerability—and passivity, as I argue later—offers a path through this isolating paranoia. Vulnerability shapes the body through affective, material encounters with other bodies, and this in turn shapes how communities might be formed or acknowledged through those encounters. As scholars like Dahl and Newmahr remind, risking this vulnerability is ultimately pleasurable. One risks feeling pain for the chance to feel pleasure, and one experiences pleasure to reshape pain. It is important to remember that these shapes are also feminine or feminized and that these feminine shapes may also be life-giving. These attentions draw me towards how feminine and by extension feminist thinking might embrace these shapes and break down paranoid barriers, trading social and epistemological anxiety for joy, pleasure, and community.

Reframing epistemological vulnerability: being overwhelmed and radical passivity

Following this rethinking of vulnerability as pleasurable, life-giving, and communal, I would like to return to passivity as an affective disposition that might move through or resist epistemological anxieties surrounding vulnerability and by extension passivity. I find it particularly interesting that there is something Derridean about these anxieties: perhaps vulnerable-making forms of social and bodily contact also demonstrates anxieties around how meaning is pregnable—how it may be shaped, change, and even give birth to new meanings. Shildrick similarly examines that "vulnerability comes not from the outside" but rather "is implicit in ontological and epistemological structure" (Shildrick, 2000: 225). Shildrick notes that hostility towards femininity traces these epistemic anxieties through a perceived fear of contamination. As Shildrick examines, patriarchal structures consider the white male body as supposedly "ideally closed and invulnerable" (Shildrick, 2000: 217). This anxiety around contamination extends from what Shildrick reveals as the perceived "leakiness" of the female body, which Shildrick equates with physiological processes like menstruation

alongside viscera like tears and mucus. This anxiety around contamination and leakiness extends to theoretical or epistemic paradigms as well, as "the inherent leakiness of meaning" parallels "a necessary uncertainty about bodies as themselves discursive constructions" (Shildrick, 2000: 225). Shildrick's attention here links patriarchal anxieties surrounding the perceived leakiness of female bodies to epistemic anxieties around the leakiness of meaning. From this attention, these anxieties around vulnerability begin to take shape at both social and epistemological levels. This ultimately means that these epistemological anxieties reflect their own paranoid borders, which has implications for theorizing new, reparative approaches to meaning-making. How might one come to knowing through passivity despite these anxieties surrounding the vulnerability of meaning?

To resist these anxieties, I want to consider now how I can forge new alliances between knowing bodies and bodies of knowledge. To do this, I turn to French philosopher Jacques Derrida and some feminist readings of his thinking. For example, Drichel's thinking attends to Derrida's concept of *pharmakon* as autoimmunity (Drichel, 2013: 59). Drichel notes that autoimmunity is also a kind of defense against defense, or a traumatic disposition. According to Drichel's thinking here, any defense of vulnerability is "as much *in defense of* vulnerability as it is a defended vulnerability" (Drichel, 2013: 59). This line of thinking doubts any possibility for true division or protection against contagion. In turn, Drichel argues that the body's inability to properly immunize itself against contagion or invasion constitutes the necessary reality of both material and epistemological vulnerabilities. Drichel argues that "this constitutional permeability means that any identity—any ego at home with itself—is always haunted by its other" (Drichel, 2013: 60). Drichel's turn towards haunting makes the Derridean impulses behind her thinking explicit again. In his own words, Derrida argues that a haunting "inhabits without residing" (Derrida, 1994: 21). Derrida argues that hauntings happen within a disadjustment, a slippery temporality. Derrida identifies this slippery time for hauntings as "the gap that affects them" (Derrida, 1994: 21). This slippery temporality informs Drichel's reading of hauntings here, reading their permeability or porousness through an attention to their temporalities. Drichel's argument here notices an affective

gap, echoing Derrida, between material or bodily vulnerabilities and epistemological vulnerabilities.

This recognition of how the time and space of hauntings are slippery, porous, and ultimately vulnerable begs a question about how to navigate these anxieties. How might one create new alliances between knowing bodies and bodies of knowledge when they slip and slide through one another, always leaking and never contained? Derrida poses a similar question: "Is it possible to find a rule of cohabitation under such a roof, it being understood that this house will always be haunted rather than inhabited by the meaning of the original?" (Derrida, 1994: 25). For Derrida though, disjuncture does not require being made whole or being put back together. Rather, he contends that these disjunctures reflect "the incoercible *différance* the here-now unfurls...binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in imminence and in urgency" (Derrida, 1994: 37). Derrida's thinking here moves beyond solely doubting divisions between vulnerable and invulnerable or masculine and feminine. I read Derrida's thinking here as articulating how haunting implies a spectrality within these disjointed, slippery temporalities. Derrida echoes this, listing a variety of epistemological boundaries that spectrality doubts: "the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general" (Derrida, 1994: 48). I notice here how this temporal paradox of the specter's absence and presence implicates Derrida's concept of the trace as well. This echoes Derrida as well, who argues that the trace "inscribes in itself the reference to the specter of something else" (Derrida 2005, 151, in Andersen, 2017: 199). These traces emerge as immanently when they are conjured, appearing within both a slippery, haphazard temporality and material, knowing bodies. These immanent experiences of how meanings haunt bodies and how bodies haunt meanings gesture towards a way of imaging new alliances between these slippery, porous relations.

My reading of Derrida here articulates not a division or immunization but rather an alliance between knowing bodies and epistemic paradigms. These alliances can offer a way of neutralizing or reframing epistemological anxieties: Derrida argues that conjuring specters can be an alliance, a plot, or even a conspiracy, but also comprises "a matter of neutralizing a hegemony or overturning some power" (Derrida, 1994: 58).

These spectral alliances also reveal how traces are material despite their immateriality. As Gotman notes, concepts move between and across bodies, which may in turn conjure "relations of alliance" (Gotman, 2016: 18). Derrida connects conjuration with exorcism too, contending that conjuring specters seeks to "reassure itself by assuring itself" (Derrida, 1994: 51). I see resonances here with Butler's notion of performativity, whereby specters emerge through repetition and ritual (Butler, 2002: xv). As Butler argues, these hauntings become apparent and material through "naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 2002: xv). Following Butler's thinking, I contend that these hauntings anxiously reassure themselves by naturalizing one's bodies, making explicit how both social and epistemic anxieties might play out at material, bodily levels. These connections further solidify how contagious contact with concepts that move between bodies crucially underpins epistemic anxieties surrounding vulnerability and the leakiness of meaning. Gotman articulates this kind of conceptual movement and contagion as a "relational poetics," which extends Edouard Glissant's thinking around poetics[10]. For Gotman, a relational poetics "signals the imbricated way power differentials can be renegotiated, information recycled, recuperated, renaturalized" (Gotman, 2016: 19). According to this argument, relational poetics constitutes "territorial ecologies," or new zones of thought that create new "habits, places of affective return" (Gotman, 2016: 19). Haunting these vulnerable-making contacts between bodies and concepts formulates not only new material, social alliances between bodies but also new epistemological alliances between bodies and concepts.

To articulate how these new epistemological alliances might take shape, I want to consider the role of passivity within this exchange. Extending Barbara Johnson's thinking, Berlant articulates the apostrophe[11] as a felt personhood, or "a silent, affectively present

[10] A poetics can be most easily defined as a linguistic model for literary criticism that attends to "the conventions that make possible literary structure and meaning" (Culler, 1997: 62). This includes "the codes or systems of convention that enable readers to...pursue the kind of symbolic interpretation that allows us to gauge the significance of poems and stories" (Culler, 1997: 62). I return to this notion of a poetics in a later chapter.

[11] An apostrophe is a literary device where a writer invokes an imagined speaker, usually something immaterial and incapable of speech like a concept, a natural force, or a ghost, as a secondary locutor within the text. Barabara Johnson defines an apostrophe as "trope which, by means of the silvery voice of rhetoric,

but physically displaced interlocutor...animated in speech as distant enough for a conversation but close enough to be imaginable by the speaker" (Berlant, 2011: 25). This displaced but close locutor constitutes a transformative relationship between the speaker and the felt personhood. Berlant notes that this imagined discourse between speaker and felt personhood unfolds the speaker in "a transformative transaction through reading/speaking" (Berlant, 2011: 26). Johnson articulates this transformation as an immanent experience, drawing attention to how the conjuration of this felt personhood can eclipse or alienate the speaker, or even confuse the addresser with the addressed (Johnson, 1986: 32). This affective closeness manifests as a felt, passive immanence. By this I mean that one is affected by that which they address, constituting an affective experience that the speaker experiences passively while engaging with this felt personhood.

This recognition of sensuous, passive, and immanent experience of affective contact similarly evokes Emmanuel Levinas's concept of radical passivity. Reading Levinas, Brenda Hofmeyr defines radical passivity as "a critical revaluation of ethical agency" that considers ethical agency as arising from "the arresting proximity of the Other that obsesses the subject to the point of paralysis" (Hofmeyr, 2009: 17). I contend that what is radical about passivity here is how this investment in what moves one to ethical action refuses freedom and choice as loci of ethical agency. Hofmeyr echoes this, arguing that radical passivity finds the possibility for ethical action through what seizes oneself from the outside but is nonetheless felt from within (Hofmeyr. 2009: 17). Bettina Bergo echoes Hofmeyr to describe this kind of passive immanence as such: "I am affected sensuously and emotionally by his/her nearness, his/her recollection...the other is distinguished from a world where things are ready to my grasp" (Bergo, 2009: 34). According to Bergo's thinking here, this evocation constitutes an affective experience that is passively felt. As Bergo identifies, this felt relationship becomes a "lived sensibility...a dynamic upwelling that changes, is discharged, or diminishes...a non-relative passivity"

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calls up and animates the absent, the lost, and the dead" (Johnson, 1986: 31). The apostrophe functions as a useful literary device when discussing Derrida's concept of the haunting, as it similarly evokes the idea of an immaterial yet ever present speaker that is animated or conjured by the writer. As Johnson notes, the apostrophe is a device that both throws voice and gives voice, a rhetorical gesture that animates that which is not already materially present within the text (Johnson, 1986: 32).

(Bergo, 2009: 1). Bergo's thinking here gestures to how passivity pushes one into ethical action, frustrating the notion that activity and passivity are opposed intensities or qualities. There is also a distinctly affective quality to this reading of passivity as well, as Bergo emphasizes how felt sense and sensuous experience bring one's attention to radical passivity. I contend that Bergo's line of thinking here also demonstrates how passivity is not ethical apathy but rather a kind of felt sense-making that informs and spurs ethical action.

Bergo's recognition of felt sense and affective transformation through passivity emerges not only at a discursive or linguistic level but also at a bodily, material level. The sensuality of this passive, affective relationship evokes a Levinasian "sensuous vulnerability," or how "the approach of the other person also affects a modification in the same X, which is lived as an immanent modification" (Bergo, 2009: 33). Bergo's focus here on the affective experience of the subject in relationship to some other mirrors Levinas's characterization as well: "the other affects us despite ourselves, and this passivity is the subjectivity of the subject" (Levinas, 2000: 104). While Levinas's use of immanence has spiritual or religious influence, I instead want to borrow Derrida's linguistic double-play to contextualize "immanence" as both conjuration and inheritance (Derrida, 1994: 42). Through this linguistic double-play, I articulate how passivity emerges in the disjuncture between speaker and felt personhood. This in turn constitutes a haunting that is felt through one's attention to felt, sensuous experiences. I see how this haunting constitutes a recognition of how contact with concepts becomes vulnerable-making, and how by extension one's affective experience is passively felt as an immanent vulnerability.

Passivity is not an ethical antipathy but an active making-sense of the world. Understanding passivity as sense-making connotes how passivity is explicitly bodily and sensual too. To illustrate this, Hofmeyr characterizes passivity as a kind of "involuntary fascination, arresting paralysis" (Hofmeyr, 2009: 17). This paralysis is explicitly linked to the material, sensing body, since Hofmeyr notes how the skin formulates both a form of internal and external contact with the world (Hofmeyr, 2009: 35). This attention to how bodily sensations arrest and thereby reshape one's experience of the world echoes decolonial feminist scholar Neetu Khanna's thinking on visceral logics. Khanna similarly

emphasizes the importance of affect and materiality but positions in in relationship to the development of a revolutionary consciousness. I see Hofmeyr's characterization of passivity as paralysis as sharing a kinship with Khanna's characterization of nausea. Khanna argues that nausea is a "temporality of suspension" that constitutes a "thwarted state of agency" (Khanna, 2020: 24). Echoing Khanna, Hofmeyr similarly describes this sense-making of passivity as a "temporal synthesis" (Hofmeyr, 2009: 32). Returning to Khanna's thinking, these visceral logics draw one towards new, decolonial feelings when one attends to these bodily interruptions (Khanna, 2020: 2-3). I see this as again echoing Hofmeyr, who notes how passivity creates the conditions necessary for affective intensities to emerge or "well up," to use Hofmeyr's words (Hofmeyr, 2009: 32). I argue that passivity can be understood as an affective, sensuous interruption that invokes some degree of change within the subject.

My reading of passivity here echoes Khanna's use of viscera as a revolutionary bodily logic. By this I mean that I notice here how Khanna pays attention to visceral reactions as a form of anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal sensing and thinking. I find this characterization of passivity as a welling-up that draws one towards new, revolutionary feelings interesting. This attention to the revolutionary potential of thinking passivity through the body draws relationships between sensuous, affective experiences and the colonial and patriarchal anxieties around meaning that I have previously noted in this chapter. Through this reading of radical passivity, one's passive experience of affective, vulnerable-making contact with other bodies or concepts has the potential to both diffuse and highlight these anxieties around epistemic vulnerabilities. Passivity becomes a means through which one not only comes to know the world through affective, material, and lived experiences but also a means through which one imagines new forms of being, thinking, and feeling. This passivity, this temporal synthesis of sensuous, affective contagions, offers opportunities to repair anxious epistemologies to imagine in turn new, perhaps even revolutionary, modes of thinking and being-in-the-world.

Returning to the idea that there is some degree of risk within affective contact between bodies, sensuous vulnerabilities might also reflect a kind of affective risk that one must passively risk when coming up against the world. For Helene Cixous, this

affective experience of coming up against the world might emerge as a feeling of being overwhelmed:

> Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst—burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put in frames and sold for a stinking fortune...what's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? (Cixous, 1976: 876)

As Cixous articulates here, these "luminous torrents" could be equated to both the sensation of the passive, felt immanence I previously discussed as well as bodily viscera like tears. This endless searching and reaching towards the other through the submission of the self is an overwhelming action. However, Cixous contends that "what overwhelms us the most—that is love—is when we glimpse a part of what is secret to him or her, what is hidden...Loving not knowing. Loving: not knowing" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 17). Cixous's attention demonstrates here how the affective experience of being overwhelmed is also not unlike how love feels. This link between being overwhelmed and love gestures to how radical passivity can be grounded in these sensuous, felt experiences.

Acknowledging how love overwhelms or moves someone draws connections between radical passivity and reparative modes. Sedgwick similarly locates how reparative readings can also be understood as acts of love:

> to use one's own resources to assemble or ''repair'' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*. Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn. Among Klein's names for the reparative process is love. (Sedgwick, 2003: 128)

For both Cixous and Sedgwick, a sensitivity to being overwhelmed or being moved is akin to how one loves. Reaching towards another to (un)know more deeply materializes this reparative gesture. What moves me here is how this gesture resonates with the femme shapes of vulnerability that femininity studies scholars like Dahl examine as well. While Dahl does not explicitly position femme or femininity through love, Dahl's investment in desire, pleasure, and community invokes a similar reparative gesture that seeks to

develop vulnerable-making relations rather than destroy them. I can extend this investment to Dahl's theoretical gestures as well, as Dahl and other femininity studies scholars' desire to reinvest and rework femininity outside of white patriarchal power similarly reflects a desire for love and repair.

Poetics of femme: imagining an ethos for critical passivity

From this understanding of how passivity might formulate a reparative gesture towards these anxieties surrounding epistemological vulnerability, I want to consider how critical passivity begins to emerge here as a weak theory. Weak theory, as opposed to strong theory, can be stood as articulating Sedgwick's desire for critical approaches that embrace repair, surprise, and taking notice rather than dominating or tearing down (Sedgwick, 2003: 133). Drawing upon affect theory, Sedgwick considers weak theory to be when theory becomes local or narrow, which contrasts strong theory's attempts to have wide or broad claims or attentions (Sedgwick, 2003: 134). To Sedgwick, weak theory will "remain dumb" in the face of what is outside of its narrow scope of attention, while strong theory "always has something to say, about anything, because it can always say no" (Sedgwick, 2003: 121). Reading Sedgwick, Heather Love similarly describes weak theory as local and attentive: "instead of powerful reductions, it prefers acts of noticing, being affected, taking joy, and making whole" (Love, 2010: 238-239). Critical passivity takes up Love's reading of a weak theory to explore how critical passivity might make use of taking notice and being surprised. I consider critical passivity as a weak theory to create opportunities where critical passivity might undo itself even as it attempts to formulate itself as a theory. Extending Calle-Gruber's thinking, embracing a more local, attentive reading throughout this project provides opportunities to reveal how critical passivity is polyvalent, including how it might reveal "traces, corrections, deletions, resumptions" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 158). Embracing polyvalence and surprise means that critical passivity can have fictive or poetic forms as well. Fiction in this sense becomes "the privileged terrain for making the love-event of writing happen" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 159). This fictive, poetic impulse similarly evokes Cixous's description of jouissance, a kind of joy or surprise that is "inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of

phantasms is incredible" (Cixous, 1976: 876). My attention to jouissance here gestures to how critical passivity takes joy and pleasure in repair; it enjoys being surprised and takes pleasure in taking notice.

I want to return to femininity studies here to consider how qualities of vulnerability, sensuality, and repair might formulate this weak theory for critical passivity. Throughout this section, I draw upon these qualities as an ethos or poetics that I might make use of through my theory of critical passivity. To further this aim, I might take the term "femme" and re-examine the sign "under erasure" (in a Derridean sense). Taking the sign (femme) under erasure recognizes how femme as a signifier is "inaccurate but necessary" (Spivak, 1999: xiv). Julia Kristeva notes that *le féminin* (or femme, for my purposes) is a semiotic rather than an existential state. For Kristeva, the linguistic semiotics of concrete psychosexual identities cannot hold except as "a priori suppositions intrinsic to the theory itself" (Kristeva, 1981: 20). This means that sexual difference is ultimately a fantasy built on a linguistic rather than biological difference. The sign determined by the trace of its other is, as Spivak notes, "the realization of sexual difference as the model for the difference between signifier and signified" (Spivak, 1997: lxvi). This means that there are also colonial logics imbedded in this notion of sexual difference. My reading here echoes Lugones's argument that "categorial, dichotomous, hierarchical logic" is "central to modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality" (Lugones, 2010: 742). Extending Kristeva's thinking, locating femme under a symbolic difference (rather than a biological difference) includes "signs and syntax; that is, language," (Kristeva, 1981: 23). By this I mean that Kristeva views the construction of sexual difference as a semiotic that structures and represses meanings in language (Kristeva, 1981: 23). This echoes what Judith Butler articulates as how "language, in turn, structures the world by suppressing multiple meanings...and instating univocal and discrete meanings in their place" (Butler, 2002: 101). Linguistically, femme might be located as a signifier dependent on the context of its text, or how "the structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is always absent" (Spivak, 1997: xvii). These lines of thinking ultimately express an attention to how the signs "femme" and "feminine" express not a particular gender or gendered experience but rather a multitude of potential meanings or significances. This attention allows me in

turn to rethink femme as an ethos and poetics for critical passivity later in this chapter without re-essentializing the gendered significances underneath the term.

To claim therefore that femme can only signify a particular expression of gender pertaining to a particular individual in a particular society is to articulate femme as always or only connoting femininity or feminine embodiments. I wish instead to examine femme as under erasure, meaning it is "already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such" (Spivak, 1999: xxxiv). I think of femme as linked to its sign's original significance (femininity or feminine) while also signifying something more. This turns femme from its original significances (feminine, *le féminin*) to a performative signifier that gestures to other concepts or practices, such as critical passivity. As a performative signifier, femme becomes polysemic: "its multiple meanings seem to push across and beyond–indeed to exceed–the limits or boundaries of its signifier" (Andersen, 2016: 12). Poststructuralist feminist thinkers like Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber's characterize this kind of polysemic performative significance as a faithfulness to being unfaithful to discreet meanings (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 9). Through these performative traces and their faithful unfaithfulness to fixed or discreet meanings, femme begins to signify a set of qualities, investments, or conditions for reparative feminist thinking. Instead of thinking of femme as only signifying a singular gender or gendered expression, I consider instead how femme can be contextualised by its past significances while also signifying new meanings.

When I write femme therefore, I use the term as a means of gesturing towards an ethos and poetics for critical passivity. To understand how this deconstruction might lend new significances to my theory of critical passivity, I would like to deconstruct femme into its qualities. My theorizing of critical passivity takes up these qualities as its critical and affective impulses throughout the course of this project. I have previously referred to this set of qualities and investments as a poetics. To understand my meaning, I would like to extend dance scholar Hetty Blades's definition of poetics. Mingling the thinking of dance scholar Laurence Louppe and literary scholar Gérard Genette, Blades defines poetics as a focus on "capturing and re-presenting that which is expressive and effective about a work" (Blades, 2015: 264). As such, thinking of femme as a poetics articulates a reorientation to femme that "addresses its expressive capabilities" (Blades,

2015: 264). This echoes literary scholar Terry Threadgold's articulation of a poetics as an attempt to "work on and with texts" (Threadgold, 1997: 1). Threadgold similarly notes how poetics alongside poiesis enacts the production of "new concepts of metalanguage and theory" (Threadgold, 1997: 1). As a means of gesturing to new significances through the deconstruction of the sign "femme," femme as a poetics formulates a refiguration of the signifier (femme) through the performative hauntings of other qualities, such as passivity, vulnerability, and surprise. I resignify femme as a poetics to gesture to how my theory of critical passivity haunts this signifier (femme) and thereby refigures femme in turn. By this I mean that critical passivity both retains a relation to what is feminized or femme about these bodily forms of knowing while also reimagining femme as a set of feminist investments and qualities. Figuring femme as a poetics transforms femme into a sign that signifies these affective qualities as well as femininity or femininized knowledges. I see this resignification of femme as also enacting the relationship between poiesis and poetics that Threadgold identifies, since rethinking femme in this way demonstrates how the interplay between expressive qualities and linguistic significances allows for new critical metalanguages to emerge. I reformulate these qualities as a poetics for critical passivity to consider how critical passivity expresses these qualities and investments as an approach to reparative feminist criticism.

Critical passivity necessarily contends with the slippery relations between more masculine-coded forms like theory alongside feminine-coded forms like poetry and dance. As Mireille Calle-Gruber notes, femme itself perhaps demands such resignification and performative reinterpretation. Calle-Gruber notes that "the extremes of major-minor, masculine-feminine, prose-poem touch each other, have a reciprocal need, form the two movements" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 151). If femme begins in reciprocals and juxtapositions, , "the feminine and the masculine...express an alternative: otherness and equivalence, equivalence *in* the otherness" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 157). Masculine and feminine are further enmeshed: "there is not, in a clear-cut manner, on one side the masculine, on the other the feminine, but the one with the other, approximately and weighing the alternatives" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 158). This means that one cannot speak of or define femme as a critical form without its interrelationship to masculine critical

forms, such as traditional approaches to theory[12]. This inseparability means that feminine and masculine define each other and move between each other like partners in the same dance. This give and take posits feminine forms and masculine forms not as binarily opposed but relationally affecting one another in calls and responses. To flow between feminine and masculine forms will seek a temporal synthesis of them. Calle-Gruber articulates this flowing back and forth as forming a door or passage: "to form a door; to open, to find, to show the passage from the masculine to the feminine—and back. And forth" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 158). One opens doors to discover what has yet to be realized: "the writer is in effect searching for the unrealized, unprecedented work: *with two contradictory genres*" (Calle-Gruber, 2003: 160). Critical passivity bears a necessary relationship with more masculinist forms of theory; however, it embraces feminized knowledges as reparative gesture, locating feminine or feminized knowledges within a larger ecology of knowing. My thinking here echoes Sedwick's thinking, who notes how reparative modes are not set ideologies or epistemic paradigms but rather reflect "changing and heterogeneous relational stances" (Sedgwick, 2003: 128). Critical passivity becomes one of these relational stances, forcing me to surrender my epistemic anxieties so that I might be surprised by my thinking, reading, and writing.

To enable this attention to surprise and repair, my theory of critical passivity must surrender my investments in anxious, paranoid epistemologies as well. As Sedgwick argues, "to read from a reparative position is to surrender the knowing, anxious paranoid determination that no horror…shall ever come to the reader as *new*," (Sedgwick, 2003: 146). Following Sedgwick's argument, I see this surrender of paranoid impulses as gesturing to how my theory of critical passivity must cultivate "soft borders," to borrow a term from feminist dance scholar Sondra Fraleigh (2004: 229). To connect this line of thinking to dance studies more explicitly, soft borders imply porous, material barriers like skin, which knows and learns through its intimate, material contact with other

[12] As Susan Leigh Foster notes, "theory, even in its first modern uses, takes on a masculine identity" (Foster, 2013: 22), as theory was originally practiced by men of rank in ancient Greece (Foster, 2013: 20), was set against "poetical and practical investigations" (Foster, 2013: 20), and attempted to offer "a kind of 'masculine beauty'" (Foster, 2013: 22). While more contemporary approaches to critical theory have critiqued and undone these connotations of masculinity and class (Foster, 2013: 22-23), there is still an implicit connotation that theory as a form of investigation maintains a shape that is uniquely "elite and male" (Foster, 2013: 19).

bodies. While surrender might evoke images of being dominated or captured, Fraleigh contends that soft borders are "cultivated in cooperative rather than competitive modes" (Fraleigh, 2004: 229). Fraleigh implies further that receptivity might even vacillate between passivity and paranoid alertness (Fraleigh, 2004: 228). Fraleigh's reading here demonstrates how surrendering one's critical paranoia does not entail an entire lack of critical or bodily defenses. Her reading here echoes Cixous, who similarly posits that "to 'defend' is sometimes a necessity. But it is an ambiguous gesture: whoever defends him—or herself forbids" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 6). I contend that defense in this view offers an ambivalent critical gesture that both turns towards and away from paranoid thinking, even if that same paranoia sometimes forbids certain forms of surprise and surrender when thinking. Extending Fraleigh's thinking, I argue that critical passivity engages with surrender as a soft border that receives that which rubs up against it. Surrender and receptiveness gesture to how critical contact with something or someone requires an openness to being moved or affected by that encounter. This in turn attends to how my thinking around critical passivity evokes the Levinasian concept of radical passivity: critical passivity cultivates a sensuous, affective, and temporal synthesis of one's critical and material encounters with knowing bodies and bodies of thought. Receptivity and surrender, evoking the sensuous synthesis of Levinas's radical passivity, create critically passive opportunities for one's thinking to be moved, to be surprised, or even to be overwhelmed by that which one reads or encounters.

Through this poetics, critical passivity emerges as both a critical framework or theory and a set of reparative feminist investments and qualities. This necessarily recognizes in tun how critical and political investments inform how one comes to knowing. The qualities I have expressed up to this point collectively underpin critical passivity while maintaining possibilities for me to be surprised and moved by my thinking. By this I mean that these investments and qualities form for me a hopeful, imaginative feminist disposition that enables me to theorize critical passivity and how it informs feminist critical practice. As I have previously argued, these qualities articulate a poetics for critical passivity that enfolds a poetic sensitivity to critique within and through an attention to the sensuous, felt dimensions of bodily knowing. This poetic feminist imagination in turn shapes my theorizing of critical passivity and how it emerges

through my affective, material encounters with dance. I argue here that critical passivity possesses a poetic, hopeful feminist imaginary to take up Cixous's call to "carve a language out for oneself in the fatty part of the flesh" (Cixous, 1992: 129, in Calle-Gruber, 2003: 153). As a reparative feminist approach to reading dance, I navigate how this poetics of femme shapes my thinking around critical passivity as I turn to close readings of dance in my following chapters. I insist on the need for hopeful, poetic feminist imaginaries here because they invigorate how I engage with my critical practices. This hopeful, poetic feminist imaginary carves out my relations between critical practice and dancing bodies, so I must insist on its necessity and capacity to shift and to move my thinking and reading. By this I mean that insisting on a hopeful, poetic feminist imaginary enables me to be surprised by dance, to enjoy and take pleasure in noticing and being with dance. Through that insistence on and investment in hopeful, poetic feminist imaginaries, I can notice how critical passivity shapes how I read dance and how dance in turn shapes my theory of critical passivity.

Ambivalent ballerina

Manon, desire, and reparative touch

Preface

I cannot think of going to the ballet without thinking about how I felt when I went to the Royal Opera House. When I came out of the station into Covent Garden, I was transported into an antique-looking courtyard that led me to the entrance of the opera house. The walk felt like I was being transported into another world, one that is perhaps more beautiful, more vivid than my own. Of course, I find it impossible to think of that feeling without acknowledging the aura of wealth that a place like the Royal Opera House radiates. When I walked into the building, I found myself greeted by the gift shop, newly renovated along with the lower half of the opera house. The modern feeling of the lobby seemed out of place, perhaps even anachronistic, when compared to the cobblestoned alley that led me to it. Marbled staircases met with sleek, glass-topped tables as I ascended the staircase to the building's interior. My ascent brought me close to escalators and vaulted, glass-ceilinged restaurants. The building's architecture seemed to gesture to the grandness of the theatre space while also obscuring its imposing opulence. I felt very small, very unfit to enter this space, as I took my seat. The auditorium, that gilded hall, evoked an oppressive grandeur that moved between aristocratic and understated. The high, gold-paneled ceilings, the soft, maroon-upholstered seats, and the auditorium's sheer vastness dwarfed me more and more. The longer I sat there, the more I felt like I did not belong.

While I was watching the performance though, I made friends with the woman sitting next to me. We talked about watching dance and shared stories about when we were introduced to ballet. We talked about how watching dance made us feel. We talked about the ballet itself: what moments we most enjoyed or most surprised us, what dancers we liked the most. We talked about what moved us. At the end of the ballet, as the heroine lay dead on the stage while her lover embraced her lifeless body, this woman

touched my arm. It was a quick, light action. She was so moved by what she had witnessed that it moved her to share that feeling with me in this small, tactile moment. In that moment, the ballet's affective resonances drove us to our own, new moment of affective, haptic connection. The dancing had moved me, and it had also moved the woman next to me. The small, quick moment of touch that we shared revealed that we had shared something, that the performance had forged new feelings within and between us.

Those new feelings were felt as softly as a fleeting touch on the arm.

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine a production of the Royal Ballet's *Manon* to develop my emergent theory of critical passivity. As my preface indicates, my encounter with this ballet poses questions for me around both material and affective forms of contact. How do I feel Manon the character? How do characters or performances touch me, and how are those touches reflected in how I read and write about the performance? What other kinds of touches materialize when I encounter dance, such as being touched by another audience member? What are the qualities of those touches? How might touch be framed as reparative or regenerative? Rather than turn to a historiographic reading of ballet, I use this attention to the affective, material dimensions of touch to consider how I am touched by the performance and how my thinking touches the performance in turn. Throughout this chapter, I consider how critical passivity attends to these touches and how ambivalence emerges as a disposition that allows one to be touched and to be moved both affectively and critically.

Through my close reading of the character Manon and how she is portrayed both narratively and choreographically within the ballet, I will explore how the ballet uses forms of reparative, non-appropriative touch. This examination of how reparative touch will in turn inform my thinking around critical passivity. This theorizing will gesture to how critical passivity may be figured as a material, lived, and ambivalent disposition materialized through reparative touch. Since *Manon* is a narrative ballet, I will make use of methods like character analysis and narrative analysis, both of which are fundamental analytic methods customary to feminist literary criticism. I will also deploy methods of

feminist dance criticism to consider choreographic and dancerly choices alongside narrative choices. I approach reading dance's aesthetics through a mix of close reading methods that draw upon both literary and dance-based traditions. My approach here evokes how Victoria Watts notes that "our understanding of the art of dancing...is already infused with notions of writing, even where and when no written text is referred to or generated" (Watts, 2010: 9). The shape and form of this reading will not necessarily depart from received approaches to close reading; however, I will employ the ethos for critical passivity that I previously explored to attend to affective intensities within my reading. Through critical passivity, I engage with these methods in alternative or reparative ways while not subverting them necessarily.

