

SOMATIC ANACRUSIS:
AN EXPERIENTIAL POETICS OF DEBORAH HAY'S CHOREOGRAPHY AND
PRACTICE IN THE SOLO *AT ONCE*

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Abstract

This project is a kind of doingmovingthinking: a close study of iconic American dancer/choreographer Deborah Hay's choreography and practice through my particular dancing experience of her solo *At Once*. The resulting experiential poetics illuminates both the implicit critique of an instrumental/rational paradigm and also the ethical implications of the particular relationality enacted in Hay's work. I characterize Hay's work as a radical communication practice, one that moves language through the body in a dynamic torqueing process that both gathers toward and unravels from the edges of meaningfulness in a process of perception. I work at the interdisciplinary intersection of dance, performance, somatics and cultural studies, and my thinking draws substantially on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy and language. Aspiring to a balanced integration of moving and writing, of practice and theory, I follow a performance studies approach, attempting, as characterized by performance scholar Dwight Conquergood: "to live betwixt and between theory and theatricality, paradigms and practices, critical reflection and creative accomplishment" (318).

Through personal daily practice and performance of Hay's work allied with close description, I apply my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis to Hay's choreography and practice. This analysis, conducted from inside the practice of the work, reveals how Hay's complex and distinctly linguistic choreography operates as a constructed situation for the practice of perception and that, in performance, this practice moves language through the body in a dynamic torqueing process that engenders a unique lived experience of paradoxical simultaneity. I coin the term somatic anacrusis to articulate this underlying processual phenomenon. Reconsidering the dimension of relationality in Hay's work, I re-frame somatic

anacrusis as a pre-relational pre-disposing, a kind of suspended or “unconsummated relationality”. Feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s thinking helps illuminate the ethical implications of Hay’s work as a practice of perception that opens a new way toward the other. I conclude by appropriating Hay’s own rhetorical interrogative strategy “what if...?” What if somatic anacrusis offers a possible answer to Irigaray’s call for a new way to approach the other that respects fundamental difference and yet allows encounter?

Dedication

To my daughter Qwynn Jones Cunningham,
who has been dancing with me throughout this journey.
May you always dance joyously and lightly along your own path ahead.
With gratitude and love.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

But our tradition is not dedicated to the cultivation of sensible perception. We are accustomed to living thought as a night of the senses, as a transmission of language and its truth, without putting either of these to the test of everyday perception. (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 22)

Since 1970, my practice and resources as a dancer and choreographer have shifted from physical to perceptual challenges. (Hay, “Remaining Positionless” 22)

... I wonder how to sustain a relationship between us, between two facts of body and language, between two intentions constituting an incarnate relationship which is realized by flesh and words. (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 28)

What if dance is how I practice my relationship with my whole body at once in relationship to the space where I am dancing in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to my audience? (Hay, *At Once* 1)

Such a cultivation of perception would modify our loving relationships, whether intimate or communal. In fact, there is no rupture between intersubjectivity in the strict sense and the intersubjectivity of a collectivity, and the desired changes in the relations between man and woman, men and women, form part of a transformation which is helpful to all of

our social relationships. (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 23)

As the above quotes imply, this dissertation ultimately makes legible American postmodern dance artist Deborah Hay's distinctly linguistic approach to choreography and performance practice through feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray's call for a culture of perception and a new relationality. Through practice-based research, phenomenological description and my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis I develop an experiential poetics of Hay's choreography and practice that illuminates both the implicit critique of an instrumental/rational paradigm and also the ethical implications of a particular relationality that are enacted in Hay's work. I characterize Hay's work as a radical communication practice¹, one that moves language through the body in a dynamic torqueing process that both gathers toward and unravels from the edges of meaningfulness in a process of perception. Hay's distinctly linguistic choreography and practice generates a counter-twisting force, engendering a lived experience of paradoxical simultaneity and sustained suspension of logical coherence for which I coin the term somatic anacrusis. I draw out the ethical implications of Hay's work, ultimately understood as a response to Irigaray's call, by articulating how somatic anacrusis functions as a pre-relational pre-disposing that offers a new way to approach the other that respects the fundamental irreducibility *and* dynamic porosity of subjectivity and otherness. What if ...?

This introductory chapter provides the context for my research and outlines the structure of the dissertation as a whole. In what follows here, I situate my inquiry within an extended critique of modernity and in relation to relevant contemporary debates in the fields of dance and performance. I then present my research questions and objectives with respect to Hay's artistic practice, provide the reader with a general sense of her work, and establish the basis of my

primary research in her Solo Performance Commissioning Project (Hay, SPCP²). In a chapter outline, I provide a brief overview of my experiential approach to research and analysis, summarize my main arguments and highlight some of the key theoretical reference points for my analysis. After addressing the limitations and delimitations of this study, I position this dissertation overall as a textual “adaptation” of Hay’s work, which therefore places it within a performative paradigm as a process of “doingmovingthinking” versus within an instrumentalizing paradigm as a product of knowledge. I begin by outlining my project and situating my dance-specific research within a broader critique of modernity that, in fact, Hay explicitly addresses in her own discourse about her work.

Context

My analysis of Hay’s work – as a radical communication practice – gains traction in the context of an extended critique of modernity that considers the force, play and capacity of the body, movement and perception in relation to the powers, influences and structures of language and socio-cultural prescription. Today we face increasingly complex and concentrated encounters with differences and otherness in both live socio-cultural and digital interactions via devices and virtual networks. As urban cosmopolitan centres become more densely packed with highly diverse populations, and as new technologies, devices and digital media proliferate and challenge the human capacity for attention in an attention economy, movement becomes a contemporary imperative in order to keep up and perception becomes an essential skill in adapting to change. Every day we face a new “global village” and technologies “extend” our senses, perhaps even beyond McLuhan’s imaginary. This hyper-futured tone of daily living tends to override an ability

to truly acknowledge and appreciate other individuals in their uniqueness. It is so very easy to move toward the other as “already known”, to allow oneself to be propelled into a kind of functional relationship based on preconceived notions and driven by a means-ends agenda: assumptions, needs, expectations and goals bound up in objects, environments and others.

I find philosopher Martin Heidegger’s concept of enframing helpful in thinking this through. Elaborated in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology”, enframing – I will gesture very briefly – is a revealing or calling forth of something that already entails a kind of pre-structuring force – Heidegger calls it a “challenging claim” – to order things, to assemble them specifically “for use” (19 and 19n17). He defines the essence of technology as the bringing forth of something through man’s demand that it stand ready for a purpose. This something that comes into being then is not present in itself but only and always already to serve as means to another end. It is instrumentalized. And without properly noticing, we live this instrumentalizing paradigm, which is quietly determining not only our practical functional interactions but also our expressive social, cultural and ecological relations. “We are choreographed up the wazoo in our daily lives,” said Hay in January 2009 during a post-show chat following the presentation of her group work *Up Until Now ...* commissioned by Christopher House for his company Toronto Dance Theatre. With this statement, Hay gestured toward what she considers to be the quotidian state of affairs in contemporary western society related to the influences of media, technology and socio-cultural programming of various kinds. Indeed western culture tends to live in a hectic, agenda-driven, hyper-productive mode. Somehow we accept an implicit obligation to account for the so-called gain, outcome, objective or take-away from any given experience or interaction.

Though Heidegger's thought is not germinal to my study, his notion of enframing is useful in setting up a basic tension traversing this study between socio-cultural forces and structures on the one hand and bodily movements and practices on the other. Certainly this thematic pervades critical and cultural theory, having been specifically articulated in many different contexts, including among them significant work on bodily techniques (Mauss), discipline (Foucault), habits and practices (Bourdieu; de Certeau), aesthetics (Shusterman), and dance (Foster, "Dancing Bodies"). I have drawn on the concept of enframing here to illustrate a limit situation for the purpose of my study, recognizing that I do so in isolation from Heidegger's thought overall. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty's conception of primordial contact, or what I refer to as primordially throughout – "the original bond between the body and world" (Mallin 56) – is useful in setting up a theoretical counter-limit to Heidegger's enframing, one that, in its implications of body-world fluidity, opposes the constraining imperatives of instrumental-rational structuring.

Here, I use the term "limit" specifically in relation to mathematics in which a limit is the value a function approaches as the variables change but at which, importantly, the function never properly or fully arrives. It is only possible to come infinitely close to a given limit. This is an important point that returns throughout this study and one that I wish to emphasize: it is theoretically impossible to arrive at either limit. I'm not positing the body as an unstructured primordially (and in fact, Judith Butler points out that Merleau-Ponty himself considers the body "an historical idea" (156)); however, neither am I suggesting that language and socio-cultural structures are all there is. My thinking is more along the lines of the pull and play of one within the other within the other, and is somewhat analogous to Julia Kristeva's in her theory of poetic

language when she notes that her non-thetic dimension of semiotic bodily pulsations and drives can only be theorized from within the thetic, symbolic dimension (24).³ Some readers may be wary of my use of terms such as “primordially”, “pre-reflective”, “pre-relational” and “pre-disposing”; however, they have critical purpose and relevance in the context of this study, which will become clear through my analysis. When I use the term primordially, it always occurs along with a reference to the “impossible”, except when in direct connection to Merleau-Ponty’s own use. When I introduce the terms pre-relational and pre-disposing specifically in chapter 6, I elaborate their use more fully as “before” that is not before but within.

Through his commitment to a deeply embodied approach to phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty’s study of bodily perception and innovative concept of the *écart* – the bodily capacity to always be pulling or spreading away from structured experience (which I take up in more detail in chapter 3) – articulates the possibility for change, for creative difference, for malleability and corrigibility (Mallin 14). This notion is immensely useful in considering the complex process engendered as language and the body interact dynamically in Hay’s work. Therefore, it is to Merleau-Ponty that I turn most significantly in this study, both for his decidedly body-centered approach to phenomenology, which is particularly aligned with the study of dance, and for some key concepts that his philosophy offers, which help me to articulate the lived experience in Hay’s work. To be clear, my intent is neither to superimpose Merleau-Ponty’s thought onto Hay’s dance, nor to illustrate Merleau-Ponty’s thought in a case study of Hay’s work. Rather than pasting theory onto practice or using practice to reinforce theory, my aim is to derive theory through practice: to describe my experience of Hay’s work and to think through (the) dancing,⁴ bringing the experiences into language by employing useful and available words and ideas that

productively lend themselves to the task. In this case, Merleau-Ponty's ideas and language help me to articulate and think through the experiential poetics of Hay's work – both methodologically and conceptually.

Having done so, I am then able to return to Irigaray's call for a practice of perception, in order to draw out the ethical implications of Hay's choreography and practice. Irigaray's work arises in the context of French feminism,⁵ and was influenced by psychoanalysis, phenomenology – she takes up and critiques Merleau-Ponty, among others – poststructuralism and Derridean deconstruction (Whitford). Irigaray's influences and concerns align to various degrees with theorists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva in particular, insofar as they were each concerned in different ways with the role of the body in relation to writing and language. Irigaray's early project was grounded in an acknowledgement and valuation of the sexual difference between woman and man, women and men. She argues for a new understanding of this sexual difference as a way toward a new ethical relation between two that respects the fundamental irreducibility of each – as two – over the historical reduction of the two to an abstract, universal one, particularly in/through language and discourse. Her work continually develops this project of thinking two, the possibilities of two, and the ethical implications of this thinking, always starting from sexual difference and a concern with the subjectivity and becoming of woman in a Western phallogocentric order, which she persistently critiques. In working with Irigaray here, I take her “thinking two” as a baseline, upon which fundamental difference may be considered. In fact, Irigaray's own writing in “To Conceive Silence” suggests this possibility: “The limit of irreducibility would safeguard the singularity of each person: ‘you who are not and will never be me or mine’ would remain you as I would remain me, thanks to

the work of the negative [silence versus the word], which entails respect for our difference” (*To Be Two* 66).

Having briefly highlighted the importance of both Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray for my study, I return to Hay, whose work is the focus of my research and who, as my analysis reveals, is a theorist in her own right. Hay’s thinking, however, manifests in and through the moving body, as dance, though her choreography and practice are distinctly linguistic. Hay is a critically acclaimed and internationally renowned choreographer with career beginnings in the 1960s New York avant-garde. Over her prolific career as a dancer and choreographer, she has created and performed numerous solo and group works that have garnered significant critical acclaim from early on. In his 1969 book *The Art of Time: Essays on the Avant-Garde* theatre critic Michael Kirby chose Hay’s *Group One* (1967) to exemplify the dance of the 1960s avant-garde period, devoting a full chapter entitled “Objective Dance” to a discussion of this particular Hay work (103). Since that time, Hay has worked consistently in dance, developing her unique approach to choreography and movement practice through distinct career phases that have focused alternately on solo and large group contexts.⁶ Hay’s work echoes with the values of the 1960s dance avant-garde: a tendency toward neutral presentation and a matter-of-fact attitude in performance, the equal inclusion of trained dancers and non-trained movers, a refutation of artifice and technical virtuosity by embracing pedestrian tasks and activities, the use of scores and game structures as compositional strategies to subvert acquired and ingrained habits and patterns, and the blurring of art/life boundaries and audience/performer boundaries. Hay’s current approach shares common ground with that of other contemporary experimental dance practices generally in that it explicitly plays with presence, meaningfulness, habit/spontaneity, relationality and flux/change.

Hay's work prioritizes a commitment to somatic attention, the intelligence of the body, and perception, challenges pre-inscribed, embodied techniques and patterns of movement, dance-specific and otherwise.

Hay's work has garnered her critical acclaim and she has been the recipient of several grants and fellowships. She is regularly invited to teach and lecture internationally and she maintains contact with the dance studies academy. The roster of artists with whom Hay has worked reads as a veritable who's who of contemporary dance: early training and performance with the companies of José Limón, James Waring and Merce Cunningham; a concentrated period of participation – as noted above – with Judson Dance Theater and affiliated artists including Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs; inclusion in Russian ballet superstar Mikhail Baryshnikov's 2000 *PASTForward* project focussed on the Judson-era dance artists, for which he commissioned a new duet from Hay, *Single Duet*, performed by the two of them;⁷ and the 2008 commission of the group work, *If I Sing To You*, by the critically acclaimed German-based contemporary ballet choreographer and dance innovator William Forsythe, followed by subsequent inaugural involvement in his Motion Bank scoring project, through which Hay's score for the solo *No Time to Fly* (2010) was documented through multiple methods and made available online (The Forsythe Company).

Attendant to her body of choreographic and performance work, Hay has developed a corpus of writing that, as described by scholar Susan Foster, forms a "chronicle of an artist's work" (Foster, "Foreword" xii). This corpus includes three books, multiple published articles, documents and transcripts of several lectures and talks, numerous performance scores and libretti, and a series of notes on her work accessible via her website. Her lengthy career and her

commitment to her practice – through choreography, performance and writing – have established Hay as an artist of international repute. Having worked steadily for over 50 years, Hay continues to question the practice and performance of dance and to evolve her approach, which uniquely deploys language to explore a deeply somatic practice that values bodily perception and relational context. Despite her occasional critical comments about the constraining influences, agendas and forces in contemporary society, Hay does not present a consistent or overt political agenda around her work. In fact she has explicitly deflected such implications (Goldman; Burton). Although Hay’s enigmatic work has attracted increased attention in the last ten to fifteen years, it remains under-theorized in the dance studies literature. However, her persistent engagement in dance movement practice and public performance, and her own writing about these experiences, enact implicit critique by performing provocative alternatives with ethical implications, as I argue in the chapters that follow.

Dance’s import for and relevance to political-aesthetic projects of contemporaneity is productively addressed by dance/performance scholar André Lepecki in his introduction to the anthology *DANCE*. Lepecki articulates dance’s five main “constitutive qualities: ephemerality [that dance leaves no object behind], corporeality [its labour of “embodying otherwise” and “proposing improbable subjectivities”], precariousness [related to both its practical-physical play with forces and its low social position among the arts], scoring [choreography as a “system of command” that disciplines bodies] and performativity [that dance “*does*” or actualizes what it plans to do] as the basis on which “dance appears as an energizing and catalyzing element in contemporary art and critical thought” (“Dance as a Practice” 15-16). He identifies two forces in the 1980s – the AIDS pandemic as it raised issues of corporeality and mortality and the rise of

hip hop (and thus social dancing) in popular social consciousness as a rearticulation of bodies and identities – that highlighted dance’s political-aesthetic efficacy in the 1980s. Writing in 2012, Lepecki concludes:

The pressing issues of our times may be different: precarization, lawful torture in the United States, endless energy wars, fundamentalisms everywhere, ecological catastrophes ... But the choreo-political questions remains [sic], of identifying what forces and apparatuses, non-metaphorically and daily, choreograph subjection, mobilization, subjugation and arrest; of figuring out how to move in this contemporaneity; and of understanding how, by moving (even if still) one may create a new choreography for the social. As long as these questions remain relevant, dance will remain a crucial practice and system of critical thought within the aesthetic regime of contemporary art. (“Dance as a Practice” 21)

With humanity facing many complex challenges in these early decades of the twenty-first century, it is essential that we find the capacity to open up to possibility, to the unknown, to each other in new ways. We are perhaps becoming overly habituated to an instrumental/rational modality, which tends to eclipse the possibility for such experiences. How might we shift out of this overly premeditated, instrumental modality? How might we enter into an experience of openness, the unknown, difference? How might we allow for new possibilities, new encounters, new relationalities? How might we create Lepecki’s proposed “new choreography for the social”? I find one possible answer in Hay’s choreography and practice. With its roots in 1960s avant-garde, Hay’s work has sustained and developed a critical-poetic impulse, creating a complex performance-generating system⁸ with an embodied ethic at its core.

In chapter 1 of her book *Social Works*, performance theorist Shannon Jackson reflects on the activist or social impulse in twentieth and twenty-first century art, noting the “anti-authoritarian critique of the 1960s” (23) and the often-asked questions: ““What happened? Where is the activism now?”” that imply its loss in the art of subsequent decades (22). She presents a more complex consideration of the genealogy of this impulse in art-making: “Rather than vilifying or celebrating the espoused values of any particular generation, however, the analysis of art-making in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries might best be understood as a warning, reaction, compensation, and questioning of changing historical contexts that were developing very specific ambivalences toward concepts such as institution, system, or governance” (23). Given that Hay’s artistic practice traverses the intervening decades from the 1960s through to today, Jackson’s lens helps to situate my analysis of Hay’s current work and its embodied ethic as implicit, rather than explicit, critique.

Where Jackson’s concern in *Social Works* is to articulate the multiple and interwoven aesthetic and political trajectories and mutual “supports” within the “social turn” in contemporary art practice (Jackson), artist and writer Walead Beshty takes up the question of ethics with respect to social or relational art, asking: “how do ethical relations create aesthetic form?” (19). Beshty suggests that “A turn to ethics is a turn to the affirmative question of art, not art as negation, allegory or critique, but the description of an art that operates directly upon the world it is situated in; it is a definition of art that is not at all premised on representation” (19). In turning thus, Beshty returns to the art work, assuming that in the contemporary art context it is always already a “social work”, in order to examine the “aesthetics of ethics” (15). By identifying an embodied ethic in Hay’s choreography and practice, I raise the possibility of

analysing her work for its particular “aesthetics of ethics”. While such an analysis proper remains for a future undertaking, Beshty’s proposal frames my project from a different angle: refracting my work here as a kind of inverse effort in analysing what could be considered a “poetics of (the aesthetics of) ethics” through my practice-based (versus reception-based) approach to Hay’s dance.

Hay’s Dances

Before I outline the analysis presented in the following chapters, it will be helpful for the reader to gain some sense of what Hay’s work looks like, generally speaking. It is important to note that the textual-visual descriptions of Hay’s dances, to which I now briefly turn, is highly inadequate in conveying the impact of their live performance. Nevertheless, I hope that these cues will function as a mnemonic for the reader in the journey through my subsequent discussion.

Hay’s dances look nothing like conventional pieces of dance choreography per se and are likely to leave many audience members wondering whether they are choreography at all.

Reviews of Hay’s work since the 1990s, of her solo performances and of group performances of her dances by others, are consistent in their descriptions, regardless of their positive or critical evaluations, and effectively capture the gist of what one might see in a Hay work today.

Descriptions from writers including Ortiz, Russo, Morris, Jowitt, Anderson and Asantewaa describe a choreographic vocabulary that sounds more like the confusing (to an outsider) and seemingly random activity of young child’s play – jumping from one incomplete possibility to the next with no logical flow, clear context or world – than like a cohesive, purposeful and mature artistic work.⁹

In these descriptions of Hay's work I recognize my own experience performing it and seeing it performed by others including Toronto Dance Theatre, Christopher House and Joe Moran. The movement ranges from a barely perceptible twitch or sustained, attentive stillness, to ordinary pedestrian-like movements, to theatrically exaggerated, raucous or aggressive stomping, flailing, gyrating. It can appear awkward and spastic or graceful and fluid, shifting abruptly among very distinct tonal qualities and movements, eschewing conventional dance logic, motif, phrasing, sequencing, rhythmic order and consistent, recognizable form. Hay and performers of her work commonly vocalize, emitting growls, squawks, whistles and gibberish and often sing familiar or unfamiliar songs or fragments thereof.

In his May 2004 *Dance Magazine* review of Hay's *The Match*, a group work performed by the Deborah Hay Dance Company, Gus Solomons Jr. provides a typical description of her work and hints at the linguistic operations at play: "Her dancers grunt and crawl around on hands and knees, gesticulate madly, talk in nonsense language, and twist their faces into grimaces. But describing what the dancers do tells nothing of what they're doing. Hay is a wizard at finding cues – word instructions, stories, images – that allow her performers to discover unexpected kinetic depths in themselves" (71). As Solomons Jr. notes, the movements themselves are not the primary concern in Hay's work and yet, as I will discuss in chapter 4, they are fundamental to it because they underpin the perceptual practice in which the performers are engaged. Importantly here, Solomons Jr. also points to the key role words and language play in Hay's work.

Where Solomons Jr. identifies some of the underlying concerns in Hay's work and embraces it as compelling, others have equally dismissed it as confounding or ineffective in performance. Writes Gay Morris in introduction to her review of Hay's 2010 presentation at

Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City: “Deborah Hay’s *If I Sing to You* engendered laughter here and there, but I thought it extremely painful” (23). Camille Hardy introduces her review of Hay’s 1997 performances of *Voila* as follows: “Sometimes the idea for a dance is much more interesting than the actual experience in the theater” and she goes on to indicate that “audiences today expect the material to be as interesting as the motivating concept” (108, both).

Hay’s choreography, her process and her own discussion thereof are indeed enigmatic and don’t easily map onto received notions of dance. This is not surprising given her background as a member of the renegade Judson Dance Theater, whose experiments in dance and movement performance fundamentally questioned the art form and recalibrated its trajectory therefrom. Throughout her career, Hay has taken the body, perception, attention and relationality as fundamental concerns. Her work has received critical acclaim for its distinct approach to and manifestation of these dimensions.

Basis of the Research

My first encounter with Deborah Hay and her work, outside of dance history classes as an undergraduate dance student, was at a December 2006 performance of her solo *News* by Christopher House, dance artist and artistic director of the longstanding Canadian contemporary dance company Toronto Dance Theatre. Subsequent to this, I saw House perform the solo again in June 2008, and then I attended an open rehearsal in January 2009 of Hay’s group work *Up Until Now*, commissioned by House for his company, Toronto Dance Theatre. Following the rehearsal, a small group gathered to chat with Hay about her work and writing practice, after which a number of us joined Hay for dinner at a nearby restaurant. Other than this short

interaction, I made my primary acquaintance with Hay and her work through experiential engagement.

After witnessing the rehearsal and performance of *Up Until Now* and hearing Hay speak, I was intrigued. Engaged with my own set of questions about presence, attention, the relation between movement and language, and performer-audience relationality in contemporary dance practice, I recognized in Hay's work a unique and enigmatic manifestation of these concerns. I was also aware that her work is grounded in a decades-long career of committed movement practice and choreographic inquiry, and surrounded by a body of her own writing about her practice. When I learned of her unique choreographic workshop/residency the Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP),¹⁰ I instantly knew it would provide an ideal opportunity and structure through which to engage my own questions. I applied to the 2009 SPCP and was accepted. In August 2009, I travelled to Findhorn, Scotland, to study with Hay as one of twenty participants in that year's SPCP. Over a ten-day intensive workshop, we spent all day every day in the studio together learning Hay's solo score *At Once* and practicing her specific approach to performing. At the end of the ten-day process, each participant signed a contract with Hay outlining the rehearsal commitment and parameters under which the solo could be performed. A key element in the relationship was a commitment to daily practice, at least 5 days per week, for three months prior to the first public performance of the work.¹¹ For the 2009 SPCP, Hay also added a new and explicit element to the commitment, requiring the performer to develop an adaptation of the solo, thus situating the choreography within the individual artist's aesthetic. During the workshop period, the 2009 group engaged in a lengthy discussion about Hay's intended meaning and specificity of the term "adaptation" with respect to the practice and the

work. I will take up this term with respect to my project later in this chapter. The 2009 Solo Performance Commissioning Project, the requisite daily practice of Hay's solo *At Once* and my performances of this work on two evenings in December 2009 formed the basis of this research study.

In my own research and practice as a dance artist/scholar and movement theorist/educator, I am compelled by the complexity of lived experience in dance practice and performance, specifically within approaches that tend away from established aesthetics and techniques, set choreography, and codified movement forms and phrases, as Hay's work does.¹² As a writer and editor, I am also very concerned with the relation between dancing and writing. I ask questions like: How can we draw complex, dancing experiences into language without simply reducing them to or eclipsing them by a set of analytical concepts? How do we understand and articulate the experiential poetics of such work? By poetics I mean the underlying functions or operations taking place; by experiential, I mean to address the active embodied experience of these poetics, versus analytic observation and reflection thereof. What can we learn from these experiences about embodiment, subjectivity, meaning-making, relationality?

Within this broader scope of inquiry, I undertook a close experiential study of Hay's choreography and practice through her solo *At Once*, in order to articulate and theorize the experience. I focus in this specific study on the following research questions: How can I articulate and understand my experience practicing performing Hay's solo *At Once*? What is the nature of this experience and how is it distinct within contemporary dance practice from conventional choreography and dance improvisation? How does Hay's choreography and practice function to engender this experience? What are the implications of Hay's choreography

and practice beyond the dance field per se?

While I identify this project as a case study because I engage with a single solo by Hay, I can ask these broader questions of the work because this is not a solo in the conventional dance sense. It is not a discrete creative work substantially different from surrounding works in an artist's oeuvre. Rather, this solo is part of an overlapping series of solos and group works created by the artist over the course of approximately 14 years. This series of works explores significantly similar choreographic material through scores and linguistic prompts and engages a specific performance practice that transcends the individual projects. Through my analysis, I develop an understanding not of this specific solo "At Once" but of Hay's choreography and practice through this solo, as one of any number of possible cases through which to study Hay's more overarching approach to dance and performance. Many other performers have experienced Hay's same approach through different works in this series.

Chapter Outline

As this is first a case study analysis of a relatively under-theorized artist, my work belongs primarily within the relatively small scholarly literature on Hay, which I present in chapter 2. Therein I consider, in particular, relevant thinking by Susan Leigh Foster, Ann Daly, Lesley Satin, John Joseph Dolan, Jim Drobnick and Megan Nicely, among others. This relatively in-depth review also draws out various themes in the literature, contributing a synthesis that has not been articulated elsewhere.

In order to address my research questions, I developed a multi-method approach to experiential research and description drawing from Laban Movement Analysis, phenomenology

and auto-ethnography. This is a relatively typical combination of approaches: “Loosely defined, embodied research is a blend of phenomenology, anthropology (with its long tradition of field studies and participant/observer dynamic), ethnography, and cultural studies” (Albright, *Engaging Bodies* 12). For this study, however, I devised a more specific set of processes and procedures that come together in my method of emergent choreographic analysis. In the first part of chapter 3, I detail this method, which involves an iterative moving-writing practice that distils and reveals key phenomena in the lived dancing experience through somatic awareness and several different modes of writing. I also derived my theoretical framework – a triumvirate dynamic relation of intentionality/intention, attention and action – first through experience. I further define my terms and the shape of this framework in the second part of chapter 3 with reference to various movement improvisation, dance and somatics theorists. Phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “ontology of situations” (Mallin 7) and his important conceptualization of lived experience through intentionality and the *écart* underpins my thinking.

In chapters 4 and 5, I deploy my method of emergent choreographic analysis and present a reflective and then a descriptive analysis respectively. In my reflective analysis of Hay’s choreography and practice itself presented in chapter 4, I first address Hay’s distinctive use of language and then work through an analysis of her choreography and practice, pointing out resonances between my work and that of others in the literature on Hay. Through the theoretical framework of intentionality/intention, attention and action and with reference to Merleau-Ponty’s situational ontology, I show how Hay’s work can be understood as a constructed situation in which her distinctly linguistic choreography and practice functions as a destructuring structure. Through linguistic torques and semantic strategies, Hay’s destructuring structure operates on

processes of intentionality/intention, attention and action in ways that push the performer away from processes of structuring and meaningfulness, throwing the performer into a necessary practice of perception and toward an impossible glance at primordially.

In chapter 5, I present a descriptive analysis of my experience practicing performing Hay's work, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's language to illuminate the phenomena of my experience. It is here that I then articulate the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis that the work engenders. In order to distinguish this concept, I reference similar conceptualizations by several dance improvisation, somatic and movement theorists including Ann Cooper Albright, Nancy Stark Smith, Kent De Spain, Hubert Godard and Erin Manning. Clarifying somatic anacrusis with respect to related concepts allows me to show how Hay's work is neither improvisation, nor choreography in the conventional sense, and therefore how her work is arguably at the cutting edge of choreography.

In chapter 6, I address the unique relationality generated by Hay's work. Many scholars and writers have commented on this very important distinguishing aspect of her dances. I will go further, however, and propose that in Hay's most recent choreography and practice, she actually comes to question relationality per se, enacting a participatory-performative suspension thereof, in the processual experience of somatic anacrusis. In the context of certain debates in performance and dance studies around training, performance, presence, repetition and representation via Richard Schechner, Mark Franko, André Lepecki and Laurence Louppe, among others, I understand Hay's practicing performing as a "training" in "doing" and thereby re-articulate somatic anacrusis as a pre-relational pre-disposing. With reference to the debate on relational aesthetics in contemporary art via Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop, I consider

Hay's work to be presumptively relational; however, the dimension of relationality in her work is "unconsummated". In practicing performing Hay's work, the performer practices a destructuring structure that pushes away from structuring and meaningfulness, incites a practice of perception that moves impossibly toward primordially, and enacts an unconsummated relationality that does not seek to orient, stabilize or impose but instead remains fundamentally mobile and porous.

Finally then, in this chapter I return to Irigaray's work to illuminate the implicit critique and embodied ethic in Hay's work. I ask: what if Hay's choreography and practice could offer an answer to Irigaray's call? What if practicing performing somatic anacrusis could open a new way toward the other through perception that, through the destructuring function, respects both subjectivity and otherness as fundamentally irreducible yet mutable and contingent, mobile and changeable, and therefore always new and unknown. What if we moved into encounter, into proximity with the other through this process of pre-relational pre-disposing?

Thinking (through) Dancing

...embodied research (to my mind, at least) requires that one engage seriously with the ambiguity that results from trying to conceptualize bodily experiences that can be quite elusive. It requires patience with the partiality of physical knowing, as well as a curiosity about how theoretical paradigms will shift in the midst of that bodily experience.

(Albright, *Engaging Bodies* 12)

I write at the intersection of dance, performance, somatics and cultural studies, and, broadly speaking, I take a practice-as-research approach to this work. My aims in this project are the following: first, to bring my dancing experience into language in a manner that allows it a presence alongside theoretical discourse as a way of knowing in its own right; second, to understand something of the poetics of Hay's dance practice and, by extension, why it has been received as both enigmatic and compelling, both for audiences and for a roster of international performers of significant calibre; third – in accomplishing the first two aims – to contribute a unique case study and new perspectives on Hay's work to the scholarly literature on this significant but under-theorized artist; and finally, in expanding the context in which we consider Hay's work, to enhance the appreciation and understanding of her work and certain other contemporary dance/performance practices more generally, on the part of both performers and audiences.

My research contributes to the small scholarly literature on Hay, providing a close and in-depth experiential study of Hay's solo choreography and practice, articulating a poetics of her distinctly linguistic choreography and its unique relationality, and considering the implications thereof in a broader context. My work also contributes generally to practice-as-research methods for the experiential study of dance practice and choreography through my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis. This approach seeks to understand the workings of choreography from within the performer's experience, through an iterative process of moving and writing.¹³ In combination with this method, I offer a theoretical framework, based on the triumvirate dynamic relation of intention, attention and action, for analyzing the relation between the performer's experience and the choreography in experimental dance practice. My articulation

and conceptualization of what is happening in and through Hay's work prompts reconsideration of the relationship between movement and language through the intermediary of the (dancing) body. It also provides a lens through which to differently illuminate and refract other experimental contemporary dance and performance practices that are similarly working with choreographic functions and through perceptive practices. The concept of somatic anacrusis, which I develop through this research, allows a reflection – through dance – on the role of the body and perception in fostering openness to difference and more ethical communicative relations with others.

My particular expertise in undertaking this project, I submit, lies in my training and experience as a dance artist, movement analyst and writer. Through my own experience as an interpreter for others and creator/performer of solo work, as a faculty member teaching studio/studies courses in the Dance Department at York University and as Certified Laban Movement Analyst, I have been engaged in questioning movement experience “from the inside”, seeking to better understand and strive to articulate the lived, fluid multidimensionality of such somatic experiences, specifically in performance. My performance experiences range over a twenty-year career from the prescribed, highly technical and athletic, to theatrical and character-based (dance-theatre), to more experimental modalities, involving extended vocalization, improvisation and somatically informed practices. In parallel with my interpretive career arc, I have also created and performed a number of self-solos deriving from improvisational modalities and often including extended vocalization. My teaching, primarily in the dance department at York University, is based in a somatic approach and is informed by the diversity of my professional experience. Through my practice, I have been spiralling ever more deeply into

embodied inquiry, always turning on and returning to a similar set of questions about dance performance experience. I have found myself most engaged, generally, by work that embraces somatic and/or improvisational paradigms.

Dancing and Writing Alongside Hay

Given my background in dance, somatic practice and writing, and my declared interest in and pursuit of work that derives from improvisatory and somatic modes, it becomes clear that my interests are quite aligned with the world of Hay's practice. In fact I sought out an opportunity to study with Hay because of these aligned interests. However, I would describe my initial position with respect to Hay's work as that of a sympathetic skeptic. I had only seen two of her works performed live and had only heard she and Christopher House speak about the practice in a January 2009 interview with choreographer and dance writer Carol Anderson. Hay's language was very enigmatic and seemed purposefully cryptic and obscure. I admit I was critical of this relatively impenetrable discourse and the way it both mysticized and obfuscated the work. I was also critical of the structure of the Solo Performance Commissioning Project, which seemed from one perspective to be very much a strategic format through which to generate resources and disseminate work. However, I was also curious because there was something about the work in performance that captured my interest and was unique from the majority of dance and performance work I had seen. So, from this skeptical standpoint, I proceeded to undertake this study, perhaps in part to determine whether I could find substantive ground.

Though it sits within an interdisciplinary context and speaks back to larger debates noted above, this experiential case study analysis necessarily imposes a tight focus and therefore this

document leaves many avenues for future exploration and consideration. My primary intent was to study Hay's work through practice in order to develop a theoretical understanding of Hay's work. This decidedly experiential approach foregrounds my lived experience of her choreography and practice, and values the "thinking" that occurs in dancing, in choreography. Tacking back and forth between moving and writing, I strove to write from inside the experience as directly as possible during my primary research and avoiding, to the extent I could, from being influenced by Hay's own or other writers' language or perspectives. Video recordings exist of both of my performances from December 2009 and I also have audio recordings of the post-performance discussions with the audience on each evening. I have not watched my performances nor listened to these interviews to date so as to limit my writing to experience versus observation. Furthermore, it is important to note that in the chronology of my research, it was only after both the experiential and descriptive phases of my research that I engaged more specifically with the existing discourse on her work.

This bracketing aligns with a phenomenological approach to research, which I pursue through the work of Merleau-Ponty. As an effort that is provisional at best, it aims to bring bodily, lived experience to the foreground during engagement with the phenomenon, over cognitive reflective and analytical processes. Nevertheless, though I attempted to proceed through experiential practice and phenomenological description first, I acknowledge that of course I'm informed by discourses and theory and by my past experiences, tacit knowledge and disciplinary movement training. However, my approach was purposeful – to study a bodily practice as closely as possible through bodily practice. My analysis, deriving primarily from phenomenological description of my own experience – versus the received language of the

choreographer or others who have written about her work – provides an alternative perspective on Hay’s choreography and practice. As much as possible, I have attempted to return to my own first-person experiential writing as the primary source for my thinking – my “thinking (through) dancing”.

As noted above, Hay maintains a writing practice that has accompanied her creating and performing activity since at least the 1970s. Author of three books and numerous articles, Hay has developed a textual field around her work that offers a certain level of insight into her concerns and practice, from the first-person experiential and reflective perspective of a practicing artist. She has been at times explicitly concerned with developing a language through which to communicate her practice. In 1982, she wrote about her then-current project *The Grand Dance*: “*The Grand Dance* represents the rebirth of my choreographic career in terms of fashioning a language to support my aesthetic” (Hay, “The Grand Dance” 40). Her articles and books seem to be part of this effort. Two of her three books actually interweave various textual voices, including experiential description, choreographic or performance directives, and reflective, sometimes autobiographical, material. Hay also writes scores or libretti for her dances – often after a first performance of a work – that derive from close experiential writing alongside practice and in turn become the “score” for that work, used in subsequent remounts of the particular dance.¹⁴

In certain ways, this dissertation project has paralleled Hay’s own writing practice. I too have written closely alongside practice, developing experiential writing that traces the residues and echoes of the dancing experience. I too aim to interweave experiential and reflective writing throughout this dissertation as a way to move toward communicating the substance of the

dancing experience in Hay's work. I too am concerned with illuminating the practice itself in order to develop shared understanding of its specificity and potential. Particularly in light of these parallels, it is important for me to re-state that I am writing as one individual practitioner about my experience of Hay's approach to choreography and practice through a single solo work by Hay and my perspectives are therefore limited as such. While I have conducted eleven interviews with other practitioners from the same SPCP that I attended, these interviews have not been transcribed or referenced and do not figure in this particular project. Here, I am specifically working through first-person experience toward phenomenological description in order to discern an experiential poetics of Hay's practice and consider its potentially broader socio-cultural implications.

I will note here that I coin a number of neologisms in my analysis in order to more effectively articulate lived experiences of paradoxical simultaneity that are difficult to render in given language. Throughout my discussion, these neologisms also function secondarily as performatives that emphasize the somatic experiential dimension of my work and sustain a connection to the dancing process at its core. I use these terms judiciously and in the spirit of the French feminist school of *écriture féminine*, feminine writing – a term and theory coined by Hélène Cixous in her critique of Western metaphysics and the symbolic economy: “to describe that which has been erased through the privileging of the (masculine/speech [and here also mind]) one over the (feminine/writing [and here also body]) other” (Alphonso 254).

As may be apparent to readers familiar with Jacques Derrida's paradigm-shifting theory/method of deconstruction, this study resonates with his influences and ideas while not directly taking them up – save in chapter 6, in which I briefly address the impact of his thought

on the development of performance studies. Of course this could be said of many studies, as Derrida himself demonstrated, wherein appear the traces of various influences that have not been explicitly included. Certainly French feminism owes a debt to Derrida's complex move in deconstructing inherited binary thinking and the implicit hierarchies embedded within. Irigaray's critiques of Western phallogocentrism developed in part via Derrida's insights, as indicated above. Further, as noted, Derrida's thinking has had important significance for performance studies.

Some of what might be read as Derridean resonances in this study more likely arise first through Hay's own movement "theorizing" which takes priority here and in which some might find certain "deconstructive" semblances, and second, through my use of Merleau-Ponty's ideas, which, as several writers have suggested anticipate Derrida's in certain ways (Grosz 38; Moran 432; Reynolds; Franko, "Mimique" 212n29). For these writers, Merleau-Ponty's effort to move beyond the dualism of mind/body in his work and the way that he presents the intertwining of body-subject and world, in which the aspects are necessarily co-constituted but never directly coincident, foreshadow Derrida's own challenges to a binary system of thought.

Also in my description and discussion of Hay's work to come, readers familiar with Buddhism may note resonances between Hay's approach, my discussion thereof and Buddhist philosophical ideas. This is no surprise. Hay's work has been influenced by Zen Buddhist ideas particularly through her association with the 1960s avant-garde and explorations of various Eastern philosophies, particularly through the influence of John Cage (Banes, *Terpsichore*). Megan Nicely's study of Hay's solo *Art and Life* (2010), which I discuss in chapter 2, productively explores this angle. I have chosen to work with Merleau-Ponty's thought for three

main reasons: 1) because his phenomenology usefully addresses and navigates the challenging body/mind dualism – and is particularly relevant for dance research; 2) because his language and ideas productively assist me in articulating the experience of dancing Hay’s work; and 3) because, in drawing Hay’s work into dialogue with Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray (whose thinking, as Elizabeth Grosz has elaborated, was also influenced by Merleau-Ponty (39)), I am able to extend this close study of a dance practice through a much broader cultural discourse.

Practicing, Performing, Writing: Iteration, Adaptation, Perpetuation

Not only has this dissertation paralleled Hay’s own writing practice specifically, it also parallels the creative and performance process of adaptation that she expects of those who acquire her dances for their own repertoire, as I did. I consider this document itself to be an adaptation of the solo *At Once* insofar as it involves iteration of the work through practicing, performing and writing. In positioning my dissertation in this way, I hope to pre-emptively address objections that this study instrumentalizes Hay’s work in service to theory. This is important to me for two reasons: because I am wary when dance practices are too readily used to explicate or exemplify pre-existing theory or when they are taken de facto as critique, rather than being respected and approached as “theory” in their own right; and because there is yet a hierarchy in dance and dance studies that places “dancing” below “thinking about dancing” and which I believe must continue to be challenged.

Below I consider the way that Hay’s work is iterative at many levels, and I specifically address the way that a performer of her work develops an adaptation through iterative process. I note that for Hay, this adaptation derives from the performer’s fidelity to the iterative daily

practice. Then I consider an alternate definition of adaptation offered by postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon. With these two ideas of adaptation in hand, I understand my dissertation research as an iterative process of daily practicing, performing and writing, and position this document itself as an adaptation of Hay's solo *At Once*.

As I've discussed above, writing about her practice is an important outlet for Hay's pedagogical impulse, an impulse that is generally evident from her ongoing interest in sharing her practice with others in workshop contexts throughout her career. This drive to share her work – and to perpetuate her ideas broadly – is fulfilled to a degree by the distribution of her articles and books, and the availability of various notes and scores on her website. It is realized exponentially, however, in the SPCP structure. Via this structure, which I have explained above, Hay has generated a global network of individuals who iterate and perpetuate her work and ideas internationally – through practice and performance, and sometimes also through writing.¹⁵ (That she requires participants' funds to be generated from their communities extends this network and roots it at the local level.) SPCP participants mount both solo and group shows of Hay's work, and regularly engage other artists as collaborators on their own performances of the solos. Artists who encounter her work locally via another performer, may become participants in the SPCP, as did I; and the network grows, iterating and perpetuating Hay's work.

Iteration, then, is a fractal thematic in the practicing, performing and writing of Hay's work, appearing at many levels and in many contexts, from the interweaving of her solo and group processes, to her re-circulating of choreographic elements from previous works in new ones, to the very specific kind of iteration that she requires of her SPCP participants in their commitment to daily practice. Part of the explicit commitment of the performer is to develop a

personal adaptation of the work through this daily process of practicing the score, tools and questions regularly and consistently. Hay's solos are to be developed and presented by SPCP participants as adaptations, credited with choreography by Deborah Hay and adaptation by the individual.

An adaptation, for Hay, must include fidelity to the practice, which is what in effect produces the adaptation, as the individual performer negotiates the complexity of her choreography and manifests a specific rendering of the work:

The performer who adapts one of my solo works calls into action 3 parallel roles: the dancer, choreographer, and the executant. Executant means 'putting into effect the exact demands' which underlie the practice of performance of my movement material. Each dancer must be a conscious executant. At the same time the virtues of 'fidelity and sympathy' with my choreographic preferences has to be felt. I run a risk every time my dances are performed because a competent practice of the work depends on the unforeseeable and imponderable factors that make up the performer's virtues of fidelity, sympathy, and streaming perceptual challenges. Every adaptation includes the execution of the specific, non-specific, yet easily discernible material within the written dance score that I provide. No matter how detailed or broad the language, between the written score and the performance are hidden elements that cannot be defined because my 'verbal dialectic' is deliberately powerless to define the performer's movement dialectic. ("More About the Adaptation")

In my practicing performing, I strove for fidelity and sympathy with Hay's work. I attempted to be a conscious executant, while embracing what I understand to be the roles of dancer and

choreographer¹⁶ within the work as well, in terms of developing an adaptation. Hay's instructions to participants at the SPCP allowed for a range of creative developments, including the addition of music, collaborators, costume and set. She was willing to accept the omission of parts of the score, but not the addition of anything new. My performances of *At Once* included a simple costume and two set elements (a tree and the crumbling remains of a brick wall), and involved a minimal change to one section of the score (where Hay used the setting of a mall in her text, I adapted this to the setting of a city). In my performances then, I held an autonomous contextual responsibility for the framing of the choreographic material, which I was under obligation to perform according to the "exact demands" of the practice. For Hay, this constitutes an adaptation of her work, realized through iterative daily practice.

In the book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon offers her own definition of adaptation:

In short, adaptation can be described as the following: An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; A creative *and* interpretive act of appropriating/salvaging; An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing. (8)

It is interesting to consider Hutcheon's notion of adaptation alongside Hay's and specifically with respect to the contractual requirement for three months' of daily practice prior to the individual's first performance of the work. For Hay:

Three months is not an estimate. It is based on my experience with new material. In order to recognize all the ways I hold onto ideas, images, suppositions, beliefs, the ways my

body attaches to what I think the material ‘is’, or should feel like, or look, I need to be alone in a studio, noticing the infinitely momentary feedback that arises from my daily performance of a reliable sequence of movement directions, influenced by the immediacy arising from the same questions day after day after day. (Hay, “How do I recognize my choreography?”)

It is important to note that daily practice does not entail “rehearsal” or “repetition” in advance of and preparation for a finished and final presentation. Daily practice, for Hay, *is* performing – practicing performing.¹⁷ The individual is to perform the work in its entirety; sections are not to be practiced discretely, in isolation from the whole. For Hay, this daily iteration of the work is central to the process of developing an adaptation. Further, per Hutcheon, each day’s iterative practice can be construed as yet another adaptation of the work.¹⁸

Where Hay emphasizes the importance of fidelity, Hutcheon problematizes this notion in the process of adaptation, allowing for much more freedom in the process by noting that “adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new” (20). In light of Hutcheon’s points here about the process of “interpreting and then creating something new”, we can consider this dissertation project – and specifically my description and analysis in chapters 4 and 5 – as yet another adaptation of Hay’s work, a new contextual framing of the choreography and practice, arrived at through an iterative process of practicing and writing. In chapters 4 and 5, I focus specifically on my experiences within the work itself, as I embrace the choreography and practice performing it. Therein, I draw from both my experiential journal entries – which trace in writing my daily practice of the score in its self-same sequence – and from extrapolated phenomenological

descriptions of experiences in the work that I developed from the journal entries. Each piece of writing in itself can be considered, per Hutcheson, to be an adaptation – as can this dissertation as a whole.

Working directly with Hutcheon's definition of adaptation, we can understand this dissertation as 1) "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable work": my phenomenological descriptions are of Hay's practice and choreography of *At Once*; 2) "a creative *and* interpretive act of appropriating/salvaging": my writing in the dissertation draws from Hay's work and proposes my own thoughts and ideas in extension from it, with inevitable choices made about what to include and focus on; and 3) "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work": my process for this writing included three months of daily practice and two formal performances, all of which I wrote about on a daily basis; four months of time spent in exclusive transcription of those daily writings; a process of review and selection from those daily writings; a second phase of writing extrapolations from the selections; and an "extended intertextual" period of analysis and interpretation in writing this document, in which I also reference the discursive texts surrounding Hay and her work.

As noted above, in Hay's definition of adaptation, maintaining fidelity to the practice is essential. However, in writing a dissertation Hay's mandate poses a challenge because in writing a theoretical analysis I am working reflectively in another medium. Hutcheon's definition, however, liberates me from Hay's requirement of fidelity in writing this dissertation, allowing for the process of "interpretation and the creation of something new". Thus rather than being a standard critical analysis of an object of study, and independent therefrom, conducted from a more aloof and ostensibly objective theoretical standpoint, I position this document as an

adaptation – a descriptive analysis of a lived experience, dependent thereon, conducted from an engaged, participatory and subjective experiential standpoint that retains ties to the lived phenomenon itself: “a derivation that is not derivative”, “a work that is second without being secondary”. As Hutcheon would say, this document “is its own palimpsestic thing”, which participates in the iterating and intertextual field of Hay’s work and adaptations thereof – perpetuating through processes of practicing, performing and writing.

Return to/of the Avant-Garde

During the 1960s avant-garde period, choreographers and performers of the Judson Dance Theater community, of which Hay was a part, undertook a serious questioning of then conventional dance practice and performance, pushing boundaries, overturning assumptions and developing innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to choreography and performance.¹⁹ In more recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in artists of the Judson Dance Theater²⁰ – many of whom have continued to practice, create and perform – as new generations of dance creators and performers re-engage with fundamental questions around their art and practice: What is dance? What is movement? What is performance? How is the audience-performer relation imagined, constituted? The resurgence of interest in the Judson-era artists was likely bolstered by Mikhail Baryshnikov’s interest in this group and the large, high-profile *PASTForward* tour of his White Oak Dance Project in 2000, which included remounts and new works by a number of Judson-era choreographers, including Hay, and which followed twenty years after Perron’s Bennington College Judson Project.²¹ Framed from within a contemporary cultural moment, these questions nonetheless resonate with the avant-garde ethos of the 1960s,

tied as they are not only to issues of aesthetics but also to issues of relationality, politics and ethics.

Hay was among those at the heart of this experimental group and, as I will discuss in the following chapters, she has continued to question the art and practice of dance over subsequent decades of her career. Hay has become an internationally renowned and critically acclaimed figure in contemporary dance and performance practice and her work remains relevant today.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature on Hay

Hay has cultivated this body, discovered and rediscovered it over many years of dancing. In training to make and perform dances, she attends to the body's changeability. She explores the ramifications of multiple, distinctive metaphorical framings of physicality. Body, in turn, has offered a kind of dialogue – probing, assessing, reacting, and instigating in response to Hay's various queries. Close and consistent attentiveness to this dialogue forms the basis of Hay's regimen for learning to dance and also generates the motional matter from which her dances are made. For Hay, choreography emerges from her ongoing reflections about bodiliness. (Foster, "Foreword" ix)

For Hay, dance is a way of knowing, one that our culture obstinately ignores. It's her job to tease out what the body knows, and dancing is the 'trick' she deploys to do so. (Daly, "Horse Rider" 46)

INTRODUCTION TO HAY

Because of Hay's status as a relatively lesser-known member of the Judson Dance Theater and the New York avant-garde, who has come to significant international critical acclaim since the turn of the millennium, I will here introduce the reader to Hay's career and influences in brief before outlining the relevant literature on her work to which my research contributes. As noted in the previous chapter, Hay has remained active as a performer and choreographer since the 1960s, moving through several distinct phases throughout her creative career. Hay began her career

working in New York City briefly as a dancer with James Waring's and Merce Cunningham's companies. She then participated in the formation of Judson Dance Theater – influenced significantly by the creative and philosophical thinking of John Cage, composition teacher Robert Dunn and the 1960s avant-garde's artistic embrace of ideas from Zen Buddhism. In 1970 Hay moved to Mad Brook Farm in Vermont. There she lived and worked with a group of artists and developed her work *Ten Circle Dances*, a fully participatory group dance practice grounded in Tai Chi-based principles of breath and flow and using simple whole body gestures and basic travelling steps. In 1976, Hay moved to Austin, Texas, where she continues to live and work. During her next period of self-solo creation, Hay began to explore speaking during performance, while still building her work around principles of breath, flow, presence and attentiveness deriving from Eastern spiritual influences of Zen and Tai Chi. In the late 1970s, Hay began working with groups once again in a process she referred to as *The Grand Dance* (Hay, "The Grand Dance" 40). From 1980 through 1996, Hay conducted fifteen annual large-group workshops with trained and untrained performers – which took place over several months of daily practice and culminated in group performances.²² In these workshops, Hay led groups in her particular approach to movement practice – which she later called "playing awake",²³ a specific and committed practice of paying attention to one's moving body in the context of the group and the surrounding space. In 1997, Hay created the solo *Voilà*, and began turning her attention to a new set of questions around the documentation and transmission of her dances (Daly, "Horse Rider" 53). In 1998, Hay created yet another group structure within which to continue her choreographic and performance explorations and launched the Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP), ultimately a group workshop context for the practice of solo

performance. The SPCP continued annually through 2013, and during this time, Hay developed an international reputation and her work attracted the interest of some of the world's leading choreographers and dancers. She has been commissioned to create group works for major contemporary dance companies and has become sought after as a teacher and speaker. In the previous chapter, I addressed Hay's writing and publications, which are central to her work as an artist.

Hay's work has remained relevant and over time she has continued to receive critical acclaim for her experimental approach to dance practice and creation. As dance scholar Ann Daly noted in 1992, among her 1960s contemporaries (Daly references David Gordon, Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown), Hay remains distinctly committed to an "antitechnical aesthetic" ("The Play of Dance" 36). Daly continues:

Hay is still interested in the aesthetics of the lived – rather than the mastered – body. She still exists (both literally – in Austin, Texas – as well as metaphorically) at the margins of the art, refusing to buy into the conventional standards of beauty that have reentered the field in the last decade. She simply has eliminated that kind of hierarchy from her vocabulary. ("The Play of Dance" 36)

In 1999, Daly reiterates her point, identifying Hay as the only Judson-era choreographer besides Douglas Dunn, who is still active and committed to the experimental ethos ("Horse Rider" 45). While one might argue that others of that era have continued to explore and experiment, Hay's consistent commitment year over year to her dance/movement practice and her ever-growing public profile certainly distinguish her. As "artist-philosopher" (Daly, "Horse Rider" 45), Hay takes movement practice and performance as her materials and has developed, over her career, a

refined approach to choreography that yokes language and sensory perception in a complex choreography that “thinks” through lived experience and relationality.

Hay’s solo performance and group choreography have been addressed by numerous dance writers and critics in the mainstream and dance-specific media over the course of her career. She and her work have been the subject of at least two documentaries (Bromberg; Edmunds). A number of dance practitioners and scholars have engaged directly with Hay’s work in written form, publishing interview transcripts, reflective essays, and scholarly analyses, and Hay’s work is also examined in individual chapters in several doctoral dissertations. Though primarily taken up in dance and performance studies contexts, Hay’s work has also been addressed in relation to movement/body therapy and community arts practice.

