

6-28-2010

Like a Moth to the Flame: Modernity and Mary Wigman 1886-1973

Mary Anne Santos Newhall

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hist_etds

Recommended Citation

Newhall, Mary Anne Santos. "Like a Moth to the Flame: Modernity and Mary Wigman 1886-1973." (2010).
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hist_etds/68

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in History ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Mary Anne Santos Newhall
Candidate

History
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Theresa Hays et -

, Chairperson

Walter K. Bay

Algo E. Johnson

John Beck

LIKE A MOTH TO THE FLAME: MODERNITY AND MARY WIGMAN

1886 - 1973

BY

MARY ANNE SANTOS NEWHALL

B.A., Dance, summa cum laude, University of New Mexico, 1998
M.A., Dance History and Criticism, University of New Mexico, 2000

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Perhaps it is best to begin at the beginning. Work on this dissertation started nearly fifteen years ago, and if anyone had predicted at that time that I would spend the ensuing years researching the life and work of Mary Wigman, I would have shaken my head in disbelief. And curiously, this journey was first inspired by an American modern dance pioneer. Eve Gentry was a quintessential American modern, born to a Jewish immigrant family and finding her way to the New York dance community in 1936 when she became a member of the original Hanya Holm company. What Eve gave to me, a dancer who came of age in the late 1970s, was nothing short of a revelation. The great tradition of the German modern dance was unknown to me before I met Eve and, like most of my contemporaries, I had lived with the myth that the modern dance was uniquely American. I had my own prejudices against things German as an American child of the post-World War II era. That this small Jewish dancer could open my eyes to the monolithic German dance so immediately is a testimony to Eve's own power, the strength of her work and the complexities of cultural history. Eve died before I could ask her the many questions that have arisen as I traced her dance lineage back to Mary Wigman. But her papers have revealed much over the past decade and I thank Michele Larsson for making them available to me. It was always the dance that spoke to me, deepening my understanding even as I navigated the scholarly channels in this work.

Next, I thank my extraordinary committee: Jane Slaughter, historian and adviser, who has kept me on course along with Melissa Bokovoy and Eliza Ferguson, also of the UNM History Department. From UNM's Theatre and Dance Department, I thank Professor Emerita Judith Chazin-Bennahum for her ongoing support. Each member of my committee has added provocative insights that will continue to guide my research and writing. Because of them my work has changed forever.

Thanks to a research grant from UNM, I have many archives to acknowledge. I am especially grateful to Frank-Manuel Peter and Garnet Schuldt-Hiddemann at the *Tanzarchiv* in Köln and Inge Baxmann, Melanie Gruss and Gabriela Ruiz at the *Tanzarchiv* in Leipzig, where the hospitality of Barbara and Dieter Wellner made my extended stay possible. Many thanks especially to Stephan Dörschel at the *Archiv*

Darstellende Kunst in Berlin who remains helpful in my ongoing research. Norbert Busè and Christof Debler of Filmhouse in Berlin helped me to see Wigman's history firsthand in Hellerau, Dresden and Berlin. Most importantly, I thank Hedwig Müller, Mary Wigman's German biographer, whose telling of Wigman's story and deep understanding of Wigman's humanity has graced this writing in more ways than I can express.

My deepest thanks go to Brigitta Herrmann, whose love for Mary Wigman as a teacher shines through our many hours of discussions and who was the source of so much embodied knowledge of Wigman's teaching practices. In part this book is dedicated to Brigitta's unique personality and vision and the spirit of Mary Wigman that she keeps alive in her own work. And I also thank those American students of Mary Wigman who shared their memories. I thank my UNM colleague, Falko Steinbach, who introduced me to Herr and Frau Kurt Schwaen, who welcomed me into their home in Marlsdorf and carried me into Mary Wigman's life in Leipzig. Their sharing of letters and stories will ever remain etched in my memory.

I thank my students at UNM who have been willing to experiment in such an embodied history.

And finally, I thank my family, Jesse and Pascale, who have declared our home "dance Mecca," and most of all my thanks and love to Jim, who has been a diligent copy editor, highly over-qualified research assistant and patient partner. Without his loving help and support, none of this would have been possible.

Again, for Mary

LIKE A MOTH TO THE FLAME: MODERNITY AND MARY WIGMAN

1886 - 1973

BY

MARY ANNE SANTOS NEWHALL

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
History

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2010

LIKE A MOTH TO THE FLAME: MODERNITY AND MARY WIGMAN 1886 - 1973

By

Mary Anne Santos Newhall

B.A., Dance, summa cum laude, University of New Mexico, 1998
M.A., Dance History and Criticism, University of New Mexico, 2000
Ph. D., History, University of New Mexico, 2010

ABSTRACT

From her birth in 1886 to her death in 1973, the life of German dancer Mary Wigman spanned the Wilhelmine Empire, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the post-war years. She stands as a seminal figure in what has come to be known as the modern dance. Her *Ausdruckstanz* or dance of expression was fundamental to the development of dance and theater in Germany and beyond. Her aesthetic ideas were disseminated across the European continent and traveled to the United States through her own touring from 1929-1932 and continued after the establishment of the Mary Wigman School in New York City in 1931. Her former pupil, Hanya Holm, brought Wigman's technique west and translated and adapted Wigman's ideas to the North American temperament.

Wigman's work also can be viewed as an assimilation of many of the major artistic innovations of her time, Romantic Symbolism, Primitivism, Expressionism and Dada art, all gathered under the banner of Modernism. As an example of the New Woman of the Twentieth Century, she embraced her own version of modernity, one made complex by the political, economic and social upheavals of her time.

Wigman carries many roles in the world of dance and theater. She stands as a trailblazer, a pedagogue and theoretician, an inspiration for many artists who followed, a conflicted figure caught in the political drama of her time, an intellectual, a mystic and the most pragmatic of arts administrators. The complexity of Wigman's persona cannot be overstated.

Fundamentally, though, Wigman was an artist, the consummate soloist for whom performance was the moment of transcendence. This dissertation provides the key facts about Wigman's life including new information about her relationship with the Third Reich and her life following World War II. It also contains a detailed discussion of her philosophy and dance aesthetics with a focus on her major works.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PHOTOS	xi
PROLOGUE: WHY MARY WIGMAN?	8
Dancing Through Space and Time	10
INTRODUCTION	16
A Word on Process	16
What the Story of Mary Wigman Has to Offer Women’s History	16
Methodology/Schema	21
A Word About the Body	24
Other Words About the Body	27
Preliminary Survey of the Literature	28
Organization/Themes/Chapters.....	35
CHAPTER ONE: GROWING UP WITH MODERNITY	43
Modernity, Modernism, Modernization.....	43
The Changing Face of German Nationalism	45
Industrialization, Class and Nation	49
Wilhelmine Women	51
Growing Up a Wilhelmine Woman	54
The Beginning of a Life in Dance.....	58
Hellerau: Germany’s First Garden City	59
The Systematizers: Making Sense of a Modern World	60
New Dance, New Space: The <i>Festspielshaus</i>	64
Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Mary Wigman’s First Teacher	67
Adolphe Appia: Architect of Light	69
The Body in Space	70
Return to Ritual on the Mountain of Truth	76
Writings on German Sexual Identity Before and During The Great War	82
Primitively Modern.....	85
CHAPTER TWO: RUPTURE — WORLD WAR I AND THE INTERWAR YEARS	91
Dancing Dada.....	94

The Crisis Year	101
Wigman's Philosophical Roots.....	106
Why a New Dance?	113
Two Streams of Modernism.....	114
Mary Wigman as Choreographer.....	116
Group Dance	117
<i>The Seven Dances of Life</i> (1921)	118
Kinesthesia and Kinetic Empathy.....	122
Class at the Mary Wigman School.....	125
Wigman's Dance Philosophy.....	128
What did Wigman Mean by Ecstasy and Form?	131
Ideas on Composition and the Choreographic Theme.....	134
Solo as Signature: <i>Hexentanz</i>	135
The Mask as Doorway	139
<i>Hexentanz</i> : A Description.....	141
CHAPTER THREE: CONTROVERSIES AND POLITICS DURING THE INTERWAR	
THROUGH WORLD WAR II	146
World Stage: Germany	146
The Body as Site of Experience and Conflict.....	148
<i>Spannung and Entspannung</i>	149
Space and the Body.....	151
Time, Music, Rhythm	152
The First Dancers' Congress.....	154
The Second Dancers' Congress	156
The Third Dancers' Congress	159
Choric Dance	161
<i>Totenmal</i> (1930).....	163
Mourning and Memorial in <i>Totenmal</i>	165
Coming to the United States	166
Seeing Mary Wigman	170

<i>Der Weg</i> (The Path) 1932	176
Returning to the New Germany	181
The <i>Reichskulturkammer</i>	183
Dancing in Dresden, 1933 – 1942.....	187
Dancing Across the Atlantic	191
From Universal Festival to Nationalist Performance.....	194
Atlantic Crossings: Germany and U.S.....	198
Germany: 1936 Olympics	200
<i>Entartete Kunst</i>	204
CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL’S END, WAR’S END AND AFTER	208
Leaving Dresden	208
Final Solo Concert	211
To Leipzig.....	214
War’s End	216
To Berlin	221
CONCLUSION - LIKE A MOTH TO THE FLAME: MARY WIGMAN, FASCISM AND MODERNITY.....	230
Mary Wigman in the Context of Women’s History.....	234
The Artistic Legacy of Mary Wigman.....	241
Epilogue	246
The Body as Site of Experience and Memory	249
APPENDIX A: RECREATING HEXENTANZ	254
APPENDIX B PRACTICAL EXERCISES.....	256
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	291

LIST OF PHOTOS

1) Mary Wigman, 1931, from program of U.S. tour.....	1
2) Dance in Stillness from the dance cycle Autumnal Dances 1937.	1
3) Abschied und Dank (Farewell and Thanksgiving), 1942.	2
4) Marie Wiegmann at 20 in Hannover, 1906	2
5) Two views of the Tessenow's Festhalle at Hellerau, c. 1911.....	3
6) Marie Wiegmann becomes Mary Wigman at Monte Verità, Summer 1914.....	3
7) Dance Around the Golden Calf – Emil Nolde, 1910.....	4
8) Mary Wigman in the first version of Hexentanz, 1914.	4
9) Totentanz der Mary Wigman, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1926/1928.	5
10) Wigman in Pastorale from Shifting Landscape, 1929.....	5
11) Wigman in Summer Dance, from Shifting Landscape, 1929.....	6
12) Dance of Niobe from Mary Wigman's farewell performance, 1942.	6
13) Mary Wigman in her West Berlin studio, 1959, with Brigitta Herrmann directly behind her.	7
14) Mary Wigman, young and old.....	7

Photos and Captions for Like a Moth to the Flame

⑤ Early 1930s from US-program 1931 —
Renger, Berlin



A RECENT PORTRAIT OF MISS WIGMAN IN HER DRESDEN STUDIO

Renger, Berlin

1) Mary Wigman, 1931, from program of U.S. tour. Taken in Dresden studio. Photo by Albert Renger-Patzsch.



Mary Wigman

„Tanz in der Stille“

Foto S. Enkelmann Berlin

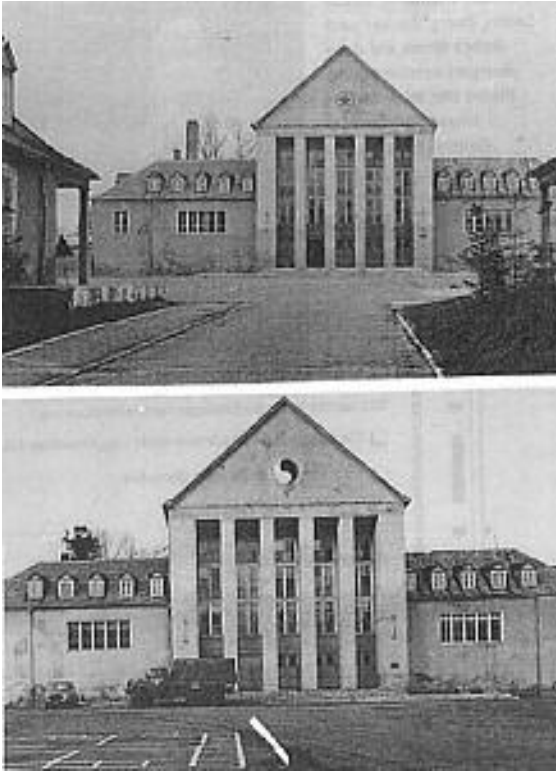
2) Dance in Stillness from the dance cycle Autumnal Dances 1937.
Photo by Siegfried Enkelman.
Courtesy Arkiv Darstellende Kunst, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.



3) Abschied und Dank (Farewell and Thanksgiving), 1942. Photo by Charlotte Rudolph. Courtesy of Deutsche Tanzarchiv Köln



4) Marie Wiegmann at 20 in Hannover, 1906. Photo by Alex Möhlen. Courtesy Deutsche Tanzarchiv Köln.



5) Two views of the Tessenow's Festhalle at Hellerau, c. 1911.



6) Marie Wiegmann becomes Mary Wigman at Monte Verità, Summer 1914.
Courtesy Tanzarchiv Berlin. Source: Wigman scrapbook.



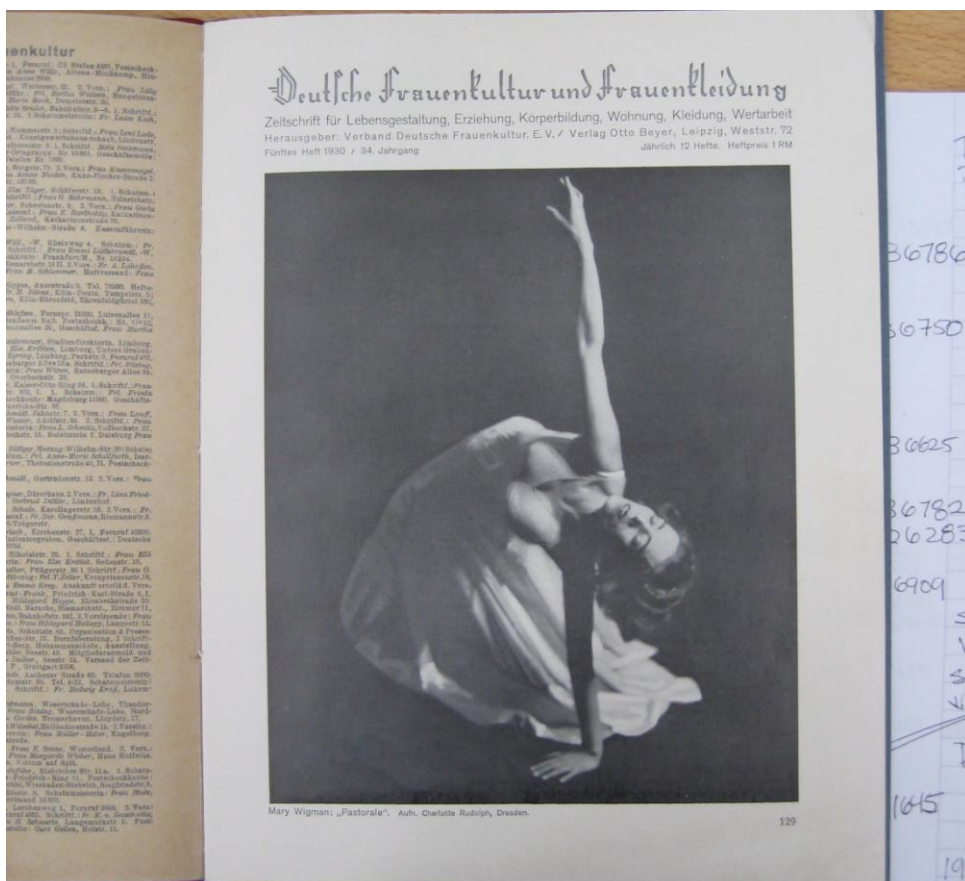
7) Dance Around the Golden Calf – Emil Nolde, 1910. Courtesy of Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst, Munich



8) Mary Wigman in the first version of Hexentanz, 1914. Photo reproduced by Rudolf von Delius, Dresden 1925. Courtesy of Tanzarchiv Leipzig.



9) Totentanz der Mary Wigman, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1926/1928. Courtesy Tanzarchiv Leipzig.



10) Wigman in Pastorale from Shifting Landscape, 1929. Photo by Charlotte Rudolph.



11) Wigman in Summer Dance, from Shifting Landscape, 1929. From program of U.S. tour.



12) Dance of Niobe from Mary Wigman's farewell performance, 1942. Courtesy Tanzarchiv Berlin.



Mary Wigman in einer Probe

13) Mary Wigman in her West Berlin studio, 1959, with Brigitta Herrmann directly behind her. Courtesy Tanzarchiv Berlin.



14) Mary Wigman, young and old.

“*Strong and convincing art has never arisen from theories.*” - Mary Wigman

Prologue: Why Mary Wigman?

There is a picture of Mary Wigman that was used in the publicity for her American tour in 1931. In that photo, she looks unwaveringly into the camera’s eye, her lips parted as if to speak. Her shoulders are shifted forward like she was preparing to stand. It is as though she was caught mid-movement. And it seems that she was always in motion, whether gesturing to students in the studio or boarding a train to tour the stages of Europe and the United States. She holds a cigarette between the index and middle fingers of her right hand. The practiced ease with which she holds it is mildly surprising and suggestive of a cultivated rakishness. She appears relaxed and confident and why shouldn’t she be? Preparing to return to the United States for a second series of concerts, she had been proclaimed “The Priestess of the Dance” in the press and welcomed with open arms by nascent modern dance communities on both sides of the Atlantic. I found this photo among the papers of my own dance mentor. Eve Gentry became a pioneer of dance modernism in the United States in the 1930s. That she saw Wigman on a stage in San Francisco and was so moved she dared undertake her own life as an artist speaks to Wigman’s influence at least within the smaller dance cosmos. In Germany, her reputation as an important artist was consolidated by the time the photo was taken. Given the continuous turmoil that characterized the Weimar Republic, this sort of professional accomplishment was no small feat. In the 1930s, there were many emerging women artists in the fields of painting, film, music and the dance. But there was only one Mary Wigman. Looking into those steady, determined eyes, we see the New Woman even if we didn’t know her before.

A second photo reveals a changed woman. It was taken in 1937 from her choreography, *Dance in the Stillness*, a solo from her cycle titled *Autumnal Dances*. Wigman’s life had been altered remarkably since that hopeful year of 1931. Her last American tour ended in January 1933 and she had returned to a fundamentally changed Germany under the chancellorship of Adolph Hitler. By 1937, Wigman had fallen from favor with the government. Her funding cut and without a performing group she

continued to make solo dances out of inner necessity rather than for huge audiences. In the photo, her focus is drawn inward, head bowed. Her hands reach upward, curving and carving the space before her. It is as if we catch her in a very personal reckoning.

Wigman wrote that this cycle coincided with the awareness that she was entering the autumn of her life.

As finale, *Dance in the Stillness* came – a soundless pacing, a listening-to-oneself, and a wary tracking down of all that was fading away. But at the same time, there was a tentative groping into what the future might hold, with its covering veils only slowly lifting.

These dances [*Autumnal Dances*] were created at a time of political unrest. The anathema of “degenerate art” had long since been pronounced about my work. Everything demanded utter caution. I have never known “being careful” in my work and have always gone my own way as I had to.¹

In 1942, Wigman concluded her performing career. A photo of her final solo, *Farewell and Thanksgiving*, shows her in profile, her arms outstretched reaching both forward and behind. Her body bends deeply at the waist, head thrown back and throat open. Her movement speaks of a yielding to greater forces. It is a response to the space around her, which had always been her metaphor for the larger world. Yet there is a dignity in the lift of the chest and the solid placement of the feet against the earth. It is a conscious surrender. Wigman wrote:

The year was 1942. War. Traveling became troublesome. Drums and gongs had to be left at home. Also the big trunks could no longer be taken along. The costumes, always cared for with particular love, had to be packed in suitcases that could be carried more easily. Railroad sections were obstructed. Trains had to be shunted to side tracks. You sat and waited, silent and motionless. You listened with an uneasy heart to the roaring of the airplane motors, flying toward a goal unknown to you. Friend or foe? Was there much difference any longer? Those beautiful silvery birds, actually created to span distances, to connect, to communicate! And now only tools of destruction.

It became cold in the compartments. The heating no longer functioned. There was no light. When the glimmer of the last cigarette went out, all life seemed to have died in the crowded room.²

¹ Mary Wigman, *The Language of Dance* (trans. Walter Sorell) (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 80.

² Wigman, *Language*, 87-88.

Since Wigman's writing, many have examined the critical rupture of German memory and identity following World War II. Historian Konrad Jarausch has eloquently termed it a shattered past. Millions of lives were lost and a terrible genocide left in its wake stories beyond number. Most of these stories will never be told.

Why should we care about a woman who dedicated her life to the pursuit of dance in the midst of such suffering? How can we find a measure of understanding for such a figure? What does her story hold as a cautionary tale to those coming after? Perhaps her tragic flaw was that she did not speak out against the regime when she held prominence on the national and international stage. Mary Wigman was a formidable artist who was caught up and shaped by much greater events in the larger world. Her story is of a woman who navigated immense difficulties and developed an individual strategy to survive through the political, social and economic changes in twentieth century Germany. It is also a story of the sustaining force of art. Through a rebellious youth, to professional success, from choreographing for the 1936 Olympics to artistic exile, teaching, malnourished and in bombed-out buildings, Mary Wigman endured. And she myopically continued to see her life in terms of her art. German filmmaker Leni Reifenstahl was a dancer first and a student of Wigman's before she was injured and turned to a career as a film actor and finally director. She too claimed that her focus remained entirely on her creative work even after the horrible actions of the Nazi government was revealed. Does Wigman's life offer an alternative telling of such a woman involved in cultural production during the Third Reich? At the end of her life Wigman wrote, "There has always been only one theme around which my thoughts circled like moths around a light: *Dance*."³

Dancing Through Space and Time

In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" completed in Spring 1940, Walter Benjamin describes the Angel of History as a conflicted figure: trapped in an iconic angelic body with humanized emotions, wings stretched taut and battered by great winds

³ Wigman, *Language*, 8.

that represent the march of time.⁴ Benjamin balances his angel amidst the singular ongoing storm we call progress and that the Greeks had named Kronos, that great god of time who devours all his children. Since the Greeks, *áγγελος* the angel has always served as a messenger. Benjamin pinned his angel in a perpetual stasis between past and future. His words were built on careful study of the draftsmanship of Paul Klee, particularly the *Angel of History* (1920), which he acquired in 1921.⁵ Within the emphatic modernist break with the past, in the relentless march ahead, Benjamin found a futile desire to fix the things of the past that have been broken — a desire that progress by its very nature must deny.

Perhaps Nietzsche's eternal return could come around to free Benjamin's Angel from unending tension and suspension. Just as the Angel, looking toward the past, felt the future at his back, we stand stymied and burdened by the horrors of the last century, commingled with dread of what will come. We long to use hindsight to foresee and thus avert further disaster. It is as though we can hear Benjamin's Angel heaving great sighs and the ragged tips of his wings snapping in the wind.⁶

Why begin a discussion of dance modernism with a consideration of this poor angel: a seraph grounded by gravity and pulled in two directions? He was neither cherub nor avenging archangel. Benjamin's angel appeared more flesh (perhaps closer to Benjamin's skin) than spirit. That material flesh is held simultaneously by time and space, inhabiting the conjoined territory in which the dance lives. Granted, a work of art can gain a conceptual and metaphoric life beyond mere physical location, but the plastic arts of painting, sculpture, collage and their permutations, all physically endure, and take up space, in the corporeal world. Music in contrast, is built of time. And while that time can be captured and ordered through notation (which does exist in space) it is left to the moment of performance to unite time and space. Even theater has the written text of script to hold a place in space outside the moment of performance. But ephemeral dance

⁴ "Theses on the Philosophy of History" was first published in German in 1950 and translated to English in 1968. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 253-264.

⁵ O.K. Werckmeister, "Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee and the Angel of History" *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 102-125.

⁶ Benjamin, *Illuminations*.

uses the very elements of time and space as raw materials. Without the marriage of time and space the dance does not come into being. Thus it would seem that Benjamin's Angel could be viewed as a Dancer of History.

Mary Wigman assuredly would have identified with the Angel's plight, caught between counter directions of the past and the future. For Wigman this tension was performed as bodily kinetic conflict wherein the muscles respond with increased tension due to the magnetic pull of two opposing poles, up or down, forward or backward. As the modernist painters had gone to their easels to invent a way to see their art anew by breaking the rules of perspective, color and form, just so the modern dancers went into the studio to try to identify the origins of movement in the modern body. Following Wigman's lead, American dancer Martha Graham built a dance technique based on the concepts of contraction and release. In a sequence of muscular action that formed the basis of nearly every movement in her repertory, Graham's contraction pulled the abdominal muscles that form the core of the body inward and upward like a punch to the gut. The subsequent release resulted from a very physical response, as if the body was fighting with itself or outside forces. Doris Humphrey would claim fall and recovery as the essential impulse in the modern dance art. Humphrey identified muscular suspension and release as bodily evidence of the human condition. Humphrey called it the arc between two deaths. And even Isadora Duncan found that her neo-Classical movement was driven by the inhalation and exhalation of the human breath. But it was only Wigman's synthesis that accommodated the fundamentals of all of these innovations. Using the terms *Anspannung* and *Abspannung*, she found a range of movement ideas arguably equal to Kandinsky's groundbreaking analysis of form and aesthetics.⁷ For Wigman, tension and release described a continuum of muscular and emotive

⁷ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1977, reprint of 1914 edition), 42-3. Kandinsky's Hegelian formulation of color as being born and dying between two poles is analogous to Wigman's statement of how tension and release create the kinetic empathy through which the artist's body communicates to the audience. She often called her dance "the fire between two poles" of audience and performer. The canvas and the dancing body might be seen as identical altars for consecration of the wedding between feeling and form.

possibilities that encompassed the range of human experience and so could communicate those experiences through the dance itself.

German dancer Hanya Holm brought Wigman's ideas to the United States in 1931 as director of the newly opened New York Wigman School. She mused, "Nobody here [in America] talked about space until I started that whole ball rolling. Now everybody uses the word (but) in a different way."⁸ Of Wigman's approach Holm wrote, "In her dances she alternately grapples with space as an opponent and caresses it as if it were a living sentient thing."⁹ Martha Graham's mentor Louis Horst had tried to define Wigman's preoccupation with space:

Mary Wigman conceived of space as a factor, like time, with which to compose. The American dancer, living in a new developing country, did not feel the enmity of limiting space, was less conscious of his use of it.¹⁰

While Horst was considering the contrast between U.S. and German sensibilities, Maurice Merleau-Ponty placed the body/space relationship in a context that was more universal and closer to Wigman's work:

Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument; and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humoral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things.¹¹

⁸ Hanya Holm and Marcia Siegel, "A Conversation with Hanya Holm," *Ballet Review* 9:1 (Spring 1981): 24.

⁹ Holm in Hanya Holm, "The Mary Wigman I Knew." In Sorell, Walter, ed. *The Dance Has Many Faces* (Pennington, N.J.: A Capella Books, 1992), 161.

¹⁰ Horst in Janet Soares, *Louis Horst: Musician in a Dancer's World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 18. Horst (1884-1964), was a pianist, composer and theorist, and served as the musical director for Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham. He exerted a huge influence on the emerging modern dance and on Graham in particular. In 1934 he founded the journal *Dance Observer* and in 1937 published *Pre-classical Dance Forms*, which was required reading for many early students of the dance.

¹¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty* (Alden L. Fisher, ed.) (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), 369.

In *Capital Cities at War*, Jon Lawrence proposed the notion that when comparing London, Paris and Berlin during World War I, a more complex view of political affairs in these cities is possible through the consideration of politics as a pre-eminently cultural practice.¹² In the same volume, Jay Winter asserted that cultural history seeks to uncover representations of communal opinion that are produced by individuals and then revealed in the public sphere rather than a straightforward approach that employs measurable statistics to uncover patterns of consumption, public health, wages, military mobilization, work and reproductive legislation to ascertain political practices. Lawrence made the case that public space provided an important and renewed site for the conflated performance of politics and cultures in the first half of the twentieth century.¹³

Wigman's sense of the danced space, Merleau-Ponty's relationship between space and the body and Lawrence's aggregation of the public space, cultural practice and politics are all in concert. The collision of politics and art, the individual and the masses are all part of a performed modernism. Jay Winter acknowledged that identities are performative and that they are expressed and reiterated in public at particular sites and times.¹⁴ Certainly, the work of a concert artist such as Wigman reflected her individual identity but also revealed her performance as a new perception of the western world. Dance, space and time are inextricably linked. The body must move within space and thus creates a particular kind of time, either through rhythmic impulse or arrhythmic movements and gestures. Wigman was born into a world that was experiencing huge ruptures in established notions of the certainty of time and the very nature of space itself. The nature of time has been mutable and linked to social notions of place and destiny that often have been reflected by the art of each era. For example, medieval theater had no depictions of historical time. There were but two kinds of time: earthly time and the

¹² Jon Lawrence, "Public Space, Political Space," in Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919, Volume 2: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 280.

¹³ Ibid. 280-1.

¹⁴ Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919, Volume 2: A Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

afterlife.¹⁵ By the 1880s, scientific and military communities argued for the establishment of a standardized time stretching across the United States to Western Europe.¹⁶ Modernization of transportation in the form of the railroads actually changed the way time and space were perceived. In 1870, the United States had more than 80 time changes that the railroad had to accommodate between San Francisco and New York.¹⁷ The speed of rail travel actually shrunk the time between destinations and consequently space grew closer. In 1884 twenty-five countries met at the Prime Meridian Conference and established Greenwich as the zero meridian.¹⁸ This determined the length of the day, divided the earth into twenty-four time zones one hour apart, and fixed a precise beginning of the universal day.¹⁹ The most outspoken supporter for standard time was the German Count Helmuth von Moltke who appealed to the German Parliament in 1891 to adopt a time that would unite the country divided by five separate time zones.²⁰ Thus the organizing of time helped to define the space that encompassed the young nation-state of Germany. Germany along with Austria-Hungary and Italy all adopted standard time in 1893.²¹ Mary Wigman was nine years old when time literally changed.

¹⁵ The religious cycle plays and the secular morality plays provide clear examples of the medieval drama's depiction of time. This representation of time becomes heightened during the plague years reaching an apex with the "Dance of Death" dramas during the fifteenth century in Germany and in England. For more regarding this subject see Oscar Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968).

¹⁶ For a broad and brilliant analysis of the effect of speed on modern culture see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), particularly chapter 5, 109-130.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

Introduction

A Word on Process

This dissertation came about in a backwards fashion, as a breech birth of sorts in the academic order of things. It began as a commission from Routledge for a book that would reveal Mary Wigman as an artist who changed the performance field through her teaching and creative work. That book was published in January 2009 as a volume in Routledge's Performance Practitioner Series. The larger project of this dissertation is the location of a major artist into the historic record using her story as a prism through which to view the events of her time, events that both affected her life and work and to which she contributed as a cultural producer. Cultural historians have sought to analyze the arts as indicator of political events, and social and intellectual movements. In this effort, mass culture can serve as a tangible representative of mass experience. Wigman's initial impulse for making art was grounded in the dawning idea that individual expression could be a vocation, a calling to participate in the inner life of a people and the construction of a nation. What is unique about Wigman is that she persevered at this mission through the length of her life. And she lived a long time, from 1886 through 1973. The other crucial factor is the location of her work in Germany and the United States, as well as her cultural influence, all reflecting social, political and aesthetic changes that traveled across geographical space and time.

What the Story of Mary Wigman Has to Offer Women's History

This writing is undertaken with respect for the development of women's history writing over the past four decades, the same decades that have passed since Wigman's death. In 1980 Gerder Lerner identified the task of women's history as an "effort to find 'missing women' and put them into the empty spaces of traditional history."²² Lerner continued that the early "contribution" stage of women's history writing was a necessary but compensatory step to placing women within the context of universal history. Two years earlier, Ellen Carol DuBois had published *Feminism and Suffrage* and a new women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s had broken fertile ground for a fresh

²² Lerner's pamphlet, *Teaching Women's History* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1981), 3, was a teaching manual really, that grew from a 1980 gathering of the Committee on Women's Historians within the AHA.

effort in the research and writing of women as historical subjects and as authors. Lerner was writing at the outset of an explosive growth in social research that endeavored to add dimension to the historical record by including the actions of those deemed outside the events that had occupied the earlier grand narratives. This writing included the lives of women not mainly attached to “great” men, as well as groups marginalized or ignored due to race or class. As women entered the telling of social and political movements generated “from below,” new perspectives on relationships to power — whether powerful political actors or potent ideologies — were uncovered in ways that began to dissolve and reinterpret the traditional separation of the private women’s realm and the male public domain. Sex and gender emerged as analytical categories to history and gender theorists transformed the way historians problematized the studies of women and of men. Lerner’s statement that “There is no women’s history separate and unconnected from men’s history” has continued to evolve.²³

Contemporary historians such as Joan Wallach Scott have engaged gender as a natural extension of postmodern Foucauldian efforts that use history to construe present concerns and occurrences in relation to hierarchies of meaning and the operation of power in the world. Globalization has long been a factor in the writing of history, whether termed that or considered within subsets of colonization, imperialism, industrialization or the many ideological “isms” that have shaped modern societies. In her introduction to the 2005 volume of *Women’s History in Global Perspective*, Bonnie Smith acknowledges the current call for a “fresh global perspective in women’s and gender history.”²⁴ Thus, non-Western historians along with historians from the West promise to inhabit a new post-modern geography that can construct an alternative array of questions to redraw the historical landscape.²⁵ As in all fields, iconoclasts often

²³ Ibid., 2.

²⁴ Bonnie G. Smith, ed. *Women’s History in Global Perspective*, vol. 3 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 3.

²⁵ Smith reaffirms that the “dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of state socialism” have necessarily reframed historical research in the United States. Ibid. Certainly a global perspective commands multiple points of view and could claim that history is best examined by “home-grown” specialists in particularly non- U.S. and thus non-hegemonic fields.

become the icons unseated by new modes of thinking. So too, the feminist scholarship that has guided western women's history — fueled by demands for gender equity and particular freedoms and practices — must respond to the evolving field and new seats of intellectual power within that field.²⁶

Mary Wigman came into her profession as one of the first female choreographers to find success in the field of Western professional dance. It can be argued that dance, more than any other field, was characterized by female participation under male patriarchal control until the twentieth century. Men shaped the very material of women's bodies in dance through developing technique practices and choreographies. Beginning with the court of Louis XIV, men had been the unchallenged creators of dance academies, companies and the very works themselves.²⁷ The “ballet rats” of the Garnier Opera were chorines who often danced hungry and were expected to attend to the stage door “johnnies,” both to build patronage and to supplement their dancing work economically in order to survive.²⁸ The foyer that Degas painted is at once an opulent space and a container for this subtext, barely concealed in his artistry. Patriarchal control and a male visioning of woman continued through the experiments of the Romantic ballet in the mid-nineteenth century, where men like Théophile Gautier wrote librettos that placed women such as Giselle as either otherworldly beings or emotional vessels that could be broken, and dispatched into madness.²⁹ Even the celebrated Marie Taglioni claimed that she was molded by the relentless direction of her father.³⁰ And that claim

²⁶ Granted, Smith is referring primarily to how history is taught and who writes the texts for that teaching. However, such training will clearly influence the writing and researching of history in the future.

²⁷ Ramsay Burt, *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, “Race,” and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). Also see Ramsay Burt. “The Trouble with the Male Dancer . . .” in Ann Daly and Ann Cooper Albright, eds. *Moving History, Dancing Cultures* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

²⁸ Ivor Guest, *Ballet of the Second Empire* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950). Also see Ivor Guest, *The Romantic Ballet in Paris* (London: Dance Books, 1980).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ For more on Taglioni see Lynn Garafola, ed., *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England/Wesleyan University Press, 1997).

somehow made her celebrity more acceptable. The Imperial Russian ballet elevated the ballerina to a pinnacle or pedestal that was constructed by the tsar and Marius Petipa. The revolt of modernism brought aesthetic and economic changes as concert dance was enfolded into the larger purpose of market capitalism.

Yet, even in the modernist explosion of the Ballets Russes, the detonation was lit by men the likes of Serge Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky and Vaslav Nijinsky.³¹ But with the Ballets Russes, something was beginning to break open. Not a choreographer but an impresario, Diaghilev encouraged a stable of brilliant dance makers including Anna Pavlova and Nijinsky's sister Bronislava, who earned her place in Western dance history as the first female to choreograph for such a company. Thus, Wigman did have forebears in Nijinska and Isadora Duncan. In cultural history volumes, Duncan is often the model for the "New Woman" whose barefoot and uncorseted body symbolizes a freedom akin to emancipation but not quite. Duncan remained a romantic figure, most remembered for her beauty in interpreting the great musical works and harkening to the Classical ideal. While Duncan blazed the trail for the individual woman soloist, Wigman followed to claim an art that was modernist at its core. Duncan remained beautiful even in her dances of revolution and loss. Frequently more grotesque than pleasing, Wigman's aesthetic was counter to the ideals that had defined beauty and the dancer to that point.

Her artistic innovations are many and include:

- Her unique concept of space as an invisible and truly sensual partner in the dance
- Her rejection of ballet technique that was also a rejection of traditional values of beauty and what was deemed appropriate thematic material for the stage
- Her radical ideas about the relationship between music and the dance
- Her use of theatrical elements, notably text, to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*
- Her fundamental belief in and demand for a modern emphasis on the transcendent nature and spiritual purpose of dance

³¹ Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

This dissertation originated in a foreign territory of its own. There is no escaping the boundary laid down between the physical language of dance and scholarly discourse. This writing is undertaken with the awareness that it is a transitional step between dance writing and history and as such explores a borderland. The difference between the territories has to do principally with where the authorial eye is focused. Changing the focus brings different issues and evidence to the fore. Thus, the artifacts may be aesthetic products, political events or social movements. Always, these things travel in tandem. The wedding of dance and history occurs naturally. Of all the arts, history remains the greatest drama of all. Written by men and by women, that drama permeates all performance onstage. In this writing, the worlds of politics, social movements, philosophy and aesthetics all collide.³² If this were a dance it would need smoother transitions. As a history writing, further integration is needed between historical events and Wigman's actions. But this dissertation was undertaken with the desire to wed dancerly body knowledge with the rigor of historical inquiry. It was spawned by the belief that the two fields can inform each other. The hope is that it will serve as a foundation for my future writing. Mary Lowenthal Felstiner's elegantly innovative telling of Charlotte Salomon's biography in *To Paint Her Life* stands as a pioneering work in that genre. It is not only a masterpiece of Holocaust studies; it is also a work of impeccable crafting and searing beauty. A true telling of Wigman's story would require such a reflection and immersion into the drama that was her life. A second story emerged in the process of writing this dissertation that also demands telling. That is the transmission of German dance ideas to the United States, a physical artifact of Progressive Era exchanges that transcended borders. My hope is that this dissertation will serve further efforts to explore these ideas.

³² As a branch of philosophy, any conversation about arts and culture coincides naturally with philosophical ideas. And Mary Wigman was greatly influenced by philosophical thinkers. Her own writing on the dance is really a philosophy set in practical terms. In this, I believe that Wigman along with many of her cohort were truly dancing philosophers.

Methodology/Schema

Research for this dissertation has included a broad range of sources. Writings on nationalism, gender, turn-of-the-century culture, modernity and its impact on cultural forms and its relationship to politics, social welfare and motherhood, fascism and the Holocaust, while not always obvious reference points, have all served to inform this work. Along with secondary sources, primary source material, in the form of Wigman's diaries and writings, serve as a foundation for this dissertation.³³ I have yet to analyze her diaries following World War II but hope to do so for future projects.³⁴ However, the correspondence between Wigman and Kurt Schwaen and Schwaen's diaries offer insights into the period from 1940 through 1949 and are employed in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

The very medium that a dance artist uses, the human body, can incite a prurient reaction rendering the body vaguely unmanageable and somehow disreputable. Some of this thinking is grounded in historical reality. This reflects a normative backlash to the questionable sexual virtue of chorines employed by the Paris Opera in the late nineteenth century to the skirt dancers of twentieth century vaudeville.³⁵ Wigman and her cohorts were dedicated to making a new identity for the dancer beyond that as a purveyor of entertainment. In 1927 Wigman wrote:

The longing for self-expression so characteristic of our age is driving today's girls to seek satisfaction in dancing. In response to this compelling impulse, they flock to join the world of rhythm regardless of whether or not they are qualified by

³³ Mary Wigman was a poetic writer. The drama inherent in her performance is reflected in her writing about what she considered crucial in the new dance. Her primary writing available in English have been gathered in two volumes edited and translated by Walter Sorell: *The Language of Dance*, from 1966; and Mary Wigman, *The Mary Wigman Book: Her Writings* (ed. and trans. Walter Sorell) (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973). Sorell also collected these and other writings of Wigman in *Ein Vermächtnis*, 1986. Another key source of her writings was Rudolph Bach's 1933 compilation, *Das Mary Wigman: Werk*, which served as a foundation for my reconstruction of Wigman's 1926 master dance work, *Hexentanz*.

³⁴ These are housed at *Archiv Darstellendekunst* Berlin. Her papers and personal effects are spread among the archive in Berlin, the *Tanzarchiv* in Köln, and the *Tanzarchiv* in Leipzig. My research included visits to all three.

³⁵ See Joellen Meglin, "Feminism and Fetishism: *La Révolte des femmes* and Women's Liberation in France in the 1830s," in Garofola, *Rethinking the Sylph*, 69-90.

nature to adopt it as their medium of expression. Many refer to this deep-seated restlessness of the modern woman as a “fad,” and perhaps there are quite a few who follow the trend of dancing and physical culture in the light of its being considered fashionable . . . However, there is a fundamental seriousness in woman’s conception of dancing which has nothing in common with the frivolous interests attributed to her by cheap and ugly minds.³⁶

That a woman would place herself willingly in front of the traditionally male gaze has made the female dancer a curious and suspicious suspect, subject, object and author.³⁷ The paradoxically corporeal substance and yet numinous identity of the dancer has proved understandably problematic. Gender historians have broached the performative in an effort to expand the discourse and some have found the dancer a useful figure. Rarely do these writings come from a specialist in the dance art. Such writing mirrors the sort of hegemonic appropriation of non-Western history by Western historians that stands in contrast to new prescriptions for research in the field. To use the performed experience of a dance as an archival artifact is a proposal for an inclusion of the body text as evidence of the linkage between corporeal and intellectual knowledge. Thus, the stage and studio become archival repositories that require a specific training and methodological approach. I propose to use that approach as a resident of the particular province of the dance.

From the outset, I employed an approach that included three years of preparatory research and studio work to reconstruct Wigman’s work, particularly her signature solo *Hexentanz* (1926), along with evidences of her pedagogical practice. This method of embodied research proposes an informed reading of her physical technique as an additional analysis of primary material. Instead of a telling of history from the bottom up, it is a call for writing from the inside out, the inside being the sensation of the body and the outside being the audience and, by extension, the larger world. This is the very process of performance.³⁸ Over the past fifteen years, ongoing performances of the *Hexentanz* have allowed for my continued embodied research supported by ongoing

³⁶ Mary Wigman, *The Dancing Times* London (November 1927).

³⁷ The identity of the male dancer is yet another fertile subject.

³⁸ In *Capital Cites at War*, Jay Winter refers to Judith Butler’s premise that identities are performative and as such they are expressed and reiterated, 4.

study.³⁹ What this dissertation also proposes is an informed reading of her physical technique as a crucial, additional analysis of primary material.

This follows Wigman's own assertion that she did indeed create a language through her dances. Albeit abstract, this approach to a danced text reveals a great deal about her philosophy and worldview, along with the thought processes of those who came to see her perform (and wrote about it) and those who supported or subverted her career through the 1920s when she was on the cutting edge of danced modernism, through her performances under the Third Reich and finally following World War II. In some ways, the body text offers information beyond Wigman's guarded autobiographical writings. This way of working calls for a radical methodology that is fundamentally a reading of her body from a specialist's point of view. Wigman proposed that she performed through kinetic empathy that could be comprehended viscerally by the bodies of those watching. This empathetic reading of her body language was not static but changed depending upon who was witnessing her performances and where she performed. Only by attempting to place the corporeal body into her practice and considering the corpus of the community of observers, can a researcher begin to truly understand her story.

³⁹ The question looms, can any re-creation of a dance give genuine insight into the original? I would argue that in all research and writing, the author's identity is inevitably present and involved in interpretation of all materials. The challenge is to use hard evidence to support any theoretical construct. To this end, I attempted in my studio work to discern and come as close as possible to Wigman's clearly documented process and methodology, while acknowledging the limitations of such an undertaking.

A Word About the Body⁴⁰

By placing Wigman's body practice at the center of this dissertation, I am attempting to give concrete substance to "a field almost as amorphous and expansive as memory studies" as Kathleen Canning describes the history of the body.⁴¹ Canning states that the "body remains a largely unexplicated and undertheorized *historical* concept."⁴² Not only does this statement have enormous implications for the present enterprise of examining Wigman's life and work, it could serve as a signpost for those looking for pathways in the growing field of dance studies. The larger, more established fields of gender and women's studies have approached the body as a discursive site built by society in a Foucauldian process initiated by regulatory norms and practices. In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler changed the discourse about the body to reconsider how society's normative standards shape identities and how identities are formed by reiterative performances. Performative practices create gender roles through a process of social reiteration as opposed to limiting sexual identities to binary biological absolutes.⁴³ Canning points out that the discursive body is primarily an abstraction and as such remains superficial in many instances. On the other hand, discursive and "material"

⁴⁰ The earliest roots of the word Body come appropriately from the Old High German *potah*. Traces of *potah* have survived into modern dialects but it is otherwise without known relatives in other Indo-European languages. The use of body to mean 'person in general,' as in "somebody" or "nobody," got fully under way in the 14th century. Perhaps this reflects the tendency of the medieval, pre-Cartesian mind not to separate the corporeal from the spiritual. For a word so central to people's perception of themselves, body is remarkably isolated linguistically. John Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1990). The same source posits that the term choreography seems to have originated from the French *chorégraphie*. This derived from the Greek *khoreiã* or 'dance,' a derivative of *khorós*, source of the English chorus, choir or carol, in all of which movement is united with song. More pointedly, the *choragus* was a term of honor for those prominent individuals who funded the great Greek dance dramas of the Dithyramb dedicated to Dionysus. Nietzsche gave a more modern view of these earliest roots of theater in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, and the Case of Wagner* (trans. Walter Kaufman) (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

⁴¹ Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 115.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 168 (emphasis is Canning's).

⁴³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

bodies have proven “problematically concrete, undertheorized or cast too simply in terms of resistance/subjugation.”⁴⁴ Thus, to use Mary Wigman’s physical practice as archival evidence is tricky business. I am aware of Canning’s cautionary advice: “The presumption that bodily experiences are in some sense material, in the sense of physicality — even if also informed by and mediated through discourses- is still likely to produce charges of essentialism.”⁴⁵ However, the body that is trained through dedication to the dance art is a unique construction much like the specialized athletic body. Yet the training of the dancer’s body has expression as an ultimate goal, which adds complexity to the process of physical dance training. Canning also calls for reflection on the “potentialities and limitations of the concept of the body [and] on the methodological implications of placing bodies at the heart of historical investigations.”⁴⁶ To develop a coherent methodology that will facilitate such uses of the body, Canning dissects the diversity of bodies that have coexisted in her own writing. These designations are useful in discerning that there are different ways of representing the body that can be conceptualized and articulated and thus validate scholarly investigations. They include: *the social body*, used by reformers (often women) and state authorities to contain the changes and dangers engendered by industrialization; *rhetorical and textual bodies* that symbolized the moral and hygienic perils of industrial society; and *bodies as objects of regulation and tutelage*, mostly by welfare states. Finally, Canning describes *bodies as sites of experience*, “like pregnancy, childbirth, illness, overwork and exploitation.”⁴⁷ However, the consideration of the body proposed in this dissertation is in another category altogether: the rhetorical creative body that is consciously cultivated and developed as a persuasive and eloquent vehicle for public communication as well as personal expression.

What does this mean for Mary Wigman? Her body simultaneously occupied various sites. It was the source of cultural production, the location of her negotiation with

⁴⁴ Canning, *Gender History*, 173.

⁴⁵ Canning, *Gender History*, 115.

⁴⁶ Canning, *Gender History*, 170. As she points out, “Thus the repudiation of sex in favor of gender left sex inextricably linked to body and body stigmatized with biologism and essentialism.” *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

the state, the place of a literally physicalized modernity and the text of her individual experience. It is impossible to tell her story without reading her body. In this, I posit that she was an active agent in the construction of her body through the development of her art, rather than one who allowed her body to be a passive mediator of social inscriptions.⁴⁸ By construction of her body, I mean the ongoing and ever-changing development of muscle and bone into a precise, expressive instrument as well as a performative identity. The idea of performance is made equally complex in Wigman's case, because it took place on an actual stage and was her livelihood, as well as the site where she made her world-view manifest through her body.

For Wigman, the space between private sphere and public sphere was traversed by her body practice. My purpose then, is to address her individual body as a location of experience to be used for historical analysis within her biography.⁴⁹ The Cartesian division of mind from body was not an operative concept for Wigman. Everything that she made, thought and experienced was through her body. It was also the source of her rhetorical practice. It is the foundation of all of her writing even if it is not mentioned as such. Her body was the dance as she conceived of it. She wrote: "The dance is speech, communication language of the body in motion. The medium of expression is the body. It is the vessel from which we pour out our desires for expression. It is interpreter, herald, instrument."⁵⁰ That Wigman was able to conceive of her body in her particular way was a product of what Isabel Hull terms "a modern person's sense of self . . . [and as such] must always have a strong bodily anchor to it."⁵¹ Wigman's approach to the body is inextricably attached to her response to her world. Walter Sorell wrote, "All her dance creations emerged from her awareness that her body was the visible manifestation of a

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ To this end, I accept Caroline Walker Bynum's argument that any use of the body as source material "operates on the basis of 'totally diverse assumptions' and definitions of the body within and across different fields." Caroline Walker Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Autumn 1995): 5.

⁵⁰ Mary Wigman, *Composition Brochure*, 1925.

⁵¹ Hull in Canning, *Gender History*, 177.

being that exists only as the truthful mirror of humanity.”⁵² In this, Wigman’s body remains an artifact of modernity even after the initial flame of her particular kind of modernism was doused by the regression of Nazism and the despair at the end of World War II.⁵³ In her letters to Kurt Schwaen in the late 1940s she still makes a claim for the relevance of her dance art to speak to the modern world.⁵⁴ In truth, her choreography and teaching methodology changed very little from her early career to her final years in Berlin. The themes for her dances in the 1950s resemble those of her first concerts. That her artistic vision changed so little over time is a topic that remains rich for future discussion.

Other Words About the Body

How dance history and the philosophy of the moving body fit within scholarly discourse is part of the inquiry undertaken here. Dance art is often overlooked by art historians in discussions of the more material modernist arts and even in dance’s sister arts of music and theater, with their concrete notations and manuscripts. It is often dismissed as entertainment or a marker of popular culture rather than an intellectual artifact, perhaps due to the pervasive prurience that questions the possibility of a thinking body. Others decline a rigorous examination of the field, likely because of limited exposure to the more profound branches of the dance art. While dance resides in the ephemeral body, movement artists such as Wigman developed concrete techniques that contained all of the originality and innovation employed by Kandinsky, Schönberg, Joyce or Brecht. And in Wigman’s case, the intellectual questioning that mirrored that of Husserl, Heidegger and the later phenomenologists. The omission of the dance art from the familiar modernist family tree has spawned a curious phenomenon in this era of postmodern discourse and critical conceptual gymnastics. The body has emerged as a way to cross the “enormous gap” between what Eugene Gendlin calls “experiencing and

⁵² Walter Sorell, *Dance in Its Time: The Emergence of an Art Form* (New York: Doubleday, 1981).

⁵³ Isabel Hull, “The Body as Historical Experience: Review of Recent Works by Barbara Duden,” *Central European History* 28:1 (1995), cited by Canning, 177.

⁵⁴ Schwaen, letter from Wigman, 12 September 1945, 18. For text of this letter see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

concepts.”⁵⁵ The term “embody” is used in nearly every scholarly field, while artistic choices made by artists in the process of art-making and even discursive decisions made by academic writers often are described by the term “choreographed,” which had always referred specifically and uniquely to the arrangement of dances and the movement of living human bodies. In *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty described the body as the site of sense perception in a physical interaction between the embodied perceiver and the world he perceives. Each acts on the other: the world by supplying opportunities for agency to the perceiver, the perceiver by endowing his environment with meaning and form. When Merleau-Ponty writes that we can “sense” the space behind our backs, the dancer responds, “Of course!” Most particularly, Wigman called space her invisible partner and used it as a living, responsive entity with which she danced. Isadora Duncan echoed the same notion when she claimed that she never danced alone, even in a solo.⁵⁶ This approach to performance was unique to the great dance soloists of the early twentieth century. It is not simply a way of being on stage; rather it is linked to a particular physical vitality that supports the transcendent experience, thus Wigman’s term Absolute dance. It was a particular way of being in the world.

Preliminary Survey of the Literature

Since the groundbreaking work of Claudia Koonz, historians have labored to uncover the conflicted identities of women under the Third Reich.⁵⁷ Issues of marriage and family, reproductive rights, labor rights, suffrage and emancipation have been consistent themes in the consideration of these women’s lives. More recently, Michelle Mouton reviewed the efforts of the conservative *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* to unite women in 1919 across political parties in the quest for an “organized motherhood” as a

⁵⁵ Eugene Gendlin, “Beyond Postmodernism: From Concepts through Experiencing,” in Roger Frie, ed. *Understanding Experience: Psychotherapy and Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 100.

⁵⁶ Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York: Liveright, 1927).

⁵⁷ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987). I will return to historians’ examinations of the identities of women in the Third Reich in the Conclusion of this dissertation.

buffer against the so-called New Woman and immoral influences in society.⁵⁸ Both Weimar and National Socialist governments saw patriarchal marriage as one institution capable of restoring social stability and rejuvenating society. This was not specific to Germany, but the doctrine was especially potent, given the transition of power from Weimar to National Socialist control. Mouton does argue that Nazi policy did not develop continuously from the Weimar but was a pronatalist, racially based population policy that claimed the bodies of women for the state in a very particular way.⁵⁹ I began this dissertation by asking a range of questions: What does Wigman's story have to offer the larger discussion of German twentieth-century women's history? How can political and social history contextualize her life as an artist? And what does her artwork reveal about her own sense of identity and the identities of those who came in contact with her work? I was also concerned about where was she able to exert artistic influence, institutionally and geographically.

Her work and relationships, class and status all were enfolded into her identity as an artist. From the vast sea of writing about Germany and German women of Wigman's lifetime, there emerges a small trickle of writings that consider Wigman's contributions to her field. Her *Ausdruckstanz* or dance of expression was fundamental to the development of dance and theater in Germany and beyond. Her aesthetic ideas were disseminated across the European continent and traveled to the United States through her own touring from 1929 to 1931 and continued after the establishment of the Mary Wigman School in New York City in 1931. Her former pupil Hanya Holm brought Wigman's technique west and translated and adapted Wigman's ideas to the North American temperament. Promotional literature for those tours sought to educate the

⁵⁸ Michelle Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007). BDF, or the Federation of German Women's Organizations, was an umbrella organization of women's groups.

⁵⁹ Robert Moeller extended the discussion of pronatalism beyond the Nazi era and into the post-war period by examining the differences in maternal and family policies between East and West Germany. His writing reveals a great deal about the constituent differences between the conservative Catholic West and the socialist East. See Robert Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

public about this new art phenomenon, and critics responded with enthusiasm and keen attention, if not always with praise. When New York Times critic John Martin published *The Dance* in 1946, he placed Wigman in the highest constellation of dance artists — in part for her artistic creations, but chiefly because of the way she widened the range and advanced the underlying theories of the art. Following World War II, however, Wigman received only fleeting attention in the English-language historiography of modern dance. In fact, the whole of early German *Ausdruckstanz*, or dance of expression, was barely discussed in postwar writing on dance modernism, which centered on the American modern dance pioneers and U.S. dance developments.

Don McDonagh's *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* mentions Wigman only in passing. McDonagh's contention was that modern dance "had been created out of the American experience in the same manner in which jazz had been created."⁶⁰ Anti-German sentiment that ran high during and after the war offers one explanation why scholars failed to acknowledge the enormous impact of the beginnings of German modern dance and Wigman's work in particular.⁶¹ In *Time and the Dancing Image*, Deborah Jowitt wrote, "quite a few early reviews presuppose some influence from Germany on the major American modernists, if only as a catalyst . . . it remains a moot point how directly and to what extent [German dancers] may have [influenced the Americans]."⁶² Cultural historians Stephen Bronner and Douglas Kellner claimed, "The role of dance, both as a motif and as a topic of discussion, has not been dealt with in any systematic way in German literary history."⁶³ Fortunately, Walter Sorell assembled and translated some of Wigman's writings in the 1960s and 70s and Horst Koegler wrote comprehensively about the period in English and in German. But no one produced an in-depth Wigman biography until 1986, when Hedwig Müller came forward with *Mary*

⁶⁰ Don McDonagh, *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (New York: New American Library, 1970), 1.

⁶¹ See the discussion in Mary Anne Santos Newhall, "Uniform Bodies: Mass Movement and Modern Totalitarianism." *Dance Research Journal* 34:1 (Summer 2002): 27-50.

⁶² Deborah Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image* (New York: W. Morrow, 1988), 167-168.

⁶³ Stephen E. Bronner, and Douglas Kellner, eds. *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 351.

*Wigman: Leben und Werk der grossen Tänzerin*⁶⁴ a definitive work supported by a great deal of the dancer's own writings. Müller's assiduous research and sensitive reading of Wigman's papers allow insight into her world. Unfortunately, Müller's book has not been translated into English but such a translation would be a major contribution to the understanding of Wigman's story in the English language. Wigman's time as a working artist during the Weimar and the rise and fall of the Third Reich offers a prism through which to view those terrible years. Contemporary writings by Susan Manning, Lillian Karina, Marion Kant and others argue for Wigman's culpability as an artist of the Third Reich.⁶⁵ Wigman chose not to leave her homeland. Her conflicts must be considered to complete the picture of a woman who naïvely considered herself artist first, above all other allegiances.

In 1993, the publication of Susan Manning's *Ecstasy and the Demon* returned Wigman to the scholarly spotlight. Through analysis of choreographed works, Manning set out to reveal Wigman with a revisionist emphasis. In addition, she sought to question Wigman's accommodations with the National Socialist government. She presents Wigman as a proto-fascist and, if not a willing collaborator, then a less-than-naïve participant within the Nazi regime. While Manning reintroduced Wigman, her writings continued to mine the same vein as texts that indicted "ordinary Germans" as willing enablers of Nazi policies. Manning reads the coming rise of the National Socialists in Wigman's choreography prior to 1933.

In the Introduction to *The Peculiarities of German History*, Geoff Eley wrote that historians cannot "de-mystify the past . . . successfully by presenting German history since the middle of the last century as if the known outcome in 1933 was prescribed in

⁶⁴ *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk der grossen Tänzerin*, hereafter referenced as Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*. Berlin: Quadragia Verlag, 1986. (All translations from this work are mine.)

⁶⁵ Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993); and Lillian Karina and Marion Kant, *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004).

every event.”⁶⁶ In *Gender History in Practice*, Kathleen Canning responded, “One of the ‘peculiarities of German history’ is the impossibility of separating the history of Nazism from the study of the Second World War and the Holocaust.”⁶⁷ Germany, the War and the Holocaust became inextricably linked. Given the period in which Manning was first writing, her book arguably represents a facet of what Eley termed the “Goldhagen phenomenon.”⁶⁸ In *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Daniel Goldhagen claimed that culpability with National Socialist policy and anti-Semitism was endemic among ordinary Germans.⁶⁹ Manning’s reading of Wigman’s dances appears to place Wigman on the path of the German *Sonderweg* toward its inevitable outcome. Certainly, spectacle played a role in the drama. The film art of Leni Reifenstahl most profoundly attests to the power of a choreographed event to stir emotion and build nationalistic fervor. However, Wigman was never one to take outside direction for her work. Her diaries reveal that any attempt from outside to disrupt her work was met with resistance and outrage, at least in her own mind. A bigger issue arises when an American of a generation born after World War II writes about Germany in that period. I was a member of the generation of dancers born in the mid 1950s, a group still responding in many ways to the horrors of World War II. The Nazi concentration camps seemed at once far away in time and place but vivid in the national and collective memories. The images were so repellent they demanded the question, “What kind of people could have done this?” The simple answer was, “the Germans.”

⁶⁶ Geoff Eley in Blackburn and Eley, eds. *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 33.

⁶⁷ Canning, *Gender History*, 53.

⁶⁸ Goldhagen was reacting to Christopher Browning’s premise that German participation in genocide was a result of peer pressure rather than rooted in anti-Semitic fervor.

⁶⁹ Published in 1996, Daniel Goldhagen’s controversial monograph, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996) exploded onto the academic scene with the thesis that the majority of Germans in the Nazi era were contributors to the Jewish genocide because of Germany’s extensive history of anti-Semitism, which held the elimination of the Jewish population as an ultimate goal.

The shocking brutality that came to light following the war has been etched in each generation that followed. Konrad Jarausch terms this “The Shock of Inhumanity.”⁷⁰ Eley asserts that Goldhagen’s book unearthed larger tensions between history and memory, ideological groups and national identities.⁷¹ In *The Goldhagen Effect*, Jane Caplan describes some of the ways Goldhagen’s writing resonated particularly with contemporary American sensibilities. Many Americans embraced Goldhagen’s argument.⁷² And Manning’s writing, while nuanced, uses what she terms “reconstructions” of some of Wigman’s dances to illustrate Wigman’s accommodations with those in power.⁷³ But for many artists in the field, Manning’s claim to reconstruct Wigman’s dances on paper — without the physical dance experience — lacked a practitioner’s understanding of how and why dances are made and especially the way in which Wigman worked, as well as why she made the choreographic choices that she did.⁷⁴ This dissertation is undertaken with respect and appreciation for Manning’s contribution.⁷⁵ Before Manning, much of Mary Wigman’s story existed solely in German and most comprehensively in the work of Müller. Manning has described Müller’s biography as “forgiveness.”⁷⁶ While much about Wigman has been revealed in both

⁷⁰ Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germany, 1945-1995* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

⁷¹ Goldhagen’s hypothesis challenged Christopher Browning’s functionalist thesis in *Ordinary Men* (1992) which claimed that German participation, at least in genocide, was a result of peer pressure rather than rooted in anti-Semitic fervor. In 2004, Browning published *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

⁷² Jane Caplan, “Reflections on the Reception of Goldhagen in the United States,” in Geoff Eley, ed. *The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism — Facing the German Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

⁷³ Many who studied and worked with Wigman did not recognize the figure or *gestalt* that Manning presented as Mary Wigman. Perhaps they did not want to see their mentor fall from grace.

⁷⁴ Manning has since written a new introduction to the second (2006) edition that acknowledges possibilities for expanded gender and lesbian studies around Wigman’s life along with a new consciousness of globalization and Cold War studies. She chose not to change a word of the original 1993 volume.

⁷⁵ As Manning herself states in the new introduction, the number of citations referring to the first edition give evidence to its place in the renewed interest in Wigman.

⁷⁶ Manning, *Ecstasy*, xxix.

Müller and Manning's work, this dissertation is an attempt to add one more dimension, to breathe life into Mary Wigman as a dancer, acknowledging Wigman's identity as a modernist is inseparable from her negotiations through a complicated and treacherous political landscape.

In the last decade new historical writings have considered the complexities of memory and identity, the "miracle" of the West German post-war economy, Cold War distinctions between East and West Germany and the tremendous effort to return a unified Germany to the body of nations. These analyses all can serve as context to Wigman's later years. Other factors come into play, however, in examining Wigman as an artist even though her most innovative years as an artistic pioneer had passed. By 1945, Wigman was nearly sixty years old. Years of difficult living and malnourishment had taken a toll on her body. She was no longer dancing. These factors influenced her choices as much as did the political climate. Acclaimed and accused, Mary Wigman emerges as a genuinely original and multi-faceted human being, one who devoted her life to dance in an era remarkable both for artistic innovation and staggering tragedy. The task of this biography is to examine Wigman's life in detail and to chart the continuities and changes therein. There are no simple answers or clear-cut conclusions in Wigman's story.⁷⁷ In *Hitler's Dancers*, Lillian Karina and Marion Kant built on Manning's analysis, citing carefully selected archival evidence to propose reconsidering Wigman, along with others, as Nazi sympathizers and thus culpable, particularly in light of her engagement with the *Reichskulturkammer* from 1933 until 1937 under Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. There is no question that, because she stayed and tried to maintain her school, Wigman fell under Nazi control.

In 2009 Routledge published my volume on Wigman as part of their Performance Practitioner Series. This was an acknowledgement of Wigman as an artist who vitally changed practices in theatre and dance. When traveling across Germany to research that

⁷⁷ From the earliest German articles and critiques dedicated to Wigman's oeuvre through the more recent contributions of dance historians Müller and Manning, along with Ramsay Burt, Horst Koegler, Karl Toepfer, Michael Huxley, Norbert Servos, Gabriele Fritsch-Vivé, Diane Howe, Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Isa Partsch-Bergshon, many have written about this period in German dance history and Mary Wigman's place in that history.

book, I found a generation of young dancers hungry for information about Wigman and primarily interested in her aesthetic philosophy and the elements of her dance technique. I was also asked to contribute to a film on Wigman for German/French ARTE public television. What became clear was a desire among German dancers, choreographers and aficionados to reclaim Mary Wigman as a great German artist and to retrieve her innovations as a legacy in which to take pride. Jarausch presents a logical “History of Rehabilitation” inherent in the process of returning Germany to the family of nations after the dramatic rupture of civilization by the Nazi dictatorship.⁷⁸ I believe that current interest in Wigman’s artistic contributions represents this ongoing process of reclaiming, but with eyes wide open to the complexity of that process.⁷⁹

In 2005, Marion Kant, perhaps Wigman’s most vehement accuser, posed a paradoxical question, “Which modern dancer would not like to trace her training and artistic roots back to Wigman, if only through a summer course?”⁸⁰ Perhaps given the ongoing fascination and controversy swirling around Mary Wigman’s life and work another question should be posed, “Why does Mary Wigman still matter?” At its most basic level, this writing is an effort to answer that question.

Organization/Themes/Chapters

Many relevant historical topics emerge and evolve in the examination of Mary Wigman’s life. These include: the changing face of German nationalism and the attendant political movements, economic pressures and the effect of those upon her work, the aesthetic developments to which she contributed, and the way sex and the body were perceived and ultimately regulated in relation to her art. Within all of these topics, there

⁷⁸ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 14 .

⁷⁹ The troubling question arises: How has the climate changed since Claudia Koonz interviewed Gertrud Scholtz-Klink in preparation for *Mothers in the Fatherland*? In the interview, she discerned that Scholtz-Klink felt, “German youth of today should have the right to reclaim those aspects of Hitler’s state of which they can be proud.” Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), xxii. I admit my own qualms at contributing even unwittingly to that reclamation.

⁸⁰ Marion Kant, “Book Review: Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm: A Special Relationship: Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman's Letters to Hanya Holm,” *Dance Chronicle*, 28:3 (2005): 417.

remain two overarching themes. The first is her position as a woman in a rapidly changing modernist world. The shift in Western Europe from monarchical and religious countries to a secular western society that evolved into nation states is the landscape of Wigman's radically transformed world. All of her artistic innovations mirror changes in a larger society caught up in the drive to modernize and the reactions to that drive. She embraced modernity. Without it, she would never have found dance as a career. Thus modernity and woman's place in her society are inextricably linked to the subject of work in Wigman's life. Her art was at once her livelihood, the physical manifestation of her philosophy and her very being as a woman. When Wigman claimed that her art was her life, it was more than a cliché. Through her life, we can glimpse the full impact of the modern era and the conflicts that emerged within such a "New Woman" as Mary Wigman. Knowing that both the modern in its many iterations and women's issues emerge in each period of Wigman's life, this dissertation is organized chronologically into the following periods:

- 1) Growing Up With Modernity
- 2) World War I and Its Aftermath
- 3) Controversies and Politics in the Interwar Years
- 4) The Post War Era

The first chapter examines Wigman's early years. Born only fifteen years after Germany was unified as a nation-state, her life charts the early development of that nation. An introductory section of chapter one will serve to "set the stage" with a historiography of nationalism as it relates to a Wilhelmine woman coming of age as Mary Wigman did at the turn of the twentieth century. Following the catastrophe of World War II, social scientists sought to explain how the impulse to identify and build a nation could have resulted in what was then termed totalitarianism. Among historians of the period, the idea of a particular German *Sonderweg* or special way that prescribed the catastrophic outcome of the Third Reich has given way to a more nuanced reading of the period.⁸¹

⁸¹ I recognize that the origins of the concept of *Sonderweg* predate Wigman's time. Originally referring to social welfare developments put in place by Bismarck, the *Sonderweg* was first proposed by the Kaiser as a positive development albeit one that provided patriarchal state support that deflected communist alternatives. Christopher

Geoff Eley and James Rettalack have written on Wilhelminism, and individual volumes argue for a re-visioning of the Wilhelmine era as dynamic rather than the static end to a stagnant imperial age.⁸² Many historians have undertaken the task of defining nationalism. The debate as to whether nations are born “naturally” or “constructed” has continued since Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s *Addresses to a German Nation* in 1808, through contemporary writings of Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm argues a constructivist reading of the nation-state as a uniquely modern institution undertaken for political and economic ends.⁸³ Like Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner conceived of the state as arising to function as the result of modern capitalism. The *Imagined Communities* of Benedict Anderson are products of modernity but also hold the possibility of utopian idealism.⁸⁴ In Mary Wigman’s work, a sort of romantic nationalism appeared that could also allow for a universal *Urgeist* or primordial spirit that transcended any national allegiance. In her case, this spirit was interpreted and performed from what she perceived as a uniquely German viewpoint. The introductory discussion of nationalism in this chapter will take into account the social historians who viewed the impact of rapid industrialization on German society. Historians V.R. Berghahn and David Blackbourn give evidence for a silent, middle-class revolution that stemmed from late nineteenth-century economic changes.⁸⁵ Wigman and her family were certainly beneficiaries of such economic development. And that expansion placed her in a transitional generation moving from traditional expectations of a woman’s place at home to a life within the public sphere.

Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), xiii.

⁸² Geoff Eley and James Rettalack, eds. *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930: essays for Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003).

⁸³ E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

⁸⁵ V.R. Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Blackbourn and Eley, eds. *The Peculiarities of German History*.

Richard Evans's *The Feminist Movement in Germany: 1894-1914* marked the opening of scholarly studies of women's rights during the Wilhelmine era.⁸⁶ Much writing on Wilhelmine women also emerged from authors who have attempted to uncover the role of women within the Third Reich. Looking to women's associations in the Weimar Republic and earlier eras allows a thread of continuity and of change, yet it remains a formidable project to see the rise of National Socialism and women's place in the Third Reich as an outcome of that past. Claudia Koonz, Renate Bridenthal and Marion Kaplan along with others are considered in the prelude to Chapter One. This chapter will also scrutinize at length some of the utopian communities that were organized even as the nation state of Germany consolidated. These communities displayed their own sort of romantic nationalism around ideas of "natural" living. These communities will also be considered in the *Zeitgeist* of changing notions of sexual freedom and liberated bodies, ideas best revealed through the work of sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld and his contemporaries who examined sexual mores and practices from the Wilhelmine through World War I.⁸⁷

The second chapter follows Wigman's life through the rupture of World War I and traces how she made her way to the community of Dada artists at Monte Verità in neutral Switzerland. Wigman prided herself as being present for the inception of Dada. Set against the events of the war, Wigman's pursuits indicate her singular focus on her art in the midst of political and social upheaval. The end of the war proved a period of crisis for both Mary Wigman and Germany. The signing of the Versailles Treaty and the establishment of the Weimar Republic coincided with Wigman's own breakdown and hospitalization, and culminated with her establishing an independent professional career. Two of Wigman's dances from that time will serve as sources to illustrate her newfound independence and her new voice as an artist. This chapter aims to show that her autonomy mirrored the freedoms and political shortcomings of the Weimar Republic. Her early ventures were often frustrated until by chance she ended up in Dresden. Stranded

⁸⁶ Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976), ix.

