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Los Angeles

Becomings: Pregnancy, Phenomenology, and Postmodern Dance

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Johanna Corinne Kirk

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Becomings: Pregnancy, Phenomenology, and Postmodern Dance

by

Johanna Corinne Kirk
Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance
University of California, Los Angeles, 2021
Professor David H. Gere, Chair

In this dissertation, I explore postmodern choreographic engagements of pregnant bodies in the US over the last 70 years. I discuss how choreographers negotiate identification with the look of their pregnant bodies to maintain a sense of integrity as artists and to control representations of their gender and physical abilities while pregnant. I consider the utility for pregnant artists of filmic techniques, ironic mimicry of feminine stereotypes, obstruction or re-direction of the audience's gaze, and refusal to be recognized as any familiar *type* of "woman." I study how artists reimagine and restructure rhythm, duration, and spatial locations of movement based on perceptions of their pregnant bodies. I analyze fraught collaborations between artists with divergent experiences of pregnant bodies and pregnancy needs. I problematize choreographic processes surrounding pregnancy that present pregnancy as an experience indissociable from constructions of sex and gender, and I challenge and historically contextualize ideas about the "naturalness" of pregnancy, birthing, and motherhood. Finally, I examine dances exploring radical physical transformation inspired by experiences of pregnancy, and I consider how the artists of these works use choreography to create conditions and community that support their experiences of personal metamorphoses, that allow them to have queer orientations towards pregnancy, and that help them to practice care towards themselves in ways that they deem significant and otherwise unavailable. Across chapters, the artists discussed include Anna Halprin, Trisha Brown, Twyla Tharp, Sandy Jamrog, Jane Comfort, Jody Oberfelder, Johanna Boyce, Miguel Gutiérrez, Yanira Castro, Noémie LaFrance, Hana van der Kolk, Jennie MaryTai Liu, and Meg Foley. By presenting their bodies in performance, these artists demonstrate how their experiences surrounding pregnancy intersect not only with their artform and its history but also with their personal experiences of race, gender, and sexual identification. I argue that choreography offers them tools that are alternative to medicine (or other forms of social representation) for understanding what/how pregnant bodies do and feel and what they can mean for individuals and their communities. The works within these pages invite readers to see dancing bodies and pregnant bodies in new ways and for their potential to manifest new possibilities.

The dissertation of Johanna Corinne Kirk is approved.

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2021

For V.W.K. and L.R.K-G., with endless gratitude for the dances we shared and share.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH/VITA

I am a doctoral candidate in Culture and Performance at the University of California Los Angeles in the department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. I am an interdisciplinary researcher and writer whose academic work connects phenomenology, performance and dance theories and practices, and medical humanities. I am trained as a dance historian, theorist, and choreographer, and I also have training as a cultural anthropologist and qualitative medical researcher. My writing sparks dialogue between the work of artists, theorists, and healthcare practitioners. Currently, I research individuals' diverse experiences of pregnancy and how dancing while pregnant can both reveal and support these experiences. I focus on the formal, theoretical, and healing work performed by dances made by artists during pregnancies as well as the ways that such dances are in dialogue with obstetric medicine and broader health science. My ongoing research focuses on choreography's applications to birth justice work, and it proposes how the attentions and community building of dance making might productively inform healthcare in ways that benefit pregnancy experiences and outcomes for more individuals, both inside and outside of concert dance cultures in the US.

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- “Experiencing Our Anatomy: Incorporating Human Biology into Dance Class via Imagery, Imagination, and Somatics,” *Journal of Dance Education*, Volume 14, Issue 2, 59-66. 2014.
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- “Prenatal Dance for Wellness: Moving Beyond Fitness into Pleasure” Center for the Study of Women (CSW) Thinking Gender Conference, *Pre-Existing Conditions*, UCLA (Mar 1-2, 2018 Los Angeles)
- “Understanding the Pregnant Body through the Language of Prenatal Dance Fitness” American Society of Theater Research (ASTR), *Extra/Ordinary Bodies Conference* (Nov 16-19, 2017 Atlanta)
- “The Labor of the Dancing Body” Dance Studies Association (DSA), *Transmissions and Traces: Rendering Dance*, Ohio State University (Oct 19-22, 2017 Columbus)
- “Barefoot and Pregnant, Fit and Firm” *Chew on This*, World Arts and Cultures/ Dance student organized lecture series, UCLA (Oct 10, 2017 Los Angeles)
- “Better Soon. now.now.” New York University, *Dance Across the Board Conference* (Feb 12, 2011 New York City)

Introduction

I click the projector into motion: tkatkatkatkatkatkatkatka. Flickers and squiggles of light resolve into a washed-out figure, bright against a field of black, facing squarely toward me. One. Two. Three. Four. Five steps straight ahead, before she careens forward. Now, she is off-balance and riding her disequilibrium. Her body juggles itself. Seemingly without her notice, the camera follows her turbulent dance through the darkness. I watch her 1970s track shoes blur in their constant motion—they rarely touch the ground simultaneously and are never pointed in the same direction. Her loose hair swoops, eddies, and lags behind her body, leaving traces in the air like flashes of bioluminescence in choppy waters. Her momentum carries her through a commotion of turns, jumps, suspensions, and falls. Then, just as decidedly as it began, her momentum ebbs. She squares her shoulders to the front and takes a bow.

Quick cut. The projection jumps to her walking forward, once again—one, two, three, four, five—then for a second time, launching into a reeling and hectic dance. I study it: the choreography is similar but not the same as before, although she attacks it with the same vigor and abandon. Again, she stops, faces forward, bows. Rapidly, in the interval before she reappears, I take inventory of similarities between version one and two: the initial steps, the final bow, the black void through which she moved, the sneakers, the spontaneity, the freed hair, her insouciance. I also notice a difference: her body, while again clothed in leotard and sweatpants, is changed—her silhouette is softer, more curvilinear, and her torso presents new prominences and dells. Quick cut and, again, she is walking assertively toward me. As she turns profile and launches into a fresh choreography of wild disorientation, I see the now more dramatic contours of her chest and abdomen. She dances. She finds stillness. She bows. Then, another quick cut to those five steps, another round of dancing, another bow, and on and on. With each round, her expanding belly and breasts add volume, heft, and volatility to her dancing body—qualities her improvisations welcome and investigate. I watch as progressively, her sweatpants ride lower and her bows become shallower, but her movement remains consistently, daringly unstable, tortuous, and bold. Until…

Five steps toward me, this time with her torso curved forward and her arms enfolding something small and shifting. Her lower body is swirling around and under her torso, as she makes intricate stepping patterns on the floor. All the while, her upper body is maintaining its gentle wilt, and her face is smiling down at the cargo of her embrace. Now, as she settles into her bow, and her hair falls across her face, a tiny hand reaches up from the nest of her arms toward her smile. Then…

Quick cut back to the wide shot and her five steps forward. This time she is alone, and with her arms free to swing, reach, counterweight, and propel her body through space without restriction. I note, her leotard fits a body similar to that which appeared at the beginning of the film, and her waistband is back at her navel, but her movement seems to be performed by a body different in kind. The tenderness of the version immediately prior has been supplanted by directness and a dynamism exceeding all prior versions. I find myself unable to square the qualities of her movement with her newly postpartum body. "Be careful!" I nervously will the grainy projection dancing like white water: her torso, no longer moving as a unit, splashing in all directions. After she bows, the film presents a brisk montage of moments from each iteration of her solo. In fast motion, I see her body wax then wane, and her movement gradually decelerate then abruptly accelerate, and I appreciate the wonderful peculiarity of this series of dancing bodies… or rather the wonderful peculiarity of this singular dancing body in its continuous state of change.

Now, alone in the dark room of the dance archives, I am scribbling in my notebook in the afterglow of the eight-millimeter reel-to-reel player, trying to recapitulate what I saw: I saw a pregnant body that I could not recognize, which danced itself as I had never experienced dance before. Her dancing pregnant body had agitated me, enthralled me, confused me, and made me rewind and watch its metamorphosis again and again. Her body provoked questions:

What do pregnant dancing bodies like this one theorize about dance? About pregnancy?
Why do they matter? and *Why do they matter to me? (as a choreographer? as a dance academic? as a person with the capacity for pregnancy?)*
Where are the pregnant bodies in dance? Why have I not encountered them before?
What accounts for their absence? What enables their presence?
What does their absence/presence reveal about the culture of concert dance?...

Later, stepping outside of the library and onto the New York City sidewalk, as my eyes adjust to the glare of the sun, on the concrete, I see the afterimage of her dancing body morphing in shape and quality as she accompanies me down 9th Avenue. Walking to the subway, I know that I have only begun thinking about this dance film, and by the time my train has crossed the East River into Brooklyn, a project is taking shape in my mind.

In my notebook, I muse about why her pregnant state stood out to me as implicitly in need of explanation, while other aspects of her body did not. For instance, I read the color of her skin (white), her casual costuming, as well as the non sequitur and improvisational nature of her choreography as recognizable information, information that allowed me to classify her work as postmodern, as well as place her geographically, stylistically, and socially within a cohort of artists with whom I am familiar—the “downtown” New York dance scene of the late 1970s. However, her “belly” created problems for me and seemed to upset the schema into which I wanted to place her. The fact that I could not recognize her as either a familiar “type” of dancer or a familiar “type” of pregnant person belied my preset ideas on how early postmodern dancers and pregnant individuals looked and behaved, even the kinds of people that they were and the kinds of choices they would make. *From where did these ideas come, and how did her dancing invited me to confront them?* I was struck by how her choreography presented her as an individual making choices and exercising freedoms with her body, and this was striking because my thinking about pregnancy (shaped by how it is portrayed in feminist scholarship and reproductive justice work) led me to think of pregnancy as forcing pregnant persons to contend with broad systems of injustice that ration individuals' bodily agency. While such disenfranchisement is especially the case for nonwhite women, women of lower socioeconomic status, and individuals who do not identify as "straight" or as women, I believed it was, to a certain extent, the case for all pregnant persons. This is because, in the world of pregnancy and birthing—as I understood it from feminist science and sociological scholarship, medical anthropology, the overwhelming racial disparities in maternal mortality rates, and my studies in health science—those systemically predisposed to have less social power and less jurisdiction over their bodies often lose even more power in their navigation of social, legal, and medical systems during pregnancies. Moreover, my cultural and academic backgrounds convinced me that even though all people come into the world via someone's pregnant body, the overall social value placed on pregnant bodies is limited; likewise, the seeming "appropriate" public spaces and "appropriate" *amounts* of public spaces that pregnant bodies occupy are limited. Thus, in my notebook, I now ask myself, *Did the dancer in the film intrigue me because she was unapologetically, compellingly taking up "too much" space and the "wrong" space?*

On the film, I saw a woman who was both the subject of and seemingly at the helm of her own experience of pregnancy. Seeing this moved me, but it also surprised me. I wonder why. I ponder how US culture writ large is upheld by an economic system that is dependent on but dismissive of reproductive (as well as parental and "domestic") labor, which continues to be primarily the charge of women, and, via networks of care, even more often, women of color. *Could it be that the dance world (my world) echoes such dismissiveness? Or is it dance traditions of aesthetic coherence and virtuosity that make pregnant bodies rare occurrences in dance?*

I pause, then redirect my line of thinking: *Is it feminist to dance while pregnant? Was I moved as a feminist by seeing a pregnant individual dancing publicly and in a "serious" dance context?* Perhaps it is not that simple, I decide, as I scootch over on my plastic subway bench to make space for new passengers. It seems to me that in feminist politics in the US, pregnancy is often eschewed so as to avoid regressive conflation of women with reproductive labor, and some feminists even consider finding purpose or empowerment in motherhood to be a false consciousness and evidence of individuals being cheated of a fuller life by accepting a deceptive sense of their own limitations. There are, of course, many feminisms. In the US, these include those feminists of the biological essentialist persuasion—who might (at least implicitly) stigmatize childlessness and present motherhood as women's destiny—and there are those feminists of the socialist persuasion—who might champion the political dimensions of reproductive labor and see "leftist" thinking that disaggregates activities of professionalism/production and reproduction as (antithetically) serving the interests of capitalism, not of individuals or their communities. Yet, the strand of American feminism most publicized in popular media, seemingly most relevant to US political policy, and most represented in my own education and communities has made a bigger commitment to women's right to *not* become pregnant than to women's right to be the subjects of their own pregnancies and to have control over their experiences of pregnancy. Considering as much, as I begin to anticipate embarking on a project about pregnancy, my pencil stalls on the page. The feminist in me niggles that I am making a faux pas. After all, I resume my writing to ask myself, *Doesn't pregnancy merely sustain culture and tradition, and thus is it not inhibitory to radical thoughts and politics?*

Yet…I wonder if the embodied experiences of profound change inherent to pregnancy can actually create opportunities to break free of repressive and restrictive traditions and to innovate new types of knowledge production. I also consider how dance-making might foster such innovation. I jump my pencil back on the page to scratch out my last question. The uneasiness that inspired it suddenly feels rooted less in feminism and more in neoliberalism—a sense that the promise of the future lies in the autonomous work of independent thinkers/artists, liberated from their duties to care for others so they can pursue a "free" life of their own design. I recall Silvia Federici's theorization of global "reproductive commons," spaces where women understand their capacity to reproduce life as bestowing them with social power. In these "commons," through socializing their reproductive labor (bringing their parenting bodies out of the isolation of domestic spaces and into strategic public spaces), they foster social activism, strengthen and improve their communities, and demand recognition of their rights (2019). Now picking up steam and with pencil flying, I worry that by not taking into consideration the experiences of pregnant women in equal measure to those who exercise their reproductive freedoms to prevent pregnancies, mainstream US feminism and dance repeat the error of so many other discourses, especially in scientific and policy spheres, which present unilateral ideas of pregnancy and make few efforts to acknowledge the incredible range of pregnancy/human experiences, needs, and capacities. Moreover, I note that such reduction of individuals to a single seemingly shared experience inevitably serves the political interests of some at the expense of others—namely, I suspect, pregnant individuals.

Down to the wood of my now fully blunt library golf pencil, I close my notebook and exchange it for the book in my tote. Opening the cover, I encounter a quote by author/poet Ursula K. Le Guin: “We are volcanos. When we women offer our experience as our truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains” (1986, 160). I linger on these words. *Can I bear witness to pregnant individuals’ experiences by bearing witness to the dances that they make? Can I, in the spirit of Le Guin, behold these artists “erupting” and, by amplifying what they experience as their “truths,” shine light on the maps that they are changing?* I imagine that if I can, these maps will range from the dance historical to the biomedical and that exciting new mountains will burst forth.

* * *

Many months after this day at the archives and on the subway, in Los Angeles and deep in my doctoral studies, I worked up the courage to initiate a conversation with New York-based choreographer Jane Comfort about her performance and choreography in the film that catalyzed my thinking and to ask about her reasons for making it. She emailed me back warmly:

> Fascinating that you are writing about postmodernists’ experiences of pregnancy…. I was one of the first choreographers to have a child …, and it was a challenge, but definitely what I wanted in my life…. Our two children grew up in a loft where rehearsals happened all around them…. It was a complete mix of art and family/artists and family.
> I’d love to talk to you on the phone.
> Yours,
> Jane

I was elated, and we set a date.

Despite my wonderment at Comfort’s film, when we spoke, she told me that when she saw her pregnant self on screen back in 1980, she found it tedious and her own movement “just so boring” (Jane Comfort, in discussion with the author, August 2020). Nonetheless, we agreed what was *not* boring was other people’s reaction to the screening. She vividly recalled “the tittering men in the audience [who] could not handle my very large belly, my mother-ness, my too-much-ness that I was putting out there." Four decades later, and two years before I approached her, she happened upon the film again as she was going through boxes in preparation for a retrospective of her company. This time, her movement interested her. She "just sat and looked at it, looked at it, looked at it." Watching it with fresh eyes, interest, and context, she congratulated the pixels on her television for "throwing weight around" without trepidation. When I told her that this dance film launched my doctoral research, she laughed in disbelief, "truly incredible!" and at the end of our conversation she said, "Thank you for writing about me." I was startled to realize that, aside from cursory press coverage, no one had written about her pregnant performance before. However, even now with two adult children, she still vibrantly recalled her sensations, fears, and fascinations while pregnant and choreographing, and she was eager to share with me how formative her pregnancy was to her investments and priorities as an artist and her understanding of her dancing body.

Although Comfort was the first whose pregnant choreography I encountered, I soon learned that she was certainly not the only and not even the earliest postmodern choreographer to make and share a dance rooted in lived experiences of a pregnant body. I discovered that like Comfort and her postmodern predecessors, including Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown, a collection of artists from the 1980s to the present day have made dances to understand and represent their pregnancies as embodied phenomena. In so doing, they posited pregnancy as its own episteme of the body and pioneered it as apt material for artistic performance. Moreover, they made work to assert control over pregnancy's effects on their professional lives as artists. Each in unique ways, they explored choreography's potential to affirm, amplify, influence, communicate, and/or conceal their perceptions of pregnancy for their audiences, depending on which strategies best fit their needs, circumstances, and interests. I discovered that the works they made—coming from their various cultural, racial, and artistic backgrounds, and from an array of gender, sexual, and familial identifications—critically engaged the politics of pregnancy and concert dance, allowing them, as artists, to tell new stories from their situated perspectives and to offer fresh representations and subject positions for pregnant bodies through their art. The more that I discovered, the more I was also convinced that choreographies responding to experiences of pregnancy have steered and continue to influence the aesthetic and conceptual trajectories of postmodern dance in the US. By this I mean that they opened dance to pregnancy, as a set of ideas and experiential phenomena—as a way of experiencing one's body changing, as a distinctive metaphor with which to think and make, as implicitly inclusive of one's sexual and visceral bodies, as interested in dancers' broader personhood, and as an underivative expression of human creativity. In so doing, they both untethered pregnancy from worn-out and exclusionary social narratives while also offering valuable resources/challenges to their artistic colleagues and their field at large. Thus, in the chapters that follow, I will share how, like Comfort, a set of US postmodern choreographers making work from the 1950s to the 2020s in the urban centers of Los Angeles, the Bay Area, New York City, Philadelphia, and rural satellites of these cities, contended with living-in, making-with, and expressing-from pregnant bodies and the distinctive ways that their personal negotiations determined how their dances *looked* and *felt* as well as what they *did* for the artists, their audiences, and for social paradigms of pregnancy as well as of dance. In addition to Comfort, Brown, and Tharp, the artists primarily discussed will include Anna Halprin, Sandy Jamrog, Jody Oberfelder, Johanna Boyce, Miguel Gutiérrez, Yanira Castro, Noémie LaFrance, Hana van der Kolk, Jennie MaryTai Liu, and Meg Foley.

Section one: Arriving at "the" pregnant body

“So, you have kids?” was typically the first question I was asked when I sat down to speak with choreographers, like Comfort, about their pregnancies. To their surprise, and perhaps to yours, dear reader, I entered this research having never been pregnant or having parented. However, pregnancy is an embodied experience with which I have been fascinated for my entire adult life. Allow me to explain. The physical body has long interested me as an artistic medium, a biology, a trove of information, and a tool for thinking. I have studied it as a dance practitioner, historian, and theorist as well as a student of health science and a teacher of anatomy and movement practices. I spent my childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood dancing at least six days per week, and as my dance studies took me from my childhood home in Idaho to new opportunities in New York City, Paris, and Conakry, I picked up and lugged along books that anatomized the body and its movements from a variety of specialist and cultural perspectives. By the time I commenced a master’s degree in choreography, my “body books” were many and dog-eared, heavily annotated, and glutted with post-it notes. Graduate school presented an exciting opportunity to expand my knowledge of bodies, and I requested and received permission to attend anatomy classes and labs through the medical school. To engage what I was learning, I taught workshops in “experiential anatomy” to dance students while also making dances that attempted to mirror medical understandings of body systems, which I hoped would serve as both teaching tools and mnemonics for dancers of how bodies “operate,” biomedically speaking. These choreographies were informed not only by my textbooks but by my background in eclectic somatic techniques including my ongoing studies in Body-Mind Centering. It was through these systems of knowing that I tried to “empirically” and “objectively” use my body to understand and teach “the” body.

I estimated that I had moderate success in choreographically experiencing systems like the muscular, skeletal, respiratory, circularity, digestive, integumentary, and nervous systems as well as feeling associatively in touch with the lymphatic, endocrine, and immune systems. However, when I tried to grapple with the reproductive system, I felt stuck, and problems with my methodology suddenly came into sharp relief. While choreography let me creatively explore the structure, rhythms, and "dances" of body systems, it felt fully inadequate for helping me grasp, interact with, and impart phenomena of human reproduction. Most specifically, I could not attune to the processes and somatic events of pregnancy in inductive or instinctive ways. I could not convince myself that I recognized them as felt sensations, yet their presence in other bodies around me was so patent that I did not feel at liberty to merely imagine them as immaterialities with which I could conceptually play (as I had with, for instance, the endocrine system). Still, I appreciated dance making's capacity for flagging gaps between experiences of embodiment, their scientific explanations, and my capacity as a thinking body to feel and trust them. In the rehearsal studio, these gaps came to me through broken patterns, false starts, and hiccups in space and time when ideas did not connect, or I did not feel any "click" of somatic discovery. Most frustratingly of all, I knew the gaps when I physically reiterated representations from which I felt somatically disengaged but that seemed like the "right answer"—when I mimicked pregnancy as I had seen it; when I gave into pregnancy being an idea outside of my body that I should do with my body—when I pretended I was pregnant via embodying available signifiers. I stuffed a pillow into my leotard; I rested my forearms on an imagined "bump;" I "waddled" around the dance studio; I sat on an exercise ball and rocked my pelvis; I did Kegels, LaMaze breathing, and meditations from *Birthing From Within*; I watched *The Business of Being Born*; I read OBGYN pamphlets and attended birthing clinic information sessions; I sat down and stood up with care and effort; I ate dark leafy greens for folic acid; I supported my low back with my hands and slept on my left side with a pillow between my knees; I followed prenatal exercise videos; and I even made accounts on websites and apps for daily updates on an avatar fetus (learning odd tidbits like which fruit or vegetable it was similarly sized to each week). In the end, my choreographic process and creative research revealed to me the limitations of my heuristics, expressive vocabulary, kinesthetic awareness, and interpretative frameworks. I was merely scratching the surface. I was missing the point.

I wondered if my experience of performing pregnancy based on the information I had at hand, even if it felt like "faking it," while trusting that "it" was real, natural, and something to which I *should* have intuitive connections, was unique to me. I also wondered if, should I experience "real" pregnancy, I might gain new insights into my body that would later invest me with knowledge that would change how I organized my instrument as a dancer-choreographer. I had been struck by an interview with celebrated early modern dancer Yuriko Kituchi in which she spoke about pregnancy surprising her with the "power that's behind one's own body" and how, while in labor, she "was already turning that physical sensation into a dance or choreographic idea—a source" (Tokunaga 2008, 218). At the same time, I recognized in myself an aversion to pregnancy as a corporeal experience, specifically the lack of physical control that it would affect. As Kituchi had also said, pregnancy is "a kind of force that I myself didn't have any control over. It had to do with me, but it had nothing to do with my brain telling my body what to do" (ibid.). As an artist, I was intrigued by dance axioms to "trust my body," "get out of my own way," "surrender to the movement," and "let my body lead me;" however, I experienced these directives as intentions and attitudes, not biologically necessitated realities. The state of being controlled by my body and having no ability to intervene in its doings was another experience entirely and one that, as a dancer, I feared. I recognized that I *preferred* to keep the kinesthesia of pregnancy in the abstract, as something ideally (certainly at that point in my life) preventable. I saw this avoidance as feministic: I was in control of my life. However, I did not recognize that it was also rooted in anxiety over my own body, how it might throw me under the proverbial bus if I did not keep it in check, how it might betray me as an artist, how I could lose jurisdiction of it, and how it could sabotage my future.

* * *

Jane Comfort always knew that she wanted to be a mother of two, but she wanted other opportunities as well. After receiving a fine arts degree, getting married, and working in the Peace Corps in Venezuela, she moved to New York City, bent on becoming a dancer. She later reflected, "Denial can be very helpful. I probably would not have been a dancer if I hadn't been in such heavy denial about starting so late" (Smith 1999, 69). Initially, she immersed herself in training with Merce Cunningham, hoping she would eventually be invited to join Cunningham's company. While in due time, she aimed to smash what she felt was a ubiquitous but preposterous "myth" that a mother cannot be a serious artist, she also, like many striving to dance professionally, postponed pregnancy so as to give herself a chance for a performance career (Comfort, discussion). However, in short order, the seeming irreconcilable dueling desires to be a mother and to be a dancer led her to what she called an "identity crisis" (Sheridan 1985). She could not fathom being personally fulfilled if she gave up having a family so as to be an artist, or vice-versa. She also could not fathom the two experiences of herself (parent and artist) overlapping. Moreover, the daily rigor, formal elements, and valued aesthetics of Cunningham technique seemed incompatible with pregnancy. It was hard for her to imagine her pregnant body performing a dance that was purely "about" movement, and she did not believe that it was possible for a pregnant body to be read in the "neutral," "apolitical" way that was Cunningham's desired aesthetic. At the time, she felt lost, and thinking back, she explained, "Many of us trained by Merce were left with a vocabulary incapable of expressing what we in our time need[ed] to express" (Smith 1999, 69). In the midst of her "identity crisis," she surmised, "I had things to say that I absolutely didn't know how to do with my body" (ibid.). Specifically, she did not have at her disposal a serviceable movement lexicon or creative process to express the parts of herself that drew her to parenthood as well as dance. In contrast to her postmodern dance predecessors who, only ten years earlier, expunged the dramatic, emotive legacy of modern dance from their practices, she explained that her cohort "always felt like we had nothing to rebel against" (Johnson 1993, 16). Thus, instead of rebelling, she decided to innovate and to create the movement and methods that she needed to better understand herself as an artist. She hoped that by making original choreography, she could manifest dances that fit her life and body and that did not require sacrificing her full personhood so as to make art.

Section two: The incompatibility (?) of pregnancy and dance

My own training in Euromerican concert dance traditions had covertly taught me that dance's standards of aesthetics and ability inevitably marginalize or exclude pregnant dancers. However, Euromerican dance is and has traditionally been populated primarily by young adult females, who are, tacitly, making decisions about pregnancies and parenthood during their choreographic and performance careers; yet, in my experiences as a student of dance in classrooms and studios, pregnancy was never directly discussed nor were the dilemmas it creates for many dancers. This inattention to pregnant dancers or dancers considering pregnancy in spaces of Euromerican dance study reflects a broader hierarchy of value in the professional arts maintaining that "serious" artists must devote their lives exclusively to their artform. Furthermore, my dance training had subliminally imparted that biological and parental bodies are messy, leaky, unpredictable, unprofessional, and thus the foil to dancers' bodies—paradigms of organization, self-containment, and consistency. Later in life, as I recognized my own sense of antagonism between my reproductive body and my dancing body, I was curious to discover means to expand my ideas of dancers and dance by thinking about each not in contrast to, but alongside, through, and with pregnant bodies.

Several years after receiving my master's degree, with many pregnancy-related questions still buzzing through my bodymind, I started doctoral studies. Having felt thwarted in my attempts to educatively choreograph and perform pregnancy, I now looked for choreographies made by pregnant artists to better understand how their experiences of the phenomena of pregnancy influenced their work. Thus, commencing my dissertation, I hypothesized that pregnancy affects individuals' choreographic processes and productions in meaningful ways; specifically, I anticipated that pregnancy inspires new sensations and representations for bodies in-flux, biological bodies, and "dancers' bodies." I tested this hypothesis at the New York City

Library for the Performing Arts. There, among its wealth of dance resources (including Comfort's film), I attempted to re-view the canon of dance history in the US through the lens of experiences of pregnancy. However, even though in the library, I had access to seven centuries' worth of dance records, I found that documentation of many choreographers' pregnancies was difficult to uncover.

I entered the archives with a list of US-based dancers I knew to be both choreographers and parents. Often working backward from the ages of their adult children, I traced where artists were in their careers and what they were involved in artistically at the times of their pregnancies. Beginning with my list—which started in the early 1900s, became denser in the 1970s and then increasingly dense from the 1990s to the present day—I looked for evidence of and reactions to works made by pregnant artists. Since many choreographers' pregnancies were seemingly excised from the documentary, theoretical, or journalistic writings that I encountered with ease about their careers, I dug deeper, into personal journals, letters to friends, memoirs, oral histories, magazine articles, performance reviews, rehearsal footage, advice columns, archived radio interviews, and other historical ephemera. Cobbling these resources together, an exciting story began to take shape. What I discovered was that, not only were many choreographers highly artistically productive while pregnant, but often, their pregnancies correlated with major career-making, style-defining shifts in their work. This is not to suggest in any way that pregnancy in and of itself unlocked their artistic abilities or that pregnancy has a universal effect on all dance artists. Quite the contrary, I came to understand that the situation of pregnancy inspired unique questions and problems for each artist, which, in turn, launched highly personal streams of creative inquiry and problem-solving that, while necessitated by pregnancy, endured as productive means toward broader ends in their larger creative careers. In collecting information, I also appreciated that the stories that I found only transpired because of these specific choreographers' steadily increasing legal freedoms in the US over if, when, and with whom they became pregnant as well as if their pregnancies should result in children, if they should rear these children, and finally, how they could define family.

Section three: The problems and opportunities within the "postmodern"

Ultimately, for my doctoral research, I decided to focus on a set of artists whose work could be described as "postmodern." Although this is a term that some of them would not immediately engage to define their art, I use "postmodern" primarily to suggest a time frame—coming after and in some way responding to the "modern" dance in the US that flourished in the late 19th-mid 20th centuries. I acknowledge that, especially in scholarly conversations, "postmodernism" is not a straightforward term to employ, as its meaning varies among academic and art disciplines as well as within these disciplines. "Postmodernism" as a dance historical category (as I am using it) has a very different meaning than "postmodernism" in the contexts of, for example, social theory, visual art, or architecture. What is more, even as a historical designation, it does not convey any sort of stylistic coherence to the works of the decades of choreographers who might be designated "postmodern." Additionally, there is no consensus among dance scholars as to when postmodernism, as a dance-specific classification, broke from modernism or the exact historical circumstances that precipitated this break. As dance critic Marcia Siegel summarized, "postmodernism" is an imperfect descriptive term for a dance genre because it is "Temporal and at the same time reflexive, it anchors itself to what never stays still, its own two parts locked in a slithery contradiction that prevents it from even being pinned down by a calendar date" (Daly et al. 1992, 49). Nevertheless, for this project, I am following the well-trodden path paved by dance historian and critic Sally Banes, who saw the beginnings of postmodernism in the work of Anna Halprin and Merce Cunningham and the full expression of this new category of dance realized in downtown New York City in the 1960s and 1970s via the dances of a group of mostly white, middle class, college-educated artist-intellectuals who were invested in reimagining dance as a creative and political medium.

I found that tracing various pregnant artists' stories offered me the opportunity to comb through historical strands of postmodern dance in the US from its nascent moves on Halprin's Bay Area dance deck; to its migration to New York City, to Robert Dunn's choreography class, and to Judson Church; to the various lofts, studios, farmhouses, living rooms, sidewalks, building façades, reel-to-reels, stages, bathrooms, dining room tables, computer screens, art galleries, churches, etc. where the artform continued to incubate, percolate, stretch, overwrite, and contradict itself, as well as bring individuals together and into dynamic conversations. Over these webs of bodies, spaces, and times, postmodernism and its priorities changed at community, personal, and genre levels as they responded to shifting cultural climates and political backdrops as well as changing popular and creative discourses.

However, as a banner to wave, "postmodern dance" has never been complete or fully intact; it is only ever in states of being tactically stitched together or unraveled. What is more, historians other than Banes, such as Susan Manning, proposed much later start dates for postmodernism, seeing the avant-gardism of the 1960s and 1970s as continuing the modernist project of "reflexive rationalization of movement," albeit with fresh stylistic approaches (1988). To complicate matters further, "postmodernism" is used differently among those in dance history and those in dance *studies*—a branch of dance scholarship concerned less with how a dance might be classified by genre or when it occurred within larger dance chronologies and more with close interpretation of dances and their relationships to the contexts of their emergences (Daly et al. 1992). Those in dance studies often employ analytical tools borrowed from or dialogic with cultural and subcultural theories and other scholarly humanities discourses (such as philosophy and gender, queer, postcolonial, or critical race studies). Considering the interdisciplinary and often multicultural underpinning of dance studies, conflicting conceptualizations of "the postmodern" inherently cause interruptions and tangles in scholarly analysis. Thus, in dance studies, "postmodernism" is a term used with economy, care, and explicit qualifications.

The artists in these pages who made work in the 1960-1980s identified as "dancers" and, once the moniker was available, the makers of "postmodern dances." However, later generations within the lineage of postmodern dance discussed here often chose more specific terms than "postmodern" or even "dance" to describe their art, and some even preferred descriptions other than "choreographer" for their professional identities. Many dance makers favored the term "downtown dance" to "postmodern dance" (Comfort, discussion). However, while still used by some artists today, the "downtown" of so called "downtown" dance is an empty signifier since the gentrification of New York's SoHo and the West Village have pushed experimental artists to other boroughs where the cost of living and venue rentals are more affordable. More recently, artists often describe their work as postmodern dance-adjacent, postmodern dance-rooted, postmodern dance-inclusive, or as an evolved and more fully realized form of postmodern dance. For instance, Foley describes herself as the maker of "various dance- and performance-based actions that explore the materiality of dance and physical identity as form" (http://www.megfoley.org/about.html, accessed Sept 29, 2020). Liu identifies as a director of performance and video "projects" (https://www.jennieliu.com/about accessed, Sept 29, 2020). Van der Kolk, makes "creative body-centered practices" through "bringing together [their] performance background, spiritual/healing practices, and community work" (https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/about, accessed Sept 29, 2020). Castro considers herself an "interdisciplinary artist" whose art "straddles performance, installation, online, and site-based projects" (https://acanarytorsi.org/category/people, accessed Sept 29, 2020). Even Oberfelder, who once identified as a postmodern dance choreographer, now identifies as the maker of stage, film, and installation works intended to "expand how one experiences dance" (https://www.jodyoberfelder.com, accessed Sept 29, 2020). All of this is to show that artists trained in postmodern dance continue to respond to the changing culture of experimental art as it itself responds to the changing cultures of the US and the wider world. Accordingly, many of today's artists see their work as both dance and as a metacommentary on dance, and they continue the tradition of making art the ambition of which is, at least partly, to frame dance in new ways and apply it toward pertinent contemporary ends, beyond conventional performance.

While the "postmodernists" of the 1980s and beyond were less preoccupied than their predecessors of the 1960s and 1970s with making work that rejected modern dance or even the dances of their immediate forebears, extant scholarship suggests that some through lines connect postmodernists across the decades. For instance, according to scholar/journalist Ann Daly, postmodernism in dance has consistently been an expression of "counterculture's vision of the body as a generative process—a source of social knowledge—and a public tablet on which to inscribe and disseminate that knowledge (Daly et al. 1992, 49). American dance critic Marcia Siegel added that postmodernism reliably "subverts received ideas about society and art" (ibid. 51), and choreographer and critical dance studies scholar Susan Foster interpreted postmodern dances as unified in how they "contested the genius theory of artist as extra sensitive communicator of archetypal human experience as well as the relationship of viewer to event based on empathic accord" (ibid. 68). Foster saw postmodern dances as often displaying "disruptive syntaxes that encourage viewers to participate in a free play of meaning," which, when operating at their "best," enable "critique of the classical conventions of Western art" (ibid.). Outside of New York and Los Angeles, the two cities most discussed in these pages, experimental dance germinating from postmodernism and maintaining connections to these expressed through lines, has also found homes and hubs in many other locations, and it is currently playing important and constructive roles, within and beyond theatre, in theory- and community-building in academia as well as in social justice organization and education. While the artists described in these chapters are interconnected by their formation in traditions and foundational praxes of postmodern dance, they are also among those recognized for pushing at the boundaries of postmodernism's values and practices from the inside. Specifically, beyond aesthetic practices, the ways in which they evolved and extended their artform made dance, both as episteme and expressive form, more open and inclusive to bodies, subject matter, and populations previously overlooked or otherwise omitted.

When Banes, like her colleagues and like myself, grappled with the in/sufficiency of the descriptive term "postmodern," she eventually concluded, "Historically—despite its many twists, turns, digressions, and alliances along the way—the movement has called itself postmodern, and many of its practitioners still use that title" (ibid. 60). In solidarity with the artists, flawed as it might be, she persevered in using the term within her writing to describe dances of the 1960s and beyond. As none of the artists whom I interviewed found "postmodern" expressly objectionable as a referent for their work and as many still teach "postmodern dance" classes, I am following suit. However, as my project moves between dance history and dance studies, I concede that my use of the term "postmodern" will surely be, for some, problematic, and independently, it is certainly an incomplete descriptor of any of the works that I discuss. While it is an insurmountable challenge to reconcile the distinctive interpretations and usages of the term from all of the different conceptual paradigms and disciplinary locations that inform my project, I, like Banes and many dance scholars before me, join the fray and employ the term not as a best fit but rather as a springboard into larger, richer, necessarily complex conversations about who makes art, with and for whom, when, why, and toward what effect.

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Looking for expressive vocabularies beyond dance to support her as she attempted her first choreography, Comfort heard someone describe visual artist Joan Jonas's "Mirror Check," and she felt a strong connection to it, although it would be a long while before she experienced the piece in person. In it, a nude performer carefully inspects every inch of her body via its reflection in a pocket mirror. As Comfort began making her solo, like the performer in "Mirror Check," she meticulously examined her body; however, her exploration was tactile rather than visual. Rhythmically, methodically, alternating between hands, she tapped the surface area of her body with her fingertips as she shifted her weight back and forth between feet in a wide second position. She later reflected that her solo was made in a subconscious attempt to navigate her fears of becoming pregnant and consequently disappearing from the art world. Each time she touched her skin, she was asking herself "Am I here?" and the dance was an attempt to reassure herself of her enduring presence. Debuting her solo was the first time she performed her self-inspection/affirmation before the eyes of others. As her body danced, she surveyed the gallery, and she noticed in disbelief that "the neighbors" had come (Comfort, discussion). These were David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, and Trisha Brown, all pioneers of postmodernism and bellwethers of the avant-garde. She felt herself seen by them and their attention to her body helped her answer the question that she was subconsciously asking herself: "If I have a child, will I still be here?" Performing and being appreciated as an artist in such company reassured her that she belonged "here" and that by her own creativity and self-assertion, she had earned her place "here." Thus, it was within her power to remain "here." Her assuredness only grew as, post-performance, she was showered with appreciation. Giving herself permission to identify as a choreographer, she felt psychologically ready to explore pregnancy, and once prepared, she became pregnant very quickly. As she contentedly told me, Steady Shift*, her name for this solo, was her first and only choreography made and shown before she started her family.*

* * *

Pregnant bodies did not appear in modern dance works, with the exception of Isadora Duncan's, by many accounts, "scandalous" dance concerts in 1906, while pregnant with daughter Diedre, in which, to her audience's astonishment, her tunic did not fully mask her protruding belly. Many female dancers, following in Martha Graham's footsteps, foreswore pregnancy because, very often, motherhood, and the gendered household labor it begot, dashed dance dreams. If, like Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, or Kikuchi, artists did become pregnant and then mothers, they did so discretely, maintaining a firm divide between their professional and private lives and eschewing day-to-day parenting to pursue their careers.

However, the 1960s' impulse toward rebellion, revolution, and gender equity affected the priorities of art dance culture just as it ignited feminist politics. Many choreographers of the 1960s turned away from the emotionality, passion, and sentimentality of early modern dance and joined feminist efforts to dismantle social ideologies of "separate spheres" and the female "cult of domesticity" and to demand women's equal participation in the workforce. This was the case even as new experimental dance artists failed to acknowledge the whiteness and class privilege that allowed them to "act out" and failed to see the women of color who remained unseen and unserved by their work (Casel 2019; Chaleff 2018; DeFrantz 2016). Part of artists claiming their equal human rights was securing legal agency over their reproductive bodies. Very significantly, the beginnings of postmodernism were coterminous with the beginnings of legislation which made it possible for many individuals with the capacity for pregnancy (especially non-poor white individuals) to both avail themselves of this capacity, on their terms, and/or to not have this capacity inhibit them from being professional artists. In other words, focusing on postmodernism for this project meant also focusing on dance made not only post Griswold v. Connecticut—which increased access to and established the legality of contraception—but post Roe v. Wade—which made abortion legal for many at the national level. In other words, as I saw more pregnant bodies performing and making dances, I also found more legislation supporting their ability to do so by expanding many women's access to reproductive healthcare, condemning discrimination, and protecting more types of individuals' rights to have/not-have a family. Thus, let me clarify that while these chapters will make the argument that pregnancy served an important purpose in many artists' careers, what served a prerequisite and equally significant role was artists being freed of social and biological obligations to become pregnant or to have pregnancy necessitate any particular and predetermined way of life.

Within dance history, just as many consider Graham to be the creator of modern dance, many consider her company member Merce Cunningham (more so that his west coast creative contemporary Halprin) to be the creator of postmodern dance. However, while Graham has been dubbed the "mother" of modern dance, Cunningham is rarely called postmodernism's "father." Perhaps this is because, unlike Graham, his approach to creativity took a path that could not be analogized to making biological family. Together with his romantic and creative partner, composer John Cage, Cunningham sought out choreographic methods that expressly minimized the mark of his paternity on what he made. To do so, he and Cage utilized "chance operations" inspired by the *I Ching*, the Chinese "book of changes," which uses a random numerical system to impart its divinations. In so doing, Cunningham intentionally loosened the hold of his own authorship on his creative output. Beyond allowing him to surpass the limitations of his own taste, his resulting works prioritized "movement for movement's sake," meaning they were not dances that communicated stories, emotions, or characters. Moreover, they fully avoided established lexicons of dance by discovering, via chance operations, entirely new ways to organize and present bodies in space and time. Cunningham and Cage's collaboration as artists also adhered to chance operations. They did not blend and synthesize their creative offerings into a single work (a process that might invite analogization of Cunningham and Cage to parents of postmodern dance). Instead, each worked independently, and their distinct contributions came together collage-like in incidental rendezvouses during live performances.

In their wake, postmodernism, as a counter-cultural project within dance upended "traditional" ideas about the art form. It did so by focusing on new creative methodologies like task-based improvisations and by rejecting virtuosic movement in favor of "pedestrian" choreographies like walking, running, lying down, and talking. It took concert dance off its "high" art pedestal, making space for humor, randomness, and the absurd whilst also appreciating the expressive capacity and political impact of non-dancerly bodies on stage (meaning those that were not lean, evidently toned, long-limbed, and externally rotated like ballet dancers). It also invited other artforms—such as sculpture and experimental musical composition—and discourses—such as philosophy and politics—to be part of dance, not as background, but as content. The resulting works, with their investments in democratizing and deconstructing dance, often had montaged, genre-hopping, non-linear aesthetics and stirred up tête-à-têtes among the audience, art critics, and larger art communities. Despite all that they included, these early works still excluded most nonwhite and differently abled bodies. They also excluded pregnant bodies although, in theory, postmodernism opened up physical and conceptual spaces that would make it possible to choreograph and perform with a pregnant body.

For the set of artists discussed in these chapters, experiences of pregnancy were key to helping them perceive the limitations of postmodern dance communities, politics, and practices. Pregnancy also revealed to them specific opportunities to grow their artform to meet their changed experiences of self, their ongoing creative inquiries, and their material needs. While postmodernism developing out of the Cunningham tradition could not accommodate pregnancy aesthetically, even intentionally welcoming and anti-elitist spaces like Judson Church were not set up to support pregnant artists. The fear that gripped second generation choreographers that becoming pregnant would be the end of their artistic careers, revealed the nearsightedness of the early postmodernists' claim that *all* bodies were welcome. In other words, while the praxes and philosophies behind postmodern dance offered supportive buttresses—for example the invitation to consider more bodies dancing bodies, to *study* one's self through dance, and to innovate one's own movement style—they also belied inherent assumptions about the types of bodies that could be "neutral" and the types of life experiences that could meaningfully inform art. Time and again—in part because of broader social interpretations of pregnancy but also because of implicit intra-dance-cultural understandings of how a dancer should look and move—the artists in these chapters experienced how their pregnant bodies did not easily fit within the avant-garde landscape. What is more, as illustrated in dance reviews, pregnant dancing bodies were frequently interpreted as too semantically laden to be abstractable, too evidently biological to be formal, too aberrant to be "everyday," and too feminine to be "neutral." It seemed pregnant bodies had too much semiotic, cultural, and gendered baggage to participate in postmodernism's larger deconstructionist tactics like revealing the human-made, and thus flexible, nature of social identities through deliberate, noncompliant presentations of bodies on stage.

Sensing their bodies suddenly not fitting into the spaces and communities in which they were previously welcome, these pregnant artists recognized that postmodernism was not only exclusionary, but it was also easily thrown off-kilter if its realms were, in this case quite literally, impregnated by bodies that appeared un-neutral, in-flux, sexed, or leaky; thus, pregnant artists' works asserted that postmodernism's politics of inclusivity were contingent at best and, at worst, insincere. However, the work of many insisted that postmodernism could be consciously evolved so as to include more individuals. For instance, Brown inserted her maternal body into her abstract work by intermingling the movements of caring for a small child with other choreographies of everyday life. Oberfelder abstracted herself by strategically flattening her fleshy and, in her mind, overly connotative body to a surface which could be read in an un-storied way. Van der Kolk interpolated pregnant bodies into formal exercises both to explore the ongoing utility of these exercises for pregnant subjects' awareness, expression, and pleasure and to confront audiences with their own unconscious expectations for which types of bodies should do and show which types of movements. In other words, confronting that postmodern dance was not as inclusive as it presumed itself to be, these artists innovated forms, structures, and systems which allowed more bodies into the formal aesthetics and praxes prototypical of their dance culture and its priorities.

Section four: The making and unmaking of "others within" postmodern dance culture

While pregnancy often led postmodern choreographers to feel like outsiders within their art community, their bodies only temporarily marked them as "other." Put another way, pregnant bodies do not remain pregnant, meaning postpartum bodies can, at least hypothetically, become once again unmarked and thus "neutral"/"normal," as these terms are conceptualized and embodied in traditional postmodern dance. Of course, this is only the case if individuals experienced their bodies as neutral or otherwise fully included in their art community pre-pregnancy. However, this is not and has never been the case for many individuals who—due to precedent and pervasive habits of aesthetic preference—consistently felt/feel like "others within" postmodernism because of aspects of their physical appearances. Increasingly, scholarly and artistic work (some included in these chapters) calls attention to the inbuilt whiteness and slimness of postmodernism and its implicit othering of non-white or otherwise "nontraditional" bodies. There is growing recognition that within postmodern dance, neutrality has been constructed in a way informed by subjectivity and representational politics. By this, I mean that the same mechanisms that allow some individuals' physical attributes to "disappear," so that their bodies can read as abstractions and ideas, make others' attributes surface, and while, to those not directly excluded by these mechanisms, they are invisible, they are undeniably present and have been throughout postmodernity (and certainly before).

It is important to note here that most choreographies discussed in these chapters are by white artists and were performed by white dancers, and as a white choreographer myself, I could imprudently dismiss these facts by saying that they merely reflect that the postmodern dance community, today as at its beginnings, is primarily white-populated. However, this is too simplistic and convenient a rationale. As Gutierrez wrote in his essay "Does Abstraction Belong to White People?," white choreographers—a population in which I am interpellated—unconsciously believe that "somehow their bodies can be signifiers for a universal experience that doesn't need to look at whiteness as an active choice or as the default mechanism of a lazy non-existent critique" (2018). Taking these words seriously, I appreciate firstly, that even by striving to abstract their bodies, the white artists I discuss did not achieve or offer access to an experience that could be universally shared; and secondly, that even as many of these artists recuperated tools of postmodern abstraction to support and present their pregnant bodies, their whiteness offered them safety and access both to feelings of agency in their strategic self-objectification and the acknowledged platform to perform and be recognized as an "insider" making critical commentary, as opposed to an "outsider within" whose belonging was already in some way contingent and thus precarious.

For most white artists, the apparentness and publicness of their bodies not-fitting-in while pregnant dematerialized postpartum, which put them in very different standing than others whose bodies, pregnant or not, consistently felt in tension with postmodernism and its professed neutrality. Of the set of artists discussed here, some choreographers, like Tharp and Oberfelder, embraced the temporariness of their “otherness,” and took the time of pregnancy to explore what they could make and show with bodies which, although biologically theirs, they themselves considered “other” from their “normal” bodies. However, for artists like Liu, feeling doubly removed from mainstream postmodern dance culture by being both a person of color and a pregnant person, presenting their pregnant bodies as art was not, for them, a feasible or personally gratifying option. This is to say, feeling a sense of possibility in the object-ness/idea-ness of one’s dancing body has more appeal and is more possible for a population who feel full reassurance that even as objects/ideas, they will still be recognized as individuals and as the agential authors of their work. As African and African American studies scholar and dance theorist Thomas DeFrantz has critiqued, within postmodernism, because of divergent racial histories, different bodies have different access to “the production of non-meaning,” and by extension, only some bodies have the “luxury” of doing the “task-based” choreography, so foundational to postmodernism and purported to offer movers experiences of freedom (2016). As he explained, the claiming of “task as art” was perhaps a radical idea in Euromerican art history, but one reliant on the artist operating from a position of privilege and a cultural background from which labor can be abstracted, tasks need not have value, and work need not directly benefit one’s community. While this was a luxury known to the white, college educated dancers from middle class families who created, for instance the Judson group, for many persons of color, especially those coming to postmodernism from other cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, task-based or fully abstract postmodern dance practices seemed like alienated labor and were, thus, unfulfilling. Moreover, as DeFrantz explained, tasks can read differently when performed by persons of color. For example, “A man walking through a park and falling over [becomes] quite different when he was a Black man walking through a park and falling over” (ibid.).

Similarly, we can postulate, a naked (white) pregnant body undulating on the floor, like Oberfelder's, might be read quite differently to dance audiences if it were, for instance, an Asian body, like Liu's. Understanding as much, in the interest of privacy and protecting her own pregnancy experience/story, Liu decided not to display her pregnant body onstage. For many of the artists in these chapters, even those who are white or white-passing, their experiences of suddenly feeling "other" to their art community while pregnant motivated them to permanently change the ways that bodies made meaning in their work, which bodies meaningfully informed their projects, the communities they created through art, and the life experiences that their dances illuminated.

* * *

Comfort decided to make a dance while she was pregnant which would affirm herself as an artist, as she had in Steady Shift*, even as her identity was gaining new facets and her instrument was re-tuning itself. She decided to do a one-minute improvisation every month of her pregnancy. While she expected this to be a private practice, she elected to end her second performance of original choreography with her third performance of the one-minute solo. Dancing while three months pregnant meant that her pregnancy was not yet public knowledge or strikingly evident. A filmmaker in the audience, Neelon Crawford, approached her after the show and complimented her "wildness" in the final solo (Comfort & Donovan 2018). She confided in him her process and its rationale, and he suggested that he document her monthly solos on film. She agreed, thinking the recordings would be equivalent to a personal diary. She valued the possibility for documentation because, despite her commitment to continuing to make work, she worried this "diary" might be the last dance she ever performed. It remained difficult for her to imagine a future that included both parenting and performing and more difficult still to imagine that her body, which was rapidly expanding—by the end gaining over 50 pounds—would ever be svelte and swift again in the ways that, in her cultural context, a dancer's was expected to be.*

Section five: Participant observation

To test, enrich, and challenge my dance historical discoveries, I reapproached my questions as an ethnographer might. Embedding myself in art dance communities on both coasts, I interviewed a set of contemporary choreographers who are parents about their experiences of dancing/making while pregnant. Formerly, a full participant in these communities, I knew or associatively knew many of these artists before our conversations, and this mutual familiarity facilitated mutual trust and their willingness to share with me the deeply private details of pre- and post-natal experiences; birthing stories; and pregnancy stories that did not result in live babies, had undesired outcomes, or had caused personal traumas. Whenever possible, in addition to speaking with them and studying their choreographies, I also attended these artists' movement classes or observed their rehearsals. This allowed me, as a researcher, to comingle textual and choreographic analysis with kinesthetic and interpersonal experiences as I grappled with and represented the art(ists) in these chapters.

Approaching pregnancy and choreography through the ethnographic method of participant observation—for me, meaning learning about individuals' lived experiences through joining them in spaces where they were comfortable and where I could observe and participate in activities with them—required consciousness of my own, to use cultural anthropologist Thomas Csordas' phrase "somatic modes of attentions" (1993). For Csordas, this phrase conveyed "ways of attending to and with one's body," which occur at the levels of both the personal and the cultural. Personally, engaging "somatic modes of attention" meant involving my body sensorially in my processes of research and analysis and trusting my perceptions to meaningfully inform my work. Csordas' methodology, which he called "cultural phenomenology," involved attending to the *culturally constructed* ways in which people understand phenomena through their bodies, and for me, the culture that has most patently influenced my somatic attentions is that of postmodern dance. Being a practitioner of postmodern dance has offered me a specific corporeality grounded in movement practices learned through immersion in a particular dance culture and vocabulary, bounded by geography and time. Because I embrace my body as my primary and necessary tool for thinking, I allow that my corporeality both facilitates and constrains my attentions and thus my scholarly inquiries.

To elaborate on my "somatic modes of attention" and their formation, after my undergraduate studies in dance at Barnard College, I stayed in New York City "gigging" as a freelance performer and choreographer. Like many within my cohort of dancers, I was academically and technically trained primarily by second- and third-generation postmodern dancers, meaning those who had danced with, for instance, Cunningham, Tharp, and Paul Taylor; those who experienced pedagogy in the techniques of Robert Dunn, Deborah Hay, or Steve Paxton; and those who danced in the companies of artists like Bill T. Jones, David Dorfman, Molissa Fenley, or Mark Morris. During this time, I did work study in exchange for class at the Trisha Brown Dance Company, ushered in exchange for seeing shows at Dance Theater Workshop (now New York Live Arts), held the red bucket for Dancers Responding to AIDS at theaters around Manhattan, auditioned throughout the boroughs for experimental works or for the opportunity to show my own work in loft or basement "venues," attended contact improvisation "jams," and saved whatever money I could from my menagerie of odd jobs to take classes at Movement Research and Dance Space Center (later Dance New Amsterdam). On special occasions, I bought a seat in the "nose bleeds" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music for touring companies like Tanztheater Wuppertal, Rosas, Batsheva, Ballet Frankfurt, and Nederlands Dans Theater, after which, I would brave the long late-night haul back from Brooklyn to the (then) more affordable housing of Washington Heights. Every Monday that I did not have a rehearsal of my own, I attended concerts of new movement-based performance at Judson Memorial Church. I went to these weekly shows both to stay on what I assumed was the leading edge of dance research and because it was free, and like so many of my peers, money was always ever just barely enough to squeeze by each month. All of this is to illustrate that I know at an embodied level both the pleasure and precarity of life as an experimental dancer-choreographer in an urban hub. Accordingly, as a researcher, I feel implicated and deeply enmeshed in dance while also, especially with the passage of time, invested in reflecting on it from an academic distance and with measured criticality.

Of course, my analysis of dance is inextricably linked to my kinesthetic history, which occurred within the particular artistic, academic, urban, and cultural contexts just described. I appreciate, especially after interviewing and moving with dancers younger than I am and from backgrounds different from my own—as indeed most performers today are—that my experiences dancing in and around New York City in the early 2000s offered me a particular Janus perspective on dance. By this, I mean that I experienced my dancing body looking backwards at its generational inheritance as much as forward at its potential for innovation. More specifically, dance as known by my body, was in tracible relationship to a historical line preceding me by four decades. As I moved through the dance spaces of downtown Manhattan and learned the choreographies and techniques of my dance predecessors, I was figuratively, but also literally, *following in the footsteps* of a very particular set of postmodernists. In other words, for me, postmodernism was incubated in Judson Dance Theater Collective's 1962 premiere of *A Concert of Dance*. There are many origin stories for experimental dance in the US, and many less tethered to European-derived thinking and aesthetics. However, this is the one that my bodymind rehearsed and knows, and consequently, I experienced being in the thick of postmodernism as orbiting around Judson Memorial Church and Cunningham's and Brown's studios. In short, just as much as my dance background and the experiential knowledge with which it has endowed me offers me "insider" access and understandings that can enrich my analysis, it predisposes me toward specific observations, articulations, and priorities, potentially at the expense of others.

Section six: Dipping a toe into health science

While I might be considered an “insider” to a certain corner of the postmodern dance world, I am by no means an “insider” to the other epistemic culture of the body that has long interested me: health science. However, appreciating that health science offers other critical systems of meaning engaged by dancers for making sense of, caring for, and working on their pregnant bodies, I ventured from the school of art to the school of nursing midway through my PhD, audited a class on obstetric nursing, and studied methods of qualitative health research. This time, I appreciated that, like the artists about whom I write, I was someone with a dance background transplanted to another body-centric context in which my “somatic modes of attentions” were of only partial and questionable utility for understanding the subject matter as a nurse or physician might. Still, while my research focuses on the formal and theoretical work that dances perform for pregnant individuals, I wanted to simultaneously explore choreography’s dialogic relationship with clinical practices. Thus, to better understand the balance between health science and art for supporting individuals’ needs while pregnant, I applied for and received IRB approval to interview pregnant choreographers about their experiences of healthcare and healing. I also studied qualitative health research with Dr. MarySue Heilemann at UCLA, who—in addition to having a graduate degree in Perinatal Nursing and extensive experience as a labor and delivery nurse, a LaMaze instructor, a maternal-child home visiting public health nurse, and the organizer of perinatal healthcare for migrant and community health centers—is a scholar of interpretive phenomenology (qualitative research with an ideographic focus, which examines how specific individuals in specific contexts understand the phenomena of their life). As a nurse, a birth justice activist, and an interpretive phenomenologist, her insights on bodies, practices of care, and methods of attention deepened and enriched my thinking. They also offered me invaluable points of entry into the field of health science and insights into the critical differences between the philosophies and practices of nursing and those of medicine. With her mentorship, I learned new methods of conducting interviews, coding interview transcripts using techniques of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006) and Situational Analysis (Clarke 2005), and analyzing data to generate health research with evidence-supported analyses.

While anticipating walls, I discovered many bridges between creative work and the humanistic caregiving work of nursing. As I transitioned back from nursing to humanities scholarship and the feminist semi-structured interview style that I routinely employ in tandem with choreographic analysis, I maintained the methods and strategies that I gleaned from Dr. Heilemann. In other words, per feminist interview strategies, I continued to appeal to the "authority of experience" and to conceptualize interviews as warm exchanges of knowledge between myself and others with common interests (Diamond and Edwards 1977). Following the advice of Ann Oakley's 1981 article, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms," while interviewing, I continued to make no pretense of distanced objectivity or impartiality; instead, I worked toward solidarity with my interviewees and was overt about my investment in how they understood the "truths" of their lives. However, while hearing, appreciating, and aiming to amplify the experiences of those with whom I spoke, I also closely analyzed and organized interviews via rigorously consistent and systematic health research methods. Often, this additional, meticulous examination revealed surprising and key connections between artists' works, lived experiences, and their perceptions of their bodies' health and needs.

After exploring obstetric nursing, I came to appreciate how historical shifts in healthcare practices over the last 70 years not only affected many choreographers' agency in making art but also the style, subject matter, and politics of their work. Together, my mixed methods, varied disciplinary locations (which came to include not only dance, health science, and anthropology, but also philosophy and gender studies), and multiple critical lenses (which, beyond the dance theoretical and the qualitative health scientific, came to include the feministic and the phenomenological) allowed me to think across boundaries and achieve, in turns, very tight foci and the sense of a larger picture. They also allowed me to theorize dance as a meaning-making praxis which, like the clinical practice of nursing, can disrupt, support, or otherwise intervene in the hegemony of medicine.

The choreographers in these pages exemplify independent artists, often in romantic partnerships with other artists or parenting on their own and sustaining themselves in urban centers with high costs of living. Thus, regardless of their cultural, racial, or educational background, many were in financially precarious situations at the times of their pregnancies, and many continue(d) to be in financially precarious situations as parents. This meant that their access to healthcare was often bounded by statutes of state-specific Medicaid. As follows, part of their experience of pregnancy was confronting the limitations put on their bodyselves by a society that, by and large, does not value their work in financially measurable ways and a medical system that many found restrictive or otherwise disempowering. However, I came to appreciate how some choreographers' work made while pregnant offered tactics for self-definition, self-observation, and self-care, which was directly responding to their experiences of feeling defined, observed, and managed in medical contexts. I recognized how these choreographers' work revealed, complicated, rubbed against, or outright lambasted how, in their experiences, the patriarchal system of medicine made sense of who/what they were as pregnant individuals. Furthermore, I noted how some of these artists experienced dance as a type of preventative, ameliorative, restorative, or alternative “medicine.”

Those in the medical humanities have long argued that medicalization of individuals’ bodies has the potential to make people, be they pregnant or otherwise, feel replaced by their representations and thus unseen. It is from their representations—be they diagnoses, numerical valuations, patterns of checked boxes on charts, ultrasound images, the results of fetal heart monitoring, intra-uterine pressure catheter readings, or other clinical codifications and prognoses—that conclusions about their health are drawn, regardless of their lived experiences of wellness or illness. What is more, pregnancy and motherhood are rarely discussed in health contexts without gendering these experiences, which does not accurately represent all of those who can and choose to experience pregnancy. While classification of bodies/people via available representations has efficacy in medical contexts for standardizing care, many choreographers (especially those who do not experience the precarity of life as “marginalized” social subjects) have some capacity to assert control over the public and private significance of their bodies. For some, asserting this control is a means to reclaim their sense of agency. To this point, many of the artists described in these pages made dances while pregnant to not feel dependent on physicians’ “expert” opinions but rather to define themselves to themselves. This set of artists found in their dancing bodies means to see and assess themselves without reliance on the objectifying, so-called, “medical gaze.” Their dances of self-observation and -appreciation which involved regular praxes of deep somatic attention, allowed for more individuated inventories of personal developments, which they observed both as and with their bodies. Their self-observations allowed them to participate in their bodily transformations because their personal assessments were not meant to label or judge their bodies but rather to facilitate and recognize the value of their own growth. In other words, their self-aware artmaking allowed them to experience themselves as the subjects of their own pregnant experiences, not the objects of other people's knowledge.

Moreover, by deriving their own means of somatic study, they continued a feminist tradition of women, personally and collectively, demystifying and claiming authority over their bodies. Learning to look at (even into) their bodies with curiosity and confidence, many of these artists refused to feel either restrained by or ashamed of their bodies as these bodies became less dancerly, as conventions of Euromerican dance define dancerly physiques. Rather they experienced themselves *as* their bodies or as their bodies' allies, accomplices, or students.

* * *

Very quickly, Comfort's private diary project became a topic of public controversy. This started when she and Crawford applied for several grants to support filming and editing. Those who supported the project (including, to Comfort's initial disbelief, the National Endowment for the Arts) saw it as an important "feminist statement" and a "strong political piece" (Comfort, discussion). Others turned them down. She recounted that one rejector said, "Oh God, just another pregnant woman who thinks she's important" (Comfort, discussion). Comfort was amused by all this feedback, and having secured enough funds, continued, unshaken, with what she called "my little dance for me." She showed up each month to Dance Theater Workshop for the shoot, a bit "bigger" and "slower." For her costume, she rejected maternity clothes, which she saw as "what you would put on for a fourth grader" and as masking pregnant bodies under "ruffled tents" of "billowy cloth and bows" (ibid.; Sheridan 1985). Instead, she wore her practice clothes, undeterred by viewers' raised eyebrows at how they hugged her contours. Much later, her "daring" wardrobe choice was applauded. For instance, in 2019, when the #MeToo movement was at its peak—a movement which sparked reckoning with sexism in the US and ignited efforts to respect women's bodies and welcome them to claim public space—the Museum of Modern Art in New York City requested permission to use Crawford and Comfort's film for a curated evening of shorts, explaining to the artists, "Oh, politically, it's such a perfect time to show it right now" (Comfort, discussion). This justification tickled Comfort because at the time of its making in the late 1970s, even though she was not setting out to make the kind of "statement" for which she was retrospectively credited, her revelation of her shape felt far more risqué and unprecedented. Afterall, her leotarded pregnant body appeared long before Demi Moore's controversial and trendsetting 1991 Vanity Fair *cover, in which she was nude and pregnant, or Beyoncé's 2017 Grammy performance, pregnant and in a sheer form-fitting dress. For Comfort, even her family members protested her wardrobe, assuming that not only as a* *dancer but as a woman, she would want to keep her form inscrutable and thus safe from others' appraisal and critique. She recollected that her husband's aunt admonished her to be more discreet and, hoping to shock her into reconsidering her outfit, exclaimed, "You look so fat!"*

Section seven: Constructions and deconstructions of pregnancy

Examining the choreographies in these chapters offers the opportunity to review the history of postmodern dance through new lenses. It also offers the opportunity to review historical constructions of pregnancy. By this I mean shifting social and clinical ideas about when pregnant bodies matter, how they should be cared for, and the types of attentions they should be paid, both by pregnant individuals and their communities of care. To quickly survey what preoccupied progressive decades of US women when it came to understanding and caring for their pregnant bodies, I consulted the literature most available and acquired for purposes of pregnant women's self-education over the last half century. The titles alone of top selling pregnancy books are revelatory of shifting priorities for different generations. As women began to inform themselves about the downfalls of medical "interventions" in childbirth, they were reading *Childbirth Without Fear* (1942), *Thank you, Dr. Lamaze: A Mother's Experiences in Painless Childbirth* (1959), and later, *Husband-Coached Birthing* (1965). Each source offered choreographies of movement and attention to support those wanting to birth without anesthesia. This was because leading into the early 1960s, talk of "progress" in birthing practices, both from health science and feminist standpoints, was primarily about reducing women's pain; however, during the period discussed in these chapters, individuals had begun to recognize that heavy anesthesia in birthing led to negative physical effects on themselves and their babies, and it also left them less able to care for themselves and their newborns postpartum. This sentiment fueled the natural childbirth movement, the philosophy behind which was that the pregnant individual, not her care provider, should be in charge of her labor experience, and thus, that women should reclaim autonomy in the birthing process. In other words, mother's autonomy was understood as coming at the cost of anesthesia.

Next came the popularity of books such as *Our Bodies Ourselves* (1970), *Birth without Violence* (1974), and *Spiritual Midwifery* (1975). This collection offered praxes for gaining expert knowledge about one's own body, taking care of both mother and infant as "whole" persons, and home birthing to a new generation of women. At the same time, *Of Woman Born* (1976) started popular conversations about the limitations of the heterosexual nuclear family and the inequitable gendered labor that upholds this problematic institution. Perhaps counterintuitively, it did not become a reference for maternal activism, such as to improve conditions for and increase understanding of the diverse lived experiences of mothers. Rather, it became part of white second wave feminists' anti-motherhood agenda, and it was most cited for instances in which its author, Adrienne Rich, articulated her fear of becoming like her own mother, a fear with which many "baby boomer" women in the 1970s identified.

In the 1980s, books like *Active Birth* (1983) looked across countries, cultures, and eras for best birthing practices. At the same time, *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (1984) and *Your Pregnancy Week by Week* (1989) walked pregnant individuals though "authoritative" information that, previously, they would have been reliant on their social, family, and clinician networks to share, information focused on what is "normal" to feel at each stage, and even each week of pregnancy. On the other hand, popular fiction like *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) brought new visions and implications of pregnancy into the social imagination, and it assertively broke from traditional master narratives of pregnant bodies, such as lore of maternal bliss. In the 1990s, the popularity of books like *The Expectant Father* (1995), *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* (1995), and *When You're Expecting Twins, Triplets, or Quadruplets* (1999), reflected that family planning and family roles were being rethought to accommodate many women's preferences to delay pregnancy or take advantage of assisted reproductive therapy so as to pursue academic and career ambitions prior to becoming a parent. Moreover, the popularity of books such as *Mama's Little Baby: The Black Woman's Guide to Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Baby's First Year* (1997), *The Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy for Lesbians* (1999), and *Waiting in the Wings: A Portrait of Queer Motherhood* (1997) reflected wider spread recognition that the journey into parenthood cannot be understood in monolithic terms.

Also in the 1990s, there was more interest in and access to resources for individuals to prepare themselves on a variety of levels, including the spiritual, psychological, emotional, and intellectual for birthing and parenthood. These interests are reflected in popular books such as *Birthing from Within* (1998), *The Birth of the Mother* (1998), and *The Thinking Woman's Guide to Better Birth* (1999). However, the homebirth/midwifery advocacy of birth activists in the 1990s like the natural childbirth movement of the 1970s took an approach which was exclusionary and which prioritized non-poor white experiences in terms of who was offered more control over their experiences or pregnancy and birthing. In other words, instead of arguing that safe pregnancy care is a human right, they fought for the rights of the pregnant individual/patient, as consumer, to pay for a midwife, other "alternative" care options, and literature that informed them about their options. By focusing on individuals' right to purchase the birth experience that aligned with their politics, they, once again, excluded the poor from protected and equitable "natural birth" opportunities. Again, in the early 2000s came a return to interest in "natural" birthing with the popularity of *Spiritual Midwifery* author Ina May Gaskin's *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth* (2003) as well as a revamped *Our Bodies Ourselves: Pregnancy and Birth* (2008). Alongside these were books like *Your Pregnancy after 35* (2001), which reflected the increasing phenomenon of navigating what medicine calls “geriatric pregnancies,” which, allegedly involved more risk and thus required extra clinical attention and care as well as extra vigilance from the pregnant individuals to fend off over-medicalization of what should be “natural” processes.

Whereas previously, pregnant individuals were keen to know “what to expect” trimester by trimester, by the 2000s, in addition to phone applications and websites that allowed them to monitor and assess themselves at smaller intervals, books like *Pregnancy Day by Day* (2009) became popular. Other trendy books of the 2000s such as *Skinny Bitch Bun in the Oven: A Gutsy Guide to Becoming One Hot (and Healthy) Mother!* (2008), *Real Food for Mother and Baby: The Fertility Diet, Eating for Two, and Baby’s First Foods* (2009), *Expecting Better: Why the Conventional Pregnancy Wisdom is Wrong—and What you Really Need to Know* (2013), *Natural Hospital Birth: The Best of Both Worlds* (2011), and *Black Pregnant and Loving It: The Comprehensive Pregnancy Guide for Today’s Woman of Color* (2016) reflect the manifold and often conflicting priorities and responsibilities for contemporary pregnant individuals. To underscore this point, key terms in descriptions of best-selling pregnancy books today include “data-driven,” “trusting yourself,” “the shit no one tells you,” “secrets of surviving,” “mindfulness,” “preventing miscarriages,” and “improving your odds.” From the titles alone, we can appreciate how the conversation of pregnancy has shifted and fractured, continues to shift and fracture, and now is, at times cacophonously, decidedly polyvocal and paradoxical. We can also appreciate that pregnant individuals are ostensibly more socially, medically, and personally responsible than ever before for both how they and their babies fare while pregnant and postpartum.

Consistently over the years, discussions of prenatal health tend toward language of morality, ideas of a "right" and a "wrong" way to do things, and ways, starting with pregnancy, in which individuals can be or fail to be "good" mothers. Thus, it is significant that, in their choreographies, the artists in these chapters fully avoided the bramble patch of social expectations surrounding "good" mothering, a bramble patch that prenatal care practitioner, Dr. Caitlin Zietz satirically summarizes as:

> Get pregnant. Have babies. But not too early. And not too late. Somewhere between 27-35 is ideal. 25 is so young to have kids! Over 35 is considered a geriatric pregnancy. Do it naturally. It should be easy. Everyone gets pregnant. You lost a baby? Don't worry it happens. It wasn't meant to be. It's normal. You'll have another and forget all about this. Don't be upset. Don't be angry. Don't let anyone know next time before 12 weeks. Enjoy your next pregnancy. Don't have anxiety. Everything will be fine. Stay fit when pregnant. But not too fit, you could hurt the baby. Eat veggies. Eat meat. Take vitamins. Not those ones, these ones. Gain weight. But not too much weight, it's hard to lose. Don't drink coffee. Drink more water. Don't stress. It hurts the baby. How are you not stressed? Birth looks terrifying. Did you find out the gender? I can't believe you don't "need to know" what it is? Do you have names picked? Don't pick a name till you meet him. Do you have the top-of-the-line sleepers, crib, car seat, bum cream, noise machine, carriers, diaper bag and stroller? Why did you spend so much money? Less is more. Give birth naturally. Definitely get the epidural. You opted for a c-section? Weren't there more options? Breastfeed your baby, it's best. Your baby is too big. Your baby is too small you need formula, you're not sustaining enough milk for her. Your baby cries a lot. Use a soother. Don't use a soother it interferes with breastfeeding. Use a swaddle. Don't swaddle, it's dangerous. Your baby should sleep more. You should sleep more. Co-sleep. Wait, don't…. You're 6 weeks postpartum. You should "get your body back". Workout. But not that workout, it's dangerous. You should love your body. How did you manage your stretch marks? Di·as·ta·sis. No, it's pronounced di·as·ta·sis. You should be happy. Why are you sad? You're so lucky to have a baby. What is there to be anxious about? … Stay calm. You're too calm.

Avoiding the labyrinthine discourse of "good" mothering along with its impossible, contrarian expectations freed up energy for artists to do other types of reflection and creation. In so doing, they exemplified that danced movement could incubate the work of examining, debunking, and rebuilding mothering not in binary (good/bad) terms, but in plural and feministic terms.

The choreographies in these chapters also confronted conventional and constraining ideas of family. The image of the "traditional" nuclear family—an industrious husband whose wife maintains his house and finds fulfillment in mothering his children—has never represented a majority of families in the US or anywhere. Despite becoming paradigmatic of "family" in US media and politics, it represented only a tiny, situated, and primarily white population and only for a very circumscribed historical period, which is now long past and that was already in the past for all of the choreographers discussed in these pages. A 2015 Pew Research Center report declared that "There is no longer one dominant family form in the US. Parents today are raising their children against a backdrop of increasingly diverse and, for many, constantly evolving family forms." Nonetheless, the "traditional family" continues to inspire a "patriotic" attitude of treating pregnant women as either the promise or disgrace of our nation, a differentiation influenced significantly by systemic racism and made depending on if individuals' pregnancies will perpetuate "tradition"—take for example the "welfare mom" who is so often spurned by politicians as refusing "tradition" and instead leaching government handouts without contributing to society. In the face of the idea of "traditional families," many of the choreographers in these chapters explored what *else* a pregnancy might create, including other types of families. Their work thereby called attention to who defines what for whom and to how these definitions could and should be revamped.

The 2016 fifth edition of *What to Expect When You're Expecting* attempted to revise its language so as to reflect what its authors perceived to be "new" possibilities for family structures. It said,

> as you read… you'll notice references to traditional family relationships. These references definitely aren't meant to exclude expectant moms (and their families) who don't mold neatly into the traditional family form. Please mentally edit out any phrase

> that doesn't fit and replace it with one that's right for you and your loving family. (Murkoff and Mazel 2016, 19)

While such gestures toward inclusion within mainstream culture are surely well intentioned, they also reflect the least possible expenditure of effort to think differently about family. In contrast, in many of the discussed choreographers' works, we will see different *who's* determining different *what's* for *themselves* through different processes of thought and communication. Rather than offering "nontraditional" individuals the invitation to do additional work and make adjustments so as to participate in a larger conversation (labor that is constant for many individuals who are tacitly expected to "edit" themselves so as participate in society), these artists center and foster their own experiences, inviting their audience to make whatever perceptual and paradigmatic adjustments that they might need to so as to participate in the art.

Over the decades, individuals in the US have been progressively better able to plan pregnancies, and as a result, increasingly, individuals (especially individuals who pursue postgraduate education or professional lives) have decided to have fewer children and to have them later in life. As a result, in pockets of greater society in the US, especially among those who are white and middle-to-upper class, social and health science behaviors have shifted toward every pregnancy and every baby receiving concentrated, individualized attention and scrutiny. Additionally, over the years, as the restless pursuit of the "perfect" baby and "perfect" pregnancy (especially among pregnant individuals of privilege) has become more pervasive and unremitting, there has also been an explosion of hospital and physician lawsuits and various other iterations of physician-patient "blame games" when things are not "perfect." Consequently, as many insured women have been offered more options for healthcare, these women have also assumed more accountability for the positivity or negativity of their experiences as well as the outcomes of their chosen pregnancy and birthing strategies.

That being said, since the 1980s, much of the US has seen a return to sentimentalism around motherhood and a spirit of pronatalism. However, neither these chapters nor the artists that they discuss forward this return. Indeed, many of these choreographers temper such sentiments by not presenting themselves as “mothers first.” Rather they present themselves as artists first or as artists, parents, and any number of other aspects of their identities in equal/fluid measures. My interviews with them centered not on their “babies,” but on themselves as the subjects of their own pregnancies and made space for not merely celebration of pregnancy but discussion of manifold reactions to it, including ambivalence and distain. In other words, my interviews were conducted not to coerce a false sense of unity among pregnant individuals or a false sense of pregnancy as something *special*, independent of their personal experiences of it. I also aspired to highlight how these artists worked against models of motherhood employed by media and politics, which unnecessarily cause divisions among those with the capacity for pregnancy by pitting them against one another into so-called “mommy wars,” or suggesting they need to pick one of two sides on issues surrounding their reproductive bodies. Several of these choreographers did not choose a side; they innovated new options for themselves or created spaces where such choices were moot, spaces in which it was possible to be different from and still be in solidarity with others. In the dances within these chapters, artists showed that they are fully able to advocate for and examine what differentiates them from others who are ostensibly having the “same” experience or occupying the “same” body. They showed that they did not need the media, medicine, advice books, or policymakers to tell them what their experiential differences were or were not, what they meant, or from whose company their experiences excluded them.

In other words, the choreographies in these chapters were not choreographies of individuation by means of segregation but rather choreographies that forged alliances by offering new possibilities of connection and conversation. For instance, they did not draw lines of demarcation between investment in pregnancy and support for abortion rights. Rather, they reflected that the conditions of pregnant individuals' very different lives create a diversity of meanings for pregnancy that cannot be tidily précised but that can be, at least partially, shared through expressing them in highly divergent choreographies. The polyvocal, aesthetically and contextually diverse dances discussed in these chapters are neither easily grouped together nor in conflict with one another; rather, they uphold individuals' freedom to define their own lives, families, and purposes within a supportive community.

* * *

Beginning her monthly solos weeks after conception, Comfort danced up until she gave birth, and she completed her movement diary several weeks postpartum. Crawford edited the film, which they called For the Spider Woman*, and three weeks after giving birth, Comfort presented it publicly for the first time at the Bessie Schonberg Theater in Manhattan. As the film ended, she came out on stage and performed the score live, holding her tiny infant as she danced. She remembered the feeling of his malleable body and collapsed spine in her arms as well as the palpable tension in the theater as the audience squirmed. She guffawed, "the men were afraid I would drop the baby!" (Miller 2001, 189). Women's reactions also surprised her—she recollected being compared to the dancing elephants in Disney's 1940 film* Fantasia *(Comfort, discussion). But, most shocking of all was the press's reaction. For instance, journalist Marcia Pally wrote*

> *There she was, all that flesh in close tight shots, moving at you, defiling our image of dancer as slight, virginal, and androgynous. A travesty, and like drag it provoked discomfort—no it provoked fear: of the omnipotent, engulfing mommy each of us had, of being subsumed by her flesh and affection, of losing our selves within her. There she was, a woman of abundant proportions and superabundant power, and Comfort was damn well ready to throw her weight around. (1981)*

Comfort saved this review and many decades later emailed it to me when I reached out to her and introduced my research. While she could approach them with a sense of humor, comments like Pally's left her feeling unseen and misunderstood. Being an "omnipotent, engulfing mommy" was neither her intention as an artist nor her experience of self while pregnant. In fact, in broader society, she felt that pregnancy minimized, not enlarged, her presence and power in *the world. She explained, "I became invisible because… no one ever looked at me as an attractive sexual creature." She found the lack of objectification liberating, while she found her invisibility if not sexualized, demoralizing. She held onto these feelings, recognizing them as ripe subject matter to critically artistically engage, and in her future choreography she did just that.*

Section eight: Connections to feminism

Significant in terms of political messaging to which early postmodern choreographers would have been exposed, some of the most iconic US second wave feminists did not become mothers and, generally speaking, presented pregnancy as anathema to their agenda and oppressive to self-aware women. Famously, Shulamith Firestone was an outspoken critic of the "tyranny of reproduction" and, finding pregnancy "barbaric," advocated for ectogenesis—human embryo incubation outside of uteruses (1971, 198-225). Similarly, Gloria Steinem, spurring a sentiment which would be echoed by many women, wrote, "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament" (2015, 86). Indeed, voices like these within second wave feminism set a precedent for mainstream feminism in the US that abortion, rather than pregnancy, was the feminist cause. Thus, since the 1960s, in politics and their mediatization, women's reproductive bodies come into public focus primarily in debates over State and local policies surrounding abortion legality, rather than prenatal care or fair access to pregnancy support.

In addition to abortion advocacy, second wave feminism also emphasized professional equity rather than child support or rights to maternity leave, and it focused on the injustice of domestic violence rather than the possible merits of building a home and family. As follows, many feminists within this group opined that women's rights were most secure if they did not become mothers, but if they did want a child, ostensibly, the feminist approach was to have a baby on thier own terms, possibly without spouses, and certainly with as little medical intervention as possible. However, the artists in these chapters offered alternative perspectives to pregnancy being inherently disempowering because they exemplified individuals making self-aware choices around their reproductive bodies that swerved away from the dominant feminist discourse of pro-choice/pro-life while still running decidedly counter to perceptions of fertility as a tool of patriarchy. Their work projected pregnant individuals as persons in their own right and as authors of their own lives—thus, not as vessels, hosts, caricatures, or those who have been duped into illusions of agency without acquiring any real power.

Many third and fourth wave feminists critiqued how second wave feminism's priorities represented and benefited some individuals more than others. Beyond ignoring women of color and centering white, East Coast, middle class, cis women, they did not take into full consideration the priorities of working-class women, transgendered persons, and the LGBTQ community. The implicit, but unacknowledged, insularity of matrophobic feminism, which some, like postcolonial and Chicana feminist theorist Chela Sandoval, called "hegemonic" feminism, inspired other populations to create their own more mother-and-child-inclusive communities and theories of feminism, which were rooted in other facets of their intracommunity and cultural identities as well as their socioeconomic realities. In other words, white privilege, heteronormativity, and racism were not sufficiently confronted by the women's liberation movement, so it has taken extra and on-going work from activists of color and LGBTQ activists to cultivate awareness that feminism must shift its course and adjust its political positions if it wants to support reproductive freedoms for *all* individuals. After all, for many women of color and many queer persons, reproductive politics have historically been not so much a matter of "choice" as one of survival.

Since feminism's second wave, the opinion that pregnancy is inevitably an apparatus of patriarchy has been largely debunked by critics who see such an opinion as belying prominent white feminists' obliviousness to histories of individuals who were denied the opportunity to have children by governmental, social, and medical policies. In other words, in US history, typically, it is only privileged white cis women who have had the option of choosing *not* to have children (in the face of social pressure to have babies) because these individuals were never systemically denied the freedom to have and raise their own children. Also, subsequent generations of feminists have parsed the difference between motherhood as patriarchal *institution* and motherhood as personal *experience*, and they have argued that motherhood, as an institution, need not determine pregnancy as an experience for an individual. In fact, with the exception of writers like Firestone and Ti-Grace Atkinson, who argued that the state of pregnancy is inherently disenfranchising, the preponderance of feminist authors across the decades—regardless of whether they personally decided to become pregnant, carry a pregnancy to term, or become a parent—allowed that experiences of pregnancy and motherhood *could* be fulfilling and interesting if oppressive structures of motherhood were dismantled.

Out of non-"hegemonic" feminisms came the Birth Justice movement, which organizes against reproductive oppressions and that aims to dismantle inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality that lead to negative birth experiences, especially for women of color, low-income women, survivors of violence, immigrant women, queer and transfolks, and women in the Global South. Birth Justice advocates cultivate awareness around the many ways that women of color and impoverished women are denied reproductive freedoms. They stress that race, economic status, and gender identity combine to generate lack of access to reproductive healthcare, and that "passive eugenics" create reproductive obstacles for gender nonconforming people, especially those who are also persons of color (Oparah and Bonaparte 2016, 6). Moreover, feminisms advocating for Reproductive Justice shed light on ways that the natural birth movement—while it might have offered white, middle-class individuals options for noncompliance with, so called, Big Medicine—fully ignored legacies in the US of Black midwives as well as *parteras*, or immigrant midwives from Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. After all, while white women in the 1960s and 1970s were building the natural birth movement, Black women were still fighting for civil rights and still working on desegregating hospitals. Without indispensable perspectives of color, white feminists narrowly saw justice work according to the binaries of medical/"natural" and male control/female empowerment. In other words, they missed entirely that many pregnant individuals' more pressing need was to create safe spaces in inhospitable, often dangerous, healthcare environments which would allow them to honor and respect themselves and to access traditional woman-to-woman intergenerational practices of care which were, at the time, stigmatized, if not illegal.

Post feminism's second wave, when white feminists attempted to merge with a broader multiracial feminist movement, many activists re-embraced motherhood. Although preferring to organize around a system of sisterhood, white feminists recognized that declaring motherhood a universal bond offered allyships with other feminisms, both in the US and globally. However, while motherhood promoted intersectional feminism by creating through lines between, for instance, Black Feminism, Chicana Feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and spiritual feminism, it remained in friction with many other feminisms, especially those emerging or reemerging in practice and scholarship in the 1990s and 2000s, including those rooted in queer experiences, socialism, ecofeminism, posthumanism, and new materialism. Still, motherhood, whether as organizing metaphor/principle/experience or adversary, has accompanied feminisms of the seven decades discussed in these pages, and it still influences feminist movements in the US today.

With or without their overt participation, the choreographers discussed in these chapters premiered works in the midst of broader conversations within and about feminism as well as shifting cultural ideas about feminisms' relationships to motherhood. For example, whether the early choreographic works discussed in these pages offered visibility or invisibility to artists' maternal labor, they documented mothers striving for comparable opportunities professionally to those afforded their male (and non-parent) artistic colleagues. Such moves anticipated broader feminist demands for gender equity and that women be seen as more than second-class citizens in society. Today's US feminists grew up in a world shaped by technology, multiple conceptualizations and expressions of sexuality, changing national demographics and family structures, a volatile economy, and global capitalism. Consequently, this wave is committed to the multiplicities of subject-constative experiences and argue that feminism is about much more than "women's" issues. Many claim that a wider range of subcultural concerns should be considered the political territory of feminism. Accordingly, currently, feminist theory is steeped in other theories related to subject formation such as race theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory, and transnational theory, and scholars can no longer say "feminist" without clarifying which kind of feminist is being discussed and typically without examining how this interpellation of "feminism" intersects with other critical vectors. Many of the choreographers in these pages anticipated such shifts toward more intersectional feminism. Regardless of the decade in which they were choreographing, in their often protofeminist presentations of motherhood, they demonstrated that womanhood, parenthood, and pregnancy were most productively incorporated into their art when these themes engaged other phenomena of the artists' corporealities—it was through being in relationship to larger phenomenal experiences of self that their maternal experiences assumed meaning.

To wit, in these chapters, among those whom we will encounter are single parents (for instance Twyla Tharp), lesbian parents (for instance Meg Foley), mothers of interracial children (for instance Yanira Castro and Jennie Lui), mothers participating in communal living spaces and creative kinship structures (for instance Trisha Brown), mothers in the US who are not of US nationality (for instance Noémie Lafrance), and non-female identifying mother allies (for instance Hana van der Kolk and Miguel Gutierrez). We will also see how these artists cued their audiences to be self-conscious and self-critical of their own positionality. In other words, a key component of many of their works was inviting witnesses to acknowledge their own expectations of performers and then to adjust their paradigms in response to what they perceived during the performances. In other words, responsible dance viewership, like today's responsible feminist scholarship, required what dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright called "response/ability," or a willingness to grapple with and witness a work and ultimately to be affected by it (xxii).

While a sampling, the artists in these chapters do not offer comprehensive representation of all pregnant artists/individuals. However, this set begins to fill in extant scholarship's gaps in its presentations of what pregnancy *is*, whom it affects, and how it affects them. Filling in these scholastic and representational gaps is imperative work. Afterall, in 2016, gender theorist Andrea O'Reilly did a quantitative international study of humanities scholarship and found that motherhood appears in less than 3% of papers, articles, and other scholarly texts, including gender studies textbooks. She also found that it was discussed in under 1% of academic gender studies classrooms. We can assume that these modest percentages are far smaller when it comes to discussion of pregnancy, and smaller still is discussion of pregnant individuals coming from "marginalized" cultural, ethic, racial, gender, or economic locations. Even fewer are scholarly discussions within the humanities of "marginalized" pregnancy experiences that come from the perspectives of “marginalized” individuals. Largely, this last non-inclusion is because such individuals have faced limited access to and limited acceptance in academic platforms. In short, far from being on the margins, pregnancy has fallen completely off the academic page in the humanities, including in women’s studies where some might expect it to remain essential subject matter. Moreover, much of what has been written and published about feminism and pregnancy, little that it is, has failed to adequately examine the multiplicity of pregnant individuals’ experiences and points of view. With important and notable exceptions of writing on motherhood such as that of Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Cherríe Moraga, and Adrienne Rich, the point of view typically represented in publications is that of a white, educated, middle-class, heterosexual, female-identifying author who pursued advanced education and had access to publication opportunities. Although she might offer opinions on behalf of womankind, such an author represents the lived experience of very few individuals.

Consequently, in this project, as I analyze choreographies, I consider social stratification and how it influences artists’ understanding of their bodies’ value, their available choices, their politics, their visions of family, and the resources at their disposal to turn their visions into realities. Moreover, I invest in, to use race and gender theorist Patricia Hill Collins’ phrase, “shift[ing] the center” of analysis to the perspectives undervalued in much of academia (1990). Moreover, I argue that the work of these artists, which emerged from a variety of social locations, offers more of a threat to dominant ideology than work on motherhood and feminism by those who have been less disenfranchised by the status quo (namely, heterosexual, white, financially stable, non-artist, cis women participating in marriages and nuclear family units).

In this project, I aim to present pregnancy as neither intrinsically “oppressive” nor as intrinsically “empowering.” By this, I mean that while clearly not claiming that pregnancy will divest individuals of power, I am also not claiming that it can/should invest individuals with power, because this position puts the onus on pregnant individuals to make pregnancy an empowering experience for themselves. Rather, from my position as a feminist, I argue for individuals' human right to agency over their bodies, their human right to unbiased and compassionate care to support their needs, and their human right to express (in speech, dance, or other modalities) their personal senses of the "truths" of their bodies. Afterall, as feminist author Angela Garbes writes in her book *Like a Mother,*

> We are still at a point where we lack stories—diverse stories—about pregnancy and motherhood. Only if we tell and hear these stories do we have a chance at understanding the experience, of making progress. Only if we see these stories as inherently valuable will we appreciate women as we should. Only then will we have the chance of creating a society that listens to, champions, and supports us for the marvelously strong and vulnerable beings that we are." (2018, 229).

Like Garbes, I am less interested in de/valuing pregnancy than I am deeply invested in exploring whose pregnancy stories get told, whose stories get censured, and whose stories *count* for whom—in, for instance, dance history, policy making, pop culture, education, and medicine. Furthermore, I am not interested in stating whose truth claims are "correct" or in presenting the knowledge that some pregnant individuals possess as more "authentic" or "pure" than that of others or even than that of social institutions. However, I am interested in making the argument that the ability to see pregnancy from a variety of perspectives and as its phenomena are lived by a variety of individuals only enlarges our collective capacity to care about and for one another. Thus, with this project, I aim to celebrate and forward the efforts of individuals (in this case, individuals living through pregnancies) who are pursuing identities of their own making as well as scholarly, creative, and care work that cultivates the personal and community resources that support their ability to invent themselves. This is because, as Garbes says,

> Women have been speculated about, experimented with, and reported on for years, but rarely have we been given the chance to simply tell our own stories, to own our undeniable authority. These are the conversations we should be having. Let's start a new one now. (33)

* * *

The score of each month's improvisation was simple: walk forward, dance for what feels 60 seconds, bow, return in a month and repeat. For Comfort, this loose structure was intentionally very open. It was her effort to choreograph differently than Cunningham and toward a different experience of dancing. Comfort recalled that when she was working with Cunningham, "If I made a mistake, it was the end of the world" (Comfort, discussion). This was because dancing for him meant experiencing herself as solely his artistic medium, thus, not a person having her own embodied experiences, which temporarily included performing the movement that he created. Craving a different method and different stakes, as a choreographer, she challenged herself to derive "processes where mistakes are always possible… [and] just fine." She described this style of working as "for the Spider Women," a phrase she also used to title the film that she and Crawford made while she was pregnant.

She was familiar with the Spider Woman (or Spider Grandmother) as a recurrent figure in the mythology of several Native American communities in the Southwest US. For the Hopi and Navajo Nations, the Spider Woman is the creator of the universe, having woven it on her loom. Moreover, Spider Woman brought human beings to life by clutching them to her breast and singing their souls into being. The Navajo believe that the Spider Woman taught women the sacred art of weaving; thus, she became a symbol of women's ability to create something with their own bodies, just as spiders make silk. As weaving is understood to involve the whole of a woman's being, Navajo weavers traditionally weave a line into the top right corner of their rugs, which they called the Weaver's Pathway. This is a pathway for their spirits to come back to them, hence, not to get trapped in their creations. The idea of a built-in path for one's self to break out of one's art resonated with Comfort. As she explained to me, starting with For the Spider Woman*, she made sure that every one of her choreographies had within it means to abscond and means for her to maintain her integrity as a person, separate from her creation. She analogized these getaway options within the choreography to the Weaver's Pathway: "It's considered a mistake, but it's also an escape route" (ibid.). As she and Crawford started their process she reflected, "Spider Woman was part of my world, and so I made this dance for her."*

Comfort recognized the Spider Woman as being "part of [her]world" and appreciated how the mythology surrounding this figure, as she understood it, offered her valuable perspective on her own unique lived experiences. In other words, she was unlike the modern and postmodern US dance artists who appropriated Native American aesthetics and traditions without engaging or respecting Indigenous worldviews and who made primitivist use of Indigenous knowledge as "source material" (Shea Murphy 2007). Comfort did not infuse her dance with superficial references to Indigenous wisdom, seize ownership of the Spider Woman as a "character" she could play, or present herself as participating in a cultural tradition that was indeed beyond her understanding. However, she found the idea *of the Spider Woman to be personally helpful, comforting, and inspiring as she built a new foundation for herself and her art. Comfort's sense of the Spider Woman remained part of her world after the completion of her and Crawford's project. She committed herself to being a teacher and helper, making things with* *and through her body, and she "wove" a world into being, through making her company—she created a community and "sang" life into the bodies of its members. While she saw herself primarily as a worker, giving herself to the work while also making sure she could protect herself from being consumed by it, others saw her as a prototype of creative leadership and as innovating humane structures that became fundamental to her dances and dance company.*

Section nine: Representation, sensation, and other means to not "disappear"

A phrase that I heard/read perhaps more than any other throughout the course of collecting interviews from pregnant choreographers was a fear of "becoming invisible" within the arts once a parent. In the face of this fear, artists, across years and cities, made their pregnant bodies visible on their own terms and in their own ways through their dances. They used performance to make sure that their bodies were seen, and they used choreography to control how their bodies were framed and interpreted. Sometimes, this involved performing a playful duet between the appearances of their pregnant and non-pregnant bodies, and in other cases, it involved making an overt spectacle of themselves ("showing the show") so as to disrupt habitual patterns of viewing women as *only* their bodies. Regardless of their strategies, their work displayed their ability to dis-integrate themselves from their images so as to reinhabit their bodies as tools with which they could make arguments/art. While Tharp distanced herself from her pregnancy so as to protect her professional reputation by presenting her pregnant body as if it were the body of another person captured on film, others wore their pregnant bodies like costumes that allowed them to strategically represent ideas and to offer metacommentaries on social constructions of womanhood. With the lone exception, within this set, of Boyce, who found in available symbols apt containers for her experiences of pregnancy, all other artists discussed in these pages felt confined by socially available signs and stories. Thus, they saw the work before them as twofold: firstly, to call attention to and comment on the predisposed nature of social interpretations of womanhood and motherhood and, secondly, to innovate new forms to hold and, when they wished, share their experiences. For some, their strategies of re-representation were both essentialist and constructivist. They cheekily physically reiterated ideas of, for instance, matricentric myth/spirituality, but they did so only to reveal the inadequacies of these ideas and to reemploy them to say and do new things. In other words, they found existing models useful for provisionally and conditionally identifying with, so as to build off of them, using strategies like philosopher Luce Irigaray's "Irreverent Mimesis." In so doing, they seized for themselves the symbolic "specialness" of womanhood and motherhood without allowing themselves to be diminished and tokenized in the process.