In addition, Hay and her work are referenced in many texts focussing more broadly on the 1960s avant-garde and specifically on Judson Dance Theater. Sally Banes, pre-eminent dance scholar of the 1960s avant-garde and the Judson-era, has published several books treating these historical moments.²⁴ Dance critic and writer Deborah Jowitt also discusses Hay’s work in the context of 1960s dance in her historical text *Time and the Dancing Image*. References to and descriptions of Hay’s practice and her early work appear in these texts and others (Livet; McDonagh) and have been relied upon by authors of other articles about her. Hay’s 1966 work *Solo* is described in Deborah Garwood’s essay “The Future of an Idea”, which discusses the reconsideration by curator Catherine Morris of the original art event *9 evenings: art, theatre and engineering*, mounted in New York in 1966 by Billy Kluver (a Bell Labs engineer) and visual artist Robert Rauschenberg and on which Hay’s work appeared. Hay’s work *Group One* is discussed at length in Michael Kirby’s 1969 text *The Art of Time: Essays on the Avant-Garde*

and is addressed briefly by Rosalind E. Krauss in her book *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*.

Hay established several fundamental commitments early in her career that have persisted and continue to underpin her practice today: 1) daily movement practice 2) participatory engagement and relationality (i.e. a concern with affecting the experience of others through dancing, be they participants or audiences), 3) iterative processes shifting from solo to group and back to solo work, and from practice to writing to practice 4) explorations with non-trained and trained movers, and 5) the development of a language around her practice, and around the documentation, transmission and public dissemination of her works and ideas. These commitments have been variously addressed by those who have written about Hay and her work, and I will touch upon them in the following review of key contributions to the discourse on Hay.

MAJOR ANALYSES OF HAY'S WORK

In the relatively small scholarly literature on Hay, a number of key analyses are relevant to consider here. They form the bulk of the scholarly engagement with Hay to date and my work resonates with aspects of each, including: a general agreement on the core characteristics of Hay's choreography and practice as noted above, the application by some theorists of feminist and phenomenological lenses to her work and, in certain cases a consideration of different possible ethical dimensions involved in Hay's approach to dance creation and performance. Each of the contributions outlined below addresses a different phase in Hay's career, and looks at her work from a specific angle and in a distinct context. Most of these studies take Hay's work as one example among several to illustrate a larger argument, and certainly in various ways each

reveals the broader socio-cultural and theoretical context and concerns of its time. While my work shares some common ground with these prior studies, it is distinct in being an in-depth case study engaging Hay's work first in itself as a movement practice through experiential research. To further distinguish between my work and these earlier analyses, my interest is not in *what* Hay's practice offers or presents to an audience, but instead in *how* her practice functions, experientially. Finally, rather than taking Hay's work as a means to illustrate a larger argument or theoretical position imposed from outside the work, my research seeks to reveal the implicit critique and theory that Hay's work enacts, working with various theoretical texts to articulate and understand Hay's own embodied "thought".

Two important notes of explanation to the reader: First, this review of the literature on Hay, while not exhaustive, is quite comprehensive and detailed. The first section outlines the major analyses relevant to my study, and the second section considers various themes and critiques in the literature on Hay. To my knowledge no such synthesis exists and, insofar as Hay's work has been under-theorized in the dance studies literature, this review in itself makes a contribution to the field in which my work also participates. Furthermore, this review serves in part to establish context and credibility for Hay as a lesser-known member of the Judson Dance Theater and yet one of the few who has sustained a career in dance since those early experiments in the 1960s.

Second, while this review is conventionally placed at the beginning of my dissertation, I remind the reader that my methodological approach began with embodied practice and phenomenological description in order to engage first with the dancing itself as a kind of knowledge, and to limit the influences of both Hay's own and others' discourses in the first

investigatory phase of my process. Clearly, a complete bracketing of prior knowledge and experience is impossible. I definitely acknowledge that Hay's own language informs my experience as I studied directly with her in learning the solo in the first place. However, in proceeding first through experiential practice and then engaging with the literature by and about Hay, my writing is less influenced by the discourse than if I had taken the opposite approach. I was certainly aware of the generally limited scholarly engagement with Hay's work; however, only after I completed writing and transcribing my journal material did I properly address the contributions outlined here. Thus, I was I able to address the convergences and divergences between these and my own analyses.

One of the first significant scholarly considerations of Hay's work occurs in Susan Leigh Foster's 1986 study *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, which looks at Hay's work from primarily the 1970s and early 1980s – some solo performance by Hay and some of her group work with other dancers. In this text, Foster elevates Hay in the context of three other historically significant choreographers – George Balanchine, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham – categorizing each artist's approach as exemplary of a certain modality of choreography and thereby developing a structuralist analysis of dancing. Foster studies the work through textual and visual material, and where possible as an observer of live rehearsal and performance and through interviews. Foster's text portrays Hay as a rigorous and articulate choreographer/director with a clear and unique vision and approach to dance and dance making and argues that Hay's somatic approach emblemizes Foster's choreographic modality of "resembling". Of particular note, in this text Foster discusses Hay's "technique" of cellular consciousness at length: a practice of attending to and experiencing the body not as an

undifferentiated entity but rather as the multiplicity and possibility of “the ever-changing cumulative performance of seventy-five trillion semi-independent cells” as Foster later described it in her introduction to Hay’s third book (“Foreword” xii). This “technique” has remained central to Hay’s work throughout her career, though the surrounding practice has become more complex and enigmatic. It is this complex practice – as a practice – in which I am interested as opposed to the structural features of Hay’s choreographic approach overall, which Foster has examined here.

Ten years after Foster’s work, John Joseph Dolan’s 1996 dissertation, *Reconfiguring the Socio-Somatic Horizons of the Subject: The Physiognomic Dimensions of Perception and Meaning in Twentieth-Century Theatre and Dance*, considers Hay’s work within a single chapter as one of two examples of a somatically-based theatrical practice that can be understood to function as a resistant response to the instrumentalizing forces of late capitalism. Referencing his participation in a number of Hay’s large-group workshops starting in 1985, Dolan nonetheless focusses his analysis on his spectator experience of the original 1991 group performance of Hay’s *Lamb, Lamb* Through a robust and lengthy description of the performance experience, he highlights a number of key reflections that illustrate and support his previous discussion of Hay’s practice including: 1) the experience of disorientation that arose as a result of the performers’ active looking at the audience and his related subsequent experience of feeling unmoored and then entering into an easeful experience of what he describes as a “pre-personal”, “pre-symbolic” state of fluid awareness (207); 2) the ways in which Hay’s structural/processual constraints and use of language (209) function to disrupt the possibility for the performers to fall into conventional movement patterns and gestures, urging instead their openness to the non-

rational and embodiment of unfamiliar or otherwise culturally dismissed movements in a process of becoming (207); and 3) the challenge for both performers and audience members in engaging with this “continual displacement and suspension of those narrative and technical guidelines that have traditionally structured the meaningfulness of movement and its role in presenting” (208).

Dolan’s analysis of Hay’s work corroborates that of other theorists and my own insofar as it draws out many of the same key values and concerns that characterize her work. Further, his discussion of Hay’s earlier large group work to explicitly exemplify a kind of resistant somatic practice supports my own recognition of Hay’s more recent solo work in a similar light; however, our projects differ, of course, in theoretical context, methodological approach and focus, and each takes up distinct instances of Hay’s work, separated by about twenty years. Dolan ultimately argues that Hay’s work is ahistorical. He suggests that in presenting only the non-rational, her work hides the fact that it needs the rational in order to exist. Further, he argues that her work is only partially effective as a resistant practice because it does not foreground that potential resistance to prevailing instrumental modes by presenting these prevailing modes within it. He also notes Hay’s apparently contradictory position with respect to language, implying her turn against the rational and the linguistic, and yet her reliance on it as a problem because it suggests a naïveté and denial of historical situatedness and the real and ongoing struggles about body, nature, class, race, gender, etc., and therefore of the “social-cultural conditions of possibility for her particular aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) orientation” (212). These are valid concerns. However, I would argue that the uncanniness and disorientation that Dolan describes points to the complexity and depth of the work’s work, in its – and the performers’ – dialogic dance with sedimented cultural conventions and assumptions. In light of the turn to

performance as a concept and organizing principle for cultural analysis (Davis 1) in the years since Dolan was writing, and in fact its conceptual effects on culture generally, I would argue that Hay's work participates effectively in this modality – enacting, rather than representing, its concerns.

Distinct from Dolan's socio-cultural analysis, Lesley Satin's 1997 dissertation on feminist autobiography in dance/performance treats Hay's work in a chapter-length case study (which I reference through its subsequent revised publication as a discrete article in 1999) arguing that Hay's practice is autobiographical in the sense that throughout her career she has consistently been engaged in practicing and performing "metaphors of self" (182)²⁵ or "self as a process re-formed in every present moment" (182). In the 1999 article, dancer and scholar Satin provides a sustained feminist analysis of Hay's work, writing from observations of Hay performances – most specifically Hay's solo *Lamb at the Altar*, derived from the prior large-group work *Lamb, Lamb, Lamb ...* treated by Dolan above – texts by and about Hay and related topics, and from an interview with Hay in 1996. Noting Hay's eclectic and abruptly shifting movement vocabulary; use of sound and spoken word; strategic manipulation of time; volition or agency as a performer in the act of decision-making; and intentional embrace of and play with visibility/invisibility, seeing and being seen (with the attendant layers of attention, intimacy, pleasure and erotism); Satin makes links between Hay's practice and aspects of feminist and film theory with respect to the gaze and objectification.²⁶ Satin suggests that, through her performance and choreographic strategies, by returning the gaze and disrupting viewer appropriation of herself as dancer, as woman, as "body", Hay sets up the possibility for presencing the self-in-process as flux and change.²⁷ In consolidating her autobiographical

argument, Satin quotes Hay from her book *Lamb at the Altar*: “All I can be at any moment is all of myself. If myself is more than fifty trillion cells in radical transformation every moment, I am off the hook of being any one entity. I am flux in a corporeal body. Responsibility to a singular identity is a misconception” (qtd. in Satin 203). This is where quoting Hay in support of Hay can become tricky, because Hay is articulating herself in an intuitive manner that is not necessarily free from contradiction and circularity. I read Hay’s description above as indicative of an experience of becoming in a very protean sense, and therefore find the word “myself” to be contradictory because it suggests a kind of stable cohesion of identity that is counter to the protean experience of flux and change. As such, I would refute the argument that Hay’s work is autobiographical, in the sense of a “graphy-writing of the bio-life of the auto-self”. Hay is not working on the “self” nor even on the dissolution or letting go of self per se, but on the experience of flux between these limits – an experience that I describe and discuss in my own experiential, versus observational, analysis, which also draws on feminist theory though different texts, and with the intent to illuminate rather than explain.

Turning from Hay’s dance to Hay’s discourse, performance scholar Jim Drobnick specifically considers Hay’s distinct use of language in his 2006 essay that draws on personal experience in Hay’s 1988 large-group workshop²⁸ and significantly on a review of thirty years of literature and documentation, including Hay’s archival and personal material (47). In his essay, Drobnick provides a cross-referenced glossary of twenty-seven of Hay’s terms/phrases and synthesizes the key understandings at work therein.²⁹ Based on his research, Drobnick argues that Hay’s embrace of language is decidedly purposeful and intentional, and was so from early on. As expressed in her own words writing in 1982 at the culmination of her *Grand Dance*

process, she stated her aim for the next phase of her career: “*The Grand Dance* represents the rebirth of my choreographic career in terms of fashioning a language to support my aesthetic” (Hay, “Grand Dance” 40). Drobnick opens his text, twenty-four years later, with the following corroborating statement: “Over the course of a forty-year career, choreographer/performance artist Deborah Hay has created an elaborate and distinctive language to articulate an aesthetic philosophy, to communicate with performers and to serve as a pedagogical tool” (43).

The significance of Drobnick’s work lies in his placing substantial weight on and providing detailed articulation of Hay’s linguistic processes in her movement/performance practice. He notes the ways in which Hay’s use of language functions to defamiliarize and destabilize, to sustain a generative and indeterminate experiential state, which he suggests has personal and social ramifications because the defamiliarization of body and discourse implicates identity (46). It is the poetics and potential implications of this experiential state that I aim to articulate through my work. Drobnick participated in one of Hay’s large-group workshops and his understanding clearly derives in part from his experience in the workshop; nevertheless, the substantial balance of his source material is textual and, furthermore, draws to a large degree on Hay’s own writing and explanations, often quoting Hay directly from interviews and from her own writing. His perspective is overarching and covers a thirty-year period. By contrast, my case study practice-based research derives distinctly from phenomenological description of my own experience versus the received language of the choreographer or others who have written about her work – so far as that is provisionally possible, as I have noted earlier. Where Drobnick’s focus is on developing a glossary of terms, my focus here is on analyzing the *performative function* or *effect* of Hay’s language in the specific choreographic operation – and stands in

complementary relationship to Drobnick's excellent explanation of Hay's use of language in her practice. As Drobnick emphasizes: "Words in her lexicon bear an unmistakable performative element; rather than conveying information, expressing a point of view or operating as a form of notation or description, Hay's language serves as a provocation for self-reflection, causing creative disturbances in the minds and bodies of performers and, by extension, audiences" (47).

Writing primarily in a journalistic context, dance scholar Ann Daly nevertheless brings her intellectual perspectives to bear in a series of reviews, essays and interviews with Hay, compiled in her book *Critical Gestures*. Daly's writing provides insights into Hay's work from the 1990s. In this collected material, Daly offers keen descriptions of some of Hay's works from the period and develops helpful analyses of Hay's practice and performance. Three pieces of writing are particularly significant. The first two primarily address the values of presence and relationality in Hay's work. The last provides insights into the developing importance of the performance libretto or score in Hay's work from this point forward. In her 1990 review of Hay's trilogy *The Man Who Grew Common in Wisdom*, Daly brings up the significance for Hay of presence in performance with respect to a quality of attention, and how this can activate performer-audience relationality. Daly also acknowledges the instinct, on the part of an audience member, to identify Hay's dance as improvisational, though Daly here – and Hay, elsewhere³⁰ – declare firmly that it is not.

In her introduction to the performance libretto for Hay's solo work *Lamb at the Altar*, published in *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* in 1992, Daly captures the core relational intent in Hay's work and goes on to explain how this concern with relationality manifests through the large group workshop context and links this to other strategies Hay has employed in

her performing career: “dissolving the boundaries between performer and spectator: by using her home as a performance space, by raising the lights in the theater, by speaking to the audience before a performance, and by directly looking at her spectators while performing” (“The Play” 38). In a 1997 interview with Hay, published in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* in 1999, Daly engages Hay in a discussion around the developing role of the libretto in her practice, with respect to the creative process for her 1997 solo *Voilà*. Prior to this, Hay had written scores for some of her dances; however at this point in her career, the process of writing libretti for her dances became a fundamental aspect of her choreographic practice and came to inform the explicit process of documenting and transmitting her dances, which in fact she began doing before her 1997 solo *Voilà*.³¹ The developing relationship in Hay’s work between choreography, writing and transmission prompted a new trajectory in her career, leading to the inception of the SPCP project. Where Daly’s descriptive analyses derive from observation and interviews, my work explores these concerns from an experiential standpoint. Daly’s discussion with Hay about the role of the libretto or score in Hay’s work informs my analysis of the score as one element in Hay’s complex choreography, deriving from the very distinct use of language in her practice.

In contrast to Daly’s short journalistic contributions, Megan Vineta Nicely’s 2012 dissertation *Choreography from the Outside: Dance Experiments in Thinking, Perception, and Language after 1960* offers a chapter-length analysis of Hay’s solo practice – entitled “Catastrophic Acts of Perception”, a phrase taken directly from Hay – based on her personal experience in Hay’s 2010 SPCP for the Hay solo *Art and Life* (2010), one year after my participation. I consider this study in slightly more depth than the previous ones because it is a much more current study, and engages with Hay’s solo practice partly from an experiential

perspective as does mine. Nicely draws on her own SPCP experience, several other workshops and attendance as an audience member at a performance of Hay's group work *If I Sing to You*, writings by and about Hay, as well as an interview with Hay conducted during her study in Findhorn, to ground her discussion of Hay's practice and process, which serves as one of three examples that illustrate her theoretical argument about choreography as "future writing". Nicely makes a case that certain choreographers' works – that of Americans Trisha Brown and Deborah Hay, and the Japanese choreographer Akira Kassaï – draw us back from the quotidian lived experience of self and open us onto a pre-personal experience and state of consciousness linked specifically with somatic awareness/attention, and through which different kinds of knowledge and perspectives on the world can arise. As such, Nicely characterizes these choreographic practices and processes as "future writing" because, in leading us, they are understood to be in advance of us in time. Nicely situates her discussion in the context of affect theory, drawing on the work of Deleuze (and Guattari), Brian Massumi, Elizabeth Grosz, Erin Manning and others.

Nicely breaks her discussion into four main parts. First she addresses Hay's practice itself and the ways in which Hay's approach to choreography is a kind of counter-choreography,³² a critique of Western concert dance that asks Western-trained dancers to actively let go of and subvert their prior training, to engage in Hay's "catastrophic acts of perception". In the second part, through the use of phenomenologist Yasuo Yuasa's thought, Nicely forwards a conception of Hay's practice as a kind of "somatic negation", drawing directly from Yuasa's notion of "without-thinking", which is his third mode of thinking (thinking and not-thinking being the first two). In the third part, Nicely focusses on the role of visuality in Hay's work. Through a phenomenological lens using Japanese phenomenologist and Zen practitioner Nishida, she

develops a discussion of the ways in which Hay's approach to vision and seeing disrupt the constitution of subjectivity. It is here that, as I noted in my introductory chapter, Nicely's study thinks through aspects of Hay's work through a Buddhist philosophical lens. In her fourth and final section, Nicely addresses the apparently environmental themes of the specific solo she learned from Hay, *Art/Life*. In conclusion, Nicely proposes that Hay's work is about changing habits of thought and action to more potentially ethical ones that will better prepare us to respond to the crises of our times.

My work parallels Nicely's insofar as we both treat Hay's practice and performing through personal experience as trained dancers and our descriptions and interpretations of experiences in Hay's work resonate, quite closely at times. I too take a phenomenological approach to my study and articulate the way in which Hay's work disrupts engrained social and cultural habits, and shifts me out of quotidian modes of being and relating. I too consider that Hay's work engenders a different kind of relationality that has potentially ethical implications. However, particularly in light of these similarities, it is important to understand the distinctions between Nicely's and my work. I develop my argument through a different method, writing much more closely to the lived experience, and I derive my concept of somatic anacrusis through this process of experiential writing. Nicely uses Yasuo Yuasa's concept of somatic negation or "without-thinking" to understand aspects of Hay's approach, specifically Hay's cellular body and use of questions (Nicely 149). My concept of somatic anacrusis addresses the holistic experience of practicing performing Hay's work, and not just certain aspects such as Hay's cellular body and questions. Further, Yuasa's concept, understood via Nicely, does not adequately articulate my experience within Hay's work, which involves a more dynamic, tensional quality.

Nevertheless, though derived independently from one another through experiential research, these two conceptualizations of Hay's work reinforce our similar understanding of the unique operations of Hay's choreography. Where Nicely's project aims to draw theory and practice together in a reflective discussion of Hay's work as one among several case studies illuminating her broader theory of choreography as future writing, by contrast my project approaches Hay's work in itself in order first to describe the lived experience, and then to analyze how it functions and elucidate what is happening therein. I aim to draw theory *from* practice, beginning with experience in Hay's work, and striving to retain ties to the somatic in my analysis in order to understand the embodied "thinking" that is occurring within the practice of Hay's work – giving weight to this way of knowing, and the phenomenological descriptions thereof as knowledge in its own right.

THEMES AND CRITIQUES

In addition to the more robust analyses I have just discussed, a number of other writers address Hay's work directly in discrete articles, including early Hay collaborator and musician Bill Jeffers, feminist scholar Judy Burns, performance scholar Danielle Goldman and, in a review of Hay's book *My Body, the Buddhist*, performance theorist André Lepecki. Taking each in turn allows me to address several important themes and critiques in the literature on Hay.

Hay's Spirituality

In her early book on American dance artists of the 1960s and 1970s, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, dance scholar Sally Banes devotes a chapter to Hay entitled "Deborah Hay:

The Cosmic Dance”, which commences with the statement: “Deborah Hay’s choreography during the 1960s and ’70s has evolved from theatrical to social to almost sacred dancing” (*Terpsichore* 113). In this overview of Hay’s early career and influences, Banes articulates the prevailing concerns of Hay’s early work already discussed above. She also particularly notes the influences of Tai Chi Chuan on Hay’s developing practice – including the concepts of “letting go”, of flux and of paradox that have undoubtedly persisted in Hay’s work. Banes notes, however, that even at this early stage these influences were only that: Hay’s “group practice diverges from Tai Chi” and her “dances break from Tai Chi Chuan in the range of their dynamics” (*Terpsichore* 119-121, all). Hay was not undertaking a spiritual practice per se but drawing on these and many other influences in her artistic explorations.

Bill Jeffers’ article “Leaving the House (Deborah Hay)”, published in *The Drama Review* in 1979, provides a unique interpretive perspective on Hay’s work of this early period. As a participant playing music in performance with Hay, Jeffers obviously had “insider” knowledge about Hay’s intentions for her performances, and his descriptions and interpretations reveal the language and discourses of the time, an almost naïve belief in the possibility of universal experience and a lack of criticality around individual differences. Nonetheless his writing, which is peppered with quotes from Hay herself, reveals many salient values and principles that her work then embraced and that continue to resonate, though differently, in her current practice. Jeffers comments extensively on the ritualistic and spiritual dimensions of Hay’s work, articulating what she does as a kind of meditation that involves a practice of emptying so that the dance can enter her. This concept of emptying resonates with ideas from Zen Buddhism, which as Satin, Dolan, Nicely and others have noted, influenced Hay’s early development, partly

through John Cage's and others' influence on her 1960s artistic cohort. Jeffers describes the specific preparation of the performing space and the inclusion of elements of nature, and everyday objects, imbued with a sense of sacredness through their selection and placement. He notes the influence of her Tai Chi practice, describing the sustained and sometimes dreamlike quality of her movement and the fact that it never seems to arrive at a resolution. Jeffers articulates his understanding of how Hay's dances function, through perception and listening, that the dances arise through Hay's and the audience's simultaneous perception and listening: "The movements themselves aren't important. It's the space around them, the perception of them, both by Deborah and the audience, that gives them life, illuminates them. Imagination is real. The perception is the dance. For everyone. Which is the same as saying that the creative act going on here is the perceiving of the dance" (84).

While Jeffers' article is important for its description and interpretation of Hay's work from this period and the way it articulates key principles of perception and listening that have remained consistent throughout her career, it is also a key to understanding the spiritual discourse that over time has pervaded Hay's work and discussions thereof. A language of spirituality pervades the literature on Hay and is important to critically consider, though an in-depth analysis is not the focus, nor within the scope, of this study. Numerous journalistic reviews and scholarly articles touch on this aspect repeatedly throughout different phases of Hay's career, over the course of which it seems Hay has distanced herself somewhat from her more wholehearted initial embrace of Eastern spiritual influences. From her practice of Tai Chi and embrace of principles of Zen Buddhism, which are well documented; to her various descriptions of her practice as "movement meditation" and "performance meditation"; to the ritualistic, even

worshipful, character of her daily movement practice, especially with its reverence for the “whole body as teacher”, Hay seems to have actively embraced and then, perhaps more aptly, productively appropriated this discourse. In early talks she gave, upon her arrival in Austin, on her *Ten Circle Dances* and first few solo performances, Hay quotes various spiritual teachers including Ram Dass and Pir Vilayat Khan (“Dance Talks” 18-19). Her second two book titles also stand as examples of spiritual references: *Lamb at the Altar: The Story of a Dance* and *My Body, the Buddhist*.

In her current practice, the term meditation is not so common to describe her practice, which she articulates more often as “practicing performing”.³³ Hay’s apparent shift away from a more overt spiritual discourse may be in part because of the difficulty this discourse posed to her work being critically accepted on the artistic circuit. Satin has noted the challenge of addressing the spiritual dimension and dispenses with it quickly in her text, commenting: “Spiritual experience, a slippery site for scholarship, is sanded down by Hay’s humor and by her earthy, sensual, and quite secular presence, on- and offstage” (Satin 183). If we take this description as evidence of Hay’s embodied ambivalence on the subject, in a 1997 interview with Ann Daly we find Hay’s explicit articulation thereof. Here, Hay responds to Daly’s line of questioning about the apparent spiritual layer in Hay’s work: “What does [prayer] mean to me? How do I relate to this, as a cynic, without much religious background, and who has no relationship to prayer at all in a conscious way?” (qtd. in Daly, “Horse Rider” 47). Hay responds a little further on: “This is crucial. In dance I do not divide the body into physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological parts. I am adamant about this. The whole body is perceiver of everything imagined, created, invented, not imagined, guessed, faked” (qtd. in Daly, “Horse Rider” 47).

Drobnick's perspective, discussed above, also addresses the influence of Eastern ideas on Hay's work, while framing a more methodological rather than spiritual application: "Hay reengineers these ancient, spiritual techniques to the contemporary practice of performance, while maintaining their efficacy in transforming the mind and body" (47). The significance of this quote to my discussion lies in Drobnick's reference to "the contemporary practice of performance". Indeed Hay's work must be understood and contextualized by the fact that it is presented as live dance performance. Hay situates herself and her work circulates within this disciplinary economy – of not-for-profit artistic creation; theatrical performance; local, national and international dissemination through presentation, touring, commissions, etc. – and the performer of her work purposefully presents a dance performance before an audience, invoking the context and specific social agreements of this type of theatrical event, which substantively distinguishes Hay's work from spiritual practices per se. Nicely's work, also discussed above, develops a strong thesis around the role of "East as Method" (144) in Hay's work, recognizing the way that Hay "extends [Buddhist notions] into artistic practice" (155). From my discussion here, it becomes clear that scholars have wrestled with the spiritual thread in Hay's work, in order to address the artistic impact thereof. Hay herself remains ambiguous on the subject. In the introduction to *My Body, the Buddhist*, Hay's ambivalence and yet explicit appropriation of the discourse of spirituality becomes apparent, with the focus remaining on her conviction of the body's innate and unique capacity for knowledge:

It would have been antithetical to my process of inquiry to research Buddhist theory in order to substantiate my thesis. Long ago I stopped sitting at a desk, surrounded by books, gathering information. My research happens in the experiential realm dancing

– standing on my two feet and moving, listening, seeing. I do not think people are going to be reading this text in order to learn about Buddhism.

I am not a practicing Buddhist. Nor am I a practiced poet, librettist, or archivist. The literary forms used in this book are liberties I have taken in order to unravel the coding between movement and perception. The libretto, poem, score, short story, were co-opted by a flag-bearer in pursuit of the study, transmission, and intelligence born in the dancing body. I will try anything to help bring some attention to the truth born here.

My Body, The Buddhist describes innate skills and basic wisdom that bodies possess but which remain untranslated because as a culture we tend to hide in our clothes. Unrecognized is the altar that rises with us in the morning and leads us to rest at night. The book's intent is to open some trapped doors that prevent awareness of the body's daringly ordinary perspicacity. (Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist* xxv)

With respect to my own research, which strives first to analyze and articulate Hay's practice through my own first-person experience, I will make two points here. First, it is essential to acknowledge and accept the foundational influence of certain, primarily Eastern practices and principles on the development of Hay's aesthetic, just as these ideas have informed so many artists, particularly within the 1960s avant-garde. Second, and more complex, is that while Hay's discourse and approach itself refer to and bear resemblances to these Eastern practices, Hay's work is not explicitly spiritual in intent;³⁴ rather, in my view, a kind of secular relationality is a

fundamental value. These two points further support my choice of theorists in this study and to use material other than Buddhist philosophy as a lens through which to consider Hay's work.

Jeffers makes an important point that helpfully situates Hay's work in the realm of performance and distinguishes it from spiritual practice per se, while also supporting my point above about the fundamental importance for Hay of relationality. It is significant to remember that Jeffers was writing in 1979, about Hay's work of that period, which she did describe as meditation, as I have noted above. In a discussion by Jeffers of how visual and movement descriptions of Hay's performance do not accurately capture what is really going on, Jeffers writes:

It's like trying to describe meditation with a discourse about the look on the meditator's face. What it's all about is someplace else. I know that for Deborah, her dance, but especially her solo performance, is meditation. It is meditation but with one significant difference from traditional forms: Hers includes a desire to communicate something, thereby making it performance as well. (Jeffers 84)

Hay corroborates:

I feel like, without exception, people respond to the presence of a being who is in the moment. It is such a gift. Whether in performance or on the street or in the house. It's a gift of life. It is true communication, understanding. The main reason for performing is to provide that experience for myself and the audience. It is the one common language which is, without exception, clear. (Hay in Jeffers 84)

The point is to understand that Hay's fundamental intent is to communicate, not with the divine but with others, the audience, present in the moment.

I venture that the discourse of spirituality pervades Hay's and others' discussion of her work not because the work is spiritual per se but largely because this language is known and shared by a wide public,³⁵ and it offers a way to approximately articulate the somato-sensory experiences to which Hay's work gives rise – both for participants and for audiences.³⁶ In my research study, I work through phenomenological description of the experience and do not further address this spiritual framing.

Hay's Feminism

Judy Burns takes a feminist approach to Hay's solo trilogy *The Man Who Grew Common in Wisdom* in her 1990 review. Burns discusses the trilogy in the context of then-current feminist theory (particularly concerned with visibility and the spectatorial gaze), noting two particular ways in which Hay's work subverts the gaze: 1) via Hay's inner/outer focus and inviting being seen while also seeing; and 2) via Hay's clown-like costuming which subverts the sensuous female figure/identity that Burns notes was more actively embraced in earlier Hay work (Burns). For Burns, throughout the performance Hay sustains a dynamic subject position with respect to the audience. Writes Burns:

Through non-linear choreography, subtle costuming, and a highly refined, simultaneous inner and outer focus, Hay attempted to eliminate factors which would arrest the viewer's gaze and get in the way of the audience fully sharing the experience of Hay's movement. She appeared to be trying not to create visual, kinesthetic or dynamic images with her movement; as a matter of fact, she seemed to relentlessly strip away anything which might contribute to image-making. (Burns 169-170)

For her part, Satin's writing (discussed above) more broadly illuminates various aspects of Hay's career through the lens of feminism. Satin points, as does Burns, to Hay's early solo performances in which she embraced a lush sensuality, presenting a conventional notion of beauty and woman's body through the use of soft, draping costumes; and, through her use of mythological and archetypal female images and performance settings, aligning woman, body and nature in a manner that could easily be understood as presenting an essentialist perspective. However, Satin implies that this would be an oversimplification, noting both Hay's formalist concerns and her active "assertive (as well as inviting) stance toward the spectator" (191n13).

Like Burns, Satin remarks on Hay's prioritizing the intention and experience of visibility and being seen by the audience as essential to the premise of Hay's work, to foreground/perform the experience of the whole person/self. In Satin's view: "Inviting being seen' is at once the most generous and most provocative of the movement meditations that guide her dance practice" (187). Satin draws on her interview with Hay in 1996 to highlight Hay's own reflections on the experience of being a woman performer. Though Hay dismisses an intellectual feminist intent in her approach to performing, she does acknowledge the complexities therein: "Early on in my performing career, when I would stand in front of men, I would ... be inviting being seen, and doing [things that were] as gross or as ugly as I could get.... [T]here were a lot of men who would not lift their eyes to look at me. They did not want to see a woman looking like I was looking. [T]here was some confrontation going on here – it was so awakening to me" (qtd. in Satin 198).

It is primarily Hay's specific and active approach to visuality that gives rise to these particular feminist analyses of her performance, and which is also a key aspect of other analyses

less explicitly feminist, including Nicely above and Goldman below. All these scholars are touching differently on the unique relationality engendered by Hay's work. Insofar as this activation of reciprocity subverts the possibility for any fixed subject or object position on the part of the performer and on the part of the audience members, it speaks to the way in which Daly has described Hay's work – in an implicit reference to feminist discourse – as a “performance of becoming” (“Review” 35). Based on Hay's comment to Satin, it would seem that Hay recognizes the effect of her approach to visuality in her work but that she did not and does not proceed with the intent to provoke, challenge or subvert from a feminist standpoint, hence Hay's “feminism” – as I have titled this section, in quotes.

Hay's Politics and Ethics

There are those who think Hay's work is entirely ahistorical and sealed inside a bubble of inquiry into “pure aesthetics” and there are others who think Hay's work enacts a politic, even mounting a critique of major socio-cultural issues and debates. As I have discussed above, Dolan mounts a significant critique of Hay's work in suggesting that it is ahistorical and does not adequately take account of very real political struggles in the world. By contrast, in a 2007 article in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Danielle Goldman also addresses the socio-political resonances of Hay's work. Goldman weaves a descriptive and interpretive text about Hay's group work *O, O*, tying it into her experience in a weeklong workshop with Hay, photographs of the performance, an interview with Hay and an excerpt from the score for *O, O*. Goldman's text provides a robust perspective on this work and Hay's practice. In the text, Goldman acknowledges the political resonances in this particular work with the US “war on terror”: in the Twin-Tower emblazoned visors (crossed

out and overwritten with *O, O* in marker) provided to shield the audience's eyes from the performance lighting; in the raw vocal lament repeated by different dancers; and in the closing image in which the dancers walk away from a single still female with a black scarf wrapped over her head like a veil.

In her article, Goldman questions the ethical dimension of Hay's approach to visibility that involves the performer taking an active approach to receiving the gaze in "invit[ing] being seen" and at the same time taking an active approach to seeing by "view[ing] others as the subject of one's experience rather than the object" ("*O, O*" 165). Goldman is concerned with the implied generosity and trust involved in Hay's proposals related to visibility and questions what it might mean to engage in this practice in situations that are not as safe and communal as the rehearsal studio, for example. Goldman writes: "Resistant to a visual reduction of the body, while still committed to being seen, Hay's performance practice is indeed filled with political implications" ("*O, O*" 160). Focussing on considerations of visibility, aurality and objecthood, and the inherent power dynamics involved in being the subject – as Hay asks – rather than the object of another's gaze (Goldman, "*O, O*" 165), Goldman's essay raises ethical questions about Hay's work from both the perspective of an audience member and from the perspective of a participant, and about the relationality between them.

In light of the 2012 controversy about Hay's *Blues* work at New York's MoMA in 2012, these points certainly resonate. The 2012 presentation of *Blues* involved two distinct groups of dancers – the blue whites and the blue blacks – that were defined based on gender and skin colour, segregated in performance, and each given a distinct practice – essentially blue whites: calm unified presence and blue blacks: energetic individualized mobility (Wasik).³⁷ For some,

audiences and performers, these dynamics established a distinctly racist hierarchy in performance, which – by performer in the work Kathy Wasik’s account at least – was dismissed by Hay as being entirely absent in the work (Wasik). *Blues* has been critiqued for being naively racist on the one hand (Gonzalez) and, on the other, Hay has been described as being a provocateur) for enacting critique of this kind of hierarchy through dance in such a high profile institution (Ask Homeland Security).

Blues is not the subject of this research; however, because the ethical dimension of Hay’s work is of interest to me with respect to Hay’s articulated concern with relationality, this incident is important to acknowledge. Over time, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, many writers and observers of Hay’s work have commented on its unique effect on the performer-audience relation, in part through the distinct quality of presence and attention that her work engenders in performers, and in part in the way that it disrupts sense-making processes and tendencies. As I have indicated above, Dolan has suggested that Hay’s dances work on and shift the performer/audience relation in a way that at least partially challenges the lived status quo, and Nicely too – through her engagement with Hay’s work in relation to Zen Buddhist thought – suggests that there is a compassionate aspect to Hay’s practice in its relational openness and aim to not fix onto anything (Nicely 154). Similarly to her dismissive response to Satin’s questions of explicit feminist intent in her work noted above, Hay stands aside from the ethical/moral debate in her discussion with Goldman, saying: “I’m going to be honest. I’m doing this for the most selfish reasons on earth. I’m not going in with any kind of morality” (qtd. in Goldman, “O, O” 162). That an artist could create work with political implications and yet not be reflectively aware of those implications is possible; however, that a work itself carries such implications

cannot necessarily be denied by the artist. We are all working and responding from and with partial – and differing – perspectives. Further, that an artist as committed and reflective as Hay should simply not be aware of these implications seems implausible. That she should choose to sidestep or refuse to comment on such questions with respect to her work seems entirely probable – fundamentally Hay’s practice operates through paradox, challenging the very possibility of fixed perspective. Moreover, if Hay’s work has a politic, it is enacted in her performance, not articulated in her discourse. Through my study of Hay’s solo choreography and my experience therein, I aim to address how her work functions, and as such how this contributes to its unique relationality. I will return to the topic of relationality in Hay’s work and the ethical implications thereof in chapter 6.

Hay’s Self-Mythologizing

Hay’s side-stepping around political and ethical questions about her work, seem all the more strategic when considered in light of her commitment to writing, which seeks to document and transmit her practice and work. In his 2002 review of Hay’s *My Body, the Buddhist*, André Lepecki describes the book as a travelogue of sorts, and situates it in a genealogy of texts written by dancers/choreographers from Thoinot Arbeau through Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Rudolf Laban, Merce Cunningham and Bill T. Jones, among others. Lepecki suggests that Western theatrical dance is tied inextricably to writing:

What can be provisionally argued is that writings by choreographers provide us with a different form of choreography’s substance: that of always reflecting and refracting forces that shape behavioral and ideological structures of subjectivation and subjection.

More radically, one could propose that Western theatrical dance only discovers its conditions of possibility once it claims writing as privileged partner, once it pairs writing with Western dance's other two foundational 'substances': the body (as estranged matter of continuous re-articulation and refinement), and movement (as autonomous aesthetic category and ontological imperative). ("My Body" 165)

This proposal aptly describes what Hay has indicated in her own words to Ann Daly about the role of writing in her choreographic practice and how it expands her understanding and experience of her practice and her choreography: "I learned about other dimensions of the dance that I did not know were there until I wrote them down" (qtd. in Daly, "Horse Rider" 52). If for Hay, choreography's substance is an exploration of perception of self and other, and of relationality, then her writing differently explores and articulates these concerns. Certainly, the ideas and experiences noted in *My Body, the Buddhist* circulate and re-circulate through Hay's body in movement practice, and through others' bodies in Hay's movement practice.

With respect to Hay's commitment to writing and publishing, her exemplary skill in articulating her process and experiences provides interesting perspectives and insights into her work. In parallel to her choreographic and performance work, the books and articles she has published also accumulate in a self-generated archive that documents her artistic career. Powerful as linguistic articulations of an ephemeral and experiential practice, and participating as they do in the economy of texts, they strongly support her reputation and stature as an artist. Would she be as known, acknowledged and revered if she had not produced these texts in complement to her performance and teaching work? As Elizabeth Aldrich, Library of Congress Curator of Dance, asked in an address to the assembled members of the Dance Critics

Association at their 2007 New York conference: “When is it appropriate to question the public record?” (Andrews). In this questing for “truth”, Aldrich was referring to the contemporary commodification of reputation and the power appropriated by artists, through self-generated writing and publishing, to shape their own mythologies, as opposed to becoming the subjects of histories written about them. The power of the written word has not been overlooked by choreographers and movement artists. One need only cast an eye back in time, as Lepecki has done above, to identify Isadora Duncan for example, one of modern dance’s pioneers, as an articulate individual for whom the written and published text served immensely in disseminating her views and solidifying her reputation. Hay’s writing can be seen in this light, and indeed likely functions in this way to some degree. Self-serving as it might seem, historically speaking it must be noted that, generally, women have less frequently been taken up as the subjects of written histories and therefore, in order to become part of the public record, they have arguably had to take the initiative and generate their own documentation.³⁸ What might be called self-mythologizing from one side of the mouth could equally be called self-preservation from the other.

Hay and Community Practice

Though primarily taken up in dance and performance studies contexts, Hay’s work has also been addressed in relation to community arts practice and movement/body therapy. Chapter 13 from Hay’s book *My Body, The Buddhist* appears in Petra Kupperts and Gwen Robertson’s anthology *The Community Performance Reader*, although in Hay’s contributor biography therein it is made clear that Hay “does not work in community performance contexts, but her ways of thinking

about movement have influenced practitioners in many countries” (Kuppers and Robertson xiii). Despite this statement, insofar as her work has long involved untrained participants from the interested general public, she can easily be considered an early proponent of community arts practice as it has come to be conceived today. Hay has been advocating through her inherently relational workshop practices and solo and group performances since the late 1960s – when she first began working with untrained participants – for an increased awareness and understanding of the body and movement practice. Arguably, Hay’s work has always existed at the intersection between art and community, and a more comprehensive consideration of her work in this light would likely contribute to the lively discussions at the heart of Shannon Jackson’s book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, in which she gestures: “... one way of characterizing the “performative turn” in art practice is to foreground its fundamental interest in the nature of sociality” (2).

Hay and Therapy/Healing

Just as her work has been connected to the field of community performance, Hay’s practice has also connected her to the field of dance therapy. In 2000, during her tour of *PASTForward* with Mikhail Baryshnikov, Hay was invited to deliver the Marian Chace Foundation Annual Lecture for the American Dance Therapy Association. Her text, which draws on and includes excerpts of her writing from elsewhere (including *My Body, The Buddhist*) is published in the *American Journal of Dance Therapy*. In her opening comments, Hay notes: “I am aware that my work over the last 30 years has had a therapeutic counterpart for many people who have studied with me, including myself, yet the site for my studies has been as a practicing performer and

choreographer and not as a practicing therapist” (“Woof” 8-9).³⁹

The fact that art and creative process have been explicitly developed as therapeutic treatments – such as in dance/movement therapy for example – weaves these practices closely. What distinguishes performance from therapy, in my view, is both the specific relationality involved in each and the intent of the practice. In therapy, the relationship between therapist and client focuses on the client’s personal experience and process, with the therapist as guide and witness. The intent is toward wellness, to heal. In performance, the relationship between creator/performer/s and audience focuses on aesthetic experience. The intent is toward communication – of some kind. Though healing might be an attendant effect of performance for performer or audience, it is not the primary purpose of the effort or encounter, as it is in therapy. Certainly there is more to this discussion than I can address here. What I wish to acknowledge is simply the proximity of Hay’s work to therapeutic practice while making the necessary distinction between therapy and performance, thereby maintaining an understanding of her work explicitly as performance in the context of my specific study.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we come to understand how Hay’s influences have their roots in the rich and radical artistic experience of the 1960s avant-garde and that her work of that time embodied – in fact, according to Kirby epitomized – the aesthetic concerns of the period. Judson Dance Theater dance-makers, including Hay, rejected the values of the dance modernists, of elitism in art, of conventional technique and virtuosity and of dramatic theatricality of the kind well-known in the dance work of Martha Graham and José Limón, for example. Instead they

actively blurred art/life boundaries, artistic disciplinary boundaries, and audience/performer boundaries, embracing pedestrian tasks and activities, as well as sports, as material for dance and including new music, visual art and sculpture, film and other electronic technologies in their works. A tendency toward neutral presentation and a matter-of-fact attitude in performance, along with the equal inclusion of trained dancers and non-trained movers points up the intent to go against artifice and technical virtuosity.⁴⁰ The use of scores and game structures functioned as compositional strategies to subvert acquired and ingrained habits and patterns. Dance writer Deborah Jowitt notes that the Judson artists were “casting dancer as decision-maker, intent on solving a particular problem ... a wily, alert individual, perhaps athletic, perhaps not” (317). Hay’s work has remained anchored by these concerns throughout her career, over the course of which she has brought various aspects to the foreground during distinct phases of artistic exploration.

Hay has continued to embrace aspects of Eastern spiritual practices, specifically from Tai Chi and Zen Buddhism, and these influences have undoubtedly informed the ways in which she understands art and life as contiguous, two sides of the same coin. In “Excerpts from Talks Made during my first, second, and third Solo Dance Performances, 1976-77”, Hay said the following, which has been quoted by others elsewhere: “So the dance is my being here in this space, totally, and preparation for this performance is my entire life and nothing more, or less” (“Dance Talks” 21). If this sounds as though it could be stated by any dance artist – or any performing artist for that matter – I think Hay’s persistent exploration of this statement is how perhaps she is putting the whole of dance in question through her work and that this is what attracts so many people these days. She is indeed getting at something that is true for all performers (or all dancers): there

is knowledge inside this experience but it is hard to pin down. Pinning it down – to the degree that is possible – is what I'm trying to do in attempting to show how Hay's work functions.

For years Hay preferred to work with untrained movers, only returning to work exclusively with professional dancers and performers in the last fifteen or so years. According to dance scholar Danielle Goldman, it was during her time with JDT that Hay, “began to experiment with what would become a lasting fascination: challenging distinctions between trained and untrained dancers” (“O, O” 160). Hay has been at times quite adamant about using pedestrian, prosaic movement in her dances, and has only loosely held onto disciplinary identity as a dancer/choreographer. Hay writes in her 1988 article “Remaining Positionless”: “In *The Man Who Grew Common In Wisdom* (1987), I return to choreography but remove all movement that could not be created by a traffic cop from Duluth. It is deliberately prosaic. The choreography is similarly reduced, stripped of everything unusual” (“Remaining Positionless” 22-23). She has embraced spoken word, extended vocalizations and singing throughout her career, and has worked collaboratively with musicians/composers at times, though the range of disciplines included in her work was arguably greatest in the 1960s when she used film and electronic technologies in, for example, *Group One* and *Solo*, both noted above.

As discussed above, Hay has developed a very specific and rigorous discourse/use of language around her practice and performance that underpins the unique constraints of her choreography and practice – an approach that is rooted in the scores, tasks and games of the Judson-era – to simultaneously inhibit and release both patterned and so-called spontaneous behaviour. So-called because arguably what one thinks of as spontaneous, movement that might arise in an improvised context for example, is not necessarily so and is, rather, always already

shaped by cultural forces. I hope to show how Hay's practice aims to actively unravel, arrest, irritate and rebuke such encultured spontaneity.

An exploration of the dimension of relationality continues to pervade Hay's work. She has continued to prefer intimate performance settings in which she can be in close proximity to her audience-cum-participants. She has also performed in her home, inviting audiences into her living room, laid out with a table of food, candles and cushions on the floor. She has repeatedly created working structures that blur the distinction between audience and participant, bringing a group of people together for a period of regular daily movement practice in the early *Ten Circle Dances*, and in both the large-group workshop format and in the Solo Performance Commissioning Project structure. In chapter 6, I return to a deeper consideration of the dimension of relationality in Hay's practice.

Hay has continued to practice and perform herself and is sought-after as a master teacher. Nicely addresses the way in which Hay's approach to teaching is informed by Eastern practices and is influencing the trajectory of contemporary dance training itself today, noting that Asian pedagogies tend not to rely on image/form-based transmission (146). Nor does Hay, who almost never demonstrates movements themselves. Instead, Hay works from proposals and what ifs, deflecting the decisions and movement manifestations thereof, to the dancer/choreographer. As Nicely phrases it: "Hay similarly moves the questions she has asked her own body to those bodies studying with her, thus transmitting her practice as a kind of writing by which dancers re-write themselves and their dance training. In this way, Hay is also affecting the field of contemporary dance training itself" (Nicely 146), a point also supported by Bojana Bauer in her essay "When Train(ing) Derails" (Bauer).

The literature discussed in this chapter forms a matrix of discourse around Hay's work. Each analysis I have discussed travels a specific vector through Hay's choreography and practice, connecting specific nodes and intersecting with other vectors, providing various oblique perspectives on the work. By considering various themes and critiques in the literature on Hay – i.e. spirituality, feminism, politics, therapy – I have addressed some of the contextual frames through which her work has been and may yet be productively and critically considered. Touching on these discussions acknowledges the many overlapping discourses triggered by Hay's work, while also allowing me to further circumscribe my own perspectives and concerns in this study. My own study travels a new vector through Hay's work, intersecting with other vectors at some previously articulated nodes and yet contributing a differently inflected angle in the accumulating matrix of writing on Hay.

Foster's study establishes Hay as a significant choreographic voice and offers an articulation and analysis of Hay's early explorations of breath, flow and the development of her practice of cellular consciousness. Dolan provides insights into the practice and the performance Hay developed through her large group workshops with untrained performers. His critique, that the political aspect of Hay's work is only partially and ineffectively realized, in fact grounds an understanding of the way in which Hay's work does not represent – or even present – but rather enacts its politics. Dolan was writing in the mid 1990s, before the so-called performative turn in cultural theory, a turn that now facilitates the contemporary understanding of Hay's politics that I arrive at in my conclusion. Satin's feminist analysis of Hay's work foregrounds many of the key characteristics of Hay's practice and performance, reinforcing some identified earlier by Foster that recur through the literature, and that appear in my own study, which is more

phenomenological in approach but takes a feminist turn in conclusion. Drobnick's substantial analysis of Hay's lexicon establishes the base for my own consideration of Hay's distinct use of language in her approach to choreography. In turn, Daly develops Hay's approach to writing and articulates Hay's reflective understanding of its role in the transmission of her choreography, which informed the SPCP structure. In considering Hay's work through her own solo practice and performance, Nicely's study resonates with mine most closely, as she addresses her own experience within the work and thinks it through in relation to various phenomenological texts. Our studies complement each other, and yet diverge in their main objectives: Nicely's primarily to support her thesis about choreography as future writing; mine primarily to develop a poetics of Hay's choreography and practice in itself.

Taken together, the literature on Hay discussed above reveals many of the primary concerns in her work – presence, meaningfulness, habit/spontaneity, relationality, flux/change. Rooted in 1960s avant-garde experimentalism in dance, Hay's work continues to explore these dimensions of lived experience, all of which can be understood to revolve around questions of intention, attention and action. I will use these three dimensions of lived experience to organize my case study analysis of Hay's choreography and practice for the solo *At Once* in the chapters that follow. My research seeks to articulate and understand the unique operation of these processes in Hay's work through a decidedly experiential approach that aims to draw theory from and through practice. In the following chapter, I outline the method by which I proceeded, and the theoretical framework that organizes my findings.

Chapter 3: Method and Theoretical Framework

METHOD: APPROACHES, STRATEGIES, PROCESS

Dancers' words on the body remain virtually unknown, and virtually unheard, for they rarely correspond with the different discourses of which the body is the object. (Loupe, "Singular Moving Geographies" 12)

Because improvisation exists for the improviser as a movement-based somatic state, the challenge to each participant, and therefore the core of significance for this kind of research, resides in the real-time translation of experience into language, and the acknowledgment that such a translation can only approximate what is felt. In other words, what we can know or surmise about improvisational experiences must be based on a kind of echo that survives the constant disappearance of the improvisational "now": the language of the individual reports. (De Spain 28-29)

As a textual practice, however, improvisation is very slippery. It also fits uneasily with certain kinds of academic discourses. I have found it difficult to find the right frame, the right tone with which to theorize about improvisation. Clearly it takes a leap of faith to articulate the nuances of a state of physical and metaphysical flux. It is delicate work, and there is the omnipresent fear of bruising the form of improvisation, pinning it down to static meanings, dissecting it for the sake of epistemological stability. But the alternatives are equally deadly; by keeping improvisational work outside of current intellectual

discussions, we limit its influence. Sure, my experience of improvisation will change as I write about it, but then again, my experience of writing and thinking will also change as I engage with my embodied knowledge from an intellectual perspective. (Albright, *Taken by Surprise* 260-261)

Introduction: Researching Somatic Experience

As the above quotes by theorists of movement and improvisational dance suggest, writing about the experience of dancing is a challenging task and one that doesn't fit easily into discursive frameworks and yet, there is much to be said about such experiences, and knowledge to be gleaned. In this introduction, I outline several perspectives and approaches to embodied research and culminate with a brief summary of my multi-method approach.

In his essay "Embodiment and Cultural Phenomenology", cultural anthropologist Thomas Csordas articulates the need for a paradigm of embodiment in ethnographic research in complement to the more established paradigm of textuality, proposing that we should be able to study culture and self through embodiment just as we study these topics through texts.⁴¹ He draws on phenomenological thought, and specifically Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to establish the construct that while "semiotics gives us textuality to understand representation, phenomenology gives us embodiment in order to understand being-in-the-world" (147). With reference also to Heidegger, Csordas articulates the perspective that language can disclose experience inasmuch as it can represent or even constitute it, supporting his case for the study of culture and self through embodiment, in complement to textuality. In considering research through the paradigm of embodiment, Csordas raises several significant methodological issues. First, he asks whether

such research would necessarily involve a specific method or kind of data, to which he answers no: “There is no special kind of data or special method for eliciting such data, but a methodological attitude that demands attention to bodiliness even in purely verbal data such as written text or oral interview” (148). The second issue involves the question of how the researcher engages the data: “whether it is sufficient to attend to the body or whether one must in addition attend with the body, now understood as a tool for research” (149). In affirmative answer to the second, Csordas quotes historian Morris Berman who, Csordas notes, advocates for an experiential engagement of the historian’s bodiliness in research and writing: “‘History gets written with the mind holding the pen. What would it look like, what would it read like, if it got written with the body holding the pen?’” (Berman qtd. in Csordas 149).⁴²

I find Csordas’ presentation compelling insofar as it thinks through and articulates the possibility for a unique contribution to research through a paradigm of embodiment. However, contrary to Csordas, I would argue that indeed specific skills and training are required – perhaps increasingly so, the more specific and complex the bodily experiential phenomenon under consideration – not only to develop a deeply nuanced attention to bodily movement patterns and a facility in disclosing them through language, but also to cultivate awareness and understanding of one’s own bodily habits and patterns in conducting first-person somatic research. It is far too easy to fall into generalized cultural or aesthetically specific assumptions about body movement and meaning that rest at the level of “body language” (Daly, “Movement Analysis” 44). By “body language” I mean the level at which movements and gestures already “stand for” or represent socio-culturally established meanings. While it is not possible to transcend one’s own experience and therefore somatically generated experiential knowledge is inherently situated,⁴³ a

necessary critical reflexivity is required when studying with and through one's own somatic experience, in order to adequately address the complexity and individual differences therein.

Many dance scholars approach their research from a more general somatic standpoint, drawing on extensive personal dance experience and the ability to reflect on nuances of movement experience, and using poetically descriptive writing to bring movement experiences into contact with a variety of cultural and theoretical discourses. Ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methods are frequently deployed in dance studies, particularly since the field of dance studies developed early on under strong influence from anthropology and has since developed its own ethnographic methods and strategies specific to dance ethnographic projects (Sklar, "Reprise"; Davida). Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) has been used as a method and tool for movement observation and description in a variety of dance studies and in other fields including psychology and communications. (Brennan; Daly, "Movement Analysis"). Daly writes that: "One of the fundamental strengths of LMA is its ability to deal with the processual aspects of performance" ("Movement Analysis" 45).