⁸⁷ Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War* (New York: Falstaff Press, 1937).

there by the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, Dresden became her home for more than twenty years.⁸⁸ It was also the beginning of her entanglement with government bureaucratic support and funding that would continue and grow ever more complicated through the Weimar and under the Third Reich. Although not included in Peter Gay's groundbreaking *Weimar Culture*,⁸⁹ Wigman was certainly part of that society, although a variant on the stereotype. While the golden age of German cabaret exploded in Berlin, Wigman stuck to her emphatic claim of dance as "high" art and concentrated on developing her concert style and teaching methodology.⁹⁰ Her staging of *The Seven Dances of Life* is considered as her first fully formed work and the performed record of her philosophy. The unmitigated quest for meaning-making through art-making is obvious in her fascination with psychology and philosophy. Chapter one will seek to uncover her relationships to other artists and thinkers at that time in Germany. Who influenced her work and who were her peers? The chapter will also consider Wigman's life in what she called "the gilded and tarnished twenties" that ended with worldwide economic depression.⁹¹ Wigman's shocking 1926 *Hexentanz* will serve as evidence for an equally radical reordering of the normative female body that resisted cabaret-style sexuality and commercialism.

The third chapter is dedicated to controversies and politics affecting Wigman's cultural production from the interwar years through World War II and how she navigated those rough seas. During this time Wigman experienced her greatest successes, including her American tours. How the American moderns received her is an important part of her story and the development of the art form in the United States. How did Wigman's international fame influence her choices? How did it situate her within the National Socialist project? What aspects of her work were embraced by the American moderns? How was she seen by the Americans once Hitler came to power? Differences between the two nations in how the dance art came to evolve in the 1930s are a result in large part of

⁸⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 57.

⁸⁹ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

⁹⁰ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 81-85.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

the events of World War II and its aftermath. This chapter aims to show how Wigman's dance ideas represent an artistic exchange that ran parallel to ideas of social welfare, internationalism and liberalism at the close of the Progressive Era. Three German Dancers Congresses represent the largest exchange between dance artists on an international scale in this period. How did the increasingly discordant gatherings reflect an internal conflict at the heart of the Weimar Republic? Chapter three will also consider the mass dance as an aesthetic effort to perform a unified body in the face of growing social disunity. How can Mary Wigman's choreography of *Totenmal* (1930) serve as evidence of this effort and as an example of performed memory and the ongoing mourning for the losses of World War I among the German populace? How was such mourning choreographed by Wigman in the interwar years? In 1933, Wigman returned from her final American tour to a vastly changed Germany under Hitler and the National Socialists. In the next years her school and her performing career fell under the control of the *Reichskulturkammer* and Joseph Goebbels. The *Reichskulturkammer* saw fit to pour resources into theater and dance performances as part of an overall strategy, increasing Reich support for these arts by 21 percent in eight crucial years and thus appropriating the aesthetics of German dance for propaganda purposes.⁹² How did Wigman respond to this financial support? In 1936 Wigman choreographed a work for the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Was she an "ordinary German" in the words of Daniel Goldhagen? Or did her life unfold in a sort of individual functionalism that was intent on her own survival and the continued existence of her work? What role did increasing bureaucratization play in her choices? How did the Nazi control of capital affect her professional life? Chapter three considers the concept of degeneration and how it was used by the Nazis as a defense for excising the "other" from the body politic in many forms. Was Wigman more vulnerable to career destruction because she was a woman and a woman who presented a female body that performed far beyond the ideal Nazi female sphere of *Kinder, Küche und Kirche*? Or did she accommodate her work to support the Nazi mission?

⁹² Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Social History of the Third Reich, 1933-1945* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

The fourth chapter is focused on Wigman's life at the end of and following World War II. Beginning with her final concert in Leipzig, it traces the end of her performing career and her closing years as a teacher. Post war, Wigman lived on both sides of divided Germany, first in the East and finally in the West. She continued to choreograph. How did she see herself and her relationship to the German nation after World War II? These years were also the period of gathering her writing, through which we can perceive her process of remembering and forgetting her past. Much current writing of German history has focused on the post-war period. Jarausch has raised important questions about how memory operates in historical perspective. The current "memory boom" in history writing indicates a shift among German historians, away from focus on political structures and social groups and more toward the stories and experiences of "ordinary" individuals. Given her life in each of the German states that emerged after the end of World War II, Wigman appears an ideal subject for examining how those states developed opposing ways of dealing with the memory of the Nazi past and how they dealt with the artists of that past. Her written accounts certainly fall within the first layer of Jarausch's three strata of memory: suffering and survival.⁹³ In 1966, Mary Wigman began her book, *The Language of Dance* by saying that her friends wanted her to write a biography. "What should I tell? My life? Life, fully lived is a rounded thing. It is better to let it be and to let it complete its course instead of cutting it into small pieces like a birthday cake."⁹⁴ For a woman who created a distinct professional and very public persona, such reticence to speak of her life presents a paradox. How did being a German citizen post 1945 affect her own identity? How did this play out in her art? Was she truly a modernist? If so, how did she reconcile her work as a modern artist with her identity as a German artist who worked under National Socialism?

⁹³ Jarausch identifies three layers of memory: 1. Individual life stories: suffering and survival, 2. Group recollections which turn individual stories with similar perspectives into a number of competing patterns of remembrance, 3. Public memory culture that defines how a country remembers its past. The third arises out of individual stories in a complex process involving politicians, intellectuals, media. Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁹⁴ Wigman, *Language*, 7.

Mary Wigman claimed to love her country all of her life. How did she perceive the German nation? Was she committed to the Germany of Goethe and Schiller or the supernationalism of the National Socialists? Did she see a difference between the two? That she had international contacts yet stayed in Germany and was willing to choreograph for the 1936 Olympics makes us uncomfortable and it should. According to her diaries, she resisted governmental control in 1937 and this led to her fall from favor. Certainly 1937 was a crisis year for many artists across all media in Germany. Along with these factors, the bureaucratic machinations of the *Reichskulturkammer* increasingly determined the life and work of Wigman and other artists during the Third Reich. This coupled with the economic realities of her time, add dimension to the telling of Wigman's story. In 1946, she wrote to American critic John Martin, "The Nazis did not like me!"⁹⁵ Yet, she never denounced the Holocaust or the National Socialists publicly. Still, her final trip abroad, undertaken in 1969 at age 83, was to Israel. Such complexities surrounding her life and her work have driven this dissertation and will serve to fuel future research and writing.

Finally, the appendices to this dissertation return to Wigman as an innovative artist. Appendix A is a short reflection on recreating and performing Wigman's *Hexentanz* of 1926. Appendix B is an original compilation of studio exercises. These have been designed to offer a direct physical experience of her technique and methodology for contemporary practitioners and scholars.

⁹⁵ John Martin, "The Dance: Word from Wigman," *New York Times*, August 4, 1946, 50. For full quote and further context see this dissertation, Chapter Four.

Chapter One: Growing Up With Modernity

Modernity, Modernism, Modernization

Born in 1886, Mary Wigman came into a Germany under rapid transformation. Imperial Germany was thrust into modernization through the growth of industrialization in a newly unified nation. The topic of modernity has opened a great deal of discussion as to what really defined the modern in the twentieth century. Larger questions remain regarding how Germany negotiated or failed to negotiate modernity in its rise as a Western power. Whether considering twentieth-century Germany or the capitalist world at large, modernity in its many aspects appears an enormous hydra of a topic with many independent but interrelated aspects including social change, political organization, economic strategies and cultural production. Stephen Kern termed the period from 1880-1918 as *The Culture of Time and Space* wherein those fundamental concepts embedded in individual human experience and daily life were transformed to accommodate the rapidly changing world. By 1919, when Wigman claimed her place as an independent modern artist, new ideas of time and space were integrally woven into her work.

Mary Wigman conceived of space as an invisible partner. Her dance with space was at its core a phenomenological quest for being in the modern world. How can we truly see her endeavors as a cultural producer in the era of modernity? She cannot be separated from what Marshall Berman terms the “intimate unity of the modern self and the modern environment.”⁹⁶ Like Berman, many have labored to define the substance of modernity. Ironically, the modern mind, in its demand for evidence while simultaneously valuing pluralism, strives to define the modern condition yet makes that definition ever more slippery. Modernization is a slippery term too. Critics of modernization as a monolithic concept raise exceptions, calling it Eurocentric and inevitably capitalistic, and charging that it assumes an evolution through progress toward a teleological and positive outcome.⁹⁷ What can be agreed upon is that the process of modernization demands

⁹⁶ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into The Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 132.

⁹⁷ For more on modernization and its critics see Modris Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1989); Bill Brugger,

change: in material production through industrialization; in space and time through urbanization and transportation technology; in communal identity through nationalisms and systems of governance; and, perhaps most fundamentally, in belief systems. The term modernism usually refers to cultural movements that arise from and respond to the changes wrought by modernization. Thus modernization is the drive to modernity which is represented by modernism. Berman defines modernism as “any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home with it.”⁹⁸ Modernity, modernization, modernism are all intrinsic to Wigman’s story. It is not enough to see her in the context

and Kate Hannan. *Modernisation and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1983); Peter Childe, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2008); Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou, eds. *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Frederick R. Karl, *Modern and Modernism: The Sovereignty of the Artist, 1885-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1988); Peter Conrad, *Modern Times, Modern Places* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth Century Thought* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Kevin Rupp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985); Katharina Von Ankum, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997); Paul Betts, “The New Fascination with Fascism: The Case of Nazi Modernism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37:4 (Oct., 2002): 541-558; Mark Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” *The Art Bulletin* 84:1 (March 2002): 148-169; Roger Griffin, *Modernity, Modernism, and Fascism: A “mazeway resynthesis,”* *Modernity/Modernity* 15:1 (2008): 9-24; Edward Ross Dickinson, “Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse about ‘Modernity,’” *Central European History* 37:1 (2004): 1-48; Peter Fritzsche, “Founding Fictions: History, Myth, and the Modern Age” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12:2 (Winter 2008): 205-220; and Thomas Rohkrämer, “Antimodernism, Reactionary Modernism and National Socialism. Technocratic Tendencies in Germany, 1890-1945,” *Contemporary European History* 8:1 (March 1999): 29-50.

⁹⁸ Berman, 5.

of the concert hall. To see her life, the world stage must be prepared with props, sets and trappings made of those very changes that identify the modern world. In order to do this, we must pull back from a close focus on Wigman and look as if through the wide lens of a camera to understand the scope of her part in the modern *mise-en-scene*. This setting is not static but reflects the overriding impulse to change, to push all boundaries of political organization, family structure, national borders, margins of space, and the very confines of the human body.

The Changing Face of German Nationalism

In March 1953 the American Academy of Arts and Sciences met in Boston under the banner of a single charged word, *Totalitarianism*, that carried with it specters of both World War II and Cold War anxieties. Later critics would largely discredit the attempt to understand the rise of fascism and communism as a monolithic twentieth century event. However, the effort to make sense of the disastrous first half of the century was the beginning of a particular type of reflection even as it was shaped by Cold War tensions. Academy members made clear their motivation for this gathering:

Totalitarianism is such an extraordinary and all-pervading phenomenon of our time that the best scholarly and scientific efforts should be marshaled and the necessary funds provided for a comparative and interdisciplinary exploration of the basic issues involved.⁹⁹

More than forty scholars from a range of related fields contributed to the conference and the subsequent volume: Hannah Arendt, Raymond Bauer, Karl Deutsch and Erik Erikson weighed in and Carl Friedrich served as conference chair and editor. Friedrich's introduction to the 1953 proceedings evinces a palpable attempt to try to make sense of the events of the previous two decades.

[T]otalitarianism is the most perplexing problem of our time. It has burst upon mankind more or less unexpected and unannounced . . . none of the outstanding scholars in history, law and the social sciences discerned what was ahead. . . To this failure to foresee corresponds a difficulty in comprehending.¹⁰⁰

A decade later, George Mosse would begin the conclusion of his landmark *The Crisis of German Ideology*, "In our time two major revolutionary movements have made

⁹⁹ Karl Friedrich, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1954), iii.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

their mark upon Europe: the Marxist and the fascist.”¹⁰¹ The conflation of totalitarian movements of the left and right confronted at the 1953 conference had reemerged, demanding acknowledgement in Mosse’s writing. By 1978, in an interview with Michael Ledeen, Mosse makes clear that his views run counter to those of many scholars, particularly the political scientists. “I am opposed to the word totalitarianism because it seems to me an untrue generalization . . .” He goes on to say that the generalization “in reality disguises the differences . . . There is a big difference between Lenin, Stalin and Hitler.”¹⁰² What Friedrich and his *compadres* brought together would become separated into general studies of nationalism and the rise of individual nation-states in the modern age. Richard Pipes, Robert Conquest and other scholars followed the thread of Marxism, while Mosse and many others would hack through the trees in trying to understand the dark forest of German nationalism. But one theme remains from Friedrich’s time — the failure to foresee — that seemed to damn the historians and social scientists who had mined the era 1871-1913. What emerges in mid-twentieth century analyses of the Wilhelmine period is a driving need to foresee, to explain events as precursors to the rise of the National Socialists.

The ongoing and exhaustive efforts of historians to define nationalism frequently have led them to Germany as a most extreme modern example of the unbridled nationalist impulse or ultra-nationalism that proposes the rights of a single nation supercedes the rights of a community of nations. In thinking about Wigman, my goal mirrors Eley’s desire to de-mystify a life that scholars have canonized and demonized in equal parts. To that end, I have focused on nationalism as it might touch the world of a bourgeois girl coming of age in Wilhelmine Germany.

In *Nationalism and Society*, Michael Hughes synthesized the works of many writers who are fundamental to the discussion of nationalism,¹⁰³ a mutable word that shoots up in many branches of a nationalistic tree. Hughes’ thesis was that German

¹⁰¹ George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 312.

¹⁰² George Mosse, *Nazism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1978), 77.

¹⁰³ Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988).

nationalism was never a united movement. He also argued that nationalism is not by nature conservative, liberal nor specific to any particular ideology. He challenged the view that nationalism was either imposed on the lower classes “from above” or arose spontaneously from mass society.¹⁰⁴ Where E.J. Hobsbawm saw modernism, urbanization and industrialization as the catalysts for state-sponsored nationalism, Anthony Smith accounted for the durability of nationalism in the power of myth, values, symbols and most importantly, memory.¹⁰⁵ Under either argument, the drive to fully form a modern German nation state was launched after 1871 and unification. Otto von Bismarck’s objective as prime minister was the expansion of Prussia and the creation of a unified Germany under Prussian leadership. To do this, Bismarck orchestrated a trio of wars, the first to win Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark in 1864, the second fraternal war with Austria in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. German unification was more a result of Prussian expansionism than a drive from within.¹⁰⁶ The new North German Confederation was established as a federal state following the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. By the Franco-Prussian War, the south German states were also taken up by Prussian expansion and joined the Confederation in the wind up to war.¹⁰⁷ Thus the *Staatenbund* (federation of individual states) became a *Bundesstaat* (single federal state). It is no wonder that alternate views of what constitutes a national identity and how that identity would manifest itself collided in the new small Germany.

Hughes identified two primary kinds of Wilhelmine nationalism: nationalism to create a nation-state; or romantic nationalism that sprang up among groups alienated from Enlightenment nationalism. Both are the results of those early stirrings of nationalist sentiment in the Wilhelmine, First Reich.¹⁰⁸ Mary Wigman was born in 1886, two years

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Anthony Smith, “The Origins of Nations” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 106; and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 526-532.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Hughes proposes five catalysts to nationalism in general:

- 1) emergence due to the French Revolution
- 2) a product of the same developments that produced modern democracy
- 3) the decline of feudalism

after the ascendancy of Kaiser Wilhelm II. She came of age in the period of his reign. Crippled at birth and emotionally unstable, the Kaiser was ill-equipped to steer Germany on a rational course.¹⁰⁹ A strong current of idealism grew among an unsettled populace, encouraging a rejection of the status quo and propelling the quest for a “perfect Germany.”¹¹⁰ Modern industrialization, economic expansion and changes in the labor force created an undercurrent of instability.¹¹¹ At the same time, Wilhelmine Germany experienced an increase in competing political factions, characterized by the steady rise of the Social Democratic Party. Conservative groups felt that traditional domestic values of piety, hard work and respectability were in jeopardy.¹¹² Thus, diverse groups within Germany felt that the First Reich was not a true expression of the nation’s essence, an essence as multiple as the many states comprising the united Germany.¹¹³ Wigman was of a generation that was born in a seemingly united and forward moving but deeply unsettled nation. However, for Wigman, the unsettled state of the state would afford her the opportunity to consider a life as a professional female artist. Earlier strictures circumscribed by class and gender began to fall away in her generation. In this she was on the cutting edge of larger changes. By the 1880s, accelerated changes in material production became integral to perceptions of class and nation. Industrialization affected livelihood, dwelling place and the family. Mobility, the ability to move between social strata or from place to place, came with the modernization of the German state, no matter how that community was imagined by its populace.

4) politicization of the masses

5) emergence of the bourgeoisie.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany, Second Volume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 128.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 563-564.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: H. Fertig, 1985).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Industrialization, Class and Nation

Between 1880 and 1914, Imperial Germany became a major trading power whose economy quadrupled.¹¹⁴ At the same time, Germany's working classes and bourgeoisie experienced major internal upheavals. Industrial centers became magnets for the exploding population. By 1907 only half of Germans still lived in the town of their birth. Mary Wigman's family had settled in Hannover by 1880 while that city experienced a tremendous period of growth. Annexed as part of Prussia in the unification of 1871, the population of Hannover quadrupled between that year and 1912.¹¹⁵ Social historian V.R. Berghahn argues that the extended families, strong religious affiliations and connections to the land that had shaped the German identity before the rush to industry and modernity were fractured. Instead of a staid, petrified Imperial power, Wilhelmine Germany emerged as geographically and socially mobile and in the midst of great upheaval. In many ways, the working class refused to "know their place" both figuratively and literally. This population moved away from places of origin with the expectation of economic advancement, but equally strong was their desire to escape from a rigidly stratified society.¹¹⁶ The new *Mittelstand* began to take pride in business expertise and social aspirations. And Wigman's forebears counted themselves among the growing legions of small businessmen who took advantage of economic growth to improve the family's wealth and status. For the shrewd entrepreneur, there was money to be made. Thus, Wilhelmine society was not stagnant. Great changes and diversity accompanied increased fluidity among the classes.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ In 1880 Germany's coal production was 47 million tons; by 1913, production had grown to 191.5 million tons. Total exports over the same period grew from 3 billion marks to 10.1 billion. V.R. Berghahn. *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 278-279.

¹¹⁵ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 684.

¹¹⁶ Berghahn provides a clear picture of the impact of rapid industrialization on German society and how economic, social and political factors acted in concert to shape the modern German nation.

¹¹⁷ Sociocultural and political barriers were rooted not simply in wealth or power, but rather in perceived class and status that limited upward mobility. The marked differences in how people organized their lives carried beyond the workplace. Not all Germans had left the farm. Berghahn points out that, as late as 1910, 40 percent of Germans still spent

In *The Peculiarities of German History*, David Blackbourn argued that a “silent bourgeois revolution” stemmed from late nineteenth-century economic changes.¹¹⁸ The German industrial expansion founded on iron, steel and engineering acquired a powerful momentum in the 1850s and ‘60s, leading to a second wave of industrial expansion in the 1880s that included chemicals, optics and, later, electric technologies.¹¹⁹ Industry and commerce overtook agriculture as the engines of economic activity and the major sources of German wealth. The extension of the communications network through telegraph and railroad lines were unsettling factors that had repercussions across all social strata.¹²⁰ The bourgeois revolution was part of the general upheaval that bound all classes. After 1910, regional and religious ties broke apart in the second industrial expansion; the newly urban begin to criticize social and economic conditions while the working class gained strength through trade unions and increased employment. The party of the Social Democrats [SPD] became the largest party of the Reichstag in 1912.¹²¹ The upper and middle classes reacted against the leveling tendencies of urbanization, the rise of the working class and attendant socialism.¹²²

Nestled within a bourgeois family, yet rebellious against the expectations of that family, Wigman must have been at least aware of the class conflict if not actively involved. The aristocracy sought to maintain social barriers and deny recognition to those who had succeeded in acquiring the material prerequisites of membership in the elite. Nationalism and imperialism “came to be employed as devices to paper over the fissures

their lives in communities of less than 2,000, with a strong sense of separateness from other regions due to dialects, customs and folklore.

¹¹⁸ Blackbourn and Eley, *Peculiarities of German History*, 166.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Kern, *Culture*, 214.

¹²¹ “The SPD did not correspond neatly with the whole of the German working class: while some Catholic workers switched their allegiance from the Centre party to the SPD when they moved to the cities, others remained loyal to the Centre.” Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 156.

¹²² Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965).

of class and status.”¹²³ To this end, upholding German interests against foreign threats became paramount, leading to tremendous pressure on all classes to conform.¹²⁴ The sense of inside and outside shifted from the rural town opposing other regions, to the city-dwelling worker opposing the bourgeoisie and the gentry, to the entire population opposing the hostile “other” outside national borders. Mosse described a core class of bourgeoisie whose primary values and identity had always been inextricably linked with the notion of respectability and it was this measure of respectability that would mould the nation from the inside. “They perceived their way of life, based as it was upon frugality, devotion to duty, and restraint of the passions, as superior to that of the ‘lazy’ lower classes and the profligate aristocracy.”¹²⁵ What Mosse proposed was neither the establishment of the nation “from above” or the organic development of a national sense “from below,” but rather a core of nationalist sentiment that grew in both directions from the middle class and eventually was accepted by all strata of class and gender. The bourgeois stratum was far from homogenous. It contained the old *bürgerliche*, the upwardly mobile middle class and women and children who came into the bourgeoisie from either a long line of *Mittlestand* ancestors or as the first generation to reap the benefits of economic success as wives and daughters of successful bourgeois entrepreneurs and businessmen.

Wilhelmine Women

Mary Wigman’s childhood was shaped by changes in the emerging Wilhelmine period. She benefited from new possibilities for the middle class and for women, both in the private sphere of the home and in the public space of the nation. German feminism was radicalized between 1894 and 1908 for women of the bourgeois as well as the

¹²³ “By 1914, what determined social and political behavior and interaction, much more than religious upbringing or regionalism were the perceptions of them and us in terms of class and status.” Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 12.

¹²⁴ Rather than accepting Miroslav Hroch’s organized three-phase development of nationalism, authors such as Berghahn draw a more reactive pathway toward German national organization.

¹²⁵ For Mosse, the bourgeoisie was the engine that powered the train of nationalism, even into its most extreme form of National Socialism. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 5.

working classes, at least within organizations that were proto-nationalist.¹²⁶ This resulted in the consolidation of bourgeois women's humanitarian associations and worker's rights associations in the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF).¹²⁷ Angelica Schaser pointed out that "there were numerous contacts between the personnel of the proletarian women's associations and of the generally bourgeois BDF member organizations."¹²⁸ Earlier, Marion Kaplan had added dimension to the German women's movement by examining the relationship of the League of Jewish Women or the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (JFB) and the BDF. Kaplan noted that the JFB modeled itself after the BDF and both organizations shared ideas of women's roles in the home, instinctual maternal nature and fundamental differences between the sexes. In fact the JFB was part of the BDF from 1907 until 1933.¹²⁹ Kaplan determined that most Germans, whether Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, "praised marriage, extolled motherhood, and held sexuality to be inextricably linked with reproduction."¹³⁰ Questions regarding abortion produced divisions but the movement for

¹²⁶ Cf. Evans.

¹²⁷ There is a compelling parallel between the BDF and the Working Women's Association in the United States where class difference became an insurmountable barrier to collaboration. Ellen DuBois offers an in-depth telling of the tale of the American Working Women's Association. Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

¹²⁸ Angelica Schaser, "Women in a Nation of Men: The Politics of the League of German Women's Associations (BDF) in Imperial Germany, 1894-1914," in Ida Blom, Karen Hageman and Catherine Hall, *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 249-268, cf. 250. As a German historian, Schaser argued that German scholars of nationalism only discovered the category of gender in the 1980s, and called the field "inadequately explored," 249.

¹²⁹ Marion Kaplan, "Sisterhood Under Siege: Feminism and Anti-Semitism in Germany 1904-1938," in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan, eds. *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press 1984), 174-175. Kaplan provides details of the interrelationships not only of the BDF and JFB but also the Catholic and Protestant women's organizations. She divides the history of the Jewish feminist movement into three parts: the JFB within the Jewish community; the League's cooperation with the BDF; and the survival strategies of Jewish women under Nazi dictatorship. In the last phase she shows that "previous feminist solidarity vanished into thin air, and strategies of sheer survival replaced the earlier gender-specific concerns of Jewish feminists."

¹³⁰ Kaplan, in *Biology*, 183.

women's suffrage united the BDF and crossed the women's social groups, albeit for diverse ends.

The first motion to grant female suffrage was introduced into the Reichstag on Feb. 13, 1895, by the Social Democratic leader August Bebel. At that time, women were not permitted to join political parties nor attend public political discussions. In fact, police routinely broke up any meeting at which women spoke. In 1983, German historian Gisela Brinker-Gabler put a human face on participants in the early German women's movement through her analysis of handbills, photographs, paintings, political cartoons and other cultural artifacts. In "*Die Frauenbewegung im deutschen Kaiserreich*," she attributed a new phase of the German women's movement to the rise of the proletariat in the mass industrialization of German society.¹³¹ Brinker-Gabler divided the women's movement into two clearly defined and often hostile camps: the *bürgerliche* and the *proletarische*. Although both united in the belief that political equality, especially suffrage, was paramount, an activist proletariat demanded the right to work and support oneself, while more passive bourgeois women organized for charitable aims, based on the prevailing moral values.¹³² Wigman's attempts to create a career as a single woman from a bourgeois family belies Brinker-Gabler's assertion. In fact, Wigman's life offers a more complex view of the era. Her struggle for artistic, financial and familial autonomy and a destiny beyond motherhood is a story that runs counter to class identification.

The complex politics of reproduction were central in *When Biology Became Destiny*. Like Eley, Renate Bridenthal and her co-authors stressed the myriad motivations that vitalized the various branches of the feminist movement.¹³³ The collective literature reveals a composite female bourgeoisie containing those who were born into the *Mittlestand* and those who scaled the class ladder by marrying upwardly

¹³¹ Gisela Brinker-Gabler, "Die Frauenbewegung im deutschen Kaiserreich," in *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung* (edited by Ingeborg Derwitz) (Bonn: Verlag Hohwacht, 1983), 27-46.

¹³² Seen in this light, the bourgeois movement appears reactionary at its core. "At the end of the nineteenth century, respectability sought to tighten its hold over women," in response to the unsettling development of an organized feminist proletariat. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 106.

¹³³ Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan, eds. *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), xiii.

mobile men in a time driven by the economic engine of industrialization. The children of both groups of bourgeois women were born into comfortable circumstances that gave some the luxury and temerity to reject bourgeois values as irrelevant to the modern world. Those young women born in the 1880s were introduced to greater possibilities through a limited but public education that introduced aesthetic pursuits while limiting their futures to hearth and home. Advances in transportation and communication had made visible a larger world of which they were aware but not allowed to enter. They were still constrained to roles and values that Mosse terms respectable.¹³⁴ They recognized the moral challenge in the hypocrisy of their situation and raised a cry for authenticity.¹³⁵ This was Wigman's generation.

Growing Up a Wilhelmine Woman

Mary Wigman was born Karoline Sofie Marie Wiegmann on 13 November 1886 in Hanover, Germany, part of the province that had been annexed by Prussia in 1866. Without a doubt, Mary Wigman was a true child of her age who turned her own body into a canvas for the palette of that *Zeitgeist*. She was born a Wilhelmine whose parents, Amelie and Heinrich Wiegmann, reaped significant benefits from the expansion that was transforming the German economy. With the unification of Germany in 1871 and the sharp rise of industrialization, a burgeoning middle class was riding a wave of new wealth that also carried the Wiegmann family toward the twentieth century. Heinrich and his brothers, August and Dietrich, built a successful family business selling and repairing bicycles and sewing machines, products that represented the incursion of the machine age and new-found leisure activities into the everyday lives of middle-class Germans. Many families had gone from working class to middle class in a single generation. Mary was the first-born. Her brother Heinrich came along four years later and her younger sister

¹³⁴ Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*.

¹³⁵ By 1914, much would change. Claudia Koonz wrote that a great irony of the First World War was the event that slaughtered young German men would emancipate young women through the needs of wartime society. Whereas women had been banned from political gatherings and university studies by 1916 they were enlisted in the nation's survival by taking up jobs previously held by men thus giving them status and autonomy that women's rights activists had advocated for decades. Koonz, *Mothers*.

Elisabeth was born in 1894. When Mary was nine years old her father died. Three years later her mother married Dietrich Wiegmann and through that marriage, her uncle became her stepfather. Thus her early life was circumscribed by home and the family business. It was also legislated.

The 1900 German Civil Code exposed a nation sharply defined by gendered hierarchy. Before the Civil Code the husband was sole head of the family and legal guardian of his wife. Without his permission she could not take a job, sign a contract or engage in litigation. Property rights were left to local jurisdictions, but generally the woman's property passed to the husband upon their marriage and any money she earned went to the husband. Fathers were given full control over female children; they alone could approve marriages of those under 24, allow them to work, represent them in law and make property decisions.¹³⁶ When they were babies, the father had the right to decide when children should be weaned and he alone could make decisions regarding their education.

Prior to the Civil Code, education continued the institutional perpetration of a patriarchal national structure. Universities did not admit women as full-time students until after 1900; within five years there were 80 full-time female students, within 10 there were 1,867, and by 1914, there were 4,126. Germany lagged behind other countries. U.S universities opened their doors to female students in 1853, French universities in 1861 and English universities in 1878.¹³⁷ The Prussian university was modeled after the exclusively male German officer corps: the goal was to transmit the values and standards of the ruling male elite. Opposition to admitting women rested on fears that their "gentler, less martial values" would overthrow academic order.¹³⁸ Many young women were

¹³⁶ "Even a spinster in her forties had no rights in Civil Law if her father was still alive." Evans, *Feminist Movement in Germany*, 12.

¹³⁷ The Prussians were the last holdouts. Not until December 1896 did the Prussian minister of education drop the requirement that any woman who wished to attend a lecture at a Prussian university must obtain her father's permission, a permission Evans says was routinely denied. *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ According to Heinrich von Treitschke, "Many sensible men these days are talking about surrendering our universities to the invasion of women, and thereby falsifying their entire character . . . The universities are surely more than mere institutions for teaching science and scholarship. The small universities offer the students a comradeship which in

unprepared by their earlier education to move into the universities. This caused a crisis in education. Most girls' schools, particularly the *Volksschule* were geared toward an assumed and sanctioned destiny as *Hausfrau* and *Mutter*. Schooldays were devoted to routine household tasks and the supposedly feminine subjects such as art and music. Secondary education for women was virtually non-existent before 1894, Evans noted, and reflected the same educational goals as the *Volksschule*. Family, school, state and nation stood as analogous institutions, all prescribing a subordinate place for women. And Mary Wigman was of the generation that would defy that prescription but not without effort.

Bright and accomplished at school, Wigman wanted to continue on to *Gymnasium*. Instead, her family sent her brother to secondary school and Mary received lessons in language and music, social dancing and comportment. In 1901, at the age of fourteen, she went to a girls' school at Folkestone on England's southern coast for a few months and the following year she traveled to Lausanne, Switzerland. She learned English and French, but the goal of this education was solely to make her an attractive and marriageable *Hausfrau*, one able to contribute to the well-being and upward social mobility of her family. And she would have none of it. She had always identified herself as an adventurous spirit. While at school in England there were stories about a secret passage hidden within the town church. In *The Mary Wigman Book*, she recalls with obvious relish and some pride that she "bought a little hammer and went to tap the walls and listen for a hollow echo."¹³⁹ Just as she listened for the echoes in the church walls, Mary Wigman was compelled to turn her attention toward her own inner landscape. Her greatest drive was to express what she described as the stirrings within her. Searching to find an outlet through which to express these inner stirrings, Wigman had thought that she might become a singer. Her singing teacher said, "You have a good voice and you have a way of expression I have never seen before. You could make a career." But her

the freedom of its nature is of inestimable value for the building of a young man's character . . ." Evans, *Feminist Movement in Germany*, 17.

¹³⁹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 28.

family said no.¹⁴⁰ Hewing to their expectations, she was twice formally engaged to marry, but broke off both engagements. After the second ended she wrote,

I cried, I begged, and asked my creator to bring me clarity. I didn't know what I should do, I had to break away, I didn't want to continue any longer, I could not. The entire bourgeois life collapsed on to me, you might say.¹⁴¹

Like many youth of her time, Wigman was caught between an old order of prescribed roles and the new world of possibilities that were an outgrowth of economic success. She had traveled and experienced a world far beyond what was available to most women of her mother's generation, yet she was forced to put all of that to the service of family. She saw hypocrisy in what she considered the superficial bourgeois respectability of her parents' generation and she and many members of her generation rebelled. Coming of age in the first decade of the twentieth century, it appeared that Wigman had few options available to her. Certainly the life of an artist seemed far from every expectation put upon her by family and the larger society.¹⁴² Yet she was swept along by the tide of modern attitudes toward art and life. In 1900 Ezra Pound had challenged the modern artist to "Make it New!"¹⁴³ Wigman and her contemporaries responded with a radical change in the very way they fashioned their lives. A life-affirming *Körperkultur* or physical culture arose on both sides of the Atlantic, encouraging fitness and a new sort of bodily expression of emotion.¹⁴⁴ And just as the emancipation of women was being

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 186.

¹⁴¹ Wigman in Manning, *Ecstasy*, 50.

¹⁴² For Wigman's statements on this see Walter Sorell, *Mary Wigman: Ein Vermächtnis* (Wilhelmshaven: Forian Noetzel Verlag, 1986). It is important to note that Sorell was Wigman's primary biographer and translator during her lifetime. The copyright to *Ein Vermächtnis* was also held by Wigman's only living descendant and heir, her niece Marlies Heinemann.

¹⁴³ For Pound, the modernist principle was innovation, and it is used here in that sense. While Pound is often referred to as the source of this phrase, he said he adapted it from the Chinese. In Canto 53 he specifically cites it as coming from Tching Tang. Pound used the slogan as the title of a book of essays, *Make It New* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).

¹⁴⁴ Karl Toepfer discusses the relationship of early twentieth century dancers to *Körperkultur*. Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Also see Laurent Guido, "Rhythmic Bodies/Movies: Dance as Attraction in Early Film Culture," in Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University

pioneered, Isadora Duncan's introduction of "uncorseted" dance opened new avenues for the dancers to follow in her wake. It is important to remember that Mary Wigman came to dance in her late 20s. A ballet career was never a possibility. Nor did she desire one. She and her cohorts indeed had to make the dance art new in order to express the experiences and conflicts of their age.

The Beginning of a Life in Dance

Following the end of her first marital engagement in 1905, Mary Wigman was sent to visit her aunt in Amsterdam. There she saw the pupils of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze in a demonstration of *Eurhythmie*, his system designed to wed music and movement through practical experience.¹⁴⁵ His students performed Weber's *Invitation to the Waltz* and for Wigman it was a revelation of a new way of approaching musical expression through bodily interpretation. By 1908 Mary Wigman was twenty-two years old, still living in the family home and plunging toward her family's greatest fear: that she would become a Bluestocking.¹⁴⁶ She had also ended another engagement and was deeply unhappy. In her memoirs, she describes closing herself in a room and crying in desperation at her situation. And she found that when she cried she made movements with her hands as she paced. During this period of despair, Wigman saw a performance by the three Wiesenthal sisters, Elsa, Berta and Grete. The Wiesenthals were dancing celebrities and Grete, in particular, became well known for her interpretation of the Viennese waltz, representing the elegance, grace and style of *fin de siecle* Vienna.¹⁴⁷ Seeing Grete Wiesenthal's performance of *The Beautiful Blue Danube* at the Opera house in Hanover, Wigman felt a new world opening before her. In her memoirs, Wigman appears especially taken by the beauty of Wiesenthal's hands in the dance, as well the range of emotions that the hands could convey. Hedwig Müller describes Wigman as intoxicated by the movement: "hands that can laugh happily and also express struggle,

Press, 2006), 139-156.

¹⁴⁵ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) introduced an analytical approach to dance education through a systematic study of the fundamentals of music, using codified movement.

¹⁴⁶ In other words, they feared she would end up an over-educated "old maid."

¹⁴⁷ For more on the Wiesenthals see Charles Warren, *Gertrud Bodenwieser and Vienna's Contribution to Ausdruckstanz* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

sadness and the gentleness of the dance.”¹⁴⁸ Perhaps in this moment Wigman recognized the cry of her own hands dancing the despair of her heart while locked away in the guest room of her family home. Here was the expressive outlet that she had been searching for. She approached the Wiesenthals, hoping to study with them. She was told that at twenty-two she was too old to begin to dance. In her memoirs she reminisced that one teacher advised, “My dear girl, go home and be a *Hausfrau* – you’ll be happier . . . You’ll never be a dancer.”¹⁴⁹ Yet she persisted. She saw another demonstration of *Eurhythmie* by Dalcroze’s students and the way became clear to her. She said, “I want to do the same.”¹⁵⁰ Overcoming the resistance of her family and the “whole bourgeois world,” she began her life in dance at the age of 27 under the tutelage of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau.

Hellerau: Germany’s First Garden City

An important element in Wigman’s early career was one particular dancing space, the *Festhalle* (festival hall), built in Hellerau, Germany, in the early years of the twentieth century. Through the *Festhalle* passed many of the artistic avant-garde of the new era: painters, composers, poets and writers such as Upton Sinclair and D.H. Lawrence. And dancers like Wigman came, at first not even knowing exactly what they were coming to. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze was made the grand maestro of the great hall and there his practice of simultaneous music and dance training created a compelling draw for those young people flushed with the possibilities of the new century. Victorian ideas of a constrained physicality were thrown aside by these students, who took off their corsets and their shoes and took on the avocation of the art of dance with a religious fervor.¹⁵¹ Many of these dancers became the missionaries of a particular kind of modernism that was born in their modern bodies. These were bodies of young people charged with a new world of possibilities, bodies liberated by an ascendant physical culture and innovations that inspired hope for the future. From among these students would surface the

¹⁴⁸ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 27.

¹⁵⁰ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 187.

¹⁵¹ Isa Partsch-Bergsohn, and Harold Bergsohn, *The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss* (Highstown, N.J.: Princeton Book Co., 2003).

revolutionaries of the dance art, including Mary Wigman. In the *Festhalle* of Hellerau, Hanya Holm met Mary Wigman and later became her student.¹⁵² In 1931, Holm would carry Wigman's technique to the United States, thus widening the circle of influence from the hilltop of Hellerau to far beyond the European continent. Along with Wigman and Holm, the splendid Japanese dancer Michio Ito took part in the historic performance of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* in 1912. And Upton Sinclair wrote of being among the crowd at the *Festhalle* on the opening night of *Orpheus* with, "throng[s] of people who had journeyed from places all over the earth where art was loved and cherished."¹⁵³

The Systematizers: Making Sense of a Modern World

The beginning of the twentieth century saw many systematizers who sought to create form out of the uncertainties of the new century. Social theorists were divining new ways of organizing societies that gained popular support. The growth of the Social Democratic party in Germany during this period attests to their progress. Enthusiasts called for health and reforms, espousing a new body culture. There were also theorists who turned to art in an effort to create an organized system that responded to the chaos of the age. While Arnold Schoenberg later would reshape Western music with the twelve-tone scale, cubists Picasso and Braque would dissect and reassemble the familiar human form, and James Joyce would restructure the written word, Dalcroze codified a method of applying gesture and movement to corresponding musical elements. By 1910 Dalcroze was considered a leader in art education. That year he established his school in the planned garden city of Hellerau situated five miles outside of Dresden. Mary Wigman literally ran away from home to become a member of that community.¹⁵⁴ Once at Hellerau, she managed to get a portion of her father's inheritance sent to her by her mother.¹⁵⁵ Choosing not to marry and without the permission of her stepfather, she began

¹⁵² Walter Sorell, *Hanya Holm: The Biography of an Artist* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969).

¹⁵³ Upton Sinclair, *World's End* (New York: Literary Guild, 1940), 1. There are more than two dozen references to Hellerau and Dalcroze throughout *World's End*.

¹⁵⁴ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

her own path that would traverse an uncharted space.¹⁵⁶ That space was new even in the larger world.

The construction of the Garden City of Hellerau was begun in 1908 by the *Deutsche Gartenstadtgesellschaft* (German Garden City Association) in cooperation with the *Deutschen Werkstätten* (German Workshops). A consistent feature of the German *Lebensreform* or land reform movement's agenda in the early 1900s was the call for establishment of cooperatively owned "garden cities." The German Garden City Association was founded in the autumn of 1902.¹⁵⁷ The land reformers, who came from the ranks of literati and leftist Social Democratic activists, initially envisioned the garden cities as a response to the housing crisis in Wilhelmine-era urban centers. Under the Garden City Association, Hans Kampffmeyer gathered a cadre of progressive architects and town planners from among the Social Democrats to design urban villages that differed from the congested, chance development of the German industrial city.¹⁵⁸ Plans included population limits – no more than 20,000 inhabitants per village – and propositions from the growing ranks of conservationists and environmental activists for incorporating the natural world into the urban setting.¹⁵⁹ The German garden city experiment was an extension of the English planning movement. That impulse grew from the October 1898 publication of Ebenezer Howard's *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, a book which proved so popular that a cheaper paperback volume was soon published.¹⁶⁰ Based on Howard's model, the city of Letchworth, England, was built in

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Clemens Galonska, and Frank Elstner. *Gartenstadt Hellerau/Garden City of Hellerau* (Chemnitz: Palisander Verlag, 2007).

¹⁵⁸ Germany's rapid industrialization has been well documented. Germany experienced urbanization and industrialization late and explosively. Between 1870 and 1900, the percentage of Germans living in large cities grew from 35 percent to more than 60 percent. Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135.

¹⁵⁹ Matthew Jeffries, "Lebensreform: A Middle-Class Antidote to Wilhelminism?" in Eley and Retallack, *Wilhelminism*, 100.

¹⁶⁰ The book was re-issued as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1902 due to ongoing interest in Howard's notions, and was also republished in 1946 and 1985. It has been called "almost without question, the most important single work in the history of modern town planning." *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, (republished original edition

1903. Designed as an alternative industrial town, the population was drawn from a variety of social backgrounds. Ideally it would be free from overcrowding, slums and pollution. The countryside would be brought into the town with parks, open spaces and low-density housing surrounded by extensive landscaping. Letchworth was a city born from an idea, as was Hellerau.

This first German garden city was established just five miles from Dresden, the capital of Saxony. Known as the “German Letchworth,” Hellerau was envisioned as a factory village/garden suburb, with economic support for its development drawn from an alliance of sources.¹⁶¹ Industrialist Karl Schmidt’s *Dresdener Werkstätte für Handwerkskunst* produced furniture and utensils of a simple, carefully crafted and functional style. When Hellerau was established, Schmidt decided to move his 1,200 workers to the site. Schmidt envisioned the town as a self-sufficient suburb of the larger urban center, one that would be linked to Dresden by tramway.¹⁶²

The site chosen for Hellerau was set among rural rolling hills. At that time an urban parcel of land in Germany cost up to seven times more than a comparable plot in England. By moving the new town outside of Dresden, planners could economically draft an entire community from the very beginning. The city design emphasized the aforementioned low density as well as collective housing layout. The plans conveyed a nostalgia for the villages of the nineteenth century.¹⁶³ A social message also was promulgated: that true communities required a firm sense of place, a harmony of interests, and a balance between rural and urban life that included a marriage of livelihood and cultural pursuits. The education of the children of the community was considered of equal importance to the humane working conditions of their parents.¹⁶⁴ Hellerau was conceived as a sort of planning *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art, wherein the integration of many aspects of public and private life was paramount. The

with commentary by Peter Hall, Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward) (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Jeffries in Eley and Retallack.

¹⁶³ Ibid and information from a tourist pamphlet acquired at Hellerau in May 2007.

¹⁶⁴ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Rhythm, Music and Education* (trans. Harold F. Rubenstein) (London: Dalcroze Society, 1967).

workers were housed in architecturally compatible family houses or villas placed along winding streets that were laid out to blend with the planted landscape and existing vegetation.

Hellerau was planned for a relatively low population density of about 1,000 families per 40 hectares of land.¹⁶⁵ Construction materials were drawn from local custom: bare brickwork, stone and wood. The new settlement was designed to evoke a rural atmosphere hearkening to older traditions. It featured a series of separate craft studio enclaves around Schmidt's workshop/factory, all of which were intended to guarantee the community's financial independence. Men and women were equally employed in the workshop. Just as the factory and workshops served as the economic centers of Hellerau, the most striking building in the town served as the aesthetic heart for the community and an educational center for its children and many adults who came to study with pedagogue Emile Jaques-Dalcroze. The community *Festhalle* — formally the *Bildungsanstalt für Musik und Rhythmus* (the Educational Establishment for Music and Rhythm, founded in 1910) — was built to house large and small performances generated by Dalcroze's school for movement training. During work hours, it served as a school and care center for the community's children. To fully understand the radical nature of the experiment at Hellerau, it seems valuable to consider what came before, both in dance and in theater construction. The distance to Dresden was only five miles, but some differences seemed centuries away. The Semper Opera House of Dresden allows us a glimpse of a world of art and architecture very different from the visions of the Hellerau designers and thus worth a short comparative description that demonstrates the radical change in theater space over a relatively short period.

Before the construction of the Hellerau *Festhalle*, the Semper Opera House had served as the primary center for performance art in the region. Originally constructed between 1838-1841 as the Royal Court Theatre, it was commissioned by Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. This was before the initial German unification and the Semper Opera House served as a crown jewel in the newly appointed

¹⁶⁵ Hellerau pamphlet 2007.

King's court. Gottfried Semper, the original architect, was born in 1803.¹⁶⁶ Semper had studied architecture in Germany and France and after his graduation had toured Italy and Greece in 1834, gaining a deep appreciation of ancient Roman architectural design. Returning to Germany, he became professor at the Academy of Arts in Dresden and a close friend of opera master Richard Wagner. Together they were arrested after the May 1848 revolt. While Wagner was imprisoned, Semper fled to Paris, then London and Switzerland where he continued his work at the Zurich *Semperschule*.¹⁶⁷ While he was in exile, the Royal Court Theatre burned. After the first German unification in 1871, Semper's son Manfred was called upon to rebuild the theater using the original design, a process that took until 1878.¹⁶⁸ At that point it was renamed the Semper Opera House and became known as one of the most beautiful theaters in Europe. In its ornate, High Renaissance style, it remains a reminder of the time of kings and courts.¹⁶⁹ In contrast, the *Festspielhaus* at Hellerau stood in stark contrast to such ornamentation. It was built in a neo-classical style that reflected the aesthetic and philosophical goals of its founders: to move forward toward a new humanism supposedly based on Greek ideals but also espousing influences from a broad range of esoteric sources including Eastern religion and modern psychology.

New Dance, New Space: The *Festspielhaus*

Built in 1910, the Hellerau *Festhalle* was financed by Wolf Dohrn, the son of marine biologist Anton Dohrn, a progressive by nature and occupation.¹⁷⁰ Wolf came from a home steeped in the positivist ideals of scientific inquiry, rational progress and humanist possibilities.¹⁷¹ Wolf Dohrn had become co-founder of the Workers Union for Handicrafts and saw the experiment at Hellerau as perfect opportunity to put his own

¹⁶⁶ James Duncan Berry, "The legacy of Gottfried Semper: studies in Spahistorismus," (PhD dissertation, Brown University, 1989).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper - Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹⁶⁹ Destroyed by the Allied firebombing in 1945 the Opera House was faithfully reconstructed and remains the center of Dresden's *Theatreplatz*. Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Wolfgang Dohrn, *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau: Ein Bericht* (Jena: Diederichs, 1908).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

theories of progressive living and education into practice. In the *Festhalle*, Dohrn envisioned,

a house, not for singles, or families to live in, but rather for all, not for learning and becoming more intelligent, but rather for enjoyment, not for praying according to some religious denomination, but rather for *Andacht* (worship) and inner experience. What I mean is neither a school, museum, church, concert hall or auditorium! Something of all of these, but also something else too.¹⁷²

The architect chosen to design Dohrn's *Festhalle* was Heinrich Tessenow. Tessenow has become best known by way of his most infamous student, Albert Speer.¹⁷³ But with Hellerau, Tessenow claims consideration in his own right.¹⁷⁴ Born in Rostocks in 1876, Tessenow trained at the School of Building in Leipzig and was known for his 1909 book *Der Wohnhausbau (Residential Construction)* and later for *Hausbau und Dergleichen (Handicraft and Town - 1919)*. Tessenow had established himself as a humanist who combined the values and traditions of the Arts and Crafts movement with a monumental Greek style.¹⁷⁵ He brought the Garden City idea to further international attention through his writing and is said to have influenced Le Corbusier with his notions

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ It is worth noting Tessenow's significant influence on later German architecture. In his diary for August 31, 1947, Albert Speer wrote: "My old teacher Tessenow's idea of simple and human building has acquired a wholly new meaning for me and for these times. Back then his sermons were a protest against the megalomania of the industrial age. He deliberately opposed his plain houses with their neat craftsmanship to skyscrapers and factories. But now his aims correspond to the poverty of these times and the crying needs of people. I foresee that he and not Gropius, Miës van der Rohe, or Le Corbusier will determine the future. As his former assistant and favorite disciple it is up to me to carry on his work. It's high time I had done with all these fits of melancholia over the grandiose plans, the unbuilt palaces and triumphal arches; high time for me to find my way back to my beginnings. Why shouldn't I be able to do something about housing for miners and applying my mind to the rebuilding of the cities? It all depends on my managing to keep in touch with my profession." Albert Speer, *Spandau: The Secret Diaries* (Richard and Clara Winston, trans.) (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), 74.

¹⁷⁴ For Speer on Tessenow, cf. Chapter 4. For a related article, see Michael K. Hays, "Tessenow's Architecture as National Allegory: Critique of Capitalism or Protofascism?" *Assemblage* 8 (Feb. 1989): 104-123.

¹⁷⁵ Hays Ibid.

of combining grand architecture and traditional craft.¹⁷⁶ Tessenow designed the *Festhalle* in Hellerau after the Wagnerian model of the theater at Bayreuth, but in the style of “primitive classicism.” Built for a sum of 1,450,00 deutschmarks, the building was striking in its stark functionalism.¹⁷⁷ Large enough to house a theater, the two-story structure was fronted with four severe Doric columns. At the top of the façade was a large Taoist “yin-yang” disk in black and white that could be seen at some distance.¹⁷⁸ The surprising Eastern symbol was meant to remind visitors of the moral goals of the community and the shared cultural ideals of an integrated existence.¹⁷⁹ This was a consciously chosen, radical symbol designed to convey the unique philosophy of the place. Each time Wigman entered the *Festspielhaus* at Hellerau, she passed under this symbol. The symbol of the dual distribution of forces, comprising the active or masculine principle and the passive or feminine principle, takes the form of a circle bisected by a sigmoid line. The two parts are invested with a dynamic relationship with the one side representing the opposing and symbiotic force of the other. As the opposites exist with one another they engender perpetual motion, metamorphosis and continuity in the midst of contradiction. Eventually, Mary Wigman would use this principle as the basis for her particular approach to spinning turns. She would also be referred to as “he” “she” and “it” all in the same concert performance. The symbolism was not lost on her as she saw such spinning as the transcendent coming together of opposing forces. She referred to these forces and her early influences at Hellerau throughout her teaching career.¹⁸⁰ The symbol in the center of a German planned community was meant to remind visitors and residents

¹⁷⁶ Tessenow is considered among the important twentieth-century architects who fostered an individual and human architecture. He dealt seriously with the problems of high-density housing and of housing for those of modest means. Interest in Tessenow and his architecture seems to have gradually revived in the last few decades. See Marco De Michelis, “Modernity and Reform: Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau,” in Hans Baldauf, Baker Goodwin and Amy Reichert, eds. *Theater, Theatricality and Architecture* (New Haven: Perspecta Inc., 1990).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Based on personal interviews with Brigitta Herrmann at Hellerau in 2008.

of the values upon which the community was founded and the shared cultural ideals of an integrated life based on rhythm, harmony, graciousness and simplicity.¹⁸¹

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Mary Wigman's First Teacher

In 1907, industrialist Karl Schmitt and secretary of the *Werkbund* Wolf Dohrn attended a demonstration of rhythmic gymnastics given by students of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze.¹⁸² Dalcroze had been working as Professor of Harmony at the Geneva Conservatory. It appears that Dalcroze found his students ill-prepared for musical expression, despite a well-developed level of technical competence. Indeed, Dalcroze had expressed this disparity as comparable to a situation in which a student may have mastered the vocabulary of a spoken language and could read it, but is unable express him or herself fully.¹⁸³ Many apocryphal stories tell of Dalcroze's "Eureka!" moment when he saw that the use of whole body movement could revolutionize the course of music education.¹⁸⁴ One such story has Dalcroze perplexed with the shortcomings of a particular student. The student seemed to possess a good ear and sense of phrasing, but was unable to play evenly in tempo. Dalcroze happened to observe this student walking with an even gait, showing no evidence of halting or hurrying as he did while playing the piano.¹⁸⁵ Dalcroze discovered the student moved smoothly, relying on the organic swing of his limbs around the solid but mobile core of his torso, in essence the kinesthetic sense of "center" used in the art of dance.

Whatever the initial impetus, Dalcroze began to experiment in his classroom. He dispensed with desks and asked his students to move when studying rhythmic fundamentals. He soon discovered that he needed other facilities and requested a bigger room with full mirrors and a changing room, essentially a dance studio. He argued that

¹⁸¹ Wigman would choreograph this idea in her solo, *Drehentanz*, in which she spun Dervish-like for seven minutes non-stop. She also embedded similar turning in her classes. Cf. Appendix B.

¹⁸² Mary Elizabeth Tallon, "Appia's Theatre at Hellerau," in *Theatre Journal* 36:4 (Dec. 1984): 495-504.

¹⁸³ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Eurhythmics: Art and Education* (Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co., 1930).

¹⁸⁴ Tallon, "Appia's Theatre at Hellerau."

¹⁸⁵ Urana Clark, "Dalcroze: Rhythm in a Chain Reaction," *Musical America* 7:13, (1950): 25.

clothing influences movement and that a person in a loose jersey with bare feet would move with greater ease than one dressed in tight clothes and street shoes. Eventually, the school administration found the removal of shoes and restrictive clothing inappropriate for study in the Conservatory, condemning such “monkeyshines” and speeding Dalcroze’s separation from that institution.¹⁸⁶ When teaching at the Conservatory, Dalcroze had started to present public demonstrations of his students performing his new theories through the system of exercises that he dubbed “Eurhythmics.”¹⁸⁷

As early as 1903, Dalcroze had presented these programs locally. As he developed his system, he traveled to locations in Germany and adjoining states to give fuller demonstrations of his work. This was how Wigman first saw Dalcroze and his students. And this was how Schmitt and Dohrn came across Dalcroze and his movement/music method in 1907. In Dalcroze’s demonstration, the founders of Hellerau saw what they hoped would become the basis of art and education in the town-to-be. In 1909 they officially invited Dalcroze to become part of the community because of the innovative nature of his work. This acceptance was a far cry from what Dalcroze had experienced at the Geneva Conservatory.¹⁸⁸ In Schmitt and Dohrn, he found kindred spirits willing to step into a new era of fresh methods — not merely of art making but fusing art with everyday life. Dalcroze responded to the invitation with a plan to create at Hellerau an aesthetic in tandem with the architecture that would “harmonize the village and its people.”¹⁸⁹ Schmitt proposed to provide Dalcroze with a place built to his exact specifications that would include classrooms, gardens and a theater to “replace the missing church.”¹⁹⁰ This was a dream come true for Dalcroze but also called for abilities in space design far removed from his music training. To take his ideas from methodology to production, Dalcroze would need help.

¹⁸⁶ For a biography of Dalcroze see Irwin Spector, *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Emile Jacques-Dalcroze* (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1990).

¹⁸⁷ Not to be confused with anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner’s exercises of the same name, which are still taught in present day Waldorf Schools.

¹⁸⁸ V.H. Mead, “More than Mere Movement – Dalcroze Eurhythmics,” *Music Educators Journal* 82:4 (1996): 38-41.

¹⁸⁹ Tallon, “Appia’s Theatre at Hellerau,” 496.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. See Dohrn’s quote on page 57.

Adolphe Appia: Architect of Light

In 1906, designer Adolphe Appia also attended the demonstration in Geneva of the Dalcroze Method.¹⁹¹ Like Wigman, he was born to a conservative middle class family. He also chose to rebel by studying music and then gravitating toward theatre design. He became a theoretician deeply influenced by Richard Wagner. Appia recognized that the usual mounting of the operas did not properly embody Wagner's theories. After Wagner's death, Appia approached Cosima Wagner in Bayreuth, but she rejected his suggestions for changes in staging. After much thought Appia published *The Staging of Wagner's Musical Dramas* in 1895 and *Music and Stage Setting* in 1899. Appia called for a modern art form that could unite the audience in a common experience of emotion. He admired the dramatic achievements of the ancient Greeks and the catharsis described by Nietzsche in *Birth of Tragedy*. He was moved to tears and felt compelled to communicate with Dalcroze when he saw the 1906 movement demonstration, finding therein "the answer to his passionate desire for synthesis — the music/body/space synthesis foreseen in his early works."¹⁹² Thus began a life-long correspondence, collaboration and friendship between the two.¹⁹³

When Dalcroze was approached by Schmitt and Dohrn in 1907 about designing and inhabiting the *Festhalle* at Hellerau, he turned to Appia, whose ideas on theatre architecture and the unified theater event guided the design of the new theater. Tessenow was already planning a unique design for the exterior of the *Festhalle* and Appia would contribute an interior design that would go far beyond Wagner's vision at Bayreuth.

¹⁹¹ Appia was by all accounts a striking figure who stood out in the crowd. Determined to live in utter independence and simplicity, he seldom wore the customary city suit, preferring more comfortable clothing such as knickerbockers and sandals without stockings in summer. Appia had been born in Geneva, the youngest child of Dr. Louis Appia, a co-founder of the Red Cross. He became a theoretician, deeply impressed by Richard Wagner. Walther R. Volbach, "A Profile of Adolphe Appia," *Educational Theatre Journal* 15:1 (March 1963): 8.

¹⁹² Appia quoted in Tallon, "Appia's Theatre at Hellerau," 496.

¹⁹³ For years Appia had studied piano and composition. A fine singer, in fact, through singing he freed himself from a debilitating speech impediment. As a child he stuttered, an affliction that made it often difficult to "have contact with other persons." Ibid.

Working together, Schmitt, Dohrn, Tessenow, Dalcroze and Appia created a theater that was a radical departure from any of the accepted theatre designs of the early 1900s:

Appia described his ideal theatre as simply a space, oblong, bare and empty, ‘no stage, no amphitheatre, only an empty room, waiting.’ The theatre at Hellerau was a neutral space, a rectangular box (49m long x 16m wide x 12m tall); it was free of decorative detail and its walls were covered in plain, beige-colored fabric; its only lines were architectural.”¹⁹⁴

At Hellerau Appia saw his opportunity to correct what he saw as the “falseness” of the nineteenth-century stage that Wagner had retained.¹⁹⁵ Beginning with the assumption that artistic unity is the highest goal of theatrical production, Appia analyzed which conventions detracted from the whole. The very features that had persisted since the proscenium stage was lifted from the royal ballroom in Louis XIV’s reign proved to be obstacles to realizing the unity of the modern stage.¹⁹⁶ Such change in stage space made possible complex grouping and dance movement that responded to the changes in level and pathway, charging the space with possibility. The form was meant to emphasize by contrast, “the round contours of the body and the curved paths of its movements.”¹⁹⁷ The new space also freed the dance from the domination of the ballet vocabulary and its congruence to the two-dimensional stage.

The Body in Space

Appia wrote that the final evolution of his theory was toward an art that took the living and moving human body as its object as well as its instrument.¹⁹⁸ He aimed to create an architectural style that used the moving body of the performer as the sole point

¹⁹⁴ Tallon, “Appia’s Theatre at Hellerau,” 498.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁹⁶ He concluded that stage presentation involved three conflicting visual elements: 1. the moving, three-dimensional actor; 2. the perpendicular scenery; and 3. the horizontal floor. In painted, two-dimensional settings he saw a major cause of disunity and recommended replacing them with three-dimensional components such as steps, ramps and platforms that could break the stark delineation of the horizontal floor and, most importantly, enhance the movement of the performer.

¹⁹⁷ Adolphe Appia, *The Work of Living Art: A Theory of the Theatre* (trans. H.D. Albright), and *Man is the Measure of All Things*. (trans. Barnard Hewitt) (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1960), 126.

¹⁹⁸ Adolphe Appia, *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Scenarios, and Designs* (ed. Richard C. Beacham; trans. Walther R. Volbach) (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).

of departure, thus, “our body becomes a marvelous instrument of infinite resources.”¹⁹⁹ But how did the dancers respond to the new space? In 1911 the first lessons began in the *Festspielhaus* with students who ranged from the children of Hellerau to young men and women from all over Germany and beyond who were interested in the new movement art. Many of these adult students had studied music and were looking for a new means of training, as this first-hand account attests:

We students were apprehensive at first, but when we took possession of the house and moved about in its halls we became aware this building, through its absence of adornments and plainness, invited us to move, indeed, it intensified movement and ennobled it. How much the room is a counter-play of the body movement, we experienced as never before or afterwards. The most beautiful part of the Tessenow building was perhaps the great hall with all its walls covered with white material behind which were thousands of glow lamps so that the hall could be plunged into every nuance of soft and blaring light. There was no stage in front of the ascending amphitheatrically rows of seats only a simple acting area, which was crated by moveable stairs and steps, curtains and pillars. Between and the seats was the sunken orchestra pit. In this hall, the students with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra and Emmy Leisner as Orpheus produced Gluck’s *Orpheus* in 1913. Soon afterwards there was the first performance of *Die Verhündigug* by the French poet [Paul] Claudel. The house itself was the center of a much bigger arena around which were playing fields, tennis courts and areas for sunbathing. We now must imagine the whole terrain alive with young people, about as many young men as young ladies. There were also the children of Hellerau who came fro[for] a daily eurhythmics lesson-they surrounded Monsieur Jaques wherever they way [saw] him, he was like the Pied Piper among them.²⁰⁰

Appia emphasized the role of light in fusing all the elements into a unified whole. For him light was the visual counterpoint to music, which changes from moment to moment in response to shifting moods, emotions and action. The lighting for the *Festhalle* was designed by Appia with the assistance of engineer Alexander von Salzman as a veritable temple of light, realizing the *Andacht* or worship that Wolf Dohrn had envisioned.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Appia quoted in Clark M. Rogers, “Appia’s Theory of Acting: Eurhythmics for the Stage,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 19:4 (Dec. 1967): 472.

²⁰⁰ Elfriede Feudel, (Thea Ney trans.) *History of the ‘Bildungsanstalt – Hellerau 1910-1914* (unpublished manuscript, 1956). Feudel went to become a music educator who published numerous books and articles on the topic in the German language.

²⁰¹ Salzman called the effect *Tageslicht ohne Sonne* (daylight without sun).

For the production of *Orpheus* Appia wished to orchestrate and manipulate light as carefully as a musical score. The walls and ceiling were entirely covered with cream-colored cloth that concealed more than 10,000 electric lights set into the walls and engineered to be controlled by a huge “color organ” that could create all degrees of luminous intensity and color variations. It was “played” by a technician at a switchboard placed out of view. As the performance began, audience and performers filed into the hall through the same entrances at the sides of the space. These were the only entrances, so there was neither a mysterious backstage territory for performers nor a grand foyer for the spectators. Entering together, the dancers moved toward the stairs and ramps at one end and the spectators took their seats opposite. The transparent light emanating from the walls and ceiling bathed the spectators and performers equally and all experienced the shifts of color and luminosity that was part of the production. The idea was to create a totality of performance, a transcendent experience, for all. This was closer to ritual than even Wagner’s efforts toward myth making and all present were meant to become participants. Appia wrote

We have the obligation to diminish progressively the abyss which separates the spectator from the actor, to shake up our egotistical torpor, to take, little by little, an active part in what we name haughtily ‘the production,’ and finally to live *ourselves* and *in common* the work of art.²⁰²

What happened to the visionaries that dreamed Hellerau into being? A tireless seeker, Adolphe Appia left Hellerau before the final production of *Orpheus*. In 1914 he collaborated with Dalcroze at the June Festival in Geneva. In 1921 he wrote *Work of Living Art* and briefly considered emigrating to the United States, but finally settled in a house connected to a Swiss sanitarium at Nyon. His lasting contributions to the theater would be through his writings. And his theories of theatrical production and stage lighting came to be accepted across Western Europe and the United States.²⁰³ In February 1914 financier Wolf Dohrn was killed in a skiing accident. His brother Harald tried to keep Hellerau alive but the war made it impossible. Schmitt’s factory was turned to other

²⁰² Appia quoted in Tallon, “Appia’s Theatre at Hellerau,” 500.

²⁰³ Arch Lauterer (1904-1957) studied with Appia in Germany and brought these ideas to the American concert dance stage.

purposes; furniture and handcrafts were in little demand in the wartime economy. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze went to Geneva after Dohrn's death and remained there during the war. In September of 1914 the newspaper *La Suisse* published a letter protesting the German bombing of the Cathedral at Rheims and the burning of the library at Louvain. It was signed by Dalcroze, who had become a war protester and "was no longer welcome at Hellerau."²⁰⁴ During the war the fields below the *Festhalle*, where students had sunbathed and followed Dalcroze, became an exercise field for the German army. The *Festhalle* itself was transformed into an army hospital. The cream-colored cloth that had diffused Appia's light was torn from the walls of the theater, and the fabric was used to make bandages for wounded soldiers.²⁰⁵

And what of the students who studied with Dalcroze? Some went to war. But many went on to pioneer new developments in the arts of theater, music and the dance. And each of these was irrevocably changed by their time at Hellerau. The ideas introduced by Dalcroze and Appia have become part of the modern theater and pioneering dancers such as Mary Wigman developed these ideas, each in different ways.²⁰⁶ Many artists were drawn to Hellerau. Due to its proximity to Dresden, members of the Expressionist painters group *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) became part of the Hellerau circle. One member of this group, Emil Nolde, would become a close personal friend of Wigman. Most of Wigman's biographers mention Nolde as the person who introduced her to dance theoretician Rudolf von Laban in 1913; however, the relationship between Nolde's painting and Wigman's choreography warrants more thorough consideration.²⁰⁷ In Wigman's autobiography, she describes their artistic relationship:

²⁰⁴ Tallon, "Appia's Theatre at Hellerau," 504.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ I know of no sound recording done during that performance of *Orpheus* in 1913; the nuances of that unique event are lost. For dance things are worse still. We have no physical evidence of the movement that filled the *Festhalle* at Hellerau. No notation exists. Still photographs give some idea of the sculptural quality of the gestures, but we cannot know how they navigated those ramps and stairs made by Appia. It has become the stuff of legend.

²⁰⁷ For another feminist view, cf. Susan Laikin Funkenstein, "There's Something about Mary Wigman: The Woman Dancer as Subject in German Expressionist Art," *Gender and History* 17:3, (2005): 826-859.

My friendship with the painter Emil Nolde dated far back . . . whenever possible (he) came to my dance concerts. The managers knew about him and were aware of what was expected from them. They reserved three seats: one for him, one for his tubes and pots of paints, and one for his wife, who stood guard lest he should be disturbed. I don't know what happened to those on-the-scene sketches. The few he gave me were destroyed when Dresden was bombed.²⁰⁸

Indeed, Nolde and the *Die Brücke* painters were opposed to the usual practice of drawing static models. They became most interested in capturing physical movement in the same way that August Rodin had captured movement in his sculpture. The loss of those sketches is regrettable. However a record of Wigman and Nolde's relationship does remain in existing paintings of Nolde. His 1910 painting, *The Dance Round the Golden Calf*, was one of many Nolde painted on Biblical subjects. William Fleming describes the painting: "[Nolde uses] violent color dissonances plus distorted lines [when] drawing his message of the *primitive fury and demoniac energies* of his tormented dancers. (emphasis mine)"²⁰⁹ The shapes of the dancers in *The Dance Round the Golden Calf* bear strong resemblance to Wigman in a photograph of her first version of *Hexentanz*, choreographed in 1914. There are obvious similarities in the angles of knees, ankles and elbows and the way that the feet are lifted off the ground while the skirts swirl in both pictures. Both the photograph of Wigman and Nolde's painting capture an abandon and a wild sense of movement.

Like the Expressionist painters, Wigman and the practitioners of *Ausdruckstanz* were fully conscious of the visible world, but chose to look within and explore and present the mind, spirit and imagination. These artists were aware that humanity inhabits a number of complex, overlapping worlds and that these worlds, which are not seen by the eye, must be explored through the moving body. Their goal was the revealing of a new world of emotion and the mysterious motivations underlying human behavior. And they welcomed Freud's identification of the subconscious. Just as Expressionist literature intends to startle the reader with subjective revelations of neurotic, often psychotic, states and just as the clashing dissonances of Expressionist music are intended to arouse rather than soothe the listener, *Ausdruckstanz* sought to produce a finished product that

²⁰⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 55.

²⁰⁹ Fleming, 367.

unsettled the viewer while finding a performance mode that took the dancer and her audience to the realm of transcendence and ritual. For Wigman and her cohorts, this flight into archaic rituals seemed at once regressive, progressive and an act of rebellion against their middle-class beginnings. They were joined in this rebellion by other dancers, artists and composers from beyond the borders of Germany.

Among those who came to Hellerau were the members of the newly sensational *Ballets Russes*: impresario Serge Diaghilev, choreographer and virtuoso Vaclav Nijinsky and the firebrand of modern music, Igor Stravinsky.²¹⁰ By a calculated move of the *Ballets Russes* to Paris in 1909, Serge Diaghilev had been freed from the constrictions of the Imperial Ballet, whose repertory reflected the hierarchical social order of the empire, with soloists, demi-soloists and the chorus mirroring the monarchy, the aristocracy and the peasant class.

Drawing together a stable of virtuosos, Diaghilev built a company that relied on the market economy instead of royal funding and began to produce ballets that shocked the Parisian art world. In 1913, Diaghilev, Vaslav Nijinsky, Igor Stravinsky and set designer Nicholas Roerich traveled from Paris to Germany while working on a new ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, seeking to make a new myth of Russia by reaching back toward an idealized and imaginary, mythological past. Diaghilev took all of these artists to Hellerau to observe Jaques-Dalcroze's methods and incorporate them into the *Sacre*. Evidence of this influence is obvious, particularly in the second, *Sacrifice* section where the driving rhythms and pathways in space appear to derive directly from Dalcroze's eurhythmic exercises.

Sacre burst on the scene as the first truly modern ballet and arguably the dance most revealing of the enduring allegory of the modern age: the desire to find an authentic or idealized myth that could serve as a rallying point for a people. It also became a dance about nation building as Russia tipped toward its own revolution. Stravinsky would assert that he wanted to convey the primal violence of the Russian spring. The central sacrificial

²¹⁰ From Hellerau, Diaghilev, Nijinsky and Stravinsky returned to Paris, bringing one of Dalcroze's star students, Marie Rambert, to integrate Dalcroze's methods into the most famous of ballets, the *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring), staged at the Paris Opera House in 1913.

figure chosen from the mass of moving bodies in the *Sacre* crystallized the modern plight: the responsibility of the individual to the society.²¹¹ It became a rallying call for those who would attempt to describe the modern age. Over the span of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, many dance companies would repeat the theme of the *Sacre*: of primal roots and individual sacrifice for the good of the group. It may well be the unifying myth of the modern age and certainly has relevance to Mary Wigman's life. More than forty years later, Mary Wigman would set her own *Sacre du Printemps* at the Berlin Opera in 1957, her seventy-first year.