To gesture towards how I might use critical passivity throughout my analysis of *Manon*, I want to imagine a metaphoric figuration of an ambivalent ballerina. This figuration materializes critical passivity within and throughout my reading. By this I mean that critical passivity materializes as a material, affective, and ambivalent disposition. To make sense of my meaning here, I want to consider how Jacques Derrida articulates ambivalence through his thinking around hauntology and hospitality. Previously, I have read Derrida's thinking on hauntology as what he calls a "performative interpretation" (Derrida, 1994: 63); haunting a text does not imply a singular meaning or lineage but rather an attention to the creative and critical dimensions of meaning-making when reading. This ambiguity of these interpretative acts is both ambivalent and generous, which Derrida frames as a kind of hospitality. In his own words, Derrida contextualizes ambivalence as a "hospitality that welcomes without welcoming the stranger" (Derrida, 1994: 217). However, this stranger is not really a stranger but rather someone "who is already found within" (Derrida, 1994: 217). Derrida's definition of ambivalence is a kind of affective displacement, one that must make space for or welcome another even though that other has already arrived or already resides within. When considered materially, this displacement materializes as a feeling of being moved, shifted, or relocated, even within spaces or places that feel familiar or "welcoming," to use Derrida's terms. This feeling of being both placed and displaced conjures to me both the material and affective dimensions of a ballerina in movement. One's performative interpretations are a kind of dance, where one both gives space for other dancers while

moving and dancing one's own steps. The need to switch and to spin between giving and taking space in one's interpretive acts mirrors Derrida's articulation of ambivalence of hospitality: here I take up Derrida's spatial metaphor and read a dancer's physical and affective labor into it. Just as ambivalence haunts these affective states of displacement, relocation, and habitation, my reading here considers how critical passivity calls to mind the material, affective realities of being moved and how those realities might in turn generate new feelings.

I argue later in this chapter that Manon, the titular character and central figure of the ballet, haunts this affective, material figuration of ambivalence. The character Manon emerges within this reading as a kind of corporeal artifact. By this I mean that Manon is both material and metaphoric: she represents the lived, material, affective, and kinaesthetic dimensions of a moving body and how ambivalence takes shape critically. I extend Fraleigh's term corporeal artifact to illustrate this: Fraleigh notes how the dancing body can be imagined as "an art and a fact both material and evanescent" (Fraleigh, 2004: 22). I extend this reading of Manon to my figuration of an ambivalent ballerina to imagine not a specific person but rather a kind of disposition that is inextricable from the material, lived body. I argue from this reading that an ambivalent ballerina materializes as a figuration of critical passivity. This reading of critical passivity corporealizes what Fraleigh calls a "reflective feminist poiesis, poetry as a living process" (Fraleigh, 2004: 22). Through the linguistic link that Fraleigh makes between poiesis and poetry here, dance moves between both material and immaterial states of creation that in turn touch a viewer through affective resonances. As Laurence Louppe similarly argues, this attention to both the material and affective dimensions of dance reveals "dance as a poetic state, moving and colorful" (Louppe, 1994: 10). This figuration of an ambivalent ballerina intentionally mingles the material, artistic, and theoretical dimensions of critical passivity, drawing attention to how thinking, feeling, and dancing stem from similar materials and impulses.

Imagining critical passivity through this figuration of an ambivalent ballerina requires one *to be moved*—to come to know how one is touched by something or someone. This figuration of an ambivalent ballerina is a kind of felt personhood: she is an affective, rhetorical figuration of an ambivalent disposition that haunts one's lived,

affective encounters with others. Through this figuration, one recognizes how or what one encounters and how it affects one's lived, affective reality. The passive experience of being moved informs how one attends to one's reading, such as attending to what one cares about or for when reading. This attention encourages intellectual and affective osmosis between a reader and her object of study through passive engagement with how one is touched by others. Theorizing critical passivity through touch creates a soft border between forms of bodily labor, emotional labor, and the labor of thought. Critical passivity moves between these affective, material qualities through its relation to critical practices and styles. Returning to Derrida, this constitutes a manner of attending to how one might inhabit a "matter of neutralizing a hegemony or overturning some power" (Derrida, 1994: 58). This means that thinking critical passivity through this figuration necessitates that one adopts a disposition of ambivalence to feel new feelings and form new relations. This figuration of an ambivalent ballerina imagines how critical passivity haunts one's reading and in turn reorients them towards new feelings or relations.

Characterizing Manon: artistic and critical perspectives on Manon as a character

The Royal Ballet's *L'histoire de Manon*, originally conceived and choreographed by Kenneth Macmillan in 1974, follows the story of a young woman whose experience of class-based and gender-based violence both shapes and ultimately breaks her. Macmillan's ballet is based upon Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel *Manon Lescaut*. The ballet tells the story of a young French woman named Manon who moves from the countryside to Paris and falls in love with a young student named des Grieux. Manon's brother Lescaut sells her as a courtesan to the wealthy and older Monsieur GM behind her back, though Manon accepts this role when she sees the wealth and luxury that she will get from being Monsieur GM's mistress. Manon and des Grieux later plot to cheat at gambling to steal Monsieur GM's money so that they can flee Paris and be together. The two barely succeed in their plans, but Manon and des Grieux are ultimately caught when Manon is unable to leave behind an expensive bracelet that she received from Monsieur GM. Monsieur GM arrives with the police, who kill Lescaut and apprehend Manon. The police send Manon to New Orleans on prostitution charges, and des Grieux pursues her. In New Orleans,

Manon's jailor rapes her, but she is freed when des Grieux appears and kills the jailor. The ballet draws to a close as Manon and des Grieux flee through the swamps of Louisiana. Manon, sick and weak, has a fever dream, imagining the life of wealth that she left behind in Paris, before dying in the arms of her lover[13].

Macmillan's *Manon* is in many ways a tragedy about gendered violence and class-based oppression against women in the historical context of 18th century France. For this reason, the ballet has been subject to scrutiny since its original premiere. Perhaps most infamously quoted is Mary Clarke's review in *The Guardian* after the initial premiere of *Manon*. In her review, Clarke writes, "Manon is a slut and Des Grieux is a fool and they move in the most unsavoury company" (Clarke, qtd in Macaulay, 2019). Dance critic Alastair Macaulay notes in his review of a performance of *Manon* by the American Ballet Theatre that Macmillan's ballet has been a target of feminist critics since its original premiere. (Macaulay, 2019). Despite the criticism though, Macaulay takes interest in how over time the ballet has grown rather than diminished in popularity:

> MacMillan (1929-1992) repeatedly took the degradation of women as a central subject...in the three-act "Manon" (1974)...most of the female characters are using sex to beat poverty, if they can. When this ballet was new, its presentation of women prompted some hostility. That's unlikely to have changed in the #MeToo era — and yet "Manon" has proved increasingly popular in the 21st century. (Macaulay, 2019)

This leads Macaulay to argue ultimately that *Manon* "remains a ballet to argue about," (Macaulay, 2019). That *Manon* has endured, particularly at a time of renewed mainstream attention towards high-profile cases of sexual violence and harassment against women, seems to me a curious fact. While feminist readings of the sexual and class politics of *Manon* seem as timely today as when the ballet first premiered in 1974, the ballet's enduring popularity gestures to perhaps another reading.

Antoinette Silbey, who danced the titular character in the original 1974 production, saw Manon as someone "who allowed it all to happen to her" (Macmillan

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[13] For a more detailed synopsis and other background information on the ballet, see: Macmillan Estate. (2014). Manon - Kenneth Macmillan. [online]. Available at: https://www.kennethmacmillan.com/new-page-97

Estate, 2014). Silbey read Manon not as a "schemer" but as someone who "only makes decisions when she has to" (Macmillan Estate, 2014). Other dancers who later danced the role saw Manon in a range of ways. Some dancers saw her as a ruthless criminal who gets punished for her actions, while others considered her a sympathetic opportunist who wanted to transcend her class through the means available to her (Macmillan Estate, 2014). Dancers like Sylvie Guillem saw their portrayals of Manon not as "desperate victims, limp as rags" but as women who were "defying death itself" (Macmillan Estate, 2014). In the performance that I saw, Melissa Hamilton danced the titular role. Hamilton had previously made her principal debut with this role and thus commanded it with a sense of authority over the character. According to an interview with Hamilton, her vision of Manon is one in which Manon has "a power...a charm" (Royal Opera House, 2014). Hamilton sees Manon as someone who is "always looking for something" (Royal Opera House, 2014). What strikes me about Hamilton's reading of her character here is how she emphasizes Manon's ambivalent desires and her relentless pursuit of them. Hamilton sees Manon as someone who "gets bored easily" (Royal Opera House, 2014). Per this view, Hamilton's vision for the character contends that Manon's searching does not culminate in her love for des Grieux. Rather, she sees Manon as someone who is continually unsatisfied and thus is propelled instead by "something missing that she is striving for" (Royal Opera House, 2014). Hamilton contends in her reading that the ballet's true tragedy is that Manon "never finds what it is that she is searching for" (Royal Opera House, 2014).

These readings of Manon in the ballet position the character as someone who, despite her seeming complicity and ambivalence to violence and crime, nonetheless sought to fight against the social hierarchies that oppressed her. This shift to reading Manon as a champion or heroine demonstrates how with time *Manon* has become seen as an empowering story about a woman who pushes back against her patriarchal oppressors. In this reading, Manon is not someone who is merely victimized by the men in her life but is instead a femme fatale. As Macaulay notes, this reading of Manon demonstrates how the character has become seen as both "fabulously subversive" and as a sort of siren that "men follow to their doom" (Macaulay, 2019). There are limits to this reading however, especially when one considers that most of Manon's choices in the

ballet are made for her. Reading Manon as a subversive, agential character undermines the great lengths that the ballet takes to demonstrate how little choice and agency Manon has. For critics like Macaulay, the juxtaposition of these readings perhaps informs the enduring popularity and interest in this ballet:

> how much did MacMillan make Manon a projection of self-deceiving masculine desire ("she drove me to my ruin")? How much is she a gold-digger, an active agent in her own ascent to bejeweled finery? And how much is she the victim of a profoundly sexist society in that rise and then in her fall? Her story is not interesting unless all these questions keep arising. (Macaulay, 2019)

I contend that Macmillan's *Manon* endures due to the complexity of its central character and her seemingly ambivalent relationship to the corrupt and brutal world of sexual exploitation into which she is thrown. The tension between these two currents--one of empowerment and subversion and another of self-objectification and patriarchal complicity--both ultimately hinge on how Manon engages with the external forces that control her world. How and why Manon ambivalently navigates these tensions appears as a central theme that readings of this ballet must consider further.

Choreographies of harm: representations of coercion and violence

Men constantly handle Manon throughout the ballet: there are few moments where a man's hands are not somewhere on Manon's body. Much of the choreography features Manon suspended in the air, moving from one male partner to another, or being physically pulled towards or away from different male partners. Throughout the course of the ballet, Manon seems to ambivalently move between her love for des Grieux and the coercive, patriarchal society that drives her to economic prosperity. To illustrate this, I want to turn to a scene in the second act of the ballet, during which Monsieur GM hosts a party for his wealthy friends. During the party, Monsieur GM and his friends hoist Manon into the air and pass her between them, fawning over her beauty and caressing her as they do. Choreographically, the men handle Manon like a glittering object that they can possess and trade amongst themselves. Manon beams through this scene though and

even offers her hands to the next man who wishes to lift her. Hamilton's hypermobility gave Manon's movement a soft pliability, heightening the theatrical effect so that the men appear to contort her body as they all dance. Manon, dressed in her glittery finery, dances in the center of their circle as the men gawk and grope at her. While she dances, her lover des Grieux pines and mopes on the sidelines. While the audience knows that Manon and des Grieux are scheming to steal Monsieur GM's money and run away together, Manon seems to be enjoying the party all the same. Wrapped in opulence, Manon appears to dance gleefully around the men who contort her. Her joy and pleasure here obscures who Manon is really conning: the wealthy men, her lover, the audience, or perhaps even herself.

Manon's ambivalence to sexual objectification similarly reveals itself at the end of the previous act as well. After confessing her love for des Grieux in his bedroom, Lescault and Monsieur GM appear with fine clothes and jewelry. The two men persuade Manon into becoming a courtesan with the finery, though in actuality Manon doesn't appear to have a choice in the matter. During this scene, Monsieur GM and Lescaut take turns moving Manon around the stage, passing her between them. After Lescaut clarifies to Manon that Monsieur GM expects sexual favors in return for the clothes and jewels, Lescaut places Manon's hand in Monsieur GM's outstretched hand. Manon turns towards Monsieur GM, who pulls her into a fish dive as Lescaut takes her upstage leg. Monsieur GM flips her body over his arm, returning Manon to the floor with her upstape leg now extended. Monsieur GM continues to hold her body while Lescaut holds her leg as they do this a few times. Both men alternate between catching and flipping Manon until the next phrase begins. Throughout this phrase, Manon appears to cartwheel across the stage, revolving around the men's hands, which creates the illusion that the men and not Manon are in control of her body's rotations.

After this, Manon turns instead to Lescaut and offers her extended leg to Monsieur GM, trying to entice him. Monsieur GM greedily grabs her foot, kisses it repeatedly, and turns her body to face downstage before returning her foot to the floor. As the pas de trois continues, Lescaut and Monsieur GM alternate between moving and placing Manon around the room. However, Monsieur GM becomes more aggressive with his lust as they dance, and Manon appears to enjoy his attention. This is most clearly illustrated when

Manon sits on des Grieux's bed and seductively crosses her legs and offers her foot to Monsieur GM, who again greedily takes it and kisses it repeatedly. Just as the greedy men coerce Manon into courtesan life, Manon utilizes her sexuality to solidify her opportunity for wealth and social status. This choreographic shift from the men flipping Manon to Manon taking a more active role in the seduction reveals this tension between Manon's willingness to be objectified and her overall lack of control over her own body and sexuality. While the choreography in this scene demonstrates Manon's playfulness and intelligence, it nonetheless highlights the ballet's representations of sexual coercion and control through the ways men touch and manipulate Manon's body.

While most critics have focused on Manon's role as a seductress (Macaulay, 2019), I have found less attention paid to how or why Manon is coerced throughout the ballet. In many scenes like this throughout the ballet, Manon is choreographed like a prop that is passed, turned, flipped, and moved between various male partners. While she may seem to enjoy her newfound wealth and status, there are few moments here where Manon appears to have narrative agency or control over her own body. Other feminist dance scholars like Clare Croft have similarly noted ballet's pas de deux structure carries patriarchal connotations. In my reading of *Manon*, this is evidenced most clearly when a danseur is in physical control of a ballerina's body. Croft has further critiqued this pas de deux structure as often implicitly or explicitly represent male sexual violence against women's bodies (Croft, 2014: 205). The pas de deux can also be read as reinforcing heteronormative constructions of gender, often positioning the ballerina as a representation of certain pervasive and insidious notions of an "acceptable" femininity. In her reading of the piece *After the Rain*, Croft considers a lift where Jock Soto suspends Wendy Whelan's body over his own as an image where "the woman is the focus of the ballet, but she has no agentic power" (Croft, 2014: 205). This can be compounded with other harmful notions of "acceptable femininity" that is placed upon ballerinas, such as how Fraleigh argues that ballerinas are encouraged to control their bodies through "thinning rituals of anorexia nervosa and bulimia that shed the flesh and conform to an ideal" (Fraleigh, 2004: 155). All of this is to illustrate how the pas de deux can be read as representing both sexual violence against women and harmful or reductive patriarchal and heteronormative constructions of gender.

In analyses such as these though, scholars often attend too much to the optics of the dance rather than its haptics. These readings ignore how partnering in ballet requires that a ballerina and a danseur work together in a more equal, give-and-take relationship. Even scholars like Croft note but do not emphasize these relational qualities, such as how Croft notes that Whelan would fall should she try to leave Soto's grip while he lifts her (Croft. 2014: 205). The illusion of precarity, one where a ballerina appears to surrender willingly to her partner's support, does not undermine her skill, ability, or bodily control while dancing but rather reflect exchange and effort on the part of both dancers. This recognizes how ballet as an artform hides the dancer's physical labor: ballet dancers are trained to make their movements appear effortless and easy despite ballet's intense physical demands. When this labor and skill are revealed, I find that the pas de deux in *Manon* confounds clear distinctions between activity and passivity. Despite the character Manon appearing narratively passive within these scenes, the ballerina dancing *Manon* nevertheless maintains an active sense of skill and control. In the case of the performance that I saw, Hamilton exhibited incredible precision and skill, even though the dramatic illusion of suspension and passivity hides her physical labor. When the men in the ballet pass Manon between them, the ballet's representations of sexual coercion and violence belies the dancers' skill and physical reciprocity hidden underneath the narrative's dramatic conceit.

While all of these examples thus far demonstrate a calculated and skillfully crafted approach to the ballet's representations of sexual violence and coercion, the ballet also does not shy away from more explicit depictions of violence and abuse against Manon. The jailor scene contains the most explicit threat of danger, and the choreography in that scene makes most tangible the threat of sexual violence against women. In the third act, Manon has been arrested on prostitution charges and brought to New Orleans as a prisoner. When Manon is brought before the jailor, the jailor forces himself on her. The choreography here is violent. In one moment, the jailor catches Manon, lifting her out of an arabesque as she attempts to flee the room. The jailor brings her to center stage before releasing her, holding onto her left arm and left leg. Letting her body hang limply from his arms, he gently swings her back and forth as her body barely grazes the floor. After this gentle swinging, he suddenly releases her arm and leg, dropping her to the floor with

little grace. This sudden, forceful drop starkly contrasts with the jailor's gentleness while swinging her. This indicates that while the lift and swing itself appear gentle, the movements still represent an escalation of violence. At the scene's most violent moment, the jailor hoists Manon off the floor and spins her around so that he is turned upstage, blocking her body from view. While Manon resists, the jailor pulls her down to her knees, mimes unbuckling his pants, and rolls his upper body. The body rolls are meant to represent the jailor climaxing while forcing Manon to perform oral sex on him. He releases her violently afterwards. Manon collapses to the floor again as the jailor walks around her menacingly and kicks her. The representations of violence in this scene are explicit, jarring. The depictions of violence are further escalated from sexual violence to murder when des Grieux arrives and kills the jailor at the end of the scene.

Despite these depictions of sexual violence, the ballet depicts Manon as never adopting a traumatic or paranoid disposition. Instead, Manon holds on to her desires. In the final scene, where des Grieux carries the dying Manon through the swamp, Manon dreams of Paris and the life she left behind. Even as des Grieux literally supports her, carrying her through the bog, her desire for her life in Paris endures, calling her towards the life that ultimately led to her ruin. Manon's dreams are not of a utopia: the ballet depicts the same swirling cast of characters that make up her violent world. Manon nonetheless appears cruelly optimistic to her desires that both sustain and destroy her. Lauren Berlant notes that cruel optimism is a method of managing the world's closeness through "the desire to have an impact on it that has some relation to its impact on us" (Berlant, 2011: 12). Berlant contextualizes cruel optimism through a desire to live a "good life," or how one can become attached to or desire something that in turn sustain conventions that might styme or obstruct one's flourishing (Berlant, 2011: 2). This is not to say that cruel optimism is only painful or harmful though. Berlant also notes how desiring something harmful or hindering can be pleasurable, and that resulting pleasure can in turn sustain one's desires (Berlant, 2011: 2). This is where Manon's cruel optimism becomes most apparent: even when she is dying, her desires sustain her through the relative pleasures that they bring her. Manon's desires endure as a means of managing how her world affects her, sustaining her optimistic belief that she can exist within this violence even as they cruelly bring her closer to her death. The ballet's choreography

explores this aesthetically, as Manon physically clings to des Grieux while she sustains herself on her optimistic desires.

Choreographies of repair: non-appropriative touch and ambivalent desires

Through this understanding of Manon's cruel optimism towards her life as a courtesan, I can begin to trace how Manon attempts to use that optimism to repair her relationship with a world that simultaneously sustains and harms her. My articulation of Manon's cruel optimism here is not to exclude how *Manon* also depicts tenderness and care through touch. *Manon* mostly depicts tenderness, intimacy, vulnerability in scenes that feature only Manon and des Grieux. The ballet often juxtaposes scenes where Manon is objectified or harmed with more tender scenes between only Manon and des Grieux. In these more intimate scenes, Manon uses directionality and touch differently than with the other men in the ballet. I want to consider the three pas de deux with Manon and des Griuex to illustrate how *Manon* depicts not only representations of sexual violence but also makes use of non-appropriative and reparative touch as a means of representing forms of tenderness and care. These scenes feature Manon and des Grieux and highlight the various qualities and dimensions of their use of touch, including how it evolves over the course of the ballet. Through close readings of these scenes, I unpack these concepts of non-appropriate and reparative touch and how *Manon* gestures to ways in which reparative touch offers critical dimensions as well.

The first scene I want to examine occurs in the middle of act one, when Manon and des Grieux confess their love to one another. In the act one bedroom pas de deux, des Grieux often chases Manon across the stage. The tete-a-tete here evokes a playful, coy seduction rather than a predatory chase. The choreography here also mirrors this, developing a different kind of tension and release than when Manon dances with the other men in the ballet. As a courtesan, Manon always moves away from her male partners: the flow of the choreography always pulls Manon towards a new partner by pulling her away from another partner. When dancing with des Grieux however, Manon is always moving towards des Grieux, as if magnetized to him. This holds true even when she creates physical distance between them: as if bound together, the couple creates

space between them only to come crashing together again. Even when des Grieux occupies the role of the pursuer, Manon's movements here orient her towards des Grieux, marking a distinct shift from her choreographic relationship to the other men in the ballet. This reflects how Manon also makes a decision to engage or to disengage, and this directionality subverts moments where she lacks bodily autonomy. The choreography here represents the more subversive ways in which Manon orients herself towards her various partners throughout the ballet.

The ballet's choreography dramatizes these intimate moments most explicitly when the two lovers dance together. Throughout the ballet, Manon usually plays a relatively passive role that implies the sexual politics between her and the other men. Usually the men pursue her, and she either does not resist or resists weakly. However, the different directional qualities of her movements in scenes with des Grieux reflects a different kind of tactics at play. By this I do not mean to imply that Manon somehow brings violence upon herself in other scenes. To the contrary, even in scenes where Manon is at her lowest, she remains the moving center for the dance choreographically, demonstrating a degree of self-control over herself as a result. To further illustrate this, I would like to juxtapose the jailor scene with this bedroom pas de deux. In the jailor scene, Manon attempts to flee and the jailor pursues her, reflecting how the directional quality of the choreography always moves Manon away from the jailor. When Manon is in close proximity to the jailor, however, she goes limp and waits for the jailor to move away from her, after which she begins to attempt to flee again. While Manon is also attempting to move away from the jailor during this scene, the quality is more violent. Like captured prey, Manon often chooses to wait passively for the jailor to become disinterested before resuming her escape. During the first bedroom pas de deux with des Grieux, Manon often moves away from des Grieux with the intention that he will pursue her, but the dramatic effect here is different. As I noted previously, these movements resolve with Manon and des Grieux coming together into an embrace or partnered lift. This kind of coming together reflects a more playful and flirtatious encounter, which demonstrates the different sexual dynamics at play between Manon and des Grieux.

Returning to the first bedroom scene with this recognition of how the ballet makes intentional use of directionality, it becomes clearer how *Manon* choreographically

constructs the more vulnerable nature of Manon and des Grieux's relationship. To illustrate this, Manon begins this scene by crossing over to des Grieux to take his pen out of his hands while he attempts to write a letter. After doing this, she bourrees away, her hand trailing up her outstretched arm. Manon, while seeming to glide away from des Grieux, remains turned towards him, waiting for him to chase her. He soon does: he runs towards her, taking her hand as they switch places. Mirroring each other, they continue to grasp hands as they both lift their downstage legs into an arabesque. Manon releases her leg and turns into his arms, her face coming close enough to kiss des Grieux before turning away from him again. She playfully flicks her foot while she does this. These kinds of gestures and movements demonstrate how the choreography here represents the more pleasurable, flirtatious qualities present in the couple's relationship. The fluid movement to and away from each other manages to maintain a singular, unified shape and image despite the dancers remaining physically separate. Grabbing hands again, Manon and des Grieux appear to yo-yo back and forth as they waltz. Each time, Manon comes ever closer to des Grieux as if to kiss him, but she always pulls away just before they can kiss. In this phrase, des Grieux constantly shifts his position relative to hers before coming into an intimate, gently rocking embrace. This rotating, magnetic push-pull between the two lovers ends in a gentle moment of coming together. This choreographed moment of soft embrace demonstrates a tender quality that is not present when Manon dances with other men in the ballet. This push-pull similarly dramatizes Derrida's articulation of ambivalence as hospitality: here Manon both gives and takes space with des Grieux, welcoming him to her not as a stranger but as one who has already made a home in her heart.

Throughout the scene, the choreography constantly pushes and pulls them together and apart as though they were tethered together by an elastic band. Their dancing here often gives the impression of a spontaneous and flirtatious waltz between the two hesitating lovers. After they embrace, Manon and des Grieux continue to dance together playfully. This time, des Grieux offers his hand and leads Manon across the stage, and Manon mimics him, leading des Grieux across the stage in turn. The reciprocity demonstrated in the choreography here clearly illustrates how Manon and des Grieux engage not only in a more tender kind of relationship but also in a more equal one. At a

more intimate moment in their dancing, Manon wraps her foot around des Grieux's extended leg, and she turns towards des Grieux as he holds her waist. From here, Manon, assisted by des Grieux, springs into a panche, landing delicately before des Grieux pulls her back to spring forward again. The choreography remains playful through its continued use of elastic movement qualities here. In this moment though, the elasticity is not in the pulling apart and coming together of the two dancers but in the spring-like dive and catches. This shift in the use of elasticity here demonstrates a level of trust and vulnerability between the two lovers, illustrated through the way the dancers maintain the same qualities of tension and release while working together as one dancing unit. Throughout moments like these, the choreography represents reciprocity and exchange between the two characters that hinges on both the characters' intimacy and the dancers' physical cooperation and skill. These representations of vulnerability within this scene, from playful and spontaneous to intimate and seductive, dramatizes tenderness and intimacy as aesthetic representations of repair.

Tenderness, love, and care, and their tension with anger, hate, and rage, form them a cornerstone for a reparative feminist strategy both critically and artistically. My thinking here echoes trans feminist scholar T. L. Cowan: Cowan argues that politicizing love and jouissance destabilizes the certainty that abolitionist feminisms that lack care and tenderness are better suited for or more able to create radical social change (Cowan, 2014: 508). Writing within the context of performance practice, Cowan argues that using love and tenderness as both a political and an artistic strategy demands that "audiences feel implicated in this tension and feel the potential of rage and love not as irreducible affects but as a full politics" (Cowan, 2014: 508). Love is a "resistance tactic" for Cowan, one where "anger, love, joy, and the erotic" emerge as "transformative sources/sites of power and knowledge" (Cowan, 2014: 509). Cowan's reading of love and tenderness as radically transformative political and artistic practices finds kinship with antiracist feminist scholar Dorinne Kondo's concept of reparative creativity. Kondo argues that reparative creativity is artistic creativity played out in relation to systemic violences and inequalities: "artistic creativity provides productive articulations of redressive outrage" (Kondo, 2018: 32-33). For Kondo, reparative creativity is a kind of worldmaking that undoes and remakes racialized discourse and violences (Kondo, 2018: 209-211). Like

Cowan though, Kondo is careful to express how repair is not utopian; rather, Kondo argues instead that reparative creativity "(re)makes that violence while refusing to romanticize a prelapsarian, pastoral anterior (Kondo, 2018: 212). Kondo argues that reparative creativity is difficult work, one which requires recognizing that repair will always be incomplete and unstable (Kondo, 2018: 54). As Cowan notes though, this difficulty does not make repair less productive politically or artistically; rather, Cowan sees this as the "creative potential" for reparative modes that hold both rage and love in tension (Cowan, 2014: 512). For both Cowan and Kondo, repair enables not just a way of maintaining openness towards a text, as Sedgwick argues, but also a political, artistic, and critical strategy that holds conflicting affective states in productive tension.

Tenderness and love can be further illustrated as a choreographic strategy in *Manon* during moments where the lovers' dancing uses tactile intimacy. After coming apart and running to opposite sides of the floor, the lovers come back together into an embrace before descending slowly to the floor. Here on the floor, des Grieux and Manon appear as one body, as though the collision and resulting embrace has somehow joined the two into one. In these more intimate partnering moments, des Grieux often lifts and carries Manon, supporting her body with his own. As the music crescendos, the two lovers kiss, and des Grieux spins, lifts, and catches Manon as she seems to bounce to and away from him like an elastic band. The choreography mirrors this crescendo, as the tempo increases and the lifts and catches become more daring. Another moment that illustrates this is one where Manon's legs and des Grieux's arms alternate, scissoring through the space around them. In the performance that I saw, Reese Clarke, who danced des Grieux, and Melissa Hamilton seemed almost to become one body in lifts like the one I just described. Even when the dancing becomes more acrobatic, the choreography here never loses its sense of joy or playfulness while continuing to build the feeling of intimacy between the two characters.

These examples that I have noted thus far have focused on the various ways in which the choreography represents the intimate, vulnerable, and reciprocal qualities present when the lovers dance together. The use of touch in this scene however is a crucial choreographic element that I have not examined yet, so I would now like to consider more closely how this scene uses touch. To begin to illustrate this, I want to turn

to a moment where des Grieux and Manon grasp hands so that des Grieux can spin Manon around *en pointe*. In this moment, Manon leans back as des Grieux spins her, drawing clear attention to the dancers' hands in this phrase. Here their touch becomes central both metaphorically and choreographically. The choreography here puts Hamilton's body in a balancing act that appears risky while Clark moves her around. If either of the dancers were to let go, Hamilton would fall. As such, the dancerly skill and care required here reflects how touch is crucial to the success of these steps. From this reading of the skill and labor of the dancers, the choreography reveals on a narrative level how the characters demonstrate a more reciprocal relationship that hinges on how the two characters touch one another. The way des Grieux and Manon support each other's bodies here in this spin turns moments where men life, move, and twirl Manon like an object, repairing the violence of their touch and transforming it into something mutually supportive. How the dancers navigate the riskiness of their partnered dancing through supportive physical touch and weight sharing here uncovers not just how their touch and intimacy is vulnerable-making but also how their touch takes on reparative qualities both narratively and choreographically.

These representations of vulnerable-making touch evoke feminist scholar Penelope Duetscher's reading of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of non-appropriative touch. Deutscher argues that Beauvoir's idea here offers a turn on Jean-Paul Satre's thinking around touch and desire. According to Deutscher, Sartre claims that touch and desire reflect a "complicated game of entrapment" (Deutscher, 2004: 144). Per this view, Sartre claims that one desires another because they want to consume or possess that other through touch, since one's body is the only tangible part of the self that one might attempt to possess (Deutscher, 2004: 143-144). In response to this, Deutscher argues that Beauvoir's concept of non-appropriative touch desires reciprocity instead, drawing from Satre's idea of reciprocal recognition (Deutscher, 2004: 144). Beauvoir argues that reciprocal recognition through touch culminates in the union of two separate bodies who "together in passion assert and deny their boundaries" (Beauvoir, 1988: 422, qtd. in Deutscher, 2004: 145). From this reading, Deutscher argues that the desire to touch another is not a desire to appropriate or control them but rather to recognize and to experience one another's complex desires (Deutscher, 2004: 145). This touch is

ultimately reparative for Deutscher, as the aim of this kind of non-appropriative touch is "being surprised by, rather than possessing, objects and others" (Deutscher, 2004: 146). Deutscher's reading of non-appropriative touch means that touch can be both a way of coming to know others through the surface boundary of the skin and a way of coming to know one's subjective understanding of the world (Deutscher, 2004: 146). I read Deutscher here as arguing how one might come to know both oneself and another through reparative touch.

Within my reading of *Manon*, Deutscher's attention to reparative touch conceptually illustrates how the ballet deploys reparative touch choreographically, which can be seen most clearly in scenes where des Grieux and Manon dance together. In the bedroom scene that I have examined thus far, the couple's use of touch takes on a similarly non-appropriative dimension that aligns with Deutscher's reading of Beauvoir. Unlike in scenes where various male characters attempt to possess or to assault Manon's body, scenes with only Manon and des Grieux often use touch as means of bringing the two lovers together. As I previously noted, there is a reciprocity in their dancing here that other scenes lack. The lovers either alternate or repeat each other's movements in this scene, and their moments of coming together usually culminate in moments of tender or intimate touch, like an embrace, a kiss, or holding hands. There is a sense of becoming one or uniting in these moments, such as where the two lovers end in an embrace after leaping across the stage to one another. This starkly contrasts the kinds of touch used in scenes like the jailor scene. Even in seemingly gentle moments like where the jailor swings Manon, there is a quality of delayed or impending violence rather than reciprocity. In the jailor's swinging, there is a sense of possession: Manon hangs limply like a ragdoll while the jailor manipulates her body through the air. Conversely, the phrase where des Grieux spins Manon around *en pointe* is similarly precarious and requires the same level of dancerly skill and care. In this phrase though, the use of touch here demonstrates a more equitable, reciprocal quality that both brings the couple together and reaffirms their separateness, using the skin here as a surface boundary. Coming together at this haptic boundary in turn alters the narrative meaning behind these scenes. In the jailor's swinging lift, he grasps Manon by the limbs so that she cannot touch him in return, making his touch feel rough, aggressive, and possessive. Alternately,

des Grieux and Manon grasp hands when he spins her, so the touch feels more equal and mutual as a result. Even though both dancers are in complete control during both scenes, holding hands represents a more mutual gesture that narratively speaks to the couple's more tender, equitable romance.