While wanting to be seen, so as to not feel invisible, all of the discussed artists did not want to be seen as a stereotype. As follows, some framed their pregnant bodies in ways that critiqued stereotypes of pregnancy, some, in ways that critiqued stereotypes of womanhood, and some, in ways that critiqued stereotypes of dancers. Meanwhile, others sought to get beyond the limitations of not only stereotypes but reductive representational systems full stop, so as to be able to hold intact their full experiences of their bodyselves in their work. In other words, they refused to be limited to available signs in their self-expressions. They employed another strategy, which was to identity with their bodies not as objects seen from the outside but as they experienced them from the inside, bodies that they felt rather than symbolized. In other words, they identified with their pregnant bodies perceptually rather than imagistically or semantically, and they prioritized sensation over representation in making choreographic decisions. Those who resisted existing models of representation entirely sought to create new meaning/non-meaning from their pregnant bodies by presenting them as experiences in which the audience could temporarily partake. In the process, they also created new means for artist-parents to value their experiences. In sum, collected, these choreographers resisted disappearing behind their pregnant bellies either because they did not want to feel defined by their pregnancy and its associated rhetoric or because they felt that their pregnancies necessitated their own epistemes fully outside of rhetoric. They shared an interest in using their lived experiences of pregnancy as tools to better understand who they were, what pregnancy was, and what dance was to each of them.

Furthermore, performing with pregnant bodies as a means to communicate a wide variety of aesthetics and ideas, these artists also demonstrated that their experiences of themselves and their priorities for self-expression were not determined by their sex or their innate bodily processes. In other words, just as they presented experiences of pregnancy as not socially-dictated, they also presented them as intentionally and personally constructed—thus, not as transcultural, transhistorical, or "natural" for *all* females. In so doing, their works reminded audiences that, despite the oft used terminology of "natural" pregnancy and "natural" birth, there is no ubiquitous understanding of "nature" behind such usages. Cultural and medical ideas of what is "natural" for pregnant bodies have always been constructed and have always been in flux. These ideas have changed through time according to shifting expectations for families and gender roles as well as what is needed from a population at different points in history to support the current economic and political systems. For example, it became "natural" for babies to thrive on formula and in extended care networks when it was deemed "natural" for women to be in the workforce, because their labor was needed to sustain the economy. Put another way, for many of these choreographers, dance offered them a useful vocabulary and meaning-making system for comprehending themselves, one that was not reliant on the false twofold logic of unnatural/natural bodies or on its related dichotomies of good/bad, normal/abnormal, or even male/female—simplistic dyads that never tell complete or personal stories and, thus, to which they refused to reduce their own stories.

Section ten: Challenging constructions of sexed, gendered, and bounded bodies

For all of the artists in these pages, becoming pregnant inspired them to newly consider their relationships to sex and gender both in their public presentations and in their private experiences of their bodyselves. It also invited them to question whether sex and gender were useful heuristics for understanding their experiences of their bodies or if new heuristics needed to be imagined. For example, for Boyce, pregnancy was exciting in that it offered what she experienced as previously elusive access to unequivocal social recognition as a woman. However, for the majority of artists in this set, it was exciting precisely because it offered new models with which to think that were independent of the binary logic of woman-ness/man-ness. In other words, while for some, social constructions of sex and gender differences were helpful in making sense of their experiences of pregnancy, for others, these paradigms and the either/or logic informing them proved inadequate, if not explicitly problematic.

Furthermore, during pregnancy, many of these artists recognized that they need not and indeed could not step into established gendered roles as mothers or as artists because available options were not enough for them to locate themselves professionally or to envision their futures as parents. Instead, in their lives as in their art, they made space for their selves/subjectivities to be complex, fluid, and not understood in terms limited to singularities or even dualities (such as mother/artist, woman/man, and pregnant/nonpregnant). Their responsive choreographic creation of formal structures that allowed for multiple orientations to themselves, their pregnancies, and their artforms rejected the limitations that singularities and binaries put on thinking, living, and relationships. Instead, the dances of these chapters asked questions like *What happens when we build knowledge from non-unified, non-bounded, and instable subject positions?* and *What happens when we demand to be seen as multiple and challenge ourselves choreographically to* *embrace our bodies' multiplicities?* In other words, in response to a social imaginary which values solidity and stability, these choreographers offered shifting and indefinite presentations of self and world through which they could know, make, and be themselves more creatively.

For example, choreographically, artists such as Brown created conditions never necessitating that they be only one iteration of themselves but instead insisting that they be seen as and experience themselves in the plural. They did this through collapsing and refiguring time so that otherwise temporally distributed versions of themselves could share performance spacetime. Put another way, they attempted to use choreography to discover means to be in synch with fuller versions of themselves and to challenging where, when, and if their bodies were bounded. Each in their own ways, this set of artists negotiated the edges of their bodies and created choreographic conditions with softer and permeable borders, where divergent phenomena of self could symbiotically coexist. Their work argued that it is possible and productive to find the compatibility of differences within the self and then to create choreographic conditions in which such differences did not compel divisions. In other words, choreographies offered them supportive containers into which they could pour what they perceived to be fuller selves.

What is more, by choreographically representing their experiences of pregnancy the artists in these chapters smashed stereotypes of pregnancy as a "delicate condition" and refused the position that mothers are powerless over their bodies and their futures. Many also plucked pregnancy clean of gendered, heteronormative, patriotic, consumerist, and domestic associations so that as a symbol, it could express new things and, as an experience, it could be significant in personally advantageous ways. Likewise, their works positioned their pregnancies within their larger experiences of their bodies in society including their experiences related to race, class, culture, and sexuality; and they positioned their pregnancies within more dimensional personal stories, which also included stories of intentionally not becoming pregnant as well as stories of pregnancies resulting in abortions, miscarriages, still births, and adoptions. Finally, they positioned their pregnancies within their larger creative and intentional projects of making community and queering communities.

* * *

Once her son, Gardiner, was born, Comfort felt like her dance community members considered themselves aunts and uncles and were invested in his upbringing. She recollected bringing him to visit students in Maggie Black's ballet class, where, to her classmates' shock, she had continued to study throughout her pregnancy. "No one had ever seen that before!" she laughed, recalling her "huge" body at the ballet barre. Even though her fellow students seemed thrilled for her, she was always suspect of what they said privately about her when she left the studio (Sheridan 1985). Although projecting confidence when she visited the class, she did not anticipate reclaiming her place at the barre postpartum. She had doubts about her body's ability to "recover" from the exertions of pregnancy and birthing. She admitted that she had continued with her ballet practice while pregnant not to demonstrate a point to others or even out of desire to move her body, but because she was terrified that she would "lose it," meaning her ability to dance (Comfort, discussion). Of course, she did not "lose it," and before Gardiner's first birthday, she had already premiered a concert of new works in which she performed in every dance. From there, not only did she found a successful company—which is still going strong—but she continued performing with the company, even at its recent 40th anniversary celebration.

Five years into rehearsing, performing, and touring with her company, she had a second child, Claire. She explained that she had waited some time because "It [her career] was working out, and I kinda wanted to have these five years to just give it my best shot" (ibid.). Her second pregnancy was similar to the first in that she again gained close to 60 pounds; however, this time, her physical changes did not distress her. For instance, she felt neither the need nor the desire to dance, perform, or make work while pregnant, and so she did not. Feeling secure in her identity as an artist, and secure that she would not "lose it," she took advantage of a Weaver's Pathway and spent the months of pregnancy taking care of herself in ways independent of dance. Postpartum, she was soon back in the studio, this time with two little ones in tow.

Section eleven: Connections to phenomenology

Beyond their undervaluation in dance studies and much of US feminist theory, pregnant bodies are also undertheorized and under-represented in philosophy. When it does appear, in philosophy texts, pregnancy is typically employed figuratively, as a concept, rather than appreciated as a lived experience, integral and resourceful to self-aware bodyminds. In response, in this project, I do not intend to intellectualize pregnancy as something to think disembodied thoughts with, but to physicalize it, as embodied experience which can body forth knowledge that is intrinsically significant. Thus, having investigated experiences of pregnancy as a choreographer and pedagogue, as a student of human science, as a dance historian, as a participant observer, and as a feminist, I also explored it as a theorist. Allowing for the possibility that I would arrive at nothing, I aimed to reframe dance-making rooted in phenomena of pregnancy as theory-making. However, before I could use it as a theoretical foundation, I needed to pin down what I meant by "phenomena" of pregnancy. The discourse of "phenomenology" intrigued me both in its scholarly usage as an individual's unique and situation-specific perceptual reality and as a type of research methodology. I was interested in individuals' lived experiences of simultaneously being pregnant and being dancer-choreographers as well as the artistic processes that choreographers often used to study their personal experiences of pregnancy and to engage these experiences as dance "material." I was, moreover, interested in the ways that phenomenology, as my own interpretive process, offered me an analytic to understand dancer-choreographers' experiences of pregnancy as they presented them in their words and movement. While these interpretations of phenomenology (certainly, not the only scholarly interpretations) are by no means mutually exclusive, it was phenomenology as artists' methodology that became the focus of my analysis; in other words, I prioritized how these artists paid attention to their pregnancies and how they made dances grounded in what they noticed about and through their bodies. I then explicated how their perceptions of the phenomena of pregnancy inspired their art.

To wit, these chapters explore each individual choreographer's interpretation of the sensations of pregnancy and how each artist found choreographic impetus in these perceptions. My methodology is strongly influenced by what, in 1945, philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty famously dubbed the *phénoménologie de la perception,* or the "phenomenology of perception." Central to his theory was the idea that a person's sense of meaning and "truth" is necessarily constructed through her embodied experiences (Merleau-Ponty 2002 [1945]). In other words and in contrast to Cartesian ideas of a mind-body split, Merleau-Ponty put forth that one's body and one's experiences of this body are *primary* to how and what one can know. As follows, there is no objective world or "noumena" (things as they are themselves, distinct from how their phenomena become apparent to our bodily senses) that individuals can understand. In other words, in contrast to those, so-called, "naïve realists" who assume that an independent material reality exists and can be neutrally observable by those with the expertise and instruments to do so, for Merleau-Ponty, the *appearance* of reality—our perception and interpretation of things themselves—constitutes our experience and thus our knowledge of reality. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty held that perception is not self-evident and predictable (as science presents "the senses" to be), and we are neither transparent to ourselves nor consciously aware of our immediate sensations and why some *matter* to us more than others. Thus, we are not cognizant of either the means whereby we know what we know or the ways that our personal bodies uniquely reveal the world to us. Moreover, perception is not a "natural," universal process but rather a subjective and historical process (we learn what we *can* sense and what these sensations *can* mean).

With these foundational ideas in mind, Merleau-Ponty wrote about the "primacy of perception" for all knowledge production as well as perception's "indeterminacies" and "ambiguities," which lead different bodies to experience different versions of what is "real." Presenting phenomenology in this way, set him apart from those who came before him and established their own definitions of phenomenology, most notably Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's teacher Edmund Husserl. In contrast to his predecessors, for Merleau-Ponty, one's body is a "third genre of being between the pure subject and the object;" an individual can study "the" body only via her unique body's perceptual capacities because her body creates the unconscious "pre-reflective ground" that necessarily precedes all conscious thought. As he summarized, "Whether it is a question of my body, the natural world, the past, birth or death, the question is always to know how I can be open to phenomena that transcend me and that, nevertheless, only exist to the extent that I take them up and live them" (231). For him, the paradoxes of phenomenology's methodology were what made it a significant and crucial branch of philosophy as well as an important intervention in "empirical" research, especially research that either ignored its debt to bodies and their subjectivities or that defined bodies as if they could be atomized definitively and universally.

Like Merleau-Ponty, I argue with this project that individuals interpret the "truths" of their pregnancies through their pregnant bodies and thus that they know their bodies and the phenomena of pregnancy differently from one another. Put another way, their lived experiences of pregnancy will inevitably be differently meaningful for them and meaningful in ways that clinical science cannot anticipate or pre-define. However, I argue that while Merleau-Ponty understood perception through one's body to be an insentient process (meaning individuals are unaware of the role their consciousness and learned sensitivities play in how they interpret their bodies), for choreographers, there is more sentience. Via practiced attentions to their dancing bodies, I propose, many dancer-choreographers have the capacity to notice and understand the experiences or their physical bodies through vision, vibration, somatosensation, proprioception, kinesthesia, and vestibular and visceral sensations, which allow them to be consciously involved in their own phenomenological methodologies of perceiving themselves. While perhaps they are not *more* consciously attuned than others with practices of thinking with their bodies (such as athletes and practitioners of yoga or martial arts), I posit that choreographers are *uniquely* attuned in that they often process and respond to their bodily perceptions with purposeful translations of their somatic sensations into creative forms, which allow them to formulate and share personally meaningful aspects of their lived experiences of their bodies with others.

While, in all likelihood, the choreographers in these pages were not students of phenomenology or deliberately building upon Merleau-Ponty's ideas, phenomenology was in the air and infusing the art-making and intellectual spaces through which many of them moved. As a discourse, phenomenology was revitalized as the result of converging cultural forces and the theoretical interests of the post-poststructuralist 1970s, which re-welcomed embodied approaches to meaning making. However, phenomenology's resurgence came with many caveats, and in the 1980s and 1990s, the discourse was freshly critiqued, especially by feminist philosophers and theorists of race and gender, who found problematic its underlying concept of "human experience"—as if "human experience" could be defined as a singularity. As a method, a discipline, and a branch of philosophy, phenomenology was criticized for neglecting differences between individuals, including their different experiences and interpretations of experiences of their physical bodies. Instead, per its critiques, phenomenology universalized "the" body and did so from the biased vantage point of its original theorists. These early phenomenologists covertly assigned neutrality and normalcy to the expressions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race with which they personally identified, and they did not consider how their own corporealities predisposed how they defined universal subjecthood and, likewise, who they excluded from their theorizations of "human experience." For phenomenological frameworks prioritizing sameness between all peoples, as the Husserlian stream of phenomenology did—in its efforts to heal, unite, and shift paradigms after the horrors of WWII—, difference was a problem, one which had to be either avoided or built into the framework as something to ameliorate. This was the case for difference both as it existed between individuals and as it might be experienced by a single individual undergoing physical changes. In both these ways, pregnancy presented phenomenological problems.

Merleau-Ponty imagined that phenomenology offers the equal opportunity for *all* people to connect with a "pre-objective" reality. He thought phenomenology could put individuals in touch with deep "truths" about what it is to be human. However, he did not account for inconsistencies between individuals' perceptions of "the truth" of their bodies. As phenomenologist and somaticist Sondra Fraleigh explains, everyone's sense of reality is always "vulnerable" to her personalized and shifting attentions (1991, 11). No reality or interpretation of it can ever be fixed or grasped as a ubiquitous human "truth" because each of our attentions is constantly in motion, just as it is inclined toward different context-dependent curiosities and apperceptions. Per phenomenology's revisionists (including, in the field of dance studies, Fraleigh) because there is no one universal body, there cannot possibly be universal human experiences accessible via a methodology of phenomenology. Thus, it should be a necessary part of phenomenology's work to present "the lived body" in plural rather than singular terms and to reveal and reduce all generalizations in the discourse of phenomenology. As more recent phenomenologists have demonstrated, phenomenology does not have to have as its goal universalism; it can appreciate how lived experiences of bodies are plural, and experiences of embodied phenomena like pregnancy can be both multiple and nebulous. For example, feminist and queer phenomenologists of the last 40 years—most notably, for my research, Irigaray, Judith Butler, Iris Marion Young, and Sara Ahmed—argue that experiences of embodiment and of the world are impacted by one's sex, gender, and sexual and political orientations. They also argue that for this reason, phenomenology is not only of philosophical importance but also of material and social importance because, at structural levels, it normalizes lived realities that are more livable for some bodies than for others. This, in turn, feeds a variety of systemic inequities.

Aligning with more contemporary phenomenological ideas and practices, I investigate individuals' experiences of choreographing and of pregnancy using a methodology of phenomenology because, as a tool of inquiry, it does not rely on essentializations of individuals or of phenomena, and, as a method of analysis, it allows me to recognize differences without reifying them into grounds for categorical divisions. Moreover, responding to the blind spots of early phenomenologists and attentive to phenomenology's history of critique, I attempt to be overt in my methods and strategies of representation, to be conscious of my project's limitations, and to be transparent about my own predispositions. In other words, I approach my phenomenological inquiries in a self-reflexive way, meaning with full awareness that my own subjectivity inevitably permeates my analysis and that meanings present themselves to and through my bodymind in particular ways. Mine is not a view from nowhere, and I am not trying to play, as philosopher of science Donna Haraway puts it, a "god trick" (1988, 589). In short, I am not writing about *the* pregnant body but rather *these specific* pregnant bodies of these specific artists as experiences of these bodies were shared with me from the artists' perspectives, and I am doing so through my own body, which is not that of an objective observer. However, I am not writing about these artists' experiences in a relativistic way—meaning my point is not that all perspectives on pregnancy are equally “right,” and phenomenology is just a mental exercise of “poe-teh-toe, poe-tah-toe.” Rather, my point is that since people know their physical realities in very different ways, diverse experiences of pregnancy collected together allow for better understanding of pregnancy as phenomena through and about which complex understanding and fresh connections can transpire.

In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty made very succinct mention of prenatal perceptions of self (2002 [1945]). Perhaps he never deemed it worthwhile to explore the lived experiences and embodiments of a pregnancy in depth because he saw pregnancy, as many scholars have, as a deviant condition, a temporary corporeal bother, tolerable and of scholarly and public importance solely because of the social value of babies. In contrast to this legacy, I view perceptions of pregnancy as having inherent value and as providing a set of perspectives with the potential to benefit both pregnant persons and others whose bodies are in flux (meaning everyone). In other words, pregnancy, in the many ways that people live through it, emphatically flags and invites us to pay attention to the states of change that humans are all living through all of the time (albeit, perhaps never as dramatically and patently as when individuals have other vital materiality, like fetuses, growing within them). Moreover, while these chapters argue that universalities must be problematized, it is still true that regardless of the specifics of our births, we have all been born. Everyone has experienced themselves, albeit corporeally and not consciously, in material continuity with another body. Post-birth, we have then come to know the world through bodies that are constantly evolving, even as, in pop culture and in medicine, we assign the greatest value to bodies that appear not to change. In other words, the phenomenal experiences of pregnancy interest me in their implicit acceptance of and inquiry into the multiple, unstable, and interconnected I’s, you’s, and we’s within all of our bodies.

* * *

The next time that Comfort choreographed a pregnant body was in 1995, when she made the work S/He. S/He *played with and dismantled gender stereotypes, and famously, within the evening-length work, she incorporated a drag section in which she and company member Andre Shoals (also known by her drag name, Aphrodite) slowly morphed from bodies that read as one gender to bodies that read as another gender through swapping their costuming, postures, and gestures. Both in experiencing pregnancy and later in experiencing drag performance, Comfort came to appreciate her own acculturated choreographies of womanhood. She reflected, "Women are taught all the time to shift their weight to one side and present a less imposing profile. They sort of make it [their body] smaller… it's also a powerless position to do" (Comfort, discussion). In her embodied experiences of pregnancy and in performing maleness, she did not, could not, have a smaller presence, nor did she want to. Recognizing the choreography that she had unconsciously learned simply through living in a world where she was recognized as a woman, she dedicated herself to replacing it with new choreographies which allowed her to be present for what interested her and to have presence in spaces that otherwise would be denied her. She also paid this gift forward to others through her art. She made works that in addition to addressing sexism, abuse, and racism (as* S/He *did), addressed lived experiences like disability and homelessness. She created worlds in her art where people and their bodies were appreciated both for who/what they were, who/what they were to each other, and, once unfettered from that which held them in place, who/what they could become together.*

In S/He*, the pregnant body in the work was not Comfort's but rather that of performer Joseph Ritsch, whose torso she extended with the material prosthesis of a pregnancy belly. Although dressed in a "man's" suit and presented as the heterosexual love interest of the character played by dancer Nancy Alfaro, within the dance, the pregnant belly and Ritsch's physical vocabulary of interacting with his belly offered anatomical and behavioral evidence of his maternity. It was a complex role in a complex work. This is to say, Ritsch's character was nothing like Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in the 1994 film* Junior*; there was no sci-fi or slapstick backstory for why Ritsch was pregnant, he just was, and he was dealing with pregnancy as a lived reality in a world that was neither surprised by his "condition" nor hospitable to it.*

In their first scene together, McKay serenaded Ritsch with Paul Anka's 1974 chart topper, You're Having My Baby. *When sang by a "woman" to a "man," the lyrics landed differently and with sting. For example:*

> *Having my baby/ What a lovely way of saying/ How much you love me./ Having my baby/ What a lovely way of saying/ What you're thinking of me./ I can see it, your face is glowing/ I can see it in your eyes./ I'm happy knowin' that you're having my baby.*

The gender flipped delivery evoked laughter from the audience for its seeming absurdity, but, more importantly, it drew attention to the pop song's implicit misogyny and its suggestion that a couple's child is a father's property. While some, like New York Times *critic Jennifer Dunning saw the duet as scoring "points in sexual-politics" primarily through its "lighthearted goings-on" and hilarity, others saw the duet as serious and as seriously radical (1995). For example, in her book* The Bodies of Others: Drag Dances and Their Afterlives*, Shelby Wynn Schwartz explains, "We could dismiss Ritsch's drag gesture and costume as fake, parodic, theatrical or inauthentic… or instead we could think about Ritsch's expanded repertoire as linked to other* *gestures that matter" (2019, 6). I read Schwartz's "gestures that matter" as referring to gestures that transform the lived possibilities and meanings of the materiality of bodies, gestures that create new possibilities for living. Comfort proposed just such a transformation through creating a reality in which perceived morphology could be in conflicted relationship with an individual's expressed embodiment and/or identity. The choreographic scenario that Comfort presented worked against tropes of certain bodies being "wrong" or not having the freedom to claim an identity because of aspects of how they appear.*

Pally, in her 1981 review of For the Spider Woman, *suggested that watching a pregnant Comfort dance was like watching a drag performance because "like drag it provoked discomfort." In saying as much, the critic revealed more about her personal preferences and biases than perhaps she intended. Possibly in response to reactions like Pally's, Comfort aimed to provoke much more than "discomfort" through Ritsch's pregnancy drag. She wished to stimulate viewers toward self-examination of why they found Ritsch's body jarring and to consider other instances in which the gendered assumptions underlying their discomfort might be limiting who they see and how they see them. Furthermore, what Comfort offered through her presentation of Ritsch's pregnant body was the opportunity to develop notions of gender beyond the familiar and binarized. She created a space and time, via her dance, to bring a new material embodiment into being. Quite significantly, as an audience, we saw Ritsch's physical labor of accommodating the prosthetic belly, and we saw how the belly changed how he organized his dancing body. In other words, we saw how, in a very real way, he was enacting and presenting not only a symbol, but a material body becoming something else, toiling and adjusting itself to bring other possibilities into being (or at least to suggest that they could be real). Comfort employed representational evidence of both maleness/femaleness and man-ness/woman-ness in the characters within her dance, including Ritsch, as a kind of make-believe that also made it possible for audience members to actually believe in alternative ways of knowing and recognizing bodies, beyond the limitations of gender. Significantly, she also presented a world in which Ritsch's maleness offered him no protection from socially normalized misogyny.*

Section twelve: Connections to dance phenomenology

For her 1966 trailblazing book *The Phenomenology of Dance*, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone performed Husserlian eidetic analysis of dance, meaning she sought to define the "essence of dance" through describing *the* experience of dancing. Through being "present" with dance as a lived experience, she attempted, in her capacity as a phenomenologist, to capture the artform in its full integrity and in writing. In so doing, her book offered an innovative method for answering the questions "What is dance?" and "What are the structures inherent in [its] appearance," a method which has since been employed and critiqued by many others (1979 [1966], 7). She presented "the" dancing body as both pre-objective and pre-objectivized, and as such, as a unique embodiment worthy of not only study but of commendation. In other words, she presented dancing as a kind of purer being and as unadulterated self-awareness. The phenomenology of dance was thus, for Sheets-Johnstone, a means of appreciating dance as a *special* phenomenon through which *special* knowledge arrives.

However, Sheet-Johnstone's presentation of the "essence" of dance presumed generalizability to all experiences of dancing, regardless of their formal, thematic, and contextual diversity. What is more, it was beyond the purview of her dance phenomenology for lived experiences of dancers to include bodily anticipation of *possible* kinesthetic experiences—in other words, sensing, as a choreographer might, movement experiences that can/will be done. Likewise, it was beyond the purview of Sheet-Johnstone's dance phenomenology for an artist to use dance as a means of inquiry, rather than expression. After all, for Sheets-Johnstone, dance is "a totality whose structures are intrinsic to it" and whose primary means of recognizing itself are kinetic; thus, dance is an embodied state bracketed and distinct from other experiences of self, and it does its work only in its performance, thus not in its conception or its construction (8). This is to say that she neither foresaw the experiences of many dance makers nor of the entire movement of postmodernism. The latter is an omission of which she herself took note. In the preface of the second edition of her book in 1979, she acknowledges that considering the turn in dance toward dances that perform meta-analysis of the artform and of dancing bodies, her definition of the phenomenology of dance needed to be adjusted. She urged readers to view her first edition as a dance history book in that it offered a window into a period of dance that was "symbolic" in nature, as opposed to "existential." By this, she meant that her analysis assumed an unchanging world of dance full of choreographers trying to express stories and feelings through dances; she never expected choreographers to be interested in movement qua movement.

However, in retrospective self-critique, she appreciated that the phenomena of dancing can be more than a means to make an audience feel a particular way. Dance can be a means toward many other ends including a means "to self-realization, to democracy in action, [and] to individual growth" (X).

It is in celebration of the many experiences of making, performing, and viewing dances and with ardent belief that there is no universal experience of dancing bodies (just as there is no universal experience of pregnancy or of embodiment full stop) that I engage phenomenology to interpret the processes behind dances. In the works within these pages, artists are absorbed in multiple perceptual processes stretching beyond the immediacy of live performance, and they are experiencing the phenomena of both pregnancy and dancing from their uniquely situated perspectives—put another way, they are simultaneously engaged in the Merleau-Ponty-like method of studying their perceptions of their lived experiences of pregnancies (albeit with more consciousness than he presumed was possible) and a Sheets-Johnstone-like method of studying their experiences of feeling their bodies dancing (albeit with attention to how their unique pregnant bodies made dance an individualized rather than collective lived experience). Beyond these methodologies of phenomenology, in their works, they are also reflecting on how they themselves and their practices of making dances are changing what others, like Sheets-Johnstone, assumed to be the "essence" of lived experiences of dancing. They are aware of the ways in which their pregnancies offered them opportunities to gain fresh perspectives on their artform, including its limitations. In other words, in addition to experiencing their pregnant bodies dancing, they are, by making dances, experiencing the phenomenologically adjacent consideration of why the insertions of their pregnant bodies into their dance culture changes the supposed "essence" of that dance culture. Thus, they are investigating the possible social and historical consequences of their phenomenological inquires. In short, with their work, they turn the ways in which their pregnant dancing bodies are not easily accommodated by the values and aesthetic standards of postmodernism into invitations for their artform to grow and thereby make room for their lived experiences.

Section thirteen: Overlapping lived experiences of postmodern dance and pregnancy

Unlike the "symbolic" dances described by Sheets-Johnstone, for Cunningham and those who followed in his wake, subjective experience was not a power to tap into but a problem to be addressed and overhauled so as to make abstract, to use Sheets-Johnstone's term, "existential" work. Cunningham took great pains to not root his choreography in his own subjective reality but rather, as he explained when invited by Sheets-Johnstone to add a prologue to her book, to make dance that was "its own necessity, not so much a representation of the moving world, rather … a part of it" (1979 [1966], foreword). However, unbeknownst to him, Cunningham's dances were part of a very particular and exclusive "moving world," one that subscribed to socio-historically specific ideas of abstraction and one only populatable by particular bodies. Like Merleau-Ponty's "universal body," Cunningham's abstract body was tacitly pre-coded with its maker's own embodied reality and his presumption that this reality was omnipresent.

The postmodernism that Cunningham catalyzed continued his and Cage's interest in removing precedented, later interpreted as elitist, formations of both dancers and dance movement. Later, second generation postmodernist Yvonne Rainer's presentation of the dancer as "neutral doer" carried forward Cunningham's perceptions of neutrality as fundamental to the experience of dancing for postmodern dancers. It also carried forward dance's exclusion of experiences that were not of relevance to Cunningham's body. Importantly, these exclusions included bodily capacity for pregnancy. In other words, while Cunningham—for Sheets-

Johnstone, the voice of postmodernism—expanded which experiences "counted" as those of a dancer doing a dance, his notion of dance phenomenology (perceiving movement purely for movement's sake and with a "neutral" body) was a tool accessible to some dancers, but not all dancers. Afterall, unlike Cunningham, many dancers have uteruses and consequently, for them, even if they are not and do not intend to become pregnant, pregnancy is an embodied reality with which they must contend. As dance philosopher Shantel Ehrenberg puts it, pregnancy is a "not yet physical physicality," meaning it is inevitably part of their imagination and perceptions of who they are, and what their bodies (including their dancing bodies) are (2019). In short, pregnancy is part of their lived experience of their dancing bodies, regardless of if they *are* pregnant or *could become* pregnant.

Most of the artists discussed in these chapters followed in Cunningham's footsteps by making works that avoided imparting a story or exuding emotions. Again, like Cunningham, they studied their bodies formally; however, in the process of doing so, they also invited their perceptions of their lived experiences of pregnancy into the work that they made. As follows, I see their choreographic processes as phenomenological inquires in which they utilized dance to experience their bodies and in so doing, to ask themselves Sheet-Johnstone's questions: "What is dance?" and "What are the structures inherent in [its] appearance." Simultaneously, and breaking from Cunningham and Rainer's creative research completely, they also asked themselves the questions, "What is pregnancy" and "What are the structures inherent in its appearance?" These were questions asked and answered through creating movement, and the movement they created stretched the preexisting, if unacknowledged, boundary of *which*, to use Sheet's Johnstone's term, "existential" experiences could inform "existential" dance.

In addition, with their pregnancy inspired works, these choreographers revealed two other lacunae within the abstraction constative of Cunningham's dancer and Rainer's "neutral doer." These were dancers' experiences of their visceral bodies and of their sexual bodies. While both are integral to lived experiences of pregnancy, neither fell under the purview of dance phenomenology, even in Sheets-Johnstone's postmodernism-inclusive model. Bearing this in mind, the introduction of visibly pregnant bodies into dance creation and performance was an important intervention in dance and postmodernism's de/reconstruction of "the" dancer because, among other things, it insisted upon dancers' biology and sexuality being part of their dancing bodies. The omissions of these key components of human experiences have been noted as shortfalls of early postmodernism by some individuals within recent generations of experimental choreographers. For instance, commenting on a 2018-2019 exhibition at New York City's Museum of Modern Art, which celebrated the work of early postmodern dancers, choreographer Ralph Lemon said, "The fact that these people were sleeping together doesn't get talked about enough" (Guadagnino 2019). Lemon appreciated that many new ideas about creativity, connection, and collaboration were coming out of "visceral" exchanges between artists across a variety of disciplines and backgrounds (even in the case of Cunningham and Cage), and these visceral exchanges were constitutive of the creative foundations of the project of postmodernism (ibid.). However, in the name of abstraction, audiences were led to believe that the bodies of dancers were not those with sexual histories or with interior worlds—not interior worlds filled, like those of Graham's archetypal characters, with emotions and psychoses, but rather, worlds filled, as human bodies are, with autonomic processes, organs, and tissues all in various states of functionality and "health." In other words, audiences of early postmodern dance performances were expected to look at dancers as "pedestrian" but not as human beings.

However, with pregnancy comes a necessary suspension of this disbelief that a dancing body can experience itself purely as movement and wholly as the choreography it is performing. By means of example, current postmodern choreographer Alexandra Beller described to me her experience of performing pregnant and unclothed. As she danced, she envisioned a dismayed audience thinking, "Oh! You have a human being inside your body right now, and they're going to come out of that part of your body that I'm looking at right now … ewww, you're an animal!" (Alexandra Beller, in discussion with the author, July 2019). By continuing to perform despite/because of this anticipated affect that her body would have, she felt that she was responding,

> Yeah, that is all true. And I'm not in a corner, and I'm not in the rocking chair. I'm here on stage. And I'm big and I could birth this baby right now.… I have all this liquid inside me, that's going to come out, … and you're going to look at me and you're going to know that you know that.

For Beller, this imagined confrontational interchange with her viewers was "freeing," as was the chance to take both dancing and pregnancy out of their "boxes" as phenomena that needed to be "packaged and contained and controlled." She felt properly and productively beheld when she was not preoccupied with the need, through her dancing, to make her body transcend its messy viscera or functional sexual organs so as to uphold an illusion that she was *only* the dance.

Furthermore, introducing the phenomenological situation of pregnancy to postmodernism allowed pregnancy to be picked up by other artists as a model or metaphor that, once untethered from its routinized connotations, could be useful for grounding innovative, generative, collaborative, situation-specific embodied creative processes. As others incorporated it into their lived reality of choreographing and dancing, they showed that its usefulness was not contingent on their having prerequisite life experiences of pregnancy or even their having female anatomy. For instance, although neither individual had a physical capacity for pregnancy, postmodern choreographers/performers Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, who were partners in life and dance, engaged phenomenal experiences of pregnancy as the baseline for the formation of their company. Jones referred to the Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company as the child "he [Zane] and I had birthed as a rebuttal to the world that said, as gay men, we were eunuchs, that we could not reproduce. Keeping the child alive was me saying this was the child that we made that represents our union. Therefore, it is at once a personal statement and a political statement" (Wong 2020). Jones and Zane accessed the lived reality of pregnancy to offer a hopeful and corporeal foundation for their cooperative, love-filled, radically creative experiences of their bodies making art, loving one another, and making a company. While Zane died in 1988 of AIDS-related lymphoma, Jones has not only kept their "child" alive for nearly 40 years, but he has also continued to approach 1977's *Continuous Replay*, their first fully collaborative piece, as a pregnancy of sorts, growing and remounting it in myriad variations and for multiple generations of company members, keeping it forever in a state of becoming. Moreover, the Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company has embraced the parenthood of its dancers, not only welcoming alumni to perform in *Continuous Replay* while pregnant, but also welcoming their children to dance by their sides. For instance, in a 2020 remounting of the piece, *Continuous Replay: Come Together*, the children of company alumni Jennifer Nugent, Paul Matteson, Toshiko Oiwa, and Colleen Thomas joined their parents in performing the work, and their material and kinesthetic presences as well as their freeform movement underscored Jones' vision for the work's continued gestation and expansion.

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When I spoke with Ritsch 25 years after he debuted the role, he recalled that central to preparing for his pregnant performance was interviewing women in his life about their experiences of pregnancy. He started by asked them how pregnancy impacted their movement abilities, their energy, and their balance—practical information that he could directly apply to *his body as a performer. However, once he initiated dialogues, they rarely adhered to his planned talking points. He was soon learning about individuals' larger senses of embodiment, thoughts on being parents, their emotional lives, the ways that they navigated their social and professional worlds while pregnant, and the social and professional conditions that predisposed such navigations to be challenging. Comfort and his duet partner, Alfaro, were among those with whom he was in regular dialogue, and consequently pregnancy, which is almost never discussed in spaces of dance, became a constant and open topic of studio conversation. He remembered, "one of the biggest takeaways is how the experience is different from woman to woman" (Joseph Ritsch, in discussion with the author, August 2020). From his conversations, he absorbed all of the varied experiential information that he could and then, through dancing, explored how to process it with his body. Comfort gave him freedom to arrive at his own pregnant physicality, and in doing so, he came to know pregnancy in deeper and manifold ways, ways which, in turn, became part of his body's story and remain part of his corporeality.*

Ritsch's second pregnant appearance in S/He *took place in a corporate setting, and he danced a duet with Comfort, who performed the role of his boss. In the scene, she called him into her office for a conversation about "right sizing" his department and informed him about a "wonderful new opportunity" that she had planned for him. Needless to say, what she described was neither wonderful nor an opportunity; it was a demotion. As he protested the injustice of her discrimination against him as a pregnant person, he had to keep up with a footwork pattern that she had initiated. Whilst dismissing his arguments and his accusations, she also added jumps into her ever-accelerating choreography. He faced the dilemma of needing to stand up for himself but also needing to protect himself; thus, of feeling his power undermined by his body, or rather by one who would use his body against him. When he finally paused his self-defense and footwork to catch his breath, Comfort took advantage of her edge and taunted him with a series of high jumps in which she tucked her knees into flat belly while forcefully jutting her arms out in front of her, over his bent over, heaving frame. With each jump she hurled one word at him, brutally forming the sentence "YOU! HAVE! NO! CHOICE!"*

Section fourteen: Connections to theory and theorizing through dance

A precept of dance phenomenology is that dance expresses lived realities more complexly and completely than language. This is because, per dance phenomenologists like Sheets-Johnstone and Fraleigh, dance is a more direct route than language for communication and for representing embodied experiences, since dance does not require translating what the body perceives into the symbol system of words. Put another way, in dance, a body expresses itself to other receptive bodies without intermediary. Accordingly, dance can be a lingua franca, allowing for somatic communication between individuals. While in this project, I do not imagine dance to be a universal language, I do take the critical dance studies perspective that dances do not merely *show* something or entertain an audience, they *think*, *do*, *propose*, *deconstruct*, *posit*, and *create* new possibilities for understanding and connecting. Moreover, by avoiding reliance on language, dances are free to conjecture without language's restriction of linearity. This is to say, beyond artists, feminists, those navigating medicalization of their bodies, or those about which others philosophize, in these chapters, I look at many of these choreographers as philosophers in their own right, theorizing through their bodies and developing their own awareness of both dance and pregnancy as experiential phenomena that are independently meaningful and supportive of larger theoretical work.

In brief summation of the theoretical moves they made, these choreographers put socially encoded choreographies of pregnancy, motherhood, womanhood, and dancerhood into creative chaos. They found ways to be inside of and present for unusual experiences of themselves and made works demonstrating that their selves could *become more*. They exhibited that pregnancy is a process of creation, on many levels, not simply one of production, and that pregnancy is best encapsulated by the paradoxes, ambiguities, and contradictions that it provokes. By not letting outside meanings of pregnancy take priority over their experiential knowledge of their pregnancies, they used art pragmatically to manifest livable spaces. Combining the perceptual richness of pregnancy and art, they accessed new experiences of potential, inclusion, relationality, and hope, and, while they complicated and expanded ideas within their dance communities (such as *who can dance*, *what a dancing body looks like*, and *what dances do for communities*), they also complicated understandings of pregnancy, womanhood, and motherhood for their participants and audiences.

Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz argues that most existing theory has been built around male bodyminds, presenting maleness as philosophically neutral/neuter and leaving female bodyselves to be philosophy's enigma. As a corrective, rather than male/female or physical/psychical, Grosz presents bodies collectively as "volatile" and category-resistant, and she thereby disrupts the traditional, dualist frameworks that she suggests substantiate "Western" male-centric worldviews (1994). By rooting my analysis in pregnant individuals' experiences of their bodies dancing, I, like Grosz, put "volatile" physical bodies and physical perceptions at the heart of my project and in so doing, I break away from an academic habit, even amongst many feminist philosophers, of relegating bodies and, in line with masculinist discourses, prioritizing the intellect. Furthermore, by bringing choreographic expressions into this piece of academic writing, I aim not to translate or operationalize artists' works but rather to invite their voices and perspectives, traditionally outside of academia, to the proverbial table, where they can hopefully inspire conversations beyond these pages. These artists engaged bodies generally and female anatomy specifically freshly, discursively, empirically, and epistemologically and in so doing, they offer knowledge production implicitly weighted against male-centric precedents and by which new perceptual information can *matter* and inform what we collectively can know.

As I explored these different choreographies and the individuals behind them, certain theorists became my steady companions. These thinkers, working across disciplines, continents, and centuries, helped me to see connections between seemingly disparate phenomena, personalities, and projects and to sharpen my analysis of what dances were themselves theorizing. Those who accompanied me most consistently include Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas about the phenomenology of perception offered an invaluable framework to both hold onto and purposefully dismantle. Focusing on bodies that are biologically female, in flux, and medicalized required me to put some of Merleau-Ponty's ideas in motion or stretch them until they could hold more embodied experiences. To better understand lived experiences of health and (dis)ability as well as how these experiences inspire live performance, Petra Küppers' ideas were instrumental in bolstering and inspiring my thinking. To explore how being female-bodied influences experiences of self and patterns of thought, Simone de Beauvoir, Iris Marion Young, Julia Kristeva, and Irigaray's writings were particularly helpful, just as Judith Butler, Maggie Nelson, and Eve Sedgwick's equipped me with queries to call the very condition of being female-bodied into question. Donna Haraway supported me as I bridged together elements which initially seemed to be categorically different; she offered me theoretical tools for appreciating the formal, directional, energetic, vital, philosophical, and political connections between ostensibly disparate phenomena. Henri Bergson and José Muñoz offered me imaginative apparatuses of hope for rethinking time in ways that were closer to, what each saw as, the splendid uniqueness of individuals' lived experiences. And while Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser facilitated my understanding of the discourses and behavioral patterns through which society comes to recognize and reproduce itself, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari supplied conceptual tools for seeing beyond what is prescribed and precedented, just as J.L. Austin theorized "performatives" by which individuals can create real conditions beyond what is accepted as constative of reality.

Many of the philosophers recurrent in these pages—including Bergson, Kristeva, Irigaray, Haraway, and Deleuze—opined that art has a unique potential to capture and communicate what is "real" since it has a capacity to hold complexity which is far beyond the capacity of other representational systems, such as language. This is because, for instance, art need not go in one direction, follow one trajectory, or advance a single argument at a time. Thus, art fosters the creative spaces in which *more* can be experienced and expressed. In a term that became key throughout these chapters, art also fosters *becoming*. Art has the potential to change conditions so that *being* (as others have been and as a steady state) can yield to *becoming*, and *becoming* can yield to *becoming more*, *becoming other*, or *becoming unrecognizable*. As I argue, this capacity of art has special promise and relevance for pregnant artists who are in a very concrete and material way *becoming more* and who might be particularly desirous of a spacetime in which their evolution can be experienced as creative, thus not as mechanistic, formulaic, or on a measurable spectrum of normalcy/abnormality. As I also argue, as they literally *become more*, pregnant individuals have special needs for and unique insights to offer the construction of spacetimes that embrace bodyselves as processes. To employ another term that became key to this project, pregnant choreographers are both well served by and already in possession of lived experiences of *the virtual*, or of the endless possibilities always and everywhere around and within them. Thus, again, these artists found unique ways to let the *virtual*, as they experienced it in feeling themselves in-flux, be a source which informed and enriched their art. They built ideas from their experiences of the compatibility of differences, and they let their experiences inspire shareable worlds, easier to manifest in their art than in life outside of art because as artists of bodies, space, and time, they could reorganize the relationships between these variables, and they could continuously alter their self-presentations. I contend that there are larger lessons to be learned from these choreographic examples of creating material conditions to protect, grow, and share lived experiences, lessons that have value beyond dance history and theory and that can feed back into and reenergize the cross-disciplinary theoretical conversations that support my analysis of them.

* * *

Ristch's final appearance with the belly, was a domestic scene. He was home tending to his children, performed by other adult company members campily dressed in the hyper-gendered clothing and hairstyles of little "girls" and "boys." When Alfaro, entered the stage costumed in professional wear and was informed that he had lost his job, she became emotionally and eventually physically abusive. For Ritsch, preparing for this scene meant having conversations with mothers about their experiences of domestic violence. For instance, while on tour in

Montana, he went with Comfort and other company members to talk to survivors of spousal abuse at a women's shelter. Ritsch recalled that the experience was memorable not only for the heartbreaking and heroic stories shared, which in turn informed his performing body, but also for the surrounding community's discomfort with the "inappropriate" situation of men like him and Shoals—more specifically, men who, onstage, wore "women's" clothing—meeting with these "vulnerable" women. A conservative newspaper printed a story about "deviant drag queens from New York" preying upon the community's "fragile" victims (Ritsch, discussion). With wry laughter, Ritsch recalled police (unnecessarily) showing up at performances to keep the peace. What went unappreciated by the town and its press was that these "drag queens" were listening to, caring about, protecting, and amplifying the stories of these mothers. It was society that had let these women go unseen and unheard, had vanished them from paradigms of domesticity and family, or had labeled them "victims."

Even after the passage of decades, Ritsch remembered the emotional intensity of performing the scenes in which he was battered while pregnant. While initially he thought of the belly primarily as a costume that would "raise the stakes of the violence" for audiences and offer more visual impact to the scenes, he had not anticipated how much he would instinctively feel protective of it and terrified for it. He remembered vividly the emotionality of helplessly trying to shield himself and his "unborn child" while also knowing he must put his body between any violence and his other children. He recalled the lived experience of the physical/emotional slippage between "how am I protecting myself? How am I protecting my children? [and] Can I change the narrative in the moment?" He was performing those who must perform for their lives and for the lives of others, those for whom the stakes could not be higher.

To my surprise, when I discussed this scene with Comfort, she said that she considered it the nadir of S/He*, and she regretted leaving it in the dance— "it doesn't hold up" (email correspondence July 13, 2020). However, for Ritsch, embodying pregnancy when surrounded by violence—a situation which is a reality for far too many pregnant persons—was the component of his performance that made the biggest impact on his bodymind. Also memorable was how others mothered him through the process of becoming "pregnant" and recovering from "pregnancy." For instance, when the rehearsal and performance process became too intense, Alfaro was always there to comfort him and discuss his feelings and needs; furthermore, their work together on this project initiated a long connection with Shoals, who became not only his dear friend but his drag mother. This is to say that despite how the role challenged him, Ritsch remembers his "pregnancy" with tenderness: "I felt very cared for" (Ritsch, discussion).*

Section fifteen: Preview of chapters

What follows will be divided into five chapters, each highlighting different choreographic engagements of pregnant bodies. Chapter one, *Pregnant Body as Choreographic Sight/Site*, discusses how a set of choreographers negotiate identification with how their pregnant bodies look in order to maintain a sense of integrity as artists and to control representations of their gender and physical abilities. In exploring this strategy as it appears in works by Twyla Tharp, Jodi Oberfelder, Sandy Jamrog, *Noémie Lafrance, and Meg Foley*, I discuss the utility for pregnant artists of filmic techniques, ironic mimicry of feminine stereotypes, obstruction or re-direction of the audience's gaze, and refusal to be recognized as any familiar *type* of "woman." In chapter 2, *Pregnant Body as Creative Spacetime,* I offer choreographic analysis of works made by Trisha Brown surrounding her pregnancy. I explore how Brown reimagined and restructured rhythm, duration, and spatial location of movement based on her perceptions of time through her pregnant body. I also explore how Brown's choreography is rooted in and sensitive to her present while also allowing her performing body to accommodate many histories and possible futures. In chapter 3, *Performing the/this Pregnant Body and its (Re)productive Labor*, I analyze the fraught collaboration between Rachel Kauder Nalebuff and Jennie Mary Tai Liu as each artist strove to make choreographies to meet pregnant individuals' "needs." I argue that their divergent experiences of "real" pregnant women's bodies with "real needs" sprung from the predicament of one creating from her politics as a feminist, while the other was creating from her personal lived experience of pregnancy as a dancer and an Asian woman. In chapter 4, *Pregnant Bodies and Choreographies of Sex and Gender*, I explore and problematize Johanna Boyce's choreographic process surrounding her pregnancy, which involved presenting pregnancy as an experience indissociable from specific constructions of sex and gender. Her process involved affirming to herself and her audience the inherent womanliness and essential femaleness of pregnancy. I challenge and historically contextualize the "naturalness" of her interpretations of herself and her pregnant body, and I counterpose her choreographic process with that of artist Hana van der Kolk, who fully avoided gendered interpretive frameworks as well as notions of sexual determinism in their performance work for pregnant bodies. Finally, in chapter 5, *Queer Orientations towards Pregnancy, Choreographing Pure Becoming*, I explore works by Yanira

Castro and Miguel Gutierrez, and I examine their shared interest in radical physical transformation inspired by experiences of pregnancy. I consider how each used choreography to create conditions and community that supported their personal metamorphoses, that offered them queer orientations towards pregnancy, and that helped them to practice care towards themselves in ways that they deemed significant and otherwise unavailable.

In these chapters, as in this introduction, I eschew footnotes and endnotes. I do so in an effort to facilitate the flow of the text and to limit interruptions in descriptions, analysis, and key arguments. Avoiding proverbial "small print," I include all information that I deemed meaningful content in the body of the text, sometimes hazarding what I reasoned were valuable digressions, and consistently acknowledging my references at the end of each chapter. You will also notice, dear reader, variety in how the content of chapters is weighted and organized. For instance, while chapter one puts five artists in conversation with one another (admittedly lingering longer on some than others), chapters two through five focus on a single artist or a prolonged conversation between the work of two artists (sometimes with one choreographer engaged primarily as a counterpoint to the other). In other words, my approach as a writer reflects the formal and relational eclecticism of the artists here analyzed. My heterogeneity of style and structure is intended to offer a variety of useful apertures (some with a sharper focus, others, more panoramic) on a wide, variegated, and heretofore largely unexplored topography. These chapters are a preliminary survey, but there are many more stories to be shared and many more ways in which to, as Le Guin said, "shine light on the maps that [these stories] are changing."

* * *

Through preparing for and performing the part of the pregnant man, Ritsch learned that pregnancy is not a monolithic experience and that it involves much more than temporary physical changes for individuals. To communicate pregnancy, Ritsch appreciated that he needed to choreograph himself from the outside in and then the inside out, in other words, he needed to *do more than pantomime what he had seen before or enact others' retold experiences. He came to know the components of his interior world as a pregnant character from the storytelling of mothers in his life, and in the process, he came to appreciate these individuals' self-awareness, individuality, strength, capability, and facility to articulate their own lived experiences. He also learned, through needing to not only perform a pregnant character but a pregnant character navigating various injustices, that pregnancy is not divorced from larger life and its inequities. Moreover, he learned that pregnancy, while in and of itself not incapacitating, can make individuals more vulnerable to what they are already vulnerable to in society. Of course, Ritsch was not the only beneficiary of his performance. As Jane Comfort and Company toured the work, Ritsch's character confronted and stretched audiences' conceptions of pregnancy and gender as it evoked nervous snickers, earnest tears, polemical press, and many conversations.*

* * *

By presenting their bodies in performance, the artists in these five chapters demonstrated how their pregnancies intersected not only with their artform and its history but also with their personal experiences of race, gender, and sexual identification. In these chapters, canonical, white, female-identifying dance figures plot a course for their pregnant and artistic identities through choreographing dances, but so too do artists of color, queer artists, gender fluid artists, non-female identifying artists, and non-dancer-identifying individuals. In these chapters, choreography offers tools that are alternative to medicine (or other forms of social representation) for understanding what/how pregnant bodies do and feel and what they can mean for individuals and their cultures. What's more, the ways in which these artists stretched and transgressed the boundaries of postmodern dance affected their communities and inspired practices which, once divorced from their specific embodied experiences of pregnancy, served broader ideas and populations. Their works offered scaffolding which could be used, in turns, as something to climb, to build around/upon, to push against, or to dismantle, just as they themselves had engaged the scaffolding of extant postmodern dance. In short, the works within these pages can and do inspire larger habits of learning to see dancing bodies in new ways, to create new communities, and to not only envision but to manifest new possibilities. They are and they inspire *becomings*.

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Chapter one: Pregnant Body as Choreographic Sight/Site

Disenchanted with New York's postmodern "downtown" scene, choreographer Twyla Tharp retired from dance in 1970. She did so definitively and emphatically, turning over her company's rehearsal and performance records to the New York Public Library and then "dropping out" of both the dance scene and society at large. She and her husband, artist Bob Huot, moved away from the city to a farm in the rural New York countryside, which they called New Berlin. It was their fresh start. Like her dance contemporaries, Deborah Hay, Simone Forti, and Steve Paxton, Tharp chose to move away from the city in order to enjoy a simpler life, to feel closer to the earth and in continuity with nature. In her 1992 memoir, *Push Comes to Shove,* she reflected that, in the countryside, "We all felt a dignity, a wholeness and wholesomeness that we had lost hustling in the dance world" (131). Her days at New Berlin were filled with what she called "ancient chores," like kneading bread and tilling fields, and soon after moving there, she took on arguably the most ancient and arduous of female chores: pregnancy.

Despite having renounced dance, in the months preceding the 1971 birth of her son, Jesse, Tharp had a strong desire to return to a creative movement practice. She fashioned a make-shift studio in the attic of their farmhouse where she could give herself a ballet barre and improvise new choreographic ideas. Soon, she was fully consumed by dance again. She made movement phrases daily, which she invited colleagues—Sara Rudner, Rose-Marie Wright, and Isabela Garcia-Lorca—from the city out to the farm to learn. Tharp acquired a video camera and monitor and began filming and reviewing her improvisations so as to make choreographic choices based on the recordings. She compiled a collection of tapes she called the "attic series," which she shared with the small group of dancers who would come to visit her at New Berlin. The videos were a boon for Tharp's artistic productivity, allowing for energy- and time-efficient rehearsals and permitting her to begin rebuilding her company and its repertoire, even while pregnant and away from the city.

Preparing to be a parent inspired Tharp to contemplate the family lineage her child would be joining, and she tried to somatically reconnect to her larger family through her movement improvisations. While she had formerly forsworn dancing to music, she began improvising to jazz records from bygone times, especially her father's recordings of Willie "The Lion" Smith. Once she had captured herself improvising on film, she studied and scrutinized her own movement, removing herself from its felt sensation in the interest of its aesthetic appreciation. She found that as her body *felt* more cumbersome to her, its movements *looked* more interesting to her. Guided by what caught her choreographic eye, toward the end of her pregnancy, she created a solo for herself. She worked backwards from visual analysis of her dancing pregnant body on film to extrapolate biomechanics and anatomical organizations of interesting shapes, gestures, and movement qualities as well as to analyze her pregnant body's unique relationships with gravity and time. Her solo was jazzy, reeling, loose, woozy, and weighted. These qualities, which came "naturally" to her pregnant body, later became hallmarks of the Tharp aesthetic.

Tharp practiced her solo until the very end of her pregnancy—recording a rehearsal of it even on the day that she went into labor. She later recalled her last rehearsal whilst pregnant, boasting that it was "against medical advice but within the realm of [her] own common sense" (1992, 142). That day, she worked in the attic doing what she called "some foolishly dangerous slides and falls," until, in the afternoon, she felt the onset of labor (ibid.). Postpartum, Tharp returned to the attic as soon as she could—medically speaking, before she should have—and began reconstructing the dance on her non-pregnant body. With a new degree of somatic remove, she once again assumed an outside eye on herself and studied her body as it previously appeared on film. She then distilled, defined, and extracted qualities that could inform new choreographic projects. Through mining her pregnancy for choreographic material and then recreating, reemploying, and recontextualizing this material without any overt reference to pregnancy, she also progressed a secondary project of hers—to sculpt her professional image as she reemerged on the dance scene. Namely, through choreographic choices and framings of her dancing body, she dissociated herself from her motherhood and from her female biology in efforts to affect how others saw her as an artist.

In the autumn of 1971, she premiered her postpartum rendition of her attic solo nested within her longer group piece, *Eight Jelly Rolls*. The solo immediately attracted attention and, for ease of fans discussing it, assumed the moniker "The Drunk." Whether Tharp planted the seed of this title or simply adopted it from the enthusiastic press, thereafter, she and her company also referred to the solo as "The Drunk" or the "fall-down-drunk." Her "drunk" was a hit, hailed by New York dance critic Arlene Croce as "surely one of the great individual set pieces in modern dance" (1971, 36). Croce raved that Tharp's drunk successfully put "the humanity back into … dancing, and the humor," while also displaying Tharp's "development as a choreographer" (39). To Croce and others, who saw Tharp's work from the Sixties as abstract, difficult and "ordered entirely by considerations of time and space," such "development" was most welcome (Croce 1969, 30). Previously, Croce had critiqued Tharp's work for trying to "torture the attention span" of her audience (1968, 30). However, she saw, Tharp's new style as not only entertaining and engaging, but as the "leading edge" of postmodern dance (1971, 140). This was because for Croce, unlike the dances of her postmodern contemporaries, Tharp's work was a "flight from…banalities" and satisfied the critic's own "impatience with [the] minority cliquishness and discontent" that characterized so much of the countercultural art of the 1960s and 70s (ibid.).

Then *New York Times* columnist Deborah Jowitt also appreciated Tharp's transformation from "severe young Twyla of 1965—hair up, mouth prim, neck rigid, eyes staring past the audience in slight embarrassment" to Twyla of the early 1970s—a "loose and witty dancer with a fluid spine, capable of bouts of speedoflight movement" (1976, 11). Thus, while Tharp had a reputation for being a "particularly thorny member of the dance avant garde" (ibid.), some critics suddenly felt endeared to her and saw Tharp's shifts in choreographic vocabulary and characteristics as well as her approach to performance as vast leaps above and beyond her previous, more esoteric work.

To rehearse for "The Drunk," as Tharp recalled in her memoirs, she tried to recapture the qualities and pacing intuitive to her pregnant body, while also emanating the queasiness of morning sickness. Referencing these embodied memories kept her portrayal from looking pantomimic or seeming like a caricature, a fact that critics appreciated and saw as a sign of her growing skill and nuance as a performer/choreographer (Tharp 1992, 158). However, curiously, those writing about Tharp's "drunk" hazarded no guesses as to why her work took the turns that it did. As dance scholar Gill Wright Miller noted in her writing about Tharp's post-partum works, no one conjectured as to the impetus behind Tharp's ostensible maturation as an artist, signaled by her aesthetic redirection. For example, as Miller flags, in their 1980 guide to the "best loved" dances, Nancy Reynolds and Susan Reimer-Torn remarked that Tharp's movement style of the early Seventies "seem[ed] to have come from nowhere" (282), and in her 1988 book *Time and the Dancing Image*, Jowitt referred to Tharp's new marvelous quality as "who-knew-what" (336). Critic's embrasure of her evolution without inquiry or speculation into its causation proved advantageous for Tharp because it held viewers' focus on the specialness of her skill, her range, and her inventiveness as an artist, thus drawing focus away from certain, in her opinion extraneous, facts of her life, such as her motherhood. She preferred it this way. Afterall, she entered her reemergence as a choreographer craving parity with top artists, which for her meant equity with male choreographers such as those with whom she had previously worked—Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Erik Hawkins. To wit and for the duration of her career, she hated being called a "female choreographer," even for purposes of commendation; she always preferred "choreographer," without qualifier. Thus, downplaying the contribution of her female biology to her early success was part of a bigger politics, and it was intentional and strategic in that it forwarded her ability to curate without constraints, her burgeoning reputation as a star artist. She was also able to set the precedent, quickly understood in no uncertain terms by the media, that "You don't ask Twyla Tharp about her personal life: It's…private, damn it all!" (Jowitt 1976).

During my senior year at Barnard College, six of my undergraduate colleagues and I were offered the opportunity to reconstruct *Eight Jelly Rolls* for a performance at the Joyce Theater in New York City. This year-long process, guided primarily by former Tharp Company member Katie Glasner and secondarily by original cast member Rose-Marie Wright, set out to reenact not only the choreography but the complete choreographic process. Like Tharp's original company, we learned various drafts of the choreography, and we learned about the context in which each draft was created; we rehearsed phrases in full, inverted them, reversed them, and reperformed them in retrograde; we got frustrated at the dance and at each other; we got confused and we got scolded; we brushed ourselves off and tried again; we trained our brains and bodies to think and connect rapidly and differently; we lost weight to feel chic in our replica 1970s-style backless, halter tuxedos; and with young women's self-consciousness, panicked about anything that might jiggle in performance (since, in solidary with the original cast, we committed to not wearing any undergarments). In the end, we had tremendous fun and felt banded together and part of something bigger than us. The work was exhausting and exhaustive. It offered the satisfaction of what we took as a dimensional and comprehensive understanding of Tharp and her process.

It was nearly fifteen years later that, stumbling upon some of Tharp's attic footage in the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library, I learned that there was more to the story of *Eight Jelly Rolls* than I had understood as a student. While I ended up dancing the part of Kenneth Rinker, we all studied Tharp's solo, "The Drunk." We were encouraged by Wright to swagger "drunkenly" as we rehearsed it. In other words, in our reconstruction process, Tharp's pregnancy was never mentioned. Likewise, we did not hear the stories of company members taking turns changing diapers between "runs" of the piece. We did not hear about Tharp yelling out, "Hey! Remember the one studio rule: don't step on the kid!" or about the company ritual that, when ragtime pianist Jelly Roll Morton called out "Ooooooh, Mister Jelly" in the musical accompaniment, the dancers cooed at baby Jesse, "Ooooooh, Mister Baby" (Tharp 1992). In retrospect, these omissions feel like significant losses. I wonder what these details might have offered my twenty-one-year-old self: *What would I have understood differently about the work, Tharp, and myself, had we learned the solo from the video of her dancing while very pregnant?* and *How would our ensemble dynamics have shifted if we learned the movement while also engaged in a collective practice of care for another dependent person?* As opposed to playing a character, I wonder if and how I might have accommodated within my body schema qualities of weight, girth, and heft as well as comfort with the idea of a body that changes. As it were, I wore the choreography like a flashy outfit that I donned and showed-off. *But, had I* *learned the movement as originated from a lived and deeply felt embodied reality, might that have altered my relationships with my own dancing, choreographing, and biological bodies?*

Section one: A pregnant body and its to-be-looked-at-ness

Pregnancy can aggravate pregnant individuals', in general, and choreographers', in particular, accustomed sense of to-be-looked-at-ness. It can make them feel pinned in an uncomfortable place; make them feel reduced to, for instance, the visible "evidence" of their gender, their biology, and their eminent social role; and for some, can lead to encounters with body dysmorphia and estrangement from their appearances. However, the artists discussed in this chapter avoided feeling pigeon-holed by either self- or social-objectification of their pregnant bodies through strategic choreographic praxes that allowed them to have observational relationships with their bodies and to offer fresh means of reading their bodies to their audiences. Their choreographies invited creative self-inquiry, as opposed to self-alienation, and they created representational spaces as well as previously unavailable subject positions for themselves both as pregnant individuals and as dancers. They invited the aesthetics of their pregnant bodies to inspire them to imagine dance differently, and they appreciated how their bodies offered them new possibilities and information with which to make art. They also appreciated how their bodies lent themselves toward the discovery of entirely new and advantageous formal and expressive vocabularies, vocabularies that outlasted but felicitously pointed back to aspects of their lived experiences of pregnancy.

The five choreographers here discussed used performance and choreographic strategies to communicate to audiences their refusal to be reductively defined by their pregnant, female appearances. Choreographically, each created conditions that required complexity of vision from viewers and that pushed their audiences to question all assumptions that they might have brought with them to performances as to the types of "women" or mothers they were to behold. The ways in which these artists attempted to ward off recognition included performing stereotypes in order to disassociate from or undercut them and strategies of shifting and confounding audiences' vantage points in the interest of offering fresh perspective/s. In their various strategies, they explored *what* their audience saw, *how* their audience saw, and how they signaled *who* they were, as artists, in relationship to what/how their audience saw. Beginning with Tharp, who feared her desired public appearance might be betrayed by her pregnant body, we see a strategy of actively using choreographic techniques to distance herself from her maternal appearance. With Jody Oberfelder, we see a strategy of partial identification with and playful engagement of her pregnant appearance to make different types of art with different messaging than her pre- or post-pregnancy work; then with Sandy Jamrog and Noémie Lafrance, we see a strategy of ironically embodying tropes of pregnancy and womanhood so as to challenge and deconstruct them. Finally, with a later Oberfelder dance and then with Meg Foley's work, we see a strategy of using choreography to frame their bodies as aesthetic events, rather than as characters/caricatures. They fully avoided participating in semiotics of representation and rather, induced a paradigmatic shift toward abstraction and pure sensation. Regardless of her strategy, each artist succeeded in making a dance that, she perceived, offered her control over how her body was meaningful to others as well as an opportunity to innovate new artistic habits inspired by the changing look of her body.

Philosopher Iris Marion Young argues that at the heart of "feminine embodiment" is an experience of disunity with oneself and an inability to escape a sense of oneself as something seen (1980). In her essay "Pregnant Embodiment," she discusses how the stresses of women's need for exterior eyes on them to feel embodied inform their experiences of pregnancy (1984).

She contends that pregnancy involves a *doubling* of self, which happens as women recount their pre-pregnancy bodies and compare their present experiences to what they would be, were they not pregnant. Connecting her theories, pregnant experiences of self revolve around how one thinks one's self appears to others, and pregnant individuals carry the double burden of awareness for how they think they previously looked to an outside audience and how they think they look while pregnant. This is compounded by the additional burden of accountability for how they think they *should* look prenatally and postpartum in order to meet social standards and also in order to look like themselves. Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey attributes such preoccupation with appearance to women's acquired sense of their "to-be-looked-at-ness." In her 1975 essay on the theory of the male gaze, she says that, because of omnipresent social cues, which are reiterated and underscored by media culture, women experience themselves as passive, raw material for the active gaze of men. Men do not feel the same compulsion to establish selfhood through how they are seen, just as their felt entitlement to be the ones who see is not shared by women. According to Mulvey, women are excluded from *scopophilia*—Freud's term for the gratification experienced in gazing at others as if they were objects (1905). This is because through acculturation, women habituate to experiencing themselves as spectacles to be objectified and scrutinized, and this preoccupies and thus disempowers them. In a parallel argument, social theorist Michel Foucault maintains that it is the experience of feeling always able to be seen that maintains the "disciplined" and "docile" individual in her place of subjugation (1977, 187). As Foucault assesses, in his theory of the Panopticon, the one who is seen but does not assume she can see, the one who is an "object of observation" as opposed to a "the subject of communication," experiences herself as captured and fixed (200). As such, she feels powerless, fearful, and entirely dependent on the authorization of others. Even without the surveillance of another, the subjugated anticipates outside surveillance and, consequently, surveils herself ("panopticism"). Arguably, such experiences of objectification and defeat are exacerbated by pregnancy, when women's bodies are especially on display and opined about as they move through the world.

Of course, feeling seen does not inevitably mean feeling subjugated. Take, for example, the movement artist's perspective on herself. Dancers and choreographers have unique relationships to their bodies as seen, staged, and as having semiotic multiplicity. However, being able to see oneself through a choreographer's gaze does not automatically make pregnancy a self-affirming experience for dancers. In fact, self experienced as to-be-looked-at, to-be-looked-at-in-comparison-to-prior-self, and to-be-looked-at-on-a-spectrum-of-anomaly (as it might be experienced in spaces of obstetrical medicine) can be particularly difficult for pregnant movement artists. This is, in part, because such artists have reduced control over how their bodies read in performance, meaning their bodies inevitably disclose (or perjure) private aspects of their lives, aspects outside of their art practice. In Euromerican cultures, pregnant bodies tend to tell different stories than "dancer's" bodies. Rather than testifying to women's training and dedication to their craft, pregnant bodies testify to women's sexual experience and draw attention to their biological processes, rather than their artistic pedigree.

Dance theorist Ann Cooper Albright explains that as an artform that relies on bodies to represent ideas, dance techniques "not only condition the dancers' bodies, they literally inscribe a physical ideology into dancers' physiques" (1997, 32). When an audience observes a dancer, it can admire how intensive and regular training has shaped the dancer's body into a special kind of body. However, Albright continues that physical dance practice has collateral "psychic consequences," and together, a dance form's psychical and physical inscriptions "dramatically affect a dancer’s own subjectivity” (32). Applied to pregnant dancers, this means that in addition to losing the clout and felt security of bodies sculpted by their movement praxes and thus visual testament to their effort and training, pregnant dancers also face the challenge of stigma and unease for being in bodies that appear and feel bigger, softer, more unruly, and more divulging of their private lives.

While perhaps especially psychically challenging for a dancer to deal with body stigmatization, pregnant body shame is a socialized experience not exclusive to dancers. As media and gender theorist Carol Stabile asserts, “the pregnant body—even clothed—is a source of abjection and disgust in popular culture: the woman is represented as awkward, uncomfortable, and grotesquely excessive. In a culture that places such a premium on thinness, the pregnant body is anathema” (1998, 191). Extrapolating from this type of thinking, cultural and body studies writer Susan Bordo reflects that, in contemporary “modern” culture at large, “the firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct *attitude,*” not merely of fashionable shape (1993, 94). More than suggesting that one is disciplined in one’s eating and exercise, in much of Euromerican culture, slimness means that one “‘cares’ about oneself” and demonstrates an “ability to ‘make something’ of oneself” (95). The impulse to use one’s body to “make something” of oneself, of course, has special meaning to movement artists. However, after previously feeling agent to intentionally and strategically present their bodies in their art toward a desired effect (which for many, includes coherence with a larger dance cultural aesthetic of “fitness”), dancers, once pregnant, face the imperative to contend with bodies that neither feel like they look like their *selves* (as artists or more generally speaking) nor indicate their training, but rather, are automatically inscribed with socially pervasive and often pejorative narratives surrounding the types of people whose bodies get pregnant at inopportune times and/or get “fat.”

Of course, presumptions of "overweightness," in dance and society at large, problematically assume that there is an ideal, attainable weight for all individuals, and this assumption decidedly benefits some individuals while stigmatizing and burdening others. Afterall, weight is a human characteristic that, like height, varies widely and is enmeshed with matters of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and gender; and it is by no means an indicator of individuals' holistic health. However, since, due to historical precedent and inertia, much of the Euromerican dance world, including the postmodern dance world, is stubbornly resistant to the appropriateness of a spectrum of body sizes on stage, performing while pregnant in "Western" dance styles almost inevitably is read as inapposite, or at least aberrant.

Considering the social significance of its appearance, choreographing one's pregnant body for public consumption requires fresh considerations and strategies for navigating how one's dancing body looks, should look, and could look. As we shall see exemplified by the choreographers in this chapter, the loss of felt coherence between how they looked while pregnant and how they felt they *really* looked resulted in experiences akin to body dysmorphia. In dysmorphia, the way one's body is reflected back to oneself does not match the way one experiences one's self, and this lack of correspondence can be deeply distressing (Mitchell 2006). However, as dance philosopher Shantel Ehrenberg argues, for dancers, contemplating one's reflection is not an intellectual/emotional praxis so much as a physical, kinesthetic, and "productive" praxis (2019). Moreover, it is a praxis in which individuals are fully participant. Generally speaking, individuals move through the world and sense through their bodies in order to perceive themselves as they are reflected back to themselves via supportive apparatuses like mirrors, shadows, cameras, and the eyes of others. Accordingly, and as postulated by phenomenologists including Katherine Morris (2003) and Katherine Phillips (1996), body dysmorphia is something lived, not just believed. Individuals' uncertainty and anxiety about their appearances is constituted and experienced through their bodies and via their physical practices. As such, it is neither a "mental" problem nor, necessarily, a "problem" at all. Indeed, Phillips argues that an obsession with one's reflected image can stem as much from experiences of hope as from experiences of fear (89). The individual hopes that she will suddenly, to her delight, find a way to recognize herself, and in a deep way, she trusts that she will. This optimism is in contrast to the individual fearing that she will never look like she should look and is, thus, doomed to a life of feeling/being unseen (89). This optimism is perhaps nowhere more present than in the dance studio. As Ehrenberg assesses in her analysis of "productive" looks that dancers cast upon their self-reflections and self-recordings, the dissonance between their imaged bodies and their imagined bodies offers "a means to re-imagine how they want to project their dancing future" as well as reassurance that they "are agents in that process" of self-projection (157) It thus offers, what she discusses as an experience of one's lived body in plural terms.

The practice of seeking visual confirmation for a felt experience, knowing that such confirmation is not guaranteed and is even unlikely, suggests awareness that bodily integrity *may* be related to how one looks, but that it is never fully reducible to it. Accordingly, and as this chapter's artists discovered, a perceptual encounter with body dysmorphia during their lived experiences of pregnancy opened up spaces in which to relate to their own images creatively, dialogically, and with an eye on the future. These spaces were particularly available to them as dance artists since they were accustomed to experiencing themselves simultaneously through sensation and representation. Already understanding creative self as existing in a space between haptic, kinesthetic, and visual perceptions, these choreographers were well-primed to explore bodyselves that were strange in both look and feel. Through organizing and supervising themselves with criticality, consciousness, and imagination, they worked toward playful duets with their own appearances using methods both sensory and symbolic.

For Tharp, the way that she perceived her pregnant body appearing to others felt *wrong* relative to what she perceived to be her earned and desired appearances as well as the appearance that she intentionally staged in her art. Tharp eagerly accepted the story that was offered her about her own choreographic ingenuity and performance talent, and she kept the true origin of the signature stylistic elements of her work a closely guarded company secret for over a decade. While kept under wraps, the video of her dancing while pregnant took on an importance of its own for her. It is likely that she took care to protect herself from having the footage of her maternal body released, fearing it could be appropriated and used in a way that would undercut her strategies of self-branding. However, with time, *she* became increasingly tempted to appropriate the footage and to use it, counterintuitively, to advance her larger goals. She began exploring how she might flip and manage the impression it gave viewers, specifically, how she could use it to actively create distance and dissonance between her*self* and her pregnancy.

At one point, according to her memoirs, she was tempted to project the attic footage behind a performance of her piece *Baker's Dozen*—riffing off of the bakery theme by showing her "bun in the oven"—but she resisted. Instead, she kept the footage concealed and accruing symbolic capital (1992, 149). However, when PBS produced an hour-long program chronicling her career, *Twyla Tharp: Scrapbook 1965-1982* (Fitzgerald et al. 1983), she dropped the first proverbial "Easter Egg," allowing, and—as the show's director/narrator—advising, PBS to splice footage from her attic rehearsal tapes together with footage from *Eight Jelly Rolls*. In this filmic portmanteau, we see quick cuts between a very slim and toned Tharp—four years postpartum, sporting her form-fitting, Kermit Love designed, halter-top tuxedo and captured with high-tech BBC cameras for a London Weekend Special—and an eight-month pregnant Tharp—before her Vidal Sassoon haircut, in a baggy white sweatshirt, on the grainy film from her personal Panasonic, in the attic of her and Huot's farmhouse. In all probability, the stark contrast between professional/amateur, refined/course, classy/gauche and the associations of the latter descriptors with pregnancy were intended. Her presentation of her pregnant dancing body recuperated a juxtaposition, largely outmoded by postmodern dance, between high-status and low-status bodies and the sense that, since she was making "high" art, she needed to rely on the ingenuity of her artist's perspective in order to strategically and winkingly include the—for her—"low-status" subject matter of pregnancy. In brief, she unflinchingly canceled out the specialness of her pregnant body, reducing it to just more of what Jowitt has called the "vernacular twang," which, through her choreographic cunning, adds aesthetic nuance to Tharp's work (1976).

The second "Easter Egg" came after another decade, when she wrote *Push Comes to Shove* and admitted that improvising pregnant introduced her to the "ways of moving that [she] had known nothing about before" but for which she quickly garnered critics' praise (141). All of this is to say, Tharp only shared the video and story of her attic solo when she was certain that she had the power to frame her pregnant body exactly how she wanted to and when she knew that sharing it would in no way challenge her professional reputation. These instances of revelation came at points in her artistic and celebrity life cycles when she trusted that audiences would see her as she wanted to be seen: as first and foremost, an artist—an artist who was, incidentally, also a mother, but whose pregnancy and motherhood in no way slowed her down physically or creatively because they were incidental obstacles she easily overcame. She waited for moments in her career when she knew her pregnancy would only add texture to her preestablished and self-defined portrait of a choreographer with grit, and she used the story of her pregnancy to emphasize her stubbornness, strength, perseverance, and drive—qualities consistent with how she regularly presented herself. Per her strategy, revealing her pregnancy also offered the opportunity to reveal that during pregnancy, she doggedly "refused to let [her] body take its natural course" and that she "was determined not to sacrifice [her] life to [her] child," as, in her purview, other women, including her own mother, had done (1992, 141-142). Addressing her pregnancy allowed her to make light of it and to boast, for example, that, although she thought it might induce a miscarriage from overexertion, she "danced full force anyhow" well into her third trimester (ibid.). In her Viking-esque narration of her pregnancy, she was a warrior who, in preparation for giving birth, killed and dressed her steer, Bully Boy, before eating a "huge portion" of him (142). Finally, tackling the story of her pregnancy allowed her to emphasize how little those nine months meant to her; indeed, she insisted, she "had never been so glad to be done with anything in [her] entire life" (144). She looked back on pregnancy with, ostensibly, zero nostalgia but rather with ambivalence tempered only by the pride that she had not let it inconvenience her or compromise her integrity.

When making the attic videos, Tharp talked about the recordings as an "extension of [her] body," and within the "dance" of her career, she tactically manipulated their placement in space and time (141). By when and where they appeared and how they were framed, she used her body as seen by others to make meaning, and in this way, her manipulation of the footage was definitively choreographic. What is more, her durational pas de deux with her pregnant image is ongoing. For instance, in 2018, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City celebrated the 50-year anniversary of Judson Dance Theater. While she was never affiliated or philosophically aligned with this adjacent group of avant-garde movement artists making dance in “downtown” New York whilst she was establishing (and then reestablishing) herself as an artist, Tharp was never one to be outdone. Thus, in response, she produced her own retrospective which she showed at the Joyce Theater and took on tour. Called “Minimalism and Me,” it was a lecture demonstration focusing on her early career (1965-1971) as a dancer, choreographer, and collaborator, and in it, she gave privilege of place to her attic tapes. This was their most public disclosure and Tharp’s most plucky attempt to dissociate herself completely from the visual of the pregnant Tharp that they contained. She shared the footage in a way that presented her, in the flesh, as a critical viewer of her onscreen image and a way that invited her audience to be similarly critical. Over the microphone, she mocked her pregnant body and flagged the ways in which it was undancerly. Rather than presenting her solo as documenting investigations that were of vital importance to her career, she made fun of herself, especially of her girth. For instance, she referred to her projected image condescendingly as the great “White Whale” (Sherman 2018). To elevate the sarcasm and deliberately add self-imposed injury to self-imposed insult, she had Tharp company member Matthew Dibble do a farcical, exaggerated version of the dance in front of the projected film with a giant pillow strapped to his muscular, flat, ballet-trained torso.

Critics steered clear of this episode. Only in one of a dozen reviews of this event, was Dibble’s shtick mentioned, although when I consulted females who attended, including my *Eight Jelly Rolls* coach Katie Glasner, they singled out the “whale” incident and flagged it as “disappointing” or “sad.” Perhaps this was because Tharp’s approach leaned into sexist condescension toward women/mothers and patriarchal minimalization of the value of reproductive labor. In constructing this scenario, Tharp aligned herself not with her body on film but with the body of a hyper-able and hyper-toned white, male dancer, temporarily saddled with a costumic accessory, lampooning pregnancy. Unfortunately, rather than condemning the forces that likely caused her to fear disempowerment as a mother and, consequently, to shun motherhood in her professional identity, she fortified these very forces. Perchance, Tharp understood that patriarchy is part of the social construction on motherhood and that motherhood plays a critical role in the subordination of women when motherhood becomes a way for husbands to domesticate wives and police their bodies. As psychoanalytic feminist writer Nancy Chodrow writes, “women’s mothering is a central and defining feature of the social organization of gender and is implicated in the construction and reproduction of male dominance itself” (1978, 9). However, Tharp’s attempts to hold onto and accrue her power, thus, to not be weakened by motherhood reinforced the idea of male dominance and the patriarchal norms that subjugate mothers in the first place. In stark contrast, poet, essayist, and mother Adrienne Rich advocates for destroying the patriarchal institution of motherhood, rather than interpreting motherhood as inherently a problem for women. As she writes, by destroying patriarchy, motherhood will be released into “the realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination, and conscious intelligence” (1979, 271-73). Mothers will be recognized for their intellect, not their maternal “instinct,” and their self-realization and -advocacy, not their selflessness (ibid. 42). They will be free to develop a sense of self that is not a construct of patriarchy, as indeed, Tharp’s ideas both on motherhood and on professional success were.

Furthermore, Tharp’s approach, her very assumption that she could have total control over how her body was interpreted by others as well as her concern about losing freedoms and respect that she expected to have and felt, were she not a mother, would be hers, reveals the white privilege inherent in her choreographing and curatorial strategies. As writer, womanist, civil rights activist, and mother Audre Lorde assessed, “White women face the pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power" (1984, 118). Following this line of argumentation, historically, white women, like Tharp, have had a stake in patriarchy and have repeatedly conceded the possibility of freedom for *all* women so as to personally feel included in the benefits of a white, male, "straight" notion of order. Tharp's idea of equity set as her goal being on a par or eventually surpassing white, able-bodied, cisgender men—a status historically correlated with if not contingent on the subjugation of peoples who do not have these identifications. As Rich and many feminists of color, including Lorde, emphasize, it is only by giving up white privilege that white women can begin to dismantle patriarchy.

However, dismantling patriarchy was clearly not part of Tharp's agenda. She wished to be successful in a "man's world," which meant, for her, not only rejecting her maternal body, but rejecting and degrading all maternal bodies. In disparaging her pregnant body, Tharp was doing more than moving forward with her personal career, she was broadcasting what she perceived to be a larger irreconcilability between pregnant bodies and dancers' bodies. In this way, her work goes against the grain of inclusive and body positive dance. By her jesting theatrical framing of her pregnant body on film, she also discounted and mocked other non-svelte or differently abled bodies in dance. Thus, while she devised multiple innovative strategies for controlling the utility and semantics of her pregnant body, she did not do so in ways that opened doors for other artists to value their own experiences of body-shape or -ability or of parenthood. In other words, by adopting and encouraging a scrutinizing and condescending perspective on her pregnant body, she engaged in an operation that, while giving her the comfort of a seeming vantage point of authority and agency, actively marginalized other bodies.

Dance theorist Susan Foster, in her exploration of the divergent approaches to postmodern dance that grew out of the experimentation of the 1960s, directly criticizes Tharp's attempts to control and frame what audiences see and how superficially they look (1985). Foster calls Tharp's signature aesthetic "we are simply as we look and nothing more," which she presents as a strategy Tharp and her dancers use to excuse themselves from "any responsibility for the messages implicit in their activity" (48). For Foster, the overtness of Tharp's strategy informs the viewer to not bother considering a deeper or more meta-meaning to her art (ibid.). In other words, Tharp choreographically cues her audience that it is there to consume her "titillating innovations of dance as spectacle," not to be included in, or to effect, the meaning that is being produced through her dances (49). While an apt description of most post-1970 Tharp work, when contending with her pregnant body, Tharp was forced to deviate from her typical style of *what-you-see-is-all-that-is-there*. In her memoirs, she spoke to her awareness that what her body signified changed as the way her body was contextualized changed, and capitalizing on this understanding, she pursued the long-term project of using her dances and later the platform of her fame to re-contextualize and thus redefine what *is-there* when *what-you-see* is her pregnant body. Perhaps by insisting that her pregnant body possessed no function or meaning outside of how she framed it, she also insisted that pregnancy and motherhood in no way defined her, or that if they must, that she could control the definitions.

When Tharp taught and performed at Oberlin College while nearly eight months pregnant, she welcomed interpretations of her body as fiercely female and her decision to dance pregnant as a political act. Oberlin dance faculty member Brenda Way, who had organized Tharp's residency, enthusiastically proclaimed Tharp's feminism and how empowering seeing her dance was for female students (Siegel 2006, 49). However, postpartum, Tharp was quick to cancel out this type of reading. In fact, in 1975, she told Jowitt she did not espouse feminism and had no interest in being seen as one of its mascots. In a statement again indicative of her white privilege she said, “I’ve always said my mother put up the feminist fight for me. I don’t bother. It’s like second generation wealth” (Jowitt 1976). Instead, treating both her pregnant image and her pregnancy at large as removed from herself and thus as formal elements with which to play a variety of games, she eventually arrived at familiar territory via a different route: she could present her pregnant body as she did her dancing body, as just another, as Foster puts it, “glossy impenetrable object” to which no meanings could stick unless she was personally holding them in place. Again, in the ways that she choreographed and curated her own image, she left no space for viewers to collaborate with her in what Foster calls “writing dancing,” or open-ended, cooperative semiotic interpretation and meaning making (1986). Rather, in her choreographic system, Tharp assigned unambiguous meanings to her body, such as calling herself the “white whale,” meanings which she expected her audience to accept without hesitation or contest.

Since the Teflon quality of her dances and her desire to spoon-feed the audience were huge departures from the style of Tharp’s pre-pregnancy choreography, some of her artist contemporaries, including her husband, critiqued the “commercial” and anti-intellectual turns in her work. However, Tharp dismissed such criticism by folding it into her telling of the narrative of her pregnancy (1992, 156). She said that as she reached the end of her pregnancy, she appreciated that “part of me would soon be sitting out there among all those faces,” and this made her, for the first time, want to connect with her audience (ibid). To her, establishing such a connection meant cutting out the “academic concerns” of her work, incorporating humor, theatrical trappings, and, in general, making the work more accessible and enjoyable. She also unabashedly defended her desire to make money from her art by saying she needed to keep her newborn child—or as she called him, “the kid”—warm and fed. While in all other ways eschewing public attention to her pregnancy and then motherhood, when critiqued by “serious” art critics or put in pejorative comparisons with “serious” artists like Yvonne Rainer, Tharp responded as a mother, and declared that, as such, “she had no more time for ‘manifestos’” (ibid.).

Section two: Reflecting on one's reflection

Tharp is far from the only choreographer to strategically flatten and objectify her pregnant body as part of a larger project of self-definition as an artist. She is in the company of others who both attended to and intentionally dis-integrated themselves from their reflections, and then choreographed their images in an effort to show something about who they were to their audiences. In some ways, these choreographers rehearsed French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s theory of ego-as-object, namely his concepts of the “mirror stage” and “apperception.” In other words, at a time when their experiences of body were experiences of chaos and unpredictability, they each looked hopefully to a coherent image of herself for the promise it offered of (re)establishing a sense of bodily control and unity. In so doing, they repeated a process first engaged by babies in which, via apperception, one turns oneself into an object that can be viewed from outside oneself (like the self in the mirror) so as to understand who one truly is/should be.

According to Lacan, for a baby, prior to six months, her experience of self is one of helplessness and disorder (1966). However, between six and twelve months (the “mirror stage”), she becomes transfixed by her own image and begins to recognize herself in reflective surfaces. For Lacan, her image intrigues her because it holds the promise of an integrated, unified self, one that has overcome self-as-chaos and achieved the security of self-as-whole. In her reflection, she sees an “imaginary order.” In Lacan’s purview, “mirrors” are everywhere in the social world, and consulting them becomes a permanent component of individuals’ senses of self. Mirrors are not merely reflective surfaces; they are also constituted by the verbal and bodily expressions of others, which are reflected back to an individual, teaching her how she is perceived. After acknowledging her potential for wholeness, according to Lacan, an individual spends the rest of her life chasing after the harmony and clarity promised by her image in the mirror. However, this chase will inevitably be in vain and will, consequently, cause her psychic strain. Seeking to actualize hoped-for integrity, the subject engages apperception and thus self-objectifies herself into images (and language), thereby attempting to constitute herself with available signifiers. For Lacan, this process inescapably leads to "misrecognition" of herself as a particular or available type of "I." This is problematic because, if she takes this self-image to stand in for her true self, then, at a very deep level, she will be alienated from herself and, at her core, defined by ideology. This creates an experience of what he calls "extimacy" with herself, meaning a sense of internal exteriority, since her most intimate experience of self also feels outside of herself. For Lacan, this entire process is unconscious but ongoing and results in an understanding of "I" as an object, rather than as a subject. It is thus, in his assessment, demoralizing.

Following Lacan, how pregnant individuals see themselves in reflections informs how they sense their selfhood. However, other theorists assert that this need not be a distressing experience of "extimacy" because individuals can decide how to perceive their reflections and, thus, can see themselves in self-affirming self-developing ways. For instance, Foucault and Judith Butler, in their work on discourse analysis and gender studies respectively, propose that subject-constitution is a performative process, meaning it is neither unconscious nor involuntary. Using "performative" in the Austinian sense, as Foucault and Butler do, this suggests that through its iteration, or performance, an expression manifests something "real" in the social world, a change of conditions. As a performative phenomenon, self-recognition/-definition is always open to transformations, yielding different iterations/outcomes. Self-perception is, arguably, also performative because it involves shaping one's perceived self through perceptual exercises. These exercises are performative and, if reshaped, create a different self in the world. Looked at this way, as pregnant individuals use their reflections to practice seeing themselves differently, their perspectives shift as do their experiences of their "real" selves. Moreover, for pregnant dancers, who are accustomed by their training to experiencing themselves as both sight and sensation, the automaticity of identification with their images or of feeling objectified by their images is not as guaranteed as Lacan presumed. Dancers often practice watching themselves in mirrors or on videos to scrutinize how their bodies read to others. A dancer is aware that she has agency over how her body appears and what it will communicate, and there is a clear distinction for her between herself as a creator with "vision" and her body as it is seen by others. Her subjectivity and subjecthood are spread between these locations of self-as-creator and self-as-sight; thus, her body as image might fulfill her creative vision and desire for self-expression without dominating her sense of self or making her feel reduced to something pre-determined and ill-fitted.

Furthermore, in his theory of "somaesthetics," philosopher Richard Shusterman refers to ways in which, through praxes, individuals direct our consciousness back onto our bodies in an appreciative fashion and toward some desired end. We are not only mindfully aware of our bodies but also reflectively aware of our body awareness. With this metacognition, we can monitor our conscious attention "through its representation in our consciousness" (2008, 55). Schusterman emphasizes that such *caring about* the body often correlates with *taking care of* one's body. The more we hone our attentions, the more nuanced and targeted our self-care can become because we recognize the amount of choice and control we have in our experiences of our bodies. Connecting his theory with choreographic methods, strategic self-observation and self-representation employed toward artistic ends may have deeply personal, even nourishing, effects, and they hardly need result in self-disaffection.

The next choreographer we will discuss, Jody Oberfelder, avoided the self-alienation of the mirror stage by appreciating her image in the mirror somaesthetically and through a choreographer's gaze—thus without being seduced into identification with it or objectification by it. She took care of herself through enjoying metacognitive processes of self-observation which allowed her to appreciate her body aesthetically without feeling reduced to how it looked. By, like Tharp, filming her body and then controlling how, where, and when her self-image was presented, she disrupted what Lacan flags as the inherent problems of the mirror stage and adopted instead a strategy of finding pleasure in her reflection, being in fluid relationship with her image, and innovating her own dialogic system through which to express her experiences of self in relationship to her image in the mirror and on film. In other words, and again like Tharp, rather than aspiring to *be* her image, she used art practice to establish herself as distinct from and in control of her image. However, unlike Tharp, she did not reject her image.

When Jody Oberfelder became pregnant with her daughter, Yana, she said she originally felt "handicapped" (Miller 1993). She did not know how to dance or make dance with her "new" body. So, she began to go to the studio every day and to experiment until she found a vocabulary that "fit" her pregnant body and that could inspire new choreography. Accustomed to her firm, flat, compact, gymnast's body, Oberfelder had never considered her body "feminine" (ibid.). However, as the curves of pregnancy began to hide her muscles and soften her frame, she began to see her appearance as "womanly," and this gave her a sense of curiosity about what, as a performer, this "new" body could express that her habitual body could not. While personally, she had fun seeing herself in a "woman's" body, she did not want to be seen by others as feminized—meaning, for her, fragile or dainty. Thus, in seeking her pregnancy-specific movement vocabulary, which she intended to publicly perform, Oberfelder was not looking for a reduced movement vocabulary or one that suggested gentleness, caution, or a "delicate condition"—as some are wont to describe pregnancy. Rather, she wanted a dynamic and athletic vocabulary that featured the potency of her new look while also remaining true to her preferred dance kinesthesia and affect. Also, for fear of "disappearing behind [her] belly" and not being seen as either an individual or as an artist, she felt compelled to make and perform a solo that presented her dancing body and her choreography, not the in-utero "baby," as the focus of the work (ibid.). She explained her choreographic methodology for her solo as trying to "tune in and to be internal" about how her new look felt in order to arrive at and exude external forms that visually communicated her own perceptions of her "new" body (ibid.). Considering that she wanted the audience to see her as she experienced herself, she adopted an outside eye when rehearsing, so as to anticipate the audience's perspective. As she honed and stylized her choreography, she relied heavily on studio mirrors. However, again like Tharp, her interest in her reflection was not a desire to merge self with reflection but rather to have critical distance on her bodily appearance in the interest of crafting how others saw her.

Once the choreography was set, she decided to perform the solo naked. In choosing to be unclothed, she was not intending to "shock" or to "show off," but rather to make her performance *appear* more "personal" through the aesthetic gesture of exposing herself completely (ibid.). However, at this point, the direction of choreographic influence between her reflection and her reality began to flip. For her, the look of her pregnant nakedness suggested experiences of the primordial and the ancestral, the "animal" and the "primitive" (ibid.). Performing naked seemingly untethered her body from particularities of time and space and situated her body within temporal perpetuity and within continuums of space and species. For her, these ideas and phenomena felt very enmeshed with pregnancy and, although she initially set out to represent expressly her own specific reflections on her own specific pregnant body, she soon found herself more taken by the self in the mirror and its possible connotations. Thus, she slipped increasingly toward attempting to symbolize not just her pregnancy but all pregnancies and not just her sudden "womanly" appearance, but larger ideologies of womanhood. Relatedly, as it developed, the solo, which she called *Duet* (1990), began to aesthetically hearken back to cultural feminism, with its unironic embrace of the sacredness of women's bodies and spirits and its nostalgia for matriarchal heritage. For example, at the beginning, Oberfelder assumed an odalisque pose, languidly undulating her spine, while running her hands through her loose hair and over the curve of her hip. Rising to her knees, she presented her belly and breasts to the sky, closing her eyes and letting her head fall back in ecstasy. Coming to stand in a modified pudica pose, like Botticelli's Venus, she rested her hands on the top and bottom of her torso while serenely gazing down at her "belly" and swaying her head and torso side to side. Even for her more vigorous movements, her breasts and pelvis led her body, suggesting that her sexuality was the source of her power.

Of course, read another way, the finished solo troublingly conflated the female with, to use Oberfelder's own language, the "primitive." In assuming that her body could stand in for all bodies by "primitivizing" herself, she entered treacherous territory and, like Tharp, exemplified the white privilege underlying her approach. In other words, by claiming, and broadcasting, the "otherness" of her body, because of its temporary appearance, and thereby presuming an affinity with "other" women, she overlooked the differences among those who identify as women. As race, gender, and sexuality theorists argue, historically, geographically, culturally, economically, socially, and sexually, there are differences in women's experiences of their gender; thus, gender essentialization always involves politics of exclusion. Moreover, different and complex interconnections between race, gender identification, class, and health also make the lived experiences of those with the capacity for pregnancy who become pregnant very different. What is more, the ways that Oberfelder affected and emphasized the look of her pregnant body for audience eyes presented, in my reading, pregnancy as a, to quote political philosopher Martha Fineman, "colonized" concept, as "an event physically practiced and experienced by women but occupied and defined, given content and value, by the core concepts of patriarchal ideology" (1991, 289-90). By this I mean, she framed pregnancy as both attuning her to deep intuition and a sense of purpose and as an evolutionarily regressive state—it pushed her back-in or out-of-time, limiting her agency or the political impact of her body in the present. In other words, although she "tun[ed] in" to arrive at the external forms that she presented to her audience, this "tuning in" did not inspire the development of a presentation of self that was fully outside of constructs of patriarchy. That being said, Oberfelder's interviews suggest an innocence and independence to her approach. She wanted to make a dance about her pregnant self as animal, eternal, and sexual because she experienced these qualities as personally empowering, aesthetically interesting, and time-sensitive in her ability to aesthetically engage them in her work. She was excited that she could appear these ways since, in her impression, these were not readings that the look of her non-pregnant body could evoke. She trusted the audience to see her naked gyrations and thrusts as beautiful and strong, not arousing or pornographic, and she earnestly believed that she could choreograph her experience of a "new" body in a way that would be valuable, inspiring, and even educational to others.

Oberfelder first performed her solo when she was four months pregnant and her pregnancy was not yet patently obvious, because of her strong abdominal musculature and very small frame. It was enthusiastically received. However, when she shared it a second time, at seven months, when her pregnancy was indisputably evident, the piece took on new connotations and impact for her audience. Her then teacher, Bessie Schoënberg, strongly advised her not to show it publicly again and chastened her to "consider [her] audience!" (ibid.). However, against Schoënberg's advice, Oberfelder did perform it again and, this time, for a larger audience, as part of an open performance series at Movement Research. There, a film maker, Ben Speath, was in the audience, and he proposed that they collaborate to capture her dance on film. She agreed, and they shot it when she was eight months pregnant, in one ten-minute take, in black and white, on 16mm film. They overlaid the footage with the sound of amniotic blood pulsing through an umbilical cord, which they occasionally punctuated with a looping synth drum rhythm.

Oberfelder felt that the film was even more successful than the live performance in meeting her artistic aim of offering the audience what appeared to be an "intimate" encounter with her pregnant body (and with pregnancy). However, the movement to film also allowed her to fully dissociate her lived experiences of pregnancy from her aesthetic project, which was, in all likelihood, a welcome rupture for her because it allowed her to gain valuable perspectives on her dance and its political possibilities. It also, I hypothesize, offered her perspective on the problematic aspects of her live performance so that she could then reapproach her framing of the work with a desire to make that which was retrograde radical.

