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Author

Bragin, Naomi

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Black Power of Hip Hop Dance:
On Kinesthetic Politics

by

Naomi Elizabeth Bragin

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

Performance Studies

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in

Women, Gender and Sexuality

and

New Media

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Brandi Wilkins Catanese, Chair
Professor SanSan Kwan
Professor Juana María Rodríguez
Professor Darieck Scott

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Abstract

Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: On Kinesthetic Politics

by

Naomi Elizabeth Bragin

Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Studies

Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender and Sexuality

Designated Emphasis in New Media

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Brandi Wilkins Catanese, Chair

The significance of dance improvisation in the black radical tradition has yet to receive close attention within the fields of performance, black studies and dance—especially as a youth culture based in California. This dissertation contributes to building a new archive of vernacular styles, innovated in the greater Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Areas between 1965-1985 and foundational to hip hop's widely cited emergence in New York. At the height of black power, funk music and gay liberation movements, these dances were generally prohibited from formal study within the protected institutional space of private dance studios and concert stages, giving rise to the umbrella term "street dance." Street dancers studied street movements, experimenting with dance in non-studio spaces—city streets, neighborhood house parties, playgrounds, parks, school gyms, private and underground social clubs. I argue that street dance draws theoretical force from this informal status that challenges assumptions of where and how the study of dance happens, retaining in its practices and politics an alliance with a discourse of the street. I theorize the relation of aesthetics and politics through kinesthesia, the body's "sixth" sense of motion historically devalued by Cartesian dualism, to argue that key principles of street dance break down conceptual divisions of collective/individual, innovation/tradition, sound/movement, and choreography/improvisation. I use the idea of (kin) aesthetic politics to ask how street dance might imagine alternative modes of relating that define performances of being connected and dislocated, belonging and dispossession, escape and capture. I create a vocabulary for the theoretical study of street dance, using oral history and performance ethnography to draw on the discourse and lived practices of street dancers and informed by my own experiences as a street dancer since the early 1990s.

for my parents

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Chapter 1.
Introduction

A sensation of movement that does not belong to one's proper body—a feeling of movement compelled by history to flow into the space between bodies—is a study in the sociality of being in common. This study considers the generative capacity of movement that happens through popular struggle, in so far as that struggle finds its ground in collective forms of being and making meaning, and experimental practices of being and belonging together. This study takes the premise that movement happens in fluid relationship—as much between bodies as within and at the limits of a single body. The dimensions of such a study are global in concern for the body's political relation to movement and the terms that frame the performance of moving and being moved.

Without attention to black movement—an experience as often violently felt as insurgently lived—the political impact of hip hop dance as a contemporary global art remains obscure. Hip hop dance has most often received academic recognition from the perspective of breaking (or breakdance) that developed in hip hop culture's New York City center. This study takes view of what's left when that center is temporarily displaced—a complex network of dance styles arising on the United States' left coast, in the greater Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Areas of late 1960s and early 1970s California. Widening the scope of hip hop dance to include the left coast styles acknowledges the messiness of histories, origins and genres; anarranging pieces of history to change the puzzle and the meanings it's designed to test. Street scholar-practitioners understand the relationship of these styles to hip hop culture as part of a complicated, vital, flexible tradition. Hip hop's prehistory of West Coast street dance style expands not only an understanding of how hip hop culture formed in political relationship to movement, but also requires a theory of moving in, between and beyond displaced spaces—the streets, the hoods, the clubs, the ciphers and the underground.

Street dance

Street dance encompasses a transnational range of technical styles, based in collective improvisation and driven by African-derived grammars that retain in their practices and politics an alliance with a discourse of the street. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, dancers experimenting with black popular dance style took aesthetic leaps in movement. In the world of commercial entertainment and television, first generation practitioners have explained to me that producers would refer to them as "specialty acts" or "the street guys"—not dancers. At the time, a general prohibition of street dance from the protected institutional space of Western dance studios meant that street dancers *sustained the study and generation of movement in and from non-studio spaces*: city streets, neighborhood house parties, playgrounds, school gyms, private and underground social clubs. Street dance draws its theoretical force from this non-formal status that effectively dis-forms institutional assumptions of where and how the study of dance may happen. Street dancers, by necessity and choice, are students of street movement and street dance is a theory of these movements, insofar as "theory begins, always, with the recognition of a displacement" (Gordon 2010:210).

Street dance is necessarily bound to the originary displacement of blackness as an illicit, illegitimate, criminal status. My study of street dance situates the various technical styles arising in the years 1966-1975 within a lineage of new world black popular dance practices that stretch

back from Hollywood films and Broadway, gang-affiliated neighborhoods, segregated social clubs, vaudeville stages and minstrel shows to the slave plantation—a repertoire of the inter-articulation of blackness, performance and violence. I attend to these relations to consider how the political status of blackness might produce different terms of sociality and humanity, felt in and by the process of moving. Considering the semiotics of 'street' already carries connotations of uncertainty and survival, street dance must always face questions of legitimacy, permission and sanction.

The street is not a set location or a firmly delineated space but a geopolitical marker that derives its imaginative creative force from an ability to remain institutionally fluid. Street dance circulates through neighborhood, club, theatre, studio and cyberspace, with a preference for transforming unexpected spaces like sidewalks, bus stops, rooftops and living rooms, into performance stages. Distinct from a genealogy of Western concert dance which differentiates the street as a break with convention because the stage is the presumed norm, street dance sustains a sense of experimental play concerned with dis-forming and transforming the norms of the spaces in which it appears. Street dance maintains a critically unstable relationship to formal, often elite and/or commercial institutions of cultural production. The street does not form a binary opposition with the stage but creates a meta-critique of that conceptual division of space, the assumptions that undergird it and the hierarchies of value that maintain it, especially in connection with ideas of privacy, ownership, individualism and property. Movement without a proper place pushes definitions of who dances, how dancers practice, and how dancers' bodies form and conform to the spaces in which they practice. The *Black Power of Hip Hop Dance* is about the politics of where movement goes and how movement transitions—between spaces and bodies.

Black thought and kinesthetic politics

I take the view that a critical association with the street is key to studying street dance as an intellectual system. In order to understand how street dance theorizes, I work from the assumption that street dance style derives meaning and performative power from an originary relation of blackness and violence. Street dance is theory in black, "a form of illicit seeing" (Gordon 2010:197) that takes effect through practices of illicit moving. The binds of slavery that extend through the aesthetic body of these dances take form in technical principles of isolation and polycentrism, contraction and release, polyrhythm, break and groove, but also in philosophical principles of illusion, control and dislocation, individual within collective expression, innovation within tradition, and choreography within improvisation. What sort of political framework is helpful for interpreting these movement aesthetics?

Black Power of Hip Hop Dance argues that kinesthesia, the body's "sixth" sense of movement, is foundational to black thought and protest struggle, sustained through practices of feeling together in movement. *Kinesthetic politics* addresses the political value of black movement and describes the importance of movement perception in the formation of black political community. I use the term kinesthetic politics to study the political implications of movement for a fundamental assertion of black life. To say movement is foundational to black thought is not to reinscribe a mind/body split central to the humanist framework that puts whiteness in the space of mind and blackness in the space of body. My work aligns instead with "a transformative theory and practice of humanity" (Jackson 2013:682) that rejects this split, to make space for what blackness is and does in movement.

This work is not a concern particular to black people, considering that the project of black studies to establish the black subject's humanity is the same as a project to establish the definition of human itself. Black thought is a project in which we all are invested. Alexander Weheliye argues:

> [T]he relegation of black thought to the confines of particularity only affirms the status of black subjects as beyond the grasp of the human […] the moment in which blackness becomes apposite to humanity, Man's conditions of possibility lose their ontological thrust, because their limitations are rendered abundantly clear. Thus, the functioning of blackness as both inside and outside modernity sets the stage for a general theory of the human, and not its particular exception. (2014:19)

How rupture figures into a history of black movement is simultaneously felt in movement experimentations and part of the labor of making political formations of community cohere. Kinesthetic politics takes into account structural relations of power that undergird lived experience and impact processes of identification.

Kinesthetic politics also suggests disjunctions between sensation and speech, considering that paralinguistic expression does not translate into politics in the sense of a direct call to action. In street dance techniques, the political content which derives from everyday life conditions is abstracted and transformed into an improvisational movement lexicon—indicated by such aesthetic principles as the repeated breaking, hitting, popping, waacking and locking into the groove; this is a social-historical process that differs from the intentional artistic decision to abstract an idea into choreographic form. These lexicons develop over time within the social life of communities, including group processes of improvisation, innovation, repetition and reproduction that are not clearly separable from everyday experience. Street dance techniques are not purely inventions of isolated single author-subjects but, I will continue to suggest, can and must be interpreted through a framework of collective improvisation—as collectively improvised experiments with/in movement.

What role does collective improvisation play in the fundamental assertion of black social life and experimental forms of belonging? Inextricable from kinesthetic politics is the function of social dancing to imagine new forms of kinship, non-biological and queer, that vitalize the ongoing innovation of movement techniques within the lived experience of communities. Considering the originary displacement that kept street dancers for the most part outside the dance studio, "confined" to the streets, street dance is movement collectively improvised— scrawled in "tight spaces" (Goldman 2010:6). This much is apparent in that street dance is designed for tight spaces while also adapting to a range of spatial contexts. The point for street dancers is to uncover space—to explore the hidden meanings of spaces, stolen in moments of seemingly infinite creative potential.

A focus on the body's political relation to movement, especially in terms of movement through racialized space, raises particular questions when studying dance within the economy of mass entertainment. Saidiya Hartman's foundational analysis of the coterminous relation between black performance and suffering and more specifically, the affective economy of slavery, lays the groundwork for constructing a politics of the aesthetic: "enjoyment defined the relation of the dominant race to the enslaved" (1997:23). I attend to this relation between enjoyment, possession and abjection, the body and performance, to question how the political status of blackness conditions practices of movement and social being.

In this vein, I take up Thomas DeFrantz's call to "explor[e] a theoretical dimension to black social dance […] and how black pleasure and black power foster hip hop dance forms" (2004:68), necessarily taking as a starting point Hartman's argument that domination/subjection is the frame through which practices of resistance and agency must be read (1997:8). DeFrantz's exploratory essay on hip hop dance theory, "The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power," circles around the problem of the (white) gaze which haunts black performance:

> [T]he palpable presence of physical pleasure, bound up with a racialized cultural history, makes the dances powerfully compelling. This dynamic amalgamation of pleasure and critique form the basis of power present within hip hop dance forms. (65-66)

I push at a question suggested by DeFrantz's statement: what are the conditions of possibility for the body's production of pleasure and power? What are the effects of pleasure and power, and related notions of fun and celebration, in their inextricable historical binds to blackness—that status which does "demand a para-ontological disruption of the supposed connection between explanation and resistance" (Moten 2008:179)?

The historical site for the production of pleasure—the slave's performing body—is interminably subject to the most extreme forms of violence. Slave music and dance, as much as slave bodies, are owned and traded commodities. Entertainment dance is especially vulnerable to the reproduction of this historical power relation, because of its commercial value, market drive and mass popular accessibility—a popularity due in no small part to the coding of hip hop movement as black.

Hip hop is now widely taught as a studio style, but the defining elements of what constitutes hip hop technique are obscured by what's actually taught in any one hip hop class—movement appearing along a wide spectrum from freestyle to Broadway-style jazz dance. If hip hop can be anything, then hip hop is nothing. In tandem with vague definitional boundaries, the development of a choreo-centered model of transmission adjoining the explosion of commercial dance films and dance reality television since the 2000s, is now the most widespread approach to teaching hip hop. This is not to argue that choreography is an essentially inauthentic or incorrect approach to hip hop practice. I am arguing instead for attention to the function of choreography in a market system that uses blackness as a commodity relation to be owned, traded and sanctioned.

A persistent myth about street dance is that these forms are not technical. Anthea Kraut (2008) has described an implicit bias in the study of dance to technique in a European-derived worldview. However, Mauss expands a definition of "Techniques of the Body" to include everyday movements like walking and eating that "generate knowledge" (2006:20) through cultural tradition and social practice: "Learning and doing techniques takes place in a collective context; a context which forms and informs the social constitution of its practitioners" (18). What I take to be the anti-institutional force of street dance is historical, because practitioners studied—learned, taught and practiced—this network of styles primarily outside the protected institutional space of dance studios, in contexts where boundaries between "everyday" and "art" were less clearly defined.

Study the idiosyncratic twitch of a hyperbolic male-performing body, strolling the street, gangsta lean, pimp walk, soft flow in slickening feet, keeping time taut with a rhythmical jiggle of pocket change. Picture this figure's transformation into the extreme angularity of a boogaloo roll or the wrist flicking gesture of the locking pace—the street dancer's methods of keeping time

with the rhythm without losing character. Boogaloo and Locking styles relate to informal contexts of study. These movement techniques seem easy or "natural" because the method of incorporating them is not linear. There was no regular schedule of classes to attend or pre-determined levels of expertise to achieve. Practice time was intimately woven into the arbitrary time of everyday life, whether improvised in the tight spaces of living rooms or extending indefinitely through sleepless nights preparing for a community talent show. Time and space are not circumscribed within the four walls of a ballet studio or theater stage, with a scheduled starting and ending point. Practice could just as quickly turn to performance—jumping out of the car to dance at a stoplight. Watching your mom get down to a nasty groove in her living room. Getting pushed in front of a crowd of adults at the neighbors' house party. Studying the off balance stroll of a peg leg man at the corner liquor store. Street dance techniques encompass these experiences of moving into and out of everyday life.

Mastery represents years of developing expertise, without negating the value these forms give to everyday life. Street dance makes everyday life an occasion for study, meaning these forms are also widely available as a movement language for anyone to do. Street dance values the amateur. The accessibility and inclusivity of street dance style contributes to confusion about an apparent non-technicality or a certain "easiness" to master. Ballet assumes a distinction between dancer and viewer, but hip hop allows and in fact asks the viewer to not be immobile but to participate. The viewer becomes an involved co-participant in the hip hop cipher. These forms are part of everyday life and movement and therefore available to anyone who wants to move. But this does not negate the difficulty of actually mastering them and the years to develop such mastery.

Methods

This project toggles between a close focus and a long shot of several street dance styles, to sketch out a theoretical framework for the study of street dance. In so doing, I aim to push the terms by which the fields of dance, performance and black studies contract and expand. In opening up new trajectories for scholarship, I admit a necessity to paint large brushstrokes that at times forego the intricacy of detail that a primarily historical or formal aesthetic inquiry might provide. The critical arguments this project makes in the process will hopefully suggest areas for closer historical research by street dance scholars.

My research is trans-methodological, drawing from three primary research strategies: participant-observation in studio classes; oral history interviews with practitioners; and native and performance ethnography supported by twenty years experience as a street dance practitioner. My primary formats for data gathering were ethnographic field notes; audio, photo, and video documentation; and ongoing internet research and participation in online street dance groups.

I take an expansive view of training, considering street dancers circulate knowledge through mixed modes of study, teaching, practice, and performance, during formal studio classes, informal practice sessions, battles, club nights, community events, festivals and frequent use of videos and participatory media. I have focused on building relationships with master teachers who have refined methods of effectively communicating the aesthetic principles of dance style. In a range of teaching settings, I study the transmission of knowledge through discourse and movement analysis, understanding learning to be dialogic and cooperative, experimental and incomplete (Freire 2012). I observe the embodied interplay of multiple

practitioners with varied investments in street dance culture. I've also interfaced frequently with the online street dance archive, including Facebook pages, YouTube videos, blogs, forum and message boards and personal websites, which is a primary way that practitioners keep pace with the constantly changing topography of street dance culture. Much of street dance culture now circulates digitally—magazine and news clippings, flyers, photos, videos, music recordings, and the discourse of practitioners themselves develops over online channels.

I put my conceptual analysis of the data I collected for this project in conversation with my already existing body of knowledge of hip hop and street dance culture, incorporated over the last twenty years of my personal and professional development as a student, dancer, choreographer, director, producer, teacher and cultural worker. The theories I bring to bear on my research find their beginnings in my experiences dancing in clubs, studios, streets, ciphers, stages and theaters, especially in the New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas. The advantage of a multi-sited project is to consider how street dancers have always traveled within and outside of localities, so that dance styles are both singular as manifestations of a particular time and place, and complicated as trans-local circulations. Street dance builds lineages to communicate across time and space, and the trans-local circulations of style do not erase but rather reinforce recognition of location.

My initiation into Bay Area hip hop did not take place within spaces marked exclusively for hip hop dance but within a politicized, community-oriented culture of artists and activists who for the most part had familial roots in Oakland and the surrounding area. House parties, clubs, local festivals, community performances and youth organizing sculpted the geographic, cultural, social and political dimensions of this participatory experience, directing my chosen point of entry into conversations on hip hop culture. Los Angeles, as well as being the historical and geographic center of commercial motion picture, television and music recording industries, was the location of the *Soul Train* film studio from 1971-2006. In Los Angeles, fusing styles is common especially due to the commodifying impact of Hollywood. New York is widely known as hip hop's birthplace and continues to be a transnational center of street dance culture. In New York a majority of these dances are still taught as foundation—a pedagogical perspective that commits to the training and preservation of dance styles, by locating formal technique within knowledge of historical contexts. Alongside a legacy of sustaining modern dance schools based in specific techniques—Ailey, Graham, Cunningham—New York holds the most classes in original styles taught by master practitioners. Because master street dancers maintain a year round international touring schedule, I've found it important to spend time in a transnational locale where I would encounter the highest regular influx of master teachers and practitioners of these forms.

My raw data consists mainly of one-on-one interviews with practitioners, some whom no longer dance and others who continue to choreograph, tour and perform locally and internationally. I spoke with older (those who came of age in the 1970s) and younger (twenty to mid-thirty year old) generations of dancers in their homes, my home, dance studios, over the phone and at public events. My inside knowledge of the culture and of specific dancers informed my ability to choose the scope and direction of individual interviews. Rather than arriving with a predetermined set of questions, I thought through topics for each session based on what I knew of the research participant's experience. At the same time I encouraged spontaneity in the interview's progress, based on the idea that both interviewer and interviewee are collaborators in an ongoing and multidimensional conversation. I was not only interested in what answers research participants could provide me but also what material they were drawn to and how their

perspectives could ultimately transform my approach to my research. Although collaborative feedback on the written/interpretive portions of my research is one of my concerns and a future development of this work, such an investment of resources necessarily goes beyond the scope of this project in its current form.

My understanding of how to initiate and build relationships with research participants stems from personal experience and influences how I create my research methods. Active, embodied participation is a central tenet of hip hop. Even within the relatively sedentary structure of the formal interview, body posture, gesture and kinesthetic expressivity relay cultural information that establishes the direction and flow of the conversation as an ongoing negotiation between interviewer and interviewee. I've considered how to keep myself visible, sitting in front of the camera when possible and being an active participant in dialogue. My interest has been to use the interview situation less as a question and answer session with rigidly defined roles than as a fluid process of inquiry into which both participants enter with differing, not necessarily compatible, intentions and investments. My sense of co-participation in a collective knowledge making project also means my work exists to engage not only academics but also street scholars.

Proof of my right to participate in the street dance community may have been facilitated by my prior personal connections but was by no means guaranteed. Street dancers regulate legitimate and ethical entry into spaces where insider knowledge circulates. Hip hop demands outright that one show and prove one's ethical stance over and again, a tenet that has particularly interesting implications for the history of ethnographic research. Several of my interview participants "interviewed" me first, expecting me to provide personal references, demonstrate insider knowledge, clarify my ethical stance and articulate my research intentions. This project is an obligation I continuously renew—to reflect on how I unsettle my own position and ethically participate in the construction and circulation of street dance study.

Hip hop study

A small transdisciplinary group of scholars have extended the reach of hip hop studies from analytic space between black studies, cultural studies, American studies and ethnomusicology, to an inquiry about the body and movement—a crucial turn considering that the existing body of literature on hip hop has largely centered rap music (Rose 1994; Perkins 1996; Murray and Neal 2004 and 2012; Chang 2005), lyricism (Perry 2004; Cobb 2007), and language (Alim 2006). The precedence of the word exists in unproductive opposition to critiques of hip hop as a primarily embodied mode of performance. A hierarchical valuing of verbal expression is implicit in the relatively undisputed impression that "the point at which dance really started to challenge that emphasis on lyrics is the point at which […] hip-hop really started to go off track."[1]

A tendency to give precedence to rap music in/as hip hop culture neglects the synesthetic relationship of movement, rhythm, sound, and speech in black cultural production. During its formative years in early 1970s New York City, hip hop was an inter articulated dialogue in the break—a temporal and transcendental space where dance and music generate each other. Pioneer hip hop dancer Steffan "Mr. Wiggles" Clemente details how early hip hop DJs manipulated and looped the drum section of records to extend the break—a way of "study[ing] the crowd

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[1] Todd Boyd, Visions and Voices: The USC Arts and Humanities Initiative, USC Libraries and Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities, Doheny Memorial Library, Intellectual Commons Room 233, Los Angeles, CA, October 8, 2007. Roundtable. Posted by USC, "Hip-Hop America," YouTube, 1:26:38. November 21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3Hod-UV8Vc.

response" that supported creative dialogue with the rhythmic movement of people on the dance floor.[2] Emcees were often party rockers who fueled the dialogue through the medium of speech (ibid). That dance and rap would seem to exist in impermeable, hierarchically valued categories is evidence of the necessity for a scholarly turn toward investigating body knowledge as a key mode of communication in hip hop culture.

Ethnomusicologist Joseph Schloss speaks to Boyd's concern about aesthetics and politics, suggesting that hip hop dance's "greater ability to transcend linguistic boundaries…may tend to make [it] less politically focused" (2011). This paves the way for dance, de-voiced and devoid of political consequence, as not worthy of serious intellectual critique. On the other hand Schloss argues that scholarly reliance on rap's textual features enacts a defense of hip hop's legitimacy in academia (2009:8). Analyses of orality consider crucial ways marginalized communities speak truth to power yet have cut gesture out of the picture, overlooking the sensory-kinesthetic acts of posturing and presence that establish all rappers' legitimacy from the moment they step on stage. What does it mean to turn from the political import of words to that of movement? The gap in scholarship stems in part from the challenge embodiment has posed to Western intellectual thought. Thomas DeFrantz points out the reification of mind/body dualism in scholarship that treats dance as "pretheoretical" and instead offers an understanding that hip hop dances are meta-critical (2004:67). In doing the practice, the body says what it does; hip hop dances are "the physical building blocks of a system of communication we may term *corporeal orature*" (67) of black expressive practices.

H. Samy Alim's *Roc the Mic Right* (2006) brings the potential of a performative turn in hip hop scholarship by expanding a paper-based focus on hip hop lyrics to a linguistic analysis of rappers' speech. Alim describes hip hop language as "the most pervasive yet least examined aspect of Hip-Hop Culture" (i). Yet hip hop speech must account for hip hop practitioners' paralinguistic performances. Without a doubt hip hop swagger—the crafted performance of style and character or kinetically transmitted presence—takes place on stages before emcees even reach the mic. It could be argued the very particular word choice in the expression "roc the mic" reflexively figures the primacy of movement and embodiment (rocking being a New York-originated style of gang dance (see Pabon 2006)) to the speech acts of rappers.

In line with Alim's intervention but with a closer focus on embodiment, Susan Phillips (2009) argues against Eurocentric constructs of textuality that attribute materiality, durability and decontextualization to writing, effectively demoting oral and embodied practices. She analyzes Los Angeles gang dance as a nonstandard form of writing, premised on embodiment, performativity and context. Street dances like the crip walk, villain dance and pueblo stroll socialize writing while also dematerializing and contextualizing it, forcing a rethinking of the racialized construction of literacy.

Rather than limiting study to dance or music proper, ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt's *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (2006) thinks at the borders of genre to register the mutually constitutive relationship of sound and movement in black vernacular culture. Studying innovations of black musical tradition through a compelling analysis of black girls' improvisational and compositional play (including handclapping games and jumprope), Gaunt argues that a gendered separation of music and movement/embodiment fails, even as the distinction is reified by scholars seeking to legitimate black culture. Black girls'

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[2] Steffan "Mr. Wiggles" Clemente, "Hip Hop Facts: The Break," *mrwiggles.biz*, http://mrwiggles.biz/hip_hop_influences.htm (4 April 2015).

playground/street performances create learning spaces that teach black musical style and impact hip hop's development, including the aesthetic craft of rap.

Schloss (2009) calls for hip hop and cultural studies scholars to shift from object-centered to discourse-centered analyses of hip hop. This methodological turn emphasizes face-to-face interaction and ethical dimensions of research that performance ethnographer Dwight Conquergood termed *co-performative witnessing* and *dialogic performance*—speaking and acting with people and communities (Madison 2007; Conquergood 2013). Schloss argues that unmediated participation is fundamental to serious engagement of hip hop expressive forms. Explaining that much of hip hop scholarship originated in literary and cultural studies (one field which tends to center linguistic analyses and the other that tends to focus on mass culture objects), he pinpoints an inability to closely examine the discourse of the practitioners themselves as it shapes "a legitimate and consistent and fascinating intellectual system [of which] dance is a crucial part" (2009:4). He argues that b-boy theory must be critiqued as more than a mere by-product of socioeconomic marginality. Such scholarly critiques tend to naturalize aesthetics as organic artifact and raw material detritus of decaying urban environments, but downplay or erase the choices made by practitioner-producers themselves (94). Rather, he argues, b-boy theory is a way that practitioners preserve knowledge of cultural history. As an ethnomusicologist, Schloss's intervention is key for social and popular dance studies, because it re-centers dance as a modality that uses kinetic engagement "to make abstract statements about things that are important to [practitioners]" (156). One of Schloss's key contributions is his delineation of a critical framework of aesthetic development of social dance forms, linking aesthetics, philosophy and history in a systematic way.

I start from the premise of embodied cognition central to the arguments of Gaunt, Phillips, DeFrantz, Schloss and others whose transdisciplinary work provokes possibilities for wider academic engagement of street dance studies. Taking hip hop to be foremost a sensory-kinesthetic performance, felt in and by moving, I consider how meaning emerges in movement. The body says what it does and also, dancers put words to what their bodies do. Dancers' interpretations of their practices oscillate between verbal and movement language, one communicative modality alternately illuminating and obfuscating the other.

Toward street dance as a form of study

Hip hop dancers commonly acknowledge the formative influence of the 1960s-1970s left coast street styles on the emergence of hip hop dance.[3] Pioneer practitioner-scholar Jorge "Popmaster Fabel" Pabon asserts: "In order to properly report the history of hip-hop dance forms, one must journey both inside and outside of New York City. Although dance forms associated with hip-hop did develop in New York City, half of them (i.e. popping and locking) originated and developed on the west coast as part of a different cultural movement" (2006:18). In his 1996 essay "Hip Hop 101," cultural anthropologist Robert Farris Thompson similarly noted, "Hip hop is a tale of three cities. As I've said, breakdancing and the hip hop sound emerged in the Bronx, electric-boogaloo poppin' and tickin' moves arose in Fresno and Los Angeles (Watts, Long Beach, Crenshaw Heights)"[4] (213). Mapping east and west coast foundations of hip hop culture, Thompson is one of the few early writers to focus specifically on

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[3] See Steffan "Mr. Wiggles" Clemente, "Misconseptions," *mrwiggles.biz,* http://mrwiggles.biz/misconseptions.htm (4 April 2015); also see James "OG Skeeter Rabbit" Higgins, *lockerlegends.net*.
[4] Original article appeared 27 March 1986, in "On Campus" section of *Rolling Stone,* RS #470 (Straight Arrow Publishers, Inc).

dance (Banes 1981; Marlow 1984; Banes and George 1985), naming regions (Bronx, Fresno, Los Angeles), styles (breakdance, uprock, boogaloo, poppin', ticking', wave, animation), and innovators (Boogaloo Sam, Popin' Pete, Tickin' Deck, Mr. Wave). Street dancers treat left coast forms as foundational to the development of hip hop dance and the larger umbrella of contemporary street dance style. The internet is still the main source for written information on street dance, researched by street dancers themselves.

The early 1970s was also significant for the syndication of the landmark black entertainment television show *Soul Train*. *Soul Train* was the most significant national, and later transnational, platform for black popular dance of the 1960s and 1970s. Recent monographs on *Soul Train* (Lehman 2008; Blount-Danois 2013; Thompson 2013; George 2014) cite the impact of locally emergent street dance styles on the show's appeal. As music videos and hip hop dance films gained mass circulation in the 1980s and 1990s, these media sources began to heavily impact the distribution of hip hop/street dance style. In the 2000s, YouTube has been the primary mode of circulating and digitally archiving street dance. Mediatization is indispensable to a consideration of hip hop dance, which the left coast styles make clear. Schloss's ethnographic study *Foundation* (2009) backgrounds this dynamic exchange between practitioner and mediated content in favor of embodied, face-to-face interaction in b-boy practice. What's less known is how mediatization not only affected the circulation but also the production and transmission of left coast styles created through dancers' careful study of Claymation films, cartoons and popular TV shows. Dancers were repurposing mass media as materials for the invention of illusionary styles like robot, animation, popping and boogaloo.

Despite the global and mass commercial impact of these emergent movement styles, university press published research on hip hop dance is rare and studies of west coast street dance rarer. Through today, hip hop dance study is mostly found in essays, journal articles and book sections. Beginning with Sally Banes' inaugural 1981 *Village Voice* article, "Breaking Is Hard to Do: To the Beat, Y'all," the few hip hop texts attending to dance focus largely on New York-originated breakdance (Banes, George, Flinker and Romanowski 1985; Rose 1994; Schloss 2009; Fogarty 2011 and 2012; Johnson 2011) including Curtis Marlow's out of print monograph *Breakdancing*. *Foundation* is still the only in-print monograph about breaking/b-boy. On the wider subject of street dance, Sally Sommer's 2001 essay "C'mon to my House" (which evolved into her production of the 2011 television documentary *Check Your Body at the Door*) breaks scholarly ground with a focus on underground house dancers in New York City, yet neglects mention of Chicago house culture that laid the groundwork for the global house scene. Arguably, New York's geopolitical placement as subcultural capital overrides awareness of the translocal features carried within local dance legacies.

In almost thirty years between Banes 1981 article and Schloss's 2009 monograph, only two other monographs analyzing hip hop dance were published: Carla Stalling Huntington's *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages* (2007) and Halifu Osumare's *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves* (2007), both of which discuss hip hop dance through questions of globalism, commodification and blackness. Huntington emphasizes the collective aspects of hip hop dance with an emphasis on 1980s-90s party dances and commercial advertising (and unexpectedly categorizes "waack" dancing as a preliminary phase of breakdance). Osumare studies the political economy of hip hop dance as a global youth counter-culture that empowers distinct local histories while deriving aesthetic power from Africanist principles of expression.

Several key essays join Pabon and Thompson's call to develop scholarship on the left coast styles. Fifteen years after Banes article, dance historian Katrina Hazzard-Donald

contributed her essay "Dance in Hip Hop Culture" to *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* (1996), an edited volume in which Thompson's essay also appears. While the anthology's title gestures to the preferential treatment of rap in hip hop studies, Hazzard-Donald situates hip hop's emergent dance forms within a cultural-historical context of New World African-derived traditions. Bringing west coast dance styles into view, she adds "Waack dance" to Thompson's list (Mary Fogarty's 2011 article on waacking suggests avenues of further inquiry). Five years later, Jonathan David Jackson added two important articles to the entwined genealogy of hip hop/street/club dances—explorations of "Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing," which mentions house dance, (2001) and the "Social World of Voguing" (2002). April K. Henderson's chapter "Dancing Between Islands: Hip Hop and the Samoan Diaspora" (2006) carefully attends to negotiations of local and global identities through hip-hop, following the transnational multi-directional flows of popping style, embodied in the personal travels and complex identity formations of master dancer Suga Pop and mediated televisually in *Soul Train* broadcasts. A primary form of identification for Samoan youth, popping's global transmission does not force assimilation to US-based culture but, Henderson argues, creates a structure of support for youth to reroute knowledge of their ancestral traditions. More recent essays provide critical new perspectives on krump in Los Angeles (Zanfagna 2009; Frazier and Koslow 2013) and dancehall in Jamaica (Ellis 2011).

The first monograph devoted to the historical development of California-originated street dance is Thomas Guzman-Sanchez's 2012 study *Underground Dance Masters: Final History of a Forgotten Era*. The written text, paired with a documentary film of the same name, navigates a contested history within the street dance community to pave important inroads into dance scholarship. Guzman-Sanchez keeps the translocal perspective in play, as he takes care to describe hip hop prehistories of funk boogaloo and popping between Oakland and San Francisco, Fresno and Long Beach, and locking in South Central Los Angeles and Reseda. He also cites lesser known styles of gay underground club culture (posing, punking, waacking and Chicago-style jacking) and the newer style of krumpin, ending with influences of funk dance on hip hop's development in the Bronx and Brooklyn. The text's critical attention to the distinctive aesthetic choices of funk innovators interprets street dance as a creative, spiritual, emotional and sensory-kinesthetic study of everyday experience. Guzman-Sanchez and Pabon provide some of the more embodied textual analyses in hip hop scholarship, giving extended attention to what the body is actually doing in the act of artistic expression as opposed to primarily sociopolitical or sociohistorical approaches.

Black street dance, choreocentricity, and commodity politics

My work on street dance, improvisation and collectivity, seeks a critical reframing of dance studies scholarship. Leading dance theorist Susan Foster has drawn on literary criticism to support her "choice of 'reading' and 'writing' as metaphors for interpreting dance" (1986:xix) while focusing her extensive body of work on single author-choreographers working in a European-derived non-commercial, proscenium concert stage tradition to make her case.[5] Literary metaphors extend to proliferate *choreocentric* discourse in dance and performance

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[5] See Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986); Foster, ed., *Choreographing History* (University of Indiana Press, 1995); *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (University of Indiana Press, 1996); and Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011).

studies. Choreography is the go-to analytic for theorizing dance, such that a discourse of the Western concert stage choreographer consistently frames questions of philosophy, aesthetics, improvisation and experimentation.[6] Choreocentricity links page to stage, while terms more common among "offstage" dancers are left under-theorized: freestyling, ciphering and battling, the streets, tha 'hood and the underground[7]. Attention to these terms supports inquiry about racialized space and practice initiated in social and popular dance scholarship (Valis Hill, 2003; Sommer, 2009; Fogarty, 2012; Guzman-Sanchez, 2012; Ellis 2011; Johnson, 2011). Because street dance is simultaneously innovative and traditional, choreographic and improvisational, individual and collective, it falls to the margins of historical/ethnographic divisions in dance studies that established the field's legitimacy within academia through a focus on non-commercial, Western concert stage performance by single author-choreographers.[8]

Choreocentric discourse buttresses a string of conceptual oppositions: street/stage, collective/individual, commercial/political, entertainment/art. Dance studies has expanded significantly beyond these formative divisions, making space for new studies of offstage, non-Western and non-concert forms, as well as transmethodologies and interdisciplinary analytical approaches. At the same time, how such divisions still persist reflects both dance and performance studies' formative moves to establish legitimacy within a Western intellectual frame by distancing their analytical foci from popular commercial (read apolitical) entertainment (Manning 2004:xiii). Thomas DeFrantz asks scholars to be mindful of how African American dance has been fixed within the realm of popular entertainment, creating an art-concert/vernacular binary that fails to articulate the individual achievements of black artists and reifies an assumption of black cultural expression as non-technical (2002:13).   A false division between 'the street' (blackened forms) and 'the technical' (whitened forms) marks an epistemological bind that is fundamentally constructed by racial difference. Street dancer Anthony Thomas (choreographer of Janet Jackson's landmark "Rhythm Nation" video) reflects on his artistic collaboration with Paula Abdul on Jackson's "Nasty Boys" video:

> [...] and of course Paula has the advantage in dance coming from the technical side of things because she studied and she went to school. She did all that and I didn't. You know I had my influence in technical dance but, for the most part, it comes from the street.[9]

This discourse of the street reproduces hierarchies of value and legitimacy that maintain a conceptual division between street and studio, and the places where knowledge is (properly) produced. Arguably, Abdul has "the advantage" in a commercial environment that gives legitimacy to institutionalized studio-based dance techniques that follow principles of Western classical dance. Thomas's position outside an institutional frame doesn't put him at a disadvantage in terms of creative production, but street movement regarded as "non-technical" can be appropriated and exploited.

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[6] On improvisation see Ali Bresnahan, "The Philosophy of Dance," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, forthcoming URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/dance/>; on experimentation see André Lepecki, ed., *Dance* (London: Whitechapel Gallery; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

[7] Jackson's theory of individuation in *free-style* dance (2001) and my definition of *hood dance* (Bragin 2014) use street dance discourse to critically intervene in dance studies' choreo-centric frame.

[8] For work that challenges this divide, see Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, eds., *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

[9] Anthony Thomas, *Great Performances: Dance in America: Everybody Dance Now*, PBS, 1991. Documentary film. 0:57:28 minutes.

Moreover, hip hop/street dance has generally held a marginal standing within the hazy category of black dance, still widely recognized as a category of African-American concert artists, companies and works that have reworked blackened movement to make, borrowing Frank Wilderson's term, a "structural adjustment" (2010:38) to the non-commercial Western concert stage.[10] While Wilderson critiques an integrationist vein in black studies that would attempt to locate and affirm a black "subject" in order to gain access to institutional life, the concept of adjustment resonates with the historical logic undergirding concert dance: black people's dance forms need artist-auteurs (whether black or non-black) trained in Western intellectual and aesthetic modalities to shape the 'raw' material into appropriate content capable of serious intellectual engagement and critique. Blackness is always already constructed as modernity's opposite—primitive, close to nature, anonymous, unstructured. By this logic, hip hop/street dance is an irreducibly commercial entertainment form distinguished by and large from 'black' dance, even though its global marketability is unquestionably a result of its being codified as black—a blackness that in fact gains commodity value through its ability to 'play' black on non-black bodies (Tate 2003). Associations with commercial entertainment and underclass culture are a key reason street dance styles remain under-theorized in dance and performance scholarship.

In the post-bellum era, black dance continued to serve the entertainment and commercial function, as minstrelsy and vaudeville (Dixon-Gottschild 2003). When black concert dance choreographers began to create individually authored pieces for the stage, a primary concern for black representation was the untethering of black dance from commercial entertainment, defined in opposition to the artistic, the political, the elite, the intellectual (Manning 2004). Another issue has been the ongoing discrediting, miscrediting, or erasure of black cultural forms and the strategic function of the 'black dance' genre to authorize black people as cultural producers. By sustaining a high art-low entertainment divide, black concert dance artists tried to challenge "views [of] black expression as exotic variations of corresponding white forms" (Hazzard Gordon 1990:xii).

African American dance sought a certain degree of legitimacy in its transition from the popular to concert stage. Choreographers like Dunham and Ailey mixed popular forms with European ballet and modern dance, adjusting the structures of black popular movement practices they researched to present these forms on the Western concert stage, while also creating technical forms that slowly were granted legitimacy in spaces, on the terms and under the supervision of whiteness. On the other hand, non-US based forms of African diaspora dance could also gain degrees of legitimacy and respect as linkages to a past and celebrations of a history and diversity of continental African and African-derived peoples. These dance traditions have most often been reinvented for concert stage presentation as well. Street dance has made transitions to concert dance stages while practitioners dancing offstage—by necessity and choice—continue to drive its innovation. Regardless the cultural form, the concert stage allows a structural adjustment for the translation of blackened movement and people into dance and dancers proper. The idea that street dancers have no formal technical training (i.e. the myth of the magnificently natural dancer possessed with raw soul, moving against the odds) continues to haunt the popular imagination about these styles in their ties to the ghetto and blackness.[11] Questions of "pleasure and critique [that] form the basis of power present within hip hop dance

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[10] See the predisposition to spotlight concert dance choreographers in Zita Allen, "What is black dance?" http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/behind/behind_blackdance.html.
[11] See Nancy Wozny, "It's Russell: Winner of "So You Think You Can Dance" Season 6," *dancespirit.com*, 1 March 2010, http://www.dancespirit.com/uncategorized/its_russell_winner_of_so_you_think_you_can_dance_season_6/ (5 April 2015).

forms" (DeFrantz 2004:66) are inextricable from street dance's displacement from dance proper—that is dance that "belongs" in and to dance studios and concert stages.