From this understanding of how *Manon*'s choreography utilizes non-appropriative touch in the first bedroom scene, I would now like to turn to the second bedroom pas de deux to consider how that non-appropriative touch evolves to become more overtly reparative. This second bedroom scene occurs towards the end of act two, when Manon and des Grieux are trying to escape Paris. Manon's desires come into conflict here most overtly. In the first bedroom scene, there is a level of innocence to the choreography; unlike in this scene, there is no element of impending danger in the previous bedroom scene. The narrative tension in this second bedroom scene offers an opportunity to consider a slight turn to their physical dynamic that reveals the reparative dimensions of non-appropriative touch. There is a crucial plot moment in this scene where des Grieux asks Manon to remove a bracelet that she is still wearing. The bracelet was a gift from Monsieur GM and therefore evidence of Manon's sex work, so des Grieux asks her to leave it behind. Manon refuses to remove the bracelet though; its glittering opulence seems to bewitch her. Despite how narrowly the lovers have succeeded in their plans to escape together up to this point in the story, Manon remains unable to willingly discard her pursuit of wealth. While the scene up to this moment is playful, evoking much of the same tone as the previous bedroom scene, the moment where des Grieux grabs Manon's wrist signifies a shift in tone. When des Grieux holds aloft Manon's gilded wrist, drawing the audience's attention to the bracelet, the joy evaporates from the scene. Manon refuses to remove the bracelet and begins to create distance between them. Her arm movements constantly put the bracelet within her eyesight, as if it is all that she can now see. The bracelet's spell has cast a rift between the lovers: Manon's choreography here marks a clear shift away from des Grieux and towards the bracelet.

After this phrase however, there is another turn that reveals the reparative dimensions of the lovers' touch, one that gestures to how tender, supportive touch repairs Manon's cruel optimism. This restoration through touch ultimately represents a reparative gesture that reframes Manon's cruel optimism as not sustaining but as

sustained through her dependence on tenderness, care, and supportive touch with des Grieux. To illustrate this, I turn to my reading of this sequence. Manon moves away from des Grieux, but des Grieux instead forcibly pulls her back into his embrace. As if trying to break the spell, des Grieux turns his attention to removing Manon's bracelet while she attempts to evade his touch. At the height of this struggle, des Grieux grabs Manon's wrist and rips off her bracelet. This grasp culminates in a lift and catch that sends Manon to the ground before coming back into an embrace with des Grieux. The touch between Manon and des Grieux here represents a desperate physical struggle, completely unlike the playful flirting in the previous bedroom scene. The choreography here represents Manon's cruel optimism towards her two desires: her life of luxury and her love of des Grieux. In the end though, des Grieux's touch brings the couple back together again, made evident in how their catch and lift end in an embrace. While des Grieux touch at first places Manon into a precarious bodily position that could signify a breakdown in their tenderness and intimacy, the phrase instead resolves in an embrace. The embrace here forms a moment of repair through touch: the embrace becomes a moment of (re)union that restores the lovers' intimate physical relations, one that sustains Manon by keeping her from hitting the ground, while drawing her away from her dependence on her cruel optimism for a life of luxury as a courtesan.

This reparative touch becomes overtly life-giving again at the end of the ballet, as it attempts to keep Manon alive during the final scene. I previously examined this scene as a moment where Manon was sustained by her cruel optimism. However, I now want to turn this reading slightly to emphasis how Manon's physical intimacy and tender touch with des Grieux repairs and remakes her dependence on those cruel optimisms. In this final scene with the two lovers, Manon dies of illness in the swamp while des Grieux holds her in his arms. Throughout this scene, des Grieux lifts and catches Manon, but these partnered movements lack the elastic qualities that they possessed in the bedroom scenes. Instead des Grieux's catches become a form of bodily support for Manon, who has become so ill that she cannot stand on her own. These movements also directly contrast the jailor scene that precedes this: here des Grieux's lifts and catches support her body weight and often prevent her from falling to the floor. This can be most clearly illustrated in moments where Manon appears to be falling towards the floor, as though she no longer

has the will to stand. Before she can hit the ground though, des Grieux swoops in to catch her, often throwing her into the air in turn. The illusion here represents how des Grieux attempts to resuscitate Manon with his touch while also supporting and protecting her body from further harm. Touch here becomes demonstrably life-giving and sustaining; des Grieux uses touch and his own bodily kinetics to sustain Manon, keeping her in motion to keep her alive.

This life-giving, reparative touch and bodily support does not ultimately sway Manon from her cruelly optimistic attachments to her competing desires though. Instead, this final scene reveals how the tension between Manon's desires continues to underpin her underlying internal conflict. While the touch between her and des Grieux literally sustains her life, she continues to dream of the world that has led to her demise. While this internal conflict evokes the tragedy in the ballet's narrative, it also demonstrates how touch sustains both Manon's life and her ambivalence towards her own cruel optimisms, those competing desires that both rejuvenate and destroy her. Manon's ambivalence juxtaposed with her surrender to reparative touch places both the potential for harm and the potential for repair within the same locus of the lived, material body. The way Manon ambivalently navigates these two conflicting desires places their presumed dichotomy into question: Manon's cruel optimisms sustain her despite their destructive results, and yet her love and tenderness for des Grieux enable her to repair those violences and to remake them into more hopeful imaginaries. Even though representations of sexual violence and exploitation are common in *Manon*, the ballet nonetheless manages to create opportunities for representations of surprise, repair, and even love while placing them in tension with those same violences. These moments of repair often renew or revive Manon, offering respite from the more violent forces at play throughout the ballet's plot. Reparative touch does not shield Manon from harm; rather, reparative touch sustains Manon's cruelly optimistic desires, which allows her to engage with both what is harmful and what is life-giving within her world. These sustaining moments of repair often emerge in the ballet during moments where Manon surrenders to des Grieux's non-appropriate touch, allowing them to come to know each other's desires. This means that the reparative touch here does not remove her cruel optimisms but instead sustains her ability to desire both that which harms her and that which sustains her.

Reparative touch materializes in this reading as a haptic means of coming to know one's desires, even ones that might be cruel or destructive, throughout the ballet both narratively and choreographically. By this I mean that the choreography both uses and misuses touch to actualize or to sustain one's desires rather than control, remove, or redirect them. One's skin acts here as a kind of soft border where one recognizes or comes to know one's desires through touch. Flowing between soft borders like skin offers a sustaining haptic connection that evokes dancerly ideas of dynamic flow[14] and corporeal matching[15]. Reparative touch can be understood as what Maxine Sheets-Johnstone defines as a dynamic line, or "an ongoing projection of forces from a beginning point" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 71). Touch becomes that beginning point from which one both projects the force of one's desires and comes to know the desires of another. This projection of various desires reflects both kinaesthetic and aesthetic resonances that are corporealized through this material, tactile point of contact. As the starting point in a projection of the affective force of one's desires, touch and later movement both illuminate and obscure who is the mover and who is moved. This means that the one who touches another is both impressed upon by another's desires while simultaneously pressing their desires onto that other. Surrendering to touch materializes these resonances and in turn creates dynamic lines that are sustained through contact with soft borders like the skin.

Touch and critical passivity: figuring an ambivalent ballerina

[14] Maxine Sheets-Johnstone articulates dynamic flow as "the way forces are released, checked, attenuated, solidified, diffused...the very specific qualitative organization of force" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 67). Dynamic flow might be contextualized not only as the organization of movement in dance but also as the way in which movement thinks. This evokes how Sheets-Johnstone also argues that "thinking is itself, by its very nature, kinetic. It moves forward, backward, digressively, quickly, slowly, narrowly, suddenly, hesitantly, blindly, confusedly, penetratingly" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011: 421). The rhizomatic qualities of both movement and thinking blend and overlap through this term.

[15] Sondra Fraleigh coins this term to express how one might formulate a relationship between body and self in dance, articulating corporeal matching as an act of "affirming the body as it is, rather than wishing it to be otherwise" (Fraleigh, 2004: 182). This mirrors Deutscher's reading of reparative touch, drawing attention to how touch recognizes and brings together separate desires through reciprocity rather than possession.

Understood through this locus of reparative touch, ambivalence emerges for me as an affective orientation towards desire. From this recognition of ambivalence through reparative touch, I might now consider how this reading informs my emergent theory of critical passivity. To unpack my thinking here, I want to consider how Manon's ambivalence reflects an affective disposition through which she navigates her orientation towards her desires. This reading of ambivalence as an affective disposition that orients one's desires directly informs how I might theorize critical passivity as an ambivalent critical disposition. By this I mean that critical passivity might similarly reflect how one might utilize ambivalence to reorient one's critical attentions or investments. Much like Manon, one's affective qualities might be understood as sustaining or diminishing one's desires. These desires may be critical investments as well as personal or political investments: one's critical investments are necessarily bound up in one's being-in-the-world-ness. Ambivalence becomes a kind of affective compass that orients oneself towards these various desires. Ambivalence allows one to maintain desires that may seem contradictory or opposed, much like Manon does over the course of the ballet. However, these desires are nonetheless born from a lived, material body that will eventually encounter the desires of other bodies. These desires that one might encounter may be similar to or in conflict with one's own desires. Ambivalence alone cannot be one's sole way finder. Reparative touch becomes a method of navigating one's contact with others' desires and investments that manages how one engages with other's desires. Reparative touch constitutes a material and affective gesture through which one comes to know or comes to recognize how one is affected by and in turn how one orients towards others' desires. As the choreography in *Manon* illustrates, reparative touch formulates a means through which one might come to know one or another's both life-giving and destructive desires and determine how one might orient oneself towards those desires in turn.

Reading choreographically articulates how one might translate across various modes of thinking and feeling while also recognizing how bodies are constantly affected by not just other bodies but also concepts and practices. These dynamic qualities of ambivalence and reparative touch still only capture part of how one might understand critical passivity as an ambivalent critical disposition. To further ponder how critical

passivity materializes as an ambivalent critical disposition, I also want to consider how coming to knowing through watching and reading might be mapped onto the material body. Gotman argues that choreography is not solely the study of dance composition but also "the very notion of bodies--books, pens, people--carrying this form, translating and further transforming it" (Gotman, 2018a: 3). This reading of choreography marks how the affective logics of being moved might be mapped onto thinking, feeling bodies. I use the phrase "being moved" here as an intentional play on words: to be moved might imply being affected, being overwhelmed, or being cared for, as well as being physically displaced or relocated. This also means that one might think of how bodies carry concepts or practices with them, or how concepts or practices necessarily embody the bodies that create them. Attending to the links between bodies, concepts, and practices in this way becomes a means of recognizing how these links touch or affect one's own thinking, feeling, and doing.

I can directly apply these affective logics onto my reading of *Manon* when I map these moving, dancing bodies. This further illuminates my thinking around critical passivity and ambivalence in this chapter, particularly with regards to how critical passivity attends to forms of reparative touch and being moved or affected. Reading Manon choreographically, I can notice how her character is figured both materially and metaphorically through the dancing body. As an aesthetic construction, Manon and her affective qualities can be understood as immaterial figurations; however, these immaterial figurations remain material since they are made bodily through the dancer's lived, material body. By this I mean that the character of Manon is an aesthetic figuration foremost: her qualities are performed by a dancer to generate feelings and sensations in a viewer. Performance generates affective resonances within one's body, which one comes to know through the ways performance touches its audience. This means that a dancer's movements are also aesthetically conceived to create these affective resonances within a viewer. While the affective resonances *Manon* creates are not universal across an entire audience, they are still felt on a local, bodily level. These resonances are intangible, but they nonetheless materialize for me as a viewer within my own body, making them feel both kinaesthetically and materially close. This affective

materialization within my own body occurs because a dancer uses her body to construct and to convey these affective resonances to me as a viewer.

What I am getting at here is that I am touched by Manon and her dancing. While that touch may be partially metaphoric, it is also affective: the performance's touch makes me come to know how or what I am feeling when I am watching it. When I surrender to those feelings, I begin to recognize my desires and perhaps even find opportunities to feel new feelings. Even though those affects spectralize and remain immaterial, they become both material and tangible to me when the dancing touches me. These immaterial touches ultimately figure within me something that I as the viewer feel or sense kinaesthetically when I encounter a dancer's aesthetically-conceived body in movement. Sometimes these resonances make me feel as though I am moving along with the dancers, as if I have become Manon, as if I am the one throwing my dying body into the arms of my lover. Like Manon, these feelings make me want to maintain the dream world a little longer. Manon in this sense functions like a felt personhood: she is not quite me but remains imbued with my bodily feelings and sensations. She is not quite material, but she is fleshed out by the dancer who inhabits the character. This felt personhood draws me materially into the dance and asks me to surrender to those feelings that the dancer desires for me to feel through her dancing. Surrendering to those feelings may even make me recognize desires I had not previously noticed until I watched this performance, may even give me the opportunity to feel new feelings.

I realize that my thinking here could be read as a conceptualization of kinaesthetic empathy, so I want to dwell on that for a moment before I return to thinking about critical passivity. While there is some debate surrounding the term, scholars like Susan Leigh Foster argue that kinaesthetic empathy gestures to dance's aesthetic potential to generate feelings in an audience (Foster, 2011: 561). Viewing a dancer's body as aesthetically conceived and designed recognizes dance's intelligence as an artistic and aesthetic form. Foster proposes that "the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt" (Foster, 2011: 561). Per Foster's view, choreography functions as a "hypothetical setting forth of what the body is and what it can be" (Foster, 2011: 34). This leads Foster to argue that choreographic aesthetics can "dramatize how the connectedness among bodies can develop" (Foster,

2011: 561). This desire to feel or touch dance to develop connections between bodies evokes my thinking around reparative, non-appropriative touch as well. From this reading, reparative touch transpires between myself and dance through my affective, sensuous experience of an aesthetically conceived dancing body. In the case of *Manon*, this dancing body is both material and immaterial, as it reflects both a lived, dancing body and an immaterial, affective figuration dramatized through a character. Manon emerges not as a singular lived body but as an affective, choreographic figuration. This felt, choreopoetic body draws me, the reader-viewer, towards new feelings and desires. I am moved by the character, who is moved by a dancer, who moves according to the choreography: this constellation of affective and kinetic movements constitute dance's dynamic, moving aesthetics.

Manon manifests most clearly as an affective yet material figuration of an ambivalent ballerina. Manon remains immaterial since she is a kind of affective spectre; she haunts the affective spacetime between me and the dancers as both material and metaphor. Through this haunting, this spectral figuration of a ballerina, a figuration of critical passivity coporealizes. This figuration offers moments of affective surrender through reparative touch: as the reader, I come to know my feelings and desires through the ways the performance touches me. This figuration is necessarily ambivalent as well, allowing one to move between various desires or investments as one encounters them. This figuration of an ambivalent ballerina touches and moves these affective resonances to offer new feelings and relations in turn. One surrenders to the dancer's touch to articulate and to sustain those new feelings. This surrender similarly evokes how Helene Cixous argues that being overwhelmed is not an affective position of self-absorption but rather a position of love (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003: 17). Surrendering to reparative touch becomes a kind of careful orientation navigated through one's passive engagement with another's touch. There are both spatial and temporal qualities to this surrender, dancerly qualities such as tempo, weight, balance, and velocity (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 67). As a careful, ambivalent orientation, critical passivity figures one's disposition towards various desires by maintaining soft borders with these affective figurations. This is not to say that a commitment to soft borders relies solely on circumstance or external force. Critical passivity actively orients one's attention, which allows one to notice both

what one touches and how one is touched. Orienting towards affective, tactile relations ultimately sustain one's investments through one's ability to notice these figurations of feeling and thought.

Touch here also carries aesthetic implications for performance. This means that maintaining soft borders might also translate to aesthetic or symbolic expressions of feeling in performance. To paraphrase Sheets-Johnstone, dance can be considered as a dynamic organization of symbolic expressions (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 68). This means that a dancer's use of touch has been conceived aesthetically. Partnered dancing also reflects this, demonstrating how the dancers perform both physical and emotional labour while dancing. The dancers carefully manage these forms of labor, and any attenuations or amplifications are determined implicitly through the ways dancers navigate one another's bodies in space. Even when one dancer supports or moves another, the dancers constantly navigate the active, concentrated labor required to maintain those positions. As the two dancers work together to achieve these symbolic expressions of feeling, touch emerges as a means of recognizing how one generates these resonances through the aesthetics of dance. The careful navigation of and attention to the aesthetic use of touch makes explicit the distinctions between the dancer's discreet, lived bodies and the affective resonances performance generates. I see this distinction as informing how I might attend to how a dancer might use touch when dancing through critical passivity.

One must carefully manage how one touches another's soft borders. A ballerina does not lose herself in the flow of the dance but rather is implicitly aware of how she touches another, which includes an aesthetic relationship to form (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 3). As Sheets-Johnstone argues, dancers are "not agents of the form, but its moving center" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 3). As the consideration of the shape and form of how one touches someone or something, critical passivity carefully attends to or manages how one utilizes touch. This means that who touches and who is touched must be negotiated with care, even when distinctions between self/other and subject/object are in flux. This similarly evokes how Sheets-Johnstone argues that dance creates "a unique interplay of fluid, ever-changing forces, a dynamic and cohesive flow of energy" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015: 3). This dynamic interplay has implications for critical passivity too. Critical passivity must engage with the interplay of touch and surrender to touch as well;

therefore, critical passivity becomes a form of careful activity that negotiates physical and affective acts of touching or being touched. This means that critical passivity must remain ambivalent to accommodate for this fluid interplay and exchange.

To return this thinking to my reading of *Manon*, I want to consider once more how critical passivity attends to the use of reparative touch in the ballet. The lover's relationship highlights touch's reparative and potentially life-sustaining qualities. This use of touch starts with the playful, elastic partnering in the first bedroom scene, moves through their struggle and ultimate reconciliation through touch in the second bedroom scene, and ultimately culminates in their attempts to keep one another alive through touch in the final scene. In her dying moments, Manon is literally kept alive through des Grieux's touch. Hamilton, the ballerina, is not without movement in this scene: she still extends her legs or arms, still engages her muscles. A viewer only passively feels these physical labors; they remain immaterial but are ultimately felt as affective resonances. When she finally dies, Manon leaps into des Grieux's arms for a final catch and lift, only this time she lands in des Grieux's arms limp, dead. This final catch and lift become a fitting choreographic metaphor for how critical passivity might orient towards reparative touch: she leaps, dying, into his arms, in the hopes that this touch might sustain her a little longer, might keep her and her desires alive, even through death.

Critical passivity constitutes an ambivalent, moving disposition that arrives from one's affective, tactile contact with another's soft borders. Refusing to become entrenched in one position allows one to be moved into another position. Critical passivity maps not the end of one's affective engagement but the beginning of a projection of forces that may in turn produce new feelings. This gestures in turn to Cowan's articulation of love as a resistance tactic and Kondo's concept of reparative creativity: in the tensions between love, joy, tenderness, anger, rage, and harm, one's creative, critical, and political lives become fuller as they take on a wider array of affective dimensions. Keeping oneself open to those tensions enables new feelings and new desires, ones which may have never been noticed or desired before, maybe even ones that are harmful or bring harm to oneself. From my reading of *Manon* though, I can see how it is not the cruelly optimistic way in which one desires that sustains life but rather the potential to have a full affective life that allows one to desire and to feel, even if those

feelings or desires are cruel. Perhaps I might desire what is bad or harmful for me—perhaps that desire will make me feel good even—and yet, it is through the full affective engagement with those feelings that I can begin to imagine fuller, more hopeful political, artistic, and critical worlds. The reparative qualities of tenderness, care, and love allow one to begin to feel again and in turn allow one to imagine those new feelings as new, more politically and critically full feminist worlds.

Critical edgework

Bluebeard, emotional risk, and feeling again

Preface

My friend and I were lucky to witness the open rehearsal for Tanztheater Wuppertal's *Bluebeard* the night before the company premiered it to the public. I say lucky because we were informed before the rehearsal started that the company had only just arrived in the country due to severe weather that had delayed their travel. A voice boomed over the microphone as we sat there. The voice told us that the company had been worried that they wouldn't make it at all. This rehearsal that we were to witness, or so we were told, was to be the first rehearsal the company had in the theatre. We were promised that the dancers were tired but wanting to give it their all. We were told there might be small mishaps along the way. The voice informed us that the production team might have to work out unforeseen issues that emerged while we watched the rehearsal. It was a strange feeling that emerged within me. I was among the first to witness this infamous piece premiering in the UK finally, and the show was going to be a bit messy. Tonight was going to be imperfect, and that fact thrilled and terrified me.

After the performance, my friend and I ended up at the same pub as all the dancers, totally by coincidence. Even though our individual affective experiences of the rehearsal were unique, it felt as though we had been bound together somehow. Somehow, we all found ourselves in the same space together not once but twice, perhaps against all odds even considering the dancers' disrupted travel. We shared our precarious inhabitation of the pub, another space we collectively haunted. I find myself returning to these moments of connection as a means of understanding those ghosts. The night is incomplete without the people, without seeing the crowded pub full of bodies. I cannot put into words the difficult feelings that the performance dragged out of me that night, cannot trap those affects within these lines. What comes to me instead is the noisiness of the bar and how the dancers brushed and bumped into me as they tried to get their

drinks. I can still sense the awkward glances that we accidentally shared, passing between us like whispers. I doubt they knew who I was or why I was there. How could they possibly know that their dancing had made me cry in that darkened theatre just a short while ago?

So instead I imagine these corporeal collisions with the dancers as a way of remembering those feelings, even as those memories slip from my reach. These bumps, laughs, glances, and feelings all commingle in my memory to create a kind of choreography for that night. This choreography could never be captured through a close reading of the discrete time of the performance itself. These touches and feelings nonetheless reappear as the paratext that populates my memory of that night. I cannot talk postmortem about those feelings, without recognizing how they follow me, how they surround my experience of that rehearsal. Maybe it is truly impossible to contain within this bundle of words the full affective impact of these small moments. So instead I think of drinking at the pub that night, wordlessly toasting to those affective resonances that haunt me. I can now see that I have scattered the remains of these memories into that cold February night. I only wish I knew now where they have gone.

Introduction

This chapter examines my reading of Tanztheater Wuppertal's *Bluebeard, or While Listening to a Tape Recording of Béla Bartók's "Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. The performance that I watched was an open rehearsal prior to its UK premiere; however, I treat this rehearsal like the other performances I read since my experience as a viewer was the same. In my previous reading of *Manon*, I considered forms of non-appropriative touch and how an ambivalent disposition might allow one to encounter these touches as reparative. As my preface for this chapter indicates though, I want to consider what happens when that contact becomes painful, difficult, or too close for comfort. This leads me to pose new questions around material, affective, and critical boundaries. What is risky about encountering difficult or painful artworks, and how does this affect my thinking and reading? What is risky or difficult about one's studies, and how does one come to know those boundaries? What does it mean to be close to one's studies, and how

does one manage the proximity of that contact? What happens when art or theory crosses my boundaries? Throughout this chapter, I consider how critical passivity might rethink the experience of having one's boundaries crossed as pleasurable or even desirable. I call this "critical edgework," or the ability to risk playing with the edges of one's thinking.

I read *Bluebeard* in this chapter so that I might theorize how I might risk taking joy or pleasure in being close to my thinking and reading. To uncover this, I consider the empathic, material relationship between myself, the dancers, and Pina Bausch's choreography. This raises more questions: what kinds of empathetic relations arise when one reads dance with a critically passive disposition? What does close reading ask one to risk emotionally, and how might critical passivity offer an approach to navigating that emotional risk? Throughout this chapter, I consider these questions among others to notice how critical passivity might reframe or refigure how one might approach what is emotionally risky about critical practices. To this aim, I draw upon Stacy Newmahr's concept of emotional edgework to articulate how one might take pleasure in playing with emotional risk. I attend to close reading in this way to uncover how one senses or touches what a viewer risks emotionally when watching performance. This further uncovers how critical passivity cultivates a particular disposition or set of investments towards how one manages emotional risk when one does a close reading of performance, drawing relations between emotional risk and critical risk-taking.

Throughout my close reading, I once again deploy various conventional modes of close reading with regards to dance as an art form. This includes methods such as choreographic analysis and thematic analysis. My reading also considers affective materials that exceed or surround the discrete time and space within which this performance of *Bluebeard* exists. I observe how the dancers' and Bausch's choreographic choices carefully and skillfully generate affective intensities which I as the viewer experience as sensuous bodily experiences. I consider how these choreographic and dancerly choices alter or impact my critical thinking around *Bluebeard* in turn. Through my reading of the affective impact of choreographic choices like repetition, duration, and tempo, I examine how *Bluebeard* plays with a viewer's emotional limits. This examination leads me to consider further how a viewer might submit to the affective intensities that performance carefully and skillfully crafts within a viewer. This reading leads me to

ponder how submitting to having one's emotional boundaries transgressed generates an affective space-time that both compresses and drags my affective experience of the performance. I theorize this elongation and compression of time through exhaustion. I draw upon Elizabeth Freeman's concept of temporal drag and Kélina Gotman's concept of anaesthesis to illustrate my thinking around the affective and material dimensions of exhaustion. Examining exhaustion in this way allows me to consider further the critical and political implications of exhaustion and what affective registers might result from exhaustion. Exhaustion emerges in my reading as a means of conceptualizing some of the qualities of one's affective submission, including how exhaustion might engender one to feel again. These notions of new feelings or "feeling again" become a recurring consideration throughout this chapter as I consider how critical passivity enables or requires an investment in the desire to feel again.

Through this reading of exhaustion, I consider the empathetic dimensions of the affective relationship that emerges between me and the performance. I articulate this empathetic relationship through kinaesthetic empathy to consider how one's material, bodily encounter with affective transmission alters or informs how one comes to knowing. Previously, I have considered kinaesthetic empathy as an articulation of how the aesthetics of dance moves or touches a viewer into thinking and feeling. In this chapter though, I expand on this notion, drawing upon the thinking of both Susan Leigh Foster and Dee Reynold to conceptualize more fully how kinaesthetic empathy illustrates the bodily and sensual dimensions of one's empathetic relationship with art. I similarly consider Erin Manning's concept of a relationscape to consider the spatial and temporal dimensions of these empathetic relations. I offer critical passivity as a means of attending to these affective space-times within one's close readings through a reorientation towards one's material, sensuous encounter with these topographies of feeling and thinking. This thinking around critical passivity similarly engenders reparative forms of criticism that enjoy risking slow, sensual encounters with these affective space-times. I consider Freeman's concept of erotohistoriography and Ben Davies' thinking around slow reading to ponder how lingering with or spending time with these affective resonances reframes how one might engage reparatively with one's close reading practices. Through this attention to the temporality and proximity of close reading, I

contend that critical passivity offers a reparative approach to close reading that allows one to take pleasure in one's slow, sensuous encounters with the affective space-times of one's objects of study.

Negotiating emotional risk: perceptions of harm and emotional edgework

Bluebeard can be described as a controversial work of art. The piece was pulled from Tanztheatre Wuppertal's repertoire for a long time due to a combination of revoked music rights and negative audience reactions to the performance's depictions of violence against women. Only after Pina Bausch's death has *Bluebeard* finally made its way to the UK for its first official premiere. *Bluebeard* can be arresting and difficult to watch at times, though one could argue that this is a trait common to Bausch's oeuvre. As Bausch scholar Royd Climenhaga has noted, Bausch's body of work is often characterized by moody, expressive choreography and disturbing imagery (Climenhaga, 2009: 13). Climenhaga argues that Bausch's choreography can be described as evocative and dramatic; according to Climenhaga, Bausch's choreography often "relied on metaphor and setting as extensions of feeling and character" (Climenhaga, 2009: 13). *Bluebeard* similarly deploys these qualities that Climenhaga describes as a "visceral aesthetic" (Climenhaga, 2009: 16). As Climenhaga observes, the intention behind the intense and moody aesthetics of Bausch's work can be understood as a means of revealing the affective dimensions of her characters' inner lives. Climenhaga argues that her choreography ultimately "serves the purpose of laying bare the inner dimensions of character and relationship" (Climenhaga, 2009: 16). For example, Climenhaga describes Bluebeard, the titular male character, through his affective relationship with the other theatrical elements of the performance, such as the opera music that constitutes the performance's sonic landscape. Climenhaga argues that Bluebeard can be read as involved in a "violent collaboration against the other characters who are trapped on stage," (Climenhaga, 2009: 16). Throughout the whole of the performance, the choreography in *Bluebeard* makes use of these intense, visceral images and theatrical elements to represent Bluebeard's

internal emotional life, which includes how the character relates physically to other characters throughout the piece.

To illustrate this, I want to turn to a sequence with the character Judith, Bluebeard's wife, and Bluebeard. In this sequence, Bluebeard has Judith's head forced down between his legs while he remains seated at a record player. While Judith's head is held down, she reaches her hand up to Bluebeard, which he forces down. This repeats over and over, increasing in speed and desperation as Judith reaches for him but is always denied. As Climenhaga observes, the movement becomes so frenetic that one might worry for the safety of the dancers (Climenhaga, 2009: 17). However, the movement stops when it reaches its most frantic. After a moment's pause, Judith resumes. Dance critic Deborah Jowitt characterizes the imagery here as "bleak, violent, and decadent" (Jowitt, 2013: 137). Jowitt reads this sequence with Judith and Bluebeard as depicting the denial of intimate connection. To illustrate this, Jowitt argues that choreography here generates feelings of preoccupation and isolation (Jowitt, 2013: 138). Jowitt further examines how this sequence deconstructs Judith's tender gesture with Bluebeard's violent gestures. Jowitt describes Judith's denied tenderness and Bluebeard's violence as illustrative of how the characters "move farther away from their original status as expressions of devotion and rejection" (Jowitt, 2013: 137). By this, Jowitt argues that both Judith and Bluebeard's gestures dissolve to the point that "the performers don't seem to own them anymore" (Jowitt, 2013: 137). According to Jowitt's reading, the breakdown between the characters and their choreographed gestures deconstructs both the desire for tenderness and violence, replacing them not with a sense of comfort but rather feelings of alienation, isolation, and neglect.

Both Climenhaga and Jowitt's readings here demonstrate how the affective intensities of Bausch's choreography, particularly its violent imagery, evoke carefully crafted emotions within a viewer. Much like Climenhaga or Jowitt, I would describe the experience of watching *Bluebeard* as difficult or uncomfortable. However, I think that perhaps this characterization does not fully capture the skill and craft behind Bausch's choreography. To illustrate this, Climenhaga argues that Bausch's choreography often seeks to stir within an audience the "raw emotion underneath" (Climenhaga, 2009: 17). Climenhaga's reading here gestures towards how Bausch's aesthetics make use of

violent, intense, or disturbing imagery to intentionally curate particularly strong feelings or reactions from an audience (Climenhaga, 2009: 17). This means that *Bluebeard*'s visceral intensity is one of the choreography's intended affective qualities. Climenhaga further notes that the choreography in *Bluebeard* constitutes only a representation of violence that intends to draw the viewer into the affective world of the performance. I want to echo Climenhaga's thinking here: I found myself drawn closer to the performance because of the intensity of the images and movements that were presented to me. Climenhaga claims that Bausch's choreography is so visceral precisely because "the performer herself is perceived to be at risk in some way (although the action is carefully developed in rehearsal to minimize actual danger)" (Climenhaga, 2009: 17). While the images in *Bluebeard* appear violent or difficult to watch, this is a theatrical illusion. As Climenhaga observes, the dancers rehearse and hone their skills to carefully manage the actual risk of harm. The dancers' labor enables a viewer to suspend her anxiety that a dancer might be harmed so that one might potentially take pleasure in the fantasy of escalating risk.

This negotiation of risk and the perception of harm for pleasure echoes feminist scholar Stacy Newmahr's concept of emotional edgework. Newmahr's concept arrives through her research into feminist approaches to BDSM practices. Newmahr defines edgeplay as a variety of BDSM practices that actively negotiate internal boundaries surrounding risk, harm, and pleasure during sex (Newmahr, 2011: 147). For Newmahr, these internal boundaries include negotiating both emotional and philosophical boundaries such as "consent and nonconsent, consciousness and unconsciousness, ethical and unethical, temporary versus permanent, and life and death" (Newmahr, 2011: 147). While examining edgeplay practices, Newmahr observes that those who engage in edgeplay often wish to challenge received notions of what kinds of sexual activity might be safe or unsafe (Newmahr, 2011: 147-149). Newmahr's reading here also includes moments where dominant sexual partners may intentionally challenge or overstep negotiated limits with their partners (Newmahr, 2011: 147-149). However, Newmahr also observes that these practices are not reckless but rather carefully managed since they depend on high levels of trust between sexual partners (Newmahr, 2011: 150). This means that edgeplay makes use of the perception of harm rather than actual harm, and

this perception is ultimately achieved through the "continual ramping-up of risk" (Newmahr, 2011: 150).