First in the mirror and then on film she followed a Lacanian process of being intrigued by her image as something meaningful, organized, and complete in ways that exceeded her experience of lived body (in life, her pregnant body did not look like her "real" body). However, unlike Lacan's paradigm, the image she admired was her own creation, and it sprang from her own perceptions and preferences, not her aspirations. It was, inevitably and intentionally, a misrecognition of herself, or rather an incomplete, but evocative, rendering of herself during a brief period within her spectrum of selfhood. There was nothing solid about her presentation of self in her work; her evident pregnancy belied the temporariness of her shown self, and the fugitivity of the image was further underscored by being a projection, a trick of the light, evanescent and easily extinguished. Consequently, Oberfelder loved seeing herself on a big screen where the scale created conditions "one step away" from her corporeality (ibid.). Oberfelder also liked that her projected body was provocative. In a conversation with dance scholar Gill Wright Miller she assessed that "seeing a pregnant body that close made [audiences] confront something" (1993). Miller commended Oberfelder's bold gesture and classified her among those who perform pregnant so as to assert "space for redefining the idealized woman's/dancer's body … therefore acting out of a kind of 'feminist resistance'" (2002). Of course, Oberfelder's projected body was not only confrontational but decidedly sexed, in ways distinctive from her non-pregnant body and even her pregnant body in live performance. For example, her choreographic choice to sustain a handstand while spreading and churning her legs, as if treading water, read entirely differently within the camera's frame than when she performed it in person. On screen, the viewer faced Oberfelder's enlarged and thus hyper-exposed vulva and its surrounding pubic hair and was thereby reminded *where babies come from* quite graphically and unambiguously while also having their ideas challenged as to which parts of a body constitute a dancing body and can be choreographed for audience eyes.

Even if not Oberfelder's intent in her live performance and not her express intent for the film, I read the film of *Duet* as a prime example of Rebecca Schneider's "explicit body" in performance (1997). In Schneider's theoretical model, the feminist who primitivizes and sexualizes herself knowingly reperforms historical primitivizations of female bodies but does so from a place of calculated intention and quip. According to Schneider, by mischievously performing/becoming primitive and sexual, "explicit" body artists engage in a kind of "visceral cultural" critique. In order to make art with their exposed bodies while emphasizing that they are not reducible to their sexual bodies, women "reinhabit" themselves with critical distance and then strategically restage themselves for the public. In other words, they intentionally occupy their bodies as if they were "beside" themselves, seeing themselves being seen and sexualized and looking back piercingly and with ulterior motives (180). Performers cheekily collapse the distance between sign and signified onto, and sometimes *into*, their bodies, and they do so with a knowing twinkle in their eye (23). For Oberfelder, with the film of *Duet*, she found herself quite literally "beside" herself, and this perspective positioned her well to play with her exposed body's signification.

As an "explicit body" performer, Oberfelder made evident that her public presentation of her body was not happening in spite of her; she was very much in command of herself, and she was controlling the viewer's gaze. In other words, by embodying primitivizing tropes through her nakedness and the intended animality and unbridled sexuality of her choreography, Oberfelder revealed that these qualities were, in fact, put-on and temporary; they were not qualities she experienced as innate or enduring. In this way, Oberfelder's performance of pregnancy was akin to Carolee Schneemann's performances of woman-as-goddess. Schneider describes Schneemann's philosophy as "If I'm a token, I'll be a token to be reckoned with," and she saw in Schneemann's goddess imagery a "double gesture" of "both/and," meaning it was essentialist and constructivist at once (35-36). Moreover, Scheenmann foresaw and intended the feminist pandemonium that her self-objectification, self-sexualization, and her incorporation of female stereotypes caused (37). Oberfelder's choreography could also be seen as such a "double gesture." As she remarked, her body "had a form that was taking on a life (no pun intended) of its own" (Miller 1993). Her body was a "costume that became part of the dance" (ibid.). For her live performance, she was eventually enticed by her reflection and swayed to uncritically utilize as content that which she assumed the audience was already seeing when they looked at her pregnant body—an assumption based on what she recognized as familiar symbology when she beheld her body in the mirror. However, for her film, she shifted this strategy toward critique because she re-presented what she assumed was already being seen in ways that were, in my reading, explicit and exaggerated. In so doing, she performed familiar—albeit flawed—representations of womanhood in a way that highlighted their histrionics. By showing that she was putting on a show, wearing the costume of her pregnant body, she put in chaos the "naturalness" of the very qualities that she seemingly represented. I cannot say that *Duet's* semiotic processes and feminist politics were all premeditated, as Scheenmann's had been, or even conscious choreographic moves for Oberfelder—although I do see them as emerging in this piece and then being more fully realized in later works such as 2019's *Madame Ovary*. Still, by her own account, her performances of her pregnancy as an artist and even as an individual outside of dance—on stage/screen and off—were central to her experiences of pregnancy and her understanding of how her pregnant body fit into her life, her identity, and her social world.

Returning to Lacan and his theory of the mirror stage, the Symbolic order it sustains and into which it feeds, and the physic stress that it induces, feminist theorist Luce Irigaray, argues that the body of Lacan's "imaginary order" is implicitly and problematically a male body (1985). To Irigaray, it is inevitable that women misrecognize themselves in Euromerican cultures because these cultures offer no adequate epistemological paradigms for non-male self-understanding. Irigaray, like Foucault, argues that Euromerican cultures privilege stable identity, unity, and a single point of view—all of which are modeled after male anatomy and physiology—and she forwards that discourses such as philosophy and science are controlled by this male-centric imaginary, an imaginary that values solid, as opposed to fluid, understandings of self and world. She does not discount Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, but neither does she posit that interest in one's reflection is inescapably alienating in the way that he does. This is because, for Irigaray, while selfhood begins in the mirror stage and with the imaginary body, it is not solidified until one enters Lacan's Symbolic order. Here, female individuals define themselves, but in ways that will never suffice or feel complete because they are taxonomic systems that subliminally center certain (male) experiences while marginalizing, or erasing, others. However, in contrast to Lacan, Irigaray does not see self-alienating self-definition via the Symbolic order as inevitable. This is because the Symbolic order is neither ahistorical nor immune from change. Irigaray emphasizes that ordering systems like language are determined by power relationships, which means that they are, like the conditions that germinated them, in flux, malleable, and of our own design. They can be different; we can *make* them different, and consequently, we can know ourselves differently, and in more female-inclusive/-centric, or, I would add, non-gender-centric ways. We have seen through the example of Oberfelder the feasibility of finding agency and reassurance through observing the coherence of one's pregnant image in the mirror as well as the possibility of staying in this pleasurable "reflective" space without entering a prescriptive Symbolic order that causes psychic distress. However, Oberfelder's body, as she presented it, was still recognizable within preestablished symbols and language. She did not dodge or dismantle Lacan's Symbolic so that her body could read and be experienced in unfamiliar and assertively anti-patriarchal ways. In contrast, per Irigaray, since ordering systems are flexible and open to growth, artists could use their relationship to their images and the comfort they provide to find innovative and less confining methods of self-representation than the available Symbolic. Accordingly, the next artists attempted to choreographically challenge the recognizability and one-dimensionality of their pregnant bodyselves. While they did not use the apparatuses of mirrors or cameras, they still used choreography to differentiate themselves from their pregnant appearances in ways that they found useful, and the first strategy employed was to evoke available signs but to make their audience read these signs with skepticism and with an eye toward their deficiencies.

Section three: Pregnant bodies as sights/sites "Under construction"

Like Tharp and Oberfelder, Sandy Jamrog was also a choreographer and dancer working in New York in the 1960s and 1970s. However, her training was with Erik Hawkins and Mary Anthony, and initially, she continued in the modernist tradition, rather than moving toward the movement, political, and philosophical inquires of postmodernism. In 1971, when she started her family, she had never heard of anyone dancing while pregnant; however, this did not deter her from maintaining her robust dance regimen throughout the nine months. In fact, on the day she gave birth for the first time, she had already taken two dance classes and was on her way to her third when her labor started. She recounted, "My water broke as I was putting my leg into my leotard!" (Miller 2002, 155). Moreover, she continued to make and perform work into her ninth month of pregnancy. This was the case not only for her first pregnancy with son Jeff, but for her next three pregnancies with children Josh, Jennifer, and John. For her prenatal performances, she developed choreography specifically tailored to the look of her pregnant body, and she grew a cannon of pregnancy dances that she then performed during each pregnancy. As a choreographer, she found pregnancy “exciting” because she “had a new body to work with” (Bush et al. 1982). Like Oberfelder, she appreciated that the appearance of this “new” body allowed her to represent new ideas; however, in contrast to Oberfelder, she was invested in using her appearance primarily to make overt social commentary. Specifically, she was interested in using the visual impact of her pregnant body and her platform as an artist to “juxtapose the cultural statement that pregnant women should be unseen, non-sexual, little girls … with the reality that pregnant women were visible, sexual, heavy, slow, powerful women with bodies that changed” (quoted in Miller 2002, 151).

In performance, she showcased the shape of her pregnant body. She used costuming to emphasize not only her “condition” but the events behind and within it. For example, she performed in a nude colored unitard for one dance and for another, a t-shirt with an arrow pointing to her “bump” and the words “Under Construction.” The suite of dances that she developed (*Hymn, 2/3*, *1/2, Ragtime*, *Developmental Sequence #1 Prone*, and *How about a Little Sex During Sesame Street*) relied on a visibly pregnant performer to take effect. They addressed with literalness and boldness previously untouched themes of not only avant-garde choreography but of “polite” conversation, such as the processes of conception and fetal development; sexual intercourse during pregnancy; and various indelicate, “unfeminine,” and unwieldy aspects of individuals’ experiences of pregnancy. Her dances demonstrated that Jamrog appreciated her pregnant body for its spectacular potential and its ability to leaven controversy. Importantly, she did not take herself as seriously as, for example, Oberfelder. She later admitted that a lot of her work “spoofed” pregnancy stereotypes, and she choreographed in order to have a hearty laugh at how pregnant bodies are interpreted and treated socially (159). This use of humor stands in stark contrast to Tharp’s approach of making fun of pregnant bodies in and of themselves. Jamrog wanted her audience to laugh not at her pregnant body but at themselves and what she perceived to be their socialized beliefs about pregnant women, such as that they were innocent, weak, mild, and feminine and that they should be tucked-away for their own protection.

However, her intended humor was lost on many critics. For example, in 1978, then dance critic Sally Banes reviewed an evening of dances titled *Dances on Pregnancy and Parenting*. The concert was a split bill between Jamrog, pregnant at the time, and Gail August. Banes' overall assessment was that the idea behind the show was more exciting than its realization. At various points in the review, she criticized the choreographers for trivializing, concealing, *and* over-emphasizing pregnant bodies. She was displeased that the show situated itself within the concert dance sphere saying, "both choreographers used the costumes movements and concert format of a style of dancing that requires a type of body (non-pregnant) … thus the jarring sense of inappropriateness and grotesquerie" (37). She disliked the choreographers' dramatic presentations of pregnancy, feeling that they should have focused on formal elements and let the "weight and bulk" of pregnant bodies speak for themselves (ibid.). Banes' review belies her privileging of early Judson-style, unembellished, untheatrical movement. However, her impression of the evening was also colored by a socialized sense of how a pregnant body should present itself—in a dignified, thoughtful way, not a way that is ostentatious, provocative, lewd, or pretentious.

Banes' was not the first harsh review Jamrog received for her pregnancy-related choreographies. In his *Dance Magazine* review of a 1977 concert of her work, critic Jack Anderson dismissed her choreographies about conception and motherhood as "harmless but forgettable." At the performance he reviewed, Jamrog's pregnancy was only beginning to show. Unaware that she was pregnant (and, because of dance norms, not anticipating that a performer would be pregnant), Anderson critiqued her physique and said that her costume choice made her "unpleasingly thick in the middle" (21). He thereby demonstrated his expectation, as a dance critic, of what dancers' bodies should look like. Even as postmodernism was welcoming more shapes of bodies to perform, he drew a line that "thicker" bodies should not be in formfitting outfits, and by criticizing her "thickness," his opinion countered Banes' critique that the "weight and bulk" of bodies should not be concealed but rather allowed to inform the work. In other words, his review when paired with Banes' exemplifies the contradictory expectations that Jamrog faced from dance aficionados for how her body should appear (ibid.).

Earlier still, in his review of Jamrog for the *Village Voice*, Robert Pierce called her pregnancy work "low brow," criticizing that "the concert was more concerned about the personal, funky joys of pregnancy than about art" (1974). Unlike Banes, who critiqued the classicism of her choreography, he critiqued her incorporation of non-dance movement such as chewing gum and scratching her breasts and belly, and he was openly disgusted by the duet, *2/3,* in which the pregnant Jamrog "simulated fornication" with her partner. While such choreographies of real-life might have gone unquestioned in the work of other postmodern artists or even appreciated as non-elitist, when enacted by her pregnant body, Pierce described them as "obvious" and "coarse;" they were dances "with little left to the imagination and even less grace" (ibid.). In other words, I speculate that Pierce, like Banes, felt that a pregnant body was a special body that should acknowledge its specialness. But unlike Banes, he felt that it should perform rarified, elevated movements that, for him, would demonstrate that the performer takes her pregnancy seriously. In brief, his review suggested that pregnant bodies are excluded from the liberties, egalitarianism, and unpretentiousness of postmodernism.

Together, Anderson, Banes, and Pierce's remarks expose the inconsistent standards to which Jamrog's pregnant dancing body was held. Banes advocated for lack of narrative so as to focus on the formal qualities of a rounder and more-weighted body, Anderson was intolerant of a dancing body that defied established dancerly aesthetics, and Pierce suggested that pregnant bodies cannot be read as other postmodern art can (in a way that allows for an ironic doubling of meaning). In many ways, these reviews confirmed Jamrog's expectations for how pregnant bodies are socially read—that which she wanted to critique— but they also revealed the brambly road that a pregnant choreographer like Jamrog confronted when trying to make dances for her pregnant body that confronted social norms. For her critics, there were many ideas on how a pregnant body should *not* present itself, but opposing notions—of how it should present itself if it was to be effective as art—were few and inconsistent.

Concurrent with Jamrog's performances, in another corner of the New York City dance scene, artists in The Grand Union improvisation group could play with how their real, fleshy, even corpulent bodies signified. They could use choreography and humor to cultivate awareness in the audience of the context-dependent social processes behind how bodies acquire meaning. Jamrog had a similar intention, to make audience members self-aware of how they looked at pregnant bodies. She wished to criticize and confound readings of pregnant bodies as special, majestic, and non-sexual by inviting viewers to read her body as goofy, prosaic, playing-feminine, and unapologetically sexual. However, unlike her peers, critics overlooked her wit and assessed that her self-presentation was transparent and that she was simply a choreographer whose work was unsophisticated and obtuse. Banes suggested that Jamrog's work, were she to forgo markers of "concert" dance, like costumes and movements evocative of modern dance, could read like postmodern works because they would *look* more like postmodern works.

However, collected these reviews suggested that her pregnant body was too semiotically pre-loaded for her to use it as her postmodern contemporaries did. While a "neutral body"—especially one that was white, male, able-bodied, and twenty-something—might use choreography to show the ways in which social identity is multi-part, flexible, and discursively constructed, in Jamrog's experience, a pregnant body could not do this same theoretical work. To her reviewers, a pregnant body was indubitably a literal, biological body, thus ineligible for being appreciated as simultaneously a body and an idea/argument about bodies.

Jamrog's story demonstrates that, regardless of the artist's intent, choreographing and performing while pregnant are not inevitably seen as dissident acts. As Albright discusses in her writings on disabled bodies in contemporary dance, inclusion of bodies not traditionally considered "dancer's" bodies in concert dance does not necessarily disrupt and destabilize popular but exclusive preconceptions of dancers and dance (1997). Like the "disabled" body, the pregnant body can simply be reincorporated into familiar dance forms so long as it seemingly signals its efforts to transcend its "deficiencies" in order to look like a dancer. This kind of "passing," could mean that a dancer hides her pregnancy via costuming, that she dances a part that celebrates her pregnancy but in no way calls into question accepted ideas about what pregnant bodies mean and can "appropriately" do, or that she dances in a way that astounds the audience because the pregnant individual seems, quite mind-bogglingly, to dance as if she were not pregnant. In other words, deciding to make and show dance with one's pregnant body, while perhaps uncommon, is not automatically transgressive. It can involve either erasure or embrasure of one's pregnancy in the interest of offering a familiar viewing experience for audiences. Artists can attempt to fit themselves into available models of representation, rather than engaging critically with pregnancy and confronting the audience with their unexamined value and belief systems. However, this was not the case for Jamrog. She presented her pregnant body in concert dance but was neither trying to "pass" as a familiar type of dancer nor demonstrate the preciousness of her body, and this opened her up for personal and professional critique. Regrettably, perhaps because she did not offer intra-choreographic cues or strategic framing for her nonconforming strategies, her personal motives for the work went largely undetected.

Choreographers, other than Jamrog have had more success using their pregnant bodies and choreographic skills to confront ideological and culturally inscribed versions of pregnancy and in so doing, to challenge viewers to rethink their preconceived notions of pregnant bodies, women's bodies, and dancer's bodies. They recognized that it is a pregnant body's ability to agitate a variety of audiences—feminist and non-feminist alike—that offers the bulk of both its potential and its problems for artists. They understood that to perform while pregnant in a non-recursive and non-derivative way, a way that embraces the trouble and disorderliness of the situation, the choreography must theatricalize itself, in other words show the audience that it is performance, not "real" life. In other words, dance with a pregnant body becomes evidently subversive when it overtly exposes and calls into question cultural constructions of feminine, pregnant, and dancers' bodies, but for the work to spur viewers to re-examine their preconceptions, it needs to call attention to itself as performance and to accentuate its choreographic strategies. In this way, it needs to function like Brechtian theater in making overt its own theatricality in order to make obvious its noncompliance with the status quo. Ergo, in her article "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," cultural theorist Janet Wolff argues that to avoid the double bind of using one's body to make a feminist point, only to have one's gesture read retrogressively as woman-is-body, the performance must cue *double vision,* in which the viewer is attentive both to the art and to the constructed semiotics of bodies (1997).

Dances must “stress [a body’s] materiality and its social and discursive construction at the same time as disrupting and subverting existing regimes of representation” (96). In other words, performers must present themselves as performers, make candid that their dance is examining the means of its own production, and actively involve the audience in processes of de-construction and/or re-construction of meaning.

While Jamrog made first steps toward cuing *double vision*, choreographer Noémie Lafrance had greater success with poignantly repurposing stereotypes of pregnancy and womanhood so as to push her audience toward not only reading her pregnant body in unaccustomed ways but actively questioning their accustomed ways of seeing and assuming to objectively know bodies. Through a variety of strategies, she made a choreography for her pregnant body that engaged audience vision principally to reveal its limitations and its subjectivities. Her work *Home* (2009) proposed that vision is complicated, that it is impossible to have the “full picture” at once, and that a singular perspective cannot be trusted. She communicated as much through choreographic tactics of affective indecision, of being noncommittal in how and when she showed her body and to what effect, and also by insisting upon the inscrutable dimensionality of her body. She offered viewers glimpses of who she *might* be, fragments of her body temporarily framed, and confrontations with the unfathomable depths of her body.

Firstly, Lafrance used her body figuratively, literally, and synecdochally to propose the inherently predisposed, incomplete, and situated nature of vision. With her theory of “situated” vision, philosopher of science Donna Haraway argues that people unavoidably see from limited, located vantage points; thus, they can only arrive at partial understandings of phenomena (1991). Embracing as much allows for what she calls “feminist objective” vision. In short, this means "epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (195). Haraway also emphasizes that there is no such thing as a "view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" because vision is embodied and bodies are "complex, contradictory, structuring and structured" (ibid.). Lafrance adopting just such "feminist objective" vision for *Home* and creating a performative scenario in which a "view from above" was consistently thwarted.

In advertisements for *Home*, Lafrance offered the following description:

> with the micro and the macro body(ies), the subject and object body(ies) as public vs. private space, a voyage on the body's infinite landscapes, the physical confines of our inner and outer selves, the body as the performance site, to interact with the micro and the macro body(ies), the subject and object body(ies) …

The description swung back on itself creating an endless loop broken only by the edge of the paper. Publicity went on to explain that *Home* explored the body as "place" via a "site-specific" performance. While Lafrance typically makes site-specific work, never before had her site been her own body. Prior sites for her work included a clock tower, military forts, a parking garage, and a 50,000 square foot abandoned pool—all largescale, epic works for substantial audiences. Scaling down to the size of her body invited different methods, considerations, and opportunities. Exploring body as place—as in, she clarified, "an actual place where I can go"—offered the occasion to experience her body as both subject and object, which to her, was a fascinating prospect (Selvaratnam 2009). Although the idea for *Home* percolated for several years, when she performed it, she happened to be eight months pregnant, which gave the work unique significance for her and inimitable impact for her audience. Via performance, she saw an opportunity to engage pregnancy at philosophical and metaphysical levels, while also strategically working against her pregnancy as the sole, or even central, significance of the site of her body.

For Lafrance, intending to share the site of her body with an audience meant that the dance was also necessarily about intimacy. She interpreted physical "intimacy" differently from Oberfelder's choreographic bearing-all in an epically exposed, albeit flattened, way. In the interest of intimacy, Lafrance made *Home* for an audience of only twenty, who viewed the work sitting around a long dining room table, rendered as a stage, in Lafrance's personal apartment. As audience members arrived in her Brooklyn home, they were asked to wash their hands in her kitchen sink and to identify themselves with a nametag. Through the symbolic acts of cleansing themselves and assuming a name, they tacitly agreed to enter into a "secular ritual" for which conditions of the world outside would temporarily be suspended (Moore and Myerhoff 1977). They became a ceremonial community bound by their sudden dislocation and their hunger for clues that would help them acclimatize because they had been cued that conditions would be different within this consecrated space. When they arrived at their seats, they found the space already occupied. Lafrance was lying on the table, on her left side, face to the wood. Depending on the evening, she was either fully or nearly-nude, except for a pair of antlers. On her right leg, covering from ankle to upper hip, was an intricate miniature bucolic landscape. Her thick leg hair was dyed green to give the impression of grass, and dirt and moss were affixed to her skin, suggesting varied vegetation. With the new parameter of scale Lafrance imposed, the curves of her leg suggested rolling hills, and this topography was occupied by tiny trees and toy animals, fastened to her flesh with honey. The full detail of the micro-world created on her leg was only appreciable with the help of a magnifying glass, which "audience attendants" distributed to audience members as they arrived.

From the very outset, Lafrance required viewers to see her body in unaccustomed ways and at tight proximity. Through guiding their eyes away from her whole body, which might seduce them toward familiar stories or characters, she telescoped their vision in close and thereby resisted having her body read immediately, definitively, and exclusively as pregnant. Also, like Oberfelder, she pulled the audience's gaze to the surface of her body, deterring those who might be tempted to picture what her body contained, and she also directed vision away from her belly and focused it on her leg. Thereby, she straightaway established the performance condition that her body was not available to be read in a single frame or at first blush. It could only be examined in parts and from the particular perspectives that she allowed and curated. Throughout the piece, she continued to guide the audience's vision, as if people were looking through a telephoto lens, zooming in and out on her body in order to arrive at vantage points that included the cosmic and the microscopic.

Lafrance's body-as-landscape proposition was the first in a series of scenarios of the body that comprised the evening. This first encounter between Lafrance and the audience was followed by at least eleven other events, which I have pieced together with the help of audience recollections, performance reviews, and montaged video documentation of the piece. *Home* continued with 1) Lafrance's private examination of her face in a mirror presented by her nude co-performer, Mare Hieronimus; 2) a tea ceremony officiated by Lafrance, lit by lamps and accompanied by drumming; 3) a nude table dance by Lafrance in flickering audience-created light; 4) a meeting between Lafrance and a series of "Russian" nesting dolls, meticulously placed in ascending order along the length of the table; 5) Hieronimus, conjuring a sexy maid—feather duster in hand, dressed in red high heels and pelts—flirting with the audience to the music of Tom Waits before pouncing repeatedly on the table with animalistic imperative; 6) whispers of apology to the audience and requests for physical assistance to get the performers back in place and on track to continue; 7) rigorous wiping down of the table; 8) Hieronimus stripping off her clothing and ritualistically cleansing herself, head-to-foot; 9) Lafrance reappearing in white panties, a tight white crocheted sweater and antlers, angrily brushing her teeth; 10) Hieronimus reappearing dressed as a businesswoman, hidden behind multiple high stacks of paper, domineeringly and aggressively directing audience members in a writing exercise on paper before presenting her own, suddenly naked body as the new surface to inscribe; and 11) "audience attendants" clearing the table, resetting it with candelabras and presenting the audience with plaster of Paris and the charge to mummify the naked, inscribed body of Hieronimus. After conducting this last ceremonial act, the audience was left to contemplate their deed and then was free to leave.

During the third event in the dance, the room was plunged into darkness as a fully nude Lafrance mounted the table and began to dance. Her dance was heard and felt more than seen. Her body and its movements were only visible as audience members passed a flashlight around the table. This particular flashlight required its operator to actively pump it in order for it to illuminate, meaning that Lafrance's dance could only be seen in glimpses and thanks to viewers' efforts. With each pass of the light, a new vantage point was temporarily offered, catching an indifferent Lafrance momentarily as she remained totally absorbed in her private dance. Not only did this choreography communicate the incompleteness of any one viewer's vision, it also established the position of power for the evening's festivities as not the one who was looking, but as the one activating and experiencing her own body and, only at times, inviting herself to be seen. From Lafrance's performance, the audience learned that seeing would not directly or immediately lead to understanding her body. As she continued to re-present herself throughout the dance, consistently overwriting her and Hieronimus' bodies and demarcating the extent to which they were visible, she, like Haraway, insisted upon the "surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production" (196). While she offered them glimpses of her body, she made no pretense of offering the viewers glimpses of "truth;" rather, she consistently thwarted any audience attempts at a diagnostic or classifying gaze by remaining slippery and evasive.

In addition to choreographing how the audience saw her body, Lafrance also cued them to mistrust reflexive readings of her body, especially in its pregnant state. Specifically, she actively and trenchantly frustrated efforts to see her as natural, pure, or chaste. Lafrance appreciated the symbolic capital, provocativeness, presumed and reassuring materiality, and the appeal of visons of fertile earth and beginnings of human life, and she ironically embodied and repurposed these symbols throughout her performance of *Home*. Medical historian Barbara Duden discusses the fetus as a contemporary "sacrum," meaning a repository of stories and hopes (1993). Haraway agrees and builds on Duden's idea (1997). Haraway draws a connection between the fetus and planet Earth, seeing both as suggestive of "life itself" and as both having the unique ability to stimulate haptic vision. She writes that the fetus and Earth evoke touch sensation from those who behold them: they "provoke yearning for the physical sensuousness of a wet and blue-green Earth and a soft, fleshy child" (174). She continues, "The audience who finds the glowing fetal and terran spheres to be powerful signifiers of touch" does so because they "themselves [are] partially constructed as subjects in the material-semiotic processes of viewing" these potent symbols (174). Lafrance wanted to take these powerful evocations of "live itself" and upset them so as to stimulate new material-semiotic relationships and, consequently, to stimulate a new scenario for her audience in which her body did not exist for their comfort, pleasure, and reassurance, and her body did not exist to become a symbol in their stories.

Lafrance engaged both symbols of life (nature and pregnancy), which are typically trusted to be markers of truth, in order to foil audience expectations through downplaying the genuineness, authenticity, and importance of either one. For example, at no point in the choreography did she directly address her pregnancy or assume any posture/movement that would suggest that it was significant to her. In so doing she offered viewers the more generally valuable exercise of seeing others without assuming that their most visible attribute reveals the "truth" of their bodies or their social identity. Likewise, through how she framed them, she emphasized that all markers of nature in her piece were artificial and could easily disappear just as casually as they arrived on the scene. The natural world that Lafrance evoked via her antlers, her nudity, and the pastoral scene on her leg were presented as "serious play," not "life itself" (Haraway 1991). She spun markers of purity and fecundity into her choreographic web, in order to bring the assumed sacredness of these ideas into question. With *Home*, Lafrance instigated an elaborate ritual that presented her body as aesthetically natural, but by no means innocent, because, reading her work through Haraway, for women, the albatross of "innocence…has done enough damage" already (ibid. 156-57). In other words, there was no optimism or naivety in Lafrance's evocation of nature. She placed no trust in woman-as-nature as an answer, especially since this model too often slides into woman-as-victim. Instead, she showed women pretending to be "nature" if and as it suited them in their own strategies of self-definition. She thereby showed that nature in no way defined her, it was an aesthetic/semiotic resource at her disposal to use towards her own ends.

Like Oberfelder, Lafrance also performed a series of social stereotypes. At times she presented herself as a goddess—nude, serine, and the subject of ceremonies. In so doing, she again mocked the supposed sanctity of motherhood or the notion of pregnancy as a divine calling toward one’s life purpose. Of course, as Rich reminds us, in the US, not all motherhood is seen as sacred, and typically, that which is serves patriarchal structures. She writes, “Motherhood is ‘sacred’ so long as its offspring are ‘legitimate’—that is, as long as the child bears the name of a father who legally controls the mother (42). Accordingly, moving away from the association between sanctity and motherhood is a movement toward more parents’ and women’s social empowerment. Lafrance also populated her dance with assorted tropes of womanhood inclusive of not just the divine but also the carnal and even the banal. In all twelve scenarios of the dance, assorted stereotypes of womanhood appeared. Her and Hieronimus’ heterogeneous performed identities, which were intentionally “contradictory, partial, [and] strategic,” created “powerful infidel heteroglossia” (Haraway 1991, 155- 181). In each scene/vignette, Lafrance had choreographic interest in how women can experience and present their bodies in ways that confront clichés that would otherwise help hold them in subjugated roles. Thus, in *Home,* Lafrance and Hieronimus displayed themselves on a spectrum of maternal to feral, and embodied a variety of legible, albeit exaggerated, “types” of woman including sex kitten, French maid, power-suited female executive, the divine feminine, and (implicitly) the mommy. Notably, and as written about at length by, for example, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1981), stereotypes of womanhood and motherhood for communities of color are notably different from the imagery evoked by Lafrance. Thus, her critique was primarily of clichés rooted in white America, in other words, the clichés applied to her white body and most pertinent to her social identity. As these characters were donned and just as quickly abandoned, Lafrance highlighted the various social inscriptions already on her female body and the available, but confining, subject positions in which she was expected to fit herself, as a woman. In this way, she performed parodic Irigarayan “Irreverent Mimesis.”

Building upon her theory of how to override the male-centric Symbolic, Irigaray explains the tactic of mimesis:

> To play with mimesis is … for a woman to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself… to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what is supposedly to remain invisible…. It also means to "unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere. (1985, 76)

Irreverent Mimesis involves intentionally embodying a sexual stereotype as a way to, as philosopher and performance artist Susan Kozel puts it, "[erode] the stereotype from within" and to offer a "tactical philosophical or social middle ground between … adopting a 'male' code of ethics… and … withdrawing completely into difference" (1996, 116). After engaging such tactical mimesis throughout the evening, at the end of *Home*, Lafrance tested whether her audience had learned its lesson and was ready to go with her beyond stereotypes into unknown territory. Thus, in a moment of great vulnerability, per Lafrance's choreography, Hieronimus removed all of her clothing and laid supine on the table surrounded by black oil pastels. She invited the audience to literally inscribe her body with meaning, and she stayed perfectly still and receptive until they had exhausted their vocabulary, nerve, or fleshy real estate. This section was reminiscent of art like Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1965) and Maria Abramovich's *Rhythm O* (1974) in that it communicated total faith in the audience through creating a very real scenario of danger for the performer. That being said, while neither Hieronimus nor Lafrance could control or predict the inscriptions on Hieronimus' body, the audiences' labels, unlike social inscriptions, could easily be washed away after the show.

Kozel warns against placing too much trust in Irreverent Mimesis—a strategy Irigaray herself called "diabolical"—since it relies on continually returning to "familiar ground." In other words, in Irigaray's system, arriving at anything new requires the woman to backtrack in the interest of "overcoming the old rule in which she is entrenched" (Kozel 1996, 125). This leaves the old and new "entwined" and the old menacingly available to fall back into, often to female's detriment (ibid.). At some level, Lafrance's work acknowledged as much. Significantly, Lafrance stopped short of offering her own pregnant body to the audience to do with it as it would. In other words, there was a limit to her trust of the audience and faith in the efficacy of her "secular ritual." Absenting herself from this culminating seeming litmus test was also the only moment in the piece where she tacitly acknowledged that her pregnancy inspired special precautions.

Another level of Lafrance's exploration involved cultivating audience awareness of the infinity of enclosures/sheaths involving the performance space of her body. In so doing, she played with the fact that her body would predictably be seen as a container. Thus, she presented her body, with its evident contents, as exemplifying but one (and by no means the most meaningful) of many relevant and present inside/outside relationships within *Home*. She specifically cued this attention at the moment in the choreography when she began playing with the collection of Russian dolls while whispering "something inside something inside something inside…". She invited her own body to be seen as just another in this series of bodies within bodies, a series with the potential to extend infinitely in both directions. In so doing, she again resisted superficial, myopic, and reductive assessment of who she was.

In reviewing the piece for the *Village Voice*, Jowitt appreciated how, throughout the dance, Lafrance guided the audience to see her body as, complexly, both "private vessel and public space" (2009). She offered her body to the public while also signaling that it was keeping its secrets, and while she invited it to be seen as a "vessel," she thwarted expectations that its pertinent contents, the contents toward which she would meaningfully signal, was a fetus. For instance, later in the piece, as Lafrance continued to use her body to negotiate the relationships between what was inside/private and outside/public, she focused especially on barrier crossing fluids. For example, she drank tea with the audience. By imbibing the same thing, all attendees then shared something internal with Lafrance. In another instance, she vigorously brushed her teeth while walking down the length of the table and spitting forcefully into a basin at her feet. She repeatedly kicked the basin to keep it in front of her, splashing audience members with her spit as she did so. She also presented her breasts to the audience, calling attention to their fullness and the threat of what they contained seeping out of her—which she did through pouring tea over her erect nipples, and letting the audience watch the liquid run down her torso until she caught it again in her teacup. Thus, like Oberfelder, she rendered her body "explicit" by daring her audience to look inside of her, while also controlling/coercing/repelling their access. In these instances of "serious play," Lafrance called attention to what AIDS cultural theorist and activist David Gere calls "a discomfiting aberration of the disciplinary distinction between the inside-ness and the outside-ness of the body" (2004, 43). Gere argues that "the leakage of the body" is "anxiety-provoking" because it conveys that "the body is not capable of holding its boundaries, of serving as a durable container" (ibid.). Lafrance welcomed the provocation of this discomfort just as she welcomed showing her body as a grotesque body. Explicating philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, critical theorist Mary Russo explains,

> The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeoise individualism. (1995, 62-63)

In short, Lafrance used her body to share many overlapping spaces that run together via fluids and that exceed boundaries, and she did so by actively making a spectacle of herself: by showing her body as a body that "transgresses its own limits, a body offering "nothing completed, nothing calm and stable" (Bakhtin 1984, 25). Her body insisted upon transgressing boundaries and upon seemingly dangerous possibilities.

Lafrance superficially presented a universal body, through aesthetics of nature, womanhood, and sacredness; yet she did so only to reveal the triteness and unfeasibility of such universality. She manipulated how she was seen by playing with scale, and by—through calling attention to nested and permeable spaces—requiring thick and vacillating vision from those trying to decipher her. Through strategies of collapsing together metaphor and materiality and bleeding together outsides and insides, she offered viewers modes of seeing that reconfigured her body materially and semiotically. She called attention to where socially and ideologically we tend to draw boundaries and what we think contains what so that she could upset these taxonomies and to suggest that reality, if *seen* differently, would *be* different. Like what Haraway calls a "cyborg myth," *Home* refused pure, contained bodies. Lafrance's paradigm of body-as-place suggested that "boundaries shift from within," and that "boundaries are very tricky" (Haraway 1991, 201). She showed her body's "nonreducible trickster quality" that allowed her to resist categories and to dissolve boundaries between human~animal, natural~artificial, and material~immaterial (128). In other words, Lafrance presented her body as a "home" that was not composed of discrete facts and truths, a home she occupied and invited others to occupy through seeking out productive affinities across borders while also being "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" (151). She opened up to her body/home so as to see/be/understand/connect differently, without "innocence" or compliance, yearning toward new embodied knowledge and freedom and resisting patriarchal structures.

Fittingly, Lafrance ended her piece with, following Bakhtin, the epitome of grotesquerie. Bakhtin saw the quintessence of the grotesque body in a collection of ancient terracotta figurines of old laughing and pregnant hags because they were bodies giving birth *and* dying (1984, 25-26). To wit, *Home* ended carnivalesquely with the audience mummifying Hieronimus as a pregnant Lafrance watched. The evening's ritual ended by evoking both birth and death, inconclusive and all-encompassing.

However, while Lafrance, like Jamrog, aimed to choreographically deconstruct the ways and methods by which society views pregnant women, she did not take the next, per Irigaray, necessary step of putting forth alternate insights through which to reconstruct motherhood in non-male-centric ways. In other words, both Lafrance and Jamrog remained reliant on the double-edged strategy of perpetuating a male-centric Symbolic so as to express their dissent. In contrast, the next works discussed fully avoided evocation of that which they were trying to move beyond. Instead, they took a more fully Irigarayan approach (a more fully anti-Lacanian approach) of innovating entirely new paradigms through which to see their pregnant bodies. These novel paradigms were fully divorced from problematic preexisting signs and did not rely on feminine mimicry, whether it be irreverent or not.

Section four: A pregnant body as virtual sight/site

When Oberfelder became pregnant with her second child, Jasper, she considered re-performing *Duet*. However, she found that doing so felt forced. Unlike Jamrog, for whom a consistent choreographic repertoire and agenda satisfied her personal needs for all of her pregnancies, Jamrog craved a fresh choreographic approach that could support the new artistic inquiries that accompanied her second pregnancy. For instance, for her second pregnancy, she had no desire to share the "truth" of her body or to present either her*self* or pregnancy as the subject of her art. She recounted that when she tried back on *Duet*'s choreography, "a lot of the mystery I felt the first time that was revealed with the child didn't seem so mysterious, so it seemed like I was faking rediscovering this mystery" (ibid.). Also, through making and sharing *Duet*, I hypothesize that she had learned the limited ability of dance to communicate in legible ways the specificity of her experience because the sign of her pregnant body predisposed both her and her audience to see her body in anticipated and impersonal ways. Moreover, returning to the live performance of the dance felt strained and ineffective because the film had subsumed the physical choreography for her as the finished art piece. Consequently, instead of repeating her past movements and methods, she decided to dance a duet with the film of *Duet* and, in so doing, to create a new piece, which she called *Duet (Quartet)* (1993).

In some ways, the title was misleading. Despite her choice of the word "quartet"—suggesting the film would evoke two entities who would join her and her fetus on stage to make four—she employed both her image on film and her live performing body unilaterally and unidimensionally through her choices of staging and composition. Moreover, she did not use the film of her pregnant body to evoke a material presence, let alone two, nor did she use it to evoke nostalgia or as a mnemonic for her past feelings. Rather, in its new usage, it was an interesting visual artifact that could be plucked from its original context and re-employed toward new purely formal ends. What is more, in her live performance with the film, she treated her material pregnant body as if it were part of the film, meaning she was interested in showing her pregnant body to the audience as lines and shapes to observe, not as something sensorially rich or as that of a person with whom to identify. To achieve such ends, she found that she needed to perform objecthood, not subjecthood. As cultural historian Uri McMillian describes in his writing on self-objectification, performing objecthood involves processes of self-estrangement and manipulation of one's physicality as if it were raw material to be looked at objectively/aesthetically, and these processes, indeed, informed Oberfelder's methods (2016, 4). For *Duet*, Oberfelder enacted herself as representation (the self recognized in the mirror), and at the start, she set out to use choreography and performance in order to make space for her subjecthood within her pregnancy. However, making *Duet (Quartet)* involved a different process of self-estrangement so as to present her dancing body/bodies, on stage and screen, like intrinsically intriguing objects. This time, the emphasis was not on personhood, story, or self-disclosure; and she avoided presenting herself as a character through the approach of performing choreography that was overtly preoccupied with staging her body/bodies formally. Her attention as a maker was on light, shadow, contour, layering, and scale, and she hoped the spectator would regard her body with similar attentions.

In her live performance of *Duet (Quartet)* Oberfelder appeared on stage naked, once again, and danced a new interpretation of the original choreography, of *Duet*, which was visible to the audience only as her body intersected with the light of the projected film. Her physical presence was thus transitory, interrupting and adding texture to the frame only when incidentally illuminated. She directed attention away from physical qualities of weight and volume, and focused attention instead on chimerical surfaces. Now *Duet* had allowed her an intriguing experience of exceeding herself because once on film, her body, although not solidly present, had a remarkably exaggerated presence. Although she reappeared in the flesh for *Duet (Quartet)*, by staging her material body as she did, her real body was parenthetical and part of something bigger than her immediate physicality. Moreover, through strategic lighting, she managed to flatten her live pregnant body and, thereby, to offer viewers an illusion of its ephemerality and even a suggestion of its metaphysicality.

In the film of *Duet*, Oberfelder moved beyond collapsing the signified and sign together upon her body to removing her "real" body from the work entirely. However, in *Duet (Quartet)*, she went a step further and presented herself as *only* sign, by which I mean a sign without a signification. Put another way, by downplaying the materiality of her body, she offered viewers deliberately superficial access to her body. Like Tharp, she presented herself as a "glossy impenetrable surface." However, unlike Tharp, she did not do so in an effort to deny her audience participation in making meaning from her work (so that she could dictate exactly what it meant). Rather, via her seeming surface-level appearance, she opened up a kind of playful space for fresh habits of perception and for rethinking meaning in ways rooted in aesthetics, not narrative, a space philosopher Gilles Deleuze would call a "virtuality" (1969).

Like Irigaray, Deleuze, with his longtime coauthor Felix Guattari, took up and extended Lacan's "mirror stage" as a means to advance his own theories. While Irigaray challenged the need to engage a male-centric Symbolic, Deleuze collapsed together Lacan's Imaginary (the condition of the mirror stage), Symbolic (our hopeless efforts to regain the unattainable completeness that we see in our reflections via available social signs), and the Real (Lacan's word for the primordial abyss of "non-being"). In integrating Lacan's ontologies, Deleuze postulated that human desire for completeness, knowing full well that it can never be attained, is not a source of suffering but rather a source of liberation and vitality. Transforming Lacan's idea of "lack" (feeling the weight of one's shortcomings in realizing one's true self) into his and Guattari's idea of "hylè," he converted a cause of suffering into a source of primordial energy with the power to re-form systems of organization (an end goal that Irigaray also desired). For Deleuze, hylè was the pure continuous flux and flow that motivated creation and change. In his purview, the ongoing "becoming" resultant from hylè was more desirable and productive than arriving at something unified and stable. In his system, one sees oneself reflected as a means to change, as opposed to as a means to stabilize. Accordingly, he put subjects "not at the center…but on the periphery with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states" through which they pass (1983, 20).

In his later related theory of *virtuality*, Deleuze argues that virtuality does not exist, but it "insists" on the possibility of existing and existing "otherwise" from what is heretofore known. Per example, in *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze discusses the different sequential stages of language production, from impulse to communicate to successful communication (1969). In so doing, he discusses the useful window in which the genesis of new meanings is possible. He explains that, to utter language with one's voice, the first stage involves discovering a means to produce a noise from the depths of the body. The second stage is playfully organizing sounds superficially with little care about making sense but with trust that there will be, eventually, meaning to be found. He describes this stage like play amongst surfaces, as they come into contact with each other and glide past each other. The third stage is arriving at signification through acquired understanding of denotations and accepting the established relationships between sounds and meanings. He continues that when interested in innovation, transformation, and virtuality, it is useful to return to the middle stage of surface-play. Here, it is possible to make forms that please the senses without being preoccupied with, and thus limited by, the exigency of signification. It is at the second stage, surface-play, that Oberfelder worked (albeit using images not language as her signs). It was this stage that inspired her imagination for *Duet (Quartet)*; it allowed her to visually be touched by and to touch her own image without this encounter necessarily doing or "saying" something beyond itself. In other words, she offered an experience of pure sensation and stimulation which avoided dictation or narration.

In *Duet (Quartet)*, Oberfelder involved her material body in a virtual project. As Kozel appreciates, virtuality—a term she playfully engages both in the Deleuzian sense and in the sense of virtual technology (VR)—does not mean denial of the body or disconnection from its sensations (2007). She argues that technology can extend our ways of knowing ourselves and can be a catalyst for achieving new physical states, consciousnesses, and interpersonal connections. This is because technology offers the opportunity to reencounter ourselves so as to further our understanding of what we are. Additionally, in Kozel's estimation, the more one "ventures into the visual, virtual world," the more one's visceral body must ground her attention (96). Acting "like an anchor, like a ballast," the visceral body offers the stable ground in which to root herself as she tries to locate her body/self on the abstract conceptual spectrum offered by post-postmodern theories, between "the abjection of flesh and the sanitization of technology" (ibid.). Importantly, this visceral component of experiencing virtuality is only privately accessible. Thus, in Oberfelder's case, sharing her virtual body offered a superficial intimacy (even more superficial than in *Duet*) to her audience while also allowing her to privatize and hide her internal body. In other words, and to sum up, through working with projection, Oberfelder had even more opportunities than she did in *Duet* to *show the show* and to emphasize the immateriality and insubstantiality of limiting representations of womanhood. At the same time, via her projected image, she could employ these very representations in ways that abstracted them so that they could become part of an imaginative project. Additionally, working with projection allowed her to ostensibly share while, in fact, deeply protecting her body and its experiences.

While during pregnancy, epistemes like biomedicine have the goal of closing the space between bodies and images, so that visualization machinery can tell the truth of the body, Oberfelder used her filmed body to obfuscate truth. Performance Studies scholar and Disability Culture activist Petra Küppers warns against the temptation of celebrating a biomedically-inspired trajectory toward a "translucent body whose data are visibly available" (2007, 25).

Oberfelder resisted this trajectory by displaying a body that decidedly could not be known and that was all surface, thus, no volume. Being offered the image of her body, we, as audience, were discouraged from imaginatively entering her viscera. Instead, she offered synthetic viscera in the form of the sound score. The amniotic sounds that accompanied her dance were sampled and looped, and to further emphasize the artifice of this "in-uterine" world, the pulsing sound was interrupted regularly with an electronic (clearly inorganic and un-biological) drum break. While when she first performed *Duet* live, this sound score might have aided the *appearance* of intimacy because it seemingly hearkened the vital presence of her "duet" partner. In *Duet (Quartet)*, it functioned quite differently. In her new framing of self, like the outside of her body, the "inside" of her body served no symbolic purpose and it did not disclose but rather obscured her story. The audience was not being given precious, privileged access to her corporeality or her felt connection to her fetus. Rather, in experiencing her piece, they were being offered something meaningful only in its aesthetic and compositional affects.

While originally performed live, *Duet (Quartet)* was then recorded and, as with *Duet*, the finished art piece became the film, *Duet (Quartet)*. It is this entirely virtual, archivable version which continues to be part of her company's repertoire and which I first encountered. With Oberfelder safely behind the veils of two layers of removal and representation in this final version, watching it, I did not presume to know her, how she knew her pregnant self, or how she experienced her pregnancy. This is not to say that I felt alienated from the work or found it opaque. There was something remarkable about seeing pregnant bodies abstracted and about not feeling compelled to assign the piece a plot. In remembering the uniqueness of the experience of viewing this work, I am reminded of a question posed by Küppers (2007). She asks, when it comes to bodies contending with experiences of health/illness—which, I insert, includes pregnant bodies— "How can we address the imperative need to know" about their bodies "together with a need for space, for dignity, and an essential privacy?" (2). In her project *The Scar of Visibility*, Küppers explores how an artist can share facets of her experience of her body without "seducing us into the fantasy of full identification, the idea that we 'know' what her experience is, or even that she knows what it is" (2). For Küppers, this becomes a question of how to connect without presuming empathy, in ways that leave space for another person's "mystery." To me, Oberfelder left just such a space. Although showing her body up-close, she also showed it as simulacra. She presented herself as part of a series, as simulated, and as intangible. She offered intimacy without offering any solid ground for identification.

The artists discussed thus far used strategic performance and choreographic strategies to communicate to audiences their refusal to be defined by their pregnant, female bodies. Choreographically, they created conditions that required complexity of vision from viewers and that pushed audiences to question all assumptions they had as to the types of women they beheld in performance and the authenticity of their performances of themselves. The ways in which they attempted to ward off misrecognition included performing stereotypes in order to undercut them and strategies of shifting and confounding audiences' vantage points in the interest of offering fresh perspective/s. However, even as they worked to thicken or flatten vision so that their bodies appeared differently, they left uncontested the audience's baseline recognition of their sex and gender. The next artist, while like Oberfelder's later work refusing recognizable symbols or narrative readings of her body, also made efforts to choreographically excise aspects of her physical body that would invite it to be read in gendered ways.

Section five: Queering the sight/site of pregnancy

Meg Foley and her partner were in conversation about having a baby when Foley received a major grant that would facilitate the next chapter of her choreographic career. For Foley, receiving the Pew Foundation Fellowship in 2012 "started a clock" (Meg Foley, in discussion with the author, September 2019). Recognizing that she was in her thirties and that it might take some time to get pregnant, she and her partner decided to try for a baby immediately. She explained to me over Skype, "I'm gay, so it takes some planning a different way" (Foley, discussion). Once pregnant, she continued her ritual of daily seventy-minute improvisations as well as a rigorous performance schedule. She continued performing her praxis, *Action is Primary*, into her seventh month of pregnancy, and she continued using her body, even as it changed, to test and refine what her praxis was and what it could offer her. She saw *Action is Primary* as a creative container of possibility, in which the central tenant was always *holding what you're doing at the center of what you're doing, even as it moves towards other centers*. In her incidentally Deleuzian studio practice and performances, *Action is Primary* allowed her to ask, "Okay, I'm pregnant. And what else?" meaning what else am I experiencing *right now* and in what other ways am I becoming different *right now*? Improvisation then showed her that the "what else" could have myriad answers. She explained, "*Action is Primary* is a practice that exists on its own, but it's also something that can be applied towards conceptual structures." One concept that became increasingly urgent for her to explore as she transitioned into motherhood was that of gender.

In her own corporeality, her romantic relationship, and her chosen community, she had cultivated environments in which gender was not defining or binary. However, as her body changed, so did her awareness of its gender expression, and, while she identifies as a cisgender woman—meaning that her gender identity matches the gender assigned to her at birth—

developing a body that bore the hallmarks of womanhood was psychologically difficult for her. Having long ago found identification with a flat-chested torso, developing breasts, or what she called "a feminine figure," felt like a violation. Her breasts "confused" her; she no longer recognized herself, either in how she looked or in how she felt in her clothes. She differentiated her discomfort with the development of her chest from her feelings about the development of her "bump." Her expanding belly made sense to her; the way that it changed her shape and the tactile feedback that she got from her clothing on her abdomen was not upsetting but exciting. Also, she found that she could incorporate the movement, sensations, and weight of her belly into her dance practice, and since she did so from the very beginning of her pregnancy, dancing with a belly consistently felt like "just this natural way that my body was moving." She, like Tharp, took pride in the fact that she "did not in any way" change the intensity with which she danced while pregnant. She danced with such vigor and force that, at performances, people sometimes expressed concern. However, she enjoyed her ability to "throw [her] weight around" and the kinesthesia of a different weight distribution. As she had pre-pregnancy, in movement improvisations, she followed trails of momentum, and her belly became a vital part of that exploration. However, Foley's ability to incorporate her lower torso into her attentions while dancing did not carry over to her upper torso. She could never comfortably accommodate her breasts into her perceptual body schema, and her uneasiness with her breasts was compounded by (and no doubt exacerbated) the perinatal depression that became a major component of her lived experience of pregnancy. Accordingly, she remembers pregnancy as a "tumultuous emotional pathway" throughout which she always felt "out of control."

In her graphic novel about her experience of pregnancy as a butch identifying gay woman, author A.K. Summers reflected, "There was a time when…gender could be flouted…when tits could fall off… I thought I was…a do-it-yourselfer, exempt" (2014, 80). However, by her third trimester her perceptions had changed. In text accompanying a drawing of herself as an astronaut, upside down, torso straining the seams of her space suite, drifting in the cosmos, far from her ship she announced, "I give up… I am too tired. I am not myself… I am tears and I am snot. I am anemic and I am purple veins. I am boobies" (81). While other artists heretofore described, and indeed many pregnant individuals, could likely identity with the body dysmorphia of seeing themselves not looking like themselves (suddenly corpulent, veiny, a medical patient, transparently emotional, etc.), Summers exemplified the gender dysmorphia that is also part of many individuals experience of pregnancy. To wit, Summers described her pregnancy as "nine long months in drag." As Summer's book offers readers witness to, the psychological strain of having one's body objectified in a gendered way, in spite of one's self-image and one's prior efforts to control one's public image can be severe, even traumatic.

Although she does not identity as butch, Foley, like Summers, also felt particularly perturbed by her pregnant body's development of prominent breasts since they seemed to perjure the "truth" of her body. Part of her discomfort with her breasts came from a disinclination to conflate identifying with a gender and having that gender visually pronounced for others. She acknowledged that the socially celebrated perspective of, "I *love* my body, and I think it's beautiful, and I want other people to look at it" has never, and certainly not during her pregnancy, represented her relationship to her body (Foley, discussion). During pregnancy, she was more interested in her body's "sculptural changing" and the "funny thing" of having some vital thing/one inside of her. Thus, having "body shapes that were a little bit more recognizable" as gender defining, like breasts, was, for her, not "empowering" so much as distracting and distressing, especially as she felt them reflected back to her by her social world. In this way, her experience was in conflict with Young's 1992 writings about the lived experience of being breasted. Young builds from Irigaray's ideas about women's sexuality as an alternative metaphysics, not constructed around the concept of solid objects but around a concept of fluids without definite borders. She associates power and pleasure with women's *experience* of their breasts, not as something seen, but as something felt through movement. However, Foley never had this kind of phenomenal intimacy with her breasts or curiosity about how they felt or moved. She only ever experienced them as affixed to her body, as separate objects that she had to deal with and that were problematically conspicuous from the outside.

Young argues that breasts are essential to women's sense of self ([1992] 2005). She asks, "How could breasts fail to be an aspect of [an individual's] identity, since they emerge for her at that time in her life when her sense of her own independent identity is finally formed?" (76). However, for many individuals, including Foley, this was not the case. Foley explained that breasts were something that, when she was younger, she "presumably desired, because that's what [she] was trained to desire," but they were a craving that she then, quite emphatically, "let go of" once she engaged in deeper self-examination (Foley, discussion). Young presumes that breasts, unrestricted by a bra, satisfy women because women can enjoy the sensations of their fluid and changing shape and can have a haptic experience that resists perceiving them as the stable objects of "phallocentric fetishism" ([1992] 2005, 83). However, being accustomed to and identifying with a flat chest, both as an individual and as a dancer, the sudden experience of weight, volume, and fluidity on her chest was not rewarding but perturbing for Foley.

Choreographically, Foley directly addressed her discomfort with a body that, being breasted, read as overtly womanly and felt like not her own. In performance, as her body changed, she would invite the audience to envision her with a different body. For example, for a performance at The Invisible Dog in Brooklyn when she was seven and a half months pregnant, she could no longer fit into her costume. However, she brought her original costume to the performance and enlisted the audience to collectively picture her in it and, thus, with a body that could fit into it. In performance, she never directly referred to her pregnancy, but she drew attention to her belly formally while simultaneously drawing attention away from her breasts. For example, she commenced her performance by spitting on her hand, pulling her shirt up to expose her abdomen, rubbing her wet palm on her belly, and then pouring glitter over her belly, where it stuck to the spit. After early on in the show describing her neck as red, so that the audience could picture it as such, she later actually painted it, along with her upper chest, using red body paint. Hence, by the end of the piece, she had adorned all of her torso, save her breasts.

In other, non-pregnant, solo performances, Foley removes all of her clothing and spends a portion of the dance with chest exposed, but this was not her choice at The Invisible Dog. At one point in the pregnant performance, she removed her top to change into a fresh t-shirt, and for a moment, her chest was visible. Her pronounced nipples were evident through a thin sports bra. The bra seemed to do little to support her chest, it merely veiled it. Now Young argues that by wearing bras, women are acquiescing to their breasts being something solid with a definite shape and without nipples, thus, without the signs both of women's erogenous zones and of her ability to feed babies ([1992] 2005). Bras hide breasts murky double signification of motherhood and sexuality, which is never more pronounced than surrounding pregnancy. According to Young, bras put men at ease because, for breasts to be understood as something sexual and *for him*, the woman-centered pleasure and the feeding function of the breasts must be hidden. Young advocates for shattering the boundary between motherhood and sexuality, so that the mother can enjoy both experiences completely and sometimes simultaneously. She calls this a "scandal for the patriarchy," and thus a triumph for womankind (77). However, Foley's experience was not triumphant. She did not completely hide or completely share her breasts, but by her partial sharing and decisive non-erasure of her nipples, she used her bra to invite the tension and confusion of breasts—generally and personally—into her work. The lack of emphasis on her chest, even in this moment of semi-reveal, compounded by the decorations applied to other parts of her torso, cued the audience that her breasts were not an intended focal point. For Foley, they were simply, complexly, misleadingly there with her, not, perforce, essential to her.

Martin Heidegger explains that because of the elusiveness of the body and our bodies' entanglement with our senses of ourselves, we tend toward "anxious exertions" in which we try to fathom and reincorporate the bodily parts of ourselves that do not feel like *us* into our familiar body schemas (1962, 243). The choreographic strategies of Tharp, Oberfelder, Jamrog, and Lafrance could all be viewed as such anxious exertions in that they all strove to fit the aspects of their bodies that became manifest with pregnancy into their senses of themselves as artists and women as well as their larger agendas as choreographers. However, Foley engaged a different strategy entirely for her choreography. She deferred to her, what gender theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls, "propriodescriptive authority" to both perceive and intervene in her changing physicality as well as to cultivate an evolving sense of herself as a woman, a body, and an artist. Sedgwick proposes the theory of "propriodescriptive authority," which while inclusive of gender dysmorphia, also exceeds it to encompass all experiences of oneself in relationship to one's sex and gender identification (1990, 27). Sedgwick emphasizes the lack of obligation to "side with" models of biological essentialism or social constructionism because a better approach—indeed the only compassionate approach—is to accept and defer to individuals' descriptions of their own sex, gender, and sexuality. She advises to "perform the least possible delegitimization of felt and reported differences and to impose the lightest possible burden of platonic definitional stress," in other words to trust people's self-perception, self-knowledge, and self-report rather than presuming recognition of their sex, gender, and sexuality and everything thus implied. However, a critical precursor to embracing "propriodescriptive authority" is extending our notions, as a society, of subjecthood beyond a discourse of gender, which, when it comes to pregnant bodies, seems particularly difficult for people to do.

With the discourse of gender intact and conflated, as it remains, with reproduction, the tendency for people who are socialized into society and then become medical doctors is to make efforts to *include* those whose gender identity cannot be defined unilaterally (as the foil to its binary opposite) in pre-established systems (whether this inclusion be a matter of welcoming them or coercing them to participate in the status quo). Author Margaret Gibson in her book *Queering Motherhood* emphasizes the danger of such obliged inclusion and, like Sedgewick, argues that this is not the helpful or humane approach that well-meaning individuals might presume it to be. She writes, "it is a mistake to think that queering motherhood is only and inevitably a matter of addition, of bringing parents who identify as 'queer' and/or 'trans' into existing unyielding frameworks"—in this instance, assuming that Foley as a breasted, pregnant person would feel *included* if seen and treated as a woman, a mommy, or a wife (2014, 5). Rather, she continues, "Queering motherhood can… start where any of the central gendered, sexual, relational, political, and/or symbolic components of 'expected' motherhood are challenged" (6). This is what Foley set out to do choreographically, by deferring to her "propriodescriptive authority" rather than "expected" gendered symbols in how she presented her body in her work. In so doing, she also avoided the suffering of Lacan's mirror stage. By this

I mean that she neither felt compelled to identify with her reflection nor betrayed by her reflection; rather, she made the Sedgewickian move of “misrecognizing” herself.

In her own response to Lacan’s mirror phase, Sedgewick considered the position of subjects who regularly find themselves the object of the punitive gazes of the law or of medicine. For such individuals, she contends, sometimes it is only through gazing upon themselves in the mirror, in conditions where they have the opportunity to intentionally frame themselves for their own appreciative eyes, that subjects are seen for who they really are. Recognizing themselves on their own terms—a “misrecognition” of how society recognizes them—becomes a confirmation of themselves. Theirs is a gaze upon themselves filled with the “amazing tenderness of affirmation” (1993, 170). It was giving form to this Sedgewickian self-recognition, this “misrecognition,” that Foley courted in her choreographic process, and she did so, at least in part, to have experiences of being seen pregnant that were not tethered to ideologies of womanhood. Refusing other outside gazes on her body, she turned a tender, affirming, and queer gaze on herself. While a queer gaze could be defined many ways, Robyn Warhol and Susan Snaider, in their work on queer interventions in narrative structures, define queering as “move(ment)s that challenge—and again, aim to understand, analyze, and rectify—heteronormative systems and practices and their attendant binary assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality” (2015, 2). Just so, Foley examined herself in ways that challenged hegemonic practices of seeing bodies and therefore placed herself in a position to remain in a discursive, rather than defining, relationship with gender. In the process she also went farther than this chapter’s other artists in destabilizing epistemic understandings of pregnancy and womanhood through her framing of her body in performance.

In philosopher Louis Althusser's theory of "interpellation," he investigates ideology, and how it affixes itself to live bodies and thereby incorporates individuals into power structures because, "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" ((2001 [1971]), 175). Via their various strategies, Tharp, Jamrog, and Lafrance all resisted being hailed as certain *types* of women, as *only* women, or as women and thus subservient to men. However, Foley resisted being hailed as a woman full stop. Foucault, Althusser's student, picks up this idea in his *History of Sexuality* (1976), in which he discusses how it was only through historically developed ideologies and their resultant discourses, that individuals could be identified by and recognized as one sexuality or another. In other words, sexualities such as homosexuality, are not an ontological phenomenon in Foucault's model; homosexuality is a constructed idea then used to define individuals so as to create the appearance of an ordered world. Indeed, all binary oppositions, like homo- and hetero-sexuality are inherently ideological in that they protect hegemonic power through protecting a particular idea—by no means the only idea—of order. In his theorization of "interpellation," Althusser presents a scenario that he calls "my little theoretical theater" (174). In this theater, which, according to him, happens every day on every street, someone recognizes another person as a familiar type of subject and calls out some version of, "Hey, you there!" to designate this type of subject. Hearing this "hail," the recipient turns around to face the hailer. Through assuming the hail was meant for her and responding as its recipient via a repositioning of her body toward its source, the person *becomes* the particular type of subject that she was expected to be. Of course, the subjecthood one performatively assumes by responding to such a hail might be in conflict to one's lived experience of self. Such is exemplified by anthropologist Franz Fanon, in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he offers an account of his own lived experience of race-based "interpellation" (1986). As Fanon depicts, acknowledging oneself as the intended recipient of a hail and responding with a turn, as if correctly recognized, is injurious not only in making an individual feel misrecognized but in making her feel complicit in her own subjugation. Responding to a hail rooted in a binarized conception of gender, when this does not align with one's experience of self, can create a perceptual disconnect and a sense of deep unease.

While Foley and her non-binary partner might have found social presentations that allowed them to feel comfortably seen and known in life before Foley's pregnancy, the seeming biological facticity of pregnancy and its problematic conflation with femininity when read socially, made Foley feel unseen while pregnant. That being said, perhaps she appreciated that disconnects between social and perceptual lived experiences can be productively held open via art in ways that allow for fresh possibilities. Foley described her dance praxis as offering a "vibratory disorienting space," structured by self-imposed and self-supportive containers of place and time (Foley, discussion). *Action is Primary* provides Foley with a clearly framed context in which reality can be "multifaceted," thus, dis-ordered. Because of this, through performing her practice, Foley is able to resist a predictable response to "interpellation," and during pregnancy this was vitally important.

Küppers, in her writings on performance surrounding disability, suggests that when hailed as a particular type of subject, because of one's body and the public's inaccurate assumptions about it, the Althusserian turn of acknowledgement need not be as straightforward as he presents it in his "little theoretical theater" (2007). As Küppers explains, "much can happen in the space of a turn. Finding a space to duck, temporarily, only half-hidden, people have found ways of finding alternatives to the dominant naming" (21). It is just such ducking partially out of view that Foley achieved through strategically choreographing her pregnant body. She was well aware that her pregnant, breasted body would inevitably be hailed publicly as a "feminine body," and, anticipating this reading and sensing the hail, she engaged, what Küppers calls, a "lateral move" in her responsive "turn." Foley did not hide her body, neither did she allow it to be recognizable. She did not erase her breasts, nor did she give them any privilege of place. In these ways, she used the technique of cuing the audience to reimagine her body as a way to dodge being interpellated into a type of person from which, in a deeper way, she felt other. She used her artmaking to create conditions under which new understanding might be produced. Rather than seeing pregnancy as a regressive scenario that required her to revisit limited and limiting categories, categories that she had long before moved through and beyond psychophysically, she, like writer and theorist Maggie Nelson, used the buttress of creative practice to explore how pregnancy "literally *makes space* where there wasn't space before" (2015, 103).

During Nelson's pregnancy, her partner had a top surgery so that as one partner developed fuller breasts, the other removed their breasts completely. While superficially, one body was seemingly becoming more "masculine," and the other more "feminine;" perceptually, it was not an experience of assuming one of two binarized genders, thus, of picking sides. Rather, they were "two human animals undergoing transformations beside each other, bearing each other loose witness" (83). Nelson likened this experience to any couple aging together and reflecting back to one another the ways in which their bodies continuously evolve. Even if changes felt natural, albeit uncomfortable, in the same way that aging does, Nelson did acknowledge that the development of her breasts and their new functionality made her experience of body strange, both perceptually and as witnessed, especially within her relationship. Again, in contrast to Young's paradigm of breastedness, Nelson's lived experience or her chest was primarily one of anxiety and disjuncture. She recounted that her breasts were sore for over a year, and even after the pain ceased, they still felt like they "belong[ed] to someone else" (86).

For Foley as well, even postpartum, her breasts did not make sense or feel like a natural extension of herself. Additionally, they did not immediately function as part of her and her child's relationship. They remained an unwelcome imposition with which she had to contend but which in no way amplified or reflected her sense of self as woman or mother. Adding to the complicated nature of her relationship with her breasts, they had a critical and painful role to play in her birthing experience. In a last desperate effort to progress her labor, so as to avoid being induced, she was instructed to do nipple stimulation. Now, Young discusses nipples as "active and independent zones of sensitivity and eroticism" (([1992] 2005), 84), and in her model, letting nipples be un-obstructed and open to touch sensation is an empowering situation for women. In an aligning perspective, birth proponents of "Orgasmic" or "Ecstatic" birth see the nipples as playing a huge role in women's efficacy and pleasure during birthing; indeed, many birth practitioners acknowledge the usefulness of arousal during birthing to release advantageous hormones and to cause uterine contractions. However, while nipples could be stimulated by self-massage or by a partner's touch or mouth, in Foley's case, in the hospital setting, she was attached to a machine. Young argues that individuals can get away from objectification of their breasts by prioritizing how breasts feel, but this was not the case for Foley. The mechanical, rhythmic squeeze and release of the breast pump was unquestionably a touch experience but one that further objectified her breasts and distanced them from her self-schema. Then, because her child was premature and consequently immediately moved to the NICU, she was unable to breastfeed and had to continue pumping. Perhaps because she was denied experiences during and immediately after birthing to incorporate her breasts into her sense of maternal embodiment, they remained strange and obtrusive to her. Thus, while her child felt like a clear extension of herself and her body, even postpartum, her breasts did not.

Feeling her body change even in ways that were self-estranging did not feel outside of Foley's research or even outside of queer experience, in general. In *The Argonauts*, Nelson suggests that there is "something inherently queer about pregnancy itself, insofar as it profoundly alters one's 'normal' state, and occasions a radical intimacy with—and radical alienation from—one's body" (2015, 13-14). She continues with a question that Foley also posed to herself, "How can an experience so profoundly strange and wild and transformative also symbolize or enact the ultimate conformity?" (ibid.). For Foley, it was critical that she neither conform nor be seen as conforming into an ideologically rooted, recognizable subjecthood of *mother*. Hence, she launched a new chapter of her creative practice, both inside and outside of the studio, in which she attempted to theorize and represent "queer motherhood." This exploration began with trying to figure out what she even meant by "queer motherhood" and how it could be a bodily choreographic practice. For her, it was not about being recognized/hailed as both a mother and a queer person. It was about excavating the experiential particularities of this semiotic configuration. She wanted to examine through/with her body being perceived as a mother, being perceived as queer, and "how those things push beyond perception, how they push from the inside out," put another way, how the "sensation of" mothering appears on the "surface of [her] being" in ways that she can recognize (Foley, discussion). In her daily praxis of *Action is Primary*, she tried to locate movement scenarios that encompassed and supported her experiential identity. The movement did not come out of her *being* queer, or *being* a mother because, as she explained, her "identity is formed through an understanding of 'I actually realized this, and then I perform this'." She looked to recognize something interior that could guide her movements or that was already guiding her performance of self. New movement expressions arrived in a praxis that she called the "undergird," which involved overlapping and reconfiguring familiar movement tasks, changing their relationships to time, and compiling them into choreographic "scores" that were multi-layered and multi-directional in how they approached attention and decision-making. In addition to working from the inside-out, she also worked from the outside-in. Attending to how motherhood, as an ideology, generates a bodily practice that she unconsciously performed for others, she then used her movement practice to "take that thing apart," interrogate its various components, and put its socially encoded choreographies into productive creative chaos.

While pursuing my PhD, I met Foley at UCLA, where she occasionally guest teaches when in Los Angeles for gigs. On more than one occasion, I joined her in practicing *Action is Primary*, and each time, I was deeply moved by her dedication, specificity, and fervent belief in the praxis and its performative capacity. In recent conversations with her, I came to appreciate how much she relies on this creative physical work to manifest a "sacred space" in which she can "iron herself out" in order to safely move through the larger world (Foley, discussion). She admitted that she needs the practice and the space it creates because life outside of it is neither easy nor straightforward for her, since she tends to "move in a lot of different directions at once" emotionally, energetically, physically, and intellectually. As Foley talked to me over Skype about her newest work and described the bodily practice of queer motherhood, she was, although strikingly eloquent, clearly struggling to find words that felt like the *right* words for her. She admitted that outside of the frame of our Skype video call, she was surrounded by books, which she had picked up to help her find terminology and phrases that could illuminate and communicate what it is that she strives to do for the purposes of upcoming funding applications.

Even in our conversation, she was following her sensing practice, feeling her way into how established and available symbols (the terminology that organizes our world and fills our books, our possibilities, and our collective imaginary) resonated with her experience of reality. She was insisting upon polyvocality and sifting available models through her lived experiences to try to enhance communication, to try to share a different, present, sharable *real*.

From her books, one phrase that she found relevant and wanted to incorporate into our conversation was "edge research." She recognized her praxis as research around the edges of her body. As she explained, being a mother means thinking about her "temporal edge"—in relationship to having borne someone and having been borne by someone—as well as her physical edge—in relationship to her child's edge—which is an exploration necessarily and always rooted in the present tense. Navigating these edges is for Foley being *inside* the concept of mother, rather than allowing herself to be defined as a "mother." By doing and sharing this work with myself and others, she continues to dodge Althusserian "interpellation" into ideologies of queerness or motherhood, opting instead for an experience more like Deleuzian *becoming* (1968). For Deleuze, in becoming, there are no longer binary "machines" like masculine-feminine; the individual is not on her way to anywhere locatable or with stable borders. Through Foley's "edge research," it is the becoming, as verb, that matters, not what she is/becomes, as nouns. Her body is not an object; it is a process. She avoids the Althusserian one hundred and eighty degree turn of recognition by instead turning *inward*. She turns inward toward somatically known experiences of queerness and motherhood, toward the self that she recognizes:

> *turning into my own*
> *turning on in*
> *to my own self*
> *at last…* (Clifton 1987)

Talking to Foley outside of the studio, I have learned that her creative movement practice also informs her strategies of generating and recognizing a queer context for her family. She describes a queer household as not "circumstance," but "intentionality," intentionality that she experiences as a physical imperative (Foley, discussion). Put another way, *Action is Primary* helps her perceive and negotiate her edges, and it also inspires how she wants to perform and experience herself, as a queer mother, in the world. Her child, Cadence, in growing up in a family where gender pronouns are avoided and never presumed, where Cadence has the freedom to select pronouns (at the time of this writing, "they") for themselves and to change their mind about these pronouns if their experience of self changes, and where every day at 3:15pm—no matter where they are or what they might be doing—their mother does an improvisatory dance in which they are welcome to take part. With her daily "3:15s," Foley creates a freeing and open space for innovation and choreographic attention, regardless of the circumstances in which she finds herself. She gives these dances from herself to herself, as well as to her community and to her child.

Some might see Foley as modeling a kind of *liberated* motherhood. Afterall, as Rich argues in her essay "Motherhood: The Contemporary Emergency and the Quantum Leap," it is often in the lived examples of motherhood by those most outcast by patriarchy that we glimpse what liberated motherhood could be. Bearing witness to such mothers, she contends, invites us as a society to envision "A future in which women are powerful, full of our own power not the old patriarchal power-over, but the power to create, power to think, power to articulate and concretize our lives and those of our children" (1979, 270-73). Foley, in her choreographies of art and life exemplified/s her development of a sense of self as a pregnant individual and then a mother that was not a construct of patriarchy. While others like law scholar Regina Austin applaud parallel efforts such as those she referred to as Black single mothers, who she sees as similarly refusing patriarchy and demonstrating their "temerity to attempt to break out of the rigid economic, social, and political categories that a racist, sexist, and class-stratified society would impose upon them" (1989, 555), postcolonial American scholar and Black feminist Dorothy E. Roberts reminds readers of the dangers of deciding what is liberating for those who are socially marginalized without turning a blind eye to all that remains oppressive in their lives. She asks, "How can we discern the transformative potential in what is basically a response to subjugation?" (1993, 25). Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that Foley's creativity and the vision of "liberated" motherhood that she might offer her audiences was/is necessitated by her lived reality of feeling compelled to create for herself and her family spaces of livability, wellbeing, and love. Such creation exacts physical and emotion labor beyond merely her artistic production. Accordingly, it is crucial to acknowledge the broader social, legal, and medical changes that must take place for more individuals to experience the security of knowing that their families and their humanity are safe. This work begins with flagging and then working to debunk the systemic built-in advantages of heterosexuality and binary gender identifications (similar to the built-in advantages of whiteness and participation in the "traditional" white middle class family structure). For me, Foley's work offers a vision for the future, but also the challenge to not only acknowledge but embrace our differences as a larger social body as we work together to create new possibilities that uplift all of our humanity and that fully dissociate the experiences and praxes of mothering from the patriarchal institution of motherhood.

Section six: The medical gaze versus the choreographic gaze

This chapter has explored five choreographers' strategies of turning choreographic gazes upon their pregnant reflections in ways different in effect from the Lacanian gaze of the mirror stage. They saw in their pregnant images opportunities to observe their bodies in personally productive ways, to notice possibilities for what their bodies could represent, and to show their audiences how to see their bodies freshly and with fresh potentials. Turning a choreographic gaze upon themselves also offered them an alternative to the "medical gaze," which, for many pregnant individuals, is the dominant means by which their bodies are reflected back to them. The medical gaze is a term used by cultural theorists and scholars in the medical humanities, following Foucault (1963), to describe how medicine objectifies individuals and depersonalizes their experiences of illness/health. In obstetrics, with the advent of visual technologies and the extensiveness of their incorporation into medical care, the contents of the uterus are (presumably) demystified and entirely representable. Clinical pregnancy care, conducted primarily by nurses, involves various and persistent inspections of the pregnant individual's body, primarily to monitor fetal health and to alert physicians at the first visual evidence of problems. While the medical gaze yields important health data like gestational age and the presence of medical abnormalities, such as spinal bifida, in the obstetrician's office, the pregnant individual is no longer the authority on her body. She is observed by a higher authority who knows what to see and who has the socially sanctioned right to label and appraise her body, its contents, and its abilities as they are seen through expert eyes. Young and Stabile emphasize that all of this visualization and assessment undermine women's experiential knowledge of their bodies. Stabile asserts that the visual and symbolic exclusion of women's personal representations of their own experiences of pregnancy by medicine is "yet another strategy for investing power" in *institutional* bodies, while disinvesting the social value of women's *physical* and *felt* bodies (1998, 194). In other words, medicine's ability to replace women with their representations (in so doing, moving decidedly in the opposite direction of more humanistic health sciences like nursing or midwifery) in order to draw "meaningful" conclusions is inherently disempowering for pregnant patients and contributes to social subjugation of women at large.

Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic* offers a genealogy for medicine's objectification of women and dismissal of their somatic subjectivity. In it, Foucault emphasizes that medicine's very ontology is inextricably linked to authoritative sight, meaning objective vision. For example, since "modern" epistemological systems give priority to sight over feeling, if physicians are not up to date with the most cutting-edge ways of implementing the "gaze," they are not socially legitimate as clinical practitioners of modern medical science. This is because, in medicine, in order to have "knowledge," phenomena must be seen and labeled ([1963] 2003, 101). Reliance on sight to determine the veracity, intensity, and degree of (ab)normality is problematic because physicians can only see what they can say—they can only perceive what is already named; thus, physicians are biased to look for what they recognize and what already exists in a familiar and unavoidably predisposed symbol system. This means that a baseline body standard is established against which every other body will be judged, and there is an implicit valuation and hierarchy to this process that puts all seeking medical support on a spectrum of aberration towards or away from pathology. In the physician's office, self, once seen, is turned into a collection of legible cyphers, and the subject seeking help becomes the object of the medical gaze. The gaze automatically renders bodily states and expressions as *symptoms*, and symptoms immediately become *signs* expressible in language and inextricably linked to established diagnoses and treatments. Even if pregnant individuals *feel* well, in a physician's office, they likely experience their bodies *seen* as in-need-of-treatment because this is how bodies are socially coded in US clinical spaces.

Furthermore, as Young points out, there is an implicit male bias in medicine's conception of health, evidenced by health's association with stability, equilibrium, and a steady state (1984, 56). Such qualities never describe the female bodily state, least of all when a female is pregnant. While certainly not the only way that clinicians assess health, medical imaging has been especially critiqued by feminist cultural theorists (for example Balsamo 1997, Corea 1985, Duden 1993, Rapp 1998, and Weir 1998). Following this critique, visualizations offer "evidence" of deviations from established norms as well as verification of bodies' return to normalcy in ways that conflate male embodiment with "healthy" embodiment and that pressure pregnant individuals to get their bodies "back" postpartum before they can be considered healthy/normal. Visiting the obstetrician and having one's pregnant body visualized and consequently defined as if it were an object does little to invest parents-to-be with self-possession and trust in their bodies' intelligence and innate capacities. Accordingly, by participating in acculturated and, arguably, implicitly patriarchal medical surveillance, pregnant persons face what gender and technology theorist Ann Balsamo calls the "double-bind" of finding themselves totally dependent on authorities to know what they are, yet still seemingly personally responsible for any and all irregularities (1997). The stresses of this "double-bind" of powerlessness and culpability play out in their lived experiences of pregnancy.

However, in contrast to being medically monitored and assessed, these choreographers created dance praxes that involved self-monitoring. Such choreographic self-observation had within it implicit self-appreciation and a presumption that their selves were misrecognized through other available taxonomic strategies, that they should be seen as they truly were, and that only they had the capacity to assess and express who/what they truly were. In other words, their processes were unlike Foucauldian self-surveillance ("panopticism") and did not presume an external evaluative gaze on their bodies. It also meant that their choreographies offered them self-assessments different in kind from medical assessments of pregnant bodies.

Moreover, while the medical gaze historically has relied on a specific idea of *the* universal body as a starting point for analysis, the choreographic gaze can rely solely on *this specific* dancing body to ground its analysis. Philosopher Philipa Rothfield argues that "there is no common corporeal basis for understanding which [can ground] all interactions between doctor and patient. If there is no shared corporeal sense of understanding, then the 'exchange' of understanding between patient and doctor cannot proceed from some common corporeal denominator" (2005, 44). She continues to argue that "the desire to achieve universality will blind itself to the discriminations performed in the name of sameness" (45). In other words, as the medical gaze looks for certain things, it leaves much unseen, and, as others in the field of health science appreciate, this can have dire effects on individuals' health, their sense of ability to be participant in their healthcare, and their sense of safety in clinical spaces.

To this point, a noteworthy example that goes beyond the implicit pathologization of un-maleness proposed by Grosz is the difference in medical treatment received by women of color and white women in the US. Nowhere is this more the case than in prenatal care. At the time of this writing, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Maternal Mortality Surveillance System, Black women are three to four times more likely to die from childbirth than non-Hispanic white women. As this is the case regardless of women's socioeconomic status or educational background, sexism and racism are the apparent causes for this disparity (Taylor 2020). Indeed, institutional norms, acculturated attitudes of healthcare workers, and enforced ideas of order that have grown out of hegemonic culture lead many clinicians to *see* some pregnant women as racial stereotypes, as needing to be controlled, or as not to be trusted while simultaneously failing to see other aspects of their pregnancy or wellbeing that are important for strategizing care (Bridges 2011). As Rothfield surmises, "Where there is a cultural, corporeal difference between the patient and the doctor/institution which is characterized in terms of dominance, the patient is liable to suffer" (44). In short, per Rothfield, since individuals know their bodies and their bodily needs in different ways, a universal model of care predicated on reading the signs of *this* pregnant body against *the* universal pregnant body leads to the mis- or un-seeing, even the maltreatment, of many pregnant individuals.

Rothfield herself proposed that dance has the potential to productively interrupt medical patterns of looking for *the* body when observing *this* body and of presuming to know the truth of another's body based on observations rooted in clinicians' own experiences of embodiment. This is because a dance is not, as hegemonic medicine might presume itself to be, a "phenomenological project" independent of culture and sociopolitical context, and it can they thereby introduce an "epistemological complication, a reformation, a multiplication… a sense of being slightly out of reach, requiring a stretch, a shift of weight, a roll, perhaps a fall" if one wishes to assess the meaning, value, and experience of another's body (the dancing body) from one's own situated perspective (46, 51).

The same is true for the dancer's observations of herself. Rather than in a diagnostic mode, these choreographers monitored their bodies in aesthetic and kinesthetic modes, meaning they were acutely interested in their physical sensations (and even their limitations) for their own sake. They appreciated their bodies as information that they could accept but with which they needed not fully identify (or to which they needed not feel reduced). They studied their bodies as choreographic material to be read and framed as they choose or, on the other hand, to be privately experientially analyzed without deference to or anxiety over expert sanctioning of their understanding. By turning their perceptions on themselves rather than submitting their bodies solely to the evaluation of others, they challenged vision as a conquering act that others could enact upon them.

For Tharp, her choreographic approach was emphatically anti-deferential to medicine. She refused unquestioned obedience to medical advice or acceptance of medical assessments, since she felt that her dance practice invested her with more knowledge about her body than her physician could possibly possess. She liked that she had her own way, via improvisation and reviewing footage, of "constantly monitoring" her body so as to be "very aware of its changes" (1992, 141). She especially liked that her methods of self-surveillance were against both her physician's and her husband's advice. She recollected enjoying that, while she "felt it was safe to [dance] this much," her husband, based on his sense of what was healthy, "worried that all this was dangerous" (ibid.). Her husband's concern did nothing to deter her from moving her body as she wished; indeed, it incentivized her activeness (and, soon after Jesse's birth, incentivized her decision to move herself, her son, and her Panasonic camera to a New York City studio, leaving Huot and the farmhouse behind). Moreover, Tharp demanded to give birth her own way, which involved "stubbornly" continuing her dance "regimen," and even fifteen hours into labor, "refusing the aspirins the nurses offered in little paper cups" (1992, 144). In other words, to the end of her pregnancy, she fought what she interpreted as forces that saw her body as in need of intervention and of being controlled.

However, and as discussed previously, while she defied others' authority over her pregnant body, Tharp did not defy the larger social and ideological forces that constrain pregnant bodies in medicine and beyond; specifically, she did not defy patriarchy. In her essay, "The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order," Haraway reminds readers that vision is, traditionally and corporeally, an overpowering and colonizing act (1997). She challenges women to devise self-analytical languages and to create their own innovative "speculums" so as to maintain control of the power and information within their private bodies. In some ways, the artists in this chapter did just this. By capturing and subsequently labeling her own image, each seized power over what her body meant. Each created a scenario that separated herself from her image, and then each wrested control of the personal and social significance of her pregnant body. In short, each conquered her own pregnant body so that others could not. However, Haraway herself was aware of the limitations of this self-colonizing strategy, and she took care to differentiate ways in which we might advantageously appreciate our bodies as "material-semiotic" "object[s]-of-knowledge" and ways in which we might take on gazes that are disadvantageously self-objectifying. In her text, she cautions against the female positioning herself as "active *discoverer*" of herself, if it requires the individual to separate her intellect from her body, rendering her body a passive thing "to discover" and seize (193). Haraway opines that women have privileged access to their bodies which becomes blocked by seizing what Lorde calls "the master's tools" (1984). In other words, adopting the strategies of patriarchy does not mean that women will use them in self-empowering ways; it is feasible that they will use such tools against themselves. Put another way, Haraway is critical of what she sees as the we-see-it-we-claim-it-for-ourselves attitude, because it leaves so many oppressions invisible and unchallenged (193). It is only through giving form/voice to what so easily becomes unseen, that we can throw back the veil, so to speak, and thereby know ourselves differently and in our own ways.

In my reading of Tharp, I see Haraway's self-colonization mistaken for -liberation situation at play. In contrast, Jamrog and Lafrance moved toward detecting and revealing to audiences the patriarchal forces that sought to colonize and lay claim to their bodies. However, only in Oberfelder's second project and then, even more completely, in Foley's work did we see Harawayan "speculums" effectively at work. For Foley, within her larger project of self-discovery and -affirmation, not only did she reveal, she fully denied and actively overwrote the previously invisible, oppressive and objectifying symbology of motherhood and womanhood that otherwise threatened her body.

Conclusion: The hoped-for body

Küppers argues that there is value in performing the "hoped-for" body, and that it is productive to play with the "ideological chimeras" that underlie our senses of ourselves through inconsistent or unfamiliar performances of ourselves (2007, 75). She posits that through enacting bodily fantasies, artists can present creative forms of agency, letting their somatic experiences multiply and overlap. In other words, within their art, choreographers can refuse to be captured by social and health narratives that they might otherwise experience as enclosing, and their bodies can resist character and narrative altogether and instead, present a "non-storied attention to different ways of being in space" (179). Foley, explained to me that in her performances of art and life, the feeling of things being "off or sideways," often cues her that she is approaching what she feels is a "quote-unquote 'correct'" orientation to the social world (Foley, discussion). In other words, it informs her that she is approaching her hoped-for body.

As the artists in this chapter demonstrate, there are many ways to court one's hoped-for body. Tharp objectified her pregnant body and then dissociated herself from its image.

Oberfelder gradually converted the image of her body to formal elements that could be aesthetically and abstractly appreciated. Jamrog engaged her body symbolically in a project of social commentary. Lafrance emphasized the opacity, profundity, and fluidity of her body, inducing in viewers a kind of vertigo. Finally, Foley attended to her own "misrecognition" in order to make work that would protect and nurture the parts of herself that, she felt, went socially unseen and to carve out uncompromising and somatically informed spaces for herself and her family in the world.

These five artists interrogated the relationships between the multi-dimensional lived experiences of pregnancy, the potentially felicitous uni-dimensionality of their pregnant appearances, and their choreographic and performative opportunities to strategically control what and how audiences *see* when looking at dancing and pregnant bodies. As it served them, they could distinguish themselves from their images, perspicaciously (if temporarily) align themselves with their images, evade the situation of being seen entirely, or resist being consistently seen as a recognizable sight. In each scenario, they pushed their audiences to query the extent to which they could trust their eyes or could presume to know the person dancing, and they asserted their influence as dance-makers to (in turns) curate, question, challenge, and embrace the veracity of sight and the significance of being seen as a pregnant individual.

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Chapter two: Pregnant Body as Creative Spacetime

When choreographer Trisha Brown became pregnant, her ambition was to use the time of pregnancy productively to advance her artistic goals. She took a hiatus from performance in the interest of protecting her privacy but also to devote herself to tightening her choreographic processes and clarifying her creative vision. When she reemerged on the avant-garde art scene postpartum, the philosophy, aesthetics, and methodology of her art had changed in marked ways, ways that soon set her apart from her peers and that went on to influence generations of artists, myself included. Both as a dance writer and practitioner who—as a student, logged many work-study hours at the Trisha Brown Dance Studios in New York City and as a dance journalist interviewed Brown about her work—I realized that it was exclusively the postpartum professional Brown with whom I was familiar. In other words, in knowing her art, I knew nothing of her as a pregnant artist or as a mother; thus, I was intrigued to discover while doing archival work that her processes of defining herself as a choreographer and of becoming a parent were coterminous. I began to wonder if it was not only her industrious time in isolation while pregnant but her personal experiences of pregnancy that had shifted her approach to art making as well as her investment in dance as a creative medium. Consequently, I decided to revisit her choreography and her life story with my attention tuned to her experiences of maternity. I looked for clues about her lived experience of pregnancy in her numerous biographies, in the very comprehensive Trisha Brown Dance Company website, in the various chronologies of her artistic output, in the collected materials about her life at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and in the Trisha Brown Archive, in the filmed and transcribed interviews with her across the decades, and in newspaper clippings about her work from the period when she was pregnant. However, instead of clues, I found lacunae.

I easily encountered young Brown, the recent Mills College graduate, who showed up to the downtown New York City art scene shy and determined and who participated in the experimental beginnings of what is now called "postmodern" dance. Then, I encountered Brown, the pioneering independent artist of exceptional drive, uncompromising vision, and widespread curiosity, who, as she progressed through the many groundbreaking phases of her career, happened to have, as was only occasionally mentioned, a son in tow. In other words, never did I encounter Brown, the pregnant individual, deep in processes of redefining her craft while also navigating her somatic experiences of a changing body. However, by mapping its omission, I came to recognize that the pregnant Brown was indeed the transitional figure between the two Browns that are so well documented, and I increasingly suspected that her pregnant experiences were of great significance to the redirections of her artistic career.

The pregnant Brown was, understandably, absent from all performance reviews and programs, since she had removed herself from the stage, and, perhaps as a consequence of this removal, her pregnancy was skipped over or only cursorily mentioned in the many published manuscripts about her life and work—for example, a book might state as a matter of fact that she "was pregnant" or that she "had a baby," but treat both statements as mentionable markers within (not integral to) a larger timeline of more significant events. Thus, both were presented as objective information, not as Brown's embodied experiences or as consequential to her artistic processes. Moreover, the lack of archived personal journals from this period of her life (before she became a renowned artist whose personal documents were preserved for posterity) left little to be discovered about her perceptions of and reactions to her pregnancy. Hence, to better understand how Brown lived her pregnancy and how her perceptions of her pregnant body influenced her choreographically, I looked for the traces of her experiences of her pregnant body in her initial postpartum work and her earliest archived choreographic notebooks. By noting postpartum shifts in her work and how she wrote about her work—in terms of its structure, fundamental components, priorities, processes, and content—I then speculated as to how her sense of bodyself, time, space, and identity might have shifted through her experiences of her pregnant body. With my acts of imagination in reading her work toward these ends, I sought to bridge the existing gaps in how her life and art have been historicized and point at the importance of her pregnancy to her understanding of herself as a choreographer and to her choices as a maker.

Specifically, I argue that the first solo that she made postpartum, *Homemade*, offers compelling evidence of how Brown invited pregnancy to change her and her art and how these changes impacted the priorities guiding her creative research moving forward. While such priorities were heretofore never linked to her pregnancy in archival, theoretical, and historical materials, the aesthetics they induced are regularly recognized for hugely influencing the future of not only her career but postmodern dance at national and global scales. Thus, this chapter advances the theory that pregnancy was not an obstacle or tangential to Brown's development as an artist; rather, it played a central role and left a significant mark on not only her personal oeuvre but on dance writ large, and what is more, Brown's lived experience of pregnancy directly influenced the style and methods that came to define her as an artist and that made her distinctive from her dance colleagues.

Furthermore, by redefining choreography at ontological and epistemological levels, through reconceiving of space and time through her pregnant body, I argue that in *Homemade*, Brown also discovered means to rechoreograph the course of her life so that her choreography and her personal history became part of a larger and encompassing "lived score." Within her "lived score," she discovered means to exist as a nonsingular, and thus less bounded, subject who had more options for how she experienced and shared herself in art, for how she defined her politics and philosophies as an artist and as a woman, and for how she approached her future. Within what she called the "self-contained loop" of *Homemade*, she created a workspace that could hold and explore more of herself than that for which the time and space outside of her art allowed at the beginnings of her life as a parent and a choreographer. In other words, within this workspace she retheorized dance, choreography, her body, and the construct of time in ways that offered her agency and individuality as an artist, a parent, a woman in the dance world, and a mother within her sociohistorical context.

When she became pregnant, Brown had qualms about the future of her dance career both because she had yet to establish herself as a professional choreographer and because models of mothers in the dance field were very few and far between, especially in her avant-garde circle (Rosenberg 2017, 42). However, after having her son, Adam, Brown did return to making and performing work. She had the opportunity to show her first (in her mind, potentially her last) postpartum solo, *Homemade*, at Judson Memorial Church in 1966. Brown conceived of *Homemade* as one component in a three-part solo, which she called *A String,* and which she premiered as a tryptic in a bill she split with choreographer Deborah Hay. In addition to *Homemade*, *A String* was composed of solos *Motor* and *Outside*, but of the three parts, *Homemade* was the only work that remained in her repertoire over the subsequent decades and which she allowed to be performed at later dates. That is to say, this section of the dance had special and ongoing relevance and utility for her, and so it is this section and its processes of thought, creation, and performance that this chapter will contextualize, depict, and theorize as a means to contemplate her pregnancy and its impact on her work.

In performing *Homemade*, Brown carried a cumbersome reel-to-reel projector on her back, which presented a film by Robert Whitman of her doing the same solo in another, prior scenario. The projector limited the movement opportunities of her torso. Consequently, the bulk of the choreography was expressed through gestures of her arms, legs, and head. Her appendages explored patterns of rotation, they cut spatial arcs, and they pulled her body into quarter and half turns. Sometimes gestures of the arms were followed by movements of her head, and sometimes her head bobbed, rolled, and angled independently. Her legs wobbled, formed loosely balletic passés and arabesques, sprung her into quick and low jumps, skittered, buckled into deep squats, and followed clear linear walking patterns along vectors and curves. Her hands rested on invisible surfaces and manipulated phantom objects, they leant against each other and against her body; sometimes they felt the ground, sometimes her fingers hung down limply, and other times they pulled her body after them into urgent activity. Her arms swung or fidgeted by her sides, they created angular and symmetrical shapes, they undulated uncommittedly, and they darted away from her mischievously. *Homemade* was highly textured, highly abstract, and it kept its secrets—saturating viewers in information, both filmic (from the projector) and somatic, without offering explanation or annotation.

Brown scholar and historian Susan Rosenberg writes in *Trisha Brown: Choreography as Visual Art*, that without contextualization, the gestures composing *Homemade* read as a "private sign language for which the audience lacks a manual" (2017, 41). However, Brown's rehearsal notes, preserved in the Trisha Brown Archive in New York City, and documentation of dancers Mikhail Baryshnikov and Vicky Shick learning the solo in 2000 and 2012, respectively, offer a "manual" to the dance, rendering Brown's gestures more decipherable and thus interrogatable. For instance, as preserved on rehearsal footage, Brown explained to Baryshnikov that each bit of choreography was constituted by the performer “physicaliz[ing] a memory” (Atlas 2000). She elaborated that the dancer needed to enact each memory with “that purity of the first time you try something”—a quality she could stipulate but could not coach or dictate because, she emphasized, it had to come from the dancer’s personal “experience” of doing the movement (ibid.). The notes that Brown compiled when preparing to perform the solo in 1996 revealed that the memories she physicalized were largely from her childhood, and that she aimed to perform them as “microscopic movement[s]” that, although “taken from everyday activities” were “done so small they were unrecognizable” to observers (Teicher 2002, 301). Despite her efforts to obscure them, having her notes in hand to help me decode the choreography, I was able to recognize that in these “microscopic movements,” Brown was, in turns, displaying her muscles like a youth pretending to be a body builder, looking at a wrist watch, blowing up a balloon, slapping her thighs in mock-coquettishness, turning a door knob, doing a tap dance, looking into a mirror, setting up slippers on the floor and then jumping into them, galumphing about as if in shoes too big for her feet, reeling in a fishing line and measuring the caught fish, tickling piano keys, digging in sand, blowing a kiss, nodding obediently at an authority figure, and holding binoculars. Quite thrillingly, from her notes, it also became clear to me that in her gestures, she was parenting: holding, cradling, and kissing an infant as well as lifting a baby from a bassinet. Per her design, all of these moments, and the many others, were squeezed into a mere three minutes of choreography, meaning that each gesture was fleeting, and it rapidly dissolved into other gestures, thereby evading viewers’ facility to register it. This quality of ambiguous evanescence—or what Brown described to art critic Klaus Kertess as “movement that was concretely specific to me [but] abstract to the audience”—sprung from her interest in how she, as the work’s maker, could have an entirely different experience of the dance than its audience

(2004). In having this interest, she was, to a degree, expressing a general esprit de corps of other postmodern choreographers at the time. By this, I mean that she asserted her right to keep her experiences and source material private, in so doing, rebuffing traditional modern dance's fidelity to emotional generosity and "honest" self-expression. For Brown, the fractional and obscured legibility of the piece was ideal because, while she was interested, as the performer, in experiencing how her choreography could be inclusive of her larger corporeality—thus, not simply her body as an art medium, distinct from her personal life—she was not interested in choreographing a theatricalization of her life or sharing a dance that was self-disclosing.