Descriptive and more specific phenomenologically descriptive methods have also been deployed and critically re-examined in the study of dance because of the obvious need to articulate movement experience in research studies. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's 1966 *The Phenomenology of Dance* (recently re-issued in 2015) and Sondra Horton Fraleigh's 1987 *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics* represent early and committed phenomenological approaches to dance art. Over her prolific career, dance scholar Ann Cooper Albright has often deployed first-person somatic approaches to research that value movement knowledge, "posit[ing her] dancing body as a research tool or guide" (Albright, *Engaging Bodies* 182). In

various projects, she has sought to build theory from this knowledge through descriptive, phenomenological and critical-theoretical writing. She models this work, and in fact she implicitly answers Berman's question quoted above in, for example, her rewriting the history of Loie Fuller's dancing through a first-person somatic research approach that generates new and important insights about Fuller's early twentieth-century performance practice (Albright, "Matters of Tact"). Albright's work is specific and rigorous, and she succeeds at foregrounding somatic experience and knowledge in her writing. In this study, I aim to foreground somatic experience and movement knowledge, using specific description to build theory that maintains intimate ties to the movement knowledge from which it arises.

My aim aligns generally with Fraleigh's phenomenological approach: "Phenomenology depends on immediate experience, but includes more. It hopes to arrive at meaning, perspectives on the phenomena of experience (dance in this case) which can be communicated" (Fraleigh, "A Vulnerable Glance" 135). More specifically, I follow Albright, who, in reflecting in 2011 on her research and writing for her 1997 book *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, writes: "I wanted to give the experience of dancing its own intellectual credibility" (*Engaging Bodies* 10). I hope to avoid an overly personal auto-ethnographic narrative, while allowing my first-person somatic experience to enable me to illuminate and inflect Hay's choreography and practice through certain theoretical discourses. My goal is to develop a descriptive understanding of the somatic experiences in Hay's choreography and practice and to discern the somatic function, or experiential poetics, of Hay's choreography and practice in a manner that could be corroborated by others who engage in her work.

Situated within the broadly defined field of practice-as-research, I have derived a multi-

method approach to my research that begins with embodiment and draws on various tools and strategies to address these objectives. This approach plays across multiple fields, grounded first in dance practice and then most specifically in my somatic training in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), and embracing auto-ethnographic and phenomenological strategies. Beginning with practice and performance, and writing alongside through close somatic awareness, I employ an iterative writing strategy to develop first-order auto-ethnographic journaling and phenomenological descriptions of experience from which I then extrapolate second-order phenomenological descriptions of significant experiences in a “double-distillation” process that provides material for my analysis. I aimed to write as close to the dancing experience as possible, both in time and in sensory-perceptual awareness.

In this close-writing practice, the dancing experience is still “with me” as I write, enlivening my flesh and bubbling just beneath (and through) my skin. It stays with me a while after I stop moving, like the light and free bounce that remains in my step after the giggle from a moment of humour has passed; or like the fizz and crackle that courses through my body from a surge of adrenalin following a near miss with a car while riding my bike; or the expansive tingle that spreads through my flesh in the aftermath of a warm embrace. Such moments erupt from or through the generally smooth flow of quotidian experience in which somatic experience may only register as a consistent hum. In such ruptures, one’s somatic being is jolted to attention and registers awareness of our implicit and proximal bodily relation with the world for a time. As phenomenologist Drew Leder has remarked, our bodies draw our attention through hunger or pain for example (40). However, through dance and somatic practice, for example, one can develop the skill of noticing and thereby register finer details of change in bodily experience as it

passes. My aim was to trace – longhand – such somatic residues and echoes of my dancing experience in Hay’s work in its fluid multidimensionality and texture, and to then extrapolate from first-order to second-order descriptions so that we can come to know this dancing experience in some appreciable manner and thus consider it analytically in the context of discourse.

The Winter 2011 theme issue of *Dance Research Journal* offers several critical re-appraisals of phenomenological approaches to dance (Franko, “Editor’s Note”; Ness; Pakes).⁴⁴ Sally Ann Ness’s article, in particular, examines the implications for dance studies of following (or having followed) the Foucauldian turn away from phenomenology based on Foucault’s critique of phenomenology’s finite subject. Navigating a fine balance between the contributions of both phenomenological embodied and Foucauldian discursive approaches to the critical analysis of dance, Ness acknowledges that dance studies might do well not to throw the baby out with the bath water so to speak. Dance specialists might indeed reject the finite phenomenological subject that Foucault rejected while yet recuperating the phenomenologically oriented approach to researching embodied, subjective experience. Ness suggests “an entirely different kind of analytics might have to be conceptualized – one that entertained the possibility of ahistorical, originary analytical movements – an emergent analytics specific to a signifiatory realm brought into being in the performance of dance itself” (27).

As a series of nested, palimpsestic texts, the descriptive extrapolations I’ve developed retain linkages through keywords and phrases to their first-order descriptions, which, through cursive bodily writing, retain linkages to the somatic experiences “enlivening my flesh” as I have just discussed. Using these nested texts, my choreographic analysis emerges from the embodied

experience of the dance and responds to Ness' provocative prompt for an emergent analytics. And, how else to research lived movement experience? Certainly, as Albright points out in one of the quotes that open this chapter above, the experience might change in the process of writing about it and my descriptions are definitely first-person renderings. This may be inevitable in any such attempt. However, the alternatives are deadly indeed, as Albright points out. Without such attempts, these dance-specific phenomena would, for all intents and purposes, be dead to discourse. Through my work I hope to enliven these phenomena in my text, and at the same time contribute to enlivening the discourse around Hay's choreography and practice.

It is in light of these challenges and objectives that I employ a multi-method approach to my research on Hay, drawing on strategies and techniques of auto-ethnography and phenomenology, along with Laban Movement Analysis, which provides me with a distinctly movement- and somatically-oriented method and expertise. Before I continue, I remind the reader once again of the chronology of my research phases in which I engaged first through practice and descriptive writing, and only then to analysis in context of various literatures. Below I articulate my approach in detail and address the strategies I used in my research, in order to establish a clear foundation for, and acknowledge the limitations of, my analysis and discussion to come.

Laban Movement Analysis as Method

Because it largely underpins my somatic experiential approach to this research, I will now provide a brief overview of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) for those unfamiliar with it, and then articulate the specific way in which I deploy it in this study.⁴⁵ (For a more fulsome

discussion of Laban Movement Analysis see Bartenieff, Bradley, Brennan, Daly, Hackney, Maletic, and Newlove and Dalby). Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) can be understood as both an analytic framework for the observation and description of movement and as a method or process – a “way” – to orient toward and notice the somatic and processual dimensions of movement experience. As an embodied research method, LMA offers a relatively reliable structure and language for the description and analysis of movement⁴⁶ that is applied by Certified Movement Analysts (CMAs) across many different fields including cultural performance (dance, theatre, music, etc.), anthropology, physical therapy, psychology, corporate leadership and management (both coaching and assessment), communication (LMA has been used in mediation and conflict resolution, for example), and in animation and the development of motion capture and artificial intelligence technologies (Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies).

While LMA is applied across a broad spectrum of movement contexts as noted above, it has been subjected to the scrutiny of cultural critique.⁴⁷ The LMA framework or system itself certainly bears traces of its genealogy and the historical context of its founder/creator, having been developed over the first half of the twentieth century by Bratislavan-born Rudolf Laban, a dancer/choreographer and movement theorist working with other progressive artists of the time in Germany, Austria and Switzerland – particularly in the Ascona artists colony – in the early to mid-twentieth century. It has also to this day absorbed influences and biases of its proponents and their primarily Euro-centric socio-culturally informed thinking. It has been shaped and is continually being (re-)shaped by historical and socio-cultural forces. In using LMA in my study, I acknowledge its inherent biases and limitations, while embracing its efficacy for my work. The strengths of LMA as a method, for my study, are in its emphases on a) open somatic awareness

to subtle changes in personal movement experience, b) processes and practices for bringing movement experience into language, and c) self-reflexivity and critical awareness of personal and disciplinary movement patterns and habits in the process of observation and analysis.

As a framework, LMA provides a symbolic code for shared communication and functions as a specialized language of movement, not entirely dissimilar from the linguistic codes of other movement practices like ballet or tai chi, for example. The difference is that LMA aims to describe movement and movement experience at a more phenomenal, rather than aesthetic or discipline-specific level. Its purpose is not necessarily to describe, teach or share a *specific* way of moving but to analyze and describe any human movement in itself – with respect to use of the body, space, dynamic quality, shaping and relationship. Laban and his proponents developed a specific vocabulary and symbol system to describe and notate the modes, dimensions and characteristics of change in movement. As a “way”, LMA provides an intersubjective approach to movement study through nuanced somatic awareness and a process of embodied “listening” – a kind of open, kinaesthetic “tuning in/attuning” to bodily dynamics. This embodied experience is then articulated first in whatever language lends itself usefully to the task, and ultimately through LMA’s specific framework and vocabulary. Through experiential learning involving extensive movement exploration the researcher/analyst attends to the subtle shifts and flows of the body, learning to recognize personal movement preferences and to discern distinguishing aspects of physical practices generally, in order to develop self-reflexivity and critical perspective in the process of movement observation through somatic awareness.

LMA involves perceiving “felt” or experienced movement, in oneself and in others, through kinaesthetic attunement.⁴⁸ I would liken the subtlety and keenness of LMA’s approach to

somatic awareness – both of self and other – to that of a scuba diver freely floating along the edge of a coral reef and openly attending to and then describing as much of the movement therein as possible, from the minutest shifts of the tiniest and most unfamiliar aspects and entities to the nudibranchs and floating fingers of sea anemones to the wavering coral stalks, sunlit particles and passing bubbles in the almost-imperceptible tidal pull of the ocean in its micro-immensity. This process can also be likened to the work of a sommelier or perfumer in attending to and learning to distinguish subtle shifts and nuances in taste or scent and being able to describe these distinctions in language. LMA develops the skills involved in first being able to distinguish sensory-perceptive subtlety and then in being able to bring this detail into language in order to identify and communicate it to others. As I have noted earlier, in the hum of daily life more intense somatic experiences erupt through our bodies and ignite our somatic awareness, drawing us into our bodies and away from a more quotidian “semi-somatic” state in which we are thinking about and interpreting the world and others. By contrast, this deeper bodily focus is the state of somatic awareness in which I conduct my research; however, the experiences I am processing occur at a much more micro level and don’t necessarily “erupt” but more aptly “hide” beneath or inside the more macro-level experiences. The process of articulating this experience requires sustained and detailed attention to somatic experience; access to a range of linguistic tools and vocabulary; and an awareness of the different registers at which descriptive writing may occur in order to open to, and hone in on, the experience itself.

Here, I wish to emphasize the distinction between the process of noticing and the process of reflection and articulation. In the process of noticing, the intent is toward movement experience generally, to maintain as wide a field of somatic awareness and as little expectation or

preconceived notion of what might develop as possible. Despite having access to and facility with LMA's framework and language, I am not "looking for" or "applying" LMA's pre-defined movement features or aspects while in experiential process. Rather, I aim to notice and register, to the degree possible, the dynamic, blurry and complex tones of somatic states and shifts in my movement and then to develop apt descriptive language for these experiences as soon afterwards as possible. Although one could then ultimately translate this material into the LMA framework and vocabulary, I do not undertake such a specific translation here. In my research here, the LMA framework and language must necessarily be set aside, first, in order to engage somatic awareness sensitively to the nuance of experiential change and second, in order to communicate my analysis within a broader field of study. Using the LMA-specific vocabulary immediately thematizes the experience through a pre-established framework and would constrain the process of noticing that I am aiming for in my research, while restricting access to my analysis to those familiar with the LMA framework.

Certainly, somatic awareness is cultivated to varying degrees in most physical practice; however, that awareness is often intentionally shaped by and specific to the aesthetic values, goals, objectives, techniques and language of the given practice. Because the aim of LMA is to describe any and all movement, there is a greater degree of openness in its approach to somatic awareness. LMA as I deploy it in this study – as a "way" – is closely aligned with a phenomenological approach to descriptions of lived experience.⁴⁹

In summary then, I use LMA as a way – rather than as an analytic framework – to attend to and perceive the subtle flow and flux of my dancing experience in Hay's work. My LMA training provides me with strategies that support the process of noticing and generating language

to describe the nuances of movement experience. To reiterate, while LMA has an established framework and vocabulary for movement description and analysis, my descriptions do not rely on this vocabulary per se. Rather, I strive to describe my somatic experience as immediately and precisely as possible, rather than articulating it according to the pre-defined LMA framework. With my descriptions, I aim for evocation of experience, not analysis. As noted, inserting the LMA vocabulary into the middle of this process would inherently thematize the experience and create a further reflective distance between the experience and the descriptions, a distance that I aim to minimize. My subsequent analysis of these descriptions proceeds likewise not through LMA but through a keyword coding and second-order description process that arises from the first-order descriptions and that I will discuss further below.

Auto-Ethnographic and Phenomenological Strategies

In identifying auto-ethnographic strategies in my research, I acknowledge that movement and body-based or somatic research cannot be separated from considerations of subjectivity and self. My work is auto-ethnographic insofar as it is a kind of writing of the self, in which I strive to make sense of my experience through self-observation and reflection, while also making sense of the artistic practice itself and drawing further connections between my experience of the practice and broader social and cultural concerns. As my research begins in personal practice and works through the act of writing and reflection on my experience, I make explicit here the point that my work is inherently perspectival and situated. I accept that this research and discursive text is in part performative of self – myself. As performance scholar John Freeman notes:

The body and the self are also centre stage in research. If ethnography, broken into its

two constituent elements, is *ethno*: people and *graphy*: writing (hence *autograph*) . . . a trying to make sense of cultural groupings, then autoethnography is a trying to make sense of our activity of trying to make sense. It is an innately heuristic and performative activity, wherein one's learning to learn becomes as important as one's understanding of subject. The subject of the research may in fact be the subject of self; or, with more than a(nother) nod to Goffman, the self-as-subject. (15)

My research aligns with autoethnography's embrace of the inherently subjective nature of research, particularly in the realms of artistic practice and performance. As Freeman argues, autoethnography offers a productive and generative method to study new practices:

In its implicit acknowledgement that all observation is participant observation – because all observation is participatory and involving – and through its increased commitment to the use of the first-person pronoun in ways that locate the researcher/performer as the subject/object of the work, autoethnography has emerged as one of the very few postmodern conceits with something genuine to say about the ways in which art and research are moving forward into practices that are new and germane. (8-9)

Where my work differs from auto-ethnography is in the fact that in my overall study, I do not develop a narrative thread, nor an autobiographical account per se, save at the meta level in presenting the process I undertook in conducting this research. While I use writing to make sense of experience and I consider my daily journal entries to be in one way “micro-narratives” of my daily movement practice, functioning to tell me about my experience after the fact in the way that field notes function for an ethnographer, I am not generating a story or account of my experience working with Hay per se. Rather I am studying the somatic processes at play in Hay's

choreography and practice through my embodied experience thereof. Distinct from narrative then, my work is phenomenological insofar as I develop close descriptions of the phenomena of this somatic experience in order to understand how Hay's choreography and practice function and thereby to develop a poetics of Hay's work.

In writing about autoethnography, Freeman notes "...the intrinsically subjective nature of observation, analysis and recall, allowing for the fact that stories are never merely told by the teller. Rather, they are invented and created, fashioned and made..." (17). This awareness also resonates with the phenomenological observations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty with respect to our limited and perspectival access to lived experience and the implications of this for our resulting attempts at description. In his discussion of horizon, (which I will address in the theory section below), Merleau-Ponty reminds us that even though the horizon comprises the full spectrum of perspectives, they are not all concretized in our present situation. As such, he writes: "I have still only a harmonious and indefinite set of views of the object, but not the object in its plenitude. In the same way, although my present draws into itself time past and time to come, it possesses them only in intention, and even if, for example, the consciousness of my past which I now have seems to me to cover exactly the past as it was, the past which I claim to recapture is not the real past, but my past as I now see it, perhaps after altering it" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 80). This horizontal synthesis "is no more than a presumptive synthesis, operating with certainty and precision only in the immediate vicinity of the object" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 80).

Two methodological points arise, therefore, that are important for my study. First, our familiarity with or understanding of an object is only ever partial and perspectival; and, second,

once removed from the object, the accuracy of our familiarity and understanding necessarily morphs and erodes. We can perhaps understand this as the inherent shaping of lived experience that occurs in time if we accept that we are always fluidly situated and that in any given present, the perspectives encompassed in our horizontal synthesis are shifted/shifting. These points are important for my study methodologically, because I am striving to articulate the lived experience of a particular dance practice during the very experience of which it is not possible to develop descriptions.⁵⁰

It is helpful here to consider Samuel Mallin's articulation of the issue in his study of Merleau-Ponty's thought:

The only way that I can 'know' a situation and have it fully available to myself is by actually being in it when it occurs. It is possible to describe it with the aid of memory and imagination, but only by putting myself back into the situation as it concretely existed. Such a description must always remain vague and indefinite (even more so than its description at the time of its actual occurrence). One finds the more cognitive or thematic one makes it, the more its 'mood,' 'feel,' or 'atmosphere' disappears. (14)

Mallin's point emphasizes that the closest description of experience is the one that is developed at the time of its actual occurrence and that is not overly thematized.⁵¹ However, if that is not possible, then Mallin's comment suggests that descriptions – albeit more vague and indeterminate – can be developed by returning to the situation through memory and imagination, with an effort made to minimize thematization. Considering this possibility for describing lived situations helps me to clarify how my process is both autoethnographic and phenomenological. I will return to a discussion of descriptive writing, specifically, at the end of this section.

In this study, I was not able to develop descriptions while in the actual situation of the dancing practice. Nonetheless, my effort is toward developing close descriptions of my lived experience in Hay's practice – and I do so, after the fact, with the aid of memory and imagination. My journal entries can be seen as micro-narratives in some way, telling the story of my experience in its immediate aftermath. Since the thematization of experience is inherent to the process of narrating the experience, as in autoethnography, these journal-entry–micro-narratives, align with autoethnography; however, as they include close descriptions of lived experience they also align with phenomenology. My second-order descriptions, developed through extrapolation from the journal entries through keyword coding, are likewise aligned with both autoethnographic and phenomenological approaches. They are developed through a keyword coding process after both the actual experience and first-order journaling; therefore, per Mallin, they are subject to potential thematization and, as such, they could tend toward autoethnographic narrativization. However, because these second-order descriptions rely on cues and clues from my first-order journal entries, which serve to resituate me in proximity to the experience and reawaken body memory, these second-order extrapolated descriptions function as phenomenological descriptions of experience that come as close as possible, given the circumstances of the situation under consideration: personal lived dancing experience.

My Process

Having discussed some of the grounding for my multi-method approach to this study, I will now articulate the research process itself and the way in which I deployed these methods.

As I articulated in my Introduction, I participated in a ten-day dance residency in Findhorn, Scotland, during which time, along with twenty other movers, I commissioned and learned Deborah Hay's choreographic score for the solo *At Once* along with her approach to practicing performing. In my overall inquiry, I strove to approach the research phenomenologically, that is with as little discursive "noise" as possible around the practice and Hay's specific approach. In discussing my method here, I reiterate that I did not engage with the literature by and about Hay, nor significant relevant movement theory until after I completed my daily experiential and writing practice, and my initial transcription process. Below, I explain my approach to this research in more detail, in order to establish the basis for and limits of the claims I will make.

Following the residency process in Scotland,⁵² I returned to my home in Toronto, Canada, and, after a weekend of rest, I commenced the minimum three-month period of daily practice (five days per week) required by the contract I signed with Hay. This period culminated in two performances of the solo in December 2009 to an audience of approximately 20 each evening. Each performance was followed by a post-show discussion with the audience.⁵³

My daily practice occurred in the early morning, for the first month outside in a field near my home and subsequently in a large dance studio. I practiced the solo five days each week, though my two off days were not consistently the same. On a handful of occasions, I practiced in very odd spaces, including a hotel room and a horseback-riding ring; and on one occasion I practiced via visualization rather than physical movement. My physical practice sessions tended to last between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on the location and whether or not I engaged in a warm-up prior to running the score. By running the score I mean a fully engaged, embodied practice of the performance. Running the score itself ranged from 20 to 40 minutes on average.

Per Hay's counsel, given during the workshop process in Scotland, I always practiced the score from beginning to end without interruption and never worked on any section of it outside a complete run of the work. Save for the first month when I practiced outside, I would usually conduct a preparatory warm-up, integrating a period of breathing and centering, vocal sounding and limbering movement to ready myself for my practice of the score. Sometimes, after warming up and before running the score, I would engage in a free movement practice focussing simply on Hay's various tools and questions (like we sometimes did during the Scotland residency) as a way of further orienting and tuning myself to the work. Normally, I would run the score once per session.

Immediately following my physical practice, I would either return home from the field or retreat to the lobby of the studio building and engage in a (hand-written) journalling process. This writing is a tracing back over the bodily residues and echoes of my movement experience in practicing performing the dance. I use the word tracing because indeed I went back over the experience through a sheet of paper. Through this paper, my experience was slightly obscured – I have addressed above the inherent effect of the translation process – and yet as I wrote longhand, I can almost say that some of my embodied experiences flowed through my pen onto the page. I wrote on 63 of my total 71 practice days. I practiced for approximately 10 extra days over the required 3 months in order to continue regular practice through to my formal performances, after which I also wrote, generating a total of 65 journal entries. The duration of my writing sessions matched that of my studio sessions, usually lasting from 30 to 90 minutes. The entries range in length from a few lines to over 2000 words on several occasions, with an average length of about 1200 words.

My daily journal entries function like auto-ethnographic field notes. At one level, as I have discussed, they are “micro-narratives” of my daily practice sessions, a chronological telling of my lived experience. At another level, they include deeper phenomenological descriptions of the nuances of my somatic experiences within the practice in its immediate aftermath. Drawing on ethnographic practices, I strove to describe and record as much detail as possible about my daily, embodied experiences in practicing performing the choreography. I generally wrote myself through the choreography in parallel with my just-past physical embodiment of it. As I wrote, I could still sense and perceive the somatic residues and echoes of the embodied movement experience in my relatively stationary body. I strove to write this experience, aiming to bring to language my multidimensional, multilayered experience navigating the choreography anew each day. My writing zooms deeply into experience at times as I encounter and relive a particularly resonant experience and work to unfold its detail and nuance in language. At other times, my writing inevitably veers off the score as I attempt to capture the tangent lines of thought that would often arise. Despite veering off the score in such moments, I maintained a discipline of returning to the score to finish out my parallel writing process on most occasions in order to maintain consistency in my approach to the daily writing process over the course of the research period.

During the three-month period of practice I never returned to read my notes from previous days. In doing so, my aim was to limit a reflective/analytical engagement with the work as much as possible. This effort also enabled me to maintain fidelity to Hay’s work insofar as it seeks to subvert the conventional approach to dance practice that focusses on rehearsal and refinement through repetition. Limiting reflective/analytical engagement, to the degree possible,

also helped to stave off my performer's instinct to evaluate my practice sessions, and the attendant desire to strive for repetition of a previous experience internally judged to be "good" in some way. Purposefully leaving aside my previous days' writing helped me to sustain my focus on the daily lived experience, and supported my phenomenological attempt to bracket reflective and analytical processes that could over-determine the experience.

Subsequent to my primary experiential research, I transcribed all my journal entries from their first-order original longhand to computer. This provided me with the opportunity for an initial reflection on this material. In the process, I began to note descriptions of recurring experiences of the score, questions and tools of the practice and of my self, other, space and time, along with various other somatic phenomena arising in my experiential practice. During the transcription process, I developed a list of keywords and phrases from these recurring descriptions that effectively identified or captured particular experiences. I then searched for occurrences of these keywords and phrases, determined those with highest frequency throughout the material, and distilled the most substantive and relevant ones into a short list.⁵⁴ Using this distillation, I developed extrapolated descriptions of these key somatic experiences. In developing the extrapolations, I wrote in reference to a collection of the most resonant first-order descriptions of the given experience, which I gathered through keyword searching and reread at length. As I have noted, at this point the auto-ethnographic, "micro-narrative" aspect of the journal entries served as a recall mechanism – providing date, location and other cognitive, affective and sensory-perceptive cues for the lived experience under consideration – while the evocative, poetic flow of these most immediate first-order long-hand descriptions aroused somatic – or what is sometimes called "body" – memory, rekindling, to the degree possible, the

sensory-perceptive state of the original experience. Rereading in close sequence a series of first-order descriptions of a recurring experience prepared me for the writing of second-order extrapolated descriptions. In a process that I consider a kind of qualitative “double distillation”,⁵⁵ the second-order extrapolated descriptions provide concentrated and clarified articulations of the key somatic experiences in the work. It is from these double-distilled descriptions that I then undertook my reflective analysis of the choreography and practice.

My process here can be effectively considered in relation to two different methods employed by dance practitioner/researchers concerned with articulating somatic experience. In an attempt to get as close as possible to the lived experience, my first-order descriptive process compares with Kent De Spain’s strategy for reporting on improvisational practice. My second-order extrapolations function somewhat like Anne Cazemajou’s approach to participant interviews about movement experience.

Improviser and researcher Kent De Spain undertook experiential research in improvisation with the goal of articulating and analyzing the experiences of movement improvisers. In order to get as close as possible to the lived experience of improvisation, he devised a method of real-time reporting in which several accomplished improvisers, including himself, practiced alone in a studio and were prompted by variably timed pre-recordings to “report now”. In response, they were instructed to simply describe what they were doing and another recording device captured their responses. De Spain then collected these responses and analyzed them for language-use and various common experiences these reports revealed. While De Spain acknowledges the fact that any interference in the experience (i.e. the requirement to “report now” and speak) would necessarily change the lived experience (28), improvisational

practice lends itself to such a strategy in its inherently un-pre-structured format. In improvisation, the recordings become just another variable in the experience. In Hay's work, the score, questions and tools comprise a choreography, the requisite fidelity to which would be compromised with a strategy like De Spain's. My approach to first-order description through journaling immediately after my practice represents my attempt to get as close as possible to the experience without impinging on the experience itself through the requirement to report during the practice.

In the process of moving from insider dancer in a training situation to outsider researcher/analyst of that same training situation, scholar Anne Cazemajou refers to a specific interview technique of accompaniment developed by Pierre Vermersch that she employed in her research. Vermersch has developed a method, psycho-phenomenology, involving first-person reporting on lived experience. Using Vermersch's technique, Cazemajou generated responses about somatic experience from participants in a dance practice in which she also participated. Writes Cazemajou: "This technique focuses on 'explicitation' and allows the subjective bodily experience of the interviewee to be made explicit through its rendering in speech" (23). She further articulates how she worked with her interviewees in generating description of their previously lived experience:

When I was sure that we had found a specific moment and that he or she was reliving it, revealing what Pierre Vermersch calls an "embodied posture of speech" – the main signs being a faraway look, a slowing down of the delivery and the use of the present tense – I started asking questions that brought the student to describe this moment: 'What are you doing now?' 'What are you doing when...?' (24)

Cazemajou explains:

Through this activity of ‘reflectiveness’ (*réfléchissement*), the technique of accompaniment devised by Vermersch helps the interviewer bring the verbalizations back to the action, and from there, back to the very place of the experience. In this activity of making something conscious – as opposed to the ‘reflexive activity’ which is a conceptual activity – the interviewer and the interviewee subordinate their cognitive activity to a silent open posture, which allows what is not yet conscious, and which exists only in a pre-reflexive, ‘ante-predicative’ manner (before it has been expressed in words), to emerge. This technique creates the conditions to help the interviewee reappropriate his or her experience and to enable sense to be made of what really happened. (24)

My double-distilled extrapolations can be understood as a kind of “auto-explicitation” in which my first-order descriptions function as a prompt or accompaniment to assist me in reliving the experience in order to bring it to language in a reflective, versus reflexive, manner.⁵⁶ The difference of course between my work and both De Spain’s and Cazemajou’s is in the fact that both De Spain and Cazemajou were primarily interviewing co-participants in a dance experience (though they both included reflections on their own experiences in their studies as well), whereas I worked auto-ethnographically. While I have already indicated that I conducted interviews with co-participants on my SPCP program, I have not engaged with that material in this study in order to keep my project within scope. Because part of my project was to develop close descriptions of the phenomena of my dancing experience as material for analysis, I focused exclusively on my own extensive set of writings and devised a process of working with them. The 65 journal entries I generated over the course of my three-month practice form the basis of my inquiry wherein,

though I remain the sole source, I am not the subject/object of my research, which in fact strives for an understanding of the poetics of Hay's choreography and practice through these first-hand experience. My series of first-order and second-order writings provides a substantial set of experiential descriptions upon which to develop my analysis.

SCOPE AND BOUNDARIES OF MY INQUIRY

As I have stated earlier, my goal is to articulate an experiential poetics of Hay's solo choreography and practice that can and should ultimately be challenged and/or corroborated by other practitioners of her work. However, that is beyond the scope of this study and must remain for a future project, in which material from the eleven interviews I conducted with other practitioners on the same SPCP program would provide an excellent base. Above, I have articulated the various methods and strategies informing my research, and I have identified some of the significant issues and limits to embodied research of this kind. Below I address some additional considerations and raise two further points with respect to daily practice and descriptive writing.

Though I am working through first-person somatic experience, I do not consider my phenomenological observations to be subjective but to be intersubjective. Experiencing Hay's work is not an entirely private affair but, as a public performance practice, is one in which others – performers and audience members – can and do participate. Through non-specialized descriptive language, my goal is to elucidate and communicate my observations and analysis broadly. My findings participate in an intersubjective field of shared experiences and published material related to Hay's work. In my literature review, I have outlined some connecting threads

and I will draw some further connections between my analysis and that of others who have practiced and written about their distinct experiences in Hay's work, which complement my own study.

While I continue to articulate this project as a case study, I explained earlier how the solo *At Once* is not a discrete creative work but part of a series of works created over 14 years that explores similar choreographic material through scores and linguistic prompts and that significantly engages a specific performance practice that transcends the individual projects. Thus my analysis is not exclusive to this unique solo per se but transcends it and applies to Hay's choreography and practice in any number of possible cases, "situations", or works within the series. This point further supports the intersubjectivity of my research insofar as many other performers have experienced Hay's same approach through different works or "situations".

With respect to my method of emergent choreographic analysis, while it relies to some degree on my expertise as a movement analyst; my professional experience as a writer and movement educator; and my longstanding commitment to and practice of experiential description, the procedures involved are available to others. As is clear from multiple movement education contexts and the plethora of approaches using imagery to facilitate motor learning,⁵⁷ somatic awareness can be learned and developed, and experiential description can also be practiced and refined. In my first- and third-year dance technique classes at York University, I frequently ask students to verbally describe their movement experiences and to write experiential reflections thereof. At the beginning of term, my requests are often met with stunned silence; however, with coaching, prompting and examples, they develop their awareness and capacity to do so. As a result, an intersubjective field of shared experiences develops that allows for more

nuanced communication, and the ability to compare, contrast, deepen and share embodied knowledge. The potential exists to further extrapolate in such situations from non-specialized language into the language of LMA in order to increase precision and inter-reader reliability. In a future project involving the interview materials I have referred to above, this additional procedure could be productively explored.

This study, limited as it is, values embodied knowing and brings the dancing experience to the forefront, providing an example of how both dancers (in this case me) and choreographers (in this case Hay) are indeed “thinking” through movement in practice and performance. My method of emergent choreographic analysis would benefit from further application in different choreographer’s works, which would undoubtedly yield new insights into the potential and limitations of the approach, while also revealing aspects of the choreographic “thinking” of other experimental dance and movement artists.

Two further points arise here to be considered: the first being the repetition of the specific lived experience or situation daily over three months with the aim of minimal to no active or determined analytical reflection; and the second being the approach to descriptive writing during the first order journaling and extrapolated descriptive processes.

On Daily Repetition A-New⁵⁸

As noted earlier, the contract with Hay required a daily practice of the score for a minimum of five days per week over the course of three months prior to the first public performance. What I wish to note regarding the repetition daily over three months is the fact that, while I could not write in the “immediate vicinity” of the object (the dancing experience), and while there was

necessarily a familiarization with the score and practice over time, I strove to approach each daily practice a-new to the extent possible. My strategies for this included efforts not to meditate on or discuss the daily experience following the first-order descriptive writing process each day, not to reread first-order descriptions until their transcription, which was begun well after the entire three-month practice and journaling period concluded, and to rigorously practice accordingly to Hay's direction. She specifically articulated that one should not seek to compare daily practices with past daily practices, nor to strive to repeat certain remembered previous experiences in the work. Both of these reflective activities are common in a typical dance rehearsal context in which one is generally striving to hone, refine and deeply embody one's precise physical and interpretive execution of a work, aiming for a certain level of "repeatability" in performance.

My point here is simply that in my study, by repeating the same practice daily it indeed became familiar, and yet because of the unique practice itself and my specific approach to it, the goal and result of this repetition was decidedly not to perfect a specific technical, interpretive or representative performance; rather, in very brief the goal of the repetition is to practice entering into a dynamic process of not-knowing. In my concluding chapter, I address this question of repetition in more detail. Acknowledging and living – indeed embracing – the paradoxical tension that persists throughout the dance experience itself and my study of it, I submit that this "repetition a-new" provides me with a fair and robust set of first-order descriptions from which I extrapolate phenomenological descriptions of recurring aspects of the dancing experience. I accept that my descriptions are inherently perspectival, that per Merleau-Ponty they are "presumptive syntheses" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 80), and yet this approach provided an

articulation of the personal lived experience of dancing practice that facilitated my subsequent analysis.

On Descriptive Writing

My experience both writing and reading dance descriptions has shown me that there are different registers at which to write about experience and these registers offer different perspectives on and reveal different layers of the experience.⁵⁹ Having become aware of at least three different registers in my own writing, I mean here to make them explicit in order to further specify my approach to descriptive writing in this study and thereby to also clarify how this writing underpins my subsequent analysis. The third register, being furthest from the lived experience, is one of received description, a kind of writing of experience that essentially parrots received ways of articulating an experience, using words, phrases, devices and concepts that have been used before to describe the given experience. In this kind of writing, I would include my using Hay's own or other writers' language to describe her work,⁶⁰ something I strive not to do, unless I am comparing my independent description of her practice to her own in order to make a point. The second register, closer to lived experience, is one of creative description, a kind of writing experience in which language may first develop from a seed of experience, but very quickly begins to play on itself in an imaginative linguistic chain, like in poetry. The first register, and the one I strive for in both my journal descriptions and in my extrapolations, is one in which the writing retains as close as possible a tie to the somatic experience under consideration, returning to its pre-reflective source and echo in the body, rather than relying on the line of the writing itself, or to pre-established discourse.

In my descriptions, therefore, I write with the intent to describe my bodily, lived experience. I do not strive to generate poetic description of the kind that I might in creative or imaginative writing practice. Rather, I aim to articulate what, in dance parlance, is often called “body memory”. By this, I mean aspects of pre-reflective experience – perceptions, affective tones, physicalities – whose imprint, residue or trace remains available to awareness in the manner of a vibration or echo in the body.⁶¹ I find that these trace vibrations and echoes provide a kind of filamentous connection back to the lived experience itself in its immediate aftermath. Attending to these traces and following their filaments in written language with pen in hand maintains a tangible analog connectivity to the body and allows me to travel back inside the lived experience to a degree.

This discussion of my descriptive writing experience connects to the way that Merleau-Ponty considers the relation between the cognitive-linguistic and pre-reflective capacities. According to Mallin’s discussion of Merleau-Ponty on the topic, we understand that the cognitive-linguistic capacity is necessarily “parasitic” (170) on the pre-reflective capacities, meaning that it relies on and is fed by the pre-reflective capacities. Mallin points to a passage in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “the “pure” ideality [the cognitive structure] already streams forth along the articulations of the aesthesiological body [noncognitive structures], along the contours of the sensible things, and, however new it is, it slips through ways it has not traced, transfigures horizons it did not open” (Merleau-Ponty qtd. in Mallin 170, insertions by Mallin). This quote usefully reflects the notion I’ve discussed above of language’s filamentous connections to bodily experience, while also acknowledging the way that the cognitive-linguistic capacity can also “slip” into different registers. Further describing this connectivity between the body and

language in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes of the transfiguration of flesh into language: “It is though the visibility that animates the sensible world were to emigrate, not outside of every body, but into another less heavy, more transparent body, as though it were to change flesh, abandoning the flesh of the body for that of language, and thereby would be emancipated but not freed from every condition” (*Visible and Invisible* 153). Important for my purposes is the notion that visibility emigrates into language but is not entirely freed from certain bodily conditions, that is, language retains connections to bodiliness therein. Here, visibility refers to the node of reversibility between seeing and being seen, a notion that holds for all the senses. Merleau-Ponty also refers to touch and tangibility, for example. As such, we could say “sensibility” here instead of visibility, and effectively expand the reference beyond the visible to include all the senses.

In writing descriptions with the aim to articulate pre-reflective experience, I aim for a kind of “honesty” or “integrity” in which the writing strives to retain the connections noted above. This commitment to integrity in descriptive writing helps me to clarify the difference between the transfiguration of bodily experience into language (which is my aim in this study) and descriptive writing at the second and third registers noted earlier, in which cognitive-linguistic capacities begin to rely and feed on themselves. In the second register, I experience an awareness of my cognitive-linguistic capacity hankering to play on itself, and leading me “astray” into creative imaginative writing. As Mallin notes, cognition can “[perform] the same operations on the structures of every other region and ... even on its own (171n2). In this case, the text itself seems to take the lead; language and the ideas themselves become the subject of my writing, thereby directing the development of subsequent lines. This is the process of thematizing that I

have discussed earlier. When I notice this starting to occur, I prompt myself to reset or re-orient to my bodily experience and the somatic, lived phenomena under consideration because this experience is my primary concern in this study. Because I am aware of the multiple registers at which my writing can develop, I can guide my process to focus as closely as possible on the somatic experience. As discussed above, my LMA training helps me with this.

A key point must be made here, however, with respect to the writing process and poetic language specifically. While I make every effort to pursue “honest” description, my writing necessarily relies on existing vocabularies, devices and languages that are accessible to me. This reliance is distinct from my experience of second register writing described above in which language plays on itself. In the latter, there is a separation and shift away from the somatic experience to the writing itself whereas in the former, attention to bodily experience is sustained and I draw on whatever language sources, tools and modes available to me and relevant to the experience in order to articulate it, including useful language from other situations and realms of experience, referential experience, metaphor, etc., to illuminate and articulate the experience. Thus poetic language emerges while always maintaining the commitment to remain as close as possible to the nucleus of the pre-reflective experience through the filamentous connections of bodily residues.⁶² The descriptive writing that I strive to develop in this study, at the first register of writing I’ve discussed above, functions in a way like Merleau-Ponty’s characterization of spoken word: “The spoken word is a genuine gesture, and it contains its meaning in the same way as the gesture contains it. This is what makes communication possible” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 213).

We can understand the difference between first register and third register writing also

through Merleau-Ponty's distinction between "authentic speech" and "inauthentic speech". Inauthentic speech, as discussed by Mallin, uses already acquired linguistic structures to express meanings that are already known and sedimented" (184). Authentic speech, on the other hand, "uses given meanings to capture an intention that transcends them, while at the same time it "fixes' these sedimented structures and 'recasts them all' by using them in a new context" (Mallin and Merleau-Ponty qtd. in Mallin 185). I aim for something close to "authentic speech"⁶³ in my descriptions of my experience in Hay's work, seeking to take hold of this somatic experience through language while also bending language to this effort. At times, I find I must inflect, "recast" or combine terms and vocabulary in order to articulate the distinct somatic experiences that Hay's choreography and practice generate. These very specific – but non-specialized – descriptions form the basis of my analysis of the poetics of her work.

CONCLUSION TO METHOD

It will be helpful here to recall my positioning of this dissertation as an adaptation insofar as each subsequent rendering of the choreography – from my daily practice to daily journal entries to transcriptions to extrapolations – belongs to a series of adaptations of Hay's work. What we read here is necessarily a creative interpretation⁶⁴ no matter how faithful I have tried to be to the lived experience. This inevitability is explicitly embraced by Hay in setting up the individual solo commissions as adaptations in the first place. Further, as noted earlier, Hay engages in an iterative practice of moving and writing such that each informs the other in an ongoing generative process. My work here, in some ways then, parallels hers. In striving for fidelity to the experience while accepting the inevitability of adaptation, in striving for phenomenological

description while accepting the necessary use of existing language and frameworks, I foreground the inherent and inescapable tensions in this work while remaining committed to the value of the process.

Obviously this research is a single step in a potentially larger project that would involve parsing interviews with other practitioners and determining similarities and differences in experiences, as De Spain and Cazemajou did. I expect it would be possible to complete a similar analysis of other participants' verbal descriptions and discover possible underlying commonalities; however, it is also important to acknowledge here that I'm not presuming universality of experience or shared meaning per se, but rather I am working through phenomenological description to reveal my experience of Hay's work in order to develop an understanding of the poetics of her choreography and practice. Based on informal conversation during the Scotland residency and my interviews with co-participants, I believe there may indeed be common phenomena experienced by others in the specific practice of Hay's work, hence my effort here to develop intersubjective phenomenological descriptions and analysis. Certainly the small scholarly literature about Hay's work suggests this to be the case, as we have seen in my review of writing by Dolan, Drobnick, Satin, Daly and Nicely, for example, which I will draw on in subsequent chapters to support my discussion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The *unknown* is precisely that and more. It is that which was previously unimaginable, that which we could not have thought of doing next. Improvisation presses us to extend into, expand beyond, extricate ourselves from that which was known. It encourages us or even forces us to be ‘taken by surprise’. Yet we could never accomplish this encounter with the unknown without engaging the known. (Foster, “Improvising Body, Improvising Mind” 4)

... surely, *all* bodily articulation is mindful. Each body segment’s sweep across space, whether direct or meandering, is thought-filled. Each corporeal modulation in effort thinks; each swelling into tension thinks; each erratic burst or undulation in energy thinks. Each accented phrasing or accelerating torque or momentary stillness is an instance of thought. (Foster, “Improvising Body, Improvising Mind” 6-7)

Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception. If, then, as we have seen to be the case, the body is not a transparent object, and is not presented to us in virtue of the law of its constitution, as the circle is to the geometer, if it is an expressive unity which we can learn to know only by actively taking it up, this structure will be passed on to the sensible world. The theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception. We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other

knowledge which we have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception. (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 239)

Introduction

In this section, I will outline the theoretical framework that gives shape to my analysis. In articulating an experiential poetics of Hay's dance practice, I mobilize a phenomenologically based framework, substantially informed by discourse on improvised dance and movement theory, and underpinned by the philosophical thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This framework – a triumvirate, dynamic relation of intentionality/intention, attention and action – provides a lens through which to understand Hay's work both in relation to and, importantly, distinct from other dance practices characterized by non-prescribed movement, improvisation generally. At the broadest level, my work engages with the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In particular his concepts of the situation and the *écart* provide a strong theoretical framework for my analysis of the concept of somatic anacrusis in Hay's practice as a dynamic suspension of processes of meaning-making. Because of his focus on the foundational role of body movement in the constitution of lived experience, Merleau-Ponty's thinking is appropriate and supportive in this discussion of Hay's dance practice. Further, Merleau-Ponty's

articulation of the primacy of perception becomes relevant to my analysis of Hay's practice. She herself describes her work as a "practice of perception" and directs performers to engage in this practice. I aim to clarify this activity and its central role in the effect of her work. While at the outset we cannot assume a de facto alignment between Hay's understanding of perception and Merleau-Ponty's, his philosophy becomes a useful tool in thinking through and articulating my experiences of Hay's work and in showing how it can indeed be understood as a constructed situation for the practice of perception.

Improvisational Dance Practice as Comparative Context

In order to provide some theoretical context for my consideration of Hay's work, I draw from a related field of movement research in which her work can be and has been loosely associated,⁶⁵ that of movement improvisation. I must make clear here that Hay refuses the term improvisation to describe her work,⁶⁶ and I concur for reasons that will become clear through my analysis. Simply stated, Hay's work is choreography. I situate Hay's practice in relation to improvisation by defining Hay's dance practice as a non-prescribed-movement practice because the actual movements, style, forms, sequences and physical-technical vocabulary to be performed are not provided in advance by the choreographer (in this case Hay); rather, they develop in the moment of the performance through the mover's engagement in the practice.⁶⁷ As such, improvisational dance, which can also be understood as a non-prescribed-movement practice, provides a comparative context in which to consider and discuss Hay's work. The ways in which dance scholars and movement theorists analyze improvisational practices offer some useful concepts and language for my discussion.

Improvisation in dance practice is a contested term with perhaps as many meanings as there are practitioners. Inquiry into dance improvisation has been taken up by dance scholars, choreographers and practitioners themselves who consider its role, meaning, impact and implication within a range of dance practices and across disciplinary and everyday life boundaries.⁶⁸ From discussions of this activity, we can distill a common thread that understands improvisation as spontaneous composition. Considerations of improvisation typically address the dichotomy or dialectic (depending on the writer) between freedom and constraint, or agency and structure, emphasizing the potential and possibilities for varying relations between these paired terms as inherent to an understanding of the concept and practice.

As dance scholar Danielle Goldman notes in her book on the topic: “Improvisation is generally described as a spontaneous mode of creation that takes place without the aid of a manuscript or score. According to this view, performance and composition occur simultaneously – on the spot – through a practice that values surprise, innovation, and the vicissitudes of process rather than the fixed glory of a finished product” (*I Want to be Ready* 5). Goldman’s project in her book, however, is to problematize the idea of freedom she sees pervading the literature on dance improvisation. She intends to go “against the grain of most written accounts of improvised dance to suggest that improvisation does not reflect or exemplify the understanding of freedom as a desired endpoint devoid of constraint. On the contrary, it actively resists it” (Goldman, *I Want to be Ready* 3). Goldman, following Foucault, proposes improvised dance as a *practice* of freedom that involves ongoing negotiation of constraint and that this is improvisation’s “most significant power as a full-bodied critical engagement with the world, characterized by both flexibility and perpetual readiness” (*I Want to be Ready* 5).

Considering improvisation as a negotiation between freedom and constraint enables an understanding of this practice across a spectrum of dance forms, characterized by relative degrees of freedom from prescription or constraint: at one end we would find very open improvisational work, and at the other, very set choreographic work. In his introduction to *Taken By Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*, co-editor Richard Gere acknowledges this spectrum, evident in the topics across the collection of essays under this title, when he notes that you can see improvisation:

... in the release technique class when a dancer feels her way toward mastery of the morning's phrase and then extends and embellishes it in her own way ... in the flamenco studio when a battery of footwork takes on a new life, a variation in rhythm, or a double-time flurry ... in the theater in the expression of the professional performer who lingers an extra second in a choreographed one-legged balance and is forced to catch up the lost time by squeezing the next few steps into a nanosecond. (Gere xvi)

Placing Hay's work on this spectrum proves challenging: insofar as it involves non-prescribed-movement, it falls closer to the "open improvisational" end;⁶⁹ yet, insofar as it involves a tightly specified score and practice, it falls closer to the "set choreographic" end. Though I use improvisational dance practice as a comparative context for Hay's work, my discussion will show how her work is ultimately distinct.

As I have already noted, improvisation is often described as "composing in the moment" and this helps make a provisional distinction with Hay's work, which does not call for such "composing in the moment" per se; it is already composed – choreographed – by Hay through the score and specification of its practice. Moreover, whereas one can point to the purposeful

performative *expressivity or intentionally communicative meaningfulness* of a given improvisation (even if abstract, or non-rational, or “pointless noodling”, or self-indulgent), in Hay’s work one can arguably only point to its purposeful performative *function or operation*, not its expressivity or meaningfulness per se. These distinctions are challenging both to appreciate in witnessing Hay’s work from an audience standpoint and also to experience through practicing Hay’s work from a performer’s standpoint. In this study, I am attempting to think through and articulate the latter, which requires some additional terms of reference.

Intention, Attention, Action

Considering Gere’s examples above, such improvisational situations require a high level of engagement and responsiveness – what Goldman, quoted above, calls “flexibility and perpetual readiness” and what we might recognize and identify both in performance and in daily life as presence.⁷⁰ In the improvisational dance performance context, these general qualities underpin the performer’s ability to make decisions and render movement in-the-moment. Recognizing these underlying qualities points in the direction of the additional terms of reference required for my discussion. As indicated by Goldman’s and my different word choices above, in writing about improvisational and (non-improvisational) dance practice, scholars and practitioners use various terms to identify and express the underlying qualities that engender the particular experience or state of presence such work manifests. The terms “intention” or “intentionality”, “attention” or “attentionality” and action, often arise in the effort to articulate aspects of movement experience.

For example, in dance improviser and researcher Kent De Spain’s analysis he describes

improvisation as an “attentional practice” (37), a process of paying attention to experience and using multiple sources drawn therefrom to generate and compose movement. De Spain also takes up intentionality as a major category in his analysis and articulates three different approaches to intentionality (with respect to movement, the physical body, and elements of artistic form) (33). For De Spain, the intentionality in improvisational practice is directly related to the process of sourcing and composing movement, the project of – the intent toward – making something, be that a “dance”, meaning, or sense of some kind.

In Laban Movement Analysis, the terms intention, attention and action are also used to articulate distinct stages of bodily experience in the process of movement, be that a simple gesture or a full-bodied, energetic displacement in space. Building on his study with Rudolf Laban, Warren Lamb’s book *Body Code*, with Elizabeth Watson, offers a three-stage action process involving – in their terms and order of progression – attention, intention and commitment: “Our movement can be understood as a constant interplay of attention, intention and commitment, overlapping at many different levels and over varying time spans” (Lamb and Watson 136). For Lamb and Watson, attention characterizes a state of heightened awareness or focus, intention characterizes a specific gathering or organizing of the body, and commitment characterizes the shift from preparation to action, the crossing of the threshold into functional or expressive movement. In an interview between dance theorist Laurence Louppe and movement theorist Hubert Godard, they establish the notion, taken from Michel Bernard, of the dancer’s body as a “corporeity” (Louppe, “Singular Moving Geographies” 13), emphasizing the dancer’s accumulated history in movement as one of experiences, intensities, situations, rather than that of a topology (geometric and spatialized structural relations). In seeking to identify an existing

discourse through which to address this idea, they dismiss the bio-medical discourse and indicate phenomenology as a possibility. Louppe explains: "... the problematic of dance brings into play a body of continuous functionality; the dancer can only work from a body-vector, which does not define itself in terms of its structure, but in terms of the ways in which it organises intensity and, as we'll see, intentionality" ("Singular Moving Geographies" 13). In thinking through dance as a way of organizing intensity and intentionality, their discussion leads them to consider how this organizing comes about, what comes before the movement, and how intentionality arises.

Despite the recurring appearance of these terms in relation to movement experience, their usage is not necessarily consistent or specific. Common ground can be found at the general level of understanding: intent, intention or intentionality generally describe an orientation toward an objective, goal or a particular type or "figure" of experience; attention generally describes a state of heightened awareness and focus on either the external world or the mover's bodily landscape within; action generally describes the movement itself – a functional or expressive gesture, which could be sound-based, or a whole body reconfiguration/displacement in space and time, for example. My analysis of Hay's practice, however, requires more specific definitions of these terms and a clearer articulation of the way they inter-relate in a larger theoretical framework concerned with the process of bodily, lived experience.

A Phenomenological Framework for Movement Research: Merleau-Ponty and Laban

Maurice Merleau-Ponty provides a theory of the lived body that seeks to overcome Cartesian body-mind and subject-object dualism, focusing on the experience of being-in-the-world as one of fundamental intertwining of bodysubject and world in situations, a term that I will define

further below. Merleau-Ponty argues that consciousness is necessarily and inherently “bodily” and always already woven with the world, our environment. The fact that from birth our bodies are fundamentally or primordially open to the world through perception means, for Merleau-Ponty, that we are always already in the world, or “thrown”. We are always intertwined in situations, such that our experiences of self and world are in a way co-constitutive. According to Merleau-Ponty, we have different modes or regions of subjectivity through which we experience the world – cognitive, affective, motor-practical and perceptual, the last of which is, for him, the most fundamental and upon which the others articulate themselves. It is to a study of perception that he devotes his most substantial effort in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. His other key work for my purposes is *The Visible and the Invisible*, in which his significant essay “The Chiasm – The Intertwining” further articulates our ultimate woven-ness with the world.⁷¹

I have previously discussed Laban’s work in support of my approach to experiential research and description of movement experience. Further to that, Rudolf Laban’s movement theory – as it has evolved in the theory and method of Laban Movement Analysis today – also informs my theoretical framework insofar as he too was concerned with processes of intention, attention and action, in the much more applied movement and dance context. Dance and movement scholar Vera Maletic has completed a comparative analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s and Laban’s theories, and finds alignment along a number of principles, most importantly in both thinkers’ efforts – in the same cultural moment of the early to mid-twentieth century – to counter a prevailing body-mind dualism by reconsidering our inherent bodily relation with the world and others. It is not clear whether Laban had direct knowledge of Merleau-Ponty’s work; however, they were approximate contemporaries working in the early to mid-twentieth century (Laban in

Germany and surrounding areas and then England, Merleau-Ponty in France) and therefore likely encountering similar currents of thought, art and practice. In her lengthy examination of Laban's movement theories in her book *Body, Space, Expression*, Maletic points out the general cultural impact of the challenge to Cartesian dualism mounted by phenomenological philosophers in the 1920s and 1930s such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. She notes that, "Laban's awareness of the clash of classical and contemporary views of movement, space and time is apparent in his writings", continuing with a quote from Laban's *Choreutics* in which he writes: "the conventional idea of space as a phenomenon which can be separated from time and force and from expression, is completely erroneous," continuing that "movement is the life of space. Dead space does not exist, for there is neither space without movement, nor movement without space" (Maletic and Laban qtd. in Maletic 163, all).

Laban's movement theory is not a rigorous philosophy per se; however, it does imply an intuitive grounding in an existential phenomenological framework that aligns in certain ways with Merleau-Ponty's thought. In an Appendix to her main text, Maletic conducts a correlation of Laban's movement theory to selected aspects of several key phenomenologists including Ervin Straus, F. J. J. Buytendijk and Merleau-Ponty. As she notes, "Common to all four authors is the conviction that one has to seek the ground of all knowledge in experience" (190). In drawing connections between Laban and Merleau-Ponty, she focusses specifically on the latter's notions of the lived body, motility and intentionality, as well as his articulation of spatiality. Maletic correlates Merleau-Ponty's lived body with Laban's notion of gesture. In Laban's description of the power of gesture, Maletic finds common ground with Merleau-Ponty's lived body insofar as each notion articulates the way in which subjectivity and world are

fundamentally implicated with each other and interwoven through perceptual processes. For Laban, gesture belongs both to subjectivity and world: “One perceives this whole interwoven complex [of man and world] as I, as a thing, as a phenomenon. The stirring or excitation of the I is timed by the densities which we experience as matter, body, the touchable. The unifying basis is the eternally changing power of gesture” (Laban qtd. in Maletic 191). Maletic notes that for Laban “it is the unified sense or the dance sense which perceives the gestures of the environment” (Maletic 191). In a very clear quote drawn from Laban’s *Die Welt des Tänzers*, Maletic connects Laban’s theory to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy: “Laban maintains that ‘only movement can be perception, experience, consciousness’” (Maletic and Laban qtd. in Maletic 191). She also points to the parallel in the notions of lived body and gesture that, for each respective thinker, situate one in space and time:

‘In so far as I have a body through which I act in the world,’ writes Merleau-Ponty, ‘space and time are not, for me, a collection of adjacent points The space and time which I inhabit are always in their different ways indeterminate horizons which contain other points of view. The synthesis of both time and space is a task that always has to be performed afresh.’” In Laban’s view, “space and time structures, as well as time and energy phenomena, are for the dancer concrete unities, which are constantly renewed through the power of gesture.’ “Dancer,” in this context, refers to a person alert to the world, self and others. (Merleau-Ponty and Laban qtd. in Maletic 191-192)

Through Maletic’s analysis we can start to understand the ways in which Laban’s movement theory resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy. While Maletic’s analysis provides useful insights, a much more detailed comparative analysis of the

two bodies of thought would, I believe, further yield both some quite complementary and also distinct articulations. However, such a project is beyond the purview of this dissertation. It is sufficient for my purposes here to point out these correlations in order to emphasize the complementarity of Merleau-Ponty's and Laban's thought with respect to my research. In this study, my dance training provides the somatic-practical background for my work, LMA provides the somatic-theoretical background and some key concepts for my thinking, and Merleau-Ponty provides the philosophical-theoretical lens for my analysis.