But Wigman was still only a student at the time of Diaghilev's visit. She was becoming certified to teach the Dalcroze method, but already was growing disillusioned with its pedantic restrictiveness, particularly the way it limited dance in what she perceived as a slavish and subordinate relationship to music. Working alone in her room, Wigman had composed a dance work entitled *Lento* that was done in silence and reveled in the rhythm generated by the moving body itself. She showed the composition to Emil Nolde. He told her that there was another dancer who worked as she did and that she should seek him out. After taking part in Dalcroze's preliminary production of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, Wigman journeyed south from Hellerau to another community with a vision even more radically rebellious and emphatically utopian. It was here that Mary Wigman would commit herself to the path of dancer and choreographer.

Return to Ritual on the Mountain of Truth

The next stage of Wigman's career took her away from Hellerau and into a new environment. Equally modernist, but not constructed as the *Festhalle* had been, the community of Monte Verità that began to grow in 1902 at Ascona, Switzerland, depended more on the individuals involved than an architect's design. Much of the creative work took place outdoors, and in the nude. Along the shores of Lago Maggiore,

²¹¹ Since the dawn of the twentieth century, this theme has played out repeatedly in the theaters of art, politics and the theater of war. The story of the *Sacre* lives in a Mother Theresa or a Gandhi and the myth has mutated in the kamikaze pilot and the suicide bomber. The theme of sacrifice has endured for the mythmakers of nation throughout the turbulence of the twentieth century and into our own, again offering proof of the cliché that in order to understand a culture one must look at the art produced therein.

Wigman found a dancer's landscape. Idyllic and pristine, that place became the incubator for much that was new in psychology, literature, painting, music and dance.

The experiments at Monte Verità stand in sharp contrast to the wind up to war. While conflicts simmered between Austria-Hungary, Russia, the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire, Germany and England were thick in a competition for naval superiority. In this powder keg of Europe, alliances were manipulated across the continent. German government was still dominated by Prussian Junkers who feared the rise of the left wing. In the midst of this turmoil, the counterculture at the community of Ascona revealed in experiments in living reform. Martin Green claims that the avant-garde really began in 1900 with the establishment of the Monte Verità community.²¹² Many of those who formed the counterculture of the period between the turn of the century and the end of World War I came through this commune. The founders of Monte Verità included anarchists, communists, nudists, alienists, vegetarians, radical psychotherapists, theosophists and anthroposophists influenced by Rudolf Steiner. At Monte Verità, independent artists such as Paul Klee and Ernst Kirchner, and writers ranging from Dadaist Hugo Ball to Herman Hesse, James Joyce, Rainer Maria Rilke and D.H. Lawrence crossed paths.²¹³ For the artists of Monte Verità, the act of dancing came to represent an idealized return to the essential and “natural” dimensions of human creative expression.²¹⁴

In 1913, Nolde encouraged Wigman to travel to Ascona near the Italian border, to enroll in Rudolf von Laban's *Schule der Bewegungskunst*, his summer school for the movement arts. Nolde had recognized that Laban's ideas about the possibilities of dance expression reflected Wigman's own. Laban's school flourished in the Alpine community of Monte Verità near Lago Maggiore. Founded as an experiment in the *Lebensreform* or life reform movement, those who sought to create a culture of artistic freedom at Monte

²¹² Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins Ascona, 1900-1920* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986).

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Verità also espoused sexual freedom and feminism and rejected conservative ideas of respectability and hierarchical social order.²¹⁵

When Mary Wigman arrived at Monte Verità, she was directed to follow the sound of drums. By doing so she would find Rudolph von Laban and his students. Wigman recalled walking down a path on a hot summer day. Dressed from head to toe in her summer whites, she came upon a clearing where Laban was leading a group improvisation. Shedding hat, stockings, shoes and clothing, she joined the group. Later she wrote

Aha-a drum! I followed the sound, reached a meadow, and on the other side of the meadow a man stood in a white shirt and shorts, a drum in his hands and a few girls and a midget jumping around. I was fascinated, staring motionless. Laban turned around and said to me: “What do you want?” “I would like to join you.” “Fine, get undressed behind that bush and come over here.” I did it. It was like coming home. This wonderful feeling I will never forget. I stood there and suddenly, under the guiding rhythm of his drum, I felt marvelous.²¹⁶

The commune at Monte Verità was dedicated to radical ideas about lifestyle, art making, ritual, nature worship, feminism, birth control and free love.²¹⁷ Along with a radical reordering of what was acceptable for the body, roles for women and men became fluid, leading to a dynamic shift in how the body was trained, presented and performed on the concert stage. Deep links to ritual and occult practices served as justification and aesthetic foundation for these experiments. Green focuses on the cultural function of alternative belief systems in efforts to resist social norms.²¹⁸ He sees connections between Freudian ideas, bisexuality and the lure of occultism. He proposes a tendency among intellectuals of that time toward what he terms a Faustian temperament. Green specifically looks at the city of Weimar, home of Goethe and Schiller, and considers how

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Mary Wigman in Sorell, *Ein Vermachtnis*, 34.

²¹⁷ It also became the site for the German faction of the renegade Freemasonic organization, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, and home to a notorious women’s lodge which caused a scandal among the locals and later jeopardized the lives of its members under the Nazi regime.

²¹⁸ Martin Green, *Cities of Light and Sons of the Morning: A Cultural Psychology for an Age of Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972). Green gathered most of the available information about Monte Verità, but more research is needed.

thinkers at the *fin-de-siècle* were carrying forward Faustian preoccupations with alchemy and ecstatic transcendence into the new century. Wigman, well read in Goethe and Schiller, was inclined toward Faustian thinking, as revealed in her earliest choreography. Green links the ideas of the twentieth-century avant-garde with the great intellectuals of the German past. Rather than an anomaly or a rupture in German identity, the resistance to normative pressures appears as a continuation of German philosophy.

For Mary Wigman, Monte Verità was another revelation. After three weeks of Laban's summer course, the morning post brought her notice of a job teaching the Dalcroze method for which she had recently received her diploma. The job would begin on October 1. When she told Laban, instead of congratulating her, he replied that it was a shame, that she was a dancer and belonged on the stage. His reply was really an opening to her heart's desire. She chose to stay.²¹⁹

In February of 1914 Wigman had her first public performance in Munich. Ymelda Juliewna Mentelberg, a student of Laban, planned an evening of solo works demonstrating Laban's choreography and she asked Wigman to perform two of her own dances: *Lento* and the *Hexentanz*.²²⁰ It was a humble beginning; the stage was actually a creaky parquet platform in the beautiful old auditorium of the Munich museum.²²¹ In this maiden performance she was for the first time to encounter the terrible, trembling stage fright that was to plague her thirty years on stage.²²² But the miracle that would also occur time and again first came to her on that winter night. With the opening dancing gesture, all insecurity fell from her, "as if a magic word had been spoken. Only to have the chance to dance, to be able to dance was bliss."²²³ She made the decision to remain with Laban until she had acquired enough technical training to proceed on her own. She stayed with him for four more years.

Laban was beginning to work on concepts that would eventually become his well-known theories: of Space Harmony, movement analysis and *Kinetographie Laban*, or

²¹⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 43.

²²⁰ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 47.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, 47-50.

²²³ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 50.

dance notation.²²⁴ But in the early years at Monte Verità these ideas were still in their nascent stages. While Laban, with Wigman's assistance, was beginning to trace dance concepts that would eventually become pedagogical, the primary choreographic influences on these dancers were grounded in dance that was chthonic — rooted in nature and ritual. Wigman recalled that the dancers “would camp down in a dell at the foot of a steep rock which I climbed to improvise a wild witch dance.”²²⁵ Indeed in 1914, Mary Wigman made her first version of the *Hexentanz* and when Laban gave his approval she recounted “I was so overcome with joy that I jumped all over the studio, sprained my ankle, and could not move for a whole unhappy fortnight.”²²⁶ Such was the effect of Laban's opinion at that point in her career.

Combining ideas of *Festival* and *Körperkultur*, the dancers at Monte Verità used dance to bring ceremony and significance to the very shape of the day. Hedwig Müller and Norbert Servos write that such flights into fantasy during the depths of trench warfare appear unsettling in hindsight.²²⁷ Indeed, the playful naiveté exercised by Laban and company stood in stark contrast with global realities. Monte Verità was a world unto itself until the larger world overtook it. The summer of 1914 brought changes that ruptured even the utopian dream at Monte Verità. On August 1, Germany declared war on Russia, on August 3, Germany declared war on France and crossed into Belgium, and the following day Great Britain declared war on the German nation. The beginning of World War I found the community at Ascona emptying and Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban were left to work together. Wigman served as a willing model for Laban's ideas, particularly his development of the swing scales.²²⁸ And the work was grueling for her. In contrast to her dramatic nature, she had to analyze movement without the

²²⁴ Known as Labanotation, Laban's system of recording dance movement through written symbols remains the most widely used system of notating and preserving dances.

²²⁵ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 47.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

²²⁷ Hedwig Müller and Norbert Servos, “From Isadora Duncan to Leni Riefenstahl,” *Ballett International* 5:4, (1982): 15-23.

²²⁸ Laban's earliest studies of a codified method of warming the body while exploring dance fundamentals of space, time and effort.

emphasis on emotion. However, she came to value Laban's more rational process in her own choreographic crafting.

When the War began, the avant-garde community at Monte Verità was torn apart. Kirchner, along with painters Otto Dix and George Grosz, all were irreparably changed by their experiences in battle. Franz Marc never returned and his blue horses stood in mute testimony to the remarkable talents that were lost with a generation. Dix's paintings became stark, filled with explosions, signal flares and dying soldiers.²²⁹ The War was a watershed moment for the arts. Ideas of beauty were shattered and rearranged. Aesthetics of canvas, sound and body were all caught in the shift. Modris Ecksteins uses the arts as a key indicator of this deep social and political change.²³⁰ His is an important and iconoclastic work of history that moves smoothly between cultural, social, political and military events to weave a seamless story. Ecksteins connects the avant-garde's affinities for Primitivism and myth making to various ideologies, including the nationalism and militarism amplified in the War. His discussion of the debut of *Le Sacre du Printemps*²³¹ is a brilliant reading of that dance in the context of Europe on the brink of the coming War. Of Germany, Ecksteins wrote:

Germany more extensively than any other country, represented the aspirations of a national avant-garde . . . and in fact had the largest homosexual emancipation movement in Europe on the eve of the First World War . . . the relative openness of the movement in Germany does indicate a measure of tolerance not known elsewhere . . . Sexual liberation in fin-de-siècle Germany was not limited to homosexuals. There was a new emphasis in general on *Leibeskultur*, or body culture, on an appreciation of the human body devoid of social taboos and restrictions . . . The youth movement, which flourished after the turn of the century, reveled in a 'return to nature' which constituted part of its rebellion

²²⁹ An examination of Dix's "Self-Portrait with Flower" of 1912 and his "Self-Portrait with Helmet" of 1914 attest to his transformation more than any mere description allows.

²³⁰ Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*.

²³¹ Premiered in Paris by Polish and Russian dancers coached by an English ballerina who had trained with a German dance systematizer, it could be argued that the *Sacre* was the first truly globally diverse dance project. Nijinsky, Stravinsky and Roerich had all traveled to the German garden city of Hellerau to find new techniques to choreograph what Stravinsky called the "cracking open and violence of a Russian spring." This was the staging of the Russian version of a newly imagined and idealized modern myth for another dramatically changing nation. The image of the great Russian ballerina and *danseur noble* were replaced with very different images of women and of men.

against an older generation thought to be caught up in repression and hypocrisy.²³²

Writings on German Sexual Identity Before and During The Great War

What relation is there among Mary Wigman, sexuality, modernity and modernism? The turn of the twentieth century saw the emergence of resistive practices – performances of sexuality – at the convergence of utopianism and “New Art” (*neue Kunst*) among the German avant-garde, from 1900-1918, through the rupture of the First World War. Counter to the prevailing and strengthening bourgeois ideals of proper sexual mores and respectability, rebellious practices surfaced among many artists of the time, especially those like Wigman who turned to art-making during this period, it is important to examine the aestheticization and corresponding toward a new Primitivism, Dada and Expressionism by re-imagining the body for the post-Nietzschean and pre-Weimar modern world. In considering the role of sexuality in the formation of German national identity, representation of a newly sexualized and gendered body stood in conflict with the politically proscribed image of the normative national body.

The work of Magnus Hirschfeld serves as a prime example of this new dedication to the study of sexual identity.²³³ He was a pioneer in the research of sexuality and opened the door for many others, including Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. Hirschfeld was the founder and director of the Institute for Sexual Science. He was also an advocate for homosexual rights and the acknowledgement of homosexuality as an aspect of normal human sexual identity. Hirschfeld’s book *The Sexual History of the World War* was translated into English in 1937 with an added note, “Intended for circulation among Mature Educated Persons only.” Clearly, the author and publishers knew that they were entering potentially dangerous territory with their work. Hirschfeld

²³² Ecksteins, *Rites*, 82-83.

²³³ The study of sexuality emerged as a discipline in Britain, Europe and North America from the 1870s onward. The term sexology was not used until the early twentieth century and it was not recognized as a legitimate social science until the inter-war years. The role of sexuality both in individual lives and human society as a whole was becoming an increasingly fertile ground for philosophical, sociological and medical investigations. The writings of German sexologists Krafft-Ebing, Iwan Bloch, Otto Weininger and Hirschfeld testify to an active German interest in the emerging field.

gathered his own writings and those of others in the field. His introduction pays special attention to the early years of the twentieth century, which he characterizes as contributing to the “economic, political and erotic emancipation of women.” He couples this with a well-documented revolution among bourgeois youth and argues that homosexual women (who were generally ignored in that time) contributed significantly to the feminist movement.²³⁴ This acknowledgement of the agency and activism of the lesbian population is a prime example of Hirschfeld’s pioneering approach to his subject.

Considering sexual actions unique to a population in the midst of war, Hirschfeld analyzed an equally expansive group of practices including the sexual desires of war wives, sensuality in the trenches, and use of sexual imagery as propaganda.²³⁵ To this end, Hirschfeld incorporated popular culture, using cartoons from contemporary broadsheets and publications. Hirschfeld had long advocated a deeper understanding of sexual practices that had been considered deviant such as homosexuality. He openly discussed transvestitism and the stresses that wartime placed on all men, particularly homosexuals or transvestites. His discussion regarding sensuality in the trenches should then be read with consideration of his ongoing quest not only to bring homosexuality into the “family” of acceptable sexual practices but also to claim that sexual practices are ever evolving, given the circumstances under which individuals are living. Thus sexual drives and identities are mutable and will never fully come under decrees of normal or acceptable.²³⁶

²³⁴ Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War* (New York: Falstaff Press, 1937), 11. See also Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

²³⁵ Hirschfeld also offers a tantalizing theory of a latent eroticism that lies behind the military drill. It would be useful to link his discussion of the subject to William McNeill’s seminal 1995 work, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). While McNeill doesn’t draw on Hirschfeld’s work, there seems to be much in common here. It would also be possible to use the later imagery put in place by Goebbels in the Third Reich as a seeming outcome of the linkage of desire, seduction and unified mass movement. The work of Leni Riefenstahl certainly testifies to the seductive power of the military drill and the thrill of what Walter Benjamin condemned as the “auratic” or the aestheticization of the political. For more see “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in Benjamin, *Illuminations*.

²³⁶ Hirschfeld, *Sexual History of the World War*, 75-77.

Hirschfeld underscored the vast differences between ideology and practice in his consideration of the impacts of trench warfare. “At the beginning of the war German public opinion frequently cited the belief of German physicians that abstinence would actually produce very beneficial results as continence would be tantamount to treasuring up the best powers of the body.”²³⁷ Of course, at the onset of the war, no one predicted that it would drag on for four long years and under the most horrific of battlefield settings. For that war, war in general, and for what he termed these “*scientific apostles*” of abstinence, Hirschfeld had nothing but contempt. He saw the so-called medical men as espousing a theory of sex-sublimation by war that he called a “bastard-hybrid of psychoanalysis and patriotism.” In the reality of war, “the sublimation of the sexual impulse soon turned out to be nothing more than a dream and a very ugly one.”²³⁸ Hirschfeld references Freud repeatedly, so it is in keeping with Freudian analysis that he wrote,

One of the most frequent consequences of sexual starvation during the war is the retreat to infantile forms of satisfying the libido. We have already shown that among these masturbation occupied the first place . . . Among the phenomena under the general rubric of erotic manifestations in the trenches, we desire to mention anal eroticism among soldiers.²³⁹

Hirschfeld sees the practices of masturbation and anal sex as a transfer of the sex drive in the extraordinary circumstance of warfare. Rather than “abnormal,” they are a natural regression in the Freudian sense resulting from the strictures inherent in the culture of the battlefield. In conclusion, he states that rather than the ideal of a galvanizing sexual abstinence imposed by war, “we have every reason to assume that the abstinence enforced by the war resulted in all forms of sexual neurosis.”²⁴⁰ Through such bold investigations, Hirschfeld influenced later work about sexual attitudes. Free love was a rallying cry among the artists at Monte Verità. Laban fathered nine children with four

²³⁷ Ibid., 77.

²³⁸ Ibid., 79.

²³⁹ Ibid., 91. See also John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999). This is not a book about sexuality but Keegan is a master of military history, in this case in describing the conditions of battle and particularly the battles in the trenches at Ypres.

²⁴⁰ Hirschfeld, *Sexual History of the World War*, 97.

women.²⁴¹ Affairs and sex partners at Ascona crossed traditional boundaries. Eventually, Laban's unmarried status and homosexual leanings would serve as indictments, forcing Laban to leave the commune. In all events, the avant-garde at Monte Verità were looking for new models that could shape their community, a feature of the modernist impulse that emerged across a vast range of art movements.

Primitively Modern

The painters, dancers and performance artists of the German Expressionist and Dada movements influenced each other as they looked within and among themselves to invent a new art form. They were also greatly affected by the rapidly changing world around them. The beginning of the twentieth century and the modern age brought amazing advances. Electricity, automobiles and other technology revolutionized the way people lived and worked. Many moved from agricultural settings to cities filled with people and factories. These changes brought with them a longing for simpler times and romantic ideas of nature. The concept of an older ideal order in human society had collapsed and could no longer supply images of harmony for the Romantic poets. Indeed, as artists stressed self-consciousness and the individual imagination,

The natural world also lost its order and its old emblematic function of providing a set of correspondences to the world of man, and took on a new aspect, offering in its wildness, as untainted by man, a refuge from disorder, and in its grandeur, types of the sublime, images of aspiration.²⁴²

Just as the Expressionists began to dominate German painting, Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* became wildly popular in the midst of the political revolution, economic depression and social upheaval that decimated Germany after the First World War. Participation in gymnastics, movement choirs and *Ausdruckstanz* became a pop-culture

²⁴¹ However, there is no evidence of sexual involvement between Wigman and Laban; Wigman's sexuality remains opaque. Her relationships with men are well-documented. More obscure are her close relationships with women, Berthe Trümpy in particular.

²⁴² Reginald A. Foakes, *The Romantic Assertion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958, 41. Also see Bronner and Kellner, eds. *Passion and Rebellion*; Robert Harbison, *Deliberate Regression: The Disastrous History of Romantic Individualism in Thought and Art, From Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Twentieth Century Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); and Timothy O. Benson, *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

craze for the war-weary citizens of the Weimar Republic who hungered for a life-affirming physical culture. And this quest for physical experience was evident not only in Germany but also in the health and new life movements in the United States, where the wheels of industry turned ever faster.

The advent of the machine age is paradoxical at its core: just as some viewed such progress as an evil that destroyed true humanity, others appreciated their ever-expanding worldview. As transportation became more rapid and available, people were able to see images and artworks from faraway places. As the cities grew, swelled by laborers leaving their rural roots, the greater world contracted with the importing of art and artifacts from to the museums of Europe. Rarely seen before, these images were startling and inspirational. This was especially true for some German artists who were enamored of the *Volk* or “folk” ideas. Simply defined, the *Volk* movement opposed the progress and modernization that had changed Europe throughout the nineteenth century. Instead of looking to the future for inspiration, *Volk* idealists saw supposedly older, mystical ways of being as guides for authentic living.²⁴³ Paradoxically, strident modernists seeking inspiration sought fresh sources. Africa, South America and the Far East all were being explored with zeal. In the early 1900s, museums such as the Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum in Dresden displayed what was termed “primitive” art collected from Africa, Asia and the South Seas. Among the artists, these works were hailed as artifacts from cultures where life was deemed somehow more original and untainted by the modern world. The influence of African sculpture on Picasso’s early work is well known. Specifically, a series of photographic postcards from Senegal provided him with a new source of posture, gestures, costumes and faces that were crucial to his groundbreaking work of 1906-7. Wigman’s friend, the painter Emil Nolde, was attracted to these exotic art pieces and the people who created them. In 1914 he wrote:

We live in an age where whole wilderness regions and primitive peoples are being ruined. Not even one small piece of primitive wilderness with its native inhabitants will remain. These primitive people within their natural surroundings are one with it and a part of the great unity of being. At times, I have the feeling

²⁴³ Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology*, 17.

that they are the only real humans, that we are some sort of overeducated mannequins, artificial and filled with dark longings.²⁴⁴

In many of his paintings, Nolde tried to recapture this art, which came to be called Primitivism. This concept grew from the anthropologists' binary notion that some cultures should be classified as complex and some as primitive. In effect it was the study by European and American scholars of cultures unfamiliar to them. These cultures were thought to be descendants of unchanged earlier cultures and therefore were considered prime or first. Nolde painted pictures using images that he saw in his travels. In 1913-14, Nolde was a member of an official German expedition to New Guinea.

He also attended exhibits in German museums and was inspired by the masks that he saw. In 1911, he painted "Still Life of Masks." In the lower right corner of this painting is the face of a mask that Nolde copied from a museum piece. Before making this painting, Nolde did a chalk and pencil drawing entitled "Trophy Head." This image was taken directly from an object from Brazil which was on display at the *Museum fur Volkerkunde* in Berlin. The original trophy head was a real human head decorated with cotton and feathers. Of masks, the painter wrote:

Exotic arts -- just like the earliest primitive European folk art, masks and ornaments -- all of it seemed very close to me. It is marvelous that folk art appears so early in the history of every race, long before many other things -- sophistication, vulgar taste, and cheap elegance. Every thing which is primeval and elemental captures my imagination . . .²⁴⁵

Many of the Expressionist artists, including Wigman, tried to recapture the perceived immediacy and visceral quality of this art. They also saw these cultures as endangered, soon to be rendered impotent by the forces of modernization. Nolde's ideas

²⁴⁴ A group of German artists that included Nolde departed Berlin on October 2, 1913, traveling across Russia and Siberia by rail to Manchuria. From there, the party journeyed down into Korea and sailed across to Japan where they spent three weeks. Sailing back across the China Sea to the Asian continent, the party visited several cities in China before departing Hong Kong for Manila, the Palau Islands, finally arriving at their destination, New Guinea and New Ireland. Nolde cited in William S. Bradley, *Emil Nolde and German Expressionism: a Prophet in His Own Land* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1986), 83.

²⁴⁵ Nolde cited in Bradley, *Emil Nolde*, 82.

about primal influences weren't limited to painting. Many German anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also thought of the dance as a manifestation of certain ancient and mystical qualities from earlier cultures, particularly the ancient Germanic tribes. As early as 1845, Karl Mullenhoff published a collection of ancient folk songs and fairy tales about dancing. In his introduction, he talked about the origins of dance:

The further we go back in time, the more we must assume the closest connection between the song and the dance itself. Just how such a dance was created can be learned from children's dances . . . dance and word and manner are interconnected, and all of them exist in the closest relationship to pagan cult ritual.²⁴⁶

That Mary Wigman inspired Emil Nolde is clear; he used her as a model for his paintings. It is also clear that Wigman shared some of Nolde's ideas about what was authentic art. She found a primitive force behind the modern dance and understood the valuable place of the so-called primitive in the mechanical, modern world:

It should not be a matter of wonderment or confusion to say that our technical age engendered the dance-motivated being. When we now consider that the *primitive* force or rhythm is behind the motor; that every machine breathes and symbolizes harnessed rhythmic force, and at the same time when we recall that the impetus of the dance is also rhythm, we then have a definite foundation, a common nexus between the seemingly opposed expressions of life and forms of art.²⁴⁷

These artists and particularly the dance artists found the idea of Primitivism relevant, holding the promise of the return of art to a prime or first place within society.²⁴⁸ Indeed, many of these artists genuinely assumed a greater kinship to artists of all cultures than to bankers or merchants in their home territory. Mary Wigman attempted to redefine and claim a new place for dance in the modern age, even as the oldest sources of dance ritual

²⁴⁶ Nolde cited in *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁴⁷ Mary Wigman, "The Philosophy of the Modern Dance (1933)," in Marshall Cohen and Roger Copeland, eds. *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 306. (Emphasis mine.)

²⁴⁸ However, this longing for earlier, authentic experience inevitably produced a reaction: "The cult of the primitive is not the expression of a naïve unspoiled soul, but of utterly corrupt and diseased degeneracy." Hitler at Nuremberg, 1935, quoted in Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 12.

had been threatened with extinction by the onslaught of technology and the relegation of dance to entertainment. In 1927, D.H. Lawrence wrote *Mornings in Mexico*, in which he continued to champion the idea that modern man must bring instincts and emotions into balance with intellect. Lawrence had first passed through Monte Verità in 1913, and in many ways he became the most eloquent recorder of the motivations and desires of his fellow artists, Wigman included. Lawrence made theatricality and authenticity tenets of his critique of contemporary life. He likened the relationship between the audience and the action on stage as a reflection of the distancing of modern man from authentic life:

We go to the theater to be entertained . . . We want to be taken out of ourselves . . . We want to become spectators in our own show . . . Which is very entertaining. The secret of it all, is that we detach ourselves from the painful and always solid trammels of actual existence, and become creatures of memory . . .²⁴⁹

Embedded in Lawrence's prose is an argument for a turn toward a particular way of "becoming" or what Wigman would term *Dasein*. This is precisely what she would claim as the dancer's task in the world: a physical "being present" that seemed to have passed away in contemporary life. Wigman also took to romanticizing the American Southwest during her 1932 tour.²⁵⁰ Both Wigman and Lawrence felt that the dance lends itself more to this sort of becoming than any other art. In her travels across the United States, Mary Wigman had been taken by the expansive landscapes and native dancers of the Southwest. After viewing the pueblo dances in Taos, New Mexico, Lawrence wrote:

. . . perhaps they are giving themselves again to the pulsing, incalculable fall of the blood, which forever seeks to fall to the centre of the earth, while the heart, like a planet pulsating in an orbit, keeps up the strange, lonely circulating of the separate human existence . . . There is none of the hardness of representation. They are not representing something, not even playing. *It is a soft, subtle, being something.*²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ D.H. Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 97-8.

²⁵⁰ A series of photographs during this tour chronicle her driving tour across the Southwest. She comments on this tour in her diaries and in letters to Barbara Mettler, a pupil who would later settle in Arizona. Sorell, *Ein Vermächtnis*, 255.

²⁵¹ Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico*, 106-7, 110. (Emphasis mine.)

What Wigman and her cohorts demanded was a reclaiming of power over their individual bodies. To return to Kathleen Canning's thesis, the experiential body was granted an emphatic agency that was inextricably linked to a sense of autonomy and creativity.

Chapter Two: Rupture — World War I and the Interwar Years

The inhabitants of Monte Verità, in their many-faceted ways, were committed to making some sort of new world. The aesthetic excavations undertaken by Wigman and those moderns who embraced both the “primitive” and the new called for a particular authenticity. They emphatically claimed that their own society lacked or destroyed any shred of the authentic and they set about to find what that might be. Many of their efforts sound idyllic, such as playing music and dancing naked in that dancer’s landscape. The reality was all of that and more. Many briefly passed through Ascona to take the nature cure at Monte Verità. But for those who stayed, there was little source of dependable income resulting in crude living conditions. The artists of Monte Verità rejected materialist influences in a way that was at once invigorating and also tenuous. The founders had hoped to establish a new kind of education for social and political action but rather than take to the streets to attack capitalism, they turned to nature and removed themselves from urban life. The founders of *Lebensreform* also had rejected “the mournful and unnatural necessity of breadwinning.”²⁵² For the women, this included refusing to

exchange the man’s duty of breadwinning for his degrading unconditional right to own her. What we need now is a new kind of education; as for social and political action. . . for later generations; their task will be to attack capitalism. We must trust ourselves to nature instead.²⁵³

Monte Verità founder Ida Hoffmann saw the “return to nature” as a necessary step but only a phase toward the education of the next generation that would challenge capitalism’s grip on Western society. The renunciation of capitalist economy and paternal hierarchy would eventually become a political act. At Monte Verità, the primary task was to instigate an individual revolution in lifestyle. The politics would come. Wigman described visiting another student in the early summer of 1914:

²⁵² Ida Hoffmann-Odenkoven, *Monte Verità: Wahrheit ohne Dichtung* [Truth without Poetry] Pamphlet, No pagination, 1906. Hoffman was a piano teacher, feminist and founder of the *Kurenstalt* at Monte Verità along with her husband Henri Oedenkoven. She wrote several pamphlets including *Vegetarismus! Vegetarismus!* in 1905.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* (no pagination)

To my indescribable surprise I found out that her house consisted of an old, fragile harmonium packing crate, leaning with its back against the garden wall and completely open at the front . . . Certainly not many of us could afford the luxury of a comfortable summer vacation. But what did it matter? We danced and lived through these golden summer days without thinking beyond the completely fulfilled hours.²⁵⁴

Whatever Ascona lacked in creature comforts, it made up for in possibility. It was a chance to make the world anew and separate from the forces forming the larger world.

In retreating to the Swiss Alps, Wigman and her cohorts removed themselves from the German *Weltmacht*. The aspirations of the Imperial government were inextricably intertwined with the ambitions of the major powers on the continent. Imperialist incursions Morocco and elsewhere in Africa, a frenzy of alliance building and military build-up, all in the thrust of a rampant nationalism, were efforts to reshape the world of states. In the summer of 1914, the two worlds collided. Mary Wigman wrote:

Then one day in the summer of 1914 I ran down the mountain to the ‘painter’s house’ on the lower lake road in the happy expectation of a festive meeting. Two young German Expressionists who had become a part of our circle lived there . . . The minute I entered the house I sensed a change in the atmosphere. Folded easels, open suitcases told the story of a hasty departure. ‘What happened?’ A short silence, and then the reply: ‘Mobilization orders.’ And what does that mean? An even longer silence and then the word: ‘War.’ During all these blissful weeks we had not heeded the world around us, we had not realized the ever-darkening shadow on the political horizon.²⁵⁵

While Wigman and her circle had experienced the ecstasy of hedonistic freedom alongside Lago Maggiore, many Europeans experienced it as a tensely breathless summer where one waited and longed for something to break open. When war finally did break out, it was as if a long foreplay had ended. The cataclysmic rupture of the war was at first welcomed. Many, like the futurists, considered it an inferno through which the old debris of Europe had to pass in order to be born anew.²⁵⁶ The birth of new aesthetics at Monte

²⁵⁴ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 42.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

²⁵⁶ Impressions of World War I come from a range of sources, including the following: Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*; Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006); Paul Fussell, *The Great War in Modern Memory* (Oxford and

Verità was one alternative to the destruction that would come in the wake of the war. But the world was made horribly new as the war proceeded. The weapons that Mary Wigman and her cadre used: ideas about language, music, color, line and design could be said to have counterparts in the world of war. The rhythm of the machine gun and the ground-chewing tank changed both the momentum of death and the limits of space on the killing grounds. By all accounts, the war was expected to be a speedy affair from the initial tempo of the march through Belgium in 1914. Then in 1915 the pace, the very modern speed of the war, was stalled. The stasis of trench warfare with its concurrent hopeless claustrophobia was the very opposite of supposed modernity even with new transportation technology and the modernization of weapons. When poison gas filled the air at Ypres from April 22 to May 25 of 1915, it was both a result of modern science and the agent of a whole new form of barbarism. Otto Dix painted the air filled with a yellow miasma at sunset. It was as if he was painting the choking death-rattle of hope in the modern world. It was at once beautiful and grotesque. Representations of beauty changed dramatically to reflect a changed Western world. The grotesque became a valid artistic reflection of the times and often deemed more authentic.²⁵⁷ And the artists would struggle to find a way to create it. Mary Wigman made her most memorable dances following the

New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999); Laurence Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1971); and Frank B. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany since 1815* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

²⁵⁷ My reading of Otto Dix is based on his paintings, in particular, his *Self-Portrait* (1912), compared to his *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* and *Self-Portrait with Artillery Helmet* (both 1914) and *Sunset at Ypres* (1915). All are available at the University of New Mexico's Bainbridge Bunting Memorial Slide Library. For more on Dix, see Dietmar Elgar, *Expressionism: A Revolution in German Art* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1991); Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Neue Sachlichkeit – Painting in Germany in the 1920s* (Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2003); Bärbel Schrader and Jürgen Schebera, *The 'Golden' Twenties: Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990); and John Willett, *Expressionism* (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970).

war. *The Seven Dances of Life* and the *Hexentanz* are both manifestations of how the world changed. They are considered in this chapter as evidence of Wigman's philosophy, her innovations in the art and a reflection of her worldview at the time. Just as the *Festhalle* at Hellerau was altered forever by the war, Monte Verità could no longer remain a world unto itself. As the artists colony emptied, Wigman stayed there with Laban, perhaps in the belief that their work and primarily Laban's development of his theories were too powerful to be detoured by the war.²⁵⁸ But it really was only meant to be a summer course. As the summer turned to fall and then winter, they retreated to Zurich and became part of the community of expatriates that hoped to ride out the war.

Dancing Dada

Between summer and winter during the war years, Laban, Wigman and his students moved between Ascona and Zurich.²⁵⁹ Once war had broken out, the neutral territory of Switzerland grew even more appealing and winter found Laban and his stable of acolytes entrenched in the Zurich cafes. Laban and his dancers were not the only ones of the Monte Verità group to relocate. German writer Hugo Ball was a catalyst at the center of the expatriate community, whose magnetic presence united all the elements that eventually produced Dada.²⁶⁰ At the outbreak of the war, Ball had tried on three occasions to enlist, but was rejected for medical reasons every time. In November 1914, he went to Belgium and saw the carnage first-hand. "What he saw turned him so vehemently against the war that he conceived a profound loathing for the German militarism that he held accountable for it."²⁶¹ Ball and his partner, cabaret singer Emmy

²⁵⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 37.

²⁵⁹ Valerie Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life* (London: Dance Books, 1998).

²⁶⁰ Dada emerged just before and during the First World War. Shock was a key tactic for Dadaists, who hoped to shake society out of the nationalism and materialism that they felt had led to the carnage of the war. Their first manifesto of 1918 claimed that Dada was 'a new reality' and accused the Expressionists 'of sentimental resistance to the times.' See Richard Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Richard Huelsenbeck, and Malcolm R. Green, eds. *The Dada Almanac* (London: Atlas Press, 1993); and Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

²⁶¹ Harold B. Segel, *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret: Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Zurich* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 323.

Hennings, came to Zurich in May 1915 and struggled to stay and make a marginal living among the growing multi-national community of disillusioned transplants. In 1916, Ball founded the Cabaret Voltaire, which became the center of the early Dada movement.²⁶² Along with his strong anti-war sentiments, Ball's great love was theatre and the spiritual aspects of art. His passion was to recreate art in all of its forms, but in particular he felt language was "unreliable as an instrument of communication because hypocrisy, cynicism, and venality had robbed it of its authenticity and vigor."²⁶³ The Dadas of Zurich experimented with a radicalizing of language by investigating African speech patterns and music. They injected such supposedly authentic sources into German stream-of-consciousness poetry to achieve a new form of spoken performance that would serve as a direct communication with the audience, unencumbered by the falseness of outworn, conventional language. This same impulse to create a new language drove Mary Wigman's invention of a new form of dance, as will become apparent in the discussion in Chapter Three of her technique and compositional methodology. For the Dada artists, all art forms were ripe for re-ordering. And often the forms converged to make something beyond categorization. Hans Richter, another key figure in the developing Dada, claimed that in the confluence of the Dada art forms of poetry, theater, puppetry and dance. The inclusion of dance among the Dada artists attests to an openness between the practitioners of all these mediums to experiment and to collaborate. Laban, Wigman and the other dancers found a home for their nascent art and in doing so brought concert dance from the elite stage to the cabaret.

Our celestial headquarters was Laban's ballet school. There we met young dancers of our generation [including] Mary Wigman . . . Only at certain fixed times were we allowed into this nunnery, with which we had emotional ties . . . These highly personal contacts — and Laban's revolutionary contribution to choreography — finally involved the whole Laban school in the Dada movement . . . dancers wearing [Marcel] Janco's abstract masks fluttered like butterflies of Ensor.²⁶⁴

²⁶² The Cabaret was on Spiegelgasse, across the street from Vladimir Lenin's flat.

²⁶³ Segel, *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret*, 330.

²⁶⁴ Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 69-70.

Laban was clearly a man of great personal charisma and particular appeal to the young women who gathered around him as students. Some perceived him as a hypnotic seducer of women. Green observes, “This cloud of sexual license and moral danger was part of the attraction of Laban’s kind of Modern Dance.”²⁶⁵ However, Wigman appeared as a rather stern member of the Laban dance clan. Photos reveal her as serious and rather somber, even at play. When others write of her, even during this early period, there is an unmistakable tone of respect, as if she was set apart. Regarding Laban’s charm and the appeal of his “nunnery,” Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck reminisced:

[Laban] would gather the most beautiful girls for his group. I really can’t say whether I was drawn more to the beauty of the girls or the newness of the dancing. But since I’ve never particularly cared for, or understood much about the dance, I tend to think that I was drawn more to the beauty of the girls.²⁶⁶

Obviously, feminist theory was not part of his Dada philosophy! However, Huelsenbeck did take note of one dancer’s performance in particular “We subsequently saw Mary Wigman dance. She put on a special performance for us Dadaists and ‘danced Nietzsche.’ I can still see her in the center of a circle, waving *Zarathustra* about.”²⁶⁷ While the Dada impulse was intentionally full of paradox, it can be seen at its most basic as an attack that used exuberant creativity against a dysfunctional and decaying culture. In the Dada circle, the absurd was celebrated just as the raging of the Great War made an apparent absurdity of civilized existence. Certainly Wigman was drawn to the new and experimental nature of the Dada events. She was happy to claim a role in the inception of Dada.

By the way do you know that your friend M. W. had an active share in the genesis of Dadaism? What divine feasts we have had in my Zurcher apartment! My friend Sophie Tauber — who later married [Dada artist] Hans Arp — and I sewed ourselves so tightly into our extravagant costumes one day that, for the whole night we could not get out of them. And all the people of the Cafe Voltaire were my daily guests . . .²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 146.

²⁶⁶ Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, 11.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. Certainly, Nietzsche’s book served as a sustaining influence on Wigman’s world view and choices for her career, as well as her choreography.

²⁶⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 141.

Along with the other Dada artists, Wigman began to use costumes and masks in a new way, seeking to change how audiences perceived the human body. In 1914, Rudolf von Delius wrote that, for Wigman, “The costume no longer presents itself as an external get-up or as trimmings that one can change at will, but rather the costume becomes a part of the body-soul like eyes and hair.”²⁶⁹ The costume became mask for the body, to blur its human contours. The use of costume and mask were transformative. This was an expansion of the anthropologically based work of Nolde. A generation younger, the Dada artists wanted to become the primal human rather than to simply depict it in order to preserve it for posterity. Naima Prevots wrote:

The Dadaists felt that primitive man had a direct link to magical powers of nature and the universe. The dances songs, incantations, and masks of these people had a way of reaching a spiritual understanding of the world that cut through the confines of traditional Western culture . . . Primitivism became a transforming element for both performer and audience.²⁷⁰

Wigman claimed that she adopted the term Absolute Dance at one of the Café Voltaire performances with Sophie Tauber. One credo for the Zurich Dadaists was “absolute poetry, absolute art, absolute dance” and Wigman was more than willing to take on that title for her own dance art. Indeed, the Expressionist goal of manifesting “truth” through art implies an acknowledgement of an absolute. In retrospect it seems that the Dada impulse was a transient inclination for Wigman. In truth the Dada manifestos claimed a turning away from the very expressionist nature that her *Ausdruckstanz* embodied. For the Great Berlin Dada evening in April 1918, Dada artist Huelsenbeck wrote what came to be the first Dada manifesto in the German language.

What did Expressionism want? It ‘wanted’ something, that much remains characteristic of it. Dada wants nothing, Dada grows. Expressionism wanted inwardness, it conceived of itself as a reaction against the times, while Dadaism is nothing but an expression of the times . . . Under the pretext of inwardness the Expressionist [artists] have closed ranks to form a generation which is expectantly looking forward to an honorable appraisal in the histories of art and literature and is aspiring to honors and accolades.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ von Delius in Manning, *Ecstasy*, 41.

²⁷⁰ Naima Prevots, “Zurich Dada and Dance: Formative Ferment,” *Dance Research Journal* 17:1 (1985): 6

²⁷¹ Huelsenbeck, *Dada Almanac*, 44-45.

Mary Wigman maintained the Expressionist conviction that art could express an intrinsic human truth and thus restore meaning to people's lives.²⁷² The Dadaists proclaimed that all extant moral, political and aesthetic beliefs had been destroyed by the war. The coolness and radicalism of the Dada and the later *Neue Sachlichkeit*²⁷³ developments do manifest themselves in Mary Wigman's use of mask and costume as a way of depersonalizing the performing body. But her themes remained essentially Expressionistic: ecstatic or somber and imbued with mysticism and symbolic imagery. Her primary allegiance to *Ausdruckstanz* eventually would place her at odds not only with Laban but also with larger political and artistic forces within Germany. However, remnants of her time with the Dada artists remained in her demand that dance be an autonomous language, in the theatricality of her performances and the revolutionary way she used the mask and costume. Hugo Ball unleashed his first public recitation of sound poems, "Flight out of Time," on June 23, 1916. Wigman was in the audience, and Ball wrote that he feared to be disgraced before her. In the middle of Ball's performance, something unusual happened:

I do not know what gave me the idea of this music, but I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative, and tried not only to look serious but to force myself to be serious. For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten-year-old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiems

²⁷² Here I am trying to link the extensive literature on the visual art movement of Expressionism with Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*. Sources include: Bronner, and Kellner, *Passion and Rebellion*; Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974); Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

²⁷³ The *Neue Sachlichkeit* or New Objectivity was an artistic movement that signaled a turn toward realism. It was first applied by museum director Gustav Hartlaub in 1923 to an exhibit of paintings grounded in the depiction of reality. *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists included George Grosz and Otto Dix. They aggressively attacked and satirized the evils of society and those in power, demonstrating in harsh imagery the devastating effects of World War I.

and high masses in his home parish. Then the lights went out, as I had ordered, and bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop.²⁷⁴

Ball's hyper-sensate experience would also become part of Wigman's own commitment to transcendent performance. While Laban remained aloof from the wilder, experimental Dada undertakings, Wigman was beginning to break with her mentor to find her own performance voice, yet she remained with him for two more years so she could continue to advance her study of dance technique.

On 18-19 August 1917, Laban and Wigman, along with others from Laban's dance group, returned to the mountains of Ascona. There they presented a twelve-hour, open-air performance of a *Sonnenfest (Sun Festival)*. Termed by Laban a "choral play," the spectacle was part of the Congress of the Oriental Order of the Temple or *Ordo Templi Orientis*.²⁷⁵ Through studies with O.T.O. founder Theodor Reuss, Laban had been initiated into that branch of Freemasonry and progressed to the highest degree of Reuss's renegade Masonic organization.²⁷⁶ He also established a women's lodge, *Libertas und Fraternitas* that caused a scandal not in the least due to the fact that Freemasonry traditionally excluded female participation.²⁷⁷ Laban's stated goal was the "renunciation of all civilizational influences."²⁷⁸ Reuss had declared the 1917 gathering as an anti-nationalist congress, reflecting an ardent stance by the participants against the war that raged in the heart of Europe and, paradoxically, the revolution in Russia. For some of the community, the two seemed of a piece.

In the urban center of Berlin, 1917 saw the Fatherland Party organizing a series of public meetings to "demonstrate popular support for their radical pro-war, ultra-patriotic platform."²⁷⁹ In contrast to the ultra-right, the mass action of the leftists in 1917 Petrograd had echoes in both London and Paris. But Winter points out that in Berlin the left

²⁷⁴ Ball, in Segel, *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret*, 346.

²⁷⁵ The secret, mystical fraternity founded around 1902 by Karl Kellner and Theodor Reuss. Rudolf von Laban became a member of Reuss's renegade Masonic organization and brought the O.T.O to Monte Verità in 1917.

²⁷⁶ Francis King, *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion* (London: Spearman, 1971).

²⁷⁷ Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 148.

²⁷⁸ Rudolf von Laban, *A Life for Dance* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975), 135.

²⁷⁹ Winter and Robert, *Capital Cities at War*, 290.

presented a “tired revolution” where “the fear of resurgent revolutionary crowds was much greater than reality.”²⁸⁰ In the bucolic Alps, those who gathered at Monte Verità rejected all political affiliations. Thus, the festival was dedicated to what was perceived as a universal spirituality that was anti-war at its core.²⁸¹ It was also more than an entertainment. The festival began at 6 a.m. with the *Hymn to the Rising Sun*. The second act of the performance was sited around a fire on a mountaintop at 11 p.m. Involving the entire cast armed with flutes, drums and torches, *The Demons of the Night* section was “a mystical play in which ‘witches and demons’ were conjured up in masked dances.”²⁸² It closed with *The Triumph of the Sun* using the sun symbolism that was part of the common ritualism of Monte Verità but also held symbolic meaning for the Freemasons.

Following the marathon event, Wigman returned with Laban to Zurich. Then in November she made her own evening, her first dramatic cycle, built of solo dances performed at the Laban School. The six dances that made up the program reflected her fascination with the mystical and the metaphysical. *The Nun, The Dancer for Our Blessed Lady, Worshiper, Sacrifice, The Dervish* and *The Temple Dance* did not emerge merely from her experiences with Laban but revealed an atmosphere that permeated the place and time. By assembling these dances into her own concert, Wigman was demanding access to a range of female characters that absorbed the boundaries of specific female religious icons. Around the same time, Monte Verità founder Ida Hoffman published *Beiträge zur Frauenfrage* (Contributions to the Woman Question). Green notes that Hoffman’s feminism moved away from “the semi-political style toward the semi-mythical. Her prose [became] more exalted, and she presents woman as being a goddess, as *die Frau im Uranfang* was known to be, as woman was in the beginning of time.”²⁸³ In summary, Wigman and Hoffman sought to draw the female face of God.

The longing for alternatives to the Western canon had taken many artists toward alternative spiritual teachings. The yin-yang symbol that stood atop the *Festhalle* at

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 300.

²⁸¹ Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 147-148. See also: Ulrike Voswinckel, *Freie Liebe und Anarchie: Schwabing - Monte Verità. Entwürfe gegen das etablierte Leben* (München: Allitera Verlag, 2009).

²⁸² Laban, *A Life for Dance*, 22.

²⁸³ Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 145.

Hellerau represented a larger inquiry into aesthetic practices that similarly guided the work of many modernist artist and writers, besides Wigman. In film, Paul Wegener presented three versions of the ancient Golem story between 1915 and 1920. In 1919, Robert Weine directed the *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the signature work of Expressionist film and a representation of the darker side of Expressionism through its thematic probing of insanity.²⁸⁴ The authors intended the tyranny of Dr. Caligari to serve as an allegory against mad authority, but the final version ends with the doctor telling his peers that he can cure his patient now that he understands the root of his own psychosis.²⁸⁵ Presentation of alternative realities became popular thematic material. For Wigman, such themes came to make a cohesive whole of her life and her work as she probed her own mental state to mine sources for art making. It is crucial to note that while she emphatically claimed her inspiration from her experience as a woman and chose female icons as her dance personae, she was ultimately guided by men who were towering figures in their fields: Dalcroze and Laban in dance theory and Hans Prinzhorn and Herbert Binswanger in psychotherapy.

The Crisis Year

1918 and 1919 brought a turning point in the history of the German Reich. Everything changed with the establishment of the Weimar Republic in November, the end of the war, and the signing of the Versailles Treaty. In 1918, Mary Wigman would have her own year of crisis, mental breakdown and self-analysis. The confusion and dissolution at war's end brought defeat and disorientation to the general population of Germany. Although she remained in Switzerland, Wigman experienced these and also was faced with difficulties in her personal life. In May, her stepfather Dietrich Wiegmann died and her brother Heinrich returned from the war as an amputee. Work at the studio in Zurich ended and Wigman also broke from Laban. She found herself physically exhausted and emotionally drained.²⁸⁶ Suffering from the deep depression that would recur throughout the rest of her life, she went to a sanatorium at Walensee in eastern

²⁸⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological Study of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 66.

Switzerland to find some peace. She was also diagnosed with a lung disease similar to tuberculosis, at a time when such a diagnosis could amount to a death sentence.²⁸⁷ In her writing, she refers to this period as a terrible wonderful year.²⁸⁸ At Walensee, she danced alone and created a new series of solos. She also wrote the poetic sketches that were to become her group work *The Seven Dances of Life (Die Sieben Tänze des Lebens)* in 1921. Finally, she performed her dances at the sanatorium in Davos, the setting for Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, where the audience was made up of shell-shocked veterans, psychiatric patients and local sportsmen.²⁸⁹ Such was Wigman's curious preparation for entry into an independent professional life.

After the Davos performance, she embarked on a tour of German cities, meeting disappointment at first as audiences were not prepared for her dances depicting the mysterious and the grotesque. What she presented onstage was a far cry from the beauty of ballet or the entertainment of the chorus line. Her first concerts in Berlin and Munich were critical debacles. Newspapers responded with cries of "ridiculous," "idiotic," "mad frenzy," "an imbecilic dislocation of the joints," "the dance without music – unbearable, fatiguing," "the drum and gong accompaniment (was) ear-splitting, torturous."²⁹⁰ Buffeted by these storms, Wigman did not surrender; nor did she change course. She persisted in her vision of *Ausdruckstanz* and finally in Hamburg the tide turned. She did find allies. Art critics Lasar Segall and Will Grohmann had been praising Wigman's new dance to the visual arts crowd.²⁹¹ She received her first real acclaim from the concert-going public. When she continued on to Dresden, her audience had been well prepared by Grohmann. With Grohmann's help, Wigman, joined by dancers Berthe Trümpy²⁹² and

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 47-49.

²⁸⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 55.

²⁹⁰ Madeline C. Dixon, "Mary Wigman," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 15:1, (1931): 37.

²⁹¹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 70.

²⁹² Berthe Trümpy (1895-1983) studied with both Wigman and Laban. She helped finance the first Mary Wigman Schule-Dresden and became co-director of the school, teaching and performing with the Chamber Dance Group. In 1926, along with Vera Skoronel, she started the Trümpy/Skoronel school in Berlin. Gret Palucca (1902-1993) was a student at the Dresden Opera House when she saw a Wigman performance and soon began to study at the Wigman Schule. Identified by her gift for high jumps, Palucca

Grete Palucca, danced to a sold-out house. On November 7, six days before her thirty-fifth birthday, newspaper critic Otto Flake wrote, “She realized an idea and fulfilled her task. Dance is for her a religious art.”²⁹³ This early success in Dresden was the beginning of a long, fruitful relationship with that city.

Meanwhile, the Weimar government was convulsed in one political upheaval after another. The young Republic was put to its first test in an uprising staged in March 1920, by disgruntled monarchist and right wing reactionaries under the leadership of Wolfgang Kapp. Associated with Kapp were Hermann Ehrhardt, a commander of a marine brigade, and General Ludendorff. Ehrhardt’s marines had defied the order of the Inter-Allied Commission to disband; they had marched to Berlin and presented the government with an ultimatum demanding new elections and active resistance to the dictate of Versailles. The insurgent government moved first to Dresden while seizing several ministries in Berlin. There they issued a proclamation denying the legality of the Weimar Republic and vesting all authority in Kapp. Moreover the *Reichswehr* commander, General Hans von Seeckt, refused cooperation and the government of the Republic called upon German trade unions to organize a general strike.²⁹⁴

Caught on tour during the Kapp-Putsch and the ensuing general strike, Wigman hitched a ride to Dresden and in many ways her fate was decided there. Wigman writes that in 1920 she was to be engaged by the Dresden State Opera as ballet master. She moved to the Palast Hotel Weber with Trümpy, who had become her assistant, to await her appointment. While there, Wigman began to teach classes in the hotel social room. From a newspaper article, she learned that the position at the Opera had passed her by,

was considered one of the most talented of Wigman’s dance progeny. Palucca stayed in Germany during the Third Reich and gained a favored position even though she was defined under the Nuremberg Laws as “*Mischlinge ersten Grades*” or half Jewish. Her school in East Germany became an important training ground for post-war German dancers. See: Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, as well as Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*; Margaret Lloyd, *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949); Isa Partsch-Bergsohn, *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States: Crosscurrents and Influences* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994); and Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 1997.

²⁹³ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 71.

²⁹⁴ Fulbrook, *A Concise History*, 162-167.

awarded to another who had influential romantic connections.²⁹⁵ Undeterred, Wigman continued to teach in the hotel; many students came but there seemed to be no resolution of Wigman's dream for a center in which to train dancers and from which to take her own creative performance work out into the world. Finally, Trümpy took action and, using her own Swiss francs, acquired a villa for Wigman in Neustadt-Dresden. It would be the primary home of the Wigman School for the next twenty-two years.

Later in her life, Wigman would reflect on the 1920s as a "fighting time" of hard and relentless work.²⁹⁶ But she acknowledged that the end of the First World War brought a surge of creative activity in all of the arts that flourished even as the Weimar Republic struggled for control.²⁹⁷ Much has been written of the inspired swell of innovation that was unleashed in spite of or perhaps in response to the ongoing political disarray that plagued the Weimar Republic. Not only was the political situation in flux, the economic conditions were equally unsettled. Yet Mary Wigman's school flourished. A roll call of the students who came to study with Wigman in the 1920s reads like a list of the most important professional dancers of the era. Along with Trümpy, Grete Palucca, Yvonne Georgi²⁹⁸, Harald Kreutzberg, Max Terpis, Margarethe Wallmann and Hanya Holm²⁹⁹ all came to work with Wigman at the house on Bautzner Strasse in the early 1920s. As Wigman's workload grew she was able to enlist help from several sources.

²⁹⁵ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 62; and Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 75.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Yvonne Georgi (1903-1975), born in Leipzig, attended the Dalcroze school in Hellerau; in 1921 Georgi went to the Wigman school in Dresden. Her successful partnership with Harald Kreutzberg took the duo on tour across Europe and to the United States. Harald Kreutzberg (1902-1968) was a student of Wigman at the Dresden school who became one of the great soloists of his era. Equally renowned as a dancer and actor, he worked with Max Terpis and Max Reinhardt. In 1928 he traveled to the United States as a member of Reinhardt's theater group and returned to the States for the next seven years with Yvonne Georgi and with American dancer Ruth Page as his partners. Max Terpis (1889-1958), an early student of Mary Wigman, later taught at the Wigman school. He became ballet master in Hanover in 1922.

²⁹⁹ Hanya Holm (1893-1992) was a fellow graduate of the Dalcroze Institute and an early Wigman student who became her teaching assistant and started the American Wigman School. She eventually became a successful Broadway choreographer with such shows as *My Fair Lady*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Camelot* to her credit. She was the first to bring Mary

At age 27, Mary's sister Elisabeth was still living with their mother in Hannover. In 1921, she came to join Mary's household in Dresden. While their mother had warned her not to take up the dance, she started in Trümpy's evening class for amateurs. Eventually, Elisabeth would take on a great deal of the teaching and day-to-day responsibilities at the school. The same year, the accomplished musician Will Goetz joined the faculty and began to serve as Wigman's collaborator for her dance compositions. With Goetz, she was able to further develop her ideas about the relationship between music and the dance. She also made use of the dancers that she had gathered around her to create group works including her dance drama *The Seven Dances of Life*. Choreographing that work in 1921 she broke from the solo performances that had defined the previous four years of her career. Throughout the 1920s and early '30s, Wigman combined her choreographic work with the intellectual work of solidifying her aesthetics, pedagogy and philosophy. She chose to stay in Germany as the young Republic fought to establish itself. The reformist ideas that had formed her at Monte Verità shaped her identity now as a citizen of the new Germany. What had she to contribute to the effort of building the nation? Her art, which held such value and promise as a catalyst and unifying force, could be put to use and could have importance. Underlying her agency in the Republican effort lay philosophical roots that reached deep into her own belief system and also served as fundamental to all ideologies battling for prominence in the unsettled 20s and 30s. As a dance artist, Wigman's perception of these philosophic ideas was unique and singularly performed. How these ideas played out in Wigman's aesthetics give an opportunity to explore how such ideas could be interpreted, subverted and ultimately used to build nations as well as dances. This was not unique to

Wigman's ideas to the United States. See Mary Anne Santos Newhall, "Dancing in Absolute Eden." M.A. Thesis: University of New Mexico, 2000. Ann Arbor: UMI (UMI Number 1400402); Mary Anne Santos Newhall, "Uniform Bodies: Mass Movement and Modern Totalitarianism," *Dance Research Journal* 34:1 (Summer 2002): 27-50; Mary Anne Santos Newhall, *Mary Wigman* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); and Walter Sorell, *Hanya Holm: The Biography of an Artist* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969).

Germany but had ramifications across the modern world and in the minds of modernist artists who saw themselves in the vanguard.

Wigman's Philosophical Roots

Wigman's philosophy and aesthetics were influenced in great part by her readings. In this, she was part of an international intelligentsia caught up in an upheaval of the mind the equaled the Industrial Revolution. Charles Darwin's publication of the *Origin of the Species* in 1859 shook religious moorings. The scientific mind seemed to light the new life path. And how was this life to be lived? What moral compass would point the way in this new world? In 1881, Friedrich Nietzsche began *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In that work, eventually published in 1887, and in the *Gay Science* of 1882, he shocked the intellectual world with his declaration, "God is dead." Surely, Nietzsche did not murder God. "He merely reported on the demise and speculated on who would receive the inheritance."³⁰⁰ Mary Wigman had been steeped in Nietzsche. She performed with the Dada artists at the Cabaret Voltaire while clutching a copy of *Zarathustra* and reciting from the book as she danced. The "Dancing Songs" of *Zarathustra* called for a new way of being in the world. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche expressed contempt for so-called "Despisers of the Body," who saw the physical body as something to be overcome for the salvation of the soul. In response Zarathustra claimed "the soul is only a word for something about the body."³⁰¹ Zarathustra came down from the mountain to share what he had seen from above and heard whispered years before by Schopenhauer.

The despair permeating the emotional landscape of a world without God catalyzed a driving need for transcendence even after the dogmatic supernatural was gone. According to Nietzsche, if God is dead, man is empowered. In fact, the will to power is the promise of man's greatness. After centuries in the service of faith, the creative urge became the key to fulfillment and a measure of the greatness of an individual and thus the realized potential of humankind. The Romantic artists had reacted to the Enlightenment with a nostalgic longing for an idealized and embellished ancestry that they deemed more authentic and natural. Stated baldly, the act of creation was

³⁰⁰ Newhall, *Mary Wigman*, 67.

³⁰¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (trans. Walter Kaufmann) (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 34.

bequeathed uniquely to the artist by a dying God. And there was a place for women in this new pantheon. For Mary Wigman and many other modern dancers, the concept of the artist as *Überfrau* was contagious, deeply compelling and validating. It bound them to dance in a way that demanded they forgo childbearing or childrearing in the tradition of their mothers. They turned from those creative acts that had historically remained entirely in the woman's realm. The individual "Will to Power" that Adolph Hitler subverted into a doctrine of Aryan supremacy could also serve as a validation for the artists of Wigman's generation. When God dies, human beings can be as gods and the artist could become the most godly of all. Never before had the avocation of art held such power, especially for the female artist. She dressed sensuality in the trappings of mysticism and a connection with a higher, and not necessarily patriarchal, life-source. The power to create is godlike. The Dionysian and Apollonian principles of a surging vitality that was ordered and increased by form are the two dialectical principles that operate in creativity. Nietzsche's Platonic/Hegelian dichotomy of emotive Dionysian urges shaped by Apollonian reason was irresistible to the expressionists, the humanists and all of those modern artists who embraced their work with the passion of secular conversion.³⁰²

Mary Wigman had reached back past Nietzsche to champion the dance art to which she was so passionately devoted. She saw herself as a defender of a new form that had provided total transformation in her own life. To champion her art, she urgently had to break from the sad stereotypical dancing women that came before her — ballet girls of doubtful morals and even more dubious technique and artistic intentions. She was a standard bearer for the new breed of dancing intelligentsia. Her own process of dance-making incorporated the dialectic: When starting a new work, she sought a subjective experience, releasing herself to a kinetic representation of emotion. She then gave shape to the raw material through objective, formal crafting. After giving the dance a set form, she attempted to return to the original subjective state in performance. In doing so, she sought to create a transformative encounter for the dancer and the audience.³⁰³ The dance

³⁰² See Newhall, *Uniform Bodies*, 47; and Seth Taylor, *Left-Wing Nietzscheans: The Politics of German Expressionism, 1910-1920* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990).

³⁰³ See Appendix B.

was in essence a vessel built to hold the synthesized Dionysian and Apollonian experiences: The outer formal shape of the vessel held within its negative space, the emotive heart of the dance. In order to accomplish such a restructuring of the artistic process, Wigman had to redefine the nature of dance itself. Appropriating the Hegelian Absolute, she reformed its meaning to circumscribe a dance art that was complete in itself, not merely an embellishment of music or the dramatic theater. From *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, she took Hegel's understanding of the Absolute as all-encompassing spirit or *Geist* and formed it to her own conception of what dance could and should be.³⁰⁴

Hegel insisted that rather than being preordained by an omniscient godhead, knowledge develops through human activity. This is a decidedly modern notion. Hegel's organic paradigm argues for the value of a philosophy that assumes an orderly historic progression. His attempt to reconcile the concrete with the abstract prepared the way for biological and social evolutionists Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, American pragmatists such as John Dewey and, of course, Nietzsche and Karl Marx. Hegel sought to unify conflicting ideas: means and ends, the subjective and objective aspects of experience and, ultimately, the individual and the state. Hanya Holm's account of the contrast she perceived between the "subjective" German dancer and her "objective" American counterpart precisely played out the Kantian/Hegelian conflict between empiricism or sense experience and the "pure" reasoning of rationalism. While Kant saw the two as inseparable aspects of human nature, Hegel attempted to resolve such fundamental conflict through the dialectic process.³⁰⁵

For Wigman, too, the sensuous dancing body became the vehicle to an authentic life. While Laban had tried to press that body into form, Wigman used his ideas of space to create a sensate environment. In her *Seven Dances of Life*, it is only through the power

³⁰⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, (trans. J.B. Ballie, revised by Carl J. Friedrich; orig. published 1807) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

³⁰⁵ Newhall, *Uniform Bodies*, 47.

of her own dancing that Wigman can be set free.³⁰⁶ Nietzsche's Zarathustra went on to say

If my virtue is a dancer's virtue and I have often jumped with both feet into golden-emerald delight . . . all that is heavy and grave should become light; all that is body, dancer . . . that is my alpha and omega: Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and . . . the ring of recurrence?³⁰⁷

Understanding the *Zeitgeist* of her era is crucial when reaching back to grasp Wigman's values and philosophy. Since the eighteenth century, the European Enlightenment had elevated science and reason over the irrational and the intuitive. Reason held the seat of authority. And in the larger society, a particular form of progress prevailed. The Romantic artists reacted with a nostalgic longing for an idyllic past that was deemed closer to nature and thus more authentic. These longings could not hold back the onslaught of the machine age, but traces of Romanticism remained in what we now call Modernism. Many early twentieth-century residents of Western Europe and the United States identified the human body as part of that more authentic, natural world that could be accessed through the *Körperkultur* or physical culture movement. Rather than denying physical existence, the body was seen as a tool for becoming a better individual and thus developing a better society. To facilitate building a healthier body, dance gymnastics came into popular culture along with bicycling, hiking, spa visits and other activities thought to build and sustain well being.³⁰⁸

In the midst of these developments, Wigman was hard at work attempting to redefine and claim a place for a deeper dance in the modern age. When Wigman danced and read to her audience *Zarathustra's* declaration that "the self is the body" and "reason lies in the body," she felt vindicated in making her dance her career.³⁰⁹ The importance of

³⁰⁶ For an in-depth translation of Wigman's original text, description of the dance and analysis of *Seven Dances of Life* see Newhall 2009 pages 113-126.

³⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 342-343.

³⁰⁸ There is a vast literature examining the body culture movement in Germany, the United States and elsewhere, along with its connection to modernism and twentieth-century art. To scratch the surface, see Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*; and Harold B. Segel, *Body Ascendant: Modernism and the Physical Imperative* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

³⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 34-5.

harmony, between the individual and the group, shaman and community, mystic and acolyte, all seemed to be the oldest stomping grounds of dance ritual. And this ancient place for dance appeared threatened with extinction by the onslaught of science, technology, civility and respectability that had burst into the modern age under the banner of progress. In response to this upheaval, Wigman and the artistic intelligentsia turned to the philosophers to make sense of the modern world and redefine the manifest destiny of the artist. Wigman was not the only aficionada of Nietzsche among the early modern dancers. The American pioneers Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey all referred to Nietzsche as a key influence on their work and all embraced the art of choreography and movement fully, with the Nietzschean transference of religious fervor. Once dance had been consecrated as a modern faith, the dancing converts approached the stage as a new altar and the practice of dance as a sort of pious devotion. In the press and her promotional material, Wigman had been declared “The Priestess of the Dance.” Holm recalled that “an awful lot of really green jealousy” arose at Bennington as a result of Wigman’s unofficial title. “They [Graham’s acolytes at Bennington] couldn’t swallow that. Graham had to be also High Priestess. All right, why not? Please! There are several high priestesses.”³¹⁰ Graham had gone so far as to choreograph herself as God/dess in the role of the Virgin surrounded by dancing acolytes in *Primitive Mysteries* (1931). Gertrude Schurr spoke of the relationship of the group to soloist Graham in the dance: “Everyone felt it, this belief in oneness. And when I was near her, she had the mystic verity of a figure to be worshiped.”³¹¹

Awesome sacredness and wonder, these elements have historically resided in dance at its most essential and the Modern dancers took on their work with a profound reverence. Female, but no matriarch, Graham established herself as the patriarchal leader of her company, eminently in charge. However, she was pliant under the influence of Louis Horst. As Graham’s mentor, he introduced her to the ideas that guided her seminal choreographic choices. Horst read Nietzsche to Graham and they were not alone in their interest in Nietzsche’s ideas. Doris Humphrey had included Nietzsche in the list of

³¹⁰ Holm and Siegel, “A Conversation with Hanya Holm,” 24.

³¹¹ Schurr in Agnes DeMille, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham* (New York: Random House, 1991), 179.

suggested reading that she posted in her studio for her dancers. The modern dance founders, Duncan, Wigman and even Ted Shawn, all had been steeped in Nietzsche. The 1931 January issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* quotes Wigman saying, “We have no uniform religion now to which to dedicate the dance. But in every person there is a deep religious sense that springs from a vision of the infinite. It deserves a common expression.”³¹² These dancers were hard at work, attempting to redefine and claim a place for dance in the modern age. The artistic intelligentsia turned to the philosophers to make sense of the modern world and redefine the manifest destiny of the artist.

Early twentieth-century Germany produced many artistic thinkers who shared Wigman’s beliefs. She was in no way an isolated figure. In their worldview, social change could be effected through the practice of art. Through her excavations of meaning in dance, Wigman bears a resemblance to another Expressionist, the painter Wassily Kandinsky. She shares his belief that spiritual impulses could be made visible in art.³¹³ In fact, for Kandinsky, Wigman and many Expressionists, the acts of making art and viewing art should generate higher human consciousness. Further, for Wigman at least, dance became the very experience of existence itself, or *Dasein*, a term that she shared with the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wigman all saw coming into *Dasein*, or a being coming into being, as the action of the most alive and fully aware individuals, wherein the divisions between body, soul and intellect disappear. Gendlin argues that Heidegger stopped short and did not understand “being in” in a bodily way. Writing seven years later in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger addresses this directly: “The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject but the opening up of human being, out of its captivity in beings, to the openness of Being.”³¹⁴ There is a sense of wholeness in Heidegger’s way of Being, a call for ecstatic opening that he sees made possible by the work of art. In the dancing body,

³¹² Dixon, “Mary Wigman,” 42.

³¹³ This is the premise of Kandinsky’s master work. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* New York: Dover Publications, (orig. ed. 1914) 1977), 42-3. It is also strewn throughout Wigman’s writings, especially *The Language of Dance*.

³¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in D. Krell, (ed.) *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1935), 192.

the self and the artwork become one and the same. As early as 1914, Mary Wigman recognized herself as the *Gestalt im Raum*, the figure in space.³¹⁵ And that space appears akin to what Heidegger would come to call the open region.

Heidegger circles around the terms origin, art, artist and work. While “The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other.”³¹⁶ In the deepest sense, he could be describing the work of Wigman, whose very being encompassed the maker, the medium and the final form of the work. Early on, her desire was for the transcendent performance in the Kantian/Wittgensteinian sense of exceeding the limits of normal experience and touching the unknowable. Through physical discipline she sought to place herself in that rift between the visible world and the chthonic *Erde*. Like Heidegger, she saw that space opened as the result of opposing forces in which the un-concealing of Being occurs. This opening for Wigman was not merely philosophical but physically accomplished by inward focus and muscular tension and release. The goal of performance, the moment “when the fire dances between the two poles,” was for the dancer the glow and consuming flame of experience equal to what Heidegger’s described as “luminous uniqueness.”³¹⁷ Wigman’s life was a relentless seeking after ecstatic entry into Being. For Wigman and these philosophical moderns, convention, the status quo and staid respectability were ideas whose time had passed. Even the very meanings of words were being reconsidered and not only by the radical Dadaists. In *Being and Time* Heidegger wrote, “Language is no longer the expression of a timeless web of meaning, but rooted in human activity.”³¹⁸ For Mary Wigman, dance by its visceral and sensate nature was uniquely suited to the making of a new and fully realized language. Wigman’s writings reflect her tireless efforts to explain the unspoken

³¹⁵ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 79.

³¹⁶ Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, 143.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 190.

³¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 165.

Heidegger concentrated on the concept of *Dasein* as a particular kind of existence unique to humans. He argued that authentic life is possible if death is resolutely confronted and freedom exercised with a sense of its essentially creative nature. Heidegger displayed an enthusiasm for the Nazi regime early on and was rector of Freiburg University before he resigned in 1934. Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

language of dance in literal terms. The urge to communicate that drove her dance art appears again and again in her writing.

While Wigman's interviews, writings and lectures attest to fluency in French and English along with her native German, it was the language of the body that most compelled her. In many ways it was an entirely new dialect that she was inventing. Like other pioneers in the modern arts, she recognized all language as symbolic and all symbols as growing from the need to communicate. Many practitioners of the various art forms were taken by a pressing need to uncover the symbols intrinsic in their arts and make them fit the current world. In the drive for personal expression and immediacy, Wigman felt that she had to reject the codified dance language of ballet.

Why a New Dance?

The ballet had reached such a state of perfection that it could be developed no further. Its forms had become so refined, so sublimated to the ideal of purity, that the artistic content was too often lost or obscured. The great "ballet dancer" was not longer a representative of a great inner emotion (like the musician or poet), but had become defined as a great virtuoso.³¹⁹

Isadora Duncan had paved the way for a new form of dance at the end of the nineteenth century. And Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* had proven that a radically new sort of ballet performance could be accepted in the young twentieth century. Beginning her life in dance at the age of 27, ballet training was never an option for Mary Wigman. Through her studies with Dalcroze and under the influence of Rudolph von Laban, Wigman had found models for movement innovation that could reveal the world as she knew it. She felt that ballet remained an artifact of another age. More importantly, she felt that ballet lacked the movement vocabulary to allow the contemporary dancer to connect her body to the larger world.