Before performing the bricolage choreography of *Homemade*, composed of gestures she had pulled from her life, Brown affixed the projector to herself with the straps of her baby backpack. Notably, she did not don the baby carrier as a costume; it was functional. It was employed without fanfare or sentiment—black harness over her black leotard—allowing it to matter-of-factly assume a new purpose, one that was integral to the conceptual operationality of her art. Albeit subtly, as with the gestures of parenting within the choreography, Brown pushed her parental identity into slight visibility and semi-relevance while simultaneously presenting herself as abstract art. In other words, Brown included props and moves of parenthood within *Homemade* without making the piece about being a parent, about Brown, or, necessarily, about any*one* or any*thing* at all. The dance existed not to narrate or to represent but to *include* more of herself in what she could make.

The projector that the baby carrier stayed was cumbersome, and Brown allowed the challenges that the apparatus brought to the work. In addition to limiting her range of motion and her ability to articulate her spine, she also had to navigate the large chord attached to it and to accommodate the loud whir of its motor. Reading this dance specifically for the ways that it might signal Brown's response to pregnancy and early parenthood, it is easy to see the projector—a prosthetic jutting from her torso as her pregnant belly recently had (although in inverse contour) and being carried in the very vessel in which she also carried her infant son—as an acknowledgment that she had new constraints within which she needed to work. However, by performing, she was also showing her ability to productively adapt to such constraints, and to respond to them with deep creativity, intellect, and originality. In short, Brown had made a dance that accommodated her many parts and a dance that made the space and gave the time that she needed to not only continue making work as a parent but to make work that was enriched, not hampered, by her experiences of parenthood, even/especially those that challenged her.

Section one: Arriving on the scene, finding Judson, choreographing a new future

Homemade was one of Brown's earliest choreographic works, and it came out of a cluster of entangled phenomena that included her experiences of pregnancy but also her experiences of participation in a particular culture of experimental art, and her desire to shift her personal artistic practice from primarily improvisation to primarily choreography. Thus, exploring herself as a pregnant individual, as a choreographer, and as a unique creative maker were fully enmeshed processes that deeply informed one another and that deeply informed *Homemade*. In addition to exemplifying a new choreographic process and vocabulary, Brown's creative explorations in *Homemade* advanced a secondary, more private, and more practical goal: they allowed her to query and trial how she might continue to choreograph, even if she could not return to her dance career and the avant-garde scene postpartum. Indeed, she had little faith that she would be able to return to dance and performance praxes in the same capacity once a mother, and the values with which she was raised lead her to believe that she should not. In a 2003 interview with New Museum of Contemporary Art curator Trevor Smith, she conceded that while pregnant, she never anticipated that her career would have longevity and, considering the historical and cultural context of her pregnancy, she was skeptical if it would even resume. Afterall, following WWII, in an effort to reestablish a sense of patriotic normalcy and to reify the "American Dream" for which so many had fought and so many had died, women commonly re-assumed conventional housewife roles and accepted a gendered division of labor within their families. Of course, for many, this resumption of domestic duties was less a matter of choice and more one of coercion, as women were actively pushed out of their roles in the labor force to make jobs available to returning servicemen. Nonetheless, as Brown was growing up, domesticity was celebrated in ways unseen since Victorian times, and this attitude stubbornly stuck, seeping into the lives of women in the 1950s and early 1960s. For example, as a college dance student, Brown aimed not to become an artist, but to become a dance teacher—which she subsequently accomplished, briefly serving as dance faculty at Reed College. Looking back on herself as a student, she remarked that teaching dance was her only imaginable goal, even if it was an "ancillary skill after graduation, to reinforce [her] conventional life" (Antenorcruz 1984). She continued, "I had been brought up to think of marriage being a mother and housewife as the most important thing[s]" (ibid.). Consequently, she never considered being an independent choreographer, and the idea of having both a career and a family felt unfathomable. However, after being introduced to other possible futures and breaking out on her own in a new environment, Brown rejected what she called the "middle class values" of her upbringing and committed herself to discovering or creating other options.

Against the backdrop of the tumultuous 1960s, Brown bid farewell to the Pacific Midwest, and after taking a cross country Greyhound Bus ride, arrived in New York City where her new life would begin. For Brown, New York offered "a clean start" and a place to let go of who she “had been” so as to begin personal development as an independent woman and as a choreographer (Goldberg 1980, 34-35). As she later explained in an interview with choreographer, writer, and visual artist Marianne Goldberg, her move from the Westcoast signaled, “a complete break from my family, [and] from my training,” a break that she made so that, her “impulses” could be “freed up” for living and making art (ibid.). In terms of her middle class and, in her mind, conventional family, she knew, “I wanted no part in their values;” likewise, she wished to challenge the values of the codified systems of movement in which she was steeped as a dance student at Mills College. She told Goldberg, as she strove to define herself as an artist, she was stalled because, she recognized, “I hadn’t developed me” (ibid.). She went to New York seeking just such development, for only when she knew herself did she feel that she could know herself as a choreographer. Having renounced her “old” values and seeking to define a new set of values to guide her life and art, she initially adopted those of a community of experimental movement artists with whom she immediately connected through classes at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. She joined their culture and embraced their lingua franca of “everyday” movement as well as their effacement of boundaries between artistic disciplines and between art and everyday life.

In addition to Cunningham’s studio, many of the conversations and creative processes with which Brown was involved during her early days in New York happened in and around the, now storied, Judson Memorial Church in the West Village. Post-World War Two, this, then Baptist, worship space dedicated itself to rethinking the role of church in contemporary society. Pastors determined that Judson would be “a faith-based institution that respond[ed] to the societal issues of its time and place by working and advocating for progressive change—with special attention to the needs of people that many mainstream churches tend[ed] to overlook or find undeserving" (http://classic.judson.org/Historical-Overview accessed, April 15, 2020). Clergy pursued "progressive change" through initiatives like offering interracial student housing as well as pre-Roe v. Wade abortion consultation and referral services. It also housed the first drug treatment facility in the West Village, and it exercised active solidarity with Civil Rights, Gay Rights, and Women's Rights initiatives. Judson Church entered Brown's life because it also became a platform for multi-genre innovative artists to share work. In its art gallery, pioneers like Yoko Ono, Allen Kaprow, and Claes Oldenburg found receptive audiences and an enthusiastic advocate for their highly experimental projects in Minister Al Carmines. Carmines had been recruited with the express purpose of building community through the arts, and with his support, Judson became a venue for not only visual art and community theater, but it also incubated the Judson Dance Theater Collective (JDTC) of which Brown was a founding and integral member.

The JDTC was interested not only in making dances but in revolutionizing what it meant to make dance, what constituted dance, and who could be a dancer. In an interview with the author Anne Livet that later appeared in Livet's book *Contemporary Dance*, Brown described a typical JDTC dance as such:

> the performers looked at each other and the audience, [...] breathed audibly, ran out of breath, sweated, talked things over [...] behave[ed] more like human beings, revealing what was thought of as deficiencies as well as their skills (1978, 48).

In other words, and to Brown's great excitement when she first became involved, Judson productions emphasized what was ordinary as opposed to what was extraordinary about dancers' bodies. Eventually, the work that JDTC produced made big and lasting waves, drastically shifting the scope and investments of dance as an art form far beyond the bounds of its collective and causing a wake still felt today in many dance communities around the world. As Brown later reflected, at Judson, "olde modern dance, exhausted by the battering it took on all fronts, keeled over like an elephant…[and] rested" (2003, 290). When it eventually "rose again," as postmodernism, thanks in no small part to Brown's own work, modern dance was "changed forever" (ibid.). The ideals of the Judson dancers, which so inspired Brown in her early time in New York, were delineated in a declaration penned by one of the other JDTC members and Brown's close collaborator, Yvonne Rainer. Rainer closed an essay that she wrote for the *Tulane Drama Review* in 1965, with a series of statements that summarized her and the collective's investments, and these statements have since been excised from the longer essay and shared widely as the "No Manifesto." In this manifesto, Rainer announced that their art said

> No to spectacle.
> No to virtuosity.
> No to transformations and magic and make-believe.
> No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.
> No to the heroic.
> No to the anti-heroic.
> No to trash imagery.
> No to involvement of performer or spectator.
> No to style.
> No to camp.
> No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.
> No to eccentricity.
> No to moving or being moved.

As part of the JDTC saying "No!" to all of these things, Rainer, Brown, and their colleagues used dance to experience and show their bodies as "neutral," thus in no way extraordinary, forms. For instance, they discarded staged accoutrements and formal technique in their pursuit of an unaffected, "everyday" style of self-presentation through dance.

Brown's first performances in New York, inside and outside of the JDTC, were not in "dances" so much as in what were increasingly being called "happenings" (although the line between the two forms was thin, perforated, and open to interpretation). In performances, Brown primarily did movement improvisations in response to specific assignments, typically selected by someone else and by chance. For example, in the 1963 work *Nuclei for Simone Forti*, which she performed in collaboration with the experimental theater group Fluxus, Brown received randomly selected poetic prompts such as "seeming to be generally like clocks are," which she would then spontaneously embody before the audience. While Brown found this work exhilarating, she was unsatisfied by being seen as only an adroit improvisor because she came to New York to become a choreographer. The "downtown" art scene was not Brown's first or fullest encounter with improvisation, and prior experiences had spurred her nettlesome relationship to it and her desire to move beyond it into choreography. For example, she had improvised movement regularly in the workshops of choreographer Anna Halprin, which she had attended to supplement her studies at Mills. With Halpin, she said, "I encountered, for the first time, the mercurial surges of an intuitive process where physical proposals and responses were dished and dashed on a whiz-by playing field" (2003, 289). Brown appreciated the energy and awareness that she accessed while improvising, but she questioned if improvisation, in and of itself, was finished art. During workshops, Brown wrote Halprin daily letters asking, "When do we get to make dances?" or stating emphatically, that she had had enough improvisation and she "would like to learn choreography" (Rosenberg 2016, 30). Despite her discontentedness, from Halprin, Brown gained practice in following intuition and impulses in dance as well as practice analyzing the physical changes she experienced during the course of improvising. These were lessons she carried forward with her into her improvisation practices in New York, even as she strove to venture outside of them so as to make her own choreography.

Brown had some training in choreography. However, while she wanted to choreograph professionally, she also wanted to be a different type of choreographer than she had studied to be through her college matriculation. As an undergraduate and in classes at the American Dance Festival, she practiced making dances, but consistently via the teachings of Louis Horst (the longtime musical collaborator of choreographer Martha Graham, who is often called the "mother of modern dance"). For Horst, choreography had to be rooted in repeatable formal structures, but Horst's structures were of little interest to Brown, just as Graham's aesthetics and qualities of movement were of little interest to her. Brown sought different options for underlying choreographic structures; she wanted to discover definite and repeatable formal containers that were in no way formulaic.

After shifting coasts, she found what she was looking for in the composition classes of musician Robert Ellis Dunn who was teaching at the Cunningham Studio. Brown joined Dunn's class in 1961 at the encouragement of Simone Forti, who had urged her to move to New York in the first place after befriending her in one of Halprin's six-week workshops in California (where the two also met Rainer). In his class, Brown encountered the compositional principles of experimental composer John Cage, which Dunn translated from music to movement. She also encountered the group of colleagues with whom she would establish the JDTC. From Dunn, Brown developed an appreciation for how dances could be made in unconventional ways, as well as strategies for parsing the relationships between improvisation and choreography so that they might exist symbiotically in her own work. For example, she embraced the Cageian proposal of occupying two roles within a dance: firstly, that of the maker, who contributes a "score," and secondly, the performer who spontaneously responds to the score as a set of strict instructions but instructions that could be realized in live performance in ways un-anticipatable even to herself.

One year after moving to New York, in what Brown later described as her "choreographic" debut, a 1962 solo called *Trillium*, she gave herself a score, which was tripart like the three-petaled trillium flowers that bloomed around her childhood home. The score was "stand, sit, and lie down." So long as she followed these instructions, her movement expressions could take myriad forms. In other words, in this dance, she presented choreography as a repeatable structure, that did not necessitate repeatable movements. *Trillium's* improvisations were tailored specifically to herself as the performer in that they showcased the facets and pushed at the edges of her unique movement facility, instincts, and problem-solving abilities. In making the work, she made a case for dance as something ephemeral, self-erasing, necessarily in-the-moment (like a plucked trillium flower soon to wilt and expire), and as something sourced from her unique kinesthetic sensibilities, individualized body, and distinctive physical faculties. Or so I have read. *Trillium* left no record of itself, save three enigmatic and dramatic photographs—one of Brown in a handstand, another of her falling backwards in space, and a third of her seemingly in flight with her body suspended completely parallel to the floor (which she explained to those who inquired was an airborne response to the prompt "lie down") (Rosenberg 2017, 32). Also remaining are a handful of reviews from critics and colleagues. Some critics expressed frustration that the solo seemed unfinished, unstructured, or was not a completed dance but merely, raw "material." The dance was just barely juried into a showcase for young choreographers at the American Dance Festival after juror Bessie Schönberg (who initially felt affronted, if not offended, by it) had a change of heart and pushed for its admittance—still adding the caveat that while Brown's was the "most original" artist, "Can we suggest she try and make a dance?" (1962). That being so, per the reviews I could locate, all who saw it agreed that Brown was a dance practitioner of uncommon and extraordinary abilities, and, as critic Jill Johnson put it, a "radiant performer" (1962). In short, even if dance aficionados were skeptical of her skills as a choreographer, they celebrated her skills as a dancer.

However, the very same attributes fêted by reviewers were, as Brown perceived it, disparaged by her JDTC peers. Brown felt that her colleagues interpreted *Trillium* as flaunting her personal abilities and thereby flying in the face of JDTC ethos. As she reflected in an interview with *Vanity Fair* some years later, "The great irony of Judson was the good joke they pulled on me: I happened to be a virtuosic dancer, and they said 'no' to virtuosity" (Sommer 1985, 96). Describing her experience of performing *Trillium,* Brown wrote in her journal, "I was distinctly able to levitate," but while she delighted in the kinesthesia of her powers of buoyancy and suspension, "peer pressure against virtuosity" from her colleagues (who said, "No to spectacle" and "No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image") dissuaded her from continuing to build choreography that put her singular abilities on seeming display (Mar 3, 1978). Thus, while later expressing tempered acrimony about the decision, at the time, she opted for solidarity with her collaborators and their collective, nascent vision of dance. Consequently, after *Trillium*, while she continued to explore relationships between choreography and improvisation, she moved away from work that was demonstrative of her physical talents. She shifted her focus toward what she considered to be more "objective" and "intellectual" dimensions of choreography, which required her to reevaluate her perceptions of the functionality and vocabulary of dance movement. As she recollected to Goldberg for a retrospective interview in *Dance Theater Journal*, "I got the picture from everyone around me to tighten up my act" (1991, 6). Taking this feedback to heart and wanting to "fit in with the group," she got to work creating a "systematized framework in which to behave" as a choreographer and as a performer that squared with the JDTC values (ibid.).

Within this period of transitioning into being a dance maker while concurrently questioning the nature of dance and re-committing to the Judson ideals voiced in Rainer's "No Manifesto," Brown also realized that she was pregnant. For Brown, considering her investments and preoccupation with self-discovery at the time that she became pregnant, her pregnancy was not, in her estimation, inherently, a setback. She was already craving an opportunity for deep introspection and contemplation of who she was as an artist and the type of work she could and should make. Thus, initially, she devoted herself to making the time of her pregnancy useful toward these ends. She decided to utilize the nine months to clarify and solidify her choreographic processes and tenets through seeking isolation and embracing experimentation. Consequently, before her pregnancy was "showing" and after she finished a previous commitment to perform in Robert Rauschenberg's 1965 piece *Spring Training*, she took a hiatus from performance and studio work. She paused and shifted herself adjacent to JDTC. During this break, she spent time with the poet Jackson Mac Low's "action pack"—1400 playing cards with commands, structured around the principle of the *i Ching*, that disassembled and reassembled language in unpredictable and, at times, poetically fortuitous ways. She also wrote to several people—including composer Earle Brown, artist/musician Walter de Maria, and Halprin—and asked them to mail her "scores" for dances. She saw in sets of drawn playing cards and in each written response of a "score" a self-contained "dance," thus something not needing to be translated into movement or performed by dancers in order to be, in her eyes, choreographic. Her expanding, open-ended understanding of dance and of choreographic processes anticipated later works like her 1969 dance *Skymap*, which involved no danced steps, instead offering the audience as "choreography" a scenario to collectively imagine while they shared the spacetime of a performance with her. In other words, during pregnancy, she succeeded in advancing her goal of redefining a relationship with dance that she, as a budding independent artist, found exciting; personal; promising; and distinctive from what she had previously encountered in classes, workshops, and collaborations. She also found one that, unlike *Trillium*, did not hinge on her own virtuosic performance abilities to make an impact on her audience. Feeling that tensions between her own interests and those of her colleagues were reconciled, for three years, Brown affiliated herself exclusively with the JDTC and relinquished her connections to more "conventional" models of dance so as to fully participate in the experimentalism of the Judson art scene. Then, even as she gravitated away from Judson, she spent two more decades presenting "nontraditional" works in "nontraditional" contexts and refusing the values of modern dance in which she was trained. However, later in her career, the entente dissolved, and she actively turned away from the JDTC philosophies, reembracing both virtuosity and traditional theatrical stages. She also, over the decades, refused invitations to participate in commemorative celebrations of the JDTC or to sanction the revival of works that she had made, which were considered exemplary of "No Manifesto" ethos (Rosenberg, 52). However, even as she moved more deeply into her own philosophy and process, which inevitably and increasingly took her farther away from their shared belief system, she remained on good terms with most of her early colleagues.

In the mid-to-late 1960s, as, starting with her pregnancy, her professional, personal, and biological timelines and experiences of herself became entangled, Brown's creative research adapted and made space to engage with these entanglements. Accordingly, in her ongoing effort to define herself as an artist, she veered toward epistemes of time and space and innovative contemplations of pastness and futurity, she also looked for ways that she might approach her present and future without limiting or segregating different facets of her identity. In my estimation, it was her attunement to her bodyself as it changed with pregnancy that offered her access to the perceptual information that she needed to advance these larger goals.

Section two: Experiencing and choreographing self as a nonunified subject

In *Homemade*, Brown's presence is multiple. She is not a singular character within a linear narrative. She is not a consistent presence or a stable subject. She is forever superimposing herself on herself, dividing herself, spreading herself, and doing/being many tasks/roles at a time, and I contend that this complex, diversiform performative presence extended from her perceptions of her pregnant bodyself. According to philosopher Iris Marion Young, who wrote her essay "Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation" to theorize from her personal experiences of pregnancy, for a pregnant individual, "Time stretches out, movements and days take on a depth," and as the individual experiences her bodyself changing, "Each day, each week, she looks at herself for signs of transformation" (2005 [1984], 54). In other words and contrary to the popular idea that pregnancy is something from which to recover or from which to get one's body "back," per Young, pregnancy, perforce and consistently, "transforms" people in real, intriguing, and ongoing ways. In other words, in contrast to medical and social discussions of pregnancy as a phenomenon with a linear and bounded temporarily, pregnancy cannot be encapsulated into a uniform sequence along a preset trajectory. It has no path that can be retraced, thus, there is no going "back" to a prior bodyself postpartum. Rather, one's body becomes a palimpsest, which neither erases its old corporeality nor becomes something totally new in kind. In other words, the personal transformations that take place during pregnancy are more than physiobiological, and they certainly do not cease or neatly retrograde at the end of nine months. What is more, I would add, is that after giving birth, what many call the long "fourth trimester" of continued change can endure for years or forever, and even this phase does not end with a recovery of prior self but rather with an equipoise and an inclination toward a next phase of development. All of this said, Young continues, because of the pervasive social and medical language suggesting that women will recuperate from pregnancy and return to their prior selves, the indelible and manifold developments of bodyself during the so-called trimesters cause distress for pregnant individuals. As Young explains, a pregnant person "fears a loss of identity, as though on the other side of the birth she herself [becomes] a transformed person, such that she would 'never be the same again'," and this "never be the same" is interpreted as a loss of self, hence inspiring a crisis of identity, rather than an expansion or liberation of identity (55).

Fortunately for Brown, pregnancy came at a time when she was widely open to transformation in all aspects of her life. She had no desire to remain the same. She was looking to develop and surprise herself as a person and as an artist. Thus, I contend that she attended to her pregnant body with appreciation for how the new experiences of embodied self that it afforded could inform her larger sense of who she was, who she had been, who she would become, and who/when she was within her art. At the time of her pregnancy, artistic creation was for Brown a practice of breaking habits; it also involved acting in accordance with developing a decidedly multipart sense of herself (the pre-New York Brown, the dancer, the woman, the pre-pregnancy and the pregnant Brown, the choreographer, the JDTC collaborator, etc.). Artmaking provided her the opportunity to explore her multiplicity of selves, and her postpartum work demonstrated how choreographic processes offered her attentiveness to her unfolding experiences of how different components of herself productively interrelated. Furthermore, as she used dance to capture and communicate her new, in-flux perceptions of bodyself, she altered the spatial and temporal organizations—in other words the structures and aesthetics—of dance, her presentations of dancing bodies, and her notion of what it is that dances *do*.

In her essay, Young also argues that the pregnant subject is “doubled” in her relationship to time. She exists in a “unique temporality” in which she “can experience herself as split between past and future” (2005 [1984], 47). Consequently, in Young’s model, the pregnant individual is not a unified subject, and as such, cannot be understood by others or be known to herself, as a lived experience, via canonical perceptual paradigms, such as those of existential philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This is because such paradigms assume sensing a unified, fully integrated self is a precondition for experiences of subjecthood and self-awareness. As Merleau-Ponty wrote in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, “the universal I is the background against which … effulgent forms stand out: it is through the one present thought that I achieve the unity of all my thoughts” (2002 [1945], 473). In other words, to have coherent thoughts, assuming this is one’s goal, one must have a coherent sense of self. However, Brown was not looking for “coherent” thoughts so much as creative means to think new thoughts and the choreographic means to think in new ways. While for Merleau-Ponty, percieving oneself as unified was an experience of power and clarity, for Brown, embracing the opportunity, via pregnancy, to know herself as, per Young, a split subject proved to be artistically investing, personally empowering, and choreographically clarifying.

Feminist phenomenologist Christine Battersby in her book *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* challenges the idea that metaphysics built around a unified subject (as articulated by for example Kant and Kierkegaard as well as Merleau-Ponty) is unaffected by issues of sexual difference (1998). She traces women’s perceived self-disorientation (also described by Young) and women’s resultant feelings of uneasiness to phallocentric “Western” metaphysics. She argues that in “Western” societies, hegemonic ways of knowing have always privileged *being* over *becoming* because they were distinguished from the point of view of individuals who could not fathom what she calls “being two,” or becoming more, because they had not and could not experience such phenomena (1998). In other words, the (male) bodies/minds/selves who mapped out the paradigms foundational to scholarly discourse and broader patterns of “Western” cultural thought, including that expressed in the arts, had not experienced cycles of menstruation and gestation; thus, they centered and normalized stable and consistent experiences of bodyself and built knowledge that privileged their own perspectives and corporeal possibilities. Furthermore, they created systems of knowledge that naturalized the concept of autonomous subjecthood and, thus, that othered or pathologized bodies in flux or bodies that support multiple subjectivities. In the process, they othered and pathologized female reproductive biology and the bodyselves, in part, constituted by such biology.

I contend that Brown, during her pregnancy, arrived at assessments similar to Battersby’s as she began to reevaluate and amend the JDTC’s dance practices. As I will subsequently argue in greater depth, *Homemade* was the first of her works to challenge her colleagues’ dedication to presenting “neutral,” impersonal, ostensibly ungendered bodies in their work. I contend that experiences of the multiplicitous and sexed nature of her pregnant body revealed to her the implicit maleness of the assumption that dancing bodies could and should consistently provide a “neutral,” stable, blank canvas for artmaking. As Brown proposed through her postpartum work, art is limited in what it can explore and accomplish if it remains preoccupied simply, as many JDTC works did, with immediate experiences of *being*-ness, as opposed to *becoming*-ness. In contrast to the hegemonic discourses troubled by Young and Battersby, Brown’s immediate postpartum choreography theorized the self as not an entity that remains constant through change but as something in complex relationships with former and potential selves—a self in constant transformations, revisions, and re-presentations; a self with a flexible past and future; and a self in the future anterior—a self that *will have been*. In her work, to borrow Battersby's description of feminist phenomenology, selfhood is not presented as "a permanent, underlying substrate that persists beneath matter and that remains always the same" (1998, 6). Instead, bodyselfhood is valued for its changeability as well as for how it might imagine/evince what will come to pass before it transpires. In brief, *Homemade* revealed her ability, as a choreographer, to locate the many bodyselves within her immediate bodyself and, through her performing body, to reify and share them with her audience as well as access them for her own development and self-inquiry.

In making *Homemade*, Brown questioned, and invited the audience to also question, where her dancing body began and where/if it ended in space and time. Exemplifying this idea, she explained that in her choreography, she performed "everyday gesture[s] so that the audience does not know whether I have stopped dancing or not" (Teicher 2002, 82). Furthermore, she choreographically played with the scale and scope of the "present," stretching the physical and conceptual boundaries of what the present could accommodate and also increasing its dimensionality within the frame of her work. Brown accomplished as much by tapping into the memories that her body housed, experiences from her past that were part of her present because they inevitably informed/composed her present body. The gestures of *Homemade* were all gestures reperformed out of context from prior moments in her bodily history spanning from when she was a child herself to when she was tending to her own child.

Again, Battersby proposed that women have the unique perceptual ability to think and make from a doubled experience of self. She conceived of one being two—and thus one individual having doubled powers of perception, cognition, and empathy as well as doubled investments and positions for self-expression—specifically in terms of the intersubjectivity between mother and fetus/child. However, feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva complicated and expanded the idea of experiential two-ness beyond this particular scenario. She acknowledged that pregnancy is experienced as "the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject." However, she said pregnancy is not just a doubling up of the body, but a "redoubling up of the body" (1981, 31). It is not only the experience of "separation and coexistence of the self and an other [the fetus]," as Battersby suggests, but it also involves redoublings of "nature and consciousness," and "of physiology and speech" (by "speech" meaning self-representation) (ibid.). Battersby warned that pregnant women, to their own and unnecessary detriment, look for perceptual affirmation of subjecthood as an experience of singularity and unity. However, as they search for self-certainly and constancy in their changing bodies, in an effort to cohere to normalized phallocentric metaphysics and hierarchies of value, pregnancy will inevitably be, in Kristeva's words, a "fundamental challenge to identity" (ibid). Because it is "accompanied by a fantasy of totality" and of "narcissistic completeness," pregnancy will provoke "a sort of instituted socialized, natural psychosis," meaning women, to their great physic strain/disintegration, will try to enclose their multiple and qualitatively different experiences of personhood within a forced sense of constancy, thinking that experiencing themselves in the permanent singular is not only desirable but exigent (ibid.). Kristeva countered the necessity of corporeal stability and singularity of subjecthood saying that becoming a mother offers new ontological understanding of subjectivity, which "leads the mother into the labyrinths of an experience that, without the child, she would only rarely encounter" within patriarchy (ibid.). This experience, which Kristeva defined as "love for an other," is perceived through "the slow, difficult, and delightful apprenticeship in attentiveness, gentleness, [and] forgetting oneself," thus, not, as Battersby suggests, in an experience merely of two-ness, as two agential subjects occupying one body (ibid.). While Kristeva's loved "other" could certainly be interpreted as a women's fetus/offspring, I read it also as the woman's emergent, transformed, beloved self. In other words, I read her as saying, the individual has the opportunity to notice, accept, and romance new aspects of herself as she experiences them in her continual processes of transformation.

I argue that Brown, like Kristeva discovered in pregnancy a starting point for exploring, accepting, and embracing more aspects of herself within her artistic creation. Choreography was, for her, the vehicle for self-courtship. Kristeva concludes her thoughts on maternity saying that "the ability to succeed in this path," meaning love for an other, be it child or, in my reading, newly-discovered aspects of herself, "without masochism and without annihilating one's affective, intellectual, and professional personality—such would seem to be the stakes to be won through guiltless maternity" (1981, 31). Experiencing pregnancy as such, rather than feeling guilty that part of oneself has been lost through becoming a parent, maternity, she continues, "becomes a creation in the strong sense of the term" (ibid.). The mother (re)creates herself and her world. In my reading, Brown's work reiterates Kristeva's notion that the ability to create newness—not just create a baby, but engage in the critical and radical work of creating new powers of perception and expression and new identifications—can be concurrent with and informed by pregnancy. Such work becomes more radical still if through such creation, individuals discover deeper capacities to love self, other, and the other within the self. I reason that this work of self-realization, -expansion, and -acceptance was integral to Brown's processes with *Homemade*.

Section three: Making time

Brown's choreography for *Homemade* enclosed time as she knew it through her body into what she called a "self-containing loop" (Rosenberg 2017, 36). In making this loop, she claimed a spacetime to define herself as a choreographer, to understand herself as a new parent, and to explore how these two ongoing experiences fit together, informed each other, and fit with other chronologically dispersed lived experiences of herself. Accessing numerous available pasts in her present, she suggested that she also had many available futures as well as the possibility, via art, to stop the proverbial march of time. She thereby created conditions for a present and future that were undetermined, unprecedented, quite possibly previously unimaginable, but that she could actively and creatively manifest through her artistic production.

Homemade was indeed homemade. Alone in her living quarters, while pregnant and then a new parent, Brown workshopped material, and rather than using dance to escape or eschew her maternal body and home setting, she made choreography inclusive of her new reality. While before her pregnancy, as a choreographer, she had thought of her dancing body primarily for its distinctive abilities and instincts, Rosenberg argues that during her pregnancy, she began thinking about her unique body as an "archive" of distinctive movements and memories that could, in and of themselves, be the building blocks of choreography (40). In my reading of it, Brown's interest in her body as an archive differed from other more recent theorizations of bodies as archives, most notably those of performance theorists Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider. For Taylor, "the archive" is always in tension with "the repertoire"; "the archive" is that which can endure with some permanence through time—such as a text or, in the case of dance, documentation of choreography—whereas "the repertoire" is composed of ephemera like orality or live performance, which does not outlast its enactment (2003). Schneider, on the other hand, presents the body as itself an archive of information and dance as a medium of transmission of archived information from one body to another via gestures that are “interval crossers as well as interval openers;” for her, moving from one’s archive is largely about communication and the making of meaning between individuals (2011; 2019, 146). In contrast to both Taylor and Schneider, Brown took a more Duchampian approach of sourcing from her archive (her embodied memories) for “readymade” components that could be repurposed toward new non-communicative ends. When reperformed, neither were the prior meanings of her memories sustained nor were they conveyed to her audience—in short, as choreography, they were not intended to share her past with others. She was not making a Tayloresque move of physicalizing memories (repertoire) so that they endured as a re-invigoration of her history in a kind of choreographic archive. Nor was she making a Schneideresque move of attempting to connect bodies and their histories through gestures which would bring the past into a shareable present where collective meaning could be made. Brown’s process was much more private and individualistic, and she brought her past into the present, not to transmit it or preserve it but to open it up to new personally advantageous functionality as movement “material.” More than anything, she tapped into her embodied archive as a means to forward her JDTC-aligned drive to redefine what movements constitute “choreography” as well as her Cageian interest, stimulated by Dunn’s teaching, in redesigning choreographic structures so that they had non-chronological logic (Rosenberg 2017, 20). In other words, sourcing from her life offered her the welcome challenge of imposing a new order on her life events so that they did not cohere into a narrative but rather were performative in other ways.

Thus, as a new parent, she observed her everyday choreographies and excavated actions of caregiving from her immediate experiences to fuel her art. As she had in Dunn’s class, she deliberately organized movements that she “found” in her life into a dance. She also revisited an exercise from Halprin's classes of taking interest in the choreographic potential of "tasks." As Halprin taught her, "tasks" allow for more creativity and indeterminacy in art because they are "systems that … knock out cause and effect" (Rainer 1965, 144). In Halprin's workshops, Brown had done tasks/dances like sweeping the floor, stacking boxes, and dressing and undressing; and now for *Homemade*, she did tasks/dances involving soothing a baby. Brown described "tasks" as ordinary actions executed as if she was not performing for an audience but was instead, in her words, "off alone somewhere" doing them privately and for her own purposes (Brayshaw and Witts 2013, 120). Before parenthood, being "off alone somewhere" was an imaginative exercise to inform a mood or a performance affect and aesthetic. However, during her pregnancy and in her early days as a new mother, Brown was indeed, "off alone somewhere," without her dance colleagues, executing "ordinary" actions, but this time, not for the sake of their appreciation as "ordinary" by an observing public, but rather for her own interrogation of what they were and what they could be for her personally.

Of course, in addition to new parenthood, Brown also "found" movement for *Homemade* in her distant past. She incorporated movements—which she again performed with heightened attention, commitment, and body/mind integrity—from her childhood, growing up, the youngest of three, in Washington state on the Olympic Peninsula. In recollecting her childhood, she said

> Aberdeen has two dazzling edges, the Pacific Ocean due West and the Olympic National Forest due North…. I climbed trees, pole-vaulted, played football and basketball under the tutelage of my older brother, dug razor clams, hiked, hunted geese, duck, pheasant, fished the local rivers…. I did all of this all of my childhood and then went away to Mills College to major in modern dance, whatever that was (2003, 289).

As her choreographic notebooks corroborate, the kinesthetic training that she received from her childhood activities informed *Homemade* more than her formal dance training. In performing the solo, she remembered, and thereby performatively re-membered, seaside pastimes like digging for clams and drawing in the sand as well as child's play like catch and blowing up balloons (Rosenberg 2017, 41). By re-membering her memories through restructuring them in her choreography, Brown broke them into pieces and then reconvened them in abstracted but, for her, experientially rich ways. Specifically, she reassembled them in a manner that preserved the mind-body integrity of each memory for her as the performer, meaning as she accessed memories through her body while dancing, she also accessed the sensory information and the emotions connected to the movements inherent in these memories. In other words, there were two layers to her approach of re-memberment. First, in terms of structure, she dissociated the memories from her personal chronology and put them back together into the body of the piece according to different formally inclined rational. In the final choreography, re-membered "tasks," both maternal and childlike, sat together in an aleatoric fashion, offering no sense of progression—the dance did not start at a beginning and move forward in time chronologically. Rather, she sequenced these found "units" from the near and far past, in a way that defied not only a sense of story, but the logic of liner time entirely. Secondly, in terms of phenomenology as a methodology, while performing, she personally re-experienced each memory as a full corporeal-cognitive phenomenon, and she did so not to conserve this phenomenon as it was (thus, to carry the past forward) but rather, to access what, as a distinct and complex lived experience, it offered her creatively in the here and now. Thus, in *Homemade*, re-memberment was utilized as a bipartite tactic offering her not only access to the past but the opportunity to unravel the very fabric of history and reweave it in what was for her a more sensorially and conceptually stimulating fashion. As followed, rather than holding her in a past, re-memberment both helped her to move on and helped her to recognize the somatic resources, creativity, and plurality of embodied options which could augment her experiences of herself in the present.

Brown appreciated that to make choreography and to remember its "steps," the steps had to "take a visual presence in the mind," and, as she wrote in her 2002 retrospective essay "How to Make a Modern Dance When the Sky's the Limit," she was curious about "method[s] to decant that vision" into a full material presence in the present (290). Thus, she sought to performatively "decant" what was in her past through putting her memories into, what she called, a "lived score"—lived as opposed to a performed or reperformed score. In my reading of it, her process of decanting, or turning an image (a symbol) into a lived experience, involved filling in the sensory information, including the affective and kinesthetic information, that she believed were stored in her body, just as the image was stored in her brain. As Brown explained to Rainer in a 1979 conversation published in *October* Magazine, in *Homemade's* choreographic framework, "The image [in] the memory, must occur in performance at precisely the same moment as the action derived from it" (32). In other words, in her process, there was no translating of short- or long-term memory to choreography or interpretation/intellectualization of her past so as to make it relevant for her present. Instead of working from the image of a memory in her mind and converting it to symbolic or expressive movement, she streamlined the process by tapping directly into and then expressing directly from her embodied archive. Thus, decanting was, I posit, a process of making the image perceptually dimensional for her the performer by maintaining its connections to how her body originally experienced the source of that memory. In other words, she appreciated that her memories were not archived as if they were on film—as if witnessed by another person—they were archived as lived experiences that she had perceived and could once again perceive. Through their re-performance they were wholistically reactivated.

Thus, while starting from recognizing her memories as a "visual presence in [her] mind," she then explored the presence that they had in her body—her capacity to re-member them physically. Subsequently, while dancing, she "lived"—rather than portrayed or represented—these "memory-units," enacting each personal instance in a non-pantomimic and non-affected way (Rosenberg 2017, 43). She also enacted each as only she could; in other words, she re-membered her memories as choreography inextricably tied to her own lived experiences and thus, her own life and bodyselfhood. As follows, no other dancer could replicate this exact choreography, for no other performer had access to the corporeal-cognitive phenomena constitutive of each "unit."

Moreover, in my reading of *Homemade*, through her processes of re-memberment and decantation, she insisted on a present that could hold all of her past identities and, in that way, offer her innumerable immediate possibilities and a fully open future. Looked at within the context of her life, when she was pregnant—in other words, during a period of fluctuation and liminality, where her future in the arts felt uncertain—Brown challenged the idea that time progressed linearly, inevitably in a single and preordained direction, thus, that her future was predestined, just as her past was closed. Instead, she let the past disrupt and merge with the present, revealing it as not finished and not behind her, but rather as immediately available and a space in which she could continue to be. In other words, rather than presenting memories as nostalgia or as imitative of her life, she used performance to make her memories physical and present-tense and, thus, expressly underivative, utterly specific, and personally, privately, and immediately enabling.

One tool that had primed her for “living” her score was her improvisation practice. Within her choreography, she embodied each “unit” with the qualities and attentions of dance improvisation. As she explained, “If you are improvising … your senses are heightened; you’re using your wits, thinking;” in short, “everything is working at once” (Brayshaw and Witts 2014, 123). Put another way, improvisation disallows for simply *going through the motions* because it requires total psychophysical integration and activation. Brown found it problematic and a puzzle for her as a choreographer that choreography is, necessarily, in the past, meaning, having already been made and thus lacking the immediacy of improvisation. Consequently, “The transition from improvisation (you’ll never see that again) to choreography (a dance form that can be precisely repeated) required great effort” for her to do in a way she embraced as uncompromising and productive for her as an artist (qtd. Rosenberg 2017, 36). However, she found a promising way forward in *Homemade*, because she fully committed to *doing*, not merely evoking, what she remembered, and thus *being*, rather than alluding to, different facets of her identity, which, importantly (in contrast to other work in her creative sphere), included her new parental identity.

In addition to exploring the archive of her body, in *Homemade,* Brown played with time and its perception by incorporating the 16mm color film of her performance of the solo. *Homemade’s* choreographic proposition and presentation required the audience to split or spread its attention between her live body and her filmed body while also seeing these two bodies as one in the same, perhaps wholly interchangeable. Brown explained that “the temporal gap between the two events,” meaning the filmed and live dances, “escaped temporal limits to imaginatively occupy a ‘forever’ as a self-contained artwork” (qtd. Rosenberg 2017, 44). This self-contained forever reinforced the “temporal loop” of her lived score, allowing her to, once again, choreographically conflate past and present into an entirely new and open creative field. Regarding her filmed and live presences, Brown explained, "*Homemade* requires the seamless self-identity of the dancer in both components" (48). Just as the audience's attention was split (or dispersed and thus expanded) so too was Brown's. Both dancing Browns were essential for the presence of *Homemade*, the conceptual artwork and the performative experience. In short, time had to exist in/as multiple as a precondition for her solo to do its work.

Initially, Brown conceived of *Homemade* as a collaboration with Whitman, the filmmaker amongst the "Bobs downtown" with whom she liked to work—other Bobs including "Bob" Rauchenberg, "Bob" Morris, and "Bobby" Hewitt (Brown 2003). However, once it was made, she realized that actually, "I was in collaboration with myself" (ibid.). The filmed Brown offered a synecdoche for the many versions of herself (child and adult, rural and urban, nonpregnant and pregnant, woman and artist, parent and professional, mother and daughter, improvisor and choreographer, etc.) currently in dialogue with one another as she sought to understand how she would self-define moving forward. The film allowed her performing body to be further stretched and looped in time. She explained, "I was trying to stay in synch with myself as a kind of solipsistic field of pleasure" (ibid.). In her decision to have the film accompany her live performance and in her subsequent in-the-moment performative responses to the projection of herself, she experienced and presented herself in not only non-singular and multi-dimensional terms but also in overtly multi-temporal terms.

In performance, as Brown moved, the projector on her back also moved, meaning that, depending on her orientation, the film was projected on the ceiling, the floor, and even into the eyes of the audience. In this way, her play with time became multimodal and dimensionally spatialized for spectators. In the film as on stage, she wore a projector, creating a Droste effect—

as in the 1904 Droste Cocoa package, in which an image contains its own image, which contains its own image, and so on. This created what art historians call a *mise en abyme*; the viewer seemed to encounter an abyss that put spacetime in chaos. For Brown, the film showed an ambiguous past (or pasts) in which the dance already happened or also happens, and, in performance, her live and projected choreographies happened in near lockstep. However, unlike for instance the live-feed video option available to choreographers today, which offers multiple vantage points of a singular ephemeral present, Brown's video expanded and deepened the temporality of the performance and pulled attention to its historicity, even as it emphasized the ambiguity of this historicity.

As her live timing occasionally differed slightly from the film, Brown showed that no two performances of the same choreography/self are ever exactly the same and that this was because the body is a different sort of archive than film; it inscribes information in a different way. In contrast to the film, on stage, she did not (re)preform the steps, again, she "decanted" each memory composing the choreographic score so as to "live" it. This required in-the-moment recognition, retrieval, and embodiment of memories so that the dance did not become, "ground down," "memorized…to death," or affectively flattened and intellectually blunted (Trisha Brown, notebook entry. May 1978, Trisha Brown Archive, New York City). In other words, she refused to present dance as motions to go through to achieve a set aesthetic outcome. After all, she had rejected the choreographic system that she learned as a dance student, which required a finished dance to look and do the same things every time that it was performed. For Brown, this style of dance in which she was steeped as a dance student was no different from presenting a prerecorded film as choreography, meaning the vital, thinking body performing the work was ancillary; the dance was already made and only needed to be shown to a new audience. For

Brown, the performative challenge of *Homemade* to synch with herself had more to do with her experience dancing than with what the audience saw. It was a perceptual goal—a challenge to know time differently and dialogically within her body—more than an aesthetic goal. Thus, on the occasions that her live performance became slightly off time with the film, this did not mean that she was no longer in "synch with [her]self." Afterall, *herself* encompassed her choreographies on both film and stage as well as her larger choreographies of life. In other words, her process and performance posed the question to herself of if she could be "in synch" with her *whole* self, including her in-process self*,* and if dancing could facilitate the synch.

Whitman's film did nothing to make Brown's "memory units" more coherent. In the moments when he had zoomed in on a particular gesture or facial expression, such gestures become more visible, but not more legible. By displaying her "memory units" duplicated, amplified, but still leaving them ambiguous, Brown emphasized that while her personal biography was doubly present in the work, it remained insistently private, and while she might show her personal body and share her personal history, only she knew what they meant. In other words, layering the film with the live performance helped her reveal that she was concealing things and that her "vignettes of memory" offered resources for how she could know, experience, and express herself, as opposed to restrictions on who she was or how she could be fitted to existing narratives that were outside of her personal lived experiences of self in time.

In aspiring to define her own future, it was important for Brown to break away from pervasive timelines and, starting with pregnancy, to experience time through her body in ways that supported her larger goals rather than undercut them. However, this was no easy feat, especially while pregnant. Afterall, in medicine and, consequently, in broader society, pregnancy is commonly understood through a specific idea of time which is embroiled with a specific paradigm of health. It is three trimesters within nine months, each composed of a series of numerically sequenced incidents. Developmental events progress until the "due date," after which time pregnant individuals are watched closely, because they are behind schedule. Today, many pregnant individuals measure time not only by belly size and weight, trimesters, physician visits, and prenatal tests (as they would have during Brown's pregnancy), but also with the help of "apps" and websites that allow them to monitor the weekly, even the daily, "progress" of their pregnancies. It is common within medical practice that if a pregnancy goes a week or two past normative time, without labor contractions, an individual is induced. Then, in labor, contractions are carefully timed by the length of each and the length of the interval between each; and the progressive events of birthing bodies are monitored in hours, minutes, and seconds so as to determine if medical intervention is necessary to get things back "on time." Furthermore, if the person in labor arrives at the hospital too "early," she will be sent home, told to time her contractions, and to come back at the "right" time; however, arriving too "late" can be seen as negligence or defiance of authority on the pregnant individual's part, even as "bad parenting." If labor progresses too quickly, it is treated as dangerous, because the birthing person could "tear," but too slowly is also treated as dangerous, because the baby could be in distress. In short, medically and socially speaking, there are many ways for a pregnant individual's body to be "off" in its timing or to be out of synch with the fetus and with what is considered "healthy." For these reasons, many look for temporal cues outside of their bodies, not, as Brown did, in perceptual cues of time through her pregnant body.

Of course, all of the social and medical attention to healthy timings presumes that the processes of pregnancy, a largely autonomic physiological and visceral phenomenon, follow the logic of the calendar and the clock and thus can be measured with these tools. This is because time, as understood in science, is objective and exists independent of individuals' subjective minds and bodies. It is considered empirical reality, a phenomenon that takes material effect on the world. However, even in science, this empirical reality can only be conceptualized and operationalized via metaphors. Thus, while time is considered part of the natural world, thus, not of human making, we tend to grasp it and use it as a tool for thinking by conceptualizing it in terms of one-dimensional space: we imagine time as a line or a chain, something composed of discrete events, progressing necessarily and inevitably in a single direction, vector-like. Viewing pregnancy as a straight line or via other common metaphors of time—for instance, as assessable with boxes on a calendar or hands on a clock—has utility primarily in that it offers ways to facilitate conversation about pregnancy as a "universal" phenomenon, and to standardize care around it. However, even if this is how pregnancy is often and beneficially understood or intellectualized in medicine, that does not mean that this is how it is necessarily experienced or how personal experiences are best represented by pregnant individuals. Speaking in terms of phenomenological descriptions of temporal lived experiences, time may not be perceived as separate, ordered, aligned units, but, rather, as a flow, a state, an affective landscape, or a non-Euclidean space. Additionally, individuals might perceive it moving unevenly, in ways resistant to both linear trajectories and the even ticks of the clock. Finally, it might flow for some in ways that cannot be generalized to other pregnant individuals. After all, considering Brown's expereince, it was not sensing into the universality of pregnancy time, but rather to the idiosyncrasies of her personal awareness of time while pregnant that had utility for guiding her creative inquiries and supporting her larger needs.

In contrast to hegemonic notions of time, in the late 19th century, mathematician and philosopher Henri Bergson developed a theory of time as a qualitative and experiential (thus, non-liner) phenomenon. In his doctoral dissertation, published in 1889 as *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, he argued that time necessarily eludes math and science and, because it is mobile and incomplete, it cannot be measured without falsifying it in the process. This is essentially, for him, because for an individual, time, as a perceptual phenomenon, may speed up, slow down, or overlap itself, whereas for science, time always remains the same. As a contrast to mathematical time, which is observed as isolated units, he proposed "pure time," which has a "real duration" (or a *durée réelle*). Such time was "real" because it was rooted in the experiential reality of the individual perceiving it. Bergson's "real duration" was continuous, indivisible, and perpetually in motion; it had no "objectively" knowable units and, thus, could not be regulated or standardized. Rather, his time was a "pure heterogeneity," which could only be lived and known through one's "intuition" (1913 [1889], 104). Bergson's "real duration" was, axiomatically, incomplete and continually growing, and rather than a line, he proposed it be understood as an "intermingling," which need not have a beginning or ending. Instead of a succession of units, his "real duration" was "qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another without precise outlines" (ibid.).

Bergson's research did not speak directly to pregnancy or any other experiences rooted in female biology; however, from his early writings, many females, especially female artists, were drawn to his theories—a fact that was used against him in scientific spheres. As historian of science Jimena Canales explained, Bergson and his philosophy were commonly dismissed as "feminized": "The fact that women read Bergson was used as evidence against him; that his theory was light and unsophisticated" because it was believed by many that "women couldn't follow … science because physics was masculine" (Gelonesi 2015). While I have no reason to assume that Brown was familiar with Bergson's work, I contend that his ideas offer productive scaffolding for understanding her methodology of phenomenological research into pregnancy by attending to time as she knew it through her body. This is not because either of their models of time were "feminized," but rather because they each appreciated the significance of individuals' embodied experiences of time for how they made sense of/with time. With Bergson's ideas in mind, if we were to consider the "real duration" of pregnancy, the lived temporality of maternity—as I propose Brown did via her "temporal loop"—it offers very different information about what pregnancy *is* and how individuals know what it is than pervasive medical and social models of pregnancy. When considered as a "real duration," pregnancy no longer can be conceptualized as nine months set apart from an individual's life, during which a series of predestined events unspool, and which ends by precipitating that individual to return to the set trajectory of the "normal" time of her regular life. As a "real duration," the notion of pregnancy as three periods of equal duration no longer suffices. Instead, pregnancy becomes in continuity with other experiences of self and as uniquely known to each individual for, as Bergson explained in his 1911 work, *Creative Evolution*,

> the truth is we change without ceasing…. There is no essential difference between passing from one state to another and persisting in the same state. If the state which remains the same is more varied than we think, [then] on the other hand the passing of one state to another resembles—more than we imagine—a single state being prolonged: the transition is continuous. (1922 [1911], 2)

However, Bergson conceded that this is not how people—I would add, pregnant or otherwise—usually experience themselves in time because, as he continued,

> Just because we close our eyes to the unceasing variation of every physical state, we are obliged when the change has become so formidable as to force itself on our attention, to speak as if a new state were placed alongside the previous one. Of this new state, we assume that it remains unvarying in its turn and so on endlessly (ibid.).

In other words, we are unobservant of, insensitive to, and even resistant to the constancy of our change and growth, and so we compartmentalize experiences of self into sequential, distinct intervals, each independently experienced by a seemingly steady self moving through seemingly steady time. This self passes through and then demarcates pieces of time, instead of identifying with time—conceptualizing it as constant fluxes, mutability, and instability, as we know these qualities through our lived experiences of ourselves. Per Bergson, the inertia of our patterned thinking—which persuades us to conceive of our lives in linear time composed of discrete units—limits our experiences of both time and selfhood.

Importantly, Bergson's aim was not to replace a scientific model of time with a qualitative model. Rather, he appreciated that our intellect and our intuition produced different types of critical knowledge. If they could both be valued, and if, for instance, physics and metaphysics could be appreciated for their combined, mutually informing offerings, he hypothesized that it would help unify divergent perceptions of reality and corporeality in productive ways. In a similar vein and with a similar impulse, Brown was deeply invested in "structure" and organization while she also welcomed intuition and highly personalized perceptual phenomena into her art. She approached her choreographic projects with scientific rigor and methodological precision within the bounds of which she could surrender to spontaneity and bodily instinct. As Bergson posited and she realized, her attention to both "objective" and "subjective" phenomena deepened the questions that she was able to ask and answer through her work as well as her investment in continuing to make work.

Motivating Bergson's theorization of time and "real duration" was a desire to inspire thinking and living freely. When he was writing, as a person of Jewish heritage during and immediately after the Second World War, he knew the dangerous potential of ubiquitous thinking and resigned obedience to a singular and authoritatively defined vison of the future. He saw how linear presentations of time can support totalitarianism by persuading populations to believe in reductive notions of cause and effect—*because this was the past, this must be the way forward*. Moreover, he was broadly skeptical of social deference to science, for he had experienced how science could be used to rationalize dehumanization of and brutality toward some by others. As follows, for Bergson, an expansive notion of time as something that could be experienced as ineffable and incomplete (not as objective) was prerequisite for individuals to experience themselves as free, and, more importantly, prerequisite for them to exercise their free will and capacity for self-determination. He summarized his rationale for being suspicious of science and totalitarianism's presentations of time as a phenomenon that moves linearly through space irrespective of human perception of it and immune to human intervention in it saying, "every demand for explanation in regard to freedom comes back, without our suspecting it, to the following question: 'can time be adequately represented by space?'," meaning one-dimensional space (1913 [1889], 221). He proceeded, "we answer: Yes, if you are dealing with time flown," meaning you are the product of your history and history is intractable; thus, your future is predestined (ibid.). He continued that we answer "No [if] you are speaking of time flowing," meaning past present and future are all entangled, inchoate, and multivalent (ibid.). He concluded, "The free act takes place in time, which is flowing and not in time which has already flown" (ibid.). In other words, for individuals to take action in their life and exercise their freedom, they must embrace that they are part of a process that they can sense intuitively and one that they most certainly can and should affect.

Keeping "time flowing" was also Brown's project in her art surrounding maternity. However, per the question of "can time be adequately represented by space?" she had a response distinct from Bergson's. As an artist of space and time, she was invested in spatializing time in a nonlinear way, meaning using space to let time "flow." Perhaps this interest grew out of her studies with Dunn and Halprin. After all, in Dunn's class, she explored Cage's musical theory including his "durational frames," which interpreted music as a compilation of sound elements that existed together within a "frame" but that did not need to be smoothly joined together into a progression. As Cage explained "Where people had felt the necessity to stick sounds together to make a continuity, we…felt the opposite necessity to get rid of the glue so that sounds would be themselves" (1961, 71). For Cage's compositions, transitional material ("glue"), which suggested that sound could only be meaningful when progressing unidirectionally forward in time, was never added. Brown adopted this idea and applied it to her choreography, resisting the creation of transitions between her "units" of movement/memory in an effort to allow choreographic material to belong together within a spacetime structure where one unit did not have to lead into another, as it would, for instance, if her movements were telling a story. Furthermore, with Halprin, Brown had danced in a space which created few constraints. Halprin's "dance deck" was outside, and thus lacked both walls and ceiling. As Halprin described it, "the customary points of reference are gone and in place of a cubic space all confined by right angels with front, back, sides, and top—a box within which to move—the space explodes and becomes mobile" (Rosenberg 2017, 59). In response to this freedom to interact with mobilized space, rather than be confined to a set space, Brown and her classmates made up their own innovative systems of spacetime for their creative exercises. They determined their own spatial rules and explored temporal connections to these rules which were distinct from what it commonly conceived of as objective reality, but which were concrete enough to structure their improvised movement choices (ibid). In other words, her experiences making dances that did not need to fit within straight lines and right angles, because the borders of the performance space were organic and boundless (trees and sky), combined with her experiences of rethinking time as a “durational frame” (not a vector), informed and liberated Brown’s lived experiences of spacetime and of space and time as perceptual elements that as a choreographer she could reimagine so as to better support her creative research. Through the highly layered, carefully synched “lived score” within her “temporal loop” of *Homemade*, she used both her live and her filmed bodies to spatialize time into distinct units gathered within a loose and mobile frame that both presented her re-membered memories in the present and (via film projection) cast them above, beneath, and around her. From a Bergsonian perspective, she created a constantly shifting scenario that offered her freewill in the present and that refused to accept her past as “flown.”

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze was a Bergson enthusiast, discovering and re-popularizing his works some seventy years after their original publication and revealing their relevance to budding postmodern philosophy. Deleuze’s 1960s writings on time were concurrent with Brown’s exploration of time choreographically, and I see the conception of time that Brown presented in dance as very much aligned with Deleuze’s revitalization of Bergsonian thinking and his resultant theory of “virtual” time. Like Bergson, Deleuze appreciated heterogeneity and continuity as constitutive of time, and, in this way, he, again like Bergson, opposed the notion of uniform, progressive, natural, and neutral time—as time is conceptualized in science. From Bergson, Deleuze adopted “multiplicities” of time, meaning he presented time as substantively multiple—thus not *either* singular (time) *or* multiple singularities compiled (times). In other words, for Deleuze, any singular moment in time is necessarily composed of many times. Time cannot ever exist in the singular because in immediate experiences of time, one’s perception of the “present” consists of the consciousness one has of one’s body as this consciousness is created simultaneously by one’s past and one’s present. Put another way, each “moment” in time is constituted by immediate somatic perception as well as by the “virtual” past that perception carries with it. Deleuze, like Bergson and like Brown, emphasized that the “past” does not follow a present which has ceased to be, and the “present” does not then evolve into a past; instead, the “past” is, in part, the condition of the “present.” The very fact that we can presume a past which succeeds a present belies the virtual coexistence of past and present in each immediate experience of time.

To the best of my knowledge, Brown’s alignments historically and conceptually with Deleuze were purely coincidental. Deleuze willingly attributed the inspiration for his thinking to Bergson. However, I propose that for Brown, after being predisposed toward an interest in time as heterogeneity and multiplicity through her early experiences with Cageian thinking and with her JDTC colleagues, her engagement with time became more individualized and distinctive through of her lived experiences of pregnancy. Perceptions of her pregnant experiences were foundational to both her theorization and her means of expressing this theory, and unlike Deleuze, she presented the past and the present (or the past/present) as *embodied* phenomena. Via choreography, she pursued the somatic means to locate affinities between previously disparate temporal phenomena in her life. Her past was present in her body since memories encoded in movements were retrievable in their entirety through their physical re-memberment. In other words, they were not merely (re)accessible as symbolic representations in her brain, as per a Deleuzian framework. While Deleuze, like Brown, broke away from the seeming requirement of a unified subject—the (masculine) stable *I* of the thinker that was troubled by Young and Battersby, among other feminist thinkers—for his model of an infinitely “becoming” subject, in the process, he also broke away from perception as an embodied phenomenon, and even away from the material body as perceivable (and thus in some way bounded) full stop. For example, in his and his collaborator Félix Guattari's proposal of the "body without organs"—which contends that there is no concrete ontological way that bodies can be organized, since bodies should be continuously evolving and experimenting with what they are/mean—he argues that when we think we know what our bodies are and how they are logically organized, we preemptively halt our own ongoing creation (in other words, our "becoming"). In arguing that "pure becoming" will eventually make us *imperceptible* to ourselves, Deleuze also abstracts and minimizes the significance of the physical body for thinking and knowing, attempting to transcend its materiality in order to put it to work conceptually. This is to say, to an extent, the biological body presented a problem for Deleuze because its materiality put physical constraints on his *idea* of "body" as a continually self-constructing entity that can be fully disassembled/dispersed until it is a site of boundless possibility. For this reason, his theory falls short of offering sufficient scaffolding for any interpretation of the felt temporality of a pregnant body, in all of its evident internal and external fluxes, its immanence, its sensations, its kinesthesia, and its self-awareness.

If we read Brown's model, materialized in *Homemade*, as a response to her pregnancy, as I do, and thus as offering an intelligible form for and phenomenological account of a transient but edifying experiential phase of her life, we can appreciate how she reinforces but also fills in critical gaps in Deleuze's "virtual" time by re-materializing and re-corporealizing it. While Deleuze disintegrated and dispersed the subject, in *Homemade*, Brown presented a model of multi-faceted subjecthood, rooted in physically perceiving and expressing herself while pregnant. By doubling her presence in the choreography twice over (memory and real-time, as well as recorded and live time), Brown challenged the need to be—in any of her capacities, including a performer, an artist, and a person/woman—a unified subject on a singular temporal trajectory. Consequently, in *Homemade*, Brown (re)lived what Bergson would call “shining points of memory” without ordering them within the linear logic of a story (Bergson 1988 [1896], 171). She not only blurred past and present, but she put notions of past-ness and present-ness into chaos because, like in Deleuzian thought, she presented both as necessarily coexisting and informing one another. Then, within the performance of the piece itself, her re-membered past was coterminous with her lived present, and the “shining points of memory,” plucked free of contextual cues, convened in a space where everything could belong and support everything else.

While Deleuze theorized such an inclusive, temporally layered space in his writings, he also anticipated the limitations of his textual work. In fact, he admitted that the paradigm of “virtual” time would be best communicated via art, not scholarship, and certainly not science. Bergson also valued artmaking as a practice of breaking from customary experiences of time both in its production and in its reception. For Bergson, artists model making decisions that align with a sense of evolution as *creative* not mechanistic (1911). Similarly, for Deleuze, the task of art is to produce “signs” that push viewers outside of their perceptual habits and toward conditions of *creation*. Per his ideas, rather than using perception to recognize (or as he wrote “re-cognition”) what one knows as properties of the world, perceiving art allows one to see beyond “representations” and to experience what cannot be recognized (2002 [1981]). This then allows for new thinking, knowing, and being. As with Bergson’s idea of intuition, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze appreciated that art must be sensed to be understood because when sensed, art can split perceptual processes thereby eluding “common sense” (1968). Because a viewer’s sensory faculties cannot agree to recognize the “same” reality, the “discordant harmony" of art pushes her into new conceptual, material, dimensional possibilities beyond the capacity of language or science.

Holding these ideas in mind, Brown's work exemplified both Deleuzian and Bergsonian visions of art by requiring viewers to split their attention between the live event and a virtual past, thereby making them witness a time that was unrecognizable, a "discordant harmony," a time she was realizing and claiming as choreographic, a time that defied "common sense." While she knew improvisation as a reality of the *now*, she sought to capitalize on the fact that although choreographic "signs" always have a history, that does not make them lifeless or hollow. Thus, through her choreography, her physical history could be revealed to viewers and herself not as something to *represent* but rather as something flexible, freshly emergent, and present tense. Simultaneously, in *Homemade*, she was creating and demonstrating her own Bergsonian evolution as an artist. She was developing not due to the steady progress of time—which, in her historical situation and because of her background, conceivably was away from life as an independent artist and toward a life of motherhood and domesticity—but in ways with which she could interact. Her past, here meaning both her middle-class upbringing and her career as an avant-garde artist, was not behind her, just as no part of her prior life was behind her. Everything was with her, as she willed it to be, in her immediate present, and her present was thus, not inevitably advancing toward a predetermined, for her, untenable future.

In *Homemade*, Brown had no interest in revisiting the past purely for purposes of preservation, and she maintained this resistance to perceiving time as "flown" rather than flowing" for the rest of her career. She, like Bergson and Deleuze, preferred to put her energy and her embodied history into new *creative* development. As follows, in 1984, Brown, by then the successful director of the Trisha Brown Dance Company (TBDC), invited company member

Diane Madden to become her rehearsal director and thus responsible for the conservation and reconstruction of the TBDC repertory. Brown thereby freed herself from obligations to preserve and maintain what she had already made so that she could continue *creating* fresh work. However, Brown, not Madden, personally reprised *Homemade* several times. Perhaps it was a rare exception to her usual practices because of how the work actively negotiated its own relationship with her past. As follows, the project of *Homemade* expanded when Brown restaged it in 1996 as part of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the TBDC. She performed it live this time at age 66, but still with the 30-year-old version of herself in the projection. While she no longer looked identical to her recorded image and while her days as a new mother were now in the far past, not the near past, the significance of the work and its underlying principles endured. At 66, as at 30, Brown was continuing to imagine and define her present and future in unprecedented ways. She was continuing to source from her past and to think in the future anterior, choreographing not what was but what *will have been*. Moreover, the importance that Brown placed, in *Homemade*, on living embodied memories in the present, as opposed to performing set choreography which was memorized and then translated from images in the mind to movements of the body, was emphasized when she next reset it, in 2000, on Baryshnikov for his White Oak Dance Project's Judson Revival program, "Past Forward." Rather than simply learning and repeating her movements, she wanted Baryshnikov to physicalize his own memories for each and every "memory unit" of the choreography, even if that meant changing the movements so that each experience could be (re)lived by him. This priority was exemplified for audiences in a video that played at the Brooklyn Academy of Music before Baryshnikov took the stage on June 7, 2001. This video, by Charles Atlas, showed Brown watching Baryshnikov rehearse and questioning him about his approach to and comprehension of the choreography. The video exemplified that for Brown, the choreography was about the dancer's experience and the challenge and rigor of re-membering (as a dimensional lived experience unique to the performer), not simply about the dance's aesthetics or the integrity of her original "set" gestures. In an interview with Wendy Perron, she recounted,

> I gave [Baryshnikov] the same instructions I gave myself: to enact and distill a series of memories, the stories you tell when you know someone really well. He went deeply into these memories, like the last time he saw his mother as the train pulled out of the station. (2013, 160).

In other words, while allowing Baryshnikov to do the dance, Brown did not offer *Homemade* as something to be preserved for posterity, but as something that does something and something living and ever-emergent, even when performed at later dates and by other bodyselves. Afterall, in Brown's purview, while all choreography is in the past, performers must embody this past in ways that makes them and by extension their audiences utterly present and thus, in a Bergsonian sense, aware of their independence and their agency to define their future.

Section four: Rethinking liberal feminism and the radicalism of "neutrality"

Popular feminist sentiments at the time of Brown's pregnancy, such as those following in the wake of Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminist Mystique*, were that mothers felt trapped, desperate, and discontented as they labored through the tedium of motherhood. However, this was not a sentiment espoused by Brown before becoming a parent, and it certainly did not represent her experience while pregnant or after having her son Adam. In her work and conversations about her work, Brown never presented parenting as a burden or described needing dance so as to have distance from the monotony of domesticity and caregiving. Instead, in a conversation with Smith in 2003, she recollected that she contentedly "worked at home a lot, taking care of this wonderful child," while simultaneously deriving new choreographic ideas. In other words, from her perspective, her child in no way inhibited her ability to make, although maternity did inspire her to make work differently and more independently from her JDTC colleagues. Turning her domestic and parental activities into the "found" movements constitutive of dance offered her observational and perceptual tools for reframing and innovating which introduced her to fresh choreographic processes, vocabularies, and theories as well as fresh applications of familiar processes so that they served new inquiries. I contend that, in the process of exploring the overlapping space between pregnancy/parenting and choreographing, she also refined her own sense of feminism, which was adjacent to but distinctive from that of others in her art culture, perhaps most patently, that of Rainer. Especially during and after Brown's pregnancy, her and Rainer's interrelated but distinctive feminisms inspired different framings of women's bodies in their art as well as different choreographic theorizations of equity and neutrality. I argue that Brown's feminism was a direct extension of her lived experience of and flowed out of her ideas of subjecthood as personally specific (within an individualized and agential "lived score"), nonunified, and temporally dispersed.

Brown was never as militantly countercultural as some of her art colleagues, especially when it came to the idea of family. For example, Rainer, as part of her efforts to say "No!" to the status-quo, refused to participate in heterosexuality. Instead, she committed herself to celibacy and, later, after getting involved in protests for gay rights, declared herself a "political lesbian" (although it was not until she was in her late fifties that her political identification became her sexual identification, and she entered into life partnership with visual artist Martha Gever) (Rainer 2006). In contrast, Brown was not driven, for political or ideological purposes, to oppose heterosexuality, monogamy (as the "free love" spirit of the time moved some other artists to do), or the goal of a nuclear family. She was even, at times, willing to prioritize her desire for what others might disparage as a "traditional" family over her art. For instance, she missed the inaugural JDTC concert because she went back home to Washington state for her wedding. However, Brown's domestic life was scarcely conventional. Far from the clichéd suburban house with a white picket fence, Brown's New York residences included a YWCA, then a borrowed loft on Broome Street, then (at the time of her pregnancy) an unspoken-for industrial loft on Great Jones Street in the West Village, which she shared with Forti. Brown and Forti's space, while hardly renovated and not their own in any contractual way, served their needs of both studio and sleeping space. In other words, and true to her drive to actively reject the "middle class values of her upbringing," knowing that she would become a mother did not inspire Brown to "settle down" in a conformist way. While she eventually vacated the loft on Great Jones Street, it was only to move her little family up to SoHo where she joined the Wooster Street artists' coop.

Still, to the best of my knowledge, Brown was the first of her JDTC peers to become married and then pregnant (at least with the intention to carry a pregnancy to term and then become a parent). Looking back on that charged moment in her life, Brown summarized, "It was before women's liberation. It was a big question whether I could continue as a professional or not" (Teicher 2002, 42). Wanting very much to return to her career as a mother, she clarified, "The question came not from me but from society" (ibid.). In other words and in consort with what she presumed would be her implicit exclusion from her counterculture once seen by her peers as complicit with the mores of mainstream American life, she assumed that tacit social forces would surface and would obligate her to cease her work or to find a way to continue it in a different, surely lesser, capacity, one that did not detract from her obligations to her new family life or trespass the spatial and temporal constraints that that life put on her art. Although there were modern dance predecessors like Isadora Duncan, Hanya Holm, and Humphrey who had found ways to balance non-conformity with their heterosexual family lives, so as to have both children and choreographic careers, Brown faced the sociohistorically situated dilemma of participating in a dance culture that rejected both the legacy of modern dance and the idea of conventional family life. Possibly, for her, this made the road ahead of her seemingly unpaved and the stakes of what she had to lose by becoming a parent seemingly higher than they had been for women in dance before her.

That being said, I speculate that counterbalancing some of her apprehensions about being a female artist as well as a parent and being accepting by others in her community for both aspects of her identity was the influence of Halprin, her former dance mentor. While the two had divergent investments in choreography, Halprin left a major and lasting impression on Brown as a person. Through both of her pregnancies, with daughters Daria, in 1948, and Rana, in 1952, Halprin continued to make dances. She saw her pregnant and maternal bodies as in no way conflicting with her dancing body—for example, she continued dancing until days before giving birth to Daria, and resumed dancing in under a month post-delivery, teaching class only two weeks postpartum. According to biographer Janice Ross, Halprin "seemed determined to demonstrate emphatically that motherhood would not end her career as a dancer—in fact it …[could] accelerate her career" (2007, 96). Her productivity as a dance teacher and maker did indeed hasten postpartum. Halprin's augmented artistic output was facilitated by her insistence on simultaneity between her work and family time, meaning positioning her artmaking in the middle of her domestic space, life, and schedule. This was facilitated by holding dance classes on the "dance deck" of her home. As her daughters later recounted, with both nostalgia and open irritation, "our family life became infused by the fact that her [Halprin's] work was going on literally in the landscape of our family" (qtd. 121). However much her methods tested the patience of her nuclear family, Halprin's female students found her choices inspirational. For example, Meredith Monk, experimental choreographer, composer, musician, and Brown's classmate on the dance deck when Daria and Rana were small children, expressed her admiration for Halprin as a "pre-feminist" who "was striving to be so many things, to be true as a mother, artist, wife" while "there were no other women doing that" (qtd. 122). Indeed, Halprin was a path forger; she was interested in women's issues during an interim period of feminism—post-suffrage but pre-Second Wave Feminism, which meant she was a forerunner for ideas that would soon motivate many and that, antecedently, affected Monk and inspired Brown.

For Brown, continuing to choreograph during pregnancy and as a new mother required permeability between her homelife and her art. This differentiated her from her JDTC colleagues who were not parents as well as those who were not yet parents (for example, Deborah Hay, Elaine Summers, Robert Morris, Robert Rauschenberg, and David Gordon). Speaking of the 1960s retrospectively, Brown said that in making work inclusive of her homelife, she was simply waiving the banner of Kaprow, who declared that the distinction between art and life should be as fluid as possible (Yee 2011, 69). However, I speculate that in Brown's case, like in Halprin's case, she had little choice but to accept such fluidity. She was not interrupting life with art, as in Kaprow's "happenings;" she was permitting her life to infuse her art, and while this permission was intentional, it was also imperative. Fearing, as she had admitted that she did, that motherhood would be the end of her career or would at least impact her participation and sense of belonging in the "serious" postmodern dance culture that she had helped to form, she had to find ways to make motherhood and domesticity impetuses for her work if she wished to keep making work. From Halprin, Brown witnessed that an artist could have many coinciding facets of her identity and that a woman could forge her own gender politics out of personal necessity, even if they were independent of a larger movement or seemingly out of synch with the priorities of her historical conditions.

Brown's pregnancy arrived in the midst of burgeoning social change in the US. With the 1960s came fresh interest in "women's" issues on a large and political scale, and, accordingly, the Women's Liberation Movement emerged from the New Left. The emphasis of the, later dubbed, "liberal" feminists of the time, was gender equality. The theory behind such liberal feminism, growing out of Marxism, argued that historical conditions lead to oppressions, but that men and women were fundamentally the same and thus, should be treated socially and politically as equals. From such ideas sprouted the National Organization of Women (NOW), which formed in 1966 and sought to overturn legal obstacles for gender equity, most notably through the Equal Rights Amendment. Also came attention to inequities in the family and workplace, women's reproductive rights, advocacy for multiple forms of female sexuality, and intolerance of domestic violence and rape—all movements toward demanding the same freedoms and protections tacitly bequeathed to men.

The priorities of liberal feminism also informed, in varying degrees, the dance explorations of Brown, as well as those of her Judson colleagues, especially Rainer. For example, Brown and Rainer's early JDTC work can be read as actively resisting the sexualization of women. Many feminists in the 1960s were preoccupied with women's efforts to reclaim agency over their bodies, with the emphasis being on women's sexual liberation though embrasure of "free love" and the birth control pill (the first version of which was approved for use in the US in 1960). However, some others, like Brown and Rainer, saw this model as flawed and inadequate, opining that women's liberation should offer more than sexual liberation, which undoubtedly served hetero-male interests even if it was popularly framed as feminist progress. In contrast, one of the central problems addressed by the women who pioneered postmodern dance was how to exhibit their female bodies in public without objectifying them and how to make dances that resisted, what feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey would later and famously term the "male gaze" (1975). In this way, they hoped to show women that they had options for how their bodies occupied spaces and how they were seen by onlookers. Furthermore, they subverted female stereotypes by, for instance, refusing to rely on emotion for artistic expression, as their dance predecessors, like Graham and Doris Humphry, had done. Instead, in the spirit of liberal feminism, Brown and Rainer attempted to produce non-hierarchical and non-gender-specific organizations and choreographic uses of dancing bodies (female and otherwise). Speaking to this, dance historian Sally Banes wrote that Brown in her early work, like her female Judson collaborators, wanted what she made and did to be seen as homologous to that of her male colleagues (1998, 226). Accordingly, as Brown and Rainer's choreography emphasized equality; it also deemphasized the specialness of being female-bodied, meaning it did not intend to express uniquely female perspectives or narratives evocative of so-called "women's issues." Instead, they made dances that exhibited their, ostensibly ungendered, intellect and wit and dances that asked formal questions.

However, responding to works like Brown and Rainer's early dances, UK based choreographer and dance academic Emilyn Claid questioned the soundness and "feminism" of "androgynous" approaches to dance making and "androgynous" presentations of bodies in dance (2006, 71). From a feminist standpoint, she saw it as "dangerous" for female performers, in their efforts to reject being sexually objectified, to risk self-disappearance through accepting a male body as more neutral and thus as "a safer sex object" than their own (ibid.). For Claid, there was not compatibility between feminist consciousness and choreographic strategies that denied the bodily differences between females and males. Thus, instead of prioritizing "concepts of the mind rather than the body," by "disassociat[ing] from notions of real mortality—flesh, blood, procreation, motherhood, ageing—of which the female body is a constant reminder," she argued that feminist female performers should ground what they were fighting for in their material bodies, for only through "re-claiming the realities of mortality and reproduction from the transcendent desires of patriarchal spectatorship" could females gain social, sexual, and political power (ibid.). Reacting to "gender-neutral" work like that of the JDTC, in her own dances, which was part of the New Dance movement of the UK, Claid refused to absent her physical body with its sexual differences while performing and choreographing. For example, for her 1979 solo, *Making a Baby*, she performed at seven months pregnant, and she required her audience to attend to her body simultaneously as a body engaged in female-specific biological processes and a body participant in a history and culture of art. At one particularly memorable moment, she reclined on her back, and on her belly, she balanced a dish of water in which she floated a toy swan. As she lay still, the audience's attention was honed to the dance within her body because in-utero movements agitated the water and caused the swan to locomote (Adair 186-187). Her dance ended by recruiting the audience to join her in performing birthing choreographies from a variety of cultural and geographic locations, which Claid argued were more supportive to birthing individuals than medical practices and delivery rituals which, like "androgynous" dance, largely and hazardously disappeared the personhood and sex of those with the capacity for giving birth.

Brown's experiences of her body changing during pregnancy preceded Claid's by over a decade. However, they lead her to rethink her politics her femaleness and how both should affect her artistic production, and in the end, the conclusions that she drew were more akin to Claid's than to Rainer's. Despite her early practices and interest in performing androgyny as a way of presenting her body as un-sexualized and un-marked, Brown's ability to make work that avoided female-specific issues and narratives became more complex as the look of her body and her sensed corporeality became more evidently and unequivocally female. In many ways, Brown's pregnancy clarified and amplified what she was already experiencing as a subtle clash between her and her colleagues' (especially Rainer's) understandings of the ideal postmodern dancing body and the feasibility of such a body being seen as female without being seen as lesser or other. For example, at the time that she became pregnant, Brown was working with Rainer (alongside Lucinda Childs, Judith Dunn, Sally Gross, Deborah Hay, Tony Holder, Robert Morris, Steve Paxton, Robert Rauschenberg, and her then spouse Joseph Schlichter) on a new project, which would turn into Rainer's *Parts of Some Sextets*. When Brown informed Rainer that she was pregnant, Rainer originally encouraged her to remain in the piece and to perform. Rainer wrote, "I had very much wanted her to participate, especially in the very pregnant condition … she would have been in by the time of the performance" (1965, 175). At first, Rainer thought that having a pregnant body on stage would serve her exploration of "everyday" bodies and gestures in dance and make it more visible for her audience. As she explained, "The idea was that there were no stars in the dance—just people—and if one of them was pregnant well—that would be a pregnant one" (ibid.). However, despite Rainer's urgings, Brown bowed out of the piece, preferring her privacy, and Rainer later acknowledged that she was glad that Brown—or as she (perhaps tellingly albeit uncharacteristically) referred to her in her writings about that piece, "Joe's wife," did—because "a 'pregnant one' would have stood out as the only one whose activities were restricted to the less strenuous material" (ibid.). This meant that while Rainer saw the "neutral," "pedestrian" choreography composing *Parts of Some Sextets* as accessible and feasible for non-dancers (like Rauschenberg, who was primarily a visual artist), she assumed it to be beyond the capacity of a pregnant dancer. For Rainer, what she anticipated to be the movement limitations of Brown's pregnant body disqualified her from being seen as an "everyday" body doing "everyday" tasks. Thus, pregnant bodies were not, according to her paradigms of neutrality, ability, and normalcy, neutral, able, or normal enough to fit her artistic and political visions. Consequently, as she concluded, "Trisha's decision to withdraw was fortunate" as her presence would have undercut the efficacy of the dance (ibid.).

Brown's pregnant and postpartum work was, as many historians, critics, company members, and theorists have put forth, feminist, but not in the burgeoning the-personal-is-the-political way of other feminists who were her contemporaries; nor was it interested purely in neutrality and equity like the liberal feminists, such as Rainer, in her sphere. Furthermore, while she was interested in incorporating choreographies of domesticity and motherhood into her work, her goal was not to convey that private domestic life reveals the power dynamics of larger society, as was the ethos of the burgeoning consciousness raising (CR) feminist groups. Instead, in the context of postmodern dance and at the time of her pregnancy, Brown's conceptual and political feminist moves were in a different direction. Namely, by letting her embodied experiences as a pregnant individual and then as a new parent mediate her work, she subtly but meaningfully called attention to the "everyday" movements and body types that were previously excluded from postmodern dance.

Now, in its broad qualitative and aesthetic strokes, *Homemade* did not overtly break from other JDTC works. Like her colleagues, Brown suggested no hierarchy to the moves composing the choreography. In terms of choreographic structure, she performed all of the "memory units" as isolated, distilled events; in line with her Cageian training, she did not add transitions between them since formally, these would be “likely to slur the beginning and end of each discreet unit,” and transitions might also suggest that the dance presented a story (ibid.). In contrast, the choreography actively resisted seeming anecdotal. There was no narrative arc, and no choreographic gesture was presented as more meaningful or decipherable than another. Each movement was performed with equal attention and dropped with equal nonchalance. While differing from her Judson colleagues in her interest in letting the autobiographic enter her work, like them, she still intended the choreography to not be embellished, “virtuosic, decorative, or frivolous” (Brown 2003). She hung onto these rules not so much because she felt fully aligned with these values, but because she welcomed the structure such constraints imposed. As she explained, affective restraint offered her a sense of aesthetic certainty because it “makes a small field in a [larger] field of choice… in which one never is certain” (ibid.). While later in her career, she eased back toward (tempered) exhibition of her skills and permitted certain intentional theatrical embellishments into her works, she always maintained a quality that she called, “do-it-and-then-move-on,” by which she meant that in her work, one should never hyperbolize or over-perform choreography. However, she moved steadily away from Rainer’s “No Manifesto,” eventually drafting her own “Pure Movement Manifesto” (1975), and she began countering Rainer’s idea of the “neutral” body with what she called the “plain” body (1975). As she explained the “plain” body, “I don’t have an embellished breastbone telling you that I’m a grand dancer. I have just a plain body using only the amount of energy and muscle that it takes to do something very clearly, cleanly, and get off of it on the next thing” (Brown 2003). She perceived her dancing body as straightforward and untheatrical but still, unequivocally, her personal body which stored and could activate her personal archive; thus, hers was both a “plain” body and a special body.

Homemade rendered parental movements, performed by Brown's "plain" body, as just as abstract-able and repurpose-able as other, more expressly ungendered, choreographies of everyday life (like putting on slippers, looking at a watch, or nodding). In other words, she showed that there was nothing about being a female or a parent that automatically interfered with her ability to be an unaffected, "plain" body and an artist of nonrepresentational, unsentimental works. Moreover, although by Rainer's valuation, pregnancy inevitably interfered with one's ability to be both a "neutral" body and a dancing body, because it limited one's physical capacities (including one's capacity for "everyday" movement), by performing *Homemade* with a heavy, clunky projector attached to her body (which was doubtlessly more cumbersome and inhibiting than a pregnant belly), in my reading, Brown wittily showed the double standard of how the appropriateness and abilities of dancing bodies were read by her colleagues.

Brown's interest in film as a choreographic tool to bolster her political and conceptual framing of her own body again differentiated her from Rainer. While in the 1960s and 1970s, Rainer also explored moving her choreographic process to film, for her, this move was an extension of her liberal feminist politics, meaning it was in the interest of controlling the audience's gaze and de-objectifying female bodies. In other words, Rainer gravitated progressively toward film to further her project of "neutralizing" dancing bodies. In contrast, Brown juxtaposed her filmed body with her live body so as to assert her individuality and vitality as a maker and performer. As Rosenberg assessed in her biography of Brown,

> *Homemade* insists on the idea of originality's possibility for choreography, a concept manifested through the function of the singular (and original) dancer whose body/performance mediates between *Homemade's* two reproductions—a precise and true understanding of the way any individual dance performance is a unique interpretation (2017, 48).

In other words, Brown again, problematized the idea of being a "neutral" body performing the "original" ideas of an artist, since her body, as a singular archive, was responsible for the originality of her movement instincts and the logic of her choreography. In *Homemade*, the two performances, on stage and on film, conveyed different versions of the past. The video suggested a past to the dance (a present now absent; an absence made present via projection), while Brown's live performance reactivated her personal past (her memories) in the here-and-now. In this way, comparing the film to her vital body on stage, offered the viewer the opportunity to better appreciate the uniqueness of both her history and of her immediate presence as an artist. In other words, with *Homemade*, Brown maintained that there could be no "original" or autonomous choreography; there was only and always Brown making a dance as only she could through her body. Perhaps for this reason, Brown, in contrast to Rainer, never intended for the film to be shown independently from the live performance, nor did she see it as documentation of the purest performance of *Homemade*. It was only ever included to thicken the performing and viewing experiences and to add a meta-commentary on what it meant, per Brown, to be a choreographer and to be herself.

Homemade premiered the same year, 1966, as the premiere of Rainer's vanguard solo *Trio A*. In Rainer's first iteration of this solo, which she titled *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I*, she performed *Trio A* accompanied by two other (male) dancers, Steve Paxton and David Gordon, who did the same choreography at roughly the same time as her. Thus, the piece was three concomitant and proximate iterations of the same solo. Brown likened *Homemade* and *Trio A* as both presenting movements that were "object-like," but she differentiated her work from Rainer's because, even if it did not explicitly disclose them, it retained its references. She called *Homemade's* movements "kinetic fictions," by which she meant that while they suggested a story, they did not tell a story, and thus the audience need not, and should not attempt to read them as a narrative (undated note on graph paper 1980s). However, despite her efforts to abstract and decontextualize her "memory units," *Homemade* was still read by some as evocative of gendered narratives simply because it was performed by a woman. Even Deborah Jowitt, in a review for the *Village Voice*, called it a performance of "the laundry list of a highly interesting housekeeper" (1991). Readings like Jowitt's suggest that some audiences could not see Brown's choreography with the coolness and objectivity of other postmodern feminist work like *Trio A*, which, although (indeed because) performed by a female, not only avoided but emphatically "neutralized" all conceivably gendered signage. Rainer wanted to be seen as a "neutral doer," not as a woman, and not as Rainer the individual with a singular life outside of the dance (Rainer 1968, 267). Rainer underscored the gender neutrality of the dance by performing with two men, dancing with what she called "work*man*like" delivery, and encouraging all who learned the dance to pass it along to others regardless of future performers' gender identifications or backgrounds (Reynolds and McCormick 2008, 405 italics mine). As Rainer explained, "I envisioned myself as a postmodern dance evangelist bringing movement to the masses" (Rainer 2009, 16).

However, for Brown, the choreographic components of *Homemade* were rooted in her personal life and, in order to perform the score, needed to be such and needed to be performed specifically by her, for only she understood them in a meaningful way. Of course, she did not perceive performing *Homemade* as in and of itself gendered labor, and, like Rainer, she was fully open to the prospect of male dancers, like Baryshnikov, performing the choreography. However, regardless of who performed the dance and regardless of their gender identification, the choreography needed to be specifically tailored to them. It was not "movement [for] the masses;"

these moves had to be personalized and unique to the performer's body archive. Afterall, instead of creating "neutral" and impersonal movements, Brown's goal was to perform "highly loaded referential gestures impassively," with a "plain" body (undated note on graph paper 1980s). Furthermore, Brown's process was not to excise the emotional content of the movement so as to present it objectively, as Rainer did, but rather, it involved the re-memberment and recontextualization of kinetic moments from her life in a non-storied and indeterminate way. In so doing, she approached her independent goal, outside of the goals of the larger JDTC culture, which was to define a personal movement vocabulary that was not virtuosic but that still was rigorous to create, challenging to perform, and intriguing to behold.

In quick summary, Brown's experiences of pregnancy and motherhood revealed the limitations of her JDTC colleagues' choreographic strategies for gender equality because in maternity, their aesthetic, conceptual, and political tactics no longer represented or supported her experiences as a person/woman/female/artist. During pregnancy, her body looked too legibly female and belied too much of her personal story to be "neutral" enough for abstract work—meaning it could not be interchangeable with a male body or have the same performative affect—and then, the movements that she "found" tending to a small child, while not expressly gendered, because of social norms at the time, implicitly read as those of a woman. However, by taking personal, even domestic and parental movements out of context, she detached signs from signifiers, rendering everything simply movement, and, thus, everything open to fresh utility. She presented tasks like cradling a baby as equally interesting/mundane/significant as any more ostensibly neutered and neutral movement utilized by her postmodern peers. The fact that her choreographic moves were rooted in her lived experiences gave energy, quality, and investment to the immediacy and presence with which she performed them without making them gender-specific or a means to connect to other women. This indicates that she was interested in the erasure of gendered discrepancies in *access* to expressive and creative opportunities based on movements "found" in an individual's life. In short, I argue that Brown sought to reveal and deconstruct that which seemed character-definitive or semiotically-laden in her art simply *because* it was being performed by a body that presented as female. She was, thus, cultivating critical consciousness in viewers and in her colleagues of their habits of perception and their proclivity to see only male presenting bodies (or bodies dancing as if they were male presenting bodies) as "neutral doers."

Brown herself was never an outspoken feminist; however, just as Halprin's students saw her as a "pre-feminist," Brown's students and company members appreciated her as her own kind of feminist and as a feminist mentor to them. For instance, in her farewell tribute to Brown, former TBDC member Wendy Perron, wrote that Brown "fulfilled the promise of a new, feminist way of being a director" ever since she began the TBDC in 1970, with (all female) company members Carmen Beuchat, Caroline Goodden, and Penelope Newcomb (2017). Echoing Perron, Madden, a long-term company member prior to becoming the rehearsal director, described Brown's feminist leadership style as offering her colleagues new experiences of space and time by creating a "clear space that allows people to have lots of room" (La Rocco 2008). She elaborated,

> You felt trusted by her, which allowed you to take more risks and give more. She would give us very clear guidelines, whether working around the perimeter of the space, or keeping close proximity to the floor, working in slow motion, but wouldn't over-define or over-direct…She would challenge you to go beyond your comfort zone because she was always challenging herself. We all were challenged (ibid.).

These challenges were formal but also political, in Bergsonian and Deleuzian senses of the word. They kept time "flowing;" kept individuals *becoming*; and reminded dancers to take action in their lives, to reframe seeming constraints, and to recognize their freedoms to behave *differently* so as to exercise their creativity. Madden continued that, while never an openly political artist, Brown's feminist activism was expressed in her ardent autonomy throughout her long career. She explained, "When I watch Trisha dance, I feel … No one's going to tell her what to do and how to look" (ibid.). Indeed, by her own admission, Brown found in dance "a way of escaping all of those rules about how you're supposed to be as a woman today" both in terms of broader society and in terms of her community of avant-garde artists (qtd., ibid.). Believing as much, motherhood did not stop her from dancing and choreographing; in fact, it was, in my reading of her life and work, a useful and generative tool, and it introduced her to her ongoing capacity for autonomous self-definition. In an interview with Brown for the *New York Times*, upon her announcement that she was retiring from performance, writer Claudia La Rocco made a connection that few journalists do; she commented on "the surge of creativity that came with a child," and how motherhood seemingly "reinforced [Brown's] artistic drive" (ibid.). To this, Brown replied that as a mother, she needed to make dances because, as she said drolly but concisely, "I didn't want to sit on a veranda" (ibid.). In other words, for Brown, there was a reciprocal relationship between her art and her parenthood: being an artist allowed her to define motherhood and her maternal body in her own ways and thereby to not feel her life reduced by having a child, and being a parent offered her more information for her embodied archive, which kept her productive and fueled her work in innovative ways.

Brown's prolific career and its many successes, including being the first female choreographer to receive the MacArthur "Genius Award," paved the way for other female choreographers, other parent choreographers, and other artists seeking to redefine dance on their own terms. Still, Brown acknowledged that because of her gender, every professional maneuver had been a challenge. She recognized that success in the arts is harder for women: “It just is. [Women] get fewer grants, fewer bookings, fewer reviews…. There are all kinds of ways of diminishing a woman’s power…. It’s in the culture. It’s how we think about women” (ibid.). She also acknowledged that these challenges are compounded by motherhood. Considering the obstacles that she faced from society and professional art “culture,” Brown took great pride in the fact that she retired after “working all my life” and that she did so in her own time and without ever firmly closing a door on a past or a future (ibid.).

Section five: Choreographing new ontologies

Homemade revealed Brown’s investment in entangling her body with time in not only aesthetically and politically but ontologically innovative ways. While many of her artist peers focused their revisionist, critical, or creative work on ideology, Brown’s work was more interested in reconceiving of the fundamental creative building blocks of choreography. In her interest in ontology, Brown aligned with Deleuzian-style rethinking of the forces that constitute the world, and in her process of attuning to her pregnant body to better understand what might be ontologically possible, she aligned with Luce Irigaray’s feminist theory, especially her ideas of sexual difference. It may seem peculiar to propose that Brown’s work exemplifies the compatibility of philosophers as different as Deleuze and Irigaray. However, while diverging in many ways, Irigaray was like Deleuze in her interest in challenging accepted foundations and innovating new ontological templates. However, she did so toward emphatically feminist ends while Deleuze, especially in his provocative theory of “becoming woman,” has often been the subject of feminist critique. For Irigaray, all forms of hegemonic knowledge represent the perspectives of only one sex, a sex of which women, as an essentialized group, are only recognized in their capacity of being the opposite and the other to men. Consequently, conventional ontology has never offered a space and time for women to know themselves on their own terms and through epistemes that value a multiplicity of, as opposed to merely two original and legitimate, corporealities. For Irigaray, sexual difference does not mean women are different from men and should be understood as different and entitled to their different (in the singular) point of view. Rather, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, she argued that there need not be a binarized idea of sexuality or personhood, and that the fact that hegemonic ontology presumes only two types of people and a hierarchical relationship between them, limits what we can possibly know, experience, and do as well as how we can connect (1984 [1982]). She emphasized that feminism has just barely begun to fathom the intellectual depths of its project, which in her purview, would be to appreciate difference as an ontological force, not a duality.

While not interested in being seen as different from men—meaning as a woman, doing a woman's dance, inspired by woman's experiences—Brown was invested in difference in the Irigarayan sense because in Irigaray's work, a feminist future does not imply women will eventually be the same as men, meaning having the same rights as men, the same social value, and the same identification with culturally foundational ideologies. An Irigarayan feminist future would be one which embraces manifold knowledges, frameworks, and investments. Accordingly, in creating space for her own future, Brown was invested in doing otherwise than what had been done before and what maintained predefined ontologies as unquestioned and elemental. As philosopher Elizabeth Grosz points out, it is not that phallocentrism denies women foundational identities; indeed, it offers multiple identities such as *nun*, *nurse*, *maid*, *secretary*, *sister*, and, in Brown's case, we can add *mother*, *wife*, and *dancer*. However, each of these "identities" is enclosed within bigger definitions of identity as something singular, limited, and limiting. Through refusing to choose between available options for singular personhood by insisting upon her own multiplicity within her choreography, Brown challenged a larger, previously unquestioned, conceptual system. In other words, Brown exceeded precedent in her approaches to dance-making, and in this way, her art offered not only a contrast to her JDTC colleagues and to mainstream feminism but new theoretical and perceptual systems for dancers and viewers while also, in a very real way, creating for herself livable conditions in which she could continue to make art and to make it not in spite of new developments in her life, but because of these developments. Pregnancy and parenthood required, or at least inspired, her to innovate new ontologies and choreographic epistemologies and these in turn accelerated, clarified, and enriched her processes of artmaking and, eventually, the larger project of postmodern dance.

Since, in an Irigarayan paradigm, understanding time involves expanding one's sense of ontology, or one's sense of what *is*, it also inevitably will involve transforming epistemes, or *how* we know, and, consequently, conceptions of matter, subjectivity, and politics will evolve. For example, Irigaray, like Bergson, argues that, although science presents it as such, time cannot be impartial or transparent. Time does not passively enable "the specificity of matter to reveal itself" (174). Rather, time is among the "active ingredients in the making of matter and thus in the constitution of objects and subjects" (ibid.). In other words, one's preconception of time is constative of what one can know of the world and of oneself. As follows, ontological shifts and shifts in perceived subjecthood go in both directions, meaning developing a new ontological paradigm allows one to know oneself differently. Just so, perceiving a new subjecthood, or multiple subjecthoods, allows one to experience a new foundation for reality. Irigaray argued that time, even more than space, needed means to be expressed that liberated it from the constraints of the present, for, as Grosz asserted "time is the force of differing whatever stability and order spatialization enables or entails" (178).

Just so, Brown engaged in differing her circumstances through her re-presentation and re-memberment of her embodied time. *Homemade* modeled her search for conditions supportive of her emergent subjecthood(s), and in so doing, incidentally but compellingly, she aligned with Irigarayan thought. Brown sought, via art, to make a world inclusive of her multiple identities and thus permissive of a future that did not require choosing between different aspects of herself. Her strategy for making this world was redefining and reestablishing time, ontologically, for herself and, by proxy, for her audience in ways that permitted more of herself/selves to coexist. This is because, I am positing, for Brown, the self that could be a postmodern choreographer *and* a mother, with the exception of the rare vanguard like Halprin, was a self outside of available models, meaning available narrative trajectories, meaning available temporalities with which to think. Thus, she needed to create the flexible past that would allow for an initially inconceivable future—in other words, a self that *will have been*. To avoid making an untenable choice, she shifted her ground toward a ground that *will have been*; she overwrote the conditions that would necessitate choosing between two futures, thereby nullifying an insufferable restriction on herself and her life. Just so, Irigaray, in her pursuit of difference as an ontology, foresaw the necessity of "becoming beyond the one," which would be realized in a future currently beyond recognition. She argued that such a future, while in no way predestined, was feasible so long as women assert themselves in the position of knowers and, thus steeled, make/do knowledge differently than it has been made/done before. Women would accomplish this through asking different questions, asking them in different ways, developing different criteria for consideration, and having different "meaningful" findings (175). *Homemade* is a prime example of this type of feminist assertion of authority, allowing for difference without division, and allowing for a model of time previously unthought and seemingly unthinkable.