In line with this problem, studies of black dance continue to fall most often within the privileged realm of concert stage/non-commercial/single author works (Dixon-Gottschild 1996 and 2003; DeFrantz 2002 and 2004; Manning 2004). Black dance and black dance studies have had to negotiate the delimitations of dance and dance studies by conforming at least partially to the governing aesthetic, philosophical, methodological, and conceptual conventions of dance and dance studies proper, to be comprehensible, visible and viable. Stemming from this history, black dance coheres around a tradition of confronting the racial politics of domination, resistance, authentication, invisibilization, appropriation, and inclusion (Amin 2011). How then might studies of black dance expand to consider street dance in its collective, de-privatized modes of theorizing based in the everyday study of movement? In these instances black dance also constitutes a community-engaged theoretics that takes place off concert stages, in counterpublic theatrical spaces of spiritual communion and collective creation. Street dance is important not only to be documented as an ethnographic and historical object, but also as a sensory-kinesthetic mode of theorizing the world. Such an approach would draw from ethnographic, archival, ethnohistorical, and theoretical approaches to dance, to consider how abstract concepts are formulated not in the 'genius' creative mind of the single auteur but through a kinesthetic politics of blackness—as 'fact,' 'case,' and 'lived experience' (Moten 2008). Such an approach considers a collective kinesthetic theoretics of racialized experience— the ethics and meanings of living as and in black.

A key question raised by the art-entertainment divide is the function of mass media in cultural representation. The argument that mass media trivialize culture leads to an ongoing idea that pop culture is inauthentic, superficial and apolitical (Thornton 1996). Any critique of hip hop must acknowledge the inherent issue of reifying the art-entertainment divide, especially since hip hop arts have always actively engaged mass media and linked themselves to commercial production, often unapologetically. Any argument for hip hop as a legitimate aesthetic form stands to consider the politicized relationship between race, representation, and commercial media.

McClary and Walser (1994) expose the function of art/entertainment and political/commercial distinctions that ghettoize black cultural expressions, rejecting their treatment as appropriate objects of analysis:

> [W]e have the familiar pattern of African Americans developing an expressive form but having it register as significant for others only when it is picked up by "genuine" artists with aesthetic know-how and non-profit integrity…[p]art of the problem, of course, is that the extraordinary impact of black music on world culture has come about precisely because of its presence within the culture industry. Without the tools of mass mediation and its profit-based motivation, most of the inhabitants of the globe would not have been exposed. (78)

This statement clarifies the consequence of dance studies' historical link to avant-garde performance, and scholars' work, whether in European classical or 'black' dance, to legitimize the field through a preference for non-commercial (also understood to be single-authored and high-art) dance. Performance studies reflects these distinctions in its genealogical link to the political avant-garde read anti-commercial. McClary and Walser were pointing to how Randy

Martin's *Performance as a Critical Act* (1990) overwhelmingly centered avant-garde works in his consideration of the political potential of dance and "mention[ed] break dancing, but only to lament its appropriation by the culture industry and to give Twyla Tharp credit for having realized how to take the vocabulary of this element of hip hop culture and use it to progressive ends" (78). Martin worked to address this critique in *Critical Moves* (1998) through a study of hip hop in an Orange County aerobics studio. Yet the racial-political divide that continues to delimit awareness of street dance communities beyond the studio challenges dance scholars to expand studies of hip hop/street dance that account in material ways for the streets.

Improvisation and dance studies

Deconstructing the choreography/improvisation binary in dance studies is a first step toward the study of street dance. Jonathan David Jackson's article "Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing" (2001) argues for a theory of choreography within the act of improvisation, an intervention supported in compelling ways by studies of black popular dance music (Pond 2013; Fikentscher 2000). Making the point that "aesthetic theory in dance studies has often separated discussions of creative process from cultural interpretation" (2001:42), Jackson outlines an aesthetic framework for black vernacular dance improvisation, as a process developing out of sociopolitical concerns. Anthea Kraut (2008) historicizes the concept of choreography and the choreographer, revealing its discursive functions in European classical dance and critiquing its relevance to black vernacular forms. Valis Hill (2003), Fogarty (forthcoming), and Buckland (2002) have studied improvisation within tap, breaking, and queer club dancing respectively, wherein improvisation is not a tool for the concert choreographer but a fundamental approach of the dancer to performance more widely construed.

Still, dance scholarship has largely explored improvisation from the perspective of non-commercial studio-based and studio-to-theater based practice. Though improvisation has been most extensively studied within ethnomusicology and music theory, David Gere suggests that "if the Cartesian dualism of body as separate from mind is ever to be surmounted [...] dance improvisation provides the perfect paradigm. For it is while improvising that the body's intelligence manifests itself most ineluctably" (2003:xiv). However, Gere notes that modern dance artists through the twentieth century separate and elevate choreography, with the perception that "improvisation is for private reflection and discovery [from which] composition and the rigors of choreography must follow" (xiv). A key exception were 1960s Judson Church era artists, whose rejections of modern dance proper contributed to the development of contact improvisation in the early 1970s (Novack 1990). Danielle Goldman (2010} critiques the Judson avant-gardists' vaguely political goal of a notion of freedom enfolded within improvisation, premised on a culturally specific process of improvising framed as universal. Instead, Goldman foregrounds the labor involved in *Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom*:

> Improvisation presents an elastic relation to constraint, which demands that the dancer actively participate in determining how a given dance will unfold. This demand for participation is particularly important because one must do more than assume an imitative position or relax in the belief that one is separate from the dance's development. (38, emphasis mine)

Acknowledging struggle and constraint rather than an imagined endpoint formulated within a Western-modernist telos of liberation, Goldman borrows Houston Baker's concept of "tight places" to argue that rules of technique—a style's "rhythmic and choreographic structures" (46)—and, as importantly, "social and historical positions in the world affect one's mobility." Considering that street dances can and do function in contexts not given over *a priori* to the dancer or dance, freestyle (the term for improvisation within street dance discourse) is a compelling site for theorizing concepts of freedom, constraint, context and planning (Goldman 2010; Moten 2003; Harney and Moten 2013). For street dance practitioners, *improvisation is both practice and disposition, an attitude enveloped within everyday life processes and elaborated through movement study and practice*.

Dance studies that focus on improvisation within a modern dance lineage have overlooked the function and meaning of rhythm and sound in the street dance practice of freestyling, which I argue follows the process of improvisation in the black radical tradition. In part this oversight derives from the generic (and gendered) divide between music and dance, challenged by critical scholarship on black music and gendered genres (Gaunt 2006; Goldman 2007). I was hula hooping one night with friends at a backyard party, and as we made fun of each other's rusty moves, our conversation turned to reminiscences of childhood play. One woman jumped vigorously from her chair, pretending to double dutch across invisible ropes. I asked her, "Do you remember any of those double dutch rhymes…the songs?" She protested, "We didn't have any songs." Someone else joined in a tone of spirited affirmation, explaining to me that there was never any music or rhymes. "We were playing games. That's exactly what it was." His explanation reflects what's also implied by the title of Gaunt's study—*The Games Black Girls Play*. Modes of black cultural production can blur genre classifications within a Western scheme and further, hint to a critical insertion of embodied artistic expression into everyday experience. Cultural division of music and dance genres obscures how the ongoing impulse for movement in street styles is given over to sound and more specifically, to the drum.

I've been studying Haitian dance informally over the last three years in classes led by Portia Jefferson, Artistic Director of Oakland-based dance ensemble Rara Tou Limen. During one class we were practicing a dance called Nago, which must be danced with sharpness, strength and fierceness in the attack. Haitian dance uses the cassé, or break, characterized by a sudden, sharp bending at the knees. At the point in the movement sequence for the delivery of the cassé, the musicians would hit the drums with greater force, sending the staccato rhythm through the dancers' bodies. Having finished my turn, I watched the lines of dancers moving across the floor. I noticed the distinct power projected by the dancers moving in response to the drum, in distinction from the dancers moving on cue with the choreography. This distinction might be described as the difference between expressing the feeling of the movement versus merely replicating the shape of the movement, a principle echoed by dancers' popular if misleading decree: "don't think, dance." When focusing on the choreography to guide them rather than the drummers' rhythm, "thinking" dancers may separate movement and music and lose the vibrancy called for by the sound-movement structure of Nago. I've found myself often switching between these two approaches to studying dance styles reliant on the drum. In moments I find myself emphasizing the choreography in order to commit the steps to muscle memory. In order to fully dance the steps, I must eventually consciously or unconsciously give myself over to the drum—what's called in street dance riding the beat or catching the groove. In this somatic state of release, sound and movement are synesthetically bound—the drum's vibration a material, motive force that is not external to my body. Rhythm is the product of the

simultaneity of sound and movement and inextricable from practice. In this moment of being in the music, responding to sound, the "I" is no longer the intention or motivation for moving. The feeling of moving is the same as the feeling of being moved. By the drum, the beat, the sound and the rhythm. To extend this idea, my body is no longer fully my own. My leg lifts a wave of sound that crashes over my foot, pinning it to the floor. Riding the next wave, my arms draw a wide arc through the air as the next crash tugs my wrists forward. The waves seep deeply into my violently contracting chest.

Kathryn Lynn Geurts (2002) argues that "the Western folk model" of the senses, wherein knowledge is produced as a result of sensations that we receive and then perceive from the external world, is not universal but culturally specific. Her ethnographic study of an Anlo-Ewe community in West Africa explores a distinct cultural sensorium articulated through the concept of seselelame—consciousness as feeling or hearing in the body. Seselelame comes closest to what is described in Western epistemology as kinesthesia. The cultural value attributed to seselelame produces an Anlo-Ewe knowledge that "bodily habits and psychological outlook are deeply intertwined." (77) Related to a Western cultural sensorium is the separation of music and dance into bounded and identifiable genres, the complexity of the sound-movement complex in African Diaspora expressive practice (Farris-Thompson 1966) is overlooked. Fred Moten's (2003) work on improvisation and critical theory attends to aurality, the sound of blackness, which he also understands as danced and moved. His study of improvisation within the free jazz era preceding the development of street dance theorizes an inextricable conjoining of sight and sound in black music. Moten argues that fugitive movement, "the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that anarranges every line" (1) defines slave life simultaneously as prohibition and transgression. He further provides a critique of improvisation that is critical for theorizing street dance forms often misconstrued as 'non-technical,' arguing that improvisation is not without preparation, not purely naive spontaneity, but rather about foresight (63-64). It is incorrect to view improvisation as endless and nonproductive; what is intended and produced is change itself—Moten's definition of the black radical tradition. Improvisation, for Moten, is a collective process that foregrounds material relations of queerness, blackness and resistance. I apply and extend this work to study how hip hop/street dance relies on a synesthetic practice of listening-by-moving.

My deeper experience living these forms guides me to take analysis beyond a focus on virtuosic individuals or "masters." While "pioneers" hold an elevated place in the street dance cathedral, I very purposefully take another route, moving away from individual naming and its reification of fathers, forefathers, godfathers, masters. I'm likewise interested in processes of "individuation" (Jackson 2002) that might differently emphasize collective labor in street dance culture. This is not to ignore the associative entangling of blackness, collectivity and the (mindless) mob—or "blob" to borrow Moten's phrasing. My assertion here is that collective improvisation in street dance need not be opposed to individuation to be disentangled from individualism. It's in this sense that the black radical tradition pivots on collective improvisation, with the potential to expand dance scholarship into an aesthetic and political theory of street dance.

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In chapter two, "'I Disappeared': *Soul Train*'s Kinesthetic Politics," I describe how improvised street dance draws theoretical force from a collective (sense) ability—a process I call

loco-motivity. I think about loco-motive power through the trans-localism that characterizes the development of street dance practices, broadcast tele-visually on the landmark black music and dance show *Soul Train* and circulated in the travels of practitioners within and outside neighborhood, city and national borders. Through oral history interviews with *Soul Train* dancers from the show's earliest years and my own participation at ongoing *Soul Train* dancer reunions, I study how the show moved black folks town-to-town televisually, building a trans-local network through dance which Train-ed participants to feel together in movement. Dancers improvising on the show's climactic Soul Train Line introduced new styles to each other and viewing audiences—Waacking/Punking, Locking, Robot, Popping. Being loco-motive meant participants could be present in multiple places and times together, representing their neighborhoods and local cultures while recording lines and lineages with the past. Into the present day, *Soul Train* dance clips circulate among practitioners globally, generating the study, reinvention and innovation of street dance style. Between the Soul Train Line and circle formations in African-derived cosmology, chapter two addresses the transitional theoretical space between notions of tradition and innovation, individualism and collectivity, choreography and improvisation, dance and music, to describe the sociality of black street dance—an experimental political project.

 Soul Train was a dance and music show that exemplifies how sensory modalities of sound and motion conjoin in black performance. I use *Soul Train* as a springboard to emphasize the synesthetic properties of street dance. These styles rely intimately on the practice of listening-by-moving. In the 60s and 70s, dancers were improvising new movements because they were hearing new sounds in black popular music, namely funk and disco. Musical genres began to blend earlier forms (soul, r&b, jazz, gospel), simultaneously blending gendered ways of moving. Dancers and musicians listened and moved together, sharing paralinguistic forms of expression that destabilized straight/gay divisions governing how bodies should properly, and heteronormatively, move. *Soul Train* provides a record of these aural-kinesthetic practices (Johnson 2012).

 Soul Train is one chance to narrate a prehistory of hip hop dance, but really there are multiple beginnings as this book acknowledges and seeks to open avenues for new research. *Soul Train* sparked spinoff shows, notably Soul Is in Oakland, California, where practitioners were experimenting with the development of styles like robot, boogaloo and strutting. The lines and lineages that I'm suggesting here gain significance in light of Pabon's and Thompson's work. Rather than reinscribing a territorial divide between east and west coasts, I'm interested in the simultaneous local and trans-local production of style that makes hip hop dance more than reducible to a geographically isolated area. Instead, flows of people and expressive practices build a conversation within and between locations, creating a relational awareness that fuels hip hop's dynamic creative potential. With trans-location in mind, while I seek to introduce left coast dance into hip hop's timeline, I will also continually question any definitive search for origins— as that project has also been complicit with the patriarchal investment in seeking out founding fathers and a blind refusal of the material creations of those silent (often female) voices that haunt the borders of such searches. I choose the term 'left coast' to remember that what's left out of any history is often most significant to gaining insight into its meaning.

 Chapter three, "Popping and Other Dis/Appearing Acts" studies the interrelation of the early hip hop styles of Popping and Robot, two styles that pivot on the principle of muscle contraction, to ask how technical rules of style incorporate a theoretics of power determining how (and the limits within which) the body moves. These improvisation-based styles are premised on a stop-and-go approach to mobility, and aesthetics of repetitive rhythmic isolation,

muscular release and contraction. Innovators applied these aesthetic principles to their study of animation mediums like Claymation and TV cartoons, and movement principles of non-human figures like puppets, skeletons, scarecrows and robots. Concepts of visual appearance, illusion and morphing became incorporated into the performance of these forms. These improvisational practices remixed mass media as subjugated knowledge, acting as an alternative model of literacy for the youth innovating them. Drawing on critical black theory and post humanism, I argue that these movement vernaculars theorize in *Soul Train*'s mode of loco-motivity, training the body in concepts of collectivity and improvisation that dis-form a humanist framework which would otherwise hierarchically value concepts of the "automotive" individual—defined as an abstract-thinking liberal subject in full possession of self.

I am specifically interested in what a close analysis of these practices might bring to a theoretics of muscle contraction that various scholars have noted in Fanon's political philosophy. These analyses address the relationship between blackness and object-ness: overdetermination and sound (Moten 2003), endurance (Keeling 2003), agency (Noland 2009) and abjection (Scott 2010). What kinesthetic codes are present and reproduced in the sensation of muscle tightening, once that repeated action becomes the structuring force of a practitioner's prolonged experimentation with movement? In light of the contemporaneous rise of the black power movement, mass media framed black power (Rhodes 2007) trapping its advocates into games of visibility and political representation that ultimately ensured government-backed infiltration and destruction of these movements. Rage was and is structurally prohibited as legitimate black political expression but in the development of hip hop culture, extended through practice as transmissible, "communicable" affect (Judy 1994).

Chapter four, "Movement from the Underground: The Rebirth of Waacking/Punking," approaches the figure of black masculinity through a queer-punk history of street dance culture and the 'rebirth' of movement practices, reinvented as studio techniques, that respond to contemporary gender identity formation. In the rebirth of waacking/punking, translocation occurs in the very intimate space between bodies, as a way that practitioners find to traverse the landscape of gender, sex and sexuality.

Sustained analysis of gay dance cultures does not appear sufficiently in scholarly accounts, which have mainly analyzed the sounds of 1960s and 70s black political cultures as if they are distinct from the movements. Disco dancing especially is regarded as highly commercial (read apolitical) and scholarship has worked to counter these assumptions. Dance of the period has generally been studied as derivative of the music or nonspecific social dancing that doesn't attend to how social dancing of the period formed the basis for the development of codified technical styles (on disco, Hughes 1994 and Easlea 2004; on house, Currid 1995; on funk, Vincent 1996, Danielson 2006 and Bolden 2008; on club dance, Buckland 2002 and Bollen 2006). Accounts of hip hop and street dance that precisely describe technical practice are less common (Pabon 2006; Schloss 2009; Fogarty 2011; Guzman-Sanchez 2013).

The dance style waacking/punking emerged in gay underground disco culture of early 1970s Los Angeles. With the passing of most progenitors over the course of AIDS and drug crises of the early 1980s, the style was not widely practiced until street dancers re-popularized it transnationally in the 2000s. Bringing together street dancers' common discourse and theory of the undercommons in the work of Fred Moten, José Muñoz and Stefano Harney, I use the term *underground dance* to describe a transitional modality and experimental space of study that unsettles proper functions and demands of professionalization in commercial studio dance. While waacking/punking's rebirth seems to promote a return to heteronormative gender performance

that would uphold (white) femininity, practitioners embody/enact a re-dressing of gendered power relations, made possible by the historical construction of black masculinity. A move with the unthought black male figure of racialized sexuality that inhabits waacking's underground history might disorient dancers into "punk'd" forms of experimentation. Still, the gender binarism that restricts practitioners' discourse must be addressed by considering how blackness, not as culture and identity but as structural position, operates through and with these forms.

Chapter five, "Shot and Captured: Hood Dance on YouTube and Viral Antiblackness," explores YouTube circulations of hood dance, which I define as improvisation-based practices that defy a choreo-centric logic of mass-market dance, locating movement aesthetics in the social life of the black neighborhood and supporting intramural dialogue among participants across time and space. I expand street dance study to a contemporary global scale and circle back to my initial questions of blackness in the kinesthetic politics of street dance. I consider how codes of blackness circulate through new media, studying the practices of YouTube users who now participate in the viral production, circulation and transmission of culture. I apply film, performance and discourse analyses to compare global viral affects/effects of counter-memorial *RIP* turf dance films in Oakland and 2013 internet dance memes that performatively forgot the Harlem Shake. While the *RIP* videos provide a record of disproportionate policing, incarceration and deaths of black people, the memes circulate in a libidinal economy of antiblackness that uses codified blackness as a vehicle for performances of pleasure. The Harlem Shake's hood (kin)aesthetics are overlooked as turfers' bodies are overseen by law. I show how celebrating hip hop in liberal social empowerment and "official" colorblindness discourse, secures the political death of blackness. In tension with its globalization as a decidedly multicultural phenomenon, I question how hip hop dance attempts to resist antiblackness as a transnational imagination of black power.

Left coast stories

Stories are fabulations. Fables incorporate fantastic characters and mythical experiences, making invention key to the story's power. Hip hop dance has much to say about storytelling, considering that dancers take on characters who sometimes blend into "real" life. The left coast stories that take precedence in this account, draw a tenuous line between fabulation and history. It's both about keeping in play those dances located geographically to the left of hip-hop's New York history and a reminder that even those stories left out of one history will inevitably leave out other histories in their telling.

Rather than tell history in a linear mode, my research traces a circuitous path through space-time that I find more telling of those stories and those whose stories exist humbly in dusty corners of half truths, missed connections, disappearances and necessary illusions. Some missing stories never fully reveal themselves. They remain faintly heard like the scratch of dry leaves stirred in a sudden gust of wind. Many voices now meander through my thoughts and inhabit me. Paralinguistic expression is more accepting of this impossibility of translation, which is why I understand that between the language of movement and written words, this text is a disappearing act. In this respect, I hope to write dance with an insight that Ronald A. T. Judy's words provide:

> [T]he most successful translation—the one that achieves not an identification of signification between two languages but the approximation of an affect articulated in one language that somehow is analogous to that of another—not only recalls the

incommensurability of languages but also the incommensurability of language and experience. (1997:105-106)

In the approximation of writing to moving my idea is to seek the stories of collective memory embedded in the techniques themselves. I've chosen to focus on the story that I feel these dances have to tell collectively through practice.

Chapter 2.
"I Disappeared": *Soul Train*'s **Kinesthetic Politics**

Under cover of night and a world championship fight between Frazier and Ali, the "people's burglars" (Jennings 2014) broke into an FBI office in a Pennsylvania town called Media—the name ironically fitting the purpose of the occasion to steal files and launch a press leak. Two weeks later, on 24 March 1971, the first article to account the theft made the *Washington Post* front page.[12] It would take another two years for the code word COINTELPRO marked on a stolen routing slip to be deciphered and made public, but the burglary (followed by the 13 June publication of the Pentagon Papers in the *New York Times*) had already catalyzed a media exposé of the US government's extensive and protracted engagement in covert and extrajudicial operations. Operations like COINTELPRO-BLACK HATE and the Ghetto Informant Program targeted King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Stokely Carmichael and SNCC, the Nation of Islam, and a wide range of organizations, with stated aims to infiltrate, disrupt and misdirect their unlicensed activities.

The initial media activist efforts aimed back, throwing into relief the reinvigoration of state power scheming to dismantle sustained high visibility political organizing over the two decades prior. One such scheme, the details of which aired before a US senate committee in 1975, increased rivalry between the Black Panthers and Ron Maulana Karenga's black nationalist US organization, culminating in the 17 January 1969 shooting deaths of Panther leaders John Huggins and Alprentice Bunchy Carter during a Black Student Union meeting at UCLA's Campbell Hall. Wheeled into evidence during a 1976 courtroom trial, shopping carts carrying 200 volumes of files documenting the activities of the FBI's domestic counter intelligence program stood to expose the 4 December 1969 assassinations of Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton and member Mark Clark, executed by COINTELPRO conspiring with the police department of Chicago. The shopping carts materialized the weight of surveillance on the black body and its (black) operations, the disruption and misdirection of its collective assembly.

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On 2 October 1971, *Soul Train* moved to syndication. The national premiere marked the black popular music and dance show's successful relocation to Los Angeles after a year of weekday afternoon airings on WCIU-TV in Chicago, home town of the show's host and creator Don Cornelius. Projected against the reconsolidated backdrop of state terror sweeping black protest movements from Chicago to Los Angeles and beyond, early *Soul Train* episodes screened a performance of collective sense-ability among black youth captured in sonic-kinetic acts of moving-while-listening together. The *Soul Train* dancers' enactments of unity and identification were underscored by the distinct tenor of black performance:

> The significance of becoming or belonging together in terms other than those defined by one's status as property, will-less object, and the not-quite-human should not be underestimated. This belonging together endeavors to redress and nurture the broken

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[12] Billy X Jennings, "How the Discovery of COINTELPRO Saved Me from Prison," *sfbayview.com*, 28 January 2014, http://sfbayview.com/2014/01/how-the-discovery-of-cointelpro-saved-me-from-prison/ (6 April 2015). The identities of the burglars (Bonnie Raines, John Raines and Keith Forsyth) were first revealed with the January 2014 publication of *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI*, authored by Betty Medsger, the *Washington Post* reporter who broke the story.

body; it is a becoming together dedicated to establishing other terms of sociality, however transient, that offer a small measure of relief from the debasements constitutive of one's condition [but that] must grapple with the differences that constitute community and the particular terms of community's enactment in their specificity in order to fully understand the value of "having a good time among their own color." (Hartman 1997:61)

Soul Train's "innocent amusements" (42)—black youth gathering on a film set not unlike a high school sock hop or neighborhood house party—were consequential in light of the enduring violence structuring black life offscreen. Adjacent to media framings of Black Panthers (Rhodes 2007), *Soul Train*'s sensational performance of black celebration would quickly be met with reprisal (although in the lower frequency register of entertainment industry politics).

Sentiment that "an all-black show equaled segregation" (Blount-Danois 2013:73) was expressed in no uncertain terms by Dick Clark, host/producer of the initially all-white dance-music show *American Bandstand*: "I don't dig black people not liking white people."[13] Phrased differently, Clark's terms of engagement anticipated a threat in the ostensibly harmless act of social dancing. *Soul Train* was staging the shift in black political consciousness since the mid-1950s—principally the concepts of self-determination and pride—albeit within a media entertainment frame. Indicating pressures against his refusal to integrate the show through these early years, Don Cornelius responded in a 1974 *Billboard* interview, "There is no such thing as visual control. Control lies with people behind the scenes, the decision makers, and that's the arena where the industry is totally negligent and blatantly discriminatory."[14] Cornelius's words underscored the intractability of power in an entertainment industry linch pinned by antiblackness.

This chapter begins with a question Cornelius provokes: how does "visual control" function in terms of what was happening "behind the scenes" and beyond the seen? I think through the limits of meaning produced by *Soul Train*'s tele-visual mode of celebratory representation, in order to describe a continuity between the dismantling of black radical movements and the assembling of community through black performance. Beyond spectacles of official policing, mass media mobilized a post civil-rights discursive strategy heralding the productive (legitimate) possibilities of mutually responsible black power and black pride.[15] In this sense, pride would have a sedating effect on power's most chaotic regressions into revolutionary violence. Tracking continuous progress toward an "integrated" social goal and sensible vision of civil order, community would build pride and power through self-policing mechanisms of bourgeois morality, order, recognition, respectability.

My study of *Soul Train* reflects on this idea of community by questioning the function of autonomy and collectivity within the sensory-kinesthetic politics of funk—a rhythm-smell-sound-movement. How do black spectator-participants (on and off set) experience an enduring "in the interval" (Keeling 2003) generated by improvisatory practices of viewing-while-moving-and-listening together, which also means grooving, getting down, getting funky? I describe these practices as (kin) aesthetic to foreground experiences of relating (and differently formulating broken relations) through movement sensation. As my reading of the iconic chugging train seeks to demonstrate, *Soul Train* is also a story that moves beyond the TV frame, connecting black people in movement conversations across time and space. Threading through this *Soul Train*

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[13] Dick Clark, quoted in Blount Danois, 71.
[14] Don Cornelius, quoted in Blount Danois, 73.
[15] Editorial Board, "Black Power & Black Pride," *Time*, 1 December 1967, volume 90, issue 22, p40.

translocale, the "broken body" of blackness performs a kinesthetic politics, a reformulation of kinship through movement practice. The show's ending Soul Train Lines record translocated lineages of dance, based in experimental improvisations on moving that break down conceptual divisions: mind/body, collective/individual, choreography/improvisation, innovation/tradition. These movement practices create a basis for innovations of street dance style.

Throughout, my accounting for the unseen/un-scened opens a reflection on black performance. *Soul Train* performed the failure of "[l]iberation […] as a present impossibility, an expansion that explodes in the interval in which we wait." (110) For Keeling, waiting, enduring existence in the interval, creates a form of revolutionary spectatorship that I'd like to rethink in the time-space of black improvisation—a collective sensory-kinesthetic experiment of being moved. These captive performances reverse the question of what exists, holding spectator-participants to account for how they convene with the unknowable. What I describe, after Derrida (1994), as the hauntology of *Soul Train*, is the ethical call—that takes the material form of specters who haunt street dance history—to challenge Western intellectual frameworks of knowledge that privilege distanced spectatorship, creating a different participatory capacity for political refusal experienced via "a regularly scheduled get-down right in your living room" (George 2014:31).

Against this capacity, Clark discursively curtailed the crisis that blackness threatens—"I don't dig black people not liking white people." Desiring to bring *Soul Train*'s "terms of sociality" swiftly back in service of white ownership of black bodies and pleasure, included Clark's strategy to recruit *Soul Train* dancers to *Bandstand* and a failed attempt to air his own black entertainment show, *Soul Unlimited*, in the same time slot. His stagings of white power effectively reframed the crisis under the rubric of policing black people's enjoyment amongst themselves. Clark's statement digs black language but not black power. Clark marked the *Soul Train* gatherings as unlawful—deploying the language of segregation as a political weapon against *Soul Train* to ensure vesting of power in white executives, all the while projecting Cornelius's plot to "segregate" against them. Keeling argues that visual representations reproduce the structure of black/white antinomy "striv[ing] to assert itself as a rational and natural expression of existing socio-economic relations" (2003:102) against (irrational) black "hatred" of white. In fact, Clark's recolonizing strategies mirrored redeployments of military power against black radicals. By literally "aiming the cameras at the black dancers, whose fashions and steps have been a key factor in *Soul Train*'s cult-like success with both blacks and whites,"[16] Clark symbolically aimed to dictate the terms of black people's pleasure and their role in producing popular culture (for a profit). Subsequently, *Soul Train*'s celebratory sensation operates fundamentally in the libidinal economy of antiblackness—situating celebration's communicable affects (pleasure, delight, enjoyment) within an ontological order premised on black political death. Black performance shapes the meaning of existence under these terms. Such analysis in my view is extended by a study of what black movement might be doing politically in ways that are not fully explained by, and also disforming of, Enlightenment models of consciousness.

Funding of *Soul Train* fueled the drive to recolonize the new black pride and power. Blount-Danois acknowledges that major industry advertiser Gordon Metcalf's "decision to fund the show [for its first Chicago airings] seemed like a bold move for racial progress, but there was a strong financial incentive driving the decision […] courting the black market seemed like smart

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[16] Jesse Jackson, quoted in Blount Danois, 73.

business."[17] Aside white executives, on 14 January 1971 Chicago-based Johnson Products became the first black-owned company to trade on the American Stock Exchange and then became *Soul Train*'s exclusive sponsor. The hair and facial cosmetics manufacturer required dancers to wear their hair out, producing a diversity of styles from naturals, braids, and perms to Afro wigs. In a sixty-second commercial for Johnson Afro-Sheen, the ghost of Frederick Douglass reprimands a handsome young man to shape up his nappy fro—but only after the youth repeats his black history lessons to the ghost. Abolition, reform politics, black thought, self-pride and commercial motives blur in the mist of the product's nap-taming powers. Prior to black popular culture's increasing hyper-commodification through the 1980s and 90s, early *Soul Train* screened the intersection of black performance and commodity politics.

Seen at the height of black power movements, Douglass's specter resurfaces the history of freedom struggle and its dissipation—captured in the ambivalence that characterized Douglass's approach to revolutionary violence as a means for black liberation. The commercial mixes signifiers of (masculine) power and pride that figure a discursive blending of cultural identity and resistance. Douglass's disappearance in a mist of Afro-Sheen might allow viewers to glimpse a spectral gesture of oblique protest against the attempted offscreen erasure of black revolutionaries. In these instants, specters present openings of meaning that can't conclude what's to be seen and scene-d on *Soul Train*. The appearance of Douglass's specter indexes the redeployment of state-powered violence to obliterate black liberation movements that endure in the (commercial) interval.

Defined by Kara Keeling in terms of a political ontology that exceeds sociological analysis, the interval conforms to and exceeds the antiblack structure of visual representation. The interval presents an opening of perception—"limited to the realm of sensation or affect" (2003:110) and repetitively anticipated and foreclosed by the structure. This opening could be termed radical when it is an "enduring" of the necessary reinstatement of its refusal. Douglass's ghost might be seen to index the offscreen operations of radical struggle, making a commercial call for politicized spectatorship. But the appearance of Douglass's specter also signals the ambivalent potential of resistance on the brink of black popular culture's hypercommodification. The proper taming of the 'fro is indexed to a kind of self-policing, such that "fighting for freedom" is reconstituted in "outward expression[s] of pride and dignity"—black power as cultural expression, black power seen most effective as a productive, civic ally of black pride.[18] Afro-Sheen is repackaged as a discursive product of Douglass's own contradictory views on liberation—his advocacy of a social reformist strategy of principled reasoning: "It is evident that we can be improved and elevated only just so fast and far as we shall improve and elevate ourselves.[19]" His commercial specter perhaps best serves to emphasize the tangled relation between black performance and radical resistance. The camera's eye leaves records of specters who seek *Soul Train*'s hauntology—a material haunting and undermining of visuality's assumed hold on truth that passes on speculations of the unthought.

The specter is an enduring reflection on and in the unknown—a reflection that attempts escapes through the collective improvisations of movement that dancers perform again, once the commercial ends. The US government's aim to obliterate black radical movements haunts the

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[17] Blount Danois, 13. The show aired locally in Chicago on 17 August 1970, before its relocation to Los Angeles in October 1971. Local youth dance shows *Red Hot and Blues* and *Kiddie-a-Go-Go* were precedents featuring mostly black dancers.
[18] "Afro Sheen Commercial (Featuring Frederick Douglass)," YouTube, 1:14 minutes, posted by coolloyd, 28 May 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8ffzI2czHs.
[19] Frederick Douglass, "Address to the Colored People of the United States of the Colored National Convention of 1848," *North Star*, July 14, 1848.

sensory-kinesthetic realm, where bodies gather to collectively celebrate. A black phenomenology of state-powered guilt by association—whether enforced by entertainment industry or government control—includes performative acts of accountability in and to the social body. Excavating this phenomenology makes space to think about the nature of this "prior collective identification" and trauma of racialized embodiment—to articulate the unthought coordinates of the visible (Keeling 102-103). These forms of association move through the rhythm-sound-smell of funk—a celebration of being simultaneously representative for and mutually responsible to one another.

Soul Train *loco-motives*

"I disappeared.[20]" I had asked *Soul Train* dancer Veda Johnson how she felt her first time seeing the show. The idea of simultaneously viewing and disappearing out of view to reappear on the opposite side of the screen, fits a feeling that dancers and viewers of the Train repeatedly describe, recollecting how street blocks emptied as families collected in living rooms to listen, watch and groove with the Soul Train Line dancers: "all black people would come *out* the street, into the house, because you didn't *see* that many black people on TV" (Proctor, 2012a).

The show's highlight was the ending Soul Train Line which showcased dancers moving down the line, introducing new styles of movement and fashion to each other and their viewers. Questlove, drummer of Philly rap group the Roots, says *Soul Train* "influenced how people *felt* on the other side of the TV […] I felt more like a participant than a spectator" (Thompson 2013:97). To view and groove with the finale Soul Train Line was a congregational act of melting into the set. Being in front of the TV screen was key to visually record the dance moves and *move while viewing*—creating a record in the collective body at a time when recording equipment was not readily available. Drawing on Diana Taylor's (2003) assertion that embodied performances store and transmit social memory and cultural identity in dynamic relation to textual archives, these social dances are significant sonic-kinetic records of transformations in black political consciousness. In other words, *Soul Train-ing* produced a type of wireless transmission, connecting black folks town to town tele-visually.

In fact, Don Cornelius had started out hosting local high school sock hops in Chicago (George 2014). He said the mobile DJ setup "felt like a train […] moving around the city" (9). Reflecting his original vision, *Soul Train*'s animated introductions portray a black cartoon train moving along tracks that traverse expansive topographical maps transmuting into cityscapes teeming with skyscrapers and high rise buildings. In one early 70s version, the fat black train blowing gaily colored swirls of smoke peeks out from behind a planet in a black sky smattered with pulsing stars. Chugging its way across the screen, the train ducks into a darkened tunnel to emerge through the opposite side onto the *Soul Train* film set—invited to take over the dance floor with a community of groovers.[21] What *Soul Train* monitored was the pulse of black sociality in movement, synchronous with mass media broadcasts of black protest.

The capacity of the dance styles broadcast on *Soul Train* to produce meaning and feeling in common, fuels a type of black power movement (sense) ability, that is *loco-motive*. While "auto-motive" is a concern of the self-possessed individual—the early automobile conceived as a

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[20] Veda Johnson, in conversation with author, at *Celebration: The Life of Don Cornelius,* Maverick's Flat Grill and Jazz Club, Los Angeles, Callifornia, 13 February 2012.
[21] "Soul Train Themes (All Intros – 1971 to 2006)," YouTube, 21:47 minutes, posted by 11db11, 17 May 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuGiQHqQCxE (6 April 2015).

machine for moving one person in isolation—the *Soul Train loco-motive* moves its passengers together, from location to location. At a time of the general prohibition of street dance in private dance studios, *Soul Train* was a form of social dance media that sparked a trans-local network and intramural conversation among black folks moving (on and off set) who, "regardless of location, began to think on one wavelength" (Thompson 97).

Engulfed in a second wave of Great Migration for three decades preceding *Soul Train*'s premiere, over five million black families steadily surged from rural southern to urban western regions of the US—especially California. Pulled in the tow of a wartime industry in cars, steel, meat and ships, the urbanization of US blacks was one of the largest internal migrations in history. By the turn of the 70s, and on the brink of deindustrialization and reverse migration back to the South, black people in urban and rural locales alike confronted a bleak retrenchment of civil rights gains. Despite the 1968 passing of The Fair Housing Act in Congress, spatial segregation was remaining the rule for urban and suburban communities. Redlining and block busting policies effectively incorporated race and class division into housing law, while provoking white flight to the suburbs (Jackson 1985). At the decade's turn, the rule of resegregation dashed hope and disciplined people's movements—within and between big city neighborhoods.

Urban-rural transit imprinted routes not only with people's migration movements but also with their symbolic flows. Eric Kit-wai Ma describes how hip hop artists create translocal space, especially through visual culture (2002:133). This symbolic connectivity resonates with early street dancers' translocations of gesture. Local dance styles could refer to what was happening immediately in the streets of a particular neighborhood while transcending bounded notions of place. Moving within and between neighborhoods but also between and into the congregational space of the *Soul Train* filmset, young black people "stretch[ed] these locales beyond places, whereby they eventually [would] become *translocales* through the establishment of routine activities" (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013:378, authors' emphasis). On and offset, street dancers were innovating rhythm-gesture routines in conversation with the movement aesthetics present in the hood:

> Don Campbell started [*locking* dance technique] by putting the gestures he was inspired by into his unique style of dancing, which became Campbellocking, but the street movement, which contributed by so many people and dancers seemed to be over looked […] also the way the dance migrated from the hoods and the city of Los Angeles to the suburbs of Orange County […] at first this was just a urban streetdance from the Hoods, so if you wanted to learn it right you had to be from there or at least hang out there, not just catch glimpses of it on TV.[22]

Soul Train was circulating a conversation that had currency in the hood and in the collective body of street dance style. Veda Johnson's statement reflects this sensibility of space between and beyond living rooms and film sets. The concept of "I"—an essential divide of individual from collective—vanishes in the context of the black improvisational scene. Where one's expression of difference—of "unique style"—is not differentiated from movement with and for the collective body, participation is constituted by travel and social practice. Hip hop's lineage with improvised street dance continues this philosophical alignment of individual and collective.

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[22] Steve "Sugarfoot" Natorio, Interview by James Higgins, *lockerlegends.net*, n.d., by http://www.lockerlegends.net/?page_id=1177.

Oriented to this paralinguistic expressive flow, Don's improvisations on a collective movement of the "streets" moved along the gestural routes of the translocale.