Before I continue with a discussion of some of Merleau-Ponty's ideas as relevant to my work, it is important to acknowledge that phenomenology – and Merleau-Ponty specifically – has its critics. This distinction, between phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty, in fact provides an effective pivot for this brief discussion insofar as the two are not one and the same, by any estimation. Phenomenology is an umbrella term for an approach to philosophy inaugurated by Husserl's call to return "to the things themselves", which is commonly understood to have redirected the focus of philosophical inquiry from rationalism and idealism to lived experience. Merleau-Ponty is one of many philosophers to take up this phenomenological proposal, which he did in a way quite unique from others in the general field, including Heidegger, Sartre and Levinas, among others. According to Dermot Moran: "Merleau-Ponty ... has made the most original and enduring contribution to post-Husserlian phenomenology in France, through his attempts to offer a radical description of the primary experiences of embodied human existence" (391). My point here is simply that critiques of phenomenology, generally, do not necessarily constitute critiques of Merleau-Ponty's thought specifically, which in itself does not maintain absolute consistency through time (Moran; Grosz) and which continues to hold relevance for

fields as diverse as philosophy of mind, psychotherapy, somatic practices and new research in cognition (Moran 433).

And in dance. In the Winter 2011 special issue of DRJ (Dance Research Journal), which reconsiders the value of phenomenology for dance studies, Mark Franko provides an introduction that usefully summarizes the major critiques of phenomenology that arose through post-structuralist and deconstructive thought:

phenomenology's first-person perspective was accused of placing a unitary subject at the center of all perception and possible description; cognition studies have located the brain rather than the body at the core of aesthetic reception; and innovations in new media and digital performance have destabilized the primacy of the lived body itself in dance performance... and last but not least, the accusation that phenomenology is a humanism purveying universalizing values. ("Editor's Note" 2)

In opposition to this problematic naïveté of the ahistorical, subject-centered approach of phenomenology, during the 1980s dance studies embraced and benefited from the influences of Foucault's "analyses of power, history, and the vicissitudes of subjectivity" and his ideas around "discipline, inscription, and control" (Franko, "Editor's Note" 2-3). In light of these critiques, the journal issue features a collection of essays reconsidering the relative value of phenomenology for dance studies.

In her particularly insightful essay, which I have quoted from earlier, Sally Ann Ness undertakes a detailed examination of Foucault's turn from phenomenology, focussing on his rejection of the "finite, organismically individual, labouring, speaking human subject" and specifically an "observing subject" (22). She then asks what the consequences are for dance

studies in embracing a Foucauldian approach to analysis. While valuing the ways in which dance and choreographic analysis benefit from considerations of historical and temporal context, power dynamics, political engagement and the history of ideas that come with a Foucauldian approach, she suggests that:

To follow Foucault's lead, in this regard, is to forego analyses that would give priority to the identification of that which is definitively emergent or categorically ahistorical in choreographic performance. It would preempt analyses that seek to orient to the immanent and the manifesting, as well as the virtual relations of dance – not only as they bear on histories of the present, but as they might make critically conceivable possible futures of the present as well. (Ness 22)

Via her discussion of Foucault, Ness' article provides an effective articulation of the major critiques of a phenomenological approach, while strongly emphasizing the potential it holds, specifically for dance studies' "greatest analytical and critical faculties – its capacity to attune articulately to the generative, structuring significance of bodily motility" (Ness 28). My study embraces a phenomenological approach to dance that, I hope, enables a consideration of this generative bodily motility for the way that it is "thinking" in the midst of dynamic socio-cultural relations and forces and the way that this "thinking" inflects understandings of those relations and forces.

With respect to the complexity and nuance of Merleau-Ponty's work, the ways that it developed and shifted over the course of his writings, and the fact that one of his major contributions, *The Visible and the Invisible*, was left unfinished at his untimely death, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a robust critical analysis. As feminist scholar Elizabeth

Grosz has noted: “I cannot presume that easy, ready-made judgments are possible with the writings of as subtle a thinker as Merleau-Ponty” (38). Insofar as Merleau-Ponty’s work generally belongs to phenomenological philosophy, the critiques noted above apply, though somewhat provisionally. While it shares broadly in the phenomenological approach, Merleau-Ponty’s thought is a distinct strand that proceeds through a uniquely bodily approach, and it has further been argued to have foreshadowed various post-structural and deconstructionist conceptualizations. Critics have noted the ways in which, in his effort to rethink the dualism of body-mind and by extension other binaries such as subject-object and self-other, Merleau-Ponty’s thinking foreshadowed Derrida’s deconstruction (Grosz 38; Moran 432; Reynolds; Franko, “Mimique” 212n29). As Grosz writes:

Rather than valorize one or the other side of a dichotomous pair of terms and affirm their fundamental unity or oneness in some kind of global or local wholism (which necessarily implies a reduction of one term to the other) or accept the bifurcation and mutually exclusive and exhaustive status of binarized terms, Merleau-Ponty, in ways that strikingly anticipate Derrida’s supplementary or deconstructive readings of binary polarization, refuses the very terrain and founding presuppositions of dualisms. His work is a resumption or reclamation of the space *in between* binary pairs. (38)

In her essay, Grosz examines Merleau-Ponty’s ideas, in particular his notion of the “flesh” and related vocabulary, from a feminist perspective, seeking to address whether his work “participates in phallogentric presumptions” (38), by appropriating metaphors of femininity to ground an implicitly masculinist theoretical system or whether his work is potentially useful for feminist purposes. Grosz notes that one of the most significant feminist critiques – even by those

feminists who embrace his work generally – is that of Merleau-Ponty’s “avoidance of the question of sexual difference” (46) in terms of his thinking about the embodied human (read, masculine) experience. Grosz specifically takes up Irigaray’s critical reading of Merleau-Ponty in *The Ethics of Sexual Difference*, noting similarities and differences in their ideas and summarizing Irigaray’s critique: “that, in keeping with her analysis of a selective history of philosophy ... Merleau-Ponty’s theoretical paradigm owes an unacknowledged debt, indeed its conceptual foundations, to femininity and maternity – a debt whose symptoms reside in the kind of language of pregnancy he continually invokes to articulate the emergence of that torsion within the flesh that constitutes and unites the seer and the visible” (Grosz 52). Grosz concludes by acknowledging a general phallogentrism in Merleau-Ponty’s work while also recognizing several key contributions that may be useful for feminism, including: his challenging of binary oppositions and his notion of the flesh as an intertwining of subject and world that “founds a new ontology that supercedes ... [the given] ... ‘hierarchy of being’” (54).

Susan Kozel has also considered Irigaray’s critique of Merleau-Ponty in *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* and her strategy of mimesis in this (and other of her critiques of Western philosophers). Kozel’s major argument is in showing how Irigaray’s strategy of mimesis falls short in this instance, when considered against Irigaray’s own philosophical efforts to theorize and enact difference rather than subsume one in another. However, Kozel also offers some recuperative comments regarding Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. She concludes that:

Irigaray’s reduction of [Merleau-Ponty] to little more than yet another male philosopher prioritizing a devouring and enclosing faculty of vision is an excessive caricature. He charted a philosophical path away from the dogmas of rationalism and empiricism and, in

his later work, from the consciousness-body divide that dominates most thought, be it scientific, aesthetic, or philosophical. (Kozel 126)

The above discussion provides an outline of some of the major critiques of both phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's work, while also pointing out some of the ways in which they may yet be useful and generative in dance studies and in feminist theory. In this dance-specific study, I embrace a phenomenological approach generally, draw on certain aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thought specifically, and align my arguments within a frame influenced by certain of Irigaray's texts. (A brief note here that inasmuch as she critiqued phenomenology and its key thinkers (Merleau-Ponty among others), Irigaray was also significantly influenced by them.) I proceed, now, in light of these critiques and bolstered by the recuperative readings noted above that find value and relevance in these ideas specific to my particular project. I will now address the key ideas from Merleau-Ponty that inform my theoretical framework for the analysis of Hay's choreography and practice.

A brief reminder to the reader that I use the term *primordial* below in direct reference to its use by Merleau-Ponty. I understand that it and other related terms implying an unstructured origin outside a given context or situation have been problematized in post-structuralist and post-modern critiques, not least by Derrida through deconstruction and his claim that "There is nothing outside the text" (Derrida qtd. in Royle 62). As I have noted above, however, various scholars have identified resonances between Merleau-Ponty's thought and Derrida's, and Royle suggests that this oft-cited claim by Derrida has been a source of misunderstanding: "In truth, Derrida has always been preoccupied (in the strongest senses of that word) by what precedes or exceeds language. Sometimes he calls it 'force', as in the early essay 'Force and Signification'

(1963) where he writes: ‘Force is the other of language without which language would not be what it is.’” (Royle and Derrida qtd. in Royle 62). As I have noted earlier, the reader may find resonances in the following discussion and analysis of Hay’s work with these Derridean ideas via my use of Merleau-Ponty. If indeed these ideas and the connection between Merleau-Ponty and Derrida might be usefully inflected by my study of Hay’s work here, it must remain for a future analysis. For my purposes here, Merleau-Ponty helps me to specify the concepts of intentionality/intention, attention and action in the context of embodied experience.

Primordial Contact and Perception

For Merleau-Ponty, “there is a primordial level which describes the original bond between the body and world” (Mallin 56). This primordial level or primordial contact describes the bodysubject’s original thrownness through the body’s given or innate general capacities or openings on the world. Mallin outlines four specific ways (or regions) through which, according to Merleau-Ponty, we engage the world – “subjectivity’s primordially given capacities” (24):

Merleau-Ponty divides the ways we can relate ourselves to the world into the perceptual, the cognitive, the affective, and the practical, and we can note that any situation contains all of these to varying degrees. *Cognitively*, in every situation we may, for example, recite rules to ourselves, make inferences and judgments, or merely rely on linguistic categorizations. There is always a core of *perceptual* awareness of ourselves, others, and the natural world. *Affectively*, there may be emotional tensions, moods, attitudes, concerns, or desires. Of course, situations are essentially *practical*, but, besides their containing capacities and dispositions, there is an accompanying bodily or motor

involvement (which is found in physical behavior or perhaps gestural or verbal action).

(15)

Through these primordially given capacities then, we are always already in-the-world, and this is how I understand and use the phrase “being-in-the-world”. Through our primordially given capacities, we begin to acquire structures of experience, which are like experiential convergences of being-in-the-world that are first acquired in a given situation and then applied to new situations, thereby organizing and interpreting experience. Mallin notes that one or the other of our primordially given capacities can become temporarily central but all are generally present in every situation (15).⁷² However, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is through perception first that we begin to acquire structures of experience: the logic of the second-order affective, practical and cognitive (or cognitive-linguistic) structures derives from first-order perceptual structures. As Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*, “Perception as an encounter with natural things is at the foreground of our research, not as a simple sensorial function that would explain the others but as the archetype of the originating encounter, imitated and renewed in the encounter with the past, the imaginary, the idea” (*Visible and Invisible* 158). As Mallin articulates it:

Merleau-Ponty’s thesis of the primacy of perception ... holds, first, that perception gives us the clearest case of our relationship to Being; secondly, that all other types of objects have a natural nucleus in or must be based on this perceptual relationship; and, thirdly, that all the regions ... necessarily interact in such a way that they “borrow” or “imitate” the logic of the most primordial region, perception. (31)

Considering perceptual structures as establishing a first-order “logic” does not preclude the

possibility that in lived experience capacities other than perception might lead or motivate perception because, as stated above, they are all generally present in situations; this first-order characterization proposes only that perception gives us the most proximate relation to primordial contact. This discussion of primordial contact and perception will become relevant in my analysis of Hay's choreography and practice as a practice of perception through which primordially might be impossibly glimpsed.

Intertwining and Flesh

Merleau-Ponty articulates the way in which, through perception first, we are woven – bodily – with the world: “I delve into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience”

(*Phenomenology of Perception* 237). This woven-ness occurs through the body's potential to be both sentient – that is, actively perceiving through the senses – and also sensible – that is, able to be perceived. We know this most significantly because we can experience this within ourselves: we can both see and be seen, touch and be touched, hear and be heard through our own perceptual capacities. Perception, thus, as a bodily capacity, gives us the fundamental ability to be at once outwardly and inwardly oriented. The processes of perception can in a way be understood and experienced as a kind of turning “inside-out” or “outside-in”, reversible, a term that I use here descriptively but that is also used by Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of perception. As Merleau-Ponty writes: “External perception and the perception of one's own body vary in conjunction because they are two facets of one and the same act” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 237).

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty further articulates his thinking on

perception, which leads him to develop his notion or principle of “flesh”. Merleau-Ponty develops this principle by considering the relation between seer and seen, toucher and touched, establishing their inherent reversibility and woven-ness. In working toward this notion, he asks, “Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?” (*Visible and Invisible* 138). Considering the phenomenological experience of vision and touch as involving both the sensible (objective) and sentient (phenomenal) body he notes: “My body as a visible thing is contained within the full spectacle. But my seeing body subtends this visible body, and all the visibles with it. There is a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other” (*Visible and Invisible* 138). This intertwining renders “a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, which belong properly neither to the body qua fact nor to the world qua fact” (Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible* 139) and from this understanding he develops his notion of the flesh. He describes the flesh as a “strange adhesion” (*Visible and Invisible* 139), as a “coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body” (*Visible and Invisible* 146), as a “fold” (*Visible and Invisible* 146) and as the “formative medium of the object and the subject” (*Visible and Invisible* 147). These ideas become important to my analysis of Hay’s choreography – as a practice of perception. My experiential descriptions, specifically of Hay’s tools – which, in my analysis, comprise the third aspect of her choreography – reveal phenomenological experiences of perceptual reversibility and intertwining along with experiences of fundamental disorientation that elide distinctions between subject (self) and object (world). Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the intertwining and the flesh helpfully illuminate my experience in Hay’s work.

In this discussion, Merleau-Ponty makes two more important points that bear on my analysis. First, he indicates the way in which our perceptive capacities are not closed in upon

themselves but are “gaping open” (*Visible and Invisible* 147), the lacuna at their core a necessary counterpoint to, an anticipation of, the seeing of a visible, the touching of a tangible that then co-constitutes a fragment of being from the flesh. Second, he also points out that the experience of reversibility he has established in principle, is only “always imminent and never realized in fact” (*Visible and Invisible* 147). It is a limit situation that is never reached precisely because my body is both sensible and sentient but cannot be absolutely coincidentally so. Merleau-Ponty notes:

this is not a failure. For if these experiences never exactly overlap, if they slip away at the very moment they are about to rejoin, if there is always a ‘shift,’ a ‘spread,’ between them, this is precisely because my two hands are part of the same body, because it moves itself in the world, because I hear myself both from within and from without. I experience – and as often as I wish – the transition and the metamorphosis of the one experience into the other, and it is only as though the hinge between them, solid, unshakeable, remained irremediably hidden from me. (*Visible and Invisible* 149)

These two points, about the perceptual lacuna as an anticipation, and the imminent but experientially unrealizable instance of reversibility, bear on my analysis in helping me to articulate my experience in Hay’s work as an experience of somatic anacrusis, a continual movement of turning back toward the impossible limit experience of lived suspension of this anticipatory lacuna that arises through the experiential reversals and foldings-back engendered through the linguistic torques of Hay’s choreographic score, questions and tools.

Intentionality

Intentionality⁷³ is a key concept from Merleau-Ponty that is important for my study. It is best

understood as a quality or movement of towardness generated through the openness that inheres in the given capacities articulated above. Primordial openness creates a kind of draw like the absence of air creates a vacuum force that pulls together bodysubject and world. Intentionality is essential to situations; it creates them and we can never be outside of one. Intentionality could alternately be described as a kind of continuous driving to engage, a magnetic pull or attraction between bodysubject and world, that is always already occurring in fundamental situatedness as: “the intentional threads linking [the body] to its surrounding” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 38, insertion mine). Intentionality generally can be understood as that which organizes or orients the flux of lived experience in(to) tensions, pulls, polarities. Intentionality as a kind of inherent force of engagement contributes to the experiential distinction of subjectivity and objectivity. In its directedness-toward, it incites a process of differentiation between bodysubject and world and is of primary importance in developing an understanding of how Hay’s choreography functions with respect to her composition of the score and its function in her work.

Attention

For Merleau-Ponty, attention as a process of articulation and specification is fundamental to the acquisition of structures (Mallin 70). In attending, we are able to focus on and distinguish levels of detail in a given situation and thereby acquire new structures – convergences – for future situations. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes both originating attention, that first process by which an articulation or specification is made in a field or from a general horizon and which is a “creative structuring”; whereas, secondary attention involves the “actualization of already sedimented

structures” (Mallin 70, both). Writes Merleau-Ponty: “Thus attention is ... the active constitution of a new object which makes explicit and articulate what was until then presented as no more than an indeterminate horizon” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 35). For my purposes, it is useful to understand attention as a process that configures and then refigures experiences, objects and world through the distinguishing process of attending in a given situation. According to Merleau-Ponty: “To pay attention is not merely further to elucidate pre-existing data, it is to bring about a new articulation of them by taking them as *figures*. They are preformed only as *horizons*, they constitute in reality new regions in the total world (*Phenomenology of Perception* 35). This notion of attention as a process of configuring and refiguring will bear on my analysis of Hay’s work with respect to the way in which I find her use of questions choreographs attention.

Motility or Action

For Merleau-Ponty, our capacity for movement – including full body movement, gestures and the movement of our senses (i.e. vision) – underlies and makes possible our structuring of experience in situations through intentionality and attention. In short, we must move in order to perceive, and this is how he comes to express “motility as basic intentionality. Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of ‘I think’ but of ‘I can’” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 159). Mallin helpfully addresses the relationship between motility and perception noting their “close interconnection” and the way that “perceptual structures will be shown ... *to be* motor intentions, and, hence, to have an intrinsic connection to the body’s capacities for gross or wide-ranging motor behaviour” (45). Because I have above discussed the way in which, for Merleau-Ponty, perception “gives us the clearest case of our relationship to Being” (Mallin 31)

and is the first order of structures of experience, it becomes important here to address how it is, then, that motility is yet thought to “underpin” perception. This can be understood generally, by noting the distinction in the above quote between motor *intentionality* and perceptual *structures*. Intentionality, as noted above, describes our body’s inherent openness on/tending toward world, and world toward body. We have intentionality – or basic connectedness in/to the world – through these capacities, which intertwine and cross-weave, with motility being a necessary and founding aspect. Structures, by distinction, are acquired body-world convergences that further organize and interpret experience. To grossly oversimplify, for my purposes it is sufficient to understand that while we are in the world through *intentionality*, including motility (our practical capacity) and perception, we establish *structures* of experience first through perception.

It is helpful to note that later in his text, Mallin discusses the concept of global motility, a fluctuation between a general abduction of the body and a general adduction of the body (abduction being a movement away from centre and adduction being a movement toward centre): “global motility is describable at any one time as a particular *balance* or organization of all the body’s standard motor capabilities” (163), or what Merleau-Ponty calls a “rhythm of existence” (Merleau-Ponty qtd. in Mallin 163).⁷⁴ Global motility and motor intentionality concern me here because they effectively articulate aspects of my experience in Hay’s work that I refer to as “action”. With the term action, I mean to address the spectrum of body activity that rides on and extends from this underlying, given, global motility or articulation between body and world: from the most cellular pulsing of blood and breath, through the movement of the organs – including the senses – through sound- and movement-based gesture to whole body activity. I have chosen the term “action” because it allows me to be both more specific and to

address more possibility than the term “movement” per se, which, in a dance context, has specific connotations of fluidity and purposefully manifested gesture. With the term action, I can thereby include micro-actions of the inner body, sound-based gesture and more reflective purposeful action – while also remaining distinct from Merleau-Ponty’s term “motility”, which is specifically tied to his philosophy and refers to our bodily *capacity for* rather than *actualized* movement. Simply stated, by “action” I mean all kinds of actualized involuntary and voluntary bodily physical change.

Situations, Structures, Horizon and Écart

For Merleau-Ponty, the bodysubject’s given capacities open to and engage the world as the world opens to and engages the bodysubject’s capacities – by way of intentionality. These mutual engagements are not discrete and occurring in advance of a relation or in linear sequence but are simultaneously constitutive of the relation as much as they are constitutive of both bodysubject and world. In Merleau-Ponty’s terms:

Human existence will force us to revise our usual notion of necessity and contingency, because it is the transformation of contingency into necessity by the act of taking in hand. All that we are, we are on the basis of a *de facto* situation which we appropriate to ourselves and which we ceaselessly transform by a sort of *escape* which is never an unconditioned freedom. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 198)

Situatedness is given, yet as we hear in the quote above, it is dynamic, not fixed. As Mallin articulates, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is grounded in an ontology of situations (9). A situation is a kind of originating contact in which so-called bodysubject and world become

through fundamental intentionality. For Merleau-Ponty subjectivity is primordially open toward possibility, available and ready, seeking engagement in way, or motivated, and objectivity or world is also primordially open, available in its multifaceted fullness and ambiguity, provoking engagement: Mallin writes that "... the subjective and objective aspects of a situation cannot be isolated, [...] they interweave and are dialectically interconnected" (14). I am using the term engagement to describe a situation, which I understand as the fitting together or articulation of this primordialness, an articulation which simultaneously makes apparent or crystallizes a particular subjectivity and objectivity, while also registering the ambiguous and inexhaustible possibilities therein.⁷⁵ Per Mallin, "we can say that situations are *modes of being-in-the-world* or are expressions of our global existence" (16, italics mine) and "structures...must be comprehended as states or *modes of subjectivity*" (18, italics mine).

We can therefore understand the relationship between situations and structures: situations describe a more fundamental process of body-world engagement; whereas, structures describe a more specific process of organizing and interpreting that engagement, which builds a particular subjectivity and objectivity. Upon a foundation of general thrown structures deriving from our primordially given capacities, convergences of the key features of actual given situations sediment in our being from the time of our originating contact, and more specific structures are acquired through lived experience. These structures become sedimented in subjectivity, and are general and repeatable such that they can be called up in and readily crystallize, or particularize, subsequent engagements. The collection or "matrix"⁷⁶ of interconnected sedimented structures forms a "schema" (Mallin 16) that manifests lived experience as such, organized and interpreted – or "meaningful" in a very broad sense of the term.

For Merleau-Ponty, the flux of lived experience includes all spatial and all temporal perspectives, encompassed in his notion of horizon. In our situatedness, or being-in-the-world, situations give us certain spatial (front, back, side, etc.) and temporal (present, past, future) perspectives through which we understand the co-existence of other perspectives for other beings (objects and people). Therefore, these other perspectives inhere within our perspective such that our situatedness (being-in-the-world) encompasses the full horizon of all these possible perspectives, even though they are not immediately concretized in our present situation. Merleau-Ponty writes: “Each present permanently underpins a point of time which calls for recognition from all others, so that the object is seen at all times as it is seen from all directions and by the same means, namely the structure imposed by a horizon” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 80). This quote helps me begin to develop a different understanding of time and space. To oversimplify in order to summarize, I begin to see the possibility that time can be understood not as “passing” or “now and then” but as an ongoing, thick and vibrating “nowness”. Likewise, space can be understood not as “three-dimensionality” per se or “here and there” but as a dynamic, dense and spongy “hereness”. I will return to these ideas when I consider my experiences of space and time in Hay’s work.

That Merleau-Ponty proposes situations as the fundamental basis for experience suggests that there is no possibility for experience “outside” of a situation. However, as I noted above, situations are dynamic, not fixed; it is important to understand that for Merleau-Ponty, situations are always ambiguous, indeterminate and corrigible (Mallin 14). While the intentional aspect of a situation is concretized for the bodysubject, it is never grasped in its entirety. In the same manner as otherness stretches away and is never fully graspable, so too is subjectivity the

stretching away of possibilities from the concretized intentionality of the situation. The active gatheringdispersing⁷⁷ polarity – or dehiscence – established through this concretization of the intentional aspect and simultaneous stretching away, as bodysubject and world engage in situations, is articulated by Merleau-Ponty as *écart*. As Mallin writes: “In his last notes, Merleau-Ponty states that the ‘there is’ is merely the separation (*écart*) from the ‘something’ ... and can ultimately be understood as the general separation of figure from ground” (63). I will return to this notion of *écart* and the way that the movement of dehiscence generates a figure-ground separation in considering how Hay’s choreography and practice performs figure-ground reversals in lived experience.

CONCLUSION TO THEORY

To summarize then, my theoretical framework is informed by Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of situations, specifically through the concepts and terms outlined here. To be clear, I do not attempt to embrace and account for the entirety of Merleau-Ponty’s thought. I use these concepts and terms to articulate my lived experience in Hay’s choreography and practice, and to develop an understanding of its poetics. Merleau-Ponty gives me a way to understand and think through embodied being-in-the-world as always-already situated, yet ambiguous, experience. Through various modes of intentionality, we are open to and tending toward the world as it is tending toward us, in a filamentous connectedness based on primordial contact and to which perception gives us the most proximate relation. We grasp-and-are-grasped-by the world within situations fundamentally through motility – or, in my terms, action – which is implicit to the mutual grasping process. Through our various modes of intentionality, attention draws figures from the

horizon of experience and our lived experience becomes organized, structured. Structures might be thought of as repeatable convergences that form figures and patterns from the flux of lived experience. These patterns – structures – sediment into what Merleau-Ponty articulates as a bodily schema through which lived experience is organized and interpreted and by which we thus navigate the intersubjective realm of bodysubject-world. However, from these convergences, lived experience also diverges, pulls or stretches away in a movement of dehiscence – Merleau-Ponty's *écart* – that renders ambiguous, contingent and malleable both structures and also situations. From the first concretized situation, structures organize our lived experience and because of their inherent ambiguity and malleability, these structures morph and new structures are acquired as we live more and more complex experiences. Each new level, or structuring, is acquired through differentiation and therefore presupposes the previous level. The point here is to understand the concept of levels building on one another – sedimenting. As such, we understand that always embedded in a situation there is the potential primordial level or primordial contact, that originary openness inherent in our primordially given capacities, of which perception is fundamental. As noted by Mallin: “Merleau-Ponty insists that our senses are in direct contact or actually merge with otherness, to the extent that Being ‘runs through them’ (25).

In the following analysis, I consider Hay's choreography and practice through this phenomenologically informed framework. Through first- and second-order experiential descriptions based on personal experience, I develop my analysis in which I consider Hay's solo choreography and practice as a constructed situation in which the score, questions and tools function as a destructuring structure. Through the triumvirate dynamic relation of

intentionality/intention, attention and action I describe the poetics of this practice – as perceptual process. I then articulate the specific experiences of self-world, body-space and movement-time that the work’s poetics engender and that lead me to understand the practice as a practice of somatic anacrusis. Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of horizon and *écart* come to bear on my discussion of practicing performing Hay’s work and enable me to articulate the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis that I argue lends her work its distinct aesthetic identity, enigmatic audience reception and unique attraction to contemporary performers across the globe.

I am arguing that Hay’s practicing performing constructs a situation in which, through a destructuring structure that thrusts the performer into a fundamental process of perception, we may approach limit experiences of the originating encounter (situation), or primordial contact, which presents the possibility for “creative structuring” rather than the “actualization of already sedimented structures” (Mallin 70). I am specific in saying that we “may approach” in the sense of approaching a mathematical limit. It is not possible to, in fact, achieve or sustain such an experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, we are always already situated, thrown, we cannot be-in-the-world otherwise. However, in the movement of dehiscence – the *écart* – in the stretching away from the intentional aspect of a concretized situation, in which the horizon of lived experience includes all possibilities and perspectives, it becomes *impossibly* possible to approach, draw near, and perhaps catch a glance of primordially. In this way, I will argue, Hay’s choreography and practice offers a new way to approach the world and others relatively unencumbered by already sedimented structures and open to the horizon of other and others’ possibilities and perspectives.

As a more creative and open approach, would this not be a more ethical and ultimately loving approach? What if...?⁷⁸

Chapter 4: Hay's Choreography and Practice: A Constructed Situation for the Practice of Perception

Contrary to totalizing theories that argue that the body is unknowable outside language, Hay posits the body as dialectical with language, that is, as an influence upon language as much as it is influenced by language. Such an ideosomatic understanding of the interrelatedness of the psyche and physique recognizes that the body inherently exceeds the capacity of language to describe it, while it simultaneously inspires new forms of eloquence. (Drobnick 45)

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I develop an understanding of Hay's choreography and practice, specifically through my experience in her solo *At Once* (2009). As I have mentioned previously, this solo is not a conventionally discrete creative work but one in a series of related works that spans 14 years, over which time Hay developed a particular way of working that is exemplified in any number of individual works from the series. *At Once* provides a case study for the analysis of her approach to choreography and practice that transcends the single work. I argue that Hay's distinctly linguistic choreography establishes a constructed situation, in which the braided aspects of her choreography and practice function as a destructuring structure for the *practice* of perception. Repeatedly throughout her own writing, Hay herself, identifies perception as a key to her work; however, she uses the term broadly in varying contexts, as seen in the quote below. My aim in this chapter is to articulate *how* her choreography functions as a *practice* of perception,

through my own experience and emergent choreographic analysis. According to Hay:

Since 1970, my practice and resources as a dancer and choreographer have shifted from physical to perceptual challenges. I perceive the doing of movement as rhetorical. Every dancer has just so much physical prowess, so much personal experience shaping his/her movement vocabulary. However, if one imaginatively endows every cell in one's body with an individual intelligence for movement and perception, the experience of movement increases exponentially. Performance becomes a continuum of multiple cellular experiences unfolding simultaneously. One can only be at the feet of one's body as a teacher – not the teacher instructing the body how to dance! The lessons learned here are as untranslatable as they are blunt. The wisdom of my body, when it is invested with individuated cellular perception, is hilariously profound. What I am doing when I am dancing is directing my attention to the validity of these tiny intelligences and reflecting that information back to the world. This is what I call the performance of dancing. It is an on-going manifestation of mystery. It is the unknown brought to light for an instant. For myself and the audience. (“Remaining Positionless” 22)

Despite her variable use of the term perception above, this quote provides several useful insights into Hay's work, including, as I've already mentioned, her interest in perception. Here, we also encounter her notion of cellular awareness or what she sometimes calls cellular consciousness, described as early as 1986 in Susan Leigh Foster's analysis of Hay's early work. This belief in the wisdom or intelligence of the body – “as teacher” – aligns with the perspective taken in somatic practice and indicates Hay's long-time commitment to this approach, which is not universal to post-modern or contemporary dance practice per se, though it has become more

prevalent in the last decade.⁷⁹ Hay's description of "the doing of movement as rhetorical" in the above quote further inflects an understanding of her work, allowing us to consider and question the way in which her work might operate rhetorically to persuade, or to influence the thought or conduct of an audience. (I address this last point in chapter 6 with respect to the ethical dimension in Hay's practice.) Finally, that Hay understands her dance to be bringing the unknown "to light for an instant" also suggests that she is clear about what she intends her work to be doing. Here I develop an understanding of *how* her work foregrounds and activates perception, brings the unknown to light for an instant and ultimately functions as an embodied rhetoric.

My analysis is underpinned by concepts outlined in the previous chapter based on Merleau-Ponty's thinking. Overall, I consider Hay's choreography and practice to be a situation, which is purposefully built through language, and as such I take it to be a constructed situation. Within this constructed situation, I address the ways in which Hay's language, as embodied in performance practice, operates on the performer's intention, attention and action such that Hay's constructed situation functions as a destructuring structure. This destructuring function in effect upheaves and excavates sedimented layers of acquired and habituated structures in a process that ultimately pitches the performer into a necessary practice of perception and toward the impossible possibility of a glance at primordially, a term I use in Merleau-Ponty's sense.

I begin by understanding Hay's choreography as a distinctly linguistic, braided function of three strands – a written score, a series of questions and a collection of tools. I then work through each aspect of Hay's choreographic braid, paying particular attention to her use of language and articulating through experiential description how Hay's linguistic torques and

semantic/syntactic strategies operate distinctly on and for the performer within her work. I continue to develop my thinking through Merleau-Ponty's ontology of situations, and I organize my analysis of Hay's work around the processes of intention, attention and action, which I have articulated in the previous chapter.

Through my analysis, I reveal the primary operation of each aspect of Hay's choreographic braid, establishing that the score choreographs my *intention*, the questions choreograph my *attention* and the verbal tools choreograph my *action*. Although my analysis identifies the primary operations of each aspect of Hay's choreographic braid, it is important to emphasize that Hay's choreography functions only and necessarily as a braid – that is, with all three strands crossing and weaving together to work as a whole. No single strand functions alone; each supports and complements the operations of the others. This distinguishes Hay's work from other contemporary dance and movement choreographers who use scores by themselves to structure performances. Here I analyze only the primary – but not exclusive – functions of each strand. Through my analysis, I discuss how Hay's distinct use of language choreographs the performer's intention, attention and action by simultaneously engaging *and* deflecting these processes, thereby perpetually destabilizing the performer and ultimately thrusting her into a necessary, fundamental *practice* of perception. I conclude by summarizing my analysis of Hay's solo performance work as a linguistically constructed situation in which the braided choreography of score, questions and tools function together as a destructuring structure for the practice of perception. I argue that in practicing performing Hay's choreography, the performer surfs along the edges of meaningfulness/meaninglessness – *impossibly* glancing the unfolded open of primordially.

HAY'S CHOREOGRAPHY: A LINGUISTIC BRAID OF SCORE, QUESTIONS AND TOOLS

To develop an understanding of Hay's work as a constructed situation for the practice of perception requires an understanding of the elements that comprise Hay's choreography, since it is significantly *not* aligned with the conventional understanding of choreography as prescribed or designed movement *per se*. As Drobnick indicates in the quote that opens this chapter, Hay's choreography is distinctly linguistic. Hay defines her choreography in the following way:

What I mean by my choreography includes the transmission from me to the dancer, of the same series of questions I ask myself when I am performing a particular movement sequence that ministers shape to a dance. I will not talk about my movement choices here, except to say that as an aspect of my choreography they fall almost exclusively into three categories: 1) impossible to realize, 2) embarrassing to “do”, or, idiotic to contemplate, 3) maddeningly simple. These movement directions are not unlike my questions that are 1) unanswerable, 2) impossible to truly comprehend, and, at the same time, 3) poignantly immediate. (“How do I recognize my choreography”)

Here, Hay describes her choreography as made up of two aspects: movement directions and questions. Hay gives her so-called movement directions via a prose libretto – a text-based score, which may include a few cursory sketches or simple diagrams of spatial pathways – rather than via physical demonstration.⁸⁰ I say so-called because, as she indicates here and as I will elaborate in this chapter, these text-based movement directions provide very little information about actual physical or gestural activity that might be considered dance movement *per se*. Hay's questions, also based in language, are transmitted to the dancer primarily via spoken word, though some do

appear written in the score. Thus we have two linguistically constructed aspects of Hay's choreography: score and questions. In addition to the above-noted text-based score and series of questions, I also address what I consider to be a distinct third aspect to Hay's choreography, comprising a collection of verbal tools that coach the performer in the process of rendering the choreography as such. Therefore, in my analysis, I consider Hay's choreography a three-stranded braid of score, questions and tools, in effect, a linguistically constructed situation.

Hay's work, of course, is rooted in the movement explorations involving scoring, games and tasks that figured prominently in the work of 1960s Judson-era cohort of avant-garde dancemakers of which Hay was a part. As I have noted in chapter 2, these artists were fundamentally questioning the materials and methods of dance and dancemaking. With roots in this 1960s post-modern⁸¹ turn in dance, Hay's work has sustained and developed this impulse, creating a complex performance-generating system that pulls and pushes the fabric of meaningfulness, propelling or inviting the performer to glance at – and perhaps just beyond – its fraying edges. It is this operation that I aim to analyze in this chapter.

ON HAY'S USE OF LANGUAGE

As I have indicated, Hay has long maintained a writing practice alongside her dancing and develops scores or libretti of her dances in an iterative process of moving and writing in which each activity informs the other in their respective development.⁸² She has published, relatively extensively for a dance artist, on her own practice in journal articles and in several books. Several writers have noted that Hay has, or has had “[an] ambivalence about language ... [a] fascination verging on distrust” (Drobnick 43). Dolan too notes that Hay's use of koan-like

language implies a “distrust of the linguistic dimensions of our being-in-the-world” (214). It is perhaps this ambivalence or distrust that has led her to develop ways of working with and querying language through the body in a productively tensile manner. The questions and verbal tools that Hay uses have been developed over years and years of focused effort as she worked out ways to communicate and share her practice with others.⁸³

As noted in my discussion of the literature by and about Hay in Chapter 2, performance scholar Jim Drobnick has undertaken an analysis of Hay’s deliberate and performative use of language that resonates with my own analysis. Writes Drobnick:

In Hay’s usage, seemingly common terms ... bear intentionally deflected meanings that seek to direct the actions of the performers without overdetermining the outcome, instruct while stimulating creative thought, and critically challenge physical and mental habits that diminish the potential of the body. The discourse that Hay provides is deceptively simple and oftentimes paradoxical, yet it effectively opens up possibilities for experiments in selfhood and performance. (43)

In my own encounter with Hay’s language and through personal practice of Hay’s work, I have found similar experiences to those Drobnick notes above. Through this and the following chapter, I will use my own case study practice and phenomenological descriptions thereof to discuss and analyze Hay’s linguistic choreography through the lens of Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of situations and the triumvirate dynamic relation of intention, attention and action that I have established in the previous chapter. To reiterate a point about my method, the reader will recall that I approached my study through practice and phenomenological writing prior to engaging

with the literature on Hay. Throughout my analysis, I make connections to the literature in order to point out where other discussions resonate with and corroborate my own. My primary focus in this chapter is on revealing *how* Hay's language functions in performance, first through direct engagement in and "close reading of" the practice. Hay's dexterity with language will become evident through my analysis of the score, questions and tools. I analyze how, through linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies, these linguistic strands *operate* experientially in Hay's work on processes of intention, attention and action, functioning as a destructuring structure for the *practice* of perception.

EMERGENT CHOREOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF HAY'S *AT ONCE*

The following emergent choreographic analysis is structured in three major sections, corresponding to the three distinct strands of Hay's choreography and their primary linguistic form: 1) The Score: Choreographing Intentionality/Intention through Ambiguous Assertions, 2) The Questions: Choreographing Attention through Rhetorical Interrogatives, and 3) The Tools: Choreographing Action through Enigmatic Imperatives. In each of the three sections, I develop my analysis in two subsections: a) function of the specific linguistic strand, and b) discussion and analysis of experience. I begin, however, with an overall introduction to the work so that the reader has a sense of the three strands as part of a whole before I consider each in turn.

The score for *At Once* is an eleven-page double-spaced text document, provided in hard copy to participants on day one of the SPCP residency. The participants also received several revised versions of the score during the week-long process and subsequently via email over a few months following the residency. The cover page of the hard copy document includes a list of

the names of the participants who commissioned this score. The specific version of the score that I refer to in this study was distributed by Hay via email after the residency and is dated September 2009. It opens with the following credit: “text, choreography, and direction Deborah Hay” (Hay, *At Once* 1).

Immediately following this on the first page are four multi-level question sets (Hay’s header indicates that there are three when in fact there are four major sets presented):

Three [sic] questions for the dancer

What if the question “What if where I am is what I need?,” is not about what I need but an opportunity to remember the question “What if where I am is what I need?”

What if dance is how I practice my relationship with my whole body at once in relationship to the space where I am dancing in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to my audience? What if the depth of this question is on the surface?

What if my choice to surrender the pattern, and it is just a pattern, of facing a single direction or fixing on a singularly coherent idea, feeling, or object, when I am dancing – is a way of remembering to see where I am in order to surrender where I am?

What if how I see while I am dancing is a means by which movement

arises without looking for it? (Hay, At Once 1)

In my analysis, these four questions belong to the broader series of questions that I consider as the second of the three strands of Hay's braided choreography. In the text document, directly following the questions are three notes or "reminders":

3 reminders for the practice of *At Once*

Remove your sequencing from the sequence of movement directions.

Remove hesitation and reconsideration.

A word or short phrase in purple ink is a warning to steer clear of any creative impulses or habitual behavior in regard to the language used; replacing those impulses by instantly assuming the cellular intelligence of the body. (Hay, *At Once 2*)

These three reminders quoted above belong to the larger collection of what I refer to as verbal tools that Hay offers to performers in the practice of the work. In my analysis, the tools comprise the third strand of Hay's choreography.

The four questions and three reminders (tools) I refer to above, which actually appear written within the score itself, are representative of the broader series of questions and collection of tools that Hay offers to performers in the process of learning her work. Through the learning process, Hay verbally volleys questions and tools to the performer during group and individual practice, sometimes abbreviating the phrasing or offering an adapted version of a question or tool. Taken together at the outset of this document, which includes the text-based score proper, these questions and reminders provide some insight into the philosophical and rhetorical tone of inquiry that characterizes Hay's specific practice.

After the questions and reminders, a poem appears on page three of the score that suggests a multidimensional, affective realm that perhaps this dance could evoke. While this poem may gesture toward a field of meaningfulness in which to situate the work, its inclusion is enigmatic in relation to the whole of the practice in which meaningfulness is fundamentally questioned. I am not concerned here with developing possible or potential interpretations of the dance, nor therefore of this poem as a discrete substantive entity. My focus is on the experience of the practice in which this poem, as part of the score, plays a role addressed below. Following the poem, the choreographic directions start on page three in black font with various notes interspersed in blue font. (As indicated by Hay in the quote above, a handful of words appear throughout in purple. Where I quote from the score in the following sections, I insert indications of font colour where relevant.) Choreographic directions take the form of single sentences or short paragraphs. While a few directions are relatively concrete and specific and include very simple and direct movement activity, spatial pathways or temporal guidelines, most are more abstract, sometimes poetic and don't necessarily suggest movement at all. Earlier I have referred to Hay's own characterization of her choreography in a longer quote, from which I here repeat her qualification of her movement choices as: "1) impossible to realize, 2) embarrassing to "do", or, idiotic to contemplate, 3) maddeningly simple" ("How do I recognize my choreography"). Often, a choreographic direction is followed by one or more individual notes, guiding and reminding the performer to maintain fidelity to the practice, which includes practicing the questions and tools.

In an article from 1988, Hay commented on how she worked with set movement in reference to her more conventionally choreographed 1984 work *The Well*: "I use the prescribed

movement like a child uses monkeybars. The form catapults me into the unknown. I return to it, secure in its support, but my attention is focused on what I am really after – returning again and again to what is not graspable” (“Remaining Positionless” 22-23). This quote refers to “prescribed movement”, which is how Hay was working at the time. In *At Once*, there is essentially no prescribed movement, but there is still choreography⁸⁴ and in my experience it functions as Hay has described: as a guide or support for an exploration of the unknown. The following quote is drawn from my first-order journal entries, and refracts my experience of the choreography overall:

November 3, 2009

So if I need the score, then why do I also feel like it constrains me from full immersion – or is that the point? The score demands my [focus, and] draws me away from falling in. [My use of the phrase falling in refers to the experience in which I lose my focus on the score, questions and tools, and indulge in the experience of moving, enjoying and playing with the images or metaphors that arise from my movement or a narrative thread that evolves. Falling in, as such, is counter to Hay’s practice and leads to resolved, graspable, solidified meaningfulness.] But I’m also working to be as close to that edge as possible – so I’m not “fallen in” but I’m also not removed. Somehow the score, questions and tools combined restrain and enable me in ways to navigate the precarious edge. If I fall in – then I lose the relation with my environment, audience, space, time, and become subject of my own experience. And perhaps object to the audience? If I navigate the edge, then I invite a sustained relation-with and the intersubjective

potential opens. When I feel this, I feel the proximity of the world and the thickness of space and the presence/passing of time. A kind of awareness in which they are more revealed in themselves rather than being background to my foreground – or life, society, culture, the everyday layers and layers of sediment through which we wade or perhaps on the surface of which we step busily.

In the above journal quote, the experience of the choreography starts to become apparent insofar as it compels and constrains the performer. The multidimensional focus required to embrace all three linguistic aspects at once in the practice of the work is part of the challenge and function of the choreography. In lived experience, the score, questions and tools function together in a linguistic matrix of assertions (statements), interrogatives (questions) and imperatives (tools or directives) respectively, through which the performer moves. It is only in reflective analysis that these aspects may be discerned as three discrete strands of Hay's choreographic braid by their linguistic form (assertive, interrogative, imperative) and by their function (choreographing intention, attention and action). I will now address each aspect and its primary function in the following sections and subsections.

THE SCORE: CHOREOGRAPHING INTENTIONALITY/INTENTION THROUGH AMBIGUOUS ASSERTIONS

In Hay's work, the score operates in a very specific way as one of three aspects of the whole of her braided choreography and practice. If we take the understanding of intentionality established in the previous chapter using Merleau-Ponty, as the quality of towardness, the mutual tending toward of body-subject and world, of grasping together in situations, then we can begin to

understand the role of the score in Hay's work, which is one aspect of the destructuring structure effected by her choreography and practice. It is important here to make a distinction between the terms *intentionality* and *intention*. For my purposes, I will use *intentionality*, via Merleau-Ponty, to articulate the connectedness arising through our given capacities between body-subject and world in situations, a *situation* being a general term for any instance of being-in-the-world. I will use the combined term *intentionality/intention* to both relate back to Merleau-Ponty's use and to articulate a more specific orientation (connectedness) between *myself as performing body-subject* and the world of *Hay's choreography and practice*, in a *constructed* situation, with the term *constructed* here denoting the more specific and distinctly linguistic theatrical dance performance instance of being-in-the-world. This distinction in terms preserves the theoretical frame I have articulated through Merleau-Ponty that subtends my analysis while allowing for a more specific consideration of the particular connectedness – intention – between myself-as-dancer and the choreography-as-dance in this specific experience.

In clarifying these terms here, I retain the meaning of *intentionality*, via Merleau-Ponty, as a fundamental open adhering of body-subject and world, and establish my use of the related term *intentionality/intention* that derives from the first and yet arises through a more specific context. Understanding *intentionality/intention* as a layered form of fundamental intentionality maps onto Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the sedimentation of structures of experience insofar as intention, as I'm defining it here, arises in a more sedimented context in which structures of experience have accumulated for myself as dancer (body-subject) in theatrical performance situations (world/s). *Intentionality/intention*, then, is a more particular form of fundamental intentionality. In short, for my purposes intentionality is to situation what

intentionality/intention is to constructed situation. And, it is in the constructed situation of Hay's choreography and practice that I experience the score operating on my intentionality/intention, that particular towardness arising between myself – as the dancer – and Hay's work – as the dance.

Function of the Score: Choreographing Intentionality/Intention

The score functions on several levels to choreograph my intentionality/intention. As the directions for my performance of a dance, at the outset the score and I move toward each other, linking together by inherent “intentional threads” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 83) and informed by previous lived experiences of dancer-dance situations that have sedimented as structures in my body schema. As I am open to and tending toward this lived experience as a bodysubject through fundamental *intentionality* via my given capacities – cognitive, affective, motor-practical and perceptual – and specifically so through *intention* as an experienced dance performer, the score draws, attracts or engages me, just as I am open to be drawn, attracted or engaged. The score, as a text, draws my cognitive (cognitive-linguistic) capacity and further engages this aspect of my intentionality/intention through its complex language. The opening poem specifically draws my affective capacity, engaging this aspect of my intentionality/intention, which perpetuates throughout the score with references to the affective dimension of joy/sorrow. The fact of the “dance” itself as something generally realized as a movement-based event draws my motor-practical capacity, and the few explicit movement cues with spatial and temporal directions throughout the score further engage this aspect of my intentionality/intention. References throughout the score to the practice of perception particularly

in relation to space and time, along with the questions and tools (to be discussed more specifically in dedicated sections below), draw my perceptual capacity, which, as I will elaborate later, is engaged in Hay's practice as a primary intentionality/intention upon which the performance relies.

Thus, in the ways described above, Hay's score choreographs my intentionality/intention and precipitates a mutual grasping of dancer and dance, bodysubject and world. However, through Hay's distinct and deliberate use of linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies illuminated in the examples below, my intentionality/intention is choreographed uniquely from my experiences in other dances and from other daily, lived experiences generally. Generally, through intentionality and a particular grasping or fitting together of bodysubject and world, subjectivity and otherness (identities and objects) precipitate in situations, structures are thus acquired and sedimented, and subsequent meaningful interpretations and interactions can occur. In Hay's work, as I will discuss below, through her ambiguous assertions the complex linguistic operations of the score subvert the process of intentionality/intention, of mutual grasping, undermining the tendency toward precipitation of identities and objects, subjectivity and otherness, and perpetually throwing the performer back into flux and away from the possibility for meaningful organization of bodysubject and world. Intentionality/intention is necessarily engaged and yet simultaneously deflected, folded back on itself, by the language of the score. Like a sock turned inside out is still a sock, intention, turned inside out, is still intention; however, what appears is the "other side" of it – not the intentional object but the *écart*, the spreading away of subjectivity and otherness. We can never be in the world without intentionality, according to Merleau-Ponty's thinking. We are always already engaged, or "in-the-world".

Hay's work embraces this, working with these inherent processes of connectedness and precipitation and using language to perform deliberate operations that attempt to perpetually suspend those very processes. As intentionality/intention draws dancer/bodysubject and dance/world toward an intentional focal or meeting point, Hay's score choreographs these processes into an experience rather of the *écart*, or spreading away.

Discussion and Analysis of the Score: A Well-Worn Path

In this section, I present several examples and quotes from my journals that reveal the ways in which the score functions to choreograph my intentionality/intention.⁸⁵ My aim is to show how Hay's score simultaneously engages and deflects it through linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies such that the performer experiences a suspension of processes of intention, moving not toward meaningfulness and the intentional object, but instead into the *écart* or spreading away that I have articulated in the previous chapter via Merleau-Ponty. As one of three distinct linguistic aspects of Hay's braided choreography, I consider the text of the score in linguistic terms as a series of choreographically ambiguous assertions, declarative statements that assert themselves as a dance.

My experience of the score is of an increasingly well-worn path, the specific choreographic directions marking the progression of the experience like blazes on a trail, beckoning me forward, leading me through the forest of the experience. The detail in the language and the specificity of the cues proposed in the score challenge me in their simultaneously concrete declarations and ambiguous abstractions: they are, metaphorically speaking, the rocks, roots, inclines and textures along the trail, giving me boundaries, however

porous, and direction, however meandering. The choreographic directions, as linguistic assertions, engage me in this specific performance context.⁸⁶ They are the “what” of the dance in a way, and initially engage my intention. The specificity of the choreographic assertions propels me through the experience, preventing me from becoming lost in free play – what is sometimes called “noodling” in vernacular improvisational dance parlance – or stuck in a physical loop, repetition or other movement or imagistic exploration, which may also occur in improvisational work.⁸⁷ The score demands my commitment, restraining me from indulging in or falling into particularly pleasurable, meaningful, or otherwise attractive/engaging movement experiences that might arise during the performance practice and that might otherwise be elaborated in improvisational work. The score is always nudging me back to the path. Each time I practice the dance, I retread the path, deepening its contour in the overall landscape, negotiating its particularities, noticing familiar landmarks and always being surprised by new details, perspectives and navigations that vary in degree from minor to major, each time. The score, as well-worn path, functions as a guide through an experience that is infinitely rich and complex, and allows me to explore it anew each time without becoming lost along the way. As a part of the constructed situation of Hay’s choreography, it productively constrains my process or journey and always leads me onward. Hay instructed us to always practice the score in its entirety, never to practice sections in isolation from the whole. This instruction is key to the way in which the score choreographs my intention, drawing me in and propelling me through the constructed situation of Hay’s work, as I describe in this journal quote from my practice:

November 27, 2009

There’s a tumbling quality to my experience in the score that I don’t feel in free

practice. [Free practice is how I describe working with the tools and questions outside of practicing the score. Though Hay instructed us to always practice the score in its entirety, not extracting sections for specific rehearsal, we did engage with the questions and tools in themselves during the SPCP and I continued doing this at times during my three-month practice]. I had a long free practice today and felt a shift partway through where I really connected to the world – my visual field – and was able to really listen to time, see/feel space but this becomes dull in the score to a degree, because the score is so strong – or my connection to it is so strong – there’s a magnetic power to this connection that acts like a force propelling me onward and I feel like the questions have the opposite potential – to be a kind of brake against this.

In this entry, I describe the score as a “force” and as “having a magnetic power”. These descriptions inform my analysis of the score’s function with respect to intentionality/intention, insofar as the score grasps me, as much as I grasp it. The score, as text for a dance, opens toward me – as performer – providing me with a context, with a baseline of initial intentionality/intention. In some ways, it doesn’t matter what I do, so long as I do something rather than nothing, and so long as change occurs, that there is a beginning, a middle and an end to this experience. The score is an important part of how Hay’s work *is* choreography, *is* dance, *is* performance, rather than simply a kind of meditation or therapeutic practice.⁸⁸ Because the score asserts a dance, it engages my intentionality/intention as a performer. There is a mutual fitting together of myself the performer and this score *as* a dance.⁸⁹ However, Hay’s linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies render the choreographic assertions both ambiguous

and unrealizable. As such, while engaging my intentionality/intention, the score simultaneously deflects it.

I consider the opening poem and subsequent references to it through the score as the first of four examples that I consider here for the ways that they simultaneously engage and deflect my intentionality/intention. Three simple stanzas commence with the similar phrases “Joy and sorrow in the audience..., Joy and sorrow in movement..., Joy and sorrow in history...” (Hay *At Once 2*). During the residency/workshop, we spent very little time with this aspect of the score and Hay did not provide any direct explanation of the poetic text. As part of the overall document, however, it informs the performer and bears various oblique relationships to specific movement directions that occur later; for example, the direction to stream joy and sorrow across one’s face, near the beginning of the piece:

My body is still while joy and sorrow wash across my face like a stream of instances. A full smile or frown is never fulfilled. When not streaming, my face may briefly return to normalcy, or it may sustain a single reflection of joy/sorrow for longer moments.

[blue font] Note: I am not limited to my personal experience of joy and sorrow. It is a tremendous relief to know that it is in and about the audience, the theater, through history, time, and space.