Irigaray was not, per Grosz's reading of her, looking for the "real" women beyond patriarchal restraints but rather for ways to challenge conceptual systems unaware of their own limitations. Irigaray was less interested in "women as the objects of intellectual investigation," more in, again, "open[ing] up the position of knowing subject to the occupation of woman" (Grosz 2005, 175). In other words, she, like Brown, was invested in developing different ways of theorizing based on the recognition of what has been left out of familiar and accepted master narratives. Thus, for Irigaray, essential for feminist projects to succeed was innovating temporality in ways that appreciated the undetermined nature of the future and that allowed subjects to see themselves projected beyond their present social identities and beyond what was currently available to them—which was, quite simply, being other to the, supposedly, legitimate social subjects, the ones who define conditions for living and around whom systems and even science was built. Brown, in her problematizing of Rainer's "neural body" and its implicit maleness, added to Irigaray's model that just as the feminist goal is not to be the other, it is also not to be the same. Both Brown and Irigaray would agree that the real goal is to be *different,* to be one's irreducible self/s.

Conclusion: The future that *will have been* and continuing to make time "flow"

Brown retired from dance in 2008, and in the ensuant years, her embodied experiences of Bergsonian "real duration" and her relationship to re-membering time though her body began to change as a consequence of her vascular dementia. She began memory loss treatments in 2011, but progressively, her past(s) became increasingly elusive in her present until, in 2017, she passed away. However, between 1966 and 2008, her interest in knowing time though her body remained and continued to stimulate her creative research. After *Homemade*, Brown continued exploring the past and drawing memories of it into her present. She briefly plunged deeper into autobiographical work, despite its unfashionableness within her postmodern dance circle. Her postpartum, post-*Homemade* works included *Skunk Cabbage, Salt Grass, and Waders* (1967), which was composed of movements, once again, drawn from her childhood memories, testament perhaps to the ongoing presence of her child-self as she re-membered it through physically engaging with her own child. Unlike *Homemade*, in which her memories were a "private sign language" barely decipherable by an audience, *Skunk Cabbage, Salt Grass, and Waders* was legible, intensely personal, and overtly autobiographical. Perhaps she wished to test the limits of reframing the personal as art. Perhaps she felt licensed, once convinced that her position and acceptance in her dance community was less precarious, to make a work that clearly went against the grain of postmodernism's preference for abstraction, especially after encountering its gender-based limitations. Regardless of her impetus, *Skunk Cabbage, Salt Grass, and Waders* marked a turning point, after which her work, although it remained interested in time as a construct, became increasingly nonrepresentational, less openly personal, and more virtuosic. However, there was one very notable exception, *Accumulation with Talking* (1973). Its precursor, *Accumulation* (1971), was one of Brown's most demonstrably "intellectual" pieces, with its intricate patterning and complex physical feats of coordination, and she decided to revise it into a "lecture demonstration" for a talk that she was giving at the *Salon d'Automne* festival in Paris two years after its premiere. As a means to "lecture" about the dance's origins, while she performed the choreography, she spoke the memories implanted in each movement as they spontaneously came to her. Often, she recalled the life events surrounding the creation of each gesture, meaning, as she performed the choreography, she spoke the bit of her personal history that contextualized the generation of each original move. Most memorably, for her, she extemporaneously said, while transitioning between two gestures, "My father died between the making of this move and this move." She had not planned to say this. Her lecture was unrehearsed since it was an exercise in letting embodied memories surface, and she later reflected, "I was amazed that my body had stored this memory [of her father's passing] in the movement pattern" (Brown and Rainer 1979, 34). Per her epistemological praxis, rooted in her own ontology of time, at which she had arrived through pregnancy and through making *Homemade*, performing the bespoke transition between two movements and thereby bringing her past fully into her present, she relived the poignant and ostensibly singular passing of her father each time that she did the dance. In speaking the memories contained in each movement of choreography, she appreciated *Accumulation*, as "keeping vigil over the integrity of each gesture" (Brown 1972, 3). Furthermore, by recognizing this particular identity-imprinting memory stored in the performative transition between two gestures, she also recognized a powerful opportunity to sustain the vigil she kept over her dying father, back home in Aberdeen, Washington in 1971. Doing the dance with this new awareness thereafter experientially offered her something personally, holistically, and deeply meaningful.

In discussing the temporality of *Accumulation with Talking*, Rosenberg, in her biography of Brown, pointed out that Brown's spontaneous speech, propelled from the archive of her body, offered an "uncanny reversal" of her use of body memory to generate movement for *Homemade* (2017, 208). While in *Homemade*, reflecting cognitively on a visual/narrative memory triggered the body movement/memory, in *Accumulation with Talking*, performing the movement elicited the memories unconsciously stored within it (its, in Brown's words, "presence in the mind"). Perhaps their complementarity is somehow connected to the fact that while *Homemade* was made in the wake of a birth, *Accumulation with Talking* was made in the midst of a death. For me, considering the choreographies' enmeshment with these two major, identity shifting life events—seeming beginnings and endings for Brown—her choreographic interpretation of time in both contexts is significant, efficacious, and revelatory of her ongoing processes of knowing herself in time and as a person and an artist.

Brown's interpretation of time in *Accumulation with Talking* was also deeply meaningful to performance theorist Peggy Phelan, who wrote about Brown as a means to come to terms with the death of her romantic partner. Phelan particularly resonated with Brown's choice of the word "somewhere" when she said, "my father died somewhere" (2004, 17). In her reading of *Accumulation with Talking*, she found solace in Brown's presentation of death as something that moves through time, that is a temporal multiplicity, and that takes up space. She wrote, "One day Brown's father died biologically; some other day she arrived at the fact and force of his death; on yet another day she announced it in her piece" (ibid.). In so doing, Phelan saw Brown communicating to her audience, "my father died and he is going to die again in the ongoing recollection and accumulation that registers the work of mourning" (ibid). As someone grappling with her own loss of a loved one, Phelan appreciated the "yawning space" between temporalities of event experience, interpretation, and communication that Brown offered in her "somewhere" (ibid.). Phelan appreciated, as I also do, that Brown, like in *Homemade*, used her choreography to create a protective "self-containing loop" in which time is in relationship to space in ways other than a linear trajectory. Once again, Brown created a space in which she presented the past and present as coexisting and as uniquely known and communicated through her body. She showed, even surprising herself in the process, that she could choreographically suspend time and re-member pasts through her embodied present in ways that had deep personal significance and in ways that gave her more options for how she understood her life circumstances. Her amazement at how her body re-membered revealed that she had, once again, succeeded in creating a choreographic container in which she could explore and understand life freely and on her own terms.

Finally, while the movements of caring for a child never again appeared as choreography in her future works, Brown did continue to source from her spatial and temporal experiences as the primary caretaker to a baby. For instance, urban environments stimulated Brown's imagination as she pushed her son's stroller through New York City. Later, analyzing her early days as a parent and striving choreographer, Brown reflected, "I was excluded from traditional theaters… because of the economics of dance, so the streets became one of the few places I could do my works" (Ross 1984). Thus, it was in the streets that she and those who danced with her performed works such as 1970's *Leaning Duets*, an exercise in counterbalance between pairs of dancers. Also, the kinesis of moving through space with the stroller inspired her first cycle of works that were fully independent of JDTC, her "equipment dances," in which dancers interacted with literal structures as well as improvisation structures within her choreography. This set of works assumed its moniker from a review by dance critic Sally Sommner who connected Brown's choreographic method to the theories of psychologist James Gibson (1972). Per Gibson, "The equipment of feeling is automatically the same equipment as for doing," meaning the perceiving body receives information from its environment which then informs how this body can act in/on its environment. Like Gibson (and also like Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenologists who followed him) Brown appreciated that, so long as bodies perceive the ground as their only surface of support, they will only be able to move in certain ways. Thus, in her dances, Brown began to shift bodies' relationships to the ground and to gravity, thereby educating performers and audiences how they *might* use their sensory "equipment" so as to perceive bodies and movement in entirely new ways. For instance, her fascination with architectural facades, as she saw them on her walks with Adam, inspired her famous *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970) and *Roof Piece* (1971), both of which were precisely what their titles suggest. For *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, her then husband, Schlichter, with the help of a harness and rope, walked down the side of 80 Wooster Street; and in *Roof Piece*, dancers performed choreography on the roofs of 53 Wooster Street and 381 Lafayette. Brown described *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* as “a natural activity under the stress of an unnatural setting” because in it, gravity was “reneged” (Yee 2011, 184). In other words, she had, again, choreographically refigured “natural” conditions of reality. While the first, time was not Brown’s only ontological de/re-construction. She deconstructed and liberated other primary phenomena, here gravity, and she did so, again, because instead of seeing her embodied experiences of parenthood as limiting her creative options, she let them spur her imagination and inspire new ontological conditions that were felicitous to her ongoing self-discovery and productivity as an artist. By challenging physics, she continued to create more physical and conceptual (feminist) spaces for different kinds of thinking and making through bodies—quite significantly, thinking and making inclusive and appreciative of bodies like her own: female, parental, and inimitable.

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Chapter three: Performing the/this Pregnant Body and its (Re)productive Labor

At age seventeen, Rachel Kauder Nalebuff became pregnant. Quietly, she had an abortion. The experience haunted her bodyself for the next decade—not so much the procedure, as such, or the recovery, but the fact that she went through both feeling utterly alone. She kept the pregnancy and the abortion completely secret, because, as she recalled, "I have never, in my whole life, felt so ashamed of anything" (2017, 2). Her discomfiture surrounding these experiences stuck with her into adulthood. However, with the passage of time, she began to question why she perceived her pregnancy and her decision to end it to be so unspeakable: "Why was it impossible to tell people? Why did it feel so heavy?" (ibid.).

In her twenties, having become an ardent feminist and an experimental playwright, she began envisioning how she could use her art to offer others the conceptual and physical platform and the supportive community that she had not had at the time of her own pregnancy and abortion. She wanted to invite individuals to affirm, rather than conceal, their bodies and their bodies' needs and stories. She asked, "What if our needs became starting points for the imagination?" (Nalebuff 2017, 8). For her, this was a question from a "former self and for many current selves. It [was] a wish for a world that we can live in, someday, outside the theater" (9). Until that "someday," it was a world she sought to manifest via theater. Thus, motivating her performance projects was the challenge to turn a "feeling of powerlessness" into "an opening" (1). In other words, she believed that attuning herself to her own perceived helplessness could inspire art that offered the support that she and others needed in ways that larger society did not. Powerlessness was a feeling that Nalebuff knew well and a feeling that she attributed to being female sexed under patriarchy—conditions which tacitly made her reproductive body a corporeal hinderance and a problem to privately navigate so as to achieve her larger aims. However, one day, she recounted,

> In a moment of exceeding absurdist liberty, I wrote a play that involved 100 pregnant performers standing in formidable silence. This play was a problem because I started dreaming about it…. It was like a salve for me. It was the image that I needed" (ibid.).

Fueled by this image, she developed her 2016 performance piece, *The Bumps*, which she described as an amalgam of movement, narrative, and labor politics. In a shift from her prior work, her fresh commitment to the needs and experiences of physical bodies convinced her that it was critical to have "movement," not just language, play a key role in the production. Thus, she decided to incorporate dances into the script and to collaborate with a choreographer, Jennie MaryTai Liu. When Nalebuff approached her, Liu was intrigued by the project and its feminist impulse, but her investment expanded exponentially when, after committing to choreograph *The Bumps* and by pure coincidence, she discovered that she was pregnant.

Prior to working with Nalebuff, Liu was wont to incorporate original text into her dances, so she did not foresee challenges in smoothly amalgamating danced movement and spoken word within this project. However, very quickly conflicts developed between Nalebuff's vision of what pregnant individuals needed and how text, movement, rehearsal, and performance could support these needs and Liu's instincts as both a choreographer and a pregnant individual for what *The Bumps'* creative praxes should be. The fissures between Nalebuff and Liu were along two fault lines. Firstly, while Nalebuff was primarily concerned with pregnancy as an idea with many meaningful implications, Liu was absorbed by pregnancy as she experienced it perceptually. Secondly, the two artists entered the project with different understandings of time and its implications for what they were making together. These different understandings only increasingly diverged over the course of their creative process. Liu was interested, as Trisha

Brown (discussed in chapter two) had been, in her personal lived experience of time as she sensed it through her pregnant body. In contrast, Nalebuff's was not corporeal time but calendar time, and she was also intrigued by the temporal interval of pregnancy as a useful rhetorical device. For her, part of the challenge of designing the project was trying to align a set of asynchronous temporalities that were in no way rooted in lived experiences of pregnancy while also making a performance work that presented pregnancy as an especially meaningful time in individuals' lives. For example, she was trying to wrangle together into synchronicity the linearity of market time, the scheduling of professional performing arts, the epic time of theater as a chronology that she wished to interrupt, the regularity of pregnancy stages as they are externally defined by the trimesters and as they could offer innovative structure for a play, the poetic circularity of time she believed could be known and expressed through maternal bodies, and a conceptual argument that she wished to put forth that waiting (as one does for one's child to arrive) is a feminist praxis. Consequently, in *The Bumps,* with all of these different trajectories moving at their different velocities within a narrative structure that was not prepared to mitigate or make meaning through the project's internal conflicts, time worked against itself, and Liu and Nalebuff's objectives became tangled. In the end, both Nalebuff and Liu contributed separate movement components to the play, and it was *The Bumps'* choreographies in particular that shone light on the project's clashing definitions of needs and temporalities related to both live performance and pregnancy.

So as to trace the progression from fully aligning feminist politics and shared excitement for a maternal- and biologically-centered project, to the early cracks in their collaboration, to the eventual stark divide between their visions of how art can meet the needs of pregnant individuals, I will introduce Nalebuff and Liu's stories separately and then entwine them. In a

Kurosawa-esque configuration, in turns, I will present Nalebuff's background, her creative and choreographic processes, as well as her investments in *The Bumps* and then do the same for Liu. Subsequently, I will put both artists in conversation with feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva and consider how each of their temporal formulations informed their divergent choreographies and how each formation can be productively examined in relationship to Kristeva's model of "women's time," both in how this model defines loopholes and progress for feminism. In so doing, I hope to highlight both how *The Bumps* was "an opening" and also how that opening was partly occluded by the project's internal mutually exclusive ambitions.

Section one: Nalebuff

The Bumps was a work made exclusively for pregnant performers; thus, in writing it for what she personally "needed," Nalebuff also created a work opportunity for a population that the entertainment industry typically excludes. As she started, Nalebuff realized that she had never in her life seen a visibly pregnant actor on stage. Scarcely an improvement, she observed that in film and television, if an indispensable actor became pregnant, that person would be strategically costumed, positioned behind furniture, or directed to carry something torso-obscuring (like a potted plant) in each scene. Seeing such standard industry practices as not only sexist and discriminatory but coercive of individuals' reproductive decisions (often to abort a pregnancy) and as contributing to the stigmatization of actors who carry pregnancies to term, she made a theater piece that did the opposite. Hers was written for a cast of visibly pregnant performers who play characters named *3 MONTHS, 5 MONTHS,* and *7 MONTHS*—corresponding to the duration of the characters' (and performers') pregnancies. The action of the play consisted of moved and spoken interactions between characters, first in the 1980s, as they await an infomercial audition, and later in the 2000s, where the performers play the, now pregnant, daughters of the characters from act one who are taking a prenatal water aerobics class together. In both of these scenarios, dance is a primary means of communication and connection amongst the cast, and between acts one and three, just described, is an act two which is entirely danced. *The Bumps* was designed for a nine-month run during which the cast would rotate—*5 MONTHS* taking over the role of *7 MONTHS, 3 MONTHS* taking over the role of *5 MONTHS*, and a new actor stepping into the role of *3 MONTHS*. It was workshopped and premiered in Los Angeles—at the Women's Center for Creative Research, the Moskowitz Bayse Gallery, the Hammer Museum, and finally, at the Skirball Cultural Center—before relocating with Nalebuff to New York City, where she restaged it as a benefit for Brooklyn Planned Parenthood and then for the 2017 PRELUDE Festival. After that, *The Bumps* went into hibernation.

When Nalebuff and I discussed the work after I witnessed its Los Angeles premiere as a full production at the Skirball Cultural Center, she told me that it was meant not only to accommodate pregnancy, but to celebrate and prioritize pregnant bodies as "real" women's bodies doing "real" things in "real" time (Rachel Kauder Nalebuff, in discussion with the author July 2017). Her focus on what is "real" for women intrigued me, especially her interest in what can be known and expressed through "real" bodies. As I understood her, she aspired to *present*, rather than represent, pregnant bodies on stage and, in so doing, to use the platform of performance as a corrective to popular misconceptions about motherhood, female bodies, and women's abilities to simultaneously "perform" physiologically, professional, and artistically, without one performance undercutting another. In an effort to make form follow function, she honored "real" women's bodies doing "real" things in "real" time by structuring the piece around the three trimesters of pregnancy. This structure, in turn, determined casting and set a tight timeline of three-month intervals for rehearsals and shows.

Nalebuff calls *The Bumps* a "project," as opposed to a play because through it, she was interested in reimaging the whole process of theater from writing the script to how she, Lui, and the director ran rehearsals to how the set was built to how the actors were costumed to the timing of the live performances to audiences' access to these performances to how audience members were treated by the performers and crew during the production. Uniting all aspects of the project was her guiding question of how she could see female bodily "needs" as the project's core "material," thus not as being subsidiary to or distracting from the work at hand. This meant rejecting all existing infrastructure and trying to innovate all aspects and steps of creative development. As she explained, theater, like "everything in this country, since its founding as the US, has been initiated by the white patriarchy" (Nalebuff 2017d). Thus, for an expressly "feminist" project rooted in and welcoming to "marginalized" experiences of female-sexed bodies of many backgrounds and identifications, retooling the entire process of performance needed to be as much a part of the project as what people saw on stage. Significantly, Nalebuff considered her project "art," as opposed to "activism," because she aimed for it to have no concrete political agenda but rather to be "open," so that it could "mean more things to more people" (ibid). In other words, she hoped to welcome diverse voices into unprecedented, vital conversations, rather than to propagate a set of specific talking points. She saw in "art," especially in dance, an alternative, less reductive and divisive, and more inclusive means of communication than prose. While inspired by pregnancy and particularly committed to improving the material situations of pregnant individuals and new mothers, she also saw the project as touching intersectional feminism both in its investment in making space for more bodies to value and take care of themselves and its proposal that theater offers us all new ways to be together and to feel less alone. In short, she intended this play to be for *everyone* in "a bitesized model of the world that [we] can handle" and to present a world that is more equitable and female-friendly than the world outside of the project. In all of these aims, the project moved and attracted me, and I began to follow and explore it closely.

With *The Bumps*, Nalebuff aspired to create a small but ongoing and sustainable economy for pregnant performing artists. For this economy, pregnant individuals' "biological clocks," their financial needs, and what they were socially and politically due (would that it were, in her opinion, a just reality), fueled her imagination. Conceptually, she grounded this economy in female physiology and gender equity, but she also marketed the production as saleable, profitable, transportable, and transferable to other casts and crews, all so that *The Bumps* could be an ongoing source of paid employment for a rotating pregnant population. Prior to writing *The Bumps*, as she explained in "A Play for What I Need," Nalebuff assessed that in the contemporary Los Angeles entertainment industry, there is an "unspoken understanding" that female actors who decide to have children will stop working for several years. As parental time begins, professional and "productive" time, in the Marxist sense, comes to a halt. For Marx, "productive labor, in its meaning for capitalist production, is wage labor which…reproduces not only… the value of its own labor power but in addition produces surplus value for the capitalist" (1969 [1863], 152). In this model, only labor exchanged with capital can produce surplus value; thus, maternal and/or domestic labor in and of itself are not "productive" and, consequently, do not have "real" (meaning measurable) worth. As many feminist critics of capitalism, such as labor activist Margaret Benston, have argued, the material basis of women's subordinate social status in capitalist society is because mothers' labor is for use and not exchange. It has no dollar value, and as Benston put it, "In a society in which money determines value, women are a group which works outside the money economy" (1969, 16). Thus, they are, like their labor, easily devalued. In addition, the lack of wages for their labor hides the critical economic roles of mothers in capitalist society—such as reproducing labor both through the daily work of offering sustenance and comfort to the wage earner so that this (implicitly male) worker can return to work the next day while she is also giving birth to the next generation of workers and consumers so that capitalism remains viable. Perhaps it is odd to evoke Marx's and Benston's ideas in this modern context since, contemporarily in the US, it is not uncommon for women to be wage earners, to continue participation in the capitalist labor force during their pregnancies, and to rejoin this force soon after giving birth—which, I should note, is an option facilitated for many by the sub-market economy of childcare (with childcare in the US being a luxury service for purchase rather than a worker's right). However, for performance artists, as Nalebuff recognized, there are additional complications which provoke recursive dilemmas and conditions in which there is still incompatibility between their "productive" and reproductive timelines. According to Nalebuff, performers' professional time stops with parenthood because they must concede that, while pregnant and immediately thereafter, their bodies, unlike the bodies of those becoming fathers (or other bodies not physically altered in the course of becoming a parent), do not have "hirable" aesthetics or proportions, and then later, childcare will be prohibitively expensive for them to audition or participate in, what are typically, low-paying gigs.

As part of her feminist activism, Nalebuff wanted to confront such professionally entrenched under-valuation of female's reproductive labor and to address the structural inequalities of the entertainment industry that sanction devaluation of females' artistic labor. She was furious that a female performer is expected to accept low pay in general and then to drop her career, as if it were a hobby, when obligated by her "biological clock" (supposedly "real" time and "real" life). Thus, as she told me in our conversation at the time of the Los Angeles performances, she embarked on a project that would provide employment opportunities for otherwise unemployed pregnant performers as well as offering paid childcare for a staff of new parents. Hers was a Marxist Feminist move in its desire to reveal what she perceived as an unjust discrepancy between the value of individuals' "productive" time and their parenting time. She aimed to throw light on ways females are denied full participation in market time and to reveal this sex-based lacuna through making something bold to fill it—creating professional, paid time for individuals during maternity and early parenthood. However, despite her Marxist attitude, she was, to me oddly, bent on pursuing a model that whilst feminist was, in her word, "capitalist."

Like Nalebuff's previous projects—including *The Little Red Book* (2009)*,* a compilation of stories about women's experiences of their first menstrual cycles, and *The Feminist Utopia Project* (2015), a mixed-media and polyvocal collection of musing on a world in which patriarchy does not limit individuals' experiences—*The Bumps* was another attempt to manifest a "feminist capitalist model," meaning, while saleable and intending to be a source of income, it refused to participate in hegemonic economics that, in her words, "don't give a fuck about women's bodies" (Nalebuff, discussion). Like much of her other work, it was initiated from her interest in females' experiences of their biology as it interacted with the modern world and masculinist social systems in which their bodies must function, and, like her previous projects, she aimed to use art to carve out spacetime for females to "make a living" on their own terms and in ways that announced, rather than concealed, their reproductive bodies.

In short, for Nalebuff, *The Bumps* had two primary goals: firstly, to make and pay "fair" amounts of money based on "productive" labor time, and secondly, to stay true to the temporality of female experiences of their reproductive bodyselves. While by no means a box-office smash, *The Bumps* was successful in achieving Nalebuff's first goal—all actors were paid for their clocked hours, and they incurred no personal expenses relating to the play that were attributable to their reproductive choices/bodies. For instance, they did not need to hire outside childcare because care was available at rehearsals. Furthermore, grant money and sponsorship were found, tickets were sold, and because of the cyclical ecosystem designed into the play, it was feasible that things could continue as they started in early runs and, thus, that many pregnant individuals and parents in the entertainment industry and performing arts would benefit from employment opportunities.

From the outset, Nalebuff wanted much of *The Bumps* to be danced. While not a choreographer or dancer herself, Nalebuff felt that incorporating dance as a key component would help the creative team to work from an "honest," embodied place, and would allow the cast to shape the project so that, while she might be the author, she was not the only one contributing content. As she was not pregnant during the project and thus could not source from her body to understand "real" women's "real" pregnant bodies in the "real" ways that she aimed to, this deferral to performers and appreciation for their embodied authority on pregnancy were, in my opinion, crucial for the project to be consistent with its goals. In addition to the entirely danced act two, Nalebuff explained to me that she incorporated physical, non-verbal expressions into acts one and three by noting "dance breaks" in the script. She also included in the script what she called "open scores" during which performers could "open up" to one another with intuitive movements (Nalebuff, discussion). When we spoke, she explained that she hoped the pregnant bodies of the actors would spontaneously reveal a "truth" beyond language that would inform the audience and herself, as the non-pregnant mentor of the project, about pregnant corporeality. This sentiment was in tension with Liu's thinking as well as that of her larger postmodern dance culture, which is wont to be skeptical of rhetorical flourishes that seemingly endow dance with powers of “honesty” or “authenticity.” Postmodernists tend to dismiss or facetiously repurpose the sentiments behind Martha Grahamisms like “movement never lies” and “the body says what words cannot;” however, Nalebuff, a neophyte to dance, threw her hope behind such maxims and incorporated them into *The Bumps'* ethos (Graham 1992, 122 & 8). In addition, she explained to me that, in general, “theater is not kind to bodies.” Thinking both that dance would be kinder and because she felt it would be “a crime to create a play specifically for a pregnant cast and have everyone just sitting and talking the whole time,” it was important to her that performers both dance and be seen dancing (Nalebuff and Selenow 2016). By avoiding “a crime,” I presumed that she meant both that she wanted to show pregnant women as strong and capable (and thereby be non-reiterative of traditional theater), and that she could not resist playing to audience curiosity about what these atypical bodies on stage could do.

In terms of her creative process, her priority of taking care of the bodies of the performers meant that, while writing, she considered the following questions with regard to her performers,

> What elements of theater that we imagine to be set in stone are in fact malleable, or decisions that someone made many years ago around their own body and needs?... Can I reimagine choreography for you? Can a script and characters be loose enough to allow for intensity of feelings—mood swings and energy dips—to inform and add texture to a performance? Can a heightened emotional state actually become an entry point for acting and heightened physical awareness become a guide for movement? (Nalebuff 2017, 5-8)

While Nalebuff had no past experience as a choreographer, she had great expectations for what dance would *do* within the project and why it was integral to *The Bumps*. She put her faith in dance, as a practice/attitude/attention, to protect the actors, to keep the work alive and sincere and the actors self-aware and present, to please the audience (who would not want to see them stationary), to channel and communicate “authentic” and direct experiences, and to revolutionize how theater is made. With this apotheosized notion of dance and its capacities, she hired Liu, a

Los Angeles-based postmodern choreographer, to keep the cast and crew attentive and compassionate to their bodies and to mentor and sculpt the project's "open scores" and dances.

Section two: Liu

The Bumps was far from Liu's first foray into theater or into making collaborative performance art. She had been working in the performing arts as a dancer, actor, director, musician, and filmmaker since premiering her first piece of choreography at the age of 11 for a television show in her native Hong Kong called *Show Kids Challenge.* She first moved to the US to pursue education in postmodern dance and Grotowski-based theater as a student in the Experimental Theater Wing at New York University. She then pursued a master's degree in dance, and after receiving her green card, moved to the US permanently to pursue a career in the arts. I first was introduced to her as a performer when we were both living and dancing in New York City, and she was in the cast of Big Dance Theater's *The Other Here* (2007). I remember this piece and her contributions to it very well. The work explored collisions between popular culture and "ancient" wisdom, especially as they implicated "Eastern" and "Western" ways of *knowing*. Liu, as the only Asian performer in a work that was a commission of the Japan Society and that sourced from the novels of Masuji Ibuse, traditional Japanese folk dances, and Okinawan pop songs showed great wittiness and self-possession in her performances of Asian identity (including wearing a "coolie" hat and doing the fraught "chopstick finger" jumps from the "Chinese Tea" dance in George Balanchine's *Nutcracker*). The show intended both humor and tension, and it was with poise, that Liu tackled the performance challenges of offering targeted critical commentary on Asian stereotypes while also demonstrating respect for Japanese cultures of the past and present and without, to me most significantly, allowing herself as the only Asian member of the cast to be tokenized. Her dancing celebrated Japanese culture with earnestness from her position as a Hong Kongese trained in performance practices of the "West" participating in the creative vision of her (white) choreographers. In short, her performance made an impression on me, both in her skills as a dancer with substantial and evident technical training and her remarkable dexterity in navigating racially charged roles. Although *The Other Here* took care to make sure jokes were never at her expense, Liu was implicated more than the other (white) performers and thus, I presumed at the time, she had choreographed her own strategies of triangulating the meanings of her dancing, her appearance, and her roles. In getting to know her more as a choreographer, I came to appreciate that such triangulation is central to her personal process as an artist and frequently shines through her original work in distinctive ways.

After New York, I encountered Liu next when we both were east coast transplants in Los Angeles, and she was showing an original piece called *Actress Fury* (2014). In the dance, she and two female companions performed different aspects of a single individual, a female actress, in an exploration of how women artists *act* like women and *act* like artists. Once again, Liu's performance shed light on everyday performances of identity that touched her life—here not performances of race and nationhood but of gender and profession. Discussing her process for *Actress Fury* Liu said, "I believe you can conjure a new feeling-body by wearing the outer-layer…. I like creating characters from the outside in" (Liu 2013). With this technique that she called "person wearing," she rebelled against her Grotowski-based formation and countered its logic of building characters from the inside-out, and she also resisted sourcing from her own corporeality or relying on disclosing her personal experiences to make her points choreographically. Rather, making the work offered her a means to escape herself so as to study and comment on aspects of her social identity from a critical and interventionist perspective.

As she moved into other projects, in particular those that she did as collaborations with her spouse, performance artist Andrew Gilbert, she began to welcome more of herself into her work so long as all creative and expressive praxes within a project adhered to strict and intentional structures. As an alternative to becoming a character, she found that these choreographic structures allowed her to supersede her personal identity even as she presented her body and bits of her private life as her art. In her and Gilbert's 2016 performance piece *House Music*, they explained their strategy of using choreographic structures to transmute themselves and open up the ways in which they could experience their bodies/lives while performing:

> Liu: These structures are containers outside of ourselves to empty ourselves into.
> Gilbert: We become the containers.
> Liu: We become the empty space within the containers, I think.
> Gilbert: Yeah. The containers are tubes.
> Liu: We have practices and they are structures that are like tubes through which we regulate our bodies in time and space.
> Gilbert: Yeah, and then we travel through these tubes and then we'll become vacuums.
> Liu: When we are vacuums, we are pure attention.
> Gilbert: When we are vacuums, we're not afraid.

In their residency for *House Music* in the Mistake Room in Los Angeles, Liu and Gilbert built a material structure suggestive of a house into which they invited visitors. Once inside, their guests could watch them as they occupied themselves with performing an ordered list of choreographic structures inspired by the rituals that they share in their life outside of *House Music*: domestic rituals, the rituals of their artistic practices, and the rituals of the Urasenke Japanese tea ceremony of which both Liu and Gilbert are practitioners. On a wall their score was handwritten:

> Arrange flowers
> Write scroll
> Make tea
> Music practice
> Dance practice
> Make video
> Sweep path
> Dress

> Lay hearth
> Practice *House Music*
> Undress
> Sweep path

Within this larger score, each component was composed of its own structures, and in terms of the choreography, Liu's appreciation of structure was very influenced by early postmodernists; most specifically, she was influenced by the work of Trisha Brown. Like Brown, Liu saw in formal structure a means to free up her intuition, and in *House Music* she paid specific tribute to Brown and acknowledged her influence. Wearing matching gingham jumpsuits, seated cross-legged and kitty-corner to each other on the floor of their "house," with microphones at both of their mouths and a cube of sound gear recessed into the floor front of them, Liu smiled warmly out at their guests and asked "Does anybody know the work of Trisha Brown?" After a pause in which she sustained her smile and surveyed the audience, she opened her eyes wide like a child in wonder, braced her hands on her knees and began speaking quickly, in a slightly lowered register, annunciating each syllable:

> Well for those of you who don't know, she was a choreographer that we now call "postmodern" working in a loft in SoHo in the 70s, when there wasn't any hot water or Abercrombie and Fitchs [pause for deep inhale]. Her dance asked the question *what is choreography?* So, she broke choreography down in order to figure out what it was made of. She imposed structures on herself.

Liu went on to describe Brown's 1971 dance *Accumulation*, and she and Gilbert modeled the dance's structure with their bodies as they performed their own choreography.

> one [while rolling their wrists]
> one plus two [while rolling their wrists and then pointing one finger up in the air]
> one plus two plus three [while rolling their wrists, pointing one finger in the air, and then blossoming their forearms open]…

and so on. She explained the virtues of *Accumulation*: "You see the building blocks of the dance. You see her thinking through dancing." Brown influenced Liu's vison of choreography, her methods of making it, and the affect she desired her choreography to have on an audience, and in these ways, Brown was part of Liu and Gilbert's performative "home" and their creative family.

Their performance of structured rituals was, according to Liu, a "commitment ceremony" to their processes of creative living which included paying tribute to the artists, like Brown, who most influenced them, taking care of their creative space and praxes, and taking care of their romantic commitment to each other. They expressed in words, music, storytelling, and dance how their love for each other and its extension into their shared creative practice felt. In one moment, Liu performed Gilbert. In this character swap, she reminded their guests that although rooted in their life together, their performances were indeed performances, and just as Liu, in this instance, engaged her technique of "person wearing" so as to be Gilbert, she was otherwise "person wearing" herself throughout the piece. As Gilbert, Liu added a microphone effect to make her voice lower and gravellier, and she urgently expressed what it felt like to fall in love with her:

> I-saw-your-sweat-scatter-from-your-shorts-and-it-glittered-as-it-flew-in-the-late-afternoon-sun-the-sides-of-your-shorts-gave-me-glimpses-of-your-sleek-amber-thigh-and-it-hinted-at-the-rest-of-your-body-dancing-underneath-your-clothes-and-it-stirred-me-I-noticed-you-immediately-when-I entered-the-hall-yours-was-the-only-body-that-was-enveloped-in-a-kind-of-stillness-that-came-from-how-economical-all-of-the-positions-were-that-you-took-however-fierce-your-movements-you-were-motionless-at-your-core-your-left-foot-followed-your-right-like-a-shadow

As she hurriedly projected her words, leaning over onto her side so that she could speak them into Gilbert's microphone, Gilbert did a writhing and frantic dance behind her—in and out of the floor, going every direction at once, restless and wild, offering the audience a synesthesia-like experience of Liu's monologue—then he resettled and reset himself in his place cornerwise to Liu. He lifted the audio effect, and both said calmly, in their own voices, and to the other "I love you."

Further exploring the feeling of their romance, Gilbert described a dream that he had of them dying and being in a casket together in the overhead bin of a bus to which Liu responded, “I think it’s hopeful… I HOPE we get to die together.” In reply, Gilbert began the following exchange:

Gilbert: Look at me.
Liu: I am looking at you.
[long pause]
Gilbert: If you ever want somebody else while we’re together, will you please just tell me?
[pause]
Liu: Yes. Yes, I will. [then quickly] Will you do the same for me?
Gilbert: [softly and gently] Yes, of course.
Liu: Ok…Ok.
Gilbert: Ok.

This moment was tense and delicate. They held each other’s eyes and spoke in what seemed to be their natural voices and cadences, as if this intimate conversation was interrupting what was otherwise a show. However, the moment was, of course, like every other component of *House Music*, choreographed and highly structured. They still spoke these words into their microphones, and they were seated on the floor with their arms extended on long stiff diagonals with fingertips pressed resolutely down into the floor. Moreover, while appearing fraught, tender, and passionately extemporaneous, the exchange was just another part of their ritual and thus an interchange that they rehearsed daily.

Witnessing *House Music*, I appreciated that for Liu (indecently, like her inspiration Brown at the time that she made *Homemade*), in this work, her creative life, her personal “domestic” reality, her family reality, and the feelings and structures that her home/family lives evoked were fully enmeshed with her art. Like Brown, she valued the choreographic relevance of her “domestic” life when organized in a highly structured way, and she appreciated how *re-membering* gestures found in her family life outside of her art could function as art so long as she presented them to viewers as structured performance, thus not as autobiography or as a personal unveilment. It was at this point in her artistic practice and research that Liu's and Nalebuff's paths overlapped in Los Angeles. Although as makers they had very different approaches to the relationships between performance and lived experience, the role of the moving body and of text in their art, and the balance between performing structures and performing stories, they anticipated a rich partnership. Mutually admiring one another's work, when Nalebuff asked Liu to join the creative team of her project, Liu enthusiastically agreed to the collaboration.

Section three: Conflicting choreographies

With *The Bumps*, Nalebuff aimed to make a work that valued and communicated the temporality of maternity by being structured around women's reproductive cycles. Liu was fascinated by her idea of time as known through experiences of female biology and excited to discover how it would manifest in creative movement. So accustomed to working from the outside-in, Liu was intrigued by this alternative approach to working from the inside-out, but in a way that was different in intent and priorities from her theater school matriculation because it was biologically based. Thus, it was not constructed around a character and that character's emotions. In other words, as I read the situation, Liu was drawn to the project for the ways in which it might stretch her own creative process and deepen her choreographic resources. Also appealing to Liu was Nalebuff's expressed investment in presenting pregnancy theatrically through individual's perceptions of their fluctuating biologies, her commitment to dance as a necessary form of research into and communication of pregnant individuals' corporeal awareness, and her belief in the feminist implications of performers' somatic attention and expression. Thus, Liu was crestfallen when she received Nalebuff's pages only to realize that all phenomenological accounts of the meaning of pregnancy and all movement components of *The*

Bumps were pre-scripted and pre-scripted in ways that presented what, to her, read as frustratingly pat representations of pregnancy.

As an audience member and as one researching *The Bump's* development, my reactions to the work paralleled Liu's. When I saw *The Bumps* performed live, the insights that I, as viewer, gleaned about lived experiences of pregnancy were reiterative of how I had seen pregnancy flatly represented in many prior contexts. For instance, as a character squeezed her knees together and cried out "I can't wait," I saw, once again, that pregnant women need to "pee" a lot and have reduced bladder control. As a character bumped into a prop and dropped another, saying, "I'm sorry. I'm just not used to knowing where I end and something else starts," I saw reinforcement that pregnant women experience themselves as clumsy. As a character dry heaved and pinched her nose when a banana entered the scene while another consoled her that "the beginning really ruins food," I was reminded that pregnant women feel nauseous. And as a character searched the air and expressed her bewilderment with wide fingered hand gestures as she said "Oh I hate this feeling when something's right at the edge of your brain…like a sneeze. Ugg!" she reiterated for the audience that pregnant individuals feel forgetful due to their, so called, "pregnancy brains." In other instances of characters performing derivative experiences of their pregnant bodies, in act one, *3 MONTHS* demonstratively felt her belly from the *outside* to crudely signal that she was feeling things *inside* her body and *7 MONTHS* sat down heavily, stood up with effort, and put her hands on her low back for support to *show* that her belly was weighty. Meanwhile, *5 MONTHS* tapped her feet to improve "blood flow to the brain," practiced breathing exercises and regular hydration, played opera music to her belly by holding a portable cassette player against herself so that the fetus had brain-building stimulation, and made food choices based on the sex of her fetus. *5 MONTHS'* behaviors provoked giggles from the audience because, in my reading of them, they presented her as a funny character who unthinkingly follows popular advice as opposed to acting from a place of her own bodily awareness and intelligence. Nalebuff seemed to wink at us, “C’mon, we all know some pregnant person like this!” In other words, *5 MONTHS* offered comic relief but was, to my mind, a foil to the type of “real” and un-stereotypical character that I expected Nalebuff and the performers would share through this project. In brief, these described moments from act one expressed no experiential insights of either the characters or the actors and were, in fact, counteractive to presenting pregnant individuals as self-aware, independent thinkers and movers.

Later, in the first act, *3 MONTHS* was told by *7 MONTHS* that she probably would not get cast as a pregnant woman in the infomercial because she was not showing much—after all, “she could just be a bloated person.” To this, *3 MONTHS* while clutching her belly replied, “That’s so funny because to me it’s so… it’s so… I feel it soooo much.” Subsequently, in what I read as a significant missed opportunity, rather than trying to put what she felt into words or to develop it in movement, *3 MONTHS* continued, “which reminds me that maybe other people are experiencing something that I can’t see at all, isn’t that beautiful?” For me, this exchange stood out because it brought into relief a dynamic that, in varying degrees, I experienced throughout the entire project: albeit it in a well-intentioned way, *The Bumps* consistently put experiences of pregnancy to work as something figurative with which to make larger points. Now, Nalebuff was well aware of her use of pregnancy as a literary device. For example, when interviewed about the project, she explained that in theater and beyond, death is usually the way we understand life, “but pregnancy and birth offer just as much insight into every epic question that we have [although] it hasn’t been examined nearly as much” (Nalebuff 2017d). Problematically for me, Nalebuff anticipated this rhetorical importance of pregnancy prior to interacting with any pregnant individuals, and she did not amend or develop it by paying attention to the lived experiences of her pregnant collaborators. In other words, the rhetorical importance of pregnancy was something that she was able to write about from her own embodied experiences, despite the fact that she was not pregnant at the time that she wrote *The Bumps*. Consequently, in her desire to make pregnancy relatable and thus a good theme for popular theater, she ended up gliding over experiences unique to pregnancy and unique to each pregnant individual, experiences that, elsewhere, when advocating for the piece, she presented as important in and of themselves for what they were, not merely for what they stood.

The physical movements of act one were pantomimic, not self-exploratory, self-disclosive, or otherwise expressive for the performers. However, act two of *The Bumps* was written to be exclusively danced; there were no spoken lines. Thus, I expected this act to be where Liu's priorities and methods entered the piece in a notable way. However, curiously, this was not the case. The three danced solos bore no similarity to Liu's other work, they were highly narrative, and I could not imagine them being generated through the types of intentional structures that Liu uses as creative springboards. In this act, the three performers entered the space wearing swimsuits, swim caps, and goggles. They arrived on stage doing a slow motion free-style stroke with their arms and then *3 MONTHS* and *5 MONTHS* took a seat in the waiting room chairs from act one while *7 MONTHS* did a series of jumping jacks and other seemingly preparatory movements to lift her energy before she purposefully walked center stage and began an undulating, cheeky, brazen dance routine. As if at a nightclub, she did grinding movements with her body, dropping down to the floor, circling her torso and gyrating her hips. Kneeling on the floor, she did several pelvic thrusts, prior to rising back to her feet to commence a pattern of quick footwork reminiscent of salsa dance in which she shifted her weight from foot to foot causing her hips to swivel side to side while her upper body seemed to calmy, coolly float above her lower. Then, as her hips and torso became still and she tucked her arms behind her back, her dance morphed into something resembling Irish step dance. She ended with big ta-da arms and the audience who had been laughing throughout took the cue to burst into applause. She blew a kiss accepting their commendation and then followed her spotlight as it gravitated off stage. After she departed, the focus shifted to *5 MONTHS* who pantomimed checking the time and then who commenced a series of schmaltzy balletic movements: emotive port de bras, bourées, arabesques, balancés, and chainé turns, all with overstated epaulement and diva-esque gravitas. As the actor who I saw perform was not a ballerina, the movements lacked grace and clarity of line and consequently, struck the audience as funny, like a parody of ballet—which presumably was the desired effect. Viewers again giggled throughout the solo and then burst into applause when she closed her routine with a dramatic curtsey.

At this point in act two, as an audience member, I felt my body very tensed, my jaw clenched, and my program crumpled in my hand, which had subconsciously tightened around it. I had an automatic aversion to hearing those around me laughing at these pregnant individuals. I was perturbed that giggles seemed spurred by choreography that framed as absurd pregnant bodies being sexy (in the case of *7 MONTHS*) and beautiful (in the case of *5 MONTHS*), and I felt vexed at the choreographer (presumably Liu) for using this opportunity to mock these women by showing their inability to dance as well as professional dancers in styles with preordained and popularly perceivable standards of excellence. Their dances in no way deepened my understanding of pregnancy or engaged me in the performers' experiences of their bodies.

Finally, 3 *MONTHS*, who has been left alone onstage, pretended to look at a clock before beginning a little 1950s-style boogie dance of scooting back and forth, her feet moving in one direction while her arms swung in the other. She then stopped as if flustered, repositioned herself in space, and hesitantly began a seemingly bliss-induced dance, with her arms flung out and head thrown back, as her feet performed triplets that carried her body around the circular space illuminated by her spotlight. Suddenly the spotlight tightened in on her, and she stopped abruptly, whimpered, and as the light faded entirely, she stumbled offstage feeling her way through the dark. Confused, the audience around me fidgeted in their seats, unsure whether to applaud or wait for the next cue. This solo was less legible than the other two, and it lacked their humor. After a minute of self-consciously sitting in the dark, the lights came back up, and it was the beginning of act three.

To better understand the development and intended purpose of act two, after seeing the live performance, I reviewed filmed versions of *The Bumps* that were earlier and subsequent to the Skirball Cultural Center performance, and I found that each was a staged reading as opposed to a full production. This meant that Liu's choreography was not included, and, as the actors remained in their chairs and behind their music stands, all stage directions were not enacted but read aloud. Having the notes spoken in these other versions clarified for me that the entire second act was intended to represent not maternal experiences but fetal experiences, and it shocked me to learn that the choreography was created not by Liu but by Nalebuff. By this, I mean that each dance was fully described in text. The script included detailed directions for *7 MONTH*'s breakdance and *5 MONTH*'s "absolutely perfect" "ballerina dance," and the script also helped me to understand that the three performers, in descending order, were tasked to enact a "dream ballet," each following the same structure. Each character was to recognize that "it's almost time" to leave their wombs, to make their preparations, and then to be born in their own (pre-scripted) styles. Although the dances had been envisioned in their final form by Nalebuff and were expressing her fantasy rather than the realities or fantasies of the performers; I preferred them as descriptions. For me, there was something wonderful in looking at the pregnant performer and imaging her break dancing or doing “perfect” ballet. This imaginative exercise allowed me to associate these bodies with a sense of unbridled and total capacity. However, when danced live, since the performers were not b-girls or ballet-trained, the shortcomings of their performances were evident, and consequently their dances read as comical. From staged reading to live dancing, the dynamic shifted from the audience dreaming with the performers and believing in them to the audience laughing at the performers. Thus, in the full performance, dance became a vehicle for, in my reading of the work, the subtle disempowerment of the pregnant performers, since it called attention to their physical limitations.

Better understanding the source of the movement in act two, I wondered where Liu’s choreography ended up within the production, if it was there at all. Rehearsal documentation used for publicity purposes and Nalebuff herself in our conversation suggested that Liu was a major contributor to *The Bumps*. However, as I watched more and more versions of the production, I had a harder and harder time locating any choreographer but Nalebuff behind it. However, after close analysis, I found Liu definitively in two instances, which were absent from the script and readings but present in the full production. The first was the manner in which the actors entered and exited the space at the very beginning and very ending of the finished production. Their transitions into and out of the performance entailed the three slowly and carefully rolling between onstage and offstage while fully conjoined. The second was a movement repeated several times during act one in which the performers either faced the audience or mirrored one another and, in unison, slowly raised one arm overhead, then the other, then both, and with each extension they let their torsos follow the lines of their arms so that their bodies swayed like seaweed in water. This particular movement struck me as a non sequitur in the larger performance; it introduced new aesthetics and pacing, and while engaged in it, the performers seemed to drop character completely. Indeed, both instances of Liu's choreography seemed to interrupt the play, and to pull the performers into an alternate spacetime that they shared with one another, but that eluded the viewers. I appreciated the simplicity, abstractness, and repetition of Liu's contributions and their invitation to us to see the performers' bodies in a different light and as a single organism. While, in neither instance did the performers seem fully comfortable, fully committed to these movements, or fully connected to each other—as is often the case when dancers with less formal training and performance experience attempt to move in unison—I could perceive the embodied connection between them, the potential for it to grow, and the opportunity for them to listen and relate to each other's bodies specifically through movement. I could also see pregnant bodies in ways that I had not seen them act or interact before. In other words, with Liu's choreographies, seeds were planted in *The Bumps*, but they were seemingly choked from growing to fruition because they were overwhelmed by the project's other choreographies by Nalebuff.

Moreover, experiencing other versions of act three, showed me that, like act two, all movement had been pre-scripted. However, in this act, Nalebuff took a different, and to my mind, more productively choreographic approach than she had in acts one and two, an approach that enhanced both the staged reading and the full production. Perhaps this was because she was not, as in act two, trying to make a dance that would be recognized as a dance by viewers or anticipating what a body, as an idea, could signal. Rather, she was writing from what struck me as an embodied place and fitting the lines and action to time and story as she experienced each through her vital body performing its choreography of writing. The act landed with power because it offered the audience means to attend to it *with* and *from* our own bodies, which automatically opened up more opportunities to connect and attend to the present bodies of the pregnant performers as well as the bodily subject matter of the work. The writing actively involved us in the substance of the play, offering us the opportunity to imaginatively map possibilities onto performing bodies, in other words, letting us practice the choreographic exercise of thinking with our bodies and envisioning kinesthetic challenges and possibilities for the bodies onstage. It also shifted the performative center of the piece outside of the bodies of the actors and the falling action of the narrative, and into our present attendant bodies, as we began to experience ourselves participating in the choreography.

The act took place in a water aerobics class and so the performers, although seated, were moving in synched rhythm as someone offstage, offering the voice of the fitness instructor, called out directions like "step, step, step…", "now lift it! Lift, lift, lift…", "out and in and out and in and out…," etc. These scaffolding movements which, in the full performance, the audience both saw and heard, created a cadence for how and when the performers recited their lines, and they created a rhythm with which I felt myself entrain. Although an aerobics class, because of the weightiness of the bodies and the imagined drag of the water, the rhythm was not frantic or driving. I found its steadiness calming. For the first time in the production, I felt sensitive and responsive to the physical experiences of the pregnant performers. Unexpectedly, the connection became stronger when the characters' exercise routines had ceased. The three were having a conversation in which *7 MONTHS* and *5 MONTHS* tried to quell the anxiety of *3 MONTHS,* who suddenly felt paralyzed by fear of what her future held. In seeing the full production of the work, this scene engaged me somatically, but in the live reading of the work, its affect was even stronger. In the reading, Nalebuff's stage directions for this section cued the performers to breathe together very slowly: “out and in, out and in, out and in….” As witness, my breath fell into the same timing, and as we all breathed together, I was ready to receive and imagine the stage direction “their limbs remain tangled, but they are comfortable, as if they were one animal,” even as the actors remained seated and separate. I felt like actors and audience alike, believed in this possibility, and, as in act two, it was the possibility, not the opportunity to see it enacted in live performance, which made it matter. I felt, as an audience member, that Nalebuff had choreographed for us all, pregnant and non-pregnant together, a physical understanding that connected us.

Likewise, breathing together, we were all present to listen deeply and as one connected social body when *3 MONTHS* (lying supine in the full performance) said slowly, searchingly into the space above her

> No, I… I’ve killed a fish with my own two hands
> My scream is so loud it’s like a cartoon scream
> I’ve built a barn
> I’ve dug a huuuuuuuge pit
> Almost everything I know, I’ve taught myself
> Me
> How to walk down the street
> How to bleed
> How to smash garlic
> How high your pants should be if you have a really long torso
> How to cut hair
> How to write a sentence
> How to thank someone
> How to say no
> How to know when fruit is ready
> How to know when someone doesn’t deserve me
> How to make a person who is sad all the time laugh
> So, I’m really
> So, you know what
> Yeah
> No
> No
> I don’t need anybody
> I have to keep telling myself that

I just *want* someone [a child] in my life, you know?
And this feels so different from needing… right?
I think this is different
I think it is…

She dropped each line like a tear or a petal, and let it sit while she took several breaths. I breathed in lockstep. I watched her chest rise and fall and heard as her voice subtly broke at moments in imminent tears of either joy or fear—most likely both. With *5 MONTHS* and *7 MONTHS*, I felt that we were all in this moment together, breathing, feeling, holding space, being an embodied community. As if including us all in her lines as she continued, *3 MONTHS* said, "it's like we're making connections with something that we don't know we know. Something bigger than us. Maybe…" and then she hazarded "What if we stay like this forever?" She concluded softly, with certainty, without melodrama, "Oh my god. I'm really scared." There was a long pause. I felt my body pulling toward her responsively along with *5 MONTHS'* and *7 MONTHS'* as they affirmed her: "I know," and I felt fully physically present in a shared lived experience with her as *3 MONTH's* ended the show:

Just a second
why can't there be just a second
where I feel like
I'm even just a little
even if it's a total illusion
in control
just a second?
…can we stay for a little?

My feeling body stayed with her and together, we breathed a little longer, but then, the light began to fade, and the performers began to melt into one another and roll away together. I appreciated having the time that it took for them to negotiate their way off stage with bodies intertwined, per Liu's direction. As they rolled, I could gradually perceive my detachment from an experience that they continued to be connected by in a special way, and I could transition back to feeling my discrete, non-pregnant self—my legs cramping in my plastic chair, my damp program in my now relaxed hand, and the creeping onset of the Angelino itch to depart so as to beat the rush to the parking garage.

As the choreographer of the *The Bumps* and as a pregnant individual, Liu looked forward to a personally revelatory and enriching process of working on *The Bumps'* dances. However, as a kinesthetically curious dance artist, her deep somatic sensitivity to her own pregnant anatomy and physiology as well as her commitment to process-based movement research, led her to feel profoundly frustrated with the project. While Nalebuff spoke of the choreographic component as the fulcrum on which the rest of the project balanced, Liu felt that *The Bumps'* dances were "antithetical" to the project's professed ethos because they were more products than practice and she, as the hired choreographer, had no time to develop a process with the actors. When we spoke, Liu told me that she found that the project afforded only very "succinct opportunities" for invention and investigation (Jennie MaryTai Liu, in discussion with the author, July 2017). This was because, in order to stay within budgets, deadlines, and trimesters, dance practices needed to be abbreviated and goal oriented. For her, the process was attentive to the "real" time of women's pregnant bodies only in that it offered additional opportunities for "potty" and snack breaks during rehearsals, and while these were welcome, they did not constitute creative research. For her, unhappily, she found that doing her job meant distancing herself from her own choreographic praxes and even alienating herself from her own pregnant body's sense of time while she was "on the clock," professionally speaking.

While Liu was not able to access or facilitate the idea of an art piece grounded in the temporality of biology and maternity while working on *The Bumps*, the discussions surrounding the work inspired her own private creative process outside of rehearsals. On her own, she felt no urge to dance, per say, but rather, she felt moved to engage with a process of what she called "re-encoding" herself (Liu, discussion). In order to do so, she needed to be home, to be solitary, and to practice "total awareness." Her idea of total awareness was inspired by the practices of postmodern choreographer Deborah Hay, and it scaffolded a praxis of what she called "radical allowing" in which she would ask herself, "How can I allow everything that is in existence to exist?" and "How can I advocate for more space?" In lieu of dance, she practiced yoga, mindful breathing, and sensation meditations such as holding an ice cube in her hand, through the burn of cold, until it had fully melted. Each of these practices offered their own useful experiential temporal frameworks. She did not want to make art about her pregnancy; however, she felt that being pregnant affected the way in which she organized the work that she did make. She described independent projects made during her pregnancy as "polyphonic, nonlinear, rambling expositions." In addition to not wanting to make work explicitly referential to her pregnancy, she felt very uncomfortable with the idea of making work that represented her identity (dancing so as to *represent* herself as pregnant, as opposed to dancing so as to *notice* her experiences of her changing body). She thought this was perhaps because she is an Asian woman, and consequently, she perceived her work as already, automatically being read by others as about, or at least infused with, her "cultural" identity. She refused to tolerate being doubly objectified—being seen as essentially her phenotype and her belly. Consequently, when she was pregnant, she preferred to be recluse and "inside" her life taking care of herself. In other words, she was not, via her art, outside of her experience making a statement about it or building a theory around it for the edification of others—a model of pregnancy art of which *The Bumps* was paradigmatic.

The Bumps' dances reflected differences in feminist values and investments in pregnant performing bodies between Nalebuff—the writer as dance-maker who was interested in the *idea* of pregnancy—and Liu—the choreographer as dance-maker who was interested in her *perceptions* of pregnancy. Consequently, these interpersonal conflicts led to aesthetic and ideological inconsistences in the movement components of their collaborative project. Liu, a student of Brown's work, approached dancing while pregnant with similar attentions and interests to her predecessor. She sought to allow pregnancy to expand her powers of observation and sensitivity as well as her choreographic tools, but she had no desire to perform her pregnancy for others or to perform for others with her pregnant body. Liu modeled herself after Brown in making pregnant, and later postpartum, art that broke down the structural components of dance and then exhibited her (re)thinking as she put them back together. Also, like Brown, Liu used dance to take care of herself and to create conditions that would aid her through her transitions into parenthood and through establishing how her art and family lives might reciprocally inform one another. In short, Liu's vision of how dance might support her pregnancy was close to Brown's: she wished to learn about pregnancy through employing the tools of dance, and she wished to learn more about the possibilities of dance through her pregnant body.

On the other hand, Nalebuff, as choreographer, was in many ways the foil to Brown and Liu. Rather than trying to discover what it meant to make dances and what it meant to be pregnant from being inside of these experiences, Nalebuff attempted to express the meanings of these embodied situations from literary and political perspectives that were outside of both. In other words, while she had never made a dance and while she did not have an embodied history with dance, she presumed to choreograph, and while she had never carried a pregnancy to term and while her embodied experience with pregnancy was over a decade behind her, she created a project ostensibly centering lived experiences of pregnancy. Thus, her body and its memories were not essential to how she let an idea of "the" pregnant body influence her work.

Furthermore, while Brown and Liu preferred abstraction and only partial disclosure of their maternal experiences, for Nalebuff, pregnant bodies needed to be unequivocal and easily decipherable if they were to appear meaningful and have theatrical utility. Thus, her project was clearly about pregnancy, emphasized by the title, the actor's body shapes, and how the scripted movements and dialogue of the play called attention to the legibility of their "condition" and their inevitably preoccupation with that "condition."

I take issue with Nalebuff as choreographer primarily in her claim that *The Bumps* was offering the actors a means to learn about and express themselves through their bodies, and its assertion that it prioritized dance as a means of research, self- and community-care, and communication because, while the project did many unprecedented things, it did not fulfill either of these promises. Nalebuff is an artist of words, and, as exemplified in act three, she was able to choreograph in language quite effectively. However, at the outset, she suggested that dance would be a critical component of the project because it made meaning differently than language, she seemed to appreciate that dance would not, like prose, progress in one direction and toward one pre-defined meaning; thus, it would allow for "openness" in how *The Bumps* was interpreted. However, in the end, Nalebuff made both dance and pregnancy operate like language and be meaningful in ways for which language allows. This meant that that neither of these somatic experiences had the "real" opportunity to change what the project was doing or how it made meaning.

In my reading, rather than thickening conversations about experiences of pregnancy or deepening the impact of the work, when Nalebuff's choreographies were danced rather than spoken, they detracted from the feminist efficacy of the project. This leads me to the question *Did her dances need to be embodied to do their work?* As Brown explored while pregnant and then in later works like *Skymap*, some choreographies need not be danced to be dances and to stimulate somatic thinking in participants. She understood that sometimes it is the collective act of imagination supported by text that is the finished work in its most cogent form. In fact, Brown did some of what she considered her best and most complex choreography through writing in her notebooks. As Brown historian Susan Rosenberg appreciated, for Brown, "The Page is treated as an analog for the body's ability to think in language as a way of moving in space" (2012). Language and the thinking it inspired were dance, and consequently, as Brown herself acknowledged, "I have the same adrenaline and heartbeat going as I enter the paper as I do going on stage" (Walker 2008). With Brown in mind, from my perspective, Nalebuff's dances would have better served her mission if they remained imaginative exercises. Afterall, performing this project as a full danced production would only be an improvement on a staged reading if the performers' dancing bodies offered new unlanguagable insights into the performers' experiences, and in *The Bumps*, as it was, this was rarely the case.

Section four: Kristeva

In *The Bumps*, part of why the body- and experience-centric components of the project were never developed to function beyond the logic of narrative and spectacle was because of what Nalebuff perceived to be shortages of time. As it happened, Nalebuff encountered snags both in fulfilling her stated objectives and in collaborating with Liu because of her dual ambitions to make a project that was supportive of pregnant physiology and one that was marketable and financially viable. This was primarily a temporal problem, a clash between a corporeal formation of time and an economic formation of time, or as feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva would frame it, a collision between "women's time" and male-centric time. Nalebuff's initial plan to make an art piece rooted in pregnant individuals' experiences of their bodies was very Kristevan in its feminist tone and intent. However, as Kristeva has warned, such plans are too often interrupted and curtailed by what are misperceived to be mandatory external structures. Trying to fit feminist political projects into structures instituted by patriarchy (for example, capitalism), means, in Kristeva's analysis, that they are destined to not only fail but to delude participants into thinking they were successful. In other words, the progress such projects can make is minimal and the ways in which they might tacitly repeat the patterns of the encompassing system against which they are rebelling makes them injurious to feminist progress. This line of Kristeva's argumentation in her theory of "women's time" offers a helpful framework to support further analysis of the accomplishments and shortcomings of *The Bumps*.

In opposition to linear time—time that simply passes, the temporality of periodized history, the temporality of patriarchal power structures, the temporality that divides rather than valuing difference, and the temporality that structures thought in ways that limit what can be conceived of—Kristeva created her own theorization of time, which she called "women's time." Kristeva was invested in time as it could be known through a female body, meaning her temporality was informed by experiences of menstruation, breastedness, and pregnancy. Writing in 1981, she critiqued the first batch of second wave feminists who, in pursuit of equality with men, sought to be inserted into history as it was already conceptualized through the models of linear time and progress. Kristeva also had qualms about feminist efforts to create a "female society" structured to be an "alter ego" to patriarchal society, because she anticipated that this "simulacrum" would be prone to compatibility with "masculine" values, and, in all likelihood, would "fall back into the old ruts of the initially combatted archetypes" of womanhood (1981, 28). Instead, and in a theoretical move in many ways aligning her with philosopher Luce Irigaray, Kristeva argued for examination and demystification of the male/female binary. She saw this binary as the "interior of," and thus as limiting to, "every identity whether subjective, sexual, [or] ideological," and she wanted it dismantled so as to create time which embraced the total uniqueness of every individual and the multiplicity of her possible identifications (34). Kristeva saw this work of interrogation, undoing, and reimagining as primarily the charge of "aesthetic practice," since engaging with art offers what she called "creative time" and, importantly, alternative expressive mediums to language. For her, alternative mediums were imperative because, at least in non-poetic forms, language relies on linear time and repeats many of its faults since a sentence can only progress toward one conclusion and all words within it must have pre-determined denotation for it to make "sense." Consequently, language typically totalizes and equalizes a plurality of options and identifications so as to facilitate clear communication. It follows that non-language based expressive forms such as dance were, to her mind, more conducive to experiences and expressions of "women's time."

Of course, not all aesthetic practice innovates its own symbolic and representational frameworks, and dance, even as an art of time, does not automatically manifest Kristeva's "women's time." After all, it is entirely possible to choreograph using available signs without interrogating their embedded stories and to use such signs in a sequence that corroborates linear time in all the ways that, per Kristeva, it stymies our freedoms and our breadth of thought. This is the case even if such art *represents* an interpretation of time as known by females or females' connectedness because of, for instance, their cycles. In other words, Kristeva-esque feminism can be superficial, especially if it utilizes signs and time in ways that only take their meaning through existing (per her model, phallocentric) paradigms. After all, thinking of female physiology and its constative cycles as what makes women special and that which unites them is in no way fundamentally incompatible with "masculine" values. As follows, ostensibly feminist art can fall into the trap of using the biology of female reproductive bodies to inspire what, on the surface, appears to be a feminist aesthetic process but which does not examine how the work might be participating in a larger self-alienating masculinist project. This was indeed the contradiction inherent to *The Bumps.*

Section five: The problem of market time

Nalebuff's driving intentions for *The Bumps* were deeply rooted in her own embodied wants and politics, and early conversations among the creative team took seriously the question, "What if our needs became starting points for the imagination?" However, I fear that the "need" for it to be a success conceptually, politically, and financially eventually overtook the "need" for individuals to know and express personal experiences of pregnancy without fear (which had been an initial call to action for Nalebuff) as well as the "need," especially in a professional context, for individuals to experience pregnant corporeality as supportive (or at least as not inherently in conflict with) their ability to perform and be taken seriously as performers. While Nalebuff set out to debunk theater practices that someone else made "around their own body and needs," in unintended ways, she repeated a version of this same errant behavior, imposing her own needs and goals and the "needs" of theater culture over those of her pregnant colleagues. From the beginning, there were inevitable conflicts between Nalebuff's dual ambitions to make a work that appreciated bodies with needs and one that was also up to speed with market demands and schedules and that was on a par with the success of, tacitly, male-centric theater—theater whose practices, as she wanted to reveal, disproportionally inconvenienced and excluded women. However, her goal to turn a profit, albeit only in order to be able to issue paychecks and have a production that could be ongoing, ended up being in friction with some of the play's ethos. As a result, *The Bumps* teetered on the edge of falling into the loophole that Kristeva portended, that of becoming in some ways and in spite of itself a simulacrum of "masculine" values.

Casting has never been a challenge for *The Bumps*; in fact, the surplus of interest in the project—evidenced immediately by Nalebuff's inbox full of messages from those eager to participate—only clarified to her the dearth of opportunities for pregnant performing artists, despite their desire and preparedness to work. Of course, it also clarified to her that she had cornered this market. In an interview she half-jokingly said, "as long as the theater/the entertainment industry continues to overlook visibly pregnant performers, casting may be easier for *The Bumps* than for other productions. Actors won't have scheduling conflicts!" (Eler 2016). In addition, the more the play cycled as a live performance, the more cultural and economic capital it accrued. With each iteration, it gained recognition as a unique phenomenon unto itself, and its distinctive cyclical design helped establish its brand. In other words, from the beginning, Nalebuff knew that the play had the potential to be successful as something self-contained, ongoing, and lucrative regardless of those who participated in it. In brief, it had the potential to function as a commodity.

Although Nalebuff would not label *The Bumps* a "commodity," because she designed it to be profitable and ongoing, commodification was indeed part of her intended design. When describing the work, she tends to underscore the historical and political significance of its economics, but then to refocus the conversation on its poetics. For example, Nalebuff told me that she perceived a natural affinity between live theatre and pregnancy because of the transience of both phenomena. She said, "the nature of pregnancy…compels us to appreciate the wonder of the ephemeral thing in front of us and embrace the possibilities of change" (Nalebuff and Selenow 2016). Now, ephemerality and irregularity are not concepts that easily align with commodification because commodification requires standardization and predictability. This is especially the case when it comes to dance. As dance theorist, choreographer, and social activist Ananya Chatterjea argues, dance resists capture, and thus does not easily support a commodity model: “Since there is no dance outside of dancers’ labor, there is no thing to extract and exert ownership over” (2011, 10). That is, unless the dependability of impermanence is the very thing being commoditized. The difference between Nalebuff and Chatterjea’s statements, and that which allowed Nalebuff to incorporate live performance into her unstated project of commoditization, was that Nalebuff was speaking in terms of aesthetics and display. Even if well intentioned, she was spectacularizing the unpredictability of pregnant bodies and suggesting that they make for good entertainment. The audience does not know what will happen in the moment of live performance, but they do know that, especially with pregnant performers, it will only happen once. Nalebuff packaged and thereby capitalized on the uniqueness and supposed tantalizing quality of this manifest impermanence. However, if, like Chatterjea, she had embraced the fluxes of live performances as “refuse[ing] stabilization even as they define presence” and let the focus of the piece be more on the unique pregnant individuals who populate each cast’s iteration of presence-in-process rather than, as she did, focusing on delimitating the material value of the fleetingness of that presence, *The Bumps* might have achieved world-making rather than commodification. By this, I mean it might have more fully materialized Nalebuff’s “wish for a world that we can live in” through activating a performative world informed by performers’ embodied experiences (Chatterjea 2001, 16; Nalebuff 2017, 9).

Were *The Bumps* to identify more as an ongoing, necessarily unpredictable process, it might become more about creating networks of relationships among participants and less about exchanging and increasing the value of itself. Participating in *The Bumps* and then passing along participation to another performer, could create an ever-expanding and ongoing circle of kinship in a non-monetized economy. Rather than remaining autonomous, performers could build community through participating in the exchange and ongoing development of roles, as they felt ready to transition from one role to the next. Of course, with such redirections would also come losses of financial and even social capital since, if we follow Kristeva, "feminist capitalism" is implicitly a misnomer, because "women's time" can never take as its foundation market time, or, for that matter, any established, hegemonic organizing principles that serve patriarchy. Despite the many ways that Nalebuff and her colleagues dismantled or refused outright existing theatrical practices and infrastructure, *The Bumps'* pre-scheduled, goal-oriented rehearsal structure and emphasis on deadlines and successfully meeting pre-set markers (as it had to in order to be performed as a full production to a house of ticketed spectators) impeded its capacity for building female and maternal centered networks of solidarity. In sum, while *The Bumps* operated within an inherent circularity in terms of its economic and conceptual structures, this circularity was shot through with, and thus impaired by, the linearity of capitalist time.

Even as Nalebuff intended to subversively carve out a space within theater culture and economics for *The Bumps* to succeed politically and financially while also supporting deeply personal experiences for the performers, the play ended up, at least in part, reproducing the alienation that Marx argues is inevitable in capitalist modes of production. Marx defines *commodity fetishism* as the condition in which private labor does not appear "as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things" (1976 [1867], 166). Just so, *The Bumps* was treated by many of those involved in its making like it had an autonomous social life—like it existed and had worth regardless of if there were people there to perform it. This attitude stymied inter-cast relationships from developing the production in new and unforeseeable directions. In other words, although those involved in the production might remain connected through preexisting infrastructures like professional and social media networks, they had not in any kind of real and lasting way created a new type of community to which each individual was an integral and valued member. Furthermore, there was a future anticipated for *The Bumps*, independent of the people who manifested it through their physical and emotional labor and the specificities of their experiences of pregnancy and performance. Consequently, some participants, including Liu, chose to disidentify with their professional labor, to maintain their autonomy, to enforce boundaries between their productive and reproductive labor, and, eventually, to divorce themselves and their labor completely from the play and its forward, productive momentum. In my estimation, performers' approach to and discussions around the play's choreography reflected their preference for performing anonymous, set representations of pregnant characters over improvised, potentially self-disclosing expressions of their own experiences. They maintained professionalism and attention to the bounds of their contracted employment and its tenure. While this might, per Marx, be the outcome to be expected in a capitalist system, it completely foreclosed the opportunity to realize Nalebuff's goal, and Liu's modus operandi, of letting pregnant individuals' perceptual experiences of their changing bodies and their sensed temporality of maternity shape and be shaped by the play. The scripted temporality of a three-act play only punctuated with moments of movement expression rooted in lived experiences of pregnancy, the fact that these three acts were structured around the medical linear model of the three trimesters, and the pressure of sticking to a production timeline so as to meet the performance deadlines all overwhelmed the possibility of performers exploring the lived temporality of pregnancy, let alone being able to spontaneously exude it via intuitive movement expressions in the "open score" moments.

These restraints also made Liu's job, to her, near-Sisyphean. When the rehearsal schedule was set, she had only one hour per day for one week to complete the choreographic components of the project. In Liu's week of rehearsals, she explained to me, she attempted to teach what she considered to be "really basic movement research," which began with "getting them on the floor" and exploring "what rolling meant," especially with bodies that were newly weighted and protruding in unfamiliar ways. She encouraged the performers to "relinquish their weight to gravity" and to "honor what was already happening." It turned out that these "basic" exercises were quite complex because in the short time that she had with them, they never moved beyond it; they never ascended from the floor. She empathized that, especially as individuals without backgrounds in practices like contact improvisation, rolling and touching each other were strange and uncomfortable experiences. Accordingly, the women had what she called "trust issues" with her, the exercises, and each other, and they had a lot of fear about hurting their own and one another's "bellies." It followed that, clearly, movement did not, as Nalebuff anticipated, implicitly give the participants a sense of safety and a means of self-expression. In fact, to her bemusement, one performer asked Liu for a "safe word." Nevertheless, Liu persisted, telling them to trust their own sense of what was "enough" and what was "too much" and to "stay in the moment" because if in the moment, they could not lose control. As she gave cues to surrender their weight into the floor and into each other, she clarified that these were not acts of abandon because—offering phrases metonymic of her personal experiences of pregnancy—the "surrender is full of care," and it happens not in one giant release but in the "micro-moments between moments." She told them that to feel safe they needed to slow down, trust, and feel everything they could feel. However, especially with the short amount of time that they had, these motivations and instructions only provoked further unease and frustration for all involved parties.

From my outside perspective, it is understandable that the performers felt unsafe and uninvested in Liu's paradigm-shifting experiences while within the parameters of Nalebuff's larger project. After all, when it comes to incorporating one's live, biological body into a saleable good, the market offers few protections and much risk. Willingness to offer one's real body and one's experiences of that body to a paying audience relies on trust in what, in his book *Time and Commodity Culture*, John Frow calls the "protected domain of the human" (1997, 145). By this, Frow means the understanding both by consuming subject and commoditized subject that the *self* is not what is being sold. The ability to share an intimate part of themselves, their pregnancies, with others without feeling that they were depreciating the value of themselves or their experiences relied on their trust that their physical bodies could participate in the market without degradation of their personhood and without rendering themselves what society might deem "bad moms." This required an underlying cultural assumption that their bodies were their private property, private property to protect, not to surrender (148, 123). Now, the notion of *self-possession* implies a split between the self that owns and the self that is owned, one of which can temporarily, in the time of commodity culture, be bought by another person while the other is unaffected and remains fully intact. This split becomes more complex with pregnancy.

The pregnant belly materializes and complicates the space between performer and character. It begs the questions, *When the actor is objectifying herself as a pregnant woman within the productive time of rehearsal and the liveness of performance, is she also alienating herself from* *her biological labor, from her fetus, and from her pregnant temporality? Is her fetus her private property? Can it be protected from the creative labor she is selling while "on the clock"?*

I argue that to avoid such quagmires—quagmires that quickly collapse into other polemics about women's control over their bodies—the actors in *The Bumps* alienated themselves from their performances, making their performances fungible while keeping their biological and maternal experiences personal. They did this most obviously choreographically, by over-performing pregnancy so that the focus was on their creative labor and productive time (*acting* pregnant) and not on their biological labor or experience of maternal time (*being* pregnant). Thus, in performance, in scripted moments of feeling bladder pressure, nausea, fatigue, or forgetfulness; or when told to dance like a break-dancer or a ballerina, they accentuated the staginess of their performances.

When Nalebuff described her vision for the second act to Liu, Liu found herself completely disinterested in choreographing it. Furthermore, Liu imagined that these "dream ballets" would be very frustrating to perform, since they were merely "signage." As she explained to me, during her pregnancy, she was only interested in allowing her body to be seen in and as a *process*; she had no desire to "stand in shapes facing the front and communicate something" to an audience. However, the cast of *The Bumps*, unlike Liu, had no option but to perform, and thus, had to have a different relationship to being "signage" than Liu. Consequently, in performing act two but also in their "open score" moments within the script, instead of exuding "intuitive" movements, the cast "hammed it up," exaggerating legible, signature postures and actions of pregnancy (supporting their low back, sitting down heavily, resting their hands on the top curve of their belly, Lamaze-style breathing exercises, etc.), which seemingly had nothing to do with the actors' real needs and comfort. They thereby encouraged the audience to focus on their representation, rather than state, of pregnancy, as if they were performing non-pregnant bodies performing pregnant bodies with their actually pregnant bodies. They thereby underscored that it was their talent, not their selves, that was in, what anthropologist Arjun Appaduri calls, a "commodity situation" (1986, 19). The "real" time they expressed in performance was informed by the lived experiences of being a professional performer not, in all likelihood, their lived experiences of maternity.

All of this is to say that Nalebuff and Liu had contrasting evaluations of the utility of dance in *The Bumps* because they had different expectations of what a valuable overall "product" would be, and consequently, what type of process would facilitate this product. For Liu, value rested entirely on producing a groundbreaking creative process that would then inform a radical new system of embodied exchange between women. In my reading, she took a Marxian stance in her willingness to forgo capitalist models completely in the interest of conjuring a type of exchange based on the female reproductive system, as it could be understood from a non-symbolic, non-productive, non-market-valued, embodied place. However, she was not just interested in producing and codifying a process, she was also interested in experiencing it and building community around it. She wanted to discover something previously inconceivable through the process of making meaning differently, through embodied experiences. In other words, she was interested in a process of creation, not one of production. However, as there was not time within rehearsals for the communal creative process that Liu desired, she was forced to accept the available commodity model. Her labor coalesced into the allocated, scripted intervals for which she was credited in the program and paid, thus satisfying the contracted commodity exchange.

Today, *The Bumps* continues to be performed occasionally, but it has yet to complete a full run, which will only happen when one cast member performs all three parts. This is surprising considering that the nine-month cycle is such a key element of its branding. Regardless, this detail has not been a setback for Nalebuff because she has fetishized the concept of *The Bumps*, independent of its enactment as a live theater event. Nalebuff told me that she hopes that the value of *The Bumps* will eventually materialize in legislation providing resources to pregnant women and in professional contracts that protect employment during pregnancy and motherhood ("a world that we can live in, someday, outside the theater"). Until that time, the material value of the work is perhaps most present in the print publicity, reviews, and promotional and explanatory materials through which the action is re-described with what anthropologist Michel Lambek would call "ascribed illocutionary force" (2013, 148). For example, the promotional descriptions on her website and print publicity do the performative work of the piece, no live theater needed:

> By featuring an ongoing cycle of performers, *The Bumps* celebrates the ephemeral nature of theater and creates a small economy for pregnant performers for the duration of the run. For each performance of *The Bumps*, the cast is paid. (http://www.itsrachelkaudernalebuff.com/the-bumps accessed March 22, 2018)

Significantly, in this widely circulated blurb, Nalebuff makes no mention of the specific characters in the play, the labor of the performers (or even their names), the presence of dance, or the fact that it has never actually manifested as an "ongoing cycle." Still, she captures and propagates the idea of *The Bumps*, which she knows in and of itself is valuable, and this idea continues to thrive in an intangible commodity time untethered in any contingent way to maternal or biological time, or to "real" female bodies. As a piece of art, *The Bumps* is but one manifestation of Nalebuff's larger, more dimensional feminist critique of the entertainment industry. It is, in the end, her larger concept and not *The Bumps* itself or its dances that she has effectively commoditized and circulated widely. However, in the processes of announcing and propagating her ideas, she not only unintentionally forwent the opportunity to engage the possibility of a creative process rooted uncompromisingly in the temporality of "real" maternal physiologies, but her project also squeezed live, feeling pregnant bodies and the artists perceiving these bodies into available and arguably phallocentric temporal structures.

Section six: Making meaning through waiting

After seeing *The Bumps*, learning Liu's frustrations with the project, and feeling my own frustrations, I developed some new questions: *What was the "real experience" of pregnancy that Nalebuff was after, if it was not dependent on the insights of her pregnant collaborators? What was her understanding of maternity if she believed it was an experience already knowable and known to her non-pregnant body (at the time of writing)? If the project was not actually rooted in lived experiences of pregnancy, why did she think the experience that she was trying to build community around via theater would be best represented through pregnant bodies, meaning did she think that pregnant bodies would read as a type of experience that mattered, even if this was not the lived experience of the individual performers?* After conversing with Nalebuff, I came to understand that the "real experience" of pregnancy that she most wished to share was one that she observed *about* pregnant individuals, which was that they were *waiting*. Consequently, the first act is explicitly about waiting, emphasized by the fact that it takes place in a waiting room. As Nalebuff explained, the "characters are waiting to audition for a washing machine infomercial and also for their entire lives to change" (Nalebuff 2017, 6). When we spoke, Nalebuff explained that she wanted to show that waiting can be generative and valuable. She wanted to stress that it is only a patriarchal interpretation of waiting, like that of Samuel Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*, that presents waiting as torture. In *The Bumps*, to illustrate their ability to make time generative and valuable, while waiting, the actors have character-disclosing and -illuminating conversations. Waiting gives them time to think and talk, and thereby to grow and affirm what they know. By creating a play in which not only female characters but pregnant characters fill the time of waiting by sharing thoughts rooted in their characters' lived experiences, Nalebuff also made an important intervention in conventional theater, since such theatrical scenarios (filling time with impromptu ruminations) typically reinforce hegemonic masculinity, or masculinity defined by its own position as an authoritative power. For instance, Beckett famously forbade female actors from being cast in *Waiting for Godot*, and typically waiting-themed theater continues to be presented not only by male casts but by exclusively white males (Wright 2016). While playwrights like Kemp Powers, in his 2013 play *One Night in Miami*, have made critical interventions in theater for Black characters/actors that parallel Nalebuff's, *The Bumps* not only included pregnant individuals in this previously restricted theater tradition but demonstrated that when experienced through female/maternal bodies, waiting is perceived differently, and it is a uniquely fecund experience.

In several interviews, including our conversation, Nalebuff expressed that waiting was an experience with which she could identity as a woman and as an artist. More specifically, she was accustomed to the feeling of waiting involved in creating something, like live performance, that cannot be fully controlled and that involves a kind of surrender to being part of a larger process. A driving question for her as an artist, a question with which she presumed pregnant individuals would identify, was "how do you make meaning as you wait?" For her, this was an "epic theme that we can all relate to," but in saying as much, she revealed that her interest was not in the lived experience of waiting with a pregnant body and the types of meaning that pregnant individuals make with/from their bodies, but rather in the symbolic and thematic importance of waiting as she understood these things as a feminist playwright. In other words, the "meaning" that can be made through waiting was, for her, cognitive and rhetorical, not corporeal.

The Bumps presumed that all pregnant individuals experience pregnancy as a time of suspense, anticipation, and apprehension. Nalebuff was not alone in having this preconception of pregnancy. After all, it is common parlance in the US to say that a pregnant individual is "expecting." *Expecting*, as if the pregnancy was not a time of unfurling action and change, but rather a time of passive anticipation, awaiting something to happen. As philosopher Iris Marion Young describes it "The image of uneventful waiting associated with pregnancy reveals clearly how much the discourse of pregnancy leaves out the subjectivity of the woman" (2005 [1984], 55). She continues, "From the point of view of others, pregnancy is primarily a time of waiting and watching, when nothing happens" (55). However, pregnancy does not simply happen to individuals, passing through them (as they patiently wait) and leaving them unchanged. Rather, during pregnancy, as Young asserts, a pregnant individual does not merely endure a process, that individual "*is* the process" (54).

Like Young, Liu understood her pregnant self to be "process," and she experienced waiting for her child to arrive actively, not passively. Waiting was an embodied present that was rich, rewarding, and edifying for her. Considering her experiences, she did not feel like Nalebuff, in the end, actualized a fresh, feminist conception of waiting or one that resonated with her own pregnant experiences. Like the *concept* of time known through pregnant bodies, the *concept* of waiting was important for Nalebuff's brainstorming and vision statement, but Liu felt that she circled back to a familiar depiction of waiting as tedium in the final work. For instance, Liu found the image of the waiting room a frustrating metaphor because while pregnant, she experienced waiting as un-monotonous and as a "beautiful thing" (Liu, discussion). She was grateful for ten calendar months within which to know time differently, and she found this span of corporeal time entirely new and intrinsically gratifying—meaning it was not gratifying because it was industrious time, time in which she was making something that would later arrive and have social and personal value. In fact, she never longed for a baby to arrive or for time to hasten. As she told me, "I was more comfortable waiting for this than for anything in my entire life…. The waiting was sweet," and this was because "It was less an experience of waiting and more one or *Being*." She *was* her pregnant body, and knowing her bodyself in this way changed her understanding of what it was to *be* and what her body *was*. These awarenesses, in turn, changed they type of choreography that she wanted to make.

Nalebuff organized *The Bumps'* presentation of the temporality of waiting through the structure of the three trimesters. In other words, *The Bumps* assumed that pregnant individuals' trimesters are an apt marker of their sense of where/when/who they are in their pregnancies and thus could be, for her, not only formally useful but character definitive. Consequently, she situated her characters *3 MONTHS, 5 MONTHS,* and *7 MONTHS*, each within one trimester. However, the trimesters did not offer apt temporal structures or helpful identifications for Liu in her experiences of pregnancy. Rather, for her, pregnancy inspired a series of "thought problems" regarding time and space, which intrigued her choreographically. In pregnancy, she felt what she called "deep intimacy beyond proximity" with the vital materiality within her; it was "the most close closeness" she had ever felt (Liu, discussion). However, what she perceived was also enormously abstract. Feeling intense intimacy with something completely unfamiliar recalibrated her perception of time. In contrast to experiencing the logic of the trimesters, she felt that, regardless of the month, it would be an eternity before she would have and relate to a "baby." She perceived an infinite distance, a boundless stretch of time between what she felt during pregnancy and the ostensibly imminent reality of parenting another person. In other words, pregnancy offered her a feeling of being very close and present-with and also very far away from her future.

While such feelings were not perturbing, they were strange, and this strangeness intrigued her. Consequently, she described the temporality of pregnancy as “surreal,” and I appreciated the appositeness of her term, especially in its Bretonian sense. For surrealist painter and novelist Andre Breton it was possible for a singularity to contain seeming opposites without contradiction because, in *surreal time*, moments of creation and destruction coalesce and are mutually dependent. With this affordance, surrealism allows for altered understanding of what is “real” for both the artist and her viewer. Breton described surrealist time as instinctual, as valuing the particular, as adaptive to the circumstantial, and as consistently rooted in an individual’s belief in the possibility of new and unknown futures. Furthermore, in his view, it was the job of the artist to reconceive of reality itself, for if she does not, she is neglecting her responsibility to herself and society, because art should either offer “révision totale des valeurs réelles” (reimagining truths and values), or “ne sera pas,” (it will not be [art]) (Breton 1928, 4). It was such reimagination of reality that Liu appreciated her pregnancy making available to her, and which she manifested, in Bretonian gestures, in the work that she made during and immediately after pregnancy. In other words, in terms of exploring “real” pregnant bodies doing “real” things in “real” time, Nalebuff contemplated the implications of pregnant individuals making meaning while they waited for their babies to arrive, while Liu approached the same charge with interest in the new “real” perceivable and the new “reality” imaginable through her pregnant body.

Nalebuff’s project fell short of actually creating a form that enabled the function of inviting its pregnant artists to explore, like Liu did independently, *why* waiting is generative and what they might learn through their bodies as these bodies transformed. Liu was precisely in the experience that Nalebuff's project professed to be about: she was waiting for realities of life, body, family, art, and work to transform; she did not know how things would change; but she welcomed the opportunity via rehearsals to track fluctuations with her body. The very facts that Liu kept her pregnancy private and that dance helped her to navigate it demonstrate the meaningfulness for her of waiting and of her choreographic process for finding personal significance and pleasure in this waiting. However, in *The Bumps*, pregnancy was never presented as a "real experience" of waiting; rather, it remained in the end as in the beginning, merely a symbol for the epic significance of waiting for "one's" life to change.

Conclusion: *The Bumps'* aftermath and what it might have been

Since concluding *The Bumps*, Nalebuff and Liu have taken different paths in their lives and in the directions of their art. Recently, Nalebuff made a new tactical move in her ongoing effort to center female reproductive bodies in her political art and activism. She again put focus on pregnant bodies, and she again emphasized the symbolic power of such bodies while neglecting to attend, in my opinion, to pregnant individuals' capacity for knowing and expressing their own needs. During the 2020 US presidential campaigns, she became an outspoken champion of Senator Bernie Sanders and was very active on social media recruiting others to support his bid for presidency. As part of her work, she instigated the slogan "no babies 'til Bernie." As means of explanation and in order to recruit popular support, she wrote in a post on Instagram "If Bernie wins, I might want to bring a person into our (less punishing/polluted and more humane) world!", and she asked, "Who is with me in using this as a tactic to convey the urgency we feel about the GND [Green New Deal] and m4a [Medicaid for all] etc. to older generations?" This was a tactical move that diverged from her strategies in *The Bumps* in that she directed her intervention not toward the stage but toward the "real world." Also, she seemingly no longer foresaw capitalism as having a role to play in her vision of a "more humane world"—a point she also intimated by commenting that revivals of *The Bumps* would be contingent on the support of a "feminist millionaire philanthropist" (Nalebuff 2017d). However, with "no babies 'til Bernie," I saw her again using pregnancy as a concept to indirectly advance other—seemingly, to her, more important—politics and to build communities that require no prerequisite respect for and curiosity about real experiences of pregnancy. Thus, again, she seemed to be accepting rigidly structured linear progress toward pre-imagined markers (in this instance electing a Democratic Socialist), and she seemed interested in pregnancy primarily for how—as a sign, not a lived reality or way of knowing/being—it can be efficacious in advancing an external agenda along a desired trajectory toward a particular economic outcome.

For Liu, pregnancy has had a contrasting influence on her work. Since giving birth, she has had many ideas for dances that come from watching her child, Orlando, observe the world and attending to her daughter's sense of spacetime. Being around a newborn shifted her sense of her bodyself and her perceptual experiences of her world; these shifts inevitably also shifted the direction of her work. When we talked in 2017, she described her, then, new creative research as exploring "the shimmer between being and being," meaning the play between "being" as noun and "being" as verb. She had recommenced collaborative work with Gilbert, and the couple began incorporating their daughter into their dances. For example, one-year-old Orlando joined them for *House Music (for more than human)* (2018). In this development of their earlier work, *House Music*, they collectively explored aesthetic structures as a family. As they gave into "the beat" of trance music that they created on electronic instruments and into the "arcane intricacies" of their other family rituals, Liu saw this performance practice as also taking "care" of them as a family and allowing them to honor and introduce Orlando to their “household gods” (https://www.jennieliu.com/formorethanhuman, accessed Feb 16). Importantly, while developed as invited artists in residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts, the piece was never intended for a performance run or to be presented as a ticketed event. Thus, freed of external schedules and the demand to produce a finished, saleable product, the dance could be what *The Bumps* could not—a collective embodied practice purely of exploration and of reciprocal care. As follows, the work, its making, and its rehearsal, again in contrast to *The Bumps,* evoked conditions outside of linear time, focused on the immediacy of being and the kinship such immediacy can foster.

Liu and Gilbert have since expanded their family with a second child, Lavender. Between having her two children, Liu created and premiered two dances. In 2019, *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi* was commissioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) to accompany an exhibition on pioneering postmodern choreographer Merce Cunningham. She took the opportunity to comment on the primacy of Asian thinking and aesthetic values in the production of Western avant-garde art, and, performing the work in the Korean Art Gallery with a Sri Lankan-American co-performer, devika wickremesinghe, she boldly took on a question that had preoccupied her during her pregnancy, which was how appearing Asian impacts/limits how bodies are read in performance contexts. While refusing to perform during pregnancy so as not to have her body/identity reduced to being seen as simply female, Asian, and pregnant, postpartum she dove directly into confronting viewers with how they saw her as well as confronting them with both what is invisible and what is superficially accentuated in relationships between Asian culture and postmodernism. In other words, after her experience of being pregnant and feeling the need to only dance privately so as to not be "signage," postpartum, with one less corporeal semiotic variable to contend with, she was eager to choreographically address how her appearance, as an Asian female, interrupted/informed viewers' perceptions of her as an artist within the Cunningham lineage of postmodernism.

In her essay "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," Sara Ahmed writes, "whiteness may function as a form of public comfort by *allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape*." (2007, 162). Per this paradigm, white bodies easily extend into the spaces of abstract visual and performing arts. For (primarily white) art viewers, white bodies read as "neutral" and thus invisible in spaces that have already "taken their shape" (such as museums). However, bodies of color are not afforded the same neutrality/invisibility. Hoping to highlight as much, in *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi*, Liu chose a performance space in which she could extend herself *partially* in two directions. Rather than performing in the Merce Cunningham exhibition or elsewhere in the primarily "Western" (white) art museum, she performed in a comparatively small Asian art gallery. And she invited the precarious situatedness of her body—not quite abstract art and not quite Asian art—to unsettle the tidy taxonomies of her environment. As Ahmed says, "The moments when the body appears 'out of place' are moments of political and personal trouble," and Liu's choreographic structures and processes made space both for this trouble to be aired and for her brown body to be seen simultaneously as that of a postmodern choreographer/dancer and that of a HongKongese without allowing any room for the first identity to be challenged by the second, or vice-versa.

Explaining *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi*, Liu wrote,

> It's marvelous enough, never too simple, to be physical material, matter, kinetic energy engaged with all its attention in the figuring out of how to get from this position to the next. Merce, our totem ancestor, a changeling, a nightwalker, grants us this inheritance. Yet, as female respondents, we are always subject to interpretation bearers of signification and we are partially constantly seeking it. (LACMA program)

The dance itself presented the paradox of her lived experience as a dancer—that of perceiving herself abstractly and kinesthetically (as “physical material, matter, [and] kinetic energy”) while at the same time, because of her physical characteristics, perceiving herself as “signification.” Consequently, the work was, in her words, a “theatrical display of indeterminacy;” she was neither/both and demanded the audience acknowledge as much (https://www.jennieliu.com/4264208-living-female-respondent-or-53-yakshi, accessed May 10, 2020). As both a tribute and a critique, Liu made choreographic decisions through consultation of the *i Ching* Chinese book of divination, a tool that Cunningham had also used to foster the “chance operations” that allowed him to minimize any tendencies toward being an authoritarian, ego-driven choreographer. For Cunningham, “chance,” not his brilliance as a star artist, determined his choreography, and this inspired an ethos and praxes adopted by many future postmodernists. However, in her reenactment of it, Liu reframed Cunningham’s “chance” choreographic technique: her own deferral to the timeless “Eastern” wisdom of the *i Ching* was both sincere and tongue-in-cheek. Moreover, she flagged the tacitly gendered aspect of Cunningham’s “neutral” “chance” operations by supplementing her *i Ching* readings with consultations from women she dubbed “contemporary feminist oracles.” Thus, like Brown, she invited female bodies and feminist politics into the praxis of making abstract art; in so doing, she revealed the, for many, previously unseen absence of such a female presence.

Liu also used *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi* to, again like Brown, call attention to early postmodernism’s pervasive and problematic assumption of neutrality and “pure movement” as experiences and affects rooted primarily in lived experiences of (white) male bodies. By this, I mean its presumption (due to founding artists like Cunningham’s unconscious white privilege and male privilege) that bodies can be repurposed as and interpreted as neutral objects with which artists can deconstruct ideas or which can function abstractly simply to define artists' creative aesthetics. Like Brown, albeit in a more overt critique, Liu's work argued that female bodies are predisposed to read as signs, not abstractions, necessitating additional performative, emotional, and intellectual labor from female choreographer/dancers. However, she took Brown's intervention further by also presenting the intersectional complexities between the aesthetic of "neutrality," dancers' sex, and dancers' race. By centering her race and laying bare the ways in which it burdened her female performing body, she presented Cunningham's abstract body to be contingent on performers' whiteness or their performance of whiteness as well as their maleness or their performance of maleness. Thus, she showed, for a female performer of color, a desired aesthetic of "neutrality" creates an unworkable problem.

Postmodernism, she asked the audience to recognize, was made by white people and was tacitly imprinted with their whiteness to the point that her body doing Cunningham-esque "pure" movement, with its Asian-influenced underlying structures, looks *almost* but *not quite* right. Her choreography and the ways in which she framed her body as subject made apparent the tacit whiteness that made her body, as well as wickremesinghe's, appear *not quite* right. As Filipino-American artist Gerald Casel recently reflected when discussing his own experience as a postmodern choreographer/performer and a person of color,

> Whiteness assumes a kind of unmarked-ness, while bodies of color are read through codes and metaphors that underscore racial phenomena which convey power and privilege only to certain groups…. Formal constraints have the capacity to invigorate creativity, however, they do not function equally for all bodies. (2019)

He sums up, "precisely, there is no such thing as pure movement for dancers of color" (ibid.). Pushing a similar point, in *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi,* Liu addressed directly the complexity of being an Asian body dancing a white community's impression of Asian traditions, acknowledging with both irony and seriousness her commitment to the artform, problematic as it might be. Thus, while Liu was uncomfortable about performing pregnant and consequently having a body whose signage could doubly interrupt her ability to merge seamlessly with her choreography in her viewer's eyes, postpartum, she choreographically confronted, controlled, and changed how her dancing body was perceived while simultaneously interrogating her own investments in and experiences of an artistic tradition that both cherishes "Asian" culture and *others* her dancing body for its racial and sexual markers.

Her second work made in the interim between her two daughters' births was also inspired by her experiences of her bodyself and its needs while pregnant. 2019's *Nemeton* was a durational choreography for 18 participants—nine performers who were "female and alive" and nine artists who were "female and no longer living." Liu created recordings of archived long-form interviews and talks by the deceased artists (Kathy Acker, Laura Aguilar, Maryanne Amacher, her beloved Trisha Brown, Octavia Butler, Katherine Dunham, Helen Frankenthaler, Ruth G. Waddy, Susan Hiller, Shigeko Kubota, Carolee Schneemann, and Agnes Varda) that the nine performers (Stacy Dawson Stearns, Jessica Emmanuel, Cristina Fernandez—whom she also worked with in *The Bumps*, Maria Maea, Coral Lobera, Jasmine Orpilla, Alana Reibstein, Gabriella Rhodeen, and Laura Stinger) listened to through headphones while performing live for an audience. The work was a study in how one female body can house the bodies of other females, which to me, seemed like an apt meditation on the creative process of pregnancy as well as the creative process of dance. It also marked how pregnancy possibly developed her prior philosophy of "wearing" another person when performing to feeling inhabited by another person through performance. Liu described the experience of *Nemeton* as "a thicket of words, positions, and breath [in which] Nice bodies listen and voice words spoken by other bodies" (https://www.jennieliu.com/nemeton accessed May 2, 2020).