To illustrate this, Newmahr examines an edgeplay scene where she recognizes how the dominant partner is "clearly skilled" (Newmahr, 2011: 153). Interestingly though, Newmahr also examines how the onlookers who are not directly participating seemed the most disturbed by the edgeplaying scene (Newmahr, 2011: 153). To account for these intrasocial boundaries, Newmahr argues for a feminist concept of edgeplay that negotiates the affective dimensions of these socially-agreed boundaries between harm and safety, which Newmahr calls "emotional edgework" (Newmahr, 2011: 160). Through this concept, Newmahr insists on the important element of trust present in these relationships, as trust allows one to voluntarily risk the lack of control over one's own bodily and emotional boundaries. Newmahr contends that emotional edgework "exists on and for the edges of what people should and should not feel in given situations" (Newmahr, 2011: 163). Newmahr posits that emotional edgework has the potential to be transgressive as well, since it allows one to stretch one's emotional limits or cross boundaries between control and chaos (Newmahr, 2011: 164). Ultimately, Newmahr offers emotional edgework as a practice of recognizing and negotiating the risk present in emotional experiences, regardless of whether one transgresses or reaffirms socially-determined affective and bodily limits (Newmahr, 2011: 163). Newmahr's framework articulates for me a feminist way of knowing and navigating risk and its affective dimensions, one which creates space for an orientation towards risk in relation to affective and bodily limits. This in turn enables me to reframe risk and edgework both as dimensions of affective, material encounters with dance and as feminist ways of knowing and navigating material, affective, and perhaps even critical boundaries.

To illustrate this through *Bluebeard*, I want to consider a particular moment to explore how Newmahr's concept of emotional edgework offers a feminist way of knowing, navigating, and caring for various material, affective, and critical boundaries. In a sequence where the dancers run across the stage and slam into the walls violently, the sequence ends with the men falling to the floor in a heap while the women remain standing. The women pull and drag the fallen men by their legs or ankles across the leave-strewn ground over and over. While the dancers appear to risk physically harming their

bodies here, the risk of harm is only a carefully managed illusion. The perception of risk emerges again here as a spectacle that is meant to evoke strong feelings in a viewer and never materializes as actual harm to any of the dancers. Some dance scholars like Judith Mackrell argue that this perceived risk of harm is a "pornography of pain" that is ultimately "cheap and inaccurate" (Mackrell, 2013: 57). Mackrell's reading of the choreography here draws to mind though how Newmahr observed how those viewers who watched edgeplay scenes experienced more discomfort and anxiety than those who were engaging in the edgeplay scene directly. Mackrell's reading seems to imply that the perception of risk or harm is somehow ineffective or shoddy; however, Newmahr's reading of the viewers' reactions to the edgeplay scene overturns this reading, demonstrating that it is instead highly effective. Newmahr's reading of the viewers' reactions elucidates how witnessing the illusion of or perception of risk could in fact be *more affective* than witnessing actual risk or harm. The theatre of perceived risk here dramatizes a loss of sensation or control through the skillful management of actual and perceived harm. Harm never actualizes here and instead remains a carefully curated spectacle meant to elicit strong affective responses from an audience.

Newmahr's concept of emotional edgework reveals how these choreographed perceptions of risk and harm play with a viewer's affective edges to transgress a viewer's emotional and perhaps even critical boundaries, which carries implications for my thinking around critical passivity as well. Newmahr argues that edgework is collaborative, since affective, material relations impact one's perception of emotional, psychic, and material boundaries between safety, harm, and pleasure (Newmahr, 2011: 160). This means that edgework is not solely concerned with navigating physical safety or mitigating material forms of harm; rather, Newmahr argues that emotional edgework pays particular attention to the relations between one another's "emotional edges" (Newmahr, 2011: 161). Newmahr argues that emotional edgework articulates how one might "develop and acquire particular skills in order to voluntarily negotiate extreme emotional and psychological boundaries" (Newmahr, 2011: 160). For Newmahr, this resists masculinist paradigms that underpin extant concepts for edgework through an attention to the skilled labor required to negotiate one or another's affective boundaries (Newmahr, 2011: 161). I find an interesting parallel between both Climenhaga and

Newmahr here in how both articulate the skill and labor needed to manage or to negotiate affective responses. Their shared attention to skill reveals the labor behind one's careful negotiation of a viewer's affective reality through interpersonal and artistic choices. Like a top in S&M edgeplay, the dancers carefully and skillfully lead their audiences through the affective intensities of Bausch's choreography. This increases the perception of harm without crossing into actual harm, which in turn allows a viewer the space to differentiate between actual and perceived harm. When the choreography does transgress these boundaries, the dancers' skill intervenes to bring a viewer back to the edge.

Bluebeard can be read as a kind of choreographed edgeplay. This means that *Bluebeard* encourages a viewer to voluntarily give their affective control to the dancers with the implicit trust that the dancers will carefully manage the viewer's affective boundaries. To me, this need for the viewer to relinquish control so that they may in turn feel something carries implications for critical passivity. Just as emotional edgeplay offers a feminist way of knowing when and how one can relinquish their affective and physical control to feel something, critical passivity asks that one relinquish critical control so that she may be moved by her studies in turn. Relinquishing control and being moved become feminist ways of knowing within this framework too, and they offer an alternative set of affective and critical investments towards which one might approach critique. As my reading of *Bluebeard* has offered, these negotiations and encounters are not shoddy but rather skillfully and carefully crafted to elicit feelings and thoughts. As a set of critical investments and strategies, surrendering or relinquishing control is also a skill and a kind of feminist knowing or coming to knowing through the affective, bodily experience of witnessing or engaging with that edgeplay.

Repetition, duration, and temporal drag

Before I explore this idea of critical edgework and how it informs critical passivity more fully, I want to consider what it means to work at the edge: where are those edges, and what happens when they are crossed, moved, or undone by these affective and critical encounters? Through my previous reading of *Bluebeard* as choreographed

edgeplay, the dancers' labor and skill take shape as a means of playing with a viewer's affective limits to exhaust them in turn. The dancers' emotional edgework is not improvised though as it might be in BDSM; rather, Bausch's choreography predetermines how the dancers engage in edgeplay with a viewer. This means that the choreography in *Bluebeard* can also be read as an integral component in how the performance plays with and ultimately transgresses a viewer's affective boundaries. To achieve this, the choreography frequently disrupts a viewer's temporal and affective experience by repeating movements, gestures, and tableaus. *Bluebeard* makes frequent use of repetition and duration to ultimately disturb the perceived unity of its images. Jowitt echoes this, noting that Bausch's choreography makes frequent use of duration and repetition to expose its affective qualities (Jowitt, 2013: 139). Jowitt also notes that images in *Bluebeard* often "appear, repeat, disappear, recur in different configurations" (Jowitt, 2013: 137). Climenhaga similarly observes this, noting how Bausch's work attempts to choreograph "a rhythm of experience" (Climenhaga, 2009: 60). These rhythms in turn generate the performance's emotional undercurrents (Climenhaga, 2009: 60). This use of repetition and duration makes the piece feel as though it drags on relentlessly. This is not to imply that the performance becomes disinteresting or lacks good pacing; rather, *Bluebeard*'s choreography uses repetition and duration to intentionally drag a viewer's experience of time. Images often come to their height only to repeat or to reset, creating the sense that sequences are prolonged, delayed, or dragged. This in turn requires viewers to reinvest in and to return to the images to consider them further. My thinking here follows performance scholar Eirini Kartsaki, who argues that repetition often calls a viewer to return to artworks to "unpack their complexity" (Kartsaki, 2016: 4). The end of the piece makes explicit use of these elements when the dancers repeat many of the tableaus from the performance in stops and starts repeatedly. The choreography here creates a freeze frame effect where time appears to rewind and fast forward through moments in the performance that have already played out. This effect creates a haphazard temporal relationship to images that a viewer has already seen, which in turn causes the audience to relive those feelings from previous moments again.

An affective loop emerges here as *Bluebeard* plays with the edges of a viewer's sense of time. The final repetition of tableaus at the end of the performance constitutes a moment where one might begin to feel exhausted or overwhelmed by *Bluebeard*'s unsteady or uneasy temporality. The choreography in *Bluebeard* falters and restarts, creating a kind of temporal drag. Freeman argues that the concept of temporal drag constitutes a "performance of anachrony" (Freeman, 2010: 95). Through this concept, Freeman articulates a way of thinking about how the past pulls upon the present to create moments where one exceeds one's historical moment (Freeman, 2000: 728). This in turn refigures the present through one's relationship to the past or what has passed, which Freeman articulates as "the pull of the past on the present" (Freeman, 2010: 62). *Bluebeard* makes use of repetition and duration to achieve something similar: it pulls upon images and tableaus that have already occurred to create what Freeman calls "disruptive anachronisms" (Freeman, 2000: 732). Pulling or dragging these tableaus creates a series of disruptive temporal moments where the present time of the performance can only be understood through its relationship to the past. Freeman characterizes the affective quality of temporal drag as longing (Freeman, 2000: 735). In *Bluebeard* though, these temporal drags create not a feeling of longing but rather a feeling of elongation, of being stretched thin. This echoes Freeman's argument that temporal drag allows one to "feel the tug backwards as a potentially transformative part of movement itself" (Freeman, 2000: 743). *Bluebeard* uses this sense of stretched or elongated time through repetition and duration to evoke a temporal drag that pulls on the past to stretch its viewers thin and to drag them to their affective limits.

This temporal drag ultimately pulls *Bluebeard* not to an end but rather a point of collapse. By this I mean that *Bluebeard* elongates or drags time to exhaust a viewer and bring her to the point of collapse. The extension of time throughout this final sequence eventually culminates in a sudden compression of time. Towards the final moments of the performance, the dancers begin to move with more speed and precision so that tableaus reappear faster and faster. The performance's end comes to a screeching halt, colliding with its own arrangement until it no longer resembles the images it originally presented. By the arrival of *Bluebeard*'s end, I am tired. I feel myself yearn to be free from being constantly pushed and pulled. Jowitt notes a similar affective experience:

Bluebeard made Jowitt feel "wearied by the remorseless guilt...the goallessness" (Jowitt, 2013: 140). Here *Bluebeard* creates temporal drag, which first pulls viewers towards exhaustion and later to collapse. By this I mean that *Bluebeard* evokes strong feelings within a viewer first to overwhelm them, which later exhausts that viewer in turn. Dragging a viewer towards exhaustion and collapse similarly creates a feeling of frustration or perhaps even hopelessness that might also wear down a viewer. From a choreographic perspective, *Bluebeard* drags time to exhaust a viewer: the choreography creates temporal drag to bring a viewer to the edge of her affective boundaries. The performance pulls at a viewer through the drag and compression of time that accompanies these repeating tableaus. As Climenhaga argues, the temporality of *Bluebeard* manages only "a futile attempt to provide tenderness, to seek comfort" that "is met with a violent rebuff" (Climenhaga, 2009: 17). *Bluebeard* drags me into its temporal drag not to comfort me but rather to wear me down, to bring me to the point of exhaustion. As a form of emotional edgeplay, *Bluebeard*'s use of repetition to drag time brings a viewer to her affective edges, and the feeling of being dragged across those edges and back produces a new feeling of exhaustion.

The choreopolitics of exhaustion: anaesthesis, devotion, and obstinate joy

Since this temporal drag exhausts me, I wonder how that same exhaustion is reparative and leads me to feeling again. To elaborate on this line of thinking, I want to consider the theoretical and political implications of exhaustion and how *Bluebeard* plays with those edges. I first want to consider how *Bluebeard*'s temporal drag also compresses me, and how that compression brings me to a point of emotional collapse or breakdown. To compress might evoke how one might cause pressure, how one might pressure someone, or how one might impress someone. One might be impressionable, which might carry the double meaning of being led and capable of feeling pressure. Touch may be a means of creating pressure: one's hand might leave an impression on someone's skin. Pressures can be both material and affective, such as how one might feel her fingers press into the keys while typing or how one might feel the pressure of an impending deadline. These various forms of pressure, compression, and being impressed upon

might reflect some of the potential ways in which I might express how pressure might make one feel exhausted. After all, constant pressure can be exhausting. One might snap if there is too much pressure for too long, like a twig under a heavy weight. Pressure can lead to exhaustion when it cannot be released, like a headache that throbs dully at the back of the head. One can become exhausted if she presses too hard for too long, which can include both pressures one places on oneself or on another. Pressure might also bring relief, such as when one compresses a wound or a muscle, and that relief might allow to feel or to recognize how exhausted she has become.

This line of thinking allows me to recognize what bodily and affective pressures emerge while I watch *Bluebeard*. When I attend to these pressures, they orient me towards my feelings of exhaustion. I feel my body tense and release while the dancers bring me to the edge of my emotional boundaries. I feel the spatial and temporal distance between me, the dancers, and Bausch's choreography compress. These figures, tempos, and affects impress themselves upon me, even while they remain distant, outside my grasp. This pressure pushes me to the limits of my senses, brings me to my emotional edges. This exhaustion is different from a dancers' physical exhaustion; this exhaustion constitutes an affective state that corporealizes how one might recognize when one's affective limits have been crossed. Recognizing how performance elongates and compresses a viewer's affective experience evokes what Kélina Gotman calls the "spectatorial situation," which Gotman defines as a state of being both "moved with enthusiasm...and distanced" (Gotman, 2018b: 52). As Gotman observes though, this spectatorial situation is not solely affective: it also rips "the fabric of our epistemological web" (Gotman, 2018b: 52). Compressing these affective space-times causes me to snap or tear. I snag on my edges and feel tears stream down my face. When these pressures exhaust me, they tearfully bring me to a point of emotional collapse.

I want to contend that exhaustion can be conceptualized as a form of emotional breakdown. Exhaustion as emotional breakdown does not signal an end to one's capacity to feel but rather shapes possibilities for one to feel again. To illustrate this, Sara Ahmed examines how exhaustion can be shattering or constitute a state of being shattered (Ahmed, 2017: 175). As a form of emotional edgework, exhaustion could be understood as a form of breaking down or breaking through certain affective boundaries that prevent

one from feeling. As Gotman notes, this evokes how a breakdown also "signals the possibility of a breakthrough" (Gotman, 2019: 138). Ahmed similarly articulates the affective potential of a break. Ahmed argues that a break allows one to reorient towards how one is broken: "a break can offer another claim to being, being in question as a break in being" (Ahmed, 2017: 183). Following both Gotman and Ahmed's thinking, exhaustion as emotional breakdown can form a fragile bond, one that "finds in fragility the source of a connection" (Ahmed, 2017: 183). Ahmed contends that a break or breakdown does not signal a desire to remain or to become whole (Ahmed, 2017: 179). Ahmed suggests that a break signifies not a loss but rather an "acquisition of something else, whatever that else might be" (Ahmed, 2017: 180). Exhaustion as emotional breakdown reveals a crack or vulnerability through which one might gain or find something new. That something new might include the potential for new feelings or the possibility that one might feel again.

To clarify how exhaustion can lead to feeling new feelings or to feeling again, I want to draw upon Gotman's thinking around anaesthesis. Gotman defines exhaustion as an affective state where "the micro permutations of life...have cancelled one another out" (Gotman, 2019: 125). Gotman argues that exhaustion read in this way constitutes not a state of nothingness or emptiness but rather a form of approaching or reaching towards modes of caring less. (Gotman, 2019: 126). While this may seem to imply that exhaustion is akin to apathy, Gotman clarifies that exhaustion is closer to a state of becoming that brings one someplace new. This exposes to Gotman the need to become "already that which one had never imagined one might be," (Gotman, 2018b: 58). Exhaustion engenders this affective state of becoming that Gotman calls anaesthesis, or a "potentially radical space of withdrawal" (Gotman, 2019: 122). As a form of withdrawal, Gotman contends that anaesthesis signals a means of understanding how one might reorganize their affective investments when one becomes exhausted (Gotman, 2019: 143). This means that "caring less" signals not apathy but rather a strategic reinvestment of one's affective energies. This leads Gotman to argue that exhaustion and anaesthesis create potential avenues for one not only to feel new feelings but also to "feel again" (Gotman, 2019: 125). "Feeling again" could also be read as an affective reorientation towards how one might take pleasure in having one's emotional edges crossed.

As a form of emotional edgework, exhaustion brings one over her emotional edges so that one might risk caring again. As I noted earlier in my analysis, exhaustion is an affective response that emerges when one is repeatedly dragged across these emotional edges. However, the repetition of that temporal drag is not simply moving for the sake of movement but rather a call to reinvest in or to reconsider what one has already felt or experienced. Kartsaki's thinking on repetition similarly echoes this, as repetition becomes the means through which one recognizes what is different about each return to that feeling or experience (Kartsaki, 2016: 5). That reinvestment produces the possibility for further reflection, which further enables one to think differently or to feel differently or even to feel new feelings about things which they have already encountered or felt. There is a reparative gesture behind this, one which enables the viewer to reshape or to reframe that which she has already experienced as something new or different. Exhaustion forms the locus around which one orients towards or recognizes those crossings, and attending to what is exhausting enables one to feel new feelings or to feel again when returning to and potentially repairing one's affective, psychic, or critical responses to previous thoughts and feelings.

I want to return to how *Bluebeard* uses repetition and duration to illustrate further how exhaustion can be figured as a form of emotional edgework that creates possibilities for one to feel again. In a sequence like the one that I previously examined, the dancers run around the stage and slam into the walls with pillows. The choreography appears frantic and aggressive, and the dancers appear to fling themselves at the walls with all their strength. While the pillows cushion the dancers' impact with the walls, the perception of risk remains intact. As the dancers run towards and slam into the walls over and over, the chaos gradually becomes less frenetic. As the speed of the movements decrease, some of the women begin to drop to the ground, as though they have collapsed from exhaustion. Some of the men pick up the fallen women and bring them to the other side of the room, as though they expect them to resume running again. Other women begin to throw themselves at the men, and the men catch them and carry them on their shoulders towards a new location in the room. The exertion and eventual collapse of the dancers here give the impression that they are too exhausted to move, requiring each other's strength to move them instead. This is illustrated most clearly in the next

sequence, where the men partner off with the women and shake them. Here the women appear to flop around in the men's arms, unable to move on their own. As the men move them around though, they slowly begin to grab the men and shake them back, and the tempo increases once again. At the height of this new sequence, the movements become frenetic again, as the women and men alternate between grabbing and shaking each other with more and more speed. The sequence builds until it finally resolves in a moment of embrace, bringing all the dancers to a moment of stillness.

The shifts in repeated movements and their tempo create here a sense of how *Bluebeard*'s choreography makes use of repeating gestures and their duration to carefully craft a viewer's feelings of exhaustion. To elaborate on my meaning here, I want to attend to how the dancers' skill and labor here mirrors the affective resonances that the choreography generates within me. Throughout this scene, the choreography gives the impression that the dancers exhaust themselves while running and are eventually brought beyond exhaustion when they are shaken back to life by their partners. While this is a representation of exhaustion, the effect generates within me a feeling that I too am exhausted. The accelerating tempo drags as the dancers slow and eventually collapse, which both accelerates and slows my experience of time as a viewer. This temporal experience compresses when the dragging tempo begins to accelerate again. This fluctuating tempo creates a sensation within me that feels akin to exhaustion. I feel myself running and colliding with the wall, and I feel myself collapsing like the dancers. This also returns me to the dancers' physical exhaustion that was disclosed to me and the other viewers the night of that rehearsal, creating another kind of doubling or mirroring through the dancers' actual and perceived exhaustion. Although the dancers and I exhibit various unique kinds of exhaustion here, these forms of exhaustion mirror one another nonetheless through what is reciprocal about our affective and material states. This attention to exhaustion in my reading of *Bluebeard* notices how affective relationships emerge between a viewer and the dancers.

I want to turn now to the moment of embrace in this sequence that I mentioned earlier. Through my reading of exhaustion, the embrace here can be read as a moment of taking or finding pleasure in what is exhausting. As I acknowledged earlier, the repetition of gestures choreographs the perception of risk and utilizes that perceived risk as a kind

of emotional edgework to exhaust a viewer. In this sequence, these gestures repeat to elongate and in turn to compress a viewer's experience of time to achieve that kinaesthetic sensation of exhaustion. This temporal drag brings one to their affective edges, playing with the line between care and harm. When the performance transgresses that edge, bringing a viewer past that point of exhaustion, possibilities for affective reinvestment emerge. In the case of this choreographic sequence, that moment of reinvestment materializes through an embrace, which completely breaks the performance's temporal drag to offer a moment of stillness. Critics like Jowitt take a more paranoid approach to moments like these, reading them as "the isolation of human beings from one another and from their own impulses" (Jowitt, 2013: 137). However, dance scholar Andre Lepecki can be read as taking a more reparative approach to exhaustion in this context. Lepecki considers how one's commitment to repetitive movements produces the potential for joy or pleasure. Lepecki reads political protest through the lens of choreography, which leads Lepecki to argue that even forms of political action that appear free are actually bounded or policed by some organizing structure, like a government or a police force (Lepecki, 2013: 20). Lepecki contends that devotion emerges as a means of resisting choreopolicing[16]. Lepecki reads devotion as a form of commitment or taking pleasure in repeated or maintained actions or gestures that exhaust or wear away at the structures that govern them (Lepecki, 2013: 26). There is a political as well as critical dimension to this joy in repetition and exhaustion: one returns over and over not because she has nowhere else to go but because she enjoys reimagining, reframing, and repairing that which she has already felt or experienced.

[16] Lepecki draws upon Michel Foucault and Jacques Rancière's thinking around policing to coin the term "choreopolicing." Lepecki defines choreopolicing as a "choreography of conformity" that emerges "even within so-called free or open societies" (Lepecki, 2013: 20) This means that choreopolicing reflects any governmental or institutional structures that appear to permit freedom of expression or thought but actually enforce intellectual or political conformity (Lepecki, 2013: 20). Lepecki argues that governments or institutions enforce this political conformity by subtly or invisibly pre-organizing what counts as an "acceptable" form of protest or political movement (Lepecki, 2013: 20). According to Lepecki, choreopolicing encompassess "any movement incapable of breaking the endless reproduction of an imposed circulation of consensual subjectivity" (Lepecki: 2013: 20). Lepecki argues that the opposite of choreopolicing is choreopolitics, which offers instead "an experimental exercise of freedom" through the redistribution or reinvention of "how to move politically" (Lepecki, 2013: 20).

Through this reading, critical passivity takes shape as an affective disposition that imagines how one can care again after one has become exhausted. This means that critical passivity also carries political implications, since critical passivity desires to remain obstinately joyful towards institutional imperatives to reduce their capacity to govern or to control one's feelings. By this I mean that critical passivity creates possibilities for one to care again or to feel joy again, even when institutional imperatives become exhausting. To understand my meaning here, I want to consider Lepecki's concept of devotion further to start gesturing towards exhaustion's political implications. Lepecki contends that one's ability to commit to an action produces possibilities for one to become less governed, even when governments or institutions have already pre-organized or choreopoliced one's actions. This commitment to institutional imperatives is not a form of masochism to Lepecki. Rather, this commitment is more akin to a form of affective reorientation that emphasizes joy or pleasure to resist becoming exhausted by institutional imperatives. According to Lepecki, devotion constitutes a kind of affective orientation towards institutional imperatives where one desires to become freer (Lepecki, 2013: 26). Lepecki notes that devotion formulates necessary affective and material conditions for less governed forms of political movement, since devotion constitutes both a form of physical labor and an affect (Lepecki, 2013: 25). Through this recognition of how devotion or pleasure might emerge from exhaustion, joy and pleasure materialize as affective dispositions that reorient one's relationship towards institutional imperatives.

Following Lepecki's line of thinking, I contend that this capacity to reorient institutional imperatives through joy and pleasure can be conceptualized through critical passivity. Although Lepecki does not make an explicit link between devotion and passivity per say, Lepecki does articulate devotion in a way that echoes my thinking around passivity. For Lepecki, devotion and submission imply a capacity "to endure, to undergo, to have the quality of submitting patiently" (Lepecki, 2013: 25). Through their shared relationship to patient submission or endurance, devotion and passivity can be understood as sharing a similar kind of affective disposition. Passivity like devotion can be similarly theorized as an orientation or disposition towards joy and pleasure. Both critical passivity and devotion constitute reparative dispositions, as both modes

emphasize taking joy or pleasure in pre-organized and potentially paranoid imperatives. This link can be further revealed through Lepecki's characterization of devotion, which Lepecki calls an "obstinate joy" (Lepecki, 2013: 26). Passivity constitutes another form of emotional edgework: one remains insistent on taking pleasure in institutional imperatives, even when those imperatives play with the edge between safety and harm. This insistence on or devotion to joy reorients one's relationship to these institutional imperatives in turn, even when those imperatives are difficult or exhausting to maintain. One ultimately remains obstinately joyful towards institutional imperatives so that one might feel pleasure again.

Cultivating soft borders: kinaesthetic empathy, relationscapes, and feeling again

I want to turn now to a different sequence in *Bluebeard* with this reading of critical passivity in mind to consider how critical passivity might offer a reparative approach to emotional edgework. The sequence I want to examine is one where the women, after violently dragging the men across the ground, embrace the men. In this sequence, the women help the men to their feet before cradling each other in a tender hug and swaying gently back and forth. The swaying hug brings to mind images of a couple dancing together, gently and slowly, as well as images of a soothing embrace like one a mother might give a child. Once all the men are standing, the women lead the men around the stage while still entwined in their embrace. The men's bodies hang somewhere between rigid and limp, as though they wish to leave the embrace but find themselves unable to do it. When the couples are all stationary again, the women release their embrace and move away from the men only to run directly at them. The women run at the men with force and speed, as though they might tackle them to the ground. However, the couples do not violently collide in the end; rather, the couples come together in a soft, gentle hug. The couples remain embraced for a few moments that feel like an eternity, playing with my sense of temporality as movements alternate between fast and frantic and slow and still. When the couples all ultimately break apart, the women extract themselves from the embrace while the men stand passively, waiting for the women to embrace them again. All through this sequence, Bluebeard remains seated at his record player, which

constantly skips throughout this scene. The skipping music cuts out at every embrace, leaving the stage in not only stillness but silence too as the couples hug one another. This sequence of running and embracing continues over and over with increasing speed and intensity without losing the repeated moment of still and silent embrace.

There are two different intensities in this sequence that I want to consider more closely. The first is the passivity of the men, who submit to the women's actions, and the second is the way in which the women seem to play with the boundary between tenderness and violence. Throughout the sequence, Bluebeard, who sits at his record player, represents the impending threat of patriarchal violence. Bluebeard sitting at his record player mirrors the earlier scene where Judith continually reaches for Bluebeard but is constantly rebuked. While Judith's desire for embrace or touch there is constantly delayed and ultimately unfulfilled, the women in this sequence actualize this earlier moment of delayed touch through their repeated embraces with the other men. Unlike before when Bluebeard's violence is always ensured and Judith remains always denied, this sequence denies Bluebeard's potential for harm and ensures these soft moments of embrace. Through moments where the choreography crafts the perception of risk and harm, Judith's desire in the earlier sequence remains denied. When the women embrace the men in this sequence though, the men passively give way to the women's embrace. The women's desires are fulfilled in this encounter, and Bluebeard's desire for violence is denied, represented through the men's passive bodies. Bluebeard's implicit threat of violence remains unfulfilled, which is further reinforced by his record player that skips at each moment of embrace. The commingling of the choreography and other theatrical elements here give the impression that the women thwart Bluebeard's violence in and through these moments of embrace.

This reading of how these embraces styme Bluebeard's desire for violence brings me to the reason why this sequence compels me. When I witnessed these moments, I broke into uncontrollable sobbing. Prior to this, I watched the dancers hurl and fling their bodies around the stage. I had become exhausted by the relentlessness of the choreography, so I found myself unprepared for the softness and stillness that came in these moments of embrace. The stillness and quiet of each embrace gave me the time and space to notice that I was holding my breath. I noticed that my arms were stiffly pressed

against my sides and that my fingernails dug into my legs, which I held in near paralysis. With each hug, I noticed these bodily tensions and allowed myself to release them slowly. As I took a deep breath and relaxed my muscles, I felt a tear stream down my face. Before much longer, I was weeping. The emotions were so powerful that my whole body shook as I cried. Tears streamed down my cheeks and drenched my contorted face. I want to dwell on this strong affective response that I had for two reasons. In the first instance, I find it compelling that what caused me to weep was not the perception of harm but rather these repeated moments of embrace. This brings me to the second reason: in this moment of being brought to my emotional limits, I realized how *Bluebeard* had made me realize my own emotional boundaries. Through my passive encounter with the performance's carefully crafted emotional edgeplay, I found the soft borders—the felt, material, and critical boundaries between myself and that which I encounter—that constituted my own emotional edges.

My passive, affective experience of *Bluebeard* and the performance's affective intensities came together here in a kind of embrace. To elaborate on my meaning here, I want to attend to how I passively submitted to *Bluebeard*'s emotional edgeplay. It occurs to me that through my experience of watching, I passively mirrored some of the performance's affective intensities and felt them as my own. I often found myself desiring a moment of gentleness or softness, hoping that such a moment might bring me respite from how exhausted I felt. This moment where the embrace stopped that intensity became a moment of emotional release for me in turn. This release made me aware of my own body, which made me aware of how much the performance encouraged me to risk emotionally. When I submitted to this release, I felt strong feelings. Perhaps this might represent how exhaustion allows one to feel again: when I recognized that my emotional edges had been crossed, I was able to release that tension and cry. When I passively submit to the performance's affective tempos, I sense my own affective registers and am brought back to them. I am not being metaphoric here. This moment within the performance brought me back to my material body which helped me in turn register how I was feeling once again. Submitting to my passive, affective experience of the performance, I forged a different kind of empathetic connection to what I was watching. The release of the performance's affective intensities gave me the chance to know or to

recognize my own affective rhythms and intensities as well. I write this to conceptualize critical passivity through these moments of coming to know my feelings through touch and embrace.

This experience of being moved by performance echoes once again a concept of kinaesthetic empathy, so I want to take a moment to consider this further within the context of my reading of *Bluebeard*. As Susan Leigh Foster notes, kinaesthetic empathy is most usually defined through neuroscientific terms that focus on the biological mechanics of how watching movement makes one feel (Foster, 2011: 24-25). However, Foster argues that the term "kinaesthetic empathy" presents a set of assumptions that separate affective experience from biological mechanics (Foster, 2011: 24). Foster further contends that reducing art's capacity to generate affective resonances within a viewer to biological processes forgets the complex and multiple affective connections between a viewer and a work of art (Foster, 2011: 212-213). This leads Foster to offer instead that a viewer forms an empathetic connection to dancing bodies through the dancing bodies' appeal to a viewer's felt sense (Foster, 2011: 213). According to Foster, this reading of kinaesthetic empathy acknowledges "the many ways in which the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to the viewers to be apprehended and felt" (Foster, 2011: 213). A viewer's desire to feel dancing bodies in turn recognizes how one might desire "to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis for their experience" (Foster, 2011: 213). As such, Foster ultimately observes that a kinaesthetic approach to empathy highlights how art might "dramatize how the connectedness among bodies can develop over time" (Foster, 2011: 213).

A kinaesthetic approach to empathy reconsiders how one might know or express affective relations between art and a viewer. These affective connections between bodies articulate a necessary condition of how one forms empathetic relations. To illustrate this, I want to extend Dee Reynolds's definition of kinaesthetic empathy. Reynolds skews away from attaching empathy to emotion and considers instead how empathy might connote a more fluid notion of affect (Reynolds, 2012: 88). Reynolds therefore defines a kinaesthetic approach to empathy as "a movement across and between bodies" that "can have affective impact with potential to change modes of perception and ways of knowing" (Reynolds, 2012: 88). Reynold's reading here argues that the transmission of affect

constitutes a material, bodily response. Reynolds further argues that this reading of empathy has epistemological implications. Reynolds observes that this bodily exchange of affects produces a kind of affective shock that is "sometimes uncomfortable" but ultimately "induces reflexivity and catalyses reflection" (Reynolds, 2012: 89). Reynold's concept of kinaesthetic empathy also echoes Erin Manning's concept of relationscapes. Manning argues that relationscapes map the "many overlapping space-times of experience" (Manning, 2009: 168). This in turn creates overlapping matrices of experience, echoing what Manning calls "a topological hyperspace of experience" (Manning, 2009: 183). Like Reynolds, Manning's concept here similarly acknowledges how affective relations are experiential and felt. Manning adds a temporal and spatial dimension to this reading though, drawing attention to how affective transmission unfolds over time between bodies that occupy space together. According to Manning's thinking, these transmissions of affect generate a "sensing-across that projects the viewer into a velocity of experience" (Manning, 2009: 170). Sensing-across expresses how these transmissions of affect catalyzes one's felt experience, echoing Reynolds' thinking once again.