The ballet-dancer developed an ideal of agility and lightness. He sought to conquer and annihilate gravitation. He banned the dark, the heavy, the earthbound, not only because it conflicted with his ideal of supple, airy, graceful technique, but because it also conflicted with his pretty aesthetic principles. Times, however became bad. War had changed life. Revolution and suffering tended to destroy and shatter all the ideals of prettiness.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Wigman, "The Philosophy of the Modern Dance," 306.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 306-7.

As a member of a generation of young people who had chosen to turn away from the circumscribed lives of their parents, Wigman sought a way to make meaning out of a world very different from the one of her childhood. By the time she was ready to embark on her independent dance career in 1919, she had seen the Western world torn apart in a devastating war of attrition that had been called the “war to end all wars.” In her writing, the territory of ballet could only represent an obsolete world. In this she is a quintessential modern artist. That she used the human body, and a female body at that, locates her among the great artistic innovators of her time and place. How can we place her in the context of radical modernism?

Two Streams of Modernism

Mary Wigman’s place in her nation and culture may be clarified by examining two major streams of thought, which have come to be known as the Enlightenment and the Romantic response. Both have sources in classical humanism and see human potential optimistically, and both reflect a general rebellion against authoritarian traditions: Church, feudalism and monarchy. Both believe in individual human genius or, at the extremes, a cult of the hero. Was Mary Wigman an Enlightenment thinker, a Romantic or her own unique hybrid? The Enlightenment *philosophes* replaced the divine right to rule with rationality and the concept of universal human rights. Enlightenment thinking kindled the Romantic response. While the Enlightenment mind saw nature as a locus for scientific experimentation and the source of raw materials that drove industrialization, the Romantics idealized nature into a place of mystery and revelation. Nature and the female often were linked in Romantic literature, painting and dance, where the natural world nourished individual genius, imagination, spontaneity and passion. In contrast to Enlightenment optimism, the Romantics questioned progress and called for authenticity through communion with nature and other cultures supposedly untainted by civilization. Certainly, Wigman’s experiences at Monte Verità and her subsequent choreography place her beliefs firmly within the Romantic aesthetic. In fact, she wrote

We do not have in mind any tribal, ritual dances. We have no undivided religious concept in whose name we may celebrate the dance. However, we have within us

a living belief and strong yearning from which we create dances of mystic character.³²¹

Both streams of modern thought were fueled by essential breaks in perceptions of the human place in the world: the Copernican/Galilean rejection of the Earth's fixed place at the center of the universe; the rupture that Darwin created between the rational modern mind and ancient systems based in creation myths; and Freud's revelation that so-called rational behavior was controlled by unconscious forces. Although a modern at her core, Wigman was hard-pressed to return myth and ritual to the modern dance world. She was also closely bound to practicing psychoanalysts in the formative years of her career. Ultimately, however, she was engaged in the inherently narcissistic struggle of the performer as artistic subject.

What did these shifts mean for the modern artist in the first decades of the twentieth century and specifically for Mary Wigman? She and her fellow utopians sought the very wellsprings of human metamorphosis while craving more genuine practice of art. These ideas bound Wigman to dance and to dance absolutely. She and many other modern dancers had chosen to forego those creative acts that historically had remained entirely in the woman's realm: traditional marriage, childbearing or childrearing. Wigman saw that her role was to redefine and claim a place for dance in the modern age. She felt she could return dance to a place of power, far beyond mere entertainment, and in so doing claim her active agency in shaping her world.

Wigman's worldview serves as a prism through which we can glimpse the artists of her age. Culture and era shape the way the body moves. Dance, as the enduring vehicle of ritual, has reflected the acknowledged or submerged myths of culture and thus shaped the very movements that embody the myth. "Is there not inherent in each act of creation a certain instinct shielding the process of genesis from the critical eye of reason? Would one expose the secret of intuition, the secret of the creative idea, even if one could?" she asked.³²²

³²¹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 92-3.

³²² *Ibid.*, 86.

In Wigman's time this primal role of dance not only endured but also reemerged to fill a new century. She had been born in the nineteenth century and that century had introduced the lightness of the French Romantics through the *ballets blancs*. In *La Sylphide* (1832) women hover as virginal figures literally suspended above the ground with wings on their backs, balanced on the tips of their toes. While Théodore Rousseau and the French painters went to the forest of Fontainebleau to create new landscapes, the choreographers Taglioni and Perrot drew on the librettos of Théophile Gautier and Novalis, and choreographed idealized women as unearthly sylphs to inhabit those Romantic landscapes.³²³ Wigman and her cohorts rejected both these dance predecessors and the hierarchical constraints of the Imperial Russian classical ballet. They emphatically broke open the moving body, just as the cubist painters fragmented the depicted figure. Even Isadora Duncan had sought to dance the lost glories of Greece with flowing feminine gestures to the lush accompaniment of the great composers. Mary Wigman would strip all of this away.

Mary Wigman as Choreographer

It is a daunting task to choose which works of Mary Wigman best represent her aesthetic practice and philosophy. In order to do this we must consider a career that stretched from her first solo choreography in 1914 to her final production of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1957. Over this span of forty-three years, Mary Wigman made more than 170 solo dances and nearly 80 group works. From intimate experience, she knew well that, "in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases the choreographer is author and director in one person."³²⁴ In most of her early works she was also the performer, both visualizing and crafting the work and serving as the vehicle for its realization. In this she was among the pioneering dance soloists who were also the creator-performers of their very individual works. Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey all stand as examples of that unique era when women began to dominate the stage, uniting the roles of choreographer and soloist. Certainly, such soloists came to make group works. As individual techniques developed and were codified, the

³²³ See Guest, *Romantic Ballet in Paris*; and Garafola, *Rethinking the Sylph*.

³²⁴ Wigman, *Language*, 22.

idiosyncratic expression and charismatic stage persona of the soloist gave way to the unity and uniformity demanded by larger works.

Group Dance

During the interwar years, Wigman accomplished much as a soloist inside and outside of Germany. But she also aspired to choreograph for an ensemble. Wigman saw the group dance as retaining the essential characteristics of the solo. For the choreographer, the group dance also permitted an amplified use of the formal elements of space, time and energy. Multiple dancing bodies permitted more variety and capacity for change. When she writes of the demands of creating an ensemble work, we hear her own struggles to form a dance group and simultaneously keep the solo dance alive. In a 1933 essay, Wigman described the role of a dancer as two-fold, “on the one hand, perfecting the dance personality as an individual; and on the other hand, blending this individuality with an ensemble.”³²⁵ She believed that the young dancers of her era had a strong feeling for a common cause that supported ensemble dance. But she also saw that the drive for self-expression must be handled with understanding and patience in order to protect and develop the individual talent. The abilities that group members brought were to be cultivated within the framework of the dances themselves. Thus self-expression would not come into conflict with the teamwork necessary to work in a dance ensemble.

Dance talent manifests itself in two ways, she said.³²⁶ The first was what she termed the “productive” talent that arises from creative imagination, this talent emerges as having a real mind of its own with which it adapts training to its own original purposes. Along with the ability to modify training material, such talent exerts the power to influence others through initiative and qualities of leadership. From this pool of talent she identified choreographers, managers, composers and soloists. Wigman reflected on how these leadership qualities came together in her 1927 essay “Dance and the Modern Woman,” written in English for *The Dancing Times* of London. Susan Manning proposes that these organizational principles show that Wigman was falling into line with Hitler’s

³²⁵ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 129.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

adoption of the *Führer* principle.³²⁷ However, this form of leadership was the *modus operandi* among all of the great choreographers of that time. This progression of choreographic control mirrors the evolution of Martha Graham's leadership role, which solidified in her own dance ensembles and through the codification of her technique. It is worthwhile to consider the development of the innate qualities of the choreographer in the light of Wigman's career. While she could comment on the task of the choreographer from her own experience, she also knew that the so-called choreographic or productive path was not for all dancers.

In contrast or in complement to the productive talent, Wigman termed a second type of dance talent reproductive.³²⁸ Such talent was innate to those dancers who became ideal instruments for the creative forces and visions of choreographers. And she made it clear that these dancers had gifts all of their own. With the reproductive talent comes the genius for absorbing and carrying to fruition the ideas of others. This requires a critical insight derived from shrewd observation and an intellect capable of penetration into motivations, metaphors and meanings. For these dancers, Wigman saw their professional potential best realized through the challenges of dancing with a group but not merely as instruments of the choreographer. These artists were called on to use a strength of personality that would neither be subverted nor stifled by working with others.

In 1921, Wigman choreographed her first major length group work, *The Seven Dances of Life*. Among the dancers rehearsing the work were Berthe Trümpy, Yvonne Georgi and Gret Palucca. Opening night was almost cancelled at the last moment because Palucca suffered a foot injury that required surgery and dancer Birgit Nohr also was injured. New ensemble member Trümpy stepped into Palucca's part and danced alongside Wigman with Hilde Daeves, Lena Hanke and Georgi. Together, they made dance history.

The Seven Dances of Life (1921)

On 1 October 1921, Mary Wigman presented a work she had choreographed for producer Hanns Niedecken-Gebhard, a dramaturge interested in expanding the role of the

³²⁷ Manning, *Ecstasy*, 3.

³²⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 130.

dance within opera performance. He and Wigman had known each other since the days at Monte Verità, and now Wigman's choreography for his production of *The Rose in Love's Garden* firmly established their long friendship. With Palucca as her assistant, Wigman struggled with the "corseted" dancers at the Statsopera in Hannover.³²⁹ Lured by the idea of theater work, but frustrated by the necessity of working with ballet-trained dancers, Wigman would soon have the opportunity to craft and direct a work that was totally her own.

On 14 December 1921, Niedecken-Gebhard produced Wigman's first evening-length performance for her small ensemble. *The Seven Dances of Life* premiered at the Opera House in Frankfurt. The first half of the evening was dedicated to performance of a Mozart operetta, *Bastien and Bastienne*. Wigman and her cast took the stage after intermission. *The Seven Dances of Life* may have debuted that evening but the performance was the culmination of years of analysis, study and self-discovery.

In that wonderful, horrible and formative year of 1918 -1919, Wigman had written the poem that became the libretto for the dance. And her extant sketches for the dance vividly illustrate how she labored over the symbolic content and choreographic form of the work.³³⁰ She undertook this project while recovering from her physical and emotional breakdown as a patient in the sanitarium at Walensee in the Engadin region of the Swiss Alps, where *The Seven Dances of Life* was her creative refuge. It is also a map of her struggle to persist in dedicating her life to dance against all odds. And it is clearly derivative of the experimental works in which she had been cast by Laban. The year 1918 was the end of her association with Laban. That year he fashioned *The Sultan's Grimace: A Dance Play in Five Scenes*.³³¹ It was one of the "oriental" fairy tale pantomimes that he made during his tenure in Zurich. Certainly, many dancers took on "Orientalist" themes, imitating such dance luminaries as Ruth St. Denis and Maud Allen.³³² Manning has suggested that Wigman modeled *The Seven Dances of Life* after Allen's work, but Allen's *Salome* had initially made a stir in 1907, more than a decade before Wigman

³²⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 90.

³³⁰ Archiv Darstellende Kunst, Berlin.

³³¹ Tanzarchiv, Köln.

³³² Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image*, 111-3.

began to work on her *Seven Dances*.³³³ It seems likely that Wigman was developing a dramatic piece that had a direct relationship to her final period under Laban's tutelage. The trappings of *The Sultan's Grimace* hold many elements found in *The Seven Dances of Life*. In Laban's work there appeared a Sultan/ruler, a female slave whose dance held the power to save lives, attending dancers, a dervish dancer and an executioner. There was a large throne upon which the Sultan sat as ruler and cloth handkerchiefs that were used as props symbolizing transition and choice. However, where *The Sultan's Grimace* appears as more of a social comedy, in which disguises and mistaken identities drive the plot, Wigman's *The Seven Dances of Life* is earnestly serious and more in the tradition of *Sturm und Drang*, but with an uplifting outcome. It is the story of a woman claiming her emancipation through her art. Hard-fought, the struggles in the dance told Wigman's own story.

By the time that she was to set the work in 1921, many other influences had entered Wigman's creative life. She had left Laban to forge her own path. Besides having a group of dancers dedicated to working with her, she had embarked on a romantic relationship with psychiatrist and art historian Hans Prinzhorn.³³⁴ She had known Prinzhorn since her days at Hellerau when he had been engaged to her roommate Erna Hoffman.³³⁵ While Wigman was working with Laban during the years of the First World War, Prinzhorn was gathering and cataloging a unique collection of art works done by patients at psychiatric hospitals. Prinzhorn's work concerned the common ground between psychiatry and art, irrationality and self-expression. In 1922 Prinzhorn published his first and most influential book, *Bildnerlei der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill), richly illustrated with examples from his collection of artwork by mental patients. This book represents one of the first attempts to clinically analyze and value such work. His groundbreaking book not only documented the art collection but also interpreted and contextualized the artwork. His writing is a phenomenological critique of the prevailing culture that disparaged such "insane art." Not only did he argue that many of the works therein had genuine artistic quality but also that the creators of the works deserved a

³³³ Manning, *Ecstasy*, 99-100.

³³⁴ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 106.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

positive reevaluation in the light of such artistic merit. While his scientific colleagues were reserved in their reaction, artists were enthusiastic. Jean Dubuffet was highly inspired by the works, and coined the term “Outsider Art” to legitimize these artists in the world of aesthetic pursuits.³³⁶ Indeed, for many artists working in the Expressionist style, Prinzhorn’s work was a welcome validation of their own artistic impulses and Wigman was among them.

Wigman and Prinzhorn saw in each other a kindred spirit with a unique depth of insight into their own pursuits.³³⁷ Extant correspondence between them is passionate and poetic. On 3 March 1921, Prinzhorn began a poem to Wigman with the words “Dance in Holy Life.” Equally an Expressionist tome and Romantic love poem, it speaks of the vessel of her body holding the “thousand wild forms that sound the one blessed chord of life,” behind which “death stands seething dressed in black yet the body sings of this holy life!” The imagery in Prinzhorn’s poem was fully realized through Wigman’s *The Seven Dances of Life* wherein the Dance of Life follows the Dance of Death.³³⁸ Besides her relationship with Prinzhorn, many other of her early influences were woven into the fabric of *The Seven Dances of Life*. These influences included ideas from Eastern philosophy that she pursued at Hellerau, Laban’s experiments in defining the fundamental elements of dance as well as his Freemasonic practices and dramatic

³³⁶ Catalogue. *Jean Dubuffet*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2001.

³³⁷ Wigman found she had many ideas in common with Prinzhorn, who was a strong influence in her philosophical and aesthetic thinking as well as her domestic life. The two remained friends even after the romance ended. After his death in 1933, Wigman kept a death mask of Prinzhorn in her home for many years. And he helped to form that home in ways beyond his lifetime. In his Heidelberg practice, Prinzhorn had employed Anni Hess as assistant and housekeeper. As Wigman’s school and performing career flourished, she was able to ask “Hesschen” to manage her domestic affairs. Hess would remain a devoted companion to the dancer from 1923 until Wigman’s death in 1973. Indeed, a good portion of the story of Wigman’s life lies with the devotion of her housekeeper and companion, Anni Hess. Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 82, 106, and 120, points out the importance of Prinzhorn’s impact on Wigman in the 1920s, and additional material is available in the Archiv Darstellende Kunst, Berlin. Müller also underscores Hess’s devotion to Wigman. For a photo of Wigman with Hess, see Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 209.

³³⁸ Hans Prinzhorn, *Gedichte Mary Wigman gewidmet* (poems dedicated to Mary Wigman) unpublished, 1921, cited at the Berlin Archiv Darstellende Kunst as 15.3.1921.

theatrical values. The dance also reflects the existential struggle found in Johann von Goethe's great epic *Faust* and Wigman's ongoing identification with Goethe's writing. Wigman left copious notes and detailed drawings for the dance and any deeper analysis would be well served by looking at these pages. They include drawings of the pathways through space done in Wigman's own hand with detailed description of the costumes and staging. Hedwig Müller also makes a brilliant case for Wigman's incorporation of Goethe's color theory in her choice of costume color for each section. Such symbolism runs deeply under the surface of Wigman's carefully crafted dance drama. The dance was a mystic composition. When describing the intention of such mystic dances, she clearly stated that she was not creating a tribal or ritual dance nor representing a singular religious idea. She writes

We may call a dance mystic when it is symbolic of cosmic powers in its expression and form, when the personal life experience of the choreographer yields to the dance visualization of the incomprehensible and eternal. The mystic dance presupposes the choreographer's personal maturity.³³⁹

By 1921, Wigman had already choreographed and performed dozens of shorter dances and several dedicated to "oriental" themes, but in *The Seven Dances of Life*, her philosophy is remarkably laid bare. Her skill as a choreographer and performer would continue to develop, yet *The Seven Dances of Life* appears as a manifesto of Wigman's beliefs. It is also reminiscent of a modern morality play, close to the great Medieval tradition of performing the spiritual trials of "Everyman," or importantly in this case, of Everywoman. Faced with the obstacles of being a female iconoclast in a field for which her upbringing had not prepared her, Wigman identified her life in dance as a calling coming from a higher source. And from that source she could claim cosmic support for her own creative genius and ambitions.

Kinesthesia and Kinetic Empathy

For Wigman, the quest was urgent: how could bodily movement alone serve as a language with which to communicate an immediate experience of being in the modern world? How could dance allow the artist to truly be present in this world? While the questions appear metaphysical, they were grounded in physiology – muscle and bone.

³³⁹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 93.

Two interrelated theories were developed by dancers and physiologists in response to these questions. The first theory examined the physical process of kinesthesia, which is the awareness of the position and movements of parts of the body by means of the proprioceptors or sensory nerves within the muscles and joints. Kinesthesia is used all the time to know whether the body is upright or upside down, to step off a curb safely or to get food from plate to mouth. Kinesthesia is a kind of muscular perception that allows us to consciously identify and thus direct our movements, certainly a crucial faculty for a dancer! A second concept, kinetic empathy, resides alongside kinesthesia in the language of dance. It is no wonder that Wigman dedicated her life to deciphering this language. To truly use dance as language, the message of muscle, joint and bone must travel beyond the dancing body to communicate with those watching. Setting aside the specialized and codified vocabulary of ballet, Wigman embarked on a search for new forms of gesture and movement that could be experienced more fully by dancer and audience alike. What she was mining was a sort of kinetic empathy, with roots closer to ritual and communal dance than concert forms established at that time.³⁴⁰ New York Times critic John Martin used the term *metakinesis* to describe this particular approach to the dance experience.

³⁴⁰ Contemporary historians, anthropologists and philosophers have used the idea of kinesthesia as an analytical tool for understanding human ceremonial practices. In *Keeping Together in Time*, historian William McNeill coined the term “muscular bonding” to describe the euphoric experience of human beings moving in unison, whether marching on the battlefield or folk-dancing in the village square. He argued that keeping together in rhythmic time is deep-seated in the human experience, emerging from a need so basic it is often assumed instinctive like breathing or sex. The choice to join together with others in rhythmic movement requires deliberate proprioceptive responses and specialized movement vocabularies. This coordinated response of the brain to rhythmic movement of the large muscles requires cooperation between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. See Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego and New York: Harcourt, 1999). The epic journey from muscle to nervous system to brain occurs in an instant. It is “only after filtering through these levels of the brain does excitation derived from rhythmic muscular movement and voicing reach the left side of the brain, where our verbal skills are situated.” McNeill, *Keeping Together*, 6. These preverbal origins of dance connect humanity both to a collective prehistory and individual infancies where the mother’s heartbeat was the initial rhythm and first experience of moving in harmony with another. Anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake refers to aesthetic experiences that are grounded in such bodily encounters: “The preverbal nature of dance inhabits a territory

Movement, then, in and of itself is a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another . . . we see in the dance the relation that exists between physical movement and mental – or psychical, if you will – intention.³⁴¹

In Wigman's version of kinetic empathy, the dancer places herself so deeply into the dance expression that the tensions and motor responses of the dancing body are made visible and thus transmitted by means of a visual-kinetic communication — from bone to bone, muscle to muscle and cell to cell — to those watching. Kinetic empathy is used daily to read the moods of others through their facial expressions, gestures, gait and posture. We refer to this simply as body language. The expressions to “feel it in your gut” or to “lighten up” are just two common examples of spoken language derived from physical communication. The challenge lies in transposing such nonverbal communication to the heightened physicality of the dance. John Martin wrote,

When we see a human body moving, we see movement which is potentially producible by any human body and therefore by our own; through kinesthetic sympathy we actually reproduce it vicariously in our present muscular experience and awaken such [emotional associations].³⁴²

The applause that exploded in response to Nijinsky's leaps, to the suspension of Pavlova's arabesque, and to the 32 *fouettes* in *Swan Lake* burst spontaneously from the spectator's thrill and startled appreciation of virtuosity.³⁴³ These physical feats were heroic humanity made visible through the human body. And each observer could recognize her possession of a body made in the same image. In that moment the audience can become unified through the kinetic experience: to each other and the performer.³⁴⁴

parallel to the importance of ritual in preliterate society.”³⁴⁰ She describes the public performance of dance as “both a means and an end in reinforcing social cohesion.” Ellen Dissanayake, *What Is Art For?* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 146.

³⁴¹ John Martin, *The Modern Dance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book Co.; Dance Horizons, 1989; repub., of original ed., New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1933), 14-15.

³⁴² John Martin, *America Dancing: the Background and Personalities of the Modern Dance* (photographs by Thomas Bouchard) (New York, Dodge Pub. Co., 1936), 110.

³⁴³ Paul Magriel, ed. *Nijinsky, Pavlova, Duncan: Three Lives in Dance* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977).

³⁴⁴ Regarding how audiences responded to Mary Wigman see Eve Gentry's diary entries in Chapter Three. For more on this see Newhall, “Absolute Eden,” 33-38.

American writer John Martin would define the term but Wigman held the principle of kinetic empathy as fundamental to her technique and incorporated it into the teaching methodology at her school.

Class at the Mary Wigman School

Wigman came to realize that in order to expand her dance repertory, she had to be aware of the larger forces that shaped choreographic processes and greater trends in the dance world at large. By incubating work in her school, she was able to develop a practical understanding of her life philosophy. In this she created a sort of *Lebensreform* that focused solely on her aesthetic life. The initial impulses she had experienced at Monte Verità by now were pressed into a coherent teaching structure. Through her touring and teaching she was able to maintain her Dresden studio while receiving some financial support from the city of Dresden.³⁴⁵ In the 1920s, a range of students came to study dance. Wigman was well aware that all of them would not become professionals and were not “qualified by nature to adopt it as their medium of expression.”³⁴⁶ Clearly Wigman felt that women were especially suited to undertake dance as a noble enterprise that ran counter to a prurient view of the moving female body. But men did come to her school; Harald Kreutzberg and Max Terpis were among the most prominent. The task of making a new generation of dancers was undertaken by Wigman with a clear eye as to how generational differences rather than gendered performance would determine who would come to study:

There is a marked egotism about modern youth, justified by the desire to know itself, to discover its own potentialities and limitations before mingling with the established world. The solution lies in the dance, in the pure delight of movement as the overflow of abundant vitality and independence of all but physical appreciation.³⁴⁷

Wigman was willing to accept all students with the ability to pay for classes. She left the teaching of beginners to her sister and the members of her dance company. At the same

³⁴⁵ H. Lazarus, *Die Akte Wigman* Hildesheim (CD-ROM: Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln - Georg Olms Verlag, 2004).

³⁴⁶ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 105.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

time she made some scholarships available to those who showed promise in the profession.³⁴⁸

When Ellen von Frankenberg took her first class at the Mary Wigman School in Dresden, the year was 1923. The school had been growing steadily during its initial two years and Wigman had gathered around her a fine group of teachers that included her sister Elisabeth, Berthe Trümpy and Hanya Holm. In the students' dressing room, an assortment of languages could be heard: English, Norwegian and Swedish, along with French and German. As the school grew a new studio space was renovated into the celebrated "yellow room" in which students took class and Wigman's first professional group rehearsed.³⁴⁹

As a beginning dancer, von Frankenberg had a clear recall of her own audition class, taught by Trümpy: the pianist played four-measure phrases while the class, with arms outstretched, began to circle the imaginary center of the room.³⁵⁰ Greater emphasis was placed on working with the group and adding to the communal expression and experience, instead of a display of technical prowess or of prior dance training. Accepted into the school as a beginner, von Frankenberg described the hierarchy of classes. Two classes were offered for the beginners, who were initiated by Elisabeth Wigman into fundamentals based on Mary's early work with Laban. His movement scales were taught just as tone scales are taught to a beginning pianist. But instead of following an aural key and pitch, the movement scales were intended to connect dimensional planes and activate the entire body and the space within and around the dancer.³⁵¹ Trümpy and Holm alternated teaching the two more advanced classes wherein the fundamental concepts were developed and explored in depth. Finally, there was a master-level class that

³⁴⁸ Interviews with Brigitta Herrmann. She also Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 115-117 on the Wigman *Grupe*.

³⁴⁹ Karen Bell-Kanner, *The Life and Times of Ellen von Frankenberg* (Chur, Switzerland; New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), 7-8. In her biography, Hedwig Müller traces the development of the original *Wigman Schule* through several chapters on Wigman's time in Dresden.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

included the Wigman Group dancers.³⁵² The teachers decided among themselves when a student was ready to advance to the next level of study. Mary Wigman was physically absent from the building much of the time as the school's expenses made her touring a necessity throughout the 1920s and '30s. Her professional aspirations as a concert performer remained strong, and the reputation of the school rested on her performance career and larger public persona. Von Frankenberg recalled that even while she was away, the impact of Wigman's personality was ever present. When she returned she would give some classes, watch student compositions and disappear again, leaving the students inspired with the sense that they'd taken part in an event of great magnitude. Von Frankenberg felt that Wigman was very conscious of the effect that her "rousing presence" had on the student dancers.³⁵³

Study at the Mary Wigman School encompassed much more than studio classes. Students were constantly sent out to museums and encouraged to consider all aspects and mediums of art. Philosophy and history were part of study as the education of the mind traveled alongside the practice of the body. Von Frankenberg wrote, "In Mary's classes one really absorbed the meaning of modern art."³⁵⁴ The emphasis was on exploration and students were expected to take responsibility for their own education in the larger world of aesthetics. So the school became a place of discovery and a meeting place for young people and new ideas. Rather than a studio solely for physical training, the goal was to educate the whole dancer in dance history, theory, composition and musical accompaniment, while making the body an articulate instrument of expression.

In Germany, *Ausdruckstanz* became popular among the citizens of the Weimar Republic who were hungry for a life-affirming physical culture. Participation in rhythmic gymnastics and *Ausdruckstanz* became a mass movement, alongside the movement choir

³⁵² Most importantly, interviews with students of Wigman in the 1950s reveal that she kept this same systematic approach to class work.

³⁵³ Von Frankenberg attests to this in Bell-Kanner and interviews with later students of Wigman echo the effect of Wigman's presence in class. For a list of interviews see bibliography.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

explorations of Rudolf von Laban and the hiking clubs of the German Youth Movement.³⁵⁵

By 1923, Germany was experiencing a measure of economic stability that was mirrored in Wigman's personal life and work.³⁵⁶ Her school was flourishing and her choreography was reaching a new level of professionalism. With the assistance of her students, accompanists, sister Elisabeth and Anni Hess, plus financial support from private donors, the city of Dresden, the Saxon state and the federal government, Wigman entered into a period of tremendous productivity.³⁵⁷ By 1924, she was able to expand her professional group to fourteen dancers. She also became involved with a man fifteen years her junior. Herbert Binswanger was from a well-known Swiss family of physicians and psychiatrists.³⁵⁸ His own specialty was also psychotherapy and he provided a boyish and light-hearted diversion for Wigman, in contrast to her student/pupil role with Hans Prinzhorn. Her time with Binswanger served to further free her as she came into her own as an artist.³⁵⁹

Wigman's Dance Philosophy

Mary Wigman's radical innovations in dance performance also presented a new way to approach dance composition. She called for an original way of training the body. While she shied away from making a "textbook" for dance, she wrote about the things that she felt were fundamental to the new dance in the modern world. In 1933, Wigman contributed sections describing the foundations of her teaching methodology in Rudolf Bach's *Das Mary Wigman-Werk* (The Work of Mary Wigman).³⁶⁰ Much of her writing for Bach was later translated in *The Mary Wigman Book*. In the 1960s Wigman began to

³⁵⁵ Manning, *Ecstasy*, 132-133.

³⁵⁶ H. Lazarus, *Die Akte Wigman*.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ Herbert Binswanger (1900-1975) was from the great family of psychiatrists that founded and operated Bellevue Sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland. His uncle Otto had treated Friedrich Nietzsche during his illness. His father Ludwig trained with Jung and had a close relationship with Freud. Ludwig also studied the writings of Heidegger and incorporated his ideas into his branch of existential psychology. Herbert followed the family vocation. Wigman began a romantic involvement with Herbert in 1924; their correspondence and friendship lasted until her death.

³⁵⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 133-134.

³⁶⁰ Rudolf Bach, *Das Mary Wigman Werk* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1933).

write her memoirs, beginning with reminiscences of her time at Monte Verità and the early years of her career as an independent artist. She continued through the establishment of her schools with stories of her students, many of whom became major figures in the history of the art. The second section of *The Mary Wigman Book* is entitled “Statements on the Dance,” in which are gathered many of her essays from the 1920s and ‘30s. Wigman spoke directly to her methods of dance composition and offered ways to look at dance making that remain useful to contemporary dancers, choreographers and directors. In 1925 she was ready to put down what she had learned thus far in choreographing her own solo and group works. These became a brochure entitled *Composition* that was reprinted in *The Mary Wigman Book*.³⁶¹

Wigman begins by admitting “There is no technique of composition,” and that each dance work is unique in how it is made. As for compositional guidelines, she allows that each composition demands its own set of rules, which become manifest as the theme of each new dance is revealed in the choreographic process. Simply put, the rules for each particular dance develop as the dance grows. Thus dance composition for Wigman is a creative process through which expression and function are joined. What does she mean by expression and function?

Expression is the metamorphosis of subconscious, spiritual emotion into conscious, physical tangibility.

Function is the power given us to use the body as an instrument for a visible portrayal of changes in our emotional moods.³⁶²

The process that Wigman describes is two-fold. First is an uncritical intuitive phase where the creative idea emerges from the inner consciousness and demands attention. We have already visited the basic tenet of *Ausdruckstanz* that demands the outward expression of inner emotion. And we have seen that Wigman’s goal was to express conflicts and harmonies that arise with and between the individual and the world. In conceiving a dance she says, “The inspiration for a dance always arises from a heightened experience of life . . . It stirs in us a yearning, a stress, an urge to

³⁶¹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 85.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 87.

communicate.”³⁶³ When Wigman writes that the “ability to compose is a talent. Talent is creative fantasy,” she is referring to the ability to access these inner stirrings and bring them to the surface.³⁶⁴ This is an action of the imagination. In Bach’s book, Wigman describes this part of composing as “not thinking” in which the idea comes to the choreographer as if in a dream and in that form it may be carried for a long time before crystallizing into a theme. Thus improvisation was a key element of Wigman’s training and teaching. In improvisation, the shifting nature and depth of internal feelings are accessed by moving the body. Wigman’s sort of improvisation was deliberately structured to address particular questions about life experiences, formal concerns and inner states of being. As an example, she described returning from a restful vacation. With the joy of returning to the studio and meeting with her accompanists, she clapped her hands. Thus began the rhythmic and movement theme and a dance was born. But unleashing the feelings was only the initiation of the choreographic process. Wigman came to understand that even the most physically expressed emotion could only be the beginning of her dance composition.

Once the dance theme presents itself, the second part of the choreographic process begins. Through constructing and arranging movement sequences, the theme begins to take form. Everything that doesn’t relate to the theme or that doesn’t move the dance action forward is pared away so that the dance composition becomes clear in its simplicity. Thus the emotional content or expression prescribes the outward form of the dance. Ultimately, the chosen form then reveals the emotional content. At the beginning of her career, Mary Wigman had learned the importance of form in composition. In her early experiments with Laban, he despaired that her emoting was ruining his beautiful system. She grasped that expression must be carefully molded into a definite shape. She wrote, “I knew that, without killing the creative mood, I had to keep the balance between my emotional outburst and the merciless discipline of a super-personal control, thus submitting myself to the self imposing law of dance composition.”³⁶⁵ Clearly, her

³⁶³ Ibid., 88.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Mary Wigman, “My Teacher Laban (1970),” in Cohen and Copeland, eds. *What Is Dance?*, 304.

approach to composition and performance was drawing on much older ideas of bringing order to art.

What did Wigman Mean by Ecstasy and Form?

Dance is the unification of expression and function,
Illumined physicality and inspired form.
Without ecstasy no dance! Without form no dance!
(*Ohne Ekstase kein Tanz! Ohne Form kein Tanz!*)³⁶⁶

Wigman crystallized a multitude of ideas into that essential statement of her dance philosophy. In this, she saw dance “truths” as having a timeless quality. Her writings can also be read as a testament to the plurality of modernism: that all eras were available to be mined for the making of modern art. Modern concert artists turned to the theatre of the Greeks as a lineage that existed before ballet or opera. The ancient Greek duality of ecstasy and form as interpreted by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* found new life in Wigman’s philosophy and in her performances. Though the term ecstasy had many interpretations, the original Greek word *ekstasis* meant simply to stand outside oneself. In using this idea, Wigman was not alone. Martha Graham made her own dance *Ekstasis* in 1933. In Graham’s version as well as Wigman’s philosophy, ecstasy was a divine gift of the gods that could lift mortals out of ordinary reality and into a higher world. Such transformative fire was intended to burn away barriers between physical being and soul to illuminate the connection to the universe.³⁶⁷ For Wigman, this definition of ecstasy would become the ultimate inspiration for dance composition and performance. When she declared, “Without Ecstasy No Dance!” she was claiming a place for her own art in an historic legacy. From her first dance experiences at Hellerau, she had been introduced to alternative, spiritual art practices that came to define her entire career. Drawing on the whirling practice of the dervishes that Laban had introduced to her, she created the *Drehentanz* (*Monotonie/Whirl Dance*, 1926) an embodied ecstatic practice, wherein she described the boundaries of her self falling away. The Zen yin-yang symbol that welcomed visitors to Hellerau was brought to the living, breathing body through much of

³⁶⁶ Wigman in Bach, *Das Mary Wigman Werk*, 19.

³⁶⁷ Robert A. Johnson, *Ecstasy: Understanding the Psychology of Joy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), vi.

Wigman's choreography and made manifest, specifically through her spinning practice. And this was ultimately a practice linked to older ideas of ecstatic experience.

If ever there was an iconic figure to represent Wigman's quest, it was the Greek god Dionysus. Dionysus had many names as the god of wine, abandon and madness. Thus, he represented the rebirth of life in the spring, the irrational wisdom of the senses and the soul's transcendence beyond the mundane. Those who chose to worship him were said to experience divine ecstasy. According to myth, he was also initiated by the goddess Rhea into women's Earth mysteries. Thus, he represented the powers historically attributed to the feminine, though in male form. His worship was not confined to the temple ritual but grew into a sacred play that signaled the birth of western theater. When she took the title "Priestess of the Dance" for her publicity materials, Mary Wigman was consciously linking her stage persona to a much older denomination. Historically, under Roman rule Dionysus as Bacchus had been relegated to drunkenness and his strengths gradually became weaknesses. For Nietzsche, the loss of Dionysus was the triumph of rationality over irrationality and fact over intuition. In his place rose another powerful icon. Historically, Dionysus was not vanquished but set aside for Apollo, the god of order, reason and the light of the sun. Apollonian order esteemed facts and organized discovery, leading more than two millennia later to those markers of Enlightenment thinking: rational culture, science and progress. Though her impulses were Dionysian, Wigman knew that order must be imposed on her art for it to survive beyond her own ecstatic experience.

When Wigman writes "Without Form No Dance!" she is referring to the external shaping, the choreographic laws that give a dance its outer form. Wigman knew that to become a professional dancer, she must tame her inner emotions into a tangible shape, a shape, however, that must retain its original link to the ethereal. Wigman recognized that her creative process required her to press the surging Dionysian vitality through conscious Apollonian crafting into form. This process proved irresistible to the Expressionists and indeed all of those modern artists who embraced their work with the passion of secular conversion. Wigman's own method of dance making embraced a kind of dialectic: the initial emotional content served as the thesis, the shaping of the form

through conscious crafting served as antithesis and the synthesis was fused in performance when the emotion and form came together anew — equally transformed and transformative. When starting a new work, she sought a subjective experience, releasing herself to a kinetic representation of emotion. She then gave shape to the raw material through objective, formal crafting. The final step was performance brilliance. Indeed, this quality made her extraordinary among the great dance artists and is one important reason to study her performance philosophy. After giving the dance a set form, she attempted to synthesize both aspects of the creative process by returning to the original subjective emotional state in performance. In doing so she sought a transformative encounter for the dancer and the audience alike.

This is a demanding way to achieve performance success. She often stayed alone in the dark for long hours, seeking to come into the performance in a state receptive to metamorphosis. In so doing, she sought to create a transmutation between the dancer and the audience, what she called the fire dancing between the two poles. The dance was a vessel built to hold the synthesized Dionysian and Apollonian experiences: The outer formal shape of the vessel held within its negative space the emotive heart of the dance. In order to accomplish such a restructuring of the artistic process, Wigman felt that she had to redefine the nature of dance itself. She saw herself as a defender of a new art that had brought total transformation and purpose to her life. To champion her art she had to break urgently from what she perceived as the stereotypical dancing girls that preceded her. She was a standard bearer for the new breed of dancing intelligentsia. Her themes were mystical and metaphysical but her choreography was grounded in impeccable craftsmanship. While her writing delves extensively into the subjective and personal reasons to dance, she also methodically organized her process and formulated an objective approach to the craft of choreography. When trying to digest these elements that Wigman defined as essential ingredients of a dance, it is helpful to remember that her own early training was in music and that her time with Dalcroze was focused on studying music through movement. The elements that Wigman identified are all part of music composition and thus provide a window into the influences that helped shape her

choreographic identity. It also ties her dance art to the larger world of art making and unites her efforts with contemporaries in many art forms and intellectual pursuits.

Ideas on Composition and the Choreographic Theme

Wigman believed that once a theme pushed its way into the choreographer's imagination, the dance was begun. By theme, she means a series of "small, related motions" which when combined constitute a dance movement that makes visible the underlying emotion.³⁶⁸ The theme is essentially a map for exploration, and she called it the base upon which the composition rests. While the theme is born of the choreographer, it also takes on its own life and exerts its own rules, rules that she described as unique to each dance. So the theme must be big enough not to exhaust itself. And the choreographer must be big enough to see the full range of creative possibilities in the theme. To this end, Wigman charted her seven essential ingredients of a dance.

1. First and foremost is the **main theme**, that series of movements that are developed in response to the dance concept
2. Next comes the full **development of that theme** by exploring all of the theme's ingredients such as gesture, effort, time and space
3. Once the theme is developed, **variations on the main theme** can take it into new directions using related developments
4. The overall **structure or systematic arrangement** of the whole dance must be considered from beginning to end, and it must remain true to the theme and its movement ideas
5. Wigman describes **dynamics** as kinetic start and stop, or a variation of the powers born of the dance. She further identifies dynamics as the rise and fall of dance tension. Thus the *Spannung* and *Entspannung* or tension and release experienced within the dancing body also are revealed in how the dynamics flow through the entire composition. Dynamics are "like a flame flickering through the dance form in direct proportion to its own intensity." (Wigman 1973: 89)
6. In addition to the dynamics of the whole, Wigman describes **nuance** as "color" or "lighting up" of a single phrase: placing an emphasis on a high point or moment of particular significance in the dance.
7. **Ornamentation** is harder to define. It calls up images of the quirky or surprising within a composition. Wigman calls it the embellishment of the main theme, making it more complex. It is a layering of theatrical and eccentric movement motifs on the original theme without obstructing its continuity. Wigman identified nuance and ornamentation as the most idiosyncratic or revealing of the choreographer's personal preferences,

³⁶⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 88.

allowing room for the dancer's unique performance strengths and style. In contrast, she says that structure and dynamics are more objective because they are ruled by the overarching form of the dance as a whole.³⁶⁹

Mary Wigman made a clear distinction between what she called composition of design and pure composition. Composition of design has pedagogical purposes. It is a dance etude and like the musical etude it is intended to develop a point of technique or to hone and display the performer's skill, Wigman saw the goal of this sort of composition as producing a particular technical dexterity. "It caters to the arrangement wherein the body acts as an instrument under the command of the mechanics of movement," and as such bears comparison with the movement studies and the swing scales that she explored with Rudolf von Laban.

In contrast to a composition or design, she saw a second kind of composition that she called pure, absolute dance composition that leads into "two great subdivisions of form: 1) The functional dances; and 2) The emotional dances. She saw the functional dances as originating from "the sheer joy of exercise, from the pleasure of doing or acting." Thus the function of these dances is to express the beauty and enjoyment of the body either by moving clearly through space as in the Minuet or the Sarabande or by playing with a prescribed musical structure as in the $\frac{3}{4}$ -time waltz. While not tied to such historic dance forms, they offer examples of formal themes that can be developed and restructured in a functional dance composition. The emotional dances originate from another source. Wigman describes them as "those based on subconscious stimuli and spiritual agitation. They grow out of an inner stress, a compelling urge."³⁷⁰ Thus, the emotional dance grows from genuine human emotion embodied. When taken to performance, its goal was to provoke an emotional response in those watching.

Solo as Signature: *Hexentanz*

Nearing her fortieth year, Wigman also was reaching a zenith in her creative development. She began to incorporate the use of the mask into her compositions in a much more sophisticated method than that of her earlier Dada experiments. She did this

³⁶⁹ Adapted from Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 86-90.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

to admit what she would term an “alien figure”³⁷¹ into the choreography. In 1926, she revisited the figure of the witch, donning a mask to craft her second version of *Hexentanz*, a shocking study in female power and the grotesque. For each choreographer, one work can be seen as bearing a unique signature through time. This work should be done when the artist’s technical and artistic identity has fully matured. It may not necessarily be the final work. In fact, most likely the choreographer will move onward to further develop artistic ideas and values and impart them to others. The “signature work” that I propose is one that comes from an embracing of self, the realization that one’s singular human experience can be expressed in a dance that is thoughtfully and meticulously crafted because the ideas and beliefs embedded in the work have been waiting many years to take on a definitive form. Of course this also calls for a maturity that comes with experience and the self-confidence that comes with the acquisition of a set of skills that define a craft.

Hexentanz was such a dance for Wigman. Initially made in 1914, the original *Hexentanz* was the first dance she created while a student of Rudolf von Laban. What she described as her deepest “stirrings” were realized in dance form, opening the floodgates of artistic expression and pointing a clear direction toward what to do with her life. The social expectations of marriage and identity of *Hausfrau* were banished as she saw her role as dancer solidify. Later, she reminisced about her joy in the creation of the work, giving insight into its place in her development and her long relationship with the dance:

After Laban had fully approved of the sketch for my first *Hexentanz* I was so overcome with joy that I jumped all over the studio, sprained my ankle, and could not move for a whole unhappy fortnight. But the witch dance was brought to life and continued to be very much alive. It became part of my first solo program. It had to undergo many changes and pass through many different stages of development until, twelve years later, it received its definite artistic form.³⁷²

By the time she made the second version of the *Hexentanz* in 1926, she was eight years beyond Laban’s influence. Wigman had been operating her own school, had toured as a solo artist and established her own dance company. Through her teaching, she solidified

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 36.

her approach to dance technique while gaining confidence in her artistic identity through successful performances. This is when *Hexentanz* achieved its final form:

I believe that *Witch Dance* was the only one among my solo dances which did not make me shake with stage fright before every performance. How I loved it, this growing into the excitement of its expressive world, how intensely I tried in each performance to feel myself back into the original creative condition of *Witch Dance* and to fulfill its stirring form by returning to the very point where it all began!³⁷³

The 1926 version of the *Witch Dance* was conceived as the fourth part of a dance cycle she had begun in 1925 with three solos preceding it: *Ceremonial Figure*, *Veiled Figure* and *Ghost Figure*. Also in 1925, Wigman wrote her article on dance composition. Therein she identified what she called elemental dances as a distinct kind of emotional dance composition. Wigman defined these elemental dances as being the medium and symbol of those forces born of the soil. In her description of beginning the *Hexentanz*, she recalled being drawn again and again back down to “some kind of evil greed I felt in my hands which pressed themselves clawlike into the ground as if they had wanted to take root.”³⁷⁴ In *Ceremonial Figure*, she had begun to incorporate the mask into her performances, thus reintroducing the mask to the modern dance as a tool for metamorphosis. Long recognized as a means of transformation in ritual dance and ancient theatre, Wigman reclaimed its sacramental and theatrical roots for the concert stage.

In her role as creator and performer of the *Hexentanz*, Wigman was able to fulfill her desire for metamorphosis through performance. By dancing the *Hexentanz*, she could realize her search for the *Dasein* and *erleben*: the full coming into being or existence that she felt was the heart of the new dance. But she also recognized that “the power, the magnificence of all creative art lie in knowing how to force chaos into form.” Yet, she worked well aware that “the original creative urge was neither weakened nor blocked in the process of molding and shaping.” In *The Language of Dance*, Wigman recalls the origins of her dance theme:

Sometimes at night I slipped into the studio and worked myself up into a rhythmic intoxication in order to come closer to the slowly stirring character . . . When one

³⁷³ Wigman, *Language*, 42.

³⁷⁴ Wigman, *Language*, 41.

night, I returned to my room utterly agitated, I looked into the mirror by chance. What it reflected was the image of one possessed, wild and dissolute, repelling and fascinating. The hair unkempt, the eyes deep in their sockets, the nightgown shifted about, which made the body almost shapeless: there she was — the witch.³⁷⁵

The character of the witch allowed the exposure of a part of her personality that she had “never allowed to emerge in such nakedness.”³⁷⁶ She had also mastered the craft of choreographing and thus solidifying such an ephemeral experience, giving definitive form to the physicality and therefore the persona of the Witch. With the addition of the mask she heightened her own experience in performance. Her 1914 Romantic Symbolist representation of a fairy-tale Witch was gone. In its place was a vehicle for genuine change. The desire for an altered state of consciousness in performance was manifested concretely, not theoretically, with the addition of the mask. She wrote of her suffocation within the mask. It sat tightly upon her face, limiting her ability to breathe. The mask also created sensory deprivation by limiting her vision through two narrow eye slits. Orientation in space and balance were both challenged in an extreme way. Through these physical constrictions a new world of possibility for the concert dance was born. In 1933, Rudolph Bach published the definitive reckoning of Wigman’s work up to that point, and placed the *Hexentanz* in the context of her repertory at the height of her career:

The *Hexentanz* from 1926 can most likely be considered Mary Wigman’s most famous work. It truly expresses the summit of her art. Idea, construction of form and interpretation all come together in the *Hexentanz*. It is difficult to decide which dance best exemplifies her art when she has made a steady stream of strong, creative work. Yet the *Hexentanz* emerges as the dance that characterizes the essential elements of her technique.³⁷⁷

It is heartening to know that even Mary Wigman’s close contemporary, Bach was challenged when trying to find a work among the many that defined Wigman’s artistic vision. His choice of the *Hexentanz* as such reinforces use of the dance to investigate her practice.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 40-41.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Bach, *Das Mary Wigman: Werk*, 27.

The Mask as Doorway

Wigman's writings offer a glimpse of what she was looking for when deciding to add the mask to the dance:

Why should a dancer use a mask? Always when his creative urge causes a split process in him, when his imagination reveals the image of an apparently alien figure which . . . compels the dancer to a certain kind of metamorphosis. The mask never can and never ought to be an interesting addition or decoration. It must be an essential part of the dance figure, born in a world of visions and transported as if by magic into reality. The mask extinguishes the human being as a person and makes him submit to the fictive figure of the dance.³⁷⁸

The mask has long been recognized as a tool for transformation, initiating entry into the sacred realm. These ideas of masking, while varied, carry across cultures and geographical location. Dutch theologian Gerardus van der Leeuw tied contemporary use of the mask to older ritual, using words that echo Wigman's dance experience:

The mask belongs to the *sacer ludus* as the great means of stylization. Through it, all events are reduced to a single event, which is at the same time, divine. The mask removes human differentiation from the realm of the accidental and raises it to the divine, eternal and meaningful world of ritual. Through the mask, human action receives a new dimension. It opens a world in which anarchy and possession lie in wait. Whoever puts on a mask is no longer absolutely certain of himself. It might happen that he asks himself which is his true countenance, the mask or his own face.³⁷⁹

Later in life, Wigman explained to a group of students that she chose to wear the mask in the second version of *Hexentanz* to “overcome the individual sphere in order to connect to the archetype.”³⁸⁰ She used the mask for transformation from modern dancer to elemental figure. In this case she became the Witch, embodying what she had described as “stirrings” deep within from her Celtic ancestors. Following her recognition of these early “stirrings,” Wigman had joined in Laban's ritualistic experiments at Monte Verità. She had seen Nolde's studies of masks and ritual objects. Following her first version of *Hexentanz* in 1914, she had experienced the Dada performance practice of

³⁷⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 124.

³⁷⁹ Gerardus van der Leeuw. *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (Nashville, Tenn., and New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), 84.

³⁸⁰ Partsch-Bergsohn, *Modern Dance*, 114.

using mask and costume to transform the body. For her new version of *Hexentanz*, she added a mask made by Viktor Magito, who was studying the masks of Japanese Noh Theater. Wigman herself describes the decision to use a mask: “And there was still left the first and never used mask of the *Ceremonial Figure*, whose features were my own translated into the demonic.” She wrote, “I suddenly knew that fabric [of the costume] and mask . . . might give the *Witch Dance* its very own stage image.”³⁸¹

At this point, Wigman’s many influences came together. Because the 1926 solo contains so many of these artistic elements, *Hexentanz* is like a powerful time capsule. *Hexentanz* also shows today’s dancer another way of perceiving the world that holds potential for art making in the future. Wigman’s addition of the mask clearly undermined the traditional spectator's position. It can be said to reflect the emergence of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* or new objectivity that appeared as a cooling of raw passions caused by the disillusion following the defeats and horrors of the First World War. By adding the mask, Wigman gave the modern dancer a greater degree of control over the performance experience. The masked Wigman chose to objectify herself as the archetype of the witch and, most importantly, become a vessel for transformation. Within the mask she was able to reveal a face and facets of her personality that were not acceptable in the everyday world.

Only a scant 50 seconds of the 1926 version of *Hexentanz* have been preserved on film. Wigman is first seen as a solo, seated figure. Dressed in a costume made of “fantastic,” brocaded, metallic fabric, her arms, back and feet are bare. She wears the face mask, which doesn't hide all of her cheeks, nor does it cover her hair. The eyes appear to be downcast. The overall effect of Magito’s mask is almost that of a death mask on a body that is very much alive. The costume and mask help to create an aura of otherworldliness in the dancer. Writers often consider earlier works through contemporary lenses. The dance works of the early moderns have been used as examples of the rising feminist spirit. These modern forebears are easily carried into these analogies because of their gender and the revolutionary times in which they lived. Wigman referenced the female identity when she described the discovery of the character

³⁸¹ Wigman, *Language*, 41.

of the witch in *Hexentanz*, asking, “. . . isn’t a bit of a witch hidden in every hundred-percent female, no matter which form its origin may have?”³⁸² For Wigman, becoming the Witch was a uniquely personal experience, one that placed her in a position of power as a performer, beyond gender, within the realm of shaman and artist.

Hexentanz: A Description

As the space fills with a hard, white light, Wigman is first seen as a solo, seated figure surrounded by darkness. She sits on the floor directly facing the audience with her feet planted in front of her and knees upright under the fabric of the costume. Her hands cover the masked face as her fingers stretch wide. They grasp the space before the face, pulling apart as if opening an invisible curtain. The tension in the arms and hands is so great as to cause the hands to vibrate as if pressing an invisible wall that separates dancer from audience. From this slow, tensed opening gesture, movement explodes. It begins with a sharp rapping motion of the left hand, as if the dancer were knocking on the door of a forbidden passageway, again, the space between dancer and spectator. The percussive movement of the arms and hands corresponds to the percussive sound of the score. Indeed it is the movement that initiates the sound. Because the movement slightly anticipates each percussive note, it appears to generate the very sound itself.

From this opening percussive movement, tension is released, the hands soften, circling and gathering force in front of the masked face. This conjuring movement is resolved as she places her hands on upright knees. A slow circling of the upper body begins, with each circle resolving in a drawing inward of the body and a sharp look forward, as if a spell is being cast out toward the audience.

The second circling concludes with a downward focus to the center of the dancer. The hands begin to pry the legs open by pressing outward from the inner knees. Here is a source of the Witch’s power. The internal focus of Wigman and the slow tempo create a sense of effort and deliberation. Once the knees are opened, she begins a forward, keening ripple that initiates from the center of the abdomen. Circling the upper body over the grounded and opened thighs, each revolution resolves in a sharp thrust of the body,

³⁸² Ibid.

arms and facial focus outward to the left diagonal. There is a sense of increasing urgency as the tempo increases and another sound, the crash of a cymbal, is added to the score.

Then, silence. The right hand slowly, softly circles toward the face and opens out with a reach to the right. The hand returns to the face again, this time nearly caressing the lips and then unfolding, as if performing a benediction or bestowing absolution. For Wigman this gesture carried the hermetic authority of the Sphinx that she referred to, adding the caution to “Keep the secret.” The moment of quiet dissolves into mounting tension. The clawed hands reach up together and the focus follows, looking upward as if gathering divine power. Abruptly, the moment is broken as the arms gather toward each other, cross and grasp the knees. Wigman’s mastery of time and tension are fully revealed in this moment. The heavy pregnant tension of the upward reach is ruptured by the lightning movement of the hands and arms. Upward to downward, outward to inward, the dichotomy and contrast of movement qualities is shocking. The silence is broken with a loud crash of cymbals as the hands clasp the knees and the focus shoots directly toward the audience.

The seated figure then begins her assault. Gaining momentum in movement and sound, she shifts from hip to hip, rocking as the hands sequentially reach from knee to knee. The tempo continues to increase as the dancer takes this rocking into a forward locomotion. She strikes out directly toward the audience, reaching with each leg until, grasping both ankles, she pounds her feet on the floor in front of her. With a loud crash, everything stops for a moment. From this brief stillness, the dancer begins to revolve. Still seated, her feet beat out a tattoo as if the floor was the head of a drum. After one eight-count revolution, the pace increases to double time; the feet become a blur and then she suddenly stops with the right leg extended. The final movement that was captured on film is a look over the extended right foot of the dancer that becomes a slow, sweeping gaze.

In *Hexentanz*, the use of sharp, percussive sound punctuates the aggressive movement. The solo figure seems to generate the sound, controlling the environment and all of those within it. Even in the silence filled with a single, slowly fluid gesture, the tension is palpable. The silence is resolved with a percussive slap of sound and

movement. From the opening position through the final look toward the audience, Wigman creates a tension that never diminishes in intensity. Even the moments of softening gesture radiate the figure's absolute control over the time and the space. The vocabulary of movement that Wigman created for the dance is unfamiliar and yet specific to the emotions evoked. Power, tension and control are present in each gesture and shape. The construction of this opening of the dance is simple. The dancer never leaves the floor in the first minutes of the work. Instead of detracting from the effect, the simplicity adds to the power of the statement. The dancer remains in control of the movement, not carried away by it. The figure is neither malevolent nor benevolent; it is omnipotent. Throughout *Hexentanz*, sound, movement, mask and costume are unified in intent. The dance presents a physically present yet powerfully mythical creature who manipulates those watching. The audience can no longer feel safe. She becomes the Witch and spectators are in danger of becoming bewitched by her. She is a timeless force, embodying pure power. The dance is one of a fully mature woman who recognizes the strength of her sensuality.

In the *Witch Dance*, Wigman was able to synthesize the previous dozen years of her life as a dance artist including ideas concerning the use or non-use of music in dance that grew from her exposure to Dalcroze's music and movement theories. She crafted carefully using ideas she had explored with Laban: the paradoxical and synchronous coupling of rational crafting with the flight into the mythic and ritual. Even the Sphinx-like gesture of touching fingers to masked lips crept into the character of the Witch from the Freemasonic practices at Monte Verità. Such imagery is still present in hermetic Masonic texts. Wigman said that the gesture was meant to "keep the secret" presumably of the Masonic rites and of larger forces. Wigman also drew on masked Dada experiments that distorted the gestalt in performance, and contributed ultimately to the deliberate development of her own distinctive performance persona. Describing the Elemental Dance Composition she embraced the grotesque and this was a manifestation of "everything apparitional, spectral, whether confined to earthy or released to transcendental experiences."³⁸³ Certainly, she made dances on many themes from the

³⁸³ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 92.

sublime to the anguished but the potential of the grotesque for danced expression was one of Wigman's most radical visions.

Before Mary Wigman, Isadora Duncan had unleashed such energy in her *Furies* as had Gluck in his *Orpheus*. *Sleeping Beauty's* wicked Carabosse had epitomized grotesque and evil forces in the ballet and the narratives of the *Ballets Russes* were filled with unusual heroes and villains. In all of these earlier representations, the grotesque appeared in contrast, diametrically opposed to what was good and beautiful. Wigman's grotesque witch appears somehow more personal, less caricature or literary figure and more immediate. She makes no apologies for allowing herself to revel in the shadow side of human nature – of her own nature. She wrote, “All sensations of anxiety, all chaotic conditions of despair arising from torment, hatred, or fury, grow in this medium of expression up to and beyond the boundaries of the purely human and blend themselves with inhuman, demoniacal violence.”³⁸⁴ The effect was shocking certainly. But the fact that this aspect of human nature could be revealed and communicated through performance was revolutionary. Wigman spoke about the performance of the *Hexentanz* as possessing her in a profoundly elemental way. She recalled the Witch “with her unrestrained, naked instincts, with her insatiable lust for life, beast and woman at one and the same time.”³⁸⁵ Remembering the emergence of the character Wigman said, “I shuddered at my own image, at the exposure of this facet of my ego which I had never allowed to emerge in such unashamed nakedness.”³⁸⁶ In this, the *Hexentanz* may be the definitive solo of *Ausdruckstanz*. It is also a performed record of the conflicts that shuddered through the end of the Weimar Republic. Performance of the work is an intoxicating exercise in raw power over those watching.³⁸⁷ It represents Wigman's sense of agency and control of her destiny. In the *Hexentanz*, she felt that she had achieved

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁸⁵ Wigman, *Language*, 41.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ A contemporary critic was not immune to this power: “A witch, vain and mad, wants to capture us. We see through her. She cannot have us. But almost. If we don't watch out, she could have us, suddenly. That is, insanity could have us. A shrill laugh. And the despairing, wretched, infamous emptiness.” Manning, *Ecstasy*, 129, quoting a Jan. 20, 1929, review from the *Hannoverscher Kurrier*.

personal and professional liberation. All of this would change, but gradually as the Weimar Republic dissolved and the National Socialists rose to power.

Chapter Three:

Controversies and Politics during the Interwar through World War II

World Stage: Germany

While Wigman found her initial professional success during the Weimar years, it is significant that she could establish her career in a radical modern art form while the government of the Republic was unsettled and contentious. The Weimar Republic was an experiment in democracy for the German nation, just as Wigman's experiments with expressionism were creating a new way of presenting the female body for public consumption. In Wigman's case she chose to perform on the concert claiming a place for a female dancer in "high" art rather than popular entertainment. In doing so, she attempted to expose her emotional state, usually kept in the domain of the private sphere, to the very public place of the stage. While she had begun to work this way before 1919, the pace and scope of her work expanded in the climate of change that was the Weimar. In the beginning of the Republic, the establishment of a democracy out of the monarchical state appeared to threaten the very existence of Prussia and its old prominence. The shock of democratic rule began a crisis of leadership as contending groups fought for status.³⁸⁸ Initially, three remaining parties of the old Reich held the Weimar coalition together: the Center, the Social Democrats and the German Democratic Party, all minority factions of non-socialist parties. The Social Democrats had earlier espoused a republican form of government before adapting to monarchy under Wilhelm II. But against the republican impulse stood old conservatives, the *Reichswehr*, the Catholic Church, universities and a temporary coalition of labor and workers.³⁸⁹ The early Weimar was wracked by attempts to wrestle control by both the left and the right. And all of the ensuing Weimar governments were short-lived improvisations in response to the end of World War I, with none congealing into a fully realized composition.³⁹⁰ During this period, Wigman was touring throughout Germany, steadily building her

³⁸⁸ For more on the effect of the Weimar Republic on Prussian displacement see Clark, *Iron Kingdom*.

³⁸⁹ Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 116-146.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 332-341.

reputation. From 1925 to 1929, it seemed that the Republic might succeed in consolidation. The devastating galloping inflation that dominated the economy between 1919 and 1923 appeared to be coming under control.³⁹¹ The Treaty of Locarno in 1925 buoyed some of the capabilities of the Republic along with public confidence. The same year, the first constitutional election instituted Hindenburg as President on its second try and reinstated a ruling class that was in essence a front for reactionary monarchists. From 1925 through 1928, the Republic was ruled by a rightist majority coalition of the Center, German People's Party and German Nationalists. Capitalizing on the threat from the Communist left, the Great Coalition tried to present a solid basis for government.³⁹² In reality, the Coalition papered over a weak government sometimes termed a Republic, but lacking in truly committed republican members. The democracy that had been forced onto the Germans with the establishment of the Weimar Republic in the crisis at the end of the war was a democracy instituted from without rather than one chosen from within.³⁹³ The Weimar Republic lacked a clear-cut alignment between left- and right-leaning parties. They pulled it in different directions, destabilizing efforts to create any center, even as the economic situation steadily improved from the fiscal desperation that had marked war's end.³⁹⁴

Just as Mary Wigman was developing her technique of *Anspannung und Abspannung* (tension and release), her homeland was experiencing the ongoing pull of tensions between political factions. True to her philosophy, her dance was mirroring external forces and the human condition. While the government was in continuous flux, the leaders of the German dance were also in dispute. The popularity of *Ausdruckstanz* had unleashed a whole new population of earnest, emotive amateurs that threatened to

³⁹¹ Claudia Koonz vividly describes a stoic German populace faced with financial ruin and imminent revolution. She also analyzes the impacts of the economic situation on women. The dowry system that accompanied marriage became obsolete, and poverty drove thousands of women into prostitution. Koonz, *Mothers*, 39.

³⁹² The complexities inherent in the politics of the Weimar Republic are addressed in a range of writings covering that historical period. In *German Social Democracy 1905-1917*, Carl Schorske laid the foundation for the period predating the Republic. Mary Fulbrook also gives a concise overview of Weimar political factions, 155-187.

³⁹³ Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*. 391-397.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

undermine the professionalism of the art form. In the United States, Lincoln Kirstein would call Mary Wigman a dangerous woman because she encouraged all young women to dance, whether they had talent or not.³⁹⁵ The emerging debate between amateur and professional dance would continue into the next decade and would serve as a flash point for the field. As competing camps struggled for philosophical and aesthetic authority over dwindling resources, Wigman entered gamely into the fray.³⁹⁶

In 1927 Wigman wrote an essay in English entitled “Dance and the Modern Woman.” In this essay she addresses the range of reasons that brought women to study dance:

That dancing exerts an enormous influence on today’s women cannot be denied, but it is through many different motivations that it is forced upon them in the end. To many it is an emotional outlet. To some, and mainly to those whose work lies in other directions, it is relaxation and inspiration, a delivery from the monotony of routine. To others again it comes as a solace, and they endeavor to find some compensation in it. And among numerous other reasons there remains the aspect of escape from care or trouble. Among this motley, restless, and eager crowd seeking to placate their longings through dancing, we sometimes find the really gifted dancer who discovers in this medium her vocation. The talent of such a dancer asserts itself quickly, demanding recognition. Instinctively she accepts this medium of self-expression, an art form achieved through and dependent on the body.³⁹⁷

The Body as Site of Experience and Conflict

Mary Wigman chose to dig deeply into her personal experience to find new ways of moving that could convey the range of human conditions in such a direct and visceral way. This was her gift. Her stated goal was to go beyond the merely personal toward universal human understanding.

The primary concern of the creative dancer should be that his audience not think of the dance objectively, or look at it from an aloof and intellectual point of view, - in other words, separate itself from the very life of the dancer’s experiences; -

³⁹⁵ Lincoln Kirstein, *Dance: A Short History of Classical Theatrical Dancing* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1935), 305-307.

³⁹⁶ In *A History of Modern Germany*, Frank Tipton examines the debate between those officials of the Third Reich who first supported the Expressionists like Joseph Goebbels and those opposed such as Alfred Rosenberg, 340-349.

³⁹⁷ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 105.

the audience should allow the dance to affect it emotionally and without reserve.³⁹⁸

In her abstract dances, Wigman did not intend to dance a message that could be translated into a specific outcome or text. Rather she trusted that each member of the audience would bring to the work their own meanings in the same way that we can hear multiple definitions and meanings in vocabulary or learn things from words that are not consciously intended by the speaker. In the experience of dancing, performing or watching, there appeared room for many interpretations.

If my dance awakes a reaction, an experience, a pleasure, visual or emotional, it is satisfactory. A woman once said to me, ‘Do you know, when you were executing your dervish movements I understood the dance. You were a witch picking daisies in a field. I actually saw the daisies. That was it, wasn’t it?’ Now what could I say to this woman? If she thought I was picking daisies, well, all right. But I thought I was dancing.³⁹⁹

While she did not always intend to put forward a dance narrative, a danced story that could be read consistently, Mary Wigman did want to create an intensity of experience. Her own body became her laboratory. How did she shape her body into an articulate vessel that could form a new vocabulary and generate kinetic empathy? For the foundation of this training she built on Laban’s ideas of effort or force in the moving body. And beyond these, she developed a performer’s understanding of muscular tension and release.

Spannung and Entspannung

When John Martin visited Germany for the Third Dancers’ Congress, he reported in the New York Times:

Grope as one may through the many studios busy with pupils . . . performing their strenuous gymnastics or beating on their rackfuls of gongs and drums . . . watching carefully the strange intensity of body and mind that by a sort of kinetic sympathy wearies the watcher perhaps more than the dancer . . . [and] learn as one

³⁹⁸ Wigman, “The Philosophy of the Modern Dance,” 306.

³⁹⁹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 145-6.

soon must, to bow the head with at least a feigned reverence at every mention of those mystic words “Entspannung” and “Abspannung”⁴⁰⁰

The early explorers of dance modernism went into the studio to rediscover the deepest drives of the dancing body. Duncan had located the wellspring of movement in the thoracic cavity, the solar plexus. Martha Graham seated the source lower in the pelvis and accessed it through the contraction and release. Doris Humphrey identified the fall and recovery as the metaphoric “arc between two deaths.”⁴⁰¹ When Wigman wrote that the secret of the dance “lies in the living breath,” she was describing what Duncan, Graham and Humphrey had all found: the expansion of the in-breath and the condensing of expiration was a physical truth that could be carried beyond the container of the lungs. Wigman’s concepts of *Spannung* (tension) and *Entspannung* (release) encompassed all of these sources for initiating movement. For Wigman, *Spannung* and *Entspannung* were principles that allowed for a continuum of energy that either increased or decreased in effort depending on what was being expressed. Imagine placing your body in extreme tension, as though you were pushing with all of your strength against a solid, unyielding wall. Try it with a solid wall. The reaction of your muscles and joints are specific to that forceful effort. In contrast, envision yourself relaxing and reclining on a warm sandy beach while the fingers, hand and arm move through the balmy air above, catching the breeze. These ways of moving create very different messages for those watching and Mary Wigman used these very images to choreograph her *Hexentanz* in 1926 and her *Pastoral* from the 1929 *Shifting Landscape* dance cycle. While these are examples of the

⁴⁰⁰ John Martin, “Mary Wigman’s Art; Years of Struggle Have Brought Her to the Very Pinnacle of the German Dance Movement, With a Great Following,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1930, 101.

⁴⁰¹ The development of individual techniques by Duncan, Graham, Humphrey, Wigman and others is essentially an oral or kinetic tradition that is articulated and disseminated through studio practice. Each of these artists did communicate their philosophies through their autobiographies. For Humphrey, see Doris Humphrey, *The Art of Making Dances* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), and the concise discussion in Ernestine Stodelle, *The Dance Technique of Doris Humphrey and its Creative Potential* (Dance Horizons/Princeton Book Co., 1978), 13-28.

opposite poles of tension and release, the whole idea was big enough to allow for many subtle gradations of muscular effort between the two extremes.

The terms *Anspannen*, to tighten or stretch the muscles, and *Abspannen*, to loosen or relax them, describe the ebb and flow of muscular impulse. Sharp and bound or smooth and flowing, such muscular tension affects the overall shape and message of the moving body. Rather than execute a traditional step like a *jete* or a *pirouette*, Wigman felt that movement and gestures derived from such variation of muscular tensions were the real vocabulary of the body and the language to which those watching would respond. Choreographers, critics, teachers and dancers now use the term “dynamics” to express these fundamental dance qualities. The term has a rich source in Wigman, who viewed her dance as a reflection of life and the struggle of the individual within the world. Larger forces always were at play in her choreography: the confrontation between the human and the cosmic. For her dance was true dynamism: the action of powerful, unseen stresses and influences, made visible.

Space and the Body

Spannung and *Entspannung* can shape the dancing body, but to what outside pressures is this body reacting? While her inner emotional landscape provided her dance motivation, Wigman was equally enlivening and responding to the physical space around her. Hanya Holm said, “In the realm of space particularly, I feel that Mary Wigman has made a great contribution . . . In her dances she alternately grapples with space as an opponent and caresses it as though it were a living sentient thing.”⁴⁰² Conscious use of space has long been recognized as a hallmark of *Ausdruckstanz*, but of course dance by its very nature exists in time and space.

How was Wigman’s use of space revolutionary? For Wigman the space became alive with a tangible substance of its own that could make greater metaphysical pressures visible through the dancing body. Martha Graham’s mentor Louis Horst had tried to define Wigman’s preoccupation with space: “Mary Wigman conceived of space as a factor like time, with which to compose.”⁴⁰³ He proposed that Graham and other

⁴⁰² Holm in Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 161.

⁴⁰³ Soares, *Louis Horst*, 18.

American dancers “did not feel the enmity of limiting space.”⁴⁰⁴ Horst was astute in observing that the contested borders of Germany sharply contrasted with the expanse of the American plains to which Graham gave homage. But another, complementary factor deserves consideration. Space for Wigman was not simply a location in which to dance but it became her great, invisible partner. In her solos, just as Duncan had proclaimed before her, Mary Wigman never danced alone. Wigman had been introduced to new ideas about space during her time with Rudolf von Laban. Laban would go on to evolve his theories of pedagogy and Wigman would take a performer’s route, developing a relationship to space that was more sensual and immediate. Her relationship with the space was intimate, tactile and thus able to inform the body as to levels of tension and release. She could literally feel the space against her skin.

There she stands, in the center of space, eyes closed, feeling how the air presses down upon her limbs. One arm is raised, timidly groping, cutting through the invisible space, thrusting forward, with the feet to follow: direction established. Then, as if the space wanted to reach for her, it pushes her backward on a newly created path: counter-direction: a play of up and down, of backward and forward, a meeting with herself, battling for space within space: DANCE. Soft and gentle, vehement and wild.⁴⁰⁵

For Wigman, the space around the dancer became the metaphor for the cosmos.

Wigman’s assistant Hanya Holm explained that the entire orientation of Wigman’s dance was toward the establishment of a psychological and emotional relationship between the individual dancer as representative of humankind and the surrounding world, whether that world was seen or unseen.⁴⁰⁶ Wigman was continuously reacting to perceived forces in the universe and being moved by these universal forces. This philosophy was the foundation for the emotional, spatial and functional aspects of all of Wigman’s work, whether in performance, in her choreography or in her teaching.

Time, Music, Rhythm

Conjoined concepts of space and effort were fundamental elements of Wigman’s technique. The space informed her dancing body and how that body used *Spannung* and

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 121.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁰⁶ Newhall, “Absolute Eden,” 71-72.