*[blue font] Note: As I perform, I try to remove my tendency to embody the poetic language I use to describe the movement material. (Hay, *At Once* 4-5)*

This particular choreographic assertion directs the performer to both enact this affective streaming and at the same time, according to the second sentence, to avoid fully enacting either one of the affective qualities noted. Though indeed the third sentence of the assertion indicates that sustaining a longer moment of joy/sorrow is acceptable, importantly the fact that here Hay yokes “joy/sorrow” with a forward slash, and does not specify “joy or sorrow” or “joy and sorrow”, directs the performer away from specificity and toward an experience of fluid ambiguity. Further on, another note indicates: “[blue font] Note: I understand that joy and sorrow are always present in the world, in the audience, in my body. I do not have to instigate it [sic]” (Hay, *At Once* 6). This note inflects the entire set of cues throughout the score related to the joy/sorrow affect, explicitly dissociating the performer’s deliberate pre-determined affective intent (or instigation) from the existence, experience and physical actions of streaming joy and sorrow, implying that this ambiguous affect might simply flicker across the performer’s face like a breeze rippling the surface of a pond, arising in and from the world rather than in or from the performer.⁹⁰ Thus through a series of linguistic torques, this choreographic assertion engages and deflects the performer’s intentionality/intention, inciting precipitation toward affective movement meaningfulness and simultaneously subverting its intentional realization.

Lesley Satin has noted a similar dissociation between affect and physical action in writing about an earlier Hay solo, *Lamb at the Altar*, performed by Hay:

Sinking to plié, curving her torso forward, she continues to slide her hands down her legs and feet. And then she sobs exaggeratedly; the sound is bereft but the act is isolated, the sobbing unattached to any visible cause. It is as though all Hay *is* is standing and sobbing. Then she switches to the next unit: snaps off the sobbing

and dances off, alternately prancing and pausing. (Satin 188)

Here, Satin is addressing the way in which Hay's work comprised movement "units" (189) that "bypassed the codes of movement and movement organization that [ballet and modern dance] systems assumed" (191). In Satin's description we can recognize the engaging and deflecting of intentionality/intention that I have discussed as resulting from the choreographically ambiguous assertions in Hay's score.⁹¹

Throughout the score for *At Once*, the performer is challenged by similar choreographic assertions that, by simultaneously engaging and deflecting intentionality/intention, require the performer to practice Hay's "cellular intelligence"⁹² in which movement and the body's fluid responsiveness are prioritized over the tendency or desire to fix, register, recognize and express affective (or any other kind of) meaningfulness. Meaningfulness per se is precipitated and actively subverted by Hay's linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies, as I will continue to discuss.

My second example is one of the most concrete movement directions in the entire score and comes second in the sequence. This choreographic assertion exemplifies the way Hay gives practical physical information throughout the score, which comes – albeit rarely – as basic information of one or two kinds: general movement of the whole body or gesture with a body part, accompanied by either a spatial direction for where or temporal guide for when to enact the given direction:

The moment the light returns I step onto the stage walking in a stride and style not mine; as foreign as a foreign accent, recognizable but odd. The path is a singular broad curve that ends in a slightly accelerated little curl that leaves me

facing the portal through which I stepped onto the stage.

[blue font] Note: Nothing about my performance ends at the end of the curl. (Hay, At Once 3)

Though the choreographic assertion provides direct and explicit movement, the fact that an individual's walk is inherently personally specific and easily recognizable to those who are familiar, even from a distance, makes this choreographic choice highly significant. As a seemingly straightforward assertion on the surface, this direction is nevertheless complex in asking the performer to immediately acknowledge *and* relinquish her fundamental movement signature and begin to shift away from pre-established, personal identity – and yet Hay is not specific about the alternate stride save that it is “not mine”. “As foreign as a foreign accent”, the stride may be “recognizable but odd”. Again here, ambiguity comes to the fore: in this walk there is something familiar and at the same time something unfamiliar or unknown. By subverting personal habit and the desire to identify through her choreographic assertion, Hay directs the performer to enact identity as fluid and shifting. As a performer of this choreographic cue, I am somehow me and yet not me, and not specifically anyone else (a character, for example). Upon reflection, this line in the score recalls the experience of learning to speak a second language as an adult and the way that I experienced my sense of identity, personality and habits of expression shift and transform as I took on a new language, in a process of becoming other. Once again, through Hay's linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies, intentionality/intention is engaged and deflected by this ambiguous assertion.

In contrast to the above relatively concrete physical direction, my third example is of a

more abstract direction and multiple notes that come later in the score. In this example, the choreographic assertion provides no concrete movement information; however, the text does provide several parameters to constrain the performer in its enactment:

Complexity arises. I play havoc with how I perceive time and space rather than creating complex body movement. Clearing the dance of complexity is as abstruse, yet here I am, the two occurrences weaving back and forth several times. The duration of the two directions is choreographically challenging for the performer.

[blue font] Note: The movement is not difficult just because I use the words complexity, havoc, abstruse, choreographically challenging. And clearing the dance of complexity does not necessarily require flowing movement.

*[blue font] Note: If I can manage my perception of time and space to inform my body then I do not have to think about what movement to do next. What I mean by my perception of time is that it is passing. And what I mean by my perception of space is that I include it in my dancing so that I am not seduced by the intelligence, past experiences, patterns, limitations, and/or sensuality of my moving body. (Hay, *At Once* 9)*

As if it hasn't already arisen for the performer of Hay's work, here the score explicitly presents a new level of challenge. How, possibly, does one dance this choreographic assertion?

Fundamentally here, the score choreographs intention: as dance this choreographic assertion

engages the performer's intention; in its abstraction, as not-dance, this choreographic assertion deflects the performer's intention. Hay's linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies here thwart the mutual fitting together of performer and choreography (body-subject and world). Each subsequent sentence in this choreographic assertion participates in a multilayered linguistic torque that turns the previous sentence on its head, deflecting processes of intentionality/intention as they engage them anew. The sentence about "clearing the dance of complexity" compounds the challenge of this choreographic assertion, in which the two ostensibly contrasting occurrences of complexity and its clearing oscillate. The temporality of this oscillation is not obvious. Hay's indication that "the duration of these occurrences is choreographically challenging for the performer" actively deflects the performer's intentionality/intention away from habitual rhythmic, arrhythmic, sequential or otherwise pre-established structures or patterns of danced time. As Satin has noted: "Hay's work is detached from phrasing in the traditional sense, and the spectator's sense of timing is not moored to the temporal framework of the movements' arrangement" (189-190). In her first note, Hay's language deflects the performer's intentionality/intention away from creating complex, or for that matter flowing, movement. In her second note, she deflects the performer's intentionality/intention away from pre-existing patterns and structures of experience that might arise through the movement.

Further, because complexity "arises", I don't activate it; as a performer I am thrust into the experience. At the same time, because "*I play*", I actively enter into a kind of high-speed parrying with my perceptions of time and space, whatever they might be. Hay's language generates ambiguity and fluidity. I am intentional and yet not because space and time are

somehow the protagonists here and I am responding through my perceptions thereof. I am moving and yet not creating movement: it arises through my perceptions of space and time. And it is through this direct and flurried confrontation with perceptions of time and space that my intentionality/intention is deflected, inhibiting me from falling into habits, patterns and tendencies that might surface in my body. In this example, once again, the linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies in Hay's score function to simultaneously engage and deflect intentionality/intention.

A fourth example of a choreographic cue from the score suggests a more concrete imaginary setting but again gives no indication of how, physically, to perform it, while also counselling the performer to avoid doing something specific, to avoid "making" something appear or occur:

I perform market, a contemporary market, [purple font] a mall. Without creating [purple font] a mall I notice it wherever I am.

[blue font] Note: I attend to my perception of space and time in order to distract myself from predetermining the outcome of this choreographed language. It is an effort to refrain from creating [purple font] a mall. [blue font] Instead copious instances of [purple font] a mall [blue font] appear and disappear. (Hay, At Once 9-10)

In the note itself, which appears in blue in the actual score, the term "a mall" appears in purple. The purple font is an explicit reference to the third of the three reminders on page two of the score (which I have discussed above) and reminds the performer to avoid enacting "creative

impulses” or capitulating to “habitual behavior” that may be prompted by the language used. Instead, according to the reminder, the performer should “[replace] those impulses by instantly assuming the cellular intelligence of the body” (Hay, *At Once 2*, all).

In yet another of Hay’s linguistic torques, here again the performer is faced with a challenge. Whether a market/mall (or a city⁹³), Hay’s language evokes a familiar setting, undoubtedly familiar in some way to the performer through acquired structures of experience. Immediately then, the score engages intentionality/intention, these structures are activated and the performer’s tendency is to call upon these structures to project and in some way perform, present or represent this setting. However, Hay’s explicit warning to avoid this tendency jolts the performer back from this acquired structure and performing technique. Through the phrases “notice it wherever I am”, and “copious instances ... appear and disappear”, the score deflects the performer’s intentionality/intention. Like in the other examples discussed above, this deflecting of intentionality/intention pushes the performer back from the precipitation and structuring of subjectivity and objectivity acquired through previously lived experiences of market/mall and toward an experience of the fluid ambiguity and stretching away of subjectivity and otherness in which any instance could belong (or not) to market/mall (or city).

From this discussion of the score, its linguistic complexity becomes apparent. The above examples provide some insight into the character and tone of the text, which comprises a sequence of similar short choreographic assertions followed by various notes. The score’s text is variously enigmatic, obscure, poetic and nonsensical throughout. Sometimes it appears clear and direct on the surface; however, as can be seen in these examples, there is almost always a linguistic torque or semantic/syntactic strategy – word choice, word order or juxtaposition of

ideas – that interrupts easy understanding and confounds its enactment by engaging and deflecting intentionality/intention. Reading it, as we did aloud on several occasions during the SPCP, leaves one with the feeling that potential meanings are just out of reach. There is a quality to the experience of slipping and sliding, of jumping from ice floe to ice floe, of tumbling through, as my earlier journal quote indicates. The text itself explicitly and deliberately resists any attempt at a cohesive or metaphorical/poetic understanding. In Hay’s mixing of the poetic and prosaic, in her linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies, in comments and notes following choreographic assertions, the text – as a score for a dance – continually undermines our impulse to structure and organize, to understand. It constantly catches us just before we solidify a meaning, flipping and turning the language and setting potential meanings back into motion and flux. In order to dance the score, a leap of faith is required; faith that somehow my body will understand how this text becomes a dance. The text of the score asserts itself as a dance, to be moved; it is a proposal to be enacted through embodied performance – and it is but one of three distinct linguistic strands in Hay’s choreographic braid.

THE QUESTIONS: CHOREOGRAPHING ATTENTION THROUGH RHETORICAL INTERROGATIVES

In my analysis, Hay’s questions comprise a second distinct strand of her choreography. Here too, Hay’s use of language is specific and performative, in the sense that these questions “do something”⁹⁴ when embodied by the performer in the practice of Hay’s choreography. In the text document, as discussed above, Hay includes four questions for the dancer. These four questions come from among a larger malleable set that Hay offers in the practice of her work.

For the benefit of the reader, I reiterate the four questions from the score here, in order to move my discussion forward:

Three [sic] questions for the dancer

What if the question “What if where I am is what I need?,” is not about what I need but an opportunity to remember the question “What if where I am is what I need?”

What if dance is how I practice my relationship with my whole body at once in relationship to the space where I am dancing in relationship to each passing moment in relationship to my audience? What if the depth of this question is on the surface?

What if my choice to surrender the pattern, and it is just a pattern, of facing a single direction or fixing on a singularly coherent idea, feeling, or object, when I am dancing – is a way of remembering to see where I am in order to surrender where I am?

*What if how I see while I am dancing is a means by which movement arises without looking for it? (Hay, *At Once* 1)*

These questions are offered in the score as a way to set up the overall practice of the work and were often repeated by Hay during the residency period, usually during an opening discussion before the day’s practice, or during brief reflections and discussions of group or individual

practice. As such, they form a kind of subtext to the score itself that runs along beneath it during practice and comes to the fore at various moments as another kind of support and guide that helps the performer maintain fidelity to the choreography and practice. Without them, practicing performing the score could quite easily transform through repetition and familiarity into an improvisational exploration or a semi-structured sequence of relatively repeatable movements. In these latter possibilities, pre-established forms or specific movement content begin to structure and organize the experience into more readily graspable meaningfulness, which runs counter to Hay's work. (I discuss Hay's work in relation to conventional choreography and improvisation in more detail in chapter 5.)

Hay's questions, as they are now primarily crafted, were developed initially as "performance meditations",⁹⁵ single enigmatic phrases around which she focused her movement practice over long periods, and which formed the core of solo works or group workshop and performance events. As noted earlier, a collection of these phrases appears in the back matter of Hay's book *My Body, the Buddhist*, under the heading "Performance Practices" (*My Body, the Buddhist* 103). Of the phrases listed there, most commence with the construction "I imagine ...", while some of the later ones commence with the rhetorical interrogative "What if ...?". In her more recent work, Hay seems to have moved away from calling these phrases "meditations" or "performance meditations" and has specifically embraced the linguistic strategy of the rhetorical interrogative "What if ...?" to set up these somatic inquiries.

Function of the Questions: Choreographing Attention

In Hay's work, the questions operate in a very specific way as the second aspect of her braided

choreography and practice. If we take the definition of attention established according to Merleau-Ponty in the previous chapter, we understand attention as a process of articulation and specification (Mallin 70) in which figures and forms are discerned, drawn out and made explicit as figures from a ground, or from what Merleau-Ponty describes as a horizon. This process of attention is what gives us “things”, patterns and connections that become structures with and through which we can act and interact. If we think of intentionality as an inherent and implicit process of orienting, then attention is the process of distinguishing specific forms and interrelationships among them from a given perspective and orientation. In Hay’s work, the questions choreograph my attention; however, rather than drawing forth figures, forms and objects from the horizon of possibility, Hay’s questions simultaneously engage and deflect this process. Figures, forms and objects recede into the horizon of possibility. In always returning to the rhetorical interrogative, Hay’s questions veer away from answers, away from specific, distinguishable and identifiable entities and toward a fluctuating and infinite spectrum of possibility. Hay’s “what if ...” questions initiate processes of attention but her interrogative syntactics refuse the figuring of form, *per se*; they activate somatic processes but subvert the figuring of body, *per se*. By way of illustration, consider the digital processes by which a blurry image can be further resolved so that the features and details can be more clearly discerned. By contrast, Hay’s work choreographs my attention away from such resolution, in the opposite direction toward increased blurriness and indistinguishability or flux, toward the question *qua* question.

As I have discussed above, what have in the past been referred to as Hay’s performance meditations are now framed by Hay most frequently as “what if’s...” and it is these questions to

which I attribute the operation of choreographing attention in Hay's work. Hay herself acknowledges the importance of the practice of attention, writing: "The maintenance of attention is the *work* that I do" ("Remaining Positionless" 23). Speaking from experience, it most certainly is work to sustain or perpetually return to an open, generative, percolating state of attention and resist the natural tendency to determine, articulate and specify. In Hay's work, the questions choreograph my attention engaging/deflecting it toward the horizon. Like in the between state of figure-ground reversal of the image of two faces or a vase in which neither figure manifests, Hay choreographs attention toward a fluctuating field of possibility that could become anything, but which is in that moment, nothing specific.

Discussion and Analysis of the Questions: Play in the Body, The Body in Play

In this section, I present several quotes that illuminate the ways in which Hay's questions function to choreograph my attention. In my discussion, I aim to show how Hay's questions simultaneously engage and deflect attention through linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies such that the performer experiences a suspension of processes of attention, moving not toward discerning figure and ground, but instead toward an experience of the horizon of all possibility that I have articulated in the previous chapter via Merleau-Ponty. As the second of three distinct linguistic aspects of Hay's braided choreography, I consider the questions in linguistic terms as rhetorical interrogatives, questions posed for the sake of the questioning itself and not to generate answers. As Hay herself has written: "The question stimulates the body's curiosity and responsiveness. The dancer is thus decentralized and continuously repositioned in relation to time, space, and other" ("Performance as Practice").

Hay's questions generally take two related forms. The first is the general form of the "What if ..." as in the four questions from the opening of the score quoted above and others from the more malleable set she offers in practice. The second is a subcategory also in the form of "what if ..." but specifically including reference to "the cellular body" or "every cell in my body", for example: "What if every cell in my body could perceive time passing?" The following quotes from my journal reveal aspects of my experience of the questions with respect to the process of attention. Here I describe their effect, particularly with respect to a) their capacity to catalyze an open attention to possibility and b) their role in subverting processes of figuring and forming.

Sept. 13, 2009

I found more freedom and movement in the song/dance and jazz crossing – not improv though because I was in the questions – perceiving – and I felt my curiosity piqued, possibilities open and more variety arise.

Nov. 4, 2009

In free practice ... I actually started though just in the question: "What if dance is how I practice relationship ..." from the score. I worked to stay with this question for a bit and began to really notice when I crossed the "line", fell over the edge into following my body/improvising. It sort of feels like forgetting and it also feels easier and less attentive.

Nov. 4, 2009

“What if where I am is what I need?”

Not about what I need but about remembering the question itself. When I work with this – I arrive here/now in presence/present and with a sense of calm, patience and attention. Also, I feel evaluation/judgment slough away as the possibility of the question rises up in me. This is a powerful experience ...

Hay’s enigmatic completion of her questions with phrases that syntactically fold back onto the opening “what if...” construction is key to their function in her work. By folding back I mean to describe the way in which the endings of the questions, or the secondary questions embedded therein, tend to strategically undermine the meaningful direction of the initial phrase. The questions effectively lead away from answers and redirect the reader/performer back into the open realm of the interrogative, suspending one in the rhetorical “what if ...”. Take the first question of the series included above, which is explicit in redirecting the reader/performer back toward the “what if...” and back into the question per se: *“What if the question “What if where I am is what I need?” is not about what I need but an opportunity to remember the question “What if where I am is what I need?”* (Hay, *At Once* 1).

Questions of the second type that include reference to the cellular body, by virtue of their construction not only fold back on the “what if ...” itself but also fold back on the body itself, putting it into play, and into question. By asking the performer to consider the body as a gathering of trillions of independent cells, Hay provokes a reconsideration of the conventional understanding of the body itself as a singular entity.⁹⁶ These secondary questions amplify the function of the question in choreographing attention in Hay’s work. First, they engage an inner-

directed attention toward the experience of the body that is immediately deflected from the more stable body-as-entity to the more mobile multiplicity of trillions of cells. Then they engage an outer-directed attention toward the experience, for example, of time, immediately deflecting attention from the more stable concept of time to the more mobile and multiple notion of time passing. The following extrapolated description of my experience of the questions in Hay's work further illuminates how they function to stimulate play in the body and put the body itself in play – in question:

This question – What if every cell in my body could perceive time passing? – draws my perceptual attention to an experience of my body as a dynamic fluid versus a solid mass. My physical/sensory awareness becomes kinaesthetically open to the potential?/actual? perceptual experience of the micro fluctuations and constant liquid motion of my body as a configuration or gathering-together of trillions of tiny rippling, oozing, pulsing, flowing cells. Posing this question to my body catalyzes/prompts/stimulates an actual experience of physical release of inherent, patterned tendencies to hold or fix my physical stance, or aspects thereof, and draws my attention to perceptions of flux, mobility and constant micro-level dynamism within my body.⁹⁷ As this perceptual shift/experience washes through my body, I experience an opening of my sensory perception to the full three-dimensional space around me, engendering a more equal multi-directional, holistic bodily awareness of my surroundings/environment and a simultaneous resonance or reverberation of my actual physical/sensory presence in/situatedness in/relationship with/my environment/the world.

This frisson of awareness I describe above is similar to the buzzing bodily vibration one may

experience when one hears a quiet, but unusual and unrecognized sound in the dark of one's own home in the night. The key connection between my experience of the questions in Hay's work and this quotidian example is that in both, there is a confrontation of sorts with the unknown, the unrecognized, the uncategorized. In such an experience, one's somatic attention becomes heightened; the event draws forth the body's perceptual processes and catalyzes imagination's generation of possibilities: "What if ...?" The difference is that in the quotidian experience, we would typically seek an answer and probably not easily return to sleep without a resolution. In Hay's work, the tendency to seek and arrive at answers and resolutions is actively thwarted. In my experience in Hay's work, the questions provoke or awaken play in the body; however, in their folding back, the questions also put the body itself into play. As a performer, I am not body as entity but body becoming flux.

Thus, Hay's linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies choreograph the questions in her work specifically to effect an inner-outer engaging/deflecting of the process of attention, ultimately pushing the performer away from figuring, forming and structuring either body or environment and rather toward the horizon of possibility. As a question so inclines us, we start to go toward the answer, and as we begin rolling down the question, its very interrogative character tips upward and around, and we roll back into the "what if...?" of the "what if ...?". Tip a question mark on its side. Leap across the abyss from the point to the stem and begin to move along into the deep curve, which travels back up and around in reverse, to where the interrogative suspension gathers and thickens, ready to drip back down onto the deep curve. Repeat. Now imagine being in motion everywhere on this figure at once. *At Once*. This is the impossible processual figure of the embodied experience of "What if...?" It is the question per

se that is the key because it functions to simultaneously engage and deflect attention. The question “What if ...?”, spoken easily and lightly, is a textual gesture that in its porous proposal resists objective stasis, seeking not to state or confirm, but to engender openness and play. Indeed, in a linguistic torque that epitomizes the engagingdeflecting of attention, one of Hay’s secondary questions (from the main four quoted above) asks: “*What if the depth of this question is on the surface?*” (*At Once* 1).

In several instances in Drobnick’s analysis, he connects various terms in Hay’s lexicon, including definitions of Performance Meditation, Play and Cellular Consciousness, to the activity of attention. In his definition of “Performance Meditation”, he explains that such phrases or “affirmations” help to focus the performer’s mind, providing each dance with a central “imaginative task or space” (53). In this definition Drobnick notes, quoting Hay, that: “The meditations serve as generative sources of inspiration one keeps returning to throughout the performance – they are ‘perfect little attention devices’” (Drobnick and Hay qtd. in Drobnick 53). In his definition of Hay’s use of the term “Attention” itself, he writes: “Attention is an exceptional state of being because it noticeably stands out from the ordinary tendency to live distractedly and habitually” (48). Hay used to employ a single meditation for a single performance or work or year of practice.⁹⁸ Having multiple questions, as in the case of *At Once* serves the same purpose to focus the performer’s mind; however, in providing more options for the performer to work with Hay multiplies the effect of the “what if ...” – the question qua question – in engagingdeflecting the process of attention.

Drobnick also defines the term “Play”, which he cross references to the term Performance Meditation. According to Drobnick, play encompasses “[g]ames and imaginative exercises –

what Hay calls ‘what ifs’ ... techniques for engaging performers totally in mind and body” (53). Drobnick’s point not only aligns Hay’s ‘what ifs’ with play, it also resonates with my point about the way in which Hay’s questions choreograph attention, “engaging performers totally” and deflecting attention to the horizon of possibility rather than discerning a specific figure from a ground. He goes on to note that “playing asks performers to forget themselves ... which carries the risk of looking ridiculous” (53), which prompts him to make the connection to child’s play and point out the quality of serious and compelling engagement witnessed therein. In linking these terms and connecting them to the realm of imagination, Drobnick’s work usefully corroborates my analysis. Indeed, Hay’s “What if ...?” is like saying “Let’s pretend...”. The rhetorical interrogative “what if ...?” in itself invokes the space of play in which the horizon of generative possibilities percolates but from which none are yet formed or specified. In Hay’s work, I am not playing “something”. In fact, for Hay, we are simply “playing awake” (Hay, “Letters” 70).

Hay has indicated in talks and workshops that her questions should be said lightly, somewhat with a sense of humour. I recall her saying this during the SPCP with an impish, wry smile and a twinkle in her eyes.⁹⁹ Hay often embodies a sense of play and lightheartedness in her work and interactions, generally. Rather than simply a personality characteristic, I think this is a key aspect to Hay’s work in cultivating a quality of ludic openness that resists sedimentation, solidification and stasis and rather supports mobility, laterality and flux.¹⁰⁰ In her article “Remaining Positionless”, Hay writes about her interest in games and play, making the connection to the way that games and play demand (or as I argue, choreograph) attention: “These are the tools of my dance making – games with rules I love playing. Games that include a

propensity for imagination and change. Games that demand my attention or the dance vanishes” (“Remaining Positionless” 23). This playfulness also links to the Zen influence in her practice insofar as Zen koans are like riddles and cannot be approached directly, nor are they necessarily resolvable.¹⁰¹ Hay’s book *My Body, the Buddhist* includes chapters entitled: “my body is bored by answers” and “my body enjoys jokes, riddles, and games”. Hay is most certainly not interested in resolution. In commenting to the audience attending an open rehearsal of her work *Up Until Now...* on Toronto Dance Theatre, she said something to the effect of, and I paraphrase: “I love watching a work in which nothing happens but is happening all the time” (Open Rehearsal).

THE TOOLS: CHOREOGRAPHING ACTION THROUGH ENIGMATIC IMPERATIVES

The third aspect of Hay’s choreographic braid comprises a set of verbal tools or directions for the performer, to be enacted in the practice of the choreography. The tools use more direct and specific language than either the score or the questions insofar as they are mandates for the performer, most often given as imperatives; however, they too bear evidence of Hay’s distinct linguistic torques that transform them into *enigmatic* imperatives. In the score, several such tools are listed in the opening and I reiterate them here for the reader:

3 reminders for the practice of At Once

Remove your sequencing from the sequence of movement directions.

Remove hesitation and reconsideration.

A word or short phrase in purple ink is a warning to steer clear of any creative

impulses or habitual behavior in regard to the language used; replacing those impulses by instantly assuming the cellular intelligence of the body. (Hay, *At Once 2*)

The third reminder here is somewhat unique and is more akin to the notes provided throughout the score, rather than one of the verbal tools as I'm articulating them. Nonetheless, this third reminder could be rephrased in the imperative as: "steer clear of any creative impulses or habitual behaviour in regard to the language used" and would then more closely belong to the set of verbal tools under consideration here.

Other than these three reminders in the score, the verbal tools are primarily provided by Hay in person during the residency process, spoken in an ad hoc manner generally during practice sessions. As Hay observes, responds to and coaches the performer in the practice, these imperatives come at the performer seemingly randomly and can be somewhat jarring, though the performer is expected to maintain focus and continue the practice. This jarring effect – which feels like the interruptive experience of having the hiccups – is purposeful as Hay offers these tools to jog the performer out of what she perceives as a habit or pattern that is developing in a particular performer's run of the score, or to shift the performer away from possibly or actually falling into improvisation or the development of thematic movement material, narrative or character.¹⁰² As a result of having heard these tools repeatedly delivered by Hay during my own and others' performance practices during the residency process, the phrases have become an embodied third strand in the performance practice, along with the score and the questions. In this way, they could be considered a kind of habit in themselves; however, as I will discuss, in their linguistic construction and challenging demands, the language of the tools – like the score and

questions – operates to subvert their easy implementation. As tools to thwart organizing processes and pattern formation – embodied as interruptive hiccups – in themselves they resist habituation.

Function of the Tools: Choreographing Action

Hay's tools operate in a very specific way as the third and final aspect of her braided choreography and practice, to, in effect, choreograph the concrete action of the dance. Distinct from the score, which catalyzes the intentional context, and distinct from the questions, which focus the performer's attention, as imperatives, the tools specifically direct the performer's action which, as I will discuss, is not danced action but rather perceptual action.

The movement precipitated by Hay's tools is not meaningful movement per se, encompassing some purpose – such as taking up a fork to eat – or expression – such as spreading and then enclosing one's arms to share an embrace. Nor is it even the abstracted movement – movement for movement's sake – that we might find in set or improvised dance, for, in these cases, there is still meaningfulness within an abstracted expression or purpose: this movement is conceived and understood as “form” and/or “content”. The tools in Hay's practice generate movement that is neither “form” nor “content” per se. Rather, the tools function to incite the basic movement of change – from cellular pulsing and fluctuations of breath through to gross motor movement. This movement is of the order of Merleau-Ponty's “global motility”, which as I have discussed earlier is described by Mallin as a fluctuation between a general abduction and adduction of the body (movements away and toward the centre of the body) (163). In Hay's work, as I will discuss, the general imperative to “fire” into motion and the simple directions of

turning, shifting, and even of inviting and noticing can be understood as instances of bodily expansion (abduction) and contraction (adduction). For example, using a camera aperture as a metaphor, one can understand inviting as a kind of global opening or dilating of the body; whereas, in contrast, noticing can be understood as a kind of global closing or constricting of the body.¹⁰³ This global motility, or general expansion and contraction of the body is described by Merleau-Ponty as a “rhythm of existence” (Merleau-Ponty qtd. in Mallin 163). Thus this movement can be understood as the movement of existence. I have earlier identified the term “action” to encompass this range of possibility in order to distinguish from Merleau-Ponty’s “global motility” and to capture the possibility of all involuntary and voluntary movements beyond what we conventionally understand as dance movement.

Hay’s tools choreograph the performer into this action and thereby into the perceptual processes that are fundamentally enabled by the basic movement of change. Hay’s enigmatic imperatives continually direct and redirect the performer simultaneously both toward her bodily experience and through her body toward the environment. Although the language of the tools may or may not reference perception directly, embodying the tools – in random and rapid sequence – activates perceptual processes. I am specific here in articulating perceptual *processes* versus perceptual *structures* because the random and rapid sequencing of the tools along with the requirement to perform the score and practice the questions, undermines the possibility for organizing or structuring of the experience to occur. This processual experience is further emphasized by the tools’ linguistic constructions, which, as I will show through a pairing of examples below, propel the performer into perceptual oscillation through the experiences of reversibility that the tools effect. The performer is choreographed into the experience of seeing

and being seen (visibility), touching *and* being touched (tangibility), “hearing” and “being heard” (audibility).

Without prescribing or designing movement per se, Hay’s tools direct the performer into action and yet away from attaching to, defining or thematizing any particular movement experience, propelling the performer instead in the throes of perceptual processes. Further, Hay’s imperatives constantly shift the performer’s perceptual modes (visibility, tangibility, audibility) and perceptual directions (toward the body or toward the environment; inner/outer) in what Merleau-Ponty discusses in his essay “The Intertwining – The Chiasm” as intertwinings and reversibilities (*Visible and Invisible* 130-155). As Merleau-Ponty articulates: “There is a double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible” (*Visible and Invisible* 134). Through the following analysis of a selection of Hay’s tools, I establish how Hay’s tools choreograph the performer’s action: away from “danced (theatrical) movement” per se, away from purposeful, expressive, meaningful gesture, and away from the tendency to fall into physical habits or patterns of movement or performance that may be ingrained from previous years of dance training or general enculturation. My discussion highlights the interrelatedness and crossing over of perceptual processes – the body as both sentient and sensible. In choreographing the performer’s action away from meaningful danced movement, Hay’s tools choreograph the performer toward fundamental motility and, in perpetuating experiences of perceptual reversibility, into the process and practice of perception.

Discussion and Analysis of the Tools: Perceiving is Moving, Moving is Perceiving

Hay’s verbal tools and directions function within the choreography as cues that tune up and

activate perceptual processes. These cues, phrases and directions may seem enigmatic to readers who do not have familiarity or experience with dance or somatic practices and indeed they are, even for those who do. Hay doesn't typically explain what these phrases mean or how to use them. They are tools to be embodied in practice, which is where their function is realized. During the SPCP, Hay's emphasis was on the lived experience of the work in which the tools were embodied and enacted, not reflected upon. Based on what she was seeing in the performance, Hay would call out various directions during group and solo practice as reminders. In her doing so, we participants were able to sometimes discern the effect of a tool when a performer responded to it.

As a result of hearing Hay speak these tools over and over during the residency process, her voice came to be "memorized" in my body as part of the practice. In my experience, practicing alone after the workshop period, far from Scotland and far from Hay, I would consistently "hear" her voice reminding me of various tools as I worked. Sometimes they would flow together or arise in combinations. Most often I did not experience them as linguistic phrases but as actions in my body. They would "surface" at different moments in a way almost in response to what I needed to remind myself of in any given experience – like embodied "reminders", which is how she introduces the three examples provided in the opening pages of the score. The tools cannot be thought about per se during practice. As noted, these imperatives are actions that must be lived. I have only come to analysis after the three-month process of practicing and writing, and period of journal transcription and extrapolated description. As the following journal entry reveals, my body understood their meanings experientially:

Sept. 11, 2009

The ready-fire-aim tool is helpful but also problematic if it becomes a conscious directive rather than an embodied 'coach' to keep present with/to the moments that arise and always ready to surrender the 'previous' moment.

The key is to understand that these directions are offered 'to the body' with implicit confidence in the body's own capacity to respond, to *apprehend* rather than *comprehend*. According to the Gage Canadian Dictionary, these terms are distinguished as follows: comprehend means to "take complete hold of the meaning of something and understand it fully and perfectly"; whereas, apprehend means to "take hold of a fact or idea but without necessarily seeing its relationships or implications" ("apprehend" and "comprehend").¹⁰⁴ I use this terminology because it helpfully describes the way we can "take hold" of these tools with our bodies as tools for use – in action – in an immediate and non-reflective manner as compared with the way we might "take hold" of them more reflectively, considering and analyzing their meanings and relations. To illustrate, in a cursory manner, I suggest the reader recall the moment when one's alarm clock rings, prompting one from a deep sleep in a darkened bedroom. Typically, one can very rapidly find and turn off the alarm, without looking and almost before actually waking. The sound of the alarm can be likened to Hay's directions and the body's response, to both the alarm and Hay's directions, is a somatic one.¹⁰⁵

Hay's extensive collection of tools challenges the performer's capacity to sustain a multidimensional awareness of them all throughout the duration of the practice, while also managing to practice the score and the questions, ultimately in the presence of an audience. Throughout the following descriptions and discussion, I will elaborate how Hay's cues activate perception, and engender experiences of reciprocity, reversibility and intertwining. For my

purposes here, I have selected a small set of examples from the larger and somewhat shifting collection of tools that I experienced as part of Hay's practice during the SPCP process and that have been acknowledged variously in others' writing about Hay's work (i.e. Drobnick; Satin; Nicely). I have chosen these phrases specifically to exemplify the larger collection of tools as a distinct aspect of Hay's choreography and to enable me to articulate their function overall. In practice, the collection includes tools that can be considered alternate phrasings of others, which are connected to a root purpose or activity in Hay's work. I have listed the chosen examples in pairs along three perceptual dimensions to demonstrate how various tools function in complementary relation to activate both interoception and exteroception, the former referring to perception of internal somatic experience and the latter to perception of one's external environment.

1. Visibility

- a. "Invite being seen"
- b. "Refresh your visual field" ("Turn your fucking head")

2. Tangibility

- a. "Notice the feedback from your body"
- b. "Be a barometer of space" ("I need the lab")

3. Audibility

- a. "Ready-fire-aim" ("Move and Call it X" and "Step Up to the Moment")

- b. “Dis-attach” (“Remove my Sequencing from the Sequence” and “Here-and-Gone”)

1. Visibility

The first set of tools from the above list, “Invite being seen” and “Refresh your visual field”, explicitly address visibility.¹⁰⁶ I use the term visibility in reference to Merleau-Ponty’s usage, by which he refers to the given capacity of vision that renders visibles in the world and thereby renders us visible as well. Below, I briefly address this reversibility with respect to this pair of Hay’s tools. In my experience of Hay’s tools, the former imperative situates the performer as a recipient of vision from the external world. Rather than a passive recipient, a position that has been considered in accounts of the audience-performer relation and with respect to gaze theory, the performer here is active, as the implied subject of the verb “invite”. The latter imperative situates the performer as an active agent of vision and one who is directed to use her own capacity to shift and move in order to alter the scope of her own vision. Hay has at times stated this in the more frank phrase, “Turn your fucking head”, which gets quickly and directly to the point and provides the performer with a very clear action. In this pair of tools, by explicitly addressing perception – in this case vision – in an imperative linguistic construction, Hay directs the performer’s action. Importantly, the action is not “danced movement” per se. The simple motion of change prompted by Hay’s tools activates perceptual processes. Here, “invite” can be understood to involve a simple turning or opening (bodily in some way) toward the implied “seer”, just as refreshing the visual field can be accomplished through a simple turning or shifting of one’s head. This fundamental movement of change – the action of perception –

becomes the movement of the dance.

In this set of tools, revolving around vision, we also encounter and can begin to understand a certain reversibility insofar as the performer and the audience/world (be that the presence of an actual human audience or simply the presence of the external world, objects and entities therein) can be understood as one-inside-the-other, linked through vision and the visible. The performer is a visible in the world, inviting being seen, and the world is also visible “in the performer”, in and through the performer’s visual field. As Merleau-Ponty writes: “...there is an immediate equivalence between the orientation of the visual field of awareness and the awareness of one’s own body as the potentiality of that field” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 239). This is but one example of a set of tools that activates experiences of perceptual reversibility in Hay’s work. I will address my experience of this particular reversibility of I-world in the next chapter.

2. Tangibility

I connect the second set of tools “Notice the feedback from your body” and “Be a barometer of space” along the perceptual dimension of touch insofar as they both imply the registration – loosely speaking – of qualities of volume, density, pressure, tension, texture and temperature, for example.¹⁰⁷ The first imperative directs the performer toward her own body and asks the performer to tune in to somatic experience, indicating – through the use of the verb “notice” as in the use of the verb “invite” above – that the performer once again be active in this process. The second imperative in this pair situates the performer in relation to the surrounding space and through the term “barometer” (which measures changes in atmospheric pressure in meteorology)

directs the performer to register the qualities and characteristics thereof. In this tool, space is conceived of in a tangible sense as having pressure, or “force”. As imperatives, these tools direct the performer’s action but once again they do not define danced movement. In this case without the word “turn”, there is even less actual movement information provided per se. However, through the imperative construction Hay’s verbs imply the movement of change, thereby activating perceptual processes.

Here again a reversibility becomes apparent insofar as “the body” and “space” can be understood to be one-inside-the-other, and linked through touch and the tangible. “The body” is in space, registering the changing densities and textures thereof, while space is also in “the body”, made apparent through somatic pressures, tensions and textures within. This particular reciprocity of body-space will be elaborated through description and discussion in the next chapter.

3. Audibility

The final pair of tools I will discuss in order to exemplify the function of the tools in Hay’s work include: “Ready-fire-aim” and “Dis-attach”.¹⁰⁸ Where the first two sets of tools quite readily align along a perceptual dimension, these tools do not as obviously connect to one. However, I connect this pair of tools to the perceptual dimension of audibility by recognizing the way that duration, sequence and rhythm commonly manifest through sound (as a marking or punctuating of time) – both in the world, for example in music, and in the body, for example in the lub-dub of our heartbeat. Insofar as “ready-fire-aim” – through its more common word order of ready-aim-fire – implies the preparatory sequence and sound of a gunshot, it indeed suggests audibility.

Further, my experience of this and the related tools “Step up to the moment”, “Here and Gone” and “Remove my sequencing from the sequence” activate an awareness of duration, sequence and rhythm generally. The former imperative, “Ready-fire-aim”, prompts the performer into action in a spontaneous manner. Like a runner at a race waiting for the starter pistol to fire her into action, the performer is also in an amplified attentive state of readying; however, Hay’s linguistic switch of order directs the performer to “jump the gun”, to simply fire into action before aiming. In my pairing of tools here, “Dis-attach” directs the performer to release the action, implying a kind of silence – or the action of listening – in opposition to the sounding of “ready-fire-aim”. “Ready-fire-aim” launches the performer into relatively spontaneous, un-premeditated action – like a reflex – subverting the process of aiming, assessing and choosing that would usually precede decisive action. Hay sometimes uses the phrase “Move and call it X” as a related tool to similarly catalyze this process.¹⁰⁹ The latter imperative to “Dis-attach” functions in a similar but opposing manner to subvert any reflective processing that might commence in the aftermath of a movement, directing the performer to release any tendencies to identify, assess and evaluate that might commence with respect to the manifested movement. As Hay otherwise puts it: “Here-and-gone”. As imperatives, once again these tools direct the performer’s action but they do not define danced movement. Through the imperative construction Hay’s tools catalyze action through the bodily movement of change, thereby again activating perceptual processes.

In this set of tools also, there is a reversibility at play insofar as rhythm and sequencing can also be understood to be one-inside-the-other, linked through sound and the audible. “Ready-fire-aim” directs the performer to spontaneously sound out movement with the body, which is audible to the body. “Dis-attach” directs the performer to stop sounding out movement and listen

to the also audible silence of the “after-before”. In the former, there is a process of listening for and hearing the sound of movement erupting and in the latter there is a process of listening for and hearing the silence of the dissipation of the movement. This particular reciprocity, which relates movement and time, will also be addressed through descriptions in the next chapter.

As the above analysis articulates, Hay’s tools work in specific ways to shift the performer away from “danced movement” per se, away from decisive/identifiable “acts of dance” and instead toward the fundamental movement of change and “acts of perception”. The experience is disorienting for the performer accustomed to either conventional choreography or improvisational modalities, and arguably also for the audience. As Dolan has noted from his experience as an audience member watching a performance of Hay’s work *Lamb, Lamb, Lamb, Lamb* ...: “They [the performers] were looking at us, the audience in a naïve and unforced attitude of re-cognition [...] To me it felt like dropping into an abyss where the very act of spectatorship, of watching and identifying with the proceedings, was effortlessly being called into question [...] at one point I had the feeling, utterly terrifying *and* enchanting, that I was onstage and the performers were the audience members” (206).

In the score itself, as a note to a choreographic cue, Hay writes of this move away from dance movement and toward perceptual process:

[blue font] Note: My choice to perform this material requires catastrophic acts of perception. I associate catastrophic with images of great loss. Catastrophe, in this sense, refers to the magnitude of former behavior that I need to dis-attach from in order to permit myself to enact these choreographic directions. It is loss of tremendous proportion. (Hay, *At Once* 5)

Nicely's analysis also becomes helpful here in corroborating my analysis of the tools. In her discussion of Hay's "catastrophic acts of perception" (which is the title of the Hay chapter in her dissertation), Nicely writes: "These acts of perception are catastrophic in that such reorientation is at great risk to what has been learned" (127). Later she notes some of the acts that must be relinquished by the dancer:

certain modes of orienting, sequencing movement, performing in ways that project and/or achieve certain kinds of sensations and feedback, and "checking out" to just ride movement pathways rather than [sic] attending to them. Many of these elements compose a professional dancer, and to then be asked to release these seems almost insurmountable. It is to risk our lives as dancers, (Nicely 131)

(Nicely's use of the phrase "checking out" here recalls my earlier description of the experience of "falling in" and the navigation of "the edge".)

Rather than providing the dancer with acts of movement, Hay choreographs the performer into acts of perception. Nicely notes that "[t]he acts of perception are sensorial ... movement arises by attending to the situation as it unfolds" (127). This quote effectively captures my experience of the tools overall, by which I am constantly propelled into action – which I have defined as the fundamental movement of bodily change with respect to Merleau-Ponty's global motility discussed in the previous chapter. It does not matter what movement and I needn't and shouldn't seek reflective understanding of its possible meaningfulness. It is sufficient that I move, that change occurs, in order to continually activate perceptual processes and subvert tendencies to arrest the flux in order to orient, define, organize and interpret the experience. In my discussion of the questions (what ifs...) I referenced Hay's phrase "playing

awake”. The title of Hay’s 1991 large group workshop, the phrase arises in an earlier published text by Hay entitled “Playing Awake: Letters to my Daughter”. There, Hay writes: “Tricks help me short-circuit negative or outmoded patterns of thought and/or action. Tricks wake me up to ‘playing awake.’ The only hard part is remembering to play” (“Playing Awake” 75).

To reiterate, according to Merleau-Ponty, movement – change – is necessary in order to perceive: motility enables perception and perception begets the first order structuring of experience. By engendering experiences of perceptual reversibility – of continually prompting shifts from experiences of seeing to experiences of being seen, from experiences of touching to experiences of “being touched”, from experiences of sounding to experiences of listening – Hay’s tools choreograph the performer into the thickness of visibility, tangibility, audibility, in-between these experiences. Hay’s tools choreograph the performer’s action; as imperatives they propel the performer into movement; however, by virtue of their enigmatic linguistic construction, the tools deflect the performer from “danced movement” per se. Instead, the tools foreground and choreograph the action of perceiving, activating perceptual processes rather than establishing perceptual structures per se. Rather than acts of dance, the tools precipitate acts of perception, Hay’s “catastrophic acts of perception”. And, according to Mallin on Merleau-Ponty, “perception gives us the clearest case of our relationship to Being” (31).

In the following passage, Merleau-Ponty’s description of the flesh resonates with my experience of the tools in Hay’s work:

It is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in particular when the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things, such that, simultaneously, *as* tangible it descends among

them, *as* touching it dominates them all and draws this relationship and even this double relationship from itself, by dehiscence or fission of its own mass. This concentration of the visibles about one of them, or this bursting forth of the mass of the body toward the things, which makes a vibration of my skin become the sleek and the rough, makes me *follow with my eyes* the movements and contours of the things themselves, this magical relation, this pact between them and me according to which I lend them my body in order that they inscribe upon it and give me their resemblance, this fold, this central cavity of the visible which is my vision, these two mirror arrangements of the seeing and the visible, the touching and the touched, form a close-bound system that I count on

(Visible and Invisible 146)

The resonance I wish to draw out specifically is that of the double experience of seeing/being seen, touching/being touched – the experience through the body of being both sentient and sensible – as a simultaneous dehiscence or splitting *and* folding back over that arises in/through perceptual processes. This reversibility, this experience of turning inside out, occurs in my practicing Hay's work in which the boundaries between what I understand as myself and the world blur to the point that I experience myself as world and I experience world as me – a contiguous tissue, the flesh. And through this experience of the flesh via the deconstructing structure of Hay's choreography and practice, historically sedimented meaningfulness is excavated to the degree that a glance at primordially becomes *impossibly* possible.

CONCLUSION: HAY'S CHOREOGRAPHY AS THE CONSTRUCTED SITUATION OF A DESTRUCTURING STRUCTURE FOR THE PRACTICE OF PERCEPTION

In a short article by Hay, she writes about one of her earlier solo dances *The Other Side of O* (1998), in which she includes a piece of text from her program notes describing a gesture that effectively articulates her consistent line of danced inquiry: "Touch the tip of one index finger to the other. Do the same with your thumbs. With these fingertips connected, open the space between them to form an O. Now separate your hands. What remains is the other side of O. This absence of boundary is the choreographed site for *The Other Side of O*" ("What if now is?" 34). It also effectively envisions and articulates the engaging/deflecting processes that I have articulated are at play in Hay's work through her distinct use of language to choreograph dance.

In this chapter, I have presented an analysis of Hay's choreography for the solo *At Once*. I began by summarizing my theoretical framework informed by Merleau-Ponty, outlining the way that lived experience occurs in situations and articulating my triumvirate dynamic relation of the key processes of intentionality/intention, attention and action that underpin the wovenness of body-subject and world. I then provided an introduction to Hay's choreography, and outlined my approach, which considers it a distinctly linguistic braid of three strands: the score, questions and tools. The majority of the chapter was then dedicated to an emergent choreographic analysis of Hay's solo *At Once*, based on my experience practicing performing the work.

I discussed the way in which the three strands of her choreographic braid construct a situation that, through its distinct and specific use of language, operates on processes of intentionality/intention, attention and action. In my discussion of the score, I have articulated how through ambiguous assertions it effectively choreographs intentionality/intention by

engagingdeflecting it from precipitations of subjectivity and objectivity toward the écart or spreading away of otherness. My analysis of the questions – the “what ifs...” – has shown how their construction as rhetorical interrogatives inherently blurs the figure they initially seem to articulate – often the body as an entity – ultimately choreographing attention by subverting the tendency to articulate figure and ground and precipitating a kind of hovering at the horizon of possibility. Finally, in discussing Hay’s tools, I have presented the way in which they function as imperatives to action, choreographing the performer not into danced movement per se but rather propelling her into the fundamental movement of change and reversibility of perceptual processes.

While these aspects of Hay’s choreography operate distinctly in the work, they necessarily weave together as a braid to form Hay’s choreography as a whole. Each aspect has its primary function and yet they layer and overlap in a non-hierarchical plait to form the choreography. In their interweaving they retain their primary function and yet support and enhance the functions of the other aspects. A more fine-grained analysis could potentially tease out secondary and tertiary operations within each aspect of the choreographic braid. However, for my purposes, it is sufficient to understand the primary functions of the score, questions and tools, and the general manner in which they work together to create Hay’s specific choreography, which proposes a complex and multidimensional linguistic-somatic challenge to the performer and ultimately thrusts her into a necessary practice of perception that is nonetheless impossible to sustain, as I will discuss in chapter 5.

From my emergent choreographic analysis of Hay’s score, questions and tools, we can begin to understand Hay’s choreography as a linguistically constructed situation which functions

as a desstructuring structure for the practice of perception. Based on my outline of Merleau-Ponty's articulation of situations and structures in the previous chapter, we recall that a situation can be understood as a fundamental body-world engagement, a certain kind of global or general context in which body and world fit together through fundamental intentionality. According to Merleau-Ponty, we are always and necessarily situated; importantly, however, situations are dynamic and ambiguous. While situations manifest a given fitting-together, they also contain within them the *écart* or stretching away from that fitting-together, as well as the horizon of all possibility. Within situations, through processes of attention our lived experience is organized into various structures of experience that are layered or sedimented in one's body schema. These structures are then called upon in new or different situations, in order to organize and interpret them, and to thus enable meaningful action within the context or situation.

We can now see how Hay's choreography can be understood as a *constructed* situation. First, a theatrical dance choreography and performance context is in itself a situation in which intentionality/intention draws performer, dance, and audience together; attention articulates and discerns specificity, calling up previously sedimented structures of experience to "make sense" of the situation and thus enable meaningful interpretation and interaction. In this case, however, Hay's choreography is a specifically *constructed* situation in which performer, dance and, ultimately, audience are presumptively drawn together through intentionality/intention but are then in a way "pushed apart" or "turned inside-out" by the linguistic operations of the choreography itself, which enacts not conventional danced movement per se but a practice of perception. In a way, Hay uses the theatrical dance performance context as a set-up or foil to enable the practice of perception. Thus Hay's choreography is a *constructed* situation. The

theatrical situation in effect isolates and protects the core of the work, the practice of perception, and at the same time makes it possible to practice. If one were to engage in this practice in public without the performance context, one might not only appear to be “insane”, one might also experience a sense of “insanity” for lack of a frame, context to hold the practice.¹¹⁰ Engaging in the practice in private without the performance context would potentially render it more of a therapeutic or meditative undertaking.¹¹¹

Through her very specific use of language in the score, questions and tools Hay effectively constructs a situation – her choreography – that uses language against itself in a way, to effect a destructuring operation that functions to undermine our habit- and pattern-forming processes, continually engaging/deflecting intentionality/intention from precipitations of subjectivity and otherness and into the *écart*, drawing our attention away from figure-ground specificity toward the horizon of possibility, and pivoting us through bodily-perceptual oscillations and reversals into a practice of perception – which according to Merleau-Ponty gives us our closest relation to Being.

It is the turning inside out noted above, engendered by the linguistically constructed situation that leads me to say that Hay’s choreography functions as a destructuring structure. In its specific and distinct composition as a linguistic braid of score, questions and tools, the choreography works as a kind of structure; however, in choreographing intentionality/intention, attention and action away from articulation and meaningfulness, and rather toward flux and ambiguity, the choreography works as a destructuring structure. It thwarts and subverts the calling up and application of pre-established structures of experience sedimented in the body schema by choreographing intentionality/intention, attention and action away from specificity,

figure-ground differentiation and danced movement per se. This destructuring structure has at its ultimate core a practice of perception, which is enabled through the choreographic function and which reveals, in performance practice, an inherently proximate, ambiguous and fluid body-world experience. Through the continual oscillations and reversals engendered by the score, questions and tools, the performer is choreographed through the sedimented layers of the body schema and into a kind of suspension of structuring that approaches a primordial limit, potentially allowing the impossible, a furtive and sidelong glance – in the word glance’s double sense of both seeing and/or touching – at primordially.¹¹²

When people use the word “presence” in discussions of Hay’s work, I think that it is this quality or character that they seek to describe. In the following quote, Merleau-Ponty expresses the way that *movement* is consciousness, *movement* is the way that we come to realize and know both body and world:

Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its ‘world’, and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation. Motility, then, is not, as it were, a handmaid of consciousness, transporting the body to that point in space of which we have formed a representation beforehand. (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 160-161)

Based on my analysis, this term “presence” in descriptions of Hay’s work can now be understood to express these instances of lived, fluid proximity of body-world, in which movement reveals itself as Merleau-Ponty’s consciousness, in a practice of perception. This is what arguably marks

and distinguishes Hay's work in the context of contemporary theatrical dance practice and performance,¹¹³ and it is what I describe and analyze from the inside of the experience in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Moving, Beyond Meaningfulness: Practicing Performing Somatic Anacrusis

I recognize my choreography when I see a dancer's self-regulated transcendence of his/her choreographed body within in [sic] a movement sequence that distinguishes one dance from another. (Hay, "How do I recognize my choreography?")

INTRODUCTION

What happens when I commit to the regular practice of Hay's distinctly linguistic choreography for the solo *At Once*? What is the nature of my experience inside the practice of perception that her choreography engenders?

In this chapter I establish the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis through descriptive analysis of my experience practicing performing Hay's work, distinguish it from several related concepts in the dance improvisation and somatics literatures, and discuss Hay's work – as choreography – in relation to an understanding of both conventional choreography and improvisation. I proceed, through experiential description, to articulate several key experiences that consistently arise through my regular engagement with the choreography and practice. Working from first-order journal entries developed during my four-month daily practice both performing and writing about Hay's solo *At Once*, along with extrapolated descriptions of key experiences in her work that I developed subsequent to my primary research, I discuss how they reveal distinct and constantly shifting experiences of I-world, body-space and movement-time. I draw on language from Merleau-Ponty to support my discussion, not as an attempt to work through his philosophy per se or to directly analyze these specific and contrasting experiences

through his work, but to help illuminate them as they arise through Hay's practice and to emphasize the way that these experiences align with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological articulations of bodily perceptive experience. Via my discussion, I arrive at three key somatic phenomena underlying these experiences, all of which are characterized by a unique felt sense of paradoxical simultaneity. Yoking these three somatic phenomena together, I develop the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis, which I then further articulate with reference to concepts from the dance improvisation and somatics literatures. This process of clarifying the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis allows me to distinguish Hay's work from both improvisation and set choreography and to show how her practice moves "beyond improvisation" and toward the "cutting edge of choreography".¹¹⁴

In the previous chapter, I presented a reflective analysis of Hay's choreography as a constructed situation in which the linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies within the score, questions and tools function on processes of intentionality/intention, attention and action, operating as a destructuring structure for the practice of perception. Hay's choreography effectively engages/deflects¹¹⁵ intentionality/intention, attention and action, in ways that continually subvert tendencies to stabilize, organize, and interpret meaningfulness. The choreography throws me into an experiential flux in which, through the practice of perception, I move the world's and my fundamental contingency – and potentially, impossibly, glance primordiality.