Robeson Taj Frazier and Jessica Koslow's ethnography of krumpin', a style created during the early 2000s in what was formerly known as South Central Los Angeles, shows how local hip hop traditions demonstrate a "proclivity toward movement and relocation [that results from] Los Angeles car culture and the extensive layout of the city" (2013:6). Street dance "practitioners' *migration orientation* aids them in dealing with and responding to ineluctable impediments such as neighborhood sound ordinances, police surveillance, and gang hostility" (6, emphasis mine), such that street dance innovators "embod[y] a perception and practice that conceives Hip Hop space and place as *moving space*, rather than just 'single spots or hoods'" (6-7). Migration orientation was an attitude early street dancers adopted and rehearsed. James "OG Skeeter Rabbit" Higgins tells his experiences of the early development of locking, as a street movement based in South Central Los Angeles neighborhoods of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Being a locker (which included not only knowing the moves but dressing and an overall approach to living) helped Higgins move across neighborhood gang lines (Higgins 2014). In 1972, Higgins was a member of the Creative Generation, a youth performance group sponsored by the Watts Writers Project, a community platform created in response to the 1965 Watts Rebellion and later destroyed by covert FBI operations. Creative Generation toured to San Francisco Bay Area schools in 1973, circulating locking style across regional lines.

Defined not only as movement between municipal borders, migration orientation constituted the "moving space" between practitioners improvising at particular locations, creating routines that transformed public and private space into practiced place. Jeffrey Daniel describes a practice I've heard other LA-based lockers attest to, called the Chinese fire drill: "At a red light, we would put the car in park, and we would jump out and just dance all around the car, and then when the light would change, we would jump back in the car and take off again […] people would be mad behind us. They would be upset, but we would be in there living our lives."[23] In parallel with this practice is one of locking's base movements, the Stop and Go, which incorporates the popular Break Down dance of the day punctuated by a staccato stopping of the movement's flow as the dancer steps forward and locks arms up in the air. Lockers also danced the Stop and Go in the club as a partner dance, adding salutational gestures like hand slaps and finger snaps[24]. The Chinese Fire Drill, the Stop and Go, and locking style are movements constituted through a practiced study of the streets and the ways the intercorporeal body is given over to its spaces (Young 2011:64).

Dancers like Don Campbell came onto *Soul Train* by way of clubs like Maverick's Flat where talent scouts actively recruited them. Dancing on *Soul Train* cited the offscreen spaces of clubs and streets that carried the imprint of street dance's translocal routes. The Stop and Go is movement constituted through a sense of relationship, whether in the moment of giving fives (the hand slap) or by citing other social dances in its aesthetic structure. Being oriented toward migration, street dancers' practices describe the "relational nature of place as dynamic (i.e. not static) and constituted through linkages" (Greiner 377) that interweave place and time.

Sociological investigation has addressed the ways systemic racism shapes processes of ghettoization in major cities throughout the United States (Massey and Denton 1993). However, the consequent analysis, whether in scholarly or popular representations, has tended to frame ghetto conditions in terms of victimization and crisis, glossing crisis and victimhood as essential

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[23] Jeffrey Daniel, quoted in George, 69.
[24] Adolfo Quiñones, Locking dance class, Performing Arts Center, Van Nuys, California, 5 April 2014.

aspects of ghetto living and creating a blind spot that generically reproduces "the ghetto" and an anonymous mass of residents. Through this lens, interpretations of black cultural forms represent black people living in conditions of poverty as either tragically regenerating or romantically resisting the homogenizing narrative.[25] Consistently, street dancers' everyday acts paint a different picture of traversing urban and suburban territories through practice. By releasing physical and ideological limitations on their mobility, loco-motivity added fuel to practitioners' personal motivations (whether venturing to clubs in distant neighborhoods, winning rent money in dance competitions, gaining celebrity status or coming together on *Soul Train*). In the process, practitioners circulated vernacular dances they were innovating in their neighborhoods—locking, robot, waacking and popping.

The *Soul Train* translocale also transited national borders, beginning as early as 1974 when Original Soul Train Gang dancer Damita Jo Freeman organized some of the dancers under the name Something Special, touring the US, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong. Eddie Cole recalls how the group returned to Japan a second time to see a group of locals who had learned and imitated their stage show in detail. Dancer and singer Jody Watley recalls performing a Tokyo show in the 1980s and afterwards receiving in amazement "a VHS that was filled with highlights of every damn number I did on *Soul Train*."[26] Old *Soul Train* videos like those continue to circulate among amateur and professional street dancers through social media and are primary source materials for generating knowledge about early hip hop/street dance styles. April K. Henderson (2006) writes on the circulation of popping bicoastally in the US and transnationally between the islands of Samoa, New Zealand and Hawaii, describing how island youth who only see and hear white artists on domestic TV and radio programs, participate in an identification with blackness by recording *Soul Train* episodes. Against critiques of assimilation and a unidirectional model of cultural transmission, she argues that popping has created a structure of support through which young people reroute their interest in and preservation of local ancestral traditions through a hip hop repertoire (190).

Migratory, material and symbolic flows on the *Soul Train* translocale shape street dance as a fundamentally interactive form of study, involving the multidirectional travel of practitioners, videos, and dance moves. These types of study constitute *Soul Train*-ing, the reproduction of a sonic-kinetic record of black aesthetics via the translocal network of Soul Train Lines, popular dance lineages, and kinesthetic politics. Collective movement sense-ability is abstracted in aesthetic principles of improvisational street dance forms that lay the foundations of hip hop dance today. Being loco-motive means practitioners can move forward and backward in time, simultaneously reinventing their traditions while recording lines and lineages with the past. *Soul Train* tracks a "repertoire of lived practices that hold on to these enactments, forgettings, and reinventions [which] can augment and complicate our understanding of historical trajectories and interconnections that the [paper-based] archive might leave out" (Taylor 2007:1418).

Connected themes of training, travel, lines and lineages, the collective body and memory, gain significance in light of Veda's statement: "I disappeared." Into the current moment hip hop derives its power from this loco-motivity. Premised on the politically dead, subject to surveillance and control, this vernacular loco-motivity responds to enclosure by the auto-motive subject of free will.[27] Even as hip hop makes transitions to concert stages, people dancing

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[25] See for example *RIZE*, dir. David LaChapelle (Lions Gate, 2005) DVD.
[26] Jody Watley, quoted in George, 169.
[27] Nyong'o (2005) reminds scholars the concept of intersectionality derives from the metaphor of two streets crossing, a productive conceptual space for considering hazards to (and resistances of) the "vernacularly mobile" (30-31)—those abject within homonormative turns in queer theory and politics that tend to regard race as an additive social identity category and/or

offstage in the hood (by necessity and choice) continue to drive its innovation globally. The transmission of street dance style via *Soul Train* offers an inroad to the meaning of a "prior collective identification" (Keeling 2003:100) felt in practices of moving together. Collective memory embedded in the aesthetic development of social and street dance forms was interwoven in the dance performances that took place in the space formed between the two lines of dancers.

Between the lines: on freestyle dance

The circle is an abstract conception and material practice of African-derived cosmology reproducible across multiple contexts—including lines. The Soul Train Line continues practices of circling, reformulated as linear progression for the camera's eye. In early *Soul Train* episodes the dancers divide into two Soul Train Lines, each formed by a queue of men facing a queue of women. Couples pair up sequentially, one female dancer pairing with the male dancer positioned across from her on the Line. One couple at a time enters the Line from the upstage end, moving downstage between the queues toward the camera to finally take their place at the Line's downstage end. Meanwhile the queued dancers repeat a simple side-to-side step, giving rhythmic accompaniment to the center couples. The looping of couples entering and exiting the line mirrors the recursive but restrained rhythm established by the steps of the queued-up dancers. Drawing on aesthetics of circle practices (repetition, collective-individuation, structured improvisation, grooving, competition, sensing) the Soul Train Line format heralded a renewed focus on moving-sensing together: freestyle collective social dance.

What street dancers call *freestyling* is black sociality, a process of "sensing" (Jackson 2008:43) that breaks down conceptual divisions between collective/individual, choreography/improvisation, innovation/tradition, self/other. Building an aesthetic theory of black vernacular dance improvisation, Jonathan David Jackson identifies overlapping, mutually dependent creative working processes: *individuation*—a "constant negotiation of personal style and community expectations"—conjoins with *ritualization*—a "creative means for the collective (and not just the individual) to negotiate the quality of their relations with each other." Jackson considers freestyle to be a heightening of these processes that "involves asserting such a pronounced sense of personal style that the black vernacular dancer's actions invite a charged, voyeuristic attention from the community at the ritual event" and which in the most extreme instance, "pushes specific traditions to evolve new forms and steps" (45-46). Fred Moten likewise describes the temporality of black performance traditions which turn on a principle of radical critique, of absolute freedom pulling against the pull of tradition itself (2003:64). I would add that the experimental force and radical imagination of freestyle ritual dance is an intercorporeal effort—still pulled by individuated (but not wholly individualistic) assertions that may refuse negotiation in the expressive moment, while always also sensing affirmation of the collective. In this formulation, freestyling cannot be enclosed within modernist oppositions that underpin the differential value given to (high) Western concert dance.

This is not to say that acts of individualistic self-assertion had no place on the Soul Train Line. When the camera's "red light hit you were done. You were on there. You were gleaming. It was your time to shine" (Proctor 2012a), and shining always modulated between egoist grabbing of the spotlight and a central sense of communion (even beyond the immediate congregation of studio participants, because dancers on the Train were quite aware of the loco-motive living

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analogue to gender. I extend these insights here to study how tactics of vernacular speech are present as movement aesthetics in street dance style.

room crowds they danced with and for). It's largely women who have recounted to me moments that their male partners pushed them out of the way or performed daredevil tricks on the Line without warning. During the most spectacular displays of acrobatic prowess a Line dancer's skill at deploying, often instantaneously, an acute sense of self in relation to partner, made the difference between her physical safety and serious injury.

The idea of collective individuation continues through accounts that describe offscreen developments of street dance culture as a collective effort, not wholly accounted for in the elevation of individual authors. Creative Generation, the youth performance group of the Watts Writers Project, included South Central area lockers from The GoGo Brothers (Tony Lewis, Edwin Lombard, James Higgins), The Lockers (Greg "Campbell Jr." Pope, Jimmy "Scoo B Doo" Foster), Original Soul Train Gang dancer Freddie Maxie, and the first all-female locking group the Toota Woota Sisters (Arnetta "Nettabug" Johnson, Lorna Dune and Shelly Cepeda). A focus on male innovators of street dance forms has also overlooked the on par athleticism of these black women participants:

> Arnetta Johnson could really lock. She was one of the few females that really locked. She locked like Don and Scoo B Doo. She really hit the floor, she did the dive, she did all of that. (Eddie Cole 2014)

Arnetta Johnson and Greg Pope both describe how the "improvisational dance" of black youth, meeting to practice at community centers, schools and each other's houses, mixed with Don Campbell's signature innovations as locking style transitioned between street, school and commercial stages[28]: "Even when you're locking there's a step called the Scoo B Doo, there's a step called the Skeeter Rabbit. Everyone had their own additional movements."[29] Naming specific steps in locking's technical lexicon is a practice of oral transmission that tributes key innovators in the collective development of street dance techniques. No street dance techniques are named for single authors, instead giving meaning to body actions like locking, popping and waacking. Dance anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston confirms the use of close-fitting, descriptive, action-based words within black expressive cultures (Hurston 1934). In distinction, modern dance techniques (Graham, Horton, Dunham, Cunningham, Limón) have tended to center single authors. Naming practices in street dance culture are an extension of collective creative processes that bear a relation to spatial (street versus studio-to-concert stage) and conceptual (improvisatory versus choreographic) divides.

Jackson rejects the distinction between choreography and improvisation that has grounded Western concert dance epistemology: "[I]n African-American vernacular dancing in its original sociocultural contexts, where there is no division between improvisation and composition … improvisation means the creative structuring, or the choreographing, of human movement in the moment of ritual performance" (2001:44). Music theorist Steven Pond underscores Jackson's formulation, linking movement experimentation on the Soul Train Line to structures of jazz music:

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[28] Greg Pope, "Campbellock Jr. (RIP) spoke on Locking Issues," YouTube, 4:51 minutes, posted by lockerlegends, 18 March 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T6wTSh6bJo (6 April 2015); Arnetta Johnson, interview by Naomi Bragin, Carson, California, 21 April 2014. Don Campbell was founder of The Lockers dance group that performed regularly on *Soul Train* throughout the 1970s, and included original members Adolfo "Shabba Doo" Quiñones, Bill "Slim the Robot" Williams, Fred "Mr. Penguin" Berry, Greg "Campbellock Jr" Pope, Leo "Fluky Luke" Williamson and Toni Basil.
[29] Eddie Cole, Skype interview with author, 23 April 2014.

Each couple dances their own individualized freestyle (and, pointedly, improvised) moves, pulling from dances like the Robot, the Funky Chicken, the Electric Slide, the Boogaloo, the Funky Broadway, Locking, and others, in an age when one might have expected performances of a single, stable dance style in a more staged routine. Moves from these various dances are incorporated by the dancers but usually as a brief reference or gesture. The point in the dance pairs' solo highlight segment is to show their original choreography, not simply demonstrate mastery of the latest thing that everyone else knows. That is to say, *dancers dip into a repertoire of recognizable dance moves, in linkages decided on in the moment but not with an absence of forethought*. The moves adapt, extend, and comment (signify) on the set dances, in real-time response to the music and the environment. They embody, in short, techniques of improvisation in jazz. (130, emphasis mine)

Pond lists the variety of party dances that constitute a lexicon (Robot, Funky Chicken…) from which improvisers draw, consistent with Arnetta Johnson and Greg Pope's description of improvised locking practice. Differently, Johnson and Pope emphasize how collective styles incorporate movements that tribute individual dancers (moves like the Skeeter Rabbit, Scoo B Doo, Scoobot, Alpha). Street dancers memorialize their own moves and those of others, in a dynamic exchange that recognizes individuation within ritual creativity. This ability to "dip into a repertoire" is the jump off for freestyle dancing and defines "performance [as] that which disappears, or that which persists, transmitted through a nonarchival system of transfer" (Taylor 2003:xvii). Freestyle is a politics of citation that attunes the body to conversation happening in the community, at the moment of performance.

However, the intention of Soul Train Line dancing was not always "to show original choreography," a necessary point of clarification when accounting for the freestyle theory of *grooving*. Soul Train Line dancers also take understated approaches to travel down the Line, at times doing nothing more than continuing the simple side-to-side step of the queue, maybe putting a slight accent on the step by deepening the sway of hips or finishing with a light twirl that circles back into the groove. The groove is a cyclical rhythm-movement off of which freestyle dancers play. Holding the groove is as important in black improvisation as breaking it to create a unique statement. The groove anchors dancers' improvisations so that even when one strays very far from the rhythmic center, her in-the-moment freestyle holds out a lifeline to the groove. Master dancer Popin' Pete makes this distinction between moving and grooving: "Some of you [students in dance class] are doing the movement before the groovemeant. That means you have to mean to do the groove" (Solomon 2013). More than performing set, replicable, referential steps, freestyle dancers must build a sense of how to flow. When freestylers fall into the groove, they are remembering to attune the collective body to the experience of feeling together in movement. Grooving is kinesthetic meaning—the way freestylers make their movement sensible within a circle of co-participants.

Just as the Soul Train Line reformulated the circle for the camera's eye while preserving circle practices through improvised social dance, the networked circulation of contemporary social dance media continues black improvisational practice, reformulated for transmission through cyberspace. Early street dances like popping, locking and robotting, recorded on *Soul Train*, are not unlike the Chicken Noodle Soup of 2007. In the preface to his carefully researched history of *Soul Train*, Christopher Lehman describes a "clash[ing] with *Soul Train*'s heritage" that in his view marked the 2007 Soul Train Music Awards (2008:3). Citing absent artists,

industry infighting and low attendance, Lehman focuses on the award given to best dance cut—the song "Chicken Noodle Soup" by Harlem hip hop duo Webstar and Young B. Lehman argues that contrary to the "unique steps of the show's dancers […] such as 'pops' and 'locks' as well as the dance craze the 'Robot,'" *Soul Train* "disregarded its own legacies by validating Webstar's clownish shuffling with an award" (4). He cites contemporary hip hop dance as evidence of *Soul Train*'s decline—characterized by a lack of inventiveness and even a leaning toward racial caricature. It's not clear the distinction Lehman is making between current hip hop and the early dances broadcast on *Soul Train*, though the statement echoes Todd Boyd's declaration of the qualitative decline in hip hop music represented by hip hop dance trends.[30] These interpretations of popular dance and its depoliticizing impact correspond to a treatment by popular music and cultural studies critics that views black culture's degradation and loss of authenticity and political force over time, especially due to commodification and circulation beyond an idealized concept of black community (Judy 1994). The idea that *Soul Train* became a caricature of itself fails to comprehend the loco-motive through-line of black social dance practice that continues in the current circulation of hip hop party dances on YouTube.

Webstar and Young B take place in a line of black youth who have shown marketing flair in producing hip hop songs and YouTube videos to accompany the creation of local dance crazes, the Chicken Noodle Soup being only one example. The mid-2000s were marked by a resurgence in hip hop dance craze songs, most successfully Soulja Boy's Atlanta-based "Crank That (Soulja Boy)" (2007), but also from A-town's DJ Unk with the "Walk It Out" (2006) and in Dallas, Lil' Wil's "My Dougie" (2007) bouncing to Los Angeles-based Cali Swag District's recording of "Teach Me How to Dougie" in 2009. Updating the tactic of early hip hop musicians selling mix tapes out of their car trunks, these internet generation artists log into the viral capacities of the world wide web simultaneously achieving personal recognition and documenting local culture. Besides the accompanying music video, Webstar and Young B posted a five and a half minute instructional video discussing the dance and the Harlem youth culture from which it emerged, including footage of Lite Feet dancing, the No Music a cappella handclap style, and a dance preceding the Chicken Noodle by two decades—the Harlem Shake. While Lehman suggests a contradiction between what Harlem youth were doing in 2007 and Los Angeles youth were doing in 1971, I argue for an essential connection. The party dances locate a politics of black movement in the neighborhood—in this case Harlem—where vectors of nationality, ethnicity, class, age, gender and sexuality converge in freestyle movement experiments. Black social dance articulates a fundamental assertion of improvisational practice incorporating ideas of representation, collectivity, tradition and experimentation.

A part dancing

Positioned on the Line in binary male-female pairings, 1970s dancers created performances that were not explicitly heteronormative. Soul Train dance partners, whether on the Line or in the crowd, would rarely touch and often one partner would dance forward of the other in Line. The crowd segments show dancers grooving without a partner and with multiple partners. Dancers usually came onto the show with a partner, but partnerships formed not on the basis of sexual object choice but on dance floor personality. Binary-gender pairing of the Soul

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[30] Todd Boyd, Visions and Voices: The USC Arts and Humanities Initiative, USC Libraries and Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities, Doheny Memorial Library, Intellectual Commons Room 233, Los Angeles, CA, October 8, 2007. Roundtable. Posted by USC, "Hip-Hop America," YouTube, 1:26:38. November 21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3Hod-UV8Vc.

Train Lines in the 1970s gave way to a single-sex format in the 1980s (one male Line and one female Line with no pairings) where dancers enter the between-space as soloists. Aligned with the new format, dancers also began to perform a heightened cisgendering of movement (acrobatic, muscular leaps, spins and flips on the male Line; undulating, gyrating hips and arched backs on the female Line) determined in part by cisgender styles of dress (tight, revealing clothing and heels for women; baggy clothing for men). The 1970s Lines record a more fluidly gendered style of movement and dress; partners often perform the same movements and wear the same cut and color of dress, shoes, hairstyles:

> I would never forget, *(laughing)* Don made some guys go change their clothes once. They came out with big bows, big ribbons around their necks and ribbons in their shoes. Don said, "Uh uh, that's going too far." He made them change […] some of the guys would even shop in ladies stores. Guys were wearing the lashes that you glue in, the individuals. (Eddie Cole 2014)

Don exercised what many dancers characterize as a parental control over their self-presentation which they in turn frequently tested, flaunting gendered dress codes down to the most minuscule adornment of an eyelash. The sociality of early dancing on *Soul Train* then, was less about enforcing hetero-normative performance (and challenging Don's control over it) than experimenting with moving apart and together.

Whether leaning toward androgyny, trans or cisgendered modes of self-presentation, dancers' attitudes resonated with a contemporaneous change in mainstream social dance from touch-partnering of the swing era to a fascination with apart-dancing—symbolized by the global spread of The Twist. Pond posits a historical connection, between apart-dancing on the Soul Train Line and a late 1950s-early 1960s line dance called The Stroll:

> One notable feature that the Stroll shared with the Soul Train Line—and with perhaps dozens of other social dances that emerged in the 1960s—was a shift to "apart" dancing (a trend that would become a wholesale change with the Twist craze, shortly thereafter): dances that assumed a partner but that did not incorporate touching, embracing, holding hands—connected partners—as had dominated social dance styles in the United States throughout the century. Once the Twist became an international dance craze, as the Eisenhower era gave way to Kennedy's New Frontier, there was no backward glance at the full-skirted, twirling, and partner-supported acrobatic dances of earlier days. Overnight, touchless, "apart" couple dances became hip in an ever-expanding array that included the Mashed Potatoes, the Pony, the Monkey, the Watusi, the Swim, and others. The vast majority of the new dances appeared and were popularized in black communities, only to be embraced (and appropriated) by the (white middle-class) mainstream. The succession of "apart" dances continued through the next several decades. The necessity of even a putative partner gradually faded, and dancers—with assumed partner or not—could move independently or in interaction with the crowd. In the context of the Soul Train Line, this meant, gradually, that *gendered pairs may or may not refer to each other's stylized moves* as they soloed or duet-danced for the camera. (2013:132, emphasis mine)

While not transgressing heteronormative display in a directly political way, apart-dancing nonetheless presented the occasion for dancers to explore the feeling of movement beyond hetero-oriented boundaries. Also, apart-dancing was not "new" for black people, as evidenced by plantation and jazz era dances like the Black Bottom and the Mess Around. Though the Mess Around was appropriated as a national craze in the 1920s, The Twist was the first apart-dance that went global, with the mass circulation of Chubby Checker's song of the same name. The Twist was "new" by virtue of being "embraced (and appropriated) by the (white middle-class) mainstream" (132). Eldridge Cleaver likewise cites The Twist in his 1968 top ten New York Times Bestseller *Soul On Ice*:

> The Twist was a guided missile, launched from the ghetto into the very heart of suburbia […] They came from every level of society, from top to bottom, writhing pitifully though gamely about the floor, feeling exhilarating and soothing new sensations, release from some unknown prison in which their Bodies had been encased, a sense of freedom they had never known before, a feeling of communion with some mystical root-source of life and vigor, from which sprang a new awareness and enjoyment of the flesh, a new appreciation of the possibilities of their Bodies. (228)

For Cleaver The Twist was a scandal on civil society caused by its association with blackness and uninhibited "enjoyment of the flesh." Cleaver argues that the The Twist marked a significant break of blackness into civil society via the affective joy of black social dance. This transformation was not directly political but moreso a solution to civil society's inability to resolve the racial problem, providing a way for whites to openly "consor[t] on a human level with blacks" at a moment when black resistance to dispossession was taking the form of political movements for self-determination. The Twist and the subsequent array of new apart-dance crazes upheld civil order via a white reclaiming of body and sexuality. The Twist was a "form of therapy" (228) predicated on turning away from radical confrontation with the destruction of civil society that incorporation of blackness would have meant.

By the early 1970s, the sensibility of apart-dancing was facilitating a transition away from the priority of binary-gendered partnering to collective social dancing—whether generated by Soul Train Lines or in the sweaty smell of neighborhood nightclubs. These "apart" social dances destabilized gender expectations in dance more generally. Hetero-partnering was transitioning into a distinct approach to moving (and feeling) that did not assume a male-female pairing of bodies. Apart-dancing was not about becoming separated as much as *being a part of*— placing that much more emphasis on the sensibility of the collective; though dancers no longer touched skin surfaces, a particular sense of connectedness or hapticality (Harney and Moten 2013:97-98) reverberates through kinesthesia. The change did foreground a process of solo performance within the ensemble, but *apart-dancing was not individualistic*. The kinesthetic sense of moving together without touching is developed through freestyle's structures of practice. Jazz music, social dancing on the 1970s Soul Train Line, and hip hop form a cultural lineage through this approach to improvisation, premised on being connected without direct touch or embrace. Not only does apart-dancing mean that dancers can innovate ways to "move independently or in interaction with the crowd" (Pond 2013:132), the idea of being-a-part is intrinsic to the black improvisational practices of sensing and grooving described earlier and based in aural-kinesthesia—an awareness of the interarticulation of sound and movement in the body:

One of the most important aesthetics of black music and dance is an understanding of the inseparability between sound and movement […] black vernacular music and dance are conceptual and experiential partners that feed on the same processes for invention. (Jackson 2002:45)

Imani Kai-Johnson's formulation of *aural-kinesthetics* corresponds with Jackson, defining a "frame for analyzing the simultaneity of social dance and music (and sound broadly)" that accounts for how the "sound and feel of dance experiences are often overridden by the spectacle of dancing" (Johnson 2012). What's less visible on the Soul Train Line is the shaping of synesthetic sensibility in an era when new styles of music and dance were teaching people to listen and move their bodies differently.

What the funk?

Young people were experimenting with new movements because they were listening to new sounds in black popular music. As importantly, these movement experimentations provoked new experiments in sound. Herbie Hancock's 1974 *Soul Train* performance during the *Head Hunters* album release tested the jazz/funk genre divide (Pond 2013) and presaged the late 1980s/early 1990s jazz-rap of hip hop groups like Tribe, De La, Freestyle Fellowship and Digable Planets. Funk aesthetics destabilized the assumed "purity" of jazz. Further, funk and disco, while imagined separate, have a connected history in the development of hip-hop. Hip hop historian and master dancer Steffan "Mr. Wiggles" Clemente explains that the early disco sound, as played by DJ Francis Grasso at famed New York City discotheque The Sanctuary in 1971, blended rock, soul, latin soul and funk.[31] Hip hop DJs recast early disco's syncopated rhythms using innovative techniques of cutting, scratching and otherwise manipulating the same recordings.[32] Toward the end of the 1970s, disco developed a four-to-the-floor rhythm which was the precursor for house music and dance. However, both funk and disco throughout their transformations blended earlier forms (soul, r&b, jazz, gospel, rock), accompanied by gender-blending movements on the aural-kinesthetic dance floor.

Shouted loudly by James Brown in 1968, black pride was a speech-act that did what it said and a sonic-kinetic repertoire transmitted to *Soul Train* viewers feeling and following his funky footsteps.[33] Like Gilroy's "politics of transfiguration" (1993:37-38), Brown refigured the political as dance. Transferred in danced messages of pride, power, and solidarity, "Negro" identity was transforming into a new black consciousness encoded within kinesthetics—the feeling of moving muscles, joints, and bones. The hit song injected grooving bodies with an affect of pride invoked in outspoken lyrics laced with visceral shouts, driving rhythms and the trance-inducing melodies of Funk. In this sense *Soul Train*-ing was embodied knowledge that de-privileged the visual realm, in that it required aural and movement perception felt in and through participating, active, mobile bodies. Black social dance trained collective ways of moving—

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[31] "Legends of Vinyl - The Sanctuary 1971 - DJ Francis Grasso - By DJ Luis Mario," YouTube, 10:00 minutes, posted by legendsofvinyltm, 23 March 2011, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7G2KMuRAqY (20 April 2015).
[32] Steffan Clemente, "What Is Was Original Disco?" Facebook, 29 October 2012, *Rock on City Kings & Queens*, http://www.facebook.com/groups/rockoncitykings/529112720451278/?notif_t=group_activity (20 April 2015).
[33] James Brown, "Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud" (Los Angeles: Vox Studios, 1968). Brown, the "Godfather of Soul," performed on two special tribute *Soul Train* episodes, in 1973 and 1974.

processes in which both the seeing eye and the capital "I" of Enlightenment ocular-centric individualism disappeared.

Just as Moten (2003) describes the inextricable conjoining of sight and sound in black music, street dance relies on a sensory-kinesthetic practice of listening-by-moving that is sensationally funky. Funk is identified through the nose: "you smell me?"[34] Rapper E-40 elaborates this visceral process of assembling information, when he stretches the slanguage of hip hop, which uses the vernacular expression "do you feel me?" Loosely translated as "do you hear what I'm saying" or "do you understand my meaning?" the expression acknowledges the sensibility of language—that "making sense" is not a primarily cognitive process but an "outward seeking" (Geurts 2002:241) activity of sensing, involving a synesthesia of sound and touch. In a passive model of sense reception, awareness forms when "some [external] object makes an impression on our sense organs" (228). The different conception of "feeling" or "smelling" another's words is especially important for emphasizing the intercorporeal transfer of verbal information, reflected paralinguistically in the social practice of hip hop dance.

Funk is the refusal of the demand for cleanliness that saturates the discursive space of the hermetically-sealed, air-conditioned private dance studio, mainstreaming black cultural production into the privileged realm of the visual. Funk, on the under, is the rhythmic smell that breaks down that perfect (sight) line. It's a guideline for movement that one can't expect to see in the process of getting down. Skeeter Rabbit explains being funky: "I don't mean act a certain trained preplanned way, I mean let what you feel come from the real, and what comes off of you should be so real I can almost smell it. It's a real down home NASTY FEELING [...] the difference between the disposition, and that soul stirring feeling.[35]" It's in this in betweenness that the body finds it grooves. Funk is an improvisatory gesture that encompasses the bad, strange and queer. Higgins explains that funky is a state of being that's real as opposed to trained and preplanned. Getting funky is getting attuned to loco-motivity. What made *Soul Train* queer was not confined purely to sexual object choice or sexual practice, but an erotic sociality that unmuted the dirty and bad and rejected sexual reticence and respectability, making *Soul Train* "the most visible space for vetting funkiness in its day" (Pond 2013:127). Funk is fundamentally aural-kinesthetic and produced through the improvisational practices of grooving and ciphering that continue to drive innovations in street dance style.

The groove fundamental to freestyle practice establishes itself through the common rhythm of a sound-movement style. For example, while contemporary house dance technique is based on "the jack"—a weighted, undulating movement of the body in seamless connection with the ground—b-boying or breaking is based on "rocking"—also a repetitive motion but distinguished by a breaking up of the body's angles and a way the body holds its energy back from its surroundings rather than falling in and out of them. The two distinct grooves are holds afforded to the body by the sound environment—respectively house and funk music. The body movement (jacking or rocking) "makes sense" of the distinct rhythms each music style offers. Based on the groove, freestyling builds a synesthetic awareness of the interarticulation of sound and movement in the body.

Ciphering in hip hop culture—also known as freestyling, flowing, blacking out—is a concept and improvisational sensory practice of being-a-part. The cipher is the term

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[34] Earl Stevens, quoted in Frauenhofer, Michael, "You Smell Me? An Interview with E-40," *popmatters.com*, http://www.popmatters.com/feature/e-40-060427/ (6 April 2015).

[35] James Higgins, "What Does Funk or Funky Really Mean?" *lockerlegends.net*, 3 May 2011 (revised 2014), http://www.lockerlegends.net/?page_id=841 (6 April 2015).

contemporary street dance practitioners use to refer to the circle formed by the bodies of spectator-participants. Though the term ciphering derives from the language of the Harlem-originated Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths and was not in general use by west coast street dancers during the 1970s, the principles of circle aesthetics in black improvisation remain the same. The Five Percenter concept of cipher even prior to the advent of hip hop signified the Arabic root, sifr, meaning zero or empty, "the unknowable, the insignificant" (Chang n.d.:2). The vocabulary became popularized in hip hop culture and true to hip hop's inversionary style, ciphers represent "the all-important centers of the culture, where aesthetics ma[k]e great leaps forward" (ibid), also gesturing to unending possibility and limitlessness.

The freestyle ritual cipher figuratively links the idea of unity and the whole—bodies form a protective, unbroken circle around the expressive space marked for movement—with that of singularity, as soloists loop endlessly into and out of the center. Like the looping Soul Train Line, ciphers (dance circles) in street dance culture create a recursive relationality between the audience-participants forming the circle's perimeter and dancers who enter and exit in any number of configurations. Different from the Soul Train Line's orientation toward a TV audience, circling supports multi-perspectival points of contact between participants and non-hierarchical, inclusive patterns of communication within the group. The circle expands and contracts multi-directionally without losing coherence. Cipher practices foreground physical presence and interpersonal relations. Ego can certainly overtake the cipher's collective sensibility, which relies not solely on form but also the critical moment-to-moment participation of its adherents. Likewise the camera's singular focus was a catalyst for ego-driven competition on *Soul Train*, as much as desire to find celebratory communion in movement.

Cipher theory is not necessarily realized by the physical appearance of dance circles but through the motivations of co-participants. In other words cipher theory also happens in moments of free form social dancing, in arrangements that may take the form of circles, lines and crowds. Especially in underground clubs where congregating is a primary function of dancing, cipher practices are constituted through the collective consciousness of participants who form and reform community moment-to-moment, allowing for a difference from the dancing seen on *Soul Train*: "[A]s great as the show was and as great as the dancing was, what you see on *Soul Train* is about a quarter of what they do if you see them in clubs. *Soul Train* is very controlled…[w]hen you're in the club, it's freestyle."[36] In this less specific conception of the cipher, freestyling describes an approach to moving more than a rigid set of rules. In the language of the Five Percent Nation, "now cipher" means "no." The cipher links nothingness to the freestyle space of creative collective expression, otherwise described in Newark, New Jersey slang as "blacking out." In discussing his approach to the freestyle dance of popping, Wiggles describes a "zero state" of being, using nothingness to describe access to a freestyle state of mind-in-body, an unknowing that constitutes the opening of the cipher process of accessing the groove (Clemente 2009). Ciphering builds each dancer's access to a "zero state," reflective of the zero of collective participation. As the freestyle process in hip hop culture, the cipher is a lab and an experiment where street dance practitioners create future aesthetics, making the cipher necessarily ahead of its time.

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[36] Jeffrey Daniel, quoted in George, 26.

Reprise: celebrations, balls and battles

the cause for celebration turns out to be the condition of possibility for black thought, which animates the black operations that will produce the absolute overturning, the absolute turning of this motherfucker out —Fred Moten (2013:742)

Don Cornelius died in his Los Angeles home on the first day of February 2012 of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Two weeks later, the *54th Annual Grammy Awards* took place at the Staples Convention Center. Unprecedented protests against the cutting of thirty-one Grammy categories called attention to the elimination of entire music genres including Native American, Hawaiian, Cajun, Latin Jazz, Gospel and Blues. Absence resounded in multiple circles, weighing into the concerns of viewers tweeting about the disappearance of pictures of Don Cornelius and Etta James (who had passed January 20) from the Grammy's "In Memoriam" slideshow.[37] The Recording Academy's oversight of the historical record was also "reflective of a time period where books are being banned in Arizona, and school districts are banning ethnic studies."[38] Despite the institutional refusal to commemorate, people joined Soul Train Line flash mobs in Manhattan's Times Square and downtown Oakland. Over the next two months I found myself on a back and forth ride to attend Celebration, a memorial reunion of the Original Soul Train dancers in Los Angeles, and the Soul Train Ball & Battle, a youth dance battle I organized in collaboration with artist-promoter Mario Benton at downtown Oakland's Uptown Studios community center.

Celebration: The Life of Don Cornelius took place 13 February 2012 at Los Angeles's historic Maverick's Flat Grill and Jazz Club, the recruiting ground for early Soul Train dancers. By presenting the occasion (only hours after the Grammy Awards) for a performance of countermemory, "celebration begins at a point along the trajectory of mourning that must be sensed collectively […] a moment in which the community joyously affirms its renewal in the very act of marking the passing of one of its own" (Roach 1996:61). In fact, Celebration was also the occasion of Original Soul Train Gang dancer Sharon Hill's birthday. In tribute to Sharon's birth and Don's life, we formed a Soul Train Line that looped past through present in repeated travels down the Line, a congregation of multiple generations of dancers moving in creative reflection. Dancers circulated to the center stage mic as projections of early *Soul Train* episodes played on screens above the stage and bar, providing the backdrop for their spoken and danced testimonials. The simultaneity of live reenactment and mediated performance created multiple temporal loops, within which the dance floor crowd would witness reproductions of reproductions. Propped up in a life-size picture frame onstage, Don Cornelius's image watched over the festivities. Mark Wood, lead singer of funk band Lakeside and Sharon Hill's husband, performed the funk hit of 1980 "Fantastic Voyage," accompanied by the recorded song in the absence of live musicians. But even this moment of solo performance fluidly transitioned into ensemble, as Original Soul Train dancers gathered gradually onstage, grooving and chanting the song's rap interlude:

Hey, come on, come along take a ride

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[37] Questlove and LL Cool J gave Cornelius a spoken tribute and Alicia Keys sung a tribute to James.
[38] Roberto Lovato, quoted in author unknown, "Elimination Of Various Categories Left Many Latinos And Others Out Of The Grammys," *huffingtonpost.com*, 14 February 2012 (updates 14 May), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/14/latino-grammys-categories-eliminated_n_1276372.html (6 April 2015).

There's a party over there, that ain't no jive
It's live, live, it's all the way live
Don't even have to walk, don't even have to drive
Just slide, glide, slippity-slide
Just forget about your troubles and your 9 to 5 (watchu gonna do?)
Just saaaaail on, just saaaaail on

Flowing, the chant got louder with people on the dance floor gathering closer in to the stage. The crowd responded to Wood's lyrical improvisations, everyone together shaping the sounds that flowed in and around our collective movement. The room swayed back and forth in this moment of aural-kinesthetic practice buoyed by the crowd's rhythmic shout:

We just want you to feel (We just want you to feel)
Nothing but pleasure (pleasure) musical pleasure (hey hey yeah)
'Cause music is a world of fantasy (its a fantasy)
Let's live it together (Together), musical pleasure (We want you to feeeel)
So come along beyond the sea
Dance in the sunshine take a load off of your mind
Our music is very real (So very real)
Truly a treasure, musical treasure

Come along, pack your bags
Get on up and jam y'all (jam y'all)
Come on and ride on the funk y'all

Come along and ride on a fantastic voyage
(Do you wanna go, do you wanna go, do you wanna go, do you wanna go)
Come along and ride on a fantastic voyage
(Come-a, come-a, come-a, come on, come on now to the Land of Funk)
(Do you wanna party, do you wanna jam)
To the Land of Funk
Come along and ride on a fantastic voyage
(Come on and dance in the sun)

What does celebration feel like in the course of struggle? This chapter ends with a reprise of the idea of material specters, but like the fantastic voyage described in the song's lyrical call, I delay arriving at any certain destination for now. The conjoining of celebration and mourning, death and birth must be a reminder of the difficulty of confronting how black life "move[s] in and as the constant permeation of" (Moten 2013:774) death. How might this conjoining present co-participants with the necessity of inhabiting a space of neither dying nor living, a not-here/not-there moment in time and space? In the performance of celebration and the performance of community, we stayed suspended in a space of not dying, not living. In celebrating, the ensemble accompanies those spirits of the passed, mingling in a time-space that is not dying or living, not here or there. The celebration ritual is a mingling with spirits that call on each other, leaning into each other, to regain the strength to make our way. This is not some carefree or careless act, but a recognition of the responsibility that we have to help the passed move on as they help us move

on. This is different from the innocent joy and affirmation of celebration that would seem to simply be about having fun or being happy. In this extended moment of celebration we lingered together, not ready to arrive.

What are the politics of spirit? What demands do the dead make, leaning into the present? Tyrone reminds me what seeking out these dances, these histories means: "They thought Scoo B Doo was dead." "When did they find him??" "A few years ago." It's not just that in dancing we bring the past into the present, but we constantly memorialize the ones we believe gone. How do we dwell in reflection with those spirits passed through street dance history, holding stories that remain unwritten, unlocatable in the archive but whose movement remains? Their presence lingers in stories recorded and transmitted through the most intimate spaces of muscle, joint and bone.