For, me, I saw these two performances— *Living Female Respondent or 53 Yakshi* and *Nemeton—as* Liu's iteration of Kristeva-esque "women's time," meaning they helped to clarify in form how her sense of feminist community and temporality diverged from Nalebuff's as well as how pregnancy had informed this sense. With these works, Liu fully realized a Kristevan model of "women's time" by creating female-centric, body-centric populations that were not structured to be "alter egos" to patriarchal society. In these two works, Liu stretched herself and invited her performers to stretch themselves between generations and bodies. In them, we could perceive her productive entanglements with "Eastern" and "Western," with "males" and "females," with "visual art" and "performance," and between language and embodied expression. For *Nemeton*, viewers could wander through the performance at any point and were free to come and go throughout the six hours that it occurred at Human Resources LA. In contrast to *The Bumps*, the performance created its own time in which audiences could immerse themselves. In other words, Liu did not fit it to habitual patterns of viewership within live theater. Moreover, with *Nemeton*, there was no product to commodify or fetishize, nothing was standardized or repeatable—no two viewers or performers could have the same experience of it, and were the event to be repeated, participants' experiences could not possibly be replicated.

After these two works, which created generative structures around her embodied identities as Asian, female, artist, and "female respondent" to the postmodern performance traditions in which she had been forged as an artist, and having created the nemeton that she needed—nemeton, in Celtic, meaning the "holy grove" or sacred space—populated with a female sisterhood of artists past, present, and ever-present, she withdrew to, once again, fully experience her second pregnancy privately and to take care of herself and her family via performing their own private rituals of everyday life.

After *The Bumps* concluded its run at the Skirball Cultural Center but before Liu had given birth to Orlando and Nalebuff had switched coasts, the two came back together with director Deena Selenow and actor Jenne Syquia for a final rehearsal, convened for the purposes of a BBC program called *Blueprints for Better*. The program had heard about *The Bumps* and was interested in including it in an episode called "Utopia: In Search of the Dream" (August 2017). In the staged rehearsal footage, Liu's belly is quite pronounced as is Syquia's who, having originally played *3 MONTHS*, was much farther along in her pregnancy. In watching the raw footage that was recorded, I saw a glimpse of what *The Bumps* might have been had it veered more in the direction of Liu's sense of temporality and pregnant individuals' "needs" instead of Nalebuff's. Improvising for the purposes of B-roll, Liu and Syquia began a gentle contact improvisation between their bellies, rolling the point of contact from side to side and maintaining steady connection between their torsos. They continued this movement for some time, seemingly unaware of if the camera was on or off of them, and as they moved, they quietly conversed. Without the aim of being heard or saying scripted lines, they casually talked about their personal experiences that week, how their bodies were feeling, how infuriating it was to both of them to be infantilized or called "mommy" by strangers, how irksome they found it when others told them how "cute" they looked, etc. They were sharing an immediate reality, synching the rhythm of their movements, connecting to each other on physical and verbal levels, and most importantly, sharing their personal experiences of their pregnant bodies in ways that they never had the opportunity to do in the rush of *The Bumps'* actual rehearsals. Nalebuff had not appreciate dance's capacity to work in this way—as a tool for connection and a facilitator of mutual discovery and communication. From my perspective, this was a loss because Nalebuff was clearly open to changing how theater is made and how rehearsals are structured so that both could be more supportive of performer's bodies and needs. When we spoke, Nalebuff celebrated everything ancillary that happened around rehearsals, like actors sharing tips and exchanging maternity clothes and sets being built one-handed, while staff held babies. However, she never considered that these auxiliary happenings (the production's "B-roll") could have been the actual material of the project. To fulfill her vison for a successful and recurrent theater piece, she needed money, and this money was consistently the sticking point. However, the performance lost ground when the economic aims trumped the conceptual aims and overwhelmed her interest in pregnant individual's nonmonetary "needs" as well as the individuality of their experiences. For this reason, a play that was written for and in celebration of people whose bodies consistently change, met its goals only in small adjuvant details, like strategic costuming, but not at the scale of the finished work itself.

The Bumps cultivated awareness surrounding sex-based inequities in professional theatre and implicit sexism, ableism, and body stigmatization within the performing arts. Nalebuff modeled that theater can function differently and in ways that show that non-male bodies, bodies of those with dependents, and bodies that have any shape or special need are valued and included. She created paid opportunities for pregnant individuals and primary caregivers, and she created a sub-economy within theater culture for the exchange of resources and mutual support among parents. She also anticipated that dancemaking could be a radical and hopeful praxis and that, even as an idea and even for those who do not identify as dancers, dance can offer supportive scaffolding for community building around a common experience. In Liu, Nalebuff found a perfect collaborator to offer productive counterbalance, and if they had found time to prioritize aligning themselves and merging their visions, *The Bumps* might have surprised all involved by what it was able to manifest. However, in the end, Nalebuff simply was too rushed to clearly see the pieces that were there and to put them together in a way that did not fracture the fresh foundation that she had poured. That being said, these component pieces can always be taken back up, turned over, reincorporated, and refurbished. *The Bumps* started important work that hopefully other projects will carry forward and continue to grow so that maternal experiences as they are lived, perceived, shared, protected, and nurtured might be valued creatively and socially for more than the marketable ideas that they might inspire.

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Chapter four: Pregnant Bodies and Choreographies of Sex and Gender

The continuum of pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare has long agitated much of feminist thinking and practices. Feminist literature, especially of the liberal or materialist feminist traditions, has tended to criticize celebratory presentations of the maternal, and it has been even more critical of suggestions that maternity is sacred and a vehicle for spiritual- and self-actualization. A chief concern among critics of the notion of spiritual uplift through childbirth is that sanctifying motherhood can only happen at the expense of women's subjectivity and their political agency, for, as poet, essayist, and mother Adrienne Rich disparaged, considering motherhood a "sacred calling" inevitably makes questionable women's rights to birth control and abortions as well as their freedoms of family planning and sexual orientation (1986). But on the other hand, experiencing one's spiritual and physical potency through the trials and achievements of giving birth has the potential to offer bodily awareness and confidence around which new social and political alliances can form. After all, it is common for individuals to seek meanings for their birthing bodies beyond the scope of tradition, social expectation, and biomedicine, just as it is common for them to seek communities within which to pursue such meanings. Many individuals, as choreographer Johanna Boyce did, turn to the occult or the divine for re-conception of themselves and of the meaning of their sex and gender (as they have freshly related to these aspects of their bodyselves through their lived experiences of pregnancy). Perhaps such individuals are lured by the promise that tucked behind the veil of the mundanity of daily life, lies a shimmering alternate reality in which their bodies and bodily experiences hold special significance and their sex, gender, and motherhood offer them special and natural bonds to others who share these "identities."

By the mid-1980s, Boyce was already critically acclaimed as a choreographer, having graduated from rehearsing and performing work in her New York City apartment living room (recruiting a small audience with homemade posters that she tacked up around her neighborhood) to accepting invitations to show dances at major experimental performance venues, such as The Kitchen. In 1986, she became pregnant and prepared to start a family with her musical collaborator and spouse Richard Munson. During pregnancy, she enjoyed experiencing how her body morphed, both in its external presentation and its internal sensations. While pregnant, Boyce described feeling newly confident in her physicality—which, because of her girth and muscularity, others in the dance field described as a "nontraditional" dance body—and she felt much more, in her word, "secure" about being a woman (*Retracing Steps* 1988). Her confidence in and enthusiasm about her more conventionally "womanly" body grew further still through her experience of giving birth. She explained, "There's something about bearing a child that really freed me up to feel myself in a way that was different from feeling myself observed in the way that I felt defined by the masculine gaze" (Boyce et al. 1988, 100). She continued, "I can bear children and that experience taught me a lot about my differences from men" (ibid.).

Those who earlier praised Boyce for exploring and questioning conventional ideas about gender in her dances were no doubt surprised by her postpartum take on gender which was, by comparison, conservative and traditional. Despite her earlier artistic investment in modulating sex and gender differences through her artwork, pregnancy convinced Boyce that men and women were different in kind and that she was, decidedly, a woman who should be seen and recognized unequivocally as such while dancing and through the look of her choreographic work. Therefore, she became interested in making dances with other women that captured a "commonality of experience" exclusive to womanhood and womankind, a mutual sensibility to which she felt she had full and unprecedented access through her experiences of maternity. Accordingly, for her postpartum work, she switched her creative focus away from her pre-pregnancy interest in how socialization defines individuals' experiences of their bodies (as she preferred, human "nurture") and toward how individual's biological bodies define who they are (human "nature") (Boyce et al. 1988, 88). However, in contemplating, discussing, and choreographically presenting "nature," Boyce treated femaleness (referring to one's sex) and womanhood (referring to one's gender) as one in the same; she interpreted her female reproductive organs as predetermining her experience of herself as a woman. While such sensed predetermination was her personal interpretation of her phenomenal changes during pregnancy, her work presumed it to be the ubiquitous experience of all women offered time, space, and support for self-inquiry. Consequently, for many who had previously felt connected to her work, her presentation of the "naturalness" of her gendered body was not relatable, and her choreographic approach alienated individuals who were, before, included in her art and the larger communities that her early works catalyzed.

In contrast to Boyce, in 2013, queer-identifying artist Hana van der Kolk, in collaboration with their pregnant friend, artist Emily Mast, choreographed a performance work for an ensemble of pregnant individuals that fully avoided sexed and gendered paradigms in its presentations of females in community and in its explorations of pregnancy. In this piece, van der Kolk offered the pregnant participants innovative perceptual and interpretive matrices for understanding and representing their physical experiences. Their strategies were rooted in their backgrounds in both the healing arts and in postmodern dance, and central to their process was the opportunity participants enjoyed of exploring their pregnant bodies in ways in which gender was both fluid and was not assumed to dominate their experiences of themselves while pregnant.

Van der Kolk identifies as non-binary, meaning, they identify as neither male nor female, but rather as having a fluctuating gender identity (something they also signify with their preferred pronouns, they/them). Working in the way that they did on this piece, even as a nonpregnant and non-binary individual, they could be fully included in the movement research and community formation that the project afforded.

In this chapter, looking at Boyce and van der Kolk together puts in relief how each theorized gender and its relationships to biological sex and to pregnancy. Putting their pregnancy-responsive works in dialogue also clarifies how each understood the relationships between their choreographic processes, the lineage and methods of postmodern dance, and their shared investment in dance as a means of spiritual healing and culture building. While their projects had different impetuses, intentions, results, and participant populations, and while they were separated by a generation, both aligned in their efforts to synthesize dance and pregnant bodies with their other interests in social work, mysticism, feminism, and health-giving practices as well as their common interest in making work that was inclusive to body- and person-types often marginalized by larger dance culture. Ultimately, I argue that Boyce's unconscious merging of the concepts of sex and gender at the outset of her choreographic process as well as her narrow and culture-specific interpretations of matricentric spirituality and female self-empowerment impaired her ability to make work that captured a "universal" shared experience of womanhood, as she aimed to do. Thus, in its ability to include more diverse individuals and these individuals' diverse interpretations of the "nature," "spirit," and "wellness" of their female-sexed bodies, van der Kolk's work had a greater impact.

Section one: *Women, Water, and a Waltz*

Boyce's first postpartum piece, *Women, Water, and a Waltz* (1987), began with a single dancer upstage, in a beam of white light and a long black gown that cut dramatically across her torso in a diagonal. She slowly poured water from a glass in one hand into a glass in her opposite hand. Continuing to pour, she steadily increased the distance between the two glasses as three other gowned dancers gradually joined her on stage. This group of women, some with one breast or a diamond of abdomen exposed and glowing white in the intense lighting, also poured water between glass vessels as they wove seamlessly between each other with languid, elegant precision. Dance writer Ann Cooper Albright described the performers:

> circling around one another, at times embracing while pouring, or pouring as an intertwined unit, the dancers shift through a variety of classic images of women bathing, pouring, and dancing. At one point, they join glasses in a mutual task, fashioning a human maypole.… Often, they simultaneously empty one glass of water and receive another, creating a timeless image of an overflowing source. (1991, 98)

As this dance of peacefully comingling bodies and fluids drew to a close, instead of water, the women began to pour golden glitter, which glowed in the fading stage lights as it drifted to the ground and the women vanished as mysteriously as they had arrived.

When *Women, Water, and a Waltz* premiered, its choreography surprised not only the audience but also Boyce herself because of its total departure from her prior work. Before this piece, her choreography was frequently likened to that of the early postmodernists whom she admired—Yvonne Rainer, Tricia Brown, Steve Paxton, and Lucinda Childs—in its compositional practices and performance aesthetics. The lack of theatrical flourishes and virtuosic movement in her work differentiated her dances from those of many of her peers in the 1980s, who were making flashier pieces for large audiences or mass media, pieces that Boyce dismissed as "repetitive and redundant" (Vigner 1994, 212). In contrast, Boyce's dances, like Rainer's and Brown's, had clear formal arrangements of "pedestrian" movements, and her ensemble choreography was described in a similar way to the choreographies of Childs and Rainer. For example, David Allan Harris described Boyce's work as "composed of a succession of alternating geometric patterns, ranging across the stage floor…while retaining the relaxed, non-stylized attitude of social dance" (1983, 88). In another example, he described the Judson Dance Theater Collective's (JDTC) clear influence on the choreographic heterogeneity and dismissal of classical aesthetics in a Boyce solo:

> She walks about, making gesture-like patterns with her arms, stopping at times, punctuating the flow with angular jabs of the elbows and extreme extensions of the arms. Much of the solo is done in postures other than standing, and she performs a series of slides, dives, rolls, and crawls without regard to any function in the tasks. (ibid.)

Thus, although she was many years their successor, her focus on task-like movement, movement for movement's sake, ordinary gestures, mathematical and game structures, and performers' "relaxed, non-stylized attitude" easily aligned Boyce with the New York City postmodernists of the 1960s. Moreover, this was the case because of her interest in making dances to be performed by people with little or no conventional dance training. All of these elements contributed to her artist's mission, to use dance to unite people via what she called their "commonality of experience." This made Boyce's work distinct within her cohort of experimental choreographers. Albright parsed this distinction by saying that Boyce's dances were "neither literal nor melodramatic… emotional, though certainly not emotive," concluding that what made Boyce truly unique was her "combination of postmodern structures with a premodern (or, perhaps, post-postmodern) sensibility and belief in human conditions" (1991, 74 and 89).

Considering this reputation, *Women, Water and a Waltz*, was received as a huge shift in Boyce's overall aesthetic since she cast a highly trained ensemble and abruptly turned away from the "relaxed, non-stylized," and pedestrian, toward the theatrical, highly stylized, and representational. Boyce acknowledged the shift: "for the first time, there was an elegance and refinement… [and] we even delved into a feeling of witchery” (*Retracing Steps*). While by her own admission her prior work was “very forthright,” in the new piece, she said, “Everything that you see is a little more deceptive [and] shadowy” (ibid). In addition to its qualitative and aesthetic diversions from her straightforward pre-pregnancy style, it also offered radically different presentations of bodies and formulations of gender. While she typically worked with casts that were a mix of male-identifying and female-identifying performers, *Women, Water, and a Waltz* was created for an exclusively female ensemble. Moreover, in a move that struck some of her contemporaries and some critics as distinctly un-feminist and even politically retrograde, Boyce’s new choreographic interests included how female bodies dance in ways entirely distinct from male bodies and how her core femaleness could inspire her creatively. As she explained, “I allowed myself to be more sensual and to investigate the mysterious effects of feminine whiles,” and, as she experienced herself being newly able to express what she called “certain feminine tendencies” in herself, her choreographic process became about exploring these tendencies and how they might be danced by an ensemble (*Retracing Steps*).

Choreographically, Boyce “feminized” her movement by prioritizing the quality of fluidity. She connected her new choreographic and corporeal fascination with fluidity to her pregnancy—her experiences of feeling herself swelling with child, feeling her water breaking, and feeling milk engorge her breasts (Vigner 1994, 215). In another unprecedented approach for her as a maker, she invited overt emotionality into the choreographic process and product and encouraged her dancers to do the same. This was because she interpreted womanhood to be more “emotional” than “physical,” to be primarily an “internal experience” and an “empathetic response” to the world. She also trusted emotion and empathy to connect her to her co-performers, and she reported dividends on this trust because, in her estimation, *Women, Water,* *and a Waltz* was the most streamlined creative process of her career. She attributed the quickness of its construction and cohesion to its entirely female cast and their ability to attune to the collective "nature"-instilled "sensibility" which they all held at the center of their process (*Retracing Steps*).

Section two: *Six Twelve One by One*

Van der Kolk's piece was engendered through their close friendship with Mast, a visual and performing artist who was in the process of coming to terms with an unexpected pregnancy. In 2013, when Mast found out she was pregnant, she was gobsmacked. Having just found what she felt was an "artistic stride" and achieved hard-sought recognition for her work, she was struck by the sudden precarity of her situation. She had not planned to become a parent, and, among a host of emergent concerns, she worried that motherhood and "serious" artmaking would be incompatible for her. However, she made up her mind that she would refuse to see her pregnancy as a crushing reality to which she would be forced to adapt. Instead, she challenged herself to lean into her creativity and artmaking praxes so as to approach her pregnancy as a problem to work out via creatively re-imagining and re-framing her pregnant body and its significance within her life and art. In order to do this, she went about conceiving of a durational physical ritual that would mark, monitor, and document nine-months of her creative and physical labor while pregnant. In tandem to defining her plan for artistic research, she sought out ways to educate herself about her changing body, as many pregnant individuals do. Again, like many, she sought physical exercises that would prepare her bodymind for labor and delivery in ways that felt necessary and sensible to her. However, unlike peers, who might log onto BabyCenter.com, pick up a copy of *What to Expect When You're Expecting,* and sign up for Lamaze classes, she decided to make and diligently rehearse a "dance." Why a dance? She really couldn't say. This choice was curiouser still because, as an artist, Mast had never danced before, let alone made a dance. So, while she felt a strong, albeit peculiar, pull toward dance, she did not know how to start dancing.

To get moving, she called up van der Kolk, who was a performance artist and movement educator, and asked them if they would be willing to prescribe a "movement ritual" that would allow Mast to learn about her changing body through her changing body. Van der Kolk, agreed to help. The two had vaguely known one another through sharing social circles at their undergraduate alma mater, Skidmore, in the late 1990s. They re-met in 2007 at an art opening of Mast's and soon became not only "fast friends" but roommates and artistic collaborators (email exchange with van der Kolk August 26, 2019). By their reunion, van der Kolk had spent years teaching and performing internationally and had completed an MFA in choreography at UCLA. At the time that Mast became pregnant, the friends were living on opposite sides of the country. However, van der Kolk would join Mast regularly over Skype from the queer separatist commune where they were living to observe her practice and pose queries rooted in physics and Mast's perception of her pregnant body. Finding Mast enthralling to watch, van der Kolk encouraged her to perform her "dance" for a bigger audience. Mast agreed to perform, but not as a solo. Her stipulation was less out of shyness and more because she, as a visual and performance artist, could picture the wonderful absurdity and impact of moving among a fleet of pregnant non-professional dancers. She later reflected, "The idea of bringing a group of awkward, unbalanced women together to *move* delighted me" (Herbst 2013). To recruit collaborators (Los Angeleno that she is) Mast put out a casting call, soliciting individuals who were "super pregnant" with their first child and interested in exploring something "completely new and vulnerable" (Emily Mast, in discussion with the author, Aug 2017).

She was flabbergasted how quickly interest circled back to her. Soon, she had assembled an eclectic, enthusiastic group with due dates very close to her own. They were a gallerist, a musician, a graphic designer, a pole dancer, and a Cinderella for Disney Land. Each week, this ensemble would meet in Mast's living room, roll up the carpets, move the furniture, sit in a circle for silent meditation, and wait for van der Kolk's Skype video call. Once virtually connected, van der Kolk gave the group what they defined as "simple" kinesthetic assignments to tackle, and cued strategies for sensory awareness once the cast got moving. Van der Kolk's prompts were meant to evoke curiosity in participants' anatomy through offering them the chance to repeatedly "get to know" their bodies (Hana van der Kolk, in discussion with the author, July 2017). For example, they might say:

> Balance on one leg. Try different ways of balancing. Hold your lifted leg low close to the ground, or higher up. Hold your raised leg in front, beside, behind you. Test your balance. If you lose your balance, you could switch legs.... You can switch legs whenever actually.

Participants noted and discussed sticking points and changes in the practicability of prompts from hour to hour, week to week, and body to body. They also exchanged and brainstormed strategies for how to approach or adapt tasks until each participant found points of access and felt engaged sensorially and empirically in her practice. These points of access were temporary, but both their location and the conversations through which they were located were significant to their process.

Each week, prompts were reviewed and reconsidered, and new ones were introduced. As due dates approached, van der Kolk, in their capacity as a "facilitator of community events and spaces" (terminology they prefer to "choreographer") proposed an organization to the tasks and tableaus the ensemble had rehearsed. Their shaping and editing were informed by their vantage point as a spectator but also by the participants' expressed interest in what they wanted to *show* audiences about their experiences of pregnancy (email exchange with van der Kolk August 26, 2019). Van der Kolk stylized and shaped these into a "dance," which everyone agreed would be performed for a live audience and for the purposes of an art film. The half dozen pregnant participants, each seeking individualized expression in collective solidarity, each feeling her consciousness multiplied at both inter- and intra-personal levels, arrived at a title that felt fitting: *Six Twelve One by One*—six dancers, twelve energies, each presence unique, significant, and worthy of attention.

Six years after *Six Twelve One by One's* conclusion, I was drawn into researching this project after coming across the virtual remnant of a press release on the internet. After scanning critical reviews, watching YouTube excerpts, and exploring the larger oeuvres of Mast and van der Kolk, I was convinced of the singularity of their project both in its processes and its outcome, and I quickly reached out to the collaborators requesting interviews. In the coming months, I enjoyed in-transit cellphone and email conversations with van der Kolk as they dashed between New York City venues as well as post-bedtime phone calls and Los Angeles garden chats with Mast, while blowing bubbles with her daughter Hazel.

Section three: "Real" women

Boyce's sudden total embrasure of her gender and her centering of it in her creative process were striking because, before pregnancy, her work reflected a more fraught relationship between her "womanhood" and her artform. Because of her larger frame, she received feedback early in her training that she was "wrong" for feminine roles. Consequently, in dance, outside of her own choreography, she always felt, whether implicitly or explicitly, within a gendered system against which she had to battle for inclusion. Boyce reflected that from her earliest days in the studio, she had, "always felt dance was a female province. It was one area in which women could reign supreme" (Vigner 1994, 212). However, while this might have been her theory on dance as an idea and an institution, it did not hold true for her personal experiences as a dancer. Rather, she felt that she existed in the dance world despite (and later, to spite) the fact that it was a "female province." This was because far from feeling that she "reign[ed] supreme" in her dance communities, she commonly felt marginalized, disempowered, and excluded because she was not a slim woman. She had a shape and weight that her teachers disparaged as "masculine." Consequently, putting her body on display in classes and performances made her vulnerable to critical commentary, and, as a college dancer, Boyce was denied opportunities because she was "too heavy" and too muscular to meet the concert dance standards of her institution (ibid.). In response, from a young age, she organized her own classes and performance opportunities for those, regardless of their gender identification, who, like her, had been made to feel excluded from other classes because of their body types.

However, while opinions that her body was not "feminine," "size appropriate," or "muscularly shaped well" might have been considered unfavorably by classical modern dance audiences, these same opinions about her shape made experimental dance audiences appreciate her "non-traditional" physique as making a statement (ibid.). To wit, whether it was commending or disparaging, rare was a performance review in her early years as a choreographer and performer that did not contain a physical description of Boyce prior to describing her work. For example, in his article on Boyce's *With Longings to Realize* (1983), writer David Alan Harris prefaced his analysis of the dance by describing the choreographer as having a "round face," the "air of a gawky preadolescent," and "prepubescent awkwardness" (1983, 88). Highlighting Boyce's corpulence, in an article for *TDR*, Ann Daly introduced Boyce as "z[a]ftig," "weighted," and "often accused of being undancerly" (Boyce et al. 1988, 82). In brief, whether her body was being critiqued or being seen as the critique, her physical attributes were of great interest to spectators, and thus were factors with which she needed to contend as a choreographer making work for herself.

Consequently, onstage, Boyce presented herself androgynously. She kept her hair in a unisex style, very short in front and on top. She rarely costumed herself in "women's" wear, preferring outfits that were either highly whimsical (like a tiger suit) or highly utilitarian (like an athletic uniform), but if she did don something "feminine," she paired it eclectically with other gender neutralizing pieces—for example, wearing a floral print blouse with a clashingly patterned skirt, knee pads, and sneakers—as she did in *With Longings to Realize* (Boyce et al. 1988). She in no way discouraged herself being seen as unfeminine and even forced the point in her work *Becoming the Man* (1983) in which she donned a "men's" button-down shirt and slacks and joined an otherwise all male-presenting cast in rhythmically executing kaleidoscopic, abstract patterns across the stage. For some critics, Boyce's unfeminine presentations of herself appeared anachronistic, aesthetically and conceptually belonging more to the feminism of the 1970s than the 1990s. For instance, in reviewing her 1982 piece, *Incidents*, critic Tobi Tobias of *New York Magazine* commented on the, in her view, outdated aesthetic presentation of Boyce and her dancers: "They sport untamed hair, unshaven armpits, faces innocent of makeup. Their insistence on a 'natural' appearance—as much a political, feminist statement as an aesthetic one—… dates back a good while" (73). She finished her review by questioning Boyce's status as a member of the avant-garde: "Boyce is supposed to represent the New Dance, but I trudged away from her concert feeling I'd seen and heard it all before" (72-72).

Boyce had turned away from femininity in her work because in her training, she felt that dance presented womanhood with "a kind of cultural hauteur or finesse that infuriated [her]" while also conflating womanhood with sexual attractiveness in ways that anticipated a male gaze recognizing an individual as a desirable woman (Vigner 1994, 212). Defying these conventional presentations, her early choreography actively refused established aesthetics of womanhood. Furthermore, it rejected eroticism, alongside elitism and classicism. In a conversation with Albright, who was then studying Boyce for her doctoral work, the choreographer explained her creative motivation:

> I see things I dislike and I react against them. I think a lot of my art comes out of that. It's kind of retaliating. I get fed up with a certain way of viewing women, and so I want to present or explore for myself other variations on that. (1991, 93)

Ways in which she reacted against this "certain way of viewing women" included boldly showcasing in her work her broad-shouldered, thickset body and its attributes and abilities, being "unabashed about [her] weight," "flinging [her]self around in non-dance ways," and, in all of these strategies, "using [her] body as a buffer, rather than a piece of beauty" (Vigner 1994, 211). Boyce's comments in a 1987 roundtable conversion between herself and choreographers Wendy Perron and Pooh Kaye further illuminated her personal incentives for staging her body choreographically at the beginning of her career. She explained,

> Traditional dance training never looked good on me because I was too heavy. So I started doing things that were more appropriate to a heavy male body…[and] since I didn't fit into the mainline, I decided to produce my own work. (Goldberg and Albright 1987, 41)

Tellingly, even as she rebelled against the dance norms of her training by choreographically creating a space that was less confining and by appropriating a "male" style of movement, her statement neither debunked standards for what "looks good" nor did it attempt to dismantle associations between beauty standards and one's degree of "femaleness." Similarly, in her various ways of acting out, she did not actively dismantle conventional presentations of femininity or efface the distinction between "traditional" dance and "non-dance." These categories remained not only intact, but important to her work—even as she chose masculinity over femininity and "non-dance" over "traditional" dance. Together these statements of Boyce's clarify the scope of her interventions and ambitions as an emergent choreographer, especially in how they were not fully aligned with the politics of feminists who were her contemporaries.

Nevertheless, Boyce saw her gender-flipped and often gender-offsetting choreography as indisputably feminist, and she anticipated that "the balance" of feminists would support her demonstrative disavowal of femininity (Vigner 1994, 215). In other words, for her, performing masculinity or gender neutrality was politically strategic rather than self-disclosing. She did not perform gender as a means of asserting her identity, but rather she performed gender theatrically with the hope of being seen in a positive light by her audience and placing herself in good feminist standing. Of course, hers was a unique approach to feminism. Par exemplar, in a round table conversation with Bill T. Jones in 1988 on the topic of gender, she critiqued the narrowness of the "American understanding" of femaleness, even within feminist politics, and she expressed her commitment to using her choreographic platform to present fresh public presentations of being female-bodied. She conveyed being especially dedicated to moving away from the "Peter Pan-esque" body—to me, an interestingly gender-crossing allusion—and toward bodies that were grounded and earthy and that expressed femaleness in ways other than their "femininity" (100). She explained wanting to reject a way of seeing women as sexualized and judged against a single standard, and she said she acted on this aim primarily by casting individuals with "really unusual body types" (Boyce et al. 1987, 46). She credited the Women's Movement for inspiring her to celebrate women's "diversity" as the source of their "power," and she metonymized this power by accruing a pick-up company of distinctively proportioned dancers—distinctive compared both to professional dance standards and to one another. In other words, her feminist move was to show audiences how “real” women’s bodies look and move, and she preferred this kind of performative revelation/celebration to what she perceived to be the more common, less fruitful feminist strategy of “fighting against something,” presumably systemic sex-based inequalities (Vigier 1994, 215). She wanted to commemorate women/females as they already were, rather than, as she saw other feminists doing, fight for what they could be.

Exemplary of her feminist work, Boyce’s 1985 dance *Raising Voice* (1985) was a piece in which a group of what she called “different types of women” sang a rendition of Handel’s *Halleluiah Chorus* for which Boyce had written new women-centric lyrics. Her choir was populated by (based on their costumes) a businesswoman, a construction worker, a “yuppie,” a peasant, and a “downtown” bohemian. All had bodies that differed in size, attire, and hair style, but together they sang harmoniously about the “queen of queens,” the “lady of ladies,” and the “queendom of her might” (as opposed to the “kingdom of the world”), proclaiming that “she shall reign forever and ever!” In another example, in *Kinscope* (1982), Boyce again intentionally recruited a cast with a wide variety of physiques and gave them asexual, sporty costumes and matching choreography so that, with all other variables controlled, the differences in their body shapes became the primary “material” of the dance. Albright celebrated Boyce’s early body-positive work writing, “When Boyce presents an image of community, it is with full preservation of individual differences … without homogenizing the women…. The open possibility of choice only strengthens the larger identity and connection of the group” of “real” women (1991, 111).

In stark contrast to Boyce’s oeuvre, van der Kolk’s feminist work has been and continues to be dedicated not to the revelation of “real” women but rather to erasure of the idea of womanhood, especially as womanhood is socially understood as the opposite of manhood. They are committed to exploring through dance “how being thoughtfully engaged bodies might destabilize our notions of gender" as well as other seeming ontologies like race, sex, and nature (http://museumofnonvisibleart.com/praxis/hana-van-der-kolk/, accessed Mar 10, 2021). Consequently, for them, dance is a practice of collapsing binaries, first and foremost that of man/woman, but also and, for them, relatedly others including "receiver/giver, dominant/submissive, fact/fiction, therapy/art, past/future, sense/nonsense, [and] abled/disabled" (https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/#/coco-damah/, accessed Mar 10, 2021). Van der Kolk credited early postmodernists for offering them exercises for reconceptualizing dance not as the practice of how one does something but rather the practice of how one *perceives* something. Inspired by their teachers including, Simone Forti and Deborah Hay, they found means to use dance to explore how they perceive "something else inside the body other than what is most immediately apparent" so as to stay in a "constant state of becoming/being/questioning" (https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/#/nothingness/, accessed Mar 10, 2021). In these ways, postmodern dance helped van der Kolk to deepen their exploration of debunking the "reality" of womanhood along with other binarily defined ideas that are socially inscribed on bodies and that limit individuals' options for self-perception.

Boyce also credited prior generations of postmodernists for clearing a space and created a climate for her body and her work to be appreciated as conceptually and stylistically relevant. However, her rationale differed from van der Kolk's. As she explained,

> When I came along, it was allowed to take from anywhere and start from anywhere; pick from this, take from that, reject this…. They [early postmodernists] were all doing pieces that had nothing to do with dance. I knew about that, and from knowing that, had permission to say "Yes," heavy people can dance. (Vigner 1994, 211)

Boyce found herself, by historical circumstances and aesthetic preferences, a de-facto postmodernist, and she identified strongly with early postmodernism's commitment to inclusivity, describing the beginnings of what she called the "postmodern category," as "dancers who came in with no training who knew nothing about the Graham/Humphrey connections [and] just said 'I can dance too!' and plopped on the stage" (*Retracing Steps*). She also appreciated the legacy of Rainer's "No Manifesto" (1965), which famously declared opposition to practices of traditional modern dance and laid out a radical politics for new experimental dance. Boyce saw her own work as building upon Rainer's, while also adding to forerunner's list of No's (for example, to "spectacle"; "virtuosity"; and "transformations, and magic, and make believe") a determined "No to anorexia" (Goldberg and Albright 1987, 43). Her assertive addition to Rainer's storied platform exemplified her commitment to dancing bodies being healthy and of many shapes—to her mind, bodies indicative of "real" women. Thus, hers was a move that was just as much away from classicism (the Romantic Ballet's fairies or sprites and George Balanchine's "greyhound" ballerinas) as from the postmodern dancer body type inspired by the long and lean Cunningham dancer.

However, for *Women, Water and a Waltz*, unlike the way that she typically cast dancers—prioritizing personal relationships with the performers and presenting a variety of body types on stage—Boyce cast Nanette DeCillis, Margaret Hoeffel, and Katie McCarthy, basing her casting on their lyrical, feminine movement qualities and similarly slender, willowy physiques. While her body shape and signature movement quality did not gel with those of the other cast members, the newly postpartum Boyce also performed in the dance (although hers was the only costume that fully covered her torso). In joining them, she also framed herself in a new light. In the choreography, instead of, as she had previously described her style, "cumbersome[ly] jumping about," she staged her postpartum body with an Ingres-like delicacy, embodying serpentine lines and graceful contours (*Retracing Steps*).

In my reading of her work, Boyce's reaction to her experiences of maternity revealed a pre-existing desire to be socially recognized as a woman, thus, feeling frustratingly unseen prior to becoming pregnant. Consequently, after her pregnancy she moved, in her words, "toward a kind of femininity" that she had previously "shied away from" and was "a little afraid to embrace," not because she personally identified as masculine or as a man, but out of fear of not being accepted by audiences or being delegitimized as a dancer if she danced a "female" part (as had been her experience while a dance student) (Vigner 1994, 215). Moreover, experiencing the physiology of pregnancy and the range of her physical and psychological capacities through giving birth gave her experiences of her body that she interpreted as spiritualistic and intriguingly outside of her socialization. In other words, seemingly, her experiences of pregnancy dramatically shifted her embodied relationships to gender, her belief in the veracity and significance of sex-based differences, and her discernment of what it meant to make dances as a female choreographer. Conceivably, these were shifts that Boyce was already prepared and yearning to make; she simply needed the invitation and the opportunity, both of which pregnancy afforded her.

Section four: Becoming women and making a "women's culture"

Boyce's *Women, Water, and a Waltz* presented a version of womanhood reminiscent of feminist theologian Mary Daly's theory of *Gyn/Ecology* (1978). While, to the best of my knowledge, Boyce was not a student of Daly's work, I find invoking Daly's theory helpful for understanding Boyce's choreographic perspective. Like Boyce, Daly had life experiences that she perceived as mystical and as a testament to the presence of divinity in nature and in her true "nature" as a woman. Consequently, she developed a theological model explicating what it means to be a woman and how women can outmaneuver patriarchy and achieve emancipation through undertaking “the Journey of women becoming” (1). Boyce experienced her pregnancy as a journey into womanhood akin to Daly’s thinking. According to Daly, through such “becoming,” women can participate in a larger shared feminine energy which is their destiny and birthright. Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology* transmuted everyday life into a “transformative reverie” within which women could access their essential power (335). Men were banished not only from this reverie but from its very contemplation—as famously evidenced by Daly’s dismissal from her professorship at Boston College after refusing male students’ participation in her advanced women’s studies classes. Like in Daly’s writing, in Boyce’s choreography, there was a suggestion of otherworldly, exclusively female space in which women discovered or manifested alternatives to patriarchy through tapping into, in Daly’s words, their “gynergy”—their inherent but dormant biologically bestowed power. Boyce’s choreographic process postpartum could be seen as an attempt to locate and choreograph from her own “gynergy” after pregnancy offered her symbolic and energetic participation in the “Journey of women becoming,” in which she had previously taken little interest. This is because making dances became her process of remembering and reclaiming her womanhood and the ways that it supposedly invited her into Daly-esque fellowship with all womankind.

In Daly’s writing, the female “Self” becomes part of something larger and boundless, through “living, loving, [and] creating our Selves, hearing the call of the wild, [and] naming our wisdom” (11). Such ideas (presented as they were with Daly’s signature eccentric capitalization of whichever words she deemed to have special and extra-linguistic significance) resonated with select branches of third-wave feminism in the late 1980s and early 1990s to which Boyce was exposed and which, in turn, influenced the choreographer’s personal politics. Such branches took a “New Age” turn hearkening back to Daly’s interest in nature and spirituality and, like Boyce, became interested in recovering “time-honored” women’s wisdom for their project of “naturalizing” womanhood. This “New Age” turn was perhaps best represented by the cultural phenomenon of Clarissa Pinkola Estés’s 1992 book, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. In this book, which appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller’s list for years, Estés popularized a trend of using Jungian psychology, myth, and the rhetoric of both feminism and therapy to spread her message that women could and should salvage their lives for themselves by rediscovering “the wild woman within” themselves. In such “New Age” thinking, the individual both makes/claims herself anew while also surrendering to something beyond herself, to which she feels she is already known and within which she feels already included. She need only recognize it. Accordingly, as in Daly’s vision, in Boyce’s work, women come together to create timeless communities, which are self-sustaining, nourishing, and purportedly invulnerable to the restrictions of patriarchy. In other words, both Daly and Boyce anticipated that women’s psychic and somatic emancipation was linked to their attunement to a shared experience of their womanhood, something that, to both Daly and Boyce, women have privileged access through what their bodies do, feel, and have had the capacity to share since time immemorial.

Boyce signaled the timeless womanhood in *Women, Water, and a Waltz* by choreographic allusions to mythic and occult feminine imagery. In their black gowns, the dancers effortlessly glide through spatial patterns like druid priestesses in a ceremony of cooperation, care, and exchange. Their white skin under the white lights shines luminously, making them stand out from their dark costumes and backdrop as if “constantly in a state of emerging from a dark pool of water” (Albright 1991, 97). And their ritual—pouring a substance initially translucent then alchemized to gold—presents them as invested with special powers or otherworldly enchantment.

In structuring her choreographic response to her pregnancy as a Daly-esque "journey" into womanhood, Boyce made a very particular and arguably outmoded aesthetic and conceptual choice. After all, theorizations of what it means to "become" a woman were neither unique to Daly nor, at the time when Boyce was working, immune from scholarly and popular critique. Rather, thanks to the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and many others, the idea of "becoming woman" had both a long history and a vital contemporary presence when Boyce was making *Women, Water, and a Waltz.* For example, thirty years before Daly, Beauvoir famously said, "One is not born woman: one becomes woman," by which she meant there is a separation between what a female body *is* and "what humanity has made of the human female" (1989 [1953], 133, 41). In other words, the raw materials of female biology could be understood and experienced in different ways than they are commonly. She clarified, "the body of woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world … [but] not enough to define her as a woman." She added, "there is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of society" (41). In other words, and in direct contrast to Daly, she did not propose that there is anything revelatory about the material female body in and of itself that offers women access to their "true" nature/power.

At the same time, Beauvoir's idea of becoming a woman was different from the idea of gender as a social construct. Thus, unlike Butler who refuted ideas of any essential differences between men and women or even the veracity of the category "woman" at all, saying, "the body is not a natural fact but an historical idea" and "the body is a field of interpretive possibilities," Beauvoir believed in the reality of both femaleness and femininity, and she did not dispute that women and men are different in legitimate and inevitable ways (251, 45). However, she critiqued the "myths" of the Feminine that lead women to experience themselves as lesser and weaker than men, even if they mistake such disempowerment for a superficial empowerment or specialness of purpose and ability. This is because Beauvoir's was primarily and methodologically a phenomenological rather than sociological inquiry into sexual difference—she was interested in *lived* female bodies. So, while she asked, "what humanity has made of the human female," Beauvoir also asked, "what does it *mean* to be a woman," as such meaning might be known through women's perception of themselves and their world: "how does the world appear to such a being?" (xvii). She was less concerned with how women have learned to perform womanhood in socially recognized ways, and more interested in how society has shaped women's senses of their bodies and their world. Beauvoir's phenomenology complicated her contemporary phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's claim that man *is* his body by saying, "Woman, like man, *is* her body; but her body is something else than she is" (29). In other words, the lived experience of being a woman is affected by more than her physical body and its biology. As she put it, "It is not the body-object described by the biologist that actually exists, but the living body of the subject," which allows for an antinaturalistic view of the body (38).

Irigaray responded directly to Beauvoir in her own theorization of "becoming woman." She said, "it's not as Simone de Beauvoir said: one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman (through culture), but rather: I am born a woman, but I must still become this woman that I am by nature" (1992, 168). In other words, she, like Beauvoir, rooted her work in phenomenology (lived experiences) and sought to bridge the gap between the seemingly divergent paradigms of female empowerment and self-awareness. Like Boyce, Irigaray trusted that there was a self that was her birthright or her essential truth, that was inextricable from her biology, and that it was hard to access this self within hegemonic culture. However, her main interest, unlike that of Beauvoir, Daly, or Boyce, was in exploring sexual differences (a concept she presented as complex and compound), rather than defining womanhood in a conclusive and universal way. Irigaray wanted praxes through which individuals might know themselves not as binarily different from or equal to men, since having the goal of equality of opposites presupposes the existence of fair terms of comparison. Instead, she challenged feminists to ask themselves, *what do women want to be equal to?* Instead of desiring equal access to options already available for men (such as higher wages or higher status) or to equal the "strong" female characters that populate the mythic stories foundational to patriarchal civilization, she encouraged women to answer that they wanted to be equal to *themselves* (2004, 77). She thereby pushed individuals as they "became women" toward practices of thinking and living *differently*, in unprecedented ways, and in ways that eschewed all existing possibilities for how they might measure their worth. With no one and no model to gauge themselves against, she anticipated they would be free to innovate means to estimate their true measure on their own terms.

When looked at through Beauvoirian and Irigarayan lenses, the mythical feminine models of Boyce seem recursive, unimaginative, and unexamined. However, there is, of course, not a singular trajectory for feminist thought, and Boyce's and Daly's works were not made to refute Beauvoir or Irigaray's paradigms, but rather to explore their own questions. At the time of their creative work, both Boyce and Daly felt the gravitational pull of female biology to understand their own subjecthood and power. Thus, Boyce's aesthetic practices in the 1980s and '90s were grounded in her sense of herself as a woman, as her womanhood could be known to her through her reproductive body. It was through reproducing that she felt she came into her womanhood;

consequently, she endowed reproduction with near magical power and, through her work, she suggested that not only her own but all women's "nature" and "divine" destiny was linked to their capacity to procreate.

While certainly problematic from the perspectives of gender theory and intersectional feminism, Boyce's interpretation of her reproductive body was supported by ideologies and imagery surrounding "natural" birthwork. The so called "natural childbirth" movement of the 1970s created an alternative birth culture of the 1980s and 1990s in the US that focused on midwife-assisted homebirths and framed such birth experiences as sacred, transcendent rituals. This philosophy of birthing was inspired by Ina May Gaskin's 1975 watershed book *Spiritual Midwifery*, which described the beauty, power, and euphoria of unmedicated childbirth and which precipitated popular notions of pregnancy and birthing as spiritual rites of passage. This philosophy has remained popular and, even today, "natural" birth culture in the US tends to sheath itself in imagery evocative of the divine feminine.

In contrast to the ideology and imagery of such "natural" birth culture, many feminist theorists caution against belief in the sacredness of maternity, seeing it as serving patriarchy by duping women into misperceiving motherhood and domesticity to be empowering experiences. They argue that elevating motherhood to mythic and divine status helps hold women in socially subservient positions to men because, isolated and preoccupied with their household duties, they do not pursue other forms of personal development, and they do not discover and nurture their political solidarity with one another. Following this line of thought, it would be in women's best interest to upset, rather than reinforce the myth of sacred maternity. In the 1940s, Beauvoir was among the first to argue that women are not destined to be mothers or to feel fulfilled by motherhood. In fact, she posited that it is more reasonable and rational for pregnancy and motherhood to be experienced as oppressive and self-destructive. She described the pregnant woman as “first violated” and “then alienated” as she becomes “another than herself” (24). She continued with a sampling of the many ways pregnancy induces psychic distress and physical damage on women, leading her to assert that, in her estimation, “the significance of pregnancy is … ambiguous,” at best and in no way inevitably woman-affirming or -enabling (556). With its focus on phenomenological descriptions of the situations of real women, *The Second Sex* refused a monolithic metanarrative of pregnancy and instead offered stories of many different types of experiences of pregnancy, and, to counteract the popularly accepted cult of motherhood, Beauvoir emphasized the alternative: that pregnancy impairs female subjectivity and offers a false and shallow sense of self-actualization. She de-romanticized pregnancy and chastened women who sentimentalized it, saying they intentionally turned a blind eye to the difficult truth: “Against the light of the mind they oppose the fecund darkness of Life; against the clarity of consciousness, the mysteries of inwardness; against productive liberty, the weight of this belly growing there enormously without human will” (561). Her language was intentionally sharp and deliberately disruptive to what she perceived to be dominant social discourse; she was trying to shock her readers by profaning motherhood, something customarily held sacrosanct; Beauvoir dared to smudge the gloss on traditionally untouchable narratives of motherhood.

In the wake of Beauvoir, theorists of the 1980s and 1990s continued to debunk the myth of motherhood as women’s natural and special calling. For example, Butler critiqued the social trend she observed of understanding “the desire to give birth as a species-desire, part of a collective and archaic female libidinal drive that constitutes an ever-recurring metaphysical reality” (1990, 90). Similarly, philosopher Elizabeth Grosz avowed that “Woman, the woman-mother, does not find her femininity or identity as a woman affirmed in maternity but, rather, her corporeality, her animality, her position on the threshold between nature and culture" (Grosz 1989, 79). She continued that the woman-mother's "identity as subject is betrayed by pregnancy; and undermined in lactation and nurturance" because in these activities, "she takes on the status of part-object, or breast for the child" (ibid.). Taken together, Beauvoir, Butler, and Grosz argue that the maternal body has a biological reality but no cultural significance apart from discourses of motherhood, and if these discourses go unexamined, it preserves women's oppression and prescribes a unidimensional and uniform experience of motherhood only mistaken for power if unexamined.

However, Boyce perceived in her experiences of pregnancy, a mystical "natural" force around which a belief system and a spiritual community (what she called a "women's culture") could form. Consequently, central to her choreographic aesthetic of womanhood was imagery evocative of matricentric spirituality. Her impulse to conflate womanhood with spirituality situated her within a niche tract of feminism in the 1980s and '90s, which went against the grain of mainstream feminism. Speaking to this tract, feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti observed, "As the secular and rebellious daughters of the Enlightenment, feminists were raised on rational argumentation and detached self-irony," and these values remained fundamental for many and were positioned at the heart of second- and third-wave feminisms (2008, 3). To those of this mindset across the decades, work like Boyce's and Daly's, with its investments in spirit, myth, and emotionality, was jarring and seemingly anachronistic. Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* and Boyce's "women's culture" refused the irony and secularity of scholarship and activism and insisted on being overtly affective and mystical. Relatedly, they assumed a timeless universality to women's experiences of themselves, rooted in their biorhythms and cycles. As Kristeva assessed, and as was the case for Boyce, "Female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations" (1981, 16). She continued that "the cycle, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm … imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison …[are] experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, … vertiginous visions and unnamable *jouissance*" (ibid.). In other words, Kristeva appraised that feeling one's full body overcome by female biological processes could be understood by an individual through paradigms of the orgasmic, the infantile, the cosmic, the spiritual, and the eternal. Such esoteric interpretive processes confounded liberal feminists' (the "rebellious daughters of the Enlightenments'") propensities toward rationality and a sense of feminist duty to detach from their feelings, unless evoking the supposed "touchy-feely-ness" of womanhood ironically.

However, recurrently throughout history, many have felt deeply connected to philosophies that bestow female bodies and their processes with divine powers, as Boyce did. Thus, many women appreciated the turn of artists and authors like Boyce and Daly away from rationalism and secularism and toward the romantic and otherworldly. To wit, Daly's readers received the ideas of *Gyn/Ecology* ecstatically, showing there was an audience for whom such mystical reorientation was welcome, and much feminist press on Daly was rapturous, declared her ideas expansive and transformative, and promoted her as a visionary. For example, the religious-studies scholar Demaris Wehr wrote in a review for the *New York Times Book Review*, "[Daly's] powerful mind, her creative genius and her uncanny ability to put her finger on deep emotional, psychological and spiritual problems are ignored at our peril" (1984). In a similar way, Boyce's work was praised by many, even as it unnerved her more political and analytical peers and critics. For example, dance writer Ann Daly, in her review of *Women, Water, and a*

Waltz, said that Boyce's "sensuous water-pouring ritual plays at the edges of semantics, registering itself at a kinesthetically expressive level that bypasses language" (2002, 183). For Daly, Boyce's choreography made her feel connected to something beyond herself and her powers of expression. The same can be said for Albright, who appreciated that "the details and repetition of pouring seem to invite us to drink in the mysteriousness of the watery ritual," an invitation that she thirstily accepted (1991, 99). Furthermore, for Albright the dance evoked a sense of Kristevan *jouissance* in that "the intertwining of arms, bodies and water created an encompassing sense of erotic connection among the dancers," to which she also connected and in which she experienced exciting and arousing potential (99-100).

Braidotti has described spiritual feminist work like Boyce's, which followed in the wake of Daly—a self-dubbed "post-Christian," "radical lesbian feminist" theologian (Fox 2010)—as "post-secular." Braidotti appreciated such work's ability to make "manifest the notion that agency, or political subjectivity, can actually … involve significant amounts of spirituality" (2008, 2). Other feminist theorists such as Saba Mahmood in her work on Islam, have critiqued how naturalized the concept of the liberal autonomy-seeking subject has been to much Euroamerican feminist theory and how personal agency (paired with skepticism of any kind of predeterminism) has been mistaken as paramount to patriarchal resistance. Mahmood says, instead, "that it is crucial to detach the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics" (2005, 14). In other words, feminists like Braidotti and Mahmood appreciate that affective attachments to one's spirituality, to a spiritual community, to notions of the eternal, to myth and magic, to forces beyond oneself guiding one's behavior—as Boyce presented in her postpartum choreography—can be productive and even constitutive of women's feminist investments.

However, spirituality becomes a problem for feminism when autonomy is sacrificed in the name of community in a way that elides critical differences between bodies and that implicitly excludes some bodies entirely from "women's culture." For example, feminist and womanist Audre Lorde, although known to be one of Daly's most outspoken critics, did not find fault with the spiritual bent of her work. However, Lorde circulated an *Open Letter to Mary Daly* in 1979 in which she accused Daly of drawing only from "Western" traditions in her construction of female spirituality, thus neglecting long histories of goddess worship in Africa. To Lorde, Daly's proposed "primal"/spiritual self, did not recognize its whiteness. She called upon Daly to acknowledge how her *Gyn/Ecology* excluded the experiences of women of color, consequently limiting the radicalness of "gynergy" and the project of "women becoming." As Lorde explained,

> To dismiss our Black foremothers may well be to dismiss where european women learned to love…. As an African-American woman in white patriarchy, I am used to having my archetypal experience distorted and trivialized, but it is terribly painful to feel it being done by a woman whose knowledge so much touches my own. (67–68)

Lorde felt close to Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, not in spite of but because of its spiritual dimensions (as well as its imbedded inclusion of lesbianism); consequently, she felt wounded when alienated from it by its couched whiteness. Thus, she implored, "Mary, I ask that you remember what is dark and ancient and divine within yourself that aids your speaking" (69).

Per responses to Daly like Lorde's, later "post-secular," intersectional feminism was more aware of the necessity to avoid essentialism and the presentation of womanhood as a stable category knowable through exclusively (though unacknowledged to be exclusively) white experiences. Considering as much, Boyce's choices of imagery and gesture in manifesting a "women's culture" inclusive to *all* women problematically and recursively repeated some of Daly's critiqued oversights. Boyce's dances, which were meant to evoke a matriarchal spirituality were, like Daly's imagery, very Euromerican in their references and their implicitly intended audience. Like Daly, she presented women's connectedness using symbols reminiscent of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, making allusions to pagan goddesses and sacred maternity. Furthermore, interpretation of her dance in the ways she intended required familiarity with "Western" art aesthetics and its canon, for she referenced Classical art in her presentations of women as if they were Hellenic Graces—in symmetrical compositions, partially undraped and absorbed in rituals of ablution and anointing.

What is more, even if, in the interest of presenting her subject matter as universal and timeless, Boyce was committed to drawing choreographic imagery surrounding maternity from ancient myths, she need not have adhered to white and feminizing symbols. After all, throughout time and across cultures, there have been myths about non-female and non-gendered pregnancy and birth. Even within Hellenic traditions, it was Zeus who gave birth to both his daughter, Athena, and his son, Dionysus, and beyond the "Western" canon are myriad examples such as Vishnu birthing Brahma through a Lotus flower blossoming from his navel.

Moreover, Boyce used dancing to relocate her maternal body within a symbolic system outside of her specific bodily experiences. Her choreography presented her body as iterative of a collective, transhistorical experience, and she disclosed her personal lived experiences of maternity only in her choice to center the quality of fluidity which, although a clichéd and oft employed description of female corporeality, she sourced directly from embodied perceptions. The perceptual experiences of her pregnancy might have changed her choreographic relationships to time, progress, causality, and efficacy—as they did choreographers discussed in other chapters, such as Trisha Brown and Jennie MaryTai Liu—and thereby inspired her to explore these phenomena formally via the postmodern strategies that she had employed pre-

pregnancy. However, in contrast to Brown and Liu, her interpretation of her pregnancy as something feminine and fluid pushed her away from abstraction and toward thematic, theatrical, and representational strategies for her art.

While like Boyce, van der Kolk welcomed myth and spirituality into their creative process and community, their focus was on individuals' personal experiences of spiritual and physical power, not a generic sense of women's collective spirit and power. As follows and in contrast to Boyce, their work was invested in participants' "personalized rituals in a deeply curious, responsive, body-positive, queer and playful container" (https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/#/coco-damah/, accessed Mar 10, 20201). Furthermore, rather than aspiring to connect to something timeless via dance, their commitment was to being in the moment, a skill and attention honed by a lifetime's apprenticeship in Buddhist thought and daily meditation. In addition to having vipassana meditation as part of the daily rehearsal process, van der Kolk also incorporated endurance tests into the choreography of *Six Twelve One by One.* In one instance, the pregnant individuals held their arms straight out at shoulder height for over three minutes on end. In this way, the dancers used "theater" to practice "real" focus, patience, concentration, stamina, resolve, and resilience. In addition to helping them rehearse skills they hoped to employ in labor, these endurance tests gave them the opportunity to be respectfully witnessed both in their struggle and in their strength. Dancers presented their power not by performing recognizable signs of "girl power," archetypes of divine womanhood, or characters with seeming supernatural abilities, as Boyce had. Rather, they let their bodies demonstrate—instead of symbolize—their strength and psychophysical capacity.

In juxtaposition to *Women, Water, and a Waltz*, part of the project of *Six Twelve One by One* was exploring and redefining what it meant to each participant to mother and how they might collectively invent praxes of un-selfless mothering (thereby refusing the archetype of the self-sacrificing and boundlessly giving-of-self mother). Indeed, Mast said that her favorite aspect of pregnancy was that it helped her to recognize and cultivate a “different sort of love,” a “mother’s love” which she anticipated being “the privilege of helping another person figure out who they are” without losing her sense of who she was (Mast, discussion). In our discussion of this “different sort of love” and the “privilege of helping” others self-realize, she never presented these ideas as tied to gender, to biology, or to an available social/mythic role/script. Rather, for her, “mother’s love” had to do with preparing mentally, physically, and relationally to be a caregiver (as she had in building *Six Twelve One by One*). It did not have to do with identifying with her uterus, surrendering to her biological destiny, or assuming a culturally meaningful identity. Mothering was an intention and a practice, not a vocation, and it was a commitment to loving another life, not a commitment to a gendered and revered social role. Importantly, this type of mothering had been modeled and cultivated by van der Kolk who, like Mast, spent months discovering, rehearsing, and embodying it while also firmly refusing motherhood as a loaded, limiting, and patriarchy-serving social institution and allegorical device.

Section five: Troubling gender, sex, and their entanglement

Pre-pregnancy, Boyce’s choreographies did nothing to distinguish male-presenting and female-presenting performers. For example, in dances like *Out of the Ordinary* (1981), men and women were dressed, or undressed, identically. For part of this dance, the entire cast wore only boxer shorts or, later, nothing at all. She explained, while conversing with Jones, that when she used nudity as a choreographic device, she used it as a means to emphasize neutrality by showing bodies that were “genderless” and “animalistic,” in other words, bodies in a state that was not culturally determined (Goldberg and Albright 1987, 47). In her efforts toward neutralizing gender and resisting eroticizing or objectifying her dancers, even when they were disrobed, she was successful. For example, critic Jack Anderson remarked in his *New York Times* review of Boyce that her use of nudity, to his initial disbelief, “was in no way provocative or sensationalistic” (1981). He appreciated the uniqueness of the experience, as a viewer, of seeing fully exposed bodies on stage in a presentation not suggestive of sex as act, modifier, or identifier. According to Anderson, this was due to the fact that “Miss Boyce took her audience beyond surprise…. [S]he brought [her dancers] right down front in [full] frontal nudity. She allowed us to have a good look at them” (ibid.). In other words, Boyce choreographed scenarios in which dancers presented their bodies without coyness, embarrassment, or seduction, and then they simply got on with the dance.

Many critics commented on the “innocence” of disrobed bodies in Boyce’s work, but Boyce was outspokenly adamant that her use of nudity was not to evoke childlike characters or relationships; she intended to show “mature being[s] in an organic state” (Goldberg and Albright 1987, 47). In this way, her aim resembled that of first-generation postmodernist Anna Halprin, and second-generation postmodernists like Rainer, who used nudity in an effort to present male and female bodies as existing in the same condition or state, thereby downplaying the relevance of their anatomical differences for the choreographic tasks at hand. For example, in her piece *Word Words* (1963), Rainer and her co-performer Steve Paxton undressed to the limits of (then) legality in an effort to look as similar as possible. Rainer’s lack of interest in sexualizing their bodies or presenting an erotic encounter with the work was clarified by the fact that prior to deciding on near nudity, they considered wearing matching Santa suits or gorilla costumes to achieve the same effect of being in a shared state (Bennahum et al. 2017, 140). Clarifying that there were no male or female roles in the duet, Rainer danced a solo that Paxton then repeated near-mimetically before they then danced it in unison. Critic Allan Hughes responded to Rainer in a way similar to Anderson's response to Boyce, remarking with amazement that "after the first surprise, nudity makes no difference at all" (quoted in Banes 1983, 87-88). Like Boyce, Rainer's agenda was to keep audience members focused on the immediate choreography rather than letting themselves identify with or objectify the performers based on their sexual anatomy. However, while nodding to Rainer, Boyce was more interested in highlighting her dancers' physiognomic differences which included but were not limited to their genitals. In other words, in trying to make art that mimicked life, she wished to show that all bodies, even those belonging to individuals with similar sex organs, had key phenotypical differences (including height, body mass, musculature, and body hair), which, if not aesthetically appreciated for their own worth, could be used to put individuals on a spectrum of manhood to womanhood, meaning having a certain body type could make one individual appear more of a woman or more of a man than another individual—a hurtful ranking to which Boyce herself felt regularly subjected. Thus, Boyce's dances aimed to be more instructive than Rainer's; she intended to educate her audience on the range of different types of equally "appropriate" human bodies that belonged in society and on stage.

In other words, pre-pregnancy, Boyce saw choreography as, primarily, an opportunity to strip bodies not of their sex but of the socialization and stigmatizations attached to sex. Once freed of these layers, she felt bodies could be in a more "organic" state, one in which all body types were welcome. She saw this state as progress for the dance community and for society at large. Considering as much, Boyce's casting, costuming, and the nudity in *Women, Water and a Waltz* functioned conversely to how she had employed these devices pre-pregnancy because they emphasized the performers' common sex and the similarities of their physiques, they endorsed gendered codes of dress, they suggested that women were inevitably similar to each other and different from men, and they exposed bodies as a means to embellish the choreography with the suggestion that it was being performed by special characters (not everyday "real" bodies).

The late 1980s and early 1990s introduced sexuality as a scholarly field, and there were major theoretical debates around preconstructed conceptualizations of the gendered subject. In contrast to Boyce's framing of the "nature" of women's bodies, in the new academic disciplines of women's and gender studies, one's "natural" body had become a questionable source of one's authority, and one's biology was rarely presented as in and of itself empowering. Moreover, contemporaneous to Boyce's early postpartum works, scholars were arguing that sex denotes one's biology and is categorized primarily by one's reproductive organs; gender, on the other hand, refers to how one is recognized, wishes to be recognized, or recognizes oneself on a spectrum between woman and man. As follows, gender was commonly accepted as socially constructed, and as associated with a set of learned qualities, attributes, and preferences that, when appearing together, suggest womanhood or manhood. Now, Boyce's choreographies slipped riskily between presenting gender as sex and sex as gender, often treating being a female and being a woman as one in the same experience. Furthermore, they generalized out from Boyce's individual interpretations of her body to present a shared interpretation of embodiment (conflating woman in the singular with women, as an imagined universal plural). In short, her presentation of femaleness/womanhood was out of synch with emergent scholarly thought.

Even before pregnancy, Boyce received some criticism for being retrogressive in her gender politics. For her 1985 work *Ties that Bind*, a duet she choreographed for two lesbian lovers, Boyce set out to show that lesbians are "just like" heterosexuals. She explained, "I wanted to present a [lesbian] love relationship and make it as accessible as possible to the general public," adding that one of its performers, Jennifer Miller, was "a woman who has a beard—which wasn't enormously accessible" (Goldberg and Albright 1988, 48). Not only was Boyce, with this piece, problematically trying to fold lesbianism back into "normal" womanhood, and thereby insinuating normality was predicated on heterosexuality, she was also reinforcing her idea that when it comes to love, coherence to a single kind of love is preferable to diverse manifestations of loving relationships. Furthermore, she revealed the limit to what she personally perceived as "normal" variations or, to use her word, "types," of women's bodies. Boyce had previously declared that female bodies that fluctuated in shape or weight were more "real" than uniformly slim, conventionally "feminine" bodies. However, her desire to use choreography to make a woman with male sexual characteristics "accessible" and legibly womanly, belied her own discomfort with bodies that defied sexual binaries (not just gender codes) by trespassing what to her were firm and "natural" genetic divides.

Imagining seeing through the eyes of her contemporaries and looking back from my vantage point today, it is difficult not to critique Boyce for denying differences among women (beyond physical shape), offering too homogeneous a vision of womanhood, having a goal of women's sameness, and making work from an unacknowledged position of privilege (a precondition for presuming all experiences of womanhood are equitable and comparable to one's own). However, despite its shortcomings, Boyce's postpartum choreographies offer intriguing access to her strategies of re-centering and self-re-assessment in light of her changed perception of her body and, consequently, her changed reasons for making dance starting from her pregnancy. Moreover, Boyce had many supporters and collaborators, and throughout her choreographic career, she remained firm, even outspoken, in her thinking about womanhood and its distinctiveness from manhood. For example, she told Jones in their public conversation on gender in postmodernism,

> Right now I feel I can only work with women, because I don't know *the* male experience enough. I can ask women to explore areas with me and trust me to explore them together because I feel like it's something I can empathize with. But it's hard for me to really explore issues of maleness with men. (Boyce et al. 1988, 99, italics added).

Boyce assumed that trust forged through empathy broke down along gendered lines. However, as she continued her conversation with Jones and attempted to explain "the" female experience with which she felt she could empathize (in opposition to "the" male experience), Boyce uncritically rearticulated social constructions such as, "Women are allowed to feel and to emote—to express emotion with abandon, to let down their hair, to roll their heads as they spin, and to lose themselves in a feeling state" (ibid.). Previously, Boyce had retaliated against, as she told Albright, "a certain way of viewing women" and was invested in making choreography revelatory of the "personness we share" (not the ways our genders make us similar or diametrically opposed to one other) (1991, 93). However, pregnancy seemingly convinced her that her personhood was pre-inscribed with tendencies—such as expressing emotion "with abandon" and losing herself in a "feeling state"—tendencies that she felt she could no longer ignore.

In stark contrast to Boyce, commencing their pregnancy-centered project, van der Kolk appreciated that there is wide variability both phenotypically and physiologically among people whose biological sex is "female." Their personal artistic and therapeutic processes were predicated on the reality that not all females identify as women just as not all self-identified women share the same physiology and phenotype. In brief, some who use the pronouns she/her have facial hair, penises, or any number of other hormonally related physical variations conventionally associated with being a man. Just so, some who use the pronouns he/his have the organs to support carrying and birthing a child. Moreover, while Boyce built choreography around and through her personal experiences of her body, which she assumed to be generalizable to all womankind, van der Kolk experienced their bodyself as distinct from the dancers they were shepherding. While holding the space and offering the structure for community formation, van der Kolk was unmistakably outside of the performers' community. They were geographically, technologically, and biologically distanced from the cast. They were not, nor had they ever been pregnant. Also, they did not see themself as part of any kind of special sisterhood united through a common intuitive experience of womanhood, as Boyce had. In fact, because they identify as gender-fluid and refuse reductive gender categories (including the presumptive pronouns she/her), van der Kolk was especially resistant to the idea that one female-presenting individual's lived experiences could be assumed to be generalizable to another's.

However, these differences did not mean that van der Kolk felt disconnected or disengaged from participants' experiences. In fact, when we spoke on the telephone about the project, they told me they enjoyed working toward kinesthetic empathy with the pregnant participants. They appreciated the imaginative work of fathoming with their own body what it is to have a "big belly" and physiological conditions to which they were not experientially privy. Additionally, doing work about pregnancy felt inside their ongoing research question of *what all can the body do?* As van der Kolk is deeply interested in what they call "bizarre abilities" of the body, they described what a delightful "kick" they got out of seeing the pregnant individuals respond to the prompts they gave them. For them, pregnant bodies provoked relatable feelings not only of anticipation and awkwardness, but of "envy, disgust, [and] arousal," which had "interesting implications in terms of feminism and performance" and thus felt like exciting choreographic subject matter for them all to explore in concert (Herbst). Also, they felt like the dancers' ally because, personally, they had had lots of "wacky" and mysterious body experiences (such as digestive issues, skin reactions, and chronic fatigue) (van der Kolk, discussion). These physical "abnormalities" allowed them to identify with being in a body that is "weird and different" and requires consciousness, but one that it also fascinating and edifying. To them, pregnancy was primarily another "whacky" body experience to investigate and appreciate.

Gender and sexuality theorists would argue that individual reproductive bodies are always sites of performance and cultural production, and when these performances become intentional, they have the potential to destabilize the ideal of a universal female body or the notion that a shared experience of body can be a solid basis for feminist community. Understanding as much, van der Kolk rooted their choreography not in participants' shared womanhood or femaleness, but rather in their shared experience of the "wackiness" of their immediate embodied experiences. After all, as Butler argues, womanhood is not "real" or a "natural" rationale for connecting with others of the same gender; it is merely "the repeated stylization of the body," through "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid, regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the *appearance* of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990, 33, italics added). Boyce attempted to strip away layers of representation so as to arrive at a "natural sort of being" which she then performed in dance, but to do so, she only replaced her accustomed performance of self with other socially available performances of womanhood. She did this replacement without dismantling the regulatory frames that confined and curtailed her thinking about what womanhood *is*, or, to use Irigaray's term, how a woman might be "equal to herself," as opposed to patriarchy's ideal of her.

Although Boyce unconsciously used the terms "female," "woman," and "feminine" interchangeably when discussing herself and her work, when being intentional in her wording, she spoke of sex and gender as different experiences. For her, while gender was something she could perform theatrically, sex was something real and central to who she was at her core. Butler parsed sex and gender differently from Boyce, arguing that sex is not and cannot be the truth of one's body. As memorably explored in her trailblazing books, she proposed that sex and gender are categorically different yet function in strikingly, dangerously similar ways in how they inform social thought—in either case, they create definitive binaries for the "type" of person/body one can be. In *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), she argued that the body is not a "fact," but rather a historical idea. While the material body exists, what this physical matter *is* can never subsist in a vacuum; it will always and only make sense through its cultural interpretations. Accordingly, regardless of a body's sex, individuals' senses of their bodies are rooted in their historical contexts. In other words, there is no "pure," "natural," biological body that can be directly accessed once one has shed one's socialization, and one's sex is not any more constative or deterministic of self than one's gender. This is because both sex and gender are part of discourse; both are the products of learned patterns of perception and preestablished taxonomies. Boyce took the Freudian path in perceiving biology as destiny, thus she perceived that her sex pre-coded her body with certain inevitable qualities and expressions. However, for Butler, sex is a construction:

> If gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not *accrue* social meanings as additive properties but, rather *is replaced by* the social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges, not as a term in continued relationships of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces "sex," the mark of its full substantiation into gender of what, from a materialist point of view, might constitute a full *de*substantaion.… Sex becomes "the construction of construction." (1993, 5)

Based on this line of argumentation, she concluded,

> If gender is the social construction of sex and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that

> “sex” becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is not direct access. (ibid.)

In other words, while Boyce perceived sex to be pure, unconstructed, or in Butler’s term, “prelinguistic” (thus not symbolic but ontological), Butler contended that there can be no “reference to a pure body that is not at the same time a further formation of that body” (10). This is to say, the problem for Boyce came when, believing sex to be wholly material (so, not conceptual or invented by people) and to be something substantiated by science, she also saw it as final, closed, and definitive. This meant that, for her, sex had no space to grow so as to include a variety of relationships between people, their bodies, and their genitalia.

Like Boyce, many perceive and are taught to perceive their sex organs and associated hormones to be “proof” of their sex. However, Butler encouraged readers to challenge even that which, because of its materiality, appears to be “true.” Per Butler, we should think of sex as “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (1994, 9). In other words, we have learned to recognize sex traits as discrete and definitive parts of our bodies and as distinct markers of our identities, but this does not mean that our understandings should be held stable. Thinking in the ways encouraged by Butler would change the conversation from one of how we constitute gender through interpretations of sex—which leaves sex unquestioned and uncritiqued—to a conversation of how the “materiality of sex as a given presupposes and consolidates the normative conditions of its own emergence” (10). In short, according to Butler, it is impossible for us to *know* our sex in a way that precedes the cultural *idea* of sex (meaning binary sexual differences), because it is nearly impossible to source from a body part (like the uterus) epistemologically without employing existing discourse to define what it *is*.

If we apply Butler's logic to the case of Boyce, it means that her perceptions of her body parts during her pregnancy, perceptions that she interpreted as her true, natural body and its femaleness, were not pure experiences of body, outside of culture. Boyce might have felt that her experiences of her body, while pregnant and birthing, corresponded to those of other females, and she might have felt that in others' descriptions of their experiences of maternity, she recognized her own. However, as Butler asserted, "the undeniability of these 'materialities' [the seeming anatomical evidence of her sameness with others] in no way implies what it means to affirm them, indeed, what interpretive matrices condition, enable, and limit that necessary affirmation" (67). In other words, the fact that many individuals apparently share the same type of matter in their bodies—such as having uteruses, vaginas, breasts, estrogen, etc.—does not mean that these material aspects *have* to coexist for a real identity to form, nor does it mean that instances in which they do coexist in bodies necessarily precipitates the same experience of self in relationship to their coexistence. Indeed, as van der Kolk understood, there are many variations on how these materialities might coincide in one body or might comingle with other material aspects of self in ways that are differently meaningful to a range of individuals. Just so, the facticity of having certain seemingly patterned attributes to one's body does not then inevitably dictate a function for that body (for instance having a uterus and mammary glands does not imply that someone in "naturally" formed to be a mother). Aspects of one's body only make sense together and appear "normal," self-disclosing, meaningful, and category-forming when put through "interpretive matrices" of culture.

Furthermore, the perceptual evidence that Boyce experienced during pregnancy and interpreted as wholly female, was not inevitably bound to her sex or even exclusive to those whose bodies have uteruses. For example, some non-pregnant partners experience *couvade*, or sympathetic pregnancy. In *couvade*, partners not carrying fetuses, regardless of their sex organs, experience phenomena such as morning sickness, cravings, weight gain, contractions, and the wateriness of a pregnant body. In other words, these qualities, which Boyce interpreted as inherently female and exclusively known to female bodies, can be lived experiences independent of other lived experiences of sex or gender. Van der Kolk's work exemplified as much by exploring individuals' perceptions of pregnancy without employing the interpretive matrices of sex and gender to make sense of them.

Akin to Butlerian thought, van der Kolk's movement practices provoke what they call "gender fuckery" and "bodily conundrums" so as to elicit experiences of self that transmute or destabilize categorial boundaries and offer more "generative realities" for movement participants (https://tinyurl.com/63e56eka, https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/grief-points/, accessed Mar 10, 2021). They guide individuals to physically explore sensation, play, and intimacy within and between bodies so as to perceive their own bodies more expansively than they could through available cultural discourse, and without the aim to recognize "proof" of their sexed and gendered identities. However, for Boyce, the interpretive matrix she employed to understand and choreographically explore the biological and physiological conditions that facilitated and were then expressed by her pregnancy was the paradigm of gender (her womanhood). Thus, when she reassumed the idea of gender in her postpartum choreography, she reinterpreted it as a tool; she no longer perceived gender to be an impediment to her self-expression.

Boyce's interpretation of her pregnancy as a manifestation of her femaleness and her interpretation and expression of her femaleness through the language and symbols of gender were behaviors not unique to her. Such interpretive patterns are common in part because health is the primary framework through which many individuals define their experiences of pregnancy, and traditional medical care, especially surrounding women's health (the name alone signaling assumptions about the interchangeability of being female-sexed and identifying as a woman), tends to enforce strict binary interpretations of sex and gender as well as interfusion of the terms. This is the case even/especially in "feminist" spaces of women's health. Joan Wallach Scott, Butler's collaborator for their essay "'Experiences'," summarized this tendency and its effects:

> [W]ithin the field of feminist health studies in particular, women's bodily experiences are held to offer us 'the truth' of being a woman: they take identity as self-evident, and difference—including bodily difference—as natural. (1992, 25)

Scott argued that because of this tendency,

> the evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of [sexual] difference rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, [and] how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. (ibid.)

Sex tends to still be firmly and binarily enforced in hegemonic medicine as either male or female, and each sex assumes its meanings by the ways in which it is *not* the other. Recently, there have been increased efforts in health science scholarship and practice to recognize gender fluidity during pregnancy, birthing, and breastfeeding (or chestfeeding) and to promote inclusion of transgender persons—people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their sex assigned at birth. Still, while "men's" health falls under the purview of "general" medicine or urology, "women's" health remains a specialty unto itself. As follows, those identifying elsewhere from the polar ends of the gender spectrum face challenges receiving reproductive healthcare that does not implicitly misgender them.

As van der Kolk understood, many individuals, themself included, live life without prescribing to binarized gender categories and thus, can find misidentifications during their healthcare both traumatic and alienating from their caregivers. Issues like this made van der Kolk reticent to trust physicians to care for their body, and it also persuaded them to create their own alternative-medicine body-inclusive healing practice, which offered what they perceived to be safe and nurturing spaces for bodies that identify somewhere between medical/social taxonomies. They describe their healing method, Radial Diamond Kinetics, as “body-centered practices towards more livable futures,” practices which are necessary in a society which otherwise predetermines which types of lives are livable (www.radialdiamondkinetics.com, accessed June 5, 2020). While not pregnant themself, van der Kolk believed that all pregnant persons should get to independently determine how they identify their bodies and themselves as they prepare to give birth since not everyone with a uterus experiences pregnancy as making them feel like more of a woman. While for some, like Boyce, feeling and being perceived as “womanlier” is positive and affirming, for others, this shift in gender perception is painful and isolating.

With more people actively identifying at various points on the gender spectrum, obstetric medicine and “women’s health” more broadly have been challenged to keep pace, but choreography and the arts arguably have a better chance of staying with or ahead of culture at large because they have the possibility to define their own systems of representation. This is not to suggest that Boyce should have expressed her experiences of pregnancy as those of a trans man or a transmasculine person. Although she had embraced choreographically the masculine qualities in her body pre-pregnancy, she had never identified as a man or as masculine in her personhood. Still, art might have offered her, as it did van der Kolk, a chance to explore where she fit within a vast and complex nonbinary experience. In so doing, she could have presented her pregnancy as part of her life, thus not, as she did, as something removed from quotidian life with the power to enlighten her about her “true” self. By presenting pregnancy and parenthood as experiences that need not be exclusive to women or expressed in symbols of womanhood, Boyce could have also offered visibility to a range of experiences that, even today, are rarely visible in broader society. Moreover, if Boyce had stuck with her earlier choreographic strategies and, like van der Kolk, interpreted and expressed pregnancy in non-gender-specific ways, it could have created *new* possibilities of how a pregnant body might come to be present for a pregnant individual and that individual's community. She could have demonstrated, as she had done with her prior work, that, even surrounding maternity, bodies body need not cohere to master narratives that limit what they can *be*. Instead, I believe she set a dangerous example, one with the potential to threaten the seeming legitimacy of the experiences of other individuals who do not perceive their pregnancies to be revelatory, clarifying, or (worst of all) corrective of more fluid interpretations of sex or gender.

Section six: Creating community

Van der Kolk and Boyce shared backgrounds in counseling and psychotherapy, and both were intrigued by mysticism. These shared pursuits and interests informed the similar types of communities that they aimed to facilitate through making dances. Van der Kolk is the child of eminent Dutch psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk and, thus, had been exposed to ideas of trauma and therapy all of their life prior to becoming a therapist themself. However, unlike their father, their therapeutic work is entirely body-based. Their work with clients incorporates the method of Internal Family Systems, and it aims to help individuals somatically "learn to live in loving relationship with all parts of [themselves]" (https://www.hanavanderkolk.com/one-on-one-sessions/, accessed April 14, 2021.). Seeing their therapeutic and art practices bleeding together through their broader investment in building communities dedicated to physical self-acceptance, van der Kolk described their wholistic mission statement as "a commitment to an interdisciplinary and experiential investigation of embodiment" (www.greatmotherconference.org, accessed June 5, 2020). They elaborated,

> I believe that something exciting and profound happens when we are challenged to unhinge habit, question the capabilities of our minds/bodies, and play intelligently and delightfully engaged with the immediacy of the moment. I trust in this process of unhinging, questioning, and playing as a fundamentally rich method for healing, social transformation, and art making." (ibid.)

While their interests in many ways aligned, van der Kolk differed substantially from Boyce in their methods of working—namely, their commitment to "unhinging" bodies from meanings ("questioning" rather than seeking to define) and their commitment to broader "social transformation" (as opposed to creating a separate woman-centric space for "Journeying" into womanhood).

Rehearsals for *Six Twelve One by One* were explained to me as a means to imagine and enact a loving, conscious, and equitable social body in which everyone understood that answers about themselves were not facts they should receive; they were ideas they would create together. Van der Kolk had facilitated such communities before with their projects such as *Polly* (a recurring queer dance party committed to dismantling patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and misogyny); a bike rescue where young people were taught to fix bicycles while also being offered a safe space in which to "hang out" and "be themselves"; a yoga class for plus-sized women, and in their work with refugee populations in The Netherlands and police officers and firefighters in New York City. Van der Kolk felt drawn to facilitating community around pregnancy because they perceived pregnancy to be potentially very isolating for individuals. Supporting this suspicion, they interpreted Mast's initial reaching out as an act of self-preservation, as an effort to not be alone with an experience that not even her partner could understand and an experience that, although assumed to be cause for celebration in larger society, they recognized, often leaves individuals feeling personally unsupported and unseen.

As Mast and van der Kolk described it to me, the key to the "success" of their creative process was participants' mutual concern for one another's well-being and their desire to take care of each other. From the outset, Mast and van der Kolk were adamant that there be no hierarchy within the community, and they embodied this in rehearsals through practices such as sitting in a circle for discussions and letting everyone speak to their experience of each exercise. Mast explained that van der Kolk never thought of her work as "directing" the mothers; rather, they were there to protect, nurture, support, and gently shape a flexible and compassionate practice *with* them. While van der Kolk gave participants tasks, they also worked through problems with the pregnant individuals and made sure that dancers stayed in places of power and agency, even as they confronted challenges. Repeatedly upon presenting an experiment, such as "lay down on the floor, get up, do it again as many different ways as you can," van der Kolk would ask, "So, what's working? What is possible?" and invite participants to share tactics with one another as co-investigators in supportive dialogue. In this way, everyone accessed new resources. Mast described to me why the constantly evolving choreography mattered to her: "You have to keep changing the movement and this makes you realize what is changing in you." Such realizations provoked awe and respect for her body. It inspired fascination as opposed to fear, which made "letting go" of familiar experiences of self more possible. In her perceptions, while dancing, pregnancy was not happening to her in spite of her; she was participating in it, interacting with it, and in dialogue with its processes.

Exemplifying adjacent but not overlapping thinking, in her early works, Boyce's dancing community of intentionally non-dancerly bodies doing non-dance movements was often called "people friendly"—suggesting it was "friendly" both to the people dancing and to the people viewing—and it was likened in reviews to the first postmodern collectives because of her utopian sensibility. Boyce called her company The Calf Women and Horse Men, and it was composed entirely of friends who loyally and repeatedly returned to work with her as their schedules allowed. Thus, their relationships were not forged by dance projects but rather informed these projects. The fact that she had a master's degree in Social Work factored considerably into Boyce's choreographic strategies and goals. She explained,

> I think I was really moved to dance because of trying to express and understand and remodel for myself experiences I had been through that I thought other people had been through too and [that] by sharing the story [we] might find something significant together. (Interview with Ann Cooper Albright New York City, May 25,1989)

Like in her social work, in making dances she consistently put faith in what she called a "commonality of experience," which she believed could be extended not only from herself to her performers but from her performers to the audience. Her efforts to connect individuals by reminding them of their "commonalities" were appreciated and recognized with a "Bessie" dance and performance award "for embodying in her dancers … ideas of humanity, conscience, and mutual respect" (https://bessies.org/archive/, accessed Mar 10, 2021). While her works might have seemed to look back nostalgically to 1960s postmodernism, as Anderson noted, "the ideals they uphold are ones that some people may find increasingly important as the 80s roll onward," referring presumably to the increasing individualism, nationalism, and laissez-faire capitalism associated with the Reagan era (1981). However, the utopian impulse of Boyce's work was at times criticized as being corny and naive. For instance, Anderson tempered his appreciation for Boyce's ideals by noting sarcastically that "Miss Boyce's dances are so determined in the attempts to be sunny that they can seem as wholesomely liberal as a Unitarian Church picnic" (ibid.). Thus, while to some, her work exhibited radical optimism, to others it seemed to hollowly sing *Kumbaya*.

While typically interested in creating communities inclusive of men and women, once before she became pregnant, in her 1982 work *Pass*, Boyce explored the specialness of connections and interactions between women when offered a space of their own. However, in this piece, the aesthetic result was markedly different from her postpartum work. For example, at one point, toward the end of the piece, three of the dancers undressed down to their undershorts and commenced a ritual in which they passed a flower amongst themselves without the use of their hands. In her review of the piece, Deborah Jowitt captured the distinctiveness of this choreographic scenario and its presentation of women in relationship with one another:

> This tenderness and eroticism have no discernible role-playing or stereotyped association with gender. The flower is caught in the crook of an elbow and passed to a bent neck, dropped onto a groin and picked up in a mouth. And after this slow warm adventure, the women put on mismatched plaid shirts and pants and take real balls in hand for a fast, precise, exhausting rite of leap, swing, pass, and toss. (1982)

These two contrasting sequential scenarios of distinctive connection and exchange between women were also noteworthy to then MFA dance student Albright, who from her seat in the back of the auditorium was captivated: “The riveting intimacy of their interaction drew me to their circle. Their ritual of passing the flower created a sort of physical link which seemed to create a conduit for passing other things” (1991, 83). She felt her own body resonate with their “link” to one another and felt herself receptive to the immaterial “other things,” the abstract understandings, flowing between their bodies.

In contrast to *Pass* and its non-stereotypical presentations of women’s connections to one another, which took many distinctive forms and were unique to particular individuals and situations, in *Women, Water, and a Waltz*, Boyce suggested that there was a kind of universal feminine preconscious logic that automatically drew *all* women into *the same* type of ongoing relationship with one another. She anticipated that her collaborators and audiences would recognize their “commonality of experiences” which would automatically connect them as women and give them a special understanding of what she and her dancers were doing onstage. Having previously made work critical of uniform presentations of womanhood as they appeared in popular culture, the subculture of her training (traditional modern dance), and, more subtly, her chosen subculture of postmodern dance, Boyce was initially uncertain how to represent her gendered self in dance or how to build community around it. Thus, she began experimenting choreographically, as she put it, using “work to say something I could not quite believe myself, which was you didn’t have to fit the cultural norm to be accepted” within a culture of your own making or to accept yourself as a woman (214). In other words, postpartum, Boyce aimed to use dances to create “cultural” spaces for women’s “authentic” selves, that were outside of and confrontational to culture at large, since she believed that popular culture squashes women’s “true nature” (Boyce et al. 1988, 99-100). In her interpretation, pregnancy offered her protective isolation conducive to introspection, and thereby strengthened her resolve that women cannot truly “experience themselves unless you isolate them from their culture” and create an alternative culture (for her, via dance projects) that is more conducive to “authentic” experiences of themselves (Vigner 1994, 209). Such thinking surely grew out of her own sense that while her cultures of dance and her broader social world had made her feel that she was not an “appropriate” woman, her pregnant body reassured her that she was. Consequently, her postpartum choreographies became spaces in which she could assert the appropriateness of her womanhood and offer others the sanctuary of seclusion and body-awareness that she felt pregnancy had afforded her. In other words, her postpartum dances were made to manifest what woman-centric community would look and feel like and to let women dance it into being for the edification of others.

Section seven: Alternatives to "analytic" postmodernism

In eschewing her prior postmodern compositional devices and turning away from abstraction and instead toward theatricalization and feminization of dancing bodies, Boyce seemed to suggest that she did not feel she could realize "women's culture" using non-narrative, non-representational, non-overtly emotional forms. However, other postmodernists preceding her did not sense the same irreconcilability between the spiritual, the feminine, the transhistorical, and the abstract. Early postmodern dance was not limited to the work of what dance writer Sally Banes called the "analytic" choreographers (1980). In *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance,* the treatise that she wrote as the 1970s were coming to a close, Banes explained that "analytic" dance was but one strand of postmodernism, the strand that dealt primarily with the conceptual, and which distanced itself from emotionality and drama through strategies like minimalism, dismissal of artifice and theatricality, prioritization of structural devices, and preference for dancers with relaxed bodies. This style, coming out of the Judson Church lineage, was especially popular in the US in the 1970s, and its priorities reflected the general secularization of the arts and intelligentsia in the US in the decades after WWII (although many of the analytic postmodernists took interest in "Eastern" spirituality and let it infuse the structural components of their choreography). However, other strands of postmodernism such as, in Banes words, the "metaphorical" and the "metaphysical" postmodernists, maintained explicit commitment to spirituality and ritual, even as they turned away from how these ideas were explored and aestheticized within early modern dance or institutionalized religion. From its very beginnings, postmodernism included constituents invested in reformulating spirituality and connecting it to everyday life. For Halprin, the mystical and the spiritual became the very stuff of her dances for, like Boyce and van der Kolk, she saw in dance primarily a pathway for personal and community healing. She employed dancemaking toward this end, for instance, with her Studio Watts Workshop after the Watts riots in 1965 and for her work with the AIDS community in the 1980s. Halprin found the spiritual in moments of overlap between life and art, and while, in her earliest works, she delved into her religious heritage and embodied women from the holy texts, she soon moved away from the symbolism, narratives, and figures of Judaism to focus on the development of personal movement rituals and techniques for helping others to do the same. These rituals were daily exercises to activate what she called her "body consciousness." Unlike Boyce, more like van der Kolk, she did not attempt to look for her spirit or her essence outside of her here-and-now, in some pure liminality beyond perceptible spacetime. Rather, she created rituals to "invest the objects of our daily lives with new significance," because she believed "Ritual and ceremony can happen anywhere at any time" (Halprin and Kaplan 1995, 37). In other words, unlike Boyce, who seemed to fit her body into existing myths so as to interpret and then convey its meaning, Halprin slowly arrived at the mythic after a process of sensitization to her body and its surroundings. From her "conscious" body, she began to develop her own stories, symbols and eventually her own myths. As she explained, "The symbol of people's myth is their own body. How people experience their body is their story. That story is their myth and how they perform it is their ritual" (ibid. 203). She concluded, in a manner similar to van der Kolk, that "everybody has a personal ritual" (ibid.). Thus, like Boyce, she saw her body as a reservoir of deep knowledge that could inform her performances and should inform them for these performances to function as ritual, but unlike Boyce, she did not seek to recognize or communicate this knowledge via predetermined symbols and narratives. Rather, her performances, gestures, and choreographic structures remained purposefully abstract and nonlinear—in her mind, maintaining distance from her modern dance predecessors. She explained that in her work, she was trying to "break this habit of cause-and-effect predictability," by opting instead to share her personal experience of the mythic through amalgamated, intuitive, nonrepresentational forms, which she offered to viewers in a "collage-like" (thus, nonnarrative) structure (Ross 2004, 58). Her husband, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, appreciated that, in working this way, she took art "back to its basic, ritualistic beginnings when … art was only a sharpened expression of life" (1962, 1). He meant that while she recruited the power and structure of rituals, he appreciated that her work was rooted in ordinary life; it proposed a "ritual consciousness" of everyday reality. This "ritual consciousness" offered, in her words, "a way of shifting awareness from an automatic, habitual way of living your life to one of active awareness," and choreographically speaking, it meant "using dance with [a] purpose" (Kaplan 1995, 37). The result of working in this manner was choreography that, although offering unfamiliar forms and non-linear structures, aimed to be efficacious, meaningful, healing, and community-bonding in forward-thinking ways.

Halprin's student Meredith Monk offers another example of a postmodernist who sought to incorporate the spiritual, the mythic, and the timeless into her abstract work but who used different strategies from Boyce, strategies that allowed her to grow, rather than turn away from, the project of postmodernism. Her early pieces, such as 1972's *Education of the Girlchild*, specifically addressed shared experiences of womanhood rooted in the body. However, rather than the uterus, she looked for the anatomical origin for female connections in their vocal cords and diaphragms. She used her "extended vocal techniques" as choreographic tools for "discovering, activating, remembering, uncovering, [and] demonstrating primordial/prelogical consciousness" (Monk 1976). She used the voice to explore the possibility of universal female experience in a way she said was "a bit like phylogeny and ontology," meaning her voice could surprise her with its ability to disclose primordial information about her origins while also being a distinct expression of her unique personhood (ibid.). In other words, she saw the voice as a physical capability both allowing for individual expression and connection to life beyond and before human cultures. However, what was significant about her process and what made her work definitively different from that of Boyce, was the ways in which she allowed the voice to communicate pre-symbolically, ways which need not articulate language to mean and do something for a community. Thus, by using her voice as the tool both to research and express females' enduring body-based connection to one another, she was able to theorize sex without dependence on dominant models of aesthetic production and reception. Critic Guy Scarpetta reflected on Monk's work that

> What is most clearly at stake is, of course, the relation to the maternal body. The relevance of Monk's work … lies in the fact that she has *both* managed to explore, in every direction and in excess, these pre-symbolic languages, connected to the maternal body, bring out their pleasure—and has signaled … the *link* that the mother maintains, everywhere and always, with power. (1998, 234)

As Scarpetta appreciated, Monk demonstrated that one's voice (not merely one's sexual anatomy) can capture and convey female embodied power, and voices raised together can amplify that power, never needing to translate it to other symbol systems which would surely distort or dilute it. Although Monk never directly included a pregnant woman or a mother among the female archetypal figures that populated her work, as Scarpetta recognized, her work still captured something of maternity and evoked maternal power. Distinctively, Monk presented maternity as a lived, visceral, wholly corporeal experience, as opposed to, as Boyce had, a representation.

In her book *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan described the problem with the strategy of female artists like Boyce, who seek to use their essentialized body in their art as a means of offering "our bodies back to ourselves" ("ourselves" being womankind) (1988, 88). Dolan explained, "these performers fail to see that the female body is still a sign which, when placed in representation, participates in a male-oriented signifying practice" (ibid.). By switching to the voice, Monk avoided making her body a male-oriented sign; thus, she was capable of making a work in which female bodies connected to each other and females were able to express from their bodies in innovative ways. In Monk's work, female bodies were not meaningful because of their differences from male bodies or their usefulness to male-centric discourse; rather, they discovered and created their own meanings and modes of conveying these meanings. With her commitments to abstraction, invention, and discovery/transformation through performance, Monk had different goals than Boyce for both incorporation of ritual and cultivation of a community-specific "culture" amongst her dancers. As she articulated her process, "I always want my work to have a clarity and a logic—a luminosity from lucidity—but I also want the audience to have enough room to be able to move around within the level of connotation and meaning. I give them evocative nuggets of information that radiate" (52). In other words, she did not, like Boyce, repurpose existent imagery without changing its significance, thereby assuming the audience would have a shared understanding of the work and one that she could anticipate. Instead, her "evocative nuggets" aspired to scaffold experiences for performers and audience that were unprecedented, previously unimagined, and personally useful for each individual in her own way.

Education of the Girlchild, which began as a solo Monk made for herself in 1972, was not about pregnancy, motherhood, or birth, but it did explore women's bodily transformations and their rebirths. It began with Monk costumed as an old woman with white bobbed hair, spectacles, and stooped posture. As the dance progressed, she shed her wig, glasses, and hunch to become a teenage girl and then a young child. Each stage of her surreal aging in reverse was signaled not only by changes in her costume and posture, but also, more importantly, by changes in her vocal intonations. In 1973, Monk expanded *Girlchild*, as she nicknamed it, into a group piece and added to the choreography a host of abstract rituals suggesting journeys, initiations, feasting, and death. The group section was populated by an ensemble Monk conceived of as a female version of the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table (Goldberg 1983, 20). However, unlike Boyce's family of different "types" of women in, for instance, *Raising Voices*, Monk built archetypes directly from the personalities of her performers. While she brought ideas into rehearsals, she asked members of The House, her company, to develop movement and characters based in their own lives. As she explained in a 1975 interview with French visual artist Philippe de Vignal, "the interior richness of each performer contributes to the making of sequences and I want the audience to have a profound relationship with [each performer's] female personality" (Goldberg 1997, 50). Thus, to cultivate and disclose their "female personalities," "Each person… use[d] her own familial childhood, social, and ethnic backgrounds" to generate her archetype (ibid.). *Girlchild* performer Blondell Cummings spoke to her process of developing a danced persona: "I tried to find a way of representing an archetype character that I would understand from a deep, personal, subconscious point of view that at the same time would be strong enough to overlap several [B]lack cultures" (The House interview with Marianne Goldberg Nov 1982 and May 1983 in New York City). Thus, unlike Boyce, Monk was not starting with preexisting symbols or personae which she wished her dancers to embody, rather she was tapping into the performers' shared interest in ancestry and mythology and inviting them to enlarge themselves in individually meaningful ways through their performances. Rather than creating a general aesthetic of mythology, Monk and her dancers were, in Monk's words, "creating a kind of personal mythology" which involved "trying to get to the essences of those elements that occur in fairytale, myth, stories, and dreams" (ibid.). Working this way, the vision of female "culture" that Monk and The House offered did not rely on or reinforce existing models of culture but rather reshaped traditional representations of females and opened up spaces for females to be in different types of relationships with one another. Notably, as the characters in *Girlchild* "undergo transformations and adventures having to do with growth, journey, coming of age, and rites of passage," Monk, like Boyce, hoped that she had created a performative space for the creative growth of those performing *Girlchild* (ibid.). Like van der Kolk, she had built the rehearsal process around such individual-specific self-exploration without, like Boyce, predetermining what would be universally discovered by all participants. Afterall, Monk felt that offering personal exploratory and expressive freedom to her performers was "perhaps even more important than the creation of the work itself" (Goldberg 1983, 27).

The lineage of Halprin and Monk, which informed van der Kolk, demonstrates that the culture of postmodernism was not inevitably unhospitable to Boyce's postpartum goals of finding broader meaning in and fellowship around her maternal body and her desire to develop rituals for examining and honoring what it meant to be female-bodied. However, for Boyce, postmodernism as she knew it—in her words, "pieces that had nothing to do with dance," where just anyone "plopped on stage"—was too provisional to accommodate her new inquiries (Vigner 1994, 211; *Retracing Steps*). Consequently, she moved toward expressivity, narrative, and interests closer to classical modern dance including natural forces, transcendence, raw emotion, and Jungian psychology.