Critical passivity reorients one towards those velocities of experience through an attention to how one navigates the soft borders of emotional edgework. Soft borders here articulate a material, felt dimension: for example, one's skin might operate as a kind of soft, material border through which one senses-across these affective space-times. These readings of kinaesthetic empathy and relationscapes articulate how exhaustion might lead to feeling again. When one plays with emotional risk, the transmission or transgression of affect can shock one back to feeling after one has become exhausted. As a form of emotional edgework, a kinaesthetic approach to empathy recognizes how one's body comes to know one's affective limits through one's affective contact with other bodies. Coming to know one's affective edges also gestures towards how one might feel again, as one comes to know these affective limits to reaffirm or to transgress them. Both reaffirming and transgressing one's affective limits reflects how one might be returned to her senses or to her capacity to sense-across. Critical passivity can also be understood as another approach that orients one towards this affective transmission. Metaphorically speaking, soft borders might also reflect a kind of closeness or empathy and the

porousness of affective transmission. From this view, soft borders reflect one kind of emotional edge that might emerge between or across bodies.

Cultivating soft borders materializes as one such way in which critical passivity might navigate forms of emotional risk. Critical passivity might cultivate soft borders as part of a larger practice of emotional edgework. Soft borders become the porous boundaries of emotional risk; soft borders chart or graph how one encounters emotional edges. Mapping these soft borders articulates the possibility for one to discover the boundaries of emotional edgework that might remain otherwise uncharted. Soft borders materialize as a kind of metaphorical and material embrace, where one touches and is touched by these affective edges. This also means that soft borders retain an element of risk without sacrificing the perception of harm. This means that cultivating soft borders similarly halts, sputters, and denies the actualization of harm. Cultivating soft borders cultivates trust as well, which allows one to willingly surrender control. Willingly surrendering control recognizes both how one might enjoy playing at the edge or how one might enjoy having one's edges played with. When one plays with emotional edges, one cultivates soft borders as a form of emotional edgeplay. One may choose to cross this soft border, or one may choose to withdraw from it. Regardless, these soft borders expose the material and affective edges where one chooses to play. One might obstinately take joy in either crossing soft borders or having one's soft borders crossed. Taking pleasure in this kind of emotional edgeplay recognizes the risk that comes with playing with emotional edges but does not seek to actualize physical, emotional, or psychic harm. One cultivates soft borders to desire instead a more reparative approach to sensing-across these emotional edges: one remains or insists on being joyful when one partakes in emotional edgework. Surrendering joyfully to these affective intensities produces the possibility for one to risk feeling those soft borders again.

Critical edgework: erotohistoriography, slow reading, and critical passivity

Through this reading, critical passivity can be understood as a reparative approach to emotional edgework that creates possibilities for one to feel again. At this juncture, I want to consider how this reading of critical passivity impacts how one might

approach close reading. As Reynolds acknowledges, the transmission of affect in empathetic relations alters or informs how one comes to knowing (Reynolds, 2012: 88). With these epistemological implications in view, how might critical passivity offer an approach to critical practice that also risks feeling again? This line of questioning leads me to consider how critical passivity reconfigures my critical relationship to *Bluebeard* alongside and through my affective relationship to it. When I attend to these soft borders on a local, experiential level, I find myself reoriented towards my fragile connections with other bodies. As Gotman argues, bodies and lives materialize as "zones of enmeshment, continua, rather than as hard borders" (Gotman, 2021: 117). Critical passivity articulates this disposition towards soft borders, these affective, bodily enmeshments and contingencies, on both a theoretical and material level. Through critical passivity, I can recognize these kinaesthetically conceived, empathetic resonances and attend to their various critical and metaphoric qualities too. This reorientation towards critical thinking through an attention to material, bodily encounters with others increases the scope of my critical consciousness. This in turn allows me to ponder what other material or critical encounters affect me. By this I mean that I come to know *Bluebeard* through not only critique but also through a combination of my lived, affective relationship to the performance and my critical and affective experience of any paratextual materials that surround or reference *Bluebeard*. These paratextual materials are not limited to extant readings of *Bluebeard* but also encompass other kinds of materials that remain after or around the performance. These materials include but are not limited to objects like my ticket stub, a playbill, and a plastic cup from the theatre that I brought home with me. These paratextual materials might also include encounters with bodies or spaces outside of the discrete time of the performance, such as my affective experience of Sadler's Wells as a building or an institution or my encounter with the dancers in the pub. The commingling of these various paratextual materials and their unique relationships to time and space reveal affective space-times where these paratextual materials resonate with critical practices.

Attending to the critical dimensions of these affective space-times similarly echoes Elizabeth Freeman's method of erotohistoriography. Freeman argues that erotohistoriography articulates an approach through which one comes to know the past

through one's affective, bodily encounters with objects in the present (Freeman, 2010: 95). Freeman argues that one uses the body as a tool "to effect, figure, or perform that encounter" (Freeman, 2010: 95). This means that Freeman sees the body as a "method" through which one develops an historical consciousness through "corporeal sensations" (Freeman, 2010: 96). Freeman recognizes this approach to historiography as one where bodily responses inform how one comes to know or to understand objects of history (Freeman, 2010: 95). Drawing from film critic Laura Marks, Freeman also calls this kind of touching history "haptic historiography," which expresses modes of "producing historical knowledge through visceral sensations" (Freeman, 2010: 123). Coming to know history through visceral sensations arrives through an attention to what Freeman calls forms of "eroticized materiality" (Freeman, 2010: 111). Freeman's concept suggests that one comes to know history or develops an historical consciousness through one's bodily sensations, which might also encompass erotic, joyful, or pleasurable sensations. This attention to viscera and sensation further links Freeman's thinking around historiography to close reading, which Freeman articulates as a form of historiography (Freeman, 2010: xvii). In thinking of close reading as historiography, Freeman articulates close reading through both proximity and temporality. Freeman considers close reading to be a practice through which one lingers, dallies, or takes pleasure in slowing down (Freeman, 2010: xvi-xvii). This similarly resonates with Gotman's thinking around genealogical critique. Gotman borrows from Foucault to argue that critique is correlated to Focault's concept of genealogy (Gotman, 2018b: 59). According to Gotman, genealogical critique allows one "to arrive again and again at the question of what it means to be now and here" (Gotman, 2018b: 59). Freeman and Gotman both articulate here what is temporal and spatial about close reading: close reading articulates a means through which one comes into contact with an other (a text, an object, a person, an event) so that one might come to knowing through one's material relationship to a broader topography of affective space-times. Recognizing what is historiographic about close reading acknowledges how close reading brings one into contact with affective space-times of thought.

While my close reading of *Bluebeard* does not utilize historiography per say, Freeman's thinking here resonates with how I have theorized critical passivity through

my close reading of *Bluebeard*. This resonance emerges through our mutual interest in articulating how attending to affective, material encounters refigures critical practices. Freeman considers erotohistoriography to be a kind of "reparative criticism" through which bodily forms of joy or pleasure produce critical consciousness (Freeman, 2010: 120). According to Freeman, this reparative approach to critique intervenes in the histories and legacies of patriarchal and colonial forms of material harm through an attention to joy and pleasure (Freeman, 2010: 120). I wish to articulate critical passivity here as an approach to reparative criticism along similar lines as Freeman. Critical passivity offers a means of rethinking critical practices through the qualities and intensities of one's bodily and affective modes of knowing. This means that critical passivity repairs or at the very least navigates what is emotionally risky about critique. Critical passivity might gesture towards an approach to navigating or managing emotional risk in critical practice. Returning to Newmahr's thinking, this reinforces the idea that critical passivity is a kind of critical edgework: critical passivity intentionally plays with the edges of emotional risk when one engages in critical practices. By this I mean that critical passivity manages how one withdraws from or transgresses one or another's soft borders or affective limits. As a kind of critical edgework, critical passivity plays with the soft borders of thought so that one might risk the possibility to feel joy or pleasure again.

This close, durational contact with affective materials evokes literary scholar Ben Davies' thinking around slow reading. Reading Freeman, Davies argues that Freeman's attention to the temporality of historiography and criticism gives way to the concept of slow reading. According to Davies, slow reading is a method of close reading that offers one "time to revel in a text's many temporal layers" so that one might "appreciate the temporal redirections created through analepsis and prolepsis, elliptical gaps and untimely holes," (Davies, 2014). This similarly echoes how Davies contends that slow reading creates a "complex temporal experience" and a "tactile, sensual encounter" with a text (Davies, 2014). The slow temporality of these encounters refigure intertextuality in turn, refiguring texts as hybrid and contingent on materials that are "not fully present in the text" or "do not have simple, easily identifiable temporal or spatial locations" (Davies, 2014). Davies's concept of slow reading opens up the time and place of close

reading, allowing one to more fully experience what is both inside a text and what exceeds or surrounds it. Davies further clarifies that slow reading encourages a kind of "textual sensuality" where one bonds with or becomes intimate with a text (Davies, 2014). Bonding with a text in turn unbinds that text, allowing one to experience what spills out or exceeds the boundaries of a text (Davies, 2014). This similarly evokes Gotman's call to untidy one's thinking so that one might pull apart the strands of one's thoughts, a practice which Gotman calls "philosophical role play" (Gotman, 2018b: 53). Philosophical role play might involve a little edgeplay too, as one pulls at one's thinking to play with its edges. One might even engage in philosophical role play with texts to transgress a text's soft borders and experience its intertextual resonances. Perhaps a critically passive engagement with slow reading enables one to know how philosophy crosses her soft borders: one role plays not as the philosopher but as the one who *feels* philosophy, perhaps feels it again and again and again, until it has left you ragged, exhausted, gasping for breath.

Davies's articulation of slow reading gestures to how close reading engenders forms of slow, close contact with the intertextual relations between texts and paratexts. Through Davies's thinking around slow reading, critical passivity gestures towards a way of doing reparative criticism that risks dwelling on or pondering the affective, material encounters that both bound and exceed one's studies. This reading of critical passivity returns again to both the time and place of one's readings while recognizing how one might take pleasure or joy in slowing down. As Davies notes, slow reading enjoys or luxuriates in one's time with a text; slow reading indulges a reader in the pleasures of spending or taking time with one's studies. As a form of philosophical role play, one enjoys the time it takes to play with the edges of one's thinking. Alternatively, one might play a different role: one may voluntarily submit to having one's thinking teased, allowing a reader to take pleasure in how one's studies plays with one's thoughts. This kind of philosophical role play could imply what Freeman calls the stereotype of the "scholar as pervert" who embodies a perverse or obsessive fascination with or attraction to texts (Freeman, 2010: 104). Unlike Freeman's figure of the perverted scholar who prefers unhealthy attachments with books though, a critically passive reader might engage in a little philosophical role play with a text to encounter what is sensuous, bodily, and

pleasurable about close reading. This figuration implies a reader who enjoys engaging with thinking as a form of critical edgeplay. According to Davies, slow reading puts oneself "at risk with the (textual) other" (Davies, 2014). Reading slowly allows a reader to take pleasure in what is risky about one's studies or to risk taking pleasure in spending time with one's studies. This means that critical passivity approaches close reading as another kind of edgework, one which I might call critical edgework. Critical edgework allows one to slow down and take one's time while reading. This slower approach to close reading allows one to enjoy the pleasures of having one's thinking teased, to find pleasure in having thoughts teased out. After all, there is something erotic about reading slowly, closely, sensually.

Critical edgework gestures to how critical passivity can be understood as a reparative approach to navigating critique's emotional risks and its affective, sensuous impacts. Critical passivity expands the scope of one's critical consciousness through an attention to or awareness of how one spends time with a text. This expanded critical consciousness might include noticing what one risks emotionally or materially when one engages with critique. Slowing down or dragging time when reading allows one to acknowledge how one's reading plays with the soft borders of one's thinking. This means that recognizing what exceeds one's reading includes noticing how one is touched or affected by one's studies. Remembering Freeman's thinking, one feels those temporal drags as tugs, stretches, elongations—physical sensations and movements that return thinking and history to bodily materials and affective intensities. Remaining or insisting on enjoying the time it takes to read or to think similarly plays with those tugs, enjoys taking those risks. Institutional imperatives might not allow taking that time; remaining insistent on slowness and taking time becomes a political as well as critical act. Reading slowly with a critically passive disposition allows one to come to know and potentially even to cross those edges through her material encounters with the affective space-times of her studies. I cannot touch or encounter a text, a thought, a body, or even an institution without being touched in turn, and these bodily and affective exchanges alter my own affective registers. I cannot remain unmoved in these encounters, and so I cannot resist surrendering to a little critical edgework.

I contend that critical passivity offers one the opportunity to engage in critical edgework. By this I mean that critical passivity engenders an approach to close reading that recognizes how critical practices necessarily engage with emotional risk. One risks the edges of one's soft borders or affective limits so that she might indulge in the pleasures that come from taking her time with her thinking. Even when texts like *Bluebeard* become difficult or exhausting, critical passivity creates a chance for one to feel joy or pleasure again. Taking time and being close to a text is risky, so one must manage those edges closely. Negotiating those edges is what makes critical passivity reparative though: critical passivity orients one towards what is pleasurable about critical edgework. This means that critical passivity engages with emotional risk not with the paranoid belief that one might be harmed by one's studies but with the desire to willingly surrender to the possibility that one might feel new feelings or feel again. Through critical passivity, one manages those edges between perceived and actual harm so that one might find joy or pleasure while reading. It is thrilling to risk that closeness, that proximity, to being touched or moved by what one studies or observes, and it is that same thrill of risking those edges that pushes one towards the desire to come closer and to feel that pleasure again.

Wiggly choreopolitics

UNDA, gestural anarchy, and going limp

Preface

When I went to the Barbican, there was a woman who complimented me on my shoes. It was a fleeting moment within the full scope of the evening. I took a seat in the lobby after getting a drink. The lobby was full, and most of the tables were occupied. This left only a pair of chairs open on the outskirts of the lounge near the bar. I sat haphazardly in the absurdly large and uncomfortable chair, balancing my drink precariously on my knee. I wanted to give my poor feet a break after wearily shambling up and down stairs in a feverish attempt to find my way through this concrete labyrinth. While sitting with one leg atop the other, my plastic cup of white wine atop them both, my shoe dangled prominently off the end of the entire stack of limbs and alcohol. They were not particularly spectacular shoes, and there was nothing about my shoes that probably warranted any attention, particularly not mine. The thing I noticed the most about the shoes was that they hurt my feet, though this had more to do with getting lost in the Barbican. What was more astonishing to me was that someone took notice and complimented me on my not-spectacular shoes.

While I was seated, attempting to relax after so much walking, a woman sat in the chair across from me. This distance was awkward: not close enough to really converse but not far enough away to avoid acknowledging each other. I smiled at her, and she smiled back. Then she noticed my shoes and stated that she "loved" them. I replied with a smile and a thanks to initiate conversation, partially out of politeness and partially out of desire for company. Before I could formulate a sentence though, the woman turned away from me in her chair, adjusted something in her bag, and left. I felt both foolish and relieved about my failed attempt at conversation. In the perfect fleetingness of this moment, possibilities emerged and disappeared. I had little ability to respond and could only receive the moment of recognition that the woman gave me. I wish that I had been

able to talk more with that woman so that I might have formed a bond, however short or fragile, with her. Perhaps, something had been forged between us though, something precious and vulnerable. I thought of the boy who asked to borrow my phone as I was headed into the building. I told him no. Possibilities closed down everywhere.

I cannot help but think of these small gestures that affect me before slipping away into the dark. Sitting in the dark, I looked at the people next to me, an older couple who talked to each other in hushed voices. The couple swapped stories and shared their impressions of the performance. I cannot remember now if that couple was holding hands, but I would like to think that they were. Perhaps they still are, somewhere else, somewhere outside of the scope of my knowledge. A tactile connection seems like a fitting bond, even if it is just as fleeting. There is an incompleteness in these relations, and the fragility of those tenuous bonds moves me. I watch the dancers recede into darkness, a tender coalition, and I feel myself go limp. I feel myself pulled into the force of the swaying mass disappearing in front of my eyes, and I feel myself wiggle in my seat.

Introduction

In this chapter, I read *UNDA*, a new work choreographed by American-born dancer and choreographer Joy Alpuerto Ritter and performed as part of the Viviana Durante Company's triple bill celebrating Isadora Duncan's artistic legacy. In my previous close reading of *Bluebeard*, I considered critical passivity as a kind of critical edgework that both manages one's proximity to her studies and delights in taking time or taking pleasure in having one's critical boundaries teased. This thinking around what is risky and pleasurable about an encounter propels me into new questions about how we come together and collide politically. As the preface for this chapter indicates, I am interested in expanding the scope of these encounters to consider how we collide in jumbled, disharmonious, and awkward ways. How does one move politically when these movements are wiggly and wobbly? How does one swerve collectively, and what squiggly histories and lineages emerge from chaotic movements? What if those movements become destructive or ruinous, and what if one delights in or desires disharmony and ruin? Throughout this chapter, I consider how critical passivity imagines a limp

disposition for an ambivalent approach to wavering and wobbly political movement, or what I call a wiggly choreopolitics.

This chapter contends with how critical passivity enlivens what breaks down, remixes, or ruins collective political movement to rethink the supposed divide between reparative and abolitionist work. To do this, I imagine more overtly how critical passivity might engender a disposition towards or approach to political movement. Political movement has two meanings here: liberatory forms of political organization and action, such a feminist or Black liberation movement, and the politics of affective movement, such as how watching dance might be moving or might move one towards political action. I echo dance scholar Arabella Stanger here, noting how dance as an artform harbors both the potential for "material conditions of struggle, conflict, and domination" and "hopeful, transformative, or reparative motion" (Stanger, 2021: 4). As such, I consider how critical passivity can imagine the material, affective relationship between viewer and performance and the micropolitics of one's affective relationships to close reading as a vibrant feminist politics that holds both abolition and repair in productive tension.

I explore how critical passivity offers a disposition or set of investments that imagines new, reparative forms of feminist and antiracist ethical and political action. This means that I question the political and ethical dimensions of *UNDA*'s aesthetic forms and composition to imagine how these dimensions resonate beyond the discrete experience of watching performance. Throughout this chapter, I pay particular attention to the artistic legacies that inform *UNDA*, including how Ritter's choreographic approach twists and contorts the boundaries between these aesthetic lineages. I do this to imagine how the contours of critical passivity might be moved by and move one's approach to a more haphazard and tender feminist body politic. I draw upon Kélina Gotman's and Whitney Davis's thinking around postformalism to consider how one might rethink the relationship between aesthetic forms as more heterogenous, open, and potentially liberatory. Through this reading, I examine how reimagining the borders between dance aesthetics in *UNDA* has both critical and political implications. Through postformalism, I examine how *UNDA* makes a reparative, antiracist gesture that repatriates and remixes Duncan's dance practices with Black dance styles like hip hop, jazz, and street dance.

Through my reading of *UNDA*, I contend that critical passivity engenders a more open and careful approach to disorderly or disruptive forms of collective political movement. To this end, I examine *UNDA* to theorize a wiggly choreopolitics: a critically passive approach to collective political movement that attends to how one wiggles or wobbles between reparative modes and modes of ruin. I stylize a critically passive disposition to this wiggly choreopolitics as going limp, which engenders new forms of being-in-the-world and relating to others by making one's borders soft and pliable. Both going limp and wiggling constitute a kind of choreography for this disorganized yet contingent approach to political movement. Reading *UNDA*'s choreographic use of gestural anarchy, I draw upon Marquis Bey's concept of anarcho-Blackness and Gotman's thinking around alterkinetics and choreomaniacal bodies to imagine more disorderly or anarchic approaches to collective political movement. I consider how *UNDA* uses these more anarchic and disorganized forms of collective movement to rethink social relations between bodies and to remix the boundaries between aesthetic forms. I also draw upon Judith Butler's thinking around non-violent political action and Sarah Whatmore's approach to relational ethics to figure how going limp styles critical passivity as a material, affective disposition that creates possibilities for new ways of being together.

This reading of critical passivity also leads me to consider throughout this chapter how one might navigate between reparative modes and modes of ruin or decay. Bey's thinking and Caitlin DeSilvey's concept of positive passivity both offer means of imagining what happens when one accepts what is unknowable or unplannable about one's ethical or political decisions. I consider what Bey calls "fugitive planning," where one curates forms of political action and ethical decision-making that resist the logics of inclusion and exclusion (Bey, 2020). Positive passivity similarly offers a mode of curation that attends to how one feels about particular ethical or critical decisions. This similarly evokes Sara Ahmed's figure of the feminist killjoy who might delight in ruining or breaking structures that exclude, even if ruining those structures ruins other's joy or happiness. This attention to the affective dimensions of curation includes a recognition of how any curatorial decision involves both opening up and closing down certain possibilities. Through this line of thinking, I consider how a wiggly choreopolitics negotiates these possibilities, creating opportunities for both reparative modes and

modes of decay or ruin. This in turn allows me to consider how Ritter's choreography offers a reparative, antiracist gesture as well, ruining the boundaries of Duncan's danceworks that exclude Black and brown bodies while remixing those same forms.

Recontextualizing "natural" dance: Isadora Duncan, gender, and race

To begin thinking through how *UNDA* offers a reparative, antiracist gesture to Duncan's danceworks, I first want to figure what kind of politics underlie Duncan's oeuvre. While it is true that Isadora Duncan's approach to dance practice innovated forms and styles that can be read as feminist, the politics of her work are more complex than they appear from a cursory reading. As dance scholar Ann Daly notes, Duncan's own body was often her first site of political resistance and reinvention (Daly, 1995: 5). When Duncan emerged within American dance scenes, the distinction between "high" and "low" forms of dance were permeable, if not non-existent. Daly notes how late 19th and early 20th century audiences made "little distinction between the trained ballerina, the entertaining skirt dancer, and the moonlighting factory-worker-cum-chorus-girl" (Daly, 1994: 6). This is akin to how performance scholar Erin Hurley notes how professional actresses during this period were likened to prostitutes (Hurley, 2010: 65). Further to this point, Daly notes that the audiences of Duncan's time were "not interested in grace and art but in shapely legs, unveiled silhouettes, smiles, and availability" (Daly, 1994: 6). As such, Duncan's body was seen as a site of political and artistic resistance due largely to how dancing opposed these sexist attitudes towards female dancers. As Daly argues, Duncan used her dancing body to create "a place where contested ground--nation, Woman, culture, self, race, art--was negotiated quite explicitly," (Daly, 1995: 5). As a meeting ground for bodily and artistic politics, Daly contends that Duncan's dancing cared about both transgressing gendered boundaries and cementing dance's "legitimacy as a 'high art'," (Daly, 1994: 6). These desires did not come without faults though; as Daly notes, Duncan also sought to position dance as high art by "deconstructing and reconstructing it as a practice of high, white, western Culture for the privileged classes of northeastern cities" (Daly, 1994: 7).

A tension emerges here. Daly notes how the politics of Duncan's work demonstrated a cry for both aesthetic and political agency, which Daly calls a "prayerful liberation," (Daly, 1995: 7). Duncan's work resisted both classical dance traditions like ballet and patriarchal control over women's bodies through an intensely personal and expressive dance form. However, while her aesthetics of free, flowing movement seem to promote a liberatory politics, it is difficult to claim explicitly that Duncan intended for her work to promote feminist politics. As Daly notes, Duncan was not a suffragist, and there is no clear evidence that Duncan supported women's liberation during her time as an artist (Daly, 1995: 163). Her movement practices linked fluid, wavelike movement with images of untamed nature and Greco-Roman goddesses, which nonetheless spoke to her feminist-leaning audiences that wished to embrace the innate power of the female dancing body (Daly, 1995: 159). Perhaps more damningly though, Duncan's approach to dance carried colonial and racist frameworks. Daly notes how Duncan regarded her movement practices as distinct to "the spastic chaos of ragtime and jazz dancing," which Duncan considered to be "African primitivism" (quoted in Daly, 1995: 7). While Daly argues that Duncan's danceworks seem liberatory, they were in fact "produced in explicit opposition to a stereotypical Africanism defined as uncivilized, sexual, and profane" (Daly, 1995: 7).

Through this reading, Daly overtly paints the colonial, racist dimensions of Duncan's work. While some of Duncan's audiences might have seen her work as liberatory, neither Duncan's danceworks nor the larger artistic landscape of early 20th century America cultivated space for the liberation of Black and brown bodies. This is not a contradiction; as Stanger notes, Anglo-European theatre dance often holds the capacity to enable both liberatory or revelatory spaces for dancers and audiences and racist, colonial practices of space-making (Stanger, 2021: 5). Daly reinforces this characterization, noting that Duncan's vision of America was "an elite, white, Europeanized monolith without a hint of the social, racial, and economic diversity that...had intensified by the 1910s," (Daly, 1995: 10). Even Duncan's embrace of torque as a language of free movement reflected colonial myths that emerged during the period of American expansionism. Daly observes that white American modernists loved torque since it championed "the forward motion of American culture, into a new century, and a

new world," (Daly, 1995: 8). This in turn sought to resist a changing socio-political and economic climate brought on by urbanization and industrialization: as Daly further observes, American modernists wished "to restate old-fashioned American ideas of morality," (Daly. 1995: 9). Kélina Gotman echoes Daly's thinking here, observing how forms of "spontaneous, 'natural' movement, prized by Isadora Duncan" still "embrace smooth and controlled (though seemingly mundane) movement," (Gotman, 2020: 166). While the body politic of Duncan's work could be read as liberatory, her emphasis on cultivating a white bourgeois audience for dance that excluded non-white bodies and dance forms reflects her deeply colonial and classist disposition towards dance. Duncan's attempt to legitimize certain forms of dance in turn sought to delegitimize Black and brown dance forms. Through this reading, the politics of Duncan's artistic legacy becomes more fraught, bound up in both revolutionary and regulatory modes that police bodies and their movements.

Postformalism: rethinking relations between artworks and form

From this reading of the racist, colonial politics bound up in Duncan's work, I want to consider now how *UNDA* makes use of a diverse matrix of choreographic forms, including hip hop, jazz, and street dance, to rethink and to reframe Duncan's approach to dance practice. While seemingly a tribute to Duncan's artistic legacy, *UNDA* demonstrates a more complex and fluid relationship to form and technique that frustrates a clean lineage between it and Duncan's work. Even tracing the complex web of artistic practices that emerges from this performance is dizzying. In the first instance, the dance company of a virtuosic ballerina (Viviana Durante) performs a triple bill to remember the artistic legacy of a modernist dancer who rejected ballet (Isadora Duncan). This is further complicated when one considers that Viviana Durante's company commissioned American-born dancer and choreographer Joy Alpuerto Ritter to develop this new work (*UNDA*) as part of that tribute, even though Ritter's choreographic style often subverts and remixes traditionally white dance forms like ballet with Black, Filipina, and urban dance forms. These haphazard, uneasy relations between choreographic forms seem to imply a desire not to preserve, to codify, or to historicize Duncan's artistic legacy. Rather,

UNDA's diverse assemblage of choreographic and aesthetic languages provides a complex topography upon which one might rethink the relationships between various dance forms. I read Ritter's choreographic style through *UNDA* as an aesthetic practice that both draws from and undermines the racist, colonial thinking imbedded in Duncan's approach to "natural" dance. To extend a term used by cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey, this approach to Duncan's aesthetics might formulate a "counterpreservation heritage practice" (DeSilvey, 2017:100). By this I mean that *UNDA* can be characterized as an attempt at cohabiting precariously with Duncan's artistic legacy: while *UNDA* might cultivate an uneasy relationship to Duncan's danceworks, the piece reimagines Duncan's dance practices without residing easily within the colonial politics that run underneath them.

How might one read the relations between aesthetic forms differently then? To approach this question, I want to read *UNDA* through the concept of postformalism, drawing upon definitions from both Kélina Gotman and Whitney Davis. Gotman describes postformalism as an approach to dance practices that embrace a "new sort of formalism...an aesthetics after the straight line or the smooth curve," (Gotman, 2020: 167). According to Gotman, this means that postformalism expands "the range of movement types, gestures and vocabularies we may find onstage" (Gotman, 2020: 160). Art historian Whitney Davis echoes Gotman's thinking here: Davis argues that postformalism articulates how one might "state the relation between artworks and *sehformen*," which Davis translates as "forms of imaginative appearance," (Davis, 2012). For Davis, this means that postformalism rejects the notion of "formalisticisim," or "the apparent configuratedness of material things," (Davis, 2012). Postformalism shifts away from reinscribing forms as "an attribute made" to artworks and towards acknowledging them as "an aspect seen" when one views artworks (Davis, 2012). Davis gestures here towards a means of approaching the relations between artworks that does not rely on direct or clean links between pre-existing artistic styles. This echoes how Gotman articulates postformalism as an aesthetics of "crafted heterogeneity" (Gotman, 2020: 160). Stanger's reading of Foucault's heterotopia as artistic and choreographic echoes this, as she links the choreographic production of spacetimes with the speculative work of dreaming utopic imaginaries (Stanger, 2016: 69). According to Davis, this more

heterogenous and imaginative approach resists reading artistic forms through a kind of "forensic archaeological method," favoring instead how one might appreciate or determine artistic forms through aesthetic orders of "active imaginative force" (Davis, 2012).

Postformalism in this view rejects the notion that a critic, historian, or artist might use form to dictate discreet boundaries between artworks and art practices. This means that postformalism stands in contrast to approaches to conceptual dance that carry anti-dance or anti-balletic prejudices. Gotman argues instead that postformalism offers a "radical openness to technique" that recognizes dance as "an art and a craft, even as…'non-dance' gestures have the potential to infiltrate and transform it" (Gotman, 2020: 161). This in turn produces a "reconfiguration of the possibilities afforded by dance as a particular gestural craft" (Gotman, 2020: 167). Following Gotman's argument, this both imaginative and ambivalent gesture to the relations between forms attempts to rehabilitate what counts as dance both critically and artistically (Gotman, 2020: 161). This echoes other approaches to rethinking how one approaches dance as form, such as Marten Spangberg's concept of post-dance. Spangberg advocates for post-dance as a self-reflexive approach to dance that detaches it from "elementary forms of causality or determination" (Spangberg, 2017: 390). This similarly gestures to how postformalism marks a more open approach to reading form: postformalism embraces a self-reflexive approach to the critical and creative relationship between artistic techniques and practices. Postformalism reinvests in artistic forms to re-imagine what links artworks and art practices while maintaining a relative ambivalence to how these links have been historically determined. As such, postformalism does not establish clean aesthetic and critical lineages but rather recognizes how established aesthetic forms are already heterogenous and contingent. Postformalism does not undo or release aesthetic discourse but rather acknowledges how the relations between discourses are already diverse and multiple.

Both Gotman and Davis's thinking here ultimately conceptualize postformalism as a relational approach to aesthetic critique that recognizes how discrete artistic forms emerge through and mingle with the active process of viewing and making sense of artworks. This means that postformalism has the political and critical potential both to

resist critical and artistic practices that harbor racialized and colonial practices. To illustrate my meaning here, I turn to Stanger's articulation of how white (neo)liberalist heterotopias can relocate or replicate imperialist dystopias and colonial violences by refiguring white supremacist imaginaries into new material space-times (Stanger, 2016: 73). Stanger notes that forms of Anglo-European dance theatre often utilize "corporeal forms of harmony and freedom" to "conceal material conditions of imperial, colonial, and racial subjection" (Stanger, 2021: 2). By this Stanger means that Anglo-European dance formulates a "nexus of corporeal, discursive, and institutional practices" (Stanger, 2021: 4). According to this line of thinking, critical and artistic practices that embrace harmony or utopia do not necessarily preclude a reoccupation of racist or colonial violences. Stanger argues instead that neoliberal notions of harmony and freedom "contribute to, prosper from, and act as an alibi for the material conditions that produce or exploit group-differentiated vulnerability" (Stanger, 2021: 5). Stanger's thinking here provides a useful context that allows postformalism to take shape as a potentially more liberatory aesthetic framework, even when discreet practices nonetheless relocate, reinforce, or reoccupy oppressive structures and practices. Following Gotman's line of thinking that postformalism presents a form of infiltration or rehabilitation for existing art forms, the refiguring or remixing of aesthetic forms and boundaries reinvests in the messy disharmony and disarray between art forms and techniques. Postformalism articulates that messier, more heterogeneous, and more decentered framework, taking up self-reflexivity, contingency, and imagination as lenses through which one comes to know or to understand the lineages between aesthetic forms.