Years before Original Soul Train dancer Scoo B Doo's return, devoted lockers who studied in clubs, battles and jam sessions around the world were Training his steps—including the stop-and-go, a lock-kick-step called the "scoo b doo" and a scooping double-kick-clap called the "scoobot." Amidst rumors circulating since the mid 1980s of his death, locking was a way to memorialize him in movement. In an online interview shot and YouTube broadcast shortly after his return, Scoo B Doo explains how he invented the scoo b doo step:

> At the place where I was living I kept sliding down the banister all the time, sliding down, sliding down. The manager would say, *[in a crackly strident tone]* "You gotta quit sliding down the banister, why don't you walk like everybody else!" And I said well I'm a dancer. Well then dance up it! So I said ok. I started dancing up it and I was doing what is now the scoo b doo. I just started stepping up there. Backwards. […] I put Don's lock, with that *step*, and I called that step the scoo b doo. It's lock, scoo b doo. That I didn't name. Damita [Jo] named it. […] She said, "Well I'm a call that the scoo b doo." (Funk'd Up TV 2011)

Scoo B Doo's story possesses all the best elements of street dance legend: capriciously undermining the structural authority of banisters and building managers; blurring lines between dance and the mundane; and naming (not only his scoo b doo step, but also other legends—Don Campbell, the "lock" Don created that started the whole style, and famed *Soul Train* dancer Damita Jo). Scoo B Doo's story returns us to the moment of collective creation—the process of collective-individuation that constitutes *being-a-part* of locking tradition and is not distinct from being innovative: "I put Don's lock, with that *step*, and I called that step the scoo b doo […] That I didn't name. Damita named it." Slipping between the "I" and Damita's calling, this moment of confusion in the story slips away from an act of purely individualistic self-assertion to affirm the collective process of naming.

Sliding down the banister and stepping backwards and up, Scoo B Doo participates eccentrically, loco-motively, in a vernacular movement experiment that asks, seriously, what moves these practices? Scoo B Doo stresses the essential "backwards" force of street dance, suggesting an inability to move properly forward, that is at the same time a capacity for endless creativity. Street dancers tend to frame their creation stories as accidents or failures to move or dance properly. In fact, the most highly circulated story of locking recounts how Don accidentally invented the style because he didn't know how to dance. How might we also think of these failed performances as part of a radically improvisatory tradition of disforming what the study of movement might be? This form of study, a disposition to the informal that holds

generative potential for movement, is the "very essence of the visionary, the spirit of the new" (Moten 2003:64) seeping into the commonplace to disform its structures. At the same time, learning street dance style is not reducible to acquiring a set of replicable dance steps but includes the material history of a feeling of moving. The reality of street dance is the hold the passed have on the history and practice of these styles. Those specters moving through these practices are material, crossing in time and space and refusing to be distant. Street styles remain haunted.

In early 2010 Scoo B Doo returned from the dead. He tells his in story an interview with *Soul Train* online correspondent Stephen McMillian:

> Around 1986. I did die emotionally and spiritually. I gave up on life. I was homeless and had little odd jobs here and there. I was living in and out of hotels and was hanging on Skid Row for seven years […] I began to go over in my mind how locking came to be […] from 1993 to 2006, I was still psychologically studying and analyzing the movement and foundation of locking […] In January 2010, my wife Gina typed my nickname into the Internet search engines and came up with all kinds of things about me and my influence on dance. One of the things that came up was the webpage www.lockerlegends.net, stating that my very close and dear friend Greg Pope passed away. I was so hurt by his death and I wanted to express my condolences. So since I was not that familiar with using the Internet, Gina went to the locker legends website and typed a message stating something like "My name is Jimmy Scoo B Doo Foster and I want to express my condolences over the passing of Greg Pope." One of the moderators of that site, Skeeter Higgins, another good friend of mine from years ago, replied and got in touch with her. We reunited and he posted photos of him and me on the locker legends website along with a story that I was very much alive. (McMillian 2011)

Greg Pope and Scoo B Doo pass each other at the boundary between death and life. Lost connections are connections sought. Scoo B Doo's search for his old friend turns into a finding of himself and a sudden rebirth into the street dance community, twenty-five years after rumors surfaced of his passing. These unexpected accountings, in some way call careful readers to account for the theoretical force of street dance—a critical black theory of street movements that "begins, always, with the recognition of a displacement" (Gordon 2010:210) not least of which is Scoo B Doo's life on Skid Row. Scoo B Doo's story of return presents to the community a critical reflection on the pain that street dance history embodies, knowing that his individual account is not fully separate from the collective accounting of histories that disappear in the archive. The ease with which the dead reappear in unexpected and sudden ways is part of the street reality of these dances. It's telling that this journey to and from a kind of death is not distinct from a spiritual journey of reflection and truth seeking that calls him to account for his own practices. Specters call us to account for humanity on different terms, articulating a "need for the dead to be remembered and accommodated" (Avery Gordon 2008:179), a seeking that is perhaps less concerned with visibility and representation but moves through and with another sense of recognition that remains unarticulated—a different kind of sociality and belonging that would require a radically different world.

Chapter 3.
Popping and Other Dis/Appearing Acts

explosion itself becomes a link in the Black's shackles —Kara Keeling (2003:104)

to be black [i]t's imposed rigor on me —Ta-Nehisi Coates[39]

The years 1966-1972 marked early forms of street dancers' experimentation with stopping the body's fluid motion. If tensed muscles was Fanon's figure for revolutionary activity however stunted and ineffectual, then early street dancers' contemporaneous fascination with stopping the body's motion through muscular contraction should be studied for its kinesthetic politics. Developing in tandem with movements of black pride and power, these incipient stages of street dance shared a structure of feeling with black political concerns at the time of *Black Skin White Masks* second 1967 printing. Innovative aesthetics of movement isolation, contraction and release, could be seen to constitute a praxis of black power that trained or unconsciously prepared practitioners in sensory-kinesthetic expressive play. My interest in studying the aesthetic politics of popping and other disappearing acts, lies in how these styles transform a certain disposition toward freedom—a mode of confronting freedom and its negation—into an experience felt as motion, despite swift and frequent dismissals by street dancers who assert that this is all "just a dance, not political."[40] I consider implications of this motion, arguing that these acts are critical sites for theorizing black power through the ways they improvise captured movement.

This group of interrelated styles form an aesthetic study of isolation, rotation, contraction and release. Street dancers transformed various social dances (including the funky robot) into technically practiced expert forms—primarily boogaloo, robot and strutting in the Bay Area and robot, locking and popping in the Los Angeles area. These styles are based in what Will Randolph, co-founder of Oakland dance group The Black Resurgents, calls "a stop-and-go formula" (Randolph 2009). In the practice of "stopping and going" the body confronts the disruption and misdirection of its mobility. These related styles offer different frameworks for practitioners to improvise within a set of limitations imposed on the body's freedom to move. It was not until the late 1970s that the term 'popping' began to circulate as an umbrella term for the technique of contracting and releasing isolated muscle groups, in rhythmic repetition. Since the early 2000s the terminology has again been changing, as first generation dancers developing their own ethno-historical research have contributed new understanding of early developments in street dance style. Without claiming to represent a comprehensive history of these styles, this chapter focuses more closely on the aesthetic principles and improvisational practices of popping and robot.

Building on interrelated questions of the collective body, visual representation, surveillance and control, introduced in *Soul Train*'s kinesthetic politics, I work through the idea of captured motion and breaking down the body into parts that move disjointedly. I reconsider kinesthesia through the anatomo-politics of muscle contraction. These miniature explosions internal to the dancer's body become visible to spectators through the dancer's manipulations of perception, using the styles' aesthetic principles of illusion and control. Popping and its related

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[39] Ta-Nehisi Coates, cited by Hudson Hongo, "Ta-Nehisi Coates Responds: "It's a Privilege for Me to Be Black," *gawker.com*, 24 December 2014, http://gawker.com/ta-nehisi-coates-responds-its-a-privilege-for-me-to-b-1674748746 (7 April 2015).
[40] Jerry Rentie, quoted in Guzman-Sanchez.

styles are techniques built on the process of improvisation, described by practitioners as getting deep into the groove, being carried by funk rhythm. Anne Danielsen (2006) describes the importance of funk to creating a deep groove into which participants disappear—falling deep into the funky mind state is a practice of endurance—whether making music or dancing. Illusionary funk style dances assume the primacy of the groove (and related concepts of soul and funkyness) in black improvisation. The practitioner's performed failure of cohesive movement replays distorted representations of otherness found in classic Claymation films and cartoons that early street dancers studied to develop their stylistic innovations. Practices of "Popping and Other Dis/Appearing Acts" are different modes of thinking through moving that, in signaling a failure to move in free-flowing ways, open meaning to "a whole other reality" (Keeling 2003:110) which poppers describe as both limitless and illusionary, expansive and unreal. Popping figures liberation in "the *explosion* [as] an always-present impossibility" (106) and refocuses the dancer on the creative repetition of explosion within the limits of the body.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

In 1971, in Oakland, California, black—the word, image and idea—alternately defined performances of resistance, political solidarity and cultural pride. Three years earlier James Brown's delivery of "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud" made "black" a celebratory badge of identification even as radical black power threatened "one of the world's most sustained and militant engagements with the modern state apparatus" (Self 2003:12). In 1966 Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, both students at Oakland's Merritt College, outlined the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program, "What We Want, What We Believe." Within the year, the Black Panther Party staged a paramilitary spectacle in Sacramento. Thirty young black men and women, dressed in dark berets, sunglasses and leather jackets and armed with rifles, moved in tight formation across the lawn of the state capitol. The image was immediately broadcast transnationally. In press shots, the state capitol building's towering white classical Greek columns created a panoramic backdrop that framed and dramatized the emergence of black revolutionary activity before mass media's spectatorial gaze. Uniforms, props and group formations were, in that moment, instrumental to the Panthers' performance of black power that was simultaneously metaphorical and "practical revolutionary activity" (Self 2003:231). As Panther Kathleen Cleaver states, "We didn't ever have to 'organize' the Black Panther Party—people organized it themselves. They saw the pictures. They saw the images and they said, *I'm coming to the Bay Area. I wanna be one of those*."[41] Armed, uniformed and backdropped by the capitol, the Panthers reversed representations of armed power vested in the police and backed by government structures. Their message to black people was immediate and transformative.

While mainstream media circulated black power images, black pride circulated affectively in popular music and dance for young people regularly tuned in to the Bay Area's local black entertainment television shows—the Jay Payton Show and KOFY's Soul Is. The *Soul Train* spinoff shows gave audiences a local view of popular dance, fashion and music styles and provided both a community-centered forum for performance and regular opportunities to hook into a mobile network of Bay Area performers, managers, promoters, agents and producers. Oakland stepper and boogaloo dancer Will Randolph describes the influence of television entertainers on the artistic development of young audiences:

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[41] Kathleen Cleaver, quoted in Riley, Theresa, "POV Blog: Photojournalist Pirkley Jones, 1914-2009," Public Broadcasting Service, 9 April 2009, http://www.pbs.org/pov/blog/2009/04/photojournalist_pirkle_jones_1.php (29 April 2015).

> Everybody was enthralled with seeing entertainers on television because it made you think they were famous […] everybody across the country and around the world was seeing them and seeing them simultaneously […] a lot of what was happening in our community was done based on what we saw on television. (Randolph 2009)

Black youth lacking control of their own representational power desired immediate recognition and immortalizing aspects of fame promoted by the socially acceptable TV entertainment industry and promised by black entertainers. The ambiguous vigilante recognition of the Panthers' Sacramento spectacle, transmitted in mass media images of the Panthers signaled rebellion and transgression. Street dancers, while aware of black power politics, did not necessarily use dance as a directly political activity and their stage performances rarely sent overt political messages. In more subtle ways, as this chapter seeks to investigate, the discourse of black power became part of a kinesthetic experience, incorporated less visibly into the improvisational aesthetics of street dance style.

Visual culture, specifically the iconography of black power and black upward mobility, acted as a catalyst for both political mobilization and artistry. The Sacramento spectacle encouraged new recruits to move across the country in response to televised images of black power. For street dancers, feeling a common sensibility of black power and black pride did not translate to direct political action. Dancers drew primarily from moving images in popular film and television that they incorporated into a process of movement experimentation. As performers, they were attentive to the role that visual spectacle played in shaping an entertaining performance. Through imitation, improvisational interplay and competition, they innovated aesthetics of early street dance style. Undergirding street dance history is a necessarily ambivalent tension between entertainment and politics that is inextricable from a critical theory of black performance, circulating through and between mass media vehicles like *Soul Train* and local movements of the hood.

By November 20, 1971, fourteen-year-old Will Randolph was preparing to audition for a local high school talent show. Kenny Love, who was fifteen years old and in the ninth grade, had heard about the auditions last minute and recruited his three sets of cousins and two close family members. Together they choreographed a stepping routine, selecting James Brown's "Superbad" for the music. After they won a performance spot, Oakland community organizer Mr. Green asked for the group's name. I ask Will to tell me the story again:

> The six of us sat around just throwing out names. Part of the name was 'black this' or 'black that'. Eventually after about four or five minutes of battering back and forth I blurted out, "The Black Resurgents!" I really didn't have any idea what it meant. It was a revelation from God. I was tired and wanted to go home. I had been in school all day, had to come back at night, rehearse and audition for this talent show we gonna be in. Right back from 98th and Cherry back around to 96th and Sunnyside. They said, "How do you spell it?" "Resurgents! R-E-S-U-R-G-E-N-T-S." I went home and grabbed a dictionary. I want a name that [is] meaningful. I looked up 'resurgence' and it meant rising or tending to rise again. Now I could get with that. Black. Resurgents. Think about it now. We at the height of the black power movement in America, so I'm like black folks rising or tending to rise again? I could dance to that. Hello somebody! I could dance to that and that's what we did. (Randolph 2009)

Misspelling the word "resurgence," Will triumphantly delivers his punchline. Framing his story with the image of a group of boys riffing verbally on, then ultimately dancing to, the popular discourse of black uplift, Will accounts for an improvisatory process by which the ideologeme of blackness was made corporeal: getting down to rise again. Will dramatizes a process that for him is not un-premeditated but borders on the mystic—"a revelation from God."

In another version of the story I've heard him tell, Will adds that the misspelling arose from his admiration of an Oakland-based R&B singing group The Gents, whose televised performances were inspiration for local dancers "who imitated the steps of the Temptations or James Brown and incorporated them into their group unison choreography" (Guzman-Sanchez 2012:19). High visibility entertainers like The Temptations, The Dramatics, The Jackson Five, The Deltones and The Whispers, connected the idea of black uplift to upward mobility, social respectability and conformity through their meticulous style of dress, smooth mannerisms, movements and singing:

> The way the kids in the hood dressed back then […] we wore Levis out-of-the-cleaners starched, creased and Italian knit shirts, fedoras and Stacy Adams. If you had Converse on, it was for playing basketball. No sweatshirts and sweatpants. If you had a head rag on it was to protect your conk. We dressed nice and we got a lot of that from the entertainers, in particular the Nicholas Brothers, Nat King Cole. They dressed nice, they dressed sharp. (Randolph 2009)

The name 'Resurgents' condenses these signifiers of sartorial, sonic and kinetic sophistication. Jason King's contemplation on the equivocal lived experience of black mobility describes a reworking of shame, defeat and failure "through the improvised performance of making [falling] look premeditated [so that] one automatically becomes a choreographer of sorts" (King 2004:36). Against this history, the choreography of black pride "has functioned on the implicit assumption that black power and autonomy are inseparable from visibility and uprightness. Racial progress demands this visibility, progressive uplift: it demands secure footing, resistance against the pull of gravity, downward mobility" (31). These improvisations on falling are felt by bodies moving with "the normative impulse that is at the heart of—but *strains against*—the black radicalism that *strains against* it" (Moten 2008:1). Considering this interarticulated history of shame and uplift, falling and rising again, Will's telling of the Resurgents' naming describes movement that is speech—the boys' willful move to name and "challeng[e] traditionalist approaches to politics, by confirming that one can get up and get down at the same time" (King 2004:42). In what King concludes is the "terminal ambivalence" (43) of blackness, the choreographed codes of highly visible (up)righteousness (replicated in movements for Black, Gay, and Chicano pride) nevertheless harbor and modulate a fascination with aural-olfactory-kinesthetic improvisations on failure—how to get down, get funky, fall deeply into a groove.

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Epistemology of the pop

Popping (and "poplocking") are common umbrella terms used in reference to a group of illusionary styles that often combine in performance: roboting, locking, boogaloo, tutting,

strutting, snaking, waving, strobing, ticking and animation styles developed in localities ranging from Fresno, Long Beach and South Central Los Angeles, to San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Richmond and San Jose. Some practitioners prefer a clear distinction between styles, but my research also shows that locking, popping and robot combined in performances—most notably of Fred Berry and Slim the Robot who appeared regularly on *Soul Train* as members of Don Campbell's dance group The Lockers. Early generation dancers James Skeeter Rabbit Higgins, Tony GoGo, Mike Peekaboo Frenke, and Greg Campbellock Junior Pope (1952−2010) address the interconnected histories of these styles suggested by the widespread term 'poplocking.'[42] The debate on terminology in street dance culture is ongoing, especially as practitioners continue to build and contribute their own historical research and documentation of street dances. While differences over terminology and classification continue, the different styles falling within the scope of "Popping and Other Disappearing Acts" find common ground in the sounds and rhythms of funk. Musicality is their baseline, a basic principle of street dance style that attunes practitioners to a historically situated sense of sound-in-as-movement. Thomas Guzman-Sanchez (2013) provides a more in-depth historical study of early forms of boogaloo and popping in Oakland (Worming, Creeping, Posing, Ditallion) and pioneer Don Campbell's original style of Campbellocking in Los Angeles, which has developed into the street dance style of locking practiced worldwide for the last forty years.

At the level of effect, popping molds the practitioner's body to appear like a rag doll whose loose limbs buckle and sag, then a rigidly mechanized robot disarticulating at its joints. The body morphs into multiple characters, momentarily taking on the appearance of a hyper-flexible cartoon, transmuting into a lumbering claylike figure, then a wooden marionette jerking from each joint, manipulated by hidden hands pulling invisible strings. As the practitioner builds the representational quality of the illusion, the body appears to lose volition. The body seems to lose control of bits of itself that it haltingly tries to grab back. Despite the practitioner's ever growing conscious intention, fastidious self-restraint and physical command, the audience's elicited admiration often depends on maximizing an illusion of being controlled from outside the self.

Popping trains rapid and continuous muscular relaxation to achieve the concentrated muscular contraction signified by the "pop" and effect the most dynamic hit of the beat. The more the popper releases her muscles, the more intense the contraction. It is the practitioner's extreme self-control of isolated muscle groups that is central to affecting the visual illusion of jumpiness, tension or at times chaotic lack of control. Practiced correctly popping's stop-and-go cycle of muscle movement circulates blood through repeated muscular contraction and relaxation, strengthening muscles that support the body's major joints and imprinting neural pathways for proper joint alignment and rotation into muscle memory. Popping shares principles of postmodern dance techniques in Western dance tradition that function to minimize energy use by releasing muscular tension.

Illusion is also created in the disconnection between imagined and actual initiation points of each isolated pop. While the pop initiates from an intense muscular contraction, the illusory effect appears to initiate from movement of the bones. For example, when the practitioner performs a hard arm pop, the shoulder bones appear to shrug up and down. Although moving the bones can increase the visual effect, the pop must initiate from muscle tension and release. Novice dancers may try to replicate their visual perception of the movement by loosely

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[42] See James Higgins, "Editorial: The Terms or Dances Locking, Roboting and "PopLocking" Valid," lockerlegends.net, http://www.lockerlegends.net/?page_id=359 (7 April 2015).

shrugging their shoulders up and down to the beat. Similarly, the knee pop appears to initiate from bending and snapping the leg bones into extension, a practice that may lead to injury in beginning poppers who make the mistake of disengaging their muscles for the duration of the movement. Again, they try to move from the bones, literally popping their knees into overextended positions, instead of contracting and releasing the quadriceps and hamstring muscles that stabilize and strengthen the kneecap. To create a safe and dynamic knee pop, the dancer stands in a slightly bent-kneed position and extends the leg back without reaching full extension while at the same time contracting the thigh muscles. The practitioner may pop her leg forward or backward depending on the effect she chooses to create. Though the knee appears to be popping out of joint, the practice attunes poppers to nuanced muscular movement and strengthens muscles supporting the knee joint, one of the least stable joints of the body.

Isolation is a third key principle defining the way movement functions within the popper's body. In order to train in the form, many practitioners will advise students to segment the body, training each part sequentially – left and right arms, left and right legs, chest, neck – before attempting to combine two or more parts. The engaged practitioner learns to separate her body into parts that appear to move independently, building a deep awareness of muscles and joints. This fragmentation of the body translates to performance, as poppers may choose to isolate a single muscle or engage multiple muscle groups in order to play more dynamically with rhythm and style. Isolation figuratively deconstructs the body; visually it seems to break into pieces that move at different times and in different directions, building the illusion of an external force puppeteering an unconscious body.

Although form is important to poppers, in practice the technique is fundamentally concerned with shifting energy in and through the body, as the dancer chooses where to direct the pop's concentrated power. For example, while the ballerina's perfect line should be replicable in every new performance, popping's off-balance lines are visual effects created by the pop's continuous rupturing of movement flow, as the body attunes kinesthetically to the rhythm of the beat. The unique movement quality that a popper displays when accessing these shifts of energy can be described as moving with soul and funk.

Animation, a subgenre of the illusionary styles umbrella, mimics the movements and style of stop-motion animation models seen in television and on film. Distinct from the rapid tension/relaxation of the pop, animation requires a sustained muscular contraction and control that endures through the arc of the movement, ending with an abrupt disabling of the motion. For example, the dancer may decide to lift his arm, simultaneously tensing all of its muscles while tracing a backward arc through the air. The stop-motion effect can then be dynamically punctuated by executing a sharp arm-pop at the end of the gesture. Like popping technique and reflective of the cinematographic technique, the dance style relies on segmenting the body then moving the various parts in isolation.

Legendary poppers including Boppin Andre and Poppin Taco credit many of the movies animated by mid-twentieth century stop-motion innovator Ray Harryhausen as their inspiration in pioneering animation dance. In order to train in the style, dancers thoroughly study the particular movement dynamics of Harryhausen's animated film models. The Harryhausen films depict oversize animated chimera threatening to eradicate civilization and make insignificant its live human architects, cinematically rendered in miniature. One of the most popular inspirations for pioneers of the dance was the giant Cyclops in *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1958). The plot recounts the adventures of an overseas adventurer who lands with his crew on an island populated by freakish creatures, including the Cyclops, a giant two-headed bird, a fire-breathing

dragon who guards a despairing princess, and demon skeletons, all of which serve as character-studies for the dance style.

The mega-monsters are manipulated invisibly by what are in reality the relatively gigantic hands of the animator. Sianne Ngai (2005) explains how in its inception at the turn of the twentieth century stop-motion animation was "seen as a kind of technological atavism" (90), reliant on the basic but tedious trick of taking numerous snap-shots of the object, an achievement of which a hand-held camera is capable. Because the process favored a "labor-intensive principle" (91) that underutilized the video camera's perceived technological supremacy, it was generally looked down on as an unsophisticated trick. Ironically, this "technically 'backward'" (91) medium signaled technology's potential to totally eclipse human labor and agency, as evinced in the animated actions of the seemingly huge and hugely destructive animated film models. Further, viewers must suspend their disbelief by taking the animated creatures as real. Possessing the on-screen illusion of life, the animated film model's spasmodic movement style becomes an inherent property of its own, due to the fact that the animator as puppet-master who truly possesses the power of animacy remains invisible.

Master popper Steffan Mr. Wiggles Clemente describes how a play on the audience's visual perception works in the dance practice:

> You don't [he waves one finger back and forth] want to see [he points to his eyes] where the pop comes from [he repeatedly points to his chest then shakes his hands back and forth "no"]. That's the illusion. I don't know where it comes from. It's coming from *in-side*. [he points repeatedly to his chest] That's popping…When we pop? People think we're here. [he lifts his shoulders and arms parallel to his ears; his arms, fingers, and wrist joints stiffen momentarily as he freezes Frankenstein-style] No. [his voice lowers and relaxes as he shakes his head] We're here. [he speaks softly, relaxes his shoulders, wobbles hands from wrist joints] We're here. (Clemente 2009)

Lifting his shoulders and wrists as if invisible strings are attached at each joint, Wiggles demonstrates the illusion of being puppeteered—of an external force that acts on him, of being rigidly controlled from the outside—then relaxes into the stance as he demonstrates the self-control that he describes as actually "coming from inside." Wiggles shows how the form plays on our visual sense as dominant while hiding a more complex sensory awareness that permeates throughout the body: "you don't want to see where the pop comes from," "I don't know where it comes from." Knowledge is not based in what either "I" or "you" see. Depending on our visual sense to tell us where the pop is coming from, we (viewers and participants) misinterpret the truth of the form.

Homologous to this play between intentional self-animation and the illusion of being animated is the way that stop-motion ironically produces the double effect of self-representation and being represented. Outside the taleworld, the animator chooses each minute detail of the object's movement, literally shaping its representation for the camera. Within the taleworld, the events of the plot and actions of the characters possess their own internal logic. Spectacular, brashly colored bodies push the screen's visual bounds with their exaggerated physicality—limbs hyperextend, organs stretch and swell, eyes bulge out—calling attention to the body's pliancy and materiality. At the same time, the bodies falter, producing an unnerving strobe-like effect. The body seems to constantly check itself, frustrating the easy flow of movement. In the animator's perceived absence, the on-screen objects appear to animate and represent themselves,

creating a taleworld with an ontological status distinct from the real world where the animator carefully constructs their every movement.

Ngai's formulation of the affective state she calls *animatedness* is useful for theorizing popping as a challenge to the body's capacity for resistance and agency (perhaps serving both therapeutic and diagnostic purposes, but also as I will argue embodying a political philosophy of captured movement). In the case of animation, the body's possibility of moving is predicated on a suspension or obstruction of agency—literally the stopping of motion in/by the body. This process by which inanimate forms are segmented and made to move in phases, provides a theoretical frame to foreground the relationship between the potential building of a politicized consciousness and *being-moved* as a feeling in the body. Considering that the animation medium performs Man's control over the (resistant) object, with an aim to screen the spectacle of giving these objects life in the absence of human agents, if stop-motion is an example of animatedness then the practitioners' aesthetic re-use of animation technology, coupled with popping's interest in stopping motion in the body, suggests a curiosity to study deeply this affective state as it connects to kinesthetic consciousness.

Ngai traces representations of the slave in abolitionist narratives (Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and William Lloyd Garrison's preface to the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*) that were carefully crafted "to dramatize the animation of racialized bodies for political purposes" (98). Proving the abolitionist cause required transformation of the ideology that slaves, fundamentally non-sentient beings, were objects of property unable to possess rights or freedom. Ngai argues that the affective state of animatedness, "the most basic of minimal of affective conditions" (91), functions within the narratives as "a thrill that seems highly contagious—easily transferred through the animated body to its spectators" (98). The animated body becomes the animator of the reader's body, "facilitating the transition from the image of a body whose parts are automatically moved, to the oppositional consciousness required for the making of political movements" (96). In this sense the desire of the abolitionists to solicit empathy for the slave's humanity was "counter-intuitively" founded on the slave body's reobjectification—"turn[ing] the exaggeratedly expressive body into a spectacle for an ethnographic gaze—a spectacle featuring an African-American subject made to move physically in response to lyrical, poetic, or imagistic language" (97).

Ngai further demonstrates how animatedness functions with a "crucial ambivalence" that is at once the liberated elasticity of movement and its restriction in the body and as such "takes on special weight in the case of racialized subjects, for whom objectification, exaggerated corporeality or physical pliancy, and the body-made-spectacle remain doubly-freighted issues" (101). The animation of the racialized body in narrative text is paralleled on-screen, where the animated film model, rather than textual material, becomes a tactile material vehicle for the ideological representation of the other, rendered symbolically by plot and character and physically at the point of contact of object and hands. Stop-motion animation "insistently foreground[s] its own artifice […] calling attention not just to the exaggerated physicality but also to the material composition of its characters" (104). This ability of the form to produce a fictive reality wherein the creatures seem to intentionally move themselves is constantly challenged by the models' very materiality. In this way, the animator holds the power of representation over these spectacularly freakish beings that are putty in her hands.

Just as the animated film model paradoxically combines liberated elasticity and hobbled movement, the animation dance form's corporal appropriation of the tightly controlled system of stop-motion technology functions in slippery ways. In practice, the practitioner must visually

memorize the animated film model's methodically choreographed on-screen movements and then relocate these scripted movements in the improvisation-based modality of the dance form. The control demanded of the animator's hands is at first rigorously imitated in the training practitioner's body, then ultimately transformed into the intuited choices of the expert performer's free-style. While the film model stays pliant to external volition, the practitioner must produce that effect volitionally, by intentionally producing her own body's sluggish response. Complexity is always doubled for practitioners, whose representation must figure both the illusion of the putty's incompetence and the illusion of being animated from elsewhere. Improvisation, at once spontaneous and anchored in the habit body, adds a third illusory effect, where she must appear to dance spontaneously although in reality she performs the trained movements of an expert. Mr. Wiggles describes this training of the body in a three-step process that begins with the character-study of an animated film model, mimicking the character's movement style, and finally applying the muscular techniques of animation-style dance. The training process demonstrates an embodied mode of analysis and interpretation, beginning with "reading" a character's movement style within the taleworld context of the film, mimicking that style within the practitioner's body, and reinterpreting the character by incorporation into the dancer's unique movement repertoire.

Poppers aim to make the body elastic and in a sense realize a "physical metamorphosis" that hip hop choreographer Rennie Harris likens to "the internal energy of Butoh, where you believe you just go inside of yourself and you change and you morph into this water, you morph into this monster, you morph into this pain and anguish, you morph into this clown or whatever. The mind has to believe it, and the body is gonna believe it."[43] In practice the body oscillates between the status of thing and human, incorporating a political ontology of blackness replayed through the style's repetitive stop-motion aesthetic—a performance of captured movement:

> the concept of animatedness not only returns us to the connection between the emotive and the mechanistic but also commingles antithetical notions of physical agency […] the affect manages to fuse signs of the body's subjection to power with signs of its ostensive freedom—by encompassing not only bodily activity confined to fixed forms and rigid, specialized routines […] but also a dynamic principle of physical metamorphosis by which the body […] seems to 'triumph over the fetters of form'" (Ngai 2005:100-101)

While I would question the extent to which the political efficacy of these signs and their "unanticipated social meanings" (125) can be evaluated and a black political project recuperated, I am interested to investigate how a theory of the *dead-end movement* and its relation to motion capture technology and cinematography might support critical intellectual engagement with black performance and the politics of representation. Poppers' study and transfiguration of filmic technique into the dance technique of popping and its associated styles foregrounds questions of the political efficacy of a bodily praxis predicated on the aesthetic principle of suspended agency. Does animation style prepare the body for defeat? How does the feeling of being-moved as a political ontology of blackness complicate the efficacy of these dances? What theoretics of the form is helpful for defining a kinesthetic politics of black power?

Popping styles translate Ngai's animatedness back into "a state of being 'puppeteered' that points to a specific history of systemic political and economic disenfranchisement" (12). Stop-motion images translate to impulses in the body that repeated over time, suspend poppers in a

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[43] Rennie Harris, Interview by Jeff Chang (2006:67).

state of unresolved anticipation, as each muscle contraction inevitably releases into the underlying groove. In questioning the political efficacy of these bodily signs I consider how contraction techniques support a critical engagement with black political ontology.

Popping's technical principles play with halting the continuous flow of movement through the body in several major ways: continuous, rhythmic muscular contraction and release (popping), highly concentrated, rhythmic muscular contraction (hitting), protracted muscular contraction (animation), and culminating muscular contraction (dime-stopping). The subtle differentiation between types of muscle contractions points to the high level of expertise expected in a popper's acquisition of style as well as the expectation that an authentic practitioner acquire this shared vocabulary, understand the subtleties of the aesthetic, and master multiple stylistic techniques. Wiggles expands his embodied interpretation of popping technique to theorize the technical practice of form:

> Zero. No energy. This is where we dance. We groove. [arms, torso and legs wobble as feet rock rhythmically back and forth between heels and toes] No energy. [freezes] The pop! Is for only one second. One fraction of every beat. We pop. [clenching fists] And let it go. [as fists release and fingers stretch open, a loud vibrating sound like a door slamming shut punctuates his words] We don't pop like this [stiffens hands and claps rigidly, head moving back and forth with hand, rhythmically emphasizing the clap]. No. We pop like this. [claps again opening a wider space between the hands, rhythmically emphasizing the silence] Cause when you pop like this? You're relaxed. This is the dance popping. Now you can groove. When you pop like this? No groove, no funk. [clap] Let it go [clap]. Let it go [clap]. Let it go…This is the beat? [finger traces big circle on mirror] That's the outside. Inner side. [finger tracing concentric circles that get smaller and smaller inside of each other towards a center point] Inside. Inside. (Clemente 2009)

Wiggles claps his hands to demonstrate the embodied practice of muscular contraction and release but also how the sharp sound of closing palms shut () relates to and derives from the silence of palms opening ( ). Falling for the trick of the visually dominant pop, the spectator focuses on how the dancer closes off kinetic flow (). Contraction disguises the beat's which is also to say the movement's "inner side," the receptive space ( ) that reopens each time Wiggles' hands release and move away from each other. The second way of clapping builds a magnetic tension between his two palms, emphasizing a reciprocal relationship of pushing together and pulling back the inside surfaces of each hand. The pop's muscular tension draws the spectator's attention, concealing the element of release and expansion that is crucial to a successful performance. Wiggles interpretation gives aesthetic value to the dancer's capacity to "let it go" and practice kinesthetic receptiveness through repetitive acts of constriction.

The form meta-discursively reflects on itself by framing the "grooving" and "funk"—the flow the dancer creates ( ) with each ( ) successive ( ) pop ( ). Wiggles's two hands act as a frame for the space that opens up between each clap. The pop shows forces in relationship rather than in opposition. This recursivity is unexpectedly emphasized as Wiggles chooses to end the demonstration by tracing and retracing an invisible circle on the reflective surface of the dance studio mirror.

Wiggles demonstrates an ironic conflict between what the body appears to be doing and what is actually happening. The closure produced by the pop directly relates to the openness "where we groove," "where we dance." The pop plays against the "zero…no energy" state of the

groove, which is the receptive state demanded in order to create grooving and funk. The meaning of the groove would disappear without the forceful precedent of the pop. The visual distinctiveness of the pop emphasizes the force of two objects colliding powerfully, coming down heavily on the outside of the rhythm. What poppers must do according to Wiggles' teaching method is get inside the groove, emphasizing the space that is created within the body—an inner space of release between each muscular contraction.

The groove is a continuous sound-movement where the popper tells her story—"the zero…is where we dance." At the same time, the groove is always interrupted by the pop which forcefully disrupts and redirects the story's narrative flow. The narrative created by a popper's unique improvisatory flow—the extended space of play "where we groove"—experiments with moving against and through the pop's repeated interruptions of the groove. The fragmentation of the groove gives shape to a popper's unique freestyle performance. Poppers recycle these movement narratives which repetitively revolve around the threat of their own destruction. Wiggles emphasizes the interval between contractions as the creative improvisatory space where grooving happens, where the funk happens. What Wiggles describes is an attitude not of moving against and resisting the beat but relaxing, in reflection, within the beat. Figured at the microlevel of the isolated muscle group—especially the quadriceps, biceps, triceps, abdominals, pectorals, forearm and neck muscles—is the spatio-temporal structure of anticipation that Kara Keeling calls the interval.

The interval is a "zero" space, a void or zone of nonbeing, that holds the potential of radical expression. The challenge of being in the interval entails opening thought to "the unforeseeable, the unanticipatible, the non-masterable, non-identifiable" (Keeling 2003:110). By way of Wiggles, the pop opens up a zero space of un-seeing/un-knowing, which is also an un-*owning,* drawing from Moten's theorization of the break's "dispossessive force" (Moten 2003:1). As a theory of cultural resistance, the break builds a capacity of lingering inside the beat to open up the infinite—a paraontological space of expansive possibility. Moten theorizes the break as an almost infinitesimal outlet where fugitivity becomes practicable. Keeling theorizes the interval as a mode of enduring that signals defeat, in that the potential for revolutionary resistance is always already anticipated by its structure. In terms of black existence in the interval—the temporality of waiting is explained through Fanon's figure of muscle tension as anticipation and bodily explosion (106). Keeling links sensation and affect to black revolutionary activity, and at the same time its (im)possibility, because the cycle accounts for Black explosion and in that way, continuously reinstates the (neo)colonial system of representation.

While Keeling considers how structural blackness revises visual culture theory approaches to black representation, especially in mass media and film, I am interested in how the interval could function at the level of body knowledge and more specifically kinesthetics—that is, the practice of stopping and suspending the body's motion that becomes the guiding aesthetic principle of popping and related 'illusionary' styles predicated on the skill of repetitious muscular contraction. By way of Wiggles' insight, waiting (which is black existence)—suspends the body in a sense, in a "no energy" state—recreating the interval that popping articulates. It's not the muscular contraction (Keeling's explosion) but the relaxation between pops that is the not-seen/not-known until *kinesthetically* engaged through prolonged practice, a practice that necessarily entails improvisation. Existing but more, moving in the interval may be a conforming to (neo)colonial time in Keeling's concept, but also "is an opening" (110) when it is an enduring. By emphasizing the nothingness of the interval between his repeated handclaps as expansion

rather than contraction, Wiggles theorizes extending the release rather than holding onto the pop, as a way of moving in the possibility of an infinitesimal and infinite inner side.

Because popping is a practice of repetition, which Wiggles signals in his recursive tracing of circles across the mirror's surface, the practitioner's aim is to keep the groove going, to extend the time-space of the interval. As opposed to a highly acrobatic form like breaking where the practitioner tends to work in a more linear narrative structure (beginning with footwork, moving to floor work, sometimes performing power moves, and ending with a freeze) popping takes a more cyclical, processual approach to practice. The popper's groove is less invested in constructing a spectacular end to the performance than in building a groove in time-space. This unending process also requires the audience's sustained and careful attention. The elongated temporality of popping supports improvisation, which is why popping is less successful as a marketable choreocentric studio technique which entertains superficial engagements with street dance for students taking class with the intention to quickly memorize and perform set dance sequences. As a kinesthetic theory of the interval, popping practice cultivates a disposition of "enduring without something expected or promised" (108), but in the process "[p]erhaps a whole other reality—one that we do not yet have a memory of as such—opens up" (110).

The dancer proves her mastery by learning the aesthetic intricacies of the pop and subsequently expanding the possibilities of how to move within the form's constraints. Stopping motion becomes thematic to the form, so that the stop in itself becomes highly aestheticized. Dancers talk about rhythmic flow and musicality (when to pop), muscular isolation and control (where to pop) and dynamism (how to pop). Limitation is figured as a tool to expand improvisational play. Poppers layer, interweave and transform a multitude of dance styles under the umbrella of popping (boogaloo, strutting, robot, animation, waving, tutting, ticking, strobing…) giving them maximum freedom to experiment in performance. I've spoken with master poppers who reject the idea that the dance has any rules, suggesting the high value placed on the individual dancer's creative ability to manipulate the dance's aesthetic structure, to such a degree that the structure itself seems to disappear. In this sense an ethos of liberation distinguishes the approach to improvisation within the form.

Popping is a dis/appearing act that teases the viewer's vis-ability and holds perception suspect. At the same time, deliberate rupture to the flow of movement is incorporated into the technical aesthetic, building a process of narrative recreation and re-creation. The pop poses an explosive threat to the practitioner's freestyle flow that she must use technical and conceptual skill to confront in a ritual reviving of the groove. These early street dance forms make a compelling study because of the almost limitless possibilities of invention that arise from a set of highly structured rules, a praxis that critically aligns with Keeling's reading of Fanonian political ontology:

> […] the utterly naked, unprotected, disarmed freedom of a limitless, open, and opening existence; one that knows no boundaries and that certainly is not locked into an infernal cycle. Liberation, if there is such a thing, is possible in the interval as a present impossibility, an expansion that explodes even the interval in which we wait. (109-110)

The common project introduced by Keeling, Moten and Wiggles is an inquiry into the capacity to radically think within a structure of captivity and, in respect to popping's kinesthetic politics, what the feeling of that radical movement might foresee.