Entspannung. Sharp or smooth, percussive or sustained, such muscular tension affects not only the shape of movement but also the time in which the movement is performed. For Wigman, rhythm was established by the body rather than coming from an external or pre-created music source.

It is the rhythm of the dance, which releases and engenders the musical rhythm. The musical accompaniment ought to arise from the dance composition. Of course, any music thus created can never claim to be an independent work of art. The profound union formed in this way between dance and music leads for both to a total entity.⁴⁰⁷

Without the outer impulse of music, Wigman turned inward in her quest to generate movement in the subjective state. She sought an individual and psychological source of dance, closer to trance state than to technical brilliance or lyric musicality. However, Wigman did not see this as a simple regression or a turning away from dance conventions. Her desire was to make an original kind of dance ritual for a new age. Thus space, effort and time were the tools of her particular modernism.

It should not be a matter of wonderment or confusion to say that our technical age engendered the dance-motivated being. When we now consider that the primitive force or rhythm is behind the motor; that every machine breathes and symbolizes harnessed rhythmic force, and at the same time, when we recall that the impetus of the dance is also rhythm, we then have a definite foundation, a common nexus between the seemingly opposed expressions of life and forms of art.⁴⁰⁸

Photos of Mary Wigman in her school reveal much of the studio space dedicated to an assortment of instruments: gongs and whistles, drums and other percussion instruments and a piano. Wigman's students all learned to accompany the dance. And in its relationship to music, dance remained the leader. Since her time with Dalcroze, Wigman had sought to move the place of dance to the forefront, no longer dependant on music. Although Nijinsky and Duncan earlier had rejected the codified vocabulary and narrative conventions of ballet, Wigman went farther, detaching herself from the reliance on music that remained in Nijinsky's choreography of *Rite of Spring* or in Duncan's many solos. Along with her revolutionary ideas about space, Wigman also aimed to help

⁴⁰⁷ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 122.

⁴⁰⁸ Wigman, "The Philosophy of the Modern Dance," 306.

free the dance from its subordination to music, especially after receiving support for this impulse from Laban. She had worked with several of the great European orchestras and in her later years she would undertake major projects set to the music of Carl Orff and Igor Stravinsky.⁴⁰⁹ Writing in 1931, she allowed that while music often evoked a dance reaction in her, when she developed the theme of a dance she consciously parted company with music. Instead of following a set musical score, she chose to work collaboratively with her musicians so that sound and movement would develop together.⁴¹⁰ She sometimes danced in silence and at times incorporated the spoken word as in *Totenmal* and *The Seven Dances of Life*, but always the accompanists were to support or enhance the movement rather than to lead it. Along with solo dances such as the *Hexentanz* and works like *The Seven Dances of Life* in which she incorporated her professional group, the mass choric dance had become an integral part of the dance life of her time. That it was a trend in the dance community is evidenced in Laban's work across Germany and for the Dancer's Congresses.

The First Dancers' Congress

In December of 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations and began experiencing a sense of renewal, primarily orchestrated by foreign minister Gustav Stresemann and due partly to the reduction of war reparations under the Treaty of Locarno. Stresemann declared to the Geneva Assembly,

He will serve humanity best who, firmly rooted in the traditions of his own people, develops his moral and intellectual gifts to the best of his ability, thus reaching out beyond his own national boundaries and serving the whole world.⁴¹¹

Wigman shared Stresemann's goal of creating a German art that would spread beyond its borders.⁴¹² The first Dancers' Congress took place at Magdeburg in May 1927, with the goal of assembling leading German dancers to discuss the most pressing issues of their time. Attendance was modest, around 300 people, and Laban and his supporters

⁴⁰⁹ Wigman writes of her collaboration with Orff in Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 178 and 184. Regarding Stravinsky see *Ibid.*, 181-182.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴¹¹ Stresemann in Kurt F. Reinhardt, *Germany: 2000 Years* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1962), 666.

⁴¹² Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 152.

dominated the proceedings. At the Congress, Laban put forward his desire to unite all German dance organizations in a single federation, ostensibly under his own leadership. Wigman and her own disciples stayed away from the primary activities of the conference since Laban had not invited Wigman to participate in the concert performances. During the Congress, the *Magdeburg Daily News* invited both Laban and Wigman to contribute to a special issue devoted to the German theater. Laban wrote “The Dance as a Work of Art,” offering new approaches to movement for the stage in what appeared to be a reconciliation of commercial theater, ballet and opera with his explorations of group performance and movement choirs.⁴¹³

With no other platform from which to express her opinion at the Congress, Wigman used her newspaper article as an opportunity to raise issues facing modern dance and the dancer, as well as the charges of dilettantism that had been leveled at the *Ausdruckstanz*. On the defensive, Wigman delineated two types of creative dance: the first was her own Absolute concert form that reflected her deep philosophical concerns; the second was what she termed stage dance, which she described as being in a state of confusion and compromise between ballet and pantomime.⁴¹⁴ Such analysis reveals her dedication to the use of dance as a means of individual expression. Rather than having dancers indoctrinated into a codified technique, Wigman remained committed to a pedagogical process that valued exploration and proposed to free the creative dynamo within each dancer. She often said she was not out to make “little Mary Wigmans.”⁴¹⁵ This process, she knew, took time and could not be so easily incorporated into a training method for the stage and thus insure employment.⁴¹⁶

Wigman argued that very few German stages had resident troupes fully trained in the relatively young dance form of *Ausdruckstanz*. She added that the young dancers of the day came from many strata of society rather than those privileged enough to have

⁴¹³ Rudolf von Laban, “Dance Composition and Written Dance,” (October 1928) reprinted in Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Susanne Lahusen, *Schriftanz* (London: Dance Books, 1990), 38-39.

⁴¹⁴ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 129.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Brigitta Herrmann, 1994.

⁴¹⁶ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 128.

studied ballet from youth.⁴¹⁷ Wigman had fought hard to make her own career in dance, diametrically opposed to the aesthetics and values that resided in ballet. She had also come to dance without any ballet training nor with any possibility of such training. She asked, “Which [of today’s] dancers can afford to finish their studies?”⁴¹⁸ She attempted to make a case for her own stable of students who had not completed their course of studies with her and looking toward the future, she realized that the nature of *Ausdruckstanz* did not conform readily to a quick training and testing that would serve a certification process. In comparing the stage choreographer to the musical composer of the day who had studied composition and performance for years, Wigman declared that very few choreographers had the needed experience to fully employ *Ausdruckstanz* on the theatrical stage.⁴¹⁹ Hers was a plea for patience to allow the development of the art form. In sum, Wigman, Laban and other Congress participants could all agree that a crisis in training had become obvious in the world of professional dance. However, she and Laban would continue to disagree about the prescription to remedy the situation.

The Second Dancers’ Congress

The Second Dancers’ Congress was held in Essen in 1928. While rivalry had flared between Wigman and Laban at the first Congress, Laban had formed several alliances, most notably with his former student and assistant Kurt Jooss. After leaving Laban, Jooss had established the *Folkwangschule* with Sigurd Leeder in Essen and was emerging as a fine young choreographer. Jooss was also making his own claim as a leader in the German dance and his role as organizer of the Second Congress firmly established this position. Both men called for the integration of classical ballet with the new dance modernism to create a unique theatrical form. Although Wigman was invited to participate in this Second Congress, she remained in rebellion against what she termed “hidebound conventional theater.”⁴²⁰ She continued to call for the support of Absolute dance first and foremost as a foundation for more specialized work in theatrical

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 113-114.

⁴¹⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 114.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 112.

productions.⁴²¹ It is crucial to understand that she still saw *Ausdruckstanz* as a primary, initiating base of experience for the dance artist. She claimed that it was the only form to assure freedom for individual development through improvisational methods rather than codified technique.

Spotlighting the distance separating Laban/Jooss and Wigman, the central question appeared to be, did the future of dance lie with the *Ausdruckstanz* which repudiated classical ballet altogether, or with the dance-drama which incorporated aspects of ballet as championed by Jooss and Laban's movement methods to create a new entity?

The practical possibility of paid work in the opera house or theater informed much of the discussion. For many dancers such work appeared to be the only option for economic security. Teaching offered a second possibility for paid work and as such, control of pedagogical content and licensure were also key issues at the Congress.⁴²² Thus, for the German dance world, the Second Congress displayed the discomfort and stagnation that had overtaken the field. At the same time, the functioning of German society was in distress as factions battled for control on the political front. Written accounts of the Congress do not refer to larger political events but do add another aspect of organizational uncertainty in the small sphere of professional dance.

The Reichstag elections of mid-1928 had ousted the ruling center-right coalition. The German Nationalists lost votes and the Social Democrats scored their greatest win since 1919. The German Nationalists had new, radical leadership and no longer were part of the government.⁴²³ Meanwhile, Hindenburg was growing too old and feeble to run for office again. The republic that the near-monarchist right had been able to accept was passing. Political maneuvers by the *Reichswehr's* General von Schleicher and the new rightist leader of the Center party, Heinrich Brüning, sought ways to use the final months of Hindenburg's term to move toward a renewed monarchy, claiming that such a move

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Notably, a similar debate was a large part of the climate of the U.S. dance community during the Depression, as many modern concert dancers would turn to what they termed commercial work: entertaining on the Broadway stage or creating dance under the auspices of the Works Project Administration (Becky Stein, Telephone Interviews. June 30 and July 25, 1999).

⁴²³ Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 172-179.

was needed to create stability and order and undermine Stresemann's governing coalition.⁴²⁴

Concurrently, the dance Congress was a microcosm of internal political machinations. Karl Toepfer points out that during the conference very little attention was paid to discussions of aesthetics; the focus was on pedagogic concerns and career enhancement. Laban did emerge as the leader once again, mostly based on the strength of his written work as a theoretical foundation for the artists. The press was particularly keen on the introduction of his *Kinetographie Laban* as the most comprehensive form of dance notation to date.⁴²⁵ Laban's timing for publication was efficacious for his position as the leader in the field.⁴²⁶ Also, dance writer Hans Brandenburg commented that Laban had freed contemporary dance from Wigman's type of excessive individualism by choreographing choric works and creating a structure of uniformity through his theoretical writings and notation.⁴²⁷ Laban's dance notation was originally initiated so that many dispersed movement choir groups could learn a work from a written score and come together for mass performances. It also offered the possibility of creating a canon of work that would be available throughout the country and beyond.

To many observers, the Congress appeared long on talk and short on actual performance at the professional level.⁴²⁸ However, Mary Wigman did dominate the gathering in the one area closest to her own ideals and career goals. If critical reviews are the measure, the performance of her group work *Feier* (Celebration/Ceremony) was by far the best-received dance event of the conference.⁴²⁹ Using her well-trained group as abstractly stylized, even archetypal figures and rejecting narrative, she reiterated in dance form her belief that the future lay in revival of the ritual origins of dance, not assimilation of ballet or other theatrical forms. Aside from the rhetoric, the performance of *Celebration* solidified her prominence and mastery as a choreographer and supported her

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Preston-Dunlap and Lahusen, 124-128.

⁴²⁶ Fritz Böhme in Ibid., 30-31.

⁴²⁷ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 151.

⁴²⁸ Lincoln Eyre, "German Dancers Get State Notice. Prussia Promises Founding a Theatre and Institute Devoted to their Art," *New York Times*, July 1, 1928, 49.

⁴²⁹ Walter Sorell, *Ein Vermächtnis*, 99-103.

claim for the power of *Ausdruckstanz*. As a sad epilogue to the actual performance, Wigman appeared onstage and addressed the audience. She announced that due to financial difficulties she was being forced to dissolve her dance group. The performance of *Celebration* was the end of an era.⁴³⁰

It also proved to be the beginning of the next phase of her work. Wigman overcame the anxieties over the solvency and management of the school with the entry of industrialist Hanns Benkert into her life.⁴³¹ Benkert had been involved romantically with Hanya Holm and through her had a good understanding of the problems facing the Wigman enterprise. An accomplished businessman, Benkert took over management of the school, allowing Wigman to concentrate once again on her creative work.

The Third Dancers' Congress

There was no German Dancers' Congress in 1929. The global economic crisis began in October, the month of Stresemann's untimely death. The Great Coalition government that he had led collapsed as the economic situation deteriorated.⁴³² Since the disappointment of disbanding her performing group at the end of the 1928 Dancers' Congress, Wigman had regained her equilibrium. In the summer of 1929, she took an idyllic road trip back to the Alps with old flame Binswanger. She returned to the studio to choreograph her solo dance cycle *Shifting Landscape*, which she was soon to premiere during her first tour of the United States.⁴³³ Wigman was asked by poet/librettist Albert Talhoff to choreograph the most prominent project in the Third Dancers' Congress at Munich in 1930.⁴³⁴ This Congress was held under the auspices of three organizations: *Der Deutsche Tanzerbund* led by Laban and Jooss; *Deutsche Tanzgemeinschaft*, which

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Hanns Benkert, director of the Society of German Engineers and a leading functionary in munitions production, became manager of the Siemens Schuckert Works under the Third Reich.

⁴³² Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 178 and 188.

⁴³³ Wigman, *Language*, 47-53 and Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 133.

⁴³⁴ Wigman details her work on *Totenmal* in Wigman, *Language*, 89-98. Manning writes of *Totenmal* in Susan Manning, "Dances of Death: Germany Before Hitler," in Alexander Carter, *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 259-268. See also Manning, *Ecstasy*; and Manning, "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Six Positions and a Coda," in Susan Leigh Foster, ed. *Choreographing History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 165-176.

Wigman established after the slight of the First Dancers' Congress; and the Munich *Chorische Bunde*, organized to supply amateur dancers for the production of Wigman's monumental dance-drama *Totenmal*, or *Call of the Dead*. In the midst of economic hardships, the city of Munich renovated a concert hall to house performances, lectures and discussions. The eyes of the Western dance world were turned toward Germany in expectation.⁴³⁵ International newspapers even sent correspondents. Elizabeth Selden's preview expressed the enthusiastic anticipation among U.S. dancers. "For the third time Germany is calling a dance Congress and thereby proclaiming her great interest in the art of motion which is destined like no other, to express the consciousness of our modern age . . ." ⁴³⁶ Selden also noted that the future of the new dance movement lay not in solo dance but in "the newly awakened socialized consciousness which is at work in post-war Europe . . . It sought the group dance and the community dance."⁴³⁷ The Congress promised to gather the largest group of dancers ever assembled and more than a thousand came. Like Selden, many saw the Congress as proof of the profound importance of dance in the modern world. To disciples of the new dance, the magnitude of the event testified how dance had become "a potent factor in the cultural life of the age."⁴³⁸ The crowning event of the week was to be an open rehearsal of Wigman's *Totenmal*. Designed on a mass scale, with over one hundred total participants, *Totenmal* was written and directed by the young Swiss poet Albert Talhoff as a memorial for the dead of World War I. Selden placed it in the tradition of the grand crucifixion reenactment produced annually at Oberammergau. She described *Totenmal* as "the greatest Passion Play of the present, since every spectator here is an actor and has been since 1914 [when the war began.]"⁴³⁹

In reality, the entire Third Dancers' Congress was judged a disappointment.⁴⁴⁰ New York Times critic John Martin, the staunchest supporter of the modern dance on

⁴³⁵ Alfred Schlee, "The Munich Dancers' Congress," (1930) in Preston-Dunlap and Lahusen, *Schrifttanz*, 86-88.

⁴³⁶ Elizabeth Selden, "Germany's Dance Congress Marks a Renaissance in the Art of Motion." *New York Evening Post*, (May 31, 1930).

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ Schlee in *Schrifttanz* 86-87.

both sides of the Atlantic, called it “futile.”⁴⁴¹ Not only did he find the performances and presentations unsatisfactory, he was shocked at the state of contention within the dance community: “Invective was hurled about promiscuously, scandal was voiced and libel uttered; the private lives of individuals present were attacked and cries of ‘Pfui!’ and even ‘Schwein!’ — an epithet of untranslatable venom — filled the air.”⁴⁴² This is how the Third Dancers Congress closed: in an unseemly display of deep rifts within the German dance world and, even more telling, in a bitter battle to wrest control under any circumstances.⁴⁴³ Martin also wrote that the ambitious but flawed *Totenmal* had occupied Wigman to such an extent that she presented “no dancing of her own during the Congress, much to its detriment.”⁴⁴⁴ To Martin, *Totenmal* was an anomaly or diversion from Wigman’s own work. But *Totenmal* was to be performed throughout the summer, with Wigman and her Dresden faculty remaining in residence in Munich.⁴⁴⁵

Choric Dance

Given the devastating disruption of the First World War and the ongoing instability of the Weimar Republic, the turn toward a life-affirming mass movement appeared to be an extension of the *Körperkultur* practices undertaken at Monte Verità. However, the impulse to mass movement in Germany during the 1930s remains troubling in hindsight given the images of masses of military and civilians moving in concert and most notoriously captured by filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl in her film of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens*. However, the organizing tool of the movement choir was not exclusively protofascist. By 1928, German socialist Martin Gleisner was using choric movement — written choral works based on Laban’s

⁴⁴¹ Martin, John, “A Futile Congress; A Low Level of Achievement, With Much Bitter Dissension, Marks Munich Gathering--A Few Fine Performances.” *New York Times*, July 20, 1930, X6.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Schlee in *Schrifttanz* 87.

⁴⁴⁴ Martin, 1930 “A Futile Congress”.

⁴⁴⁵ Hans Brandenburg offered a contrasting perspective on *Totenmal*. He claimed that the dramatic-choric form “might rescue the theatre as well as the dance out of their crises, by leading to a closer fusion of the two than has been achieved through opera.” Brandenburg (1930) “*Totenmal* and Dance” in Preston-Dunlap and Susanne Lahusen, *Schrifttanz*, 88.

Kinetography — to organize manual and office workers in Berlin.⁴⁴⁶ Following the development of the movement choir in Germany, dancers in the United States incorporated the concept as well.⁴⁴⁷ It is worthwhile to take the time to consider the form of choric dance as it was originally conceived.

The principles demanded by the choric dance are born of the needs that arise when moving large numbers of dancing bodies. When considering the choric dance, we can chart a progression from the idiosyncratic movement allowed in the dance solo through the cooperative cohesion of the group dance and the final development of mass unison in the choric. The key feature of the choric dance is simplicity of movement. The dancer's postures and gestures must be pared down to a united expression that creates an impact due to its mass volume rather than technical virtuosity. However within this form there is room for individual interpretation within the prescribed movement phrases. Demanding group awareness, shared movement qualities and rhythmic unison were vital to the execution of such gestures. While not always the practice of amateurs, the choric dance did lend itself to non-professionals. The choric dance was not unique to Germany. In 1937, Hanya Holm made her masterwork *Trend* at Bennington College. She carried her experience of working with Wigman to the American stage. Choreographing for thirty-three dancers, many of them students, she imported Wigman's choric methods to make a dance statement of great impact. Following the performance Alwin Nikolais wrote, “. . . the mass of dancers, just by raising one hand together blew off the whole top of the universe.”⁴⁴⁸ Magnifying simple movements gave the choric dance its power.

This is not to say that the choreographer's task in the choric dance is a simple one. Instead of movement invention for individual dancers, the emphasis is placed on the elements of time and spatial structure. Not only does the grouping of dancers in the space create an architecture of bodies but it also reveals dynamic tensions between the groups.

⁴⁴⁶ Newhall 2002, 30.

⁴⁴⁷ For more on the use of mass dance in the United States see Newhall, “Absolute Eden,” 29-31. For the incorporation of mass dance in Northern California and among leftist dance groups, *Ibid.*, 57-60.

⁴⁴⁸ Sali Ann Kriegsmann, *Modern Dance in America: The Bennington Years* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1981), 165.

Space remains an invisible partner, but one that links groups of dancers rather than the soloist to the cosmos. Expressions of unity or opposition are realized through these spatial relationships. While every individual movement is enlarged through working in union with the group, the rhythmic content is also amplified through use of unison and mass. In theory, Wigman had a mastery of these concepts. In 1930 she was asked to make the concepts into concrete form in the *Totenmal*.

***Totenmal* (1930)**

Wigman had been approached by Talhoff to choreograph for the cast of more than 50 lay dancers for *Totenmal*.⁴⁴⁹ In her attempt to keep up with the trend toward choric works, Wigman took up the challenge. The successes of Laban and his ideas for choric dance and notation in the Congresses of 1927 and 1928 were not forgotten by Wigman. However, her own writing reveals that she viewed her goal not as the creation of mass movement but more as an experiment in uniting dance with the spoken word.⁴⁵⁰ Talhoff had anchored the work in his chanted poetry performed by a mass *Sprech-chor* or speaking chorus, which dictated the movements of the dancers along with the shadings of underlying feelings. Wigman saw this undertaking as a natural outgrowth of her mission, not only to create a *Gesamkunstwerk*, but also to prove dance an art form of equal stature to theater. The use of the color organ that would change the light as well as the sound in *Totenmal* harkened back to her time at Hellerau when Adolph Appia designed for the theatre there. Wigman had cut her pre-professional teeth on opera, performing Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* at the Dalcroze School. Since those early days, she had labored to bring dance to the fore, no longer subordinate to music. But in truth, Wigman lacked the practical experience to direct such a large amateur group. Since those early experiments at Monte Verità and her separation from Laban, she had pursued a professional career distinguished by solos and smaller group works. Given the complexity of making

⁴⁴⁹ Wigman gives an explication of her work on *Totenmal* in Wigman, *Language*, 89-98.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

Totenmal, Wigman fell back on theories of the movement choir that she had earlier explored and observed with Laban.⁴⁵¹

In keeping with her experiments of the late 1920s, Wigman did employ wooden masks made by Bruno Goldschmitt that gave individual character to members of the women's chorus, comprised primarily of her trained dancers.⁴⁵² Working with the women, Wigman had each develop a character through movement improvisation.⁴⁵³ Their personality was revealed through posture and movement quality as much as masked visage. For the mass of amateur men portraying the war dead, she used also used masks that, while each unique, appear more uniform in their similarity.⁴⁵⁴ Wigman appeared as the only unmasked figure in the work. Photos reveal her grouping the male dancers together architecturally to shape the performance space. The choruses also served to frame and respond to Wigman's solo dance and her struggling duet with War, performed by a masked solo dancer as a relentless destructive force.⁴⁵⁵

Where the war had been primarily a site of male activity, Wigman made her women active agents and not just in maternal mourning but through her own danced ability to conquer the character of War. *Totenmal* was to be performed through the summer following the Third Dancers' Congress. After the showing of *Totenmal* in rehearsal at the Congress, it became clear that the work was a critical disappointment, despite the collaboration of so many well-known artists and the investment of considerable economic resources. Such extravagance in Germany's desperately depressed economy, coupled with the disappointing outcome of the performance, drew outspoken criticism. *Schrifttanz* editor Alfred Schlee called the performance a sad confirmation of the flood of dilettantism that was destroying the new dance, ironically echoing Wigman's own doubts about the state of dance training.⁴⁵⁶

While the Third Congress and the production of *Totenmal* seemed a failure on many levels, it also appeared that *Ausdruckstanz* was in a state of decline. In truth the

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Schlee in *Schrifttanz* 87.

entire infrastructure of the German Republic was in chaos and cultural elements such as the German dance reflected the critical state of affairs. Submitting to the choric dance and using amateurs for the performance shows Wigman caught amidst desire and necessity, idealism and peer pressure. In her later writing, she appears philosophical about the critical failure of *Totenmal*. She insisted that the entire project was an unprecedented experiment to wed the dance with the spoken word.⁴⁵⁷ And it was. For Wigman, the amateurs presented a challenge to be borne for the sake of experimentation. Her company, trained in her own technique, had been disbanded due to lack of funding the year before, leaving only a small core led by Holm to anchor the women's chorus in *Totenmal*.

Mourning and Memorial in Totenmal

While photos allow a glimpse of still shapes from sections in the work, they disguise the overall sweep and style of movement. It is difficult to determine the emotional impact of the *Totenmal*. Did it create nostalgia, sorrow or a call to action for those watching? Was it an exercise in cathartic mourning, nationalist solidarity or a patriotic memorial? Recall that the American dance writer Selden had reported it as the “greatest Passion Play of the present, since every spectator here is an actor and has been since 1914 [when the war began.]”⁴⁵⁸ Mourning was hardly a foreign theme for Wigman. It had been an active part of her choreography since her making of *Lament* in 1920. Even as early as 1914, she had performed and choreographed solemnity in *Lento*. Women's sorrows in particular were part of her thematic material. Alongside her festive dances, she showed a melancholic strain. *Totenmal* neither evoked a nostalgic memory of the time before World War I nor did it highlight the German experience of loss in that war. It did bring together the international community of spectators to evoke memories.⁴⁵⁹

Susan Manning has proposed *Totenmal* as a prototype for the Nazi spectacles to come. Manning's argument appears particularly concrete in consideration of Talhoff's

⁴⁵⁷ Wigman, *Language*, 96.

⁴⁵⁸ Selden, “Germany's Dance Congress.”

⁴⁵⁹ For more on the employment of nostalgia, see the discussion of Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), in Winter and Robert, *Capital Cities at War*, 11.

later commitment to National Socialism and Wigman's period of work under the regime. However, she allows that "most contemporary spectators considered *Totenmal* a pacifist statement."⁴⁶⁰ Extant written accounts of the event confirm the truth that it was anti-war in its effect. It is also true that the economic crisis incubated a new nationalism in Germany. That Munich had commissioned Talhoff who was bent on writing a memorial to World War I indicates that there was an intention by those in the city government to reach back to the past for the civic memorial. *Totenmal* also can be considered a modernist statement in its pluralism: Talhoff's text included letters from British and French soldiers, as well as Germans. This surprising lack of nationalism, which Elizabeth Selden termed "supranationalism," may be construed as "concealing a highly politicized theater within an apolitical aura."⁴⁶¹ However, it could also be viewed as a statement of solidarity among all combatants and all mourners. No *volkish*, nature myths appear, nor does the reactionary sentiment that perpetrated betrayal myths at the end of the war. Instead, the work reflected a sad sweep of history and the universal misery of warfare. For Wigman, it was a continuation of her mission to use *Ausdruckstanz* to express the human condition. But in truth the human condition was becoming inextricably intertwined with the political order. The high expectations for the *Totenmal* performance reflected the hard-earned prominence that Wigman had gained in a German dance world that had grown increasingly impoverished, contentious and openly hostile.⁴⁶² Wigman's own solo performances and touring had always been an important source of professional pride and income. By the end of 1930, she was about to embark on the most important touring cycle of her career.

Coming to the United States

In the early 1930s, the person most responsible for the introduction of international dance artists to the United States was not a dancer but a promoter.⁴⁶³ Sol Hurok was an impresario of the old school who presented acts across the country, most notably the early, exhaustive touring of Anna Pavlova and Isadora Duncan. He redoubled

⁴⁶⁰ Manning, *Ecstasy*, 159.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴⁶² Schlee in Valerie Preston-Dunlap and Susanne Lahusen eds., *Schriftanz*, 88-89.

⁴⁶³ Sol Hurok with Ruth Goode, *Impressario* (New York: Random House, 1946).

his efforts in the 1930s. The expansionist U.S. big business in the first decades of the twentieth century also stormed through the arts and entertainment. Corporations such as the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System overtook smaller presenters. But Hurok intensified his self-proclaimed mission to remain an independent producer of “the interesting, the exotic, the novel from abroad.” The opening of what Hurok came to call the “dance decade” began in 1930 with Mary Wigman.⁴⁶⁴

Certainly, the United States had its own dance ancestry. Isadora Duncan got her start there, as had Loie Fuller and Ruth St. Denis, although all had to travel to the European continent for major artistic success. Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, all the offspring of Denishawn, were beginning to make a mark in the cultural world and by 1930 were the rising stars in the rather small cosmos of American dance modernity. A 1927 *New York Times* article underscores the state of the dance prior to Wigman’s arrival. It begins, “The advent of the new German ‘physical culture’ dancing in to the arena, though yet almost unknown in this country, is causing something to happen in the dance world.”⁴⁶⁵ The writer goes on to describe a “blood feud” between the advocates and opponents of the ballet. Noting the significance of the fact that the “non-ballet” had not yet acquired a name, the writer tries a few — “esthetic, barefoot, interpretative, rhythmic” — and argues that in the dance style itself there is little that is definitive enough to even bear a name. However, the writer offers hope: “Then, of course, there are the Germans. We have seen almost nothing of them as yet in this country, but Mary Wigman is reported to be headed in our direction.”⁴⁶⁶ It would be three years before Wigman could make the voyage across the Atlantic. But her reputation preceded her and much preparation for her arrival was made through the work of John Martin. It is telling that the 1927 article bears no byline. This was not unusual. The identification of writer by byline was a fairly new addition to American journalism. There was no staff writer dedicated to the dance art at that time. In 1928, Martin was hired by

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁶⁵ Anonymous (“L.P.M.” probably Louise Martin). “A Ballet Feud; New Opposition for the Classical School Is Threatened With the Present Invasion Of German Physical Culture,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1927, X13.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the Times to do just that, launching his decades-long dominance of the field in the United States.

In January 1929, two students of Mary Wigman debuted their work in New York. Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi had left the Wigman schools for careers as soloists and were now performing as a duo. They made their way to the United States before their teacher. Following their premiere, Martin was pressed to answer the question, “Is this the new German dance?”⁴⁶⁷ Martin’s response displayed his tireless effort to educate the public on the dance revolution that was underway: “It is a complete restatement of physical technique, going back to nature and away from art for its experimentations. It also lays great stress on expressionism.”⁴⁶⁸ As correspondent to the Third Dancers’ Congress, Martin traveled to Germany in early August 1930. Finally, he was able to write definitively,

When one comes face to face with Mary Wigman, the truth about the German dance dawns with unexpected suddenness; Mary Wigman is the German dance . . . the mystery of the German dance itself clears away in her presence.”⁴⁶⁹

Wigman arrived in the United States in November. Hurok had booked her for a “scratch tour.” Unsure of her appeal to American audiences, he added concert dates in response to demand. He needn’t have worried. With great anticipation, the audiences paid her an unusual tribute. New York’s Chanin Theater was completely sold out for her opening performance before she even left Germany!⁴⁷⁰ While exciting, this also laid upon her a tremendous sense of responsibility and even anxiety as she considered the task of bringing the “free dance” to an entirely new audience. The stage fright that plagued her all her life came roaring to the fore. Yet as the curtain opened on that broad New York stage, she was greeted with a thunderous applause, a welcome that she would recall until her death. From her premiere in December, she was met by full houses along with equal

⁴⁶⁷ John Martin, “Kreutzberg; Brilliant Exponent of German School Transcends It -- Current Programs A Misunderstood Movement. Art, Not Propaganda. A School by Himself,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1929, X8.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ John Martin, “Mary Wigman’s Art; Years of Struggle Have Brought Her to the Very Pinnacle of the German Dance Movement, With a Great Following,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1930, 101.

⁴⁷⁰ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 132.

measures of enthusiastic support, perplexity and some outright dismay.⁴⁷¹ Before her first tour, there was rumor that she would be forced to temper her program for consumption by the uninformed American public. Although John Martin pointed out that the homegrown American dancers such as Graham had already struggled mightily to introduce dance modernism, there was some doubt as to the sophistication and depth of the American public when faced with Wigman's unique theatricality. Uncompromising, for her first tour, Wigman performed the same program that she had staged in Berlin and Hamburg just prior to her journey.

By her fourth performance, Martin claimed that undoubtedly a new epoch for dancing was beginning in the United States. Comparing the poetry of her movement to the nobility of Homer and the passion of Whitman, he continued, "it matters very little, if at all, that Frau Wigman herself is not possessed of personal beauty . . ." ⁴⁷² Not only was Wigman described as past her prime, her concerts offered works that ruptured the tradition of classic beauty in the dance. Just as the crisis of the First World War brought into question the very relevance of beauty and order in a world radically altered by death and disfigurement, modernism in all of the arts had redefined art itself. Martin observed that Wigman brought to the surface aesthetic differences that had been stirring for years. Unquestionably, the authority and success of Wigman's work smoothed the path for the American moderns. Reflecting the development of a particular kind of Americana based on atavistic themes, Martha Graham choreographed *Primitive Rituals* and Doris Humphrey made *The Shakers*, both in 1931. That same year interest in the new German dance proved great enough that Hurok backed the establishment of an American Wigman School in New York, headed by Hanya Holm.

When Wigman returned to New York for her second tour in December 1931, Martin observed, "where there was curiosity and shocked surprise; now there is solid

⁴⁷¹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 172.

⁴⁷² John Martin, "Dynamic Art; Mary Wigman's Debut Brings an Insight Into German Movement--New Programs A Theatrical Quality. Music and the Dance," *New York Times*, January 4, 1931, X4.

enthusiasm based on mutual understanding.”⁴⁷³ Wigman criss-crossed the country, remaining in North America for months. Her solo dance cycle *Opfer* (Sacrifice) anchored her performances. In an interview, Wigman explained that she understood the enormous sacrifices that gripped the American public in the Great Depression. At the climax of the Depression, thirty million were unemployed worldwide including six million in Germany alone. The idea of sacrifice had been an active element in Wigman’s choreography since her first solo concert in 1917. The end of World War I only heightened her use of such symbolism in *Totenmal*. Leila Rupp points out that by World War II, mobilization propaganda made use of the Nazi ideal of sacrifice for one’s nation.⁴⁷⁴ In 1931, economic hardships were foremost on the minds of American audiences. Wigman also noted that while she herself had not been adversely affected, largely due to the economic success of her American tours, many in her homeland were suffering deprivations.⁴⁷⁵ In spite of the economy, she performed for full houses. Hurok was no longer unsure of Wigman’s ability to draw a crowd.

Seeing Mary Wigman

Wigman crossed the country to perform for audiences on the West Coast. In San Francisco, young dancer Eve Gentry sat in the audience. The concerts that Gentry attended in early 1932 were part of Wigman’s second solo tour of the United States. Gentry was in the audience for Wigman’s Pacific Coast debut at the Tivoli Theatre on Saturday, January 30. On Sunday, February 14, she attended Wigman’s matinee at Erlanger’s Columbia Theatre and on February 16 she traveled across the Bay to see Wigman dance at the Oakland Auditorium Theatre. Thus, in a very short period of time, she was exposed to a large body of Wigman’s solo repertory.⁴⁷⁶ At this time Wigman was

⁴⁷³ John Martin, “Cordial Reception For Mary Wigman; A Cycle of Six New Dances Called ‘Opfer’ Makes Up Most of Her Program. Magnificent Yet Simple Chanin Theatre is Crowded to Its Capacity--A Warm Welcome Accorded the Artist,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1931, X17.

⁴⁷⁴ Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 49.

⁴⁷⁵ Mary Wigman, *Deutsche Tanzkunst* (Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1935).

⁴⁷⁶ For much more on Gentry’s introduction to the work of Mary Wigman see Newhall “Absolute Eden.”

at the height of her dancing power, acclaimed in her own country and gaining an international reputation. She offered work that was radically stunning in its scope and depth of accomplishment. These works were drawn primarily from Wigman's acclaimed *Tanzcyklus* or Dance Cycles. From *Schwingende Landschaft* (the Shifting Landscape Cycle) Eve saw *Anruf* (Invocation), *Gesicht der Nacht* (Face of the Night), *Pastorale* (Pastoral) *Festlicher Rhythmus* (Festive Rhythm), *Sommerlicher Tanz* (Summer Dance), and *Sturmlied* (Storm Song). From the cycle *Visionen* (Visions) Wigman presented her great solo, *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance), along with *Zeremonielle Gestalt* (Ceremonial Figure), *Traumgestalt* (Dream Image) and *Tanz des Leides* (Dance of Sorrow). *Drehentanz* (Monotony Whirl Dance), in which Wigman performed her Dervish-like spinning turns for seven minutes, came from the *Feier* or Celebration cycle. The newest work on these programs was from the cycle *Opfer* or Sacrifice. These recent works impressed Eve most of all and she would later emulate the themes in her own choreography. Wigman presented her Sacrifice Cycle in six dances; *Schwertlied* (Song of the Sword), *Tanz fuer die Sonne* (Dance for the Sun), *Todesruf* (Death Call), *Tanz fuer die Erde* (Dance for the Earth), *Tanz in den Tod* (Dance Into Death and *Klage* (Lament). Hurok candidly discussed Wigman's Dance Cycles in his 1946 autobiography, expressing his own dance preferences, which he had kept suppressed in the 1930s while producing Wigman's tours. He wrote, "She danced 'cycles,' groups of dances whose relationship existed only in the mind of the performer, as far as I could see."⁴⁷⁷

As a young dancer, Eve Gentry had a much different perspective than businessman Hurok of the dances that unfolded before her. Gentry later would join Hanya Holm's original dance group in New York. But for her introduction to Mary Wigman, she was another uninitiated audience member. And her response offers a glimpse of Wigman's impact on the American public. Armed with a pencil and a University of California student Blue Book, Eve studiously recorded her impressions, interpretations and critiques of each dance. She had come to the first concert with her teacher Ann Mundstock and Mundstock's husband James. For Mundstock, seeing Wigman must have been charged with all of her memories of the Laban School in

⁴⁷⁷ Hurok, *Impresario*, 158.

Germany. Wigman embodied many of the concepts that Mundstock had learned and was now teaching. This mastery was coupled with the growing legend of Wigman as one of the truly great performers of the era. The program proclaimed: “Mary Wigman: Priestess of the Dance.”⁴⁷⁸ With notebook in hand, Eve recorded her impressions of her first contact with Mary Wigman’s *Ausdruckstanz*. Resisting peer pressure, Eve wanted to form her opinion of Wigman. She wrote, “I sat. I felt. I thought. Ann is sitting near me (along with) Esther (and) James. I will not let them influence me in my reactions, tho’ they are over enthusiastic I will not be so until I am sure, sure that I want to give this enthusiasm to Mary Wigman.”⁴⁷⁹ By the end of the concert, Gentry’s restraint dissolved into unabashed admiration.

I’ve been sitting on the edge of my seat, my knee quivering. I feel as tho’ I just can’t sit here longer – I must jump up. I feel as if I have seen a great artist. I have a great deal to think about, a great deal to dance for. I have actually learned things. The audience was riotous. People yelled ‘Bravo!’ ‘Bravo.’ I have never been in such an excited place. I have never been so excited it seems. For the first time in my life I wanted to call ‘Bravo’ so much that I actually did scream ‘Bravo’ not only once but a dozen times, I was exhausted, trembling almost crying for joy.⁴⁸⁰

This reaction was precisely what Sol Hurok would later declare appalling. In 1946, he reflected on his association with Wigman in his autobiography. His writing was published in a time that was charged with post-war rhetoric, when the atrocities of the Third Reich were beginning to come to full light. Anti-German sentiment was high and Wigman was not only suspected: many reviled her because she chose to remain in her homeland during the war. The aesthetic reservations that Hurok had set aside to present Wigman as a successful concert artist emerged full-blown; he referred to her as a thick-thighed Amazon.

What she (Wigman) did was to create the illusion that anyone could be a dancer, with the result that she encouraged all kinds of awkward, unhappy souls to dance. (Lincoln) Kirstein called her a dangerous woman, dangerous that is, for the dance,

⁴⁷⁸ Gentry “University of California Wigman Blue Book” (no pagination), Gentry papers.

⁴⁷⁹ Newhall, “Absolute Eden,” 36.

⁴⁸⁰ Gentry, Wigman Blue Book.

because she was professionalizing amateurs. Because of Wigman, people who should have been in the audience were on the stage.⁴⁸¹

Gentry was likely one of those who should have remained in the audience in the estimation of Hurok and Kirstein. Although she was not of Amazonian proportions, her early training had been piecemeal, her stature was diminutive and certainly not one that would give her access to the stage of American Ballet Theatre, The Metropolitan Opera house or George Balanchine. But in 1932, seeing Wigman gave Gentry the hope of fulfilling her own dreams. She would write, tellingly, “I know that some people will think that I am imitating Mary Wigman in a couple of things I have long ago composed. There are several movements I have done which are almost exactly like those of Mary Wigman.”⁴⁸² Even among the burgeoning transcontinental movements in the new dance, Wigman’s *Ausdruckstanz* offered a distinct alternative to popular interpretive dancing. From the outset, seeing Wigman was nothing less than an epiphany for Gentry. “People who came to see beauty think that she is crazy. They think this is just ‘novel,’ ‘Fantastic’ they can’t see that this is a prophecy of the world – earth, its beginning and its eternal moving . . . It sees ahead – far ahead”⁴⁸³

Wigman’s *Ausdruckstanz* relied on the recognition and embodiment of an inner, emotional state, which stimulated Gentry’s natural artistic inquisitiveness as never before. Hurok’s dread of Wigman’s empowerment of “awkward young women” was no doubt well founded.⁴⁸⁴ The success of Wigman threatened previous stereotypes of the “attractive” dancing girl. What Gentry saw in Wigman’s 1932 performance was a masterful artist not concerned with projecting a feminine ideal but focused on creating work that emerged from the subjective state. When crafting her work, Wigman put herself at the center of the personal, emotional experience first, inventing movement and

⁴⁸¹ Hurok, *Impresario*, 161.

⁴⁸² Gentry, *Wigman Blue Book*.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.* Sitting in the Tivoli Theatre in 1932, Gentry couldn’t foresee that her own future would bring her back to Wigman’s fundamental principles through their common bond in Hanya Holm. That bond wouldn’t be established until four years had passed when Gentry found herself standing on Holm’s doorstep. Holm would be the one to articulate the difference in artistic approaches — contrasting the American and the German dancer — and Gentry would understand those contrasts directly as a member of Holm’s company.

⁴⁸⁴ Hurok, *Impresario*, 151.

finally honing the dance to present the clearest physical manifestation of the original emotion. This method in the hands of a master craftsman such as Wigman was astounding; when attempted by dilettantes, it could be dreadful to the same degree. Wigman succeeded in transmitting her own artistic experience to Gentry. For Wigman, this was the highest achievement for a dancer: to ignite that “fire that dances between the two poles” of dancer and spectator. After watching Wigman’s *Klage* (Lament) Gentry wrote,

This is a ritual! . . . This is Lament! She enters and her entire body and soul is revealed as lament. It is sincere. It is deep. Not even a tiny part of any one movement, or any group of movements is anything but lament. It made me tremble and suffer way deep within, until at last my only outlet was tears. I wanted to cry for much longer than I cried but I just had to stop. I’m sure people thought I was a little “bug-house.” This dance was one of the most beautiful, purely, surely, marvelously beautiful things I have ever witnessed.⁴⁸⁵

Through the experience of watching Wigman’s performance, Gentry was converted. This was a fresh world of dance, separate from her previous dance experiences. It was beyond her adolescent identification with Isadora Duncan as well. Gentry began to come of age as a woman and an artist. She struggled to understand the appeal of Wigman. She acknowledged that watching Wigman had opened the doors to her own perception of what was performable; what was dance. Gentry returned to watch Wigman again,

At this second concert I sat in the second row center downstairs (cost \$3.00!). I can see why people say she is “ugly.” Her breasts are very full, her hips well rounded. Her body tho’ in fine shape begins to have the squareness of age (in the hips and waistline.) Her teeth seem too gray to be good looking. [Wigman was a chain smoker.] Her hair flies away from her face as tho’ her face were a mask. And her face often looks like a mask. . . She smiles in her dancing, but her smile is not for her audience – it is to herself. It is almost grim at times. She doesn’t recognize her audience except in her Gypsy and Spanish dances. [These were finale pieces which Wigman often repeated as an encore.] At other times she is dancing for herself. She often sets her teeth fast and draws air in thru her teeth before taking a leap or in turning. She purses her lips hard – but it is all in self enjoyment - in enjoying an emotion or movement – in feeling herself do it.”⁴⁸⁶

This subjective quality of Wigman’s performance persona was simply defined by Gentry as sincerity. Her perception of genuineness would serve as the standard for

⁴⁸⁵ Gentry, Wigman Blue Book.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

Gentry's subsequent evaluation of other artists and ultimately, her own work. On April 1, 1932, Gentry observed Harald Kreutzberg at the Geary Theatre and commented on what she judged as Kreutzberg's passion for applause.

In parts he is not absolutely sincere. He seems to make a lot of noise for little reason sometimes. He can't compare with Wigman. He's like a spoilt brilliant child showing off very successfully . . . he acts for the audience . . . His dance is not pure as is Wigman's . . . How Kreutzberg loves the 'big hand.'⁴⁸⁷

Even fifty years later, long after Wigman had fallen out of favor among dance aficionados, Gentry would remember her powerful stage presence and compare her to the towering figure of American Modern dance. "It's interesting how Martha Graham and Mary Wigman were alike in certain ways – not in the way they moved, but in their power, in their sense of theater, in their sense of the person on stage, their magnetism – they were alike."⁴⁸⁸ Gentry's impressions of Wigman stayed with her over her lifetime and underscored that Wigman served as a role model at a crucial point in Gentry's development.

After the concerts Gentry managed through the friend of a friend to get a letter of introduction to Wigman's manager. She went to the Hotel St. Francis where Wigman and her entourage were staying, hoping for an opportunity to talk with Peter Conley, local manager for the tour. Her burning desire was to be able to dance for Wigman and to inquire about the possibility of studying at the Wigman *Schule* in Germany on scholarship. That opportunity never came. Wigman was across the Bay rehearsing for her Oakland engagement, and her management was "very unkind" to Gentry. Discouraged after waiting from morning until night, Gentry left the hotel so tired and disappointed that she cried. But during those long hours in the lobby of the St. Francis, Gentry composed a manifesto that documents the break with her own youth; she was 22 years old and seeing Wigman accelerated a coming of age that was both artistic and intellectual. New values

⁴⁸⁷ Eve Gentry, University of California Blue Book. "Harald Kreutzberg and Group." April 10, 1932. (Referenced as Kreutzberg Blue Book 2)

⁴⁸⁸ Eve Gentry, *Bennington Summer School of the Dance Project: The Reminiscences of Eve Gentry* (Interview by Theresa Bowers) (New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office, Unpublished, 1980). (Interview date: September 21, 1979, at Santa Fe, N.M.), 31.

would guide Gentry's future work. Just as she left ballet by burning her tutu and toe shoes, Gentry reacted dramatically to her new viewpoint.

Those who think that dancing should be bees, butterflies and flowers are living in an unreal world, they have not grown up sufficiently to face the realities of life. Life is not bees, butterflies and flowers. And if dancing is to be an art, it must, as in all the other arts, be our expression, an assimilation of life itself. . . Those who refuse to recognize the realities of life are doomed . . .

What bliss it must be for one to be able to live all one's life believing that dancing is bees, butterflies and flowers. It is like believing that the stork brings babies. Such a person certainly should play no part in the true dance for in pure joy, great joy, there is also a kind of pain.⁴⁸⁹

Der Weg (The Path) 1932

Wigman had succeeded in carrying the seeds of *Ausdruckstanz* across Europe and to the United States. She had caused a sensation and furthered her mission to spread the dance that she loved so well. The income and artistic interest generated from her tours allowed her to continue to expand her work and schools even in the difficult economic climate of the early 1930s. In 1931, the American Wigman School was established with Hanya Holm at its helm. However when Mary Wigman returned home to Germany in 1932, she once again found her German school in financial crisis. The worldwide depression had thrown many of her students out of work. With massive unemployment, very few could pay tuition for the professional training program and even enrollment in the lay classes dropped precipitously. The struggle for state funds grew even more difficult.⁴⁹⁰ She had turned over financial administration of her school to Hanns Benkert, whose successful business ventures had him attached to the Siemens Corporation. He was also well connected politically with the rising National Socialist Party as German industry threw support to the Nazis. For Wigman, his business acumen and political protection became invaluable as she struggled to retain her school and continued a relentless cycle of touring her solo concerts to keep the school afloat.

⁴⁸⁹ Eve Gentry, "Impressions of the Danse," handwritten notes on Hotel St. Francis stationery, San Francisco, California, circa 1932, Gentry papers.

⁴⁹⁰ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 212.

In July of 1932, Hurok came to Berlin and approached Wigman about a third U.S. tour. The offer appeared a godsend. She hatched a plan to use the tour to lift the profile of her school, employing and thus retaining some of her more advanced students. This could only serve to build future support for her enterprise. She would start a new dance group with these advanced students and create a major new work for them. The new Wigman Dance Group would tour the United States from coast to coast and into Canada. The group would not only be paid for travel and performances, they would also be paid to rehearse, and not in falling Deutschmarks but in solid American dollars, a development that caused much excitement within the Wigman school community.⁴⁹¹ She even talked with Hurok about an extended tour to South America. Once more, Hurok kept all plans contingent on audience enthusiasm, again placing Wigman under extreme pressure to produce. She had less than six months to pull together a group of students who had never performed professionally into an elite troupe equal to an international tour and to make a work that highlighted her own theories of the group dance. She wrote in frustration of the great good will of the girls and their equally naive view of the hard work necessary to accomplish such a feat.⁴⁹²

The Group unveiled her new dance cycle *Der Weg* (The Way/Path) on 8 December 1932, in Dresden and performed it again three days later in Berlin.⁴⁹³ The performances were met with sharp disapproval in the press. Leading critics Fritz Böhme and Paul Bloch both challenged Wigman's choice of the group form instead of her own, much stronger solo work. Unaware of the necessities that shaped Wigman's choices, or perhaps in spite of them, Böhme declared it regrettable that this work would represent the current state of German dance and claimed it a bigger shame that the work must travel directly to the United States without correcting the problems evident in the German performances.⁴⁹⁴ The criticism was surely searing to Wigman, who was feeling pressures from all directions. Perhaps the most painful of all proved to be the critics' assertions that

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Bode in Müller 212.

the great Mary Wigman had become artistically and spiritually lost, deserting the values of her homeland.⁴⁹⁵

When Wigman arrived for her third U.S. tour in mid-December 1932, she was not alone. Along with accompanists Hanns Hasting and Gretl Curth, she brought those twelve student dancers to perform *Der Weg*. The hurtful claims that dilettantism was making *Ausdruckstanz* obsolete appeared proven. In the case of *Der Weg*, practical necessity prevailed. In the world of concert performance, the proof is what happens onstage. And competition in the United States was heating up. Graham, Humphrey and Weidman all had cast well away from their Denishawn roots. Their own concert aesthetics were evolving and their own schools had growing enrollments.

The American debut of *Der Weg* took place on Christmas Day at the New Yorker Theatre. Wigman was given the opening night spot of a two-week International Dance Festival. John Martin, ever a champion of Wigman's work, wrote kindly: "Twelve excellently trained dancers, able to alternate between movement and the playing of flutes and percussion instruments, constitute the company."⁴⁹⁶ He goes on to try to describe the relationship between Wigman and her dancers in the work, "among them Wigman herself moves as the protagonist, though not actually the most important figure." He does concede that "Wigman with a group is not to be compared with Wigman as a solo dancer."⁴⁹⁷

Indeed, Martin and others who had come that evening to see the power of Wigman seemed sorely disappointed that she had made herself an auxiliary of the group, rather than the focus. This was a departure even from her earlier choric staging of *Totenmal* in which she was the only unmasked, individual figure. Martin claimed that no fault lay in her composition: Wigman was a stickler for clear form, but she had chosen to discard her strongest artistic tool – her own performance personality. Martin saw clearly that

⁴⁹⁵ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 213.

⁴⁹⁶ John Martin, "Festival Of Dance Opened By Wigman; Her Group Makes Its American Debut In Cycle Of 8 Numbers Entitled 'Der Weg.' Shadows' Seen As Climax One Of Dances An Effective Piece Of Grotesquerie -- Miss Wigman Without A Solo Role," *New York Times*, December 26, 1932, 26.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Her singular power as an artist lies in her ability to project her highly personal inner experience through movement of sometimes breath-taking originality. When she gives these movements to other dancers, she runs the risk of making them appear manufactured and unconvincing.⁴⁹⁸

In letters, Wigman recorded this difficult beginning of the tour. During the seven New York performances shouts came from the audience, “Mary Wigman Solo!”⁴⁹⁹ This certainly didn’t aid the confidence of the younger dancers although Wigman did claim a victory in their Chicago performance to a nearly full house.⁵⁰⁰ The tour was originally planned to take the group by bus and train to Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Denver, Kansas City, Tulsa, Denton, St. Louis, and Indianapolis and beyond.⁵⁰¹ By the time they reached San Francisco on January 15, Wigman had inserted solo works from other dance cycles.

It appeared an act of desperation, to tear apart the fabric of *Der Weg* with substitutions, sacrificing the subtle sense of the original evening with something that would please the crowd. Martin perceived that just as Wigman had subordinated herself to the group, she had now been forced “into a mood and style lighter and less vital than her own.”⁵⁰² Aside from Wigman’s valiant attempts to fix the program, the tour had become a fiasco. There would be no South American leg. In fact Hurok declared he had had enough. Never one to back a losing proposition, he suggested that Wigman wait until 1934 or 1935 to return, when the public might be receptive to her work once again. She could no longer envision her future as a “New World” touring artist. By the time that Wigman made it back to New York for her farewell concert on March 6, she had abandoned *Der Weg*. Instead she danced solo, primarily drawing on dances from the heroic *Opfer* (Sacrifice) cycle, along with *Allegro Arioso* from her *Spanish Suite* and *Monotonie Whirl* from the 1926 group work *Celebration* and *Summer’s Dance*; the

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 214.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² John Martin, “Frau Mary Wigman and her Company; The Deadlock Presented by an Individual and a Group -- Programs of the Week,” *New York Times*, January 15, 1933, X2.

dances most loved by U.S. audiences in her earlier tours.⁵⁰³ It was a much lighter and more virtuosic program than *Der Weg*.

Perhaps American audiences had grown tired of the heavy expressionism that characterized *Der Weg*, perhaps they were developing a proprietary sense of aesthetic judgment raised by the increasing abilities of their homegrown dancers, or perhaps the young student dancers were just not up to the task. The xenophobia and anti-German sentiment that would come full-blown with the rise of the Third Reich may have been partially responsible. When Sol Hurok wrote of that season in his 1946 memoir he put it this way, “One stocky Amazon, providing it was the miraculous Wigman herself, was all right, but a whole group of thick-waisted, thick-legged German girls in wide-skirted bathing suits was too much.”⁵⁰⁴ However, for her final U.S. concert there was nothing but praise and admiration for Mary Wigman. Martin deemed her solo performance “of unusual brilliance,” even judged by her own high standards.⁵⁰⁵ The audience filled the New Yorker Theatre to overflowing and “there was in the atmosphere that tension and enthusiasm which mark special occasions.”⁵⁰⁶ Martin reported the next day that no one moved when the evening was over. Instead “flowers were thrown upon the stage and cheering and applause were maintained for more than a dozen curtain calls.”⁵⁰⁷ Wigman responded with an encore of her *Gypsy Moods*. But the cheering continued and only an impromptu farewell speech by Wigman satisfied the crowd before the final curtain could fall. In many ways that final curtain call signaled the end of Wigman’s brightest years. Hurok recalled

Mary Wigman strode down Broadway one evening in [February] 1933 . . . It was late, after a performance, and the morning papers were out. That was the day of the last legal election in Germany. Wigman begged for the newspapers, and the lot of them hurried down the steps into Childs Restaurant in the Paramount

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Hurok, *Impresario*, 161.

⁵⁰⁵ John Martin, “Gala Farewell by Mary Wigman; Dancer is Recalled a Dozen Times and Finally Has to Make a Speech. To Be Gone Two Years ‘Der Feier,’ Not Seen Here This Season, Concludes a Performance Unusually Brilliant,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1933, 16.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

Building basement to read the election returns. She was happy that night. The Hitler gang had been beaten.⁵⁰⁸

In July 1932, the same month that Hurok had engaged Wigman for her last American tour, the July Reichstag election showed the Nazis as the strongest single party with 37 percent of the electoral votes.⁵⁰⁹ The Communists also made electoral gains in that election. For the first time, the Reichstag was unable to put together a working majority of Social Democrats and middle-of-the-road parties. Both anti-government factions of the left and the right held the majority together. Chancellor Franz von Papen, a thinly veiled monarchist, saw the opportunity to effect a coup since the Reichstag was essentially unable to function. Papen dissolved the Reichstag in hopes of reinstating a monarchical government. The National Socialists had been a splinter group that could not be considered a mass party until 1930. In the years following the Depression, it had grown alongside widespread misery and a resurgent nationalism. In the electoral battles of 1932, first in the presidential election where Hitler opposed Hindenburg, then in the first Reichstag elections that July, the National Socialists had abandoned their platform of running against the “November criminals” who had betrayed the nation after the war. The Party and Hitler now were also running against Papen and his aristocratic cabinet. Oscillating between left and right, in 1932 they stressed their populist side. They had joined forces in November with the Communists in the Berlin transport strike.⁵¹⁰ The situation was volatile and unpredictable. Following their surprising victory in the first Reichstag elections, the National Socialists had lost thirty-five seats in the elections of November 6, 1932, but this would change in less than three months.⁵¹¹

Returning to the New Germany

By the time her boat docked in Germany in March 1933, Mary Wigman’s homeland was in paroxysms of change. She wrote in her daybook, “The new Germany –

⁵⁰⁸ Hurok, *Impresario*, 162.

⁵⁰⁹ Sebastian Haffner, *The Ailing Empire* (New York: Fromm International Publishers, 1989), 173; and Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 408-410.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

not simply a change of government but a Revolution – Strange!!! Where is it going?”⁵¹² While Wigman was in the United States, a campaign was mounted to convince aging President von Hindenburg to name Hitler as Chancellor, both as an attempt at unification and to appease conservative elements. Hitler did become Chancellor on January 30, 1933, but he by no means took absolute control at that time. The Nazis promoted the myth of the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power). However, many like Papen still felt that Hitler could be contained and his popular support co-opted. Between 1933-1934, Hitler methodically pursued his policy of *Gleichschaltung* (literally bringing or forcing into line), strengthening his grip on German politics and expanding his reach into all cultural life, particularly the lives of German artists.⁵¹³

Hitler’s art program was not initiated abruptly nor did it reach its full span all at once. With the gift of hindsight it is natural to question Mary Wigman’s accommodations with the new regime. The love of her homeland runs strongly throughout her writings, speeches and her creative work. The rise of nationalism was endemic in the twentieth-century West. In the United States, one can point to Martha Graham’s promotional material and the choreography of her own Americana as another example of the nationalist impulse. That Wigman did not use her celebrity to speak out against the Third Reich once the core of the regime was revealed may represent the most authentic condemnation of her choices. The question of why she chose to stay in Germany remains. Hedwig Müller underscores the fact that Wigman could never desert her homeland.⁵¹⁴ She felt called to bring forth the new German dance with a profundity that equaled the art of Goethe, Schiller and Nietzsche. For her, this was her destiny, the purpose of her life. It was *Schicksal* and *Opfer* — fate and sacrifice. It also had practical implications.

Historian Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt argued that each revolutionary change favors a brief experimental co-operation of politically and artistically radical forces. Such association seems to rest largely on mutual misunderstanding or hopeful projection, one

⁵¹² Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 214.

⁵¹³ Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 55.

⁵¹⁴ Hedwig Müller, Personal interview. Ports-Wahn, Germany, May 2007.

obvious reason for its brevity.⁵¹⁵ In his speech to open the *Reichskulturkammer* in April of 1933, Joseph Goebbels said, “Every genuine artist is free to experiment.” The Depression of the early 1930s had exacerbated an already difficult economic situation. With much work, Wigman had kept her school afloat but most artists held a common conviction that fundamental structural reform of the arts would be required. This conviction underlay the strife within the dance community. Unsatisfactory administrative infrastructure was widely blamed for the lack of professionalism among the schools of dance and for the lack of adequate financial support for the arts or for pensions for artists. Wigman was one of the lucky ones due to the profits from her American tours. With the less than successful final tour of *Der Weg*, the American source of income appeared closed. The Third Reich came in with a strong message of economic support for the German arts and further support for those great national artists such as Wigman. Those shaping the new Germany quickly grasped the public relations power of international stars like Mary Wigman.

The *Reichskulturkammer*

The establishment of the *Reichskulturkammer* in 1933 is noted in many general histories as part of the discussion of National Socialist propaganda. Any survey of these histories confirms that the arts occupied a central position in Nazi ideology and strategy.⁵¹⁶ Most authors of the subject state this baldly. Alan Steinweis wrote that

The arts occupied a central position in the ideology and propaganda of National Socialism . . . the research potential of the Nazi regime’s policies toward the arts remains largely untapped. The *Reichskulturkammer*, in particular, stands out as an institution that merits far more attention than it has received.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art Under a Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).

⁵¹⁶ There has been substantial scholarship in the German language on the topic, notably by Josef Wulf, who published initially in the 1960s. His topics ranged from painting, literature, music, theater and film.

⁵¹⁷ Alan E. Steinweis, “Cultural Eugenics: Social Policy, Economic Reform, and the Purge of Jews from German Cultural Life,” in Glenn R. Cuomo, ed. *National Socialist Cultural Policy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 23-37.

Steinweis identified an obvious gap begging the pursuit of writing about dance as a topic worthy of academic rigor and unbiased reporting.⁵¹⁸ In *Social Life, Local Politics and Nazism*, Rudy Koshar demonstrated that cultural production was enlisted early on as a tool for National Socialist propaganda.⁵¹⁹ In *The Social History of the Third Reich*, Pierre Ayçoberry delves more broadly into the appropriation of cultural activity as a political strategy. On the topic of “Illusions, Collusions and Disillusions of the Elites,” he describes the *Reichskulturkammer* as a “huge controlling apparatus with subdivisions for every discipline and profession [ensuring that] no artist could thenceforth publish or exhibit without providing proof of party loyalty.”⁵²⁰ Ayçoberry also offers relevant insight into the independent nature of artists such as Mary Wigman. Going back to the Weimar Republic, he writes,

Here it was no longer a question of group *esprit de corps* or even representative institutions, for artist’s histories are largely individual stories. In politics, contrary to what is implied by the classic expression “the Weimar culture,” they had seldom demonstrated any solidarity with the Republic, for the militant minorities were positioned on the outer edges and most of them preferred to remain ‘outsiders,’ as individuals.⁵²¹

In 1933 there existed a diversity of attitudes toward artists among the Nazi administrators as well as a range of responses among artists to the new regime. Such individualism was precisely what some Nazi strategists saw as dangerous among the artists along with “Jewish” internationalism, modernism and negativism or intellectualism. Alfred Rosenberg organized the “League to Combat Cultural

⁵¹⁸ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go fully into the effect of the *Reichskulturkammer* on German dance, although as Steinweis points out, it is a topic ripe for research. In the 2003 English translation of *Hitler’s Dancers*, Marion Kant made available some documents relating to the intricacies of the evolution of the *Reichskulturkammer* and how it impacted the dance world.

⁵¹⁹ Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Koshar truncates events that occurred all across the German nation into a specific analysis of cultural change in the city of Marburg.

⁵²⁰ Ayçoberry, *Social History*, 123.

⁵²¹ Ayçoberry, *Social History*, 122.

Bolshevism” with a membership of 250,000.⁵²² Wigman was never a member of that group but she also remained mute when members of the Prussian Academy of Arts, including Heinrich Mann and Käthe Kollwitz, appealed to the artists to resist governmental policies and were dismissed. When the Nazi minister of Science and Education Bernhard Rust asked the rest of the Academy members to make their commitment to the National Socialist government clear, “two resigned and seven others, some in fawning terms, declined to declare their intentions: they were hoping to gain time and, indeed, for some the moment of decision did not come until 1937.”⁵²³ Indeed, this was the case for Wigman who worked within the National Socialist government until that year. Hedwig Müller strongly states that Wigman was not interested in politics “at all” and Wigman’s own diary entries seem to bear this out. There is no evidence that she belonged to any political party.⁵²⁴ But with the establishment of the *Reichskulturkammer* under Goebbels, it was guaranteed that no artist could again exhibit their work in Germany without providing proof of party loyalty. This was the intended effect of the *Gleichshaltung* on the community of performing artists: to control “creators [who] must feel within themselves the sense of a united whole.”⁵²⁵

Urgent problems confronted the German art world before and after 1933, including severe unemployment among professional artists in all fields and a fragmentary social insurance system that plagued all of German society. There was also a general acknowledgement of insufficient systems of professional education and certification. This was true in the dance world as evidenced by the Dance Congresses as early as 1927. Starting in 1933, the Nazis undertook a period of ideological combat between factions within the Government under which the Chamber was established; 1934-1936 began a period of governmental co-ordination in developing all of the divisions of the Chamber and the infrastructure to govern such a broad organization linking governmental control

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 207.

⁵²⁵ Goebbels in Ayçoberry, *Social History*, 123.

of the arts to Nazi propaganda policies; and the final stage, beginning around 1937, saw the reins tightening with the declaration of “degenerate artists” as enemies of the state.⁵²⁶

For German artists, it appears that party membership, while not mandatory in 1933, became increasingly necessary if one wanted work. By 1937, the *Reichskulturkammer* came down hard on all artists deemed “degenerate,” that is, not conforming to Nazi ideals for heroic, uplifting portrayals of the German people. Thus, control over the content of the work was not established initially, unless of course, the artist was Jewish. As the most internationally prominent German dance artist in 1933, Wigman was afforded some governmental support initially. She was not only allowed to continue performing and teaching in the first three years of Nazi rule, she also choreographed for the 1936 Olympics. In 1937 she was shut out of government support for her professional work and dismissed as director of her school but financial support for the performing arts continued to grow.

Embroided in a rapidly disintegrating military and economic crisis after 1941, the *Reichskulturkammer* saw fit to pour resources into theater and dance performances as part of an overall strategy, increasing Reich support for these arts by 21 percent over eight crucial years and thus apparently appropriating the aesthetics of German dance for propaganda purposes.⁵²⁷ By 1942, 370,000 Reich marks were dedicated to German dance schools out of a total of 44,845,000 spent by the Chamber. There had been no such appropriation for dance schools in 1934.⁵²⁸ We also know that total Reich subsidies for German theaters grew from 9,670,000 in 1934 to the 44,845,000 in 1942.⁵²⁹ The use of theatre and dance by the Nazis demonstrates integral links between aesthetics and ideology. In *The Crisis of German Ideology*, George Mosse argued that Nazi ideology and propaganda was predicated on establishing an overwhelmingly compelling secular

⁵²⁶ Among the first to examine the impact on working conditions for artists under the Third Reich was Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt. Lehmann-Haupt, who was a publisher during the early years of the Nazi takeover, left Germany before the war and returned under the auspices of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section of the U.S. military after World War II. Due to his official role, his book offers the most immediate analysis on the subject and served as a foundation.

⁵²⁷ Ayçoberry, *Social History*, 122.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

religion that manifested itself in public performance.⁵³⁰ His argument that the Nazis successfully wedded romantic *Volkish* thinking to modern mass techniques of propaganda gives credence to the evidence that Wigman style of work could prove useful at least initially to the goals of the *Reichskulturkammer*. In fact, the methods to employ mass propaganda that Mosse described owed much to the performance models already perfected by Wigman and her cadre. The larger question remains, how did this change in Wigman's case? The years between 1933 and 1942 are crucial to fully understanding Wigman's career. While claiming to be an artist above all, she initially accommodated the imposition of National Socialist intrusion into her work until it was no longer possible to do so. Other German dance artists like Grete Palucca and Harald Kreutzberg thrived throughout the years of the Third Reich. What role did Wigman play in her own decline within the regime?

Dancing in Dresden, 1933 – 1942

Dresden provided a home for Wigman's dance life over the longest period and greatest achievements of her extraordinary career. In the 1920s the German dance had grown into an institution, Wigman was at the exciting and conflicted forefront of that growth. The contentiousness at the German Dancers' Congresses already reflected a systematic attempt by the Weimar government to regulate dance education even before the advent of the Third Reich. The studio schools such as Wigman's were home to these developments, just as government regulation of art education had been accelerated before the National Socialists came to power. It took nearly a year for the Saxon Ministry of Economics and the Dresden Board of Education, under the Weimar Republic, to register Wigman's school as a legitimate vocational institution that could receive financial support and issue diplomas to professional students.⁵³¹ Survival of Wigman's school depended on such official recognition amidst growing competition, economic depression and rising costs. Additionally, Wigman had to demonstrate that the school did not need

⁵³⁰ Mosse followed *The Crisis of German Ideology* with an edited documentary history simply titled *Nazi Culture* — George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968) — in which he organized primary sources as support for his thesis in *The Crisis of German Ideology*.

⁵³¹ Tanzarchiv Leipzig and H. Lazarus, *Die Akte Wigman*.

student tuition to survive, that she had sufficient state and city support, as well as adequate income from her touring.⁵³² Wigman had depended on public grants to support her dance groups, so changes in educational policies and public attitudes affected her school as well. Long merged, the studies of *Gymnastik* and artistic *Tanz* were officially separated by 1930.⁵³³ During the long absences for her international tours from 1930-1933, the City of Dresden was beset with rising unemployment and severe cuts in public welfare, school maintenance and other public services.⁵³⁴

Hanns Benkert had kept Wigman's school economically solvent while she was on tour. He also managed the school as it came under the control of the *Reichskulturkammer*. Wigman continued her personal relationship with Benkert along with the business side.⁵³⁵ And while he eventually became prominent in the Nazi Party, Benkert was an established businessman, not a street thug or rabid brownshirt. And Wigman was no longer a young woman. Nearing fifty, she turned to him and he offered a sort of anchor, not unlike the stability of her own early upbringing. At this time of crisis in her career and her homeland she returned physically and figuratively to her own bourgeois roots. Her rebel artist days behind her, Wigman was now established as the face of the great German dance. Her journal offers some small evidence of her reaction to the new government. Her letters to Hanya Holm during this period reveal even less. As she noted in her diary entry of January 1933, the change was more than a change in governments. The Weimar Republic had certainly experienced many of those. She termed the coming to power of the National Socialists as a "revolution."⁵³⁶ Following the book burnings of 1933, Wigman wrote to her friend Martha Reuther, "I have deep fright and like you am in bewilderment about the raving, hatred and instincts which are discharged here."⁵³⁷ Yet, if we can judge by her actions, Wigman's focus remained on her German career, particularly after the disappointments of her final overseas tour. She acted decisively to secure the continuation of her primary interests, her school, her dance group, her work.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 158.

⁵³⁶ Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 214.

⁵³⁷ Translated. Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 222.

The Third Reich's mergers of social, technical and political associations put an end to many schools and to the careers of teachers not already licensed. Diplomas from unaccredited schools were not honored, ending any chance of student income.⁵³⁸ Some schools sought to strengthen their positions as the new status quo took shape. In April 1933, the Law for Restoration of the Professional Civil Service enforced dismissals for those deemed insufficiently educated, politically unreliable or "non-Aryan." The same month, the Gestapo carried out a house search at the Wigman School based on suspicions of communist machinations.⁵³⁹ At the same time, the passage of the Law Against Congestion of German Schools excluded Jewish pupils. Students of Wigman claim that she protected her Jewish students at least at the beginning.⁵⁴⁰ Other students claim that they were dismissed from the school once it appeared detrimental to retain them.⁵⁴¹ Wigman fell under suspicion for many reasons. She had traveled abroad frequently and for long periods, she had Jewish dancers in her professional group and Jewish pupils whom she retained in her school, despite the law.⁵⁴² The remodeling of her school in 1927 was partly funded by foreign capital and lists of communist party 'agitators' included dancers certified by her school.⁵⁴³ Wigman was taken aback at the intrusion by the authorities. Hedwig Müller points out that in the end it was the detrimental effect of governmental interference upon her work that most outraged Wigman.

In July 1933, following the merger with the Palucca School and the Trümpy School, the *Wigman Schule Gruppe* joined the National Socialist Teachers Federation and opened new branches in Chemnitz, Erfurt, Hamburg, Hannover and Stuttgart. The government prescribed a new dance curriculum as Joseph Goebbels took over leadership

⁵³⁸ H. Lazarus, *Die Akte Wigman*.

⁵³⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 222.

⁵⁴⁰ Koonz points to the post-war practice of providing a Jewish acquaintance as "proof" that one (in this case Gertrude Schlotz-Klink) was not anti-Semitic. Koonz, *Mothers*, xxvii.

⁵⁴¹ Instances of such dismissals were noted during the period that Elisabeth Wiegmann was the school's chief administrator while Mary Wigman was touring. Manning notes that Jewish students performing in *Der Weg* were not part of Wigman's performing group after they returned from their American tour. Personal interview, Gerde Zimmerman. Las Vegas, N.M. August 11, 2008.