Here, I present a descriptive analysis of my experiences practicing performing Hay's choreography. As I have indicated in discussing my method, part of my effort in this study is to bring this lived movement experience into language and therefore I quote directly from my

journal entries and include extensive extrapolated descriptions throughout the following pages. As indicated above, I follow my own descriptions of experience with passages from Merleau-Ponty that reflect back on and illuminate them in a kind of dialogic citation strategy. Through this approach, I hope the reader will begin to see how the theory already lives within the experience. Nevertheless, I take an inherent risk in quoting directly from journal entries and in including extensive extrapolated descriptions. As I have discussed at greater length in my method section, in these experiential descriptions my aim is to use whatever language available to draw out the phenomena and as such, words arise and recur in ambiguous and sometimes contradictory ways. In my journal entries and extrapolated descriptions, I quite liberally use words that come to have more specific and defined meanings as terms in my analysis. These descriptions are tied to the experience and are first and second order efforts at describing and articulating the experience as it happened. It would be counterproductive to critique the use of terms in these descriptions because that would impose on them and prevent them from retaining their proximate tie to the bodily experience. Therefore I ask the reader to remember this caveat with respect to the various descriptive voices herein, which are denoted by italics.

Theoretical Recapitulation

In my introductory chapter, I presented several concepts and ideas from the dance improvisation and somatics literature that resonate with the experiences of flux and engaging/deflecting processes I've discussed that arise in Hay's work. I summarize them here in preface to my descriptive analysis of practicing performing Hay's choreography in order to guide the reader through my development of the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis. I will develop their

relevance to my work in more detail later in the chapter.

Dance improviser and scholar Ann Cooper Albright develops upon veteran dance improviser Nancy Stark Smith's notion of the "gap" as a state through which an improviser passes that involves a suspension of reference points and an experience of freefall that Stark Smith describes as "breaking ... a pattern of behaviour" and "from which more directions are possible than anywhere else" (Smith qtd. in Albright, "Dwelling" 258, both). Albright suggests that this experience points to an "existential openness" or "space in which to change our habitual responses" ("Dwelling" 259). Importantly, implicit in both Smith and Albright's perspectives, this experience is always on the way to somewhere: into a direction from among Smith's possible directions, or in Albright's words, "what could happen out 'there'" ("Dwelling" 260).

Improviser and researcher Kent De Spain articulates the ways that, in improvisational practice – an "attentional practice" (37) as he defines it – the mover pays attention to experience and draws sources therefrom with which to compose movement. He discusses different approaches to intentionality¹¹⁶ – toward movement, the physical body and/or elements of artistic form – that, through attention, draw the performer toward figures of experience and sense-making. De Spain also gestures toward "something ineffable", a "beyond" (36-37), that sometimes arises in improvisational experience and that for him lies outside linguistic articulation. He provisionally references the language of spirituality to reach at this experience, as have Hay and others in discussing Hay's work.¹¹⁷

Movement researcher Hubert Godard, in conversation with dance scholar Laurence Louppe, defines the concept of "gestural anacrusis", by which he identifies a spacetime of pre-movement, before the gesture as such, as an anacrusis, and describes it as a "low pressure trough"

and later as “a value... of hesitation, a certain suspension of being, body and thought” (Godard qtd. in Louppe 17). In Godard’s inquiry about what comes before movement/gesture, he is concerned nonetheless with understanding how the poetics of gesture, of movement, arises. While Godard’s gestural anacrusis and my concept of somatic anacrusis share a term, I distinguish the concepts from each other by their differing relationships to meaningfulness. I will clarify this further in my analysis below.

Finally, movement philosopher Erin Manning also thinks through the question of what happens before movement in the process of querying the relationality and connectedness of partnered improvisation in tango dance. She establishes a cycle of phases that occur in the experience of moving together: “preacceleration–relation–interval–intensification–actualization–extension–displacement–preacceleration” (25) in which she articulates preacceleration as “the breath that releases speech, the gathering-toward that leaps our bodies into a future unknowable” (25).

Together, these articulations offer multiple, related perspectives on the processual experience of moving toward danced meaningfulness – the expressive, communicative aspect of dancing. Their relevance to my work lies in their respective references to and characterizations of the experience of what happens *before* the realization of meaningfulness as such. Following the descriptive analysis of my experience in Hay’s work below, I will return to these theorizations further. Before I begin, I remind the reader of my positioning of this dissertation – in the introductory chapter – as an “adaptation” and propose that the following descriptive analysis comes closest to being a “written performative” adaptation of Hay’s solo *At Once*.

PRACTICING PERFORMING

I enter the work. The choreography invites a shift from fixity to flux: “I enter in a stride not my own”.¹¹⁸ I let go my movement signature, my recognizable and familiar identity and morph slightly sideways. The choreography loosens my reflective grip on the world; I relinquish the stabilizing fixing, objective function. Activating perceptual processes, the work compels my bodily dimension to unfold, to surface, to come into contact with the world. I enter a mode of open listening through this somatic unfolding, flowing toward the world, listening, attending and noticing, not knowing, not seeking. The choreography engenders a letting go, which is not complete surrender or release but a transitive, dynamic, fluid experience. Like the reciprocating movement of breath, world and I move together in heterogeneous forceflows, currents and eddies of movement, tidal in their microimmensity. Movement is everywhere.

The following descriptive analysis of practicing performing comprises three sections that address significant recurring dimensions of the experience and reveal the somatic phenomena underlying them. The three dimensions and their underlying phenomena are: I-world: absencing/presencing, body-space: yielding/expanding, and movement-time: thresholding. These dimensions became apparent via the shortlist of keywords I generated as part of my method in working with my first-order journal entries. The underlying somatic phenomena come to light through the descriptive analysis that follows. What I aim to show is that by practicing performing the destructuring structure of Hay’s choreography – which excavates through sedimented structures of experience and undermines the structuring process per se – I necessarily enact the practice of perception opened up by the operations of her choreography and thereby move into a more proximate experience of being-in-the-world. This more proximate, less structured and

therefore more primordial, experience is revealed only in and by the tension generated through Hay's linguistically constructed situation and destructuring structure in which the performer is suspended. The pushing, pulling, torquing and reversing effected by the linguistic choreography engages/deflects processes of intentionality/intention, attention and action and continually inhibits any kind of resolution or arrival in meaningfulness per se, engendering an experience of dynamic bodily suspension that I describe as somatic anacrusis. Primordial contact, per se, as a sustained experience is impossible but through Hay's choreography, which subverts and undermines the insistent and inherent tendency toward structuring and meaningfulness, a glance (at this "before" of meaningfulness) is, perhaps?, possible (only through Hay's kaleidoscopic-linguistic lens of "after"). This is a paradox – the paradox – of Hay's choreography – and also of my effort in this dissertation, to bring to language something that inherently resists that possibility.

Experiences of I-World: “absencingpresencing”

In the practice of Hay's choreography – as score, questions and tools – I experience what I describe as a distinction between the experience of an “autonomous I” or “I am”, involving a stable and fixed sense of both myself and world, and the experience of a more “fluid I”, a dynamic sense of myself and the world that is multiple (cellular), protean, heterogeneous and mutable. I have already touched on this I-world experience as a perceptual reversibility in my discussion in the previous chapter of the pair of Hay's tools related to vision. It is in practicing performing the choreography as a whole – through the effect of the destructuring structure and the practice of perception – that the underlying phenomenon is revealed more fully. Here is an excerpt from a journal entry describing these experiences:

Sept. 25, 2009

When I'm in the "I am" ... then I sense a vacuum surrounding me ... Nothing really touches me – bodily. Everything is somehow remote, unrelated to me. Yet in [other] moments ... I felt proximity, relationship, as though a dam released and space rushed toward me with force – the world came close, touched my skin, pushed against my mass like another being in an embrace – or like my dog does, nestling into the contours of my lap, fitting to me as I also fit to him and there is a mutuality – a meeting – bodily that we share. This is how I felt in that moment – it was but a fraction of a second, but it was clearly different – more tactile ...

From my various first-order descriptions of these experiences in journal entries, I developed the following extrapolated description that characterizes these distinct experiences of I-world.

In my experience of what I am calling the "autonomous I", I feel small and contained, drawn back into myself and discrete from the world, separated out from and unconnected or unrelated to my surroundings. I describe this as an experience of remoteness, dryness. My skin is a closed, tight boundary that keeps me in and keeps the world out. I am hermetically sealed inside, "shrink-wrapped". Between the world and me is a void, emptiness, like the airlessness and gravity-less-ness of deep space, wherein there are no energies or bodies. I can see the world and hear the world, touch objects in the world and sometimes smell the world but it is far away, held at a distance, on the other side of an impermeable boundary. While this boundary is elastic and malleable, in the sense that I can move within it and interact with the world, "we" – the world and I – do not "touch". I experience no sensual connection, by which I mean that I do not receive my experiences in and through my "body". Rather, my experiences seem to come to my

awareness through my “mind”. They have a quality of abstraction to them, versus a quality of concreteness. I am indeed aware but in a manner that is outwardly directed. I, in this autonomous sense, point my awareness into the world and this pointing is closed, definite and linear. I might describe it as two-dimensional, lacking an experience of three-dimensional volume. This is a functional or habitual mode of being that relies on what I already know. I proceed in the world based on pre-conceived expectations. I interact from and through already learned and assumed experiences, roles, rules and codes, structures and strictures that I experience as already forming and holding and stabilizing me. In this experience, I understand myself as “objective-subject”, an entity that ostensibly maintains a regular and consistent form, signature or identity regardless of the possible dynamics of its surroundings. In this experience, I am “self-aware” in a kind of inward-closing, defining manner; the form of my self-awareness here is circular (not spherical) because of the two-dimensional quality of the experience.

In my experience of what I am calling the “fluid I”, I do not feel contained by the boundaries of my physical body; I flow outward toward the world, connect to it and am part of it. I do not experience a complete dissolution or formlessness of self in this experience but an easing and releasing in contrast to the sense of relative stability and stasis in the “autonomous I”. I experience my skin as both porous and filamentous (referring to the antennae-like hairs on my skin), at once opening inward and furling outward. My body boundary blurs, inviting the experiential possibility for exchange with my surroundings. Osmosis. I experience a subtle tactile pressure on the surface of my body and become tangibly aware of the currents of air flowing around me, the intensities and flickerings of light. In this experience, I apprehend my materiality: that I am made of the same “stuff” as the world. My surroundings seem to transform

from distant, abstracted “ideas” or “things”, to concrete physical presences. My bodily awareness of these presences shifts my attention and I begin to perceive the aliveness of the world, densities, tones, textures and motions, temporalities and spatialities. What I mean by this is that I receive or apprehend the bodily imprints or registrations not of recognizable and named things like “building”, “trees”, “grass”, “studio floor”, or “window” but rather the bodily imprint or registration of a gestalt of qualities such as enduring solid upward thrusting angle (of peaked roof) or random rhythmic fluttering bouncing (of leafy branch) or flat expansive amber grainy wooded warmth (of surface on which I stand or roll).¹¹⁹ These experiences imprint me as I also imprint them in the sense that I become aware of the invisible vibration and resonance of my actions in the world. At times I make sound, percussive or vocal, which accentuates this experience of vibratory resonance. We are moving together and I experience myself as continuous with the world, affecting it as it affects me. It is this sense of continuity or flowing-with that incites me to describe this as an experience of fluid “I”. I experience ongoing fluidity and malleability in my sense of self, a contingency and responsiveness to the world and a sense of myself as a dynamic composite of expressions and experiences, imprints and registrations, both outwardly directed and inwardly gathered. In this experience, I am an open “subjective subject”, an inter-subject. The form of my self-awareness here is multiply spiralic, turning inward to turn outward and turning outward to turn inward.

It is essential to understand that neither of these distinct experiences of “I” are stable or absolute in the practicing. Borrowing the concept of limits from mathematics for a moment (in which a limit is an infinite point to which I can only ever approach but at which I can never arrive), I understand the concept of an absolute fixed sense of self as one limit and the concept of

a fully dissolved or perhaps better, evaporated, sense of self as another limit. My lived experience can approach but never arrive at these limits, which are infinite extremes. In a sense, the “fluid I” that I experience in moments in the work is a self that *is* liquid. At different moments, this experience of self takes on varying degrees of viscosity – weighted, dense and rolling like mercury; sticky, thick and slow like molasses; trickling and light like clear stream water; or looser yet and lighter like vinegar – yet it is always a mobile, responsive and dynamic, multidimensional experience. I remain grounded in my dynamic material body, which simultaneously turns in on itself and extends beyond itself, spiralling, enfolding, unfolding.

In practicing performing, Hay’s choreographic destructuring structure incites a shift from my relatively closed, habitual and stable “autonomous I” to a more open, protean and dynamic “fluid I”. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the opening sentences of the score implies and precipitates this shift, immediately asking me to relinquish my established, regular identity and shift toward something other “in a stride and style not mine” (Hay, *At Once* 4). Letting go my fixed and set sense of self – as “autonomous I” – and with it the associated functional, habitual modes and patterns that enable me to operate effectively and meaningfully in the object world – means letting go of the relatively stable and perspectival relations I have with things and my environment. “Dis-attach”, Hay says. The process of letting go involves entering an experience of relative free fall or vertigo in which I can no longer count on my usual supports, expectations and understandings nor on the bracing effect (literally, holding up or holding apart) of perspective and separation from things. Everything is moving, swirling, shifting, blurring; and, becoming “fluid I”, I join the flux. Normally familiar, discrete entities are no longer identifiable as such. I enter the unknown.

In this newness, and in order to navigate this choreography, my bodily senses heighten instinctively, rising to the occasion. “Notice the feedback from my body”, says Hay. Perception becomes my guide. I “feel” my way through. At the same time, the world, as I know it in my daily life, shifts as well. The familiar world that I count on and within which I function recedes and an unfamiliar flux surges forth in which I see anew. As “fluid I”, through bodily perception, the world and I come into proximity, embrace and begin to move together. This is a new kind of “support”, a kind of contact duet with the world.¹²⁰

My description here calls to mind that offered by Merleau-Ponty in the chapter “Experience and Objective Thought” in *Phenomenology of Perception* in which he addresses “the problem of the body” and the way that objective thought eclipses experience in the act of positing an object even though, in his analysis, the process begins in bodily perception.

I detach myself from my experience and pass to the *idea*. Like the object, the idea purports to be the same for everybody, valid in all times and places, and the individuation of an object in an objective point of time and space finally appears as the expression of a universal positing power. I am no longer concerned with my body, nor with time, nor with the world, as I experience them in antepredicative knowledge, in the inner communion that I have with them. I now refer to my body only as an idea, to the universe as idea, to the idea of space and the idea of time. Thus ‘objective’ thought (in Kierkegaard’s sense) is formed – being that of common sense and of science – which finally causes us to lose contact with perceptual experience, of which it is nevertheless the outcome and the natural sequel ... the absolute positing of a single object is the death

of consciousness, since it congeals the whole of existence, as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 82)

Here Merleau-Ponty's text captures the sense of separation ("I detach myself from my experience") in the "autonomous I" and by contrast, the sense of contingency ("inner communion") in my experience of the "fluid I".

In a later passage in the section "The Theory of the Body is Already a Theory of Perception", he treats this distinction again, this time with emphasis on bodily perception:

We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which I have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 239)

Here, Merleau-Ponty provides language that supports my description of the "fluid I" and the way that I experience my bodily senses "rising to the occasion" ("remaking contact with the body and with the world"), while also making a connection that considers "our body" as our "self". My use of the "I" in my descriptions above is a simple or vernacular use of the term that implies a general experience of personal subjectivity.¹²¹

In my practicing Hay's work, I move simultaneously from and toward both these senses of I-world while crystallizing neither. There is only flux. By engaging/deflecting

intentionality/intention, attention and action as I have discussed in the previous chapter, the choreography engenders this fluid ambiguity. The experience is not a linear oscillation between one and the other but instead an active paradoxical simultaneity. I can sustain neither of the two experiences of I-world described above while inside the work. I cannot sustain the “autonomous I” because the choreography (as destructuring structure) demands that I let it go, while at the same time I acknowledge that as a contemporary western subject – and as a dancer/performer in the constructed situation of practicing performing Hay’s work – I proceed from this “autonomous I”: I intend toward the choreography as a dance that I will perform. The “autonomous I” is simultaneously present and absent throughout the practice, as is the “fluid I”. The choreography consistently thrusts me into an experience of the “fluid I”; however, my quotidian sense of self and perspective on the object world, the habits and patterns that subtend my regular daily experience and the meta-experience of doing the choreography (including the insistent habit of evaluating my experience against deep-seated dancerly criteria and against my previous day’s practice – both of which Hay explicitly directs against) erupt and tend to crystallize the “autonomous I”, returning me to my prevailing mode of objective relation with the world. Thus, in doing the work, I experience a paradoxical simultaneity in which “autonomous I” and “fluid I” are both present *and* absent. I experience both and neither at once.

I can best characterize this as an experience of absencing/presencing. I use this yoked term because the verbs “absencing” and “presencing” aptly describe my lived experience of the “not-there-ness” and “there-ness” of these distinct senses of self while also describing that same quality in my awareness of the world as it shifts in relative relation to these senses of self, its relative “there-ness” in relation to the “fluid I” and “not-there-ness” in relation to the “autonomous

I”. Further, the explicit yoking of the words reflects the paradoxical simultaneity in this experience, in which these I-world processes of absencing and presencing occur at the same time.

Experiences of Body-Space: “yieldingexpanding”

I will now move on to describe my experiences of the dimension of body-space in Hay’s work, in which I experience my body *as* space and the surrounding space as a thickness co-extensive with my body. I have already addressed the body-space experience as a perceptual reversibility in my discussion in chapter 4 of the pair of Hay’s tools related to touch. Here, the underlying phenomenon is more fully revealed in practicing performing the choreography. Here are two excerpts from journal entries that reveal my experience of this dimension:

Sept. 10, 2009

I felt a moment of clear questioning in this section – perceiving space – barometer of space – and this stood out from the rest of the experience. I felt kind of like my body shrunk and my awareness of space grew bigger – so I was smaller but my attentional kinesphere was enlarged and the actual space around me came clearer and became thicker – tactile almost. I also felt my curiosity tune up and my movement changed – intention-wise, it seemed to not come from me as much as in almost-response to the space.

Oct. 7, 2009

I think I understand my experience of space being/becoming thick as the experience arising from my cellular body perceiving space, which in reciprocity gives me to myself as space.

From these and other first order descriptions of similar experiences in journal entries, I developed the following extrapolated descriptions that characterize these distinct experiences of body-space.

In my practice of this work, a distinct shift occurs in my experience of space. Hay sometimes offers the verbal tool “Be a barometer of space” and this linguistically suggests an ability to sense space and reveal its dynamics through the body. This experience of space is distinct from the conventional understanding of space in dance, which refers to the “use of space” via location, direction, pathway and level.

As I embrace Hay’s tools “refresh your visual field” and “all that I can and cannot see”, the space around me manifests a depth of field of which I am not normally aware. I perceive proximity and distance and the thickness therein. Space becomes dense and tangible, a kind of element or force field within which I move. When I do, whether with a finger motion or a full-bodied action, I experience my impact on space, displacing it, pushing it away and feeling it flow around me like water. Its texture is inconsistent; I encounter deep currents of concentrated density that open onto more shallow, diluted pools. This perceiving of space locates me specifically in and as space. As space takes on depth and dimension, so do objects in my environment, thereby reciprocally activating my perception of my own depth and dimensionality – my body as space. I become as aware of the curves, angles, inclines and slopes of forms in my environment as I do of my own bodily form. My perception of depth and dimension also carries a heightened awareness of surface. I experience the specific elongatedshallowdroppingawaycurve of my forearm from wrist to elbow, for example, which leads me into noticing the space between my elbow and the floor below, my experience of the force of gravity making space’s bouyancy

apparent to me as lift beneath my arm. I also notice the flatlinearshootingout directionality of the floorboards themselves and the vast expanse they define and reveal. The far wall of the studio is miles away.

This experience of space contrasts my everyday experience of space, which is in a way a “non-experience” of space and, rather, a nominal-functional experience of things. In this functional mode, I do not perceive space as dense and tangible. I see primarily objects and others, not the space between, as though through a kind of filmic membrane or overlay that is suspended between the world and me. In this experience, objects and others remain dormant within their pre-defined and already-known sheaths, behind this filmic overlay. By this I mean that I recognize them only as I have come to know them before, by their marks of identity, not by their tangible, voluminous and contoured presence. Familiar and available, they are fixed, stable and simply there in their established “identities”. There is a flattening, equalizing function to this filmic overlay that distances the world from me and renders things in two dimensions. I see beyond things in their material presence to their purpose or function for me. In a way, I’m engaged in a constant process of critical evaluation. If I judge that they have such a purpose in a given circumstance, they become important and become part of my functional experience as I take them up and use them toward accomplishing something. Otherwise, they do not stand out from the flatness, with depth and dimension in themselves. If they don’t have a purpose or function for me, then they recede into the flat and equalized realm beyond me.

As with my discussion of experiences of I-world above, here again I describe two contrasting experiences of space: the latter prevailing in my everyday functional experience and the former arising in my experience while practicing Hay’s choreography. As I also noted above,

these two experiences are limit experiences and are not absolute.

In practicing Hay's choreography, I shift from a flattened, cartographical experience of space to a voluminous, dynamic one. One of Hay's typical questions incites this shift: "What if every cell in my body could perceive space?" As I practice this within the choreography, my attentional aperture dilates to take in more detail at the level of my cells insofar as this is possible. I notice micro perceptions on the surface of my skin, for example, that register the shifting air currents in the environment and my attentional aperture instantly dilates further, opening up a tactile¹²² perception of my surroundings. I move in and therefore touch space, its thickness, which begins to include my awareness of all volumes, both those "uncontained" open spaces and those "contained" as objects. Those "contained" objects rise in my awareness as variably weighted concentrations of volume, space, and I experience these weighted, concentrated volumes as though they are inside my body as I, too, am a weighted concentration of volume; I too am space. As "barometer" of space, I move body-space and register its dynamics.

At the same time, I am still a dancer doing a dance and Hay's score continually pulls me back to the cartographical perspective with directions such as: "Note: I strongly maintain the role of the choreographer overseeing the particularity of the path I travel – making spatial choices without becoming too artistic" (Hay, *At Once* 7). Within my experience of this direction, I shift to a "lived" bird's eye view of the space and objectively visualize the locations and paths I've defined in my dancing area. This is a reflective act that pulls the rug out from under my voluminous body-space experience. As cartographer – Hay's choreographer in the above phrase – I return to being a body moving *in* space, mapping its topography.

Again, I turn to Merleau-Ponty, who provides useful language that illuminates these experiences. In a section on “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility”, he writes:

By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and, moreover, time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplaceness of established situations. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 117)

Here, Merleau-Ponty’s phrase suggests a distinct difference between the experience of the body’s actively taking up or inhabiting space and the commonplace experience in which this activity is “obscured”, which resonates with my description above. Further on, in a section on “The Synthesis of One’s Own Body”, he offers the following in which, again, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes objective space and a more “primitive spatiality” of which the body is co-extensive: “Experience discloses beneath objective space, in which the body eventually finds its place, a primitive spatiality of which experience is merely the outer covering and which merges with the body’s very being. To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 171).

Like in my experience of I-world, in my practicing Hay’s work, the engagingdeflecting operation of the choreographic destructuring structure demands that I move simultaneously from and toward both these senses of body-space while crystallizing neither. Again, there is only flux.

In Hay’s choreography, I am required to attend to my objective body in objective space in order to manage my locations, pathways and levels in the dancing area. Space, in these moments, seems to yield in my awareness to the placements and trajectories of my body, which expands to

become a magnified opaque object in this experience, a game piece I purposefully manipulate. At the same time, however, I am directed by the choreography to perceive space through my cellular body and in this experience, my body yields its magnified objective opacity, opening up dynamic perception at the surface of my skin and within the volume of my body. This bodily space expands, meeting and merging with the space surrounding me in a tangible swelling and subsiding body-space, like a water-filled jellyfish in the roiling ocean, barely bounded by a membrane. Just as I experience my skin as surface membrane containing relatively concentrated volume of my body, so do I experience other objects as “concentrated volumes” contained by surface membranes – other jellyfish. In Hay’s choreography, I must somehow sustain both of these experiences of body-space – cartographical *and* voluminous – but can in practice sustain neither, because each experience pulls at the other’s seams. I am once again suspended in a paradoxical simultaneity: my body expands in the cartographical mode while simultaneously yielding in the voluminous; space yields in the cartographical while simultaneously expanding in the voluminous. Once again, in order to aptly describe this phenomenon, I yoke these terms: yieldingexpanding.

Experiences of Movement¹²³-Time: “thresholding”

From a discussion of I-world to that of body-space, I now move to a discussion of movement-time in my experience practicing performing Hay’s work. The reader will recall that I addressed this dimension in my discussion of Hay’s tools “Ready-fire-aim” and “Dis-attach”, which I connected to the perceptual reversibility of listening/sounding. Here, in my descriptions of practicing performing, this dimension and its connection to audibility is revealed more fully.

Once again I commence with two journal entries and then some extrapolated descriptions before developing my discussion.

Oct. 7, 2009

So what happens if I just allow myself to perceive time passing – since it already is? The fleeting awareness of this involved a softening in my body, a release of tension and a very momentary letting go of the constant sense of rush – the pressure that I consistently experience in feeling time as finite and limited and the amount of work, tasks, activities that I want, need, feel compelled to somehow fit into this finite –in fact somehow even shrinking span or possible duration. When I play with perceiving time passing, I feel like I stop trying to swim against the current or move opposite to its flow, like turning the other way after making a whirlpool in the swimming pool. Acceptance, submission or surrender to the flow of time, that I am. Somehow my work, tasks, activities can no longer be separate from time “as finite or shrinking container”. They merge and my doing becomes being – they are one and the same. I am here now not separately from my action/interaction, but as it – through it. Without action/interaction, I am not. Simple as that. Living is time; living is space.

Dec. 17, 2009

Like trailing my fingers in a stream, with the flow of the water always water, never the same water ever. And yet there’s a continuity to my perceiving the water as water despite it never being the same water – I am in time, I am time – flowing, passing – always time/duration? But never the same time – no fixing just aiming – attending – perceiving

its passing, my passing as time.

Following are my extrapolated descriptions around experiences of time in Hay's choreography.

*In my practice of this work, different experiences of time arise through somatic awareness. Hay often asks the question, "What if every cell in my body could perceive time passing?" This linguistically foregrounds a conception of the body as a mass of trillions of cells that evokes both the fluidity and heterogeneity of the body and suggests the independent capacity of each cell to perceive in itself. This question proposes the potentially immense perceptual power of the body, or, as Hay says "the body's daringly ordinary perspicacity" (Hay, *My Body, the Buddhist* xxv).*

In my experience of the work, I acknowledge that there are (at least) two different types of time experiences, (aside from clock time, which is not an experience within the work other than when I have to measure how long the dance takes in order to plan for its production in theatrical performance). The first is the more commonly understood dancerly experience – or use – of time, which relates to tempo, timing and rhythm, marking the measure of "linear" time and therefore somewhat related to clock time. The second is a more perceptual experience of time as suggested by Hay's question above. As I enter the work and experience the shift in my sense of self from "autonomous I" to "fluid I", my sense of attention to the world pervades my body and I begin to "listen" through every pore, becoming "all ears" as it were. I "listen" not to someone speaking but to my body and the world, through my body in the world. As I "listen" in this way, I experience a kind of now-ness or attention to present moments in their infinite continuity as I move past them or they move past me, as Hay says: "here and gone". As I perceive these moments and their "here and gone-ness" as flow, time becomes a river¹²⁴ in

which I swim, sometimes upstream, sometimes downstream and sometimes across – but there is always a current. However, as my perceptive awareness deepens, I come to experience a kind of ongoing present that is flowing but no longer past me like river water. This experience of time as flow becomes concurrent with my experience of myself as flow, the fluid I, my cellular body. With this awareness, I suddenly understand myself as time. I am not in time; I am time. And the world is time. I am time in that I am time passing. This experience of being time is an experience of time coming as much as it is an experience of time passing. I hear Hay: “step up to the moment” – for it is arriving and won’t wait for me. “Let it go” for another is coming. If my experience of time is the ongoing present that I am, and not a linear sequence of passing moments, and if this ongoing present includes within it both “time coming” and “time passing”, then it is a kind of pastpresentfuture in which I must engage in both these activities “at once”: steppinguplettinggo, steppinguplettinggo. This experience of buoyant fluctuation is very similar to the experience of the flow and fluctuation of breathing. Through my experience of time in this very proximate and micro-specific way and the perception that both the world and I are time, my awareness begins to include a kind of “epic time”. By this I mean a felt sense of the immense and simultaneous compressions and expansions of both “pastness” and “futureness” in the ongoing present/presence of a tree or building, for example, or – in a shift of scale – the different compressions and expansions of these in the ongoing present/presence of a bird or insect. Noticing this through my body, I experience a felt sense of the different compressions and expansions of time within my own body, my bones, cells, skin, nerve pulses. I become aware of the complex ongoing temporal counterpoint withinbetween me and the world.

This experience contrasts my experience of time in daily life, which is of an abstract ruler

to whose measure I must submit. Clock time, calendar time, time marked out in sequence of equal portions, exerts a constraining freeze on my experience, locking me into a regularity, an imposed tempo. Above, I have described my perception of time as a kind of listening. In the case of daily life, what I hear is a monotone buzz or the incessant rush of a cascading waterfall that drowns out the ongoing present of experiential time. This incessant white noise stops up my ears – all my “bodily” ears – desensitizing me to the buoyant flux of myself and world.¹²⁵ In my experience of time as linear progression, I am standing in the river and time exerts a kind of pressure or force on me – sometimes lighter, sometimes stronger. Facing upstream toward the future, I must stabilize myself and brace against its flow or be swept away into the past. In this experience my movements accentuate or punctuate its flow, creating a rhythm. Returning to the sound metaphor, if time in this case is an ongoing sound created bodily by the flow of the breath, my movements phrase and affect its flow, like the covering of the holes of a flute, changing tones, lengths of tones and rhythms. In a way, then, my movements are “against” time; I am a (partial) dam and my movements are the sluice gates that attempt to control time’s flow.¹²⁶

Here again I describe two contrasting experiences of time: the latter prevailing in my everyday functional experience and the former arising in my experience while practicing Hay’s choreography. Again, as with my experiences of I-world and body-space discussed above, these two experiences are limit experiences and are not absolute.

In practicing Hay’s choreography, I shift from an experience of time as linear progression to an experience of time as buoyant fluctuation. In the former, I experience the “tempo” (speed/velocity) and “timing” (rhythm/periodicity) of my movements as measuring and marking the linear passage of objective time, a force to which I am beholden. In the latter, I experience

the movement of my body itself as time, from large travelling movements to small gestures to micro shifts in weight and breath. As I practice performing the work, my experience begins with time as a force outside myself that is flowing past me as I resist and punctuate it. As I practice the choreography, moving into a perceptual mode, I experience my body become “inhabited” by time. My living, breathing, moving body *is* time. And as I come to experience myself as such, I experience all things *as* time. Thus time is both bodily and epic. Whereas my movements first mark and measure time’s flow, gradually they become the flow of time itself. In this experience, time doesn’t seem to have a past and a future distinct from the present; rather since everything is time and I am “now”, all time is gathered in the “now” of existence. This is what I mean when I describe the compressions and expansions of time in the ongoing present. My movement is time, is time passing.

That said, in the work I am, as always, a dancer and there is some part of me that understands movement as tempo and rhythm; the same goes for Hay the choreographer. In addition to notes throughout the score about perceiving time passing, there are instructions that draw me back into experiences of time as linear progression – which often involve sound. At one point, the score instructs the performer to sing a wordless song: “The song’s duration is determined by how much time is required for it to impress itself on my body and the audience’s memory. The phrasing of the song can expand and contract” (Hay, *At Once* 6). Further on, the following direction appears: “I attach rhythmic movement to the song, my dancing obviously influenced by my singing” (Hay, *At Once* 6). With these directions, I am called upon to work with measure, tempo and rhythm, my movement becoming an objective accentuation and punctuation of the linear progression of time.

Once again, I turn to Merleau-Ponty who here quotes Heidegger, for language that illuminates this experience further: “‘The passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it; I am already at the impending present as my gesture is already at its goal, I am myself time, a time which ‘abides’ and does not ‘flow’ or change’ ...” (Heidegger qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 489).

The text here makes a distinction between the conceptual marking of time as a series of moments and the experience of being time, both of which I have described above. Merleau-Ponty also offers the following description, which reiterates the distinction between an “abiding” experience of time and objective time, which resonates with my descriptions above of my experiences within Hay’s practice. Writes Merleau-Ponty: “This intuition of time’s permanence however, is jeopardized by the action of common sense, which thematizes or objectifies it, which is the surest way of losing sight of it” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 490).

In this last quote below, drawn also from Merleau-Ponty, we find reference to acts of decision-making or conceptualizing and the way that these acts provide a remedy against time, binding and withholding us from the flow and revealing ourselves as entities, rather than as time per se. This quote from Merleau-Ponty usefully illuminates my description of the experience of movement as a punctuating and marking of time’s flow:

I am not the initiator of the process of temporalization; I did not choose to come into the world, yet once I am born, time flows through me, whatever I do. Nevertheless this ceaseless welling up of time is not a simple fact to which I am passively subjected, for I can find a remedy against it in itself, as happens in a decision which binds me or in the act of establishing a concept. It withholds me from what I was about to become, and at

the same time provides me with the means of grasping myself at a distance and establishing my own reality as myself. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 496)

Like in my experiences of I-world and body-space, in my practicing Hay's work, the choreography demands that I move simultaneously from and toward both these experiences of movement-time while crystallizing neither. Again, there is only flux.

In Hay's choreography, I am engaged and required to move in time with measure, tempo and rhythm. In this movement-time experience, time is a flowing linear progression past me and, with/through my movement, I phrase and accent its flow. In this experience, time is "going" and my movement functions as a kind of intermittent "staying" against that motion. At the same time, the choreographic destructuring structure deflects that experience and asks me to practice perceiving time passing, to "step up to the moment, and let it go", as Hay says. As I engage in this practice, my movement-time experience shifts. My being as movement at the cellular level becomes an on-"going" flux rather than objective actions imposed on time, while time itself seems to somehow "stay" in the "now". No longer flowing in a linear progression past me, time becomes an ongoing present within/as me, that includes past and future. In this experience, time becomes a buoyant fluctuation and my movement is the movement of time. Hay's work choreographs me into both of these experiences; however, again, I can sustain neither because the one simultaneously precludes the other. In attempting to practice this, once again, I experience a paradoxical simultaneity: time both goes and stays; movement both stays and goes. In an effort to describe this oppositional suspension, I describe it as "thresholding",¹²⁷ a term that combines notions of both going and staying, staying and going.

SOMATIC ANACRUSIS

Through these descriptions and discussion, we gain insights into my experience of practicing performing Hay's choreography and the way in which it is a *practice* of perception – an ongoing effort, an impossible practice, to approach the world and lived experience through perceptual processes. It becomes apparent that as a performer, I am in a constant process of moving both toward and away from specific experiences of self, world, body, space, movement and time: between various objective, analytical experiences characterized by stability and definition; and other more bodily, perceptual experiences characterized by fluidity and porosity. The point I wish to make is that neither type of experience is achieved, realized or “consummated”¹²⁸ as such. I cannot grasp these experiences, allow them to become clear or sustain them in any way, because the choreography constantly pulls and pushes me – engagingdeflecting – such that I continually shift, which thereby perpetuates the experience of dynamic flux. As I move toward one type of experience, the other pulls at its seams, tearing it apart and moving me away.

Through the complex destructuring structure of the linguistically layered choreography, these experiences don't occur in linear sequence but overlap and embed one within the other within the other As I have articulated, my bodily experience is of dynamic paradoxical simultaneities of absencingpresencing (I-world), of yieldingexpanding (body-space), of thresholding (movement-time). These simultaneities precipitate an experience of hovering, like a hummingbird in radical movingstillness coming into relation with the flower, itself also in radical movingstillness on a vastly different durational scale. I might also describe the experience as the folding over of bread dough and the kneading through of folded layers – fold back and knead through again and again – such that the foldingoverkneadingthrough occurs

simultaneously. To offer yet another image, my experience is that of perpetually being at/within the turning point of a transition. I refer again to the illusion of the vase and two faces: in Hay's work, I am dancing the experience of between, of neither faces nor vase nor both nor neither, of rather the dynamically unfigured field, before either form takes shape. It becomes impossible to distinguish between the "me" and the "not-me", between inner and outer environment, between movement and pause. Who, where, when? What if...?

In order to describe this experience overall, I have derived the term "somatic anacrusis", to describe the simultaneous and paradoxical bodily feeling of "about to (express something), but never quite (realizing it)". In poetry, an anacrusis is the unstressed syllable at the beginning of a line of verse. In music, an anacrusis is an upbeat, a moment (or series of notes) which precedes the first beat of the composition, in which there is a quality of in-drawing of breath, and a suspension/gathering of intention, attention and action by a single musician or throughout a group. The downbeat that is to follow is implied in this upbeat as yet an inherent potential, generating an energetic experience of paradoxical simultaneity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the etymology of the word goes back to the Greek *anakrousis* ("anacrusis", OED). This term may refer to the pushing back of a ship in water ("anacrusis", OED, Harper). The word derives from the prefix *ana*: pushing back or pulling up and *krousis*: to strike. In these various senses, the word includes a paradoxical simultaneity in which there is an inherent simultaneous opposition; the pushing back or pulling up is in preparation for and thus includes the potential for the strike within it. In the situation of the ship, the counter force of the water is present in the process of its pushing back. As the ship pushes back, the water flows forward, these movements occur simultaneously. This is the embodied experience of paradoxical simultaneity in Hay's

work.

It is important to note that while anacrusis seems to suggest a kind of pre-event, the paradoxical simultaneity includes the event within the pre-event and vice versa. In Hay's work, we do move, but it is with an engageddeflected intention, attention and action that is always also pulling back. And it is from meaningfulness per se that we are suspended, in the what if ...? of the what if ...? through the action and process of perception engendered by Hay's choreography. As I have discussed earlier, in describing the intertwining and reversibility of sense perception, Merleau-Ponty writes that the perceptual capacities are "gaping open", he describes this "lacuna" as an anticipation (*Visible and Invisible* 147), and he notes that a coincident experience of sentient/sensible, of the reversibility of the perceptual capacities, can never be fully experienced because there is always a shift or spread between them: "the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch it ..." (*Visible and Invisible* 148). Merleau-Ponty's description of these two possibilities resonates with my own discussion above of the way that Hay's choreography incites contrasting experiences of I-world, body-space and movement-time and it also helps me to articulate the lived experience of Hay's choreography, in which these contrasting experiences unravel each other, in which *neither* of Merleau-Ponty's two possibilities arise. Rather, the choreography propels the performer at least toward, if not into, the anticipatory lacuna, the suspension – somatic anacrusis – which resonates with what Merleau-Ponty also describes as the hiatus:

But this hiatus between my right hand touched and my right hand touching, between my

voice heard and my voice uttered, between one moment of my tactile life and the following one, is not an ontological void, a non-being: it is spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world; it is the zero of pressure between two solids that makes them adhere to one another. My flesh and that of the world therefore involve clear zones, clearings (*Visible and Invisible* 148).

Again here, Merleau-Ponty's language further refracts my descriptions and helps illuminate the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis.

How is it that I can arrive at these *figures* to capture or describe the experience of paradoxical simultaneity? Is it not a fundamental contradiction to do so, when with the same breath I describe the subversion of processes of meaning making in Hay's work, in which figures and ground are, rather, indistinguishable flux? It is only through reflection and analysis that I can attempt to arrive at a way of articulating and describing the experience. While I am practicing performing the deconstructing structure of Hay's choreography, these figures are not apparent to me as figures. The experience is flux, is dynamic, shifting, simultaneous enfolding/unfolding. It is only through the iterative writing process that I arrive at these figures, as an attempt to allow this kind of experience to be considered theoretically. It is also why I draw on Merleau-Ponty's language, because it too embraces the challenge of drawing this kind of experience into discursive form.

RELATED CONCEPTS

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, several dance improvisation, movement and somatics scholars have articulated similar somatic experiences in dance. Their discussions relate to my

characterization of somatic anacrusis, particularly with respect to similar descriptions of experiences of pre-movement and suspension. It is useful now to consider these discussions in more depth, because they resonate with my analysis of my experiences in Hay's work, and also enable me to distinguish Hay's practice from that of improvisation per se, and thereby support my argument for the unique poetics of Hay's work and the implications thereof (which I will address in my concluding chapter).

Nancy Stark Smith's "Gap" and Ann Cooper Albright's "Dwelling in Possibility"

In her essay "Dwelling in Possibility", dancer/improviser and scholar Ann Cooper Albright writes about the experience of the "gap", which she draws from veteran dance improviser Nancy Stark Smith, whom she quotes:

'Where you are when you don't know where you are is one of the most precious spots offered by improvisation. It is a place from which more directions are possible than anywhere else. I call this place the Gap. ... Every time I want a cigarette and don't have one I'm creating a gap. Moments that once were easily and automatically filled have become uneasily and consciously unfilled. By leaving them unfilled, I'm not only breaking a "momentum of being," a pattern of behaviour, but I'm bringing attention and charge to a moment that would have passed without remark. ... Being in a gap is like being in a fall before you touch bottom. You're suspended – in time as well as space – and you don't really know how long it'll take to get "back"'. (Smith qtd. in Albright, "Dwelling" 258)

This description of the "gap" resonates with the experience of somatic anacrusis in Hay's work;

however, in the improvisatory experience described by Smith, the “gap” is a moment through which one passes. Though Smith implies that it might last for an indefinite period, the gap is not the point of improvisational practice. One moves from the open gap of suspension into a given direction, onto the path of forming meaningfulness, of composing. Immediately following this long quote, Albright writes: “This ‘gap’ or moment of possibility is an existential state, a suspension of reference points in which new experiences become possible” (“Dwelling” 258). The implied focus in improvisation, in which one may move into and through a “gap”, is on those “new experiences”. Albright acknowledges the rigorous training required to move into this gap, which supports my understanding of Hay’s work necessarily as a practice,¹²⁹ and she also notes – as I have similarly described above in my discussion of experiences of I-world in Hay’s work – the change in sense of self that occurs in this state:

In order to embrace those moments of falling, in order to experience that state of suspension, however, one needs to *train* the body (and, by extension, the psyche) away from one’s conditioned fear of losing control. Being suspended between up and down, stretching one’s awareness to attend to the split-second experience of falling – these are all physical moments that point to an existential openness (which includes *a suspension of the self* as we have come to think of the self/ego in contemporary Western society).

Nancy Stark Smith’s gap constitutes what I think of as a space in which *to change our habitual responses*, thereby expanding the possibility of dwelling in the world.

(“Dwelling” 258-9, italics mine)

Here Albright also comments on the way in which this experience might allow shifts in established habits and patterns through which we approach the world, a point that echoes Hay’s

intent and reflects on my experience in the work. Albright further offers a way to understand how this occurs: “This willingness [to cross into the uncomfortable, unknown] is made possible by the *paradoxically* simple and yet quite sophisticated ability to be at once external and internal – both open to the world and intensely grounded in an awareness of one’s ongoing experience. ‘Dwelling in Possibility’ refers to this dual experience of being present “here” in order to be able to *imagine* what could happen out ‘there’” (“Dwelling” 260, italics mine).¹³⁰

I will make two related points drawing on the latter quote. First, in defining her phrase “Dwelling in Possibility”, Albright here describes the paradoxical experience of simultaneous inner and outer attentionality that can occur in improvisational practice. I have described in the previous chapter the way in which Hay’s questions choreograph attention in a similar way. A particular emphasis on the practice of attention to both inner experience and outer environment is indeed common between Hay’s work and improvisation. However, in the next sentence, Albright suggests that in improvisation we are in the process of “imagining what could happen”. In the context of her quote and discussion, I understand this to indicate a process of imagining *something* (or *some things*), a process that is focused on “bringing into form”, of making meaningful. In my reading, this description expresses the process of *composing* in-the-moment that is the intent of improvisation and that the improviser’s actions articulate – and against which, as I have discussed, Hay’s choreography works explicitly. Here I am making a connection and also a distinction between my experience of somatic anacrusis in Hay’s choreography and the related experiences of the “gap” and “dwelling in possibility” in these descriptions of improvisational practice. Both experiences are characterized by a sense of suspension, of a certain paradoxicality, and of multiplicity, which can be attributed to their arising from similar

processes of attention. However, as discussed by Albright and Smith, the “gap” is a moment in improvisational experience that one passes through on the way to a particular somewhere or something, on the way to form and meaningfulness. Somatic anacrusis, on the contrary, describes an attempted perpetuation or sustaining of the experience of the “gap”, of actually sustaining the “unconsummatedness”, the “dwelling in possibility”, not passing through it. The emphasis on attention, and specifically the paradoxical inner and outer attention, may be common to the two experiences; however, the engaging/deflecting of processes of intentionality/intention and action that are also involved in somatic anacrusis distinguish it.

Hubert Godard’s Gestural Anacrusis

In several articles and interviews in the journal *Writings on Dance*, dance theorist and kinesiologist Hubert Godard articulates his notion of gestural anacrusis, which bears some resemblance – as a term and as a concept – to the somatic anacrusis I am theorizing here. In an interview with dance theorist Laurence Louppe, she and Godard establish the notion, taken from philosopher Michel Bernard of the dancer’s body as a “corporeity” (Louppe, “Singular Moving Geographies” 13), emphasizing the dancer’s accumulated history in movement as one of experiences, intensities, situations, rather than that of a topology (geometric and spatialized structural relations). In seeking to identify an existing discourse through which to think this conceptualization, they dismiss the bio-medical discourse, and indicate phenomenology as a potential, because, as Louppe explains:

... the problematic of dance brings into play a body of continuous functionality; the dancer can only work from a body-vector, which does not define itself in terms of its

structure, but in terms of the ways in which it organises intensity and, as we'll see, intentionality. Before all else, the dancing body is a multi-directional geography of relations with oneself, and with the world. It's a matter of keeping it living, open, sensitive. (Louppe 13)

For Godard, "... a dancer operates more like a geographer, accumulating maps, intra-corporeal dispositions, geographical situations which subsequently produce a history" (Godard qtd. in Louppe "Singular Moving Geographies" 14). Here, Godard's language resonates with Merleau-Ponty's situational ontology and the notion of a body schema that develops an accumulation of sedimented structures through situations. We find further parallels to Merleau-Ponty's thought – though no direct reference to its influence on Godard here – when, in thinking through dance as a way of organizing intensity and intentionality, Godard's inquiry leads him to consider how this organizing comes about, what comes before the movement, how does intentionality arise:

One inevitably goes back to the mystery of what happens before movement: what body image (connected to what plasticity)? What geography? What history? And above all, what intentionality? The pre-movement is an empty zone, with no displacement, no segmentary activity. And yet everything is already played out there, the entire poetic charge, the tonal colouring of the action. A brief passage, a low pressure trough corresponding to this wholly founding moment: the gestural anacrusis. (Godard qtd. in Louppe, "Singular Moving Geographies" 15)

What's interesting for my purposes here is that Godard identifies this spacetime of pre-movement, before the gesture as such, as an anacrusis, and describes it, as noted above, as a "low pressure trough" and later as "a value ... of hesitation, a certain suspension of being, body and

thought” (Godard qtd. in Louppe, “Singular Moving Geographies” 17). These descriptions resonate with my own articulation of the somatic experience of paradoxical simultaneity I encounter in Hay’s work. Further, Godard’s use of the term “*gestural* anacrusis” suggests the way in which this experience precedes and is at once part of the gesture, the communicative movement: the anacrusis grounds and underpins the gesture as such.¹³¹ In this dialogue, Godard and Louppe are interested in understanding the poetic charge of dance, the way in which dance organizes intensities and intentionality into communicative meaningfulness. They are interested in what precedes the gesture in order to understand the gesture, the gesture being the movement as meaningful/communicative action.

We can distinguish this from my discussion of somatic anacrusis in Hay’s work as follows: in her choreography and practicing performing, we are not aiming for meaningfulness; we are not aiming for gesture as such, and yet we are in motion. By engaging/deflecting processes of intention, attention and action through its destructuring operation, the choreography (impossibly but nonetheless) aims to sustain the experience of the anacrusis itself in movement, to continually reiterate the suspension of, as Godard says, “being, body and thought”. In Hay’s work we move but this movement, as I’ve argued, is action as fundamental motility and the practice of perception. Hay’s choreography insists that we let go and resist the impulse to make meaningful movement, gesture. In a comparison of Godard’s *gestural* anacrusis and my somatic anacrusis, the distinction lies in the difference between the terms *gestural* and *somatic*. To be in anacrusis is to be in suspension “before” expression, gesture – “about to ... but never quite ...”. To be in *gestural* anacrusis is to be before “gesture”, in fact before motion, “displacement” or “segmentary activity” (Godard qtd. in Louppe, “Singular Moving Geographies” 15), and yet to

be already in a poetically charged experience or process of movement as meaningful action. To be in *somatic* anacrusis is to be before “bodiliness” if you will, before the differentiation of body-subject and world, before the precipitation of subjectivity and objectivity, and yet to be in motion – as action, fundamental motility as a practice of perception. Drobnick discusses Hay’s “Cellular Consciousness: When an individual is immersed in cellular consciousness, the privileging of the singular ego becomes secondary as the body is turned into ‘an infinity of tiny organs of perception’ and the significance of one’s ‘identity falls out of focus and is replaced by attention’” (Drobnick and Hay qtd. in Drobnick 49). To be in somatic anacrusis then, is to be in cellular motion *and* in suspension, against the tendency for this motion to become meaningful, *as gesture*.

Erin Manning’s Preacceleration and Interval

In theorist and philosopher Erin Manning’s book *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*, which draws substantially on Albert North Whitehead’s philosophy and the work of, among others Deleuze and Guattari, she offers a dense discussion and theorization of the same question as Godard’s: “what happens before movement?” Grounded in Manning’s experience of a relational dance context – improvisational tango-based partner dance – her discussion is most concerned with articulating the character of the relationality itself and the processual experience of connectedness that allows the dancers to move fluidly together without deciding, planning and knowing in advance what the movement will be, when to extend a leg or arm, where to place a foot, how to manage one’s weight and balance. I draw on Manning here because she identifies

and articulates qualities of movement/dance experience that support my own descriptions and thinking.

In her introduction, Manning offers this proposal:

The dynamic form of movement is its incipient potential. Bodies are dynamic expressions of movement in its incipency. They have not yet converged into final form. Throughout *Relationescapes*, I refer to bodies as pure plastic rhythm. I propose that we move toward a notion of a becoming-body that is a sensing body in movement, a body that resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity or identity, a body that is involved in a reciprocal reaching-toward that in-gathers the world even as it worlds. (Manning 6)

The language of this proposal resonates strongly with the experiences I have described in my practicing performing Hay's choreography. Particularly, Manning's description of the "becoming-body", "resisting predefinition" and of the "reciprocal reaching-toward that in-gathers", provide articulations related to my own experiences in Hay's work, of paradoxical simultaneity in absencingpresencing and in yieldingexpanding. Throughout her introduction and first two chapters, Manning works toward articulating the experiential time-slip ("the future anterior: the will-not-yet-have-happened" (24) and incipient potential of body-movement-relation. Manning develops a number of related concepts to get at a nuanced articulation of the experience of incipient action.

For Manning, movement emerges out of the interval created through preacceleration, both of which are phases belonging to the cycle of relational movement experience as she conceives it:

Preacceleration is tapped into by the interval, actualized not in displacement as such but in the potential of its actualization. Preacceleration is like the breath that releases speech, the gathering-toward that leaps our bodies into a future unknowable. It goes something like this: preacceleration–relation–interval–intensification–actualization–extension–displacement–preacceleration. Simultaneity of experience creates sensing bodies in movement creates shifting space-times of experience. (25)

With this cycle of phases, Manning enables me to get even more specific about the experience of somatic anacrusis, which aligns most readily with her conceptualization of preacceleration. Her description of preacceleration as “the breath that releases speech” evokes the experience I’ve described of somatic anacrusis, a paradoxical simultaneity, like the transitional suspension between the inhalation and exhalation (as speech). Manning notes the generative “simultaneity of experience” that reinforces the alignment between her concept and my analysis of Hay’s work. This transitional suspension that for Manning ultimately releases speech, for Hay, does not. In Hay’s work, meaningful expression is continually undermined or subverted. This is what I mean when I describe the experience of somatic anacrusis as the “about to ... but never quite ...”, a phrasing that parallels Manning’s future anterior, noted above with respect to movement’s incipient potential.

For Manning, preacceleration enables, or perhaps better, activates the relation through which the interval arises. The relation here refers to the relation between the two tango dance partners. The interval, which arises through the relation, is the creation of a spacetime of between:

The time of the interval is incipiency. This is a future-past that is prolonged at the interface of the becoming-actual of the virtual. Just because you cannot see the interval doesn't mean it's not real. The interval's concreteness is what allows me to feel the movement in the before or the even-as of my body's displacement [actual movement from a to b]. I can't think fast enough to catch the interval in the making. The interval is the production of movement before we know it as such. (Manning 18, insertion mine)

With this description of the interval and Manning's cycle of preacceleration–relation–interval ..., I am able to deepen my articulation of somatic anacrusis in Hay's work. Above I have indicated that somatic anacrusis most readily aligns with Manning's preacceleration, and in its experiential quality of active suspension, it is. However, through Manning's discussion, we can now begin to take into account the performance context for Hay's work, and provisionally consider the relation as that between the solo performer and the audience rather than, in Manning's discussion, a relation between co-participants in a social dance. However, in Manning's situation of the tango dancers, the relation is actualizable and actualized: the dancers actually interconnect and interact together in meaningful movement.

By contrast, in Hay's situation of the solo theatrical performance, the performer and the audience do not interconnect or interact together in meaningful movement. The relation, as such, is suspended from actualization in Hay's constructed situation and destructuring structure, in contrast to the situation of the tango dancers. Here, Hay's choreography – and my experience and analysis – diverge from Manning's conceptualization of movement process. Hay's choreography remains suspended in the preacceleration phase, the further phases of relation, interval, intensification, actualization, extension and displacement do not occur, per se. Because

the relation is not actualized, the interval, articulated by Manning as a spacetime of between [the two tango dancers], does not arise through the relation of performer and audience member in the solo performance context. Participatory communication as such is not the intent. We don't dance "with" the audience like tango partners dance together. We don't "move" together with the audience in meaningful relational movement. However, nor is non-participatory, or "re/presentational", communication the intent. We don't dance "for" the audience like in more conventional staged dance performance. We don't move into "meaningful" movement figures, enacted or presented for the audience. Indeed, we do move; however, the movement in Hay's work is of a different order than that of relational or re/presentational movement. Movement in Hay's work can be understood to reside within, or be, preacceleration, a paradoxical simultaneity of "the gathering-toward that leaps our bodies into a future unknowable" (Manning 25) rather than a sequential process that moves into actualization, extension and displacement.