Robot

If you ask most people in San Francisco what they know about the upper East Bay city of Richmond, the last thing they're likely to say is "cultural center." It does hold the questionable distinction of being the 113-year old home to the United States' twenty-second largest oil refinery, owned by Chevron. When Richmond makes its bleep on the radar it's most likely the site of corporate scandal, pollution, violence and (ironically for the locals who dub it The Rich) poverty. By the late 1970s Richmond was a land of robots—a cultural domain for Bay Area robotting. Groups like Richmond Robots, Androids, Audionauts, Criminons, Lady Mechanical Robots and Green Machine competed regularly in local talent shows, opening a forum for a corporeal discourse on aesthetics.[44] A prominent inspiration for street dancers' robotic movement was master mime Robert Shields, a world famous street performer in San Francisco's Union Square and co-star with his wife Lorene Yarnell (1944-2010) on CBS's *The Shields and Yarnell Show* from 1977-1978. Robot debuted nationally on *Soul Train* in 1971 by dance partners Charles Robot Washington and Angela Johnson (Guzman-Sanchez 2012:46), but the style has a cultural history in both Northern and Southern California metropolitan centers since at least the mid-1960s.

Robot, robotting or botting focuses on extremely controlled isolation of body parts, but distinct from popping's quick muscle contraction-release, robot's particular stop-and-go approach to mobility requires sustained muscular contraction. Roboters may layer different styles of contraction in performance, like hitting, popping and dime stopping, which break the rigid flow of robotic movement to create a polyrhythmic groove. Robotters use hard body angles and sometimes the vocalization of mechanical whirrs and bleeps to create the illusion of the human practitioner's partial transformation into machine:

> I would imagine sounds… *(his eyes glaze and he makes a machinic clunky sound while stiffly moving arms and head: erroomKUH oomKUH KUH)* Even though they put [machine sounds] in some videos today, back then we didn't have that so you kind of mentally think *(he moves and stops with the vocal rhythm: eerrYUM eerrYUM errYUM)* It makes you think of the movement in sound. (Eddie Cole 2014)

Renée Lesley, one-third of Richmond's all-female dance group The Lady Mechanical Robots, describes her transformative experience of dancing Robot:

> Our body movements and the styles express[ed] our feeling. It was cool, it was a form of strength. The moves were just smooth, they were electrifying. It signified toughness. A robot was tough, well-oiled. Robotin' was a machine and back then we were machines. [Robot] was a survivor. (Lesley 2010)

Renée describes how the collective practices of robotting granted youth in her neighborhood a kind of persistence. Taking into consideration Richmond's relative isolation from the urban centers of Oakland and San Francisco, the visibility and renown youth cultivated through dance

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[44] Talent shows held throughout the Bay Area provided a circulating stage for local dancers and groups. Well-known dance groups that got their start through the early 1970's to 1980's were also from neighborhoods in San Francisco (Granny and the Robotroids, Demons of the Mind, Close Encounters of the Funkiest Kind), Oakland (The Black Resurgents, The Black Messengers aka Mechanical Devices), and San Jose (Playboyz Inc.).

was much different from the celebrity entertainment world that was somewhat more accessible to Los Angeles dancers via Hollywood and *Soul Train*. Richmond robotters gained hood fame, through their creation of highly choreographed group performances at the community talent shows. Reversing themes prevalent throughout science fiction which describe the threat posed by mechanization and technology, Renée's interpretation suggests that robotters conceived machines to be the embodiment of their lived experiences. Robotting was a way of feeling invincibility but also a kind of cyborg intimacy with mechanized metal. This affiliation with movement is evident in the personification of styles in street dance discourse—"robot was tough" and "we were machines" (ibid). Rather than describing themselves as "robot dancers" or "dancing robot style," street dancers will say "I'm a robot" or "I robot." Street dance epistemology makes no separation between individual self and dance style. Body commits completely to style, just as style melds to and inhabits body.

The status of blackness as a threat to (white, civil) humanity, has somewhat paradoxically required that black people be alternately conflated with and denied access to the technological. Science fiction, circumscribed as a discursive territory of white masculinity, on the one hand allows black characters to operate and in fact become machines as industrial laborers (a discursive strategy implied already by the word "robot," as it derives from the Czech root *rab* meaning slave). On the other hand (white) science fiction disallows black conceptual control over the discourse of technology and the future, consigning the black's relation to technology to a purely physical experience in which the black body is instrumentalized for capitalist productivity. In this conception the industrial laborer is incapable of intelligent thought, inventiveness, imagination or agency. Body detaches from mind as it fuses to the machines of industry.

By the late 1970s, the advent of the personal computer made an irreversible leap from industrial to information technology. The future had already been brought into the present with the first launchings of humans into space throughout the 1960s and the first lunar landing in 1969, which brought televised images of space travel directly into people's homes. Space represented the new unknown, wide open and limitless possibility. At the same time, expansions and contractions of time and space, made evident with technological advancement, created a disorienting experience. The dancers' process of observing, mimicking, improvising and performing mechanized movement enabled them to play with themes of technology, outer space and science fiction sensorially and conceptually. Dancers did not simply replicate the movements of machines but remixed machinic movement to the sounds of r&b, soul and funk music. Pioneer San Francisco street dancer Fayzo describes how he would watch science fiction movies and cartoons, intently studying and copying the motion of nonhuman characters, while his father's records were playing in the background.[45] In taking machines out of the role of purely physical labor and into the discourse of outer space, futurism and most importantly funk, robot dancers conceptually transported their bodies out of a system of capitalist profit and into a non-productive, process-oriented space of symbolic, sensory-kinesthetic play. Science fiction enabled dancers to embody mechanical, technological and futuristic beings and at the same time shape an experimental representational space. Robots enacted experiences of temporal and spatial disorientation to imagine their corporal transformation, practicing how to move outside of and beyond hegemonic modes of representing otherness.

As a theory specific to funk era music and culture, Mark Dery's (1994) coining of the term Afrofuturism describes black people's appropriation of technology and science fiction

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[45] Tommy Washington, in conversation with author, Berkeley, California, 5 May 2015.

imagery to address the diversity and hybridity of black cultural forms, theorizing African American culture as creation of and not contrast to modernity. Dery's description of the Afrofuturist aesthetic merges with the necropolitics of antiblackness:

> African Americans are, in a very real sense, the descendants of alien abductees. They inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movements; official histories undo what has been done to them; and technology, be it branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee experiment, or tasers, is too often brought to bear upon black bodies (1994:180)

Realizing the mounting historical evidence of the mutilation of black bodies, Afrofuturist symbology rejects Western representational systems that control the body's mobility and mutability. By representing themselves in intimate relationships to technology and outer space, Afrofuturists contradict the ideological positioning of blackness as modernity's opposite. Afrofuturist performers engage themes of space travel, escape and exodus, utopia, mythic African history, spirituality, gender and sexuality.

At the same time funk music has allied itself directly with the black underclass. The group Parliament-Funkadelic brought philosophy to funk music, crafting lyrics, music and spectacular stage performances that backed up bandleader George Clinton's emphatic statement: "We gonna be the blackest, we gonna be the funkiest, we gonna be dirty."[46] The spectacular landing of Clinton's Mothership happened in urban areas throughout the United States between 1976 and 1977. The spaceship descended during P-Funk's touring stage show at the Oakland Coliseum on January 21, 1977, ready to transport black people back to outer space, their utopic homeland. The mythic event took the concept of return to an idealized African past, prevalent in Black National and Pan-African rhetoric, and projected it into a future space made present. Alongside the Black Panther Party, who were creating their own infrastructures for free breakfasts and free schooling within black communities, P-Funk staged fantasies of moving far beyond social systems to access the unreal, a space limited only by the black radical imagination. Funk artists performed Afrofuturist acts to estrange reality, figuratively expanding and contracting time-space to imagine disorienting travels through uncharted territories of sound and movement.

While there exists abundant analysis of Afrofuturist music, literature, visual art and media, scholars have not studied how street dancers were drawing on Afrofuturist images, sounds and ideology to innovate funk dance styles. Bay Area dancers experimented with new forms of movement that engaged in embodied discourses of modernity, tradition and blackness. Contributing to the development of what would come to be known as an Afrofuturist aesthetic, the performance artists fashioned themselves as robots, space travelers, Frankensteins and alien beings. Their performances recycled science fiction imagery but added more layers of complexity to the formation of a robot identity as they mixed with the discourse of black power, pride and upward mobility. In mixing mass media, Afrofuturist aesthetics, and the smooth presentational style of contemporaneous r&b entertainers, street dancers' performances contradicted the construction of these "gents" in socially normative roles. Iconography of alien life forms, technology and outer space symbolized escape out of the bounds of the human ecosystem—a free fall of the performers' imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness, momentarily cut loose from societal restrictions. Like the naming story of The Black Resurgents,

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[46] George Clinton, quoted in Wright (2008:37).

the dance practices demonstrate how a move beyond limited representations of blackness could also mean demanding greater mobility *within* a sanctioned social hierarchy, without calling for a fundamental destruction of the order of things.

Restrictions placed on their mobility effected how street dance practitioners came to conceptualize conformist, resistant and extraordinary identities, as well as to produce technical responses within their bodies and movement through space. Aesthetics and kinesthetics came together to work through the stopping of bodily motion, the crippling of the body's mobility, and fixing of blackness not as cultural identity but violence of position. The concept of disabling motion that arises both in the action of muscle contraction and the practice of moving through space, translates into the dancer's experience of her own body in relation to social perceptions of bodily disability. The corporeal epistemology of illusionary dance pulls practitioners into particular ways of understanding corporeality and mobility that question normative conceptions of the body. Renée contrasts the transformative experience of robotin' to her experience of being in ballet class:

> She [the ballet teacher] was like (*enunciating each word in a proper tone*), "Your butt. Is *too* big. For ballet. You are *too...*" (*interrupting herself loudly*) "I *am* a black girl." And so for me [ballet class] was a terrible experience. I was maybe eight years old and robotin' fit right in because it allowed me to express *my* heritage, what *I* was feelin, how *I* got down. It fit my body. (Lesley 2010)

Ballet limits which bodies can participate, operating within a narrow visual standard that essentializes what bodies are capable of doing. Robotin' is an alternative way of moving and being in the body that provided Renée an opportunity to imagine mobility beyond a hierarchy of artistic expression. The illusionary dances claim this ideology as part of their pedagogical effect. Renée describes the experience of master dancer Riley Moe:

> Riley for one. He couldn't play sports because of his legs. He used that to his advantage. He's unbelievable. I used to love watching Riley. He couldn't play sports he couldn't play baseball. People would laugh at him. When he started robotin he used those legs. He scarecrowed, he did things with his arms and his body and his head. It was like he was detaching his body from his legs. He just started doing things that were unbelievable. He created a whole new style […] his mom didn't get him the corrective shoes and so he was stuck.

Renée's story ends with Riley's mother's financial situation, which serves a function for his "stuck" performance. Being unable to move in conventional ways, Riley couldn't get skilled at sports. Renée's story redefines disability as ability and immobility as mobility. Limitation is a creative approach that shapes "unbelievable" movements and the invention of Riley's unique "scarecrow" movement style.

Teachers of illusionary dance often repeat this narrative to their students. Physical limitation, disability and imperfect bodies are foregrounded in the technical, philosophical and pedagogical principles of popping and robot. Mastery of the style comes with learning the particularity and the limits of one's body and mobility. In melding body to style, a practitioner doesn't conceal but instead deploys differences in body size and ability, physical limitation and perceived imperfection, to build her unique sense of style. Ultimately it is this development of

character through perceived physical limitation that allows a practitioner to gain immortality within the culture as a master of style. The embodied epistemology of illusionary dance pulls practitioners into particular ways of understanding corporeality and mobility that deconstruct normative conceptions of the body.

In the Bay Area, street dancers of boogaloo, robot and strutting styles, developed a unique practice of synchronized dancing—unison choreography where bodies seemed to meld into one unit. Individual robots remade themselves into one machine, interconnecting fingers, hands, arms, legs and any combination of body parts. Robots had to sustain integrity as a corps, performing complex, fast-paced movement sequences accompanied by 45RPM record singles that the robotters would speed up to 78RPM. Limbs intertwined and crossed at sharp angles. Body surfaces fused to form unbroken waves of motion. Boundaries of the personal body dissolved as bodies morphed, taking on appearances of the humanoid, mechanical and animal.[47]

Synchronized robot differs from conventional unison movement in that all robot bodies must remain touching without missing the intricately choreographed moves or even a quarter-second beat of music. Moving effectively as one body, robots bond completely to sound. Robots build an acute sense of space, body control, rhythmic precision and collective responsibility for the performance of style. Technique and aesthetics specific to choreographed group performance and magnified by processes of rehearsal and repetition, trained robots in a sense of corporeal solidarity. Renée describes the Lady Mechanical Robots rehearsal process:

> Doing that type of robot you had to be uniform […] everytime you touch but you had to go to the ground and do something offbeat, when you came back up you had to make sure that you were touching […] you were all one. You had to move like you were moving together. We had to walk each step. We had to walk together, arms together, legs, everything had to be together. And when you separated you had to pop back together. It was unbelievable. The practice was intense.

The group of dancers, usually from three to five, physically link their bodies as they are moving, while maintaining linear formations in parallel or perpendicular orientation to the audience. The style is always choreographed since linking multiple bodies requires the dancers to move perfectly in sync with one another and to simultaneously reproduce the fast-paced musical rhythm in their body movements.

These highly stylized dance routines required the dancers' meticulous rehearsal of complex robotic effects, including synthesis and linear sequencing. Unison and domino were two main types of synchronization that dancers utilized in these choreographies. The domino effect is created by a line of dancers replicating the same movements, one after the other—front to back, back to front, left to right, or right to left. The movements are precisely timed so that the dancers follow in succession, one beat after the dancer next to them in line. One of the most widely replicated domino effects is the centipede. Oriented perpendicularly to the stage, the group of dancers curves its upper body from one side to the other in continuous repetition, as the lower body remains still. The precise synchronization of movement and timing creates the effect of one undulating centipede body, with each dancer representing a segment of that body.

Rhythm and musicality were central to creating these visual effects. In a major innovation of the style, practitioners began to increase the speed of their routines by switching the record

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[47] "(BRS) Boogaloo Robot Strut (Bay Area Dance)," YouTube, 7:45 minutes, posted by dizzrockn, 5 May 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuYqpWVAiz4 (29 April 2015).

player speed from 45 to 77RPM. With the increase in speed, the dancers' movements had to become smaller, tighter and closer together, without losing precision and unison. The music, filtered through the manipulated technology of the turntable, became more futuristic sounding:

> We used to take the Ohio Players. Back then we had the 45s and the LPs. We would put them on, double the speed. Miraculously fast. We felt that it was too slow. Speeding it up made the moves more crisp, sharper. It made you be able to be more technical. It made you go fast and do things and jump over people and it was an effect. The effects looked better faster […] We listened to it on such fast speed that I couldn't sing the original version cause I don't have a clue. All I know is in fast speed. (Lesley 2010)

In physically interconnecting, the body's individual boundary becomes less differentiated and intercorporeal awareness takes precedence. The aesthetic of synchronized mechanized movement requires individual dancers to make themselves one. To perform these routines dance groups dedicated long hours of intense rehearsal, where choreographic decisions were debated, ideas rejected and approved through group consensus:

> We were in Cookie's small apartment or Bootsie's small apartment or our apartment in Crescent Park in the living room all night […] it was just (*slaps back of hand into palm*) '*Do* it again! *Do* (*slap*) it over! *Do* (*slap*) it over! *Do* it over! *Not* right! *Stop*! *Do* it over!' And it went on for hours. And hours. Sometimes we would go all day and all night. Into the night, into the morning. If we knew that the talent show was the next week we'd practice. The minute I'd come home from school? Wherever we would meet. I would take my homework. I would ride my bike across Richmond. I lived close to Bootsie and she lived in Deliverance Temple […] across from Eastshore Park. (Ibid)

Robot bodies were made anonymous, an effect often highlighted by uniforms or matching costumes that included masks, wigs, headgear, footgear and gloves. Masking the face and cloaking the body from head to toe, costumes created a more uniform appearance, reducing or eliminating differences in body shape, skin color and facial characteristics. Robotters created their own costumes and would add hardware, like battery operated lights, to create special lighting effects onstage. Detailing on the costumes would add to the visual symmetry of movements. Strips of white fabric down the outside seams of the pants and sleeves of each costume emphasized the kaleidescopic patterns of intersecting lines of legs and arms as the dancers moved in concert. Visual and rhythmic unity were mutually enhanced in the process.

Although synchronized robot was a highly choreographed, unison form, robot style relied on key concepts carried over from the freestyle cypher. Unlike the chorus line, where dancing is predicated on uniformity to the degree of restricting chorus dancers' body shapes and sizes, synchronized dance does not prohibit a range of body types and stems from the tradition of black vernacular improvisation. The ability to improvise within the style is still highly valued and solo performances were always built into robot routines. Dancers took control to varying degrees of individual authorship, but the groups generally worked collectively through the choreographic process. Performance pieces ultimately relied on the dancers' collective process of experimentation, evaluation and refinement.

Moreover, the practice of moving together foregrounds the collective *kin*-aesthetic philosophy of this particular style of synchronized street dance. Incessant repetition in rehearsal

trained robotters in the practice and performance of kinesthetic solidarity. Entangled, robots studied a body knowledge based in feeling together in motion. In practice and performance, thinking together is the same as moving together. Each dancer is wholly accountable to the collective. Whereas the fear of robots has been conceived as a fear of anonymity and dissolution of self-other, this formulation of being-machine in practice values a process of collectivity that does not erase individual style. Making the body a part of the whole, the robot does not become anonymous but moreso feels a sense of being responsible, accountable to the collective production of style. In each passing millisecond of performance, the feeling of moving is no longer one of being in total control of one's body but rather of becoming intimately attuned to the body's intercorporeity. One's sense of movement becomes less differentiated from the other movements that permeate the body. Dancing synchronized robot one begins to feel the feeling of being moved.

In her article "Black Atlantic Queer Atlantic," Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley describes the fluid space between black bodies tossed together in queer middle passages:

> "[T]hese erotic relationships are neither metaphors nor sources of disempowerment. Instead, they are one way that fluid black bodies refused to accept that the liquidation of their social selves—the colonization of oceanic and body waters—meant the liquidation of their sentient selves […] *Queer* in the sense of marking disruption to the violence of normative order and powerfully so: connecting in ways that commodified flesh was never supposed to, loving your own kind when your kind was supposed to cease to exist, forging interpersonal connections that counteract imperial desires for Africans' living deaths." (Tinsley 2008:199, author's emphasis)

Movement not proper to one's body is theory in black—a kinesthetic politics of blackness that feels neither being nor belonging unquestionably to one's self. Robot bodies became fluid bodies moving in a tidal break of forced and disruptive modes of identification, as often violently felt as rebelliously lived experiences that complicate ideas of celebratory, additive identity formation. This sense ability shapes an erotic politics of blackness that experiments in Tinsley's words "by *feeling of, feeling for*" (199, author's emphasis). As a kind of *Soul Train*-ing, synchronized robot creates ways of knowing not centered in visuality but emerging from rhythmic feeling. By and through its funkyness, robot mystifies the boundary between human and machine, soul full and soul-less.

Robot loco-motivity disarticulates the liberal self-possessed subject of knowledge who reasons, discerns truth from fiction, thinks abstractly and autonomously. Robot moves in line with Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's "call for a transformative theory and *practice of humanity* [that] should not be mistaken for the fantasy of an absolute break with humanism… [but] marks a commitment to "work through" that which remains liberal humanist about [posthumanist] philosophy" (2013:682, emphasis mine). This practice of body knowledge constitutes a sonic-kinetic repertoire of collective work in and through motion. Robot is a resource for creating a disjuncture between the body's assumed natural-ness and its power to be loco-motively an/other, with/others, for/others, making meaning of what it is to be human in an anti-human body. Training the body in fundamental concepts of collectivity and improvisation, these dances necessarily disform a humanist framework that would otherwise hierarchically value concepts of the individual, defined as an abstract-thinking liberal subject in full possession of self.

The embodied knowledge circulated in and between robot bodies is black thought—always already a displacement. It's not to take individual creativity out of account in documenting their history or meaning, but to impose a framework of the single individual would neglect how robot resignifies the epistemological category of human. To understand robot "posthumanism," which is really nothing other than robot's human principle, is to foreground concepts of innovation within tradition, individuality within collectivity, choreography within improvisation. Robot develops a fluid sense ability of being in relation, in movement. Moving beyond a human/non-human divide, Robot corp/orality articulates a humanity in and through its disarticulation of humanism.

In closing, I'd like to suggest that the disarticulation of humanism foregrounded by robot's kinesthetic politics dovetails with a disruption of the logic of academic disciplines occasioned by a turn to the matter of black thought. Returning to Lewis Gordon's theory in black: "Fanon advocated the position of embodied interrogatives, of the human being reentering a relationship of questioning […] willing to go beyond one's disciplinary presuppositions for the sake of reality" (2010:202-203). The desire to go against enlightened logic may appear in certain enactments to be crazy—a desire that is not able to reason and powered by loco-motives. If we hold the traditional formations and procedures of the academic institution in question, we might also begin to imagine our work more innovatively, which includes the value of methods like performance research, creative ethnography, collaborative learning and community engagement. Performance studies' attention to what bodies actually do, is a resource for grounding aesthetic theory in material practice. Embodied experience foregrounds physical presence and interpersonal relations, challenging the idea that intellectual study is an isolated, distanced, purely objective activity. What Gordon proposes in theory and what street dances demonstrate in practice, has implications for how dancers learn, where students imagine study to take place and how people enter into relationships with each other, within and across different communities. The "willingness to go beyond disciplinary presuppositions" is then a necessary project, if we are to take theory in black seriously.

Chapter 4.
Movement from the Underground: The Rebirth of Waacking/Punking

Punking was not a professional dance. They never called it anything. They just did what they did. Today people are trying to own what happened yesterday, and that's such a big mistake. I think. I think that's what you call political. I guess [studio dancers] had to put a name on it. That happens. That's just something that we have to live with. —Disco Maggie (Reyna 2014)

less-expected cultural moments at which punk has been figured…have more than a nominal relation to the canonical ones, and understanding something more of the connections between them—and the discourses of race and sex that simultaneously make and mask such connections—is an important part of the project of "punking" theory —Tavia Nyong'o (2005:20)

the black underground is a sexual underground, a space re-en-gendering aesthetic and political experiment —Fred Moten (2003:283)

On Season Eight of FOX TV's *So You Think You Can Dance*, Sasha Mallory and Ricky Jaime danced a waacking routine choreographed by Kumari Suraj. FOX included this photo caption in its online Dance Dictionary:

> Waacking is a style of street dance that originated in Los Angeles in the early '70s. It takes a lot of skill, precision and control. It is typically choreographed to Disco music as the driving rhythms and defined beats compliment the quick hand and body gestures.[48]

FOX's definition erases direct reference to gay black and latino communities who created the 1970s dance style waacking/punking. This chapter considers implications of a deeper level of erasure: the photo's starkly hetero-normal aesthetics frame waacking as an appropriately heterosexual practice. Sasha's gauzy top and bell-shaped skirt reveal black bra and short shorts. Ricky dresses in button-down shirt, pants, suspenders, and fedora. She wears heels; he wears wingtips. His hand moves to her waist, eyes gazing down at her body. She faces the camera with a sultry facial expression, hip and chest flexing at exaggerated angles and knee turning inward.

This performance of properly dressed gender relations sells a narrow vision of cisgender straightness. In *SYTYCD*'s translation, waacking is made proper by every consumer vote approving sexy girls coupled with admiring boys, striving to embody ideal norms of female femininity and male masculinity. Are these crossings celebration or violation, when the shadowy origins of the kinesthetic material transform into something more palatable? Waacking's rebirth into mass media culture is part of an appropriative process by which hegemonic power reconfigures cultural identity, wrapping transgressive relationality and queer practice in hegemonic hetero-normativity. FOX sets a protocol for mass-market sexuality and sociality that requires practitioners to *disown* waacking's queer/punk history, especially considering *SYTYCD* contestants are not allowed to reveal their sexual orientation.

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[48] "FOX Broadcasting Company - Waacking Dance Dictionary - So You Think You Can Dance on FOX - Official Site," http://www.fox.com/dance/dictionary/waacking (6 May 2013). See "SYTYCD Sasha Mallory & Ricky Waacking," YouTube, 1:49 minutes, posted by GaleChester, 3 August 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhydfXGRmkI (22 April 2015).

Commercial studios increasingly offer lessons in gay-identified dance styles, marking a filtration of movement patterns developed in underground clubs into Western mainstream culture, especially since the early 2000s. Cisgender women, a large percentage of the student population globally, may select from a curious range of offerings: voguing, waacking, punking, pole dancing, "heels" classes. At the same time that borderline sexual cultures gradually solidify into marketable, transnationally circulating styles, consumers and practitioners experience and experiment with ideas about proper sexuality and fluid gender performance. Practitioners can try out (and on) "street" styles, enclosed within the relative security of private, air-conditioned, marley-floored dance studios—a very different experience than the gay black underground. While vogue maintains a primary association with the Ball Scene,[49] contemporary waacking/punking is most widely practiced outside the United States by nonblack, cisgender females in transnational hip hop/street dance communities.

When I've asked what they value most about waacking, many female interviewees have responded, "Waacking taught me how to be a woman." Putting aside slippages already imminent in the term 'woman,' the prevalence of such statements marks a desire and way to break free of gendered limitations in hip hop, even if the response, paradoxically, is abandoning a pair of Adidas Shell Toes for platform stilettos. B-girls tend to dress in unisex, less revealing clothing (track suits, caps, sneakers). Waackers often, though not always, wear tighter, 'sexy' clothing and/or women's clothing and dance in heels.[50] Differences in costuming don't simply indicate a re-suturing of emphasized femininity to female bodies. What appears on some bodies as hyper-normative femininity is layered and distorted by how these styles access anti-normative sexuality through the historical production of black masculinity.

Rather than studying waacking/punking as an originally or authentically 'male' dance culture, I am suggesting that the dance form's unique history addresses the open question of gender and sexuality, and its particular bearing on racialized history. Practitioners may attempt to disorient how they experience their bodies through movement by playing with a certain embodiment of black/male abjection. The practice of these styles allows dancers to experiment with abject sexuality through *corporeal drag*—a type of play, process and practice, through which performers try on and refashion movement as sensory-kinesthetic material for experiencing and presenting the body anew. Corporeal drag centers material effects of movement, as well as social and structural processes that control the terms and consequences of movement play. In doing these practices, women may critically distance their bodies from movement norms and creatively refashion their perceptions of woman, feminine, female. Cisgender female performances of waacking and punking may then present ways to work within what appears to be a standard framework of femininity, that expand women's kinesthetic sense and expression of their sexuality—a renegotiation of the female made possible by a kinesthetics of black masculinity.

Moving to the very borders of what is properly delimited as hip hop dance, the contemporary resurgence of the "reinvented" dance tradition of waacking/punking into global street dance culture since the early 2000s is arguably unparalleled by any other street dance style. These improvisation-based techniques originated with characteristic movements of a core group of progenitors who frequented these clubs, the overwhelming majority of whom disappeared

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[49] Jonathan David Jackson's article on Voguing explains, "The Ballroom Scene arose in the middle-to-late 1970s out of mid-twentieth century forms of New York City-based African American Drag Balls (or gender impersonation competitions)" (Jackson 2002:26).
[50] Shell Toes are a classic sneaker style worn by Breakdancers. B-girl is a common term for girls and women who practice Breaking but may also refer to a person's sincere commitment to hip-hop culture.

over the course of early AIDS and drug crises.[51] Though practitioners tend to discuss the rebirth of waacking/punking solely as a question of challenging gender and sexual relations in street dance, emphasizing gender and sexual conflict covers a submerged question with which I prolong a reflection: how does blackness haunt the historical development of these forms and what is their potential, as underground dances, to articulate a kinesthetic politics?

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> *Andrew, Arthur, Tinker. All the ones no longer here. Michael Angelo. Billy, Blinky. Lonnie, Micky, Lamont. Gary Keyes. David Vinson. All the ones no longer here. Lil Tommy, Chyna Doll. Fay Ray. Lizard Woman. The original waack/punks. No longer here. They linger here. Passing through me, moving past me. These names passed to me. I grasp for them but they pass through me. They linger here. Although everyone speaks as if they're no longer alive…on a long car ride home, I'm writing the names of the dead religiously into my book. I ask Tyrone, "How do you know? Has anyone tried to find them?" That's when Tyrone's rant came back. Sometimes, many times, I'd felt they were maybe there, speaking through him: "They say they're going to do this. That I have to find them. Well why don't you go find them!" It was as if he was dealing with an imaginary, very bothersome person. Sometimes I'm not sure who's talking to me. His words cut the air between us and momentarily jolt me from my task at hand."Did you ever think maybe they don't want to be found?"*

The rebirth of waacking/punking is also a story of a different kind of transitioning—that of ancestors. As I researched these styles, competing accounts of history arose in conversations like restless spirits, ghostly voices in a collective head battling for attention and light. Tyrone tells me, "All you can do is guide them. They'll do what they want."My questions linger in the hidden fragments of history that circulate through the repertoire of waacking/punking practice that refuses me the satisfaction of grasping the past. Tyrone's response—"Did you ever think maybe they don't want to be found?"—contends with the hazards of loco-motivity—to dwell with the pain these histories embody in the unsettling hold of waacking's punk history. The inability to categorically define waacking/punking, might be rephrased in terms of a radical unsettling that these ghosts call forth in moments of practice—an unknowability that an ethical engagement in practice might reserve.

To understand the kinesthetic politics of waacking/punking requires loco-motivity—a sense of being connected through movement that is also an attention to the ethical implications of moving in the world. To think in more sustained ways about what motivates people to move and the conditions of possibility for moving. In the case of the rebirth of waacking/punking, being loco-motive means choosing to dwell with those spirits who've passed through the history of this dance, those caught in the crosshairs of racism and homophobia, whose stories remain unwritten, unlocatable in the archive, but whose movement remains. Caring for waacking's

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[51] Progenitors of waacking/punking include Tinker, Arthur Huff, Andrew Frank, Michael Angelo Harris, Billy Star, Lonnie Carbajal, China Doll, and Tommy. Blinky, Mickey Lord, Gary Keyes and Lamont Peterson are also key innovators who have passed. First generation contributors to contemporary waacking/punking who teach internationally are Tyrone Proctor, Viktor Manoel, Tyrone Proctor, Ana "Lollipop" Sanchez, and Toni Basil. Adolfo "Shabba Doo" Quiñones teaches his innovation of the style called Shway. More key first and second generation contributors are Jeffrey Daniel, Jodi Watley, Toni Basil, Archie Burnett, Dallace Ziegler, Angel Ceja, and Brian "Footwork" Green.

underground, punk, history impacts how dancers practice and just as importantly necessitates a reshaping of the motives dancers bring to their practices.

Like the street, the *underground* is a porous concept that allows for transition between multiple spaces of practice and ways of categorizing styles within street dance culture, while still staging a challenge to dance that happens in mainstream space. Dancers brought waacking/punking movement to commercial stages like *Soul Train* and popular music venues, ensuring their transnational circulation and contemporary resurgence. The underground supported experimentation in the vernacular, away from normative demands placed on movement behavior. The underground happens in a time of becoming, space of protection, and (for queer black folks forced to survive in a present that denies their existence) radical "relationality, politics, and reality" (Allen 2009:313). Beneath the street, the underground holds the imagination both of escape from the everyday but also of subversive activity. Underground dancing keeps creating movement that is not already defined as technique but exists in the purpose of the moment. While the codification of street dance techniques for the studio may "serve the function of regulation and discipline" (Nyongo 2005:30), a radical politics of underground dancing holds experimental responses to enclosure—wherever that underground arises.

Underground also situates the historical relation of electronic dance music to early 1970s disco cultures that provided the sonic accompaniment to waacking/punking movement. Kai Fikentscher's 2000 study of UDM (underground dance music) emphasizes this integral relationship of physical activity, affect and sound, as well as the sociopolitical function of music and dance outside of hegemonic morality and aesthetics, noting that "African American expressive culture supplied much of the musical and aesthetic material to an emerging gay community to help forge its own musical style and socio-cultural identity" (x). Black culture has always been used as a vehicle for nonblack groups searching for self-definition; in the context of waacking/punking, "[t]he attribute 'underground' highlights the role of race, gender, and sexual orientation as expressed through stylistic means […] that are cultivated largely outside of the awareness of the American mainstream, let alone its media" (13). Underground is a helpful concept for identifying the stakes involved in the transitioning of non-normative or anti-normative cultural forms into institutionalized spaces—homonormative and heteronormative.

Focusing on movement cultures nascent to the disco underground of 1970s Los Angeles that have given birth to the global street dance style of waacking/punking in the 2000s, I consider how dancers negotiated these culture crossings in the 1970s and how new generation dancers are now reinventing gay underground dancing in the global street dance arena. I stretch the frame of hip hop dance liberally in comparison to more traditionalist views of the culture to include underground dance cultures that mix and play with normative categories of genre—in this case hip hop versus disco dance styles with origins in gay underground club life—not in a move for re-categorization but in an attempt to think through the racial politics of crossing (genre and gender) itself.

Proper genres/improper genders

In 1991, dance historian Katrina Hazzard-Gordon inadvertently spotlighted a conundrum of genre presented by the dance style waacking/punking, in her essay "Dance in Hip-Hop Culture." She says in a passing comment: "Hip hop dance can be characterized in three stages: waack, breakdancing, and rap dance. Waack dancing appears in 1972. Dance moves such as

locking […] the robot, and the spank […] were part of waack's outrageous style" (509). Though Hazzard-Gordon categorizes "waack" as an early stage of hip hop, street dancers today would likely amend this genealogy of hip hop dance. Locking and robot are not "dance moves" within waack style but styles unto themselves, each with their own history and proper movement vocabulary. Street dancers define waacking/punking as a dance originally performed to disco music and emerging from gay underground club culture of 1970s Los Angeles. Locking and robot, on the other hand, are considered progenitors of hip hop and danced to funk—the overtly politicized, popular black music of the same period. What's fascinating about this genealogy, is that disco and hip hop (the music and dance) tend to be constructed as wholly separate genres, yet Hazzard-Donald unintentionally names a gay disco dance as hip hop's progenitor—placing it even prior to the well-recognized style of breakdance.

Contemporary battle waacker Princess Lockeroo comments on assumptions that divide "straight" and "gay" dances in global street dance culture:

> The fact that it's a gay dance I guess does make it stand alone, in the hip hop world. Because it really was brought to life in the hip hop world, as opposed to just in gay culture. Voguers, they have their balls. There was no scene for waacking. Waacking came about in a hip hop scene, in a straight scene, and there is a lot of misunderstanding about it because sometimes men think that you have to be gay when you do it (Cohen 2013)

Lockeroo's statement makes an implicit connection between gendered movement expression, regulation of sexuality, and the equation of hip hop culture with homophobia (arising from the historical bind of blackness and hyper-masculinity). Though Lockeroo seems to perpetuate the assumption that hip hop is in essence straight culture, in this case she's speaking to a common knowledge she and I share about the hetero-normativity of the global street dance scene. The problem of genre and gender division continues to impact the development of street dance culture. Because the rebirth of waacking/punking—"brought to life […] in a hip hop scene, in a straight scene"—blurs lines between straight and gay culture, the transitioning of movement style raises questions for practitioners about hetero-normative gender-sex expression—questions that are rarely explicitly challenged. Within a culture that operates largely on binary gender divisions, waacking's rebirth has limited the practice of the dance to females (and gay men)— limitations that reproduce genre divisions based on male/female, man/woman, straight/gay binaries. In fact, since the early 2000s practitioners have become more vocal on questions of sexuality in the global street dance arena, and the intersectional bearing of gender and sexuality on genre divisions in street dance history.

Genre blending in popular music has similarly become more pronounced over the last decade, with the rise of a new generation of hip hop artists like Harlem-born rapper Azealia Banks, who at one point categorized her music "witch hop" on iTunes and draws her sound in part from 1990s house music.[52] Even vogue (in the disco-house lineage) shares aspects of hip hop form and content: battling, the incorporation of dance styles like tutting (and locking in new way vogue), and the vogue ball commentator who acts in a similar role to the hip hop party rocking MC. Returning to Hazzard-Gordon, her early research on hip hop indexes the ambiguity of these genre divisions in 1970s California: "Through mass-media exposure, particularly on the

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[52] See/hear Azealia Banks, "1991," music video, dir. Justin Mitchell, posted by Azealia Banks, 2 September 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oM_9ca8hxE (7 April 2015).

TV dance show *Soul Train*, the dance group the Lockers and the Outrageous Waack Dancers popularized the early hip hop dancing styles"[53] (509).
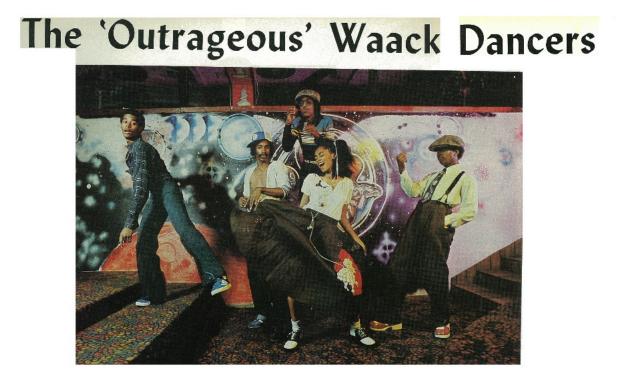

Figure 4.1. Photo and headline from *Ebony* magazine's August 1978 special issue, "The New Generation." Shot at Los Angeles nightclub Maverick's Flat, a recruiting ground for 1970s *Soul Train* dancers, posing left to right are Kirt Washington, Tyrone Proctor, Jeffrey Daniel, Jody Watley, and Cleveland Moses. Photographer: Win Muldrow.

Hazzard-Gordon was likely drawing her history of "waack's outrageous style" from this photo and accompanying article in the August 1978 issue of Ebony magazine (figure 4.1). The photoshoot took place at Maverick's Flat—a popular black club in Los Angeles where dancers were often scouted to appear on *Soul Train*. Original Soul Train Gang dancer Tyrone Proctor, who appears center stage in a trucker hat, explains to me that when he taught dancers in the *Soul Train* studios, he used the term "waacking" to describe the movements he would see dancers doing inside the gay clubs. Jeffrey Daniel (prominent member of R&B group Shalamar, who appears at the top of the photo blowing bubbles) invented the unique spelling with two A's (Proctor 2012a). Don Campbell, early *Soul Train* dancer and originator of locking, confirms Tyrone's account, candidly describing how he and other male dancers would parody the gay dancers on the film set and say they were "punking" (Campbell 2013). The Ebony photo gestures to an off camera scene of gay-straight culture crossings.

Although waacking/punking was danced to early underground disco music in Los Angeles's gay clubs—introduced most notably by underground disco deejay Michael Angelo—it was the *Soul Train* camera that captured waacking/punking on film, alongside dances like locking and robot that are considered the "funk style" foundations of hip hop dance. When

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[53] The umbrella designation 'hip hop' is misleading when applied to dances with separate geographic and cultural histories. Hip hop dance is a distinct style and battle category in street dance culture, encompassing 1980s-90s party dances and dancing that derives from them, collectively created to hip hop music.

waack/punks danced on *Soul Train* the music was most often funk and soul. Many early dancers tell me that gay folks made up a majority of the dancers on set:

> All of these dance moves that we did on Soul Train were *not created on* Soul Train. They were all created *in a club*. We brought the dance that they were doing in the club on to Soul Train […] When the music came on that's what we felt. It wasn't so cut and dry. (Proctor 2012a)

Tyrone's statement suggests that the *Soul Train* film studio was both congregational space and experimental platform where cultures that mainstream society normally kept isolated and separated, could mix. Regardless what viewers may have thought they were watching, the show brought gay black culture to international exposure at a time when black and gay were, and still largely are, imagined antithetical.[54] While gay sexuality was not openly celebrated and gay dancers were still vulnerable to derogatory treatment, the medium of dance supported a greater degree of cultural transmission and innovation across gay and straight communities. Dancers were moving to disco and/or funk music depending on the context. With respect to theories of black improvisation discussed in chapter one (Jackson 2001; Pond 2013), different stylistic genres often blended when dancers performed on *Soul Train* in support of Hazzard-Gordon's genealogy. In these crossover contexts gay/straight divisions blurred, making genre distinctions difficult. The fragile limits of genre, gender and sexuality, and the political stakes of genre-making are themes threading through this chapter.