⁵⁴² Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 222.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

of the *Reichskulturkammer*.⁵⁴⁴ Wigman appeared as guest lecturer at the *Deutsche Tanzbühne*.

But already her motives were under governmental scrutiny. An anonymous document from the *Bundsarchiv* dated 16 December 1934 states,

. . . Can one consider a woman truly German, who only two years ago changed her name by deed poll from the good German Marie Wiegmann into the English form Mary Wigman? Besides it is very well known that the teaching personnel . . . in the Wigman School in Dresden and in Chemnitz is made up exclusively of communist-Bolsheviks and that the Jews play the main role in the school . . .⁵⁴⁵

What does such a letter mean? As an anonymous document, it is difficult to ascertain its direct impact but it does reflect the backbiting and infighting that were encouraged under the *Reichskulturkammer*. It also points to an atmosphere of growing fear and mistrust. The same day that the accusing letter was filed, 16 December 1934, saw the closing of the German Dance Festival in Berlin. In their analysis of this Festival, David Buch and Hana Worthen point to “the discrepancy between the values embodied in National Socialist discourse and the values represented on the stage.”⁵⁴⁶

The parameters of the “new German dance” also appear to have been fluid. Mary Wigman presented her *Frauentanzen* (*Women’s Dances*) both as a new group work and an excerpted solo within the four-day span of the festival. The sections in the dance suite were all themes that Wigman had addressed in earlier works. Susan Manning analyzes the *Women’s Dances* as choreographic proof of Wigman’s accommodations with National Socialist ideals. The presentation of woman’s role as wife and mother was certainly in keeping with the Nazi policy of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*. The dance was still essentially expressionist.⁵⁴⁷ Program notes describe the dance as evoking “all five life-

⁵⁴⁴ Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*, 204-205.

⁵⁴⁵ Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*, 216

⁵⁴⁶ David J. Buch, and Hana Worthen, “Ideology in Movement and a Movement in Ideology: *The Deutsche Tanzfestspiele* 1934 (9-16 December, Berlin),” *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 216.

⁵⁴⁷ Claudia Gitelman notes that Wigman considered performances of *Women’s Dances* a public success. Wigman’s letters show her enthusiasm for the finished product. But critics complained that “too many outmoded ideas of individualism and expressionism had been on view.” Claudia Gitelman, ed. *Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman’s letters to Hanya Holm* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 51-56.

spheres of women's experience" and symbolizes her powers: girlish mirth (Wedding Dance), motherhood (Maternal Dance – a solo for Wigman), female capacity for suffering and grief (Lament for the Dead – a familiar theme), prophecy (Dance of the Prophetess) and the final section was a group *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance), subtitled 'the abyss.' Extant photos show a very animated and smiling group of young women and Wigman with arms akimbo as if throwing a spell outward and delighting in their 'witchiness!'⁵⁴⁸ Commissioned by the government for the festival, it is hard to know how much control she had over thematic material and how she negotiated with the parameters of the commission. Certainly she fell back on old themes from her earlier work for the Festival, whether by choice or by decree.

Dancing Across the Atlantic

Meanwhile in the United States, Hanya Holm represented the Wigman School as one of the "Big Four" leaders of U.S. modern dance — along with Graham, Humphrey and Weidman — when the Bennington College program began in 1934. On the West Coast, the Dance Council of Northern California was established in the fall of 1934. Eve Gentry attended a meeting of the Council in September of 1934 and heard a talk by San Francisco dancer Carol Beals, who had just returned from New York City to share news of the dance scene there. She offered the example of the New Dance League as concrete evidence of the value of an organization for dancers. The New York-based Workers Dance League had been established in early 1932 to organize dancers and dance groups for a mass dance at the Bronx coliseum for the May Day Celebration. League secretary Midi Gordon wrote,

JOIN THE WORKERS' DANCE LEAGUE! HELP US BUILD A MASS
WORKERS' DANCE MOVEMENT. TURN THE DANCE INTO A WEAPON
FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE OF THE WORKING CLASS!⁵⁴⁹

A New York Dance Council dedicated to fostering understanding among various dance groups grew out of the League. The New York Council also encouraged greater recognition of the importance of working class dance activities in the mass

⁵⁴⁸ Buch and Worthen, *The Deutsche Tanzfestspiele*, 236.

⁵⁴⁹ Midi Gordon, "The Workers Dance League" (New York: William Korff papers, circa 1932).

organizations of the revolutionary movement. In time, the more professional New Dance Group would emerge from the Workers' Dance League. The Northern California Dance Council, although not as radical in its politics, modeled its activities, lectures and festivals after the Workers Dance League and New York Dance Council.⁵⁵⁰

In San Francisco, Bernice Van Gelder was elected chairman of the executive committee while Eve was field secretary for outlying regions. An article written for The Dance Observer identified three main objectives for the nascent Council. The first goal was to encourage education that would "raise the cultural level of the dance." Among the activities scheduled for 1935 was a western edition of John Martin's New School Series of lectures.⁵⁵¹ Also, the Council was to establish a teacher training course to further the quality of dance education. The second objective was to "broaden the scope of the dance to include recreational opportunities for greater numbers of people." Finally, the Council would "explore means of presenting dance creations to a mass audience."⁵⁵² The Council was to advise a public works project that assisted unemployed dancers and "bring the concert dance as an art-form to masses of people."⁵⁵³ Finally, a series of dance concerts was planned to showcase the work of the Bay Region dancers, similar to the programs already in place at Washington Irving High School in New York.

The Council presented its first dance festival on March 24, 1935, at the Veterans' Auditorium in San Francisco. In Germany, festivals for dance had been common and established since well before the First Dancers Congress at Magdeburg in 1927, which included Wigman, Laban and other leaders of the German dance movement. The German concept of festival as a community-building activity and a way to reach the masses was recognized and appropriated by the American dancers in New York and by the California Council. When the San Francisco festival was organized, nearly all the Bay Area dance

⁵⁵⁰ Gentry submitted a letter to Louis Horst's periodical, the *Dance Observer*, in August 1935, while she was still in San Francisco and influenced by her work with the Northern California Dance Council. She also had recently attended a conference on dance education at Mills College.

⁵⁵¹ Bernice Van Gelder, Henry Cowell and Ann Mundstock were all enlisted as speakers.

⁵⁵² Anon. "Pacific Coast Activity," *Dance Observer*, c. 1935.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

studios were sent information about the project and invited to apply. The Council chose the participating groups for the festival through that canvass. The programs were determined by a selection process undertaken by the Program Committee, of which Eve was a member. The souvenir program declared

The primary purpose of the Dance Festival is Dance Education. The Festival, no matter in what medium, gives a broader and bigger idea of life. It changes the attitude of mind towards our work . . . By bringing us in contact with the work of others, it gives us a greater appreciation and a larger culture . . . The modern dance movement in Germany has in past years become so widespread that the dance itself has been a sufficient motive for festivals.⁵⁵⁴

The eleven dances in the first Northern California Festival represented a wide range of area dance schools. An *Indian Nautch Dance* was performed by the McFarland-Joy Group, comprised of young business and professional women who turned to dance “as a fascinating and healthful hobby.”⁵⁵⁵ The majority of the works presented fell into the category of Modern dance. Carol Beals, fresh from her exposure to the Worker’s Dance League in New York, choreographed *Reaction* which denounced war and Fascism. Beals also had traveled to Munich for the Third Dancers’ Congress in 1930 and her work prominently retained her understanding of events there. Social criticism of U.S. economic conditions appeared in the Peters-Wright dancers’ presentation of *Rich and Poor*.⁵⁵⁶ The *San Francisco Peninsulan* of May 1935 featured a review of the Festival. The author, Jack Curtis, applauded the new vigor within the dance community and claimed that the afternoon offered an overview of the new dance:

Most stimulating of the groups . . . were the moderns. . . in their work design and movement were enriched and integrated by the emotional and intellectual content of the dance, and group and soloist had an organic and dramatic relationship to each other. More plastic than ballet and more restrained than aesthetic dancing, the modern dance is more articulate and hence more significant than either.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ Lenore Peters Job, “The Dance Festival” in *Dance Council of Northern California Presents its First Annual Dance Festival*. Veterans’ Auditorium, San Francisco, Souvenir Program, Sunday, March 24, 1935, Gentry papers.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Eve Gentry presented *Dirge: Lament of All Living*, a Wigmanesque group work. Extant photos in Gentry Papers.

⁵⁵⁷ Jack Curtis, “On With the Dance,” *The San Francisco Peninsulan*, May 1945, 3.4.

The Council's goal of educating the public was fulfilled through discussions scheduled around the performances. There was an evening forum following the concert. Dance was debated as an art form in relation to the other arts by the composer Henry Cowell, the director Ralph Welles and *San Francisco Chronicle* dance reviewer Alfred Frankenstein. At this forum a mass-dance festival was suggested as most appropriate for the next undertaking of the Council. Simultaneously, in Germany, New York and San Francisco, mass dance was being promoted. In all cases, this call for mass dance emerged alongside rising political ideologies. The drive to organize the bodies of masses, while not overtly political in the work of Laban and Wigman, eventually played itself out in National Socialist Germany and was captured on film by Leni Reifenstahl. At the same time, the Workers Dance League was organizing Communist Party spectacles for the Lenin Memorial March at Madison Square Garden. While not as politically outspoken, the San Francisco Council saw mass dance as a tool for organizing. As Modern dance evolved during this period, two distinct but symbiotic directions became evident. On the one hand, professionals were presenting concert dance while on the other hand mass dance events were promoted for amateurs, often in support of political purposes.

From Universal Festival to Nationalist Performance

The Second Annual Dance Festival of the Dance Council of Northern California was presented on May 17, 1936. Unlike the inaugural festival, this year's event carried a theme, "Growth and Development of San Francisco." There was no more mention of Modern dance as a pandemic movement. The German attainments that had been so central to discussion the year before were overlooked. The topic at the post-concert dinner was "The Trends of the Dance and Related Arts in This Country." The *Dance Council Bulletin* of May 1936 announced the event and also printed a quote by Martha Graham that would become celebrated in Modern dance lore and a part of Graham's legend.

In refusing to participate in the Dance Festival to be held in Berlin in connection with the Olympic Games, Martha Graham stated, ' . . . So many artists whom I respect and admire have been persecuted, have been deprived of the right to work for ridiculous and unsatisfactory reasons, that I should consider it impossible to

identify myself, by accepting the invitation, with the regime that has made such things possible.’⁵⁵⁸

Graham was very much on the minds of local dancers. She had recently been in the Bay Area as part of a transcontinental tour billed as the “first ever undertaken by a modern American dancer.”⁵⁵⁹ Graham gathered works that reflected her growing identification with uniquely American subjects. She chose to group these works together, just at that particular time when the specter of war was growing ever larger in Europe and American isolationism and separation from that conflict was still possible. Thus, she catered to the naïve hope of a nation that wished to remain apart from the old world struggle and yet could comment on it. The America that she portrayed was filled with endless landscapes and forward movement. This was in sharp contrast with the boundary battles and decline that characterized the geography of Europe at that time. In this, she served as the galvanizing figure for a new American Modern dance. Her intention in the ordering of these works appears self-evident. The program that she presented included *Frontier: American Perspective of the Plains* (1935). “Act of Piety” from *American Provincials* (1934) had an accompanying description by John Martin, “It is in every sense an American study.” Graham also performed “Building Motif: Homesteading Song” and “Dominion” from *Horizons* (1936) with the program note, “These dances are taken from the first cycle of the suite *Horizons*, built on the theme of exploration and discovery. While not specifically American these dances are built on themes abstracted from the American background.” The program included supporting commentary by Margaret Lloyd, “The American dance reflects the . . . forceful beat of American life . . . Graham has evolved her own dance expression . . . in accord with the life expression of her country . . .”⁵⁶⁰ Graham espoused a persona that was to become a call to arms for American dancers.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ Graham, quoted in Anon. “The Voice of California Dancers,” *Dance Council Bulletin*, May 1936, 2:8, Gentry papers.

⁵⁵⁹ Martha Graham Souvenir Booklet 1936, Gentry papers.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 50.

The singularly American identity that Graham claimed for herself and her art necessitated that she distance her public persona from those influences on her work that had origins in Europe. Her association with mentor Louis Horst is well known. Horst had traveled to Europe during 1925-26. His trip was undertaken during a time when European innovation was still considered preeminent. Horst had seen Wigman perform in Switzerland in 1926, years before she would tour the United States. This was the year that she premiered her revised *Hexentanz* with mask and percussive accompaniment. While in Europe, Horst sent Graham pictures of Wigman and letters about her new German form of dance and dance accompaniment which particularly interested him.⁵⁶² Horst's initial major artistic undertaking after returning to the United States was to accompany Graham in her first independent concert, presented at the 48th Street Theater on August 18, 1926. It included eighteen short dances set to the music of such composers as Schumann, Schubert, Brahms and the more unsettling Satie, Scriabin, Ravel and Debussy. There were, however, two solos by Graham that employed Horst, not only as accompanist but also as composer. The first was entitled *Masques* (1926) which Horst composed after he traveled through Europe and saw Wigman's masked *Ceremonial Dance* and *Hexentanz*. Graham did not don a transcendent mask in *Masques*, but Horst had incorporated new aural impressions in his composition. The second solo work retained residual exoticism from Graham's tenure with Denishawn. *Scène Javanaise* (1926) was set to a music score that had been composed by Horst during his time in Vienna.

Horst's opinion of the role of music for dance was evolving. For Graham's 1936 program booklet, Horst wrote that up until the present, "the dance had occupied the secondary place of interpreting music. But places now have been reversed, and music is relegated to the status of interpreting the dance . . . Music for the dance cannot be judged apart from the dance for which it was written, because it is an integral part of it."⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² DeMille, *Martha Graham*, 11.

⁵⁶³ Graham Booklet, no page numbers.

Horst appears to be appropriating Wigman's thoughts on the relationship between dance and music. Having claimed her dance as "Absolute" in the 1920s, Wigman wrote this prescription for dance accompaniment.

It is the rhythm of the dance which releases and engenders the musical rhythm. The musical accompaniment ought to arise from the dance composition. Of course, any music thus created can never claim to be an independent work of art. The profound union formed in this way between dance and music leads for (sic) both to a total entity.⁵⁶⁴

The composer-accompanist had long been integral to Wigman's work even before her 1926 collaboration on *Hexentanz* with Will Goetz and continuing to her later touring with Hanns Hasting. However, Horst didn't reference Wigman or mention Hasting when he wrote, "Out of this situation (in 1936) a new musical profession is springing up – that of the composer-accompanist."⁵⁶⁵ Graham and Horst, maturing as artists, were claiming the genre as their own. Growing anti-German sentiment supported and accelerated the establishment of an American dance dynasty. American dancers were no longer flocking to Germany to study at the *Wigman Schule*. Germany symbolized decay and collapse while America epitomized the future. Horst would be known ever after as the American prototype of the composer-accompanist for the dance just as Graham became the quintessential Modern choreographer. The final article in Graham's 1936 program booklet left no question as to Graham's sentiments. It was a parting statement to her audience.

The American rhythm, the American gesture, these phrases are often on Martha Graham's lips, not as catchwords or cliches, but as apt condensations of a basic tempo and cadence in herself. A child of America, a lover of America, she is without doubt. Born in Pittsburgh, removed to California as a small child, a tenth-generation American, she loves her country.⁵⁶⁶

While Graham was compelled to wave the flag and gain recognition through her own patriotism, she also felt a responsibility to prescribe a new direction for the American dance that resonated with popular national sentiment. Her *American Provincials* was not only a dance title but a declaration.

⁵⁶⁴ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 121.

⁵⁶⁵ Graham Booklet.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The dance has been particularly the sufferer in this country of unwillingness to dig deep into our own experience. The escape motif which has so long blinded the artistic vision of the American artist too often has made our dancers imitators of a culture utterly foreign to them.⁵⁶⁷

The doctrine of American exceptionalism was as active in the dance world as it was in the larger world of politics. Such a nationalistic stance, as endorsed by Graham, was also evident in the work of the San Francisco Dance Council in 1936. The eclectic, international dance themes that had characterized the previous year's festival were set aside. Broad focus and more abstract works were abandoned for depictions of individual people, places and specific events. All dances were required to fit into the general theme of San Francisco history. Carol Beal's Dance Group demonstrated the New York influence of the leftist Workers Dance League in *Waterfront – 1934*. The dance depicted the historic events that culminated in the San Francisco General Strike of that year.

Atlantic Crossings: Germany and U.S.

Themes of labor and social welfare along with mourning after the war were present in many dance works on both sides of the Atlantic in the years between the world wars. These themes were assimilated just as ideas of festival and public performance emigrated from Germany to the United States. In *Atlantic Crossings*, Daniel T. Rodgers reconsidered the connections between Europe and the United States from the 1870s to the New Deal.⁵⁶⁸ He argued that rather than a navigational barrier, the North Atlantic should be viewed as a lifeline or fluid conduit that allowed the movement of ideas from Berlin in the East to San Francisco in the West and back again. The catalyst for progressive social politics was a shared impulse to control the juggernaut of rampant market capitalism while harnessing economic forces for a larger good. What that larger good was, who would benefit from such a harnessing and how such reform might be realized did not have universal answers but ones unique to place and time. Rodgers focuses on those ideas typically considered intellectual products of the Progressive Era: establishment of social services, organization of labor and the reform of living space. In this context, dance

⁵⁶⁷ Graham Booklet.

⁵⁶⁸ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).

appears as another progressive notion that found fertile ground on both continents. In Germany, laissez-faire economics had been attacked since the 1870s, in sharp contrast to the English economists who simultaneously touted free marketeering. Even in Mary Wigman's childhood, Bismarck had launched a campaign to win over the urban German masses through pre-emptive, top-down socialism of the state. Factions in the U.S. had decried such paternalistic tinkering at that time. However, as American students began to attend German universities, an awareness of German-style social welfare began to permeate U.S. consciousness.⁵⁶⁹ By the end of World War I and the onset of the Great Depression, American thinking had changed and the Progressives saw the Depression as an opportunity to press forward with social reform.

In the desperate economy of 1932, Franklin Roosevelt had been elected president of the United States by a landslide. He promised a New Deal for the forgotten man. He hoped to reform capitalism in order to preserve it. Roosevelt attacked the problem of unemployment directly with agencies that gave work to the masses. The most prominent, the Works Progress Administration, spawned the Federal Dance Project and the Federal Theatre Project along with similar projects that promoted a range of artistic endeavors. Ironically, by becoming part of the WPA, dancers were able to organize into a union for the first time. These radical dancers who had taught in union halls and performed at Communist May Day events gained entry to the American political system by joining a government-financed program. The New Deal was a Progressive move toward social welfare. The hope of a government job helped check the threat of social revolution. The radical left and the revolutionary dance movement in the United States did not die from lack of interest. They were co-opted by the New Deal. At the same time, the Popular Front emerged as a conglomerate of liberal groups opposed to the rise of Fascism. Dancers who previously had been seen as bourgeois and apolitical began to enter the political arena. Mark Franko asserts that Martha Graham became socially relevant "at the very historical moment when radicalism expired."⁵⁷⁰ Wigman too, was absorbed in creating a national identity through her art. Yet, such drives appear consistent with her

⁵⁶⁹ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 76.

⁵⁷⁰ Franko, *Dancing Modernism*, 63.

work since the late 1920s. Her diaries and letters to the U.S. are consumed with her efforts to keep her school viable and her artistic production high amidst huge bureaucratic changes.

The economic recovery program that established the Federal Theatre Project in the United States was undertaken just as dance in Germany came under the regulation of Goebbels through the Department of Stage in the *Reichskulturkammer*. A German dancers' constitution was drafted, including examinations and course guidelines. The September 1935 Nuremberg Laws deprived the Jewish population and their spouses of citizenship rights and Wigman's long-time costume designer Elis Griebel was forced to emigrate in response. Griebel's Jewish partner was arrested and briefly released when he fled to Warsaw. Griebel was charged but also fled to join him. And Wigman had worked with Griebel for more than ten years. In a letter to Hanya Holm written two months later, Wigman makes no mention of Griebel who would have also been well known to Holm.⁵⁷¹ Wigman remained committed to her representation of the German dance and in 1935 her first book, *Deutsche Tanzkunst*, shows her determination to support the dance art of her homeland. The distance between Mary Wigman and her international peers had widened into an impassable chasm. Responding to anti-German sentiment, in 1936 Hanya Holm changed the name of the New York Wigman School to the Hanya Holm School with Wigman's blessing.⁵⁷² As alliances formed among nations, they were also played out on a smaller scale among the dance dynasties.

Germany: 1936 Olympics

Opening night ceremonies of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin featured a pageant, *Olympic Youth*, produced by Hanns Niedecken-Gebhard. Along with Gret Palucca and Harald Kreutzberg, Mary Wigman danced in the newly constructed Olympic Stadium. Her *Lament for the Dead*, with music composed by Carl Orff, was choreographed and performed by Wigman supported by eighty female dancers all dressed

⁵⁷¹ Wigman's letters to Holm are gathered in Gitelman, *Liebe Hanya*.

⁵⁷² In 1993, Eve Gentry reminisced about the change of name. She claimed that Wigman was "just wonderful" about it. Walter Sorell discusses the name change and U.S. sentiments in Sorell 1966, 44. Claudia Gitelman also makes note of the change while Wigman's letter to Holm giving permission for the change remains missing to date. Gitelman, *Liebe Hanya*, 62.

in grey and once again mourning the dead of World War I.⁵⁷³ Rudolf von Laban was to contribute a spectacle with a thousand dancers to the Olympic event, but when Joseph Goebbels saw the rehearsal, he was appalled and wrote in his diary:

Rehearsal of dance work: freely based on Nietzsche, a bad, contrived and affected piece. . . It is so intellectual. I do not like it. That is because it is dressed up in our clothes and has nothing whatever to do with us.⁵⁷⁴

Laban's work was halted and not shown during the Olympic festival. As soon as Goebbels saw the rehearsal, it appears that Laban's fate was sealed. However, he did remain in Germany through 1937 and attempted, like many who wished to secure their jobs, to join the National Socialist Party when enrollment was opened in that year.⁵⁷⁵ A letter written by Laban on 3 September 1937 shows concern for his own well-being and indicates that he was under investigation for infractions under Paragraph 175, the notorious anti-homosexual statute.⁵⁷⁶

As the political reins tightened on the artists who had stayed in Germany, many began to realize their perilous position. In the Olympics, Wigman was presented as Germany's greatest dancer for the last time. Her diaries reveal her caught up in the task of that monumental ceremony dedicated to power, prestige and dominance.⁵⁷⁷ But soon she came to see that her name was used for a purpose far removed from highlighting the dance art. Within a year her new branch schools were eliminated and the *Wigman Schule Gruppe* was deleted from the National School Registry. She received no further subsidies. Wigman tried to support the *Schule* by touring but officials continually cancelled engagements.⁵⁷⁸ Meanwhile, her accompanists Hanns Hasting and his wife Gretl Curth expanded their own range of influence within the Nazi Party, benefiting from

⁵⁷³ Partsch-Bergshon, *Modern Dance in Germany*, 92.

⁵⁷⁴ Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban*, 196.

⁵⁷⁵ Marion Kant "sees an undeniable tendency to ignore Laban's attitude to National Socialism or to provide it with acceptable moral explanations." Karina and Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*, 61. Kant is the primary source for the reading of Laban as an active Nazi co-conspirator. For more, see chapters 6-12 in *Hitler's Dancers*.

⁵⁷⁶ Wigman did save mementos from the Olympic production. The program and commemorative pin shaped as a swastika stand out as Nazi remnants among her archived materials in Berlin.

⁵⁷⁸ Gitelman, *Liebe Hanya*, 66.

Wigman's decline even as they remained working in her Dresden school.⁵⁷⁹ Wigman had proven too intellectual, too deep and too independent. Ultimately, Goebbels and other party officials did not welcome her or her *Ausdruckstanz*. Under the National Socialists, dance had to be functional and deemed healthy, meaning angst-free, strong, goal-oriented, happy, *Volkish* and most importantly anti-intellectual. Wigman's dances were far from these things. Just as Hitler turned from his devotion to Wagner toward light opera, artistic dance was to become entertainment providing diversion and depicting a particular version of popular history.⁵⁸⁰ Even art criticism was banned,⁵⁸¹ as was any art outside the party line. Expressionism, essentially individualistic, unsettling and emotive, was dangerous. And Wigman was seen as a dangerous woman.

It was her artistic autonomy rather than political protest that caused her to hesitate when asked to contribute a dance in honor of Hitler, which led to the break between Wigman and the government in May 1937. Her performance was to be part of the ceremonies inaugurating Munich's House of German Art, for which Hitler had laid the cornerstone in 1933.⁵⁸² What became starkly clear by 1937 was that only a particular kind of art would be housed there. Albert Talhoff, who had penned *Totenmal* in 1930, was in charge of the performance and he first contacted Wigman. She wrote in her diary,

⁵⁷⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 251.

⁵⁸⁰ Frederic Spotts points out that in speeches in 1920 and 1922 Hitler singled out Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow* as a pre-eminent example of artistic kitsch. During the 1930s that operetta became one of his favorites. Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2003).

⁵⁸¹ "Because this year has not brought an improvement in art criticism I forbid once and for all the continuance of art criticism in its past form, effective as of today. From now on, the reporting of art will take the place of an art criticism that has set itself up as a judge of art — a complete perversion of the concept of 'criticism' which dates from the time of the Jewish domination of art. The critic is to be superseded by the art editor. The reporting of art should not be concerned with values, but should confine itself to description. Such reporting should give the public a chance to make its own judgments, and should stimulate it to form an opinion about artistic achievements through its own attitudes and feelings." Goebbels (27 November 1936) in Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 162-3.

⁵⁸² It is telling that the first official construction undertaken by the Nazis in 1933 was this building dedicated to housing artworks.

The play!?! [It is] Talhoff's invention even though there is obviously outside backing. [It is] *Totenmal* over and over again. Also the swinging flags [swastikas] are not absent. What makes me pensive and shaken and dismayed in my deepest being is the fact that the "artistic" [or dance] part of the play is only concerned with the years following the First World War. The new time under the Third Reich should appear symbolically calm . . . ⁵⁸³

Hanns Hasting went as her representative to the initial planning meeting for the event. In her writing Wigman appears hard-pressed between her art and official demands. Both Benkert and Hasting advised that she could not decline the invitation. She wrote that she had known this immediately with Talhoff's phone call. She likened the demands of this project to "Barbarism – indeed . . . a decline like that of Greek tragedy, a decline that brought the Roman pantomime. We experience the same decline."⁵⁸⁴ Wigman's reference to Roman pantomime is insightful and gives a glimpse into her comprehension of her situation. The rise of the Roman spectacle was seen as the death of Greek art performance. Thus the catharsis of Classic tragedy was set aside for blood lust and the appeasement of Roman bread and circuses. Hedwig Müller concludes that Wigman did take note of the rising terrorism in daily life. But she did not elaborate in her diaries about the fear and the growing mistrust. Her focus remained on her work: The words *work* and *dance* and the events of her professional life dominate her diary entries and her correspondence. Reading them, one comes to realize that her dance life was her true existence. Every joy or trauma is chronicled primarily in relationship to her art. Müller also concludes that Wigman had become careful. And indeed she did not know how much of her private life was known to the state. Müller writes that Hesschen guarded Wigman's privacy in the home. But ultimately she was a public person by nature of her work. Wigman did attend a planning meeting with Talhoff and other organizers in Munich on 6 May. Upon her return to Dresden she wrote:

Confused, broken, hit, smash . . . What insanity. I still do not know what approaches me. I have to go into this hell . . . **as the only woman among the men!** Every objection, every doubt is pushed aside as tiresome and questionable.⁵⁸⁵ (emphasis mine)

⁵⁸³ Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 244-5.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁵ Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 245.

In the end, Wigman stalled so long that the offer to choreograph for the museum dedication was officially withdrawn. The program went on without her. Her diary entries reveal a terrible reckoning with the state of affairs:

My desperation lies in recognizing the bitter facts. For basic things like my dance group, my school my dances, there is no real support. While for the big show everything is procured immediately . . . **Victory of collectivism over the individual!** . . . No living person can avoid it. One is involved in the big fabric. To try to tear it would bring self-destruction.⁵⁸⁶ (emphasis mine)

Her writing explodes with a shock of realization. All of the values that had shaped her aesthetics — a personal expression of a woman’s experience in the world — were irrelevant in Hitler’s Germany.

Entartete Kunst

“Anybody who paints and sees a sky green and pastures blue ought to be sterilized”⁵⁸⁷

At the opening of the *Haus der Kunst* in 1937, Hitler announced,

From now on we are going to wage a merciless war of destruction against the last remaining elements of cultural disintegration . . . From now on all those mutually supporting and thereby sustaining cliques of chatterers, dilettantes, and art forgers will be picked up and liquidated. For all we care, those prehistoric Stone-Age culture barbarians and art-stutterers can return to the caves of their ancestors and there can apply their primitive international scratchings.⁵⁸⁸

The day following Hitler’s inauguration of the House of German Art, a very different exposition was opened across the street. Nazi exhibitions of *Entartete Kunst* or Degenerate Art made outcasts of the great modern German visual artists, including Wigman’s acquaintances from *Die Brücke*. Even long-time National Socialist Emile Nolde was ostracized as a degenerate artist in the 1937 cultural purge. All of the major visual art movements were represented: Expressionism, Surrealism and Dada. Also included and denounced were many of Wigman’s old friends from the Cabaret Voltaire like Hans Arp and Sophie Tauber. Similar local exhibits already had taken place. In 1933

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Hitler’s speech for the opening of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, in Barron, ‘*Degenerate art*’.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

the Civil Service Act had taken the jobs of many curators and replaced them with Party members. Goebbels and his assistants gathered more than 16,000 works from thirty-two public museums, claiming misuse of public funds in acquiring the works. For the exhibit, 650 paintings, prints and sculpted pieces were on display.

Degenerate art was defined as art works that insulted German feeling or destroyed or confused “natural” forms or simply revealed an absence of adequate manual and artistic skill. They were the antithesis of the rosy cheeked *Fräulein*, pink female nudes, bare men sculpted in bronze with unsheathed swords, bucolic landscapes and portraits of the Fuhrer that inhabited the House of German Art across the square. Thrown up in a cramped space with no intention of displaying the works as art, the *Entartete Kunst* exhibit was grouped into the following nine categories:

1. Distortion of color and form
2. Mocking religious feelings - confusing people regarding the nature of religious experience
3. Stimulating political anarchy – advocating Bolshevik class struggle
4. Ridiculing deep respect for military virtue, courage, willingness to serve
5. Making the street a bordello- sex and violence
6. Primitivism-connected to the Marxist and Bolshevik bent to substitute the Negro and South Seas Islanders for the Aryan mode
7. Idiots and cretins
8. Jewish artists, and finally
9. Madness – sheer lunacy.⁵⁸⁹

With art criticism outlawed, viewers could only pass by the works without opposing public comment or discussion. 36,000 people attended the *Entartete Kunst* exhibit on the first day. Within four months, more than two million had passed through and one million more attended when the exhibit toured Germany and Austria. If public attendance is the measure of success, it was the most successful art exhibition of all time.⁵⁹⁰ Instead of

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. For photographs of the exhibit, see Barron’s catalogue.

⁵⁹⁰ Degeneration theory had been around since the 1870s as an international movement. In 1892, Max Nordau published *Degeneration* as a tome against modernization. The pseudo-science of eugenics combined post-Darwinian genetic research, notions about inheritance traits, and population policy to make a claim for innate superiority and for “degenerate” strains among human groups. The extension of this thesis was the need to cleanse the weak from the human community, linking urbanization, insanity and

dancing for the Munich events, Wigman made *Dance in Stillness*, the description of which opened the prologue of this dissertation. Her writing about that work deserves repeating.

As finale, *Dance in the Stillness* came – a soundless pacing, a listening-to-oneself, and a wary tracking down of all that was fading away. But at the same time, there was a tentative groping into what the future might hold, with its covering veils only slowly lifting.

These dances were created at a time of political unrest. The anathema of “degenerate art” had long since been pronounced about my work. Everything demanded utter caution. I have never known “being careful” in my work and have always gone my own way as I had to.⁵⁹¹

Written in 1966, her account was for public consumption. It is difficult to place her by date as a degenerate artist since the exhibition was limited to the plastic arts. However any photograph of her work places it firmly in the realm of *Entartete Kunst* rather than the work displayed in the Great German Art Exhibition.⁵⁹² Her diary account is much more raw and revealing of her emotional state. From the beginning, dance had served to quiet her fears. The debilitating stage fright could be conquered. She could abandon

congenital illness. Ultra-conservative groups also saw the hallmarks of modernity — urbanization and especially the city — as primary sites for such degeneration or weakening of the species. The city, sex and Jewishness became conflated. Jews were considered to be hyper-sexual and in fact dangerously infectious to the body of the state. Thus modern art, mental illness, congenital deformity, urbanization, primitive cultures, sexual perversion, Bolshevism and Jewishness were all illnesses to be purged from the body politic. Under the National Socialists, a series of laws was passed to accomplish eugenic purging and solidify government control of reproductive rights: The 1933 Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring Law forced mass sterilization of those deemed feeble or unfit to parent; the 1935 Paragraph 175 against homosexuality and Paragraph 218 limiting abortion and birth control for “acceptable Aryan” women; the 1935 Miscegenation laws forbidding “mixed marriages;” and the 1939-1945 so-called “mercy killings” of the insane or infirm, leading to the Final Solution. It is remarkable to see the detailed files kept by National Socialist doctors tracing family “traits” that determined whether an individual was degenerate. Many of these have been archived at the U.S. Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. There is also a body of writing on degeneration from Nordau through George Mosse’s *Nationalism and Sexuality* of 1985.

⁵⁹¹ Wigman, *Language*, 80.

⁵⁹² I would argue that in their form, even Wigman’s *Women’s Dances*, created under government commission for the German dance festival of 1934, had elements more *Entartete* than Nazi. The masked figures of *Totenmal* certainly would not have appeared in the Great German Art Exhibit. The masks themselves would have been suspect.

herself in the persona of the Witch. The deep depression that set her course to Dalcroze and Laban, the sanatorium and the stage, could only be overcome by the dance. The play of tension and release and the relationship to space and time in her technique were brilliant innovations and mechanisms for her own emotional survival. To lose that was to lose everything. She was self-centered and myopic in light of the terror that marched through her country. But she knew that she had to hold fast to the dance to go on.

Remain quiet – do not allow the nervous shivering to arise. Do not complain . . . nobody can take your rich life from you. Your creations may pass, you may be fast forgotten but maybe you have planted a few seeds and maybe the earth was fertile at some places.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹³ Wigman in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 250.

Chapter Four: School's End, War's End and After

Leaving Dresden

The once fertile dancing field of Dresden was becoming uninhabitable for Wigman. The city had maintained its reputation as a center for arts and culture during the first years of Nazi dictatorship, but all arts activities were increasingly governed from Berlin.⁵⁹⁴ Many cultural institutions began moving from the city of Dresden and Wigman also applied for such a move, to Berlin where Hanns Benkert was residing. In 1937, her application for relocation to Berlin had been officially “unapproved.”⁵⁹⁵ A series of memos between Wigman and officials of the *Reichskulturkammer* and the Reich’s Ministry between May and June show her rapidly changing situation. In May she wrote in anticipation of participating at the Great German Art Day in Munich. On June 30, the Ministry generated the following internal memo:

Frau Mary Wigman believes of herself that she still has something to offer modern art dance and expects to be called to the German Master Workshops for Dance. The responsible officer for dance matters shares this view. He has employed the supplicant [Wigman] in strictly limited tasks during the summer semester of 1937 . . . a transfer [of her school to Berlin] seems undesirable because all sorts of demonstrable confusions and backwards aspects of the school, which go back to the 1920s have not been entirely eliminated and it would be sensible to let them quietly die out in the provinces rather than permit them to get established in the Reich capital.⁵⁹⁶

There were more than 17,000 trials against Germans who opposed the regime in 1937.⁵⁹⁷ In 1937, Mary Wigman choreographed her *Autumnal Dances* in what appeared to be the fading light of her own fame. She had lost her status. Her diaries of 1938 reveal that she felt the opportunity for considering immigration had past. “To go abroad? To the U.S.A.? It is not possible anymore.”⁵⁹⁸ On 9-10 November, 1938, sanctioned violence

⁵⁹⁴ Karina and Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*, 193-311.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 272-73.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁵⁹⁷ Detlev J.K Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 134-40.

⁵⁹⁸ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 250.

toward Germany's Jewish population was laid bare during the *Krystallnacht*. Jewish synagogues and property were brutally destroyed as officials relentlessly pursued a policy of Aryanization.⁵⁹⁹ At the same time, Hitler continued to formulate plans to expand the borders of Germany to the east, his ultimate goal being Russia. The Western powers had tried to avert war by handing over the Sudetenland to Hitler at a hastily arranged summit in Munich in 1938. By August 1939, it became clear that appeasement war had not succeeded in forestalling war.⁶⁰⁰ In a message to the commissar of the League of Nations Hitler wrote,

Everything I do is directed against Russia. If the West is too stupid and too blind to see this I shall be forced to reach an understanding with Russia and fight the West, and then, once the West is defeated, turn against the Soviet Union with all the power at my command.⁶⁰¹

This was the plan that Hitler followed in the first two years of the war. On 22 August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact.⁶⁰² On 1 September 1939, German troops smashed into Poland. On 3 September England and France declared war on Germany in accordance with their pact to defend Poland. On 4 September Wigman wrote in her diary, "The unthinkable has become reality; we have war."⁶⁰³ Then she choreographed a solo suite of three dances to Polish folksongs: *Tänze nach slawischen Liedern*. The lightning campaign in Poland was over in three weeks. However a seven-month stall followed the blitzkrieg. In May 1940, Germany moved into the Low Countries and continued into France. Paris fell June 14 and France signed the

⁵⁹⁹ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*, with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 399.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁰¹ From Hitler's message to Karl J. Burckhardt on August 11, 1939, in Haffner, *The Ailing Empire*, 224.

⁶⁰² The pact contained secret provisions to the effect that in case of a war against Poland, the Soviet Union would get back parts of eastern Poland it had ceded in 1921. Furthermore it would be given control over the Baltic borderlands (cf. Haffner, 225). Certainly Stalin knew of Hitler's ultimate plans against the Soviet Union. He thought to keep Hitler at bay by involving Germany in a war with England and France. *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Wigman diary entry, 4 September 1939, in Schwaen.

armistice on June 22.⁶⁰⁴ One year later, Germany undertook Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia, and in December it declared war on the United States, making a true world war.⁶⁰⁵

Within Germany, the war against Jewish citizens escalated and control tightened over all cultural activities. By 1941, a police regulation required that all Jewish Germans wear the Star of David. “In June 1941 a solution to the Jewish question was still envisioned by the German leadership in terms of forced resettlement . . .”⁶⁰⁶ At the same time the government placed a general ban on dance dramas and anything that did not comply with ballet traditions and National Socialist values.⁶⁰⁷ A specific ban of free dance or German expressive dance in public places applied to Wigman’s work.⁶⁰⁸ She had become a political liability to Benkert after more than ten years as business and romantic partner. Traveling to Berlin in 1941 to teach a series of workshops, Wigman arrived at Benkert’s house, suitcase in hand. Only then did she learn from Benkert’s housekeeper that he had married a woman who was not only younger but had Party affiliations more advantageous to his own career.⁶⁰⁹ Loss followed loss, yet Wigman revealed none of them in her extant letters to Hanya Holm in the United States. Only through her poems, letters, diary and her dances can we glimpse the depth of her bereavement, not only for the betrayal by Benkert but mourning for her own willful allegiances to her nation and to her art.

In the spring of 1942, the Wigman School, her home for decades, was sold to the City of Dresden. Her accompanists Gretl Curth-Hasting, Gisela Sonntag and Hanns Hasting had established a separate Dance Academy, approved by the government, within Wigman’s school. The Academy was subsumed into the municipal conservatory and so

⁶⁰⁴ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 79-81.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁶⁰⁶ Matthäus in *Ibid.*, 251.

⁶⁰⁷ Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*, 295.

⁶⁰⁸ Wigman’s professional decline was precipitous. By 31 March 1940, she was presented in second billing to the students of dance theatre at the Theatre Horst-Wesselplatz in Berlin. Program, Tanzarchiv Leipzig.

⁶⁰⁹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 256.

her association with the school came to an end.⁶¹⁰ Another betrayal, this time by those with whom she had worked for years, added new bitterness to her losses:

As of today, this, my school, no longer exists. For 22 years, love, effort, care, also joy, beginning, center, expansion, good times, and bad times.

Now it is not only the name on the house that is disappearing; it is also the spirit that is departing.⁶¹¹

Final Solo Concert

Twelve years passed between the experiment of *Totenmal* and Wigman's final solo concert. Since *Totenmal*, she had experienced great successes beyond the borders of Germany and she had choreographed and performed as part of the 1936 Olympic spectacle. She had also fallen into disillusionment and despair amidst personal and professional loss. Wigman had often declared that she would choose to retire from the stage before her performance powers declined.⁶¹² Three months before she lost her Dresden studio, Wigman presented her final solo concert in February 1942. As was her practice, the works in this concert grew from improvisatory sessions with her composer at the time, Aleida Montijn.⁶¹³ Together they developed the dance themes. The performance included her *Farewell and Thanksgiving*, which was captured on film.⁶¹⁴ In fact, the local government supported documentation of this final performance. The film proves that Wigman was still in command of her dancing and also shows her mastery of using motif to build gestural language. She repeats a rippling movement that reverberates through her upper body and along her arm, to the tips of her fingers. Reminiscent of a farewell wave, the gesture is not charged with tension but rather with a sort of yielding. The movement also was sustained – without dynamic variation that was intended to leave an impression that it would go on beyond that moment of leave taking. There is softness in her muscles and joints. Even on film, the surrounding space appears to hold little resistance as she reaches out and she draws her focus inward in a sort of moving benediction. Then her

⁶¹⁰ H. Lazarus, "Die Akte Wigman" Hildesheim (Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln - Georg Olms Verlag, 2004).

⁶¹¹ Diary Entry: 2 April 1942.

⁶¹² Personal interview Brigitta Herrmann 2006.

⁶¹³ Wigman, *Language*, 79 and 117.

⁶¹⁴ This film can be seen at Tanzarchiv Leipzig.

gaze follows her hand and she looks out beyond the performance space. After one of her last performances, an audience member reportedly approached Wigman, “Mary Wigman, it was more beautiful than ever. But it is dangerous for you. Too many tears have been shed in the audience.”⁶¹⁵

Isa Partsch-Bergsohn recalled being moved to tears by another dance in Wigman’s farewell concert. “*The Dance of Niobe* moved me deeply. It had nothing of the pathos and literalness of the first dance [*The Dance of Brunhilde*] but abstractly condensed desperation . . .”⁶¹⁶ Wigman was able to dance her hopelessness and grief through the character of Niobe. In literature, the earliest mention of Niobe in Homer had come to represent a stock form of bereavement. Niobe is the mother forever mourning her slain children. She is a matriarch whose overarching pride left her blind to her own limitations against the infinite power of the gods. In the end, wearied with the shedding of her tears, Niobe was turned to stone.⁶¹⁷ The theme of Niobe and the choreographic form of the dance can be read as Wigman coming to a new reckoning of the political reality. In some ways, Wigman’s dances were her children, born of her mission to prove the dance art a great and profound vehicle of the human spirit. And she was sure to place herself as the creator of that vehicle. That such a calling could be subverted, co-opted and misguided, and finally rejected would have been unimaginable in the cosmology of the young Mary Wigman. At 56, her perspective was much changed. While more than a million of her countrymen were dying at Stalingrad, she responded with the new dance:

I just had to do something about it, maybe only to get rid of my own feelings. So I started this dance, dedicated to women in the war. It started with a haughty feeling, as if to challenge the gods . . . I remember there is a figure in Greek myth who has gone through all this. It was Niobe. The dance begins with a challenge to the gods in the pride of women, then the movements are more quiet, thinking of the wonderful time when the baby was born . . . Then it goes back to the challenge; then she gives her children away; then she receives the wound of an arrow through her own heart as she . . . mourns over her children; then she

⁶¹⁵ Angela Rannow and Ralf Stabel, *Mary Wigman in Leipzig* (Leipzig: Tanzwissenschaft, 1994), 57.

⁶¹⁶ Partsch-Bergsohn, *Modern Dance in Germany*, 112.

⁶¹⁷ Wigman, *Language*, 81-86.

[Wigman in the dance] sits again on her stool, emptiness turned into stone as Niobe was turned into stone.⁶¹⁸

It is curious to consider Wigman's choreographed representations of motherhood. The mother was one representation of woman that she returned to again and again in her career, along with religious iconography and Greek myths. While Nazi policy elevated the idea of a woman's place in the home and rewarded motherhood, Wigman danced women who were archetypal mothers. Niobe was felled by her pride. Her story is one of the mother instinct turned destructive. Certainly, Niobe holds autobiographical information when considering Wigman's life. The emotive tenants of *Ausdruckstanz* demand an autobiographical element in each of her works even if abstracted. That she chose the character of Niobe and finished the work as if turned to stone seemed to refer to her sense of paralysis and perhaps defeat at the end of her career.⁶¹⁹

The Battle of Stalingrad was a touchstone for the German people.⁶²⁰ Loss in that battle made evident the possibility that the war could end in a crushing defeat for Germany. What was most evident was that Operation Barbarossa was at its core a race war.⁶²¹ Russian soil became the field for permanently removing the "Jewish Bolshevik" menace from its source. This was to be the central location of the war of extermination. Robert Moeller points out that "Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of the army, told his commanders in March 1941 that the war against the Soviet Union would be a 'struggle between two different races.' Unlike the war in the west, the east was a 'race war' (*Rassenkampf*), designed to eliminate racially undesirable populations, in particular Jews and Slavs . . ."⁶²² In many ways, the push into the Soviet Union and the Battle of Stalingrad would have lingering impact on German identity not only during the war but particularly after the war. It would be the source of contested memory that

⁶¹⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 163.

⁶¹⁹ Or it could be read as a rejection of Nazi pronatalist policies along with idealized motherhood. Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk*.

⁶²⁰ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 249.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 244-294.

⁶²² Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 10.

continued long after the battle was lost.⁶²³ Domestically, the government was calling for increased efforts of *Opfer* or sacrifice. Even before the battle was lost, Hermann Göring placed Stalingrad in the German *mythos*, claiming “in a thousand years, every German will speak of this battle in reverence with hallowed awe.”⁶²⁴ He insisted that the *Opfer* of the Sixth Army would not be in vain. That Wigman chose the character of Niobe to depict women and the war, and began with a “haughty feeling” in challenging the gods, reveals much about her thinking at that time. The war and her career were conflated in the representation of loss but Niobe’s was not a simple victimhood. Rather, it was the *hubris* of Niobe that Wigman danced, coupled with a heroic human failing.

To Leipzig

After 1942 and the transfer of ownership of her studio, government orders restrained Wigman from performing, but she was not left immobile. She was granted a position as guest teacher in Leipzig through her old friend Hanns Niedecken-Gebhard, who had supported her work as early as 1921 when he produced her *The Seven Dances of Life*.⁶²⁵ It appears that Goebbels did not want Wigman to hold a full-time position but Niedecken-Gebhard could make accommodations on her behalf. As a well-positioned Nazi and head of the Department of Dramatic Art at the Music Academy in Leipzig, Niedecken-Gebhard was able to help Wigman work under tenuous circumstances, although she was never granted a full-time position there. At Leipzig in 1942, Wigman began a key working relationship and friendship with composer Kurt Schwaen. Schwaen had been imprisoned from 1935 to 1938 as an enemy of the Nazi government due to his membership in the German Communist Party. Released from prison between 1938 and 1942, he found work as an accompanist at the Academy in Leipzig.⁶²⁶ To Schwaen, it

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Robert Moeller, “Every German Will Speak of This Battle,” in Omer Bartov, Atina Grossmann and Mary Nolan eds. *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 162.

⁶²⁵ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 162-163.

⁶²⁶ Schwaen kept a daybook throughout his adult life. In 2006, 60 volumes existed upon which his recollections were based. He also saved his correspondence with Wigman from 1942 through 1947. His papers hold a wealth of information that cry out to be mined in future research.

seemed incomprehensible that the Wigman School had been closed.⁶²⁷ He also understood that the “free dance” was counter to Nazi ideology.⁶²⁸ His first meeting with Wigman was at the Academy in October 1942. He wrote, “She is small, almost shy and looks wretched. This impression disappears in conversation. Then she looks lively, wild, determined and exceedingly warm and always polite.”⁶²⁹ The two worked together until 1943 when Schwaen was conscripted into the German 999th Afrika Brigade, a penal military unit made up of former political prisoners. These former prisoners were thought condemned again, given the high mortality rate of that unit. Letters between the two show that Wigman tried to counsel Schwaen in his unsuccessful efforts to avoid being drafted. Correspondence between Wigman and Schwaen illustrate her concern for his well-being, as well as her own unsettled position. On 5 February 1943, Wigman wrote to him

The heart lies heavy with all that has taken place. Now many men whom I knew personally are suffering at Stalingrad. Also the new regulations lie like a heavy weight around my sphere of activity. Still, nobody knows what shape it eventually will take.⁶³⁰

These letters starkly expose how the focus of her attention, including how she perceived those in her life, revolved around her work and the belief that her work was larger than the chaotic times or the individuals involved. Schwaen was again losing his freedom under the Nazis and despaired in his diary. To be sent to Africa at that point was virtually a death sentence. In his diary, he wrote that Wigman could in no way understand what conscription meant to him. But later he wrote that he had been wrong about her. Wigman took on Schwaen’s wife Hedwig, as her accompanist, thus helping to support her while her husband was enlisted. And Wigman maintained her friendship with the Schwaens for many years. In an interview at his home in Marlsdorf in May 2007, not long before his death at age 98, Schwaen confronted the question of Wigman’s political allegiances. Clear-eyed and direct, he switched from German to English to answer that “She was no

⁶²⁷ Kurt Schwaen, *Erinnerungen an die Tänzerin Mary Wigman: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen Erlebnisse Briefwechsel (Recollection of the dancer Mary Wigman: Diary Notes, Experiences Correspondence)* (Berlin: Kurt Schwaen-Archiv, 2006, unpublished), 2. (All translations are mine.)

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 14.

Nazi. She was German, yes, but not all Germans were Nazis.” Schwaen also claimed the Hans Niedeken-Gebhard, Wigman’s benefactor was indeed a “Brownshirt” and a Nazi party supporter.⁶³¹ I contend that Schwaen’s insights are particularly important in gauging Wigman’s involvement, given his own life-long political leanings and unique perspective on her life and work.⁶³²

Under a commission from Niedeken-Gebhard, Wigman worked with composer Carl Orff to stage *Carmina Burana* for a July 1943 performance at the Leipzig Opera House.⁶³³ In February 1944, Allied bombers destroyed the dance building at the Leipzig Music Academy, but Wigman continued to teach a handful of students in her apartment.⁶³⁴ There, she threw herself intensely into teaching until the declaration of total war in August 1944 when all theatres were closed. At the end of the war, Wigman was left “physically and mentally isolated and exhausted, living under very deprived conditions in the East . . .”⁶³⁵ The severe food shortage left Wigman suffering from malnutrition. Annie Hess had managed to keep some food on the table and, supplemented their diet with care packages from Wigman’s American students and friends. Displaced dance students continued to find refuge at her home.⁶³⁶

War’s End

The political situation at the end of the war in May 1945 made manifest Wigman’s question, “Who knows what shape it will eventually take?”⁶³⁷ One thing that the events of May 1945 did shape was a struggle for a usable identity that continues to haunt the German people and has fueled controversies among historians since.⁶³⁸ While

⁶³¹ Interview. Kurt Schwaen, Marlsdorf, Germany May 29, 2007.

⁶³² Interview. Kurt Schwaen, Marlsdorf, Germany, May 29, 2007. Schwaen survived the war and went on to help reinvigorate music education and performance in East Germany.

⁶³³ It is difficult to reconcile the drama of *Carmina Burana* unfolding the same month that the first transports of prisoners were dispatched to Treblinka.

⁶³⁴ Partsch-Bergshon, *Modern Dance in Germany*, 116.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁷ Schwaen 14.

⁶³⁸ For example, “The myth that figures like Laban, Wigman, and Palucca suffered terribly and hence had no choice to serve the new masters is simply a falsehood spread by them after the war . . . They accepted the Nazi Weltanschauung in every particular way. They rejoiced in the grand German world mission and all its smaller consequences. . . .

the end of the war saw the liberation of the victims of concentration camps by the Allies and the Soviets, the German population faced the westward march of the Red Army, occupation and an identification with their own victimization. These conflicting ideas would consolidate in a particular post-war German view of themselves. The Potsdam Agreement left Wigman living under Russian occupation in Leipzig. She again opened a school there in 1945. No longer performing, she made a group work for her students in 1946 entitled *Three Choric Studies of the Misery of Time*. The dance cycle unfolded with the sections: *Escape*, *Those Seeking* and *In Loving Memory*. In choreographic form, she followed the plight of German POWs, those expelled from the eastern front, and also undertook the patriotic *Trauerarbeit* or work of mourning that she had visited earlier in *Totenmal* and in the Olympic spectacle. It was also part of the project of commemoration that she had claimed as an artist.

Wigman continued such work in the much-humbler venue of a studio performance, rather than on any sort of national stage. Yet, she still saw herself as part of an international dance community. At the end of the War she regained contact with many acquaintances including John Martin, who reported on her whereabouts in the *New York Times*, through an excerpt from a letter from her:

Since 1942 I live in Leipzig – left Dresden, house, school, everything there because it had become intolerable for me. The Nazis did not like me! Here I live among ruins and have a tiny school of my own where I teach from morning until night. Hard life, but wonderful to be alive, after all! No money, my capital ‘frozen,’ as it is called, but that means: nothing at all.⁶³⁹

On July 3, 1945, she wrote to Kurt Schwaen, “Now I know that you live.”⁶⁴⁰ Her letter to Schwaen is the first evidence of their reconnection and the beginning of their conversations about the possibility of her relocation to Berlin. Schwaen encouraged her to consider the move but she hesitated, equally unsure of the political scene and the dance climate in Berlin. She claimed that the months of American occupation in that city were

German dance chose the swastika before the state authorities had thought to raise it over their head.” Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*, 110.

⁶³⁹ John Martin, “The Dance: Word from Wigman,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1946, 2:2. It is important to note that Martin was writing in 1946. Wigman’s letter was written after the end of the war.

⁶⁴⁰ Schwaen, letter of 3 July 1945, 16.

absolutely negative from the cultural point of view. Also, the troops were departing and she was worried about the looting that accompanied the *interregnum* in which the state lacked any recognized leadership. She was also suspicious of the three-person committee that was to supervise dance in Berlin.⁶⁴¹ Her letters allude to the sense that this committee might not be of the caliber that would appreciate her work or her stature. However, she continued to correspond with Schwaen about the move and in September 1945 she received a letter from the Berlin suburb of Wilmersdorf offering her a home and support in her effort to establish a new school. Hedwig Schwaen, Kurt's wife, had recommended her to the city officials. Writing in response to Schwaen she was cautious, waiting until it could be delivered by hand and adding, "One does not know any more whom to trust."⁶⁴² She expressed regret that she was not able to undertake the journey to Berlin and could not respond to the offer – yet. She closed her letter with her thanks.

Darling Mr. Schwaen, to you and your wife, I thank you not only for your assistance to me but for your faithful regard for the ideals of the dance, our dance which may be the only dance that has not become tired like the other forms and has something to give still.⁶⁴³ (*Emphasis Wigman's*)

In January 1946 Wigman wrote to Schwaen of the bitter cold in Leipzig. And she made clear her growing reservations about staying there:

I myself work in silence and must do this to be able to exist. I could have it differently if I could join in what one calls Agit-Prop under the KPD [the German Communist Party.] But I want no dependence that obliges or compromises me or lowers the level of my art. I'd rather fight for the penny than stoop to becoming a promotional symbol. I am still curious about the possibility of going to Berlin. Economically, things may prosper here again but culturally it seems dubious to me. Pity!⁶⁴⁴

It is important to consider not only what Wigman wrote but to whom she was writing. Schwaen had been a member of the KPD since before the Nazis came to power. This was the cause of his initial incarceration in 1933. He remained a Communist throughout his life. Yet, Wigman felt free to express her concerns about art-making under

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Schwaen, letter from Wigman, 12 September 1945, 18.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Schwaen, letter from Wigman 3 January 1946, 19.

the KPD. Growing from a movement of socialists opposed to the war to a viable political party in the aftermath of World War I, the KPD had stood in opposition to the larger Social Democratic Party since 1914, when the SPD members of the Reichstag had voted in favor of the war.⁶⁴⁵ Schwaen had been a child during the Spartacist periods of 1918 and 1919 when the KPD was committed to violent revolution in Germany. Wigman, in her thirties, was coming into her artistic and professional maturity during those years. She had been of the class and generation that feared a Bolshevik revolution in Germany. The above letter to Schwaen was written when the KPD was still independent.

In April 1946, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany was founded through a merger of the SPD and the KPD in the Soviet-occupied areas.⁶⁴⁶ In December 1947, Wigman served as a delegate to the First German People's Congress for Unity and Peace in the Soviet Sector.⁶⁴⁷ So it appears that she made accommodations with the SED at the same time she was working toward her move to Berlin. She wrote to Schwaen in April 1946 that she was still waiting for a word from Berlin about moving to Wilmersdorf, saying that the "administrative machinery is moving slowly."⁶⁴⁸ In fact, huge transformations were happening in both sectors of separated Germany. In the East the idea that "monopoly capitalism" had given rise to Nazism demanded a transformation of capitalism itself. By 1949 the German Democratic Republic had undergone a major reordering of political, economic and social life to Soviet-style government.⁶⁴⁹

At the same time, change in the West was characterized by a policy of denazification, coupled with a "cumbersome bureaucracy, relative inefficiency and unintended consequences . . . [Germans were categorized into] five groups ranging from 'major offenders' through to 'exonerated', on the basis of answers to a lengthy questionnaire."⁶⁵⁰ Caught in the bureaucratic nightmare, Wigman was happy to have received letters from the Central Committee for National Education in Berlin and was

⁶⁴⁵ Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 207.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁷ Schwaen, letter from Wigman, 3 January 1946, 19.

⁶⁴⁸ Schwaen, letter from Wigman, undated, received on 3 April 1946, 20.

⁶⁴⁹ Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 208.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 209.

hopeful.⁶⁵¹ In Leipzig, the music department was to be closed by the Russians again and in her estimation that “venerable institute” could not recover, “Not enough good teachers!”⁶⁵²

In early May of 1946, Schwaen wrote to the council of Wilmersdorf as Wigman’s representative in an attempt to speed the process. Part of the agreement was the purchase of a house to be used as Wigman’s home and school. This had stalled negotiations.⁶⁵³ Schwaen wrote the council again to inform them that Wigman would be arriving 17 May to finalize things. Meanwhile, she continued her work in Leipzig. Sending birthday greetings to Schwaen in November, she was in the midst of preparations for a production of Gluck’s *Orpheus and Eurydice* to be staged at the Leipzig Opera in March 1947.⁶⁵⁴ She expressed the desire to work with him again to have a musician who can improvise and who “loves the things which I also love.”⁶⁵⁵ She complained of the difficulties of working with a choreographer who “works by committee” and of the difficulties of getting materials for sets and of using dancers from the Opera who were not trained in the style of her own students, who were relegated to the chorus.⁶⁵⁶ She had not lost hope for the move. She wrote to Schwaen, “On the surface, one goes on working as if everything was the same. Yesterday’s technical rehearsal for *Orpheus* has shown me that the work – in spite of the defective material – could be good.”⁶⁵⁷ Marion Kant considers Wigman constitutionally anti-communist and there is evidence that she felt constricted working under Soviet control. Susan Manning underscores that she “voted with her feet when the Communists came to power in a way that she did not when the Nazis came to power.”⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵¹ Schwaen, letter from Wigman, undated, received on 3 April 1946, 20.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Letter from Schwaen to Wilmersdorf village, 10 May 1946, 21-22.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid. letter from Wigman to Schwaen, 28 November 1946, 23.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Schwaen, 32. By defective material, it appears that she is speaking of both the production qualities and training of the dancers.

⁶⁵⁸ Manning 1993, 226.

It's true that she finally relocated to Wilmerlsdorf in 1949, but she had been moving steadily in that direction for years.⁶⁵⁹

To Berlin

Others factors came into play in delaying Wigman's relocation. From the beginning of the occupation, Russia and the Western Allies clashed about governing policies for Berlin. On 20 October 1946, Berlin held its first free elections since 1933. The Social Democrat Ernst Reuter was elected mayor.⁶⁶⁰ Claiming that he was anti-Soviet, the Russians vetoed his election, so a deputy mayor was left to conduct the city's affairs until December 1948.⁶⁶¹ In June of 1948, the Western powers introduced currency reforms that resulted in a new Deutsche Mark. The Russians responded with an announcement that they would introduce a new currency in their zone. On 24 June 1948, Russia blocked all rail, water and highway routes through East Germany to West Berlin and on June 25, they stopped supplying food to the non-Soviet sectors of the city.⁶⁶² During the previous three years, the United States, Britain and France had never negotiated an agreement with the Soviets to guarantee rights of land-based access to Berlin through the Soviet zone. The blockade left the western portion of the city an island, cut off from food, supplies and services. The West responded by organizing a giant airlift to supply the more than 2 million West Berliners. At the height of the airlift in April 1949, planes landed in West Berlin at the rate of one every 45 seconds. By 15 April 1949, the Russian news agency TASS reported a willingness by Soviets to end the blockade. Serious negotiations between the four powers ended with a settlement on Western terms. By May the blockade was lifted but flights continued through July 1949.

⁶⁵⁹ It is also important to remember that many East Germans "voted with their feet" in the decade of the 1950s and such movement was based on economic as well as political concern. Cold War containment policies reached their height with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 505.

⁶⁶⁰ Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 86.

In the end, more than 2.3 million tons of supplies had been flown to West Berlin in over 278,000 flights.⁶⁶³

Once the blockade was officially lifted, Wigman began her move. In June 1949, Schwaen and his wife helped Wigman fulfill the invitation to relocate to the Wilmersdorf district of West Berlin.⁶⁶⁴ The magistrate of Wilmersdorf offered to support her school for one year, after which she was expected to take over financial responsibility. The economic benefits of the European Recovery Program or Marshall Plan made the possibility of mounting quality performances in the western sector more likely than had ever been the case in Leipzig or anywhere in the East.⁶⁶⁵

While government efforts to reunify failed in 1951, Wigman turned her attention to establishing her school and making new choreography. She began to present works at her studio. In 1952, a program there featured a trio of choric studies: *Those Waiting*, *The Homeless* and *Grievance and Accusation*.⁶⁶⁶ In all of the dances that she made throughout her career, only two studies appear to be straightforward social commentaries and both were made following World War II. The first was her *Three Choric Studies of the Misery of Time* (1946) and the last was the trio in 1952. Both were choric-style studies prepared for students, with emphases on simple movement and strong spatial patterns. Perhaps she used the choric style based on the abilities of her student dancers or perhaps she felt the approach appropriate to the thematic material. Most likely it was a combination of both factors.

Wigman's use of choreography as blatant social commentary was non-existent before the 1940s and speaks volumes about her thoughts at that time. These dances deserve further attention and analysis. Konrad Jarausch points out that in the years just following the war and particularly in the early 1950s, West Germans were facing the refoundation of a civil society. After the collapse of 1945, the task was to create a serviceable meaning of the war that permitted West Germans to acknowledge the war as part of their collective history. Various narratives emerged that rejected the collective

⁶⁶³ Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 505.

⁶⁶⁴ The Federal Republic of Germany had been established one month before.

⁶⁶⁵ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 89; and Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 511-512.

⁶⁶⁶ Wigman, *Language*, 118.

guilt of Nazi terror and embraced the victimhood of those who experienced “Soviet terror” at Stalingrad and in the existing POW camps where German soldiers were detained.⁶⁶⁷ Stories of the Red Army’s progress into East Germany featured brutality that included rape, pillage and the uprooting of expellees. In order to create a useable past for the process of nation-building, Stalingrad became a mythic battle once again and Eastern Front especially became the iconic site of German suffering and sacrifice.⁶⁶⁸

Responsibility for post-war misery was shifted as identities were redrawn from perpetrators of the war to victims among the German population. As Moeller points out, victims of Nazi racist genocide were rarely acknowledged while German suffering was underscored in the commemorative process of building a collective memory.

Wigman’s dance of 1952 represents this process of re-crafting memory. The first section: *Those Waiting*, clearly speaks to the families who wait for the return of a prisoner of war. Both the POW and the expellee became the primary representatives of victimhood. Along with the displaced, personal stories of deprivation and suffering of the entire German (not Nazi) population served to build a heroic edifice and narrative for the new West German state. Moeller points out that in the early 1950s, “tales of the expellees’ discovery of a new home in the Federal Republic became a central theme” of the *Heimatfilm*.⁶⁶⁹ These movies were vastly popular and, under the chancellorship of Konrad Adenaur (1949-1963), were among the most popular movie genres in West Germany. They pictured “unsullied natural landscapes,” pristine mountains and bucolic scenes populated by noble wildlife. In fact, they were not unlike images of the Fatherland produced under the *Reichskulturkammer*. And comparisons can be made to the *Bergfilme* of the 1920s and early 1930s, in which dancer Leni Riefenstahl began her acting, and later directing, career. Moeller explains that the “*Heimat* represented hearth and home, local culture and identity, values that postwar *Heimatfilme* could portray as a German bedrock that escaped the devastation of war and National Socialism.”⁶⁷⁰ He added that

⁶⁶⁷ Jarausch, *After Hitler*; and Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*.

⁶⁶⁸ Moeller, *War Stories*.

⁶⁶⁹ Moeller, *War Stories*, 128.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

“The German idea of *Heimat* came to embody the political and social community that could be salvaged from the Nazi ruins.”⁶⁷¹

Translation of dance titles is as difficult as translating poetry. Language used in the title of a dance is often condensed and metaphoric. The original title of Wigman’s second danced section, *Die Heimatlosen*, refers to more than simple homelessness but rather alludes to loss of home place, country. A poster from Christmas 1947 encouraged Germans, “Don’t forget them/The loneliest of our people/The prisoners of war throughout the world/The expellees and the homeless.”⁶⁷² Was Wigman choreographing the prevailing attitude of the West German government? Certainly, by using the theme for her students, she was reflecting a pressing concern. Writings of that time reflect widespread sorrow over a divided Germany. By finishing the performance with a work entitled *Grievance and Accusation*, she makes what could be read as her only direct choreographic response to her personal entanglement with the Third Reich and negotiations with a more public national guilt.

In the following year of 1953, she mounted her final studio productions and in those she returned to abstract themes that were based either on rhythmic form or mystical material.⁶⁷³ She was able to present these dances at the *Festival Recklinghausen*, which finally returned her work to the concert stage. In the end, Mary Wigman allied herself with a music-driven theater that was far from the territory of her Absolute Dance. Still, she was able to use her talent to awaken dynamic space on the stage. And prominent, large-stage spaces were becoming available to her once again. Led in the first phase by Adenauer’s conservative Minister of Economics, Ludwig Erhard, the so-named

⁶⁷¹ Celia Applegate in *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, figure 7, no page number, after 122.

⁶⁷³ Titles ranged from *Ecstatic Rhythm* (based on Honegger) to *The Prophetess* and *The Spook*. Wigman, *Language*, 118. Working closely once again with an accompanist, Ulrich Kessler, she danced with her students in Choric Studies II in January 1953. Manning interprets Wigman’s role of *The Prophetess* as a coming to terms with her accommodation to National Socialism. Indeed, the intention of *Ausdruckstanz* was an ongoing mining of the depths of individual experience. In this way, all of her dances were autobiographical in the deepest sense. And the central role of the *Prophetess* was a familiar one for Wigman. She had first explored the theme in 1934. But in her diary, she describes her experience of performing the work as a sort of coming home, a return to the stage and the transcendent moment when dance and life reach heightened vitality. *Ibid.*

“economic miracle” gained momentum in the FRG.⁶⁷⁴ Rebuilding was well underway in the West and theatres were part of the reconstruction. Between 1954 and 1958, Wigman choreographed and staged major works including Händel’s *Saul*, Carl Orff’s *Catulli Carmina/Carmina Burana* and Gluck’s opera *Alkestis*, all for the National Theater in Mannheim.⁶⁷⁵

By the mid-1950s, international students were again coming to Wigman, many from the United States. American dancer Bill Costanza was stationed as U.S. military personnel in Germany and received permission to travel across the Eastern sector to take class at Wigman’s school in the West. He recalls her ability to communicate in many languages with the students who filled her summer courses.⁶⁷⁶ Other German colleagues who had lived through the war were aware of her early work and major contributions to the art form. But the German students who populated her Berlin school were of a different generation. Growing up amidst the chaos of war and coming of age in a defeated and divided Germany, shamed by the revelations of the Nuremburg trials, these young people felt called to dance in a very different way than Wigman. While German dance was utterly disrupted by war, American modern dance had thrived. Soviet-style ballet had become the art of the Eastern sector and Wigman’s student Grete Palucca headed the most highly regarded institution in the East. The Western Sector remained open to innovations from the United States and Western Europe. Postmodernist Merce Cunningham’s visit to Berlin and the Wigman School in 1960 was greeted with enthusiasm, his work hailed as the dance of the present.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁴ Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 496-520.

⁶⁷⁵ Damaged by Allied bombings, Mannheim was first occupied by the American military in 1945. In 1953 a competition was undertaken to design a new theatre. Construction began in 1955, the theatre was inaugurated in 1957, and Wigman’s *Alkestis* was performed there in 1958. Brigitta Herrmann, Interviews, Germany and Paris, 26-31 May 2007. For photos of *Alkestis* see Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 289 and Wigman, *Language*, 25.

⁶⁷⁶ Personal interview, Bill Costanza, Martha’s Vineyard, Mass. 4 August 2007.

⁶⁷⁷ Cunningham’s collaboration with John Cage and their chance processes of making dances — a hallmark of fractured postmodernism — seem particularly well-suited for a city about to be split in two by the Berlin Wall. Personal interviews, Brigitta Herrmann and Sarah Manno, Philadelphia November 2007, Sandy Broyard, Martha’s Vineyard, Mass. 1-6 August 2007 and Noelle Simonet, Paris: *Centre National de la Danse* May 2007.

But Mary Wigman was no longer of the time, her style of modernism outdated. She was also too old to perform. She had her first cardiac infarction in 1956 yet she continued to teach.⁶⁷⁸ Brigitta Herrmann began her study with Wigman at the Berlin school in 1957 and continued a long association with Wigman until she emigrated to Philadelphia in 1968. Herrmann said that when one was in the room with Wigman, she always left with the impression of a great artist. Herrmann began her early training in East Germany studying Russian ballet technique, which was the mainstay of the Palucca School. Upon being accepted by the Wigman School, the choreographic and performance possibilities of Wigman's style of expressive dance were a revelation. However, Wigman in her seventies could not be an active role model for the young dancers of the new Germany. At the Berlin Wigman School it was Dore Hoyer, not Wigman, who became the dancing model for students who were still drawn to study *Ausdruckstanz*.⁶⁷⁹

Many of these students would not come to recognize the strength of Wigman's fundamental dance philosophy until later, if at all. And for others of the new generation, her poetic, emotive imagery seemed obsolete. Just as the American postmodern dancers had turned away from the psychodrama of Martha Graham, young German dancers were looking for something new to inspire them. And there was something else: the young Germans were a nation apart from Wigman's generation. Dancer Helmut Gottschild said, "We were the first generation to come to consciousness after the war. The first generation to ask our parents how it could have happened. And suddenly we were confronted with Mary Wigman's pathos . . ." ⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ Her heart attack stopped Wigman's work for awhile. She did not choreograph any major work in 1956. It also delayed Herrmann's entry into the school. Herrmann interview 1995.

⁶⁷⁹ Hoyer performed the role of the Chosen One in the *Sacre du Printemps* that Wigman choreographed in 1957, which once again featured the theme of sacrifice of the individual for the group. Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 183.