In her 2001 article “Sacred Maternities and Postmedical Bodies,” anthropologist and religious theorist Pamela Klassen argues that scholars studying birthing practices in North America are less attuned to spirituality and tend to marginalize women’s reliance on the spiritual in understanding their processes and lived experiences of giving birth. Likewise, those who study the religions of North America tend to be disinterested in the topic of women’s experiences and interpretations of their childbirths. By contrast, anthropologists studying childbirth in non-Euroamerican settings emphasize the pragmatism of inviting interplay between religious, health science, ritual, and mystical paradigms for comprehending and performing maternity. Klassen discusses how women, regardless of their geographic location, by interpreting their birthing experiences in spiritual terms, “pragmatically … enact strategies of resistance that reinterpret history, the body, and the process of birth itself” in community building ways. Although perhaps divided along other axes, such women can be united by their efforts to challenge the systems of meaning that typically and restrictively structure understandings of motherhood and womanhood. Their sense of bodily enablement, awakened by but not dependent on their experiences of maternity, might then motivate them toward taking any number of political actions in solidarity. In other words, by reclaiming the sacredness and strength of their bodies through pregnancy, birthing, and the assignment of meaning to these experiences, individuals reclaim discourses that otherwise define and limit their physical bodies and experiences of themselves in society.

I summarize Klassen’s arguments to suggest that Boyce’s postpartum work was not inherently problematic, in a feminist sense, for suggesting that individuals might come together to find spiritual truth within their maternal bodies, but it was problematic in its maneuvers to essentialize this truth and for its unacknowledged framing of women’s empowerment solely through the lens of specific Euromerican women's experience of maternity. What Boyce felt was "natural," intuitive, animal, or female about her body in preparing to give and then giving birth and what cultivated her sense of solidarity with ostensibly *all* women was imagined, not absolute, and was imagined using a socioculturally specific representational lexicon available and familiar to her but certainly not to *all* women. Her construction of "women's culture," its sacredness, and its foundation in maternity carried layers of assumptions about what empowerment is, how it is experienced, how it is accessed, and who has access to it. Consequently, it was destined to only benefit *some* individuals, despite her hope that it could benefit all of womankind. More problematic still, by repurposing available representations of women's shared power and spirituality, Boyce choreographically "re-materialized," to use Butler's word, women as heterosexual childbearers; instead of making new options, as van der Kolk did, for what pregnancy and motherhood could mean, she utilized the acculturated infrastructure of her imagination to make sense of her body and the bodies of *all* women. This patterned thinking in turn influenced the signs she employed in her postpartum work, including the unconscious whiteness and "Western"-ness of these signs.

Rather than framing the making of *Six Twelve One by One* as sanctified and serious work, van der Kolk, in rehearsals, cultivated an environment of thoughtful playfulness. According to Mast, the cast loved the "opportunity to not take [themselves] so seriously while *seriously* considering ideas around femininity, feminism, physicality and awareness" (Herbst 2013). Furthermore, and in juxtaposition to Boyce, humor was an important component of the performed piece. For example, the dance contained what the cast lovingly called the "meerkat moment," in which the participants slowly and with great solemnity coalesced into a heroic tableau in which each dancer rested her forearms on her belly, letting her hands hang limp, creating the illusion of shortened arms with paws. This was but one of many instances of physical humor by which performers reminded the audience that they were in control of what their bodies signified. In another moment, the cast poked fun at the audience by mischievously, according to Mast, "giving them what they wanted" (Mast, discussion). In this instance all of the women began to heave and wail. With bellies bared, they played up the melodrama of this scenario to bombastic proportion, hunkering down and howling, intending to show viewers *This is what you thought we would want to show you! This is what you thought our pregnant "performance art" would be! We're sorry, is this making you uncomfortable? Is it a little too real for you? A little too close to you?* They then morphed their sounds and movements until they were clearly pantomiming the ecstasy of orgasm. Here again, they called viewers to awareness of their own expectations, assuming the audience would startle to see pregnant women relishing sexual pleasure – *Wait! They're already pregnant, why would they be engaging in a sex act? Is that safe? Doesn't their maternal instinct overpower their sex drive? Should we be seeing this? Should we look away?* Before the audience could digest their surprise, the performers playfully slipped back into labor sounds and motions, and for the next several moments, they meandered between performing wails of pleasure and wails of pain, drawing awareness to the ambiguous continuum between these experiential poles while also boldly declaring themselves as self-possessed and sexual subjects. Van der Kolk, as a transformational sexuality coach, a former sex-worker, and an artist/activist committed to sex positivism, was a supportive chaperone into this playful celebration and assertion of sexuality.

As the instigator of this humorous and poignant scenario, van der Kolk, walked a fine line between providing a structure (being responsible) and refusing authority (not providing any definitive answers). The audience was left wondering—*Is van der Kolk in on this joke, or are* *they, like us, outside of it, laughing while also suspecting the joke's on them?* As liaison between performers' and audiences' worlds, van der Kolk curated an experience for viewers that employed the tools and followed the example of early postmodernists. Like David Gordon, one of the "comic spirits of the postmodern movement," they employed humor, cleverness, and strategic irreverence (Croce 1982). They also, like early postmodernists including Carolee Schneemann and Monk, invited real sexuality and sexual pleasure to be subject matter for their artwork. This was because, for van der Kolk, the work of being a "movement educator" and then a "facilitator of community events and spaces" was the work of translating the pregnant individual's empirical and imaginative explorations into forms that would allow the audience to grow their understanding of pregnancy in ways deemed important by those experiencing pregnancy—in other words, not the ways that van der Kolk deemed pregnancy to be important. In their role as steward, amplifier, and framer of participants' priorities, the methods and precedents of their postmodern dance predecessors enabled them, while also offering them space for their own investments as an artist and inquiries as an individual.

Again, like early postmodernists, van der Kolk assembled the different components of creative research into a dance to share using strategies of bricolage and juxtaposition and with attention to dynamics between the performers and the audience. For the show, different scenarios were patched together, and it was performed in the round with the audience very close to the performers and thereby implicated in the world the performers were making, as was the case in performances by the JDTC. In the interest of making space for fresh interpretations of pregnancy, performers did not attempt to present consistent, decipherable characters, as Boyce had. Instead, efforts were made to create chaos through stylistic eclecticism. In addition to those already mentioned, some of the ideas that they collaged together included choreographic quotations of well-known dances like the “stack up” from Brown’s 1973 work *Spanish Dance,* which provoked laughs as bellies interfered with its signature configuration. This again was a strategy originated by the JDTC, who often recycled preexisting “material” from choreographies of art and life, plucked it from its original context and combined it in new ways with fresh material so as to make it operate differently. A gesture or scenario that appeared abstract in one movement context (here Brown’s *Spanish Dance*) once resituated, assumed a meaning and a politics specific to the project at hand. As Gordon explained, “Movement is ambiguous until you place it against some background,” and he elaborated to say that “Exploring the alternate possible meanings of gesture” was, for him and his collaborators, a major concern (Carroll 1979). While to an extent, quoting Brown’s “pure” dance movement was simply done in good fun, it also drew critical awareness to the types of bodies that do not easily *fit* into postmodern art. Van der Kolk created a situation that spurred recognition that these quotations are funny because of the seeming absurdity of semantically overburdened bodies functioning as neutral formal elements. Pregnant dancers’ bodies literally got in the way of expressing abstract ideas. However, unlike Boyce who broke away from postmodern dance in pursuit of content, van der Kolk let their critique of postmodernism occur from within the artform. In other words, they used the tools of their predecessors to reveal the postmodern project’s limitations. By so doing, they did not resign themself to what they perceived as a limitation of postmodernism, but instead imagined new potentials and populations that could become part of the project.

In 1992, sensing a sea change in experimental performance, *TDR* published an article titled, “What Has Become of Postmodern Dance?” In it, as arguably the mother of postmodern dance and as the one who had repeatedly both forecasted and led the way into new historical moments in dance, Halprin was asked to predict the future of postmodernism in the US. She projected that the artists of the 1990s would continue moving away from making “art for art’s sake”—the Cunningham lineage—and would instead move toward “meaning and content” because this was what people needed in their lives (Siegel et al. 1992, 53). Perhaps because of the period’s “culture wars,” which caused deep intrapopulation cleavages along fault lines of value and belief systems and lifestyle choices, Halprin anticipated that new postmodernists would strive to create art that unified populations and that made a “real difference” in people’s lives (ibid.). She foresaw the new generation of avant-garde choreographers, the first batch to explicitly call themselves “postmodern,” moving increasingly, as she herself was, toward myth, ritual, and healing in the aesthetics and investments of their work (ibid.). Halprin also saw dance becoming less about what happened on stage and more about what happened to the performers through making the work as well as what happened between the performers and the spectators when the work was shared. While the eclectic output of third and fourth generation artists went in many directions, Halprin accurately divined the trajectory of both Boyce and van der Kolk.

However, although Boyce’s postpartum work appeared to model the kind of meaning-filled, ritualistic, healing space that Halprin foresaw as the future of postmodernism, it was van der Kolk whose work created rituals that made Halprin’s hoped-for “real difference” in participants’ lives. For Mast and the other *Six Twelve One by One* performers, pregnancy was, more than anything, a series of experiential conundrums. Thus, it made no sense for their dance to present a solution such as Boyce’s *now we are affirmed and connected as women*. Instead, they let things remain complex, suggesting that in life, as in this work, paradox can be and is lived, that truth can exist in potent in-betweenness, and that embrasure of ambiguity and contradiction can be strategies of resistance and empowerment. In the face of a social context that might objectify pregnant bodies, load them semiotically to serve various agendas, and make them read as hyper-gendered, *Six Twelve One by One* presented pregnant bodies in ways that could not be easily categorized. Thus, the dance never let ideologies of pregnancy or of being female-sexed outshine individuals' experiential knowledge of these phenomena. Making this collaborative art project and employing the choreographic tools of postmodernism to do so pushed participants in *Six Twelve One by One* to stay curious and flexible in their interpretations of what their bodies meant, what they could do, and what they might offer one another. Through their dance, they realized ways to appreciate their changing bodies; to accept each other's support; and to know pregnancy as an intricate, irreducible constellation of experiences unique to them. By interacting with their fears surrounding pregnancy (like Mast's fear that her art career was over), they were inspired to begin transforming their realities, using art as both revisionist representation and rehearsal for real life.

Despite their shared physical practices during pregnancy, when it came time to give birth, the cast of *Six Twelve One by One* had very different delivery experiences. Mast had an unassisted birth (no chemical or mechanical support and no health complications). Three had C-sections, and the other two had epidurals. All babies were healthy and at term, and, according to Mast, all the women felt peaceful and proud about how their births went, even if events unfurled differently than they had envisioned. Perhaps their contentment lay in that they felt that how their bodies responded to delivery was only one physical component of their somatic memory of how their bodies "performed" surrounding pregnancy and birthing. Their many rehearsals of being physically, emotionally, and mentally strong were not erased by what, in some cases, were challenging births. In other words, the creative communal work that they did was real, and although the choreography eventually ended, its impact stayed in the people who had performed it, and it shaped their perception of their bodies and abilities moving forward.

Conclusion: The dancing communities to come

Post cast members' births, van der Kolk experienced a marked separation from the community they had fostered in *Six Twelve One by One*. As individuals shared their labor stories, van der Kolk felt it was "a real puncture" in the space that they had previously held with participants, the "whimsical space of playing with their baby bellies" (van der Kolk, discussion). After the performers' bodies had been, in their words, "ravaged by labor," the "purity" of van der Kolk's connection to the mothers changed. Gatherings around postpartum bodies and new babies felt to them like "trauma recovery" from a dramatic event that they did not personally know and could not access in their own body. By contrast, Mast described postpartum cast reunions not as therapeutic but as congratulatory and happy opportunities for the dancers to stay committed to supporting one another in early parenting. In other words, it seemed that after delivery, the mothers were prepared to take care of each other, but they no longer required van der Kolk's choreographic support. They had all, in the end, had an experience that, while not gender specific, was beyond van der Kolk's life experience, and thus van der Kolk eased themself away from the community of parents and onto, among other projects, commencing doctoral studies and new research in dance and healing.

Although feeling estranged from the group at the end of the project, van der Kolk was quick to say how *Six Twelve One by One* helped them to better understand their own relationship to their reproductive body. Since pregnancy is a state typically hyperfeminized in social and healthcare settings, they anticipated that rehearsals with exclusively pregnant dancers would leave them feeling set apart and uncomfortable because it would be a "totally female identified space" (van der Kolk, discussion). However, over the course of making this dance, they came to appreciate that pregnancy does not inevitably foreclose inclusive and radical community, and after participating in this project, they felt that pregnancy in no way conflicted with their ethos, their lived experience of gender, or their relationships to their biological sex. In fact, although before *Six Twelve One by One* they never considered it an option, when we spoke on the phone in fall 2017, they were interested in becoming pregnant themself.

As part of her dissertation research on feminist theory in contemporary dance, Albright attended Boyce's early postpartum rehearsals for *Women, Water and a Waltz*. In her notes, she described how cast members took turns stepping outside of the work in order to care for baby Charlotte and also to watch and offer feedback on the piece. Although intending to be only an observer, Albright soon found herself pulled into this cooperative community, taking her turns at both childcare and contributing ideas for the dance. Albright respected how Boyce "seemed admirably comfortable with shifting roles from mother to choreographer," guiding rehearsals, making her dancers feel appreciated, breastfeeding her baby while discussing staging, and choreographing phrases with babe in arms (1991, 79). Albright deeply admired the "culture" that Boyce cultivated behind the proverbial curtain of her productions.

Perhaps because she saw the ways that Boyce worked and the community that she cultivated, Albright became an apologist for the finished piece. However, many others critiqued *Women, Water and a Waltz*, as I have, for essentializing and sentimentalizing womanhood. For instance, Jowitt wrote in the *Village Voice* that she found the dance "generalized" and "precious in its women-as-life-giving-goddess imagery" (1990). However, for Albright, the piece exuded "love, mystery, and a stunning eroticism" (1991, 97). She attributed others' "queasiness" about the dance to their inability to see the female performers in terms other than those of male desire. She justified, "What is amazing about the passing of water—the simultaneous emptying and replenishing of each other's glasses—is the extraordinary image of intersubjective desire, a continuous filling and refilling of one's cup by another" (101). In the dance, as in rehearsals, she saw women caring for and letting themselves be cared for by other women in a space innocent of an objectifying gaze. She saw women who had no need for male desire or for a masculine presence, full stop.

To a point, Boyce's own reflections on the piece seemed to confirm Albright's hypothesis. She explained, "so often, women pouring water has been in the service of men, and I really liked the idea of women pouring for each other" (Albright 1991, 98). However, with her subsequent statement she shifted tracks, clarifying that when she said, "pouring for each other," she meant "just for an aesthetic… for the beauty of it," because she "thought it would read somewhat magically" (ibid.). Thus, she did not, overtly, craft the scenario to be political; she crafted it to be pleasing to the eye. In aiming for beauty to be simply "about beauty and being proud of it [being beautiful] for its own sake," she did not attempt to redefine beauty or to repel practices of gazing upon the beautiful with consuming, objectifying eyes. In fact, she returned to aesthetic beauty standards that her pre-pregnancy work had actively and consistently contested. Rebelling against such strategies had indeed initially motivated her to become a choreographer. In other words, although, in theory, she wanted to represent women as feminine and beautiful without objectifying them, she did not, like many other feminist artists since the 1960s, reclaim the female body in new terms and depict it through new lenses. Furthermore, her manifestation of beauty did not depend on how beauty is lived and perceived by each individual but rather depended on European Romantic and Classical beauty ideals—seeing as beautiful symmetry, proportionality, refinement, and elegance. Thus, she perpetuated idealizations of the female form historically depicted by a (typically male) canon of artists.

After becoming a mother, Boyce became increasingly fascinated by the idea of a female subconscious, inspiring her to begin studies in psychoanalysis. Continuing along the path she had begun clearing for herself with *Women, Water, and a Waltz*, she focused on making community and process-based work through therapeutic workshops with women, dedicated to (re)claiming their womanhood. For example, her 1990 project *Surrender Mouth to Breast* involved a ten-week group creative process about experiences of being female-bodied—be they disempowering or empowering, mundane or magical. A monologue that accompanied the performance presented questions such as "How is the woman to know her womanhood?" and "How do we let the woman's woman live?"—queries posed with kōan-like gravitas. Boyce said her goal for this work was to understand, represent, and finally celebrate the balance women find between their "vulnerability" and their "strength" (Vigner 1994, 216). She approached this project by creating choreography that was intended to allow the dancers to embody their innate "demons" and then their "angels." She first presented the demonic through a dance of, what *New York Times* critic Jennifer Dunning called, "fantastic beasts," for which the performers donned elaborate ceremonial masks, made by Judy Levy, and "lumbered" about the stage doing choreography that borrowed imprudently from both Africanist and First Nations dance traditions. In contrast, women's inner angels were presented by dancers, having shed not only their masks but also their blouses, bare breasted and accompanied by classically intoned music, moving languidly in unison. The piece began in what seemed to be time contemporaneous with that of the audience. Women, wearing identical plastic masks of a (tellingly) white, blond, red-lipped face, pantomimed shaving their legs, struggling into tight jeans, wearing post-plastic-surgery bandages, preparing salads, and performing other ostensible trials of modern (white) womanhood under patriarchy. After embarking on another Daly-esque "Journey" into womanhood throughout the different chapters of the dance—which included choreographies of cleansing their space and bodies like diligent, eerie homemakers—the same cast, now angels, ended the dance in a ceremonial elsewhere, again evocative of a Daly-esque "transformative reverie," in which the garments and space were white, the lighting was diffused, the spatial pathways were curved into soft lines, and the movements progressed in adagio. The piece concluded as women decanted milk over one another's bared, glistening breasts in slow and synchronized pours. In this final moment, which expressed, for Boyce, the quintessence of "women's culture," the choreographer returned to the feminine imagery from *Women, Water, and a Waltz*: the exposed breasts and the slow and gentle pouring of fluids. She also, as she had in her prior work, let motherhood anchor the activities and imagery of her "culture." The women who closed the piece—the epitomic, self-discovered/recovered, women-loving women—performed their rituals in solidarity and continuity with one another. Again, Boyce's composed scenario suggested that in their capacity for maternity/lactation (not *diversity*, as had been her pre-pregnancy politics) lies their power. In Boyce's concluding choreographic ouroboros, after one woman poured milk over another's breast, she hovered her mouth near the dripping nipple as if keen to latch. She then, in perfect unison with her sister dancers, flowed her way along the circle to the next woman and repeated the exchange. This recurrent interaction, suggesting an endless cycle, eventually faded into darkness as the stage lights dimmed, leaving the audience to assume the reciprocal dance of support and woman-to-woman nourishment—a more dramatic version of the women replenishing one another that Albright had praised in *Women, Water, and a Waltz*—would continue ad infinitum.

Once Boyce had completed her studies in psychotherapy and had her second daughter, Amelia, she retired as a performer and took a pause as a choreographer, explaining to *Surrender*

Mouth to Breast dancer Rachel Vigier in a 1994 interview that she no longer enjoyed the "narcissistic attention" of being seen dancing, and that she preferred to immerse herself in a "gestative time" in which she could wait for "a bigger idea" to inspire her to make something again (216). Furthermore, having two daughters with body types similar to her own reminded her of the sting of body-consciousness when one is heavyset in a society that continues to valorize thinness and firmness in females of all ages. When Charlotte was a little girl, Boyce reflected, "My seven-year old daughter is extremely preoccupied with her weight and it's very discouraging to me…. This fixation didn't used to hit until adolescence. Now it's in primary school. And it really saddens me" (209). Perhaps recognizing her own limitations for insulating and protecting the confidence and self-appreciation of her daughters, Boyce withdrew from her "women's culture" projects and from the public eye, and she moved away from New York City to rural Vermont to have a quiet family life and to focus on her therapeutic practice. To my knowledge, Boyce has not danced or choreographed since *Surrender Mouth to Breast*, and she considers herself to be in a "natural fallow period" (209). However, as she reaches her advanced years, she is interested in making performance work for a senior female population which will be grounded in their shared bodily experiences of aging (216). Thus, she continues to be drawn toward the choreographic potency of her female embodiment, she continues to be interested in her own life as it exists in continuous solidarity with other women, she continues to challenge cultural notions of the types of female bodies that can and should be seen on stage, and her interests continue to run tangent to those of postmodern dance even as she no longer identifies as either a postmodernist or as a dancer. After embodying the beginnings of creative movement in response to her pregnancy, growing older offers Boyce a sense of "coming full circle," and as with age, she begins to reach the "endings" of certain movement possibilities and even to contemplate the ending of her life, she anticipates the beginnings of new forms of creativity, connectivity, and community discoverable through dance.

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Chapter five: Queer Orientations towards Pregnancy, Choreographing Pure Becoming

When I was just out of college, in 2007, postmodern choreographer Yanira Castro offered me my first paid dance gig in a piece called *Daphne or Dear New Girl*, which was part of the New York City Japan Society's *Butoh Festival*. I was elated. My role was to embody Daphne from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Thus, my task was to locate in myself a woman who, in panic and terror, on the verge of being overpowered by Apollo and made his conquest, wills herself to transform into a laurel tree. My transformation, in accordance with the myth, was to be through sheer determination and silent pleas to Gaea (the Greek goddess of the earth)—my future required metamorphosis, required my total surrender to a force that could consume and re-form me, and required that I recognize this force as already within me. As a choreographer, Castro was gentle, trusting, and also uncompromising. She told me the broad strokes of Ovid's story and then gave me time to improvise so as to locate my own impetuses for transformation. I determined that my score was first, to sense into a body immobilized by fear, to find deep stillness; to root, branch and yield; to find a gentle, steady swaying deep within; then, to find continuity with something previously beyond me, to find a vastness of being. My charge was not to pantomime, but to open myself to conditions that could quicken me to metamorphosis, conditions that would oblige willingness to release everything familiar, to release everything I took for granted as constative of self, to release reality as I knew it. This choreography was one of recalibrating my powers of perception and extending them in unfamiliar ways.

I didn't have a clue how to do this dance.

In working with Castro, I was, like her, ending my day jobs, taking the New York City subway out to wherever she had acquired a few hours' rehearsal space, and then—with hopefulness, stubbornness, and utter puzzlement—dropping into movement meditations I could scarcely wrap my mind around. Rehearsals were filled with subtlety, intensity, and exceptional challenges. *How can I transform from a person materiality to a thing materiality and not in a wink-wink/theatrical way? How can I do so while remaining the dancer Castro hired who is* performing *this ontological shift? How much must I* be *this transformation, and how much must I stand watch outside of it, monitoring my response to the challenge so as to hone my skills as an artist? Am I doing this transformation, is it doing me, or is it not a matter of doing so much as* becoming *or allowing what already is?...*

Castro offered sparse direction but constant, concentrated, expectant witness. She asked about my experience (my intentions, energies, and attentions), and she discouraged overtness and legibility in the shapes my body assumed: I did not need to look like I was afraid, I did not need to look like a tree. She especially discouraged legibility for the sake of legibility, and illegibility intrigued her. As a result, becoming Daphne becoming the laurel tree cultivated in me corporeal curiosity about my body's potential to know itself differently and in undefined ways. Experientially, my senses of self/other, art/life, body/self, and human/nonhuman became productively tangled. Hoisting myself up by the knot that this tangle formed afforded me exciting new perspectives. Post-performance, I found myself both unable and unwilling to tear out my tree roots (loosely grounded, uncertain, and intangible as they were) and double back to a pre-Daphne (more seemingly bounded, self-contained, and self-certain) Johanna. My perceptions remained confused in ways that, to me, made good sense, and the slippery perceptual questions Castro offered me occupied my body long after the Butoh Festival closed.

When I worked with Castro, she was nearly a decade into her career as a choreographer. Born in Puerto Rico, Castro graduated from Amherst College, having majored in Dance but also in Literature, and when she arrived in New York City after graduating, she put both degrees to work, finding jobs in both performance and publishing. She first arrived on the downtown New York City postmodern dance scene in the early 1990s, just as the title "postmodern" was fading out of popularity (Daly et al. 1992). Still the influence of postmodernism was very prominent in avant-garde performance. Castro, like others of her generation, trained in dance but identified more as an interdisciplinary artist. She called her dances, "hybrid projects" because they incorporated visual art, technology, theater, and sound compositions. Working with Castro in 2007 meant that I was proximate to and observant of one such "hybrid project," a large-scale work with a multi-year incubation, which she called *Center of Sleep.* This dance installation, which premiered at then, Dance Theater Workshop (DTW) (now, New York Arts Live) like *Daphne or Dear New Girl*, explored themes of maturation and transfiguration. It also presented deep rest (the "center of sleep") as essential for these processes to transpire.

Initially, Castro focused *Center of Sleep* on puberty, seeing this period of flux as paradigmatic of bodily metamorphosis. However, during a 2007 Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC) residency, she had the opportunity to pursue creative research in collaboration with faculty from the Florida State University School of Medicine, Dr. Curtis Altmann and Dr. Jamila Horabin. These scientists' research was embryology, and with their guidance, Castro became a fascinated student of the germinal and embryonic (pre-fetal) stages of development. These are stages of rapid self-division and exponential growth: what starts as one, distributes itself into many and folds in on itself to make even more. One cell becomes a ball of cells and from this ball, layers, pleats, and pockets materialize which, in eight weeks' time, develop into discrete but fluid, communicating, and interdependent living systems. What *is* at this point in development is not yet a "fetus," let alone a "human;" it is not yet anything definable. In Castro's mind, this lack of definition was marvelous; the embryo was *pure* *possibility*. Consequently, for her, embryology became a useful model with which to think, and Castro began to link puberty and gestation as not only forms of radical biological transformation but also as processes with reiterative elements, parallel timelines, and extraordinary potentiality.

I read the evening length performance that Castro went on to develop—through her emergent fascination with embryology, her investment in bodily transformation, and, later, her personal experiences of pregnancy—as exploring changing bodies via choreography, using choreography as a methodology of queer phenomenology. My usage of the term "queer phenomenology" follows that of Sara Ahmed, who advocates for a "politics of disorientation" in how we interpret our lived experiences. Per Ahmed, such a politics allows for that which we perceive of ourselves and our world to be realigned and connected in new and fortuitous ways, ways which we might have previously dismissed as "wonky" or unreasonable (2006). I saw Castro inviting queerness, as a theoretical and political perspective, and queering as a practice, to disrupt and reorder both the ways in which she interpreted her transforming body and the means whereby she made a dance. As a choreographer, her perception of pregnancy as a queer (thus, productively disorienting) experience inspired her to forge new spatial pathways and physical relationships within her dance, which reflected and amplified what was for her an intriguing sense of her body having gone awry. Consequently, in my interpretation of it, her choreographic approach for *Center of Sleep* can be best interrogated by bringing together models of phenomenology, as a method of inquiry (such as those of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl, and Luce Irigaray) with ideas and knowledge-making strategies from queer studies. In concert, these scholarly areas of thought foster understanding of how, in Castro's work and the processes behind it, bodies freshly perceived their spatial orientations to other bodies and their somatopsychic orientations to themselves. They also shine light on the ways in which her project called attention to the knowledge-limiting orientations of hegemonic discourses like patriarchal medicine, which pre-define what is perceivable and pre-set the positions from which it might be perceived.

Castro shifted her own orientation to pregnancy away from more conventional interpretations of it as a special, exceptional, bracketed period of one's life; instead, she perceived it as simply one of many ongoing bodily metamorphoses and as in continuity with other phenomenal experiences. She choreographed her audience as well as performers to shift their orientations to pregnancy (conceptually and spatially), so that she could share with them an experience of collectively and individually *becoming more.* Personally, she chased after this possibility of *becoming more* as a means to refuse pregnancy's social and ideological ties to biological determinism and essentialism and to hetero-patriarchal notions of motherhood as "ideal womanhood." It was more than that; she was more than that. As she sought out new ways to understand her pregnancy, as we shall see, she also broke maternity and fetal development free from gendered associations of predeterminism and from the rigidity of linear (what I will call *straight*) time. Using transformative experiences of pregnancy as epistemological tools, she put concepts, bodies, and paradigms of spacetime in motion and in new relationships so that they could be experienced by herself, her performers, and her audience in new and hope-inducing ways and so that they did not need to be *straightened* into familiar and restrictive tracts.

I will discuss Castro's work within a theoretical matrix of imaginative and queer ideas. I will draw from theories that, like Castro's own ideas, find compatibility between differences and radical hope in our possibility of transforming ourselves, our bodies, our society, and our relationships beyond what is presently conceivable. These will include Gilles Deleuze's concept of "pure becoming," Ahmed's model of "queer phenomenology," José Muños' proposal of "queer futurity," Jack Halberstam's theories of "queer time" and "queer failure," and Irigaray's philosophies of "sexuate difference" and "ethical relationships." I will also discuss Castro's work in relationship to projects concurrent and parallel to *Center of Sleep* made by other postmodern artists as a means to propose that her explorations were part of a larger impulse within the avant-garde art community to transform the field of dance. Most specifically, I will put her work in conversation with the work of choreographer Miguel Gutierrez, who also pursued queer orientations toward pregnancy as a means to create new relationships between his body, the bodies of others, time, and his choreographic process. With all of the examples discussed, I will argue that experiences of pregnant bodies inspired the creation of new worlds, communities, and options that artists sensed were otherwise socially and conceptually unavailable to them, options that were necessary for them to have in order to support their desired processes of physical and creative transformation.

Section one: *Center of Sleep* and the possibility to becoming *anything*

Four dancers crawl along the perimeter of the room, behind the lighting trees. They would be in the wings were the curtains not stripped, but the black box theater is naked. So too are the dancers naked, naked except that they each wear a string of pearls around their necks. Someone somewhere is playing the steel drums. The audience, previously wandering the space perplexedly and without direction, begins to notice the crawling and adjusts their spacings and facings to get better vantage points on the action. The dancers begin writhing and somersaulting, some seem to be eating something off the floor. One by one, they enter a small, short structure fashioned from plastic sheeting, and the audience huddles around them until bodies both inside and outside of the structure are packed together tightly. The movements of those inside are semi-obfuscated by the sheeting, causing those outside to lean and bend their bodies in efforts to get closer, clearer vision. As the sheeting filters the lighting, the naked bodies glow orange. As a member of the audience looking in, my mind flashes to Lennart Nilsson's iconic 1965 *Life Magazine* cover and series of macroscopic photographs of luminant embryos and fetuses housed in their amnion, captioned "The Drama of Life Before Birth." I hold this image in mind, but unlike Nilsson's serenely still floating forms, inside the plastic, the dancers move restlessly. They explore one another's bodies and the space between their bodies. They begin to thrash and quake, and from supine positions, they thrust their pelvises ardently upward before snaking over and under one another in a tight circulation. They voice sounds that are difficult to decipher. Occasionally, their body parts come into sharp focus as they make contact with the sheeting, leaving sweaty residue. Similarly, bits of their vocalization stand out as decipherable. For instance, I hear their stoic and insistent refrain: "Look at us, yeah. We're beautiful, yeah." Without ceremony, this episode ends, and they crawl out of the structure and approach a pile of clothing from which they select and don undergarments and then many other layers of clothing seemingly gathered from teenagers' closets—an abundance of "fast fashion" finds. I see no deliberation or consistency behind their garment choices, and outside of appearing adolescent, their final outfits offer few clues as to either who or where they are. Dispersing, they start to dance decidedly complex choreographic phrases and to enact succinct theatrical scenarios, and their words and movements both begin and remain eclectic and indecisive. Choreography slips between styles, bodies, efforts, and placements in space. In what ensues over the remainder of the evening, they dance alone, in sets, as an ensemble, on their feet and on their backs, against walls and in front of mirrors, on raised platforms and in the midst of the audience, covertly and demonstratively, as many different personae, in many different scenarios, in various states of undress, and all throughout the theater. As they do, performers and audience alike navigate a set of movable pieces fashioned from plywood, cotton, mylar, and metal, as well as an aleatoric sound composition of basketball dribbles, vacuum cleaner *vrooms*, video game *bings* and *pings*, electronic and acoustic music, with sonic elements both sampled and produced live by meandering musicians.

For *Village Voice* dance critic Deborah Jowitt, "Viewing Yanira Castro's *Center of Sleep* is like being in a dream yourself. You can roam the performing area…searching for happenings that may not materialize where you thought they might, or you can hang out in one place and call whatever passes by your reality" (2008). For Castro, in its sounds, spaces, scenarios, and lines of motion, this world was one of rest, gestation, and metamorphosis. It was an amniotic space for incubating transformation.

Castro's interest in gestation evolved and deepened when cast member Peggy Cheng became pregnant, and it increased exponentially further still when Castro learned that she herself was pregnant. Cheng's pregnancy was planned and carefully coordinated with their rehearsal calendar so that she would deliver and recover during a long break in *Center of Sleep's* creative development. Castro's pregnancy was not planned, and it coincided precisely with the final nine months before their premiere. With her pregnancy came a shift from Castro's *thinking* about transformation conceptually and how it might be danced to *feeling* her body and sense of self transform while she tried to make a dance (Yanira Castro, in discussion with the author, July 2019). As an artist, her focus was suddenly divided between looking at and sculpting the work from outside of it and privately sensing her energies, abilities, curiosities, shape, and attentions morph into unfamiliar experiences of self. The disjuncture of attempting to have distance on and thereby offer choreographic structure to a dance expressing what was increasingly presenting itself as her lived reality felt untenable. Thus, not only did Castro expand the thematic focus of the work to explicitly include pregnant bodies, she also decided that she should join the cast. In so placing herself in the center of the world she was worlding she also allowed her lived experience of pregnancy to suffuse it.

In saying that Castro worlded a world, I am engaging the idea of worlding as it is used in the fields of New Materialism and Human Geography, meaning

> the term 'world' does not refer to an extant thing but rather the context or background against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances. (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 8)

In other words, I am suggesting that through her attentions and resulting choreography, Castro created conditions for a world to emerge through her body and supportive of her body. In so doing, she interrupted habitual temporality and other normalized modes of being/perceiving/relating through creating a choreographic spacetime that offered herself and the other participants unique engagement with a set of specific interrelated phenomena. When we sat down to reflect on the piece in 2019, she recollected that she decided to incorporate her "hugely transformed body" into the research and performance of *Center of Sleep* because it made too compelling a "case" to not put forward to herself as the maker (Castro, discussion). She recognized that her embodied experiences could allow her to deepen her theorization and perceptions of as well as her participation in bodily metamorphosis.

However, even as she introduced not only the theme of pregnancy but her literal pregnant body, she was adamant that the piece was not and should not be interpreted as autobiographical. She had no interest in "narcissistically" centering her own specific pregnancy and its significance to her in her art. To avoid doing so, she planned to only dance in duet, never solo. She asked dancer, Ashley Steele who, she had heard whisperings in her dance circles, was also pregnant and only a month "behind" Castro, to join the cast. She also decided that their movements should be performed naked and in complete unison so that their bodies appeared detached from their personal histories and were, thus, decontextualized, anonymous, and aggregated into "*the* pregnant body." So as to present "*the* pregnant body," not *her* pregnant body, Castro made all choreographic decisions for the duet in full collaboration with Steele, and their choreography explored their experiences of "going through a series of [biological] processes," not, for instance, their emotions around becoming parents or their "hero's quests" of parental self-realization. Becoming "*the* pregnant body" meant, for Castro, becoming one with her body's processes, becoming a body both her own and not her own, becoming a body both private and shared, becoming a body shared both inside and (by collaborating with Steele) outside of itself, and becoming a body itself becoming another body. For Castro, *the* pregnant body, like *the* embryo or *the* adolescent, was more verb than noun; it was a body transforming in kind in the present tense, something she could *live* and *do* rather than *be* defined by.

In her efforts to choreographically explore and communicate *the* pregnant body, Castro considered intersections between her experiences and those of Cheng and Steele, and she also re-membered her own previous experiences of pregnancy which, although occasioning abortions, also offered transformative experiences of self and lived experiences of becoming—experiences of self as continual change, as slipping between fixed points, as forever expanding. In one expression of *the* pregnant body in *Center of Sleep,* she asked Cheng, barely postpartum and breasts engorged with milk during the performance run, to sing a song that Castro wrote for a previously aborted fetus. Within the dance, Cheng mounted a small circular stage, which the cast called "Peggy's stage" and sang into a microphone with conviction and insouciance, slipping on and off key, as if performing for friends at a karaoke lounge. Castro shared the lyrics to the song she called *Ballad to No One #1: To a Fetus from a Dead Man* with me. They included the lines

“You look like all the others/ Blood vesseled baby” and “You are all potential/ You are all things/ You are no choice/ You are a blank slate.” At the time of our conversation the line that was most memorable and important to her was, “You have no sex/ You beautiful thing.” Cheng’s song reflected Castro’s awareness that birthing a child meant bringing an individual into a world which would inevitably impose limits on who that child could be, limits from which she desperately wished to protect her child. For Castro, the lack of an embryo’s definitive sex was not only “beautiful” but hope instilling and choreographically intriguing.

For her pregnancy during *Center of Sleep*, Castro was, in her words, pregnant with what “the medical industry would say is a ‘boy’,” which she preferred to not delimit as such but rather to experience as “all potential.” She recalled that she would whisper to her belly, “you’re so free! ... You are *everything* right now! … hold on to that. You will always be, can always be *everything*.” As everyone in her life began to ask, “What’s the sex?”, she told me that she wished she had replied, “First of all, who knows!”, by which she meant that such a question could not possibly be answered in a word: “Are you talking about … physically? hormonally? neurologically? ....” Secondly, she wanted to answer, “It could be anything!” even after “it emerges.” Although difficult to deliver verbally, she worked out these responses choreographically. Within the spacetime of her dance, she aimed to immerse others in a reality in which gender is undefined so that new forms of togetherness and growth are possible. Even though in pregnancy, as measured in the linear time of medicine, it is only the first seven weeks in which the gender of the fetus is undefined, “*the* pregnant body” of *Center of Sleep* was a body outside of linear time, a body experiencing itself evolving, thus, never a body fully defined or a body creating within itself something fully defined. Thus, *the* pregnant body of *Center of Sleep* actively held open the window of possibility in which bodies can elude sexual definition and remain “all potential,” “all things,” “no choice,” and “a blank slate.”

In part, because Castro did not enjoy how pregnancy made her social experiences of her body emphatically gendered, and also in her avoidance of defining others in existing and limiting ways, she did nothing choreographically to gender her dancers. Initially, the cast—who in addition to herself, Steele, and Cheng, included Heather Olsen, Luke Miller, and Joseph Paulson—were quite legibly embryonic, undressed down to matching pearl necklaces and inhabiting the plastic sheeting structure they, amongst themselves, called their “womb.” Later in the piece, in scenarios more evocative of puberty, they repeatedly changed and exchanged their mostly non-gender specific clothes: cotton t-shirts, polos, zip-up sweatshirts, backpacks, briefs, striped and solid patterns, etc. They interacted with each other’s bodies in ways not suggestive of erotic desire or foreplay, although they were often undressed. For example, Miller brushed Olsen’s teeth, performers said words together as if possessing one mouth or one mind, they watched each other with unobjectifying curiosity, they stopped and had snacks and took naps together, they washed their bodies and hair, they held each other tenderly and clumsily, they explored each other’s skin with awkward intimacy, and they examined each other’s belly buttons. They patted, tickled, tussled, and preened one another in expressions of care, provocation, inquisitiveness, and ambivalence.

For the dancers in *Center of Sleep*, their bodies had evident differences (including but not limited to sexual characteristics). However, these differences were never emphasized or highlighted choreographically; rather, they seemingly motivated the performers’ curiosity to discover their significance/efficacy through explore themselves, each other, and the many means by which they could put their bodies in relationships. In other words, their physical differences neither defined nor segregated them, and their sexual differences were never framed as, in and of themselves, meaningful to their community or even as fixed aspects of their identities.

In her watershed work *The Sex Which is Not One*, philosopher Luce Irigaray proposed,

> Your body expresses yesterday in what it wants today. If you think: yesterday I was, tomorrow I shall be, you are thinking: I have died a little. Be what you are becoming, without clinging to what you might have been, what you might yet be. Never settle. (1985, 214)

Later, she extended the idea of being "what [one] is becoming"—thus, not the set identity that one was or the definitive self one is going to be—into her formation of what it means to "become woman," as a political identification and an epistemological method. In her theory of *sexual difference,* she stated that, "becoming of women is never over and done with, is always in gestation" (1993, 63). Considering this definition, *the* pregnant body of *Center of Sleep*—embodied by Castro and Steele and reinforced by the fluid bodies of the entire ensemble—could be understood as an embodiment of Irigaray's "becoming of woman." Of course, Castro preferred to eschew gendered identifications (finding them limited and limiting); however, for Irigaray, identifying as "becoming woman" meant identifying not as the opposite of men, but rather with the process of becoming, the experience of knowing oneself as constant change. Similarly, for Irigaray, expressing herself as *woman* meant expressing herself in ways that did not foreclose future alternative/counter expressions. By these unconventional definitions, which were liberated from the reductive social role of "woman," Castro and her cast were also "becoming women," both through experiences of pregnancy and through making and performing the choreographies of *Center of Sleep*.

Irigaray is perhaps a surprising presence within this discussion of Castro, considering Castro's yearning toward embryo-like possibilities beyond maleness/femaleness and avoidance of gendering labels like man/woman, boy/girl. After all, on the surface, Irigaray's theory of "sexual difference" seems to not take into consideration broader spectrums of sexuality and identifications outside of the sex and gender dyads which mattered to Castro (including trans, genderqueer, gender fluid, intersex, or Castro's *embryonic*). However, plunging beneath the surface, Irigaray's theory of "sexual difference" can be unpacked and put alongside her theory of "sexuate difference" as well as her late-career writings on maternity and ethics. Collected, these theories make her a helpful companion for exploring Castro's choreographic theorizations of transformation, sex, *the* pregnant body, and human relationships in *Center of Sleep*.

When Irigaray wrote of "sexual difference," she did not, in fact, express a binary. Although using the terminology "man," "woman," "male," "female," "masculine," and "feminine," she was never an essentialist and in fact actively refuted essentialism. Thus, she never suggested that these terms were definitive, mutually exclusive, or set. Rather, Irigaray was interested, as Castro was, in the possibilities "between two" as a way of refusing both binary culture (male/men/boys and female/women/girls) and universal culture ((hu)mankind). This is because, Irigaray's commitment to "sexual difference" expressed her deeper commitment to dynamic and fluid semiotics that appreciate differences between bodies because such differences can opportune meaningful relationships with one another. She saw our bodies, with their anatomical differences, as imaginative starting points for how we might contemplate other differences and fathom bridges across them. For her, our perspectives are always sexual because they are always revelatory of our differences—we need to be cognizant of differences-between our perspectives/bodyselves in order to recognize why our personal embodied perspectives matter, what they afford us, and how they need to be supplemented so as to further what we can know, do, and be. In my reading of her, Irigaray understood difference not, exclusively, as difference from the opposite, complementary sex, but rather as modes of accepting and navigating one's own perceived incompleteness in ways that motivate yearning to keep *becoming more*.

Irigaray's later work explores "sexuate difference," which is a model intentionally less reliant on references to sexual binaries and heterosexuality to assume its meaning. In her formulation of it, "sexuate difference" exists between bodies with wholly different perspectives but is not rooted in erotic desire or sexual anatomy. Expanding on her prior thinking, Irigaray explained that when in relationship, "we are not complementary or supplementary to each other. Rather, the question is how to think an identity which is different from the one we know, an identity in which the relationship with the other is inscribed in the pre-given of my body" (2001 [1994], 34). For Irigaray, similar to the theories of existential philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber, it is the *ethical* responsibility of each "sexuate" subject to cultivate ways of relating to others without negating or assimilating vital differences-between in the process. For Irigaray, it follows that through relationships, what matters is to "positively construct alterity between" (2016 [1996], 62). In her model, being a "sexuate" individual means acknowledging that one is a partial subject, with a partial experience, and partial point of view, which only becomes more complete through relationships with other individuals. In an individual's different perceptions of self and world lie the potential to connect in unique and personally expansive ways, ways which, Irigaray enthused, could inspire alternatives to patriarchy and the patriarchal discourses of psychoanalysis, linguistics, and Continental Philosophy. It could inspire discourses that are, instead, fluid, dynamic, *ethical*, and embracive of multiplicity as well as new epistemes which anticipate, appreciate, and further possibilities for the transformation of thought and society.

For Irigaray, our senses of relational possibilities are formed in our first relationships with our mothers. Just so, birthing parents, in their experiences of pregnancy, labor, and nursing have formative relationships with their children that will influence their future capacities for *ethical* relationships. Per Irigaray's definition of "sexuate," pregnancy necessarily makes one a "sexuate" individual. Pregnant individuals' worlds are constituted in different ways from the worlds of the beings with whom they are pregnant, whom many then breastfeed, and whom they help to understand the world. As Irigaray puts it, "The 'who' of the mother and the 'who' of the child do not inhabit the same world . . . There is a sharing of worlds in a sense, but of different worlds where each has different cares towards the other" (2008a,114–115). Consequently, the relationship between a pregnant individual and a child is grounded in "sexuate difference" because it involves simultaneous independence and interconnection through their responsiveness to each other's alterity. Differences flow between their bodies helping each to continue to *become more*. Thus, like Castro, Irigaray theorized that maternity offers experiential resources for reinterpretation and transformation of self and the self's possible connections to others as well as tools for building a new expressive poetics.

Irigaray also argued that giving birth to children should be discussed in the context of other kinds of creative production, such as generating new images, symbols, and ways of knowing, as an artist does. For her, one makes art as a means to think and be differently, but this need not be limited to aesthetic/symbolic practices. One can also live one's life (for instance in one's experiences of pregnancy) as art. Irigaray asserted that "[t]he work of art that a human is invited to carry out is first the blossoming of self in its own singularity, which presupposes a still unknown cultivation of space and time" (2002, 127). In other words, she argues for an art of interiority by which individuals aspire to transform themselves and then the conditions in which they live toward realties that can be shared in meaningful ways (2008b, 135–136; 2002, 98). Without art, Irigaray believed that difference often falls into merely mechanical reproduction which allows for the endurance of power hierarchies and a limited sense of what can be. However, art, be it aesthetic production or an art of interiority, transmutes individual bodies into affective and creative relationships, inspiring openness to ongoing transformations. Finally, Irigaray argues that art is also conducive to the cultivation of "ethical" relationships, since it provides a praxes and platforms for differences to be appreciated, upheld, and channeled into further development at personal and social levels (2002, 121–122). Although indecently, Castro saw similar promise and consequence in artistic creation.

Like Irigaray, Castro was interested in how our identities can be understood not as independent and defined through establishing difference, but instead as developed through our experiences as embodied subjects relating to one another across differences. She appreciated the creative opportunities of both pregnancy and choreography to deeply explore how to move past reductive paradigms and a reductive sense of self so as to include alterity in connecting her experiences to those of others. In the connections she found, she experienced a "blossoming of self" and tools for "cultivation of space and time" choreographically. Specifically, *Center of Sleep* launched an enduring inquiry for Castro into the relationships between individual performers and the audience. She began a line of questioning which continued into, for instance, her 2016 work *CAST* which asked how the individual performer is "transformed" in the presence of the group that watches (and vice versa) and how the performers, choreographer, and audience members assert, acquiesce, and share control so as to be in fluid relationships with one another.

Experiences of relational and personal transformations were the seeds from which *Center of Sleep* sprouted. While her personal transformation was apparent to others while she was pregnant, Castro had perceived herself in/as transformation long before her pregnancy. Although I was unaware of it at the time that I was dancing for her, she was coming out of a very challenging year in which she had, in her words, "completely shut down" physically and emotionally and from which she was "trying to reemerge" (Fukamachi 2007). For her, this reemergence required the ability to metamorphosize, and she strove to do so through seeking new relationships across differences, which would stretch her in vitalizing ways. In addition to finding connections with new colleagues in different fields, she had entered into an intimate partnership with another individual and had begun contemplating both if she wanted to have a child at any point in her life and if, perhaps, she wanted to have one with this person (Castro, discussion). Thus, through these new relationships, she was beginning to shift her energy forward and outward, and she was opening herself to how she might transform so as to meet/make a more life-affirming future. To create more space and tools for growth, she applied for and received a residency opportunity in Italy through the Rockefeller Foundation. This month at the Bellagio Center was a month to research transformation and also a month to create space for her own personal development.

At the Bellagio Center, she discovered energizing relationships across disciplinary and conceptual differences. For Castro, the material, physical, psychological transformations that she encountered in her creative research—the body in puberty, in depression, in sleep, in pregnancy, and in gestation—were most meaningful when snarled together and allowed to both interrupt and amplify one another. For example, learning that adolescents and pregnant individuals should sleep comparable hours to an infant instilled in her an appreciation that, at different points in one's life cycle, in order to transform, one needs to "shut down." This message resonated with her on many levels, and perhaps it was ingesting this information that allowed her to reframe her own one-year “shut down” as anticipating and facilitating her ensuing evolution. It was all part of one process, one becoming, with which she could choose to identify. Coming to such realizations offered opportunities to make affective affinities across time, across bodies, and across her own embodied history which created a webbed, relational foundation for stimulating new choreographic ideas.

Section two: Dance as transformation—relationships, orientations, and simultaneities

While there to start a dance, the Bellagio Center did not have movement studios; consequently, she began to think about choreography and dancing space differently. This challenge proved fruitful in shifting her perception of who she was and how she worked as an artist. In her bathroom, which was her makeshift rehearsal studio, she built choreographic material from an imaginative space in which transforming bodies, at their various stages and on their various trajectories were entangled. Rather than creating a movement vocabulary intended to express ideas about transforming bodies theatrically, she was interested in giving herself the opportunity to grow as a body and artist through embodying new connections within and beyond herself and interpreting her body in un-pre-scripted ways, ways that offered her a sense of burgeoning possibility.

Castro said that prior to her residency, as a choreographer, she was “still making steps” and doing so through a process of “does this *feel* like what I want it to be?... is this the right *feeling*?” Her hope was to capture and pass on choreographically a specific feeling that was unique to her bodyself through bottling it into the right “steps.” These steps would transfer that feeling, particular to her bodyself, to the bodies of her dancers and then to the bodies of her audience members. That translation of pure feelings from one discrete body to another, for her, constituted the choreographic process. However, that method of choreographing presupposed that what others felt in and through her art originated from her bounded experience of self, also that it was pre-felt and re-feelable, and it was transferable to other individuals in their bounded realities as their own embodied subjects. Furthermore, the goal of such choreography was for everyone involved in the performance to feel the same way. In contrast, starting during her residency, where she was in regular dialogue with scholars and creatives from many disciplinary and cultural locations, she began to take less interest in bracketing and communicating her own feelings and more interest in exploring what was possible when a community entered into an experience together, unsure of what they would discover or if their discoveries would align.

When she returned to New York City, she began to think of dances as offering, more than anything else, the possibility to discover new feelings and new possibilities because they created new relationships between embodied subjects. She began to recognize performances as offering succinct windows of spacetime when lives coincided and where/when, as the choreographer, she could offer an "awakening up to the moment of the experience" of togetherness as well as cues for how to be collectively present for new discoveries. Such collective presence was, she decided, "what we're all looking for," even if such presence inspired an array of experiences and interpretations of the art that was shared (Fukamachi 2007). She also began to think of performance events as offering "cocoons" in which, temporarily, predictable boundaries between individuals became less defined. In this way, she saw choreography offering an alternative way for individuals to perceive how they might belong together and with whom they might belong.

With this fresh outlook on dance making, she began ensemble rehearsals for *Center of Sleep.* In rehearsal, Castro redefined "the choreographic" as a way of "making relationships happen," and "choreography" as "how relationships are formed and how they exist in time." Thus, as a "choreographer" working with an ensemble, her thinking/perceiving/making became primarily about relationalities. Relational thinking was in contrast to her prior method—which she retrospectively recognized as presenting "point by point by point," rather than the possible webs between these points. To wit, instead of being sequenced, she intended *Center of Sleep's* choreography to flow through a variety of inter- and intra-personal possibilities, and the project of *Center of Sleep* became contemplating relationships that precipitate metamorphosis for both individual and social bodies.

Exploring what relational thinking meant not only for her conceptual but for her material creative processes for *Center of Sleep* began with revising the relationship of the audience to the thematic content and to the physical bodies of the dancers. Inspiring this revision was Castro's reflections on puberty and pregnancy as very personal and intimate experiences, but also as experiences that stimulate intentional self-presentation to others. For example, she noticed in her own life as a pregnant individual, feeling preoccupied by deeply private, subtle internal changes while also feeling preoccupied with "How do I display the belly?"—how to display herself so as to control how her changing body read to others (Castro, discussion). Consequently, in strategizing the dancers' relationship to the audience, she tried to grapple with such simultaneity of private sensation and intentional presentation. To begin with, instead of stepping outside of the work as she was making it, so as to try on the audience's perspective, she meandered through the dancers and looked at their movement from many vantage points and proximities. Doing so, she realized, "I don't have to watch this thing I'm making from this distance because that's the distance that theatre prescribes!" Appreciating how moving among the dancers offered her a newfound multiplicity of vantage points and vicinities to content, she decided to offer audience members the same opportunity to explore the work from the inside and as part of its motion. Thus, she eliminated plans for a seating area, did not choreograph with a "front" in mind, decided the dancing would happen throughout the performance space, and decided the audience would meander through the dancers and the dance just as she was doing in rehearsals.

By decentering and destabilizing her own familiar perspective on what she was making, Castro's changed method as a choreographer paralleled philosopher Sara Ahmed's shift in method as a phenomenologist when she moved toward what she considered a more "feminist" and "queer" approach to phenomenology as a methodology. Ahmed described that she "learned to think about not only how phenomenology might universalize from a specific bodily dwelling" as the white, male, heterosexual founders of her field—such as Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty had done—but to chase after what follows "creatively" from critiquing this classic approach, meaning, "what the critique allows us to think and to do" (2006, 544). In a similar vein, while Castro appreciated her perception of her art as coming from her personal body which was, in Merleau-Ponty's words, *her* "point of view upon the world," she also recognized that hers was not *the* point of view of *the* world, and thus, not the point of view that she, even as choreographer, should expect of her audiences as she offered them experiences of her work (2002 [1945], vi). Similarly, for *Center of Sleep*, she no longer assumed that her audience *could* share her perspective; after all, their bodies, like hers, already and always predetermined their unique points of view in the world. Instead, she bore in mind the inevitability of a variety of perspectives and saw this variety as creating opportunities rather than impediments. In my reading of her process, she theorized that this variety, could allow performers and audience, together as a community composed of many unique perspectives, to "think and to do" art differently through the ways in which she choreographed possibilities for relationships between their bodies. Moreover, she embraced that just as her point of view could be dispersed and put in motion so as to enhance her comprehension of what was developing through the work, so too could audiences' points of view because, like her, they had the opportunity to literally experience different vantage points by moving around the performance space. Reorientating herself helped her to appreciate that as a choreographer, she could create a world in which everyone could explore the potential of entering an experience and finding their own decidedly multiple orientations to it. Also, even as an audience member made choices of attention in the world of *Center of Sleep*, she would be aware of the real, albeit abstract, alternative possibilities for her attentions. In other words, the choreography would intentionally make her aware of what philosopher Gilles Deleuze called the "virtual"—the surplus of the experiential present moment, the conditions of possibility within a spacetime. For Castro, in this experiential immersion in boundless possibility, there lay buoyant hope and an exciting path forward for her as a maker, a mover, and a person.

Working in the ways and toward the ends to which Castro aspired meant working not only against her own choreographic habits but against the traditions of live performance and habits of viewership. Typically, because of learned behaviors, precedents, architecture, and theatrical clues, dance audiences have clear senses of how and when to direct their attentions where. With seeming automaticity, they know to focus on some dancers and events and away from others. However, Ahmed would say that this belies larger acculturated habits of attention and orientation which center some people and experiences and marginalize or invisiblize others. As Ahmed says, "if we face this way or that, then other things, and indeed spaces, are relegated to the background" where they are "only ever co-perceived" and thus, never foundational for knowledge production (547). Individuals' socialization to dance and its surrounding histories and cultures cue what they perceive as the focal point, as background, and as irrelevant in performance. In my reading of it, in inviting audiences to repeatedly notice and choose their own orientations, Castro's work explored orientation as a psychological and even a political phenomenon of perception, through the metonym of literal physical orientation. While she knew that orientation is not only a spatial question, she allowed it to be *also* a spatial question, and through choreographing spatial questions for audience members by requiring them to physically turn their bodies in response to what they noticed, she also, like Ahmed, set in motion larger questions and productive disorientation for how people and ideas *could* connect.

It was impossible at any point in the spacetime of *Center of Sleep* to attend to the entire choreography because of the simultaneous events inviting multiple possible foci. At any point in the performance, choreographies were layered, and they unfolded in multiple spatial locations. While, Castro remembered, there were a few audience members who tried to position themselves somewhere in the space where they had full visibility, "Nothing had been created with the … complete outside eye, in mind" (Castro, discussion). Afterall, with "full" vision came lost intimacy with the performers and lost affective engagement with the world of the work. For her, the simultaneity of scenarios was intended to be felt, not seen. As choreographer, she controlled the sensory bundles available for an audience member to digest at a time and controlled which elements coexisted and the degree of their alterity. In this way, to me, the experience Castro offered the audience was, in a Deleuzian sense, "musical." Deleuze and his collaborator Félix Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, offered a model of multilinear, "musical" spacetime in which "everything happens at once" among grouped and sequenced sets of information (2003 [1980], 297). For them, in the blocks of sound composing music, things can creatively and beautifully move forward together, and this aesthetic/perceptual structure can promote new possibilities for knowing and feeling. Furthermore, they suggested that "becomings" (meaning, for them, transformations in kind) occur "musically," meaning they are more feasibly precipitated through "blocks" of sensation and information (not independent points arranged into a single line) (296). Castro, through the "musical" combination of simultaneous scenarios offered the beginnings of a new sense of order, which could emerge within seeming chaos—while at the same time refusing familiar but reductive orderings of space and time. In so doing, per Deleuze and Guattari, she incubated phenomena of transformation and thus choreographically advanced her conceptual, material, and biological projects.

Castro found it exciting and fascinating to see how audience members related to the piece, for instance watching bits from behind or from the side, "even though the *action* is telling you it's frontal" (Castro, discussion). Vicariously through the audience's eyes, she discovered myriad possible relationships to the dance, and seeing the choices of others allowed her to have a more wholistic experience of it, herself. This is because, in *Center of Sleep*, differences in orientations offered participants opportunities to expand and develop their understandings. Differences fostered growth rather than creating divisions, hierarchies, or binaries; they inspired Irigarayan bridges, not walls. Furthermore, differences in perspectives, like the bodies that held them, were never still. Philosopher Erin Manning argues that a dancer, in her relational movements with spacetime and other bodies, "provides a glimpse into the ways in which movement creates the potential for unthinking dichotomies that populate our worlds" including "abstract-concrete," "actual-virtual," and, "man-woman" (2009, 15). She explains, "It's not that movement directly undermines these dialectical concepts. It's that movement allows us to approach them from another perspective: a shifting one" (ibid). This is because, "When we are no longer still, the world lives differently" (ibid.). Theorizing the potential of movement in a similar way to Manning, Castro held traditionally binary concepts that limit experiential and relational possibilities (most importantly for her, sex and gender) open through keeping everything in *Center of Sleep* in constant motion. No one could assume a universal or authoritative perspective on anything or anyone, and within the work, there was always incentive to adjust one's own position so as to stay in relationship to the larger body of the group.

In making *Center of Sleep*, Castro created a world rooted in her own embodied understanding of becoming—incidentally close to Deleuzian becoming—a space that would hold, encourage, and protect transformations, and an environment akin to what Manning calls a "relationscape." For Manning, "relationscapes," are movement experiences that preserve the complexity of *real* experiences and *real* embodied phenomena, complexity that typically gets lost as people, including artists, try to *represent* experiences rather than *share* them with others. For Manning, "relationscapes" cannot happen in preexisting spaces and times; they must actively create their own spacetime. Through embracing the sensations of moving and the relationships that movement facilitates both between individuals and between individuals and their environment, Castro's dance created a shared experience, rooted in, inquisitive of, but not contingent on her *real* embodied experience (of pregnancy/transformation). *Center of Sleep* did not show a representation of her experience. All individuals constituting *Center of Sleep*—as they were perceiving, while also moving, while also attending to others' motion—created a complex spacetime that could not be grasped through familiar ontologies of time and space. Per Manning, when navigating a "relationscape," space and time do not precede one's sensations of them or one's movements in relationship to them. Rather, movement events and the thinking they opportune create new times and spaces and a community bound by inhabiting them together (7). Consequently, when everyone and everything is in motion, reality can be shared differently than is possible in linear and stable time. In this way, bodies moving together are "always reconverging around the elasticity of their becoming," and everyone is involved in and complicit with the constantly changing conditions (9). As Manning asserts, such "relationscapes" and their performative iterations in art offer more than aesthetic experiences, they offer fresh and critical epistemes for knowledge formation. This is because extant ontologies no longer hold when everything is in motion and ontologies revealed to be unstable thus become "thresholds" that once crossed, allow us to shift "from being to becoming" (10). When what previously was taken for granted as foundational is shaken loose, new opportunities arise for what can be known.

Center of Sleep engaged the idea of pregnancy as becoming in multiple ways. More than inviting Castro's and Steele's pregnant bodies to read as symbols or metaphors for becoming, Castro engaged becoming as an episteme which their pregnant bodies were doing/being; by perceiving her body within *Center of Sleep*, she aspired to not only continue to *become* but to allow others to *become* with/as her and she with/as them. Thus, by giving the audience freedom of motion and attention within the piece and making them a crucial part of her "relationscape," Castro also gave them, as she did herself, the opportunity to be part of the transformations occurring. In other words, as opposed to having audience watch a story or see bodies as only expressions of ideas or experiences, Castro used choreography to create, to use Manning's phrase, "new ecologies of experience" (64). For Manning,

> To simply watch an event—to remain a passive spectator to its inner workings—does not result in experiential transformation. Transformation entails a shift in affective tone such that that participating spectator feels the performance, responding to it through an emphasis as much on its duration—its capacity to create experimental space-times—as through its content—its micro-movements in the making. (ibid.)

Per Manning, when the choreographer integrates the spectator into moving relationally to the movements of the performers, all parties can sense "the intensity of an opening, the gathering up of forces toward the creation of space-times of experience into which we [all can] move" (ibid.) In other words, the choreography offers movement encounters which flow into and permeate one another, spatial events without precise outlines which, together, collaborate as a “gathering of forces” toward a collective becoming. From the place of participant observation within Castro’s work, the audience senses how inside the choreography, each “movement begins to fold into another movement, we [the audience] feel its elasticity, opening the movement’s shape to its inevitable deformation” (Manning 2009, 34). In other words, the spacetime of the dance is not pre-ordained and then *entered* by the audience. Instead, it is fully *in creation* and perceivable only through attention to the active and evolving partnerships between performers and audience.

Section three: Making (not taking) time

In “relationscapes,” movement does not *take* time so much as it, in Manning’s words “*makes* time” (17). Just so, *Center of Sleep’s* shared, present tense, morphing spacetime allowed Castro to not evoke transformation but, together with the audience, to actively transform. She “made” the time to transform, the Irigarayan time to “Be what you are becoming, without clinging to what you might have been, what you might yet be.” I argue that Castro’s immediate access to transformation, via her lived experiences of pregnancy, inspired the time “made” by the “relationscape” of *Center of Sleep*.

However, Castro’s method of “making” time through attention to her lived experience of pregnancy was distinct from the methods of others who have theorized time through pregnant bodies. For example, part of feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva’s work attempted to release women’s experiences of their bodies, be they pregnant or otherwise, from the strictures of linear time—time rooted in male corporeality, the time underlying the periodization of history, modern science and medicine, and the time that limits the capacity of language. She did so through a feminist recuperation of, what she saw as, women-centered temporal measures, namely the cycles underlying menstruation and gestation. However, her effort to overwrite the linear time of patriarchy with the cyclical time of womanhood problematically maintained a referential anchor that conflates *women's time* with women's, presumed, ability to bear children and their, presumed, identification with this ability.

Consequently, some, like art theorist Emily Apter, rejected Kristeva's implicit acceptance of rote and reductive narratives of womanhood and tropes of women's perception of time primarily through their preoccupation with their "cycles" (2019). Instead, Apter advocated for Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) "virtual unfurling of being" over Kristeva's female cycles as offering a more progressive and, arguable, more feminist temporality (2019, 17). Following Apter's argument, even if Kristeva was denying linear time as apt for advancement of radical and un-reductive thinking, she was still embracing "straight time," or "time that follows the heteronormative patterns of family life, reposing upon heterosexual reproduction as the goal" (Davies and Funke 2011, 1-3). It is without a doubt that maternity has often been put to work serving social and political agendas that burden women with reproductive work while simultaneously marginalizing this work, and thus, in my purview, it is understandable to dismiss Kristeva's proposed temporality, as Apter does, because of its root in pregnancy, its presumed heteronormativity, and its assumption that subjects identify with their reproductive organs.

While like Kristeva, Castro employed *the* pregnant body to ground her processes of "making" time, unlike Kristeva, the way that Castro interpolated, framed, and interpreted her lived experiences of pregnancy in *Center of Sleep* fully avoided masculinist master narratives and the limitations of "straightened" perceptions. This is because in her work, she allowed her experience to be and remain queer. In other words, she appreciated how pregnancy made her experiences of self strange and irreducible, and she used choreography to explore her freedom to go “off script” of social norms and thus to be explicitly un- or anti-normative in her interpretation and performance of pregnant self.

Of course, presenting pregnancy as queer experience is an unintuitive theoretical move considering that “queer time” (the foil to *straight* time), as theorized by scholars such as Jack Halberstam and José Muñoz, rejects human biological reproduction, with its implicit heteronormativity, and rejects, in particular, suggestions that participation in such reproduction will be rewarding and is “natural.” This is in part because queer families and kinship structures are typically formed through choice and Austinian performative utterances (declarative acts). Thus, they are not reliant on female biology and consequently need not instrumentalize female bodies so as to *become more* and to have the promise of futurity. Furthermore, queerness works against what queer theorist Lee Edelman calls “reproductive futurism,” a mindset which affirms structures “to authenticate social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of the child” (2004, 30). Halberstam goes so far as to define queer uses of time and space as those which are in direct opposition to the institutions of family and heterosexuality because for Halberstam, queer time creates “potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and childrearing” (2005, 2). Queer time refuses the *straight*, prescriptive lines of precedent and heritage, time “different and outside” of “straight time,” time that can only emerge “once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (6).

Now, in this paradigm, a female pregnant body could be suspect (if not expressly rejected) as a productive theoretical tool. A pregnant body risks being read as productive toward the ends Halberstam rejects. However, this reading requires pregnancy to be interpreted for what it does socially, in contrast to what it can be as lived experience, and it presupposes that pregnancy locks pregnant individuals into repeating a trajectory of signification, valuation, and behavior without locating potentiality for newness in their experiences of themselves in fluxes. However, as Castro demonstrated, pregnancy can be isolated from the pipeline of "reproductive futurism" and, more broadly, from extending the status quo. Pregnancy can be reframed, as Castro did, not for what it is but for how it *includes*, *changes* and *worlds*, not what it corroborates or perpetuates.

Castro presented pregnancy as becoming, applying Kristeva-like thinking to consideration of the pregnant individual as the subject of pregnancy and the one not only producing something of social worth, but identifying with and *becoming more* through her own changes. For me, Castro argued that the experiences of pregnancy need not be defined in the restrictive terms of masculinity and femininity, need not be seen as only producing a baby, and need not be at odds with the heterogeneous creative temporalities put forth by Deleuze and Guattari such as "becoming-woman", "-animal," "-molecule," and finally "-imperceptible," all in the interest of "suppress[ing] in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things" (1980, 279-80). After all, as cultural theorist Russell West-Pavlov expresses in his book, *Temporalities*, pregnancy can be "one of many unpredictable forms of productive coupling which make up the dynamism of multiple temporalities themselves" (2013, 116). Castro embraced that these multiple temporalities can exist for the pregnant individual phenomenologically (especially when coupled with other physical transformations), giving her, if she thus perceives them, the freedom to experience not just a steady, productive, predesignated process, but a productive distribution and stretching of self in many qualitative, boundary dissolving dimensions. Castro showed that such dimensions, while difficult to put into the linear—per Kristeva, masculinist—temporality of language, are explorable choreographically.

Consequently, *Center of Sleep* offered cast and audience the opportunity to experientially participate in Castro's "virtual unfurling of being" inclusive of but not limited to her particular perceptions of pregnancy.

Of aesthetic and symbolic significance, as they moved through the spacetime of *Center of Sleep*, the dancers and audience could look at themselves and each other in mirrors made of metalized plastic film that slightly distorted and reangled their bodies. The mirrors reflected the population of *Center of Sleep* back to themselves queerly and in a way incidentally reiterative of Merleau-Ponty's model of queer phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty exemplified his model with the following:

> If we so contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is, only through a mirror which reflects it at an angle at 45° to the vertical, the subject at first sees the room "slantwise." A man walking about in it seems to lean to one side as he goes. A piece of cardboard falling down the door-frame looks to be falling obliquely. The general effect is "queer". (2002 [1945], 289)

In other words, when one looks for confirmation of the world as she knows it, for instance in a mirror, and instead finds a world that is similar but not quite the same—one that brings into question the dependability of her habitual perceptions and one that disrupts her sense of security about the constancy of her reality—she is having a queer experience. The queer worlds within the mirrors of *Center of Sleep* were mnemonics of the larger world of the piece because within the mirrors, perceivable reality was no longer familiar; it no longer seemed to confirm that one's habitual orientation was "right way up" (561). In Castro's work, the world cued by the mirrors but extending beyond them was adamantly queer, and the piece argued that in this queerness lay potential for seeing through or beyond the limitations of the familiar. Jowitt grasped Castro's meaning. After seeing the piece, Jowitt reflected, "spectators and performers together occupy an onstage hall of mirrors that—depending on your angle of vision… can also be windows" (2008).

As Castro intended and Jowitt surmised, the mirrors presented us back to ourselves in productively strange ways, ways which offered "windows" into new possibilities who we are/could-be/were becoming.

In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty expanded on queer phenomenology as "the intellectual experience of disorder," which is perceived as "the vital experience of giddiness and nausea," because it makes us aware of "our own contingency and the horror with which it fills us" (2002 [1945], 296). In Merleau-Ponty's estimation, individuals respond to queerness by re-straightening their experiences so that they line up with familiar grids and shift into familiar frames, and thus, individuals are able to overcome the queerness (the "horror") which accompanies it by dismissing it as a misperception. However, in her theory of queer phenomenology, Ahmed asks what would happen if individuals had different orientations to phenomena experienced as queer, orientations allowing them to "even find joy and excitement in the horror" (554). She reasons that "risking departure from the straight and narrow, makes new futures possible which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer"—becoming through identifying with the "joy and excitement in the horror" (ibid.). Building from Ahmed, I see that Castro attuned herself to and found "excitement" in the experiential queerness of pregnancy, and through her choreography, she resisted and helped the audience resist learned tendencies toward "straightening" experiences to corroborate existing knowledge.

In medicine and in broader society, many perceive "right side up" pregnancy through preestablished straight lines of thought and action. Such lines dictate socially "appropriate" timings and conditions of pregnancies, "appropriate" prenatal care, "normal" development by trimester, sequences of "healthy" pregnant sensations and behaviors, "healthy" ordered routines of bonding postpartum, and the establishment of an "appropriate" family structure and home environment for one’s child to meet their “normal” developmental milestones and to start their lives on the so called “up and up.” As Ahmed puts it, reiterating Merleau-Ponty, “for things to line up, queer of wonky moments are corrected;” in other words, by ascribing to an available pattern of behaviors and interpretations, the queer spacetime of pregnancy is either ignored or straightened into something locatable on preestablished lines of “appropriateness,” “health,” and “normalcy” (562). However, in art, as Castro demonstrated, it is more feasible than in, for instance healthcare, for experiences to stay queer. In performance, reality can be left “wonky” and performers and audience might be persuaded to resist “righting” their perceptions so as to make them “sensible” and recognizable. This is because in art, as Ahmed recognizes, it is possible “not to pledge allegiance to the familiar but to make the ‘familiar’ strange, or even to allow what has been overlooked… to dance with renewed life” (569). Just so, through making art, Castro was able to experience and represent aspects of pregnancy that were strange and overlooked in other social narratives of pregnancy.

Through quite literally refusing straight lines in time and space in her choreography—sending her dancers and audience on circuitous, amorphous, individualized journeys through the world of *Center of Sleep*—Castro knocked performers’ and witnesses’ perceptions off kilter and out of line. As a result, everyone could exist together in a queer experience of spacetime, self, and community. In his theorization of phenomenology, Heidegger presented that “Aspects show themselves and open up in ever new ways as we walk around the thing” (1999 [1988], 68). In *Center of Sleep*, Castro offered this idea as embodied experience for audiences who were forever engaged in circumambulation of performers, set pieces, and one another as they strove to be both out of the way and in the know. Consequently, the performance space disallowed for efficient pathways or the possibility of lining up and following one another. Ahmed argued that when we simply continue the trajectories of others around and ahead of us, these trajectories become further reified as normal and necessary, and there is, thus, no space to discover *more*. *Center of Sleep* was, in my reading of it, a physical iteration of Ahmed's conceptual model. As Ahmed explains, "the lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are … performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, or routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition" (555). She continues, "to say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way, we know which direction we face, only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view. So in following directions, I arrive, as if by magic" (555). Castro lifted the veil on this magic and made the work (and its undoing) apparent. In so doing, she made the "space to discover *more*."

Just as Castro was looking for ways to *become more* through the disorienting or "wonky" experiences of her life, her work required audience to constantly find their own navigations and orientations to it, spatially and conceptually. The dance offered no defined point from which a clear world unfolded, no, per Husserl "zero point" (1989). Rather, it worlded a space with no paths to follow and no zero points to which it was possible to return. Consequently, in *Center of Sleep*, there was only the present tense opportunity to move one's attentions, perspectives, and orientations in relationship to emergent situational changes, to be together with others as each person navigated her own places of comfort and curiosity, as each person "walk[ed] around the thing" so as to know it better.

Section four: Being present for the transformation

At a personal level, for Castro, openness to experiencing the dance and its constituting transformations from every possible perspective and orientation as well as in all of their queerness mattered because it afforded her increased sensitivity to the phenomena of her own pregnancy, in all its fleetingness and immensity. As she disclosed in our conversation, although she knew her body would experience many other metamorphoses, she knew that she did not want to have another child, so she acknowledged that "this was [her] opportunity to *feel* this and … absorb it." She wanted to be fully "*present* for the transformation;" she "wanted to be inside" of it and to find ways to support it. Creating and performing in the dance gave her just such opportunities. As a movement praxis, extended repetition of emergent patterns became a way for Castro to be more "present" and participant in her becoming. The science professors and scholarship that Castro had consulted as well as her lived experience of pregnancy convinced her that like sleep, repetition was indispensable for her growth and change. Studying sleep and contemplating her own felt need for more and more sleep, she learned that during sleep, the brain attempts to "catch up" with the body, by remembering the day's physical events and then rehearsing them over and over and over again. Consequently, she found herself drawn toward repetition as a choreographic device which would do important work within the piece as well as facilitate her personal transformation. This was especially the case for the choreography of her and Steele's duet; they embraced repetition as offering them a means to "catch up" with themselves as they changed.

Playing with repetition in the studio and trying to make something metonymic of their experiences of being changed through pregnancy, they realized that the repetitions within the choreography needed to be not only present but driving, dynamic, and intense, so as to match their lived experiences. After all, in their perceptions, pregnancy and its processes were never lulling or soft. Twelve years postpartum at the time of our conversation, she struggled to find words to describe the feeling of the repeated movements from the duet. "It actually feels like…" she paused and, remaining in her coffeeshop chair, began to twist her torso aggressively from side to side as if someone had her by the shoulders and was winding then unwinding her limp body to and frow. She remembered repeating such twists again and again with Steele, initiating from what felt like the “center of activity,” the vital materiality inside her uterus, and moving with full energy, even as, instinctively, her body protected what was delicate and vulnerable inside of her. She described her and Steele’s movement as an attempt to tap into the “will” of their bodies, that which was changing them in ways that were not mild or moderate but ways that they wanted to be “inside.”

Philosopher and poet Søren Kierkegaard wrote in *Fear and Trembling/Repetition* “what is recollected… is repeated backwards, whereas repetition is recollected forwards,” meaning repetition is generative and hospitable to newness (1983, 131). Similarly, in her writings on the phenomenology of womanhood (and its foundation, for her, in experiences of pregnancy or at least the possibility of pregnancy), Christine Battersby said that “Rhythmic repetitions provide the ‘labour’ that allows identity to emerge from conflictual multiplicities” (1998, 9). In other words, within the chaos of transformation, when spacetime functions differently for the individual, repetition offers a temporary marker, the planting of a proverbial flag, a gesture of self-assertion that allows one to feel participant in, rather than victim to, the processes forcibly altering them. Castro desired to *be* her own transformation as opposed to feeling transformed in spite of herself. Thus, she attempted to find the rhythm of change transmuting her body and, through letting it inspire choreography, to amply and reinforce it. In so doing, she, again, arrived at a similar model of becoming to Manning. Manning argues that becoming bodies can best know themselves through/as “pure plastic rhythm,” a conclusion Castor drew from her experiments in the studio (15). By sensing into and then, through repetition of a choreographic phrase, merging with and identifying with her internal rhythms, Castro experienced herself as participant in her own becoming. Per Manning, attempts to locate, join, and express emergent movement through repetition "preaccelerates a body toward its becoming" (6). Just so, Castro repeated rhythmic movement to corporeally accept and fortify changes while also performatively making more spacetime and momentum for them. She did not move *to* a rhythm so much as she, in the words of Manning "move[ed] rhythm," meaning, she merged with rhythm and thereby "preaccellerated" its effects (34). Thereby, she did not endure or accommodate pregnancy; rather, she became the processes of pregnancy.

Center of Sleep ended with fetal development, where it began, but this time, it presented *the* pregnant individual, not the organism(s) in the "womb," as the transforming subject. Steele, naked, eight months pregnant, and doing the athletic twisting solo that she and Castro developed together stepped into the performative space. The audience separated as she approached, offered a wide berth, but then, as if by collective instinct, encircled her protectively. She danced vigorously, with directness and perseverance, as she repeated her phrases to the point of exhaustion. She ended her dance as she had performed it—with clarity, calm, and decided lack of ceremony—then approached viewers who, again, broke apart to clear her path. She ascended onto a raised platform, then, seeming to leave the rarified space of performance despite the rapt attention of the audience, she causally drank from her water bottle, laid down on her side, and took a rest. After some time, she appeared to fall sleep, and the audience was left, as they were pre-performance, entirely unsure of what to do. The choreographed events seemed to have stopped, leaving us, as audience, to assume that the dance was over. Surmising as much, we also appreciated that between us and the exit was the "sleeping" Steele. Silently, again as a collective body, we agreed to tiptoe past Steele in order to leave the theater. In my experience, our movement up through what is normally the New York Live Arts seating area and toward the lobby doors offered a germane energetic transition to the spacetime outside of the world of *Center of Sleep*. Our ascension was hushed, pensive, gentle, and full of care. There was not banter between spectators, discussion of dinner plans, or a mad dash toward the subway to beat the crowd. Instead, there was attention to preserving the specialness of the world we were departing and consideration for maintaining conditions for Steele to sleep. Together, we were sensitive to the importance of not intruding upon the rest that, the piece had argued, Steele dearly needed for the transformation in which she was participant.

Castro's own qualitative transition to a spacetime outside of the world of *Center of Sleep* was less tender and calm than what she offered the audience. Although the ending of *Center of Sleep* was supposed to be a danced duet, it became a solo when Castro went into labor during tech week. Much to Castro's frustration, the timing of her artistic and fetal gestions did not fully align, or perhaps aligned too perfectly, both culminating at once. Thus, as her dancers took the stage, she was at the hospital in her new process of giving birth. In other words, the physiological timing of her pregnancy and the queer timing of her experience of pregnancy did not conveniently fit with the calendar (linear, *straight*) timing of live theater scheduling. However, for Castro, she recognized that *Center of Sleep* had autonomy beyond her participation in it, and after all, she had been adamant from the beginning that she did not want the piece to be about her, her specific pregnancy, of the feelings unique to her body. With or without her participation in the performance, her becoming body remained present because the piece shared her personal phenomenology of perception, especially in its relationalities and its temporality. Moreover, even without her physical presence, she remained very much in relationship to the work.

Center of Sleep dancer Heather Olson remembered Castro calling her from the hospital with final notes and requesting that Olson film sections and bring them to the birthing ward so that she could consider last-minute adjustments. While Olson refused, fondly dismissing Castro as a "warrior workhorse," I would like to hope that continuing to work on the piece from her hospital bed offered Castro the opportunity to stay inside the queer world the piece offered, even as she found herself in the hospital, where spacetime was organized along decidedly *straight* trajectories (Yanira Castro and Heather Olson, in discussion with the author, July 2019). Furthermore, for Castro, giving birth in no way marked the ending of her pregnancy or the conclusion of her metamorphosis, in her experiences of her body and herself as an artist. When we discussed her experiential time of pregnancy, Castro remarked that it was, per her experience, even longer than puberty, with the bulk happening in what some call the "fourth trimester." She said that her own transformation into something definitively different from becoming pregnant did not occur until her child, Lucien, was going to school five days a week for most of each day. It was only then—when the temporalities and rhythms of their days no longer aligned into a Deleuzian "musical" block—that she felt enough of a separation for one personal transition to segue into the next phase of her metamorphosis.

Section five: Queering futurity, becoming *more*, and making time *lazy*

Castro's choreographic process taps into the queer potential of the present moment as a means to reorient and thereby become participant in transformation. However, for other artists, queer performances in the present are enacted as a means to anticipate, forecast, and prevision possible, better, queerer futures. Performance theorist José Muñoz built a theory of performative "queer futurity," a concept he proposed as utopian. Like Halberstam, he recognized such "queer futurity" as extant in queer subcultures which "produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Halberstam 2005, 2). Although he anticipated that such utopias would be impossible to realize in largescale or lasting ways in the "real world," he saw in performance the opportunity to center alternative temporalities and to fully, albeit provisionally, leave "the here and now of straight time for a then and a there that might be queer futurity" (2009, 185). In other words, in performance, futures, or alternative realities, can exist in the present and, at least in the present tense, be "real." In so being, they offer real alternatives to the status-quo and thus, they affirm and encourage hope, sometimes lifesaving or life-sustaining hope, for individuals identifying their experiences of self as queer.

The work of choreographer Miguel Gutierrez exemplifies Muñozian thought. Concurrent to Castro, in another corner of New York City, Gutierrez also saw the queer potentiality of a pregnant body and of using pregnancy epistemologically, not simply symbolically, to destabilize binary categories and *straight* time. Gutierrez purposefully incorporated pregnant dancer Anna Azrieli into his evening of work *Retrospective Exhibitionist/Difficult Bodies* (2005-2006). In my reading of Gutierrez's work, it recognized that pregnancy—in the ways that it temporarily interrupts "normal" life and introduces nonnormative logics and organizations of embodiment, spacetime, and community—offers another way into Muñoz's "then and there that might be queer futurity." Inviting pregnancy to inspire and reside within his live performance, Gutierrez augmented the queer yearning and utopianism of his art.

In *Retrospective Exhibitionist*, Gutierrez offered a first-person look back at his early years as a dancer. He shared autobiographical photos, videos, and commentary with the audience. He also shared honest and at times brutal acknowledgment of the ways in which his body was aging and changing with the march of time. For instance, he stripped off his clothing at numerous points and to numerous degrees under harsh, unforgiving stage lighting and subjected himself to scrutiny. At one point, he yelled in campy despair, “I could have been somebody!” However, in the face of entrenched professional standards, trajectories, and hierarchies of successfulness in the dance world—which might define his career as post-denouement and his body as past its prime—Gutierrez used the rest of his dance to dismantle these *straight* formations, formations which would make him feel like he was not “somebody.” In their stead, he choreographically conjured a more livable “queer futurity.” *Difficult Bodies* was the solo’s coda, and in it, he extended the spacetime of his body into other bodies and into a more stylized movement vocabulary, while staying within the experiential world of his transition to maturity (not deterioration) as an artist. In this coda, three female dancers—Azrieli, Michelle Boulé, and Abby Crain—performed a silky seemingly molten dance which largely consisted of in-unison rolling patterns on the floor. Together, they performed the queerness of Gutierrez’s transformation into a mature artist with a mature body, reframing this transformation as a Deleuzian “virtual unfurling of being” which opened a future wide ahead of him. While dancing, the trio shed old skins by slithering out of sequined cocktail dresses, continuing to dance in black panties and bras, and eventually acquiring new skins by donning mismatched, and well-worn t-shirts for the piece’s finale.

When Gutierrez was invited to remount the dance in 2006, Azrieli was visibly pregnant, a situation which he fully embraced and which became a major point of discussion in critics’ reviews of the work. For example, in her 2006 article for *Dance Magazine*, Wendy Perron remarked that “Anna Azrieli, the dancer in the center, was pregnant but unfurled her clothing as smoothly as Michelle Boulé and Abby Crain” (2013). Perron was surprised both by Azrieli’s privilege of place (she was not hidden in a formation where her body was less of a focal point), her level of ability (despite being pregnant), and Gutierrez’s decision to not give her specialized choreography or a special role (considering that her body had special affective valence). Indeed, as Perron applauded, Azrieli maintained total synchronicity with the others in the rolling on the floor and the undressing/re-dressing. However, while her body was legibly transforming and, by its mere presence, helping to reinforce ideas of genesis and rebirth, Gutierrez, not she, remained the clear subject of piece. In other words, Azrieli's pregnancy in no way re-populated or explicitly altered the narrative of the dance. That being said, both the rolling on the floor, which placed a pregnant Azrieli at times in the, medically speaking, taboo positions of being both prone and supine, and the section in underwear in which the bare skin stretched across her taut belly was wholly exposed and her full breasts held within her lace bra were daringly conspicuous, brought my attention, as an audience member, to her vulnerability and the risks that she was taking to perform Gutierrez as he wished to be seen. Consequently, while mesmerizing and, per Perron, impressive, Azrieli's presence also gave this dance of transformation a palpable sense of risk as well as precarity, both qualities that were not as present in the prior version. Watching it, I extrapolated that Gutierrez identified with this danger and felt even more seen than before in her exposure (as his surrogate), her possible susceptibility, and also in the promises and secrets that her body held.

Bringing the dance to a close, after a series of extreme bodily behaviors—including guttural screaming and thrashing about violently—and then a series of provocations of the audience, the trio arrived downstage. Apparently, they were on the other side of their metamorphoses and appeared steady, serene, and resolute. They, analogous of Gutierrez himself, had gone from something seemingly sleek and shiny to something broken-in, unpretentious, semi-feral, unquestionably present, and demanding to be witnessed in all its power. While lip-synching the Destiny's Child song *I'm a Survivor*, the trio was rejoined on stage by Gutierrez for the final moments in which the four bodies coalesced into one bigger body that then related to the audience. In her review of the piece, titled "Miguel Gutierrez: Transcending Uncertainty," art critic Lisa Paul Streitfeld reflected that "As Gutierrez partners with … the women, his vulnerability gains him the visible support that results in authentic interconnection with the feminine" (2006). She continued, "For a gay dance artist whose identity was forged in the aggressive moves of ACT UP in San Francisco, this is a huge leap into the abyss" (ibid.). In the Muñozian "there and then" of this "abyss," together, as one body, the four chanted adamantly and as performative utterance, "I am perfect, and you will love me, and everyone in this room is in this fucking dance!" With this declarative, the audience was interpolated directly into Gutierrez's becoming and into the extension of the queer reality he had worlded into an emergent future. We, like Azrieli, were the mirrors through which he saw himself, the possibilities through which he grew himself, and the witnesses who affirmed his transformation. Streitfeld appreciated that through Gutierrez's framing, "we [the audience] are conspirators in this dramatic process of surrender, disintegration and rebirth" which is toward "a full-body awareness of the holistic Self" (ibid.). Gutierrez asserted himself as a "survivor," as "somebody," as whole, and even as he was mature, as continuing to *become more*. Streitfeld concluded in wonder, "Think of the possibilities of … expanding to fulfill this vision!" (ibid.). This was precisely what the dance charged the audience to do.

In addition to having a pregnant performer and the theme of metamorphoses, Gutierrez and Castro's choreographic inquires aligned in their interest in the transformative power of sleep. Soon after the remount of *Difficult Bodies*, when Azrieli was in the final months of her pregnancy, she was among the cast of Gutierrez's project *Everyone* (2007). Part of the making of this piece was what Gutierrez called a "napping practice." This meant that the cast would get together and take a one-hour nap followed by their one-hour improvisation/rehearsal. Gutierrez described napping as productively tempering his "force of ideas… by inducing a state of laziness" into the choreographic process (ibid.). His interest in napping was in fact an interest in cultivating a productively queer temporality; he expressed his hope that starting with a nap would detach everyone involved from a "production-oriented forward moving time" and invite them into what he called "sideways" time, but what we could call "queer futurity" (Gutierrez 2016). The practice of napping was inspired by Azrieli, who he saw regularly dropping out of group activities to go nap in the corner, a practice that initially annoyed him and then hugely intrigued him. As a choreographer trying to follow the logic of his body, he admired her submission to her body's sense of time and the clarity of her perception of her physical needs and drives. Inviting everyone into this napping practice was also, for him, a way to abdicate his own control over the means and pace by which the work developed and to dissuade himself from having a *straight* trajectory for where it should arrive. It was thereby a nod to postmodern predecessors like Merce Cunningham who utilized what he called "chance operations," such as rolling dice or consulting the *i Ching* when needing to make a choreographic decision, as opposed to centering himself, his aesthetic desires, and his authorship in his work. However, Gutierrez's "chance operations" unlike Cunningham's were rooted in aspects of embodiment like biorhythms, physiology, and sexuality, aspects that Cunningham fully avoided as they seemed counterproductive to his mission of "abstracting" bodies through his art. Gutierrez's interest in queering, as opposed to abstracting, meant that more bodily and human experiences (his own and those of others) could be present in his process and relevant to his work.

Azrieli, from her perspective, valued the attentions that Gutierrez paid to her pregnancy and his openness to grow his creative processes so as to not only allow for her body but to appreciate her body. In a roundtable conversation at Movement Research about parenthood and dance, she reflected that consistently, "[Gutierrez] really changed from who he was working with" (2017). In allowing himself to creatively stretch so that he could understand and support the experiences of his pregnant collaborators, as other panel participants corroborated, he was unique among the postmodern choreographers with whom they had worked and an anomaly among male choreographers. Azrieli continued, that beyond pregnancy and into parenthood, even though Gutierrez does not have children of his own, he made space for her son in his process and in company culture. This meant welcoming her baby into the studio for rehearsals, arranging money for Azrieli to pay for childcare when working with him, and accepting that she would need to say no to gigs, projects, and touring opportunities for which he could not cover the cost of her and her son's presence. She respected that he was always open to conversations around her needs, and "he just kept learning from… the struggle" to stretch the culture and methods of his ensemble, The Powerful People, to make space to support more people's experiences. Fittingly, in his artist's statement, Gutierrez says that his work is about "how to live in the world, how to love, [and] how to feel about being yourself" (https://www.miguelgutierrez.org accessed Aug 31, 2020). He says his dances are, both "about things and are things themselves." In other words, his dances world worlds that allow his dancers to explore his ongoing research questions of livability and lovability of oneself and others, and his work takes as its foundation that his company members "are all powerful people" whom he respects and from whom he learns (ibid.). In his interactions with Azrieli, we see one manifestation of this mission, its affirmation of her life, its appreciation of her power, and its presentation of a "queer futurity" in which both their bodies and many more bodies can experience themselves as intriguing, powerful, and loved.

Section six: Part of the zeitgeist

Castro, while she never saw either of Gutierrez's pieces, heard about their similarities to *Center of Sleep* from other individuals, and while the similarities immediately concerned her, they later attracted and excited her. She wondered, considering that she and Gutierrez's dance careers in New York had run parallel to one another, if perhaps they were both responding to a larger "zeitgeist" of her cohort of early 2000's postmodern artists (Castro, discussion). She explained that in New York "there's a lot of people working within a similar gestation," intending the pun and continued, "even though he himself was not pregnant… someone close to him [Azrieli] was, and we're the same age, and so therefore maybe there were similarities in how we were looking at it." She was not alone in feeling that pregnancy, as idea and lived experience, was very present within the so called "downtown dance" scene for her generation of interdisciplinary artists. Over a decade after their performance of *Center of Sleep*, I interviewed Castro's contemporaries and collaborators, dancers Cheng and Olson, about their experiences inside of its processes and performance and also with their own pregnancies. Cheng, while pregnant during the making of *Center of Sleep*, has since had another daughter, and Olson has had two children (as well as other pregnancies resulting in miscarriages) since participating in the work. Beyond *Center of Sleep*, Cheng performed at eight months pregnant in another work reflecting on pregnancy by choreographer Maura Nguyen Donohue. Because of her experience with Donohue as well as seeing other pregnancy inclusive work of the same period, she did not see Castro's choreographic interest in pregnancy or her choreographic incorporation of live pregnant bodies as particularly groundbreaking (Peggy Cheng, in discussion with the author, July 2019). Olson, like Castro, made and performed a dance, *Shy Showoff*, during her first pregnancy. She shared that doing so helped her understand, control, and communicate her experiences and, like Gutierrez, to assert herself as present and as an evolving artist in the face of the "dance world," which she feared would treat her as obsolete and past her peak post-partum. However, when I asked Olson about *Center of Sleep*, she began her response by saying, "Oh my god. Soooo many babies came out of that dance!" (Heather Olson, in discussion with the author, July 2019). Both Cheng and Olson appreciated that beyond Cheng's, Steele's, and Castro's pregnancies, *Center of Sleep* was made smack in the middle of a historical moment when, for the first time, many postmodern dancers and choreographers were electing to become parents. Cheng spoke to this phenomenon: "When I came to New York in the mid-nineties it [pregnancy] was not part of the conversation.... I remember distinctly hearing from people who were older—not hearing, *overhearing* them talking about 'it's not a good idea'." However, for her and many others in her cohort of dancers, neither did they heed this advice, nor did they feel a responsibility to heed it. Instead, their senses of responsibility lie elsewhere. As Cheng explained, "I've had a lot of conversations with people my age about feeling like … foundations were laid, and it would almost be wrong or shameful to not take advantage of some of those…. These things [women's rights to both a career and a family] have been fought for!" As we spoke, she paused here and took time to organize her next words: "I don't know, I mean, when I was—" She stopped and restarted, "a lot of the people I know, we went to these small liberal arts colleges where you were told that you can go out and do anything… I mean—" she hesitated then emphasized, "that you *should*." While she quickly qualified that it is impossible to speak for an entire generation of dancers, she was resolute that in her communities in New York City and Brooklyn, there was unequivocally a "very specific shift around" pregnancy that seemed "to echo…the other bigger shift for the generation I belong to," but that was particular in that there was "something" about "*performance* and *creativity* and dance *making* and [the] role that plays for people in their lives that also made space for that shift." In other words, she saw dance both offering visibility to the shift and clearing a path for it to happen.

Cheng explained that "the shift" was primarily one of discourse: "this idea that parenting is a generative thing, and it feeds creativity is something that I started to hear people say, and I had never really thought of it that way, and it felt like a new idea." This idea became part of the "conversation" of postmodern dance communities, even to the point that formal panels and advocacy groups were established through "downtown dance" organizations to discuss it. For example, Movement Research held "Studies Projects" discussing if the dance field makes "Room for Parenting" and for "Dancer-Parents" and it created the "All Together Now: Artist-Parent Community Meet-up." Cheng also mentioned the novelty and radicalness of dances in the early 2000's that were grounded in pregnancy (despite their pervasiveness); suddenly, pregnancy was "much more a part of the material and research than just a *story* to tell … it's not your personal story, it's actually bigger." I appreciated Cheng, Olson, and Castro's parsing of the "zeitgeist" of their generation of postmodernists and their identification with this spirit of the time. Together, they spoke to the opportunity as well as the pressure to find meaning, purpose, acceptability, and inspiration in experiential processes of pregnancy and also to see their transforming bodies as having the potential to evolve the dance field toward more inclusivity. As their bodies were *becoming more*, so too did they hope that their field could *become more*, for an inclusive future, previously unfathomable, became imaginable and, in particular instances, manifest.

This "zeitgeist" did not produce a more utopian dance world, per say. To reiterate Muños, *becoming more* as a queer politics is more feasible, safer, and possibly more liberating in art than in life outside of performance. For instance, Cheng was quick to critique as naïve the idea that becoming a parent is a possible, worthwhile, empowering, feminist, and creatively enriching option for *all* female artists. She explained that she feels her generation is “still in a *struggle*” with the idea of needing to be “so many things,” to be “*everything*.” She exemplified, “how do I parent *and* work full time *and* be super involved in my child’s life *and* be…fulfilled creatively *and* be a really interesting conversationalist? … *and* be well-read *and* be….” She trailed off into laughter, but her questions hung in the air for the remainder of our conversation. Our discussion helped me to appreciate that inside the carefully constructed spacetimes of live performances, in which orientations, relationships, and circuitous flights of movement can be choreographed, it is, decidedly more possible to hold things together in a queer and reciprocally supportive way. So too is it possible to choreograph society (in the microcosm of the audience) in ways that support an artist’s own experiences of *becoming more*. In the world of performance, a person can be stretched *further* rather than being stretched *thin* by allowing herself to identify and orient in multiple ways. In performance, the self can exist as rhizome, as fluxus, as motion rather than as a bounded singularity that can only divide itself and its energy so as to meet the separate responsibilities of each of one’s identifications. Hence, as Muñoz surmised, queer worlding through performance affords livability in a way that “real” life often does not.