For Manning as for Godard, meaningful, communicative, relational movement or gesture nonetheless remains the primary concern in their conceptualizations. For Godard, a concern with the meaningful gesture (its poetic quality) is implied in his discussion of gestural anacrusis. For Manning, "bodies capitulate" or "surge into" the interval and into meaningful, relational movement. For both, *something* happens. Dynamic forms emerge and the dancers flow with them; these dynamic forms are valued as expression, as dance. However, in Hay's practice, we don't capitulate or surge. For Hay, "*nothing* happens, but is happening all the time" (Hay, Open Rehearsal, italics mine). We move, yes. And forms may *begin* to emerge, of course, as an inherent result of sedimented structures and tendencies to organize and interpret experience, but they are not the concern, and for Hay it is imperative that we release this very germination as

soon as, even before, it begins. This is the very destructuring operation that her linguistically constructed choreography effects. In a linguistic torque of my own that attempts to use language against itself to conceptualize this experience, this nascent “pre-forming” is the “ground” to Hay’s “figure”, which I am arguing *is* the somatic anacrusis, *is* the preaccelerating, not the movement or the gesture that arises therefrom. Hay’s choreography prompts the performer to engage in “catastrophic acts of perception” (Hay, *At Once* 5) that turn the body-world inside-out, and reverse the fold, such that we move toward the limit possibility of perceiving the horizon of being – the simultaneity of all time, all space – and the stretching away from specificity, individuation, and subject-object positioning. For Hay, the goal is “remaining positionless” (Hay, *Remaining Positionless*), through a deliberate and complex linguistic-experiential choreographic operation that undermines and subverts fixity and habituated patterning, attempting to enact suspension in sustained flux, as such. It is the preacceleration of Manning’s process that Hay’s choreography is aiming to sustain, a suspension of incipency – somatic anacrusis – into which she choreographs the performer. In Manning’s words:

In the preacceleration of a step, anything is possible. But as the step begins to actualize, there is no longer much potential for divergence: the foot will land where it lands.

Incipency opens up experience to the unknowable, follow-through toward concrescence closes experience on itself. Of course, this closing-in is always a reopening toward the next incipient action. (7)

Manning describes the quality of open suspension inherent in preacceleration:

“Preacceleration does not predict one displacement over another. It holds in abeyance openings, out of which shapes emerge, but control is not of the essence” (19). Shortly thereafter she

remarks: “If we had to locate creativity, the interval could serve as its nexus” (20). Here Manning’s comments recall earlier discussions of the “gap” – the unknown, the possibility, the open – which arises in experiences of improvisation and that seems to be a pre-requisite for movement invention, composing while performing.¹³²

RETURNING TO INTENTION, ATTENTION AND ACTION

In the discussion above, of concepts related to somatic anacrusis, we find that Albright, Smith, Godard and Manning also conceive of movement process in terms of intentionality/intention, attention and action, as have I, though none uses the explicit triumvirate dynamic relation of the three that I have conceived in this study. All these mover/thinkers are also concerned with conceptualizing experiences of the unknown, the pre-figurative, in dance-movement or improvisational processes. Nonetheless, implied in these conceptualizations is the assumption that these movement processes ultimately manifest meaningful, re/presentational and/or relational movement. It is specifically along this dimension of meaningfulness, that we may begin to understand how Hay’s work is distinct from both improvisation and set choreography.

In his essay “The Cutting Edge of Awareness: Reports from the Inside of Improvisation” improviser and researcher Kent De Spain summarizes his dissertation research analyzing first-person experiential reports on improvisational practice. In this essay, De Spain is interested in articulating the dimension of meaningfulness in lived experiences of movement improvisation. As I have indicated in the introduction to De Spain at the opening of this chapter, De Spain considers improvisation an “attentional practice” (37), by which he means a practice of paying attention to experience and using multiple sources drawn therefrom to generate and compose

movement. Through his analysis, De Spain derives four major categories by which he classifies the fields of experience from which improvisers source and develop, or derive and compose the movement content of their improvisations: the world inside, the world outside, memory and intentionality (which he does not explicitly define but that seems to relate specifically to the mover's deliberate purpose). Even in his determination of three different approaches to intentionality – in which an improviser may direct or pitch himself or herself toward 1) movement, 2) the physical body, or 3) elements of artistic form – De Spain's analysis implies an underlying concern in improvisation with meaningful “content”: through one or more of these particular approaches to intentionality, the improviser will derive and develop expressive, communicative movement material. Clearly, the focus is on making something: movement, meaning, sense of some kind.

By contrast, in Hay's work, discovering sources for and composing meaningful movement – as “figure” – is not the point. Reading De Spain's experiential analysis of improvisation alongside my own experiential analysis of Hay's work helps me to be more precise about the ways in which Hay's work is *not* improvisation. Like Albright, discussed above, De Spain emphasizes the importance and emphasis on attention in improvisation. In improvisation, the process of attention *functions toward* meaning-making, drawing movement figures from fields of experience, which the improviser then develops to compose/choreograph-in-the-moment. In Hay's work, rather, the choreography and practice *function on* the process of attention itself, subverting the possibility of drawing figure from ground and thereby constantly undermining the possibility to compose-in-the-moment and make meaning. Similarly, for Godard and Manning above, processes of intentionality/intention and action are also understood

to *function toward* meaning-making in danced gesture and in tango partnering respectively. By contrast, in Hay's work, her choreography and practice *function on* processes of intentionality/intention and action to subvert meaning-making per se. Below I discuss several experiences that will further illuminate this distinction between Hay's work and improvisation and subsequently also distinguish her work from set choreographic work. Hay often says, "there is no one way this looks" (Hay, SPCP), a statement that on the one hand focusses on the visual aspect of dancing, while also implicitly undermining our conventional impulse to value the specific movements per se. In Hay's work, we might think of the "dance" that results from her choreography and practice as a kind of secondary byproduct of the practice of perception; whereas, for De Spain – as for the theorists discussed above – the meaningful/relational movement, as dance, is the point.

Coagulating and Constellating: Hay's "infinite moments of indeterminate specificity"

In my practice of Hay's work, I not only experience the flashes I have described above as nascent "pre-forming" but I am also at times able to experience the micro-process that precedes these flashes, which I describe as experiences of coagulation and constellation. The following extrapolated description elaborates my experience of this coagulating and constellating process in which the language reveals processes of intentionality/intention and attention as well.

As I move and engage perceiving, travelling the well-worn path of the score and practicing the questions and tools, I am able to attend to the moving fluidity that I am and within which I move. I continue to experience the figure-ground reversals and deflections that throw me into somatic anacrusis. I become aware of poolings and eddyings, concentratings and dilutings,

surgings and abatings, centripetal and centrifugal spiralling forces within my experience. These dynamics seem to develop in relation to my environment as the world almost seems to draw me out, pushing and pulling at me with forces of its own. Gravitational pulls, tidal shifts; warming, cooling, brightening, darkening. The forces may seem to be immense and impact my whole being; or they may be minute and call to just a local aspect. The viscosity of my fluid self increases, non-uniformly, and I sense a kind of variable coagulating that begins to hint at form versus flow. [This is not necessarily stillness but may involve stillness or relative stillness. I comment on this further when I discuss the “object” experience below.] As I sense this, I notice my reflective processes kindling in the background, eager and willing to flame up, cast light and reveal; to compare, contrast, evaluate, identify this potentially meaningful coagulation or name the nascent constellating form as it comes into relief and specificity in/through my body.¹³³

In Hay’s practice, the deflecting functions of the score, questions and tools and the multidimensional effort of working with their constantly changing, rapid-fire, braided multiplicity, douse¹³⁴ the kindling process when it begins to draw (like a fire draws oxygen to feed itself). “Dis-attach” and “Ready-fire-aim” guide me back to the choreography and the practice of the score, questions and tools. Dousing the kindling process before recognition, identification and interpretation occur engenders an experience of a kind of pre-reflective specificity. This is what I understand a note in the score to be referencing in the Mall section: “[blue font] *Note: I remember to notice that my whole body is producing unimagably pure instances of specificity*” (Hay, *At Once* 9). Because this kindling process is so readily ingrained in my general lived experience, it is very challenging to douse the process before recognition occurs and herein lies the impossibility of Hay’s practice. I am continuously suspended in the

process of the “about to ... but never quite...”, a paradoxical simultaneity of movement towardaway of glimpsing and glancing the bodily vibrations that reveal the movement of meaning-making as coalescences, fleeting coagulations, possible constellations. I play at this edge of meaning-making through absencingpresencing, yieldingexpanding and thresholding, barely brushing up against it as Hay’s work choreographs me into somatic anacrusis.

The Mall section of the score is a fruitful one for the explication of these experiences of coagulation and constellation because it offers the possibility to discuss both the dousing of reflective processes as described above, as well as the fanning of the embers, as it were, which is explicitly choreographed uniquely in one section of the dance, and which I will now discuss. This coagulating and constellating process can effectively be understood in Merleau-Pontian terms as a process of structuring, which Hay’s choreography “douses” through its linguistically constructed destructuring operation.

Within the Mall section,¹³⁵ the following direction appears: “A single [purple font] object [black font] reveals itself in [purple font] a mall. [black font] I perform several views of object for the benefit of the audience. [purple font] A mall [black font] and [purple font] object [black font] alternate their appearances” (Hay, *At Once* 9). Shortly thereafter, a note clearly articulates the process of coagulation and constellation that precedes the experience of recognition and identification, or interpretation. Here again, the word “object” appears in purple ink, cautioning the performer against creative/interpretive performance impulses: “[blue font] *Note: I do not create [purple font] object. [blue font] I learn its attributes from my body, and actually take pleasure in identifying the object for myself in each performance*” (Hay, *At Once* 9). In this particular section of the score, structuring processes come to the foreground. In my

experience of the work, in this section I am very definitely playing with the relative “balance” of kindling (structuring) versus dousing (destructuring). In the process of performing Mall, I move through experiences of relative fluidity and coagulation. As I embody the choreographic directions for the Object section, I usually (but not always) come into relative stillness. In this case, I allow the process of coagulation to continue and my reflective processes to kindle. Through the experience of viscosity and coagulation, I experience my bodily flow continue to “solidify” and constellate as more stable form. Fanning the embers and allowing the process of reflection, I experience a sudden flash in which I recognize the stable form I experience: it comes to light with an identity as a specific object, of which I then “perform several views ... for the benefit of the audience”. Interestingly, while the identity of the object comes to light in this flash of receptive registration, I do not always actively “name” the object for myself in my mind during the experience of performing the work. In my practicing, I would generally experience the constellation of three different objects in the Mall section of the work. Writing afterward, I would always attempt to recall the three objects in my journal. Sometimes I would be able to easily and quickly recall and write down the names of the objects. Other times, I would have no immediate recollection of them, though I knew I had experienced their constellation within the work. Only by tracking back through the score and tracing the residues of their constellation as it echoed in my body afterward could I recall these constellated objects and name them in my journal.

I draw out this particular example and experience from the practice of *At Once* because it is a unique occasion in the practice of the score in which the choreography directs reflective processes to carry through, to resolve. In conventional dance improvisation and set

choreographic work (with predefined movement), resolution of some kind is generally sought. The nature of the resolution may or may not be understood by the audience, or even necessarily by the performer/s; however, both cases typically work with and/or toward expressive, communicative gestures and/or movement statements.¹³⁶ Other than in this one unique instance, Hay's choreography does not strive for resolution. It is not trying to say or mean anything. By its contrast, the resolution occurring in this Object example serves to show the prevailing experience throughout the work of somatic anacrusis, in which the deconstructing structure of the choreography deflects intentionality/intention, attention and action away from meaning-making processes, moving the performer away from the intentional object and into the *écart*, away from attention to figures and toward the horizon, away from danced movement and into the action of fundamental motility and the practice of perception that opens impossibly toward primordality.

I have above articulated the way in which Hay's work is distinct from dance improvisation and conventional set choreography with respect to the way in which the performer experiences processes of reflection and meaning-making. Coagulating and constellating describe the nascent process of meaning-making itself, against the edge of which we brush in Hay's work. This edge is the "O", of which Hay's work is "the other side" (Hay, "What if now is?").

Compositional Responsibility

I will now address the way in which Hay's work is distinct from both set work and improvisation with respect to compositional responsibility. Conventional set choreography and improvisation both tend to be concerned with meaning-making and interpretation, wherein someone, either choreographer or performer, tends to take primary responsibility for the composition – the

reflective handling and shaping of material. In set work, the choreographer generally takes more responsibility, in setting the movement material and directing the interpretation, though aspects of both may be shared with the performer in the creative and rehearsal process. In improvisation, the performer generally takes substantially more, if not full, responsibility, thereby navigating a balance between engaging with the developing movement material of the dance experience and maintaining reflective awareness and active engagement with the evolving whole. In improvisational contexts, this balance is often described as, for example, ten per cent compositional awareness to ninety per cent generative experience.

As noted earlier, Hay is explicit that her work is not improvisation. From my experience and analysis of the work, I concur. The work is highly choreographed. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the choreography (score, questions and tools) is significantly complex and specific, and constrains the performer to a high degree, allowing the performer to mostly relinquish responsibility to actually compose in the moment. The work, as choreography, provides a very specific structure, direction and parameters for the performer's activity. Hay holds compositional responsibility – and explicitly claims it in the required credit given to her in all performances of her work: “choreography by Deborah Hay”. Hay's choreography, as such, resides in the complex braid of linguistic operations in the score, questions and tools, as I have discussed at length in chapter 4. There is very little autonomy granted to the performer in terms of compositional responsibility; and yet, there is.

In terms of movement material, Hay's work is not necessarily “choreography” as we typically understand it in dance: defined sequences of specific movements composed into a meaningful whole. In Hay's work there is practically no set movement, pre-defined figures or

expressive intent. Thus the performer is granted almost full responsibility with respect to the movement material of the dance. In this way, as I have indicated in my introductory chapter, Hay's practice can be understood to align with other un-premeditated movement practices, such as improvisation generally speaking. In Hay's work, the performer is indeed expected to generate the movement material of the dance, as in improvisation. However, the performer is not at liberty to follow, develop and interpret the material – to compose-in-the-moment – as one would in improvisational practice. As I have discussed, Hay's choreographic function deflects the performer from this compositional activity, constraining against this improvisational pursuit. Hay is explicit in the score: “[blue font]: Note: The movement may change but the choreography itself does not change” (Hay, *At Once* 9). Paradoxically herein, though autonomy is granted with respect to the actual movements, the performer once again experiences Hay's assertion of compositional responsibility.

Nevertheless, I must address the fact that Hay does grant the performer modest compositional responsibility in a very few choreographic cues in the score that ask the performer to maintain some reflective awareness of the overall performance manifestation in a given run-through, of which this example is the most specific: “[blue font]: Note: I strongly maintain the role of the choreographer overseeing the particularity of the path I travel – making spatial choices without becoming too artistic” (Hay, *At Once* 7). This would seem to contradict my discussion above. However, I account for this somewhat anomalous choreographic cue by acknowledging Hay's own active embrace of the theatrical performance context in which she situates her work and in which it circulates. As Christopher House has said, commenting on Hay's work following his own performance of Hay's solo *I'll Crane For You* at Toronto's

Winchester Street Theatre, and I paraphrase: “Deborah is interested in theatrical performance.” Passing references in the score to “the audience”, “the theater” and “live performance” within cues that provide other specific choreographic directions support this understanding.¹³⁷ As I have noted earlier, the theatrical performance context plays an important role in providing a frame that safeguards the performer in entering the choreographic deconstructing structure and moving into the practice of perception. Entering into this practice without this contextual frame could be quite risky: alone, one has the potential to become destabilized; in public, one has the potential to be seen this way. Charged with developing an “adaptation” of Hay’s choreography, the performer participates in setting the theatrical performance frame, in which the choreography will take place. Thus, at this level, the performer is granted a kind of responsibility, though I consider this a contextual responsibility, as distinct from a compositional responsibility per se. Despite having framed his solo performance of Hay’s *I’ll Crane For You* with lighting, costume and set, House describes the sense of risk and lack of autonomy he experiences in performing the work as being like: “entering an arena with no shield and no sword... with an hour of potential failure hanging over me” (House qtd. in K. Smith). House’s statement does not convey a sense of compositional responsibility and rather expresses a sense of being at the mercy of Hay’s choreography.

Because the choreography functions in a sophisticated manner to deflect the performer from meaning-making processes overall, explicit choreographic directions like the ones noted above, which ostensibly give the performer momentary compositional responsibility, in fact participate in the challenging dynamic of the work and contribute to the paradoxical simultaneity of the somatic anacrusis experience, in which the performer cannot properly embrace the compositional responsibility, nor entirely relinquish it. I consider Hay’s work *choreography*

because of the linguistic complexity and specificity of the score, questions and tools. In the work, though the movement is not set, the performer is highly constrained by the choreography, which stays the same but is not necessarily graspable as choreography in the conventional sense of danced movement. As such, in my view, Hay's work is at the cutting edge of choreography, a claim that has support from similar assessments by others who suggest that Hay is contributing to a paradigm shift in contemporary dance training, with respect to her approach to choreography and practice. For example, Nicely notes that " Hay has identified something within training itself that she works to reform, thereby confronting the institution of dance and remaking it on her terms" (167) and Bauer writes that Hay "is one of the choreographers who has most meticulously, thoroughly and idiosyncratically explored, challenged and questioned the notions of training, technique, bodily behaviour and memory" (75).¹³⁸

CONCLUSION: BEYOND IMPROVISATION, AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF CHOREOGRAPHY

In De Spain's conclusion, entitled "Beyond What We Know", he remarks on the limits of language with respect to articulating improvisational experience and offers a provocation to explore further:

My own experience tells me that where we go, what we know, and how we know it is intimately connected to the linguistic stories we tell ourselves in our minds (that might be one definition of the word "consciousness"). The verbal reports under scrutiny here, by their very linguistic nature, urge those aspects of our awareness to the fore. But verbal language has limits. By looking at those limits, at the places where our ability to

articulate our experience begins to break down, we see how improvisation can take us into realms of awareness that extend beyond literacy, a place of synapses and chaos and unvoiced intention [...] as students of human experience we must find the discipline to feel past these words and into the negative spaces around and beyond. (36)

De Spain's description here points to the realm of bodily knowing that Hay's work engenders paradoxically through her distinctly complex linguistic constructions. De Spain's point about feeling past "the negative spaces around and beyond words" echoes Hay's gestural description of "the other side of o", and based on my research and analysis, I would argue that Hay has indeed found a way to move into those negative spaces beyond words and beyond what we know. Paradoxically, she has done so specifically through language. In my work here I follow suit, feeling my way through Hay's language into those negative spaces beyond. Then, through practicing performing and writing, I wind my way back in an attempted return. My aim is to draw these experiences into language and to show how Hay's words can take us beyond improvisation and into realms of experience at the cutting edge of choreography. I re-quote Drobnick, who captures this "intertwining and reversibility" of body and language:

Contrary to totalizing theories that argue that the body is unknowable outside language, Hay posits the body as dialectical with language, that is, as an influence upon language as much as it is influenced by language. Such an ideosomatic understanding of the interrelatedness of the psyche and physique recognizes that the body inherently exceeds the capacity of language to describe it, while it simultaneously inspires new forms of eloquence. (45)

Interestingly, in order to get hold of the "beyond", De Spain defaults to calling it "spiritual":

But in those spaces beyond are some experiences in improvisation that are not easily categorized – not inside, nor outside; in fact, somehow dissolving that existential border. In these moments, we seem to sense and respond to (“dance” with) something ineffable; something, although we tend to avoid the word in this culture, that might be described as “spiritual”. (36)

As I have discussed earlier, Hay herself and others describing her earlier work, have often appropriated the language of the spiritual, the mystical, the cosmic to somehow grapple with the experiences of her work. She continues to use/refute this, as I have noted in reference to her book title and comments within *My Body, the Buddhist*. Dance theorists Hubert Godard and Laurence Louppe, whose thinking I have addressed above, also address the challenges of discussing the dance experience outside of received discourses (Louppe “Singular Moving Geographies”).

De Spain nonetheless attempts a recuperation from this default to the spiritual in his subsequent paragraphs, which resonate with Merleau-Ponty’s account of the *écart* as I’ve discussed it, though not directly:

Our consciousness is like a body interacting with the exterior world. Because our nerves cannot extend beyond our skin, we only really sense ourselves in contact with a larger world, but separate from it. In the same way, we only “know” what is present within our consciousness, yet by touching it, by dancing with it, we can sense the contours and textures of an infinite world that exists beyond the boundaries of knowledge. (De Spain 37)

In his discussion, De Spain seems to be struggling to articulate this realm of experience “beyond what we know”, at “the cutting edge of awareness”. He is coming up against it, feels its presence

and is compelled to describe. I too am compelled to articulate it and I can only try. If I am remotely successful, perhaps it is because Hay's work takes me beyond improvisation, to the cutting edge of choreography, and through her complex and specific use of language, she offers a way.

Hay's choreographic proposal is distinct and unique in the way that it uses language against itself, and draws forces movement and language together, challenging their power in proximity and the performer's capacity to practice her complex choreography, which involves the commitment to enter into and live through the generated forcefield of the dance. And I mean forcefield explicitly, as this term evokes the charged experiential spacetime of the "dance" (Godard's body vectors and intensities that arise through intention, attention and action), and as this term also evokes the palpable experience of sustained suspension in somatic anacrusis.

In operating on intentionality/intention, attention and action in the ways that I have analyzed in the previous chapter, Hay's complex constructed choreographic situation and uniquely linguistic-somatic destructuring structure of score, questions and tools engages/deflects processes of meaning-making: "about to ... but never quite ...". As performer, I am thrust into motion and caught in the act of perception, suspended within the flux of intertwinings and reversals, of paradoxical simultaneities – the absencing/presencing of I-world, the yielding/expanding of body-space and the thresholding of movement-time. In practicing performing Hay's work, I enter into an experience that is beyond improvisation, arising at the cutting edge of choreography; an experience through which I might impossibly glance primordiality; an experience of somatic anacrusis that has potential implications within and

beyond the field of dance with respect to presence and relationality, and which I address in my concluding chapter.

Chapter 6: Moving Toward Otherness: What if ...?

Improvisation does not, therefore, entail a silencing of the mind in order for the body ‘to speak’. Rather, improvisation pivots both mind and body into a new apprehension of relationalities. (Foster, “Taken by Surprise” 7)

As the above quote implies, discussions of movement improvisation often suggest that such experiences offer new approaches to relationality with other, within the world. I use this quote to open this chapter because it helpfully connects the ideas I have articulated in the previous chapters to the focus of this chapter on relationality; however, I remind the reader once again that Hay does not consider her work improvisation, and I have argued in agreement with this in the preceding chapter, describing her work as being “beyond improvisation, at the cutting edge of choreography”. I arrived at this point via my descriptive and reflective analyses of practicing performing Hay’s choreography and practice as a unique function that draws language and the moving body into a dynamic, torqueing process – a destructuring structure – that pivots the performer through a practice of perception into the paradoxical and simultaneous, non-resolving experience of somatic anacrusis.

In this chapter, I specifically consider the dimension of relationality in Hay’s work through a double re-framing. In the following discussion, I reconsider Hay’s practicing performing as two distinct but connected activities: “training” in “doing”. The practicing is understood firstly as “training” a process or way that does not seek to stabilize meaning and therefore secondly as a “pre-disposing”; and the performing, specifically as solo activity nested

in a theatrical frame is understood firstly as “doing” – praxis – and therefore secondly as “pre-relational” or “unconsummated” in terms of active engagement for/with another. As such, in the first reframing, practicing performing becomes “training in doing”, and in the second reframing, this training in doing – somatic anacrusis – becomes “pre-relational pre-disposing”. I undertake this reconsideration with reference to certain discussions in performance and dance studies with respect to training, performance, presence, repetition and representation. It becomes clear to me as I work through these ideas, that Hay’s choreography and practice could be further considered in relation to these discussions; however, I do not pursue these lines of thought here. My primary effort in this study is to describe and articulate the experiential poetics of Hay’s work through emergent choreographic analysis and to consider certain implications thereof. Ultimately, this reframing of somatic anacrusis as pre-relational pre-disposing sets up my understanding of the unique relationality of Hay’s work and enables me to consider the ethical implications of her choreography and practice in light of feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s call for a culture of perception as a way toward the other. I ask: in cultivating the processual experience of somatic anacrusis considered as a pre-relational pre-disposing, can Hay’s choreography and practice be understood as a way toward otherness through perception? What if ...?

Shifting the Frame of Reference: Rethinking Relationality

Many writers have commented on Hay’s interest in and concern with relationality, which is also explicit in Hay’s own discourse about her work. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, most major contributions to the literature on Hay highlight this key concern and, taken together, they address various ways this theme has reiterated throughout Hay’s career. Foster’s 1986 analysis of Hay’s

choreography established relationality as a foundational principle of Hay's practice: "From the moment she walks into the performing space ... she works to create a sense of community among everyone present" (*Reading Dancing* 5). In Nicely's 2012 dissertation chapter she writes that: "A relational engagement with others happens in her work by unfixing who we see and instead identifying ourselves in movement as action" (154). Nicely further suggests that Hay's solo work *Art and Life* can cultivate a sense of responsible action that prepares us to approach the challenges of the future (171).

Hay's concern with relationality in her work, over and above an interest in content or meaningfulness per se, helps to explain her work's varying and often strong effects on different populations: confounding dance spectators, attracting experimental performing artists and artist-researchers, engaging therapeutic and community practitioners. This relational priority also assists in understanding how Hay's work has caused significant controversy,¹³⁹ been described as spiritual, considered feminist, and been both dismissed and revered as ground-breaking in reviews. From an alternative perspective, one might say that through her decades-long exploration of relationality, Hay has perhaps only inadvertently established a movement aesthetic. In considering her work beyond a theatrical dance context, I suggest that through it she proposes an embodied ethic – a way of being/moving toward others and the world, and moreover one that she is able to publicly stage and enact through a theatrical performance practice. Accompanying this embodied ethic is a verbal discursive practice that enables her to disseminate her process to others who can then also enact it – through adaptation, via a global performance and presenting network that ultimately perpetuates her work – and her message.

Considering this persistent concern with relationality in Hay's work over time, I propose

an understanding of Hay's artistic career arc as an exploration of how to enact relationality, following an overarching chronological trajectory from her early work in unison group contexts to her more recent interest in individual solo contexts. Hay's early circle dances focused on enacting a kind of relationality in completely participatory group practice. Hay's SPCP solo choreography and practice, which is the subject of this research, enacts a different kind of relationality through individual performative solo practice. Hay's career phases, focussed alternately on solo work and large group workshops, have enacted relationality in various ways along the participatory/performative spectrum. In the following discussion, I will go further, however, and suggest that in Hay's SPCP solo practice phase she actually comes to question relationality per se, enacting a participatory-performative suspension thereof, in the processual experience of somatic anacrusis, reframed as pre-relational pre-disposing.

Textual Performances and/of Performing Bodies

Before I continue with my discussion of Hay's work, it will be helpful to briefly establish some theoretical context with respect to questions of training, performance, presence, repetition and representation. These questions are made relevant broadly in the context of performance studies, which, while strongly debated as a field or discipline, collects under its auspices a multiplicity of theories, methods and events (Madison and Hamera xii) which share some common ground in, as performance scholar Tracy C. Davis notes: "acknowledging how individual behavior derives from collective, even unconscious, influences and is manifest as observable behaviour, both overt and quotidian, individual and collective" (1). Within this conception, as Richard Schechner has articulated, almost anything can be considered and studied "as performance", while we still

understand some more typically “theatrical” and culturally defined events *to be* performances – “is performance”, per Schechner. In the twenty-first century, however, the distinction between the two modalities “is vanishing”. (Schechner 38 and 49, all). This is in part due to the “performative turn” in cultural analysis (Davis 1), by which even “is performance” can be understood “as performance”. And yet as is often cited, the term “performance” itself remains an “essentially contested concept” (Strine, Long and Hopkins qtd. in both Carlson 68 and in Madison and Hamera xi), the tensions therein valued as fundamental to its meaning/s – and its opening/s to alternative articulations.

Rather than rehearsing one of many possible stories of performance studies, here I will draw out several key contributions in order to briefly sketch some important ideas that variously mark my subsequent discussion. In his essay “What is Performance?” performance scholar Marvin Carlson surveys a range of notions of performance from the public display of technical skill; to Richard Schechner’s concept of restored behaviour (discussed further below); to the measurement of a specific act against an ideal. In an attempt to establish a more overarching definition, he offers the conceptualization attributed to ethnolinguist Richard Bauman, that “all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action” and that “performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self” (Carlson 70-71, all).

At the outset of Schechner's chapter "What is Performance?" in his *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, and before further specifying his notion of performing as "restored behaviour", Schechner defines "to perform" in four basic ways: "being, doing, showing doing and explaining showing doing". He defines "being" as "all that exists" and "doing" as "the activity of all that exists". "Showing doing" is "pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing" and the final phrase, he explains, "is performance studies". "Doing" and "showing doing", he says, "are actions ... are always in flux" (28, all). In conceiving of performance more specifically as "restored behaviour", Schechner draws attention to the idea that even quotidian activity can be understood to be performed according to a script: "the habits, rituals, and routines of life are restored behaviors" (34). Restored behaviour is "symbolic and reflexive" (Schechner 35); its meanings are scripted, coded and enacted within cultural contexts. For Schecher, "Performance in the restored behaviour sense means never for the first time, always for the second to nth time: twice-behaved behavior" (36) and this is so even at the level of the minute, wherein a closer look will reveal a process of repetition and recombination even if the individual is unaware of it being so. However, Schechner points out that while "[p]erformances can be generalized at the theoretical level of restoration of behaviour, [...] as embodied practices each and every performance is specific and different from every other" (36-37). While this statement gestures in the direction of performance conceived alternatively as bodily lived experience or corporeal presence, for Schechner, it does not necessarily liberate performance from his rubric of restored behaviour; it just tightens the aperture at which the performance and/of the behaviour is considered. We can consider Schechner's "restored behaviour" as a characterization of performance as representation and repetition.

Schechner is recognized as one of the founders of performance studies. His perspective, as Madison and Hamera note: “has inspired scholars to examine the intricate conceptual and pragmatic connections between performance, repetition, and representation” (xxi). These examinations have been substantially fuelled by Jacques Derrida’s philosophical contributions in deconstructing binaries and challenging the western “metaphysics of presence” or “logocentrism” (Reynolds “Jacques Derrida”), which problematizes the notion of a “truth” or “origin” or “centre” that stabilizes meaning. His influential ideas, particularly iteration, *différance* and trace, have contributed in direct and indirect ways to performance theory. For Derrida, there is always an absence within presence (any mark), constituting a “leakage” or “overflow” (Royle 61), which is the trace that is fundamental to the movement of signification as *différance*. In particular, Derrida’s notion of iterability – that the meaning of an act said or done relies on its having been said or done before and on the specific context in which it occurs, but importantly *not* on the presence of the actor or speaker (thus a deferral, *différance*) – constitutes a key process in thinking about performance as repetition *and* difference. According to Royle on Derrida’s thought: “Iterability thus entails both ‘repetition’ (sameness) and ‘alterity’ (difference)” (68). Schechner illuminates the implication of this idea for meaning in performance: “meaning cannot ‘be’ once and for all. Meaning is always performed: Always in rehearsal, its finality forever deferred, its actuality only provisional, played out in specific circumstances” (Schechner 146).

Through this, we can also understand Derrida’s impact on the question of representation: if there is no absolute origin or truth and meaning is always deferred, performing presence in its encompassing fullness – or plenitude – is impossible. Derrida’s close reading of Antonin Artaud’s writing on the Theatre of Cruelty works through this problem acknowledging the

impossibility of Artaud's proposal: "But if the idea of a theater without representation, the idea of the impossible, does not help us to regulate theatrical practice, it does, perhaps, permit us to conceive its origin, eve and limit, and the horizon of its death" (Derrida 16). He concludes by articulating the closure of representation: "Because it has always already begun, representation therefore has no end. But one can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its *playing* space. This movement is the movement of the world as play" (Derrida 17).

From Derrida's paradigm shifting interventions, particularly iteration or citationality, a notion of performativity evolved, influenced largely by the work of feminist theorist Judith Butler who argued that genders (and by extension, all manifestations of identities) are performative, repetitions or citations of cultural norms and values, not biologically determined. This thinking recalls Schechner's notion of "restored behaviour" as twice-behaved behaviour, an iteration of a previous action. However, as Madison and Hamera usefully point out, this is but "one dimension" of performativity, which opens up the alternative possibility for performativity as "resisting citationality" (xviii, both). In either case, this notion of performativity – whether normative or resistive – largely relies on the effect of repetition and difference on socio-cultural constructions of values and norms in the process of citationality.

As just discussed, Derrida's provocative ideas have been influential in thinking through performance as text, as repetition and as representation. However, they have also been influential in thinking through performance as bodily experience. For Derrida, there is always the supplement, the trace, or "that which precedes or exceeds language" (Royle 62) and particularly his notions of the trace and of *différance* have been taken up directly and indirectly in dance

studies with respect to questions around the “presence” of the “body” in “movement”, all of which I place in quotes because these notions have been theorized and problematized – repeatedly. What of the visceral, material, living, breathing, experiencing/experienced body in motion? Thinking also through repetition and difference, Peggy Phelan developed a psychoanalytically inflected feminist approach to understanding performance that considers the dynamic presence of live bodies in performance, which cannot be documented or written. As such, she proposes an ontology of performance as “representation without reproduction” and emphatically claims that “Performance ... becomes itself through disappearance” (146). For Phelan, performance becomes less about presence per se and more about absence and loss. In this work, Phelan is strongly concerned with the lived materiality of the marked and “unmarked” body and the performance and politics of representation.

Writing both “with and against Derrida”, in his essay “Mimique” dance scholar Mark Franko thinks through the implications of the Derridean trace for dance and performance studies (“Mimique” 209). He forwards the notion of primary mimesis, via Spurius: “the taking of bodily form by bodies, the material occasion for the presentation and transmission of behaviour” (“Mimique” 209). He suggests that: “Primary mimesis does not entail an originary metaphysics so much as a project of becoming. If one conceives the danced trace as primary mimesis, dance need not be identified with an originary metaphysics on the one hand, nor with the reference-less reference on the other”. He then proposes primary mimesis as a “doing”, a “physical participation” in order to theorize dance as “praxis” (“Mimique” 210, all). As part of his larger argument Franko articulates an understanding of dance as action, rather than as presence or absence. The notion of dance as action, as praxis, is useful as I develop an understanding of

Hay's performing as "doing". Franko's essay begins with a question of the relationship between writing and dancing, prompted by Derrida.

Dance and performance scholar André Lepecki also takes up the (un-resolving – and productively so, as my study both relies upon and reveals) question of this relation between dance and writing in his essay "Inscribing Dance" which examines both the contributions and limits of Derridean logic for dance and dance writing. Inside his larger discussion of the co-relational possibilities among dancing, writing and femininity which I will not elaborate here, Lepecki notes several dance scholars – including Franko and also Ann Cooper Albright and Peggy Phelan – whose critiques of presence in dance have been influenced by Derrida and, importantly, whose thinking, Lepecki suggests, also reveals the "limits of deconstruction for dance and performance studies" ("Inscribing" 136). Writes Lepecki in reference to these scholars' critiques: "Configuring the conditions of dance's embodiment destabilizes the play(fulness) of the trace by anchoring the dance in the dancer's historical, material body. Presence returns ... it returns with the mark of a history on the edge of its own withdrawal" ("Inscribing" 136). Concerned as he is with ontologies of dance, presence and movement (both here and elsewhere, for example in his book *Exhausting Dance: Presence and the Politics of Movement*), Lepecki states the importance of acknowledging the always historically contingent and fluid relation between writing and dancing via the material moving body on stage. This means, he writes, throwing

the presentness of the verb *to be* into the space of friction between writing and dance, a space mediated by gendered bodies as systems of exchange, as practice of counterfeiting, as spaces of troubling restlessness through which dance's presence becomes undecidable,

multiple, lawless, a presence whose present can point simultaneously toward yet unthinkable ontological coimpossibilities of pastness, presentness, and futurity.

(“Inscribing” 137)

With, against and through Derrida – with, against and through writing – dance’s presence returns as “unthinkable” “(co)impossible”, as paradoxical simultaneity: historical, material, undecidable, ephemeral, approachingwithdrawing.

It is always a dance in itself, this act of writing dancing, and one that Laurence Louppe performs virtuosically in her book *The Poetics of Contemporary Dance*. Like the scholars noted above, Louppe also addresses questions of “presence” and “body” in her work, in which – as her English translator and dance scholar Sally Gardner acknowledges – “she is concerned to avoid positivistic, naturalistic and biologicistic notions of bodies and their ‘lineages’” (Gardner, “Introduction” xi). While positing an “irreducibly social and cultural body-agent”, Louppe develops her poetics of dance with great attention to and complex treatment of the body *matière* of dance: “the live unstable ‘body states’ of the dancer which are her/his primary materials” (Gardner, “Introduction” xv). Gardner notes that for Louppe the term *matière* is crucial in circumventing oppositions and binaries and is an example of one of Louppe’s own linguistic moves in the process of thinking and writing dancing.

It is to this task that I now return, to consider the specific relationality that Hay’s dance practices performing in the context of the above discussion. In my thinking, I’m not positing the body as primordial essence or presence, nor am I endlessly repeating a text or routine (in the sense of daily repeated behaviour and/or an established, set, phrase of danced steps), in a normative citationality. For Hay’s work functionally problematizes these notions. I am, however,

playing with language and the possibilities that lie within and beyond words to “write with dance” (Lepecki, “Inscribing” 133). I accept that in Hay’s work, I am a socio-cultural body-subject and that my performing and performed body meets, intertwines with and reiterates Hay’s choreography and practice (her deconstructing structure) – as praxis. Through Hay’s distinctly linguistic choreography and practice a torquing occurs, a dynamic tension – in-tension, at-tension – in which dance as action becomes a performance generating system for somatic anacrusis – a ravellingunravelling paradoxical simultaneity that opens a spacetime of the “prepost”, “pre-relational”, “pre-disposing”. Hay’s work attempts to sustain this spacetime such that its possibility can register: like trying to register the paradoxical simultaneity that occurs in the process of breathing, precisely as inhaling becomes exhaling or vice versa.

Practicing as “Training” as Pre-disposing

Thus far, I have focused on Hay’s choreography and practice primarily as “choreography”, as a dance work. It is also possible to consider her choreography and practice as “training”, particularly with respect to the required three-month daily practice. However, Hay’s practice distinguishes itself from a conventional understanding of training in dance, which is typically concerned with disciplinary skill development through repetition of figures and forms belonging to one or more particular movement aesthetics, cultures and value systems, for example: ballet, flamenco, bharatanatyam, folk dance forms, breaking, Limón, contact improvisation, release techniques, etc. As noted previously, Susan Foster has registered Hay’s blurring the distinctions between training, rehearsal and performance as part of her approach to choreography and dance (*Reading Dancing* 11). Through stipulations to “Dis-attach” from acquired technique, to not

rehearse but to always run the piece in full, to not strive for repetition of a previous day's manifestation of the dance, to not compare or evaluate each daily practice against past ones, and pertinently, in almost never involving movement demonstration per se in the process of teaching the work, Hay's practice moves against the grain of conventional dance training.

In a short article on Hay's practice as training – in which the author considers Hay's approach to training as innovative – Bojana Bauer notes the historical connection, in contemporary Western dance, between the development of a choreographic aesthetic and its basis in training: “Most of the milestone figures of modern dance history constructed their aesthetic discourse and forms on the basis of a specific body training. Creating a body for oneself meant creating a dance and choreography” (74). In this way, Hay's work is perhaps no different: there is a connection in Hay's work too between the training and the choreography; and yet, her work is fundamentally different in terms of what constitutes “training” and, as I've discussed, what constitutes “choreography”. Bauer writes: “To understand how Hay's repetition differs from disciplinary repetition characteristic of conventional training, the process and the result of repetition have to be taken out of the representational framework” (77-78). This is not Schechner's “restored behaviour”.

Bauer develops an understanding of dance training as a tensile negotiation of the “history” of the body and the “future” demands of a new choreographic aesthetic or situation and suggests that: “In the moment between past and future the movement emerges. As an approach to this moment, training can become something more open than the instructed development of habits” (Bauer 75). Bauer draws on Hay's own description of the practice as “training in a questioning process” (Hay qtd. in Bauer 76) to acknowledge Hay's embrace of the notion of

training and yet her distinction from the conventional understanding of dance training. Pointing out the important tool in Hay's work to "Dis-attach", Bauer further elaborates the way in which Hay's practice trains an "ongoing transformative process" (76). She notes: "The dancer is expected to relinquish what she knows while at the same time no other specific bodily programme is laid out. Hay leaves the dancer in the void. It is a void that is not to be filled but should rather act as a generative threshold towards the unknown" (77). This description resonates strongly with my discussion and articulation of the experience of somatic anacrusis in Hay's work – in which I too describe it in part using the word threshold(ing). Referencing Bauer's discussion here assists me in acknowledging Hay's choreography and practice as "training" and as repetition, and in significantly distinguishing it from the disciplinary repetition in conventional dance training. So, what are we training and repeating in Hay's practice? According to Bauer, via Hay herself as noted above, we are training in a *process*, an approach or way, that opens the "generative threshold", a phrase that does indeed correspond to the experience of somatic anacrusis as a dynamic – engaging/deflecting – suspension of the structuring of meaningfulness in my analysis.

I will now consider this notion of training in the context of Hay's choreography from a different perspective and articulate it as a "pre-disposing". First taking the definition of the word "disposition" as "one's habitual ways of acting toward others or of thinking about things" ("disposition"), I then understand the etymology of the term "dispose" from the Old French *dis* (variously) *poser* (to place) as referencing the act or process of variously placing, positioning, or arranging ("disposition"). Adding to this the prefix "pre-", meaning "before in place, time, order, or rank" ("pre-"), I invoke the term "pre-disposing" to characterize how Hay's work practices –

“trains” – a process or way of being that, in effect, is “before” disposing, “before” habit, “before” the act of placing and positioning. According to Melinda Buckwalter, “Hay says ‘practice the performance’ rather than ‘rehearse’ to point out that the purpose of an ongoing performance practice is to unlearn the habit of learning a piece in one particular way” (39).

I purposefully place the term “before” in quotes to signal my use of it in the context of the paradoxical simultaneity of somatic anacrusis under discussion. Here “before” is not before in linear time per se, but a “beforeness” that occurs within the process “disposing” and can only be understood in this context. A useful analogy, as I noted earlier, can be found in Julia Kristeva’s conceptualization of the semiotic and the symbolic, not, in this case, with respect to her articulations of the semiotic and the symbolic specifically (although her theory of poetic language could provide another interesting lens through which to reconsider the experience of somatic anacrusis). Here, however, I wish only to echo Kristeva’s clarification that the semiotic can only be thought from within the symbolic order (24). The “before” of somatic anacrusis that I am articulating here – the “pre” – only arises through the process of “disposing”, via the distinct function of Hay’s choreography.

I consider the training or practicing of somatic anacrusis in Hay’s work a “pre-disposing” in the sense that this training perpetuates a processual experience of being “before” (i.e. pre-) disposition. This is the destructuring that occurs through Hay’s structure. In the experience of somatic anacrusis, the performer is perpetually deflected into the *écart*, the spreading away from precipitations of subjectivity and objectivity. Through Hay’s choreographic operation, the possibility for structuring and sedimentation that is involved in forming dispositions or habits – in conventional dance training or otherwise – is thwarted and with so-called repetition through

practice, the performer could be said to be “training” this process of subversion – of somatic anacrusis.

However, simultaneously (and paradoxically), this practicing or training in the process and experience of somatic anacrusis may in itself be considered an act of habit-forming, of “pre-disposing” in the dictionary’s sense of “[having] an inclination or tendency to” or “[putting] into a favourable or suitable frame of mind, emotional condition, etc.” (“predispose”). This line of thinking recalls Merleau-Ponty’s articulation of the sedimentation of structures of experience in the body schema, which aligns conceptually with the formation of dispositions as habits. As Mallin characterizes it: “Situations are mastered (though never finally) through a process of articulation and patterning which at one and the same time is the formulation of actions and of dispositions” (16).

In my analysis, I discussed how Hay’s choreography constantly engages/deflects intention, attention and action, simultaneously acknowledging *and* subverting the tendency toward structuring and sedimentation through its function as a destructuring structure. As such, the term “pre-disposing” is apt because it reflects the paradoxical simultaneity of the experience of somatic anacrusis in both including *and* suspending the act of disposing, and the paradoxical simultaneity of being “before” and also “engaged in” the process of habit-forming. It is the practice of Hay’s choreography – as destructuring structure – and the daily repetition of the processual experience of somatic anacrusis, the “training-in-a-process” that I am articulating as “pre-disposing”.

Performing as “Doing” as Pre-Relational

Not only is Hay’s work practicing, it is also – and always – performing,¹⁴⁰ both when dancing in the theatrical context and, importantly, even when dancing the solo alone in a studio. In articulating the performing aspect of practicing performing in the context of Hay’s work, I begin by addressing what it is not. Schechner’s restored behaviour does not adequately account for the experience of performing in Hay’s work, not least because Hay’s work functionally problematizes the idea of “restored behaviour” per se, in pulling at the seams of previously behaved habit, pattern, ritual or routine. Neither does Hay’s performing sit easily within Bauman’s definition of performing *for* as “double consciousness”, in part because the action is *not* placed in mental comparison with an ideal or original. Schechner’s earlier distinction between “doing” (the activity of all that exists) and “showing doing” (pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing) becomes helpful in beginning to understand Hay’s notion of performing. (Here, Schechner’s “showing doing” compares to Bauman’s notion of performing *for*.)

Based on my experience, Hay’s performing is a kind of nesting of one within the other that, not surprisingly, troubles both. The experience of practicing performing in Hay’s work is more akin to Schechner’s “doing” insofar as it is aligned with Merleau-Ponty’s fundamental or global motility – the basic movement of bodily change – and insofar as this scope includes “all that there is”, as Hay has said. However, framed as theatrical performance, performing Hay’s work presumptively becomes a “showing doing” by context, with the potential experience of “double consciousness” this entails. However, even in the theatrical context, Hay’s choreography actively subverts self-reflexivity of “double consciousness” or of performing *for*.

In the case of working alone in a studio, one is fully engrossed in executing the complex task that is the deconstructing structure of Hay's choreography. The emphasis is on the de facto commitment to the full activity as prosaic task,¹⁴¹ recalling Hay's stipulation that one should never "rehearse", take apart, work on, mark,¹⁴² gloss over, etc. In practicing performing Hay's work alone in a studio, one should not be refining the choreography, in a manner once removed from the theatrical context but nonetheless in advance of and in preparation *for* performance, as *for* someone. It is not rehearsal. Rather, one should be fully committed to executing the choreography as Schechner's "doing". Similarly so, in the case of practicing performing in a theatrical context versus the studio, though this would suggest a shift into "showing doing" or the *for*. According to Hay's request for fidelity to her work at all times, in the theatre as in the studio one should maintain a de facto commitment to the choreography, as prosaic task. Thus, even within the context of the *for*, Hay's choreography pulls away from the self-reflexive experience of "showing doing". Performing, for Hay, does not change whether in the studio or in the theatre with an audience. The immense perceptual challenge of the deconstructing structure of the work constantly pulls the performer away from falling into the *for*. By way of analogy, I think of this as similar to the experience of actually jumping/being pushed into deep, icy cold water and having to swim to avoid sinking or drowning. I might have greater or lesser skill in the movement and I can improve, but the movement is imperative and the situation requires my full commitment. In this analogy, there is no "double consciousness" or *for*. It is helpful here to return to Franko's understanding of dance as praxis, through primary mimesis – "the taking of bodily form by bodies" – to understand Hay's performing as praxis: a "doing" and a "physical participation" (Franko, "Mimique" 209-210). Dance as action.

In both studio and theatrical contexts then, performing Hay's choreography involves "doing, not "showing doing". However, in performing Hay's work in the theatrical context, the stakes and the challenge of remaining committed to the task of the choreography – as "not showing doing" – increase due to the socio-economic contract of theatrical performance, and the attendant expectations and forces of desire to fulfill them – on the part of audience and performer. By contrast in the studio context, the stakes and challenge ostensibly decrease in the absence of an audience; however, in studio there arises the challenge of mustering a full commitment to the "doing" rather than the slightly removed rehearsal and marking, which are the common approach, but which would, to carry the analogy through, keep me standing at the edge of the water. Paradoxically once again, in the theatrical context, I must sustain the "doing" I might achieve in studio that is not *for*; and in the studio, I must manifest the committed "doing" I might achieve in the theatrical situation. The work itself raises my awareness of these expectations and forces of desire, of the habits and patterns of my own history and experience rehearsing and performing (and also as an audience member), and my interaction with them becomes another layer in the engagingdeflecting experience of somatic anacrusis – another of Hay's "catastrophic acts". I believe this is in part why Hay's contract stipulates a period of three months' daily practice – in order to be able to maintain fidelity to and consistency in "doing" the work, on a daily basis in the studio and in the charged context of theatrical performance.

If the performing of Hay's work can be articulated as doing, as praxis, as action, and can be "done" both alone in studio and also before an audience without substantially changing, can it effectively be considered relational? Further then, why ultimately situate the work in the theatrical context, i.e. before an audience? It is this fidelity to the performing as action, as praxis,

in both the studio and the theatrical context before an audience that prompts me to further question the dimension of relationality in Hay's work.

Considering Relational Aesthetics

In the 1990s, art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud began to establish the concept of relational aesthetics as a way to understand and critique contemporary visual art of the 1990s. Writes Bourriaud: "... the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real ..." (13). Relational artwork, for Bourriaud, involved a certain open-endedness in both the creation and interpretation of what was previously understood as a completed art object. Artists working in what Bourriaud identified as relational aesthetics, were concerned with generating situations or scenarios in which artists, objects and the public would engage in active intersubjective encounters – what might for our purposes here be called object-events. Around this time and after, performing artists in dance and theatre also re-engaged with 1960s and 1970s strategies for participatory work, in which the audience was invited, prompted or provoked into active relation with either or both the performers and the work.

In her book *Social Works*, performance scholar Shannon Jackson extends the analysis of relational art launched by Bourriaud, addressing the increasingly complex aesthetic and socio-political strategies in the field of "experimentation in art performance" with respect to the "social turn" (Jackson 2, both). Relatively recent examples in the contemporary dance/theatre zeitgeist include bluemouth inc.'s *Dance Marathon* and Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, both of which actively invite the audience to participate in the performance event. Works of this kind have been

variously critiqued for either their potent or, alternately, limited (to non-existent) self-reflexivity and criticality with respect to challenging or reinforcing socio-political contexts and structures (Bishop). Nonetheless, the common impulse in these efforts in both visual and performing arts was and is to activate the audience, incite interaction and catalyze relationship.¹⁴³ According to Claire Bishop, so-called relational works prioritize function over contemplation – and I have characterized Hay’s choreography explicitly as a function, which would thus include it in the category of relational artwork. However, I question how to place Hay’s work with respect to this dimension of relationality.

Considering relationality in light of the above, as an active engagement between public subjects and object-events or public subjects and performing subjects, presupposes a placing or positioning – a disposing – however temporary and contingent, in which each aspect of the relation takes meaningful, identifiable form both by and for the other. However, as I have just discussed, Hay’s choreography of somatic anacrusis enacts a “pre-disposing”. For the performer,¹⁴⁴ Hay’s work deflects the precipitation of subjectivity and objectivity, and therefore of positioning or disposing. Thus, for the performer, the work deflects the possibility for active engagement, or relationality per se. And, if active engagement or relationality is pre-empted by the work itself, then this is how practicing performing the work can be understood to remain essentially unchanged whether in the studio or in the theatre, or in fact in a public or a private space.

However, at the same time that a theatrical audience is not necessary in maintaining fidelity to practicing performing the work, Hay’s choreography is understood as such within the frame of theatrical performance convention, involving presentation before a generally seated

audience and thus implying a kind of witnessing, though perhaps not an explicit active engagement. The context for the work is presumptively relational at this level; Hay embraces this and it is important for the way in which, I propose, the work functions ethically. She could certainly choose to define a different context for her work that would contain or frame it otherwise, for example as an exclusively private practice. As it is, Hay makes a commitment to the presumptively relational context of theatrical performance and yet choreographically deflects the realization of relationality in the practicing performing of the work itself. Before an audience or not, in a theatre or not, the “doing” of the work subverts what might be articulated as a “consummated relationality”.

Here I return to my analysis of somatic anacrusis as an “about to ... but never quite ...” to articulate what I now consider the “pre-relationality” of Hay’s work. This solo work is presented in the relational context of theatrical performance but deflects the realization of consummated relationality by deflecting the possibility of active engagement. It is always “about to [enter] ... but never quite [entering into]...”, and therefore always just “before”, relationality. As with my discussion of “pre-disposing” above, here, the word “pre-relationality” implies being “before” relationality and yet embraces the paradox of the work’s theatrical context by including the concept of and possibility for relationality within it. Once again as above, by placing “before” in quotes, I signal my non-linear use of the term.

As I have indicated, it is not possible for me to speak with any scope about the audience members’ experiences of the work. However, I have been an audience member for Hay’s work on several occasions and based on those few experiences I will only suggest the possibility that, in an encounter in which the artwork (specifically Hay’s) constantly strives to deflect a relational

disposing (in Hay's case, as I have argued, via the performance of somatic anacrusis through the choreographic operation), audience members might experience something similar in witnessing the work. While a fair gauge of audience response to Hay's solo choreography and practice remains a question for future study, reviews of Hay's solo works hint at this possibility. In a review of Hay's *No Time to Fly* (2010), Johanna Burton writes: "Watching Hay, I got a sense of just what such 'cellular intelligence' might be" (355). And of Hay's *The Match* Jennifer Dunning writes: "Who knows what was going on, seemingly in real time, in the strange and surprisingly handsome little world of 'The Match'? There was nowhere else to look, however, and that was good" (n.p.). For Daly watching Hay perform *Voilà* in 1995: "The condition of watching, and of being, becomes perpetually transformational, without continuity or closure. It's an experience of constant deferment" ("No Exit" 41).¹⁴⁵

To summarize, what I am working toward here is an articulation of the way that practicing performing somatic anacrusis in Hay's work can be understood to be "training" of not the stabilizing of figures and forms in a consummated relationality that enables meaningful interaction (however potentially fraught with imposition and misunderstanding as it might be equally filled with receptivity and understanding), but, rather, a process of approaching/withdrawing in a pre-relational pre-disposing that practices a way toward but does not yet actually move into relation with the other. Hay's work cultivates the process and experience of somatic anacrusis, the perpetual spreading away from precipitations of subjectivity and objectivity and the deflection of processes of structuring and sedimentation, thereby engendering a lived suspension of consummated relationality, engagement and meaningful interaction. In this sense, it is a radical communication practice. Hay's work pitches the

performer into this pre-relational pre-disposing through a fundamental and necessary process of perception in which the performer experiences the reversals and intertwinings of I-world, body-space and movement-time through the desstructuring structure of Hay's choreography, catching an impossible glance at primordially. For Merleau-Ponty, this process of perception lies at the core of our being-in-the-world. For feminist philosopher of language Luce Irigaray, this process of perception lies at the heart of our capacity for an ethical approach to the other. So, I propose that somatic anacrusis – as pre-relational pre-disposing arising through the process of perception generated through the torquing dynamic of moving Hay's language through the body – enacts Irigaray's call for a new way toward the other.