Pioneer street dancer Ana Sanchez hints to the tensions of translation that surface in the *racial* politics of naming waacking and punking styles:

> [G]uys that entered the straight world, did not want to be called fags so waacking came about…in their own world it was punkin'…punkin' was how they lived, how they expressed who they were."[55]

Ana's statement recalls a longstanding usage of *punk* in African American slang—"a derogatory term for male homosexual" that carries core associations with abjection, sexual violation, imprisonment and slavery. Careful attention to history begins then to unravel the complex interarticulation of race, gender and sexuality at the core of waacking/punking. Emerging in the discursive context of black power and gay liberation movements, waacking/punking reclaimed a sexual politics of race, incorporating political struggle through movement. As an abject community, waack/punks staged their rejection of heteronormativity *and* whiteness. Further, while Hazzard-Gordon describes waack as a series of "dance moves," Ana Sanchez describes punkin' as a style of living. This is waacking/punking's *loco-motive* approach to movement— here concerned less with constructing a rigid lexicon than with creating a way of living and being in movement that evades settled definitions. Ana and Tyrone set the scene of gay-straight culture crossings and the significance of their impact on challenges of genre and naming.

Tensions between genre and gender become more pronounce as Hazzard-Donald describes the cultural politics of funk and disco:

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[54] Early *Soul Train* dancers touring internationally helped establish Japan as a key location for the evolution of hip hop/street dance. Waacking and punking continued as a practice in Japan even as they declined significantly in the US during the 1980s and 1990s.

[55] Ana Sanchez, Speakers Panel at "Punking+Posing=Whaacking," a dance festival held at Peridance Studios, New York, New York, 21 July 2011.

> By the late 1960s and early 1970s […] the *politicized* forms of music and dance were successfully challenged by the *apolitical, slick* dance and music called disco. Disco gave voice to a newly empowered economic strata, the yuppie, and the midlevel service worker…[v]icious attacks on all phases of the black movement deprived this generation of a viable social movement through which to work against their frustrations and for their economic needs. (508, emphasis mine)

What politics of genre division enable Hazzard-Donald to draw a line of opposition between "politicized" forms of early hip hop, and "apolitical, slick" bourgeois disco? Waacking/punking's unrecorded life within early disco culture clearly provides a challenge to these statements. Hazzard-Donald's scholarship strains against the implications of this history, reproducing the binary division of disco/funk as it is bound to classed and racialized sexual politics.

Characterizations of disco as a threat to politicized blackness must be read in the epistemic context of the black power and gay liberation movements within which the music was developing. Mass media framing of black power movements played on fears of blackness, masculinity and aggression (Rhodes 2007), shaping a discursive context in which normative performances of black masculinity were compelled and transformed. The rise of the black power male figure depended in part on the abjection of gay black masculinity, of which Eldridge Cleaver's 1968 autobiographical manifesto and New York Times Best Seller *Soul On Ice* is exemplary. Politicized black manhood was/is framed to defend "blackness [against] its being violated and abject, as, in fact, the *loss* or threatened loss of bodily integrity" (Scott 2010:111). The still widely held assumption that black and gay are incompatible categories traverses this violent history of over-determination, wherein blackness is always already hyper-sexual and lacking normative sexuality. Hazzard-Donald's oversight of waacking's origins *in* disco (and punking) culture is connected to an evident suspicion of disco's threat to the black political struggles that defined the era—a threat not only of class, but also of racialized sexuality.

The aesthetic critique of disco music across an atypical range of contemporaneous communities including white rockers, feminists, funk, soul, and R&B musicians, was that in the absence of the live band, disco flagged the death of the natural body. Described as an artificial, manufactured, highly managed sound coupled with apolitical lyrics, disco lightened the heavy tone and often overtly confrontational lyrics of funk. Disco lyrics were sparse evocations of a ritualistic dance floor culture that consumed themes of sex, slavery, and demonic fire, with the sensory affect of heat, fever, and ecstasy. Walter Hughes (1994), while occluding the presence of non-white gay men in his description of African-American women disco singers and their racially unmarked gay male fans, aptly shows the link between the derision of disco's aesthetics and the figuring of male homosexuality:

> [E]ven the subtler critiques of disco implicitly echo homophobic accounts of a simultaneously emerging urban gay male minority: disco is "mindless," "repetitive," "synthetic," "technological" and "commercial," just as the men who dance to it with each other are "unnatural," "trivial," "decadent," "artificial" and "indistinguishable" "clones." (147)

Normative conceptions of sexuality similarly penetrated black power discourse, opposing the black power male (heterosexually virile, self-defending, politicized, authentic) to the abject punk/fag (emasculate, submissive, politically ineffective, and ultimately, whiteness itself). Oakland rapper Too Short's expression "disco killed the funk" concisely states the crisis to a hetero-normativized black power masculinity presented by (white) homosexuality.[56]

Disco anthems call forth a collective vocabulary that anchors waackers' political experience of their corporeality as they improvise within the sensory-kinesthetic grammar of waacking technique:

> Don't call a doctor/Don't call her momma/Don't call her preacher
> No, I don't need it/ I don't want it
> Sweet love, I love you/ Sweet love, need love
> If there's a cure for this/ I don't want it/I don't want it no[57]

A waackers' classic, "Love Hangover" tropes illness and erotic desire, employing ethical symbols of family and religion. On the dance floor these notions are made abstract and corporeal. Dominant meanings of love, kinship, health, sexuality, and morality, secured through white-hetero-patriarchy, are stripped and re-signified kinesthetically in moments of collective improvisational practice.

Music and performance scholar Tavia Nyong'o (2008) guides a critique of this history, arguing that anti-disco sentiment is not simply anti-gay but has "target[ed] other straight male bodies who might be inviting a desirous gaze through their style, movement, and 'superficiality' […] mobilized by the panicky fear that such gender and sexual distinctions might dissolve" (102). Nyong'o clarifies the threat presented by disco is its "disorganized modulation" of normative oppositional categories—a fear of same-sex desire but also, the threat of disorganized *hetero*sexual desire. Transferred in aural-kinesthetic-affective club space, disco's "oceanic feeling-tone" summons the body, whether by acts of dancing, singing, or both. More than an essentially anti-gay stance, anti-disco sentiment in the 1970s had to do also with flipping the function of heterosexual masculinity from active to passive. The disco movement presented the idea that male bodies could be sexy and objectified, consolidating "a male demand for a return to the position of gazer rather than gazed upon" (103). Tethered to the politically fraught history of black sexuality that puts the black male body's criminal and savage nature under constant surveillance, disco was/is a predictable scapegoat.

Waacking/punkin' on *Soul Train* and in the disco underground worked boundaries of physical and representational space, distinctly expanding allowable expression for black men. The relation of funk music (hip-hop's progenitor) to disco, as the division of music and dance genres (hip hop/waacking) operates in parallel, widens the contextual frame for understanding how a politics of black manhood must figure into waacking/punkin' practice.[58] The oceanic, positing an always-troubled relation between self/other, was the soundscape within which waack/punking dancers played, modulating true/false, straight as real/queer as artificial, and

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[56] Too Short, "Burn Rubber," *Married to the Game*, Jive Records, 2003. Nile Rodgers, founding member/vocalist/songwriter/producer of *Chic*, one of the top disco groups of all time, was a Black Panther and tied his lyrics to a politicized experience of blackness (Easlea 2004).

[57] Marilyn McLeod and Pamela Sawyer, "Love Hangover," Motown Records, 1976.

[58] Undoubtedly, these reconfigurations were also important to non-black dancers who pioneered waacking/punking cultures. Within the limitations of this critique, I focus on the meanings of waacking practice implicated in the particular structural dynamics of blackness.

object-driven versus objectless love. What was rendered unthinkable as a black radical stance was/is a "willingness not only to play the abject but to risk *being* it, suggest[ing] an altogether different form of politics and social bonding: a politics that does not organize itself around a stance of defense or aggression, a politics…in favor of one's becoming immersed in, lost in what it is to *be* race, precisely as to be black means to have-been-blackened" (Scott 2010:244-245).

Genre and gender divisions support ideas that disco signaled the infection of black political cultures by effeminizing, depoliticizing whiteness. The more generalized but often inarticulable anti-queer sentiment toward disco music was/is also a disposition "at the heart of— but that strains against—the black radicalism that strains against it."[59] Fabrication, an act of invention implying deceit, suits a critique of how waacking/punking performances differently address the figure black masculinity.

Spirit moves: politics of the (kin)aesthetic

> *Frantic gestures flicking wrists whipping arms. "Waacking is a tornado." Furies of twirling limbs stirring storm winds lashing across bodies. Lightning bolts conducting sound. Each rhythm perfectly aimed. Still. The eye of the tornado stays calm. "Be prepared.""Pull up. Touch. Your head. To the ceiling." His gaze moves up out forward. This is not a downcast dance. It's only for queens. Royalty. A frenzy of movements, his arms are restless searching desiring. Reaching out further grasping the ebb and flow of currents slipping just past his fingertips. He calls them forth with ease. Sometimes I'm not sure who's talking to me. Heavy hearted spirits drift in and out of his area. They feed the mind at times with their irresolvable demands. He runs from them, after them, but they won't return. Pausing posing feeling reproach, glee, despair, provocation. Melancholy. Mostly desiring. He struggles and grasps each note of music catching butterflies in the wind. Moving softly flying lightly nothing explodes."No. It's bitter. I'm just very bitter."*

Today waacking may not fall properly into the hip hop genre due to a primary association with disco music. However teaching these movements in the commercial studio, they must be identified and named. Dance genres shape how bodies may be seen to properly move, gain visibility, legibility and value. The hyper-masculinity often attributed to hip hop performance on a wide scale makes waacking an anomaly. Moreover the ongoing misrepresentation and exploitation of hip hop culture shows up in a general lack of clarity about what defines hip hop dance. A push since the 2000s to professionalize waacking/punking as nameable techniques that can circulate globally in studio classes, battles and online, catalyzes the process by which unnamed cultural phenomena become defined through the determination of movement lexicons and principles of style.

Margarita Reyna, a 1970s underground dancer who goes by "Disco Maggie," describes this un-naming: "Punking was not a professional dance. They never called it anything. They just did what they did. Today people are trying to own what happened yesterday, and that's such a

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[59] Moten (2008:177). Marlon Ross (2002) analyzes the historically embedded trope of emasculation and divestment of (hetero-male) black power by a race rape symbolic that understands race as male and rape as done to women. Under this symbolic, black male sexuality cannot inhabit an epistemological space of the homoerotic, foreclosing acknowledgement of literal acts of rape that secure the ongoing racial and sexual domination of black men.

big mistake" (Reyna 2014). Tyrone echoes, "When they were doing it, it didn't have a name…they didn't care about giving it a name."[60] Institutionalizing dance requires a certain settling of experimental/underground movement into proper genres and codified technical forms over which, as Maggie suggests, professional dancers may make proprietary claims. Un-naming values movement in Moten's sense of black study, "a mode of thinking with others separate from the thinking that the institution requires of you."[61] At one point in our interview, Margarita questions me:

> Margarita: Some teachers, they have labeled their dance moves. But I'm not sure about the syllabus of waacking and punking. I'm not sure if they *have* created a syllabus. You know? They have?
> Naomi: Oh. What do you mean, like different kinds of moves that go under that style?
> Margarita: Yes.
> Naomi: Umm…
> Margarita: (*interrupting me quickly)* No I don't think so.
> Naomi: I mean…people have their own…
> Margarita: Yeah. Uh huh. No.
> Naomi: moves that they invent…
> Margarita: It's not a syllabus.
> Naomi: Did people call what they were doing waacking, and how was that different from punking?
> Margarita: Back then people would actually dis*tin*guish between them? No. (*raising voice) Never.*
> Naomi: They wouldn't really distinguish…
> Margarita: *No!*
> Naomi: Between waacking and punking.
> Margarita: *Never!* Uh uh. Not like today. *Peeling laughter.* Today people are trying to own what happened yesterday, and that's such a big mistake. *I* think. I think that's what you call political.

Identifying the concept of a syllabus, Margarita describes the tensions of transition between underground and mainstream, and the adjustments that waacking/punking culture must take to be studied as institutional form. The indeterminacy of waacking/punking's cultural history shows up in contemporary practice as an inability to clearly grasp the underground dancing that happened outside institutional spaces. Waacking/punking's politic of improvisational/experimental/underground practice is a way of showing up to practice movement in the space and time available, more so than memorizing and replicating set movement vocabularies. Learning styles purely as studio-based techniques in the neutral scenario of the dance studio does not fully encompass the process of learning in street dance culture.

When early waack/punks defined their movement styles by saying, "You have to come to Gino's"[62] or "it's a dance *we* do where *we* live," they attached value to participating in a feeling in common, which can also be thought of in terms of black study:

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[60] Tyrone Proctor, in conversation with author, at Eastside Arts Alliance, Oakland, California, 23 March 2012.

[61] Jack Halberstam, Introduction, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013) 11.

[62] Gino's was an early 1970s gay underground disco, located in a strip mall at Santa Monica and Vine streets in Hollywood, that gathered a largely Latino (especially Mexican and Central American immigrant) community, as well as Blacks and Pacific

These activities aren't ennobled by the fact that we now say, "oh, if you did these things in a certain way, you could be said to have been studying." To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice […] to feel that world, to sense it, and to enter into it, to join the study already going on in different informal, unforming, informing ways. (Moten 2013:116-118)

The "informal, unforming, informing" impetus of black study is a way to open up waacking and its marginal underground status as punkin' to an exploration of the "discourses of race and sex that simultaneously make and mask" its cultural figuration, as Tavia Nyongo's project of "punking theory" argues (2005:20). Punking theory reassesses the genealogy of *punk* in its variously racially-marked uses—an "American Africanism" for male homosexual different from white homonormative *queer*, and its application to a musical subculture that has obliquely referenced nigger-ness to imagine a victimized and transgressive whiteness. In the way that canon formation exercises a conservative, authorizing power over naming and categorization processes, Nyong'o's "punk'd theory" poses a challenge to the consolidation of queer theory within the academy and liberal humanist discourse more generally, further arguing there is nothing inherently politically radical in the proliferation of identity categories:

It is not enough, in other words, to take up the simultaneity of race, class, gender, and sexuality, which it is my argument that the vernacular does constantly in keywords like punk and punked. Rather, we must investigate the subject transformed by law that nevertheless exists nowhere within it, the figure of absolute abjection that is, paradoxically, part of our everyday experience. (30)

Sustaining a reflection on the abject/unthought term 'punk' requires an understanding of race in terms of power relations that structure experience. An "alternative nomination of a series of street taxonomies" (19) challenges the authority of canonical forms while still negotiating the operation of "the frozen dialectic between black and white […] straight and queer, that is produced and reproduced within cultural forms both sophisticated and otherwise" (30). The idea of punking theory calls forth a consideration of the relationality that the terms waacking and punking index, against the enclosure and regulation of dance culture into static categories of style.[63]

The ubiquitous forward slash that shows up on flyers and internet posts simultaneously divides and connects waacking/punking—a reference to their equivocal history and reminder to keep terms of style (and race and sex) in play. Inventiveness, whether in verbal (the word waacking) or paralinguistic expression, takes part in black improvisatory aesthetic-politics and indicates that a system of proper spellings, grammar and definitions, has never been available to or able to recognize blackness. Black study and punking theory are ways to reroute the development of waacking/punking to the hold of its black punk history, which is also to understand how race and sexuality are integral and not secondary to these forms. In the spirit of black study and punking theory, these underground dances interrupt the proper market-driven

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Islanders. Famed DJ Michael Angelo was also a dancer with skill for reading the pulse of the dance floor, and created what was distinctively referred to as "Gino's music," often dropping original disco cuts to test on the dancers.

[63] International street dance battles highlight the conditions of possibility for the street dance canon to expand and contract, as questions of genre, gender, and sexuality necessarily underlie debates about the legitimacy of "new" dance styles to be accepted as official battle categories.

operation of studio-centered dance, not with the purpose of proliferating but rather unsettling categories to experience a creative un-naming and un-knowing.

It is this feeling in common that could be a productive way of taking these styles as forms of black study—meaning that their re-generation has unsettled relations between differently categorized styles and at the same time re-centers issues of relationships—genred and gendered—in street dance. In so doing, they expose a less acknowledged history of the punk— the figure of black and abject masculinity that undergirds and unsettles a presumably straightforward naming of style and sexuality.

There is something in the performance aesthetic of waacking/punking that is constituted by absence, whether this absence surfaces in the stories of dancers who are not present, or in the aesthetics of a dance based on the interplay of deafening sound and silence, movement frozen and in flight. While the term waacking directly references the fast, rhythmic arm whipping that is a defining characteristic of the style, the less common term "punking" indicates a stylized movement behavior that expands beyond set vocabulary, incorporating elements of large locomotion, dramatic gesture and facial expression, and narrative. Dancers drew inspiration from the moving images of Hollywood silent films and glamour stars. At times dancers would refer to their movements by the actors they embodied, prompting early references to the style as "Garbo" or "Marlene."

Punking appears in stories of flight, like a dancer "running on the tip of his toes as though the floor was made out of hot coals."[64] Viktor Manoel, remembering his first experience at the Paradise Ballroom, describes "a room full of men dancing together, but in costume running around flying like crazy [and] me wondering what they were running from."[65] These fleeing dancers who consistently play starring roles in the silent films of waacking/punking's underground history are more akin to travelers of the undercommons—"being[s] separate from settling"—[66]whether for a limiting sense of family, kinship, or home:

> We really didn't discuss *jobs.* I mean some of us didn't even know where we lived. You know? We would get dropped off […] at bus stops. We sometimes didn't even know our last names. You know? It's almost like when you find kinship with people, you don't have to know *every*thing. (Manoel 2011)

It is their fugitive style of movement that articulates itself best through bodies in motion and transition, dropped at bus stops, disappearing around corners, creating "a feeling if you ride with it, that produces a certain distance from the settled, from those who determine themselves in space and time, who locate themselves in a determined history" (Harney and Moten 2013:97). This fleeing movement has also escaped conclusive names and labels, and attempts to restrict how people may or may not move within a given vocabulary of movement style. Margarita reflects on the over-production of "cool" moves in contemporary dance culture: "They just mark mark mark? But in between, (*whispering*) there's no dancing. Because they're just concentrating on their next mark. And it's not about what you're *gona* do, it's about how they get there." Abandoning the aim of getting to the next location, of knowing names and places, Margarita and

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[64] Adolfo Quiñones, personal interview with author, Van Nuys, California, 28 August 2011.

[65] Viktor Manoel, personal interview with author, Burbank, California, 28 August 2011.

[66] Early *Soul Train* dancers touring internationally helped establish Japan as a key location for the evolution of hip hop/street dance. Waacking and punking continued as a practice in Japan even as they declined significantly in the US during the 1980s and 1990s.

Viktor revalue "being together in homelessness" (11) which is being-in-movement—a being loco-motive rather than auto-motive:

> I don't think we were crazy. We took it serious. Our craziness was seriously crazy. And that's what I say up to today. *I* don't give a hell. Because I don't *wanna* be like the people of today. I will always be a '70s person. That's what's wrong with me and I don't think it's wrong. I think it's a great thing because I own myself, and I don't wana change. I don't. (Reyna 2011)

In fact punking/waacking in its original contexts appears to have been more about releasing than establishing limits on movement. It's then possible to formulate the rebirth of punking and waacking as the unsettling generation, by contemporary street dancers, of a "nonce taxonomy to express creative discontent with settled categories" (Nyong'o 2005:20). Waacking/punking continues to push bounded ways of moving in street dance and attachments of movement style to gender and sexual norms. The dialogue between differently categorized styles is apparent in rare footage of key innovators performing to the disco hit "Love Hangover" with Diana Ross in 1979.[67] The choreography blends movements of waacking/punking and locking, revealing subtle but significant correspondences. Pioneer and new generation practitioners excavate these styles (often by circulating YouTube clips of *Soul Train* and Ross's show) and put them back into the historical record.

Straight dancers, who positioned themselves in some ways as informal dance ethnographers, now openly recount traveling into LA's gay underground—clubs like Gino's, Paradise Ballroom, and Catch One—to witness the early punking scene:

> I thought I walked into a scene out of Sodom and Gomorrah. I did. Because I come from that whole Baptist thing I was in there goin' "these people are going to hell." But I don't care right now because I just wanted to learn this dance, so I'm justifying it in my mind. I just need to know how this goes. And I pray to *god.* God forgive me. As weird as it sounds, something like that was going on in my head. And so I stood against the wall. I was afraid because I didn't want them to get behind me because we heard stuff like, "Gay people will *rape* you. You know *so*domize you. They'll do all these things." I'm there watching this thing and people are dressed in gold. Had painted their bodies gold, wearing angel wings, with devil horns. It looked insane. (Quiñones 2011)

When straight dancers traveled to gay underground clubs, they found opportunities to experience a sense of disorientation from conventional ways of moving. These transition stories, peppered with characters like Lizard Woman, a transvestite who teetered on high heels and chain smoked, paint detailed tableaus of sexualized movement experimentation: "They'd be dancing, take the Locker Room [amyl nitrate sold in bottles at the bar], and then all of a sudden start, just for a couple minutes, posing or moving their body while scratching their head. Whippin' their hair around or having a seizure on the floor. Doing all kinds of freekin' things" (Reyna 2011). In this sense of black study then, waacking/punking's historical formation was not as concerned with technique as experiment. It was movement not stilled but fugitive, moving so fast on the tips of

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[67] "Diana Ross With Waack Dancers," YouTube, 5:24 minutes, posted by drpeppa1906, 21 April 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etnptlY_4cg (29 April 2015). Waack/Punks in order of appearance are Andrew, Tinker, Billy, and Lonnie.

its toes that dancers appeared to be fleeing. The elusive process of naming as it tells the history of these dancers—and of their approaches to moving which continue to elude generic distinction—is also a story of fugitivity experienced in and through motion.

Distinct from fleeing, posing was a foundational element of waacking/punking that signaled in the body a new era of sound and movement, as Tyrone explains:

> I went to one specific club called Paradise Ballroom, and I think that specific time there was a song [playing] by The Temptations called "Papa Was a Rolling Stone," which went, "*Boom boom, boom boom boom boom*….it was the third of September…the day I'll always remember…yeah." And it would always have that lingering bass line, that *boom boom, boom boom boom boom*. What the gay people did then was they would take that and they would [freeze] their shoulders, and go "one-*two*, one-*two-three*-four." And that would be what they would consider *po*sing. (Proctor 2012a)

Posing switches an aesthetic of pure flight to one of being captured in motion, like the glamor actresses and silent film actors whose movements were expressive material for the dancers:

> They were acting like the characters in the movies. Without sound. They would bat their eyes all big and over-melodramatic. Everything was really big and expressive. If the doorbell rang [the subtitle] would say "Doorbell rings" in the bottom. (Quiñones 2011)

On a dance floor where the driving disco beat engulfs the dancers, they imagine themselves aurally sealed off from their audience in a world of flickering images only penetrable by light. They play starring roles in melodramas where they speak without being heard. This aesthetic of sound in/as silence parallels themes of flight and capture in stories of their performances. When inquiring further into their lives outside the club, I've often been met with a silence, not of words or stories, but of memories:

> Arthur was the meeting ground […] It was a one room [studio] but it was perfect because he had room to dance and practice. I didn't even know their real names…the whole thing was being around it. So I would tell them after I saw them that night. "Oh what are you guys doing tomorrow." "Oh we're gonna go out to this other club." "You want a ride?" "*Suure* girlfriend, come pick *me* up!" "Ok. Where at." "Just honk when you're there." I never really knew. One time, Andrew came out of an alley. *What the fuck is he doing in an alley?* And he'd just come walking out. "Ok, let's go." "You need a ride home?" He'd look over at me. [*in a haughty voice*] "I don't *think* so." One time [he said], "Stop! Just drop me right here." "I am *not* dropping you off in the middle of the street!" "No. Just drop me right here." They didn't want you to know where they live…Arthur said, "You know gays honey, they like their privacy. But I love you to death." He even let my friend stay with them for two months cause she didn't have a place. He felt so bad for her. "Honey you can just stay here and pay me whatever you can." He'd get them to come over. Music would come on, they would show me stuff. And then give me homework. I would go and study. (Sanchez 2014)

Trying to locate the real-life homes of the dancers, I found that early waacking/punking dwells in an incessant feeling of homelessness that pervades stories surrounding it. Whether by its sense of

motion, ambiguous generic location, or by the absence of almost all of its progenitors, the unease I feel in not being able to determine exactly who these dancers were, where they lived, or even if they were living, is what un-informs and vitalizes waacking/punking in this moment. Did Andrew leave Ana at the corner to sleep in an alley? Did he leave her and sneak through his parents' back door? Did he meet up with an anonymous lover? Whatever the story's end, he flees from our knowing where he goes. This evasiveness of locations and positions participates in a vernacular movement experiment that "make[s] common cause with those desires and (non) positions that seem crazy" (Halberstam 2013:11), like the unease Ana feels at leaving Andrew in the middle of the street.

Then, is it also possible to understand waacking and punking not as "settled" traditions constituted by set lexicons and techniques, but as dynamic practices through which street dancers negotiate social determinations of genre and gender, while also creatively breaking open those determining categories through the ongoing dedication to researching and innovating black popular dance? This type of dedicated practice, that includes community-based research, self-reflection, philosophical inquiry and aesthetic experimentation, goes against the market-driven mining of dance styles and demand for productive efficiency—replicable moves, studio techniques, choreographed sequences. It's not to say that street dancers do not also participate in studio practices but that studio practice does not constitute the whole of what street dancers do. Impractical practice does not fully conform to a commercial model of cultural production. What impractical practices escape is attempts to reinscribe genre limits on ways of moving in order to make them more widely accessible and acceptable.

Margarita Reyna frames her first trip to Gino's as an in-depth journey of personal transformation, showing how her choices in terms of moving on the dance floor were not distinct from choices that changed her everyday life.

> We walked in and he paid. I went on the dance floor with the guy who took me. He was *hot*, he had *money*. His parents *loved me*. They bought me *clothes*, they owned their own factory. I went on the dance floor with him, and I have to be completely honest with my feelings. [*lowers voice*] I said what the heck am I doing with you? *I* don't wana dance like this. *I* wana dance like *them*. [*suddenly speaking loudly*] I wana be *me* now! And so I thought, ok let's leave. I thought, I'm going back tomorrow but I'm not *ever* going back there with him, so I have to break up with him. So I broke up with him. To go to Gino's. (Reyna 2014)

The punking scene Margarita first witnesses at Gino's moves her to renounce heteronormative partnering for dancing she describes at turns as "freestyle," "crazy," "unnormal" and "underground." In order to make this stylistic transition (to *really* go to Gino's) she makes a string of self-conscious choices that require her to physically move back and forth between locations: first exiting the club with her boyfriend, next breaking off the relationship, and finally going back to Gino's on her own terms. Margarita emphasizes the stakes of her choice to be unattached, listing the benefits she was receiving from straight coupling: parental love and material gifts in the form of money, clothes, even potential interest in the family-owned business. She expounds on her story of gaining financial and sexual independence, which she relates to experimenting with a style of moving outside of socially imposed gender and sexual constructs.

I went to Gino's time after time. I knew that he wasn't going to take me there again. Cuz I had something in me and I had to [*growling*] *let it out*! When I went there by myself, and I let it out, I felt like I was [*whispers*] at home. And I felt complete […] When I dance all of my nerves seem to come together into my face. I look like I'm very hard. That's just the way I *feel*. It's a part of *my style of control*. And that's where the prettiness goes away. My prettiness, *I* feel, is in having control of what I'm *do*ing. [Another dancer] told me "Maggie, you are such a beautiful girl. You have beautiful teeth. You have beautiful eyes. But when you're on the dance floor. You're not showing it." But I'm *okay* with not being what *she* wanted me to be, or anybody else. I'm doing how I feel. How I feel on the dance floor is why I dance. *Raises voice.* If I'm dancing some stupid shit? It's cuz I wana do that right *now*. And if you're not ok with it? Well I'm not here for you, and you didn't pay my way, you're not buying my drinks, 'kay. So there! […] I don't think we were crazy. We took it serious. Our craziness was seriously crazy. That's what's wrong with me and I don't think it's wrong. I think it's a great thing because I own myself, and I don't wana change. I don't.

Margarita's story moves from a description of the propertied relations of bodies and movement through space that issue from straight coupling—"he wasn't going to take me there again"—to taking control of her own motion through solo improvisation, understood as shaping a physicality (evident in nerves, lips, eyes) that redefines feminine prettiness for herself. She again emphasizes that this feeling of moving is not only not *properly* feminine but also is not proprietary—"I'm not here for you, and you didn't pay my way, you're not buying my drinks." Punking translates to a kind of pure feeling, in and through moving, that gives Margarita "complete" access to her self and, more, self-loving.

> Margarita: I feel like it's a medicine and it heals me. It's a healing feeling. It's like after I have sex. Sometimes when I'm dancing I feel better than just having sex. Because I did it all myself.
> Naomi: *Laughing.* That's a quotable phrase.
> Margarita: Without needing *anybody* to satisfy, anybody else. Without having to worry about how anybody else feels. Just doing something for myself that makes *me* feel good, and me satisfied. After a night of dancing and I'm driving home, I think about that and I think, I just *love* the feeling.

Driving herself home at the end of the night, Margarita makes clear that for her, coming back to Gino's is only possible if she comes by herself. The kind of objectless love that revels in losing a 'proper' sense of self, marked by her deliberate failure to perform proper female femininity, also subjects her to others' evaluation and criticism on the dance floor. She associates her practice of punking with the power to reject proprietary holds placed on her by other dancers, friends, family and men to perform prettiness, softness and femininity.

Margarita also becomes improper by relocating herself in and through movement—a style of moving she describes as being at home, on the Gino's dance floor. The idea that Gino's was a refuge is more complex than formulations of the gay club as a place of temporary escape. Relocating was not simply a metaphorical gesture for the Gino's crowd—black kids, gay kids, immigrant kids and runaways, who were often intermittently or permanently unable to live at or with the proper idea of home.

The rebirth of waacking/punking

By the late 1980s, waacking/punking in the US had largely faded from view although the movements were still practiced within limited contexts. Ana Sanchez was teaching punking movement in Orange County. Tyrone Proctor and Jody Watley performed waacking movement in the video for Watley's 1987 hit "Still A Thrill." Brian "Footwork" Green taught the first waacking/punking classes at Manhattan's historic Fazil's Studios in the early 2000s. His work to historicize waacking/punking in contemporary street dance culture is of primary importance to the style's US rebirth. Waacking/punking's recent inclusion as a category in international street dance battles since the mid-2000s marks the culture's unique resurgence as a competition style. Princess Lockeroo, who studied with Green and Proctor, has been organizing a New York City party called Waacktopia for the last few years:

> I can't tell you how many gay students I've had that have broke down in tears because this dance made them feel like they had a place, within this *hip hop* world. Within this *dance* world…even for myself as a woman. I used to lock and I love locking. But when I started waacking, I was able to just *be* more feminine and be more sensual, within myself…waacking has given a place, for gay people *and f*emales, to be them*selves* in the dance scene, worldwide. (Cohen 2013)

Lockeroo associates different styles (waacking and locking) with different ways of feeling in the body. Such feelings cannot be dissociated from often painful demands of culture and society that conflate bodies, gender, and sexuality—"you have to be gay when you do it." She suggests that different dance styles allow access to different dimensions of the self, so that at moments dance may override boundaries of genre and gender. At the same time, descriptions of waacking that resort to vague characterizations of the style as 'feminine' perpetuate the most common slippage of assumptions about gender and sexuality.

Holding Margarita's rejection of conventions of female femininity under the lens of the present, a nonce taxonomy of waacking/punking poses a challenge to the mass commercialization of street dance in the early twenty-first century. Making culture into styles exposes market operations undergirding contemporary street dance that have transformed since the 1970s. As these dances "petition for admittance" (Nyong'o 2005:19) into the dance canon, the significance of their reinvention in contemporary street dance culture is a development of discourse within the street dance community where practitioners are raising questions about creative freedom, improvisation and sociality, and challenging ideas of productive efficiency, choreocentricity and professionalization. Their historical formation calls forth a moment of increased experimentation in street dance, where practitioners like Margarita question the regulation of style by a market-driven delineation of a syllabus of movements. The naming of waacking/punking then reveals the stakes of street dance in a current moment of mass commercialization.

Female practitioners articulate a sense of power they understand to be part of the performance of 'woman'—what battle dancer Leah "Waackeisha" McKesey feels in the transformative moment of first learning the kinesthetics of waacking:

Tyrone's like, "You gotta forget everybody and just zone in. Feeeel *you.*"…Closed my eyes. I started getting shivers down my spine. He'd already told me to stop. I didn't hear…I remember what it felt like to *feel* for the first time…I came alive in that moment and forgot everybody was there. Ever since then? I know how to channel my sexy. Now I don't need to close my eyes…I always felt in the terms of the dance, whether it was Popping or Dancehall…but to feel sexy? I was not *used* to sharing that with people. The Waackeisha you see now? Me dancing in underwear? Never did I dream that would be me. Maybe I needed to get to that extreme, to get out of my comfort zone. (McKesey 2013)

Leah differentiates kinesthesia—the feeling of moving "in the terms of" popping versus waacking—to mark a definitive change in her knowledge of self.[68] Importantly, her practice necessitated "extreme" estrangement, a concept theorized by Noland that I later explore in depth. Open to subordinated sensations, she transforms her own expectations of who she could be. More, "dancing in underwear" exemplifies this change. While black women's respectability insures the machinery that capitalizes on pathologizing (what under other circumstances would be) strip club femininity, Leah undoes a certain racialized sexuality to "promote shadowy feminism that is a feminist politics" (Stallings 2013:138). Without fully releasing the feminine norm straining its center, practicing 'Waackeisha' is a mode of self-care that changes the profit-oriented exploitation of women into the disorienting impropriety of dancing in underwear (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. "Now I don't need to close my eyes." Waackeisha in battle at Streetstar 2013, Stockholm, Sweden. Photographer: Setareh Seydalzadeh.

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[68] Popping, a California-originated style contemporaneous to Waacking but danced mainly to funk and hip-hop music, is most often practiced in male hetero-oriented spaces.

It's important to complicate the assumption that waacking's rebirth, in transitioning from more fluid performative spaces of the disco underground to normatively-inclined spaces like the Western commercial dance studio, simply reverses a gay male appropriation of what might be reductively called 'feminine' ways of moving, or even that waacking presents an opportunity for cisgender females to reclaim 'femininity.' What sense of femininity are they reclaiming? Though waack/punking dancers mimicked classical Hollywood glamour actresses, their performances were less about a normative desire to be female (and white) than transforming the meaning of such identifications themselves (Muñoz 1999). Crossings between multiple identificatory sites constitute a complex queering of movement itself such that for the practitioner, the sense of moving 'as a woman' in the body also requires a queering of the idea of 'woman' held in her belief system.

Corporeal drag can then be, under certain conditions, a *queering praxis*—defined as power to create critical distance from hegemonic normativization through repeated application of movement techniques. A waacker may shift how kinesthesia relates to consciousness of her sexuality as a process of social identification. This understanding frames conceptions of power within Waacking's aesthetic philosophy. Tyrone explains:

> This is not an easy dance. Power is most high. If you're gonna just do *uh, uh,* [*waves his arms absentmindedly*] and think this is a girly dance? You're in the wrong place. You have to learn how to apply power, attitude, and control. They're *every*thing. (Proctor 2012b)

Tyrone's use of the term 'girly' marks a distinction I'm making between girl-ness as defined by culturally enforced norms of movement that suture (white) femininity and submissiveness and a refigured sense of power that waacking aesthetics incorporate: radiant energy, vitality, fierceness. Likewise, practitioner King Aus associates different dance styles with subtle changes in how he accesses power:

> When I Pop? I'm *very* aggressive. I'm trying to basically *destroy*…to cause some kind of a wave in the earth. For [Waacking] when I say power…a lot of people get confused thinking everything has to be powerful *physically*…I'm extending all my energy from the tips of my fingers. You feel that energy…from the next state. (Spottedeagle 2011)

Aus distinguishes power as physical aggression and power as *felt presence*. Channeled through lifted, directed gestures, postures, and gaze, power doesn't destroy but expands.

> Reggie "Prince Lavince" Seale challenges judges' demands he dance with more power: Breakdancers do power moves…I'm not [that] kind of power person. I am powerful. I have strength. My power comes in my connection to the music. I can hear things people will not normally hear. That's how I beat people, in that power. I'm a very flowy kind of person. My hands are like water. I'm able to express the music more when I'm softer, rather than hitting everything like a pin needle. Light like a feather.[69]

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[69] Reginald Lavince Seale in discussion with author, 6 May 2013.

Reggie's self-evaluation insists power doesn't always require shows of athleticism. His articulation of power brings forth marginalized sensibilities—specifically enhanced aural perception manifested in a "connection to the music" and the feel of water. His references to water and flow are especially interesting, since the peculiarity of water is that it appears a gentle, completely permeable substance, yet its associated qualities of flow, slipperiness, and heaviness, enable it to be an incredibly destructive mobile force (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. "Light like a feather." Prince Lavince battles at Soul Train Ball: A Tribute to Don Cornelius, Oakland, California, March 24, 2012. Photographer: Mona Caron.

The difficulty of disarticulating gender expectations from understandings of power consolidates a hegemonic demand for cisgender normativity, necessarily complicating a critique of waacking practices. Reggie compares gendered approaches to power beginning in childhood:

> Growing up I always felt weak being a gay man. I didn't play football. I'm not a man. I don't have any power. You're a sissy boy. [With waacking] I have control over the people watching me…it feels so good to walk inside the club and everybody's just staring at you with your awesomeness and the music. Keep looking at me I don't care.

The control Reggie affirms does not manifest as guarded defensiveness but is a working with power, understood as ability to direct the gaze of others through cultivation of presence and a sense of self-possession, of being completely comfortable in one's own skin. Importantly, Reggie contrasts his practiced awareness of power *felt* through waacking technique, with his childhood knowledge of power that *divides*—"man" from "sissy boy"—by enforcing hegemonic notions of masculinity (football as a manly practice and gay identity bound to effeminacy and a feeling of weakness).

Reggie's description of entering the club dovetails with Fiona Buckland's critique of currencies of the fabulous and fierce—a desire to look extraordinary and practice of moving through space to gain attention (Buckland 2002, 36). He transforms the hyper(in)visibility he experiences as a gay black man by manipulating technologies of visibility—practicing the power to be looked at, which is also the power to be fierce. Waacking fashions a non-normative corporeality that fits his body, mixing signifiers of race, gender, sexuality, power, and pleasure:

> I feel more empowered doing waacking as a gay male…when I waack I have some type of power. It's like how when you Breakdance it makes you feel like yeah, I'm a man…I feel free and like I have some type of power…

Reggie connects power to a sense of freedom that he experiences kinesthetically in his self-styled approach to waacking (flowing and moving like water) and specifically, a freedom to discover power outside the normative masculinity that he attributes to breaking kinesthetics. His words search for a refiguring of power that Darieck Scott (2010) has approached through the imagination of black power as an abject status:

> I want to talk about that which is not-power according to the ego-centric (and masculine and white) "I" definitions we have of power, but which is *some kind of power*, if by power we mean only ability, the capacity for action and creation in one or several spheres, be they internal or external to the empowered. (171, emphasis mine)

Accounting for this conception of creative power, Reggie may find in waacking/punking opportunities to enact a refusal of hegemonic demands on gender and sexuality. Nonetheless this ability can not effect resistance to the terms of power that constitute blackness as negation. In choosing a different way to define power in his body, Reggie may feel "with and for" (Harney 2013:147-148) the creation of another world altogether.