Part five: The hope within queer failure

Interestingly, while both of Gutierrez’s works received a great deal of critical acclaim, Castro’s work was less enthusiastically received by the press. For example, in her *New York Times* review, Claudia La Rocco harshly critiqued Castro’s experimental materialization of spacetime. She wrote, “Ms. Castro does not seem to inhabit any specific artistic space …. There is no secret world to discover within these settings, so the works feel like empty boxes—fancily wrapped, but empty all the same” (2008). Moreover, La Rocco critiqued that the dance “by a naked, pregnant Ashley Steele felt as if it had been plucked from another world" (ibid). While Castro, as a practice, does not read press about her works and thus did not read La Rocco's feedback, she was appraised by others that is was not favorable. Accepting that la Rocco had "serious questions" about the work, she wished and still, over a decade later, wishes that they could have had a conversation about it and its, per La Rocco, shortcomings. Castro felt strongly that La Rocco simply did not allow herself to be part of the work; rather, she tried to look at it through a habitual critical lens. Afterall, in order to review the work favorably, critics like La Rocco would have to allow their perception to become queer, to resist straightening their impression into the logic of language and the valuation of "good" or "bad" dance, and to appreciate the work precisely for the ways in which it took them and kept them off kilter.

Clearly, in her memory of the work, Castro struggles with the fact that *Center of Sleep* was not the popular success that she anticipated it would be. While it had great personal significance for her, it pained her that some others perceived it as a failure. However, queer theory puts forth that failure is integral to queer worldmaking. Muñoz insists that disappointment is a big part of utopian longing because utopia is always destined to fail. As Muñoz explains, "queer failure is often deemed or understood as failure because it rejects normative ideas of value;" after all, "within straight time the queer can only fail" (174). Accordingly, interpreting Castro's work as failing was accurate in that the dance failed to be normal. However, *Center of Sleep* never set out to be normal, so was being seen as a failure by those socially sanctioned to have "good taste" perhaps a sign of its queer success? While reductive to binarize in such a way (success/failure), according to Muñoz, queer failure is decidedly productive: "despite the seeming negativity, a generative politics can be potentially distilled from the aesthetics of queer failure," and the beauty of queer failure is the hint of potentiality that it introduces to the world

(173). Similarly, Halberstam's 2011 project *The Queer Art of Failure* emphasized the limitations of conventional conceptions of success because of their roots in heteronormative, capitalist society. Halberstam appreciated the value of the "low," that which is not trumpeted as "high" culture or "high" theory, and he pondered the possibility of practices of valuation which do not reiterate pre-approved methods of knowing and that are not reliant of what has already been accepted as successful and archivable. For both Muñoz and Halberstam, queer failure reveals the biases fundamental to hegemonic *straight* time, *straight* space, and "normal" life. Thus, "the politics of failure are about doing something else, that is, doing something else in relation to a something that is missing in straight time's always already flawed … mapping practice" (174). Castro's map, in *Center of Sleep* was not *straight*, but it was far from being "empty," as La Rocco saw it; it was disorganized, labyrinthine, and truncated exactly as a queer world needs to be so as to never fall back into familiar grooves and familiar orientations. She was not trying to define a territory so much as refuse existing territory. For like Irigaray said in encouraging those who are "becoming woman" to find their own expressions and to embrace *difference* as episteme,

> It's not that we have a territory of our own; but their fatherland, family, home, discourse, imprison us in enclosed spaces where we cannot keep on moving, living as ourselves. Their properties are our exile. Their enclosures, the death of our love. Their words, the gag upon our lips. (1985, 212)

While La Rocco criticized the suddenness with which Castro introduced elements so that they appeared "plucked from another world," as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner proposed in their theory of "queer counterpublics," a queer world requires the bold conglomeration of disparate elements and the refusal to organize them: "a queer world is a space of extraneous exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projecting horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurable geographies" (1998, 558).

When Steele's pregnant body finally entered the performance, it entered a fully queer space, and thus it was not intended to be seen from any familiar perspective or within any familiar story. Something seemingly "plucked from another world" should not have surprised viewer-participants at that point in the show; but for La Rocco, she did not see *the* pregnant body as one component within the larger proposal of the piece, as Castro had intended it. For La Rocco, in all probability, Steele's body was too dominant, too strange, and too storied a symbol, and "the intellectual experience of disorder" that it evoked—to return to Merleau-Ponty's phrase—made her want to straighten it onto a recognizable trajectory so that it lined up with what she knew.

Regardless of how it was reviewed, Castro said, placing a hand tenderly on her chest as we chatted, that *Center of Sleep* still holds a very "special place in [her] heart" not only because it surrounded her child's birth but because it documented her own burgeoning, dimensional growth (Castro, discussion). In my reading of the work, alongside my readings of Ahmed and Muñoz, the fact that it existed at all, matters hugely because the queer world that Castro manifested in her art surrounding her pregnancy offered audiences and performers experiences of queer phenomenology that, even if they were fleeting, created what Muñoz called, "flight plan[s] for a collective political becoming" (189). In the work's refusal of existing order, it opened space to long for collective transformation. For Muñoz, the longing and the promise of different kinds of futures is enough for the present to be more livable. As Muñoz says, queerness is always and importantly a "not yet here," and an ideality. When realized in art, meaning when art offers, as Castro's did, a manifest queer reality, it creates a powerful experience of the future in the present, which creates the opportunity for hope. Hope, for Muñoz was not only an affect but was the methodology behind his work and that which, like Castro and like Gutierrez, tuned his imagination. Consequently, he concluded, as I hope Castro also feels, “the eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process” (10).

Castro had her child before she could perform pregnant.
A hope dashed.
Her work was not well received by critics.
A hope dashed.
Her child was born into a world that treated Lucien as a “boy” and required her to be a choreographer *and* a mother *and* myriad other seemingly conflicting responsibilities.
All, hopes dashed.

However, the thinking commenced in this artistic process and the world created in the theater during the performances created potentiality that even at the time of our last conversation, feeds Castro and keeps her hopeful and vitally imaginative. Experiences of becoming, the desire to keep becoming, and relationships that facilitate becoming continue to drive her art.

Conclusion: Continuous *becoming*, leaving it *wonky*, and queering care

At the time of our conversation in 2019, Castro was preparing for her child, then 12, to begin puberty; thus, *Center of Sleep* had special poignancy for her. The biological time that she had folded over itself in the world of her dance so as to make concurrent the temporality of embryology/pregnancy and the temporality of puberty had now transpired in the physical body of her child. As a mother and an established choreographer, whose own qualitative fourth trimester (which quantitatively lasted five years), came to a close some seven years ago, Castro also felt herself preparing for a next cycle. She was anticipating menopause. Having been present for various transformations in her life, she did not expect her sense of self to remain stable or familiar through the next changes. As an individual and an artist, Castro continues to reject a search for self that is reliant on certainty and particularity; instead, she sees and expresses herself choreographically as in continuity, relationality, and development with other forces and fluxes. Thus, at the time of our conversation, she was trying to gather knowledge and energies to enter the flows of the imminent experiences when both herself and her son would begin new metamorphoses within their unforeseeable but approaching spacetimes. As much as she wanted to prepare herself to be intentional in how she experienced and related to these next developments, she was peacefully aware that bodies, not egos, make such processes happen: "there's so much that you might want to try to *lead* yourself … but there's only so much you can affect." Instead of trying to control and choreograph her next metamorphosis, she hoped to once again surrender to and then be present for her and her son's ongoing transformations, embracing that through ongoing metamorphoses they each could still become *anything*.

As a choreographer, Castro resisted the *straightening* of her pregnancy, creating a performative space for it to maintain its queerness. In other words, *Center of Sleep* offered her an alternative and highly personal interpretive framework with which to make meaning from her pregnant body. However, for pregnant individuals not engaged with an artistic worldmaking praxis, creating such a space-time is a difficult operation made more difficult still when the dominant discourse by which they interpret their pregnant bodies is their prenatal medical care. In addition to linearly organizing pregnancy along a timeline of "healthy" milestones, medicine often *straightens* pregnancy by fitting it to the narratives of binary gender and heterosexuality, since these narratives are pre-couched in conventional ideas of "healthy" and "normal" bodies. For example, in medicine, as in much of society at large, heterosexuality tends to be the unspoken key point of orientation, the seeming "neutral" orientation, Husserl's "zero point." Consequently, caregivers have unconscious, what Ahmed calls, "straight tendencies" for interpreting and discussing the bodies for which they are caring (561). According to Ahmed, "straight tendencies" determine "how things arrive, and how they gather in their very availability as things to do things with" (558). In other words, because of "straight tendencies," what matters to us and, hence, what we do and do not attend to and do and do not build knowledge from ("do things with") is that which lines up with what we already see as "normal" and "neutral." For instance, no matter our sexual-identification, -orientation, or -object choice, we are nested within a larger social body that presumes, due to "straight tendencies," that "the heterosexual couple [is] a social gift" (561). Consequently, the heterosexual couple automatically "extends into space" without hitch or barrier, while queer bodies, queer families, and queer experiences must struggle and maneuver to gain purchase on space (ibid.). Accordingly, while *straightness* might be invisible, queerness attracts attention and can be socially interpreted as noncompliance, aberrance, or—to use Ahmed's word—"wonkiness" because it is put in contrast to master narratives like the ostensibly "neutral" nuclear family.

This can especially be the case, albeit unintentionally, in clinical spaces surrounding prenatal care which, in efforts toward efficiency and standardization of care, presume heterosexuality and the *straightness* of family lines and family structures. Consequently, anything that does not "line up" de-rails business as usual. Thus, the integrity and agency of queer families—with queer including but not being limited to, families not composed of a female identifying and male identifying couple who have, through sexual intercourse with each other, produced a child who will be determined to be male or female and expected to partner with a person of the opposite sex and thereby continue the family line for time immemorial—requires extra effort and ingenuity in clinical spaces. Some hospital systems, like that of UCLA (thanks to the strident efforts and determination of humanistic health science researchers, who work outside of hegemonic medicine), take great pains to in no way restrict or limit the privileges and rights of birthing individuals on the bases of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation (just as they have zero tolerance for discrimination against patients based on race, skin color, national origin, religion, or any “disabilities”). However, this is not the case of all or even most hospitals, and moreover, lack of discrimination in patient care is not, de facto, patient-centered care or queerly oriented care. As Ahmed says, “A queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way to inhabit the world that gives ‘support’ to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place” (2006b, 179). In clinical spaces, while there may be tolerance or even inclusion of queer identifications, there is rarely “support,” and this is because the attentions and choreographies that would make such support possible are not part of most healthcare trainings or hospital culture.

From the perspective of clinical care, “The queer body becomes … a faded orientation” as Ahmed explains, because “the queer body does not extend into such space, as that space extends the form of the heterosexual couple” and all of the *straight* sociohistorical trajectories associate with it (560). As a result, the queer body in a *straight* space creates an experience like Merleau-Ponty’s angled mirror: it “might look like they are slanting or oblique,” and it might thereby incite discomfort in caregivers who must either reorient themselves slant-wise so as to better align with patients’ needs or, as is more typically the case, try to get the patient back “in line” in the interest of health, safety, and regulations (560). The pregnant individual who enters prenatal and perinatal care from a queer orientation—for example, who refuses to ground experiences in binarized gender and to orient understandings around heterosexuality—throw standard procedures off kilter, but in ways that Ahmed would see as fecund. Ahmed asks her readers to consider the exciting potential of what could happen if we contemplate “the queer potential of the oblique” (ibid.). For instance, can we imagine choreographies of *oblique* care in which caregivers hold space for their own disorientation and have praxes for reorientation along slanting, curving, or shifting axes? Might such practices allow them to accommodate and support more patients' experiences and thereby grow their capacity for caring?

However, due to "straight tendencies"—not exclusively tied to heterosexuality, but which extend, as heterosexuality does, social ideas of what is "normal," "neutral," "natural," and the "correct" orientation—a variety of relational possibilities and family structures are rarely accounted for as a regular part of clinical practice. In addition to having repercussions for the mental health of some patients, as nurse practitioner Jennifer Searle states, in terms of effective medical care, the *straightness* of practices is especially problematic because it dissuades pregnant patients from disclosing personal information about their queer experiences of their bodies, selves, and families, information which is relevant and sometimes critical for those caring for them (2019). From a philosophy of nursing perspective, this is a serious issue that should be rectified as part of preventative care and that evidences the highly problematic nature of patriarchal medicine. Nursing schools are increasingly and intentionally independent from medical schools and nursing professors educate and train nurses to see their work as much more than solely supporting the efforts of physicians. Many nurse scholars and clinical nurses recognize their work as intervening in the hegemony of medicine and counteracting the ways in which standard medical practices may be oppressive to and negligent of many individuals' lived experiences of their bodies. For many birthing individuals with queer orientations, they must decide whether to, what nurse scholar Lisa Goldberg calls, "come out" to their provider, thereby disclosing their queer orientation (2009, 2011). Whether or not to "come out" is a decision individuals calculatedly make through gauging how they think their physicians will respond and how knowing as much might impact the care that their providers subsequently offer them (McManus, Hunter, & Renn, 2006; Stevens, 1995; Tash & Kenney, 1993). Nurse scientists studying “queer pregnancy” in the interest of optimizing patient care and experiences report a general lack of trust in healthcare providers and avoidance of routine healthcare for the majority of queer-identifying parents (Goldberg 2009, Davis 2000, McNair 2003).

Of course, this does not indicate that clinical providers do not have kind intentions, compassionate practices, goals of inclusivity, and evidence-based support for extant choreographies of care. However, many queer parents share fear and negative expectations, and they do not anticipate support for queer orientations in clinical spaces. Such misgivings and apprehensions are typically pragmatic because they are grounded in queer individuals lived experiences of being mistreated or misunderstood. For instance, the literal space of health clinics and the language and images of the posters and brochures that they contain most often present “healthy” heterosexual couples giving birth to a “healthy” “girl” or a “healthy” “boy.” Consequently, other family structures and relationships to gender identification are invisibilized or even tacitly pathologized (Sanvidge Spinks, Andrews, & Boyle 2000; Stevens, 1995). As nurse scholars Goldberg and colleagues Ami Harbin and Sue Campbell point out, “although nurses typically intend to provide ‘safe’ and ‘good’ care for [queer] birthing women, the impact of under-recognized heterosexism and homophobia often makes such well-intended practices fraught. Commitments to ‘treating everyone the same’ can contribute further to homophobia in birthing environments” (2011, 174). Consequently, queer orientations are often only cautiously disclosed by patients for fear of receiving worse care or being pathologized by their healthcare providers.

Moreover, observing omissions of queer representation in the physical spaces, performances, and culture of prenatal and obstetrics care, and desiring optimal attention from clinicians, many birthing individuals feel compelled to perform *straightness* while receiving care. For instance a lesbian couple might not present themselves as a romantic couple, might allow the non-birthing spouse to be spoken to as the “husband,” or a non-binary or butch birthing individual might tolerate she/her pronouns and being spoken about as the “wife” or the “mommy.” Consequently, out of fear of not being taken care of, as Douglas Crimp discussed in *Melancholia and Moralism*, queer individuals end up performing identification precisely with what “repudiates them” because they fear retribution for alternative identifications (2002, 6). As a result, in the clinical care space, they *straighten* themselves and conform to “neutral” scripts. However, what follows is that the status quo is further fortified, certain ways of doing and understanding pregnancy and birthing are further normalized, and *straightness* extends even further into space while remaining for those seemingly unaffected by it, unseen. As Ahmed writes, “We walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. A paradox of the footprint emerges. Lines are both created by being followed and as followed by being created” (555).

However, some birthing individuals who enter into unwelcoming clinical spaces—often with great effort, resolve, and intentionality—create personalized interpretations and meanings for the practices surrounding birthing. They refuse to compromise their orientation or to *straighten up*, and in so doing, even if temporarily, they transform the available possibilities for their health. In *In a Queer Time and Place*, Halberstam speaks to the importance of paying attention to such individuals’ personal creative avoidance of *straightening up*: “We have become adept … at talking about ‘normativity’ but far less adept at describing in rich detail the practices and structures that both oppose and sustain conventional forms of association, belonging and identification” (2005, 4).

In the case of Castro, the literal choreographic process of making a dance allowed her to maintain queer spacetime even while in the birthing ward and "on the clock"nd of productive, healthy labor. In an environment where she had little control over her experience, she shifted her experience of self to the "forms of association, belonging and identification" within *Center of Sleep.* She recounted to me how, as the performance was about to debut, between contractions, she was calling dancers to see if they would dance her part and how she "stayed up until 2:00 in the morning typing notes [for each performer] while in labor!" She acknowledged proudly, "Yes, that's nuts. That's nuts… just crazy in a really great way" (Castro, discussion). Her behavior was covertly but assertively queer; it was clandestinely resistive, and it kept her in the world and relationships that offered the support that she needed, even as she felt she was being forcibly *straightened* in other ways.

Choreographer Meg Foley—who we return to here at the conclusion of this last chapter after meeting her at the beginning, in the first chapter—had a more overtly defiant strategy than Castro for choreographing resistance to the *straightening* of her birthing experience in the hospital. She and her gender nonbinary partner Carmichael Jones worked very hard to queer their birthing space so as to protect their family and senses of selves while Foley gave birth. When her water broke five weeks early, Foley and Jones' birthing plan drastically changed. Instead of birthing with midwives and her doula in a "natural" birthing suite, she was rushed into a hospital bed and immediately seen by an obstetrician who she remembered, "did not ask before he put his fingers inside my body" (Meg Foley, in discussion with the author, September 2019). This invasive and impersonal act "set a clock" for her: since her water had broken, she was restricted to 24 hours to safely deliver the baby, and even fewer hours to deliver without Pitocin (medically administered synthetic oxytocin which stimulates uterine contractions). It felt to her like everyone was keeping time, and for the next 24 hours, while on the clock, her body was monitored and evaluated by many anonymous "authorities" sanctioned to tell her how normal or abnormal she was and to threaten her with looming medical interventions if her body did not get "in line." Suddenly and despite herself, she was in "straight time," a "decision" which she experienced as being violently made for her. She described her subsequent interactions with clinical staff as consistently making her feel like her body was "wrong" and needing to be righted. Foley was pressured numerous times by care practitioners to get things to a "healthy" pace, which to her felt hostile and endangering. She described one instance:

> This nurse came in, and I felt so protective. I remember feeling so protective. Like… I have to get away with this.… At that point it became really clear to me that I didn't know the answer to the question of, *at what point can they force me to do something that I don't want to do?*

An already profoundly stressful experience became more stressful still when after a blood pressure reading, she was told that she had to be induced, that it was an emergency, and that if she refused, she could (with an implied *would*) go into seizure and die. Foley described the nurses' approach to speaking to her and her partner as "alarm bells," and as primarily intending to tell Foley "This is DANGEROUS!!" However, Foley fought to stay in her own queer spacetime. For her, it was the threatening environment and not the act of birthing that was stressing her body and raising her pressure. She told the nurse "I am telling you right now, if you measure my blood pressure, it's gonna be high," and she begged, "Give me five minutes…" At this point in our conversation, her voice began to break as she remembered the trauma of being bullied by the nurse who seemed exclusively interested in making Foley's body *normal*, in the process making her feel abnormal and a danger to her child and herself. After a beat, she continued recounting her exchange with the nurse: "You *have* to let me do this, you have to let me help myself!" After the nurse acquiesced to her appeal for a few minutes' privacy, Foley focused all of her energy on how she could get through the experience as herself and how she could access internally the power and clarity she would need to birth. Like Castro, she began by shifting her attentions to her creative work and sent a series of emails to colleagues, thereby connecting, albeit virtually, to her larger art world and dislocating herself from her threatening immediate surroundings. When the pain became more intense, her partner climbed into the hospital bed with her, and on that bed, their family claimed spacetime and held their ground. As a family, they became a bigger body and a firm point of orientation around which the care providers needed to navigate.

Foley then made her experience of self even more expansive and queer by employing the sensory and creative tools of her movement praxis, *Action is Primary*. She remembered coping with her fear through imagining the complete diffusion of her muscularity, as she might in the studio. She stayed in this dispersed body, held stable by her partner's embrace and her personal resolve until her child was born. She recounted the queerness of the actual birth in that she barely felt the contractions and her body, which she had willed into dispersion, seemed to evade the apparatuses attached to her. She remarked with mixed frustration and pride that "they couldn't ever get the monitor in the right place to … measure the contractions." Fully dispersed, her body was un-readable and consequently, un-definable. In the end, despite the stress, she felt like she gave birth on her terms, in spite of her clinical care, through dogged determination, passionate creative leaps, and by becoming something else. She did so against astonishing odds, considering the medical-legal climate of obstetrics for the past 50 years, which has precipitated the banning of aberrant or "uncompliant" behaviors like having one's partner share one's birthing bed. She described with a scoff how her caregiver responded after she gave birth without induction or intervention: "Way to surpass everyone's expectations!"

As Foley and Castro experienced, pregnancy in and of itself can inspire stress for individuals in their experiences of self because it offers few options for “appropriate” social performances of self while at the same time prescribing overwhelming social expectations for what is “normal.” However, as Ahmed says, “we do not know what we could become without these points of pressure, which insist that happiness will follow if we do this or we do that” (560). We do not know what pregnancy and birthing could afford individuals and clinical care were they not organized along *straight* lines but rather given room to be oblique and “wonky.” Of course, we also do not know what such “wonkiness” might *cost* clinicians. Hospitals are businesses, and they are litigation averse. Fear of malpractice lawsuits motivate physicians, nurses, and facilities to insure themselves many times over and to take safeguards against any practices that do not correspond directly to approved protocol. However, for the moment setting the considerable impediment of medicine’s legal climate aside, as an imaginative exercise, let us consider, for instance, if prenatal and perinatal nursing staffs were to develop queer knowledge bases which allowed them to not only participate in but drive the transformation of our current system of childbearing to one that welcomes diversity and values the hope inherent in queer orientations. Such a transformation would necessarily require uncovering and challenging deep-rooted structural components of hegemonic and patriarchal medicine which reinforce heteronormativity. Perhaps such changes could begin from appreciatively attending to the lived experiences of queerly oriented pregnant individuals and families who identify outside of binaries as part of “normal” medical and nursing education (as indeed it is in other health science education). This could, in turn, offer clinicians the impetus and preliminary information to begin to build trusting relationships that create safe environments for birthing individuals to share personal experiences and needs verbally and experientially as well as the creative tools to meet these needs. As part of creating safe environments, terminology which labels individuals "mommies" and "daddies" and "shes" and "hes" could be reimagined, required clinical paperwork could be revised (as UCLA's has been) to include queer experiences, and images of queer families could be incorporated within healthcare spaces and advertisements. This would be a start. Perhaps, in an even bigger imaginative reach, this transformation in practices of care could include sharing with not only clinicians but also hospital administrators and lawyers artistic presentations of experiences of pregnancy like *Center of Sleep* that organize pregnancy queerly and offer new experiential relationships to it. Although this might be my own oblique optimism, a hope destined to fail, such exposure could initiate the originary experiences from which Irigaray's "ethical" and reciprocally advantageous relationships could begin between more patients and caregivers.

Of course, as Muños reminds us, these shifts are more easily performed on the page and stage than in "real life," but it is in such imaginative acts that they start to be possible. So, let us continue to imagine: If open to being knocked off-kilter, clinicians could also have the opportunity to become part of queer kinship structures, which could affirm and support those trying to make space for *queer futurity* through their families. This was indeed the fortuitous case for queer Chicana feminist activist and artist Cherríe Moraga. Moraga, like Foley, gave birth to a very premature baby necessitating unplanned-for and undesired highly medicalized care surrounding delivery and recovery. However, unlike Foley, she felt that her nurses fully supported and protected her butch identity, her partnership with her co-parent, and the rhizomatic network of loved ones binding their family. In the end, she felt the nurses who supported her in birthing and initially caring for her son became her queer kin. She dedicated her book on queer motherhood, *Waiting in the Wings*, to them, thanking each by name. Journaling from the hospital postpartum, she reflected, “it is not our dependence on the nurses that I fear, so much as the loss of the connection. These women have become our family, the only ones who have known intimately, on a daily level… [what] we endure” (1997, 78). In caring for Moraga, her son, and partner when they were most vulnerable, without pressuring them to change themselves in the name of “standards,” protocol, or convenience, she felt “the nurses have been the real healers” within the clinical environment and within her birthing story (79). Consequently, these nurses joined Moraga’s “blood familia,” and with their protection, attention, and support, she was able to create a space of *queer futurity* within the hospital. Her experiences of being cared for offered a buoyant possibility of a “there and then” within the “here and now.” Beyond the hospital, she could hope, a larger world might also receive and nurture her family. Her clinical experience offered a “real-world” spacetime opportunity akin to live performance to *belong with* others in ethical, hopeful, ever-becoming relationships.

Philosopher Donna Haraway has said,

> It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what world make worlds, what worlds make stories. (2016, 12)

In their various experiences of pregnancy, Moraga with her nurses; Foley with her partner and through her dance praxis; Gutierrez through the body of Azrieli; and Castro through creating flexible relationships between concepts, histories, bodily processes, her dancers, and her audience all engaged queer orientations as a means to world new stories of pregnancy. Through their queer performances and choreographies of pregnancy, they thought new thoughts, knotted new knots, tied new ties, and opened up hope for new futures. They offered audiences the opportunity to imagine the possibility of reality expanding to fulfill their creative visions, and they offered us all the opportunity to imagine how we might continue—individually, collectively, relationally, biologically, and artistically—to *become more* together.

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Conclusions and Connections

The female body has been both territory and machine, virgin wilderness to be exploited and assembly-line turning out life. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body. In such a world, women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence—a new relationship to the universe. Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy will develop new meanings; thinking itself will be transformed. This is where we have to begin.

— Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*

* * *

The artists discussed in these pages made dances during their pregnancies so as to give themselves options for how to know and present their bodyselves and to (re)imagine their lives, their artform, and their communities in ways supportive of their changing experiences. All responding to their own historical, geographic, cultural, and biological circumstances, these choreographers and performers found ways to interpret pregnancy not as a hinderance or burden to their professional lives but as a creative boon, and this is because they let the changing perceptions that came with pregnancy inspire fresh inquiries, the origination of, for them, more apropos self-representations or -abstractions, and the manifestations of subject positions more hospitable to their self-interpretations than those otherwise available in medicine and in society.

Their work, produced over the last seventy years, offers a small sample of the many experimental performance projects surrounding pregnancies in the US and beyond which affirm and amplify embodied knowledges, which help individuals navigate the distances and incongruities between their lived experiences of pregnancy and pregnancy's pervasive social depictions, and which afford expanded perceptual insights into and orientations toward pregnant bodies. In the 1950s, at the very beginning of the shift toward what retroactively was termed postmodern dance, Anna Halprin took bold, first strides toward inviting parenthood to coexist with artmaking. Then, in the 1960s, Trisha Brown became the first of the "downtown" New York dancers to not only have a child but to incorporate choreographies of parenthood into the "found," everyday movement embraced by her Judson Dance Theater Collective peers. In the 1970s, Twyla Tharp, Sandy Jamrog, and Jane Comfort each found ways to study their changing bodies through their creative movement praxes and in so doing, they gained new understanding of their physical and artistic capacities. In turn, these new understandings pushed their careers in ground-breaking and trend-setting directions. Later, in the 1990s, Jody Oberfelder and Johanna Boyce explored how their pregnant bodies read symbolically and how aesthetic and somatic attentions to pregnancy offered them unprecedented access to interactions with larger cultural ideas of womanhood, spirituality, femininity, and self-care. In the early 2000s, Miguel Gutierrez, Yanira Castro, and Noémie LaFrance each engaged pregnant bodies as both symbols and perceptual modes of knowing themselves. Spreading their attention between semiotics and somatosensory consciousness forwarded their projects of creating new and innovative relationships between individuals as well as thickening audiences' interpretations of their work through insisting upon the correctness of a plurality of perspectives, apertures, and alignments. Finally, from the 2010s to the present day, Hana van der Kolk, Jennie MaryTai Liu, and Meg Foley disengaged experiences of pregnancy from reliance on the constructs of sex and gender so as to more fully study pregnancy as a sensory landscape with the potential to imagine new worlds and foster radical togetherness in caring communities.

For first and second generations of postmodernists, pregnancy was overtly discouraged within the dance world, as becoming pregnant suggested to some stalwarts that an artist was not "serious" or fully committed. However, for many third and fourth generation postmodernists, a space was seemingly cleared and a path seemingly paved not only by artistic predecessors, but by the tenets of experimental dance and mainstream feminism, which led some artists to feel both empowered and pressured to, as the adage says, “do it all.” As they sought to be successful and socially engaged artists, parents, and advocates for parents (among a host of other neoliberal pursuits toward fulfillment, wholeness, and individuation) some also felt both welcomed and expected to interpret their pregnancies as fundamental to the conceptual, sensory, processual, and political material of their dances. By the late 1980s and into the early 2000s, some choreographers pushed back against years of women forsaking building families for the sake of their dance careers or vice versa with bold theatrical gestures like performing naked and pregnant (as Oberfelder, Castro, Lafrance, and many others did) or bringing babies onstage as part of their performances (as Boyce did in 1987’s *The Tree isn’t Far from Where the Acorn Lands* and Oberfelder did in *Rock me Mama*, a work she premiered in 1996 and repeatedly remounted with various casts).

However, even as the dance field began to hold open spaces for the pregnant and parental bodies that had maneuvered their way in, the culture, spacetimes, and economics of live performance still created frictions between artists’ biological, familial, and professional lives. Even those, like Nalebuff and Castro, who built projects around the physical and material realities of pregnant individuals, had to acknowledge that pregnant bodies could not satisfy *all* of the demands that live theater puts on bodies. For instance, they found that the temporality of pregnancy does not line up smoothly with theater’s calendar time or with market time, more generally. Nalebuff needed pregnant bodies to perform versions of themselves, standardized in ways that fit her creative project’s scheduled cycles of rehearsals and showings, and for Castro, early labor inhibited her from performing in her dance, as she had intended, thus undermining her masterplan as its choreographer. For both artists, and many others with similar stories, either their bodies or the professional performance art world were destined to “fail” them because the unpredictability of pregnant bodies unavoidably conflicts with the fixity and organization of established theater practices.

Rare have been the postmodern artists like Gutierrez and van der Kolk who fully welcomed the needs and realities of pregnant bodies into their creative processes and allowed them to redefine how they made and shared dance (including casting, scheduling, use of rehearsal time, and their senses of ownership and authorship of the final art products). However, not being pregnant themselves, they had degrees of remove from lived experiences of pregnancy. They could study and appreciate pregnant bodies (and be appreciated by others for their “progressive” appreciation of these “unruly” bodies) without having the deeply complex phenomenal experiences that accompany pregnancy for pregnant performance artists—for instance, knowing that pregnant bodyselves might completely undercut plans and overwhelm anticipated dancing abilities. Theirs were intellectual and political choices to relinquish control; theirs were not biologically necessitated relinquishments of control. In other words, they had less of their artistic selves at stake in letting everything formal and procedural in their work be open to change. Moreover, practically speaking, they had the security of knowing that when seen as their creative experiments, pregnancy-inspired work could be supported with full, albeit tacit, understanding that if they ran into unforeseen trials, they could always reinvent themselves and their methods or revert to more predictable tried-and-true creative modes. This is, of course, not the case for parents whose material bodies, financial needs, and available time and energy are permanently impacted by having a dependent child post pregnancy. All of this is to say, with full appreciation for Gutierrez’s and Van der Kolk’s efforts, it will take much bigger cultural and systemic shifts in values and procedures of experimental dance before pregnant and maternal bodies can be completely included and can exist on their own terms, in full (not just symbolic) awareness of themselves, and in all of their unpredictability in, as, and through choreography.

Importantly, for this full set of artists, pregnancy was *primary* to their creative thinking and doing, meaning everything that followed conceptually, choreographically, and politically was generated in response to the distinctiveness of pregnancy as they had lived through (or adjacent to) it. In other words, the majority of these artists refused to fit pregnancy into a familiar framework; instead, they used their experiential knowledge of it to generate new self- and situation-responsive performances. For artists like Castro, Comfort, and Brown, who were looking for ways to reinvent themselves as artists, responding to their pregnancies formally allowed them to access new approaches and spurred the development of practices and philosophies which scaffolded their larger postpartum careers. For artists like Foley and van der Kolk, who utilized dance rituals pre-pregnancy to ground, heal, and pay attention to their bodies, engaging pregnant bodies in the creative praxes that they already practiced allowed them to discover fresh utility and efficacy for these trusted methods. For white choreographers such as Tharp, Oberfelder, and Lafrance, pregnancy offered a time to work in fresh ways, while their bodies temporarily moved and presented differently, thus offering them new versions of their own dancing bodies to study and with which to express ideas. In other words, for them, pregnancy offered a productive diversion from their usual methods and creative research which in turn, extended their choreographic toolkit. For Boyce, experiences of pregnancy shifted her interest in dance toward self- and community-healing as well as re-contemplation of womanhood and how gender informs art making. Regardless of the priorities of their work surrounding pregnancy and what they learned through making it, for all of these artists, pregnancy presented a window for reevaluation of why they choreographed, why they danced, why they shared work with others, and why/how they would continue to make art.

What is more, through their respective processes and resultant works, the artists in these chapters retheorized how it is possible to know what self, space, time, and body are, and in so doing they both reimagined and recreated reality for themselves in personally meaningful ways. They found that, just as they created many absorbing problems to solve, the phenomena of pregnancy offered opportunities for new ways of knowing, doing, connecting, and being. For some of these artists, such as Brown, their works surrounding pregnancy were assertions that they could create the conditions in which they could still make art as mothers and where their personal lives could be present in their work in ways that fortified rather than weakened its impact. For others, such as Liu, protection of their lives through their art came, in part, from asserting their ability to obscure the audience’s access to their personal experiences of their bodies. In contrast, for a few, including Castro, part of protecting themselves was baring their bodies and sharing their intimate bodily perceptions with their audiences—they trusted audiences to take care of them as they dared to become something new. Irrespective of their strategies and the reasons behind them, these choreographers fashioned dances that balanced life/art and disclosure/concealment, which they could perform without compromising what they deemed to be important aspects of themselves. Their dances shielded them, nourished them, and allowed them to embrace emergent facets of their identities and creativity, and their dances offered them means to reimagine the true measures of themselves as well as the true capacity of their art form. The fresh options that they located through paying attention to their lived experiences surrounding pregnancy allowed them to create different kinds of spacetimes through their dances—environments free of what they personally found restrictive such as the confines of linear time or those of gender, spacetimes of *pure possibility*. In the realities that they conjured, they also offered innovative means to connect across differences including connecting performers' bodies with their audiences' bodies. Some artists created conditions in which they could trust their audiences to join them in the discovery of more shareable spaces for mutual engagement of ideas and for closer togetherness. This was because, to join them in the worlds of their works, audiences needed to set aside existing visions of both dance and pregnancy and to allow the lines that their thinking habitually followed to diffract, to swerve, to loop disparate elements together, and to fold into and over themselves until something completer and more dimensional emerged, something unrecognizable that they could intimately experience together.

Personal dividends of their works notwithstanding, in these chapters, we also saw that experimental pregnant artists were often misunderstood by viewers and critics, and even if they did cultivate a supportive and close community in live performance, the possible worlds that they gestured toward did not remain intact beyond the performances. Still, sometimes through making and sharing choreography while pregnant, the choreographers literally created the physical and cognitive spaces of livability, creativity, and the connections to others that sustained them into and throughout their postpartum lives as artists. In other words, starting with their pregnancies and moving forward, they did not feel compelled to fit either their art or their larger lives into preestablished but personally inadequate cultural systems. Instead, their pregnancy works created incubators for larger artistic and political selves to gestate, because, just as their works insisted that reductive narratives and identities were not inevitable for their pregnancies, they also insisted that it was within their power to create the conditions and community that they needed to continue *becoming more*.

Section one: Productive destabilizations of medicalized pregnancy

As these chapters demonstrated, a dance made for one's pregnant body is a syntactic and semantic system; it is a sign, and it is an experience. It can build, share, or conceal private body knowledge. Thus, it can be, in community performance artist and disability culture activist Petra Küppers' theorization of it, a "scar." For Küppers, a "scar" is "the knitting together of life and disruption… a temporal journey that highlights survival" (2007, 76). It is something to see/feel, disclose/conceal over and over; intentionally; expressively; differently; with investment, curiosity, and imagination. Küppers, in her work, reflects on how artists share their "scars" as a means to productively "destabilize" medical knowledge as the only or most significant stories behind their bodies, and my chapters advance a similar argument. Many of the artists described in these pages used their pregnancies to "destabilize" medicalization of their pregnant bodies because in their dances, they rendered the evident/diagnosable unfamiliar and open to new signification. These artists celebrated arts' ability to overthrow accepted reference systems in favor of what Küppers calls "deconstructivist unknowability" (2). Such overthrow matters because while medicine necessarily pursues certainty and tries to close the gap between one's body and its representations, art can and should do the opposite. For example, while medicine promotes "a translucent body whose data are visibly available," many of artists in these chapters staged their bodies as unrecognizable (25). In composing these pages, I, like Küppers, came to appreciate the significance of artists' ability to insert new gaps or to reveal and explore the existing gaps in what "empiric" systems like medicine can know, show, and say about bodies/people as opposed to what is known only to/by individual people/bodies.

Many within this set of artists, through their work, offered what Küppers calls the valuable "accretion of slight differences, openings, and games" through which artistic representations texturize and complicate health science's representations of pregnant bodies on spectrums of normalcy and health (76). Their art effectively negotiated the distance between customary signifiers and what they signify, and they thereby emphasized for the dance viewer that pregnant bodies, women's bodies, and dancers' bodies are not as easily recognizable as they might assume them to be. Through my own experiences of interacting with these artists, their dances, and the ways that these interactions have deepened by understanding of pregnancy, I have come to realize that there is much that can be learned through acknowledging the discrepancies between how medicine and individuals spatialize, verbalize, or otherwise convey phenomena of the body. As Küppers says, to expand our understanding, we need "engagements with social and personal realities that open up moments of difference, of new alignments of power, individuality, and sociality…allowing spaces for living to come into being" (2).

Küppers encouraged her readers to appreciate their own and others' bodies not as they can be defined but as they can be "hoped-for" (2007, 75). Now, queer theorists Jack Halberstam and José Muñoz cautioned that while one might strive toward a hoped-for body, such striving will rarely lead to the realization of this hope because finding livable conditions that can support this hoped-for experience of self is often impossible. The artists in these chapters understood that such conditions could not be found, they must be made, and that they could be made via art. For instance, rather than reinforcing medicine by creating a mnemonic of preestablished anatomical knowledge (hoping to find the hoped-for truth of their body this way), these artists showed that body art can create and change bodies and allow bodies to find interdependence with personally meaningful systems outside of medicine. Of course, in doing so, they were not denying the importance of health science or their reliance on it for navigating their experiences of pregnancy. Even as choreographers ended up entrusting their birthing bodies to obstetricians (as well as more humanistic health clinicians like nurses and birthworkers) and deferring to their professional expertise, their dances still offered other enduring options for how they could code, decode, and make meaning from their changing bodies. As Muñoz emphasized, even if efforts to create oneself as one hopes to be are destined to fail in the "real" world (for instance, one cannot exercise choreographic control over one's labor or fully avoid feeling objectified under the medical gaze), they are still important, and one can still find "real" joy in their provisional creation in art.

Beyond functioning as "scars," I see the choreographies discussed within these pages as offering not "objective knowledge" but what philosopher Donna Haraway called "situated knowledges" of pregnancy. Taken both alone and together, these "situated knowledges" enlarge what it is possible for anyone to know about pregnancy as well as how it is possible to know what can be known. Through their dances, these artists understood, respected, and communicated their specific points of view while pregnant or close to pregnancy, and as I argue, these specific points of view offered vital supplements to hegemonic medical understanding of pregnancy and necessary interventions in strategies of care. Haraway advocated for the importance of "situated knowledges" in understanding both the value and limits of sciences, including health science. This is because the facts of biological science are made by people using the perceptual tools of their subjective bodies; thus, these facts are never neutral and can never be unproblematically or universally applied. Pretending that science is unbiased inevitably leads to the exclusion or pathologization of some perspectives. As she wrote, "Nostalgia for 'pure research' in mythical ivory towers is worse than ahistorical and ideological" (1997, 95). She continued that "A better use of our times, critical skills, and imaginations might come from considering hope-giving, on-the-ground practices" (ibid). I see the choreographies discussed in these pages as doing just this imaginative, critical, hope-giving work.

Engaging another of Haraway's phrases, these choreographers were "Modest Witnesses" of their health and the treatment of their bodies in health contexts, meaning they were "implicated, knowing, ignorant, worried, [and] hopeful" (3). They understood their pregnancies as biological and cultural phenomena, but they also were invested in them as intimately known phenomena with distinct significance to them as unique perceptive and thoughtful subjects who believed that their perceptions and thoughts mattered. As artists, they were empowered with what queer and gender theorist Eve Sedgwick called "propriodescriptive authority" to know and share their experiences without feeling obliged to fit them into someone else's sense of the world. Haraway encouraged Modest Witnesses to queer their witnessing, meaning to perceive *differently* so that they might know *differently*. For some of these choreographers, locating queer orientation toward pregnancy, even as they progressed through the linear stages of their pregnancies and interacted with clinicians, allowed them, to as Haraway put it, "diffract" around the patriarchal institution of obstetric medicine. When Haraway wrote of diffractions, she meant finding strategies to not simply "go with the flow" but rather to bend around obstacles posed by socially/medically defined phenomena (in this case, such as biology, gender, and family), which get in the way of deeper understandings and possible connections. Haraway advocated for allowing the ends of our individual stories to "swerve" away from where they are expected to go so that they can reach new places (16). Likewise, she encouraged taking the components of seemingly defined phenomena and playing "Cat's Cradle," thereby exploring what other formations they might collaboratively create (268). Just so, these choreographers took the phenomena of pregnancy, health, dance, and of having a body changing in ways both predetermined and unpredictable and played "Cat's Cradle" until they discovered something personally and professionally useful. Through making dances, they played embodied and conceptual “string games” in which the same “material” (as a choreographer might consider it) could be shaped into new organizations and new relationships to itself. In the process of such choreographic refiguring, new, real, and radical possibilities for making sense of seemingly commonplace, “normal,” “natural,” “universal” phenomena were created. Making space for other ways of knowing their experiences allowed health science to be part of the answer that each choreographer was seeking, but they did not feel compelled to look to it for a full answer. Consequently, each individual found her own constellation of information with which to play and with which to ask new formal and conceptual questions.

Moreover, as choreographers of these chapters’ works shared multiple visions of pregnant individuals’ experiences and priorities, they contributed to a more robust and inclusive construction of not only pregnancy but women’s health. In their 1972 book *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English encouraged the emerging feminist Women’s Health Movement (WHM) to remember that “A movement that recognized our biological similarity but denies the diversity or our priorities cannot be a women’s health movement, it can only be *some* women’s health movement” (86, italics mine). After decades in pursuit of its initial goals to improve healthcare for *all* women and to offer women power over their bodies and lives, the WHM has made significant gains, especially at the Federal policy level. However, it has also faced and continues to face setbacks surrounding women’s reproductive rights, and there are still many gaps in who benefits from WHM initiatives. Of course, “women’s health” encompasses many embodied experiences beyond pregnancy and addresses many situation-, person-, and age-related needs. However, part of the WHM’s ongoing work is to decrease unnecessary medicalization of pregnancy, to appreciate cultural diversity in experiences of pregnancy, and to look at pregnancies within the total contexts of women's lives. Toward all of these ends, the choreographies within these chapters make progress. These dances presented pregnant bodies, subjects, and lived experiences in ways meaningful to broad and diverse communities, and they made space for experiences which obstetric medicine struggles to hold, such as nonbinary gender and sex, experiences of family not rooted in heterosexuality or created through heterosexual sex, and other lived experiences that are intentionally queer. The described dances and the choreographers behind them introduced important questions like *What is the self that emerges in the shifts between experiential bodies, socialized bodies, medicalized bodies, and artistically performed bodies?* and *How can we productively play with the ideologies that underlie our senses of self by enacting art that lets our perceptual experiences multiply and overlap?* These dances also asked *Aside from health science, what other discourses can pregnancy inform, and what other practices of care can it inspire?* and *Beyond healthcare, how can we offer more individuals opportunities to feel whole and safe in their experiences of pregnancy, parenthood, body, and family?*

Section two: Productive destabilizations of dance, "natural" birth, and motherhood

Today, many postmodern dancers and choreographers have children, and many have made work while pregnant and then as parents without announcing that they were doing as much. Few have done so in an effort to be artistic revolutionaries, and few have felt the need to experience their dancing and maternal bodies as one in the same. Indeed, when pregnant and as parents, many artists attempt to keep their bodies within familiar dance forms, schedules, and systems of valuation, and they attempt to leave their parenting bodies at the studio door, where they can reassume them post-rehearsal. Considering as much, in their strategic amalgamation of their dancing and maternal bodies and their willingness to let pregnancy alter what their dances theorized about dance as a praxis, the artists in these chapters were unique.

However, these artists are not acknowledged or remembered for this distinctive aspect of their work. Famous postmodern dance innovators like Brown and Tharp's pregnancies have essentially been expunged from their artistic biographies, and dance history is not taught in a way that acknowledges how their pregnancies influenced the creative and technical understandings of dancing bodies that they pioneered and others have emulated. For Tharp, omissions of her pregnancy in popular narratives of her career supported her professional goals, and she has since written numerous autobiographies allowing her to (re)author her story with their strategic inclusion. However, for Brown, we will never know how much the absence of her pregnancy from public memory was her express desire, how much it was the predictable outcome to historical circumstances largely disinterested in motherhood, and how much it was the oversight of those who told the story of her early and formative work without considering its concurrence with her early experiences of motherhood. To me, as a choreographer, a dance theorist and historian, and a female, the erasures of their pregnancies from the public record offer short shrift to these choreographers' singularity as creatives, the particularity of their contributions to the artworld, and the intelligence of their work.

Moreover, Tharp and Brown, while often historicized as being both postmodernists and feminists—this second term, one that neither used in self-description—are rarely remembered for the ways in which their work was in dialogue, sometimes conflictive dialogue, with both postmodernism and feminism, especially as these ideas were practiced in their creative communities. They are not remembered for the ways in which their work testified to the (im)possibility of their bodies being seen as female and maternal without being seen as less, other, or femininized (in ways that tacitly discredited them both in the eyes of postmodernists and feminists). While I argue for the political importance of the artworks described in these chapters, politics were not an express priority for Tharp or Brown (or others among the artists here discussed). Despite the Women's Liberation Movement stirring the air around them, they did not see the personal as political, per se. In fact, Tharp adamantly insisted that her work was not "feminist," and while never making such a declaration, Brown explained that she made her work to learn about herself as a choreographer rather than out of allegiance to a broader women's movement. In other words, like many of the choreographers in these chapters, Tharp and Brown primarily employed formal strategies, not political strategies, and aimed through making dances to take care of themselves and their craft more than denounce patriarchy or sexual hierarchies.

For Comfort, pregnancy complicated her relationship with feminism. Mainstream second wave feminism, when not disparaging motherhood, encouraged women to reconnect to traditional wisdom and to opt for "natural" childbirth. Comfort, tried to do just this. When we spoke, she recounted feminist birth culture of the 1970 and early 1980s: "Nobody did any drugs or epidurals or anything. That was bad, bad, bad! … This was *completely natural* childbirth: suffering and misery" (Comfort, discussion). In the spirit of the natural childbirth movement, she elected to give birth in a birthing center, which was a new option for women like her who were seeking alternatives to institutionalized healthcare. However, despite her efforts and expectations, she remembered how *unnatural* her birthing experience felt. She recounted, "It was just like being on a volcano. You know, they're trying to get you to push and get the rhythm and everything [but] there's no rhythm at all!" Feeling pressure that birthing should come "naturally" but sensing no innate female instincts for how to do it was a very upsetting experience for her and for her partner. As she remembered, John, her spouse, "started crying because he just didn't understand what was going on, [and] I didn't know what was going on." In her confusion and to her outrage, her physician, considering it in no way discordant with "natural birth," performed an episiotomy (subsequently sewn up without anesthesia). For her physician, echoing a commonly held medical opinion of the time, "tearing" was more *unnatural* than rupturing women's perineal tissues by surgically cutting them; however, anesthesia ostensibly robbed women of experiences of their "natural" fortitude. What is more, Comfort's nurses considered it within the purview of "natural birthing" to keep her son, Gardiner, in the nursery overnight in case he had swallowed meconium (which he had not) and to present him to Comfort the next day, cleaned, fully swaddled, and with his hair parted and combed. "I felt very gypped [sic]," Comfort concluded about her "natural birth" experience. She felt slighted both by her clinical care team and by the cultural feminist ideology that led her to believe that her "natural" birthing experience would be personally empowering and testament to her personal strength. Considering her conflicted feelings, Comfort was surprised to be lauded as a feminist when she premiered her pregnancy dance. She recounted to me that the feedback that she received after sharing *For the Spider Woman* was always along the lines of "Oh, my god, what a feminist statement!" and "What a strong political piece!" (Jane Comfort, in discussion with the author, August 2020). However, for her, *For the Spider Woman* was "really was just a personal record. That's all it was." In other words, since she did not feel like her lived experiences of her body were fully supported by extant feminism, just as they were not fully supported by extant postmodernism, she had created her own self-supportive practice outside of either discourse/culture. Yet, others appreciated her self-presentation during pregnancy as asserting a new and significant feminist subjecthood, and in spite of herself, she became, for some, a feminist icon.

Within feminist politics, motherhood has been regarded with suspicion at times, glorified at others, and rejected at others, but it has never been ignored. However, as contemporary feminism has stretched to welcome a variety of lived experiences and identifications, it has also, once again and especially in its far-left scholarship, distanced itself from maternity. Perhaps contemporary experimental choreographers who make work that is inclusive of maternal experiences in innovative ways are, like their forerunners, protofeminist. Perhaps they anticipate, or perhaps they are spearheading, the reincorporation of pregnancy and parenthood into pioneering feminist knowledge-making, community-building, and political advocacy.

* * *

Currently, the scholarly field of Motherhood Studies applies itself to exploring motherhood as a material, biological, philosophical, political, social, philosophical, mythological, and economic phenomenon and to interrogating its many hegemonic constructions, including being a "natural mother" and females having "maternal instincts" and "biological clocks." Motherhood Studies, and its associated "maternal activism," has a sizable presence in the UK, and while it has robust offshoots in Canada, the Netherlands, and other parts of Europe, its presence in the US is comparably meager. That being said, the choreographers' work discussed in these chapters contributes to Motherhood Studies in its creative play with ideas already stubbornly within discourses of pregnancy and motherhood. For many artists, existing ideas offered springboards into their own innovative expressions. For example, working from the trite idea of "expecting" a baby, Nalebuff asked how individuals make meaning while they wait for their lives to change in unpredictable ways. She thereby shifted the subject of the social narrative of pregnancy from the developing fetus to the thinking, self-aware, individual pregnant individual. In a similar vein, Brown, Tharp, and Comfort made the time that they were "expecting" professionally productive by doing deep research into their personal choreographic methods and styles. In a different but related manner, Liu and Castro experienced and presented pregnancy not as an experience of "expecting" (waiting) but as one of being, and they sought choreographic structures that heightened their capacity for presence and to connect to audiences in the present moment. These were but several of the ways in which artists unsettled conceptions of pregnancy as a time of quiet patience and powerless anticipation in the face of forces that act on pregnant persons' bodies. Artists also called into question the universality and naturalness of pregnant temporality—for instance, the idea of the trimesters. Nalebuff created a work structured by the trimesters but one that also looped back on itself and into a sustainable cycle for which there was no clear beginning or ending. In her creative world, the trimesters did not compel productive movement in one direction. Like her, others ignored the "straightness" of social and medical formulations of pregnant time and instead, derived fully non-linear spacetime in their art, or they presented pregnant bodies as completely outside of recognizable time. Regardless of their strategies, all artists in these chapters let their perceptions of time through their pregnant bodies inspire the organizations of their work.

Furthermore, some choreographers critically engaged the construction of *becoming a mother*. For example, as Lui and Castro experienced their bodies changing, they embraced the *becoming* but looked through and beyond *mother* as a pre-established point of arrival. Instead, they created choreographic conditions that allowed them to negotiate the boundaries for what they were transitioning from and into, and they attended to what perceiving their transformation might afford them. Consequently, Castro felt her pregnant self in continuity with other biological transformations within the history of her own body, and choreographically, she created a spacetime in which the audience could partake in her ongoing processes of change. As she experienced herself *becoming more*, she welcomed others to become with and through her body. In another engagement of *becoming more*, Brown, in her choreography, demonstrated unique aims and means of *becoming* a fuller self as she created conditions in which her past selves could be re-membered in the present. In so doing, she invited herself to be expanded, rather than be reduced, by pregnancy, and like Castro and Liu, even when no longer pregnant, she had created structures and strategies through which she could continue to grow.

Section three: Connections to "choice"

Looking at the dances within these chapters reveals historical patterns, as well as what swerves away from such patterns, in women's reproductive "choices." We might assume that these choreographers (many being white and educated, some more financially solvent than others) exercised an abundance of choice—they chose to be artists, chose to become pregnant, chose to become parents, chose to make art inclusive of their pregnant bodies, and chose to continue as artist-parents—implying that they were privileged with agency and autonomy and, at each stage, had viable options between which they could choose. Of course, choosing to have a child, has special significance in the dance world, because tradition and precedent, in a reversal of society at large, tells women *not* to have children. What is more, unlike other professional spaces, in the dance world, there are rarely any worker protections for professional artists who are pregnant or recovering from pregnancies. Since not having children became easier for postmodern dancers, these dancers, apparently, assertively chose to become parents. After all, with the exception of Halprin, all of the other artists discussed in these chapters, at least in theory, had access to "The Pill," which became FDA approved and publicly available in 1960. Moreover, in addition to access to abortion, as the decades progressed, women also gained more legal support, FDA approvals, and over the counter access to more forms of birth control including emergency contraceptives. Furthermore, starting with Title X of the Public Health Service Act in 1970, and expanding with the Affordable Care Act in 2010, access to reproductive healthcare and "family planning" options became more available and affordable, and this was especially the case after 2011 when, under the Obama administration, insurance companies began covering contraceptives as a form of "preventative healthcare." As choreographers are often independent contractors with low incomes who are either uninsured or reliant on Medicaid for reproductive healthcare, these legislations had a big impact on their ability to make decisions about their reproductive bodies. Because of these collected gains in women's agency over their fertility, we can assume that many of the artists in these chapters had unprecedented influence over the timings of their pregnancies, and so the choices both to have a child and when in their career to have a child were feasibly made with care and consideration.

However, even if the postmodernists featured here were seemingly vested with freedoms of "choice," Haraway reminds us that in matters of "choice" we must always ask ourselves, "What counts as choice, for whom, and at what cost" (192). For the artists discussed in these chapters, we cannot assume that they all interpreted their pregnancies as their "choices" or that there were not costs associated with their decisions to-have/not-to-have or to-try-to-have/not-to-try-to-have. Moreover, in broader conversations about female reproduction the word "choice" typically is a shortcut for the choice *not* to carry a pregnancy to term. But even in this usage, "choice," with its implied binary of to-have/not-to-have (either a child or an abortion) and its associate binary of "pro-choice"/ "pro-life" falls short of capturing many pregnant individuals' experiences of their freedom/lack of freedom.

This is even more so the case for artists of color. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Black choreographer and founder of Urban Bush Women, made this precise point with her dance *LifeDance III…The Empress…Womb Wars* (1988). In this work, she shared her private experiences surrounding her pregnancies—stories that importantly diverged from master narratives of pregnancy and motherhood and that were, instead, stories of molestation, unwanted pregnancies, and the impossibility of keeping and caring for offspring; stories revelatory of the lack of choice that she had experienced surrounding her fertility because of her historical situation, her socioeconomic status, her race, and a host of structural inequalities that robbed her of the opportunity to make decisions surrounding motherhood that were rooted in her desires and were on her terms. She decided to publicly share her deeply personal process of reexamining her experiences of pregnancy because, as she explained to dance scholar Eva Yaa Asantewaa,

> the stories I tell are other women's stories, more women than I'd ever imagined. I think women have thought 'This is something that's happening just to me, and I have to cope with it.' [But] Every woman I know has been through some kind of sexual abuse." (2012)

In her disclosures, Zollar shared that her history of sexual violence precipitated a history of pregnancies and consequently a history of abortions. It is clear from her telling that neither the pregnancies nor the abortions were matters describable in terms of "choice." Rather, as dance scholar and choreographer Ananya Chatterjea described, in UBW's performance of *Womb Wars*,

> [Zollar's] own body as well as the bodies of other women in her company literally and metaphorically … reveal the epistemic fracture that marks the politics of legislation, the unbridged divide between those who know experientially, and those who theorize from a distance. (2004, 32)

In other words, those who might have a stance on abortion and legislate in accordance with that stance (even pro-choice) often cannot fathom the experiential violence of having a pregnancy and then an abortion forced upon one's body. Zollar's personal experiences of her reproductive body, like other artists described in these pages, gave her authoritative knowledge that, through her art, she asserted should be witnessed. However, unlike some of the other (white) artists in these pages, she claimed and shared her stories choreographically because in performance, she had a public platform denied her in broader society. Using her platform, in *Womb Wars* she showed that when women's reproductive freedoms are reduced to impersonal binary positions over which different sides can argue, "The female body bears the entire brunt of the situation"

(32). As Chatterjea appreciated, “Simplistic categories … erase the fine complexities that shape the discourse for women as well as the different experiences and contexts that visit the bodies of the women upon whom politicians legislate and wage their power battles” (32). Zollar’s work enumerates and exemplifies these complexities in the hope of reshaping popular conversations around female reproductive bodies so as to make them more polyvocal. In Chatterjea’s reading of Zollar’s work, she saw that after women endure becoming pregnant through, what for many is, sexual violence, a second layer of violence is inflicted on these women’s bodies by legislation which discounts their lived experiences and minimizes them to the ostensible bad “choices” that they made, thereby blaming victims for their own suffering. Thus, Zollar did not allow her work to be seen as pro-choice propaganda. Afterall, her own experiences of pregnancy and abortion afforded her no “pros,” and she experienced them as neither emancipatory nor feminist; they were tragic inevitabilities that were her right and her need, but never her “choice.”

Moreover, tacitly, *Womb Wars* argued that the pro-choice/pro-life debate centers the priorities and history of particular groups of people, and most centered are white middle-to-upper class women, who, arguably, have and have always had (after men) the most agency and social power to have “choices.” The piece pointed to the past and ongoing politics of not only gender but also race and class which have meant that different groups, especially many Black communities, are underserved and misrepresented by the pro-choice/pro-life binary. Afterall, while mainstream feminism might consider birth control to be a fundamental prerequisite for the emancipation of all women (since limiting and planning pregnancies allows women to invest in self-development and careers), historically, the abortion rights campaign has not taken into account why Black women in the US might be suspicious of birth control after a national history of eugenics and forced sterilizations. Laying a groundwork for audiences to see that Black women have never had the privilege of freedom to control their reproductive bodies in this country, Zollar used her dance to declare war (the titular Womb War) on business as usual; as she cried out in the dance, "We have no choice but to fight!" Zollar's battle cry, was primarily against violence toward Black women and the history of white patriarchy violently interfering in their fertility—be such violence sexual, medical, or legal and as such violence expresses itself in Black women's distressing experiences and outcomes of their pregnancies. *Womb Wars* also insisted, like the work of justice scholar Angela Davis, that violence against Black women, especially rape, is facilitated by interlocking oppressive systems of race, gender, and class (1978, 1981). In other words, unlike many white women, especially those who are not poor, women of color are burdened with multiple oppressions simultaneously. Moreover, as Critical Race Theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw Williams argues, there is no discourse that addresses the intersectional complexity of pervasive stereotypes of Black motherhood (1994). To this point, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins expressed in her seminal book *Black Feminist Thought*, socially, many Black women combat the stigma that Black women are bad mothers and the stereotypes of *mammies*, *matriarchs*, and *welfare moms*, which make racism, sexism, and poverty seem like natural and inevitable parts of life and which normalize black women being the "other" to white women (1990). And as racial justice activist Dorthey Roberts asserts, in a sentiment echoed by many others, white feminist work has never produced an effective critique of such objectification and disparagement of Black mothers; thus, hegemonic feminism has and has always had limited utility for Black mothers (1997).

Related to Zollar, Davis, Collins, and Roberts' arguments, stereotypes of Black motherhood also allow physicians to justify conscious or unconscious race/class/gender subordination in their treatment of patients. Recent data reports that black women are 243%

more likely to die from pregnancy or child-birth related causes than white women, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that Black and Indigenous women are two to three times more likely to die of preventable causes surrounding pregnancy than white women. Considering these outcomes, in 2018, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) released a statement that "the racial and ethnic disparities in women's health (including higher rates of preterm birth [and] maternal mortality…) cannot be reversed without addressing racial bias, both implicit and explicit" (PBS NewsHour 2018). In a similar tone, physicians, such as Harvard professor of obstetrics Dr. Neil Shah, argue that because of racial bias, Black women in particular are less believed when they share symptoms and concerns (ibid.). This feeds a vicious cycle of distrust between physicians and patients. As anthropologist Khiara Bridges evidenced through her ethnographic research on pregnancy as a site of racialization, low-income pregnant women of color are the most vulnerable, the most stigmatized, and the most untrusting/untrusted (2011). They are the least likely to receive adequate prenatal care and the most defenseless to having their bodies controlled by the, so called, medical-industrial complex. In brief, experiences around pregnancy offer examples of how women of color encounter racism differently than men of color and as well as sexism differently than white women. As Zollar's work argued, these "situated perspectives" on medicine's participation in structural violence are critical for productive conversations of health, "choice," reproductive freedom and effective means of care.

Of course, racism influences maternal health and limits Black women's access to "choice" beyond just the healthcare that they receive. A history of forced hysterectomies, rape, and medical experimentation on women of color add to the stresses of pregnancy for many individuals as does broader transgenerational trauma that they carry in their bodies. Moreover, the daily stress of racism, stereotyping, racial profiling and what psychologist Joy DeGruy has defined as Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome affects Black women's psychological and physiological health while at the same time making them reticent to look for healing resources within the medical system (2005). Employing similar strategies to Zollar, other choreographers have directly confronted the transgenerational trauma exacerbated by pregnancy as they recounted the suffering experienced by their ancestors, parents, and present community members while making dances that anticipated the arrival of their children. For example, former UBW dancer Marjani Forté-Saunders produced a performance piece while pregnant with her child Nkosi, *Memoirs of a…Unicorn* (2017), which captured her experience of preparing to become the parent to a Black son amidst what felt like increasing social disregard for Black male life. She desired to use her performance to offer audiences new powers of perception so that "when you see my son, when you see Nkosi, you see this celestial being that I'm dealing with, and you stop looking at the surface of whatever it is, the shallow emptiness, that allows you to dismiss his life" (Jones 2017). Similarly, choreographer Okwui Okpokwasili made her work, *Bronx Gothic* (2014) while pregnant with her daughter Umechi as a way to prime audiences to see and respect her Black daughter's presence in the world. She hoped her daughter would find less shame and more power in her female body and her sexuality than her mother had been afforded. Collected, the works of Zollar, Forté-Saunders, and Okpokwasili offer strong voices and visions of Black women who are the authors and architects of realties that are not already available for them to "choose." Moreover, each choreographer offered a self-defined and self-articulated situated standpoint from which others might learn. Each, through her voice, body, and the immersive environment surrounding her performance welcomed viewers into a bigger body that they could share with her. These bigger bodies held pain and trauma, they held complex and contradictory truths, and they demanded a more racially just future for themselves and their offspring.

As Davis says, through art, it becomes possible to create a community of resistance because "art can assist people to learn not only about the objective forces at work in the society in which they live, but also about the intensely social character of their interior lives. Ultimately it can propel people toward social emancipation" (1989, 200). It is such emancipation which, in experiencing their performances, audiences had the opportunity to imagine through the dancing bodies of Zollar, Forté-Saunders, and Okpokwasili. All three artists toured their works broadly and performed them with and for a variety of racially and socio-economically diverse communities, always offering alongside their performances conversation groups and workshops with community members which directly addressed their dances' themes and queried the resonance of such themes with their audiences. After these performances and curated conversations, it was then up to audiences to take the feelings and community that the choreographers' work afforded them forward and to grow these offerings into more widespread compassionate practices, legislation, and praxes of care toward others.

* * *

It is important to note that beyond the artists described in these chapters, many more choreographers have offered, through their art, many more personal experiences of reproductive "choice" and making-family, which, while not analyzed here, offer other important situated perspectives that continue to expand what we can know about bodies, sexuality, pregnancy, reproduction, and family. For example, Donna Uchizono, in *longing two* (2010) and then *Fire Underground* (2013), shared her embodied experience of the long and complicated international adoption of her daughter, Tara. Shantel Ehrenberg, in *(in)Fertile Territories* (2015), shared the lived experience of her early onset infertility. Mark Bamuthi Joseph, in his choreo-poem *Word Becomes Flesh* (2003), shared his experiences of his partner's pregnancy as he spent nine months preparing to parent a Black son and resolving his own misgivings and fears about Black fatherhood. And Laura Karlin's work, *Interior Design* (2017), was directly informed by her experiences of miscarriages. Furthermore, performance artists like Narcissister claim their sexual anatomy as part of their dancing bodies while also fully divorcing their sex organs from any reproductive function. For instance, Narcissister incorporates her uterus into her choreography by using it as a container for props which she pulls from her vagina while dancing. In so doing, she puts her work in dialogue with female avant-gardists of the 1960s and 1970s such as Carolee Schneeman, who withdrew pieces of paper from her vagina for her 1975 piece *Interior Scroll*. However, unlike her predecessors, Narcissister frames her interior space as neither her womb nor as in any way constative of herself; it is simply storage space. Of course, beyond this cursory sample of works rooted in choreographers' experiences of their reproductive bodies which did not involve giving birth to a child, are many other dances whose connections to the choreographer's reproductive history are covert. Furthermore, myriad art works came to be because artists did not have children or delayed having children until after their professional careers. Indeed, I must repeat that access to contraceptive technologies and abortions (albeit more accessible to some than others) have dramatically shifted the landscape and possibilities of postmodern dance in ways that allow for more female presence.

However, it is imperative to mention here that the freedoms made possible through advances in available and affordable reproductive care and technology are, at the time of this writing, being threatened. For example, in 2019, the Trump administration imposed a "domestic gag rule" on Title X healthcare clinics like Planned Parenthoods, which provide contraceptives, services, and consultations. Many of the choreographers with whom I spoke rely on such clinics for their healthcare needs. This same administration waned Medicaid and cut trillions of dollars previously allocated to Medicaid programs. It also added work requirements to coverage (a stipulation that disproportionately affects women, especially women of color, and certainly mothers whose "domestic" labor is not counted as a "job"); it also impacts self-employed artists. While one out of every five women of reproductive age are insured through Medicaid, the statistic for dancers and choreographers is much higher, and, of course, the hardest hit are choreographers of color. According to Planned Parenthood, the 68 million people who currently rely solely on Medicaid for accessing their reproductive care includes 14% of white women, but 24% of Latina women and 30% of Black women. Furthermore, beyond Medicaid recipients and Medicaid-accepting providers, many individuals with uteruses fear that a more conservative Supreme Court will reinterpret and thereby chip away at the power of prior decisions such as Roe v. Wade, leaving them with even less agency over their reproductive bodies. I reference all of this to emphasize the precarity felt by many individuals in terms of their access to "choice" and their perceived sense of freedom over their reproductive bodies. I mention it also because dancers who, at the time of this writing, face unprecedented financial strain because of lack of work due to COVID 19 also face the threat of losing access to reproductive healthcare. Thus, conceivably, they will have to rely even more on their dance training, philosophies, choreography, and communities to support their health.

Section four: Looking back, looking forward, looking at what we could do for ourselves

Before bringing this reflection on choreographic responses to experiences of pregnancy to a close, I would like to revisit three of the artists we initially encountered—Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, and Jane Comfort—as well as introduce two more contemporary mother-choreographers—Nia Love and Samantha Speis. Looked at together, these artists' divergent experiences with dance while pregnant and the different ways in which pregnancy impacted their larger careers offers a final opportunity to appreciate the range and longevity as well as to acknowledge the limitations of the personal politics, leadership strategies, and creative gestures that pregnancy inspired for each choreographer.

Tharp took great pride in her ability to monitor and manage her pregnant body by her own means and toward her own ends; however, the attentions she honed through self-observation while pregnant and the body awareness she gained while dancing did not prepare her physically, psychologically, or emotionally to give birth—these were not transferable knowledges that facilitated a smooth and empowered birthing experience for her. In her memoirs, she recounts the anguish of labor and delivery:

> When after twenty-eight hours of labor, Jesse Alexander Huot finally emerged—headfirst, healthy, and squalling—I had never been so glad to be done with anything in my entire life. As Jesse touched me and our skins pressed together for the first time, my tears and love could not overcome my rage at the agony and possible damage to my own body he had caused. I banned him from my sight for an evening and refused to nurse, wanting nothing to do with him. (1992, 144)

Clearly, Tharp did not experience her dance-trained body as informing or easing her labor, and her choreographer's mind influenced her approach to birthing only by making her stubborn and resolute that she would stay in unilateral control of her body—an attitude which interfered with her ability to surrender and let labor run its course. She did not trust her caregivers, but rather, saw them as meddlesome. As she says, "I didn't want anybody telling me how to have a baby any more than I wanted anybody telling me how to dance;" however, this insistence on her part to think of birthing like dancing and her laboring body as one that needed to be choreographed exclusively by her caused her self-imposed and undue suffering (142). For her, one episteme of the body (dance) interfered in another episteme (health science), and consequently, she was left without the safety and comfort of either. Furthermore, from the first moment of his life outside of her, she felt that Jesse was sabotaging her dance career, beginning with how birthing him violently damaged her instrument. She resented him for it. Consequently, the day after delivery, she was consumed not with nursing, bonding, and resting, but with getting back in shape: “I had heard [NYC Ballerina] Melissa Hayden did a barre the day after delivery and was determined to be at least as Spartan as she” (142). While she eventually “took to” her son, she never took to nursing or diapering, and she knew immediately that her heart was decidedly in her creative career and not in mothering. Thus, she was adamant that she would never have a second child because she knew it would be an impossible strain on her as an artist. She also, as soon as it was financially feasible, began employing nannies to care for Jesse so that she could pursue her professional life unencumbered.

In other words, dancing during her pregnancy had not convinced Tharp that motherhood and artistry could synergistically co-exist, being present with her transforming body did not allow her to feel peaceful with a body that was changed, and having Jesse did not make her feel expanded as a person or as an artist. Instead, motherhood made her feel strained, overburdened, and angry. As follows, when she became pregnant again very shortly after having her son, she acquired an abortion (her second), a decision which came at the expense of her marriage and which was risky and painful in that it was, as were all abortions at the time, illegal and expensive, and, like many, unanesthetized. In addition to these costs which she willingly bore in exchange for freedom from increased maternal duties, acquiring an abortion was difficult on Tharp emotionally. As with her second pregnancy, she related to her experiences of pregnancy, then abortion, as a choreographer, and she choreographed her post-abortion body, as if from outside of it, to make *something* else out of the distressing experience of feeling herself changed.

For example, after her first abortion in 1966, she made the dance *Re-Moves* which was laden with symbols of death and sorrow. As with her solo *The Drunk*, she hid the personal embodied experience behind the dance from her audience, never correcting viewers who interpreted *Re-Moves* as a meditation on the Vietnam War. However, she later admitted that her character—a sinister nun wearing a sharply pointed habit over a stark black costume and apathetically letting eggs roll off her fingers and smash on the floor—was a representation of her experience of her body post-abortion (90). Unable to withstand the responsibility and discomfort of another abortion, unwilling to endure another pregnancy, unable to care for a child, and out of spite for a gendered system of labor which pressured her, not her husband, to assume all "family" duties, she had a Dalkon Shield inserted. She did so knowing full well that the device, later banned by the FDA, "might mean sterility or even cancer" (153). These were risks she was, she said, willing to take. In other words, her decisions related to her fertility felt like no-win "choices," each inflicting a different violence on her body.

With time, Tharp reconnected with her son and reconsidered her relationship to being a parent as well as the impact that parenthood had had on her career. Although she was not present for his childhood, for the last twenty-five years, Jesse (now in his fifties) has lived and worked with Tharp, and he has assisted her in the capacities of both her business manager and the producer of her Broadway productions. Moreover, performativity, Tharp continues to (re)author and (re)present her life, including her experiences of pregnancy and motherhood. For example, most recently, in a two-hour PBS *American Masters* special that aired in March 2021, she once again incorporated the attic footage of her dancing while pregnant, but this time, she interwove this grainy videorecording with the professionally captured footage of her dance *Baker's Dozen* (Schutz 2021). Perhaps she did so to finally make the previously deferred "bun in the oven" pun, which she had been advised against making when *Baker's Dozen* premiered—after all, Tharp has never been one to let others tell her what to do. In other words, in her retelling of her early career for this televised special, she did not connect her pregnancy to *Eight Jelly Roles* or to the loose and wild aesthetic that gained her such renown. However, unlike other auto-historicizations of her life, she did include pictures of her and Jesse in all chronological image montages, she had him by her side for several newly captured interviews, and she even invited him to speak on camera to who she was as a mother, including the challenges that her career and drive put on their relationship. In an abrupt shift from comments that she has made throughout her career about "the kid," now, on the brink of 80 years old, she refers to Jesse warmly as her "North Star." In an interview with the *Boston Globe* that was promoting the PBS show, she spoke about her son saying, "I hope you feel from it [the documentary] I love him dearly. I call him the North Star of my life. Without him, many things would not have been accomplished or even tried. Every work I do is dedicated to him" (Campbell 2021). She reiterated this sentiment to the *New York Times*: "He's the North Star. I know there were times in this career that were so difficult that, had my son not existed, I wouldn't have made it. I wouldn't have known why [I was] doing this" (Kourlas 2021). However, while she now not only incorporates Jesse into her story as a key character but grants him his own voice to participate in the telling of her story, she neither apologizes for nor bemoans her earlier attitudes toward pregnancy and parenthood. Then as now, she holds firm that she is first and foremost "responsible for [her] own identity," telling the *New Yorker*, "I can't afford regret and remorse … O.K.? Those are qualities that require much too much energy. I don't have time for them. I can only get on with what the thing is" (Syme 2021). For now, Jesse and motherhood are part of "the thing" that consumes her present, and her pregnancy is once again a useful rhetorical tool for envisioning her future.

While seemingly consistently exercising control over her body, including her reproductive body, and thus seemingly asserting her agency as a woman and artist, Tharp admitted that she never experienced her decisions or experiences as personal triumphs. She had regrets and bitterness about being a mother, and the stress and pains of her abortions nearly ended her career. Although confident that motherhood could only ever "curtail [her] momentum" as an artist, the experience of her second abortion "remains intensely painful, one of the few that make me wonder whether my professional and artistic aspirations were really worth the price" (84). While choreographers of later decades might have had access to more contraception; safer, less agonizing, and more affordable abortions than Tharp; a wider culture more sympathetic to women's human rights to a life and career of her own; and a social mentality that domestic duties should be shared by co-parents, even today, many dancers and choreographers experience their reproductive and dancing bodies as being at odds with one another and still feel the strain of having to make "choices" in the interest of one body at the expense of the other. This is to say that not contraception, abortion, pregnancy, or artmaking are enough in and of themselves or even in concert to give artists desired freedoms, wholeness, equity, or social empowerment.

Furthermore, just because an artist might find through choreography the opportunity to carve out a space for her pregnant body in the dance landscape, it does not mean that she will necessarily offer this space to others. For example, Brown took away a performance and touring opportunity from dancer Risa Jaraslow once Jaraslow became a mother. Brown explained that she could not risk having a company member who might not be fully reliable if, for instance, her child became sick and needed her full attention (Comfort, discussion). Furthermore, although she was making a company in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and Women's and Queer Liberation—all of which, especially when compounded with the professed egalitarianism of postmodern art and, I would add, her own experience of exclusion from the Judson Dance Theater Collective while pregnant, could have inspired an effort to form a more equitable community within her dance company—she, like her Judson colleagues, instead followed historical dance precedents of company models (DeFrantz 2016). This is to say, she created a company titled after herself with a distinct, even if unspoken, hierarchy of power. Dancers were there to manifest her visions, and if their bodies or lives interfered with the fulfillment of her vision, then that created problems, not opportunities for growth. In other words, Brown contributed to the very postmodern culture that previously excluded her, the culture into which some bodies "fit" more easily than others. Moreover, in their capacities as dance theorists DeFrantz (2016), Miguel Gutierrez (2018), and Rebecca Chaleff (2018) are among those who comment not only on the whiteness of the Trisha Brown Dance Company membership across the decades but also the whiteness of Brown's ideas about abstract art. Gutierrez argues that Brown always felt challenged by company members' bodies that did not strike her as "neutral" signifiers, easily serviceable for abstract projects. For instance, she "never knew what to do with" dancer David Thomson because he was Black or Shelly Senter because she was shorter than her colleagues (ibid.). In other words, despite her own experiences of feeling excluded because of the look of her body, she still excluded other bodies because their look did not fit her desire for "neutral" signifiers.

In 2017, Movement Research organized a Studies Project which intended to explore the question "does the dance field make room for dancer parents?" The question had been raised because so many postmodern choreographers and dancers, even nearly 70 years into the postmodern project, felt the decision to have children would sabotage their professional goals. Samantha Speis, current co-director of Urban Bush Women and mother or two was among the handful of artists invited to contribute to this roundtable discussion. In addition to being the only panelist working in the space between postmodernism and African Diasporic dance, she was also the only panelist, aside from moderator Nia Love, who was Black. Love, a mother of four and grandmother of two, had many decades of experience navigating the dance world as a parent. Quickly, it was apparent that Love and Speis' experiences differed tremendously from their colleagues'. Speis was the only panelist who had neither feared nor had to face discrimination from a company director or employing choreographer based on becoming pregnant and then having additional child-related needs. She insisted that Urban Bush Women dancers faced no penalties if they decided to have children, and not only were children welcomed into rehearsal and performance spaces, they were treated as valued members of the company whose needs became part of the company's needs. With this security and support, both she and her co-director and mother of three Chanon Judson, along with other company members, had their children while dancing in Urban Bush Women. What is more, Spies' two daughters, Aminata and Aicha, since their births (and in-utero), were with their mother at every rehearsal, performance, and on every tour, and Aminata even performed with the company as a toddler in Speis' choreography *Hair & Other Stories* (2018).

Soon, race entered the conversation overtly. Others on the panel, who danced and choreographed in what became increasing apparent and eventually expressly named "white spaces," spoke of the immense financial, physical, and emotional stresses of pregnancy and parenthood within the postmodern dance field and the unequal treatment they received because they had "chosen" to be parents. Speis, who had brought her daughter, Aminata, to the panel, could not relate to these experiences. She declared that dancing for Zollar while pregnant and then with a baby in Urban Bush Women instilled in her fierce confidence to unapologetically declare without qualification, “I shouldn’t be judged for having a child, I shouldn’t apologize for bringing life into this world” (2017). She said that this was just “owning what my reality is.” She continued, “My reality is I have a daughter and she goes *everywhere* with me [and] if you don’t want me in your space then I don’t want to be in your space!” Having had her experiences with Zollar, she refused to be involved in any art projects that did not make space for her as a “whole person,” which for her meant her child/children would always, just as in pregnancy, have the right to occupy the same space as her/their mother. Reflecting on the divergences in her co-panelists’ experiences from her own, Speis said, “I haven’t been challenged with the things I’m hearing just yet,” and she continued that Urban Bush Women, thanks to Zollar, treated Aminata not as “the baby” to be tolerated or resented, but as the “eighth person” in the otherwise seven-person company. Speaking to the disparity between her professional experiences and those of her peers, she concluded, “It really makes me think about how *we* [the postmodern dance community] think about … *professionalism* and the thoughts and the assumptions around children and parents.” In saying this, she presented a challenge; she put responsibility not on those in power or on a biased system outside of the panelists inflicting pain upon them, but directly on herself and her peers. She suggested that together, they could change their thinking and assumptions and thereby, they could develop their ideas of what is possible in dance spaces.

In disbelief that Speis could really feel no shame or stress about bringing her child to rehearsals and surprised by her bold self-assertions, co-panelists pressed her, “But who takes care of your baby when you’re performing?” to which Love and Speis answered simultaneously, “the company!” Others were incredulous that such could be the case and that pregnancy/parenthood could really be so copacetic with professional dance company culture. One panelist described her “choice” to keep her art and family in totally separate mental and physical spaces because she did not want to "burden the work with her messy life." Another described how hard she had worked to be taken seriously as an artist and that she now worked hard not to lose the ground that she had gained by letting others see her pejoratively as a "mommy." These artists' painstakingly guarded and personally erected divides between art and life made it impossible for them to imagine simultaneity of their bodyselves as mothers *and* serious professionals. Their comments, in addition to exemplifying a pressure felt by many working mothers, also belied a lack of experience with professional environments like Urban Bush Women in which collaborative childcare is part of the culture.

One panelist finally said what others were dancing around—that Speis' experiences had to do with her being a "Black woman working in a Black Company," in other words, she ventured that Black dance spaces are more "inclusive" of dancers' lives outside of dance. The panelist continued that in her "white space" of professional dance, the attitude was more "No! We're not gonna take all of you. We're gonna take the one part that we can control." There was a hum of agreement among others in the room.

Of course, there is a history within many Black communities including communities in Africa, the African diaspora, and the US of communal childcare within extended families and networks of friends and neighbors. However, especially in the US, biological mothers are often different from a children's primary caregivers because of economic necessity, not cultural traditions or preferences. As Collins wrote, charging one person with full responsibility for mothering a Black child is often not feasible for Black parents because mothers have to bring income into their family (1990). Consequently, "othermothers"—women who assist "bloodmothers" by sharing mothering responsibilities—have traditionally been central to parenting (Troester 1984). It is possible to see the Urban Bush Women members as “othermothers” for company children. For example, Love described rehearsing a piece with Speis and Zollar at Jacob’s Pillow during which Speis “strapped that baby to her back and … did all of the work, and when she couldn’t, somebody just took the baby and somebody else had the baby and strapped the baby…” her words merged with and then faded to a pantomime of the choreography of smoothly passing a baby between hands and attaching that baby to various bodies within the larger body of the company. She appreciated how, through this collective choreography of care, rehearsal continued without incident. However, Love asserted that this choreography worked within Urban Bush Women not because it was a company composed of Black women, somehow innately endowed with the capacity to collectively mother, but because it was a company that, with the exception of one male member, were all females and—especially because all-female, female directed companies are rarities in the dance world, even today—they valued what their situation afforded them. They also shared an understanding of the economic precarity both of making a life in dance and of sustaining the type of company they were manifesting together. Consequently, each artist was willing to make certain sacrifices and commitments in the interest of sustaining Urban Bush Women and its methods of making—as was further evidenced when in 2012, the company collectively decided to take a two-year unpaid hiatus in which their energy was dedicated to fundraising and strategizing. Love clarified that male choreographers (or male-minded choreographers) can have empathy for mothers, but “empathy doesn’t support what we’re doing,” because what Urban Bush Women was doing was actively appreciating what is possible and possibly better when mothers and children are fully included and supported in creative processes. She continued that what *does* support the simultaneity of mothering and making art is to have “sisters in the struggle,” which, like Speis, she invited the other panelists to be for one another. She called the other panelist to task to create for themselves communities in which they hold space for one another to be artists *and* mothers without apology and with appreciation for how this support for one another could enrich all of their experiences.

In other words, Love argued that maternal solidarity need not have anything to do with race. It is a matter of *sisterhood* and this sisterhood, as achieved by Urban Bush Women, needs to be the work of mothers looking to change their daily professional reality. In her own experiences within postmodernism, Love fondly remembered Liz Lehrman, a white choreographer, being the first artists to employ her once Love had a daughter. For Lehrman, although at the time having no children of her own, making unproblematic and instead welcoming that Love had a child in tow furthered her goal to deconstruct the notion of patriarchy as it permeated experimental dance and to welcome more bodies into her art. Inviting Love and her daughter into her professional space was not a "natural" maternal instinct, it was a political act, and it was her "choice" as someone with the power to create and model for audiences and other makers new ways for people to be together.

As the Movement Research panel drew to a close, Love entreated the panelists to consider in that moment, "When do we become solidarity for ourselves? … Can we move in this revolution or are we trying to dismantle the master's house with the same fucking tools?" With fervency, she continued, "are we really gonna dismantle this patriarchy that keeps always burning and breaking us down? I feel like we can do something more and we're not." After several moments of tense silence, another panelist hesitantly spoke and shifted the conversation back to a familiar track—the pressure she feels as a "mid-career" artist to not lose the sparse dance opportunities that she currently received by rocking the proverbial boat. Others rallied behind this sentiment, which also offered an alternative to, in that moment, committing to the sisterhood work Love was charging them to step up to. However, one panelist returned focus to Love, addressing her directly and saying that while she had a hard time fathoming herself organizing and resisting in the ways that Love was encouraging her to do, to hear how Love, Speis, and Lehrman “completely reject” misogyny was very inspiring. She continued, “it’s hard to unlearn fifteen years of professional training and twenty years of training before that,” which had taught her never to expect to be asked “what do you need?” but rather to make her life outside of the work appear to disappear so as to uphold the integrity of her art. While afraid to make a next move, she was excited that there could be “a different way to do things.” Thus, in this gathering, a “baby step” toward mother-choreographers becoming solidarity for themselves was made, hopefully the first of what will be many more.

For her part, in addition to creating a welcoming space for pregnant persons and mothers in her own choreographies, Love supports her community as a doula. As a doula, she offers encouragement and care for friends and dance colleagues, such as Urban Bush Women dancers Forté-Saunders and Paloma McGregor, for whom this care might otherwise be cost prohibitive or otherwise not easily accessible. Doula-ing is also part of her intracommunity justice work; in other words, it is a means to protect and care for Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies since these bodies have been and continue to be grossly mistreated by the medical system. Others have followed suit. For example, like Love, choreographer Ogemdi Ude, integrates somatic healing methods from her dance background as well as her commitment as an art activist to the wellness of Black, brown, femme and queer communities into her birth doula care, which she advertises as “non-judgmental support” that is “radically inclusive and affirming of POC, queer, and trans folks” (https://www.ogemdiude.com/doula, accessed Oct 3, 2020). Love and Ude represent what is emerging as a larger phenomenon of choreographers, especially women of color, employing both the politics and sensitivities that inform dancing bodies into caregiving in health contexts. Testament to this budding phenomenon, Movement Research hosted *Passage: A Dialogue with Doulas, Dancers, and Caregivers*, and in 2016, it began a Studies Project specifically exploring dancers who extend their embodied practice into being doulas.

Now, the tension between art and family that was expressed by many during the panel that Love facilitated, strains female makers of artistic mediums beyond dance. Afterall, on the one hand, there is the enduring archetype of an undomesticated, untamed, non-conforming, semi-self-destructive, "bohemian" artist who will do anything for art and thus cannot care for dependents. On the other hand, there is a history of female artists who not only refuse motherhood but are outspoken opponents to it. For example, fiction writer Doris Lessing famously abandoned her family and shifted continents, memorably declaring, "No one can write with a child around … There is nothing more boring for an intelligent woman than to spend endless amounts of time with small children" (*The Telegraph*, 2008). In her recent book, *Little Labors,* Rivka Galchen, enumerates the many other writers, including Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Hilary Mantel, Janet Frame, Willa Cather, Jane Bowles, Elizabeth Bishop, Hannah Arendt, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, Mavis Gallant, and Simone de Beauvoir, who shared Lessing's sentiment and expressed similar opinions in their own words and works (2016). The same is true in visual art. Writer and curator Jori Finkel assessed that "Being a mother is the last taboo in contemporary art;" all other aspects of one's identity are acceptable subject matter and are frequently seen as making one's art richer, but motherhood is still predominantly seen as a diminishing force (Sokolowski and Trumbull-Lavalle). Reflecting this attitude, in July 2016, experimental artist Marina Abramović, declared that if an artist wished to be "free," beyond forgoing children, she must avoid having a family full stop. She explained that she had had three abortions early in her career out of a sense of duty to her art: "One only has limited energy in the body, and I would have had to divide it" (Kippenberger). She concluded, "In my opinion that's the reason why women aren't as successful as men in the art world" (ibid.).

Writer Alice Walker offered a different perspective on motherhood. In her essay "*One* Child of One's Own: A Meaningful Digression Within the Work(s)," she wrote, "We are together, my child and I. Mother and child, yes, but *sisters* really, against whatever denies us all that we are" (2003 [1979], 392). Walker, at a certain point in her artistic career appreciated that her fear that having a child would be detrimental to her ability to make art was misplaced. As she recounted, she recognized that her struggle was really that of "affirming the life of my child (children) at all costs," which was, in truth, an affirmation and "a fond acceptance and confirmation of myself in a world that would deny me the untrampled blossoming of my existence" (372). In other words, she, like Spies and Love, came to see that pursuing art that allowed her to be her full self was "political in the deepest sense" (ibid.). Furthermore, for her, motherhood became a "necessary—digression within [her] work(s)," and in hindsight, she appreciated that taking this digression allowed her to realize the artist and the activist that she *could* be when she stopped pursuing someone else's expectations of what her life should be (ibid.). For Walker, as for many of the artists described in these pages, it was a mistake to see "The Child" as a threat to her broader success; rather, as Walker surmised, the "enemy" to oneself is the "sexism of an oppressive capitalistic society," which makes us see motherhood as a disadvantage and as inextricable from patriarchy. She was adamant that the pervasive idea throughout generations that motherhood compromises art belies a widespread belief that one needs to have "balls" to make art. However, for her, "ballsdom is surpassed" by birthing because motherhood offers the "blossoming of [one's] existence" (ibid.). In other words, by affirming one's own and one's community's futures through having a child, a woman learns that she need never think she has to be like men to be serious about what she does or to demand to be taken seriously by others.

Walker appreciated the *idea* of becoming a mother as it aligned with her broader politics; however, like Tharp, the reality of being a parent proved more complex than she anticipated, and today her long feud with daughter Rebecca Walker, who is also a writer and activist, has possibly gained more public attention than her bold and buoyant theories of motherhood. Rebecca Walker, since becoming a mother herself, has written several books including *Baby Love: Choosing Motherhood after a Lifetime of Ambivalence* (2007), which directly accuse her mother's fanatical feminism for making her disillusioned and ambivalent about the importance of parenthood—an experience which, after having a child, she found surprisingly deeply rewarding. In other words, for Alice Walker and Tharp, mothering was perhaps more meaningful and accessible as a creative tool for thinking than as a daily practice of creative living.

Of course, Walker's idea of opening oneself up to an "untrampled blossoming of [one's] existence" can take many forms, motherhood being but one, but certainly not the only or best one for all persons. Comfort offers an example of an artist who took from her experiences of pregnancy, which like Walker, she found artistically liberating, a desire to create more spaces through her work as a choreographer for more untrampled blossomings, more inclusion, and more opportunities to respectfully connect across differences through creating embodied experiences that could be shared. Motherhood did not end Comfort's choreographic career as she initially feared it might; to the contrary, she went on to found a successful longstanding company which continues to be a pillar of the New York City dance scene. However, her initial experience of feeling the precarity of her inclusion in dance because of her pregnancy influenced her work, casting, and choreographic subject matter throughout her career. To that point, Comfort often employs dancers with distinctly personal patterns of movement, which perhaps do not “fit” into classic postmodern work, but which she values and which inform her evolving style and content. The fact that Comfort’s son, Gardiner, who has gone on to become an actor and disability activist, was diagnosed with Tourette’s Syndrome contributed to her ongoing curiosity about challenges of communication between individuals and the fallibility of language. It also impassioned her to use dance to find alternative ways for individuals to be heard and to listen to one another. Toward that end, throughout her career, Comfort continued acquiring new movement vocabularies, which allowed for more avenues of communication between more bodies. These included learning American Sign Language and Afro-Brazilian dance as well as pursuing intense training in male body habits and drag with Diane Torr.

Moreover, Comfort’s works regularly took/take on issues of racism, bigotry, sexual abuse, and sexism, most famously in her restaging of the Anita Hill trial in which performers’ sexes and races were flipped—Hill was played by a white man, Justice Thomas by a white woman, and the all-white, all-male jury was played by a group of Black women. Moreover, she reflected that helping Gardiner through his public-school education by sitting with him while he did his homework gave her an appreciation for what is transmitted as “facts” to children, which/whose stories are wiped from the record, and also how creativity is snuffed out of children by prescribed systems of belief. In the interest of her children and inspired by their more liberated minds and dreams, she attempted to make work that resisted systemic deficits of the educational system and that embraced hope and possibility as it also cultivated a sense of collective duty to creatively change the world for the better and for our children.

Never seeing herself as an artist who happened to be a mother, but rather as an artist who always considered her motherhood central to her work, Comfort had a very permeable boundary between her familial and artistic lives. Her children were always part of company rehearsals, and her son toured with her when he was small. Comfort wrote to me nostalgically, “Our two children grew up in a loft where rehearsals happened all around them. They came home from school and the dancers would turn themselves into climbing apparatuses and the kids would swarm them” (email correspondence Jul. 2, 2020). Moreover, since so much of her work dealt with “heavy” subject matter, having young children present in rehearsals tempered her approach to tackling topical content (Smith 1999, 70). She arrived at a signature style of humor tactically laced with social critique. Describing her philosophy to me she said, “the devil slips into the room through the side window, to the tinkle of laughter” (Comfort, discussion).

In short, starting with *For the Spider Woman*, Comfort’s work consistently grew out of lived experiences of navigating “anxious times” as well as lived experiences of motherhood. Making dances and dance communities created support for her, her company, her children, and her audience to navigate that which challenged them. On many occasions, including our conversations, Comfort attested to the fact that her experiences of pregnancy and motherhood made her better at doing both her political and artistic work. They made her choreographies richer, and she attributed this richness to the embodied understanding she had accrued through these experiences of how it feels to take care of other human lives and to feel profound love for other people. Unlike Tharp, who only discussed the influence of pregnancy and motherhood on her work once she was very established as an artist and even then, inconsistently, Comfort has always framed her pregnant body as her literal entrée into not only being a choreographer but understanding why she would make work. Consequently, when in 2016, La MaMa hosted the

Jane Comfort and Company's 40th Anniversary Retrospective, which honored Comfort's career, she elected to have the evening open with the *For the Spider Woman* film. This was a testament to her belief that this work was the beginning to her career and was foundational to everything that came after it. In other words, while Tharp made her pregnant body something both she and the audience should laugh at and Brown hid hers away, Comfort gave her pregnant body an enduring and public place of honor.

Comfort attended the La MaMa celebration with her children as her "dates," and she began her remarks by thanking them. Touchingly for her, hers was not the only company family present that evening. She told me that her favorite aspect of the celebration was seeing former company members with their children, some of whom, then teenagers, she had known as babies. She felt the gratification of having created a professional environment welcoming not only to her children but to her company members' as well, and she remembered fondly having baby blankets in front of the mirrors during rehearsals. Likewise, Joseph Ritsch recounted the unique joys of having children within their company culture. He recalled jumping on hotel beds during company tours with dancer Nancy Alfaro's daughter, Sky Lily, after Comfort included mandatory childcare in her contracts with theaters (Joseph Ritsch, in discussion with the author, Aug 2020). Seeing her company family and extended family assembled at La MaMa celebrating what they had built together, Comfort recollected, was deeply rewarding and "incredibly sweet."

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Over the decades, choreographers' practices of understanding their dancing bodies through their pregnancies and their pregnancies through the dancing bodies have yielded many choreographic works. These works demonstrate choreographers' moves toward finding ways to fit their pregnant bodies into postmodern dance by controlling how they are seen; strategies for changing what pregnant bodies symbolize; exploring how pregnant bodies invite participation in larger discourses; surveying pregnancy for the ways that it offers unique means to know, organize, relate, perceive, and be; actively detaching pregnancy from existing paradigms such as those of sex and gender; and letting lived experiences of pregnancy offer tools for thinking new thoughts, building new relationships, and worlding new worlds. Beyond choreographies, these choreographers' navigations of the theoretical and physical spaces between bodies having biological, cultural, and artist experiences of themselves have created new possibilities for dance, new communities, and new experiential insights. All these gains can be of value to a variety of discourses of the body, including health science, as individuals continue to challenge and grow understandings of what it means to have a body, to reproduce, to create family, to create art, to-be/not-to-be female, to take care of one another, and to continue to *become more*.

Currently, for me personally, these choreographers and the dance-making and thinking that they did surrounding their pregnancies resonates with new poignancy. As I close these reflections, I am for the first time pregnant and deep in my own lived experiences of the many ways that my corporeality is changing. Through my pregnancy, I am carrying these artists' works, theorizations, and methods with me, and I am valuing the ways in which their ideas and processes enrich how and what I am perceiving somatically. I feel affinity with them as I experience the ways in which my own daily movement praxis heightens my attention and reassures me of my capacity for creative self-care. Moreover, I appreciate that the kinesthetic sensitivities that I have honed as a movement artist inform how I am making sense of what I am perceiving. As I type these final sentences, I anticipate the ways that my evolving experiences will complicate, clarify, and texturize the ideas that have filled these pages, and I welcome the inquiries and insights that will emerge from my body as it continues, evermore, to change.

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