There is an extant set of drawings that Wigman made for the *Sacre* see Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 290-292. For a full collection of Wigman's choreographic drawings see Dietrich Steinbeck, *Mary Wigman's Choreographisches Skizzenbuch 1930-1961* (München, Leipzig, Mannheim: Hentrich, 1987).

⁶⁸⁰ Gottschild in Manning, *Ecstasy*, 227.

Yet, American students continued to travel to Germany to study with Wigman. In 1958, American students financed her last trip to the United States. She had applied for a visa years before in Soviet-occupied Leipzig but had been denied.⁶⁸¹ As a citizen of West Berlin she was finally granted passage and met with Martha Graham and Ruth St. Denis and gave a series of lectures at universities and women's clubs.⁶⁸² And once again, she returned from the United States to find her home in crisis. Late in 1958, Russian premier Nikita Khrushchev demanded that the Western powers withdraw from West Berlin and turn their sectors into a free, demilitarized city.⁶⁸³ He threatened to sign an independent peace treaty with the GDR that would give East Germany control of all access routes to West Berlin if the Allies refused.⁶⁸⁴ West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt denounced the Soviet plan and Western powers pledged to maintain their presence. As the Cold War

⁶⁸¹ Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk*, 295.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 295.

⁶⁸³ Rhetorically, the East German government called the Berlin Wall an *antifaschistischer Schutzwall*, or anti-fascist protective rampart, intended to dissuade aggression from the "imperialist, militarist" and capitalist, consumer-driven West. An East German booklet published in 1955 by the Socialist Unity Party's Agitation Department, Berlin District, read as follows: "Both from the moral standpoint as well as in terms of the interests of the whole German nation, leaving the GDR is an act of political and moral backwardness and depravity. Those who let themselves be recruited objectively serve West German reaction and militarism, whether they know it or not. Is it not despicable when for the sake of a few alluring job offers or other false promises about a 'guaranteed future' one leaves a country in which the seed for a new and more beautiful life is sprouting, and is already showing the first fruits, for the place that favors a new war and destruction? Is it not an act of political depravity when citizens, whether young people, workers, or members of the intelligentsia, leave and betray what our people have created through common labor to *offer themselves* to the American or British secret services or work for the West German factory owners, Junkers or militarists? [*Emphasis mine*] Does not leaving the land of progress for the morass of an historically outdated social order demonstrate political backwardness and blindness? . . . [W]orkers throughout Germany will demand punishment for those who today leave the German Democratic Republic, the strong bastion of the fight for peace, to serve the deadly enemy of the German people, the imperialists and militarists." Students at the Wigman school were certainly affected by the Wall, some with family in the eastern sector. Of course, the Wall became the symbol of much more than a barrier to travel, as evidenced by the momentous events of 1989. East German booklet published in 1955 by the Socialist Unity Party's Agitation Department, Berlin District.

⁶⁸⁴ Fulbrook, *Concise History*, 217-218 and Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 544-545.

heated up between the United States and the Soviet Union, Berlin became the flash point for contact between the two powers. As tensions mounted, more than 1,000 East Germans began fleeing to West Berlin each day.⁶⁸⁵ East German authorities tightened travel restrictions but the stream of émigrés increased steadily.⁶⁸⁶

On 13 August 1961, East German police built a 26-mile barbed wire barricade across the city. Within a few weeks, a concrete wall replaced the barbed wire for more than half its length and Berlin became a city truly divided. Two months following the erection of the wall, Wigman directed her final work. With Gustav Sellner, she choreographed and mounted Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* in West Berlin.⁶⁸⁷ What better danced-myth than the passage from the world of the living to the underworld could have been chosen in a divided city? In her final work, choreographed themes reflected both her environment and her private life. Through this production her career came full circle. Nearly a half of a century had passed since those early, heady days of discovery at Hellerau, where her performing life began with the choric study of Gluck's *Orpheus* by Dalcroze and Adolph Appia. There seems no better myth than Orpheus with which to memorialize Wigman's life and career. The descent and return of Orpheus from Hades represented an ideology of metamorphosis and a metaphor for redemption. Wigman's dance became her own road to emancipation. Steeped in mysticism, Wigman's dance promised a sort of deliverance through ritualized practice and an aesthetic doctrine. As early as 1921, in *The Seven Dances of Life*, Wigman affirmed that it is only through the dance that the character passes through death and attains liberation.

Wigman claimed that the wedding of physical body and inner spirit defined her work to the end of her life. She was able to maintain her studio with the financial help of friends and an honorarium from the government. A second heart attack in 1965 left her weak, yet Wigman continued to teach until 1967, when she finally closed her classes. In 1969, at age 83, she visited Israel with life-long friend Herbert Binswanger. Most of her travel later in life was to Switzerland and the countryside that she had known and loved

⁶⁸⁵ Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany*, 570-573.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ Wigman, *Language*, 118.

since her time at Monte Verità.⁶⁸⁸ Even though she became nearly blind, she claimed she could feel the landscape of those familiar mountains. Suffering from failing eyesight and a weak heart, she died in Berlin during the fall of 1973. A few months earlier, she had written to Binswanger,

Everywhere people are again surrounded by snow despite the fact that snowdrops and crocuses started to flower here too. I only know this from hearsay; for I am living in Hades, in the realm of the shadows, and there everything is in motion . . . it is rather like sinking and being lifted, swaying and tottering . . . I want to resign myself to it. I want to do what I can.⁶⁸⁹

Even close to her death, her descriptive powers remain rooted in physical experience. She had made numerous dances in which she grappled with death. Even as she moved toward the end of her life she met her decline with a dancer's sensibility. She continued to make a case for dance as a profound art form. She broke open structures of movement invention and female objectification, only to be accused of performing madness on the concert stage.

In the end she wrote:

People like my dancing or they think it most terrible . . . It is hard for an artist to tell why her dance method is a success. I have tried to combine emotion with intellect. Some call my art tragic, far removed from sweetness and prettiness. I have tried only to interpret modern man and his fate.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 198-200.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

Conclusion - Like a Moth to the Flame: Mary Wigman, Fascism and Modernity

I return to the initial question, why does Mary Wigman still matter? What started as a book chronicling Wigman's contributions to the field of dance and theatre has evolved into a larger story. The editor of my original volume commented that it was strange that so much space was dedicated to biography in that earlier book.⁶⁹¹ This dissertation has allowed me the pain and pleasure of further exploring the particular place where art and politics intersect. What Wigman's life exposes are the complex and sometimes contradictory strategies of an artist in response to the tumultuous events of the long twentieth century.

As Elizabeth Heineman points out, "the experience of Nazism and its aftermath was complex enough that it can be deployed to argue a wide range of positions."⁶⁹² Since reunification in 1990, Konrad Jarausch and others have led efforts to rethink German history in a context of the economic and social developments of the last half of the twentieth century, rather than solely through the dark lens of the first half. As Jarausch points out, the new challenge is to write a more reflexive history "that is aware of the artifice we historians create to give the past a voice and an imagination."⁶⁹³ I have undertaken this telling of Mary Wigman's story with awareness that such an historian's artifice is inherent in any effort to breathe life into an historical figure. And I acknowledge that the very nature of biographical writing can suffer more from the author's identification with her subject than might occur in the larger practice of writing social history. I have also tried to keep in mind the twists and turns of historians' arguments as they have evolved since the end of World War II.

The artifice of history, to use Jarausch's term, could allow Wigman to be used on any side of the intense historical debates that arose after World War II and have continued to this day. Her career can serve as evidence of Hitler's overwhelming interest in and influence on the arts. She was also directly affected by the very functional and systematic build-up of the *Reichskulturkammer* under National Socialist bureaucracy. It

⁶⁹¹ Correspondence with Franc Chamberlain, 2008.

⁶⁹² Elizabeth Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past," *Central European History* 38:1 (2005), 41-74, cf. 73.

⁶⁹³ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, ix.

could be argued that German society developed in a way that led her inexorably, through her national allegiances and romantic leanings, to co-optation by the National Socialists. And of course, she has been considered as an “ordinary German” whose cultural production intentionally supported the drive to a particular German identity that culminated in World War II.⁶⁹⁴ Yet, there are other aspects of her work that demand attention.

Was her choreography an example of *Resistenz*? The term requires a definition:

The attitude shared by a vast majority of Germans who, for various reasons went along with Nazi policies and initiatives, but who nonetheless, were at least partly immune to the ideology of the regime and even slightly defiant in some cases?⁶⁹⁵

If compared with the filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, Wigman’s life and work do show signs of resistance, whether undertaken by her willingly or imposed from without. Wigman declined from official favor as Riefenstahl ascended through her film work. How the two women’s paths diverge could prove fertile ground for future research.

However, historiographical negotiations with Nazism can obscure what I believe is the larger question for our time. How were artists such as Wigman, Riefenstahl and to some degree the Portuguese *fado* singer Amália Rodrigues under António Salazar and a raft of Spanish flamenco dancers under Franco, drawn to their careers in a way that allowed them even if temporarily to become a public female face or (in the case of Wigman) a representative body of the fascist state?⁶⁹⁶ Wigman’s driving ambition to succeed as an artist remained the single overarching motivation that determined her choices throughout her long life. That she felt her ambition was born of a metaphysical calling to dance underscores the reality that it took such idealism to create an entirely new field – and art form - by a woman of her generation and background. Wigman’s closest artistic peer is Martha Graham who also believed that she was uniquely chosen to reshape dance as an art for a new era. Both women were patriots: in the 1940s, Graham created dances based on American themes that were far more blatantly nationalist than

⁶⁹⁴ As previously noted, Susan Manning and Marion Kant are the main proponents of this hypothesis.

⁶⁹⁵ Bartov et al., *War Crimes*, 23.

⁶⁹⁶ In this, they came to represent the state just as Germania, Britannia and Marianne symbolized their nations prior to the Twentieth Century.

Wigman's dances of mourning for the fallen soldiers of World War I. Both women were myopic in the singular focus on their careers. And both were innovators who changed the field. Yet, Graham remains a heroic figure in international dance while Wigman was all but forgotten for a time by dancers and scholars beyond Germany. Since the 1990s, her stature has been increasingly diminished because of her association with Nazi Germany.⁶⁹⁷

Like Graham, Wigman's story bridges both halves of the last century. Her life reveals changes that are at once socio-political and aesthetic and particularly have to do with the identity of women artists. Her professional persona was in constant flux: as part of the renegade avant-garde in the teens, to international recognition during the Weimar Republic, to doing creative work under the swastika.

Following World War II, Wigman also lived in both sides of a divided Germany. Her time in the East was immediately after the war and every indication shows that she was never truly invested in living and working in the GDR. In East Germany, the fascist past and its relationship to the corporate capitalism of the West were theorized as being in direct opposition to the socialist GDR.⁶⁹⁸ This separation appears to have modified issues of guilt and denial.⁶⁹⁹ It also epitomized Cold War factions in the divided nation. In contrast to Wigman, her student Gret Palucca found government support throughout the time of the Third Reich, even though she had to petition for an exemption as *Mischling* or half-Jewish. When the Soviets took control of the Eastern sector, Palucca and her school were favored by the GDR in great part because of her inclusion of Soviet-style ballet into the curriculum.⁷⁰⁰ Wigman was given no such backing.

⁶⁹⁷ As an example of how she is perceived in the popular press, Graham was the only dancer listed in Time magazines' 100 Most Influential People of the last century.

⁶⁹⁸ For more on the differences between East and West Germany post-war see Jarausch, *After Hitler*; and Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁰ The differences between the experiences of Mary Wigman and Grete Palucca deserve future exploration. This was first brought to my attention during my performance at the German Historical Institute September 7-9, 2007, in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the German Embassy. The concurrent exhibition, "*Zeit mit Palucca: Photographs by Günther Bersch*," and conversations about Palucca's career raise questions regarding the dance art

Wigman's subsequent move to the West and her long residence in West Berlin offer an example, through her choreography, of how she came to identify with the suffering of her own war experiences. It also sheds light on the construction of individual and national memory around those experiences. In this Wigman saw herself as a victim of the War, an identification that was common among the West German public in remembering the collapse of the German military and the advance of the Red Army. Wigman's dances testify to her acceptance of this narrative.⁷⁰¹

In the West, the ruling Christian Democratic Union party, Catholic conservatism and the continued capitalist thrust of the Federal Republic complicated negotiations with the past. Theodor Adorno criticized West German strategies for rebuilding as denying both the capitalist legacy of fascism and German culpability for the war and the Holocaust.⁷⁰² Yet the economic miracle of the West was remarkably successful and ultimately triumphant with the end of the Cold War and reunification. Wigman profited from the West German economic ascent. Certainly, improved finances helped her stage major works. She also was able to continue her artistic production in a way that had seemed impossible since the beginning of World War II. Ultimately, Wigman was a survivor. This term is not taken lightly. Many dancers of less fame were forced to flee or died between the years of 1933 and 1945.⁷⁰³ That Wigman stayed in Germany has made her a suspect of guilt and of denial equal to her accomplishments as a cultural icon.

In Wigman's story, issues of art and artifice, memory, identity and experience are intertwined. Looking at Wigman, strains of the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s that sought

in both fascist and communist societies. Because of these issues, Palucca may be the closest German peer to Wigman.

⁷⁰¹ See Chapter 4.

⁷⁰² Theodor Adorno, 1968 "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" Opening address to the 16th German Sociological Congress (Dennis Redmond, trans.), <http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/AdornoSocAddr.html>; translation used with permission, Creative Commons 2001.

⁷⁰³ The best description of these dancers to date can be found in *Hitler's Dancers* by Karina and Kant.

to find a usable German past and developments in women's history that emerged in the 1980s and 90s collide with and inform one another.⁷⁰⁴

Mary Wigman in the Context of Women's History

Since the initiation of women's history in the 1970s, many have attempted to place women within the historic record and, when it comes to twentieth-century Germany, they inevitably question the individual's relationship to Nazi ideology. The publication of *Mothers in the Fatherland* by Claudia Koonz in 1987 reflected a change in the perception of women under the Nazi regime. Where German women had been viewed *en masse* as victims under the Nazis, Koonz uncovered women that were active agents in the Nazi project. Anyone who has read Koonz's opening interview with BDF (Organization of German Women) leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink comes away with the appalling realization that women could be equally indicted for Nazi evils. Since Koonz's book, writers have continued to add dimension to German women within the Third Reich. Elizabeth Harvey's examination of those who worked to "Germanize" women at the eastern borderland proves that women were active agents in colonization and racial "cleansing" of those territories.⁷⁰⁵

Mary Wigman herself remains hard to categorize. This is due in no small part to her very private nature. When she wrote for publication, private correspondence or in her diaries, she remained focused on her work.⁷⁰⁶ Other concerns were secondary. Her letters to Hanya Holm do contain warm greetings and mention mutual acquaintances and her own health and living conditions but do not respond to social issues or political events. It is hard to find Wigman the citizen behind Wigman the artist.

⁷⁰⁴ Here, I refer specifically to the historians' debate undertaken in *Der Zeit* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1986 between Ernst Nolte and Jürgen Habermas and their supporters.

⁷⁰⁵ Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). By racial cleansing, I refer to relocation of non-Germans and housecleaning in the literal sense of teaching "good German" housekeeping practices at the same time the *Einsatzgruppen* and the *Wehrmacht* undertook racial genocide.

⁷⁰⁶ It must be noted that much of Wigman's written material has been mediated by her niece Marlies Heinemann, her American biographer/translator Walter Sorell and her German biographer Hedwig Müller.

We have no record of her political alliances during the Weimar Republic. Even in the Republic she appears to have nationalist leanings in the sense that she felt her art was uniquely German yet she believed that it had universal appeal. Indeed, her international successes proved that belief. She does not fit easily into the category of bourgeois right-wing women that her family status would have predicated. Women of the DNVP (German National Peoples Party) would certainly have found Wigman's career path the epitome of what was termed destructive "female egoism", being neither dedicated to motherhood as protector of the race nor as the pinnacle of female destiny.⁷⁰⁷ The DNVP also championed women's rights but demanded those rights be put to the service of furthering the above stated moral goals.⁷⁰⁸ And it appears Wigman had little to say regarding feminist activism beyond championing her own right to make art. While Wigman's words sometimes echo those of Chancellor Gustav Stresemann in claiming a unique status for the dissemination of German culture, she does not express women's issues in ways that reflect the women of Stresemann's own more moderate DVP (German Peoples Party).⁷⁰⁹

Wigman was already a prominent artist and a public figure in the early years of National Socialist control. She was no committed party member or symbolic "angel in the house" as was organizer Scholtz-Klink, who remained to the end a defender of the National Socialist cause.⁷¹⁰ In fact, there is no record that Wigman was a member of the National Socialist party, even though she received governmental commissions and funding. She had no obvious religious affiliations, although she choreographed on themes across a range of religious symbolism. Leila Rupp points out that Nazi ideology concerning women presented a strange "mixture of conservative ideas, vague longings

⁷⁰⁷ Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 8-13.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 12 and 52. By more moderate, I place the DVP in contrast to the more racist DNVP. Scheck has more on the differences and similarities between the two parties during the Weimar Republic and among their women's groups.

⁷¹⁰ For more on Scholtz-Klink and the German Women's Organization, see Koonz, *Mothers*.

for a mythical past and acceptance of the needs of a modern economy.”⁷¹¹ While the last two elements could be true of Wigman, her way of life was never traditional or conservative. She did choreograph dances of women but she also choreographed dances of figures that were genderless. Her *Women’s Dances* of 1934 depicted marriage and motherhood but ended with witches and in a frantic intensification of shaking wildness.⁷¹² This was not the representation of *Kinder, Küche* or *Kirche* by a long shot.⁷¹³ Among her publicity material, there are certainly no prominent photos of Wigman with children or in a kitchen or church for that matter! While physically striking, Wigman was not considered beautiful, not “Aryan” by appearance and not projecting eroticism even though her body was revealed onstage. She had numerous affairs but never chose to marry. Her romantic partners ran the gamut from experimental, “far-out” psychologists to a well-connected Nazi businessman.

Nor was Wigman part of an active resistance. She exhibited a deep emotional attachment to her German identity all of her life. Yet, she was cosmopolitan, traveling widely through her work, and was firmly entrenched as part of an international community of artistic stars. She was well read and highly intellectual as well as being drawn to an intellectualized yet corporeal and irrational vision of the mystical experience. She had a career but was no typical workingwoman, even in the war years when women made inroads into the labor force.⁷¹⁴ Her fame was mutable and evolved throughout her career. In the beginning of the Third Reich, it could be said that it made her at once safe and also kept her blind. As late as 1937, she came to a terrible realization that her individuality, the very source of her art making was not valued by the government and thus opposed to National Socialism. For Wigman this reckoning came in terms of the loss of independent artistic freedom. Gudrun Schwarz points out that the young members of the League of German Girls were so completely co-opted by the Nazi state that they

⁷¹¹ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 47.

⁷¹² Gitelman, *Liebe Hanya*, 54-55.

⁷¹³ *Kinder, Küche* or *Kirche* (children, kitchens and church) was the slogan that indicated the ideal woman’s role under the National Socialists.

⁷¹⁴ Koonz underscores the complex relationship between women and wage labor following the war: “While American feminists were demanding entry into paid work, poorly paid German women dreamed of escaping from it.” Koonz, *Mothers*, 46.

considered their positions as part of a uniformed collective an honor signaling a freedom to which they completely subordinated themselves.⁷¹⁵ Former BDM leader Renate Finckh describes her experience, “I sang about freedom with a ‘shining heart’ and felt free while doing it; free from oppression by the father I feared, free from the constraints of old-fashioned methods for raising daughters . . .”⁷¹⁶

At the age of forty-six, Wigman was well beyond such naïve maidenhood when the National Socialists came to power in January 1933. She had experienced decades of artistic freedom through the teens and the twenties. Though she danced a range of heroic female roles, she never became a wife or a mother. It is true that Nazi pronatalism was complex in its interpretation by Nazi feminists.⁷¹⁷ Were Wigman’s dances metaphoric children that she dedicated to the German state? When faced with state control over her thematic material, she complied for a time and then refused. But she was not a resistor in any common way. She made works that were anti-war and also elevated mourning for the war dead. She made dances about sacrifice decades before “the ideal Nazi woman would serve her people and her country, making whatever sacrifices were demanded of her” as Rupp explains.⁷¹⁸

Wigman poured all of her financial and emotional resources into her artistic pursuits. Her school, her performing company and her creative work took the place of traditional home. She even sought to forgo a separate residence, living in her school until she was expelled from it in 1942. However, growing up as she did in a bourgeois Wilhelmine household and fleeing to a radical avant-garde artist’s community, she was

⁷¹⁵ Gudrun Schwarz, “During Total War, We Girls Want to Be Where We Can Really Accomplish Something,” in Bartov, et al. *Crimes of War*, 121-137.

⁷¹⁶ Finckh quoted in Schwarz, *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷¹⁷ Rupp gives an example from a publication of the Women’s Office of the German Labor Front. “In contrast to those women who are willing to retire from their work or profession to assume the new duties of marriage, these [women] do not consider their profession as something temporary but as the highest purpose of their lives. . . Through them the ‘feminine principle’ operates and the will to serve their people is as unalterable rooted in their consciousness as in that of the German mothers.” Rupp allows that this is an unusual document, possibly due to the fact it was used as propaganda in foreign countries. It appeared with text in German, English, French and Italian. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 43.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

indoctrinated early into the idea of a utopian alternative to the status quo. And then there is the question of mysticism as a crucial part of Wigman's worldview. She needed to believe that her coming to dance was part of a larger calling, one that allowed her to claim a life as a dancer and turn away from her middle-class roots.

As part of German fascism's utopian draw, the leadership claimed a mystical union with the historic destiny of the nation.⁷¹⁹ The strength of fascist leadership such as Hitler's was dependent on bringing the public to a supposed higher realm of politics that they could experience sensually rather than rationally.⁷²⁰ As Paxton pointed out, fascism deliberately replaced reasoned debate with an immediate sensual experience that transformed politics.⁷²¹ The personal relationship to fascism was to be rooted in sensate experience rather than discourse, to borrow Cathleen Cannings's dichotomy.⁷²² Surely this resonated with Wigman's ideas of *Dasein* and the power of performance. And her experiences led her to espouse an amorphous mysticism related to romantic ideas of national flowering and of individual artistic or spiritual genius.

The idea of individual genius was absolutely anchored in Wigman's self-identity. This identification with genius along with the desire to dance is what she had directly in common with Riefenstahl who had been a student of Wigman during the 1920s. Wigman also shared a sort of megalomaniacal artistic exceptionalism with Ruth St. Denis, Isadora Duncan and the Martha Graham. Identifying with a metaphysical calling to dance was the siren song of the pioneering women and great soloists of early dance modernism and was the basis upon which they could become the New Woman, using their bodies as the instrument for their art. That German fascism otherwise denied modernism's exaltation of unfettered personal creativity was not apparent to Wigman until too late, if we are to believe her diary entries. By the time she recognized this, her fame was on the decline. Perhaps the decline of fame allowed her vision to sharpen.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2004), 17.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Canning, *Gender History*, 112.

In 1980, George Mosse posited that there is a horrible brilliance to fascism that allows for the extant beliefs of a large portion of the population to be exploited.⁷²³ To Paxton, fascism worked out its practice in action as opposed to the many other isms — conservatism, liberalism and socialism — that were created in an era when politics was a “gentleman’s business” that grew gradually from parliamentary debate and rested upon a bedrock of coherent, Enlightenment-era philosophical systems. “Fascism by contrast was a new invention created afresh for the era of mass politics. It sought to appeal mainly to the emotions through use of ritual, carefully stage-managed ceremonies and intensely charged rhetoric.”⁷²⁴ Both Hannah Arendt and Jose Ortega y Gasset⁷²⁵ saw “the breakdown of classes and their transformation into masses”⁷²⁶ as a function of the modern age.

Finally, this dissertation returns to the consideration of modernity. Writing at the end of her life, Mary Wigman said that she was drawn to dance like a moth to the light. I propose that she was pulled by modernity. She was overwhelmingly attracted to the opportunities made possible in the embrace of modernity, specifically in the most radical cultural pursuit: modernism in art. In his critical analysis of post-World War I culture, Helmut Lethen proposed that “the adaptation of self to changing outside conditions does not necessarily predetermine a repressible and antidemocratic personality . . .”⁷²⁷ Lethen refers to a positive ability to adapt to external circumstance while preserving internal autonomy and resistance. Katharina Von Akum posits that this ability “may in fact be

⁷²³ George Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: H. Fertig, 1980). By contrast, he argued, Communism demands that the population undertake the process of mass reeducation.

⁷²⁴ Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, 17.

⁷²⁵ “The multitude has become visible. Before, if it existed it occupied the background of the social stage; now it is the principal character. There are no longer protagonists; there is only the chorus.” Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1930), 13.

⁷²⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (The World Publishing Company: Cleveland and New York, 1958), 329. A more extended discussion is found in chapter 8, 222-243.

⁷²⁷ Helmut Lethen referenced in Katharina Von Ankum, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997).

what informs specifically female reactions to and ways of coping with modernity.”⁷²⁸ I believe that this sort of adaptability is true in Wigman’s case and it is also what marks her as a modern artist.

Jarausch warns about the difficulties of using “the paradigm of modernization as the explanation of social development” that has become an implicit master narrative in the discussion of Nazi Germany.⁷²⁹ Considering fascism, Paxton rightly asserts that the “complex relationship between fascism and modernity cannot be resolved all at once with a simple yes or no.”⁷³⁰ Wigman’s life offers a striking example of this complexity.

Returning to Marshall Berman’s definition of modernity posited at the opening of Chapter One in this dissertation, the pluralistic nature of modernity makes it an ever-moving target when seeking where to locate the root cause of German fascism. Nazism was at once regressive and claimed to be founded on tradition. At the same time, the functioning of the fascist state required economic and technological modernization. Rather than place tradition and modernity as dualities, it is possible to see that they function together and in relation to one another.

Modernity functions as a social and economic tool to achieve some wealth, flexibility and innovation for individuals and groups; Tradition functions, partly and at times largely, as a mythological state that produces the sensation of larger connectedness and stability in the face of shockingly massive social change . . .⁷³¹

In Wigman’s story of danced modernism, she embraced tradition and modernity in much the same way that she incorporated the muscular continuum between *Anspannung* and *Abspannung*. But in the end, it was developments in artistic modernism that allowed her a life as an artist, even as her art claimed to have origins that were deep

⁷²⁸ Von Ankum, *Women in the Metropolis*, 11.

⁷²⁹ Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*, 85.

⁷³⁰ Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, 13.

⁷³¹ Robert B. Siegle, *Mirror to Mirror: Postmodernity in South Asian Fiction* (Introduction, Chapter Four) (Digitally published by The Center for Digital Discourse and Culture, Virginia Tech, 2002). Accessed Sept. 2, 2009, at <http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/mtm/Four.htm> online.

in ritual past that transcended geographical or temporal allegiance.⁷³² Leila Rupp wrote that

Nazi ideology on women was, like Nazi ideology in general, a strange mixture of traditional conservative ideas, vague longing for a mythical past and acceptance of the needs of a modern economy.⁷³³

When asked to write her biography in the 1970s, Wigman responded with a treatise on the dance art itself rather than tell her life story. Even after the disillusionment she experienced under the National Socialists, she still made a case for a profound mysticism inherent in dance. Her signature solo, *Hexentanz* (1926) remains a testament to her artistic innovation. She broke open structures of movement invention and female objectification and was accused of performing madness on the concert stage.

The Artistic Legacy of Mary Wigman

Finally, I must return to Wigman's artistic lineage. This is still a dancer's story and as such the dance deserves the final word on Mary Wigman. Where does this leave her artistic legacy? Is it possible to acknowledge her vast contributions while at the same time puzzling over the larger events that surrounded her life and career? I have attempted to create a useable past out of her experiences and, in the process, view her artistic contributions as global, as having lasting import for dance artists beyond her place and time.

I felt that I'd never seen dancing before. In this she has given us pure dance, without acting . . . It made one feel so big inside. I wanted to cry. Somehow Mary Wigman's dancing does not make me feel that I am hopeless. In fact I feel that I can dance, that I have danced just like this!⁷³⁴

⁷³² Wigman had said, "I do not believe in labels. One cannot take art and divide it into separate parts – this is Expressionism, this is Modernism, this is Futurism, this is Post-Expressionism. There is expressionism in all art that is worthy of the name." Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 82.

⁷³³ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 47. Atina Grossmann points out that "the antimodernist drive of the National Socialists – [is] sometimes in danger of being submerged by the recent focus on the regime's destructive and 'pathological' modernity." Atina Grossman, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform 1920-1950* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 146.

⁷³⁴ Eve Gentry in Newhall, "Absolute Eden," 34.

What Mary Wigman accomplished in performance was in equal parts simple and profoundly difficult. She laid bare her emotions in a sort of self-sacrifice to the dance and to the audience. She appeared at once physically strong and emotionally vulnerable and in so doing allowed those watching to come into contact with their own humanity and emotions. Not only was she a consummate artist, her reputation as a teacher was equally far reaching. Many, many students from Germany and beyond studied with Wigman over her years of teaching, either through a summer course or extensive training at her studio.

It is difficult to fully gauge the impact of Wigman's influence. Young dancer Eve Gentry, who saw Wigman in San Francisco in 1932, went on to dance in Hanya Holm's original dance group from 1936 to 1942. Her admiration for Mary Wigman remained all of her life. And she is only one small example of Wigman's impact on the nascent American modern dance.

As early as 1926, Louis Horst brought tales of Wigman's innovations from Europe to Martha Graham.⁷³⁵ Soon Graham and her American cohorts came face-to-face with Wigman's art through her American tours in the early 1930s. John Martin wrote of Wigman as a source of pure inspiration and elucidation of the new dance.⁷³⁶ While the 1940s and 1950s kept her confined to Germany, Wigman continued to work with students as much as possible. Isa Partsch-Bergshon recalls Wigman working whole-heartedly with a handful of students under desperate wartime conditions in Leipzig.⁷³⁷ In 1963, three students from the Wigman School, Katherine Inge Sehnert, Helmut Gottschild and Brigitta Herrmann, established *Gruppe Motion Berlin*, which brought Wigman's lineage directly into the realm of contemporary dance.⁷³⁸ In 1968, the renamed Group Motion relocated to Philadelphia, and Wigman called Herrmann and Gottschild her children who traveled to the new world.⁷³⁹ Many of Wigman's former pupils have scattered across

⁷³⁵ Soares, *Louis Horst*.

⁷³⁶ Martin, *The Modern Dance*.

⁷³⁷ Partsch-Bergshon, *The Makers of Modern Dance*.

⁷³⁸ Personal interviews with Brigitta Herrmann.

⁷³⁹ Gottschild established his Zero Moving Company and taught for years at Temple University. He continues to choreograph and perform. With Manfred Fischbeck, Herrmann continues to teach workshops developed from the Wigman practice and has named her own American group *Ausdruckstanz Dance Theatre*.

Europe and the United States, sowing the seeds of her dance ideas along the way. The German dancer Suzanne Linke had her early training in the Mary Wigman School and continues to carry on her tradition as a strong female soloist.⁷⁴⁰ The *Tanztheatre* of Pina Bausch is often referred to as an heir of Wigman's theatrical impulse, made more complex through contact with global and contemporary ideas of theater, technology and new views of what makes a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁷⁴¹

The Japanese-born dance form of *Butoh* has deep roots in Wigman's teaching. And in *Butoh* we find the training goals and values of dance Expressionism living beyond Wigman's time.⁷⁴² *Butoh* icon Kazuo Ono saw Harald Kreutzberg perform in 1934 and claimed that this performance was one of his earliest inspirations to dance. He studied with Wigman pupil Takaya Eguchi and continued that study following World War II. Japanese artists Eiko and Koma studied under Wigman assistant Manja Chmiel before they brought their own form of *Butoh* to the United States.⁷⁴³ *Ausdruckstanz*, *Butoh* and *Tanztheatre* all were incubated in nations that had been great military powers and each dance form became prominent after those nations experienced stunning defeats in war. Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz* reached its zenith following World War I. *Tanztheatre* came of

⁷⁴⁰ Newhall, *Mary Wigman*, 95.

⁷⁴¹ Pina Bausch (1940-2009) was a student and director of the Essen *Folkwang Schule*, where Kurt Jooss established the dance department in 1926 following Laban's ideas of *Tanz, Ton, Wort* (dance, sound, word). A scholarship student at the American Juilliard School, Bausch became the leading choreographer and developer of European *Tanztheatre*. Her company, *Tanztheatre Wuppertal Pina Bausch*, regularly toured throughout the world. For more on Pina Bausch see Royd Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁷⁴² *Butoh* is an avant-garde dance form that originated in Japan in the late 1950s. The founders were Tatsumi Hijikata (1928-1986), who was a student of the German *Neue Tanz*, and Kazuo Ohno (b. 1906).

⁷⁴³ Eiko and Koma studied with Kazuo Ohno and in 1971 joined the Tatsumi Hijikata company in Tokyo and soon began working as independent artists. They eschew traditional Japanese dance or theater forms, instead choreographing and performing only their own works. Their interest in the German modern dance movement and nonverbal theater took them to Hanover in 1972, where they studied with Manja Chmiel, who earlier had taught at the Wigman school. They continue to tour worldwide, performing their own form of *Butoh*. For more on *Butoh* see Sondra Horton Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (London and New York: Routledge); and Sondra Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999).

age in post-World War II Germany and *Butoh* followed the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The searing reversal of fortune, humiliation, despair and reckoning with the most violent of human events all seem to have found a special vehicle in such dance expression.

All of these artistic developments germinated in a world of modern psychology and philosophical phenomenology with which Wigman certainly was well acquainted. Her friendships with Prinzhorn, Binswanger and others attest to her profound attraction to psychological thinking. Jungian psychologist Robert Johnson claims that the archetype of the Dionysian ecstatic had been laid dormant by the very rationality that has made modern scientific progress possible, while Jungian Marie Louise von Franz cautions that an archetype such as the earthy Dionysus can only be confined for so long. “Our refusal to honor an ethical caring human drive [say, for ecstatic experience] can transform it [the drive] into something wild and destructive.”⁷⁴⁴

Walter Benjamin was an outspoken critic of the way in which aesthetics came to be used by fascist governments.⁷⁴⁵ In his essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” Benjamin wrote, “The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life.”⁷⁴⁶ Benjamin hoped that advances in technology that he termed “mechanical reproduction” such as photography, film or sound recording would emancipate the work of art from its “parasitical dependence on ritual.” He argued that the ritual roots of art served to entrance both the artist and the viewer, taking them toward dangerous irrationality.⁷⁴⁷

In the second half of the twentieth century, George Mosse delved much more deeply into this “aesthetization of politics.” Mosse discussed a sort of secular religion that grew up around the Fascist festivals and rallies as a performance of Nazi ideology.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Marie-Luise von Franz, *The Psychological Meaning of Redemption Myths in Fairy Tales* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1980), 4.

⁷⁴⁵ Driven from Germany in 1933 by the rise of the National Socialists, Benjamin settled in Paris. When the Nazis invaded France in 1940, he fled to the Spanish frontier, where on being denied entry he committed suicide. Benjamin, *Illuminations*.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁷⁴⁸ George L. Mosse, “The Mystical Origins of National Socialism,” *Journal of the*

Circumscribed separations between history and social criticism dissolve in the writings of both Benjamin and Mosse. Their works gave voice to a critical rupture in thinking about art that necessarily arose after the shocking revelations of the Holocaust and the utter devastation of the Second World War. With the images of Nazi horrors and spectacles inextricably intertwined in the collective consciousness, it seems that many postmoderns have embraced Benjamin's warnings against the 'auratic' and have turned away from the irrational and ritual-driven art making. Choosing the cerebral over the visceral art experience or diffusing emotion through abstraction and interruption have become hallmarks of postmodern art.

Since the end of the war and into the new millennium, much thinking about Mary Wigman has been teleological: seeing her association with the Nazis as an inevitable outcome of her German values. The danger in such thinking lies in compartmentalizing Wigman's life and art, losing sight of the woman while building an icon. It is much simpler to judge an icon than to empathize with Wigman's very human struggles and recognize our own biases and blind spots. From today's vantage point, the indelible images of Nazi mass spectacle make us instinctively turn away from any mass movement and its potential to bind us together. It also raises suspicion of the mystical performance practices that Wigman espoused in her *Ausdruckstanz*.

The human body in motion has served as breathing ledger upon which is recorded sweeping changes. Dancing bodies such as Mary Wigman's have choreographed the turning of art from religious observance to secular creation. When she was identified as the Priestess of the Dance, she was the practitioner of a particular devotion to the dance art. Her revolution was not only spiritual. As an artifact of the twentieth century, it became at once a social and ultimately a political revolution. Historian William McNeill argued that the need for individual expression and communal movement is so essential to human nature that it forces its own return.⁷⁴⁹ Seemingly forgotten by post-modern dancers of the twenty-first century, Wigman's life and work is drawing renewed interest among dance and theatre artists in Germany and beyond. Even while modernism by its

History of Ideas 22 (1961): 81-96; and Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*.

⁷⁴⁹ McNeil, *Keeping Together in Time*.

very nature privileges the new over the past, it seems compelling to consider Wigman's life and work once again. Perhaps enough time has passed since World War II to allow objective reflection on the genius and the humanness of Mary Wigman. The human body in dance remains a most immediate barometer of the state of the individual body within the world body. And Mary Wigman's life and work offer an exceptional reflection of her world.

Epilogue

When undertaking a creative endeavor, whether moving in the studio or in the sitting practice of research and writing, I have found that the end of one project is the beginning of the next. That is the case as I end this dissertation. There are two primary areas of inquiry that I hope to expand on in the future. The first is the current rethinking of the concept of totalitarianism and how that can be used to investigate dance and political ideas that traveled from Germany to the United States. The second is how the body can be used as a site of experience for historical inquiry.

The first chapter of this dissertation opened by recalling the 1950s conference on totalitarianism, the need for which had grown with increasing urgency after the war as scholars from multiple disciplines sought to understand how the tragedies of the 1930s and 1940s could have occurred and how they might have been foreseen.⁷⁵⁰ Since then, historians have extensively mined the era and the location of Germany in an attempt to not only grasp these catastrophes, but also to take hold of subsequent history within that tragic context. The editors of *Crimes of War* in 2002 argued that

[a]fter being discredited in the 1970s and 1980s, totalitarianism theory has gained a new respectability and, many argue, analytical purchase. With that has come a new emphasis on comparative history . . .⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵⁰ A caveat is needed here. Since I first undertook this writing, a trend in American politics has arisen that is troubling to both my political sensibility and to my further exploration of this thesis. As a rhetorical tool, the radical factions in popular media have deployed conflation of fascism and communism under the heading of totalitarianism. This troubling development must be taken into account if I proceed with the stated thesis.

⁷⁵¹ Omar Bartov, et al., *Crimes of War*, xix.

They also claimed that German involvement in World War II could be analyzed comparatively to other war crimes while not denying the specific genocidal racism of the Holocaust.⁷⁵² Used in a parallel fashion to consider artistic movements, such a comparative approach might prove fruitful for further investigating Mary Wigman's influence on danced modernism beyond Germany.

When investigating the relationship between Modern dance and political movements in the first half of the twentieth century a paradox emerges: How could modernist art coexist and indeed thrive in companionship with totalitarian ideologies? Totalitarian movements both left and right flooded like atomized gases into the vacuum created at the end of World War I. These all-encompassing ideologies absorbed everything, including the emerging modern dance. For that is the nature of totalitarianism: to demand absolute allegiance to a single ideology that permeates all aspects of life. In secularized Western society the artist had depicted marginal members of society as symbols of individual protests. No totalitarian regime can encourage this.⁷⁵³

Like all other human activity, art in a totalitarian society must be drawn into the service of propaganda. The striking paradox of modern totalitarianism is that these movements are mass organizations of "atomized, isolated individuals."⁷⁵⁴ This parallels in political terms Wigman's aesthetic judgment of the dancer's skill to perform both as an individual soloist and to become a member of the group without losing the individual identity.

The emphatic individualism that defined modern dance stood in direct conflict with the Fascist and Communist waves that crashed through Europe and rolled over Depression-Era New York in the 1930s and '40s. The discussion of a link between German dance and American dance in the 1920s and 1930s is often met with resistance because the specter of Nazism hangs over everything German from this period. This is understandable given the horrific events that overtook Germany after 1933. As a collective culture, humankind still recoils from these events. The Holocaust and Stalin's purges have changed our perception of the potential for human evil. However, this

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ Erik Erikson in Friedrich, *Totalitarianism*, 222.

⁷⁵⁴ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 323.

repulsion should not necessarily disregard those things that occurred outside the influence of ideologies. Such conflation actually diminishes both the evil and the art that was born outside of its corrupt intent. The emergence of totalitarianism — both the Nazi and the Stalinist varieties — was global in scope and demands a meta-discourse that can serve the rethinking called for most recently by the editors of *Crimes of War*.

Artists who stayed in Nazi Germany are inevitably scrutinized for their staying, no matter what their political affiliations or lack thereof. But dance before the rise of Nazism deserves a viewing that is not distorted by hindsight. American dancers were also drawn to mass movement events and in the case of the New Dance Group, to using dance “as a weapon in the class struggle.”⁷⁵⁵ That the Group was born out of the New York Wigman School attests to the use of Wigman’s techniques by a broad range of dance practitioners. Indeed, a rational discussion of the transmission of German dance ideas to the American dance landscape requires this undistorted perspective. Richard Pipes wrote “mainstream Western scholars writing on the history of the Third Reich have been unambiguously [and understandably] hostile to Nazism, [while] the majority of those writing about communism have been in varying degrees sympathetic to it.”⁷⁵⁶ This resulted from “the psychic need to disassociate from Nazism: for, since the Nazis were anti-Communist, anti-communism is tainted with Nazism.”⁷⁵⁷ Pipes proposed that such thinking had so permeated Western thought as to shape the form of most Cold War intellectual discourse.⁷⁵⁸ The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breaking apart of the old Soviet Union along with a deepening criticism of the policies of the United States and its allies has called for a rethinking of Cold War paradigms that continue to this day. What is needed is an objective view of how dance techniques could adapt to serve a divergent range of political purposes. And how the individuals involved were part of communities that were at once cultural, social and political. In all cases, the negotiation

⁷⁵⁵ Program for the New Dance Group first annual concert 1934. Gentry col.

⁷⁵⁶ Richard Pipes, *Three “Whys” of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 7.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

with modernity has affected all of these artists and has influenced how the individual is perceived as independent or part of a particular class, race, political or gendered group.

There is also an implicit conflict between the liberation of the independent modern body and the need for belonging to the “larger body” of the group. Wigman implied that the most fully developed dancer was one who has the technical “skill” and emotional “will” to be subsumed into the group while retaining an individual performance personality. Wigman took a split view of the dancer’s role and applied that view to the training of her dancers:

Solo and Group Dance . . . These two orientations do not necessarily have to exist in contrast to one another . . . both can be harmonized depending on the dancers will and strength to attend to these two tasks and to muster enough understanding so that subordinating his own personality to a multiform organism is not synonymous with giving up his individuality.⁷⁵⁹

Wigman’s use of the term “will” reflected the philosophical climate in which she was developing her dance pedagogy. Nietzsche’s writings on the “will to power” became the barometer of the swelling European nihilism and the empowered individual. In her own performance persona, Wigman was ultimately a soloist. She struggled between the liberation of her independent modern body and the popular outcry for dance works that featured the “larger body” of the group. She accommodated this conflict by describing it as a sort of split process or duality. Certainly, Wigman and many of her contemporaries came to the idea of mass dance through outer forces, and not necessarily inner drives.⁷⁶⁰

The Body as Site of Experience and Memory

The rhetorical body that responds intentionally to political and social changes is a topic that demands further investigation in the field of dance writing. The discursive, linguistic turn of history writing from the 1990s has, as Cathleen Canning suggests, made experience and discourse dichotomous. Canning also argues that the individual’s physical experience has remained in the background of historiography, relegated to a “subtextual

⁷⁵⁹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 129.

⁷⁶⁰ The mass dance was alive in the *zeitgeist* — briefly spanning the continents — and as a trend offers a way to trace the dissemination of dance ideas that organized in tandem with emerging political movements.

and unmarked place in the underground of this wider project of rethinking history.”⁷⁶¹ Canning points out that the “post-project — encompassing postmodernism, poststructuralism, postfeminism and *posthistoire* — spiraled inward in actual conceptual denial of ever knowing the experiential subject, let alone locating that solitary being at the powerfully formative conjuncture of self and society where history is ultimately made and remade.”⁷⁶² The fact that Wigman is best understood through using her body practice as a “site of experience” required the placement of such experience at the center of this dissertation writing. Canning proposes three areas of historical work that have the power to redeploy experience as a viable tool in historical inquiry: the body, the study of subjectivity as it relates to identity, and memory studies.⁷⁶³

Such use of experience proved valuable in considering the major themes exposed through Wigman’s life: fascism and modernity. While the performance of dance is an ephemeral event, Wigman developed concrete techniques that shaped her body and responded directly to historical changes in the larger world. In the case of Wigman, the body was a vehicle of philosophical belief, aesthetic value, self-perception, fears and relation to power. More than entertainment, Wigman’s work exposes a thinking, rhetorical body that at once defies prurient objectification while acknowledging the body’s sexual potential.

Thus the idea of the body as an intentional vehicle for active agency holds promise for continued research.

A second area of inquiry asks how memory is shaped by representations of the body. Recent scholarship also has taken sexuality into consideration in the examination of postwar concepts of the body and of how physical experience shapes and reflects identity. In *Sex after Fascism*, Dagmar Herzog makes a compelling study of sexuality,

⁷⁶¹ Canning, *Gender History*, 112.

⁷⁶² Brian Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the Histories of Transgression* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), quoted in Canning, *Gender History*, 102.

⁷⁶³ Canning, *Gender History*, 113. It is useful to apply Canning’s second location of experience, the study of subjectivity as it relates to identity, to the case of Wigman. Wigman’s sense of “I” and her interior life were clearly overtaken by larger forces, yet she maintained her sense of a distinct self, even as the revelations following the war begged for a rethinking of her role in the cultural production of the Third Reich. I hope to continue to develop this use of experience as a viable tool in future research and writing.

morality and memory and the tangled connections of each to German fascism. In Herzog's telling, it is the *idea* of sexuality, as much as sexual practices, that proves a powerful tool for organizing and ordering the moral identity of community and seeing how that identity defines the national body. Herzog recounts the complex relationship between pleasure and terror that was continuously evolving during the Third Reich. Furthermore, she underscores the place of power in these sexual negotiations and how it determined what kind of sex was appropriate, and with whom.

Beyond the Nazi years, Herzog examines the ways in which sexuality — in what she terms (post) Post-Holocaust memory — was used as a rallying point for the sexual revolution of the “’68ers.” What Herzog underscores are the historical shifts governing sexual identities that were socially dictated, politically enforced or individually undertaken. All were coupled with moral posturing. Herzog's particular use of memory and misremembering add new dimension to the considerable scholarship in the field of memory studies. Herzog's unique concern remains “how, in the postwar era, . . . conflicts over sexual mores could also become such an important site for managing the memory of Nazism and Holocaust and coming to terms with their inheritance.”⁷⁶⁴

By forgetting, or perhaps never knowing, the sexual liberation that came with the end of World War II and also selectively ignoring the problematic pleasures of extra-marital sex and how the Nazis encouraged reproduction among the privileged, the 68ers set out to ride the “sex wave” that emerged in the West. For the new generation, a particular memory of the Nazi era as one so sexually repressive as to create a culture of murderous violence proved useful. It could be a rallying cry that was emphatically anti-Nazi and reinforced by the theories of the Frankfurt School, Wilhelm Reich and Klaus Theweleit. The New Left held hope in a sexual revolution that would initiate a larger revolution that could expand beyond the social to the political. In that hope, the ‘68ers turned to their bodies as a site of rebellion.

⁷⁶⁴ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.

The Nazi representation of the Weimar Republic was condensed into a decadent, hyper-sexualized state, a “Jew Republic.”⁷⁶⁵ The Jewish body became the diseased organ or foreign invader to be excised from the “healthy” Aryan corpus. Under the Nazis, the oversight of individual bodies by the state — men’s or women’s, “healthy” or degenerate, Jewish, Gypsy or “Nordic,” homosexual or straight, leftist or conservative — made of the body the ultimate tool and dependant of the state and thus the ultimate site of rebellion.

Wigman’s demand for control over her own artistic production and thus her own body practice left her vulnerable to changing ideas of what was acceptable representation of the Nazi body politic. Authors have analyzed the “body politic” and particularly the woman’s role in Nazi culture since the publication of *When Biology Became Destiny* in 1984.⁷⁶⁶ After 1933 the Nazis redefined the woman’s role in motherhood according to racial guidelines.⁷⁶⁷ As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, the earlier work of the sexologists, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the Nazi era, provide an alternate reading of sexual destiny: that such identity was part of a continuum between male and female characteristics rather than a biological binary. During her performing career, Wigman’s dancing persona had been described alternately as “he,” “she” and “it” by reviewers in a single concert. This range of possibilities was closed at least officially by the Nazification of the state. By the 1960s, the rupture following the years of Nazi power was so complete as to disallow any referencing or remembering before the crisis of the National Socialist state. In a divided Germany, ‘68ers were compelled to frame their sexual revolution as anti-Nazi.

From nearly the turn of the twentieth century there had been an avant-garde German population that had rebelled against perceived sexual hypocrisy, repression and

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁶⁶ More recently, Michelle Mouton argued against the notion that Nazi family policy was either an inevitable extension of or a reaction to Weimar developments. Both governments saw patriarchal marriage as a primary institution capable of restoring social stability and repopulating the German nation in the wake of World War I, but they viewed the state’s role in that project very differently. Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk*, 277.

⁷⁶⁷ Moeller examined the political ramifications on the mother’s role in the post-Nazi era, in which policy was based on marriage, not only in the familial sense but also through the union of Church and state. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*.

gender limitations. From the time at Monte Verità, Wigman and her cohort had espoused new life-style choices, alternative family organizations and free love. Theirs was the revolution of *Körperkultur*, a revolt of ideas wedded to bodies in an immediate and urgent way.

In her examination of the German sexual revolution of the 1960s, Herzog quotes the New Leftist Schneider, “It was a new feeling for the body, a new way of moving . . .”⁷⁶⁸ The body, sensate and desirous, was a way into the language and action of rebellion for a new generation. Such a revolt was at once personal and political. And it most certainly was not new. That the legacy of Wigman’s earlier avant-garde generation was lost from the memory and the legacy of Schneider and his contemporaries adds another dimension and greater poignancy to the telling of Wigman’s story and makes continued research all the more compelling.

⁷⁶⁸ Schneider in Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 154.

Appendix A: Recreating Hexentanz

Mary Wigman wrote about choreographing *Hexentanz* as a very emotional experience realizing the character of the witch “with her unrestrained, naked instincts, with her insatiable lust for life, beast and woman at one and the same time.” Remembering the emergence of the character Wigman said, “I shuddered at my own image, at the exposure of this facet of my ego which I had never allowed to emerge in such unashamed nakedness.”⁷⁶⁹ Sally Banes pointedly questions Wigman’s rhetoric:

Whether she (Wigman) herself believed it, thought she believed it, or simply produced it for public consumption to enhance the dance’s mystique. Her account is the myth she constructed about the dance – its origins, feeling-tones, and meaning. Indeed, part of the dance’s meaning resides in the choreographer’s pronouncements about it.⁷⁷⁰

I’m sure that I too was influenced by Wigman’s pronouncements regarding *Hexentanz*. I chose to re-create the work in a way which was as true as I could determine to Wigman’s original intent and working methodology. This way of working suited my purpose which was to gain a first-hand understanding of Wigman’s work through the dance itself. The masking of the piece, which limited visual field, the oddly rhythmic sound score, the shapeless, weighted costume all contributed to a wholly unusual performance encounter, one that takes the performer inward, encouraging indulgence in the most base of motivations: the lust for power. That desire fulfilled is then projected outward toward the spectators as a way of being in power over them. This is my experience of the work. When I first chose *Hexentanz* as a work to perform, I thought that perhaps it was Wigman’s warning to the world, intuiting the coming horrors of the War. In this my thinking was clouded by hindsight. After repeated performances, I believe it to be a statement of individual empowerment and a reveling in forbidden abandonment. It is intoxicating. I finally understand why Brigitta Hermann said that in *Hexentanz*, Wigman was able to experience the full spectrum of self and, while performing it, she was both being scared and falling in love with the power of the work.

⁷⁶⁹ Wigman, *Language*, 42.

⁷⁷⁰ Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 129.

Besides my performance experience of *Hexentanz*, I had an unsettling incident during my rehearsal of the work. In one single day, I did the dance eleven times — without costume or mask — for the recording of a sound score and during a consultation with a lighting designer. The following day, I felt profoundly disoriented: a completely unexpected result. I was unable to concentrate in my usual fashion and incapable of performing mundane tasks such as driving. At first, I attributed this to the sheer physical exertion of repetition; however, as the morning continued, I realized that something besides physicality was involved. I believe that this is when I began to inhabit the choreography that I had made for *Hexentanz* and I began to step inside of the performance experience that Wigman described. Stripping away the familiar layering of my own technique was the most unsettling part of the process as I realized how much I depended on that technique for my identity as a dancer. The performance of *Hexentanz* does not come from the domain of technique but instead stems from the deeper realm of dance as transformative ritual and expression. The question arises, Did this new and unexpected knowing of the work grow from Wigman's "mythic" pronouncements? The immediate experience felt very much my own. The experience of re-creating and inhabiting *Hexentanz* finally allowed me to really understand Hanya Holm's distinctions between the "subjective" and the "objective" dance. This is what I recognize when I read D.H. Lawrence's description of "being" the dance.

Appendix B

Practical Exercises

This section outlines a series of practical exercises, with particular attention to Wigman's pedagogy. These exercises are intended to give the experimenter a visceral experience of the performance and training elements that appear most crucial to understanding Mary Wigman's viewpoint. These exercises are not intended to recreate Mary Wigman's teaching practice. They are simply one contemporary way of experiencing the fundamental elements identified by Wigman as she formulated her deep exploration into the stuff that dance is made of. An appreciation for the uniqueness of Wigman's German dance came to me through an American modern dancer. Eve Gentry joined Hanya Holm's original dance company in 1936 and worked with Holm during those formative years of modern dance as a performer and teacher at Holm's studio. As an American dancer in the 1980s and '90s, the values and methodology that Gentry revealed to me seemed at once revolutionary and part of a dance legacy that had been lost to many contemporary dancers. Ongoing research and the generosity of many former Wigman students allowed me to continue to learn about Wigman's methods even after Gentry passed away in 1994. These exercises developed from a burning desire to understand Mary Wigman's philosophy, to share her concepts with current dance and theatre students and to recognize the lasting significance of her work. Some exercises may seem familiar to students of theatre and dance improvisation. In each exercise, the emphasis is on the underlying concept as it relates to Wigman's fundamentals.

Did I comprehend at all at that time what Laban had in mind? I was young and impatient, I wanted to dance, I wanted to create and communicate something that concerned other people too. What was a theory to me? I believe that the foundations of my career as a dancer as well as a dance pedagogue were laid in those few weeks. Objectivity and responsibility, patience, endurance and self-discipline!⁷⁷¹

When you imagine Wigman's bright studio filled with dancers streaming barefoot in lines across the wooden floor or circling an unmarked but imaginatively potent center, where do you envision the mirror on the wall? A mainstay in most dance studios, the

⁷⁷¹ Wigman in Copeland, *What is Dance?*, 304.

mirror – that blessing and curse of the dancer’s day – was absent in the Wigman School. The goal of class was to experience the movement from the inside out rather than impose an external ideal of placement or position on the body. Brigitta Herrmann, who studied at the Berlin Wigman School in the 1950s and 60s explains, “We were the mirrors.”⁷⁷² Herrmann’s experiences offer an exceptional view of Wigman’s training methods at that period of her long teaching life. Having studied at the Palucca School in Leipzig from the age of sixteen, Herrmann had trained in classical Russian ballet as well as Palucca’s modern style, following the Palucca school curriculum. In contrast, class at the Wigman School was a revelation and an opening to the many levels of creative involvement in the study of *Ausdruckstanz*. While Herrmann went on to a long professional life in dance and theater, she saw that Wigman did not intend for all of her students to become professional dancers. In *ekstasis*, the ecstatic experience, Wigman felt that the dancer could come into the deepest state of performance. She worked to develop a way of dance study that could enable such experiences for her students, although all might not achieve them. What Wigman training did not do was definitively sculpt the dancing body into an ideal “professional” form like ballet training or the codified technique of Martha Graham. Sandy Broyard studied at the Martha Graham School in New York and at the Berlin Wigman School in 1961. Her memories of Wigman are filled with an appreciation of Wigman’s teaching style and for the gentleness with which Wigman treated those around her. On Sundays Wigman would invite her foreign students who were far from home to her own house where she made tea for them. Broyard was well aware that this sort of graciousness would never have occurred during her study with Graham in New York. She also recalls that the students gathered in Wigman’s classes represented a broad range of experience, from professionals like Herrmann to farm girls taking their first dance classes. Bill Costanza was an American GI stationed in Germany in 1960. Remarkably he received permission to attend Wigman’s summer course, traveling through the Russian zone by train to dance. His memories of Wigman reveal an enduring fondness for her as a woman and as a teacher. He recalls his concern at first seeing Wigman teaching in her

⁷⁷² Interview, Brigitta Herrmann, Santa Fe, N.M. 14 March 2006

70s, her frail figure moving forcefully yet precariously through the lines of dancers and “some were big girls.” Such a wide range of students were brought together in Wigman’s classes and each was asked to develop an individual way of fulfilling the movement whether it was an hour-long class devoted to turning or to Wigman’s signature vibration practice. Wigman recognized and encouraged them all. The goal was an enrichment of the whole person, physically and emotionally, through the practice of dance movement. And it is no wonder that in some ways, Wigman’s training methods are better recognized among movement therapists than in the world of concert dance.

Study with Wigman followed a definite structure. Classes were organized in hour-long blocks and the day started with stretching and warm-ups taught by Til Tiehle or Manja Chmiel. Once the muscles in the body were warm, the *Ubungstunde* or Training Hour began. A closer look at the structure of these training hour classes provides a view of what Wigman deemed the most important elements of the dance. Each training hour had as a theme a particular movement quality, such as walking, swinging or jumping. Throughout the hour, that movement would be developed, varied and embellished in much the same fashion that Wigman describes the process of composing a dance. The movement quality was introduced in a simple form. The movements were taken traveling across the floor with the most advanced dancers in the lead. Line after line would cross the floor to return and begin again. Learning was done more through repetition than explanation, with the goal of experiencing the “feeling” of the movement. As the class progressed, levels of complexity were added to the basic movement quality. The German language famously combines words to expand the lexicon and allow a multitude of shaded meanings. In much the same way, Wigman’s training hour offered traveling movement combinations that would build on each previous passage so students could assimilate the fundamental movement at the same time that they glimpsed limitless possibilities within that movement. Using repetition in this way and filling the class time with non-stop progressions demanded stamina and concentration. When it gets tired enough, the body releases and finds a new sensation that can become an epiphany. American dancer Alwin Nikolais describes an entire class period that Hanya Holm spent teaching arm swings. After that sort of experience, he said, one never looks at the

movement in the same way again. Holm had carried this type of training from Wigman to students in the United States.

What were the movement qualities that Wigman selected to form the foundation for her dance? The following terms offer a glimpse into the basic building blocks of Mary Wigman's *Ausdruckstanz*:

Gehen (walking)
Gleiten (gliding)
Schreiten (to strike or stalk)
Fallen (falling, collapsing)
Stampfen (rhythm in the feet)
Ostinato (counter rhythm)
Vibrato (vibration)
Schweben (floating)
Schwingen (swinging)
Huepfen (skipping)
Springen (jumping)
Kreise (walking the circle)
Kreise ohne Fronveränderung (circling with facings)
Drehen (turning, spinning)
Gewichtverlagerung (shifting weight into running) then
Auffangen (catch and collapse)

(A) Discovering the Eloquent Body

In her desire to develop a technique most able to articulate the new language of dance, Wigman saw the work of a dancer as encompassing two large areas of practice: the first was a systematic study of expression as the retrieval and transformation of subconscious impulses that brought spiritual emotion into conscious physicality. Simultaneously, she recognized the need to develop what she termed the function of the dancer by physically training the body as an articulate instrument that portrayed these metaphysical states.

Mary Wigman was committed to the idea that dance training should serve the purpose of freeing the dancer in a process of individual discovery. She never codified her technique but she did provide clear structure for these explorations in her classes. She was adamant that she was not interested in making “little Mary Wigmans.” For Wigman

the goal of dance training was the development of the body as a versatile, communicating and very personal instrument. She did see that the development of a dancer proceeded in three states:

First stage: Wigman saw this stage growing solely from a desire for expression. This desire was not yet guided by content or form. Instead it was driven by expression for its own sake. She identifies, “Dullness, chaos, unrestraint, agitation and rapture about the [new] awareness of body.”⁷⁷³ Thus the individual could have a rapturous experience but one that lacked conscious awareness. To move toward consciousness, the dancer must enter the second stage.

Second stage: Wigman described this as the awakening of sense orientation. It is the point where the dancer struggles to grasp the formal elements that will eventually allow a conscious expression. The second stage is characterized by an internal discord, “the oscillation between expression for the sake of expression and form for the sake of form [as] the body, no longer mere corpus and not yet instrument, becomes the scene of inner and outer struggles.”⁷⁷⁴ This is essential if the dancer’s talent is to progress.

Third stage: In this stage, Wigman saw that a real understanding emerges. Expression and function are brought together. “The body, no longer willful substance, reveals itself as the tool for a purpose . . .”⁷⁷⁵

This progression of a dancer’s development makes possible, “the dancer’s fitness for professional effectiveness.”⁷⁷⁶ And it is important to understand that while many would benefit from a dance experience, the training of a professional dancer was focused and arduous, although it followed a very different course than that of ballet. For Wigman emoting was not enough. This has been a common misunderstanding of her methodology

⁷⁷³ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 127.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

since the time of her early fame up to the present. Wigman outlined the process of becoming a dancer, starting from the point of purely physical training through thematic exploration to the transcendent performance experience for the individual and finally for the individual within the group.

With that in mind, this section of exercises is intended to introduce two branches of the dance art as Wigman envisioned it: the outer/physical and the inner/emotional. While it is useful to identify a dichotomy of physical and emotional training, it is also important to remember that the two became inextricably intertwined in Wigman's practice and in the professional dancer. In class with Wigman, line after line of dancers would progress across the floor, sometimes in unison, sometimes in canon. Variation would be layered upon variation and the continuous energy of moving bodies would drive the class forward. While, all of these movement qualities ideally could be explored in such a setting, these exercises can be modified to fit nearly any space or population as a simple introduction to Wigman's movement fundamentals.

Wigman Movement Qualities in Practice

Gehen – Walking

The simple act of placing the bare foot on the floor was of a great significance to Mary Wigman. Barefoot dancing represented a radical departure from the ballet, at once a return to a kind of earthiness and a cause of some scandal. Kay Bardsley recalls that when she took classes with Maria Theresa Duncan in a Greek settlement house in New York, many parents were outraged that their children would be dancing in such a "peasant" style with bare feet. The bare foot became the symbol of dance modernism, from Isadora through St. Denis, Graham, Humphrey, Wigman and those who followed. The feet presented a non-uniform of the modern dance as an emphatic connection to the earth and, most importantly, a new instrument capable of eloquent expression. Wigman wrote of the feet,

The dancer's feet love the ground. Like small, tamed animals they slink across the floor with repressed wickedness, holding back their power to jump. They stroke the floor, grasp it with their toes, press against it, whispering their secrets.⁷⁷⁷

Walking and running have become mainstays of postmodern dance choreography. The walk for Wigman was not pedestrian; it demanded a palette of steps, like a spectrum of colors that could represent the variety of human locomotion, literally and metaphorically. The walk could be a slow saunter, a swaying stroll, a deliberate striding or an angry storming. The range of what could be expressed simply through walking was vast. The articulation through the foot from heel to toe or toe to heel offered a multiplicity of ways to relate to the ground and thus to pass through the space. Walks could drive the energy downward into the earth or lift the dancer up, resisting the pull of gravity. They could be done with the whole foot or only on the balls of the feet. A walk could be taken directly forward or backward or on the diagonal with the body in profile. The diagonal walk especially offered a manifestation of the oppositional tension, the push and pull of opposing forces. Most importantly, Wigman emphasized the experience of walking itself. Most of us walk every day, yet the goal of the walking practice was to bring the walker into the present moment and to demand concentrated attention to a sensation that had become automatic. It also served to settle the dancer in preparation for more complex activities. Practiced before performance, the simple exercise of walking and feeling the feet in contact with the floor can literally ground the performer before she goes onstage.

Exercise 4.1 Taking the Feet for a Walk

Let's start with the simple and important practice of walking. Start by feeling the soles of your feet against the floor. Is the surface warm or cool, rough or smooth? Begin walking with your regular walk. Keep all your attention on your feet. How does your foot move to allow you to walk? Do you roll through from heel to toe, foot flat or toe first? Try each of these ways of walking. Read again Wigman's description of the feet. Can you stroke the floor with your feet in place? Traveling? How does the stroke change as you begin to move through the space? How can you strike the floor? Or stalk from corner

⁷⁷⁷ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 118.

to corner? Can you grasp the floor with your toes? Press against the floor to rise. How does walking on the balls of your feet change your whole body's relationship to the floor? Try Wigman's image of the feet as "small tamed animals." Can the feet "slink across the floor with repressed wickedness?" What does repressed wickedness look like when expressed with the foot alone? What other images can you think of to inspire the feet? Can feet be sneaky or bold, quiet or loud? What happens when you speed your walk to a run?

Gleiten - Gliding

Gliding is a very specific variation on the theme of walking. In gliding the feet are flat and slide across the surface of the floor. Nothing should disturb the smoothness of the movement. Of course there is some lift allowed, otherwise you couldn't travel at all! But rather than coming from articulation through the foot, ankle and then lifting of the knee, gliding comes from the entire leg reaching from the hip. There is a conscious effort to lengthen the space between the legs, as in a shallow forward lunge. In gliding the level of the body remains constant. It is as if you are on a conveyor belt traveling on a steady stream of motion. When gliding forward, the sternum or breastbone will naturally take the lead. In backward gliding, the small of the back takes the lead with the abdominal muscles engaged in a small contraction. Clearly, gliding can easily travel forward and backward. Gliding through space can be direct and linear. But gliding is especially suited to carving curves through the space. Just as the gliding proceeds in a smooth, ongoing progression, so do curvilinear lines link as a chain, one to another. Gliding is continuous.

She slowly strides across the floor and closes her eyes. She no longer feels anything but the rhythm of striding . . . The floor responds, returns every pressure, instinctively offering embrace with motherly love. Every step is a caress, a touch of tenderness.⁷⁷⁸

Exercise 4.2 Gliding through Space

Start with knees softly bent and the feet in conscious contact with the surface of the floor. Bend your arms at right angles in front of you with palms facing toward the

⁷⁷⁸ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 118.

floor. With your arms in this position, lift your shoulders toward your ears then let your scapulae slide smoothly down your back as you lower your shoulders to a neutral position. Begin to move smoothly forward, finding evenness in the rhythm, length and level of your glide. Try it backwards. Release your arms to your sides but keep them falling from the shoulders and actively maintaining their relationship to the torso. Then travel with a curving pathway, beginning with a large curve across the floor. Starting from upstage right, glide in a single arc that takes you toward downstage center and continues to move you to a point of arrival at upstage left. Reverse the pathway while gliding backwards. Choose a smaller curvilinear path that carves small arcs. Connect the arcs into a scalloping pattern with three, four or five glides forward and a half turn to travel three gliding steps backwards and repeat the pattern. How does the upper body respond to the curving path of the gliding feet? There are many variations possible when gliding. Consider the varied pathways that the gliding body can take through the space.

Stampfen – Rhythm in the Feet

We've read of Wigman's demand that innate body rhythm initiate the pulse of the dance. While rhythm can occur in any part of the body, the feet are especially suited for exploring the rhythms of dance. Gliding offers a way to experience a smooth and sustained sense of time but the feet can create the opposite effect.

Sometimes the dancing feet turn wild: then they rage against the mother in angry rhythms, stamping furiously against the floor, threatening utter ruin. Untouched by their hatred, the ground goes on breathing deeply and quietly. The frantic feet stop, astonished, confused, stretching themselves arrogantly at their ankles, turning laughingly on their toes. Yes, they can be frivolous too.⁷⁷⁹

Exercise 4. 3 Wild Feet

Have one person clap a rhythm. Have the other dancers respond by clapping the same rhythm in unison. Do this several times with different “clappers” setting the rhythms. Next have one person clap a rhythm while the group responds by repeating the

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

rhythm with their feet. Then have one dancer stamp a rhythm while the other dancers begin to move to that rhythm through space. From that rhythm, develop your own variation. Vary the time and intensity of the beats: sometimes fast or slow, soft or emphatic. Read again Wigman's description of when the dancing feet turn wild. Can they rage against the floor? Can they stop in confusion and then become frivolous? What sort of rhythm would frivolous feet make? Could you take that rhythm into your hands and clap it? Could you take any of these rhythms into another body part?

Ostinato – Different rhythms in feet and arms

Ostinato is a term that Wigman adapted from music theory. In ostinato a phrase is repeated insistently in the bass line throughout a composition while the upper treble parts change. Musical fundamentals like ostinato directed the experiments that Emile Jaques-Dalcroze presented to his students at Hellerau. Mary Wigman imported the term ostinato to the dancing form and used it to signify the use of counter rhythms between parts of the body, for example between the feet and the arms.

Exercise 4.4 Ostinato

Listen to Chopin's *Fantaisie-Impromptu* for piano. Can you discern the square structure of four sixteenth notes in the right hand against the swing of triplets in the left hand in each measure? Can you put these rhythms in your own body? Try the following exercise.

Establish a rhythmic pattern in one area of your body – try your feet. Keep it in 4/4 time to begin with. (Count and step 1, 2, 3, 4) Practice this pattern until you can comfortably repeat it. Then establish another rhythmic pattern in another body area – say your arms. Keep this rhythm in ¾ time. (Count 1, 2, 3) Practice this pattern until you can comfortably repeat it. Now go back to the rhythm in your feet. Keep it going and add the arm pattern. Trade rhythms between upper and lower body parts. Try new rhythms. Try them with different body parts.

Vibrato – Vibration

Vibrato is another idea from music vocabulary, wherein expressive quality is given to the sound of a note by means of rapid and minute fluctuations in pitch. Translating the idea for dance, Wigman's vibrations were achieved through a buoyant vertical bounce of the body, sometimes slight and at times more vigorous, either with the whole body or with a single body part. The vibration usually was done traveling across the floor with many variations, from a light, lifted vibration on the balls of the feet to a deeper bounce with the whole foot placed firmly against the floor. The vibration was achieved through a release in the ankles and a resilience in the knees and hips that was supported by a resonating, lightly panting breath. The hands sometimes rested on the ribcage in order to bring awareness to the breath.

Wigman developed the quality of vibration after an injury curtailed her own ability to jump. The up and down motion of the vibration is like a very small lifting and landing that reaches into the heart of jumping.

At the Wigman School, students were encouraged to explore for themselves and to solve the problems presented by the movement qualities. Hanya Holm describes how she and a group of students came to understand the vibration.

We found the answer to it while sitting on a sofa a whole night, with the springs helping us to bounce back. Then, on our feet without any outward help, the demands of the momentum carried us gradually further until the repetition of the movement finally broke down any mental opposition, and vibration became a true experience for us.⁷⁸⁰

Exercise 4.5 Vibrations

Bounce on something with springs: a couch or bed or hammock. Try this sitting or standing (carefully!) Try it with eyes open and eyes closed. Try to focus on the changes in level and the moment of change from up to down and vice versa. Then see

⁷⁸⁰ Holm in Sorell, *Hanya Holm*, 18.

those changes as part of a continuum. Mary Wigman's practice of the vibration was very specific and thus difficult to recreate without a knowing presence in the studio. However, the concept can be explored as an idea of a movement type. A very fine example of the vibrations can be seen in the video, *Hanya: Portrait of a Pioneer*, where Hanya Holm leads a group of students in vibration practice outdoors at Mills College in the 1930s.