I contend that *UNDA* takes shape as a postformalist dancework when considering Ritter's heterogenous and decentered approach to choreography and how her approach carries both aesthetic and political implications. By drawing upon and remixing a variety of dance styles, Ritter uses, undoes, and reframes Duncan's artistic forms and cultivates messier relationships between extant dance forms. In an interview with dance critic Alison Roberts-Tse, Ritter discusses her creative decision making behind *UNDA*. *UNDA* features Ritter as both a choreographer and as a dancer, as she dances along with five other dancers in the piece. Ritter notes how she comes from an array of disparate dance traditions and styles, such as ballet, jazz, Philippine folk dance, hip hop, and street dance,

among others (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). Roberts-Tse also notes how this diversity of styles and influences is reflected in the diverse body of work that Ritter has produced or in which she has participated (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). As a freelance dancer, Ritter has worked as an aerial dancer, a jazz dancer, a hip hop dancer, and as a ballerina. Ritter notes in her interview that she is actively aware of how this wide range of movement languages collide and emerge within her work (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). Ritter states that with *UNDA*, she wished to carry forward the spirit of Duncan's danceworks while developing a research and studio-based approach to choreography that supported a more heterogenous and decentered choreographic language (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). For Ritter, this meant drawing upon a diverse group of dancers with various technical backgrounds as well. Ritter discusses that she worked with the five company dancers to develop their own specific movement concepts based on each dancer's unique dance backgrounds within the overarching framework of Ritter's own choreographic language (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). For Ritter, this desire to develop a diverse, heterogeneous approach to movement within one cohesive performance acknowledged how "individual dancers also function as a unit" (Roberts-Tse, 2020a). This proliferation of movement forms, styles, and lineages ultimately formulated for Ritter an approach to reimagining Duncan's danceworks today. Ritter describes this heterogenous choreographic language as a desire "to find an agreement within differences" among the various aesthetic forms that Duncan, Ritter, and Ritter's collaborators explore (Roberts-Tse, 2020a).

Ritter's desire to find aesthetic agreement-within-difference reflects how *UNDA* both breaks with Duncan's oeuvre and reimagines or redevelops Duncan's style. Roberts-Tse notes something similar when reviewing *UNDA*, arguing that Ritter's choreography "never meant to replicate Duncan's movements," (Roberts-Tse, 2020b). As critic Sanjay Roy notes, *UNDA*'s choreographic style is more chaotic and heterogenous than Duncan's, describing the choreography in *UNDA* as "cut with more jagged internal rhythms" (Roy, 2020). While Roy sees this as a lack of choreographic direction (Roy, 2020), I contend that Ritter's heterogenous choreographic lineage reflects a postformalist reimagining of the relationships between different dance styles. *UNDA* offers a reorientation to Duncan's style by mixing and remixing various dance forms and rhythms throughout the piece. *UNDA* seeks to reimagine or perhaps to repatriate Duncan's style rather than merely re-

perform it: *UNDA* draws upon and works within the disagreements and incongruities between various dance aesthetics. This is where *UNDA* becomes most clearly postformalist: Ritter intentionally practices a diffuse and heterogenous choreographic approach that misrecognizes and unfaithfully cites the relations between aesthetic forms.

As a piece that seeks neither to avow or to disavow Duncan's style, *UNDA* reflects a more anarchic relationship to established lineages between dance practices and their aesthetic forms. One of the most obvious examples of this is how *UNDA* makes use of a variety of aesthetic approaches to body undulation. The title of the performance (*UNDA*) is a reference to the Latin word for water and to undulation, implying both wave-like and bodily movements. Throughout the piece, the dancers move in wavelike patterns, achieved by flowing through isolations, contractions, body rolls, twisting limbs, and swaying hips. These movements draw from a variety of choreographic techniques and gestural languages. Dancers pop and lock at times, invoking hip hop and street dance styles; at other times, freewheeling limbs and sharp contractions evoke the dark gestural intensity of Pina Bausch. This is illustrated most clearly towards the end of the piece, when the dancers douse their hair in water from basins which have been filling during the performance. As water drops with steady intensity from the ceiling into basins strategically placed around the stage, the dancers drench themselves, particularly their hair, which they move to cover their faces. With damp hair obscuring their visages, the dancers undulate and contort, swinging their hair around in circles and waves. Water flings itself off their soaked heads, cascading around the dancers and intermingling with the rainlike streams falling into the basins in front of them.

The influence of Bausch's style is noticeably striking here, perhaps even dipping slightly into homage with the way in which the dancers' hair obscures their faces, which is an aesthetic common to Bausch's style. Dance critic Jann Perry notes that the movement and soundscape of the performance evoke a "sinuous intensity" that evokes images of "women possessed, even traumatized, when they're not remembering happier times," (Perry, 2020). As I noted in my previous chapter on *Bluebeard*, this kind of sensuous intensity is common to Bausch's style. However, while Ritter's choreography captures here most clearly the angular, mournful movements that often characterize Basuch's style, Ritter references these forms without invoking them too precisely. Ritter

invokes instead a kind of unfaithful citational practice, referencing Bausch-like movements while remixing them with syncopated rhythms common to other dance forms like hip hop. In *UNDA*, these intense, sensuous movements neither outright reject nor strictly adhere to a singular style or technique. Rather, the choreography here reinterprets both Duncan's work and Bausch's work through their proximity to other dance forms as they have taken shape within Ritter's body and the bodies of the other dancers. Ritter's choreographic postformalism emerges through her methodological desire to abscond from clean gestural or aesthetic lineages and to embrace more heterogeneous relations between various dance techniques, their movement languages, and the specific bodies that dance them. This anarchic approach to choreographic forms is intentional for Ritter and directly informs how *UNDA* reinterprets and repairs Duncan's aesthetics.

Gestural anarchy: killjoys, alterkinetics, and anarcho-Blackness

Through this postformalist reading of *UNDA*, it becomes clear how Ritter places Duncan's aesthetic forms in conversation with other dance forms and styles to rethink the politics of Duncan's aesthetics. However, Ritter maintains an ambivalence to Duncan's techniques and styles throughout this process, choosing to reimagine them rather than ignore them. I would like to consider how *UNDA* creates an anarchic reparative gesture that both undoes and repairs Duncan's work. To illustrate my meaning, I want to consider how Ritter's choreography evokes a kind of gestural anarchy that performs a reparative gesture too. Gestural anarchy here refers to a choreographic language that Gotman calls "part-strange, part-familiar spasmodicism" (Gotman, 2020: 161). This gestural anarchy repatriates rather than reoccupies Duncan's aesthetic forms by reinhabiting black and brown dance forms that Duncan excluded. As I will examine later, this unruly, anarchic body takes joy in ruining structures and forms that attempt to control or to exclude them, which in turn produces an orientation to a more radical openness towards disorganized or disorderly forms of political movement.

To unpack this, I first want to consider this lexical distinction between repatriation and reoccupation. To say that *UNDA* is a reoccupation of Duncan's work

would carry imperialist and colonial weight along with its more metaphoric meanings. By this I want to recognize how the language of (re)occupation might carry material implications, such as lands ravaged by imperialist militaries or violently seized by settler colonizers. While Duncan's work does not carry the same geopolitical weight as these material realities of settler colonialism and imperialism, there is a theoretical and political gesture here that *UNDA* avoids. Alternatively, *UNDA* makes an anarchic gesture that might be more closely related to repatriation. By this I mean that *UNDA* offers an approach to repairing racist danceworks by reuniting pre-existing structures with those who have been excluded from them. This approach in turn creates opportunities for those who were previously excluded to use or to inhabit those structures differently. This takes on both political and artistic significance when considering how Ritter worked with each dancer to develop a choreographic language that incorporated each dancer's unique dance training and styles. Ritter's choreographic approach does not simply recontextualize the lineage of Duncan's work but also creates opportunities for her dancers to reimagine Duncan's danceworks along their own unique aesthetic lines.

The dancers' active engagement with a multiplicity of styles and practices within the larger context of Ritter's choreographic landscape gestures to what makes Ritter's choreographic approach both anarchic and reparative. Ritter's choreography in *UNDA* approaches the boundaries of Duncan's dance practices not to add to them but rather to dismantle them so that they might in turn be reconfigured in newer and more contingent ways. To illustrate this, I want to consider Ritter's first solo as a moment where Ritter's choreography demonstrates this anarchic gestural relationship to Duncan's aesthetics. Up to this point in the performance, the flow of movements is wavelike, embracing Duncan-esque rotation as movements flow from one isolation to the next. These movements create the illusion that the dancers' bodies are rolling and twisting like unbroken waves. However, as the chorus continues to dance, they become less uniformed as individual rhythms emerge and limbs shoot out in different directions. Ritter breaks the rhythm entirely, splintering the chorus, and dances alone in a semicircle formed by the other dancers. Here, Ritter twists and contorts Duncan-esque torque into new shapes and rhythms. Rather than embrace the gentle, wavelike flow previously accentuated in

the choral dance, Ritter's flow is interrupted, broken, and her movements look more mechanical than aquatic.

As Ritter's solo continues, the movement between isolations becomes more pronounced, evoking a gestural rhythm more akin to hip hop than Duncan. Before this, movement flowed up, down, and across the body with clear directionality. Here, Ritter's movements become erratic. Ritter's leg shoots into the air, breaking the flow of movement that brings her body down towards the ground, which is interrupted again when Ritter twists her torso to fling that energy across her body. Her direction constantly changes as the movements break down, even stalling in some places, such as when Ritter's arms hang in right angles in front of her body, stopping and starting on their path toward the ground. If Duncan considered her style to be in contrast to jazz and ragtime dance styles that arose at the same time as her work (Daly, 1995: 7), Ritter's choreography here subverts Duncan's practices through the addition of hip hop rhythms and jazz techniques and shapes. This subversion does not reject Duncan's style, however, as Ritter maintains a relationship to the free-flowing, torque-like movements associated with Duncan's style both before and during her solo. Neither rejecting Duncan's style altogether nor fully embracing it, Ritter makes styles proliferate, using the seeming anarchy of her gestures to embrace black and brown dance styles that Duncan's danceworks previously disavowed. I read Ritter's choreography here as a reparative political and artistic gesture, one which seeks to reshape and to reimagine Duncan's oeuvre into something more expansive and perhaps more liberatory.

To understand my meaning more fully, I want to read Ritter's use of anarchic gestures here through Black feminist scholar Marquis Bey's concept of anarcho-Blackness. Bey argues for "anarcho-Blackness" rather than "Black anarchism" to express a "critical, generative intimacy" between anarchist politics and Black, queer, and feminist thought (Bey, 2020). For Bey, anarcho-Blackness considers how Blackness interacts with and refigures anarchism to produce an "anticolonial sensibility" (Bey, 2020). According to Bey, anarcho-Blackness "remixes" anarchism to create a "radical world-making project" and "a mode and posture of reading, engaging, and undermining the tenets upon which hegemonic sociality rest" (Bey, 2020). Bey contends that this approach departs from classical anarchism, which desires a leaderless or stateless political order. Bey

theorizes that anarcho-Blackness promotes disorder as anarchy instead, since disorder refuses "order as instantiated by regimes of governance," (Bey, 2020). Bey characterizes this kind of liberatory disorder as an "illegal liberty," (Bey, 2020). This means that anarcho-Blackness achieves liberation or freedom without appealing to pre-existing forms of organization. As Bey observes, the work of anarcho-Blackness is to mobilize what happens when one engages in or creates "harmoniously complex chaos," (Bey, 2020). Anarcho-Blackness expresses a mode of productive disruption and disorganization that creates forms of freedom that do not depend upon their reference to pre-existing governing structures.

I read Bey's concept of anarcho-Blackness desires here as repatriating Black anarchic gestures and actions through a commitment to more fragile forms of collective action. Reading Bey in this way, one recognizes both how political movement is precarious and contingent and how forms of disorganization and disorder can be politically and theoretically productive. Bey observes that the work of anarcho-Blackness is to demand for one to become "monstrously inclusive," which desires that one "does not discriminate or develop criteria for inclusion and, consequently, exclusion" (Bey, 2020). Bey clarifies though that this kind of monstrous inclusivity does not imply a neoliberal politics of representation or inclusivity (Bey, 2020). Rather, Bey argues that anarcho-Blackness is monstrously inclusive because it engenders the "monstrous work" of "liberatory, unanticipated salvation," (Bey, 2020). By this Bey means that one engages in Black anarchic work not to predetermine what society will look like after government but rather to risk what is unknowable or unknown about anarchist world-making. Bey calls this kind of planning by refusing to plan a "fugitive planning," (Bey, 2020). Fugitive planning for Bey invokes both the material dimensions of sustaining fugitive lives whose arrival one cannot plan and the theoretical imperative that one must risk the limits of one's thinking (Bey, 2020). This kind of radical world-making constitutes for Bey a "perpetual openness" that gestures both to ways of being ungoverned or disorderly and to radical ways of loving others (Bey, 2020). Bey characterizes this radical love as both a caress and being "all the way in," both of which gesture to forms of material and affective proximity (Bey, 2020). Bey's concept constitutes not just a different way of thinking about anarchist action. Anarcho-Blackness also gestures towards a mode of being-in-the-

world that informs how one orients towards and feels about others who may have radically different approaches to living and being in the world.

I see Bey's argument as signaling here how a failure to reconcile conflicting political desires can engender new anarcho-Black ways of relating to others. I find this distinction compelling since to me it gestures to how disorderly or anarchic forms of moving and being can take reparative shapes. While Bey does not name or claim these as reparative actions, I see resonances here between Bey's commitment to ruining or beginning anew also offers potential for repairing or rethinking what already exists. For example, anarchic gestures might be reparative when one takes pleasure in opening up or perhaps even ruining pre-existing structures, categories, or other forms of organization. One might enjoy being a wedge, or one might experience a wedge that holds a door ajar as joyful. This similarly evokes Sara Ahmed's concept of the feminist killjoy who breaks the promise of other's happiness "to ruin what ruins" (Ahmed, 2017: 40). Ahmed's thinking here reflects how dismantling things can be informative, or "how we learn about things when we dismantle things, or by dismantling things" (Ahmed, 2017: 40). The figure of the killjoy also imagines how one might feel when one dismantles things: the killjoy figures one who delights in what is ruined, even when that means ruining someone else's joy or pleasure. For example, Ahmed argues that the figure of the "angry Black woman" is a "feminist killjoy who kills feminist joy," since she interrupts forms of feminism that exclude Black women (Ahmed, 2017: 177). In this case, delighting in what one ruins signals a reparative approach: one delights in ruining something so that one might create an opportunity to inhabit differently what has been broken. This sentiment is ironic, but it is not a contradiction. While it is ironic to break something only to repair it, some repairs can only be made after something has already been broken. As Ahmed and Bey both notice, commitment to repair might also demand that one also dismantle or ruin that which needs repaired first. When one engages in fugitive planning too, the conflict between repair and ruin does not need to be reconciled for one to move politically. Rather, one enjoys what emerges when one works within the disorder that might emerge from this conflict, and that joy in turn might allow one to imagine a way of moving politically that embraces these two desires.

Moving politically must become more spontaneous and haphazard should one endeavor to commit to or even to delight in anarchic gestures that bring the potential for both repair and ruin. To navigate this, I want to consider how choreic gestures perform this anarchic orientation to repair and ruin. Gotman notes that choreic gestures are both aesthetic and political gestures that indicate "a tender space of aesthetic autonomy" that "refuses a sort of 'democratic representationalism" (Gotman, 2020: 159). For Gotman, choreic gestures create an opportunity for aesthetic autonomy. She calls this paradigm the alterkinetic, defined as "a genre of playful and unnerving gestural anarchy" (Gotman, 2020: 163). Gotman's concept of alterkinetics demonstrates modes of gestural anarchy where "gesture signals the failure to mean smoothly (to signify, to signal, to be eloquent)" (Gotman, 2020: 164). Here Gotman plays with the slippage between politics, language, and aesthetics. She argues that aesthetic forms take political shapes as a means of articulating how bodies should be shaped, constrained, or categorized through the arrangement of rhythms, images, and patterns. Gotman reads this as how "formal organization is properly choreographic" (Gotman, 2020: 157). Her reading here draws attention to how gestural anarchy might reflect both bodily stylizations and political movement. Gotman rethinks political organization around these alterkinetics, imagining a way of doing both aesthetic and political gestures that might trade on "gestural (dis)attunement" (Gotman, 2020: 159). This means that alterkinetics offer an anarchic gestural system that constitutes a "temporary - aesthetic - autonomous zone" (Gotman, 2020: 159). Gotman's articulation of alterkinetics finds kinship with postformalism, as alterkinetics offer a means of imagining a disorderly or disorganized aesthetics that embraces how gestural forms are already heterogenous and contingent.

Like Bey and Ahmed, Gotman's thinking here reveals a disjuncture between bodily, socio-political, and aesthetic gestural systems and a radically open, anarchic body politic. Gotman's concept of alterkinetics offers a form of aesthetic and political disorganization that embraces a "tender and awkward space of (mis)representation" (Gotman, 2020: 162). Alterkinetics trade on forms of both gestural autonomy and discord, formulating a twin commitment to both bodily and political dis/attunement and tentative, fragile cohabitation and coalition. Returning to *UNDA*, this kind of gestural anarchy attends to the possible collapse of pre-existing forms or structures to engender

the possibility for new forms of being and moving in the world. Ritter's choreography in *UNDA* can be read as making a similar gesture, twisting and interrupting Duncan's use of torque to create an anarchic, more disorderly set of relations between black dance styles like hip hop and Duncan's white American modernist aesthetics. As Ahmed observes, "interruption comes from rupture," (Ahmed, 2017: 177). Ritter uses these hip hop and jazz rhythms to rupture these distinctions, creating radical opportunities to do the "monstrous work" (to invoke Bey) of rethinking and reinhabiting aesthetic and political forms from which black and brown bodies have been excluded.

Wiggly choreopolitics: positivity passivity and relational ethics

From this reading of the politically and aesthetically anarchic potential of Ritter's choreographic approach, I want to consider now how *UNDA* gestures towards another kind of relational politics that draws closer to my thinking around critical passivity. To begin thinking through how critical passivity engenders a more anarchic or entropic body politic, I want to attend to DeSilvey's concept of positive passivity to figure a choreopolitics for passivity. DeSilvey posits positive passivity as an attitude or disposition towards modes of decay and withdrawal. DeSilvey argues that positive passivity "frames people as both 'accomplices' (accommodating ongoing change) and antagonists (intervening selectively to check decay and deterioration)" (DeSilvey, 2017: 115). DeSilvey offers positive passivity as a means of rethinking agency, abandoning control to "make space for a messier form of coexistence" (DeSilvey, 2017: 115). DeSilvey still acknowledges, however ambivalently, the need to rely occasionally upon the judgements of individual or collective agents to maintain some level of material stability. According to DeSilvey, positive passivity is a practice of "productive indeterminacy" that requires one "to experience (and negotiate) the tension between domesticated and wild, control and chaos, intervention and abandonment, process and preservation, intention and accident" (DeSilvey, 2017: 115). Positive passivity is fragile and precarious; DeSilvey characterizes it as open to "profound collapse and transience" (DeSilvey, 2017: 114). This openness to collapse signals to DeSilvey how positive passivity accommodates forms of decay that are "selectively maintained, with some remnants allowed to decay and others

held together through minimal repair" (DeSilvey, 2017: 113). Positive passivity functions for DeSilvey as a kind of curatorial process: one relinquishes control to manage selectively the process of decay. Passivity here is neither active nor inactive, neither agential nor apathetic; rather, DeSilvey characterizes passivity as positive because it is additive or generative. Positive passivity sustains and prunes an ecosystem while allowing that ecosystem to change, which might include becoming less ordered or possibly even decaying into ruin.

Positive passivity methodologically shapes my reading here as a reparative mode that sustains life by embracing processes of decay and disorder. It finds kinship with Bey's thinking as well, as it similarly demonstrates the anarcho-Black desire for disorderly and disorganized forms of political organization (Bey, 2020). This also means that positive passivity is, in many ways, postformalist: positive passivity makes a self-reflexive gesture that recognizes how the relations between curatorial practices are contingent and heterogeneous. This gesture in turn necessitates not only disorder but also ambivalence to the practices that might (or might not) be used or maintained. As a postformalist artwork, *UNDA* engages with a kind of positive passivity to curate messier, more anarchic boundaries between aesthetic forms. This becomes most evident through how *UNDA* incorporates Duncan's aesthetics to refigure how bodies relate to one another. This approach does not simply refer to extant choreographic or movement practices but rather remixes and recontextualizes them. Positive passivity makes a postformalist gesture when one relinquishes control over clear distinctions between aesthetic forms too. This does not make forms illegible or unknowable but rather allows one to curate how one watches or reads. This in turn allows for new kinds of relations to emerge between forms. Like postformalism, positive passivity similarly recognizes that one must risk losing these distinctions and allow them to fall into decay or disorder to engender messier, more heterogeneous relations between bodies and practices.

Ritter's choreography evidences this aesthetic approach to positive passivity most clearly towards the middle of the piece, a moment when the dancers move together. Through this sequence, the pace becomes more frantic and desperate, mirrored in the gradual increase of tempo from the cellist. The *mise-en-scène* evokes a Bacchanalian pastoral, one which evokes the Hellenistic period of classical art that would have been

much appreciated by Duncan. The reveling in *UNDA*, however, is not picturesque and tidy but rather rambunctious and messy. From the haunting cello music to the harsh lighting punctuated with shadows, *UNDA* paints the picture of a desolate, elemental landscape that appears roughly hewn, perhaps even wild. In this more elemental space, the chorus fragments at times before coming back together, sometimes moving in pairs, sometimes breaking off as individuals before rejoining the group. As the movement becomes more frantic, the lights on stage begin to flicker before cutting to black, and the cellist stops abruptly at the same moment. As harsh, white lighting returns to the stage, the chorus dances in shadow while light slowly strobes from the basins of water. The twisting, ecstatic movements take on new meaning as the dancers slow their rhythms and make their movements more subdued. Framed as silhouettes, the dancers appear more like gyrating and swaying clubgoers than ancient Greeks at a religious fête. In the shift of *mise-en-scène* from bacchanal to club, *UNDA* twists the aesthetics of Duncan's work in another new direction, recontextualizing it rather than merely re-presenting it. Ritter and company, like nightclub dancers bumping and grinding their way through ancient ruins, curate Duncan's aesthetics to create new relations between disparate forms and styles.

A question remains though: how does one determine what must be selectively managed? Alternatively, how might one determine the extent to which something must be curated or pruned? What ecologies, structures, or forms are in most need of repair, and which must be allowed to fall into ruin? How might one curate ethically, even if that curation is largely determined by the unpredictable, anarchic gestures of ruination and decay? As a reparative ethics of disrepair, positive passivity refuses the binary logics of action/inaction, animate/inanimate, and active/passive in favor of a more tender practice of cyclical curation and sustained decay. DeSilvey argues that one must give up the illusion that continuous maintenance will preserve structural integrity or stability (DeSilvey, 2017: 114). Rather, DeSilvey advocates for the possibilities that emerge when one selectively manages decay and ruin: "possible unraveling as well as coming together" (DeSilvey, 2017: 116). Positive passivity both unravels and weaves, asking one to adopt an ambivalence both to repairing what comes apart and to ruining what must not be maintained. This kind of curatorial practice requires one to voluntarily accept this lack of control and knowability. Such acceptance, as DeSilvey observes, might bring discomfort,

for an "acceptance of unpredictability can only ever be partial, and uncomfortable" (DeSilvey, 2017: 118). Positive passivity therefore requires one to negotiate those awkward or uncomfortable feelings to practice a softer, gentler approach to curating with co-curators. This has political implications as well, since the work of political organization becomes one not just of disorder but also of awkwardness, discomfort, tenderness, and care.

This line of thinking does not stop DeSilvey from ruminating on some of the impossibilities of positive passivity as well. For example, DeSilvey notices that pre-existing socio-political or economic constraints might either foreclose certain possibilities or impose external interests that conflict with one's own desires. To DeSilvey, this reflects how individuals may form different and opposing judgments on what needs maintenance and what needs removal (DeSilvey, 2017: 117-120). To illustrate this, DeSilvey recounts a project where she mourns the possibilities that were lost because of her team's intervention, even though DeSilvey's team had previously determined that such an intervention was necessary for the longevity and ultimate sanitation of the site. DeSilvey's recollection observes how the questions that emerged from this case were less about the ethics of these choices and more about one's *affective orientation* to that choice, how those choices caused a ripple of conflicting emotions both personal and collective. This leads DeSilvey to consider how positive passivity hinges on one's affective orientation to curation and one's willingness to reveal those contradictions and conflicts (DeSilvey, 2017: 124). DeSilvey's revelation here is profound. She recognizes here what is affectively difficult about curation, but she embraces that difficulty. To DeSilvey, curation requires not only an opening up of possibilities but also "a closing down of some of the possibilities that the site now holds, fraught with failure and collapse, scavenged and scarred, but still occupied, and appreciated" (DeSilvey, 2017: 125). This acceptance and appreciation of what is lost to make way for other possibilities causes DeSilvey to reconsider positive passivity as an affective orientation towards curation that requires a "willingness to live with the wobble" (DeSilvey, 2017: 126).

I find DeSilvey's use of the wobble here interesting, as it adds material and kinetic implications to positivity passivity's affective registers. Willingly accepting the wobble

might evoke a voluntary submission to spontaneous, unplanned movement. Wiggling might be a gesture of discomfort, like fidgeting in one's seat, or a gesture of joy, like shaking with excitement. A wiggle might be small like wiggling one's fingers or toes, or it might be a big movement like swinging hips or twisting shoulders. One might even wiggle to dance, such as popular dances like twerking, flossing, or even the aptly named "wiggle dance." This wiggling might also include older forms of social dance like the Charleston, popularized by Josephine Baker, the jitterbug, and the boogie woogie, all of which featured wiggling limbs, swinging hips, or twisting torsos. Wiggling might also be an involuntary movement, making it more closely aligned with forms of choreomania or disability. Wiggling then might also offer a contra-kinetic that invokes gestural anarchy. Gotman's thinking around alterkinetics similarly parallels the wiggle, which might also be formulated as an "elastic space of normative reconfiguration that is open and affirmative" (Gotman, 2020: 170). As a form of elastic, anarchic movement, wiggling gestures wildly towards positive passivity, engendering a curated approach to disorder and repair. Wiggling recognizes how one might move in unplanned, nondisclosed, and perhaps sometimes even unwanted, ways. Wiggling might imagine movements or gestures that allow one to escape from someone's grasp: one might wiggle to escape what attempts to hold one hostage. Wiggling might formulate a form of political movement that evades capture or escapes that which attempts to control one's body: one wiggles to disrupt or to disturb that which enforces forms of political, social, or aesthetic order.

Wiggling marks a choreopolitics of gestural anarchy that navigates the boundaries between order/disorder and ruin/repair. This means that wiggling also figures a choreography that expresses how one might carefully curate the relations between bodies. Intervention and withdrawal become a part of the wobble that engenders how one negotiates those relations. To elucidate my point, I want to dwell a moment on how this space of negotiation, this wobbliness, similarly reflects feminist scholar Sarah Whatmore's thinking around relational ethics. Whatmore destabilizes the overdetermined discourse of human rights through an attention to forms of relational ethical agency. She argues that human rights discourses highlight "the gendered (and racialized) character of the autonomous self configured as a rights-bearing citizen of a sovereign state" (Whatmore, 2002: 146). Instead of entrenching into this nationalistic

notion of the citizen, Whatmore turns to the relational qualities of ethical agency, noting how forms of embodiment and tacit knowledge shape ethical competence (Whatmore, 2002: 146). She articulates this relationality as "new possibilities for conviviality" that undermine overly determined organizations of selfhood or nationhood (Whatmore, 2002: 146). Alternatively, relational ethics favor an approach to community that embraces the "messy heterogeneity of being-in-the-world" (Whatmore, 2002: 147). The importance of this shift lies in the move from discursivity to corporeality. For Whatmore, this shift refuses the "masculine conceit" of the rights-bearing citizen, which Whatmore identifies as a patriarchal logic that has historically disenfranchised women, people of color, and poor people, among others (Whatmore, 2002: 149). Splintering the right to speech or political dialogue from the rhythms of daily life is ultimately undone by the "fleshy business of living" (Whatmore, 2002: 150). Whatmore emphasizes corporeality as a material, experiential recognition of being-in-the-world to signal a necessary shift towards an ethical relationality that relies upon mutual vulnerability and eventual decay as alternative modes of socio-political recognition.

According to Whatmore's thinking, the mutuality of shared vulnerability and eventual decay presents the foundation for collective action. This echoes Bey's attention to the unknowable, "monstrous" inclusivity of fugitive planning and DeSilvey's insistence on the voluntary acceptance of positive passivity. One willingly wiggles to curate how one swings between repairing and ruining organizing forces or structures. Following Bey's thinking, this wiggly curation requires one to be open to what is unknown, to be open to including those futures and possibilities for which one may not have originally planned. This in turn may require shutting down or ruining other possibilities, which similarly requires one to curate those decisions with less assurance to offer more wiggle room. Like DeSilvey and Bey, Whatmore also contends with difference and dissensus as means of creating new kinds of contingent relations. Whatmore defines these social contingencies as a "difference-in-relation" that is "inter-subjectively constituted in the context of practical or lived configurations of self and community" (Whatmore, 2002: 153). Whatmore's difference-in-relation contextualizes extant factors of place, access, and culture through a respect to lived, material realities. Whatmore calls this a practice of "participatory communalism" (Whatmore, 2002: 153). This collective participation

articulates a practice of care that navigates messy relations between the material conditions of unique bodies. Whatmore advocates for a fleshier theory of bodily difference, one where the body registers as a "living assemblage of corporeal dispositions and relations," (Whatmore, 2002: 154).

Whatmore recognizes these wobbly relations through the contingent social assemblage of bodily dispositions, or what Whatmore calls the "inter-corporeality of social conduct" (Whatmore, 2002: 155). Whatmore connects these wobbly relations to feminist care ethics to consider how one might practice attending to another's material, bodily needs. By attending to those who are most vulnerable and least mobile as living, mortal beings and not discursive subjectivities, Whatmore's relational ethics recognizes that one's ethical consciousness arises from what is contingent and vulnerable about mutual survival. This echoes Bey's articulation of "anarcho-life" as well, which Bey's contends formulates a recognition of disorderly or anarchic relations that imagine "life by other means," (Bey, 2020). These contingent social relations formulate an ecology precisely because they include nonhuman and vegetal organisms as well, which Whatmore locates as similarly contingent and vulnerable. Whatmore expresses how human and nonhuman life are contingent as the "corporeal immersion of humankind in the biosphere" (Whatmore, 2002: 157). This means that Whatmore recognizes not an individual or a collective of individuals but rather the world as the ethical subject, which in turn frames relational ethics as "an ecological care ethic" (Whatmore, 2002: 158). As an ecological care ethic, relational ethics foreground what Whatmore identifies as "the geographies of intimacy and affect" (Whatmore, 2002: 158). This geoethical approach to contingent social relations in turns re-enmeshes the contingency of living beings. One orients towards these contingent relations through a fragile, careful, and disorderly negotiation of collective political movements: a wiggly choreopolitics. Much like how the dancers in *UNDA* twist and turn a pastoral aesthetics into one evoking a night at the club, the force of collective gyrations wiggle bodies and spaces into new affective and aesthetic arrangements.

Going limp, or the body politics of critical passivity

To imagine how critical passivity activates a wiggly choreopolitics, I want to consider further how a wiggly approach to collective political action can be mapped onto my reading of *UNDA*. Both literal and metaphoric anarchic gestures in *UNDA* signal how Ritter's choreography stylizes a critically passive approach to a wiggly body politic. The anarchic choral body in *UNDA* figures an affective, material, and kinetic body politic that engenders more contingent forms of relating and moving together. As Roberts-Tse notes, the dancers in *UNDA* dance in pairs, trios, or as individuals but always ultimately come back together as a chorus (Roberts-Tse, 2020b). Throughout the performance, dancers dance in pairs and later trios that both reflect and refract each other, creating multiple, overlapping dialogues that happen in concert with one another. The dancers frequently dance in unison, but their movements are rarely the exact same. As a phrase or rhythm builds, a member of the chorus will introduce a new idea: a new direction, a new gesture, a new rhythm or intensity. These ideas are sometimes taken up by other dancers, and sometimes not, oftentimes resulting in a kind of disorganized cacophony of gestures and intensities. In these moments, individual dancers peel away from the chorus to offer new relational possibilities. The dancers' interjections and interruptions never fully undo the group's cohesion: the chorus maintains a fragile and haphazard unity as individuals break off, rejoin, and alter the group's direction.