For Reggie, flowing and moving "like a feather" is who he is and how he feels most comfortable expressing himself. Aus, who has worked to bring straight men into the practice, emphasizes that dismissive reactions ("You must be gay.") point to dancers' fear of stretching gendered movement norms: "You don't have to take a feminine approach even though that's sometimes something I do…you manipulat[e] people's minds with the ways you danc[e]. I like playing with that kind of gender swap" (Spottedeagle 2011). Looking to the practice of black men is persuasive for it is from this relatively marginal position in the context of waacking's rebirth that notions of power and racialized sexuality become conspicuous.

Scott's rejoinder is helpful to hold in balance: "which is not to say that women cannot manipulate or play with abjection but that where women do so the political ramifications may more easily appear to be a confirmation of the defeat with which abjection works rather than a complication of it" (20). Reggie's moving experiences of abjection contain "the unspoken history of institutionalized sexual violence against black men [which is also] profoundly related to [the] inability to think about the history of black women, their suffering and struggling, as anything other than a secondary commentary on the status of black manhood" (Sexton 2003:34). The ways dancers move are inextricable from relations of power structuring their performances.

In the contemporary hip-hop/street dance arena how 'well' practitioners move depends on decisions of respected judges whose opinions carry weight within the community, effecting competition, training, and teaching practices. I have witnessed (and heard from other dancers)

instances of male judges demanding that a male dancer waack 'like a man' or 'be more masculine.' No matter a judge's sexual orientation, such comments evoke anxiety over compulsory hetero-normative identification and cisgender normativity in general. Similar to how normativity functions within the Ballroom Scene, street dancers "apply and adhere to these criteria, often conflat[ing] notions of anatomic femaleness and maleness with performance and presentation…[which] ends up re-inscribing and relying upon these same norms to view and judge each other within the community" (Bailey 2011:380).

Cisgendering of movement secures gender boundaries to counteract an embattled history of racialized sexualities, working less to encourage wider participation than to obscure how the normative gender-sex binary always bolsters white-hetero-patriarchal power. Holding in balance the "inescapable ambivalence of desire and its precarious relation to aggression and violence" (Sexton 2003:36), fluid identifications of race-gender-sexuality cohering in black performance indicate and cannot be separated from the permanent "structural vulnerability" (36) of black to white.

Tyrone's master class spotlights the transmission process. We are performing in groups, hitting improvised freezes to a strong disco rhythm. I recognize one student—a highly trained breaker. 'B' chooses stereotypically 'feminine' poses. Hand moves to hip. Hip juts out at an exaggerated angle. Foot turns coquettishly inward with bent knee. She approaches the poses stiffly, robotically trying on and rejecting a series of ill-fitting dresses. Since our exercise seems physically undemanding in comparison to breaking, I'm curious about her unconvincing performance. Lips form a thin tight line; gaze is removed, hard to read. A rigid facial expression underscores the robotic sequencing of poses, making the face appear to float detached from its body. Watching her I feel unease. I feel awkward in my own body.

B's *dis*ease sets conventionally 'feminine' postures in relief, foregrounding their constructed nature—a phenomenon that Noland argues can become an acquired skill:

> [T]o abstract movement from its social 'frame,' is itself not natural, but rather a learned skill, one of the culturally elaborated 'somatic modes of attention' that are designed to alert us to the qualities, not the results, of our acts. (6)

Learning a dance style estranges the practitioner's body from its habitual kinesthetics, bringing to consciousness how movement feels. Estrangement creates critical distance "to confront gesture as contingent" (214) and potentially re-evaluate socially given meanings.

Years of training incorporate a breaker's sensibility into B's "normative gestural routine" (6), challenging her to move outside gender norms. When teaching basic breaking, I direct girls to feel the weight shift from hips to arms and chest, since relying on hip strength is gender-normative. Proto-typical B-boy postures assume a guarded defensiveness: rounded shoulders, concave chest, rigid jaw, arms wrapped around torso. Waacking opens, expands, and extends the torso; as Tyrone directs, "Touch your head to the ceiling."

B's choice of poses reflects a common misperception of waacking tied to stereotypically 'feminine' movement conventions. The disjointed dynamic she powerfully creates through estrangement effectively reveals the *un*naturalness of positions that by and large are associated with the (white) female body and (white) femininity. Her performed resistance to making movement 'fit' makes me feel present to my body and to a performance phenomenon we both feel and know as women.

In learning to waack, gestures present themselves to B's consciousness, alerting her to how they feel in her body. These shifts in meaning take place not only through the body but also through language:

> [I]t is precisely when sensations produced by holding a posture or executing a gesture become available to "introspection," or conscious awareness, that they must be mediated by language or by equally culture-specific systems of visual imagery. The intervention of culture is necessary to transform the inarticulate workings of the nervous system into the experience of a particular subject. (10)

The moment movement transitions from habit body to consciousness, the mover interprets kinesthetics through cultural systems of meaning available to her, complicating potential subversion of social norms. It is at this intersection of kinesthesia and culture that the function of discourse becomes critical to learning dance technique. After a few groups perform the exercise, Tyrone tells us to sit down and listen:

> This is not. Your. Fault. I'm going to tell you this. Because I've been teaching for a while and what I've noticed is, when I speak? People do what they *think* it is. They don't do what it actually is. (Proctor 2012b)

And later, when we finish the exercise:

> I just want you to realize how difficult that was. That was not easy to do. I'm taking a lot of you out of your comfort zone. You're not used to moving this way. You're not used to understanding. So to do what you're doing is beyond anything I could possibly ask for.

Tyrone articulates an estrangement he perceives to be particular to learning waacking. It is only paradoxical that a form so often characterized as 'feminine' would actually be "taking a lot of [women] out of [their] comfort zone," if one assumes femininity is bound to biologically female bodies.

The "understanding" Tyrone asks of his students is not available through cultural conventions that tie female-gendered bodies to particular norms of moving. To label waacking a 'gay' dance assumes static representations of homosexuality and effeminacy that don't recognize how "identity might best be described as process with multiple sites for becoming and being" (Halberstam 1998:21). Describing waacking as 'feminine' results from the reciprocal shaping of cultural norms and language that can only inadequately articulate what happens when such norms become translated through non-normative gender systems.

When Tyrone instructs, "Don't do what you *think*…do what it *is*," he indirectly asks practitioners to disarticulate cultural norm from kinesthetic knowledge incorporated in the aesthetic principles of form. Estrangement is a queering process itself, setting the practitioner at odds with a white hetero-normative gender structure. Learning to waack has the potential to redefine the meaning of movement coded 'feminine' within a normative binary gender system. In this sense, waacking becomes a tool to access a historical context of black and abject ways of moving. More, Tyrone's assessment suggests thinking is limited as a way of doing waacking. I would argue these practices resist a Western ocularcentric (Moten 2003:174) subordination of kinesthesia as a way of knowing (Geurts 2002). Waacking/punking practice poses creative

possibilities for a more expansive working with power, routing abject sexuality through the historical construction of black masculinity. The technique partially exposes the technology of sexuality by instrumentalizing it against the regulation of gender performance. In this sense waacking/punking's aesthetic politics have the potential to produce "genuine thinking, [which] might best be conceived of as black thought" (Sexton 2012).

Corporeal drag, while performing a certain sense of estrangement from socially constructed gender performance, necessarily fails to redress the broken body of blackness. Frank Wilderson describes the confrontation between body-based action, black performance and the law, as an experience of objective vertigo—a failure of balance caused by disease of the inner ear—that ensures "a life constituted by disorientation, rather than interrupted by it" (Wilderson 2011:3). Akin to what Moten describes as being-in-the-hold, objective vertigo is an existence of dwelling submerged beneath the terms of a political order that will not allow witness or redress to Black non-subjects. Without being able to resist this unbalancing, the transmission of black kinesthetic politics shifts the body's sense of knowing by working with a radically different sense of motion that the Black position withholds. Objective vertigo is a way of thinking about black aesthetics not as modes of resistance but as channels for desire for freedom from the world that can't be found in the world. The language of freedom underwrites this as a being-in-disorientation rather than a performative play with disorientation. Slipping into corporeal drag, practitioners may feel and refashion sexuality, without redressing blackness.

* * *

I have focused on processes of kinesthetic transmission to provoke a deeper line of questioning with respect to the stakes involved in the complex transpositions, translations, and transmutations of dance style. What I am suggesting here are nuanced ways that culture and political practice are intertwined. Varied articulations of waacking's kinesthetics become less or more comprehensible depending on the context of performance, and especially the bodies performing, and therefore, corporeal drag maintains an equivocal politics.

Dance is a paralinguistic modality wherein processes of identification directly connect to sensation, making a desire to know and experience the world differently not distant from a desire to inhabit the body differently. Waacking, understood as a collective everyday practice, is a technique for making the body anew, disarticulating one's sense of being from ways of being dependent on "the proprietary claims of the dominant position" (Moten 2003:262). Textual and verbal descriptions of waacking that obscure its queer (and blackened) *punk*-ing history, or resort to vague characterizations of the style as 'feminine,' perpetuate the most common slippage of assumptions about gender and sexuality. Still, I question to what extent estrangement enables practitioners to distance themselves from normativized demands of movement, such that they might also "steal away" (305)—from a world that recognizes femininity most often as training the (white) female-gendered body to appeal to (white) male subjects—something of what Hortense Spillers calls "the power of 'yes' to the 'female' within" (1987:80). Reggie's experiences on the street dance battle circuit may be compared to B's studio practice. Her refusal to easily embody postures of gender-conforming femininity marks in movement the failure of words to adequately articulate the "actually is" of waacking—not only a series of movements but an approach to moving—a feeling that passes "the gender prerogatives of white men because [of]…a different kind of history" (Spillers et al. 2007:304).

For the Black—that status not granted access to normative gender-sex subjectivity—the question turns less on compulsory cisgendering of movement than on the heightened stakes of performing cisgender social inclusion under terms of a white patriarchal order that suture blackness-to-pathology-to-violence. Black performance, understood as the site for the "re-elaboration" of dispossession, coheres outside conventional formulations of agency (Hartman and Wilderson 2003:184). In the mass marketing of black performance, the question of cisgender display might be more critically posed in terms of *becoming*—an orientation toward process more than product. How does the everyday practice of waacking resist ownership, and how do waackers, in creating their practice, sidestep hegemonic productions of race, gender, and sexuality?

With street dance moving more into the studio, which is a form of enclosing and regulating movement, there is the question of whether it will sustain its relevance to everyday folks who don't have access to "professional" spaces, or even more significantly it raises the question of professionalizing and the market motive that is not inextricable from black popular culture but also not fully a way to explain the aesthetic and political function of these expressive forms. The underground can happen in the studio, like black study teaches us, by reformulating that space of practice on its own terms, which is already inherent to the embodied philosophy of hip hop. Any space holds potential to be a space of practice, but the utility of a theory of the underground for street dance is to revalue the aspects of the culture that are about feeling and holding together.

Chapter 5.
Shot and Captured: Hood Dance on YouTube and Viral Anti blackness

28 January 2013. MTV broadcasts the season two trailer for its reality-documentary series *World of Jenks*, featuring the life story of Oakland turf dancer D-Real. Andrew Jenks, the show's host, was YouTube surfing when he caught a memorial dance video of D-Real turfing on the street corner where his brother Rich D had recently passed (YAK Films 2009c). Moved to "to spend an entire year experienc[ing] life through [D-Real's] eyes," Jenks, a New York native, brought the show to California (MTV 2014). The trailer's introductory audio-visual mash-up of Oakland, "one of America's most violent cities," flags high murder rates, patrol cars, flashing sirens, dying boys, and mourning mothers. Astounded, Jenks asks, "Do you feel like America knows about this?" D-Real responds emphatically, "I feel like they *do*, but I feel like they don't *care*" (MTV 2013a).

2 February 2013. YouTube vlogger Filthy Frank posts "Do the Harlem Shake," a caricature dance video that spawns 40,000 copycat internet memes tallying 175 million combined views in the two weeks before Valentine's Day (Miller 2013).[70] Nowhere in the memes' shared plot does the Harlem Shake, a dance created by Harlem resident and street ball entertainer Al B, materialize. Still, antiblackness structures the memes' production and reception, facilitating their viral spread (YouTube Trends 2013). The Harlem Shake memes play at blackness—codified in seemingly involuntary, vaguely sexual thrashing movements—enforcing a general imperative to obliterate the Harlem Shake from history (Brady 2013). The memes overlook the social life of Harlem Shaking—located in time and place and transmitted through collectively improvised aesthetics of black performance.[71]

The replayed spectacle of black suffering, hypervisible in the consistent policing of black bodies, is a structural requirement that is not disconnected from the appropriation and performative erasure of black cultural expression. Structural antiblackness, in participatory media and the global dance industry, capitalizes on the social codes of blackness. In distinction, the hood dance practices of Harlem Shaking and Oakland turfing constitute more than social identity. They incorporate improvisational aesthetics that arise from a radical (para)ontology of black performance.

Hood dance is a sub-category of hip hop dance that defies antiblack logics of mass-market dance, linking movement aesthetics to the social life of the black neighborhood. In the process of its collective formation and innovation, hood dancing creates an intramural dialogue among participants across time and space.[72] Thomas DeFrantz describes this process as corporeal orature—the aligning of movement and speech to communicate meaning both within and beyond the immediate performance context (2004:67). Hood dancing gets the body attuned to conversation that is happening in community, at the moment of performance.

This chapter studies hood dance as it circulates virally through social and participatory media. Taking account of the interest to erase race under officially sanctioned "colorblindness," I

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[70] Wikipedia's entry for "Internet meme" uses the Harlem Shake memes as its primary example.
[71] See "How To Do The Harlem Shake," YouTube, 0:43 minutes, posted by Phronesis7, 14 July 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJHc26iM7jg#t=17 (29 April 2015). Also see Chris McGuire, Schlepp Films, "Harlem Reacts to 'Harlem Shake' Videos," YouTube, 5:23 minutes, posted by SchleppFilms, 18 February 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGH2HEgWppc (29 April 2015).
[72] For instructional hood dance videos, see host Lenaya "Tweetie" Straker and producer Sway Calloway's "Dances From Tha Hood," at MTV.com (MTV 2008).

study the capacity of these performances to shape and obliterate political memory. In tandem with an increase in online participatory engagements with black performance, meme-ing the (fake) Harlem Shake committed a performative erasure of Harlem social life, a paradox that D-Real's affective response succinctly echoes.[73] YouTube users can replay these scenes in perpetuity (53,000,000 views of Filthy Frank's meme as of 30 April 2015), demonstrating the performativity of the interface itself. Viral trafficking in the codes of blackness obscures the political specificity of the dances' meanings, just as the lives of black people continue to be subject to forms of violent erasure.

A theory of hood dance seeks to make scholarship conversant with the discourse of hip hop practitioners, to participate in the grammar and life of hip hop culture, and to make visible the intellectual labor embedded in dance practices that maintain their own distinct and coherent theoretical systems. Hood dance expands dance studies discourse to attend to street dance forms and the work they do beyond a Western concert-stage context. This chapter's analysis of hood dance's viral circulation on YouTube reflects on the politics of memory resonate deeper attachments to blackness and antiblackness, their structural implications and global viral effects.

Viral antiblackness

The viral spread of black performance via user-uploaded YouTube videos must be thought within a current desire to forget "the black problem." The yield of a convergence between screendance theory, performance studies, and black critical theory lies in challenging an "American" social order premised upon official "colorblindness," an ideology characterized by broad reluctance, if not refusal, to engage seriously with the history, culture, and politics of black communities. The globalization of hip hop aesthetics as a decidedly multiracial phenomenon stays in tension with the persistence of hip hop as an expressive medium through which transnational imagination of a form of black power remains operative—even when forgotten, ignored or denied. Brandi Catanese (2011) helpfully articulates the problem of the color (blind):

> The potential danger of postrace philosophies is that they repeat the shortcomings of multiculturalism: while emphasizing elective culture over supposedly inert racial categories, they substitute a quantitative focus on representation for a sustained commitment to political and material change in American society. (144)

In this sense, colorblindness entails an official imperative to forget the structural realities of antiblack racism. Running in tandem with and underwriting official colorblindness and liberal multiculturalism are less articulable operations of the libidinal economy:

> libidinal economy [is] "the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification (their condensation and displacement), and the complex relationship between sexuality and the unconscious" […] linked not only to forms of attraction, affection, and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction, and the violence of lethal consumption.[74]

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[73] Related viral phenomena have included the internet meme-ing of Antoine Dodson, Charles Ramsey and Kimberly Wilkins. See Helena Andrews, "The Curious Case of the Black Viral Star," *theroot.com*, 9 May 2013, http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2013/05/charles_ramsey_sweet_brown_and_antoine_dodson_viral_stars_arent_victims.html (29 April 2015).
[74] Wilderson (2010:7), citing Jared Sexton.

The libidinal economy forces a consideration of the function of race as more than "a reliable social indicator of life chances and as a traceable chain of significations, [because] its political ontology exceeds the terms of sociological investigation" (Sexton 2008:11). It is precisely the refusal to see race that stimulates renewed urges to identify race, making bodies subject to new forms of policing, evaluation and containment. Dance's direct engagement of body, sensation, emotion and sexuality, makes it a significant site for considering how libidinal investments in race are produced through accumulations of desire, fear, pleasure, hostility, delight, aggression. In this charged atmosphere hood dances circulate as a pervasive aggressive threat to whiteness, its affirmation and upholding.

Against the institutional priority of Western concert dance, hood dancing maintains a distinctly anti-institutional status, most evident in the way its practice and politics align with a discourse of 'the street', critically destabilizing its relationship to formal, and often elite, institutions of artistic production. Hood dances are black improvisation practices that teach hip hop aesthetics, performed to hip hop music. Hood dance resists the terms of choreocentricity as an assumptive racialized logic that reconstitutes hip hop forms into efficient formulae for mass profit. I distinguish choreocentricity from choreography, which is encompassed within improvised hood dances like the Harlem Shake, Brookfield, Dallas Boogie, A-Town Stop and Brooklyn Bounce. Hood dances are choreographic building blocks that form the core of freestyle hip hop dance as a function of black social dance.

Likewise, Anthea Kraut's critique of choreography in European classical dance indexes the choreographer's rise to a higher (in fact mythic and transcendental) status, creating a conceptual "division between choreography and improvisation, with the former perceived as premeditated and intentional and the latter seen as impromptu and haphazard" (2008:56). The choreography-improvisation binary continues to enable stereotypes of "instinctive black performativity" (57). Within dance studies, the priority of a theoretics of choreography cannot be dissociated from a historical privileging of single author, proscenium, concert stage works that follow elite and avant-garde Eurocentric tradition.[75] Within mass culture as well, choreography tends to be the primary way people view, interpret, and evaluate dance. A critique of choreocentricity considers the limitations of scholars' discursive resources and the ways Western intellectualism produces the conditions of possibility by which black social life remains largely incomprehensible and ignorable, as the two factors are co-constitutive.

In contradistinction to choreography, choreocentricity brings black forms into a frame of whiteness, in order to institutionalize and police their global production and marketability, and to effectively cleanse them of their anti-institutional tendencies. A prime example of this disinfection process is the development of a relatively recent but pervasive genre "hip hop choreo," widely seen on mass broadcast TV dance reality shows. Hip hop choreo promotes formulaic performance practices, including proscenium orientation, eight-count conformity, and highly routinized, homogenous movement replication. Taken in combination, such formulae are antagonistic to black improvisation principles that vitalize hip hop dance, in that they marginalize multi-focal orientation, rhythmic intelligence and collective innovation. Buttressed by the spectacular event of judging on shows like MTV's *America's Best Dance Crew*, these

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[75] André Lepecki reads *RIP RichD* through the relational concepts of choreopolitics and choreopolicing, forming a theorization of choreography that embodies the political (Lepecki 2013). My reading differently works from my understanding of improvisation in what Fred Moten calls the black radical tradition (Moten 2003), using choreocentricity to critique attempted erasures of black improvisational practices.

management strategies assimilate hip hop movement into a choreocentric commercial frame. A typical critique of the judges is that the crew's performance isn't "clean" or must be "cleaned up," ordering total uniformity of timing and movement. The judging operation discursively cleanses hip hop of its *funky* blackness—funk being the musical precursor to hip hop and standing for everything whiteness does not—the unclean, smelly, untidy "low-down dirty dog feeling that … [makes] you forget about that contrived dance you were trying, and you *get off your ass and jam*" (Vincent 1996:3, author's emphasis). Movement-cleansed-of-funk is often spectators' only reference for contemporary hip hop dance.

Hip hop dance is invited to participate on mainstream platforms through what Frank Wilderson terms a "structural adjustment," by which the form must undergo major distortions in technical approach and philosophical worldview in order to be recognized as valuable and legitimate. Considering hip hop as hood dance—at the core a social dance practice arising from the sociality of the black neighborhood—the discourse of cleanliness negates black aesthetics to curate the death of hip hop under the terms of social orderliness. Blackness retains the position of the impure and libidinous.

Choreocentric operations fuel profit-oriented businesses like Urban Strides in England that urge the paying client to "[s]pend 10 days with the Street Dance experts and change your life to ensure you achieve the financial freedom you desire and gain the world's first government accredited authentic Street Dance Teacher Training qualification."[76] These programs assume it is possible to extract hood dance forms from their local contexts, transport them to private Western dance studios, repackage them (wrapped in the language of "authenticity" to validate these maneuvers), and price them for resale on the "world" market. Institutionalization schemes neutralize the politics of producing, acquiring and exchanging hip hop movement. The racialized logic of a ten-day "government accredited authentic Street Dance" program is that hip hop culture (unlike cultur*ed*, historical forms like ballet or modern dance) is an object to be swiftly bought, traded and sold.

Choreocentric operations function within a libidinal economy entangled in global discourses of appropriation, ownership and liberal property relations, betraying their intimate relationship with racial slavery and antiblack racism. These institutionalization processes compel paying clients to neglect a persistent and ethical attention to the social, which is also to say political, life of hip hop dance, and the lives of people whose bodies are implicated in the history of hip hop dance who are continually subject to violent forms of policing, exploitation and erasure. Choreocentricity reminds us to celebrate black performance (talking black, dressing black, dancing black), and forget the predicament of the Black—a violent refusal of personhood and life to the black body.

Because screendance transforms choreography in a normative "concertized" sense of dance "predominantly composed for and presented in proscenium-arch stage environments […] or other arrangements that encourage a spatial and, by extension, conceptual separation between performer and audience" (Jackson 2001:43), some strands of scholarship have "advocate[d] for screendance untethered to live dance" (Rosenberg 2012:7). However, the YouTube interface, while reconfiguring proscenium stage to computer monitor, also separates performer and audience in ways that hold particular consequences for online spectatorship of black performance. When hood dance appears on YouTube, its unstable, even anti-institutional, status

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[76] Urban Strides Limited, "Get Qualified in Street Dance on an Urban Strides Street Dance Course," http://www.learntoteachstreetdance.com/join-a-street-dance-class-to-qualify-your-street-dance-skills.

gets caught up in larger discourses about black people and blackness — discourses that are most effective when their immanent antiblack logic is obscured.

My analysis of YouTube dance videos emphasizes the anti-institutional status of hood dance, in order to consider the stakes of disengaging "live dance" (and the bodies that perform/live it). The rise of choreocentric forms of hip hop, which is also to say the increase in new ways of buying and selling co(mmo)dified blackness, aligns with the availability of blackness to renewed forms of policing, containment, neutralization and exploitation. These processes are not disconnected from an overall inability to think and speak of the ongoing violent conditions under which black people live and the structural relations of power that maintain this violence through the purging of historical memory.

Turfing: hood dance in Oakland, California

East Oakland knows the mourning ritual: a hastily constructed street side altar, flowers and teddy bears propped at signposts, heavily circulating RIP T-shirts air-brushed with images of recently passed loved ones. The *RIP* videos, a group of four memorial YouTube dance-videos, are a trans-mediation of these mourning rituals, extended from street to cyberspace.[77] A collaborative creation of youth collectives YAK Films and Turf Feinz dance crew, the videos use an Oakland, California-originated movement style called *turfing* to pay tribute to dead friends and family.[78] Turfing trans-mediates ritual tools of mourning—street altar, RIP T-shirt—into sensory-kinesthetic modes of commemoration.

Turfing developed in the early 1990s, as people created signature dance moves representing their different neighborhoods (Neal-De-Stanton 2013).[79] The "Brookfield" step calls out a neighborhood of East Oakland, marking a precise name and claim to turfs and emphasizing the way hood dance sustains an intramural dialogue among practitioners. Turfing sites the local, performing a consciousness of history and place—the term "turf" referring to territory but also meaning ground, soil, roots. The improvisation-based movements are highly intertextual, linked to local language, rap lyrics, street culture and fashion. First-generation turfer Rawnay defines turfing by its "unorthodox movements" based in storytelling and pantomime about "things we do in our daily life" (Neal-De-Stanton 2008).[80] A playful narrative process inspires signature moves like "the auntie," where "you got your hands out and you skippin', acting like somebody's auntie that's mad," and "the Busta," "from the Busta Rhymes video [where] you sit down and you squat like you waking up in the morning" (ibid). Turfing forms a lineage with styles developing in

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[77] While Henry Jenkins has coined the term *transmedia* to describe fictional narratives that develop across media platforms (2006:96), I use the term to consider dance as a kinetic mode of storytelling that, in the particular instance of the *RIP* videos, bridges embodied and virtual mediums of expression.

[78] The two collectives got together in 2008 at East Oakland's Youth Uprising community center, where YAK cofounders Yoram Savion and Kash Gaines offered free video production classes. Several years after the videos' viral spread, YAK Films has established itself in the global street dance scene and travels internationally documenting local street dance cultures. Turf Feinz dancers appearing in *RIP RichD* (in order of solos) are Garion "NoNoize" Morgan, Leon "Mann" Williams, Byron "T7" Sanders, and Darrell "D-Real" Armstead. Dancers and Turf Feinz appearing in other *RIP* videos are Larry Alford, Eric "E-Ninja" Davis, Deondrei "Pstyles" Donyell, Danny "Bboy Silver" Fiamingo, Kashif "Bboy Phlauz" Gaines, William Latimore, Davarea McKinley, Jeremiah "Joyntz" Scott, Rayshawn "Lil Looney" Thompson, and Denzel "Chonkie" Worthington. YAK Films is Yoram Savion, Kash Gaines, and Ben Tarquin.

[79] In the early 2000s, dancer Jeriel Bey began to use the term *turfing*, already in widespread vernacular, as an acronym TURF (Taking Up Room on the Floor) to counter negative assumptions about the style (Bey 2013). After moving to Oakland from Los Angeles, Bey increased media and civic recognition of turfing as a city sport, organizing local battles and cofounding Architeckz dance crew with Demetrius Zigler.

[80] René "Rawnay" Neal-De-Stanton is cofounder of the Animaniackz turf crew (Oakland) and created a move called the "stutter" walk.

different localities of the Bay Area through the 1960s and 1970s, notably Oakland boogaloo, Richmond roboting, and San Francisco strutting.[81]

Turfing represents the local through felt sense of motion, to build lineage, kinship, continuity and stability. Space is not a blank slate onto which performance is momentarily inscribed but a container of local histories and collective memory. The spatial politics of turfing stand apart from how site-specific art, dance, performance are typically understood—single authors, leaving the proscenium stage to stage art in "non-conventional" spaces, marked as such because the concert stage is the assumed norm (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009). Turfing is site-specific practice by definition of form moreso than content—embedded in the techniques of turf style are ways of knowing place and imbuing place with meaning and connection.

Figure 5.1. YAK Films Director Yoram Savion captures Chonkie's solo on the set of *RIP 211*, an abandoned home on MacArthur Blvd across from Youth Uprising, made into a shrine for Kenneth "211" Ross. (Photo courtesy of YAK Films)

The *RIP* videos locate turfing within the necropolitical space of East Oakland—an area where policing, incarceration and death of black people is generally excluded from the official historical record.[82] The dance videos make evident both the underreporting of everyday antiblackness and overreporting of the criminalized black. Turfing mediates a local history of

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[81] To name only a few dance groups of that period: Granny and the Robotroids, Demons of the Mind, Close Encounters of the Funkiest Kind (San Francisco; The Black Resurgents, The Black Messengers aka Mechanical Devices (Oakland); Richmond Robots, Audionauts, Androids, Lady Mechanical Robots, Green Machine (Richmond); and Playboyz Inc. (San Jose).

[82] Examiner.com dance correspondents Ian Ono and Jana Monji note this fact in their online segment on *RIP 211*: " You didn't hear about this death on the news and that is what makes this memorial video more important and perhaps more socially informative—the reality is that young black men in this particular neighborhood in East Oakland die prematurely and their deaths often go unnoticed by the public" (Ono and Monji, 2010). After *RIP Rich D*'s viral spread, ABC News correspondent Brian Rooney recorded a nationally broadcast segment on turfing, Turf Feinz, and YAK Films, in which the deaths of 211 and Rich D are noted (ABC News, 2010). *RIP 211* won San Francisco arts organization Southern Exposure's 2010 juried exhibition.

place, transmitting a paralinguistic record of the event of death that persists in tension with the transient character of the artists' sites of tribute—street corners, train stations, an abandoned home (figure 5.1). The *RIP* videos are a reflection on ordinary death; in a mode of witnessing, turf style becomes the community's immediate, embodied response. Turf as black performance presents an incessant violence—not only the suffering of a friend or family member's death, but as importantly the suffering of the instant forgetting of that death—the multiple ways that the official order continues ensuring black lives don't matter. The *RIP* videos rely on turfing's site-specificity, blurring lines between practice and performance, commonplace and spectacular.

RIP RichD is a memorial for Richard Davis the brother of Turf Feinz member D-Real. It's the most famous of the videos with almost seven million views and was filmed in 2009—a year that dawned on the highly politicized murder of twenty-two year old Oscar Grant. Grant was prostrate and unarmed when BART transit police officer Johannes Mehserle, surrounded by five other officers, shot him in the back on the platform of East Oakland's Fruitvale BART train station in the early hours of the New Year.[83] Numerous BART riders used cell phone cameras to capture and instantly disseminate footage of the murder across the Web. Less than a month after Mehserle's murder trial began, a jury found him guilty of involuntary manslaughter, fueling local uprisings.[84]

On 21 March 2009, Lovelle Mixon confronted Oakland police, fatally shooting four cops over the course of a 200-officer hunt down ending in his murder by police at 2755 74th Avenue (Winston 2011). Residents affirmed Mixon's insurrectionary act in the wake of Grant's death (Valrey 2009). The first of the *RIP* videos, *RIP June* was shot spontaneously on the day of June's funeral and uploaded 2 May 2009 (Savion 2011). *RIP RichD* followed that fall—uploaded 27 October 2009. *RIP 211*, uploaded 17 December 2009, was shot in an abandoned house transformed into a shrine for Kenneth "211" Ross—murdered by police in an alleged shootout at 64th and Bancroft Avenues on 5 December 2009. Ross, like Mixon, was a local hero. The fourth and final video, *RIP Oscar Grant*, was shot at East Oakland's Fruitvale BART train station and uploaded 31 December 2010, five months after the Mehserle verdict. *RIP Oscar Grant* was the only pre-planned filming, which YAK member Kash Gaines chose to shoot and edit on his own at the dancers' request (Savion 2011).

The collaborating artists' choice to film and turf in specific times and places grounds the circumstances of the *RIP* videos' creation in a certain immediacy and urgency, signaling a condition of compulsory death. The *RIP* videos work to give names and places to black people, drawing attention to the singularity of their deaths and unavoidably leaving evidence of a generalized political death. It is this death general to blackness that *RIP RichD* reproduces on multiple levels in terms of its representational capacities and modes of reception.

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[83] For an incisive critique of the structural positioning of anti-blackness in the cinematic representation and mainstream reception of Grant's story, see Jared Ball's review of the feature-length film *Fruitvale Station* which opened nationwide on 26 July 2013. Jared Ball, "Fruitvale Station Is Sadly Fruitless," *imiXwhatilike!* (blog), 13 August 2013, http://imixwhatilike.org/2013/08/13/fruitvale/.

[84] Mehserle was sentenced to two years minus time served and released on parole 13 June 2011. A civil rights investigation opened by the US Justice Department would override double jeopardy, but no charges have been filed to date. BART settled with Grant's family for $2.8 million, so that the entity cannot be held responsible or sued for his death.

Figure 5.2. Capturing the scene of routine police violence. Garion "No Noize" Morgan and Leon "Mann" Williams (behind car) remove their hoods under the terms of the cops' warning, "Y'all better just be dancin." "TURF FEINZ RIP RichD Dancing in the Rain." YAK Films, Oakland, CA, 2009. (Screen grab courtesy of YAK Films)

The introductory frames of *RIP RichD* set up a familiar narrative of police surveillance of young black men (figure 5.2). The scene fades up on two figures standing at a street corner. Baggy clothing, hoodies and gloves mask their bodies. The cut jumps to a patrol car bearing Oakland Police insignia. The car stops, partially blocking the figures from view. The cut jumps again. One figure has pulled down the keffiyah covering his face and the other has removed his gloves. The patrol disappears around the corner with the third jump cut. The camera cuts to street signs naming the intersection—Macarthur and 90th Streets in East Oakland. Panning down to the two young men, the shot connects them implicitly to geopolitical location. The musical introduction has almost neared its climax, when one turfer ritually crosses himself in time to the pickup of the drumbeat. He stretches his arms out into the air, his hands gripping an invisible support—a variation on a classic turfing move called "The Busta" that mimics the act of waking and stretching in the morning (Neal-de-Stanton 2008).

The opening shot of *RIP RichD* frames the demand for black performance in the existential criminality of blackness. It's a recognizable scene: two young black men biding time on a street corner are subject to surveillance and sanctioning. In an MTV interview, D-Real recalls how "we did it in one take," the police's parting warning—"you better just be dancing"—setting the hostile terms under which black males may stand on street corners (MTV 2013b). That the film was not storyboarded in advance and the police just "happened" to show up confirms the inevitability of the narrative. The removal of gloves, hood and keffiyah to show brown skin marks the revelation and identification of black bodies and black performance under the regulatory sanction of law—accentuated by the visual effect of the police car passing over the performers' bodies. Blackness exists in the moment of monitored movement.

The initial scene of police surveillance sets up the turfers' performance, not only conditioned by police presence but also perpetually in crisis. Black performance is positioned at

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the crossroads—permanently subject to monitoring, control, capture and erasure. This predicament is meta-discursively rendered by the filmmakers' repetitive use of the jump cut, a signature filmic effect in subsequent *RIP* videos.[85] The jump cut initially served the practical purpose of matching the turfers' movements (performed in the street without music) to the beats of a musical score produced by local artists Yung FX, Erk tha Jerk, and COOP (Savion 2013). YAK continued to develop the "raw, no-effect look," which fit with the "raw dance experience" they intended to visualize (Savion 2011). Video and audio editing techniques function reciprocally to double the sense of erasure implicit in *RIP RichD*'s representational aesthetics. A crisis of imminent citation, discipline, imprisonment and removal frame the black body's presence.

The jump cut fragments visual continuity, jolting the turfers out of their fluid execution of movement and exposing the technology of capturing the body on film. The technique visualizes the body's restricted freedom of movement. Drawing attention to the camera as editing tool, the jump cut provides a metacommentary on the monitoring and control of black movement, already captured onscreen in the initial confrontation of police and turfers. The institution that sanctions black presence/performance under threat of arrest operates in parallel with a choreocentric logic that positions hood dance under institutional custody to compose and clean up (raw and funky) black movement.

Haltingly disappearing and reappearing across time and space, the body's structural integrity is threatened by edited erasure, the certainty of its existence unsettled. The dancers' ghosted bodies fray the boundary between death and life, their spectrality accented in the transient space of street corners. The jump cut imposes a fragmented visual experience onto the viewer and undermines the possibility of a stable narrative or linear unfolding of time.

RIP RichD's post-produced soundtrack doubles the jump cut's optic erasure, creating an aural seal around the turfers' live performance. YAK's editing techniques manipulate viewers' ability to perceive the turfers' sensory environment, literally and metadiscursively rendering life at 90th and Mac insensible (unknowable). Voices, passing cars, falling rain, are deleted from the final cut, leaving the isolated music track audible to viewers. What remains internal to turfing's dialogue is an aural-kinesthetic consciousness of time and place, affirmed and underscored by YAK's choice to use locally produced music. Implicit in these representational aesthetics are deeper indications that even as black cultural products (hood dance and music) circulate globally, black life is persistently overlooked.

YAK's aural and visual manipulations of the "live" figure the incapacity of the filmed image to make evident not only these dances of mourning but also "the discursive frameworks, political and commercial interests, that ensure that some social 'targets' are rendered more visible by surveillance than others in the geopolitical space of urban cities" (Marriott 2007:xiv). Denied fluidity of motion and coherence, the dancers' bodies hobble in a flickering display of black ontological opacity—ghosted life, captured freedom, overseen erasure.

Viewers mimic visual fragmentation of the jump cut in their own use of the YouTube interface, as they dissect and scrutinize the performance—viewing practices that show a concern for the efficacy of the body's performance more than an interest in its personhood. Citing specific time counts of the video, this fragmented mode of spectatorship cognitively mimes the jump cut, so that viewers may choose to "keep replaying 2:45" (mbobskabobble) or mark the

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[85] This aesthetic is most pronounced in *RIP 211*. Historically the jump cut has served a political function in filmmaking of strategically interrupting the viewer's sense of time and bringing a Brechtian consciousness to the act of viewing. Jean Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960) was one of the first films to feature the jump cut extensively.

"spin at 0:33" (Butter-Butter).[86] The grammar of technicalization has the effect of rendering anonymous the dancers' bodies. Consequently, the body is "RED 2:52 - 2:54" (Angel Fernandez), "2:46 Bodied" (illuzeweb), "unreal at 1:30." As the metacritical arresting of movement provoked by YAK's jump cut meets the dissection of movement style by YouTube users' viewing practices, the interface supports spectatorship and disables ethical political engagements.

Of 1800 comments, two mention "police" or "cop," 45 mention "beauty/beautiful," 60 mention "inspire/ing/ational," and 125 mention "amaze/ing." Consciousness of Rich D's death slips away and "a racially relative form of anonymity emerges," so that "[o]ne is led to believe, for instance, that one can 'have blacks' by virtue of having that black, that anonymous black" (Gordon 1997:75). Viewers ascribe extraordinary powers to black bodies: "this is not fair...I want black people's elasticity genes" (TimUkulele). Desire to incorporate the black body stands in place of the mourned person. No longer the result of individual practice but of a "people's" existence, the black body stretches beyond bounds, endowed with a super-human status that is ultimately transcendent: "Black people are amazing. Right next to God" (ddsharper).

Because the anonymous black is both any/body and no/body, Rich D's death remains undistinguished—fungible across black bodies. The dancers' performances of mourning enact this surrogation, most potently realized in the film's initiatory scene as a car swerves to avoid hitting No Noize (figure 5.3). Replaying the actual event of death—Rich D died in a DUI car crash on the corner of MacArthur and 90th—No Noize intentionally surrogates Rich D's body. Positioned in the crossroads, No Noize's body poses the question: Whose deaths are singular and whose are plural? In the context of structural death, Rich D cannot only be grieved privately but must also represent collective trauma. His death is interchangeable across the bodies of family who dance in tribute, introducing a political death that lives on through performance.

Figure 5.3. Whose deaths are singular and whose are plural? Body positioned in the path of a passing car, No Noize's dance leaves evidence of Rich D's death. "TURF FEINZ RIP RichD Dancing in the Rain." YAK Films, Oakland, CA, 2009. (Screen grab courtesy of YAK Films)

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[86] All comments quoted are from the YouTube page (YAK Films 2009c). Throughout, comments are transcribed as written.