Schwingen – Swinging

For Mary Wigman the movement of the swing could be the basis of an entire dance composition as well as a singular physical activity or a formal element in a larger choreographic work. She describes swing dances as arising from the pure joy or pleasure of moving. “These are based on the swing of the body and its extension in sweeping through space as curve. Their nature has an externally flowing quality. They are less bound by metrics than by space.”⁷⁸¹

Exercise 4.6 Swinging

Make sure that you have plenty of space around you. Raise one arm high overhead and allow it to drop forward and back, falling from the shoulder. Reverse the swing from back to front. Experiment by swinging the arm from side to side across the body and on the diagonal. Stick with one swinging motion for several minutes or longer. Close your eyes. Imagine the experience of a child riding a swing. Envision the suspension, the fall and the catch of the forward and backward movement. Allow your body to experience the swing through your imagination, while standing still. Now reach both arms upward and swing through the whole body from front to back and then back to front, releasing through the hip, knee and ankle joints with the down swing. Try swinging with the leg alone releasing at the hip. The range of a swing is directly related to effort of the suspending reach and the releasing joints. *Anspannung* and *Abspannung* are integral to the swing. Doris Humphrey's fall and recovery has made the swing a staple in American modern dance. In class with Wigman, exploring the action of the swing could

⁷⁸¹ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 92.

fill an entire class period, building from a localized swinging arm to a full-bodied sweeping through space propelled by the momentum of the swing. Many, many variations of the swing can be seen in dance classes. Find a swing in playground, park or schoolyard. Reacquaint yourself with the sensation of swinging.

Huepfen – skipping (This may also go along with swinging.)

Exercise 4.7 Skipping

Start with a simple skip across the floor, alternating the feet and allowing your arms to travel naturally at your sides. Increase your effort so that your skips become more energized, pressing the right knee forward as you push off from the floor with your left foot and vice versa. Bring the arms into action, one swinging forward and one back in opposition to the skipping legs. Skip with the intention of really wanting to get somewhere. Try it with both arms swinging forward and both back or opening to the sides and closing with the alternating swings. Add the upper body and head. How can they respond to the skips and be part of the swings? What variations can you discover?

Kreise (walking a circle)

Kreise ohne Frontveränderung – Circling (facing one direction, changing ¼ turn or ½ turn with arms, with torso circle)

For Wigman, the circle had great import, just as it has been recognized as the core of traditional folk dances from around the world. More than a geometric shape, for Wigman the circle was a cosmic concept, and in her exercises incorporated multiple explorations of the idea of the circle.

Her body draws a circle into space, the feet move with wide, intense steps around the circle's line, and, in moving, always hit upon the same points of the circle. She holds sway over the circle in space while being held by it.⁷⁸²

⁷⁸² Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 120.

Drehen – Turning and Spinning

The yin-yang symbol that greeted those entering the *Festhalle* at Hellerau became a symbol of deep resonance for Wigman as she developed her dance technique. And Laban had shared with her his experience of the mystical dancing prayer of the Sufi dervishes. The vertical center of the yin-yang represents the mystic ‘center,’ where there is no rotation, no restlessness, no impulse, nor any suffering of any kind. It is the “still point of the turning world.” These philosophical ideas run throughout Mary Wigman’s writings about turning and the circle. And training to turn and spin was central to her pedagogy over the span of her teaching life. They also formed the theme of her 1926 solo *Drehentanz*, or *Monotonie Whirl*, in which she spun for seven minutes without stopping. In Wigman’s treatment of the turning body we see most clearly her wedding of the individual dancer to the space surrounding her.

A secret power emanates from this circle and directs the feet . . . Indeed, a living circle this dancer is, subject to the very law conjured up by herself!

Suddenly – an idea striking like lightning; the center. To become the center herself, and then from there to destroy the self-created madness!”⁷⁸³

Exercise 4.8 Circling, Turning and Spinning

Hanya Holm wrote of the struggle among Wigman’s students to master spinning for an extended period of time. Many were left clinging to the walls to find equilibrium and others were sent flying down the hall with nausea. But when captured, spinning is one of the most compelling of Wigman’s elements to practice and mesmerizing to behold. The video *Mary Wigman: When the Fire Dances Between the Two Poles* has a sequence in which Wigman teaches a spinning class in her Berlin studio and illustrates the spin in practice. When watching the sequence, play close attention to the placement of the feet and the response of the upper body to them. As with the vibrations, Mary Wigman’s practice of spinning was very specific and thus difficult to recreate without an experienced teacher in the studio. However, the concepts of circling, turning and spinning

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

can be explored as an idea of a movement type and a practice of the body's relationship to the space around it. Wigman knew well the power of the circle as physical property and cosmic metaphor.

(1) Drawing the circle:

Begin standing with the feet in parallel with the knees bent in a *demi pli  *. Bearing weight on the left foot, straighten the left leg while reaching the right leg forward, side and back to close again in parallel *pli  *. Repeat on the left side. Try it again and envision that you are drawing an arc on the floor to the right and to the left. Both arcs have the parallel *pli  * as their point of returning to center. For experienced dancers, this is a parallel *rond de jamb*. Now add a simultaneous reach of the arm, creating a parallel arc at torso height, as you circle the leg: forward, side and back. Reverse the pathway from back to front. Try it with a six-count circling: reaching 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and *pli  * together on 6. **Establish a sequence:** Right leg and arm front to back, left leg and arm front to back, then right side back to front and left side back to front. Repeat.

(2) Walking the circle:

Begin with the right foot, walking an imaginary circle through the space to your right. Try taking five steps: right, left, right, left, right and shift your direction at count six on the right foot to begin to walk the arc toward the left. Repeat the five steps in the left arc: left, right, left, right, left and shift to the right again. Essentially you are walking a horizontal figure eight with the shift as the center point that changes directions. Try tilting the body toward the direction of the turn. Find the centripetal force that draws the torso toward the center. Visualize the center of each circle. Stretch your arms out sideways at shoulder height. As you walk and tilt your body, allow your arms to establish the center point. Thus your right hand reaches toward the center of the circle to the right and your left hand does the same in the left circle. **Establish a sequence:** Starting with the right foot, walk the circle to the right and shift, walk the circle to the left and shift. Repeat the circles and add the body tilt. Repeat the circles again and add the arms. You

can also establish a rhythm: Five counts to the right, shift on six and five counts to the left and shift.

(3) Circling while facing front:

Consider the circles that you have traced through space in your figure eights.

Now begin to walk a new circle while maintaining your facing toward the front. Imagine yourself standing still at the center. Picture the face of a clock. Straight before you is twelve o'clock. Directly to your right is three o'clock. Behind you lies six o'clock and 9 o'clock is to your left.

Keep your shoulders and pelvis facing directly to the front of the room throughout your walking. Step your right foot forward toward the right at 2 o'clock. Step your left foot across and behind at 4 o'clock. Bring the right foot behind the left at 6 o'clock. Take the left foot open to the left at 8 o'clock. Bring the right foot across and forward of the left at 10 o'clock. Bring the left foot forward to twelve o'clock. Thus in six steps you have traversed the edges of a circle while keeping a single focus, in this case forward.

Try walking the circle while facing front again; keep the knees soft and the legs slightly turned out to facilitate the sideways motion. Allow your pace to build gradually as you grow comfortable with the pattern of the feet. Find a pace and placement of the feet that allows your steps to become smooth and even. Now begin to allow the rest of your body to respond to the circular pathway as if the whole body was moving inside a large cylinder. Again, maintain a forward focus through the shoulders and pelvis even as you step to the side. Imagine your torso contacting the circle in space through your right side, back, left side and front and all of the subtle places between these points. Allow your head to respond to the shifts in your body. Place your fingertips at your shoulders with the elbows opened wide to the sides. Repeat.

Establish a sequence: Beginning with the right foot, circle in six steps while facing front and repeat, then add the torso, repeating the circle two times. Finally, bring the fingertips to the shoulders and circle twice more. Thus the sequence builds from feet, to feet and torso, to feet, torso and arms. You can establish a rhythm by taking six counts for every time around, thus the above sequence would have six repetitions of six counts. Now try the whole thing on the left side!

It is possible to change facings by turning the entire body a quarter or a half turn at the beginning of every new repetition. It is easiest to turn toward the right side when stepping out with the right foot and toward the left side when stepping with the left.

It is also possible to **create a longer phrase** by joining all of the circling and turning sequences above. For example: Combine one full sequence of **(1) drawing the circle** from right to left, then add one full sequence of **(2) walking the circle** from right to left and continue by squaring the body to the front and adding one full sequence of **(3) circling while facing front** on both the right and left sides. The entire phrase can be done in $\frac{3}{4}$ time counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

The variations in such turning phrases are many. In the phrase above, the emphasis is placed on first establishing the dancer at the center of a larger circle through drawing the circle around a stationary body. By walking two conjoined circles, the body is moved to the periphery or the outline of the circle in space. By circling while facing front, the entire body fills the volume of the circle. The final step would be to draw the energy of the circle form to the very center of the dancing body through spinning practice. Thus the dancer equally shapes, is moved by and becomes one with the cosmic force of the circle.

Springen – Jumping

Every leap is a battle between the upward drive toward weightlessness and the somber reality of the earthbound being. When jumps were the theme of the training hour, the entire class was spent on jumping. No small challenge for the students that day! The jumps started small. Building to the two-footed take-off and landing of a true jump, the air was filled with hops that grew to skips that progressed to leaps. The breath was integral to the success of the jump. The legs remained buoyant throughout, pressing against the ground to spring and yielding into the floor on landing. Inhalation offered a key to buoyancy. At the peak of the jump the inhalation was sustained for just a moment to keep the body airborne for as long as possible. In the leap we see full exertion of the muscles and limbs with the support of the inner breath

“She jumps because she wants to fly, battling during the leap with gravity and lightness, overcoming the one to be conquered by the other.”⁷⁸⁴

Exercise 4.9 Jumping and Breath

Endless variations are possible on the theme of jumping, from the airbound leap that evolves from a run to the vertical jump when both feet leave the floor simultaneously. The form of the jump depends on the expertise of the dancer but all jumping begins with a *plié* or bending of the leg that connects the body to the earth, and continues through the press and spring upward that culminates in the landing *plié*, allowing the body to yield again to earthly contact. Whether you are comfortable with a bounding leap across the floor, a jump in place or any variation, try adding an inhalation through the takeoff and the high point of your jump. See how the breath can support the suspension of the body in space. This use of breath can be consciously incorporated into any jumping practice.

Mary Wigman also used a very specific kind of jump when making her “grotesque” dances such as the *Hexentanz* or the Dance of the Demon in *The Seven Dances of Life*. In these dances, the leaps and jumps are consciously earthbound. The legs

⁷⁸⁴ Wigman, *Wigman Book*, 119.

pull in toward the body and the pull of gravity downward remains strong. It can be useful to think of this sort of elevation as a jump done in a box where there is a ceiling or a point where the upward momentum is arrested and drawn into the body center. Try your earlier flying jumps and leaps, this time keeping a lid on the high level. How does this change the feeling and shape of the jump? How does it change the expression transmitted to those watching? When would this sort of jump be useful in a choreographed work?

Fallen – Falling, collapsing

Gewichtverlagerung – Shifting of weight into running, and *Auffangen*/catch and collapse.

Perhaps no other act represents *Abspannung* and *Anspannung* more than falling: the absolute release of the body to gravity, the suspension that precedes it and the gathering of forces that allows a rise and a repetition of the entire sequence. Falling practice for Wigman, while allowing for endless variations, grew from a very specific sequence. First there was a conscious shifting of the weight into a running through space that was caught, arrested. And from this suspension of momentum, really an in-breath of intention, the whole body surrendered to the downward pull. The fall could happen slowly or quickly but always with a conscious control.

Exercise 4.10 Falling

Experiment with ways of falling. Begin with a run leading to a suspension and collapse as described above. Listen to your muscles. How much tension and how much release is required to smoothly execute a slow collapse or a quick one. Listen to your bones. How must the joints respond to support a smooth descent and an equally fluid rising? Listen to your breath. How can your breath assist with your falling?

At the Wigman School, a full class period was dedicated to each of the above movement qualities on a rotating basis. The very nature of the training hour promoted the possibility of an uplifting experience. Analysis happened on the fly and the whole structure of the class was aimed at an increasing level of muscular involvement and

excitement with the goal of “being danced” or carried along by the flow of the movement and the energy of the group moving together. Progressing from the simplest version to the most complex, each exercise was mined for its full range of possibilities and, rather than attaining an ideal form of the walk or the jump, the swing or the fall, class was shaped to allow the movement to develop through intensive practice and repetition with the hope of a conscious total experience.

(B) What makes the Dance?

In *The Mary Wigman Book*, she lays bare her goals for training the body. All were intended to fulfill the range of human expression in dance form. She saw this training as the first step to finding the power of the body as an instrument for the outward manifestation of changes in our invisible emotional states. She called this physicality “function” and divided the dancing functions among parts of the body. Reminiscent of Delsarte’s divisions of the body,⁷⁸⁵ she defined the primary dancing functions as

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Tension | the function of the muscles |
| 2. Rhythm | the function of the limbs |
| 3. Breathing | the function of the vital organs (Wigman 1973: 88) |

In Wigman’s *Ausdruckstanz*, each part of the body became an eloquent member of the whole. Expression was not limited to the center or core or the limbs. Each body part must be awakened in order to contribute to the complete form of the dance. The following exercises offer an opportunity to explore these functions and bring to life Wigman’s concepts of the essential elements of dance, including breath, space, time and effort/strength.

⁷⁸⁵ Frenchman Francois Delsarte (1811-1871) developed a system of “harmonic body movements” and tableau vivant. Delsarte’s theory divided the human body into three distinct zones: the head and upper chest as the spiritual center; the torso as the seat of emotions; and the abdomen and pelvis as the physical center. Delsarte’s ideas formed the basis for many philosophical and theatrical principles.

Exercise 4.11 Sequential Stretches

Find a place on the floor. Lie down. Release your body into the floor. Feel the surface of the floor against your body. Feel the air around you and how it plays on the surface of your skin. Close your eyes. And begin to listen to your breathing. Pay attention to the changes that happen in your torso as you breathe in and out. Do you take more time to inhale or exhale? Is your breathing regular or varied? Is there a pattern to your breath? As you turn your focus inward, try to relax your muscles more and more with each exhalation. As the muscles loosen, feel your body soften into the floor.

Then turn your focus to your fingertips. See what small movements you can make with the tips of your fingers. Can you move each fingertip at a time? How do they want to move together? Begin to make the movement of your fingertips larger, using the whole finger. How does that affect the movement of your hand? Become aware of the palm of your hand. How does closing the fingers inward change the palm and the back of the hand? And how does stretching the fingers change them? How do these larger movements of the fingers and hand affect the wrist? As you begin to move the fingertips, fingers, hands and wrists, notice how the muscles in your forearms respond. And what does moving these muscles do to your elbows?

Allow the elbows to join in the dance of fingertips, fingers, hands, wrists and forearms. What sorts of movement do the elbows allow? And how does this movement affect the upper arms, the biceps and triceps. How does movement from the fingertips through the arms resonate in the shoulders?

What sort of message can travel from the fingers to the shoulder joint? How many ways can the shoulder joints move? As you make your movements larger, see if you can find how the shoulder joint changes the bones and muscles of the upper back and chest. Take a moment and feel this dance of fingers, hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arm and shoulder in every direction around your prone form. How does your neck respond? And your head? Imagine how this movement would change the focus of your gaze if your

eyes were open. Allow the center of the body to become involved. Twist or stretch at the waist and feel how your abdominal and back muscles support your movement.

In this upper body dance, inhale and stretch from the center of the torso to the fingertips. Exhale and release the stretch. Do this several times ending with a release back into the floor. In the final release, make the body still and begin to listen to your breathing again.

Now take the focus to your toes. How articulate can you be with the tips of your toes? Can you move each toe in isolation? Can you move them sequentially? Expand your toes by stretching and draw them in by grasping. How do these movements affect the soles of your feet? Draw circles in the air with your toes or triangles or octagons. Write your name. Try your first name with your left foot and your last name with your right foot. How does moving your foot affect your ankle? And how does ankle movement change the muscles in your shins and calves? Point and flex. How does pointing change your calf muscles and flexing change those of your shin?

Allow the movement impulse from toe to foot to ankle to lower leg to continue to your knee joints. What sort of movements do the knees make possible? And how do the thighs respond to this movement? When you take the movement into the thighs, what happens in the hip joints? What sort of message can travel from the toes to the hip joints? And from the hips to the toes? What sort of movements do the hip joints make possible? How does your pelvis respond? And your abdominal and back muscles?

In this lower body dance, inhale and stretch from the center of your pelvis to your toes. Exhale and release the stretch.

Now connect the lower and upper body. Starting with fingertips and toes, let the movement grow to include hands and feet, wrists and ankles, forearms and lower legs, elbows and knees, upper arms and thighs, shoulders and hip joints. Feel the beautiful balance and correspondence between the muscles, bones and joints of the upper and

lower body. And how do the torso and pelvis, spine, neck and head respond to this full-bodied movement? Now initiate the movement from the center, from the pelvis and inner torso out to the extremities.

Exercise 4.12 Stretching Dance

Remember Wigman's statement that the secret of the dance lies in "the living breath." Breath support for movement became an integral part of her own performance and of how she taught dance. The expansion and contraction of the lungs serves as an automatic example of expansion and condensing within the body center.

Take the sequential stretch from Exercise 4.11 into a full-bodied stretching dance. Feel the tension through the center as you reach right hand from left foot. Try the reverse. Stretch long from fingertips to toes. As you stretch, begin to bring your attention back to your breath. As you inhale, stretch the body in any way you wish. As you exhale, allow the body to condense. Continue this breathing, stretching dance by expanding or opening on the inhalation and condensing or closing on the exhalation. Try different body parts and the whole body.

Now reverse the breath/stretch pattern. Try stretching or expanding on the exhale and closing or condensing when you inhale. Does one pattern or the other feel most natural to your body? Spend some time in that pattern, then alternate between the two.

Expand this stretching dance to rise. Eventually, come to standing and stillness. Press your feet into the floor. Listen to your breath. Can you feel your heartbeat?

Exercise 4.13 Breath Phrase

Take your stretching dance from Exercise 4.12 to the standing position. Your kinesphere is the reach space around you. As far as you can reach and in all directions, your kinesphere is your self-space, your space consciousness and awareness of your own place and the use of the kinesphere. Find the edges of your kinesphere by stretching your

limbs in front, behind, beside, above and below you. Imagine a large circle surrounding you and your body, poised within the sphere like Leonardo DaVinci's proportional drawings of Man.

Once you have found the edges of your kinesphere, begin to use your breath to further explore what movements are possible in this space. As you did on the floor, expand with the inhalation and condense with the exhalation. Reverse this pattern by expanding with the out breath and closing with the in breath. Vary the breathing pattern, a quick breath out and a long, slow breath in. While riding your breath, begin to create a movement phrase that is completely dependent on your own breath pattern. This is the breath phrase.

Exercise 4.14 Breathing through Space

Begin walking quickly through the space. Notice how many steps it takes for you to fully inhale and how many steps it takes you to exhale. Imagine that your feet are like paint brushes: each step or glide or hop leaves a trace of color on the floor. With this in mind, travel along a straight or linear pathway, then try a curving or curvilinear path. Try varying your pathway between straight and curved. Add corresponding movements of the arms and upper body. Once again use the breath to initiate and drive the movement. Now add the whole body breath phrase as you travel on your path.

(C) Space

Wigman had used her time with Rudolph von Laban well. She was present for the early explorations that resulted in Laban's analysis of movement possibilities within the multi-dimensional space of the icosahedron. Wigman expanded on these theories from her experience as a consummate performer. Remember that for Wigman, space was the great, constant, invisible partner. While the space had mystical and metaphorical significance, it is important to remember that air does have actual weight. When Mary Wigman danced at Carnegie Hall, the space inherently contained 70,000 pounds of air! In many ways, Wigman's ideas were as closely bound to science as they were to aesthetics.

Exercise 4.15 Space as Invisible Partner

Lie down comfortably on the floor with plenty of space around you. Take time to stretch your torso and limbs in whatever ways are most appropriate to your body in this place, at this time. Listen to the messages from your muscles and joints. This is your warm up. Once stretched, allow your body to release totally into the floor. At the sound of the drum (or count) take 12 beats to rise to standing in any way you wish. Take 10 beats to descend to the floor again. Take 8 beats to rise and 8 beats to descend. Try new ways of rising and descending. Repeat with 4 beats up and 4 beats down. Then in 2 beats each: up, down, up, down, and finish standing.

Close your eyes to bring the focus inward. Begin to move a hand through the space around you. Imagine that the space is filled with champagne or soda. This effervescence allows your hand and arm to be buoyant and move freely and easily through the space. Reach with your fingers. Tickle the air.

Now imagine that the champagne has turned to water and it is deep water like that found at the deep end of a swimming pool. Feel the resistance of the water as you push, press and reach your arm through the space. How does your wrist respond? Your elbow?

Now imagine that the water has turned to molasses. The space is filled with a viscous substance that creates more resistance as you move through this thicker space. How do your fingers, hand, arm and shoulder respond to this increasing pressure from the space itself? What must your muscles do to push your hand through the space?

Finally, imagine that the space is filled with wet sand. How does this change the pressure and tension in your arm? How does the rest of your body, pelvis, thighs, chest and feet, respond to the space pressing in on you? What must you do to carve this heavy space? Could you take a few steps through this space? How does the resistance of the space shape your movement? How does it change your breathing?

Now, while standing still, return to the sense of lightness in a space filled with champagne. Listen to your breath. Open your eyes. Take 8 beats to descend to the floor as if the floor was pushing against you, resisting your descent. Take 8 beats to rise as if the sky or ceiling was pressing you down, resisting your rising. Take 4 beats down with no resistance. Rise in 4 beats, resisting the rising. Descend in 2 beats with resistance. Rise in two beats with no resistance. Try single beats with resistance and without.

Consider how your relationship with the space informed your movement. How can this relationship with space influence muscular tension and release, timing, and intention?

How can this experience prove useful in choreography and performance?

(D) Dance as Language

Hands

From her earliest experience of seeing the Wiesenthal sisters in concert, Wigman had been aware of the expressive potential of the hands. In class students were guided in explorations to animate the hands by using emotional cues. The imagery was vivid: hands that can cry, that can laugh happily and also express struggle, sadness and the gentleness of the dance. Consider the dance elements with which we have already experimented. Tension and release come into use when dancing with the hands. How does the idea of struggle affect the tension in your hands? What is the difference between a hand that laughs and a hand that cries? How does the speed with which you move your hands change as the emotion changes? And how do your hands move through space? Do you use the space close to you or far away to reach with longing or sadness? How do effort, space and time affect the dance of the hands?

Exercise 4.16 Hand Dances

Make a list of emotional qualities, for example, anger, fear, greed, lust, hope, longing, joy, tenderness, rage, sadness. And make a list of actions such as laughing,

weeping, hiding, sneaking, struggling, yielding, caressing. Sitting in a circle, take your focus to your own hands. As a group, consider each of these emotional qualities and actions through improvisation, allowing yourself to explore this range of emotions through the hands alone. Begin to notice how these hand studies can affect the entire body. Repeat the hand explorations, but this time allow the entire body to respond. This can be done seated and taken to standing.

(E) Speaking Beyond the Individual Body:

Working with Others and the Strength of the Dancing Ensemble

These exercises can be for any number of dancers. Live accompaniment is preferred. They can be done solo, in unison with the entire group or divided into smaller groups with actors and observers.

Exercise 4.17 Finding Home

In silence, find a place in the room that will be home for you right now. Go there and settle. Sit, stand and/or lie there. Inhabit that particular place and explore it. Close your eyes and imagine that your body is filling your home space. Stretch, relax or pace. Do anything that will allow you to connect with this place at this time. Finally stretch out long against the floor and feel where the surface of your body connects to the room. This can be a good time to practice the sequential stretches from exercise 4.11. Finally, come to standing and bring your awareness to the sensation of the soles of your feet against the floor.

At the sound of the drum, or piano or counting voice, begin to walk away from your dance home out into open space. See the others moving through the room and become aware of the rhythm of your walk. Speed or slow the pace in response to changes in the sound accompaniment. When the sound stops, find a still shape and stay in place. Become aware of your home place. As if that spot was emitting a magnetic pull, begin to

travel back home. It may not be in front of you but rather beside or behind. Feel the pull on the part of your body closest to home as you initiate your return.

A myriad of possibilities are available in finding and moving away from home. Explorations of pathways, tempo, stillness and emotion abound. The magnetic pull of points in space offers another way to experience surroundings as tangible with agency that affects the dancer. It is possible to leave home and return numerous times and in many ways. It is also possible to connect with another dancer when away from home.

Exercise 4.18 Mirroring

An old standby in improvisation and theatre classes, the mirroring exercise initiates an immediate kinesthetic response between partners and a practical example of kinetic sympathy.

Sit face to face and take your focus out over your partner's right shoulder. Choose one person to lead as the other partner mirrors the leader's movements. In mirroring, if the leader moves her right hand, the partner would move the left. The goal of mirroring is to transmit movement without speaking and to enliven the space between the two dancers. After a few minutes, change leaders and repeat. Finally, neither partner leads, but instead both respond and share the initiation of the movements without talking. This exercise, while simple, calls for complete attention to the movement and the interplay of forces between partners. Allow some time to discuss the mirroring experience. What was it like to lead? To be led? To share the leadership?

Exercise 4.19 Dancing Conversations

Return to facing your partner. Rather than experiencing movement simultaneously, a non-verbal conversation will take place between the partners. The movement conversation may be literal or very abstract. It may take the form of a narrative or a stream of consciousness, emphatic, dramatic, and emotional, or matter-of-fact and understated. The challenge of the dancing conversation is to be still and "listen" before responding. One person starts the dancing conversation while the other watches

and then responds through the body alone. The conversation continues back and forth between partners and can evolve to a standing conversation.

It can be curious to observe how speaking styles translate to the dancing conversation. Some conversations never quite connect; some partners have trouble really listening and continue with their own dancing monologue. Some are impatient and “talk” over the other dancer who is still moving. Some dancers finish each other’s sentences. Some are emphatic while others are subdued. It can be useful to have one couple continue while the others stop and watch.

Exercise 4.20 Walking Partners

Standing side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder, partners gather at one side of the room. Looking straight ahead (and never into the mirror, nor with sly, sideways glances) the partners begin to travel across the floor. The goal is to move

together to the other side of the room. The goal is not to trick one’s partner, although that could be another exercise. While the partners may be most comfortable starting with walking forward, any variation is valid as long as both can travel together in shared movement.

Choose one partner to begin as leader. Halfway across, without talking, change leaders. The moment when leadership changes is a crucial one and is similar to the sharing of the lead in the mirroring exercise. The space between the dancers is once again charged. How do bodies communicate with one another? What happens to timing and effort in this exercise? How can we use these ideas and awareness onstage and in life?

Exercise 4.21 The Group in Space

Expanding on the practice of walking partners, join together two or more pairs of dancers. They may start standing, sitting, kneeling or each finding their own unique starting position. They should be quite close together, at least to begin. Let them be still until an impulse to move arises from someone in the group. Together, the group travels

through space, not necessarily with the same movements, as was the case for the walking partners exercise. Most importantly, the initial impulse to move and the dynamic quality of the movement is shared, as may be the impulse to stillness or urgency. It is possible to direct the focus of the group inward within itself or outward toward a fixed point or end goal. The idea of a magnetic pull through space can press the group toward a direction or destination or it can repel the group away from a particular location.

Exercise 4.22 Crystallization (Based on the Group Motion Workshop)

This exercise is for five to limitless dancers, with music/ live accompaniment. All dancers begin walking or jogging around each other. Be aware of each other and the space around you. Suddenly, upon impulse, one person freezes in a still shape. As you notice this dancer among you, go to him and in response to his shape, connect physically to him and to the other dancers, as do the molecules of a crystal. The full crystal is formed when all the dancers are connected.

The central dancer who began the formation now begins to repeat a movement and sound impulse. When it is felt and heard, the impulse is repeated, first by the dancers closest to the source and eventually by the whole group. In this way the impulse spreads outward through the group like the rings from a stone thrown into water. As it continues to expand, the impulse will break the physical connections of the group and the dancers will separate from each other, spreading outward into the space. When the energy of the impulse reaches its highest point, this outward expansion stops and the walking and jogging that began the exercise will resume. More than one dancer may initiate a crystal at the same time, in which case the group will divide to join different crystals.

*“And this was the best of all, and perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical achievements; to be given not only one’s artistic independence, but to be forced into an absolute self-responsibility.”*⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁶ Wigman in the full version of “My Teacher Laban,” *Journal of Art and Idea* online. Accessed 7 September 2009 at <http://bearstowjournal.org/wigman-a.htm> An edited version is available in Copeland, *What is Dance?*, 302-5.

(F) Composition: Improvisation and Developing a Theme

In the early years at the Wigman School, there was no specific class time set aside to improvise. Instead, improvisation developed as the day's class work progressed. By the time Wigman was teaching in Berlin in the 1950s, the afternoon courses included improvisation, composition and rehearsal time. Students from that time recall the schedule of the afternoon classes: on Mondays and Wednesdays the students would alternate between improvisation and composition taught by Wigman and accompanied by Ulrich Kestler. Tuesdays were for mime class and Thursdays and Fridays were dedicated to dance theory and history. Afternoon rehearsal time was taken up in the development of independent projects that grew out of the composition classes.

Improvisation

Wigman would use imagery to inspire improvisation. She would draw on her own life, whatever was moving her at that time. She also based improvisations on the cardinal elements — fire, water, earth and air — and natural phenomena such as the wind, the quiet snow or falling leaves in the autumn. She also drew on everyday experiences like being on a lonely street. And she used images that had inspired her own dance compositions such as *Schwingende Landschaft* (*Shifting Landscape*, 1929) that traversed a range of emotional experiences in response to an ever-changing natural landscape.

Dance improvisation has become an integral part of the vocabulary of western modern dance. We have Mary Wigman to thank for this, in great part. Of course, improvised movement has been a part of dance throughout time and cultures, but the use of improvisation to explore movement ideas for the concert stage has deep roots in Wigman's philosophy of giving the inner experience external shape. Dance improvisation demands a physical way of "being in the moment" that gives substance to the experience of *Dasein* or consciously coming into being in the world. Notably, Wigman didn't encourage the use of improvisation once the dance was crafted and performed onstage. Indeed, her own dances were meticulously shaped into a clear compositional form. But as

a tool for movement invention and a means of discovery through physical experience, the addition of improvisation to the language of professional dance continues to permeate the art form and has become a performance technique in itself.

For class, simple improvisations were developed based on movement themes used by Wigman. In improvisation class the students would sit at Wigman's feet and she would set the improvisation problem or concept for the day. One by one, students would rise and improvise on the spot. A discussion would follow each improvisation and the students would be asked which element they felt was strongest in their work: timing, space, energy/effort or overall design. Try this method of reflection when exploring the following improvisations. The first is designed to be more formal or abstract and the second more dramatic or psychological.

Exercises 4.23 – 4.24 Structured Improvisation

Begin with an assignment based on formal dance elements. You can start simply with an assignment like "Circle into Straight" or "Attraction toward Depth." You can also progress toward more complex images like "Conflict Between the Attractions of Two Opposing Focal Points" or "Building Excitation Leading to Collapse." Let the improvisation arise spontaneously in the moment of showing.

Following the improvisation, allow each dancer to discuss those elements they found strongest in their work as outlined above. The beauty of this sort of spontaneous improvisation is that it reveals which concepts each dancer has grasped deeply and integrated fully into their dance vocabulary.

Next, create an improvisation in response to an emotional situation such as "being on a lonely street" or an action such as "wandering" or an improvisation reflecting a facet of the natural world such as the quiet snow or a sandy beach.

Look outside your door or window for an improvisational idea. And look within to your own experiences.

The possibilities for either improvisation are limitless.

Composition

We've seen that Wigman had definite ideas about the nature of dance composition. In her composition classes, she often expanded on improvisations by requiring that the students develop a motif or theme. The motivation for the theme in composition class could be a deeper exploration of pure form such as "Circle into Straight" or it might be based on a composition of Wigman's own making. Sometimes she would give a set phrase or a section of one of her choreographed works and ask the students to finish or develop it. The students would work alone or with a partner, and would continue to work on their compositions outside of the class period. When it was time to show a study, Mary Wigman would ask questions from her chair, such as, "How did you think Sally developed this?" or "How would you [the other students] do it?" This sort of compositional study and critique has become *de rigueur* in choreography classes, particularly in the university setting, but it really emerged in the world of concert dance with the early moderns such as Mary Wigman, Doris Humphrey and Louis Horst.

Exercise 4.25 Developing a Theme

Now, can you extract a movement theme from one or each of your improvisations from Exercises 4.23 or 4.24? Recall that Wigman defined the theme as a series of small, related movements. What movements do you recall from your improvisation that relate to each other and could be developed as a phrase to be manipulated and amplified? Consider that Wigman called a theme the base from which the entire composition rests. Craft your theme. Then begin to develop it by keeping in mind those elements of timing, space and energy/effort. Show your theme. Then show how you have chosen to develop it. Let those watching discuss how the theme was developed. Ask how others they would develop the same theme.

One Final Theme

Mary Wigman wrote that in all of her teaching, “I have attempted to open roads for my pupils leading deep within themselves and to bring them to the point where knowledge and divination become oneness, where experience and creativity penetrate each other.” She sought this unity in her own performance and meant to share it through her choreography and teaching as well. Her parting writings expose her desire to “Keep the artistic fire from being extinguished – hold high the torch!” She sought the heroic even as her life unfolded amidst tragedy and human failings. Her human nature held blind spots that she never acknowledged publicly. We glimpse them in the private struggles found in her diary entries. Her passion, determination and charisma have become legendary. As have her innovative contributions to the art of dance. She remains controversial to this day. Through grand successes and equally great disappointments, tragedies and misjudgments, she persisted. The story of her life and the themes of her work are epic. And she continued to the end with eyes wide open, even as her vision dimmed.

Teach your students to see and to absorb with waking eyes the manifold eventfulness of their everyday life . . . teach them to think in terms of big dimensions. The spatial relationships do not tolerate any narrow-minded limitations. They demand a spiritual expansion in the same degree in which the dance gesture strives for faraway space.⁷⁸⁷

From this perspective it is possible to see Wigman’s life as a single great composition. Her story unfolds on that stage where is played out the sweeping drama of human history. Of the larger composition of her own life Wigman wrote,

There has always been only one theme around which my thoughts circled like moths around a light: *Dance*. . . that is what I want to write about. For you, my friends; for you my students for you who come after me and for all of you who love the dance . . .⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ Wigman, *Language*, 110.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

For this dissertation, Mary Wigman's unpublished papers were accessed at the following archives:

Archiv Darstellende Kunst, Berlin.
Deutsches Tanzarchiv, Köln.
Academie der Künste Tanzarchiv, Leipzig.

Unpublished New Dance Group sources are from the Eve Gentry papers, housed with the author.

Other Primary Sources:

Anonymous ("L.P.M." probably Louise Martin). "A Ballet Feud; New Opposition for the Classical School Is Threatened With the Present Invasion Of German Physical Culture." *New York Times*, December 25, 1927, X13.

Anon. "Pacific Coast Activity." New York: *Dance Observer*, circa 1935.

Anon. "The Voice of California Dancers." *Dance Council Bulletin*, 2:8, May 1936.

Curtis, Jack. "On With the Dance." *The San Francisco Peninsulan* 3.4, May 1945.

Eyre, Lincoln. "German Dancers Get State Notice. Prussia Promises Founding a Theatre and Institute Devoted to their Art." *New York Times*, July 1, 1928, 49.

Gentry, Eve. *Bennington Summer School of the Dance Project: The Reminiscences of Eve Gentry* (Interview by Theresa Bowers). 1980 New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office. (Interview date: September 21, 1979, at Santa Fe, N.M.) Unpublished.

———. "Impressions of the Danse." Handwritten notes on Hotel St. Francis stationery, San Francisco, California. Gentry papers, circa 1932.

———. University of California Blue Book. "Harald Kreutzberg and Group." (Referenced as Kreutzberg Blue Book 2). Gentry papers, April 10, 1932.

———. University of California Blue Book. "Mary Wigman." Dance Concerts I, II. (Referenced as Wigman Blue Book). Gentry papers, January 30, 1932, and Feb. 14, 1932.

- Gordon, Midi. "The Workers Dance League." New York: William Korff Collection housed at Brown University, c. 1932.
- Martha Graham Souvenir Booklet. Gentry papers, 1936.
- Program for the New Dance Group first annual concert. Gentry papers, 1934.
- Hoffmann-Odenkoven, Ida. *Monte Verità: Wahrheit Ohne Dichtung* (Truth without Poetry) (Pamphlet, No pagination) 1906.
- Job, Lenore Peters. "The Dance Festival." In *Dance Council of Northern California Presents its First Annual Dance Festival*. Veterans' Auditorium, San Francisco, Souvenir Program. Gentry papers, Sunday, March 24, 1935.
- Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Martin, John. "Kreutzberg; Brilliant Exponent of German School Transcends It -- Current Programs A Misunderstood Movement. Art, Not Propaganda. A School by Himself." *New York Times*, January 27, 1929, X8.
- . "A Futile Congress; A Low Level of Achievement, With Much Bitter Dissension, Marks Munich Gathering--A Few Fine Performances." *New York Times*, July 20, 1930, X6.
- . "Mary Wigman's Art; Years of Struggle Have Brought Her to the Very Pinnacle of the German Dance Movement, With a Great Following." *New York Times*, August 3, 1930, 101
- . "Dynamic Art; Mary Wigman's Debut Brings an Insight Into German Movement--New Programs A Theatrical Quality. Music and the Dance." *New York Times*, January 4, 1931, X4
- . "Cordial Reception For Mary Wigman; A Cycle of Six New Dances Called "Opfer" Makes Up Most of Her Program. Magnificent Yet Simple Chanin Theatre is Crowded to Its Capacity--A Warm Welcome Accorded the Artist." *New York Times*, December 14, 1931, X17
- . "Festival Of Dance Opened By Wigman; Her Group Makes Its American Debut In Cycle Of 8 Numbers Entitled 'Der Weg.' Shadows' Seen As Climax One Of Dances An Effective Piece Of Grotesquerie -- Miss Wigman Without A Solo Role." *New York Times*, December 26, 1932, 26

- . “Frau Mary Wigman and her Company; The Deadlock Presented by an Individual and a Group -- Programs of the Week.” *New York Times*, January 15, 1933, X2
- . “Gala Farewell by Mary Wigman; Dancer is Recalled a Dozen Times and Finally Has to Make a Speech. to Be Gone Two Years ‘Der Feier,’ Not Seen Here This Season, Concludes a Performance Unusually Brilliant.” *New York Times*, March 6, 1933, 16.
- Martin, John and Maurice Goldberg. "The Dance: Word from Wigman." *New York Times*, August 4, 1946, Sect. 2, p. 2.
- Selden, Elizabeth. “Germany’s Dance Congress Marks a Renaissance in the Art of Motion.” *New York Evening Post*, May 31, 1930.
- Schwaen, Kurt. *Erinnerungen an die Tänzerin Mary Wigman: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen Erlebnisse Briefwechsel (Recollection of the dancer Mary Wigman: Diary Notes, Experiences, Correspondence)* Berlin: Kurt Schwaen-Archiv, 2006 (unpublished). All translations are mine.
- Schumann, Gerhard. *Gespräch* (Interviews with Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca: Nov. 28-29, 1972; March 16-17, 1973) Akademie der Künste Tanzarchiv, Leipzig.
- Wigman, Mary. “Dance and the Modern Woman.” *The Dancing Times*, 1927.
- . “Composition in Pure Movement.” *Modern Music* 8:2 (1931): 20-22.
- . *Deutsche Tanzkunst*. Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1935.
- . *Die Sprach des Tanzes*. Stuttgart: Ernst Battenberg Verlag, 1963.
- . *The Language of Dance*. (trans. Walter Sorell) Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966.
- . *The Mary Wigman Book: Her Writings* (ed. and trans. W. Sorell) Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- . “My Teacher Laban.” In *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, edited by Marshall Cohen and Roger Copeland. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, 302-5.
- . 1933 “The Philosophy of the Modern Dance.” In *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*, edited by Marshall Cohen and Roger Copeland. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, 305-7.

Secondary Sources

- Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995.
- Adorno, Theodor. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?" Opening address to the 16th German Sociological Congress. Dennis Redmond, translator, 1968. Creative Commons, <http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/AdornoSocAddr.html>.
- Affron, Matthew and Mark Antliff, eds. *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Annan, Noel. *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Antliff, Mark. *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909-1939*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Appia, Adolphe. *The Work of Living Art: A Theory of the Theatre*. trans. H.D. Albright; and *Man is the Measure of All Things*. trans. Barnard Hewitt. Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1960.
- . *Adolphe Appia: Essays, Scenarios, and Designs*. ed. Richard C. Beacham; trans. Walther R. Volbach. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989.
- Appignanesi, Lisa. (rev. ed.) *The Cabaret*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: World Publishing Co., 1958.
- Avçoberry, Pierre. *The Social History of the Third Reich, 1933-1945*. New York: The New Press, 1999.
- Ayto, John. *Dictionary of Word Origins*. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1990.
- Bach, Rudolf. *Das Mary Wigman Werk*. Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1933.
- Baldauf, Hans, Baker Goodwin and Amy Reichert, eds. *Theater, Theatricality and Architecture*. New Haven: Perspecta Inc., 1990.
- Balfour, Michael. *The Kaiser and His Times*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1974.

- Banes, Sally. *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Barron, Stephanie and Peter Guenther, eds. *'Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-garde in Nazi Germany*. Los Angeles and New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and H.N. Abrams, 1991.
- Bartov, Omer, Atina Grossman and Mary Nolan, eds. *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*. New York: The New Press, 2002.
- Beacham, Richard C. *Adolphe Appia, Theatre Artist*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Bell-Kanner, Karen. *The Life and Times of Ellen von Frankenberg*. Chur, Switzerland; New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991.
- Belting, Hans. *The Germans and their Art: A Troublesome Relationship*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.
- Benson, Timothy O. *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Berghahn, V.R. *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Berry, James Duncan. *The Legacy of Gottfried Semper: Studies in Spahistorismus*. Doctoral Dissertation, Brown University (AAT 9002197) 1989.
- Biddiss, Michael D. *The Age of the Masses: Ideas and Society in Europe Since 1870*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- Billington, James H. *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith*. New York: Basic Books, 1980.
- Blackbourn, David and Geoff Eley, eds. *The Peculiarities of German History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Bland, Lucy & Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

- Blom, Ida, Karen Hageman and Catherine Hall. *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Bradley, William S. *Emil Nolde and German Expressionism: a Prophet in His Own Land*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1986.
- Bramsted, Ernest Kohn. *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1965.
- Bridenthal, Renate, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, eds. *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.
- Brinker-Gabler, Gisela. "Die Frauenbewegung im deutschen Kaiserreich." In *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung*, edited by Ingeborg Derwitz, 27-46. Bonn: Verlag Hohwacht, 1983.
- Brockett, Oscar. *History of the Theatre*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968.
- Bronner, Stephen E. and Kellner, Douglas, eds. *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
- . with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus. *The Origins of the Final Solution: the Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- . *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution*. Cambridge; NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Nazi Policy, Jewish Labor, German Killers*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Brugger, Bill and Kate Hannan. *Modernisation and Revolution*. London: Routledge, 1983.
- Buch, David J. and Hana Worthen. "Ideology in Movement and a Movement in Ideology: The Deutsche Tanzfestspiele 1934 -- 9-16 December, Berlin." *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 215-239.
- Buder, Stanley. *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

- Burleigh, Michael. *The Third Reich: A New History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.
- Burt, Ramsay. *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, "Race," and Nation in Early Modern Dance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- . "The Trouble with the Male Dancer. . ." In *Moving History, Dancing Cultures*, edited by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, 44-55. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective." *Critical Inquiry* 22:1 (Autumn 1995): 1-33.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*. New York: Viking/Penguin, 1968.
- Canning, Kathleen. *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Caplan, Jane. "Reflections on the Reception of Goldhagen in the United States." In *The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism — Facing the German Past*, edited by Geoff Eley. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Carter, Alexander. "Dances of Death: Germany before Hitler." In *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, edited by Alexander Carter, 259-68. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Clark, Christopher. *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Clark, Urana. "Dalcroze: Rhythm in a Chain Reaction." *Musical America* 7:13 (1950).
- Climenhaga, Royd. *Pina Bausch*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Cohen, Marshall and Roger Copeland, eds. *What Is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Cohen, Selma Jeanne, ed. *Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance from 1581 to the Present*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

- Cuomo, Glenn R., ed. *National Socialist Cultural Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Dalsenbrock, Reed Way. "Slouching toward Berlin: Life in a Postfascist Culture." In *Fascism's Return: Scandal, Revision and Ideology Since 1980*, edited by Richard J. Golsan, 244-259. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Damasio, Antonio. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt, 1999.
- d'Andrea, Gisela. "The New German Dance in the Weimar Republic." In *Germany in the 1920s: The Artist as Social Critic*, edited by Frank D. Hirschbach, et al., 86-97. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980.
- De Michelis, Marco. "Modernity and Reform: Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau." In *Theater, Theatricality, and Architecture*, edited by Hans Baldauf, Baker Goodwin and Amy Reichert. New Haven: Perspecta Inc.; and New York: Rizzoli International, 1990.
- DeMille, Agnes. *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*. New York: Random House, 1991.
- Diethel, Carol. "The Dance Theme in German Modernism." *German Life and Letters* 44:4 (July 1991): 330-352.
- Dissanayake, Ellen. *What Is Art For?* Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- Dixon, C. Madeleine. "Mary Wigman." *Theatre Arts Monthly* 15:1 (1931): 37-42.
- Dohrn, Wolfgang. *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau: Ein Bericht*. Jena: Diederichs, 1908.
- Drewniak, Bogushaw. "The Foundations of Theater Policy in Nazi Germany." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, edited by Glenn R. Cuomo, 67-94. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- DuBois, Ellen Carol. *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Dubuffet, Jean. *Exhibition Catalogue*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2001.
- Duncan, Isadora. *My Life*. New York: Liveright, 1927.
- Durham, Martin. *Women and Fascism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

- Ecksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- Eley, Geoff, ed. *The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism — Facing the German Past*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Eley, Geoff and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. *Becoming National: A Reader*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Eley, Geoff and James Retallack, eds. *Wilhelminism and its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930: Essays for Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003.
- Elgar, Dietmar. *Expressionism: A Revolution in German Art*. Koln: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1991.
- Elswit, Kate. “Berlin . . . Your Dance Partner is Death.” *TDR: The Drama Review* 53:1 (Spring 2009): 73-92.
- Evans, Richard J. *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933*. London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976.
- Everdell, William R. *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth Century Thought*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Felstiner, Mary Lowenthal. *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.
- Ferguson, Niall. *The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2006.
- Feudel, Elfriede. Trans. Thea Ney. *History of the 'Bildungsanstalt – Hellerau 1910-1914*. unpublished manuscript, 1956.
- Flam, Jack and Miriam Deutch, eds. *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: a documentary history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Foakes, Reginald A. *The Romantic Assertion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958.
- Fraleigh, Sondra. *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999.
- Fraleigh, Sondra and Tamah Nakamura. *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

- Franko, Mark. *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Frie, Roger, ed. *Understanding Experience: Psychotherapy and Postmodernism*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Friedrich, Carl. *Totalitarianism*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1954.
- Fritsch-Vivié, Gabriele. *Mary Wigman*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999.
- Fullbrook, Mary. *A Concise History of Germany*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Funkenstein, Susan Laikin. "There's Something about Mary Wigman: The Woman Dancer as Subject in German Expressionist Art." *Gender and History* 17:3 (2005): 826-859.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War in Modern Memory*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Gablik, Suzi. *The Reenchantment of Art*. London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991.
- Galonska, Clemens and Frank Elstner. *Gardenstadt Hellerau/Garden City of Hellerau*. Chemnitz: Palisander Verlag, 2007.
- Garafola, Lynn, ed. *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*. Hanover, N.H., and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997.
- . *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Gay, Peter. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Gendlin, Eugene. "Beyond Postmodernism: From Concepts through Experiencing." In Frie, Roger, ed. *Understanding Experience: Psychotherapy and Postmodernism*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, 100-115.
- Geyer Michael and John W. Boyer, eds. *Resistance Against The Third Reich, 1933-1990*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Gitelman, Claudia, compiler and ed. *Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman's Letters to Hanya Holm*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.
- Golsan, Richard J., ed. *Fascism's Return: Scandal, Revision and Ideology Since 1980*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology*. New York: New York University Press, 1985.
- Gordon, Mel. *The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber: Weimar Berlin's Priestess of Depravity*. Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006.
- Gordon, Terri J. "Fascism and the Female Form: Performance Art in the Third Reich." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11: 1-2 (January/April 2002): 164-200.
- Green, Martin. *Cities of Light and Sons of the Morning: A Cultural Psychology for an Age of Revolution*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1972.
- . *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins Ascona, 1900-1920*. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986.
- Greenberg, Allan Carl. *Artists and Revolution: Dada and the Bauhaus, 1917-1925*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979.
- Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Grosshans, Henry. *Hitler and the Artists*. New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1983.
- Grossman, Atina. *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform 1920-1950*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Guenther, Irene. *Nazi Chic: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004.
- Guest, Ivor. *Ballet of the Second Empire*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950.
- . *The Romantic Ballet in Paris*. London: Dance Books, 1980.
- Guido, Laurent. "Rhythmic Bodies/Movies: Dance as Attraction in Early Film Culture." In *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, edited by Wanda Strauven, 139-156. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Haffner, Sebastian. *The Ailing Empire*. New York: Fromm International Publishers, 1989.

- Hagerman, E.R., ed. *German and Austrian Expressionism in the United States: Chronology and Bibliography*. Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Hall, Peter and Colin Ward. *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard*. Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.
- Hamilton, Richard F. *Who Voted for Hitler*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Handlin, Oscar and John Burchard, eds. *The Historian and the City*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1963.
- Hanley, Elizabeth A. "The Role of Dance in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games: Why Competition became Festival and Art became Political." Seventh International Symposium for Olympic Research. London, Ontario, Canada: Centre For Olympic Studies, University of Western Ontario, 2004, 133-140.
- Harbison, Robert. *Deliberate Regression: The Disastrous History of Romantic Individualism from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Twentieth-Century Fascism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
- Harvey, Elizabeth. *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Hays, Michael K. "Tessenow's Architecture as National Allegory: Critique of Capitalism or Protofascism?" *Assemblage* 8 (Feb. 1989): 104-123.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. J.B. Ballie, revised by Carl J. Friedrich (published 1807). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. (orig. edition 1927) New York: Harper and Row, 1962.
- . "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935) In *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, edited by David Krell, 139-212. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993.
- Heineman, Elizabeth. "Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past." *Central European History* 38:1 (2005): 41-74.
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

- Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Hinz, Berthold. *Art in the Third Reich*. New York : Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Hirschfeld, Magnus. *The Sexual History of the World War*. New York: Falstaff Press, 1937.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*. London: Little, Brown and Co., 1994.
- . *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- . *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Holm, Hanya. "The Mary Wigman I Knew." In *The Dance Has Many Faces*, edited by Walter Sorell, 18-27. Pennington, N.J.: A Capella Books, 1992.
- Holm, Hanya and Marcia Siegel. "A Conversation with Hanya Holm," *Ballet Review* 9:1 (Spring 1981): 24.
- Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. London: Faber and Faber, 1946 edition; orig ed. 1889.
- . *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. London: Routledge, 2003 edition; orig ed. 1898.
- Howe, Dianne S. *Individuality and Expression: The Aesthetics of the New German Dance, 1908-1936*. New York: P. Lang, 1996.
- . "The Notion of Mysticism in the Philosophy and Choreography of Mary Wigman, 1914 - 1931." *Dance Research Journal* 19:1 (1987): 19-24.
- Huelsenbeck, Richard. *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Huelsenbeck, Richard and Malcolm R. Green, eds. *The Dada Almanac*. London: Atlas Press, 1993.
- Hughes, Michael. *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945*. London: Edward Arnold, 1988.

- Hull, Isabel. "The Body as Historical Experience: Review of Recent Works by Barbara Duden." *Central European History* 28:1 (1995).
- Humphrey, Doris. *The Art of Making Dances*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.
- Hurok, Sol, with Goode, Ruth. *Impressario*. New York: Random House, 1946.
- Huxley, Michael. "European Early Modern Dance." In *Dance History: An Introduction*, edited by Janet Adshead-Lansdale and June Layson. London: Dance Books, 1983.
- Inwood, Michael. *A Heidegger Dictionary*. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- Jaques-Dalcroze, Emile. *Eurhythmics: Art and Education*. Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co., 1930.
- . *Rhythm, Music and Education* (trans. Harold F. Rubenstein). London: Dalcroze Society, 1967.
- Jarausch, Konrad. *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germany, 1945-1995*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Jarausch, Konrad H. and Michael Geyer. *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Jarzombek, Mark. "The *Kunstgewerbe*, the *Werkbund*, and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53:1 (March 1994): 7-19.
- Jeffries, Matthew. "Lebensreform: A Middle-Class Antidote to Wilhelminism?" In *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930: Essays for Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann*, edited by Geoff Eley and James Retallack, 91-106. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003.
- Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film and the Death of Weimar Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Jeschke, Claudia and Gabi Vettermann. "Germany: Between Institutions and Aesthetics: Choreographing Germanness?" In *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theatre Dance and Cultural Identity*, edited by Andree Grau and Stephanie Jordan, 55-78. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

- Jilek, Wolfgang. "Altered States of Consciousness in North American Indian Ceremonials." *Ethos* 10 (1982) 326-343.
- Johnson, Robert A. *Ecstasy: Understanding the Psychology of Joy*. New York: HarperCollins, 1987.
- Jowitt, Deborah. "Expression and Expressionism in American Modern Dance." In *Dance History: An Introduction*, edited by Janet Adshead-Lansdale and June Layson, 169-181. London: Dance Books, 1983.
- . *Time and the Dancing Image*. New York: W. Morrow, 1988.
- Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1914 (1977 reprint).
- Kandinsky, Wassily and Franz Marc. *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*. New York: The Viking Press, 1974.
- Kant, Marion. "Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm: A Special Relationship." Review of *Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman's Letters to Hanya Holm*, by Claudia Gitelman. *Dance Chronicle* 28:3 (2005): 417-423.
- Kaplan, Marion. "Sisterhood Under Siege: Feminism and Anti-Semitism in Germany 1904-1938." In *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan, 174-96. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.
- Kaprelian, Mary H. "Parallel Trends in the Development of German Expressionist Painting and Modern Dance." In *New Directions in Dance*, edited by Diana Theodores Taplin, 51-9. Toronto: Pergamon Press, 1979.
- Karina, Lilian and Marion Kant. *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004.
- Karl, Frederick R. *Modern and Modernism*. New York: Atheneum, 1988.
- Kater, Michael. *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Keegan, John. *The First World War*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999.
- Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- King, Francis. *Sexuality, Magic and Perversion*. London: Spearman, 1971.

- Kirstein, Lincoln. *Dance: A Short History of Classical Theatrical Dancing*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935.
- Koegler, Horst. "In the Shadow of the Swastika: Dance in Germany, 1927-1936." *Dance Perspectives* 57 (1974).
- . "Wigman and the Demon." *Dance Chronicle* 17: 3 (1994): 369-372.
- Koonz, Claudia. *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- . *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003.
- Koshar, Rudy. *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological Study of the German Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- Kramer, Alan. *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kriegsman, Sali Ann. *Modern Dance in America: The Bennington Years*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1981.
- Laban, Rudolf von. *A Life for Dance*, trans. Lisa Ullman. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Representing the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Lafore, Laurence. *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I*. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1971.
- Lane, Barbara Miller. *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Laqueur, Walter, ed. *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- . *Weimar: A Cultural History*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson; New York: Putnam's, 1974.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Mornings in Mexico*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927.

- Lawrence, Jon. "Public Space, Political Space." In *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919, Volume 2: A Cultural History*, edited by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, 280-312. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. *Art Under a Dictatorship*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Lerner, Gerda. *Teaching Women's History*. Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1981.
- . *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Linke, Uli. *Blood and Nation: the European Aesthetics of Race*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Lloyd, Margaret. *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.
- London, John, ed. *Theatre Under the Nazis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Long, Rose-Carol Washton, ed. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- McDonagh, Don. *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance*. New York: New American Library, 1970.
- McNeil, William. *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Magriel, Paul, ed. *Nijinsky, Pavlova, Duncan: Three Lives in Dance*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1977.
- Major, Patrick. *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Maletic, Vera. *Body - Space - Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*. Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987.
- Mallgrave, Harry Francis. *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

- Manning, Susan. "Dances of Death: Germany Before Hitler." In *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, edited by Alexander Carter, 259-268. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- . *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; second edition, 2006.
- . "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Six Positions and a Coda." In *Choreographing History*, edited by Susan Leigh Foster, 165-176. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- . "The Mythologization of the Female: Mary Wigman and Martha Graham: A Comparison." *Ballett International* 14.9 (1991): 10-15. (reprint from *Tanzdrama* # 15: 1991)
- Margalit, Gilad. *Guilt, Suffering and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Martin, John. *America Dancing: The Background and Personalities of the Modern Dance* (photographs by Thomas Bouchard). New York, Dodge Pub. Co., 1936.
- . *The Modern Dance*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book Co.; Dance Horizons, 1989 (Republication of original ed., New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1933)
- Martin, Randy. "Modern Dance and the American Century." In *A Modern Mosaic: Art and Modernism in the United States*, edited by Townsend Ludington, 203-226. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Mead, V. H. "More than Mere Movement – Dalcroze Eurhythmics." *Music Educators Journal* 82:4 (1996): 38-41.
- Meglin, Joellen. "Feminism and Fetishism: *La Révolte des femmes* and Women's Liberation in France in the 1830s." In *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, edited by Lynn Garafola. Hanover, N.H., and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*. Edited by Alden L. Fisher. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969.
- . *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. New York: Humanities Press, 1962.
- Michalski, Sergiusz. *New Objectivity: Neue Sachlichkeit – Painting in Germany in the 1920s*. Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2003.

- Michaud, Eric. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Mitchell, Joseph R. and Helen Buss Mitchell, eds. *The Holocaust: Readings and Interpretations*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2001.
- Moeller, Robert. "Every German Will Speak of This Battle." In *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Omer Bartov, Atina Grossman and Mary Nolan, 161-190. New York: The New Press, 2002.
- . *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- . *War Stories: The Search for a Usable in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Mosse, George L. "The Mystical Origins of National Socialism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961): 81-96.
- . *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. New York: H. Fertig, 1998 (original edition New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.)
- . *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality*. New York: H. Fertig, 1980.
- . *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. New York: H. Fertig, 1985.
- . *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968.
- . *Nazism: A Historical and Comparative Analysis of National Socialism*. (An interview with Michael A. Ledeen) New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1978.
- Mouton, Michelle. *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Müller, Hedwig. "At the Start of a New Era." *Ballett International* 6:12 (1983) 6-13.
- . *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werk der grossen Tänzerin*. Berlin: Quadragia Verlag, 1986.
- . "Mary Wigman and the Third Reich." *Ballett International* (1986): 18-23.

- . “Wigman and National Socialism.” *Ballet Review* 15:1 (1987): 65-73.
- Müller, Hedwig and Servos, Norbert. “From Isadora Duncan to Leni Riefenstahl.” *Ballett International* 5:4 (1982): 15-23.
- Muthesius, Stefan. “Review: *Deutsche Gartenstadtbewegung/Kulturpolitik und Gesellschafts-Reform* by Kristiana Hartmann.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 37:2 (May 1978): 120-1.
- Newhall, Mary Anne Santos. “Dancing in Absolute Eden.” M.A. Thesis: University of New Mexico. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 2000 (UMI Number 1400402).
- . “Uniform Bodies: Mass Movement and Modern Totalitarianism.” *Dance Research Journal* 34:1 (Summer 2002): 27-50.
- . *Mary Wigman*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Nietzsche, Frederich. *The Birth of Tragedy, and the Case of Wagner*. (trans. Walter Kaufman) New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- . *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (trans. W. Kaufmann.) New York: Viking Press, 1966.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. New York: D. Appleton, 1895.
- Odom, Selma L. “Wigman at Hellerau.” *Ballet Review* 14:2 (Summer 1986): 41-53.
- . “What is Dalcrozian?” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 10:2 (Autumn 1992) 121-131.
- Okey, Robin. *The Hapsburg Monarchy: From Enlightenment to Eclipse*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001.
- Ortega y Gasset, Jose. *The Revolt of the Masses*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1930.
- Owings, Alison. *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Palmer, Brian. *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the Histories of Transgression*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.
- Palmér, Torsten and Hendrik Neubauer. eds. *The Weimar Republic Through the Lens of the Press*. Köln: Könnemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000.
- Partsch-Bergsohn, Isa. *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States: Crosscurrents and Influences*. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994.

- Partsch-Bergsohn, Isa and Bergsohn, Harold. *The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss*. Highstown, N.J.: Princeton Book Co., 2003.
- Passmore, Kevin, ed. *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- Paxton, Robert O. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.
- Perris, Arnold. *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*. Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Petropoulos, Jonathan. *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World and Nazi Germany*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Petropoulos, Jonathan. "A Guide through the Visual Arts Administration of the Third Reich." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, edited by Glenn R. Cuomo, 121-53. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Pipes, Richard. *Three "Whys" of the Russian Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- Potter, Pamela. "The Nazi 'Seizure' of the Berlin Philharmonic." In Cuomo, Glenn R., ed. *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, 39-65. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Preston-Dunlop, Valerie. "Laban and the Nazis." *Dance Theatre Journal* 6:2 (1988): 4-7.
- . *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life*. London: Dance Books, 1998.
- Preston-Dunlop, Valerie and Susanne Lahusen, eds. *Schrifttanz: A View of German Dance in the Weimar Republic*. London: Dance Books, Ltd., 1990.
- Prevots, Naima. "Zurich Dada and Dance: Formative Ferment." *Dance Research Journal* 17:1 (1985): 3-8.
- Prince, Raymond. "The Endorphins, a review for psychological anthropologists." *Ethos* 10:4 (1982): 303-16.
- Prinzhorn, Hans. *Gedichte Mary Wigman gewidmet* (poems dedicated to Mary Wigman) (15.3.1921). Berlin Archiv, 1921.
- . *Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972.

- Rannow, Angelika, and Ralf Stabel. *Mary Wigman in Leipzig. Eine Annäherung an ihr Wirken für den Tanz in Leipzig in den Jahren 1942 bis 1949*. Leipzig: Tanzwissenschaft e.V., 1994.
- Rannow, Angelika and Stabel, Ralf (Hrsg.). *Mary Wigman. Eine Künstlerin in der Zeitenwende*. Tanzwissenschaft e.V., Dresden. Neuauflage der Publikation, 2006.
- Reagin, Nancy R. *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Reifenstahl, Leni. *A Memoir*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Reinhardt, Kurt F. *Germany: 2000 Years*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1962.
- Reynolds, Dee. "Mary Wigman and 'Absolute Dance.'" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 35:3 (1999): 297-310.
- . *Rhythmic Subjects: Use of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham*. London: Dance Books, 2006.
- Richter, Hans. *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Robinson, Jacqueline. "Mary Wigman, A Magician." *Dance Chronicle* 20:1 (1997): 23-47.
- Rogers, Clark M. "Appia's Theory of Acting: Eurythmics for the Stage." *Educational Theatre Journal* 19:4 (Dec. 1967): 467-472.
- Rodgers, Daniel. *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Rubin, William, ed. *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art, Vol. 2: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984.
- Rupp, Kevin. *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Rupp, Leila. *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Schaser, Angelica. "Women in a Nation of Men: The Politics of the League of German Women's Associations (BDF) in Imperial Germany, 1894-1914." In Ida Blom, Karen Hageman and Catherine Hall. *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Nineteenth Century*, 249-268. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000.

- Scheck, Raffael. *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004.
- Scheyer, Ernst. *The Shapes of Space: The Art of Mary Wigman and Oskar Schlemmer*. New York: Dance Perspectives Foundation, 1970.
- Schlee, Alfred. "Expressionism in the Dance." *Modern Music* 8:1 (1931): 12-16.
- Schorske, Carl. E. *Fin-de Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.
- . *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1955.
- Schrader, Bärbel and Jürgen Schebera. *The 'Golden' Twenties: Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Schwarz, Gudrun. "During Total War, We Girls Want to Be Where We Can Really Accomplish Something." In *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Omer Bartov, Atina Grossman and Mary Nolan, 121-137. New York: The New Press, 2002.
- Segel, Harold B. *Body Ascendant: Modernism and the Physical Imperative*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- . *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret: Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Zurich*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Selz, Peter. *German Expressionist Painting*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.
- Sennett, A.R. *Garden Cities in Theory and Practice*. London: Bemrose and Sons Ltd., 1905.
- Sinclair, Upton. *World's End*. New York: Literary Guild, 1940.
- Slaughter, Jane. *Women and the Italian Resistance, 1943-1945*. Denver, Colo.: Arden Press, 1997.
- Slaughter, Jane and Robert Kern, eds. *European Women on the Left: Socialism, Feminism and the Problems Faced by Political Women 1880 to the Present*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981.

- Smith, Anthony "The Origins of Nations," in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. *Becoming National: A Reader*, 106-130. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Smith, Bonnie G., ed. *Women's History in Global Perspective, vol. 3*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Soares, Janet. *Louis Horst: Musician in a Dancer's World*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Sokel, Walter. *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Sorell, Walter. *The Dance Through the Ages*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967.
- . *Hanya Holm: The Biography of an Artist*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.
- . *Mary Wigman: Ein Vermächtnis*. Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 1986.
- Spector, Irwin. *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Emile Jacques-Dalcroze*. Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1990.
- Speer, Albert. *Spandau: The Secret Diaries*. (Richard and Clara Winston, trans.) New York: Pocket Books, 1977.
- Spotts, Frederic. *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*. Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2003.
- Steinbeck, Dietrich. *Mary Wigman's Choreographisches Skizzenbuch 1930-1961*. München, Leipzig, Mannheim: Hentrich, 1987.
- Steinweis, Alan E. *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater and the Visual Arts*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- . "Cultural Eugenics: Social Policy, Economic Reform, and the Purge of Jews from German Cultural Life." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, edited by Glenn R. Cuomo, 23-37. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Stern, Fritz. *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.
- Stodelle, Ernestine. *The Dance Technique of Doris Humphrey and its Creative Potential*. Princeton, N.J.: Dance Horizons/Princeton Book Co., 1978.

- Tallon, Mary Elizabeth. "Appia's Theatre at Hellerau." *Theatre Journal* 36:4 (Dec. 1984): 495-504.
- Taylor, Seth. *Left-Wing Nietzscheans: The Politics of German Expressionism, 1910-1920*. Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990.
- Thimey, Erika. "The Lessons of Mary Wigman." *Dance Magazine* 74:4 (April 2000): 58-9.
- Timms, Edward and Peter Collier, eds. *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Tipton, Frank B. *A History of Modern Germany since 1815*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.
- Toepfer, Karl. "Speech and Sexual Difference in Mary Wigman's Dance Aesthetic." In *Gender and Performance*, edited by Laurence Senelick, 260-278. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1992.
- . *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Trask, Michael. *Cruising Modernism: Class and Sexuality in American Literature and Social Thought*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- van der Leeuw, Gerardus. *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*. Nashville, Tenn., and New York: Abingdon Press, 1963.
- Vanschaik, Eva. "The Mistrust of Life: Relations in Dance Connections between Butoh, Austruckdanz and Dance Theater in Contemporary Experimental Dance." (interview with G. VanLeeuw). *Ballett International* 13:5 (1990): 11.
- Volbach, Walther R. *Adolphe Appia, Prophet of the Modern Theater: a Profile*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968.
- . "A Profile of Adolphe Appia." *Educational Theatre Journal* 15:1 (March 1963): 7-14.
- Von Ankum, Katharina, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Berkeley: University of California, 1997.
- von Franz, Marie-Luise. *The Psychological Meaning of Redemption Myths in Fairy Tales*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1980.

- Voswinckel, Ulrike. *Freie Liebe und Anarchie: Schwabing- Monte Verità. Entwürfe gegen das etablierte Leben*. München: Allitera Verlag, 2009.
- Warren, Charles. *Gertrud Bodenwieser and Vienna's Contribution to Ausdruckstanz*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Werckmeister, O.K. "Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee and the Angel of History." *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 102-125.
- Willett, John. *Expressionism*. New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970.
- Williams Raymond. "Theatre as a Political Form." In *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Edward Timms and Peter Collier, 307-320. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Williamson, George S. *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture From Romanticism to Nietzsche*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Winter, Jay and Jean-Louis Robert, eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919, Volume 2: A Cultural History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Zivier, Georg. *Harmonie und Ekstase. Mary Wigman*. Berlin: Akademie der Künste: Monographien und Biographien 2, 1956.

VIDEO AND DIGITAL RECORDINGS

- Hanya: Portrait of a Pioneer*. Chico, Calif.: The University Foundation, California State University, 1985.
- Mary Wigman, 1886-1973: When the Fire Dances Between Two Poles*. Pennington, N.J.: Dance Horizons Video, 1991.
- The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolph Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss*. Highstown, N.J. Dance Horizons Video, 2004.
- Mary Wigman - der Tanz der Zukunft*. Filmhouse - Norbert Busè and Christof Debler. Arte Television Documentary. Berlin, 52 minutes, 2006.
- Lazarus, Heide. *Die Akte Wigman*. Hildesheim (CD-ROM: Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln) Georg Olms Verlag, 2004.

Lazarus, Heide (Hrsg.) 2006 Die Akte Mary Wigman/The Wigman File. Eine Dokumentation der Mary Wigman-Schule-Dresden (1920-1942) mit regionalen Archivadokumenten, Prospekten, kompletter Zeitschriftendokumentation "Die Tanzgemeinschaft" (1929/30), Hörspielauszug (1932), Kontextbeiträgen in Deutsch und Englisch. Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Edition Tanzdokumente digital des Deutschen Tanzarchiv Köln.

INTERVIEWS

Newhall, Mary Anne Santos. Personal Interviews with the following:
 Eve Gentry, Numerous Personal Interviews. Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1992-94.
 Michele Larsson. Numerous Personal Interviews. Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1992-2000.
 Mary Anthony, Jane Dudley, Billie Kirpich, Bill Korff, Muriel Manings, Sophie Maslow, Personal Interviews, Saratoga Springs, New York, August 1998.
 Becky Stein, Telephone Interviews. June 30 and July 25, 1999.
 Jean Leon Destine, Lorry May, Walter Nicks. Personal Interviews, Saratoga Springs, New York, August 1999.
 Jane Dudley. Telephone Interview. Sept. 19, 1999.
 Sandy Comen. Personal Interview. Providence, Rhode Island. February 2000.
 Donald McKayle, Lorry May. Conference call under the auspices of the American Dance Legacy Institute. Providence, Rhode Island to Irvine, California. February 2000.
 Marion Scott, Telephone Interviews. Los Angeles, California Winter and Spring 2000.
 Marva Spelman, Personal Interviews. Los Angeles, California May 6-10, 2000.
 Don Redlich, Conversation. Santa Fe, New Mexico. June 19, 2000.
 Brigitta Herrmann, Personal Interviews, Santa Fe. August 1995.
 Brigitta Herrmann, Personal Interviews, Santa Fe. March 14, 2006.
 Brigitta Herrmann, Personal Interviews, Paris and Germany. May 26-31, 2007
 Brigitta Herrmann, Personal Interviews, Philadelphia. November 2007.
 Sarah Manno, Personal Interview, Philadelphia. November 2007.
 Noelle Simonet, Personal Interviews, Paris, *Centre National de la Danse*. May 2007
 Sandy Broyard, Personal Interviews, Martha's Vineyard, Mass. August 1-6, 2007
 Bill Costanza, Personal Interview, Martha's Vineyard, Mass. August 4, 2007
 Kurt Schwaen, Personal Interview, Marlsburg, Germany. May 29, 2007.
 Gerda Zimmerman, Personal Interviews, Las Vegas, N.M. August 11, 2008.