This choral body is not a homogenous body; this is not the same choral body as the corps de ballet, which moves in perfect uniformity and rhythm. The chorus here is more anarchic: they interrupt, disagree with, impose upon, or recede from individual dancers while always inevitably submitting to the force of collective movement. My thinking finds kinship here with how other scholars have articulated the politicization of movement; for example, Gotman recognizes anarchic political movement through the choreomaniacal body, a choreic body politic that takes cues from choral dancing to emerge as "a signature for collective motility" (Gotman, 2018a: 304). As Gotman argues, a chorus can represent a kind of social body, one which figures itself as "a representation of social order and public opinion" (Gotman, 2018a: 305). As a means of demonstrating how one might move collectively, the choreomaniacal body is a kind of choral body that rejects uniformity in favor of a more fragile and fraught coalition for moving. As Gotman notes, the choreomaniacal body is "chaotic, jumbled...not cohesive" (Gotman, 2018a:

304). This means that a choreomaniacal body also echoes Gotman's concept of the alterkinetic. As a stylization of alterkinetic body politics, the choreomaniacal body reimagines kinaesthetic regimes for socio-political bodies. This means that choreomaniacal bodies remix gestural intensities through a commitment to unfaithful aesthetic citation. The choreomaniacal body is both postformalist and a kind of anarcho-Blackness: it materializes a choreic body politic that hinges on messier, more anarchic relations between bodily forms and modes of being-in-the-world. The chorus in *UNDA* does not concern itself with smoothing over histories or futures for discreet gestural languages or bodily stylizations; rather, it ruins the borders between forms to make newer, more fragile boundaries. This choreomaniacal body dances a kind of aesthetic anarchy that engenders a more fragile and open space of coalition.

This choreic body politic maps the wiggle of critical passivity as going limp. Going limp here means submitting to the force of collective action, allowing oneself to mingle and move with a choreic, wiggling body politic. To unpack my meaning here, I want to consider Judith Butler's thinking around relationality and non-violent political action to figure going limp as a bodily stylization of a critically passive disposition. While Butler considers relational ethics along the logics of violence/nonviolence, Butler's approach to relationality echoes Whatmore's approach to managing social and ecological contingencies. This means that Butler identifies ethical relationality as ambivalent, mutable, and contradictory: "relationality is a vexed and ambivalent field in which the question of ethical obligation has to be worked out in light of a persistent and constitutive destructive potential" (Butler, 2020: 10). According to Butler, relationality does not emerge at the end of one's ethical decision-making; rather, social contingencies refigure ethical agency by attending to contingent, vulnerable relations. Instead of investing further in individualist logics, Butler considers how relationality redirects the question of ethical agency (Butler, 2020: 10).

Butler's sense of directionality here evokes reorientation rather than simply a change in direction. Butler rejects the notion of a necessary self that must be defended (Butler, 2020: 11-13). Instead, Butler considers what is mutually dependent about social bonds, noticing where bodies become thresholds for receptivity and openness. Butler defines these bodies-as-thresholds as "the site of passage and porosity, the evidence of

an openness to alterity that is definitional of the body itself," (Butler, 2020: 16). This similarly echoes Bey's thinking around the radical openness of anarcho-Blackness, which necessitates that one must become "monstrously inclusive" (Bey, 2020). Butler later figures this receptivity or openness to passivity as "going limp," (Butler, 2020: 22). Butler articulates going limp as "exercising an adamant and embodied form of political agency" (Butler, 2020: 22). When one goes limp, a bodily aesthetic for passivity materializes. One's body becomes not rigid, hard, or resolute but pliable, soft, and limp. Butler's thinking here also connotes a form of bodily submission, noting how physical submission can transform social and political relations (Butler, 2020: 22). This reading gestures to how I can also characterize limpness as submission, willingness, or receptivity. There is a clear connection here between limpness and critical passivity: one goes limp to submit to or to receive the force of social relations, creating opportunities for one to materialize modes of bodily and affective openness to other bodies.

With this distinction in view, going limp might be a critically passive gesture that precedes wiggly political movements. Alternatively, one might go limp after wiggling, or one might either wiggle or go limp without doing the other too. All of these choreographies of going limp and wiggling recognize how movement might emerge through, exceed, or fail to appear within forms of collective political movement. Going limp constitutes what Butler calls an "ethical stylization of embodiment" (Butler, 2020: 22). This means that going limp performs or stylizes a critically passive disposition within a wiggly body politic. Limpness negotiates the thresholds between bodies, revealing how the borders between bodies might become soft or pliable. As a bodily stylization of a critically passive disposition, going limp disturbs hard barriers between bodies-in-relation. Limpness then is not only about surrendering to the force of collective movement: limpness constitutes a bodily threshold through which new forms of material, affective relations might become (em)bodied. Through this reading, limpness becomes a form of body-worlding[17], where going limp creates new forms of being and

[17] Dance theorist Erin Manning offers the term "body-worlding" to express how one not only inhabits or embodies a space but also how one creates space through one's bodily engagement with it (Manning, 2009: 13). Manning uses this term to articulate how one "colors space, vibrates it," (Manning, 2009: 13). This means that body-worlding illustrates how "coming-together poses a combination of form-forces," (Manning, 2009: 13). Manning also calls this a kind of "relational shape shifting," meaning that the

relating. Going limp and wiggling offer a choreography that styles an openness to new ways of being or moving together. Critical passivity might be figured as an approach to political movement that maps anarchic or disorderly gestures as a form of knowing, relating to, or otherwise encountering other bodies.

Wiggly choreopolitics figure how going limp stylizes a critically passive disposition towards contingent and haphazard forms of social relations and political movement. To illustrate this, I want to return to Whatmore's thinking on relational ethics once more. Whatmore notes how the "performance of multiple lived worlds" emerges "through the assemblage of mutually constituting subjects" (Whatmore, 2002: 159). Wiggling performs these contingent assemblages, offering a form of movement that performs jumbled and haphazard coalitional political movements. This collective yet disorganized body politic figures the kinetic materiality of Whatmore's living assemblage. Wiggly choreopolitics map a contingent but not uniform ecology, one that recognizes both dependency and difference within social relations. As movements of an anarchic body politic, wiggling performs critically passive approaches to moving politically. This in turn means that going limp and wiggling both offer a choreography of critically passive political postures and turns. Moving politically means embracing how collective political action might operate in multiple and even contradictory directions. Limpness styles how one reorients towards these forms of collective political action: limpness allows one to practice new ways of relating or being together while engaging with choreic forms of political movement. Critical passivity articulates that limpness as both a material, bodily stylization and a political or ethical responsibility. Wiggly choreopolitics express this limpness too, offering a kind of ecstatic movement, which gestures both to "hysterical" or uncontrollable movements and feeling joy or exuberance. This limp approach to a wiggly body politic offers not just an individual gesture but also as a collective one. One goes limp to the force of collective movement, and the collective political body wiggles, disrupting and destabilizing social relations to imagine new ways of being together.

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relationship between bodies and spaces expresses "the invisible-but-palpable link between bodies," (Manning, 2009: 13). This relational shape-shifting or body-worlding acknowledges how bodies and spaces come together and refigure each other at points of bodily contact (Manning, 2009: 13).

As *UNDA* demonstrates though, a wiggly choreopolitics engenders an anarchic and uncertain choreography for collective political movement. While the movement throughout the performance appears wild and frenetic, *UNDA*'s chorus still demonstrates a careful approach to moving together. These heterogeneous choral movements reveal their carefulness towards the end of the piece. After being separated by a darkened stage and storm-like soundscape, the dancers appear in the light of the water basin placed centerstage, washing themselves in the water. The business around the basin makes use of careful, slow movements that make the sequence appear to happen in slow motion. The gestures here are mundane though, as dancers wash their faces or scrub their arms. What strikes me about this moment is the sense of tender community that arises in these gestures. At one point, one dancer splashes another with water; later, another dancer helps others wash their hair. The simplicity of these gestures and the careful, tender way in which they are crafted demonstrate a fragile yet careful approach to community. This sense of carefully crafted community is sustained through the end of the performance, as the dancers move away from the basin and begin to move as a chorus again. The dancers retain their individuality through this build towards the finale since dancers still sometimes break away for solos or move with slight variation from each other. The chorus is chaotic, frantic even; as the music crescendos, the dancing becomes more vigorous, more intense. The culmination of this however is a strikingly unified image: the lighting fades again, leaving the dancers in the same chiaroscuro effect as earlier in the performance. Appearing only as silhouettes, the dancers move together seamlessly, a coalition of bodies that appear indistinguishable from one another. Even as they move together in this way, the dancers find moments of looseness and imprecision within their collective movements. The silhouetted chorus never appears here as a single body but as an assemblage of bodies, a wiggling, fragile collective that verges on breaking apart even as it shapes its disparate parts into something like a whole.

This is the choreopolitics of the wiggle: the critical and political capacity to carefully twist and contort those indeterminable, autonomous zones into new, more disorganized, and more reparative forms of political movement. A wiggly choreopolitics repatriates the aesthetico-political terrains upon which these fragile and heterogenous movements might imagine new horizons for shared futurity. Critical passivity gestures

towards this set of investments in collective political movement: critical passivity imagines how one might submit to the force of collective movement to engender new forms of being together. Going limp styles this critically passive disposition as a way of relating to other bodies, allowing one to submit to collective political action or to imagine new ways of being with others. These fragile relations may at times break down or stumble, may sometimes fall into disorderly or disorganized movements. However, anarchic or disorganized gestures do not signal the end of collective political action; rather, these choreic forms of collective political movement signal a shift towards new possibilities for more fragile and tender approaches to community. As *UNDA* demonstrates, when one crafts careful and disorganized forms of community, one finds joy in cultivating new forms of being and relating to others. Carefully crafting a more fragile community risks having that community fall to ruin, or it might require ruining or remixing existing communities when those borders are broken down. However, one delights in that ruin, recognizing how accepting disorder or disrepair can in turn allow one to repair or to repurpose those relations in new ways. Wiggling and going limp stylize what is reparative about critical passivity too: one ruins or anarchizes one's borders to make them soft, cultivating the possibility that one might be moved or affected by new ways of being-in-the-world.

Towards a theory of critical passivity

Methodology revisited: (un)doing research

My excursions in thinking through my close readings bring me back to theorizing critical passivity methodologically, considering further how it emerges as a new feminist theory that values affective, material, and otherwise embodied forms of knowledge. I take from these close readings the sustained impulse to imagine further how critical passivity takes shape as a theory and as a critical disposition. My reading of *Manon* and how it enables moments of touch and contact brings my attention to ambivalence and how it enlivens critical passivity as a critical disposition. My thinking around proximity and contact expands into new questions about risk, harm, and pleasure, so my reading of *Bluebeard* applies critical passivity as a way of affectively and critically navigating risk. This makes me attend to how critical passivity enables me to move around the edges of potentially harmful contact with performance and refigure that work as pleasurable and desirable. My attention to the edges and how one enjoys being close to or taking pleasure in edgework expands the scope of my questions again, which materializes as thinking about new ways of coming together and moving politically. My reading of *UNDA* enables me to think about how critical passivity envisions a disposition of openness and receptivity, which I articulate as limpness or going limp, and how that informs a rambunctious, unruly, and wiggly body politic. All these close readings are in ways additive to my thinking around critical passivity: they create opportunities to practice thinking about how critical passivity articulates what is affective, bodily, and processual about coming to knowing. I practice those feminized ways of knowing by thinking through smaller acts of noticing, observing, encountering, reading, and writing.

Through the process of writing about these close readings, I have found how affective, bodily forms of knowing intersect with and build upon both dance-based and feminist forms of bodily knowing. Despite desiring new forms of critical engagement, critical passivity nonetheless maintains a necessary ambivalence to extant critical writing practices. As a result of engaging with my emergent theory of critical passivity,

my practice for critical writing has been fraught. I have found resistance and ambivalence to reading and writing methods emerge through my process of thinking through these theoretical and practical terrains. In this chapter, I wish to contend that this shifting, evolving relationship between reading, writing, and critical passivity has formulated for me a reorientation towards how one might come to knowing through critical reading and writing. As such, I consider over the course of this chapter how my theory of critical passivity might engender hopeful forms of critique. Throughout this chapter, I examine how critical passivity desires a more ethical and imaginative engagement with extant critical frameworks. This similarly encourages me to consider the choreopoetics of my own writing process, including how my theory of critical passivity reimagines critical writing as a creative practice of performative interpretation. As a means of imagining futures for a theory of critical passivity, I consider how critical passivity might engender other methods or practices that similarly desire a more ethical, empathetic engagement with ecologies of knowing.

I examine throughout this chapter how I employed various compositional methodologies and how those practices shifted or evolved as I undertook this research. A deeper consideration of compositional strategy encouraged me to rethink my research methods as I shifted my attention and tailored my writing to the affective intensities and embodied knowledges that surfaced throughout my readings. I subsequently consider throughout the course of this chapter how a theory of critical passivity constitutes my research framework and encourages me to develop an attention to the form of my writing as much as the content of my reading. This shift in attention requires me as the researcher to think about how I was moved over the course of my knowledge-making processes. This means that I consider how dance spoke to me or made me feel rather than how I as the researcher might impose or inscribe an extant theory or reading on top of these performances. The process of writing about these readings of dance has therefore increasingly drawn my attention to the style or perhaps the (choreo)poetics of my own writing as much as (if not more than) the translation of affective, bodily knowledge into writing. As such, I found myself struggle with the form of critique, even when my critical perspectives ranged from feminist criticism to dance theory to postcritique. As a research framework, this attention required me to adopt critical passivity as a compositional ethos

as well, engendering a reorientation to the received methods of reading and writing that I utilized throughout my research.

This discovery of how critical passivity shifted my attention to affective, bodily knowledges during my reading and writing practices necessitated that I approach critical writing and reading as a kind of studio process, a term I use here both metaphorically and literally. By arguing for a studio process for critical practices of reading and writing later in this chapter, I wish to draw focus to how affective, bodily knowledges inform the process of writing about one's research, rather than assuming a dissociation or bifurcation from the practical, material experience of conducting research and writing about that research. In thinking of critical passivity as a studio process for writing, I emphasize reorienting towards the material, haptic, and choreographic qualities of thinking through writing. I contend later in this chapter that this reorientation towards critical writing repositions it as an imaginative, creative method akin to developing art or performance in a studio. Within this reorientation towards the material and imaginative dimensions of writing, critical passivity shapes not only a researcher's critical dis/position but also her compositional methods and strategies. For me and my thinking, how one reads or writes became not just a set of codified practices but a space of negotiation, exploration, and imagination. I consider how critical passivity reshapes critical writing methods by valuing the invisible choreographic dimensions of reading and writing. I consider how this application might reveal or value forms of bodily or affective knowledge as a way of coming to knowing through discursive critical praxis. To resist concluding, I suggest how further research into my emergent theory of critical passivity might contribute to the continued development of alternative compositional practices, particularly those that seek to be moved by choreographic practices.

Towards a theory of critical passivity

As I have noted elsewhere in this thesis, I maintain that critical passivity is a weak theory. By this I mean that critical passivity is a *theory*, yes, but a weak one, one that hinges upon the local, the affective, the marginal, and the imaginative. As Eve Sedgwick observes, theories become weak when they occupy only a particular domain or

application (Sedgwick, 2003: 120). This in turn means that weak theories only become "strong" or more universal through "textured analogy," (Sedgwick, 2003: 121). According to Sedgwick, a weak theory cannot understand what it comes up against unless it is "significantly similar or resemblant enough to one or more in its domain" (Sedgwick, 2003: 121). I recognize that such a gesture might in turn cause critical passivity to fail to speak to some questions or thoughts, that it might "remain dumb," (Sedgwick, 2003: 121). However, I want to affirm critical passivity as a weak theory to avoid closing or reforming it into a totalizing framework or strong theory that might insulate it from further development. I find that weak theory offers a kind of interruption into my desire to frame critical passivity, which in turn enables some critical wiggle room. Rather than attempt to totalize critical passivity into one "strong" theory, I want critical passivity to remain available for continued reimagining and development. Keeping critical passivity a weak theory allows it to stumble over what it has not yet come up against. This refuses but does not negate the paranoid belief that strong theories are "always ready to draw the line" around one's thinking (Sedgwick, 2003: 121). I unquestioningly desire to articulate the terms, conditions, and investments of critical passivity in a way that gestures towards those textured analogies that might make critical passivity strong. However, I characterize critical passivity as a weak theory here specifically to signal how I wish to cultivate a more ethical and processual approach to developing feminist theory. This similarly rejects the paranoid belief that a theory of critical passivity might exceed or evacuate its reparative qualities. Instead, a weak approach to theory allows critical passivity to remain on unstable ground, keeping it available to surprise, innovation, and repair.

My linking of ethos with theory similarly requires a recognition that theory might emerge as a way of imagining a more ethical world that does not operate along existing axes of power and domination. I wish to imagine how developing a theory of critical passivity requires a softer, more open space of critical negotiation. I have previously characterized critical passivity as an ethos, and I name critical passivity a weak theory to add to this characterization. Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski note that critique is often used as a synonym for theory (Anker & Felski, 2017: 3); as such, there is a tendency to conflate method with theory. However, remembering Toril Moi's assertion that "a theory

is not a method" (Moi, 2017: 35), I feel it is important to name critical passivity a theory to draw attention to the idea that a theory of critical passivity might invoke a genre of investments, interests, or feelings more so than a particular method or set of practices. This linking of theory and ethos also has a dual gesture, as it frustrates the patriarchal and colonial connotations of theory as a totalizing organization of the world. I seek instead to consider theory as a genre, by which I mean that theory is a loose, imprecise constellation of attitudes, affects, and investments rather than a monolithic or myopic framework or worldview. My desire here is that one might take up the desire to do theory ethically, which may require one to hold some degree of ambivalence or self-reflexivity when doing theory. Critical passivity as a weak theory requires that one must consider what exists at the margins of thought so that one can engage more ethically with a larger ecology of knowing.

Critical passivity emerges as only one constellation of my thinking and how it sits within a larger ecology of theoretical knowledge. To further illustrate my meaning here, I want to turn to Sara Ahmed's theorizing around orientation and reorientation. To explore her conceptualization of orientation and reorientation, Ahmed considers the metaphor of the philosopher sitting at a writing desk. For Ahmed, the desk or table represents the *mise-en-scène* of knowledge for the philosopher, as the table becomes the surface upon which philosophy is written (Ahmed, 2006: 3). Ahmed notes that the scene of philosophy must begin with the writing table because the table is the object closest to the body of the philosopher; it is the thing that the philosopher turns towards first (Ahmed, 2006: 3). However, Ahmed also notes that philosophical writing relegates the table to the thing in the background rather than as one of the necessary conditions for the philosopher's thinking and writing (Ahmed, 2006: 4). The table is the paratext that recedes from view even while it constitutes the conditions necessary for one to see the philosopher's thinking. By this I mean that the table, as the stage upon which writing occurs, recedes from view as writing comes into view, rendering the written text the final object or product that makes knowledge observable. This turning back and forth between writing, the text, the philosopher's body, and the table formulates a foundation for Ahmed's interest in orientation, as the "what" or "how" of knowledge (in the case of Ahmed's metaphor, the table) becomes the device that propels one towards or away from

particular ways of knowing. Per Ahmed's view, turning towards the table and bringing it into view constitutes a reorientation which offers new ways of thinking and writing about the scene (or to use Ahmed's words, the "angle") of thought (Ahmed, 2006: 4).

What if one is to examine the writing table rather than the text as what makes knowledge visible, or what if one considered an examination of the philosopher's table as fundamental for considering text? How might an examination of the table as a scene of coming to knowing imagine new worlds or inspire a revolutionary consciousness? If the act of reorienting is a kind of bringing into view what exists in the background–what is marginal perhaps–then a theory of critical passivity suggests a desire for reorienting towards the paratexts that exist in the margins. In this view the margins or what is marginal becomes the paratextual bodies that constitute one's coming to knowing. This in turn also suggests how a theory of critical passivity might articulate desires for new, process-oriented forms of critical writing that might better reveal these reorientations. For example, if critical passivity is a theory that might include kinetic, visceral, and affective conditions for knowing, then a critically passive reading might offer a reorientation towards or attention to affective, bodily registers as a scene of knowing and meaning-making. In this estimation, the thing receding or becoming marginal that must be reoriented towards might be a thinking body-in-motion or a feeling, experiential body, going beyond the writing in the margins to the hand that writes and the body that senses, breathes, and quivers.

Critical passivity must engender a softer, weaker approach to meaning making through one's reading. Perhaps critical passivity might be such a fragile framework, such a weak theory. I feel that this is where critical passivity most clearly emerges for me both as a framework and as a refusal to frame. I think of Ahmed's call to build feminist houses with different tools and materials and to consider structures that might collapse and need rebuilding rather than permanent structures (Ahmed, 2017: 16). This means that critical passivity is not necessarily a framework even though it may in some ways attempt to frame my thinking. Perhaps one might utilize critical passivity as a means of framing weaker structures that might later collapse. I find myself constantly wandering, wiggling between my ambivalent desire to frame and to dismantle the critical shelters I inhabit. Vacillating between these paranoid and reparative modes constitutes an ecology of

knowledge (Sedgwick, 2003: 145); I must in some ways haunt paranoid dwellings that reside within that larger ecosystem. I must wander through and among marginal ways of knowing even while simultaneously desiring to dwell in and around more established frames of paranoid critique. I nonetheless find myself circling around what has been forced to the margins in my own research, even as I recognize my contradictory impulse to (re)produce those paranoid frameworks that marginalize. My articulation of critical passivity as a (weak) theory formulates both an attempt to articulate my commitment to what theory offers or can do while simultaneously refusing to enclose critical passivity into a broad, solid, or immovable framework.

Critical passivity as reading practice

I want to consider how critical passivity impacts one's reading practice before later turning to alternative approaches to writing practice. Through my emergent theory of critical passivity, reading as a practice or method of investigation becomes similarly available to speculative exploration. If critical passivity is a theory but not a framework, then one might apply critical passivity as a set of investments or attentions for received critical methods like reading and writing. For the moment I would like to consider how it might function as an ethos for reading practice before later considering how critical passivity informs writing practices. As a reading practice, critical passivity could be understood as akin to what literary scholar Lisa Blackman articulates as an ethos-as-medium. As Blackman articulates, ethos-as-medium locates where a researcher's critical ethos becomes a form of mediated perception that gives shape to one's findings through acts of critical interpretation (Blackman, 2015: 39). Following this thinking, ethos could be defined as a method of critical interpretation predicated on an attention to one's intentionality while reading or writing. Through this understanding, one's critical perspective continuously frames, unframes, and reframes her research process, constituting a creative, interpretative act through which one might come to knowing. Critical passivity might similarly be understood as an awareness of how one's investments–be they personal, political, critical, or artistic, to name a few–are moved by and in turn move one's critical interpretations.

As a means of shaping critical interpretations, considering critical passivity as an application of ethos-as-medium attends to how these commitments enact a reorientation to one's approach to critical practices through affective, bodily, and material knowledges. Blackman's ideas of performative interpretation through one's ethos evokes to me Erin Manning's ideas of preacceleration and relationscapes. Per Manning's thinking, the elasticity of the interpretive act seems to throw both researcher and object-event into what Manning calls a sensing-across, or a kind of rhizomatic, relational projection of experience that constitutes its own aesthetico-critical topography of meaning (Manning, 2009: 171). Blackman's concept of ethos-as-medium also more explicitly draws from Derrida's concepts of hauntology and deconstruction, imagining critical stages upon which a researcher hosts or embodies disparate hauntings in a scene of critical meaning-making (Blackman, 2015: 39). Blackman's concept envisions the researcher as an (em)bodied archive of experiences, whereby the researcher utilizes a critical or artistic ethos to perceive and mediate these disparate and intangible traces into a form of embodied, affective knowledge.

As a method of critical interpretation, critical passivity might be engaged as a reading practice, whereby a researcher gauges their affective energies, bodily intensities, or material encounters alongside the critical dimensions of close reading. In these interpretative acts, a researcher's energies, intensities, or investments (personal, political, artistic, affective, or otherwise) materialize as the paratextual bodies that mediate and materialize one's critical interpretations. The researcher's feeling, sensing body--one that aches, leaks, shakes, speaks, feels, moves--become intertextually entwined with the researcher's studies. Clean divisions between critical, affective, and material states cannot hold in this transtextual space, a space where the researcher cannot remove herself or her practices from the messiness of living and being-in-the-world, even while brushing against the seemingly bounded worlds of the page, stage, or screen. Here there is no way to separate completely the researcher from the researched. Instead, the paratextual body of the researcher haunts her texts, contorting them, smearing them, inhabiting them, bleeding on them, making them wet with sweat and tears and spilled coffee. In this collapse, the researcher is no longer merely manipulating an object, impressing or interrupting it with her readings to suit her needs or desires.

Rather, the researcher is pressed upon by her object of study just as she presses back in turn. If one could somehow look at it from the outside, I imagine that it would look like a dance, one where the researcher is being moved by her critical and artistic practices and investments.

While this approach is not dissimilar from other lines of feminist or queer thinking, my attention here is specifically focused on how these material, affective dimensions touch and reshape critique and theory as critical practices. To unpack my meaning here, I want to consider how critical passivity evokes Eve Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading to better illustrate how critical passivity as a reading practice might manifest through active reading methods. This in turn will begin to gesture to how critical passivity informs and interpolates critical writing practices, which I will unpack later in this chapter. Writing about one's research might be a practice of active exploration, and critical reading might similarly be actualized as a scene or space upon which a researcher works out her thoughts. To me, this gestures to two different yet similar directions: reparative reading and margin writing. In the case of reparative reading, considering one's reading practices as an opportunity for exploration and discovery evokes Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading, where paranoid modes of mastering or attacking a text are rejected in favor of approaching a text with surprise, joy, or care (Sedgwick, 2003: 146). Sedgwick even makes a similar appraisal of positionality as Blackman, noting how one's critical position is more akin to an ego posture or stance, which in turn recognizes one's positionality as mutable and vacillating rather than tied to discrete markers (Sedgwick, 2003: 128). In Sedgwick's estimation, it is not that reparative modes are more optimistic than paranoid modes but rather that reparative modes value how one's investment in or engagement with an object might shift or change. This means that the true power of Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading is that it desires the imaginative, hopeful potential of a more localized reading that does not desire to totalize or to sanitize a text (Sedgwick, 2003: 145). While Sedgwick desires reparative modes over paranoid modes, she nonetheless recognizes how these modalities require each other to formulate a full landscape upon which different forms of knowing are both active and reactive.

This distinction of Sedgwick's is crucial to understand how critical passivity might inform how one approaches other critical methods or practices, as the desire to consider how one is moved is ultimately a similar desire for additive, imaginative approaches to knowledge ecologies. I feel it is important to note this distinction that Sedgwick makes to more fully understand how critical passivity works alongside reparative reading. Following Sedgwick's thinking, I contend that embracing critical passivity as a research ethos recognizes how one's knowledge is contingent, how the process of coming to or generating knowledge emerges through overlapping, contradictory, and wavering investments with various ways of knowing. Sedgwick does not position reparative reading against paranoid reading, nor does she attempt to disavow paranoid modes through reparative modes. Rather, reparative reading emerges as *pharmakon* to paranoid reading precisely because it formulates part of this larger, shifting "ecology of knowing" (Sedgwick, 2003: 145). This means that reparative reading is not reductive, a quality Sedgwick associates with paranoid reading, but additive (Sedgwick, 2003: 149). To extend Ahmed's thinking, critical passivity might be an ethos through which one brings their beingness into existence within the greater topography of knowledge through overlapping acts of coming to knowing. A critically passive ethos becomes the means through which one points to their existence as a knowing, feeling being, adding to rather than diminishing the ecologies of knowing within which one emerges.

Through this application of critical passivity, the process of working out one's thoughts through reading becomes a means of adding to rather than ripping away at the multiple emergent meanings that are or have been located within an object of study. The experience of being moved, whether that is affective, bodily, or intellectual, is a moment of recognizing how an influx of forces adds to one's experience or understanding and in turn brings one's thinking into (or perhaps back to) being. This recognition shares many similarities to a hunch or a gut-feeling, an impulse that might orient oneself in different directions. Hunches or gut-feelings are akin to Manning's understanding of moments of preacceleration; an impulse can move or throw oneself into both awareness and further engagement. Neetu Khanna locates these gut-feelings within visceral feelings as well, such as nausea, laughter, spitting, vomiting, or crying. As Khanna notes, these visceral

feelings emerge not as extensions but as interruptions to clean lines of thought: viscera manifest as forms of both bodily and critical eruption that return one to affective states of being and potentially to "the promise of the visceral: *to feel new feelings*" (Khanna, 2020: 150). These (int)erupting constellations of bodily and metaphoric viscera formulate in Khanna's view "a critical dimension…of revolutionary consciousness" (Khanna, 2020: 2). One might even consider how this might invoke the spirit of postcritical approaches to reading, where the focus of one's critical reading practice might be to imagine new possibilities for more revolutionary, more liberated forms of critique (Anker & Felski, 2017: 20). I contend that utilizing critical passivity as an ethos similarly begins to formulate a new approach to critical reading. In my own thinking, these bodily, visceral interruptions have occurred both inside of and outside of my encounters with text—perhaps another audience member touches my arm while we watch the dancers, or perhaps reading feminist theory about BDSM draws my attention to how erotic close reading is. Perhaps critical passivity might emerge as a similar kind of affective, bodily interruption of one's critical self-consciousness to produce a new kind of revolutionary consciousness for critique.

Critical passivity as a reading practice interrupts one's self-consciousness to return oneself to the affective, visceral qualities of being-in-the-world. As an ethos for close reading, critical passivity becomes a means through which one might recognize what may not be otherwise observed or acknowledged in the final product of one's meaning-making (an artwork, a book, etc.). Here I would like to return to how critical passivity might orient researchers towards margin writing and note-taking while reading, as these practices of sense-making might reveal the otherwise unmarked processes of working out one's thoughts while reading. When I consider my own research process, I cannot help but think of the myriads of scribbles, doodles, lines, dashes, arrows, and snippets of thoughts that cover my texts. I find that I am the kind of reader that I must cover my text to work out what I am thinking, and that no two texts look quite the same. Some readings I mostly highlight or underline, using color and lines to block out ideas in the text that move me. Others are barely legible due to the scribbled mess of notes or doodles with which I have covered the pages. Digital readings even bear hidden blocks of notes where I typed out thoughts, questions, frustrations, and quips. Sometimes I was

frustrated with a text; other times, I found myself deeply moved. Sometimes texts made me laugh, and sometimes they made me cry.

I find myself wiggling between the desire to reveal these texts and my desire to obscure them, to keep them hidden. All of these visceral, affective encounters reflect a sort of hypertextual engagement with the text that demonstrates my thinking-in-action and interrupts my self-conscious attempts to tidy my thinking. However, I consider these scribbles deeply personal and private–they are not something I could or would even want to readily share as part of the product of my process of knowing. I find these thoughts hiding in the margins of my texts, another of the paratextual bodies that haunt my writing. Writing in the margins is to me a kind of meaning-making that is both embarrassingly personal yet fundamental to how I understand and explore what I read. What really moves me about my writing in the margins though is how it remains marginalized. When informed by a critically passive disposition, one's wiggling between the center and the margin of one's reading and writing produces a kind of choreopoetics for coming to knowledge. Engaging with critical passivity as a choreopoetics for coming to knowing attunes me to what is marginalized or what is marginal.

Critical passivity as writing practice

From this recognition of critical passivity as a reading practice that attends to what is marginal, I wish to consider how critical passivity has mediated what I perceive as marginal within my own research process. At this point, it has become impossible for me not to collapse the distance between myself and my own research even as I attempt to re-establish it through the act of writing about my research. To pretend that when I talk about "the researcher" that I am not talking about myself would be dishonest. What has always made this project both compelling and difficult to me has instead been my tendency to collapse these critical distances while simultaneously trying to reform them. Just as I cannot write from a space too removed from my research, I cannot write from a space too close to it either. I must write myself as "the researcher" because on the page I cannot be multiple versions of myself at the same time, even if I would like to create a writing that attempts to position me as such. Sara Ahmed notes a similar phenomenon.

However, Ahmed argues that writing brings into existence the overlapping and co-mingling of multiple material, lived positions (Ahmed, 2017: 230). Ahmed characterizes this as a "writing of all existence, with insistence, with persistence" (Ahmed, 2017: 230). From this, Ahmed theorizes the intersection as how one points to their existence, where pointing at which positions intersect or overlap becomes the labor of bringing oneself into being (Ahmed, 2017: 230). In my estimation, there is a different kind of disjuncture that happens here, a different kind of paratext that haunts me even as I attempt to write into being the multiple valences of these overlapping and intangible positions that remain nonetheless tangible and material. These paratexts escape the normative parameters of academic research: how do I write about the feeling of bumping up against the dancers at the pub after my affective encounter with them in the darkened theatre? How does a touch on my arm change the entire trajectory of my thinking? How does the loneliness of thinking, reading, and watching inform the desire to imagine different kinds of communities, different ways of being together? Perhaps this seems like a paradox—and if I am being honest, it often feels like one too—though I wonder if such a paradox might be a feature and not a fault. Critical passivity is what emerges to me within that wiggly space, a way of both framing and unframing all the thoughts and feelings and encounters that slip and squeeze through the spaces between myself and my writing.