Suturing violence-to-criminality-to-blackness, viewer responses implicitly link Rich D's death with lawlessness. Notchback1986 comments, "Thumbs up to these guys!! Keeping themselves busy with something other than crime!! U guys r awesome keep it up." Turfing is sanctioned as a non-violent strategy for coping with black existential criminality. The performative force of Notchback's statement mandates that blackness *be* crime, circulating an antiblack logic wherein the black "does not live on the symbolic level" but necessarily exists as a body "locked in the serious, material values of the real" (Gordon, ibid). The assumption that black men are immersed in criminality gives rise to the generalization of their deaths, refusing *RIP RichD* the specificity of its mourning.

Is it ironic or is it also by an underlying logic that out of the four *RIP* videos YAK Films broadcast between 2009 and 2011, the one drawing the most interest by far (*RIP RichD* had 6,554,696 views as of 14 February 2015) is dedicated to a young black man who did not die by gun violence? In contrast, *RIP Oscar Grant*, the most overtly political of the videos, addressing a case of direct police aggression and institutionally sanctioned death, has the least views (150,058 views as of 14 February 2015). Even as Notchback's comment captures blackness in the real, disinterest in the politicized deaths of black people is perpetuated.

This structuring condition of blackness (blackness that inhabits death, captivity, and disappearance) underwrites an overwhelming desire to empathize and celebrate: "This made me cry [...] stop the hate, stop the killing, dance on.....dance on" (Melody K). Another viewer writes, "Every time I watch, it makes this old white dancer cry," acknowledging his whiteness through the act of watching, emotional identification, and white ontological dissociation. He shares the passion of dancing precisely at the point where he recognizes difference—the absolute incapacity to be black. Empathy and negation work together, fueling the desire to return "every time to watch." Celebratory viewings submerge blackness in a structure of desire, so that the contagious affects of the turfers' performances simultaneously captivate spectator and capture blackness.

The emotionally invested tone of the commentaries is contagious, diverting attention from the initial scene of policing while upholding its logic, meaning the only response possible is to "dance on." Because the black body is unable to transcend inherently criminal existence, turfing must be celebrated as a mode of temporary release from a perpetually self-induced condition. At the same time, the celebratory approval of turf dance as social problem-solving—"I give props to all youth expressing themselves in a positive way [...] keep doin what you do" (Zitz99)—obscures attention to structures of oppression that position blackness in negation and death.

Within a progressive discourse of "urban youth" in crisis, the transformative power of art must be celebrated as a means of redirecting negativity. Hood dance resolves black rage as a social rather than political problem, enabling a healthy exchange of emotion between dancer and onlooker. The sublimation of rage that would otherwise threaten the destruction of a social order is required by productive, participatory socialization. As long as black rage and despair are represented in dance as a therapeutic modality that heals pain, prevents crime, enables empathy, and humanizes blackness, celebration discourse demands repeat performances. Calls to "keep it up," "keep doin," "keep your heads up," recall the cops' parting shot—"yall better just be dancing"—affirming hood dance within the setup of monitored black movement. Black people are not premeditated targets of everyday police terror but survivors against the odds.

Celebratory discourse imagines the dancers moving through/with their pain—"You can [see] that they danced away their feelings. Respect." (Hipst3r5ever)—and, in fact, displaying a

certain lack of sentience to their own suffering. Rage is readable when bottled and silenced within the twists and graceful twists and turns of the body harmlessly celebrating its "blackness," over and against rage inciting a violent response to the political status of blackness.[87] The black body is shot and captured, not by bullets or police, but by YouTube's circulation of a discourse of antiblackness that roots for black people to "keep it up" but fails to politicize viewers in the global trafficking of black performance.

At the same time the logic of choreocentricity polices the recognition of hood movement, taken not as an act of dance but as an act of crime. Consequently, the anti-institutionality of hood dance critically challenges norms of dance. Commenter Immanuel Kant suggests: "How about give them jobs somewhere … perhaps as traffic controllers. Or, maybe dance instructors at Alice Arts? I bet we agree that they should not be forced to dance in the rain on a street corner."[88] Kant's humanist ethic that holds hood dance institutionally suspect also determines the legitimate places where dance productively exists (in the studio, the choreographer's established province) and serves a choreocentric logic that must shelter hood dance (and black people) under proper/proprietary institutional control.

If hood dance only matters in the hermetic ontological world of private dance studios and proscenium stages, how can black deaths matter in a world that negates black existence (Ricks 2013)? The scene of policing black life aligns with the anti-institutionality of hood dance, making the *RIP* performances criminal acts in a double sense. Raw movement that belongs to no/body is unlicensed—subject to seizure and misattribution. The presumed non-technical and unrestrained nature of hood dancing shows up as disorganized and unsanctioned, necessitating the supervision of institutional systems that can legitimately appropriate, conceptualize and pattern the raw material, creating accredited artwork. What makes hood dance gain meaning and value in *RIP RichD* are turfers who perform under conditions of criminality and crisis.

Being out "in the rain on a street corner" builds a sense of the live body in crisis, revealing the particular predicament of black representation that *RIP RichD* makes visible—the need for happy black bodies, dancing and carefree at the very scene of freedom's peril. Two commenters in dialogue point out the inherent irony of this celebratory discourse:

> Klaasvaak1214: too bad I'd never dare to sit around long enough at macarthur and 90th to watch this
> Joshua McClendon: lmfao same here. I mean it's cool and everything...but you're in for way more than a dance show if you're on the corner of mcarthur and 90th
> Klaasvaak1214: more like a gun show…for realz tho

The commenters sarcastically acknowledge realities of black life on MacArthur and 90th, implying that a bourgeois humanist concept of freedom is felt and figured most powerfully when it is thrown into relief—against the turfers' exposure to the elemental risk of black necropolitical space, and against the dis/order that they live, fugitively, in these spaces, facing compulsory death. The demand for a happy performance, or its incorporation into institutional systems that protect and serve, while perhaps satisfying "the Human need to be liberated *in* the world [are]

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[87] In "Police 2, Oakland Residents 4" (2009) J.R. Valrey writes, "[W]hen we are indiscriminately killed in the streets by police, as in the cases of Oscar Grant, Terrance Mearis, Donte Story, Amadou Diallo, Annette Garcia, Adolph Grimes, Casper Banjo, Anita Gaye, Aaron Harrison, Kathryn Johnston, Sean Bell and Gary King [...] we know that no police officer is going to serve any real time."
[88] Alice Arts Center, renamed the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts in memory of a local Cameroonian master dancer, is a historic African-based performing arts institution in downtown Oakland and houses a theater and dance studios.

not the same as the Black need to be liberated *from* the world" (Wilderson 2011:32) and subsequently require a rejection of black rage as either representational strategy or political praxis: "Ahh, it's nice to be back with one of my cheer-up vids. Never gets old" (Matthew Williams); "this video is my happy place" (MsThomasin); "These guys make waiting at the red light fun!" (Starshooter689).

Turfing embodies a pain that viewers experience as pleasure: "its beautiful to see that even they are probobly homeless they still laughing, dancing and having fun while other peoples are stressing about their work, financian problems and other stuffs :)" (Sangar Salih). The feeling that dancing provides immunity from a perilous situation is most compelling when the turfers' bodies are completely exposed to the elements—rain, concrete, street life, speeding cars, police. Extending this logic, dancing neutralizes the threat of their homelessness, a type of "richness" guaranteed by complete dispossession.

Saidiya Hartman shows how the cultural practices of new world slaves, reliant on subjection in their performance, expressed a utopic freedom outside of bourgeois humanism (1997:13). She describes these practices as "gestures," phantom limbs that figure freedom and its limits of possibility. In the after life of slavery, where no adequate institutional systems of testimony and response exist, turfing's everyday acts can be understood as incomplete forms of redress. While these attempts at recovery are necessary and not insubstantial, Hartman stresses, redress is always inadequate to slavery's originary and unlocatable loss, such that the "language of freedom no longer becomes that which rescues the slave from his or her former condition, but the site of the re-elaboration of that condition, rather than its transformation" (2003:184). These phantom limbs are enactments of absence and performances of a dislocated body that show the impossibility of a prior whole.

The "beautiful [...] homeless" freedom that Salih sees in blackness is determined by a structural violence that conditions acts of looking and what it means to (over) look at blackness in the realm of visual representation. Rosenberg's definition of screendance is helpful here:

> screendance speaks of the *endpoint* or *point of reception* by the viewer and not of the material form of the production [...] the method of apprehension (the screen) modifies the activity it inscribes (dance); in doing so it codifies a particular space of representation and, by extension, meaning (2012:3)

YouTube's interface "modifies the activity" of hood dancing to the degree that *RIP RichD*'s global reception as screendance may circulate "commodified affect" (Judy 1994:227) yet reveals a more entrenched inability to articulate black experience. The libidinal economy of antiblackness ensures the replaceability of black bodies, making the singularity of black life unknowable. It is the inability to think blackness outside of crime, captivity and death that continues negations of black personhood. Conversely the black body's immanent captivity makes black performance a potent site for the recognition and celebration of freedom. Hood dancing, always linked to the anti-institutional status of blackness, gains value as a mode of empowerment at the same time that its ability to communicate politicized black rage directed at structural injustice is foreclosed.

RIP RichD creates a historical record where there was none (and perhaps can never be one in the conventional sense), just as turfing grounds the *RIP* dances in a necessary dialogue within the turfers' neighborhoods. Turfers do the work of making black lives matter by materializing the deaths of black youth in Oakland through collective dance practice. Offscreen,

turfing remembers the lives of Rich D, June, 211, Oscar Grant. Yet the video's global reception as screendance reveals a more entrenched inability to articulate antiblackness—the belief that anything is better in this world than to be black. Because blackness is only interesting as cultural capital and becomes less interesting, if not threatening, as political existence, it remains eloquently tragic. The "irony" of the turf dancers' elegy is recognized in a few interspersed comments reflecting on the reality of black life, but as the video gets more and more play, evidenced by the increasing number of views recorded on the YouTube interface, turfing gains cultural capital without turfers gaining personhood. Black bodies are replaceable, making the singularity of black lives unknowable. It is the inability to think blackness outside of crime, captivity, and death that continues to erase black personhood.

The black body's immanent captivity makes black performance a powerful site for the fundamental refusal of humanist freedom. Hood dancing, always linked to the anti-institutional status of blackness, gains value as a mode of social empowerment at the same time that it remains unauthorized to communicate politicized black rage directed at structural injustice. What the *RIP* videos teach most fundamentally is that at this time, freedom in the world manifests through the shooting and capturing of black bodies. To keep moving black is to move in service of making black liberation a reality, that is, to aim at getting free.

A Harlem Shake sequel

The proliferation of Harlem Shake memes uploaded last February by YouTube users worldwide, demonstrated how producing and transmitting the codes of blackness simultaneously entails a performative forgetting of black life.[89] In this instance, overwhelmingly nonblack communities gained intense pleasure from global participation in the performance of movements that derived erotic power from being codified as black. Dancing the "fake" Harlem Shake was a way to perform social inclusion across a global network, accessed through the feigning of blackness. These movements produce a sentiment of antiblackness, wherein the Black occupies the position of absolute negation.

The memes' shared dance narrative uses the electronic dance music single "Harlem Shake" as their soundtrack.[90] Baauer, who was until then a relatively obscure Brooklyn-based music producer, lifted the sample which is the track's mother lode (a man's voice demanding, "Do the Harlem Shake") from Philadelphia-based rap group Plastic Little's song "Miller Time"—initially without obtaining the rights. The track commences with a different sampled cry, "con los terroristas!" Then an initial rhythmic buildup climaxes with the "Harlem Shake" command and beat drop, providing the cue for all participants to begin arrhythmic, chaotic, often overtly sexual thrashing and thrusting movements.

With slight variation across memes, the common plot involves work communities going about their daily routine, apparently unconscious of the impending performance in which they are all implicated. During the initial buildup, one participant wearing a mask or helmet begins to stiffly thrust his pelvis. Prior to the call of the Shake, bodies seem wholly oblivious to each other's presence. Upon the drop of the beat, participants (some masked, costumed, or in various states of undress) stand in place, their movements restricted to pelvis and upper body. The call-

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[89] Richard Dawkins (1976:192) coined the term *meme* to describe a "unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (e.g. an idea, behavior, product, practice, etc.). A meme "leap[s] from brain to brain…turning [the brain] into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell."
[90] Baauer, "Harlem Shake," Mad Decent, 22 May 2012.

and-response structure of sound to movement guarantees (comically) that once the beat drops, these impulsively dancing bodies will move. Unconsciously responding to the bass and synth-heavy loops and sounds of growling lions, the performers enact a complete lack of volition and foresight.

While similar movements appear across memes—especially pelvic thrusts and wriggling or wildly waving arms—within each meme bodies do not interact and the movement material does not transform. Participation centers on reproducing certain characteristics of movement that insinuate participants in the global performance; movements are not innovated in the process. Instead, creativity in the memes hinges on changing the settings where the same story is guaranteed to play out: bedrooms, office spaces, swimming pools. The comic irony is that these disorganized movements that rupture participants' banal routines nonetheless follow a master plan, guaranteed to involuntarily transpire anywhere and anytime. YouTube viewers participating in the viral phenomenon look forward to seeing the same plot play out in unexpected settings.

Because Internet meme-ing is the viral transmission of symbolic practices, participants' deliberate choices of what to replicate and what to alter betray deeper investments in the reproduction of social meanings. An atmospheric antiblackness structures the phenomenon of the Harlem Shake memes, evident in the fact that the parodic movements do not change even as the environments do. The Harlem Shake memes show that playing black is a global phenomenon in which anyone can participate. The memes train antiblackness through ritualized movement behavior, the replication of which constitutes an "affective/representational performance […] underwritten by paradigmatic violence" (Wilderson 2011:30).

The participants' performed lack of awareness is antithetical to Harlem Shake epistemology, transmitted through practices of collective improvisation and situated in the social life of the hood. Fred Moten (2003) writes that the aspect of change in black performance has to do with the material fact of reproduction that operates within the improvisational act. In hood dancing, movement is the material being changed through black performance. Against the misperception of improvisation as an endless, nonproductive process, the performer's intention is to produce change. Black performance is always actualizing its potential. The memes' call-and-response structure references black performance, understanding "there is no event, just as there is no action, without music" (64). Yet, the purely imitative movements in the memes demonstrate a tautological parody of blackness that negates the improvisational principle of hood dancing in the black radical tradition:

> anarchic and ungrounded, opening a critique of traditions and Tradition, and on the other hand, no simple and naïve, unplanned and nonhistorically driven, inscription […] the very essence of the visionary, the spirit of the new, an organizational planning of and in free association that transforms the material, and on the other hand, manifest in that material […] never manifest as a kind of pure presence—it is not the multiplicity of present moments (64)

The base movements of the (original) Harlem Shake are a jump-off for the creative potentiality of each dancer to manifest in the social circle. Hood dances like the Harlem Shake, Oakland's Go Dumb, LA's Cat Daddy, Philly's Wu-Tang, Baltimore's Spongebob and Atlanta's Nae Nae attune bodies to a conversation happening about community and what's relevant right now, at the moment of performance.

The impulsive, arrhythmic movements of the meme performers, and their blank facial expressions, intimate a lack of foresight—a performative erasure of the black radical tradition that vitalizes hood dance. Performers act oblivious to each other's presence in space and time. They will comedically reproduce the same movements, moved by the beat of the drum. The videos are funny because they link performances of randomness within an overarching movement narrative that self-replicates. In the process of producing more and more memes, the movement material does not transform. Viewers already know the storyline but look forward to seeing the same story play out in new unexpected settings. The overall effect, evidenced by the memes' common embodiment of erotic abandon, pleasure and escape from boredom of the everyday same, is a screening of power to access a codified blackness, which is the same as affirming nonblack subjectivity. To perform the imagined Harlem Shake and take pleasure in that performance demonstrates inclusion in whiteness—the nourishing of social life that ensures and insures the negation of black social life—made manifest by the total disappearance of the "real" Harlem Shake from memory. Harlem Shake sociality is directly negated by the reproduction and worldwide proliferation of the Harlem Shake memes.

These performances of feigned unconsciousness are suggestive. The bodies, masked or costumed to further erase them of personhood and foreground their physicality, seem animated by the music and moved to respond without volition to the song's innate call. Thrusting pelvises, thrashing arms and bouncing asses link to the articulated point of reference—Harlem. The covertly sexual reference to "do" the Harlem Shake circulates in the libidinal economy, producing a forceful desire to penetrate the codes of black movement. This play at blackness (at times barely discernible, at times overt) disturbingly ensures that the Black remains perpetually available for entertainment and pleasure.

Not surprisingly, the implicit codes of blackness in the February 2013 Harlem Shake memes presaged Disney-white pop star Miley Cyrus's explicit use of black women's bodies and stripper dancing to promote the June 2013 release of her music video "We Can't Stop" and her August 2013 VMA performance. The antagonistic positioning of Cyrus to black flesh—the dancers' faces concealed in teddy bear masks, close shots of asses bouncing against Cyrus's waiflike, stark white figure—underwrites her tabloid odyssey from Disney Channel child star to full-fledged Hollywood celebrity. In order to spread her wings and claim white female sexual freedom, Cyrus had to capitalize on the afterlife of the Hottentot Venus—an erotic power play that with each performative slap on the ass violently assigns black women to the biological— black flesh and inflated sexuality.[91]

At the level of the psyche and the feelings that structure and sustain a global investment in antiblackness, Cyrus's blacked up performances participate with the Harlem Shake craze in Brady's politics of obliteration. More than movement stealing, obliteration accounts for fungibility, as invoked in an artistic conflict that arose during the (fake) Harlem Shake craze. Evidently with the plan to fully capitalize off the track's viral success, Baauer and co-producer Diplo solicited Harlem-born rapper Azealia Banks to record a remix of the track, then ordered her to remove a video mix she had prematurely posted online when they decided to contract with prominent strip-hop rapper Juicy J (who was soon rumored to be dating and/or impregnating Cyrus). The willful expunging of black women's voices (and faces) is part and parcel of upholding the black rap star's hypermasculinity—a way to gain purchase across the social

[91] The Khoikhoi woman known as Saartjie Baartman and displayed through Europe as the Hottentot Venus, remained on display in Paris's Musée de l'Homme until 1974 and was not repatriated to her native home in South Africa's Gamtoos Valley until 2002.

network while purging the social body of its black detritus. Banks articulated the erotic politics of fungible black flesh—the persistent, violent exchange of black bodies—when she tweeted in response to the broken deal, "I feel like Harlem Shake was a ho with some free pussy and everyone was allowed to fuck but me."[92]

Al B's mummy

Ten years prior to the memes viral spread, Inside Hoops interviewed the Harlem Shake's architect, forty-year-old Albert Leopold Boyce. Boyce was a famed half time performer at the Rucker Park Entertainer's Basketball Classic. The world's largest street ball tournament draws hip hop industry heads, but opportunities to sell the rights to his Shake were lost on Boyce. The Harlem Shake materializes in Al B's words, three years before his passing due to heart failure:

> It's a drunken shake anyway, it's an alcoholic shake, but it's fantastic […] it's glowing with glory. And it's respected. But if we could mystify it, and become historian, about this Egyptian jazz […] Pharaohs invented this thing, with spears, and hats, and gowns […] It was a drunken dance, you know, from the mummies, in the tombs. That's what the mummies used to do. They was all wrapped up and taped up. So they couldn't really move, all they could do was shake […] It spread to all the parks, and all the picnics, and all the areas, museums, and, you know. Biologically.[93]

Though Al B refers to an early 1990s revival within hip hop culture of the dance he'd been doing since 1981, a comparison to the 2013 viral craze is instructive if not ironically prophetic. In an equally compelling interview, his mother Sandra Boyce explains that, actually, he was inspired by watching *her* dance (Mays 2013).

Submerged under the memes' performances of social inclusion are the bandaged Black political memories of a mystic mother Africa—performances of mummies. *And* mothers. Al B's cryptic language moves in the Shake's paralinguistic dialogue with phantom limb movements of turfers, who draw on a 1980s dance style called *tutting* that similarly cites an ancient and powerful Egypt.[94] Al B's avowed mystification of an originary Egypt of "copper, gold, diamonds, sapphires, rubies" and shaking drunken mummies, aims for the impossible. It's a crazy type of loco-motivity that is death-bound, mummified, taped up and can't move in this world. Without wholly disavowing Al B's assertion of an impossible whole, or any impossible longing to transform and liberate blackness through recognition of mythical ancestral identity, how does Harlem Shaking theorize struggle—the effort it takes to resist being captured?

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[92] Carrie Battan, "Baauer Explains Azealia Banks "Harlem Shake" Squabble, Working With AlunaGeorge on New EP," *Pitchfork.com*, 18 February 2013, http://m.pitchfork.com/news/49604-baauer-explains-azealia-banks-harlem-shake-squabble-working-with-alunageorge-on-new-ep/.

[93] Albert Boyce, Interview by InsideHoops.com, "Inventor of Harlem Shake Interview," *InsideHoops.com*, 13 August 2003. http://www.insidehoops.com/harlem-shake-081303.shtml (29 April 2015).

[94] See, for example, *RIP 211* (YAK Films 2009a). Tutting is an early 1980s hip-hop style that mimics hieroglyphs and relief sculptures of ancient Egypt. Michael Jackson's 1992 music video "Remember the Time," one of the few representations of ancient Egyptians as black people, similarly references Africa through tutting choreography.

Feet anchored to ground. Knees buckle slightly. A tempest of gesture, the body gasps and swallows itself down. A wreckage of limbs, winds in ribbons around the torso, lapping insistently against then away from the ribs. Arm bones churn and swirl in eddies of elbows and wrists. The collarbone tips and twists—rotating on frontal, lateral and horizontal planes simultaneously. Holding with the rhythm, the body frets, pops back. Freezes. A shoulder strolls nonchalantly past one ear and the body shrugs, giggling coquettishly in response. Bones shift and release. Detached, they float away. Angling loosely toward the body's center, they suddenly sink down and flow together, crashing sharply back to rattle deep in their joints. Recollecting pieces of itself, the body wobbles back and forth. The Harlem Shake struggles and in its inability to move—shakes, fails.

Turfing responds in kind, a play with gravity and momentum, the body's composure masking a tremendous effort to resist gravity's force sinking downward. A methodic launching of the body's dead weight, the body traces a painfully slow backwards path. Feet press to the floor. Knees extend like rusted joints. Bend. Sliding along the ground arms helplessly drag to the sides. Paralyzed from hips down, the body pulls across ground, knees bent, feet curled upward and back. Dragging a heavy sack of bones. extending out into a low push up position stretched out on the ground. Never breaking the slowed-down pace, arms jut outward forming the body into the sign of a cross. At a silent command the body freezes. Reengages. Rotating to the back, knees float upward. Pausing for a moment, gaze shifts skyward. A sequence of robotic tick-steps transition smoothly into a perfectly off-balance pirouette perched on the toe of one sneaker and falling backwards through the air.

Although they're coming from different contexts, the movements are abstractions of lived experiences that speak to each other. David Marriott (2007) tracks the affective convergence of Black self-identification and ontological positioning, describing a paradoxical displacement of self *that is also a displaced body*—an out-of-time-and-place feeling of being as a condition of existence. Reconsidering the moment of misrecognition—Look! A Negro!—in Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks,* Marriott aligns the empty train seat at Fanon's side with the evacuated space of Black existence. As the Black imago jumps out of the seat and becomes an occupying force within Fanon's body, at once violently splitting the ego and bonding to the racial self, the seat remains a sign of White phobia and the introjection of Black psychic disintegration. The empty seat produces "the sense of being hated from within [which is] inseparable from the condition of being hated from without" (209). Taking his seat on the train is counterintuitively an experience of the evacuation of a sense of place. In the generative "racial drama" that plays out, it is only the White who occupies a seat on the train. Fanon is ontologically out of place, his body being the visible accumulation of every "Negro."

The movements of the Harlem Shake do not figure displacement, they are the body moving into the position of dis-placed-ness. This being-in-displacement is simultaneously a feeling of the body in the act of moving, a process that can be elaborated by the Anlo-Ewe concept of *seselelame*, literally "feeling or hearing in the flesh, the body, or the skin" (Geurts 2002:240). This is not to universalize a specifically Anlo-Ewe cultural experience or to index an

Africanist retention but rather to argue that a Western epistemology of the senses cannot fully account for what Harlem Shake kinesthetics contain:

> the transfer of African ontological and cosmological systems; African presumptions of the organization and significance of social structure; African codes embodying historical consciousness and social experience; and African ideological and behavioral constructions for the resolution of the inevitable conflict between the actual and the normative […] the terms upon which the response of the enslaved to the slave system would be grounded. (Robinson 2000:122)

Attention to the more visceral aspects of meaning making suggest how dancers feel and live the Harlem Shake's unmappable coordinates, and its inability to be thought, exclusively, within ocular-centric epistemology. Without needing to draw a conclusive relation between movement and social meaning, the intertwining of the Shake's phantom limb existence—an intertwining of discourse, technique and kinesthesia—positions the body in a feeling of a memory of loss, distinct from the ideal of freedom often celebrated as black performance and what resolution or relief may be gained by its recognition. The collective African identity toward which Al B's words gesture is an identity in all ways always distorted and disjointed. Cross-stitched with a political ontology of blackness, the Harlem Shake is a performance and practice not of remembering/remaking a glorified past as whole, but of dis-membering—of reenacting the memory of a loss. Feeling this motion of dislocated-ness is a way of living in absence, which is to make that experience available to thought although not at the level of intellection but by moving in the structures of that imperative to be-overlooked-overseen, through a deeply "somatic and sensory mode of attention that involves an 'aesthetic of the cool,' or keeping balanced and calm in an effort to prevent sickness" (Geurts 2002:202).

At the intersection of aesthetics and politics, Al B's mystifying words work with, not against, the paralinguistics of the Shake's discourse, constituting a response that echoes the performative complexity of Hartman's (2007) call to "lose your mother." As hood dancing, the Harlem Shake lives necessarily in an "irreducible sociality" that reconfigures what relating, kinship and being might be. In the hood, Harlem Shaking is a practice of displacement—a practice of *being* bound and displaced. It is no irony that the memes obliterate Al B's dance of his mother and a mummy—a dead body preserved to look lifelike. Circulating in the libidinal economy, the viral replication of the memes drives a participatory politics that disguises its antiblackness by its seeming aimlessness. The participatory power of the memes gaining life in the internet circuitry is predicated on a dance form that figures death. The demand for black performance not only "substitute[s] for historical and political representation" (Muñoz 1999:188), but moreover is a scheme for negating black life in order to give meaning and coherence to nonblackness. The libidinal economy of antiblackness ensures that conditions of black life are dismissed, securing the ontological disappearance of the Black. Because blackness is only valuable as cultural and symbolic capital, but becomes less interesting and in fact threatening as political existence, it remains and its remains are tragically eloquent. The videos give evidence of this unresolvable problem of captured black performance, which more than affirming the potential for the performance event to transform, rehearse the event of black captivity and erasure. Al B's rendering of the Harlem Shake leaves evidence of political death conjoined with captured life—the structuring condition of blackness.

Epilogue

This project seeks to reinvigorate concern for the black power of hip hop dance, despite a popular preference to celebrate diversity in a climate of multiculturalism, multiracialism, colorblindness and post-race. A focus on blackness is cause often enough to raise suspicion of the legitimacy of such a project—how is this really relevant? why dwell on the past? you're not black—why do you care? In response to these questions, I'm brought to reflect on how hip hop first made an impression on me.

When hip hop was reaching a point of hyper-commodification in the late 1980s, NWA switched the conversation on gang violence from a discourse of black-on-black crime to the violence of police gangs and structural antiblackness in Los Angeles. I was attending a highly segregated, conservative suburban high school and feeling socially adrift. On occasion, my alienated sense of community would land me with the school "outcasts," in reality a group of mostly white upper middle class boys dedicated to simultaneously flouting and exploiting their entitlement. I remember one night riding in the back of a pickup truck on the 110 Freeway from Pasadena to Highland Park. The driver was turning the freeway's sharp curves full speed and blasting "Fuck The Police." I bring this image to mind in 2015, sharpened against anti-police insurgency from Oakland to Orange County, Florida, Ferguson and Baltimore. What resounds most clearly now is how listening to NWA was an act of white rebellion premised on the injunction against rebellion by and for black people and blackness. Finding myself in hip hop, I've found myself inculcated in this act. To ask about the black power of hip hop is to ask how giving the finger to the system can be an act of incorporation into a pledge that system makes time and again to protect and serve nonblackness. The pleasure I might find in celebrating my freedom to rebel was/is premised on the underlying reality of NWA's lyrical call—the structural injunction against black rage.

I bring up the situation to note a problem of resistance that the cultural transmission of black performance presents. Ron Judy has argued along these lines that hip hop expression transmits commodified affect, especially rage and pleasure, at the expense of experience (Judy 1994). In expanding this problem into the realm of dance, I have suggested ways the desire to embody blackness, from less evident to more conspicuous manifestations, can guarantee a foreclosure of concern for lived experience if not a willful apathy toward the open question of black liberation. In speaking to the structural injunction, my research asks how pointing out the instances of a static power relation between blackness and non-blackness might help to more clearly articulate the stakes of black performance and resistance, especially in a current moment when fluid performances of embodiment, appropriation and celebratory identity formation run up against fixed and unchanging lived experiences of violence. To demand that black lives matter must also mean to attend, with unflinching commitment, to the failure that continues to constitute black existence.

My research for this project began with a key question: what does it mean for hip hop to be the most extensively exchanged form of popular culture in a world where black people continue living under terms of excessive, enduring violence? The question itself holds other questions: what is the relationship between culture and politics? what is the relationship between performance and violence? My questions wavered on the overwhelming sense that in this era hip hop has nothing to do with black power. Studying writers and artists whose work revolves around such questions, I reformulated the question in terms of an equation: does the power of hip

hop to be globally consumed increase in inverse proportion to the political empowerment of black people? I began to ask differently if the efficacy of black performance, including the ways black culture is particularly open to commodification and exchange, is constituted by the violent position to which blackness is consigned in the world. In this case, politicized rage against the anti-world status of blackness must be sublimated in/as black performance.

This dissertation has studied the improvisatory incision of the black radical tradition into practices of hip hop dance, writing with the urgency to locate the black power of hip hop in an era when multicultural celebration and unity make much more convincing, or at least far more overt claims on hip hop as a global popular expression of youth culture. A politics of love, freedom and unity pervades global street dance culture. The cipher imagines itself universal. In the desire to create a globally unified, inclusive community, blackness is not absent but celebrated as cultural identity—a problem of thought that is reflected in academic culture. With Black Power of Hip Hop Dance, I turned to theorists concerned about the political ontology of blackness, in order to follow a line of theorizing that demands reframing scholarship, not only in terms of how I talk about street dance but also what questions might become relevant (or not) to my study. That blackness is so often discussed in terms of culture provokes a tendency toward celebratory representations that have avoided critical reflection on questions of power, violence and negation, arising from concern for the static structural position that blackness holds. This project has pushed me to ask questions and find language to consider street dance in terms of the limits and failures of performance and resistance. I'm interested to continue studying the less obvious ways that this structural injunction is reinforced—especially in everyday practices that promote an ethic of inclusion and unity that nonetheless is unable or unwilling to think and move with the persistence of black suffering.

Generally speaking, black dancers retain a certain legitimacy and are widely sought in the international scene as teachers and cultural custodians of street dance. Without denying the value of representation, my work questions the relationship between promoting blackness as cultural capital in the absence if not refusal of a politicized discourse on blackness. My research continues to ask difficult and necessary questions about the appropriation of street dance, both historically and today, by nonblack people and groups, the erasure of awareness of LGBTQ and black women's contributions to street dance history, and the ethics of participating in contemporary street dance culture. These questions center most fundamentally on the issue of participation. If the global spread of black cultural forms, including the ways "blackness" is codified and performed by nonblack bodies, happens at the expense of critical attention to black radical politics, how do practitioners ethically participate and reflect on their cultural practices? The power to embody the codes of "blackness" seems quite easily to create the belief that participation makes one more accepting, tolerant and appreciative of black culture and black people and in fact, that acceptance, tolerance and appreciation of black culture and black people are reasonable enough social justice aims. This dissertation has taken the view that participation and enjoyment, empowerment and pleasure, may encourage appreciation of black culture without encouraging awareness, if not actively encouraging ignorance of antiblackness.

I've reflected on how blackness underlies the conceptual tension between street and stage, choreography and improvisation, entertainment and art, sound and movement; how blackness centers questions of authorship and collectivity; how blackness shapes a discourse of the hood, the underground, theories of freestyling and the cipher; and how a discourse of the street marks the incursion of blackness into commercial studios and concert stages. This work continues to generate questions relevant to dance theory and practice: why do studies of

improvisation continue to center histories of European-derived concert dance to the general exclusion of street dance history (Heble and Caines 2015)? Why do some university dance departments still prohibit "street" shoes on the studio floor? How do ballet's pointed foot and plumb line uphold an idealized neutral, unmarked language for dance proper, against which the pedestrian foot and off-balance lean of hip hop dance become an accented language? How do the marking and unmarking of body languages become insinuated into the creation of new fusion studio forms like "lyrical hip hop" and what are the stakes of these translations?

My contention continues to be that street dance does have an analysis of black power, even as this analysis has been covered up by imagining a universal cipher where race does not exist. By seeking to articulate the black power of hip hop dance, my aim has been to describe and utilize the discourse of street dancers, and to demonstrate how street dance practices are modes of black thought that remain relevant to critical theory, political philosophy and aesthetics. Blackness is a movement of critical assertion in street dance style that captures the relation between muscular rigidity and explosion in the illusionary techniques of popping and robot; a question that theories of the hood, loco-motivity, funk, freestyle and underground contain; a history of violence that constitutes the tight space between the naming of waacking and punking; the conjunction of death and rebirth, celebration and mourning, performance and failure.

In studying the black power of hip hop dance I locate global street dance culture in a radical political project that takes seriously what moves practitioners to dance. These questions also mean to show that kinesthetic politics is not equivalent to radical politics. To understand kinesthetic politics is to think differently about political efficacy on the terms of movement perception. The kinesthetic politics of hip hop dance is an extended inquiry into how it feels to move within and against a structural order of antiblackness. Attention to kinesthetic politics takes into consideration how movement politicizes and depoliticizes, by studying the relation between movement, sense perception and political consciousness. To radicalize street dance practices means to persistently question ways of teaching, performing, documenting, judging, choreographing, training and doing research. Kinesthetic politics seeks space for critical reflection in dance theory and practice, to seriously consider what street dance techniques themselves might teach us about what it means to move in, with, beyond and against the world.

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Appendix A. Personal Interviews and Communication

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Burnett, Archie. 2011. Personal Interview. 2 August. Skype.

Campbell, Donald and Tyrone Proctor. 2013. Group Interview. 7 August. New York City, New York.

Cohen, Samara. 2013. Personal Interview. 21 August. New York, New York.

Cole, Eddie. 2014. Personal Interview. 23 April. Skype.

Creekmore, Carole. 2014. Personal Interview. 18 March. Los Angeles, California.

Davis Martin, Thelma. 2014. Personal Interview. 12 March. Hyde Park, California.

Espiritu, Nadia. 2009. Personal Interview. 27 July. Berlin, Germany.

Gardner, Marquisa. 2013. Personal Interview. 15 July. New York City, New York.

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Higgins, James. 2014b. Personal Interview. 6 March. Los Angeles, California.

Holmes, Kim. 2013a. Personal Interview. 20 August. New York City, New York.

Holmes, Kim. 2013b. Personal Interview. 26 August. New York City, New York.

Huggins, Ericka. 2010. Personal Interview. 24 February. Telephone.

Joe That Go. 2010. Personal Interview. 5 January. Berkeley, California.

Johnson, Arnetta and James Higgins. 2014. Group Interview. 21 April. Carson, California.

Johnson, Deborah. 2010. Personal Interview. 12 January. Oakland, California.

Lauture, Alain. 2013. Personal Interview. 22 August. New York City, New York.

Lesley, Renée. 2010. Personal Interview. 13 February. Richmond, California.

Loclair, Christian. 2009. Personal Interview. 31 July. Berlin, Germany.

Louis, Amanda Adams. 2011. Personal Interview. New York City, New York.

Manoel, Viktor. 2011. Personal Interview. 28 August. Burbank, California.

Maxie, Freddie. 2014. Personal Interview. 9 March. Fontana, California.

McKesey, Leah. 2013. Personal Interview. 30 August. Los Angeles, California.

McRae, Hiroka. 2011. Personal Interview. 30 October. Los Angeles, California.

Montejo, Ralph. 2010. Personal Interview. 11 January. Telephone.

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Reyna, Margarita. 2011. Personal Interview. 27 August. Los Angeles, California.

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Rupniewski, Agatha. 2009. Personal Interview. 28 December. San Francisco, California.
Sanchez, Ana. 2014. Personal Interview. 2 June. Banning, California.
Savion, Yoram. 2011. Email Message. 2 December.
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Spottedeagle, Ausben. 2011. Personal Interview. 26 July. New York, New York.
Straker, Lenaya. 2013. Personal Interview. 16 July. New York City, New York.
Tsappos, Niki. 2013. Personal Interview. 12 July. New York City, New York.
Washington, Tommy. 2010. Personal Interview. 26 January. Oakland, California.
Williams, Terry. 2011. Personal Interview. 1 August. Brooklyn, New York.
Young, Chris. 2010. Personal Interview. 6 January. San Francisco, California.

Appendix B. List of Events 2011 − 2014

Punking+Posing=Whaacking. July 2011. Peridance Studios, New York, New York.

Gino's II Reunion. 27 August 2011. La Cita Bar, Los Angeles, California.

1st Annual Original Boogaloo Reunion Barbeque. 3 September 2011. Shoreline Park, Oakland, California.

LA's 2nd Annual International Waack/Punk/Pose Festival. 28 October 2011. North Hollywood, California.

Celebration: The Life of Don Cornelius. 13 February 2012. Maverick's Flat Grill and Jazz Club, Los Angeles, California.

Tyrone Proctor Master Class. 23 March 2012. Bancroft Studios, University of California, Berkeley.

Soul Train Ball & Battle: A Tribute to Don Cornelius. 24 March 2012. Uptown Studios, Oakland, California.

Tyrone Proctor Master Class. 25 March 2012. In The Groove Studios, Oakland, California.

Ladies of Hip Hop Festival. 10 July – 14 July 2014. New York City, New York.

Advance Street Lab. 4 August – 9 August 2013. New York, New York.

Popin Pete Master Class. 7 August 2013. Highline Studios, New York, New York.

Afropunk Fest. 25 August 2013. Commodore Barry Park, Brooklyn, New York.

LA's 3rd Annual Waack Fest. 30 August – 1 September 2013. North Hollywood, California.

Tyrone 60th Birthday Master Class. 29 August 2013. Evolution Dance Studios, North Hollywood, California.

Soul Train Dancers Reunion Picnic. 31 August 2013. Kenneth Hahn Park, Los Angeles, California.

Soul Train Dancers Memorabilia Party. 1 September 2013. Maverick's Flat Grill and Jazz Club, Los Angeles, California.

Soul Train Dancers Christmas Party. 8 December 2013. Los Angeles, California.

Dallace Winkler-Ziegler Memorial. 15 February 2014. Star Dance Center, Newhall, California.

The Abyss: A House Dance Experience. 22 February 2014. Live Arts, Los Angeles, California.

Celebrating the Life of Dallace Zeigler. 23 February 2014. Weddington Park, Hollywood, California.

Alpha Anderson 61st Birthday. 2 March 2014. Posch Restaurant, Irvine, California.

Open House Anniversary Party. 8 March 2014. Live Arts, Los Angeles, California.

Flo Jenkins Birthday Party. 21 March 2014. Maverick's Flat Grill and Jazz Club. Los Angeles, California.

Nelson George Soul Train Book Signing. 2 Apr 2014. Book Soup, Hollywood, California.

Shabba Doo Locking Classes. February – May 2014. Performing Arts Center, Van Nuys, California.

Sabela Grimes Funkamentals Classes. October 2013 – May 2014. World Arts and Cultures Department, University of California, Los Angeles.

4th Annual Original Boogaloo Reunion Barbeque. 20 September 2014. Shoreline Park, Oakland, California.

Chicago House Dance Weekend. 4 − 6 December 2014. Department of Africana Studies, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.