Conceiving of reading, writing, thinking, and material spacetimes as separate divorces the rhythms and times of being-in-the-world from the seemingly timeless record of written research, a kind of split thinking that attempts to sequester thought and knowledge from lived, bodily realities. To illustrate this, I turn to how literary scholar Anna Gibbs notes how this tension between the researcher self and the lived self can be most clearly noticed during the "writing up" of one's research. As Gibbs examines, research writing is often characterized as somehow disjointed or disconnected from the other methods or practices employed within the research, such as fieldwork (Gibbs, 2015: 222). Research writing is often characterized as a period during which one goes to a computer and taps away at a keyboard to record all those various thoughts and findings into a written exegesis. This time of writing is envisioned as entirely separate from the actual acts of conducting research and entirely devoid of the researcher herself or any material or affective spacetimes within which she might occupy during her research.

According to this view, research writing is imagined as a simple process of encoding knowledge gathered elsewhere (in the field, at a lab, in a studio, at a gallery) into a formal document (a thesis, a paper, a chapter, a monograph) that can be disseminated or preserved (placed in an archive or examined by peers) without the need for the researcher's lived, affective, or material dimensions to be present or acknowledged. However, as Gibbs notes as well, this view ultimately distances the act of writing, itself a lengthy, laborious practice, from the practices or methods of research. This separation of research writing from fieldwork or reading also places particular emphasis on certain domains of knowledge in turn, favoring knowledge that can be recorded discursively over affective, bodily, or material knowledges.

Alongside what I have already noted as the tendency to view research writing as separate from conducting the research itself, I feel it is important to note that this reductive view that Gibbs identifies has wider epistemological implications. Privileging written exegesis or archivable documentation displaces the experiential, affective knowledges which cannot be placed within an archive or canon of extant writing. Many marginalized forms of scholarship have similarly argued this point; for example, Black feminists like bell hooks have argued against foundational feminist texts like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* for their inability to encompass a broader analysis of lived experiences that fall outside of the lived realities of middle-class white women (hooks, 1984: x). There is a kind of literacy to knowledge and knowing: one must be able to conceive knowledge literally or discursively before it can be understood as valuable. This line of thinking also privileges canonicity, whereby all knowledge of value can or should be located within a genealogy of previously recorded thought. Not all modes of thinking or studying engage with these more conservation-focused approaches to knowledge; however, patriarchal, colonial, and heteronormative logics are necessarily enfolded into these limiting perspectives. If patriarchal, colonial, and heteronormative logics encourage a kind of canonical literacy to knowledge, I wonder: how might one read differently? How might one write in ways that facilitate different kinds of critical literacy, ones that do not require written exegesis? If there is a genealogy of knowledge, how might one rethink lineages that fall outside of pre-circulated writing? How might one consider the forms of knowledge that have been left out or never considered? How might

one create a found family of knowledge, a lineage that is more diffuse and personal than one dictated by clean lines or traditional hierarchies? These questions are too large to be answered at this point in my research, but I will return to this line of thinking in a moment so that I might ponder futures for alternative critical literacies further.

Returning to the separation of the graphic act from the field, the studio, or the library that Gibbs notes, traditional approaches to discursive forms of knowledge dissect the researcher-as-observer from the researcher-as-maker, placing writing/making and watching/reading processes at odds with one another. This rupture between these two researcher selves (the researcher in the field or studio and the researcher writing up) assumes a splitting of the self, or a splitting of the researcher's mind at the very least, where the researcher must somehow divorce themselves from the experience of being in the room so that they might write what they know or what they have learned. Researchers are already present in the field, gathering information, learning, and experiencing materially and affectively as well as intellectually, so this division feels counterintuitive and destructive. Contrary to this sentiment, Gibbs argues that the writing up process is not a separate process, sequestered away from fieldwork, but rather is "continuous with it, and, in large part, produces it" (Gibbs, 2015: 222). Following Gibbs, the process of writing about research is not somehow an event that occurs after or outside of the process of conducting research but rather is an active part of making sense of research as it is being conducted (Gibbs, 2015: 222). As Gibbs notes, critical writing in any research process should be understood "*as* research," or as "a mode of inquiry in its own right" (Gibbs, 2015: 222). Following Gibbs's view, I similarly consider my critical processes of reading and writing to be an active practice of making sense of what I have done throughout my research rather than simply an act of locating some of my acquired knowledge in a discursive format.

Per this view, self-reflexivity in critical writing brings into existence the researcher's beingness, which in turn attends to writing as both a speculative and critical craft. Drawing attention to critical writing as a process of making sense while researching, Gibbs also makes another important distinction: that critical writing is as much about the transmission of affect as it is about the dissemination or translation of thought into written text. As Gibbs notes, any writing up process is "affect-laden...driven

by interest and desire, subject to frustration and misery as well as productive of joy and excitement" (Gibbs, 2015: 223). To illustrate Gibbs's claim within my own process, I need only gesture to the months of procrastination and writer's block that I endured alongside my exuberance as ideas came together. Ultimately, Gibbs sees this experience of affect while writing as essential to the bodily, experiential knowledge embedded in other aspects of the research process (Gibbs, 2015: 223). As such, Gibbs acknowledges how a researcher must be both aware of and critically reflexive about her own affective intensities while writing, which Gibbs states as how researchers must "be alert to our position" (Gibbs, 2015: 224). This call to reflect on one's position is not necessarily the same as the more common feminist call to disclose one's relative privileges or identity as a means of determining one's positionality. In fact, there is no whiff of "identity" in the socio-political sense in Gibb's sentiment here. What strikes me most here instead is that Gibb's interest in position and reflexivity calls to speculative or imaginative thinking and not (dis)closure. This assessment of the way affect impacts critical writing practices forms a cornerstone for Gibbs's argument that a researcher must "be able to improvise in the face of these things" (Gibbs, 2015: 223). By this, Gibbs means that a researcher must be able to engage with her position as an imaginative act rather than as merely a location of one's social or political signifiers, more akin to Ahmed's call to utilize the intersection as a point from which one might come into being. Gibbs even calls for critical writing that is "a kind of bricolage or experimental tinkering" (Gibbs, 2015: 225), explicitly linking speculative and creative thinking with critical practices. For Gibbs, self-reflexivity is not simply about cultivating a kind of self-consciousness about one's place in the world. Rather, self-reflexivity in critical writing becomes a practice that cultivates openness and imagination.

To cultivate that openness and imagination within my own thinking and writing, I want to consider my process of reading and writing throughout my research and ponder what might haunt the unmarked spaces of this practice. When attempting to unpack or to uncover what might be otherwise unseen or unacknowledged in my writing, I found myself engaging in a research process that felt profoundly imaginative. I found this to be true even when the content of my writing was mostly theoretical or critical in tone or substance. Much like the lineages of feminist poetic critical writing and performative

writing I have previously noted in this thesis, I found my writing process throughout this project to be more akin to creating a work of art than theory. Gibbs's desire for a bricolage approach to research writing resonates with the kind of writing practice that emerged for me during my research process. While writing this thesis, the process of making sense of my research through writing became as much an imaginative and creative act as it was an act of locating in writing what I had learned throughout this process. During the process of developing each chapter, I played with multiple kinds of formats and layouts, sometimes placing text in columns or arranging them like shapes on a canvas. Early into my research process, I created mini annotated bibliographies for one or two sources at a time. These bibliographies incorporated images, found text, drawings, scribbles, and little notes, all arranged on a single page as a sort of collage piece or zine. Some earlier drafts of mine experimented with having the reader bounce between sections and ideas, attempting to read across or around sections rather than from the top of the page to the bottom. Many of these experiments sacrificed logical clarity for a more affective impression of the text, but some experiments revealed connections and hauntings that might have been otherwise unnoticed if written in a more linear format. Most of these explorations emerged from my engagement with extant literature as well as performance, either emerging as my reaction to the various texts with which I engaged or as a desire to play with experimental methods outlined or theorized by other researchers.

In articulating my research writing process as inspired by a studio process, what I mean is that I took many cues from art-based, practice-based, and studio-based research to envision a research process that not only engaged with affective and kinaesthetic knowledges but also benefited from a more open, imaginative approach to criticism and theory. While almost none of my experiments with form have made it into a more finalized chapter in this thesis, the experience of this practice of playing with form deeply impacted the knowledge that my research generated. In my first chapter, I examined practice-based approaches to knowledge generation and arts-based research, noting how these forms of thinking and feeling through one's research not only challenge normative discursive research frameworks but also imagine more affective, embodied approaches to research. I am being largely metaphoric when I say that I took a studio-

based approach to my research. I would hardly claim that this research has been practice-based, or that what I have produced is anything even close to a work of art, as such a claim would misrepresent what practice-based approaches to research entail and subsequently produce. I want to be transparent about this element of my writing process though, as it helps illustrate what I mean when I say that I approached the process of writing about my research as an imaginative and creative act inspired by bricolage or art-making practices.

Studio-based research inspires an approach to critical writing by articulating how one's processes of meaning-making might emerge *as* a research methodology. To further unravel my meaning here, I want to turn towards a definition of studio-based research and think around how these practices might extend beyond the studio and towards other domains like critical reading or writing. Dance practitioner-researcher Kim Vincs examines a studio-based research approach to dance practice as a means of placing value and emphasis on the process of generating knowledge through dance rather than on the product of knowledge. The product that Vincs locates here is both the more traditional research paper or a written exegesis as well as the artwork itself. This distinction is valuable because it gestures to how Vincs's understanding of studio-based research hinges on the processual nature of knowing or coming to knowing and not the final product of that knowledge, regardless of what exactly that product might be. Vincs articulates this process-oriented approach as one that might engender a more open, meandering approach that considers how multiple and perhaps even contradictory investments emerge (Vincs, 2007: 101). Vincs elaborates that such a process emphasizes not a product or end destination but rather chooses to "refuse to privilege any one of a diverse set of interrogations taking place simultaneously" (Vincs, 2007: 102). Vincs's approach thereby seems to fly in the face of a more linear, traditional research process that values establishing clear methodological lineages prior to fieldwork, paying greater attention to the often-meandering turns and trajectories of one's research process than the final conclusions or results of that research.

This process that Vincs articulates echoes various other approaches to practice-based or practice-as research. For example, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's concept of emergent methodologies similarly values the emergent properties of knowledge. Barrett

and Bolt consider the shifting landscape of one's engagement and investment in a particular field or in a particular series of investigations to be the emergent properties of one's methodology rather than a byproduct of it (Barrett & Bolt, 2007: 6). When placed alongside other process-based approaches to knowledge production like Barrett and Bolt's concept of emergent methodologies, what strikes me about Vincs vision for studio-based research are how these conceptualizations of the research process value the imaginative dimensions of thought by privileging experimentation and critical impulse. Remembering Gibbs's call for a bricolage approach to research writing, these imaginative or speculative approaches to research evoke both dance-based and feminist critical approaches that similarly value affective or embodied knowledges over purely discursive ones. Examples of this would include Jasmine Ulmer's choreographic writing or Karina Quinn's *écriture matière*, or more overtly artistic forms like concrete poetry or typographic art, among others. Lauren Fournier notes some of the relationships between these forms as well, drawing attention to the relationships between both formalized feminist approaches to art practice as well as para-art and para-literary approaches as a means of locating how autobiography, memoir, life writing, and other similar forms intersect with artistic practices (Fournier, 2021: 7). As Fournier notes, the collation of these various approaches both formal and deeply personal constitutes an approach that is "incidental, gut-centered" (Fournier, 2021: 5), emphasizing how her thinking begins from a hyperlocal position based on impulse and later expands in scope.

For the sake of my own approach to research writing, I consider the desire to discover through graphic acts—rather than simply deploying writing as a means to an end—to be a gesture towards how one might conceive of a new approach to critical writing that values it as a form of speculative exploration and creation. Much like Fournier has done, I might draw connections between formalized artistic and critical modes and more personal writing methods, such as journaling, notetaking, or doodling. In these practices, the page is utilized less as a space of disclosure or conclusion of thought and more as a space for working out thoughts. In practices such as journaling, there is an emphasis placed on the lived experience of the researcher, as the researcher draws upon experiential knowledge of being-in-the-world. Journalling also gestures to the value of the hunch or the guess, that gut feeling that Fournier similarly values in her

methodology. Meanwhile, doodling, sketching, and notetaking all offer rough shapes and outlines rather than fully formed concepts. By aligning doodling with discursive forms here, I hope to dissolve the idea that these practices of working ideas out must be purely discursive; rather, the practice of working out ideas might also be visual, pictorial, gestural, or visceral. This is akin to Vincs's assessment of dance as a means of critical exploration, whereby moving, dancing, and choreographing become bodily, gestural modes of shaping, outlining, or workshopping one's thinking. Regardless of the shape or mode in which these hunches are explored though, all of these practices gesture in some way to active spaces of investigation and questioning and therefore refuse the false sense of closure that a completed artwork or written exegesis might provide.

Ethical implications: methodological ambivalence and epistemic responsibility

A more paranoid reader might note at this juncture how my research methods have vacillated between critical and creative practices and similarly between paranoid and reparative approaches to critique. While I do not wish to create a false binary between these two modalities, I wish to consider the implications of my methodological ambivalence to both critical and artistic practice within my research, particularly regarding how this ambivalence informs an important quality of my thinking around critical passivity. As I have previously located, one aspect of my research has been concerned with how artistic practices such as dance or choreography might inform theoretical or critical modes and how in turn critical modes might reimagine how one approaches or interrogates artistic practice. These opposing but nonetheless twin directionalities reflect to me a central tension of my research, which I will attempt to characterize with yet another opaque metaphor. When I turn to critical modes, be they feminist critical practice, dance theory, postcritical reading, or reparative reading (to name only a few), I find myself returning to artistic practices and modes. However, when I approach creative or artistic models, such as performative writing, *écriture féminine*, or even fictocriticism or autotheory, I find myself turning back to those critical modes from which I turned away.

While reading dance, I find myself whirling between critical and artistic practices, unsure where to land or even where to spot sometimes. This turning back and forth, feeling spun or twirled around a point that seems to constantly throw my partner (sometimes critical practice, sometimes artistic practice) into question, occurs to me as the sort of kinetic bodily logic that permeates and often (un)structures the shape of my research. As I stated previously, a goal of this project was to ponder how reparative thinking might disbalance my paranoid impulses when doing feminist theory about and around dance. If the choreography of this thesis is a kind of turning or twirling around a point(e), I find that the choreopoetics of my research tend to evoke a sense of dis/balance and precarity that might occupy this seemingly circular kinetics of thought. While I may be guided by my ever-shifting partners of artistic and critical practice, I nonetheless find myself moving haphazardly and precariously between, around, and through them.

It seems impossible for me not to be opaque here, perhaps largely because I find that writing seems to obscure rather than reveal the revolutions happening within and around my thinking. I have at times characterized this disjuncture, this slipping between what is written and what is felt as the ambivalent, dis/balanced relationship between the praxis of writing and the material, felt, or otherwise embodied knowledges that evade graphic signification. Perhaps this is why I find myself returning again and again to scholars like Jacques Derrida—(in)famous for his opacity—and Éduoard Glissant. I find resonances with feminist artist-researchers like Helene Cixous, who appear more committed to the affective impressions one creates in the act of writing while maintaining a sharply critical eye. More recent feminist arts research such as Lauren Fournier's research into autotheory as feminist art practice reveal similar diffusions and transparencies between art, writing, and theory, noting how forms of art practice and art writing move and flow between and through art galleries, universities, studios, and an artist's personal life (Fournier, 2021). While I am gesturing here to the slippery relations between these forms and practices, what I have found more pressing through this research process has been less a question of category--as in, what does or does not count as feminist dance criticism, or what does or does not count as feminist art practice--and more a question of intention or disposition. To return to my metaphor from earlier, what I found most interesting (or perhaps most apparent) within my research was not

whether I was dancing with critical or artistic practices but rather around which critical (dis)position I revolved while reading, watching, thinking, feeling, or writing.

I'll attempt to be more direct: what emerges for me at the centrifuge of these turns (both critical and artistic) is not a particular direction but rather an ambivalence to directionality. This is not to say that I think my thinking has been aimless, but it has perhaps been meandering, too open and noncommittal in its commitments, at times even lacking singular theoretical or artistic ground. My thinking has not been groundless, but perhaps there have been too many terrains, too many topographies of thought across which I have attempted to travel or to map. I have tried to keep a sense of wanderlust while doing this research, though this has in turn shifted my attention to how I might travel and not to my destinations. If my thinking has wandered too much, been too amorous, too slutty, I find myself committed to ambivalence more so than any one critical intentionality. A commitment to ambivalence recognizes how affective realities condition or mediate one's relationship to an object, event, or community. To commit to or invest in ambivalence forms an affective as well as theoretical cornerstone of my thinking around critical passivity. A commitment to critical ambivalence mediates how I engage with the tangible and intangible materials of my thinking. I will return to this notion of critical passivity as a form of mediated perception later to first ponder how ambivalence informs my critical disposition throughout this research.

In my theory of critical passivity, ambivalence is one necessary quality of one's relationship to extant critical practices. Ambivalence is not a form of apathy or a lack of care. While it can be useful to determine what one does not care about or what one cares less about when doing research, critical passivity signals a different kind or orientation to one's affective relationship to one's studies. Ambivalence manifests as one's ethical and critical approach to the negotiation of one's energies, investments, and attentions through the course of one's research. Recognizing ambivalence as a quality of critical passivity does not sacrifice one's ethical responsibilities or abscond with one's commitment to consider how critical practices impact others. Critical passivity is also not a form of implicit or tacit agreement with a pre-established circulation of affects and knowledge. By this I mean that one may not utilize a critical passivity to (choreo)police the affective dimensions of knowledge, art, or critique. Ambivalence manifests itself as

an affective way of being in the world: it is a careful, negotiated position that considers how affects stick and how they might shape and refract one's critical attention and intention. Critical passivity therefore deploys or withdraws these affective impressions strategically and purposefully. When one values one's affective states in this way, one's energies become resources that are consciously spent or reserved. Recognizing one's ambivalent disposition requires that one must pay attention to and care about the direction of one's affects to enact critical passivity as with intention and not apathy.

An ethical assessment of critical passivity might also acknowledge that one's affective energies have weight and impact beyond the moment at which one feels them. If one is to approach critical passivity ethically, one might curate one's affective investment and how they impact certain forms of knowledge. By this I mean that a theory of critical passivity acknowledges how one's feelings inform how one comes to knowing, even when that knowing may not seem affectively risky. Critical passivity deploys an ambivalent disposition to consider how one's affective attentions form a vector of one's critical intentions or assumptions, not as separate phenomena with no bearing on each other. This sentiment echoes feminist scholar Andrea Doucet's thinking around epistemic responsibility. Drawing upon the thinking of feminist Lorraine Code, Doucet argues that epistemic responsibility demonstrates an orientation towards what is ethical about knowing or producing knowledge (Doucet, 2018: 82). Extending Code, Doucet contends that epistemic responsibility entails taking responsibility for how one comes to knowing, which recognizes how one "cannot separate epistemic analysis from ethical analysis" (Doucet, 2018: 82). As such, Doucet contends that one's epistemic responsibility is to "negotiate knowledge making," or how "researchers must sometimes work across, and negotiate, instituted and instituting social imaginaries in order to maximize possibilities for ethical knowing and intervention" (Doucet, 2018: 83). This means that the question of what is ethical about knowledge and how one negotiates coming to knowing are bound together and not separable registers of thought.

What I hope to impart here is that critical passivity should not be considered a disavowal or ignorance of one's ethical responsibility. Rather, critical passivity desires an ethical approach to what I contend is an intentional methodological ambivalence. My suturing of critical passivity with ambivalence does not hope to create critical zombies,

nor does it legitimize a sort of affective zombification that reduces or constrains critique to an impossible act of "pure reason." Applications of critical passivity do not desire a sanitization of knowledge, nor do they seek to leave unmarked subjective or lived realities. An ethical approach to critical passivity necessitates a softer, more haphazard negotiation of energies and intensities which in turn requires attunement to one's material and lived reality. Such an investment requires one to consider how investments and energies are formed, reserved, or spent, which may inevitably draw attention to how one may waver or wiggle between critical investments throughout the course of one's life and thinking. Adopting critical passivity as an approach to reparative feminist critique requires an ethical commitment to actively identifying and negotiating how one's affects and investments inform how one produces knowledge. This commitment to epistemic responsibility also includes how those investments may shift and change over the course of that knowledge-making process. Critical passivity therefore invokes a kind of strategic care ethic that uses ambivalence as a means through which one might recognize the various affective or emotional taxes that emerge during processes of knowledge production. This in turn emphasizes how and why one's affective resources or energies may or may not be spent during or coordinated for one's critical endeavors and how that necessarily impacts the kind of knowledge that one's research might produce. It is therefore my earnest desire that such a commitment, albeit an ambivalent one, creates rather than forecloses potential avenues for new political, critical, and artistic feminist investments.

Imagining hopeful futures for critique: questions & implications for further research

From this recognition of how critical passivity engenders reflection on one's epistemic responsibility, I wish to return now to the idea of alternative writing practices and how critical passivity might begin to gesture to new futures for critique. As I noted earlier, research writing sometimes comes with the assumption that there is a finite or discrete amount of knowledge that must be encoded into a discursive form. Such an assumption means that knowledge must be discursively legible or that it must be

graphed into a shape or form that can be disseminated. There are neoliberal, capitalistic connotations behind this assessment of knowledge as a discursive product, and I feel it is useful to consider how institutions might both commodify knowledge and harbor resistance to that commodification. Scholars like Bruno Latour have expressed hesitancy and disgust with the co-opting and institutionalizing of critique, particularly how it vacates critique's once revolutionary aims and affects (Latour, 2004). This reading of critique creates certain values and evaluations of knowledge and who can produce it, reducing critical literacy outside of institutions to what can be understood as a product. Even the term "knowledge production" can be read as reinforcing this notion that critique can make knowledge into a commodity to be later sold or exchanged. This institutionalizing of critique can create certain assumptions about what counts as knowledge or who act as knowledge's arbiter, which in turn produces an institutional atmosphere of skepticism around commonplace and experiential knowledges (Anker & Felski, 2017: 14). Of course, this is only one reading of how an institution approaches critique; institutions can also provide refuges for radical forms of thought and practice. As Young argues, even colonial institutions can harbor anticolonial forms of resistance (paperson, 2017). This means that even institutions can offer "contradictory desires" towards conservatism and revolution within critique (paperson, 2017). Even as institutions might attempt to demarcate the borders of feminist or decolonial critique, the possibility for alternative modes still exist within and trouble these boundaries. This goes for dance-based and by extension arts-based modes as well, which might similarly resist how institutions enforce boundaries between theory and practice or creative and critical modes.

I wonder to what extent a theory of critical passivity might evade the commodification of knowledge and embrace these more radical or resistant forms of feminist critique. Might a theory of critical passivity imagine worlds where one comes to knowledge not as a product to be consumed but as a hopeful, revolutionary process of creative interpretation? A hopeful future for critique might echo feminist scholar Karen Barad's concept of "diffractive readings", or what Barad calls a reflexive reading method that illuminates the differences between texts (Barad, 2007: 30). Barad extends Haraway's use of defraction as an alternative to reflexivity, noting how a "diffractive

methodology" respects "the entanglement of ideas and other materials" by attuning to "apparatuses of production" (Barad, 2007: 29-30). What strikes me about this line of thinking is how Barad articulates an engagement with reading that reorients self-reflexivity towards how one produces knowledge. Through this reading, critique might be read as interrupting a kind of neoliberal self-consciousness, drawing one away from self-conscious readings of one's position within an institution and towards reflection about how one does the work of critical thinking. This similarly echoes Diana Damian Martin's concept of "nonconforming criticism," which articulates modes of doing critique that make the process of thinking legible (Damian Martin, 2019: 26). According to Damian Martin, nonconforming criticism "exposes thinking" (Damian Martin, 2019: 34); this recognizes how thinking is "processual, fragmented, and multiple, but also an action" (Damian Martin, 2019: 35). Nonconforming criticism offers a turn to the idea of work here, turning away from neoliberal notions of production and towards forms of queer use that attend to "affective economies" while resisting or disturbing "already constituted discursive ecologies" (Damian Martin, 2019: 39). These approaches to criticism point to ways in which thinking and critique might be refigured through an attention to reflexive processes that refigure or at the very least cannot be easily contained within neoliberal notions of production.

Critical reflection on how one does thinking and critique appears to me to offer ways of undoing neoliberal models of knowledge production. Critical passivity similarly engenders a more ethical, imaginative engagement with one's processes of knowing and how they relate to wider ecologies of knowledge production and meaning-making. I would like to imagine critical passivity as an approach which might reorient critical writing towards new ways of revealing or mapping how one comes to knowing. This means that a theory of critical passivity may be akin to Dorinne Kondo's concept of reparative creativity. While Kondo's concept is explicitly about creative acts that remake race through art (Kondo, 2018: 5), Kondo also notes that reparative creativity functions as a theoretical approach that desires to make new worlds through reparative critique (Kondo, 2018: 211). As I have already argued, critical passivity is an imaginative act that draws upon similar creative impulses as reparative creativity. I might similarly consider critical passivity as a kind of hopeful or speculative world-making, one that desires a

more tender, reflexive form of engagement with ways of knowing. This similarly draws connections to Christopher Castiglia's call for a hopeful disposition for critique where critique emerges as an imaginative, world-making practice that produces a revolutionary consciousness (Castiglia, 2017: 225-226). In Castiglia's words, this is the "ethics of the possible" (Castiglia, 2017: 226), the ethical, hopeful potential for yet unrealized worlds to be imagined and explored through critical practice.

To place this thinking within a more local disciplinary context, I feel that a deeper consideration of how art-making and creative practice might shift or mutate traditional feminist critical practices in the humanities can only help to further resist this institutionalization and commodification of feminist critique. Adjacent to this thinking, rethinking feminist theory through an attention to arts-based practices in turn gestures to how feminist thinking can transform or shift arts-based models as well. As arts-based research finds itself more and more entrenched in the neoliberal models that require art practices to produce knowledge as a discrete product, critical passivity might be applicable as a methodological or processual tool to resist this commodification of knowledge. Arts-based researchers who work with practice-based or process-led research methods might similarly find this theory of critical passivity as either a countermeasure to art-as-product or as a speculative tool for theoretical exploration. While I would not propose critical passivity to be a one-size-fits-all theory for arts-based researchers, I would hope that those who desire to explore this theory might find solace in a more ethical and imaginative feminist approach to critical practice. Similarly, I wonder how complex engagement between feminist thinking, wider humanities or cultural studies, and art-based practices and creative thinking might in turn offer alternatives and opportunities for reviving or invigorating discursive forms of critique. I hope that critical passivity might emerge as a feminist critical gesture that might invite a liberatory or revolutionary force for critical practice. If the desire or purpose of critique is in fact to make one less governed or freer, as Foucault has argued, then perhaps critical passivity might liberate arts and humanities researchers from institutional boundary lines or disciplinarity. I find critical passivity to be an interdisciplinary theory largely because it desires to wiggle between those boundaries, and I hope that it might similarly

offer arts and humanities scholars that wiggle room to explore whole genres of critique that remain marginal within arts and humanities studies.

How might one apply critical passivity as a means of imagining new futures for arts and humanities critique? One such future might be to imagine how one might be moved by the process of writing, attending to the kinetics of one's thinking through an attention to how one's hand moves to craft letters. The researcher-turned-artist crafts her own dance of pen on paper or fingers on keys, littering the bare page-stage with traces of movements in letters, words, and sentences. Such a reorientation might even function as a subtle turn within Gotman's call to become discursive choreographers: one becomes attuned not just to the way writing or discourse moves but also to how one's body must move so that one might write. Just as a letter has lines and curves, the hand that writes moves in a subtle choreography that remains invisible until one reorients towards them. When I'm sitting at my desk, typing away at my keyboard, various rhythms, movements, sounds, and affective intensities emerge from the haptic, kinetic dimensions of grafting letters into words. These elements combine to form their own choreography – quite literally here, as a kind of moving writing, a choreo-*graphos* or choreography for writing. Previous thinking around choreographic writing conceives of a choreographic writing that takes up the scene of writing as a kind of stage-space. Words become dancers making shapes and patterns on the blank page, which might instead be considered as akin to a bare stage. As Ulmer notes, choreographic writing might function as a means of expanding the spaces of visual expression with graphic acts (Ulmer, 2015: 36). What I would like to notice here however is how writing – the physical act of moving a hand – has a kind of choreography to it, a kind of improvised or maybe even rehearsed movement that comprises an invisible performance. In attending to these movements, the metaphor of the keyboard and the blank page as a studio becomes more visceral, more tangible.

These movements follow their own rhythms, perhaps steady and measured when the writing is flowing well, maybe more syncopated when the writing just won't come that day. Gotman talks about the secret choreography that she attends to in her writing, thinking of when a line ends and the shapes that are made on the right side of the margin (Gotman, 2017: 160). For myself, I think of my fingers pressing away at the keys as little

steps beating out their own unique dances. I recently switched to a different kind of keyboard so that I can feel my fingers press against the springs of the keys, hear the sound of the keys clicking and clacking as they compose their own mechanical melodies. I know when I'm having a good writing day because I feel my fingers find the right rhythm, words come easily as the thoughts emerge while my fingers drum out the notes and flit around the keyboard. I don't watch my hands while I type, so while I see the words form on the screen in front of me, I like to imagine what the dance of my fingers looks like, to imagine what would happen if someone were only to watch my hands moving and not even read a single word that I've written. Sometimes I type out a paragraph on my phone, and I get the treat of seeing my thumbs dance across the digital keys out of the corners of my vision, a fleeting dance that sneaks between the spaces of writing and moving and thinking. Sometimes the thoughts come too quickly, so my fingers can't quite get there in time. Sometimes I change my mind or make a mistake, and I listen as my fingers dance to undo the words on the screen. I imagine that my hands are making their own private performance for me as I write, a choreography that only I get to see playing out in my mind as I try to get my fingers to drum out the thoughts as they rise and fall.

It would be easy at this point to incur into a kind of phenomenology of writing, but I would instead like to return to wondering how a theory of critical passivity engenders new feminist approaches to critical writing in the arts and humanities. How might such a theory begin to imagine new genres of writing, or how might it reorient one's writing towards the invisible choreographies of knowing through one's body in the first place? These are ultimately questions that I cannot attempt to answer adequately at this juncture, especially if I am to resist foreclosing my theory of critical passivity so that it might remain a weak theory. I am left wondering though what possibilities might emerge with future investigations and explorations. As Derrida observes, writing is a kind of breaching or breaking open to arrive somewhere new, what Derrida calls a "rupture and irruption becoming a route" (Derrida, 2002: 268). Is it perhaps in the disjuncture between writing, thinking, and moving that critical passivity might begin to move one towards new reading and writing practices? How might a theory of critical passivity allow one to write bodily knowing through forms other than words? How does a critically passive writing practice mark different kinds of knowledges without enfolding them into

paranoid, disciplinary gestures? Might one be able to write a theory of critical passivity using only bodies or pictorial forms, or would such an exploration only collapse once again into simply another form of textuality and discursive critical praxis? These are questions that I could only hope to explore with future research.

I find myself unable to answer how a weak theory of critical passivity might become strong because I want to imagine that there is space for feminist critical modes that desire softer, more local, and more careful modes of thinking, reading, and writing. Perhaps it is an unsatisfactory answer, but I cannot begin to grasp at what these potential avenues may yield without offering more fledgling ideas. As I have previously located, many of my critical perspectives are indebted to how feminist, queer, Black, and decolonial scholars among others have attempted to rethink, to reframe, and to reimagine worlds of critical thought and practice. It is my sincerest hope that my theory of critical passivity builds upon and encourages those feminist histories and lineages while proposing a new turn or direction for feminist thinking. I propose a theory of critical passivity not to overthrow old regimes or to render obsolete any extant feminist histories of thought. Rather, my desire is reparative: I wish to be surprised by my thinking and the thoughts of others, which might include discovering that these hopeful feminist futures already exist. I seek to stare into these depths so that I might know these hopeful futures more deeply, more passionately. My critical engagement throughout this research could be imagined as a kind of looking carefully out over a precipice, and my critical feminist attention nurtures these desires while embracing the potential that I might fall. A weak theory of critical passivity gestures towards that same reparative desire: the desire to risk being moved, being affected, in the hopes that I might see new forms of feminist life and thought move too. My theory invokes a call for hopeful feminist futures, but it also recognizes those futures as already here, as already possible, if one only looks carefully for them. To believe in these futures is to think feminist thoughts, which is to live a feminist life. Feminist utopias are not a dream to me because I have already been moved by the hopeful feminist futures that I encounter, the ones that already exist, if only I take the time to feel how they move me.

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