Irigaray and Hay: Staging Encounters between One and the Other

“Perception represents a possible path for sensing the other, respecting him as subject, and it also allows me to remain a subject while perceiving the other” (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 22). As this quote suggests, perception and relationality are among feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray's concerns, like they are Hay's. Where Hay embodies her politics implicitly through movement, Irigaray articulates her politics explicitly through language. Both propose bodily sense perception as a way of becoming toward self, world, other – staging provocations to a primarily logocentric, rational order. Having articulated somatic anacrusis as a pre-relational pre-disposing above, I will now further expand my frame of reference to consider the ethical implications of Hay's practicing performing in light of feminist philosopher of language Luce Irigaray's thinking about relationality and communication. Recalling Hay's own words, as quoted by Daly: “It is precisely ‘the whole person in relation to the rest of the world,’ Hay argues, that is missing from

life today. That relationship is what we are longing to see. So the point of performance is not self-centeredness, but to embrace the audience, as well as fellow performers” (Hay qtd. in Daly, “The Play of Dance” 37). As I have presented above, Hay attempts this by choreographing a dynamic approaching-withdrawing – somatic anacrusis – that arguably enacts the widest possible embrace.

Irigaray’s Call for a Culture of Perception and a New Way of Speaking Together

Here I will summarize the aspects of Irigaray’s thought that are directly relevant to my argument. Irigaray’s works, specifically *To Be Two* and *Wisdom of Love*, develop her thinking about a new way of becoming together, of speaking together, in difference via an unpremeditated language that arises in the present encounter between one and the other. She is generally critical of instrumental-rational hegemony and media technologies and argues for the possibility of a new way of being toward the other through sensible perception that at once starts from and returns one to oneself, that is simultaneously a being toward the other and a becoming of self. Irigaray’s thinking, presented through a distinctly somato-poetic discourse, usefully enables a consideration of the ethical implications of Hay’s practicing performing, with respect to how it cultivates the pre-relational pre-disposing of somatic anacrusis.

From her earlier works, which develop her thinking around sexual difference, Irigaray extends her theorizing of identity and difference to consider alterity and the possibility for relations between one and another in community: “In fact, there is no rupture between intersubjectivity in the strict sense and the intersubjectivity of a collectivity, and the desired changes in the relations between man and woman, men and women, form part of a

transformation which is helpful to all of our social relationships” (*To Be Two* 23). Irigaray questions – in *To Be Two* – language, technology and other discourses on her way to articulating – in *The Way of Love* – “a philosophy in the feminine, where the values of intersubjectivity, of dialogue in difference, of attention to present life, in its concrete and sensible aspects, will be recognized and raised to the level of a wisdom. A philosophy which involves the whole of a human and not only that mental part of ourselves through which man has believed to succeed in differentiating himself from other kingdoms” (Irigaray, *Way of Love* vii-viii). Here we note Irigaray’s critique of logocentrism and the instrumental/rational paradigm that has tended to dominate Western culture, and her prioritization of embodiment as a holistic and integrating principle. Like Merleau-Ponty, in her thinking Irigaray is concerned with the sensible body and foregrounds the role of perception in our encounters with the world and others. However, she critiques Merleau-Ponty for “overlooking the role of perception as a means of acceding [the verb accede here is likely used in connection with the Latin *accedere*, meaning to go near] to the other as other” (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 22, insertion mine). She continues: “Perception can establish a link between the reception of a fact exterior to me and an intention towards the world, towards the other” (*To Be Two* 22).

Importantly, by the phrase “other as other” Irigaray emphasizes the need for respect and preservation of fundamental otherness, difference – a possibility foreclosed by either subsuming difference in same, or by refusing acknowledgement altogether. She implicitly critiques a generalized tendency to approach the “other as same” in the interest of efficient communication and an instrumental means-ends drive. The urge(ncy) to find common ground and understanding is predicated on identity/identification, thus eclipsing respect for otherness per se in

communication. For Irigaray, bodily sensible perception – with its qualities of intertwining and reciprocity – can specifically enable both a respect for otherness (“reception” in the above quote) *and* an opening toward (“intention” in the above quote) that do not foreclose the possibility to respect alterity in encounter and communication. Irigaray argues that this alternative approach – a more ethical approach – lies in a practice or process of perception that is generally missing from contemporary interactions and communications.

In fact, several times in this chapter of *The Way of Love*, Irigaray notes that “we lack a culture of perception”, “we lack a culture which is subjective and intersubjective. Such a culture would require being faithful to the reciprocity in touching-being touched, itself a matter of perceiving or of speaking” (*To Be Two* 23). (This is one of the quotes with which I began this dissertation.) Her book *The Way of Love* can be understood as a kind of answer to the inherent question of how we develop such a culture. In fact, she suggests this in her preface: “The original place of the relation between the two parts of the human [mental and sensible, which she articulates previously] has to be cultivated in order for humanity to exist as such. This task is still to be fulfilled by us, and *The Way of Love* sketches a possible scenography for it” (*Way of Love* viii). Irigaray’s choice of the word scenography is particularly striking in the context of my study in its invocation of the realm of theatrical performance. This invocation returns again with the use of the word “staging” in the next paragraph, in which Irigaray discusses the problem of using existing descriptive or narrative language for this task. She notes rather that she is attempting to “[make] something exist, in the present and even more in the future. It is a matter of staging an encounter between the one and the other – which has not yet occurred, or for which we lacked words...” (*Way of Love* viii). From these invocations, we can understand *The Way of Love* as a

kind of performative text that, “proposes ways to approach the other, to prepare a place of proximity: with the other in ourselves and between us. The book is in search of gestures, including gestures in language, which could help on the way to nearness, and in order to cultivate it. This implies another relation with language, a relation which favors the act of speech in the present, and not a language already existing and codified” (Irigaray, *Way of Love* ix). These invocations of the performative realm, Irigaray’s explicit effort to “search [for] gestures, including gestures in language”, to find “another relation with language”, to “act ... in the present”, to work through “a language [not] already existing and codified” aptly describe Hay’s project, which I argue embraces a similar and yet more fully performative strategy, equally “in search of gestures, including gestures in language”, and equally “stag[ing] an encounter between the one and the other which has not yet occurred, or for which we lacked words”.¹⁴⁶

On several levels, then, Irigaray’s work helps me to articulate the ethical implications of Hay’s choreography and practice. First, the *practice* aspect of Hay’s practicing performing, in which the tools and questions she expects the performer to embrace function to activate perceptual processes, aligns with Irigaray’s concern with the sensible body and with developing a culture of perception. Second, Irigaray’s thinking around the irreducible difference between two and her effort to articulate a way to approach the other while respecting this irreducibility in a new ethical relation offers a way to understand the *performing* aspect of Hay’s practicing performing, insofar as it is presumptively relational and “stages an encounter” in the present between one and other(s). Thirdly, Hay’s effort to subvert codified meanings and the “already choreographed” in her work – as dance, as movement, as gesture, and also through her distinctly subversive use of language in the score, question and tools – connects with Irigaray’s attempt to

move against, away, around codified language and pre-existing meanings “in search of gestures, including gestures in language, which could help on the way to nearness” (Irigaray, *Way of Love* ix). For Irigaray, we must find a new way of speaking together in difference. Hay’s choreography and practice performs such a proposal. Finally, at another level, Irigaray’s performative/poetic writing as a scenography (throughout *The Way of Love* and differently but particularly in the “Prologue” in *To Be Two* (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 1-16) can be thought of as a kind of score to be performed or enacted, not unlike Hay’s, while both of Irigaray’s texts also serve to illuminate language as gesture (as speaking and as moving) and reveal the intertwining weave of words and body, as does Hay’s dance work.

Hay’s Choreography and Practice: Toward Otherness, Toward A Theatre of Love?

In this concluding chapter, I have expanded the frame of reference for my study of Hay’s choreography and practice in order to consider its implications beyond the dance context. I am here answering the proverbial “so what?” with respect to my analysis of Hay’s choreography and practice. Above, I discussed Hay’s ongoing and prevailing concern with relationality in her work and from there, I articulated Hay’s practicing performing as a kind of “training” in “doing” of a specific order. This enabled me to develop an understanding of somatic anacrusis as a pre-relational pre-disposing process – a “way”. In keeping with the paradoxical linguistic strategies I have employed throughout, these two terms – pre-relational and pre-disposing – include and yet preclude – engagedeflect – disposition (as formed habit or stance) and relationality (as active intersubjective engagement, “consummated relationality”). Understanding Hay’s work in this manner, as purposefully suspending processes of structuring and forming and thus holding back

the consummation of relationality, led me to the texts of Luce Irigaray, whose work shares themes and concerns similar to Hay, with respect to relationality, processes of perception and bodily being. As noted above, Irigaray has called for a culture of perception in order to find a new way to approach the other. My analysis has shown how Hay's work functions through a practice of perception that I now suggest opens up possibilities for new ways of moving toward otherness.

Others too have commented on the potentially ethical dimensions of Hay's choreography and practice. As discussed in chapter 2, Dolan, Drobnick, Goldman and Nicely particularly emphasize the ways in which Hay's work can be understood to resist status quo ways of being through the unique relationality it sets up. While Dolan and Drobnick focus on Hay's large group works, Goldman and Nicely focus on Hay's recent solo practice and group works deriving therefrom and both consider the ethical implications of the work in different ways. Goldman raises an important question about the ethics of practicing this work outside the safe space of the studio where individuals in the room share relative agreement around the nature of the work. She is particularly concerned about the vulnerability involved in the visual practices in Hay's work, in both inviting another's and activating one's own gaze. Goldman's concern here is primarily on the part of the safety of the performer ("O, O" 161). On the other hand, Daly describes Hay's "public vulnerability" in performance as part of what makes her work so uniquely compelling ("No Exit" 40). Daly's comment offers an important complement to Goldman's concern because it both reinforces that concern and also therefore supports the view that Hay's work is indeed implicitly political: in its performance it is making a proposal against the status quo and specifically with respect to relationality. Nicely, for her part, also suggests that the ethical

implications of Hay's work lie largely in Hay's approaches to visibility, which as Nicely argues, disrupt the constitution of subjectivity and dissolve the boundaries of naming that keep us separated (162). Nicely suggests that the practice can therefore change the possibilities of relationality, offering different ways to move into the future and to respond to the crises of our times. My own thinking about the ethics of Hay's practice resonate with these perspectives; however, where these writers emphasize the visual aspect of Hay's work, I consider the choreography and practice as a whole.

Hay writes that she "aspires toward a bodily speechlessness" (*At Once* 6), and she discusses the importance of "playing" as a way of suspending or sustaining attention to the flux of the body ("Playing Awake" 75). In her book *The Way of Love* Irigaray characterizes a "silent constituting pause" (*Way of Love* 21) in which the world arises, a pause which is a withdrawal that reveals the non-universal character of the speaking and, in the pause, energy is awakened that is not named and fixed with words – that is left indeterminate – and, in this pause, the parts of the world come into proximity: "There is then neither a single round dance [Hay's circle dances?] nor a single play of the world [Hay's more conventional solo and group dances?] but a constitution of subjectivities [Hay's solo choreography and practice?] that try *to dance or to play* together through – and despite – different unfoldings and refoldings" (Irigaray, *Way of Love* 21, italics and insertions, mine). Irigaray writes: "A silence, an impossible to say, moves each one toward an unappropriable signification. Too quickly occupying this silence – or the between-two – by a gesture, gestures, risks veiling the meaning of it: between the two something exists that belongs neither to the one nor to the other, nor moreover to any word" (*Way of Love* 23). Irigaray's descriptions here unmistakably resonate with my foregoing discussion of the

experience of somatic anacrusis in Hay's work: of suspension, of absencing/presencing, of yielding/expanding, and of thresholding, of a process that subverts formed meaningfulness in a pre-relational pre-disposing wherein the engaging/deflecting of intentionality/intention, attention and action dissolves figure and ground to emphasize the *écart* or spreading away, of subjectivity and otherness, and opens toward an impossible glance at primordially.

Thus, in aspiring to bodily speechlessness, Hay's choreography and practice enacts or performs Irigaray's silent constituting pause. In engaging/deflecting intention, attention and action, Hay's work foregrounds "the non-universal character of the speaking" through its unpremeditated and thus individual and idiosyncratic movement and sound; it does not "[name] and [fix] with words" or gestures, instead it actively subverts processes of structuring; and it generates an indeterminate energy through an emphasis on bodily flux and the practice of perception. In engendering somatic anacrusis then, as a sustained suspension in a bodily process of perception, Hay's work engages/deflects pre-established modes, habits, patterns and structures of relationality and precipitates an experience of hovering, or ...approaching/withdrawing.... Hay's choreography and practice shifts experience into pre-relationality and thereby performs/reveals the generative dynamic, or pre-disposing, at the inception of relationality, proposing possibilities for a more ethical relation with the other, one that does not seek to possess or master, a new way of moving toward the other through perception that respects subjectivities (othernesses) and irreducible difference.

In effect, through the engaging/deflecting processes engendered in the experience of somatic anacrusis, which moves toward/away from meaningfulness, Hay's work, paradoxically once again, opens up possibilities for drawing together, into proximity. Practicing performing the

dynamic lived experience of moving Hay's linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies through the body opens a spacetime of difference and a new way to approach otherness. It is an ethical practice; Hay's work enacts it, and disseminates it globally through others' committed practice and performance of her work. Insofar as practicing performing Hay's work engenders the experience of somatic anacrusis, could its iteration, perhaps even beyond the theatrical stage – as a radical communication practice of pre-relational pre-disposing – actually affect an individual's approach to the world and to others over time? I suggest that Hay's choreography and practice is a kind of performative answer to Irigaray's call for a culture of perception, her search for a "way of love". Could Hay's choreography and practice therefore be considered to be moving toward a "theatre of love"?¹⁴⁷ Indeed, what if?

Chapter 7: Conclusion

A “theatre of love”. What if? Certainly, this question opens up the positive, utopic potentiality of Hay’s embodied ethic. However, the opposite must be considered. As Deidre Sklar has noted in her essay “Unearthing Kinaesthesia”, in which she considers performances that shift between and engage different sensory modes: “I am making a large claim for somatic awareness, nothing less than declaring its potential for interrupting automatic responses. A performance that does this can be an act of generosity”. However, in short order she follows up with this: “I cannot help but consider the opposite possibility – the potential for danger as well as generosity inherent in interrupting somato-sensory habits ... There is certainly evidence that one can call an audience to somatic attention and fill the opening with propaganda or worse (“Unearthing Kinaesthesia” 46 and 46n12, both).

As discussed earlier, Goldman has noted the possible dangers in practicing Hay’s work beyond the safe space of the studio where everyone is complicit in the work, and Daly has noted Hay’s vulnerability in performance, which could be compared to Sklar’s description of generosity. In my experience practicing performing Hay’s work in a field near my home – outside the theatrical context – I was definitely aware of the vulnerability (which, as I have noted, performer Christopher House has also remarked upon (K. Smith)) inherent in the practice and experience of somatic anacrusis as passersby turned their attention my way. In some instances, I immediately registered my instinct to “close up” into a stable experience of identity and meaningfulness, to dispose myself and come into a known pedestrian-in-the-park relation in order to feel safe and “normal”. But this experience reinforces the productive potential of Hay’s

work as a radical communication practice that moves toward otherness. I would argue that the inherent risks are worth taking in an effort to enact change – to move into new, more ethical (more loving?) relationalities.

Summary of the Research

Deborah Hay is a contemporary choreographer of international repute with a distinct and enigmatic choreographic practice that has garnered her critical acclaim, a network of accomplished performers engaged in her work, and a moderately-sized literature demonstrating scholarly interest in her distinct approach to dance practice through the course of her over forty-year career. In this research project, I engaged in and studied Hay's work from the "inside" as a performer and via close descriptive writing through my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis. A phenomenological framework of intentionality/intention, attention and action evolved from and supports my theoretical analysis, drawing significantly on Merleau-Ponty's ontology of situations and his theory of embodiment and perception. My emergent choreographic analysis of Hay's work, as I experienced it through the solo *At Once*, comprises two parts. The first considers Hay's choreography as a constructed situation of score, questions and tools that, through her distinct use of language, functions as a destructuring structure. Through description and analysis, I articulate how Hay's braided choreographic function engages/deflects the performer's intentionality/intention, attention and action, operating as a destructuring structure that subverts tendencies toward organizing and interpreting experience such that the performer is thrown into a fundamental practice of perception. The second part of the analysis involves experiential descriptions of distinct and contrasting experiences of I-world,

body-space and movement-time within the work that reveal how Hay's practice of perception actively pulls at the seams of patterns and habits of sense-making.

Drawing together three key phenomena at play in my performing experience – absencing/presencing, yielding/expanding and thresholding – which are characterized by a shared felt-sense of paradoxical simultaneity, I establish the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis. Comparing this concept to similar concepts from within the somatic and improvisational dance literature, I distinguish this non-resolving suspended experience of somatic anacrusis from my experience in both set choreography and improvisation, which both tend toward resolution, broadly speaking. Having articulated this distinction, I argue that through a highly specified dance work that is nonetheless realized through un-premeditated movement, Hay's work takes us both beyond improvisation and to the cutting edge of choreography, where, through linguistic torques and semantic/syntactic strategies, we move beyond meaningfulness toward an impossible glance at primordality.

In rethinking the dimension of relationality in Hay's work, I bring it into contact with Irigaray's thought. First, through the lens of certain discussions around training, performance, presence, repetition and representation, Hay's practicing performing is reframed as "training" in a process of "doing" – as praxis. Then, through this reframing, somatic anacrusis in Hay's work is understood as a pre-relational pre-disposing that occurs in the process of perception, one that suspends pre-established habits and patterns of encounter and sense-making. As such, practicing performing somatic anacrusis becomes a possible answer to Irigaray's call for a new and more ethical way toward others and difference through perception. In bringing Hay's work into contact

with Irigaray's, we arrive at an understanding of the implicit critique of an instrumental/rational paradigm and the embodied ethic enacted through Hay's choreography and practice.

My emergent choreographic analysis of Hay's work, presented in the preceding chapters, resonates with many of the ideas developed in the literature on Hay's work. Like others, my work recognizes the specific quality of attention – what some, including Daly, call presence – that occurs in Hay's work, which derives from somatic awareness of bodily experience. Writes Daly: “The work is about what is traditionally called ‘presence’ ... It has, I think, to do with a saturated quality and intensity of focus, with the simultaneous, connected attention between the performer's inner and outer life” (“The Play of Dance” 37). In her early analysis of Hay's creative activity, Foster focuses particularly on Hay's practice of cellular consciousness with respect to the qualities of presence and attention in her work (*Reading Dancing*). I address the dissociation of movement and meaning in Hay's work, which has also been noted in the literature, specifically by Leslie Satin and Rosalind Krauss. The emphasis on flux and change that appears in my discussion has also been treated by others, often in considering Hay's work through a feminist lens as a process of becoming, as do Daly, Satin and Burns. I also articulate shifting experiences of self and subjectivity that occur in Hay's work, which have been noted by others including Daly, Drobnick and Nicely. I examine Hay's distinct use of language in her work, which has been noted by Dolan and treated more systematically by Drobnick; and I consider the destabilizing forces at play in Hay's work as they subvert and disrupt habits and patterns of thought and action, as have Nicely and Goldman. Finally I consider the relational and ethical dimensions of Hay's work, which have been touched on – differently – by others including Dolan and Nicely.

My study in part resonates with similar points from the above literature and yet offers a new perspective on Hay's work. Specifically, my work digs deeper, asking not "what" are the characteristics of Hay's work but more specifically, "how" are these characteristics engendered. A commitment to articulating complex, dynamic, processual experience lies at the heart of my study. Both Goldman's and Nicely's work tends in this direction as well; however, a major distinction between my research and the discussions referred to above is also in how I approached my key question, generated in itself through an overarching practice-as-research approach. This approach facilitated my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis, which provides significant new insights into Hay's choreography and practice, specifically in terms of how it functions as processual experience and how it enacts an embodied ethic. The work I have undertaken in this study realizes my aims from the outset: to bring my dancing experience of Hay's work into language and present it as a way of knowing, to articulate a poetics of Hay's dance practice in terms of how it functions experientially, and to expand the context in which Hay's work is considered.

Contributions

My work contributes generally to practice-as-research methods for the experiential study of dance practice and choreography through my devised method of emergent choreographic analysis involving iterative phases of moving and writing. This method goes hand-in-hand with the theoretical framework I have derived for this research, based on the triumvirate dynamic relation of intentionality/intention, attention and action, which provides a lens through which to differently illuminate other experimental contemporary dance and performance practices that are

similarly working with choreographic functions and through perceptive practices. I intend to continue developing the processes and procedures I have articulated in this study and hope that others will join me in exploring both their value and their limits in revealing the workings of experimental choreography and performance from within the performer's experience, as well as their potential applicability in other kinds of research involving close study of complex, processual lived experiences. In my reconsideration of the relationship between movement and language through the intermediary of the (dancing) body, this work adds to and inflects the existing discourse on the relationship between writing and dancing in the dance studies literature. Finally, the experiential concept of somatic anacrusis that I have articulated allows a reflection – through dance – on the relation between language and the body, and the role of processes of perception in fostering openness to difference and more ethical communicative relations with others.

Openings

This work is a poetics: it presents the internal experiential processes by which Hay's work arguably enacts an implicit critique and an embodied ethic. In taking a practice-as-research approach to a case study analysis, it remains necessarily tightly focussed. It answers the question: how does Hay's work function from a performer's perspective? Many other questions extend from this work – not least of which is how other performers' experiences of Hay's work might corroborate and complicate my analysis. Using my eleven interviews with other performers from my same SPCP workshop/residency, a preliminary study could begin. Further, my research does not yet address the question of how Hay's work "appears" to an audience? This would require,

according to Beshty, an “aesthetics of ethics”: “a new set of tools for the evaluation of art’s ‘agency’” (15). Another next step would be such an ethical analysis of the aesthetics of Hay’s work from the standpoint of reception. Earlier I suggested that from an alternative perspective, one might consider that Hay has perhaps only inadvertently established a movement aesthetic through her decades-long exploration of relationality. This fits with Beshty’s proposal: “The central concern of an ethical analysis is not whether the work can be evaluated positively or negatively in ethical terms, but instead resides in the more complex question of the aesthetic manifestation of the ethical dimension of the work of art” (20). This kind of evaluation that is concerned with “how ethical relations create aesthetic form” (Beshty 19) presents an alternative and perhaps more appropriate method of evaluation for work like Hay’s and other contemporary dance artists practicing in similar ways.¹⁴⁸

Thinking (through) Dancing

As a result of my research and analysis, I consider Hay’s work a radical communication practice with implications beyond the field of dance. Though this particular work is a solo practice and I’ve articulated it as “pre-relational”, it is nonetheless “social work”, aligned with the range of performances discussed by Shannon Jackson: “Whereas for many the word “social” signifies an interest in explicit forms of political change, for other contemporary artists it refers more autonomously to the aesthetic exploration of time, collectivity, and embodiment as medium and material” (14). Hay’s work moves along this continuum. And it is dance; therefore, in embodying Lepecki’s five main constitutive qualities (ephemerality, corporeality, precariousness, scoring and performativity), it is a practice of contemporaneity: in its “inescapable corporeality

constantly demonstrat[ing] to dancers and audiences alike concrete possibilities for embodying-otherwise – since a dancer’s labour is nothing else than to embody, disembody and re-embody, thus refiguring corporeality and proposing improbable subjectivities” and in its “essential performativity [...] [t]his insistence on returning with a difference” (“Dance as a Practice” 14). Choreography, dancing, is contemporary “thinking in process”.

Practicing, Performing, Writing: Iteration, Adaptation, Perpetuation

And we need new processes of thinking. In contrast to taking an established scholarly argument or idea and destabilizing it through critique, my research has taken a lived and changing practice – and one that, as I have discussed, actively seeks to destabilize – and sought to stabilize and restabilize it, through critical-creative adaptation. This is only ever provisional. As performance scholar Della Pollock writes: “Performance won’t stand still long enough for theory to wrap it up nicely. It moves in time and space through restless bodies. To track its contingencies, to plumb its affective depths, and to discover the power and pleasures of its rough currents, thinking about performance must move as well” (1). In this characterization of my work, I refer back to my introduction in which I articulated Linda Hutcheon’s sense of the term adaptation as: “An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; A creative *and* interpretive act of appropriating/salvaging; An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (8). My effort here is grounded in the fact that knowledges develop in many forms – movement performance being one – and yet to consider them in a scholarly context requires a type of reflective – and linguistic – engagement. In this

dissertation – thus understood as a critical-creative adaptation of Hay’s solo *At Once* – I have endeavoured to remain intimate with the lived dancing experience through writing strategies that strive to respect the lived form of the knowledge (in movement performance) while translating and interpreting this knowledge into a discursive form that enables its interaction with an interdisciplinary field of ideas.

Notes

1. To clarify and orient the reader with respect to my use of this phrase throughout, what I mean by a radical communication practice here is distinct from the more conventional understanding of communication as a semiotic, representational system of signs and meanings – through which dance and movement have been considered. In my work here, I use this phrase in the broad context of performance praxis, placing emphasis on the embodied, affective, energetic aspects of enactment and intersubjective exchange.

2. I first encountered many of Hay’s distinct turns of phrase, questions and tools during the 2009 Solo Performance Commissioning Project residency in Scotland. Henceforth in this document, all quotations cited in this manner refer to statements Hay made during the course of that workshop.

3. Interestingly, in his essay “Mimique”, Mark Franko also refers to Kristeva’s theory as one that “dodges metaphysical fixity because its ‘originary metaphysics’ is motility itself, without spatial coordinates” (Franko, “Mimique” 215 n23).

4. I use this phrase “think through (the) dancing” in two senses. To “think through” something commonly connotes a reflective analytic engagement with the experience. However, the phrase also suggests using dancing as a kind of method or tool for thinking. This second meaning is pertinent to understanding my approach to this research.

5. French feminism is by no means a unified school of thought, as Kelly Oliver points out in her preface to the French Feminism Reader (Oliver vii-x). In fact, theorists considered to belong to this heterogeneous group, including Hélène Cixous, have refused the categorization altogether (Oliver 254).

6. In my Chapter 2 discussion of the surrounding literature on Hay and her work, I address relevant aspects of her career and influences more fully.

7. Baryshnikov conceived of this project for his White Oak Dance Project as a way to honour and reconnect to the artists of the 1960s avant-garde in dance. He commissioned remounts or new works from a handful of key figures from the period including David Gordon (co-organizer of PASTForward), Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Simone Forti, Hay, Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer. Hay created the group work *Whizz* (2001) for White Oak and also a new duet for she and Baryshnikov entitled *Single Duet* (2001). (See Perron, *Judson Dance Theater*).

8. I first encountered this phrase “performance generating system” in reference to dance through the work of performance dramaturg and scholar Pil Hansen who, in 2014, published an essay entitled “Dancing Performance Generating Systems”. In Hansen’s terms, “Performance generating systems add precise rules, parameters, and sources to task-based creation that focus the dancers’ attention on specific aspects of the work and limit their possible responses. The resulting coordinates are not typically used to create material that then is set as choreography, but they and the movements they attract become the very dramaturgy of a composition.” Hansen briefly cites Deborah Hay’s work as an example of a performance generating system: “Her [Hay’s] performance generating ‘scores’ indicate a series of paired tasks, emotions, directions in space, perceptual orientations, rules, challenges, and memories that the dancer is moved through and responding within over time (for example, *No Time to Fly*)” (Hansen 256-257, both).

9. It would be interesting to consider this perspective with respect to psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott's thinking in *Playing and Reality*. I do not take up this direction here.

10. Deborah Hay's Solo Performance Commissioning Project: In 1998, after a period focussed primarily on making solo dances for herself, Hay launched the Solo Performance Commissioning Project (SPCP), in which a group of participants commissioned the same solo from Hay. The annual ten-day residency ran from 1998 through 2012 in various locations internationally. During the SPCP, participants studied Hay's specific performance practice and received individual coaching from her over the course of the residency. For participants, the SPCP provided the opportunity to acquire a solo work from Hay that then became part of the individual performer's repertoire. The SPCP invited experienced performers from dance, performance art and theatre to participate in the program. In August 2009, when I attended, international participants came from countries including Canada, the United States, Australia, Portugal, Venezuela, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. Most participants came with a strong dance background and many had quite highly developed technical training in western contemporary dance modalities. A handful had less technical movement training, coming to performance via physical and dramatic theatre.

The SPCP was partly a way for Hay to explore and develop her choreographic method and performance practice, and to engage in questions around the documentation and transmission of choreography as much as it was a choreographic commission structure. Interested individuals applied to the program and were required to raise the commissioning fee from their community via individual, corporate and/or government sources. Over the course of its existence, the program inevitably evolved, forming a cyclical and iterative part of Hay's annual choreographic and performance practice. Solo scores commissioned by participants through the SPCP developed from Hay's prior work and also evolved into subsequent solos or group works by Hay, for herself or others. For example the solo *At Once* commissioned through the SPCP 2009, which I attended, was informed by the previous solo *Market* (2009) and linked forward to Hay's subsequent solo work *No Time to Fly* (2010).

11. For each subsequent performance run, the contract stipulates that the performer must complete a three-week process to engage with the tools of the practice and to bring the work back to performance readiness.

12. I am concerned here with dance practices that prioritize process over product, and experience over form. In the latter category, we might include classical dance forms such as ballet, bharatanatyam and Graham, in which a strong aesthetic and technical specificity underlie the practice, compositions are most frequently set in advance and draw on an established movement vocabulary. Though improvisation can be understood to be at play in all live dance performance (Albright and Gere xv), it is not the primary modality in these cases. In the former category, we might include contemporary practices such as contact improvisation, structured and open improvisation, along with conceptual and task-based performance that may be informed by or appear in performance art contexts. In these practices, we find a low degree of specificity in aesthetic and technique, composition often occurs during performance or is derived from parameters set in advance that do not prescribe the movement vocabulary for the performance.

13. An interesting study that seeks to understand the dancer's artistic process in a particular choreography was conducted by Cecilia Roos and Anna Petronella Foulter and documented in

an anthology that includes theoretical and practice-based research and writing in which the moving body is very present in the text.

14. Hay makes a distinction between a score and a libretto: “The scores of the ’60s were simply from the point of view of the dancer who was dancing it, whereas with the libretto, which I also think of as a score, you get the view of how the observer sees it. You have more than one perspective into the dancing of the dance” (Daly, “Horse Rider” 51). This passage in Daly’s interview with Hay provides some useful insight from the time into Hay’s thinking about, writing and use of scores or libretti in her work. In my work here, I use the term score, but allow for the fact that the score for *At Once* is more like a libretto, as defined by Hay here.

15. For example, beyond performing Hay’s solos, various practitioners have begun to share her approach to practice. Australian solo dance artist Ros Warby has worked extensively with Hay and has begun to teach in a workshop-based structure sharing her own approach to practice, which draws on what she has learned from Hay (Gardner and Dempster 1). Toronto-based Christopher House, who has also developed an extended working relationship with Hay, taught a workshop in January 2013 through the Toronto Dance Community Love-In that was described to be focussed on sharing his understanding of Hay’s practice.

16. In chapter 5, I discuss the level of choreographic responsibility that the performer holds in Hay’s work and make a distinction between choreographic responsibility and contextual responsibility. Here, I use the term choreographer with direct reference to its usage in Hay’s quote above. Below I use the term contextual responsibility to refer to the framing the performance of the work. I thus distinguish this from choreographic responsibility, which I use to refer to dealing with the actual material of the work itself.

17. I address this understanding of daily practice as performing more specifically in my final chapter.

18. Considering that there are approximately twenty people involved in each SPCP (though some people return year over year), and considering the fact that at least a good portion of this group enters into the requisite three months of practice immediately following the SPCP residency, we can begin to visualize network of iterating processes, extended across space and time: Hay’s work in multiplicity, pulsing through bodies around the world.

19. Sally Banes, eminent scholar of the Judson-era and post-modern turn in dance, provides a distilled summary and examples of work from this period in her essay “Earthly Bodies: Judson Dance Theatre” included in the Bennington College Judson Project book (Banes “Earthly Bodies”). Other books by Banes examine the context, concerns and artists of this period in more detail.

20. Most recently, I’m thinking here of American dance artist Sara Wookey’s engagement with Yvonne Rainer and the transmission of Rainer’s *Trio A*, for example, an incarnation of which took place at the Art Gallery of Ontario in spring 2015 (“Transmitting Trio A”), and the July 2014 symposium entitled “The Live Legacy Project: Correspondences between German Contemporary Dance and Judson Dance Theater Movement” mounted by Tanzfonds Erbe (Guerreiro). Some of the interest and connection between new generation and the 1960s avant-garde artists relates to questions and concerns on the part of both groups around legacy and transmission of live performance practice. Such concerns have also been a motivating factor for Hay (Daly, “Horse Rider” 53).

21. Perron herself notes this connection (“Through the Eyes” 157).
22. In 1980, Hay also established her own dance company, Deborah Hay Dance Company (DHDC), which has since functioned as a non-profit umbrella to support her own work.
23. Hay’s 1991 large-group workshop was the first to be named in this way (Hay Lamb xi).
24. Banes’ collected work provides an excellent contextual analysis and ethnographic document of the period, laying out the cultural and artistic foment among disciplines and articulating the specific history of JDT itself.
25. Satin notes that she draws this phrase from James Olney’s book *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (205, n2).
26. Satin calls upon the work of Adrienne Rich and Laura Mulvey, among others.
27. Satin also looks back at some of Hay’s work over time and draws out salient details including Hay’s early use of objects as another strategy to deflect the spectatorial gaze from herself.
28. Drobnick participated in Cheap Thrills, which took place in Austin, Texas, in 1988, three years prior to the Playing Awake workshop that gave rise to *Lamb, Lamb, Lamb, Lamb, Lamb, Lamb....*
29. Drobnick’s 27 chosen terms: Ah-Ha, Artist, Attention, Awakeness, Body, Cellular Consciousness, Change, Choreography, Community, Cultivation, Dance, Innocence, Listening, Movement, Performance, Performance Consciousness, Performance Meditation, Play, Positionlessness, Practice, Resourcefulness, Returning, Seeing, Simplicity, Tricks, Willingness to be Seen, The Work.
30. In the ethics agreement Hay signed with me with respect to this research project, she requested the addition of a special term in which I agreed to never describe her work as improvisational.
31. In her book *Lamb at the Altar*, Hay includes the scores/libretti for both the group and solo choreographies.
32. This term comes from Hay herself (“How do I recognize my choreography?”).
33. “Practicing performing” was the language Hay used in the SPCP in which I participated. “Meditation” was not generally used as a descriptor of the work – or any aspect of it – in my experience.
34. Indeed, one might argue that through processes of mimicry and appropriation, Hay’s work functions as a (feminist) challenge to and critique of both Eastern and Western notions of spirituality, offering a secularization of spiritualism that could be read in critical dialogue with contemporary debates about spirituality and atheism, such as those forwarded by philosopher Alain de Botton (Botton, “Atheism 2.0”). A more robust consideration of Hay’s complex relationship to and extension of spiritual ideas/practices and discourse in her artistic practice is well beyond the scope of this project.
35. Later, I consider Kent de Spain’s research on improvisation in which he also reverts to a certain spiritually inflected language to articulate the experiences thereof.
36. In *My Body, the Buddhist*, Hay provides a short reflection on sacred dancing and dancing as inherently sacred. Her comment highlights the semantic/linguistic issue that I articulate here with respect to the use of spiritual discourse around her work: “I was never drawn to participate in sacred dance classes. I feared my irreverence, cynicism, and snobbery. Little did I realize that

my problem was linguistic. Sacred dancing is redundant” (*My Body, the Buddhist* 53).

37. In addition to the performative hierarchy and segregation, according to Wasik one group of performers was paid significantly less than the other, and during one performance a blue black “intentionally shoved” (Wasik) a member of the blue white group. This incident is described differently in Goldman “Judson Now”. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to parse the perspectives and implications of this particular performance and ensuing discussion. I raise the situation here in order to provide an alternative perspective on the debate about the political dimensions (or lack thereof) in Hay’s work.

38. This issue was made topical in 2012 with an article on theglobeandmail.com by John Barber, which took stock of the fact that though female writers dominate in terms of the number of novels sold, male writers still dominate as both reviewers and reviewed in the media. Anecdotally, this situation could very likely be transposed directly onto dance, a field of prevalently female practitioners.

39. Later in the text, Hay reveals the title’s allusion to a dog, proposing that her cultivated relationship to her body as teacher is not unlike the relationship of a good dog to its master, attuned and responsive to the slightest movements and energies and following its lead.

40. Yvonne Rainer’s *No Manifesto* stands as a major articulation of these concerns (Rainer).

41. In her thinking through the possibility for research via embodiment, dance ethnologist Deidre Sklar also references Thomas Csordas’ earlier work on somatic modes of attention as a proposed method for conducting embodied anthropological research (Sklar “Reprise”).

42. This question is productively engaged and explored with respect to dance in Susan Foster’s anthology *Choreographing History* (1995).

43. I use this term descriptively, and also in reference to feminist arguments about knowledge and embodiment significantly articulated in Donna Haraway’s important 1988 essay “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”.

44. Ann Cooper Albright’s essay “Situated Dancing: Notes from Three Decades in Contact with Phenomenology” first appeared in this journal issue and was subsequently published in her 2013 book *Engaging Bodies*. I reference the version of the essay from *Engaging Bodies*.

45. For my discussion, I rely primarily on personal experience and certification as a CMA – Certified Movement Analyst – through the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies in New York. Several published texts on the system include Bartenieff, Bradley, Brennan, Daly, Hackney, Maletic, and Newlove and Dalby.

46. Mary Alice Brennan discusses LMA as a research method and addresses questions of reliability and validity in her essay “Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All Its Own: Movement Analysis in Dance Research”. While inter-reader reliability has been established via several studies, reliability evaluation could stand to be further examined, particularly for more scientifically inclined studies using the method.

47. See for example Daly “Movement Analysis” and Desmond. In discussing her own scholarly trajectory, Ann Cooper Albright also notes the limitations of LMA as an analytic tool when used in neutral analysis of dance movement with a focus on description versus interpretation and cultural meaningfulness (“Situated Dancing” 6).

48. Recent research in cognitive neuroscience on proprioception and kinaesthesia has

identified the existence and activity of mirror neurons, which are involved in our perception of movement in ourselves and others. Providing a scientific and physiological grounding for the notion of kinaesthetic empathy or what I have above called embodied “listening”, research has shown that these neurons, located within the cerebral cortex, activate not only when a subject performs an action herself, but also when a subject witnesses an action. In her book-length analysis of concepts and relationships between choreography, kinaesthesia and empathy, dance scholar Susan Foster has elaborated this research in a dance-related context (*Choreographing Empathy*).

49. Vera Maletic has conducted an extensive comparative analysis of LMA and three different phenomenological philosophies, including Merleau-Ponty’s in an appendix to her detailed text *Body, Space, Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts*.

50. Below, I address one method developed by dancer/researcher Kent De Spain for soliciting descriptive reports of movement experience during the experience itself and I explain why that method would not have functioned in my inquiry here.

51. By thematized, I mean a description that develops or imposes a theme on the phenomenon in order to organize and make sense of it according to a particular concept, reference or framework. The goal is a description that is as free as possible from pre-selected or pre-defined organizing or interpreting principles.

52. A brief summary of the residency experience: On the first day, we immediately began learning the score, an eleven-page text document with some simple hand-drawn figures, each person around the circle reading aloud a paragraph at a time. Hay would then answer questions and elaborate with further verbal instruction, though minimally, and very shortly we were up and moving through the score in the space. As *At Once* is a solo work, each person practiced individually within the context of the full group. During the first few days, the twenty of us almost always moved concurrently, or in one or two smaller groups. Within two days, we had learned the score’s basic structure and sequence. The balance of our ten days continued in a similar manner. Generally we began with open group practice of Hay’s specific tools for practicing performing, usually with a specific focus or direction proposed by Hay, who would often provide additional verbal proposals while we were moving. Then we would practice the score, as a group at first and then individually. Over the course of the intensive, each participant had two opportunities to perform the full score as a solo, witnessed by the entire group. Immediately following each solo performance, Hay provided feedback and engaged in direct dialogue with the performer, before inviting other participants’ feedback and a group discussion. Cycling through the entire group allowed us to observe other performers’ approaches and embodiments of the score, as well as to learn from Hay’s responses to each performer. The score took approximately twenty minutes to perform, on average depending on the performer and the specific instance. As such, including feedback and discussion, it was possible to complete two solo performances per hour. With open group practice, discussions and breaks, it took about two-and-a-half to three days to cycle through the group once; thus, the workshop period allowed for two solo performances per participant.

53. Video recordings of the performances and digital audio recordings of the post-show discussions remain as documents of these events.

54. While my keyword analysis method in ways resembles that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as developed by Jonathan Smith (Smith 1999), I did not proceed from that basis or approach, which is used more commonly in psychological research.

55. In science, and in alcohol production, a secondary distillation process is sometimes used to further purify a liquid. For example double distilled water, produced via a second boiling of the previously boiled and condensed vapour, was often used in laboratory experiments.

56. I use these terms in relation to the above quote in which Cazemajou explains Vermersch's usage. "Reflective" is taken to mean making something conscious, which I understand to mean bringing it to language, to light. "Reflexive" is taken to mean conceptualizing something, which I understand to mean organizing and interpreting it.

57. From early work in dance and movement rehabilitation by Dr. Lulu Sweigard to Irene Dowd's expansion of the term Ideokinesis to more recent approaches including Eric Franklin's Conditioning With Imagery and Donna Krasnow's CI Training, the productive resonance between somatic awareness and verbal description is recognized and valued.

58. Here I am concerned with articulating the repetition of this practice from the perspective of method. In chapter 6, I offer a more critical discussion of the question of repetition in Hay's work in the context of dance training.

59. While I have not formally studied Mallin's Body Hermeneutic Method, I have come into contact with aspects of it through the work of my colleagues Drs. Angela Joesse and Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof. As I study my experience of Hay's practice through Merleau-Ponty via Mallin's interpretation, I am aware of Body Hermeneutics and begin to see possible resonances between the way I'm working and aspects of Mallin's method, particularly with respect to my approach to descriptive writing. I wish to acknowledge this indirect influence while also noting that I do not take it up explicitly in this study.

60. Choosing not to read the Hay literature prior to my research process helped me avoid this to the degree possible, while of course I acknowledge that I studied Hay's practice directly with her and discussed it with others on the SPCP residency program.

61. De Spain also uses the word "echo" to describe the relationship between bodily experience and language that describes it (29).

62. Ann Cooper Albright draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of tracing the body in writing in her own reflections on researching and writing through bodily experience as a "connected knowing" ("Situated Dancing" 13).

63. To make a connection, Authentic Movement – developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse – is a practice in which a witness observes a mover freely following movement impulses arising in the body in a non-judgmental way and non-selective way. The movement may but need not bear any resemblance to recognizable or codified form, either pedestrian or practiced (sport, dance, etc.) The intent is spontaneous and personal-exploratory. The witness and the mover both respond to the experience afterward and then often switch positions to repeat the process. The literature surrounding this practice situates it within a therapeutic context, though the practice is sometimes drawn upon in dance creation contexts. There are similar principles underpinning Authentic Movement, Merleau-Ponty's notion of "authentic speech" and my writing practice in this research project (Whitehouse et al).

64. In the senses articulated by Hutcheon in *Theory of Adaptation* and Freeman in “Making the Obscene Seen”, both of which I have discussed earlier.

65. Many of Hay’s own articles on her practice have appeared in the alternative movement journal *Contact Quarterly*, which focuses extensively on improvisational dance and somatic movement practices, including contact improvisation, hence its title.

66. In the ethics agreement she and I signed with respect to my research, she stipulated the additional specification that I would not refer to her work as improvisation.

67. In Hay’s score for the solo *At Once*, there are only a few explicit movement directions. The balance of the score is more abstract and enigmatic. See chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of this.

68. See for example Novack, Albright and Gere, Goldman’s *I Want to be Ready*, Buckwalter, De Spain and the movement journal *Contact Quarterly*.

69. This is also very likely why her work is often considered improvisation and why she takes pains to distinguish it, which I hope to explain in the following chapters.

70. This term/concept has been repeatedly taken up and taken apart in dance, theatre, performance studies and philosophical contexts. I use it here in a general and vernacular usage.

71. I understand and employ aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s thought in my work through engagement with primary texts and via their interpretation by Samuel B. Mallin in his book *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*.

72. Situations will be discussed below; for now, a situation can be understood to be any specific instance of lived experience.

73. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes two types of intentionality: operative (or motor) intentionality and thetic intentionality. Per Mallin, the perceptual, affective and motor-practical given capacities are characterized by operative intentionality; whereas, “thetic intentionality, that which makes a definite claim or judgment about its object, is uniquely characteristic of the cognitive realm” (Mallin 38). I understand this, generally, to articulate a basic distinction between pre-reflective and reflective experience. Thetic intentionality builds upon operative intentionality.

74. This conceptualization would be very interesting to explore in dialogue with Laban’s movement theory, with respect to Laban’s concept of the freeing and binding of flow. Maletic’s analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s intentionality as related to Laban’s Effort theory provides a beginning for this, which is well beyond the scope of this study.

75. This is discussed by Mallin on pages 14-15 wherein he notes the difficulty in describing these ideas in language which “forces us to speak of them in one of these two ways [subjective and objective]” (14) when they inherently and fundamentally belong to one another.

76. Mallin points out that Merleau-Ponty uses the term “polymorphic matrix” in *The Visible and the Invisible* to describe this system of structures (Mallin 35n16).

77. As discussed in my Introductory chapter, throughout this document, I yoke terms in neologisms, as in this example, in order to convey a quality of dynamic simultaneity and attempt to address, or at least remind the reader of, the ineffectiveness of given English language to effectively articulate such lived experiences.

78. I see how this is risky. What if the other doesn’t approach in this way? What if the other is violent and encumbered? What if I am violent and encumbered but unaware? This is why, as I

will discuss in my concluding chapter, this practicing performing is located in a theatrical, performance context. It is a (relatively) safe space to propose, enact, practice, suggest, imply, show, share. Hay's practice is radical and not practical for daily life – but in its radical proposal, it provokes a reconsideration of the accumulated sediment and lets us know there are ways to excavate, and possibly open new pathways, channels. I think even of my responsibility to my daughter. My ethical responsibility to her is to provide some structures and to approach her through some structures, but not all of them are ethical because not all of them allow for her freedom and subjectivity. It is this dynamic that I understand Irigaray to be after and why, as I will also discuss in my conclusion, I think Hay's work is pre-relational, not relational. It is a proposal, a practice. In relationality, structures must come into play, but it is a question of how we allow these structures to form between us that is at issue I think. Who decides how? Is it possible to respect alterity and develop structures of relationality that are more ethical?

79. Take, for example, the establishment in 2009 of the new *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*.

80. Hay almost never physically demonstrates movement, though in open group practice, she often moves with the group. She herself notes this on her website, and it has been remarked upon by others including Ann Daly and Megan Nicely.

81. On various occasions, dance scholar Sally Banes has critiqued the use of the term post-modern with respect to dance, arguing that the values and concerns associated with post-modern dance actually align more readily with the values and concerns of modernism in the visual arts, as set out by art critic Clement Greenberg (Banes, "Terpsichore in Sneakers, High Heels ..." 303).

82. See Daly's "Horse Rider" for a discussion of Hay's intentional exploration of writing as a method for transmitting her dances to other performers.

83. In addition to Daly's discussion with Hay about the communicative import of language for Hay in sharing her practice with others (see note 81 above), Drobnick also remarks several times on Hay's need for a shared language in order to work across difference with both trained and non-trained dancers (43 and 45).

84. I have made reference to this distinction between improvisation and choreography in the introduction and I have used discussions of improvisation to contextualize and support my thinking in chapter 3. In the conclusion of chapter 5, I more thoroughly distinguish choreography and improvisation with respect to Hay's work, which as I've noted, she maintains is emphatically not improvisation.

85. While not made explicit in our discussion or ethics process, I feel my commitment to Hay precludes my including the full score as an appendix to this document as it is rightly her creative work and is not generally available for public use at this time. Another of her scores, *No Time to Fly*, is available to the public via William Forsythe's Motion Bank website project, of which Hay's work was a part.

86. I have noted elsewhere Hay's choreographic genealogy in the 1960s avant-garde, with choreographers' pre-occupation and experimentation with tasks and games as compositional strategies to challenge the emphasis on technical virtuosity, emotional expression and narrative structure in modern dance prior to that time.

87. For a productive study on the experiential dimensions of solo improvisational dance practice, see de Spain.

88. I have commented earlier in the chapter on this distinction in relation to Drobnick's work on the topic.

89. Certainly, according to the contract all SPCP participants sign, I also have a professional responsibility to Hay to respect her choreography and uphold its integrity.

90. In the SCPC residency, Hay verbally offered this image of the way affect or emotion might ripple across one's face like wind on the surface of water.

91. Rosalind Krauss has also similarly commented on the dissociation of movement and meaning in Hay's work, describing "the nature of Hay's physical performance" as a "message without a code" and "a message disengaged from the codes of dance" (211).

92. Hay references this in the score itself (Hay, *At Once* 1) and other writers have commented on it, as I have discussed in chapter 2. Susan Foster addresses it in depth as I have noted on page 37.

93. In my adaptation of the score, I changed market/mall to city about halfway through my three months of practice. I found that in order to perform market/mall, I was strongly drawn into an active reflective thought process in which I found myself locked into "creating a mall" in my imagination and then projecting it into the space around me so that I could then "notice it". This reflective process continually halted my practice of the score, running counter to Hay's direction and what I understand the practice to entail. In making the change, I was not trying to remove the effort required "to refrain from creating", which Hay addresses in her note; rather, I was attempting to remove a major block to my performance of the score. Once I made the change from market/mall to city, it became possible to simply "notice it" rather than having to actively conjure and project an image.

94. With this phrase in quotes I explicitly reference J.L. Austin's seminal text "How to Do Things with Words".

95. Drobnick defines Hay's term "Performance Meditation" as "a specific phrase or affirmation that focuses the mind of the performer during a performance" (53).

96. In her foreword to Hay's book *My Body, The Buddhist*, dance scholar Susan Foster writes of Hay's "postulation of body as the ever-changing cumulative performance of seventy-five trillion semi-independent cells" (Foster, Foreword xii).

97. For anyone familiar with Contact Improvisation, this relates to what the form's founder Steve Paxton has called "the small dance".

98. As noted elsewhere, see the back matter of Hay's *My Body, the Buddhist* for a chronological list.

99. In fact, following one of my practices of the solo during the residency in Scotland, Hay suggested to me that I "lighten up" and I understand this now to be essential in the practice of the work, for in focusing and trying too hard, I move toward specification and stabilization, against which the performance practice works.

100. Certainly one could examine Hay's practicing performing through the literatures on creativity and play, in which I would expect some common ground with the work I've done here. Taking up those literatures is beyond the scope of this study.

101. Both Drobnick and Foster, among others, have remarked on the koan-like phrasing of Hay's statements.

102. "Falling in" is a phrase I have come to use that describes an experience of becoming engaged by, going with/following and developing a movement theme, image or idea. In the previous section of this chapter, I have included a journal entry that describes the experience and the necessity of navigating "the precarious edge".

103. As a Laban Movement Analyst, I recognize the strong correlation between these descriptions and dynamic bodily processes as described in the LMA framework of Body, Effort, Shape, Space (BESS). As discussed earlier, I don't use the LMA framework or vocabulary in this study. This point of connection, however, prompts a further exploration of the relations between Merleau-Ponty's work and LMA, building on the foundation established by Vera Maletic.

104. These disambiguating definitions of comprehend and apprehend are offered in the entry for comprehend under Usage.

105. The difference in this example is that it relies on a pre-structured experience of "alarm-clock-waking-bedside table-arm-hand-button" whereas, in Hay's work there isn't this object-oriented pre-structured experience to rely upon, per se.

106. The visual perceptual dimension of Hay's practice has been given significant emphasis by several scholars including Nicely and Satin. The perceptual dimensions of touch and hearing have not been as substantially considered.

107. All these qualities can be tangibly measured by devices that one would find in a lab. Hay's tool "I need the lab" suggests this connection, and I have included it as a secondary tool in combination with "be a barometer of space".

108. In a footnote on the score for *No Time To Fly* (2010), Hay writes: "My use of the word 'dis-attach' instead of 'detach': to detach has become a generalized concept that, at this time, often loses the experience of the personal. To dis-attach requires more action on my part as a practitioner. I need to recognize where I am before I can choose to dis-attach from where I am." (*No Time to Fly* 30).

109. In conventional dance practice grounded in a technique, I definitely aim before I fire; I aim toward the movement form or figure I am to execute. In improvisational dance practice, I still aim before I fire; in this case, I aim toward a possible movement form or figure that I discover in the process of moving and my intent is still toward this "something", this evolving figure or form. In Hay's "ready, fire, aim", the "movement arises without looking for it" (Hay, *At Once* 1) and my focus is decidedly not on the movement form or figure but on sustaining the practice of attention. Aim, coming after fire, does not point me back to the movement that arose, in a reflective return, but rather draws me continually toward the practice itself, demanding my attention and inhibiting the possibility to lose focus and instead begin to follow or "fall in" to the ripple effect of the movement impulse of the "fire" experience. This cue prompts the mover to subvert his/her own habits and patterns, "removing my sequencing from the sequence" (which is another of Hay's verbal cues related to this one). The experience is one of surprise, an entry into the realm of the unfamiliar, the not-known, the not-already-known. This experience is not, however, of randomness or flailing or chaos because there remains in the verbal cue the intention and action of aiming.

110. In an interview with Hay as part of her essay “Deborah Hay’s O, O”, Danielle Goldman raises a question about the necessity for a kind of trust in relation to Hay’s work: “I guess I was wondering whether a kind of trust is necessary to allow that kind of invitation in the first place. In the workshop, we built a shared vocabulary in the safety of the studio. What does it mean to generously invite being seen in situations that are far less certain, or comfortable?”. For approximately the first month of my three-month practice period, I worked outside in a park and experienced a related dilemma. I encountered the difficulty of remaining committed to the practice and particularly to “inviting being seen” in the presence of passersby. These moments raised the question of how they would understand (or not) what I was doing and what interpretation and meaning they might develop, without the explicit theatrical performance frame to situate them. My concern with this at times is revealed in my journaling in which I discuss my self-conscious awareness of being seen in this potentially very odd-looking activity in a public park and the ways in which I purposefully shifted my performance of the practice into a more “readable” modality, pushing my performance toward potentially graspable meaningfulness by emphasizing interpretive structure toward “tai chi” or “physical workout”, while also “closing” my attention (and therefore invitational performance openness) in a way so that I articulated myself as a figure of action in order to communicate my wish to not be disturbed. Within the theatrical dance performance situation, the intentionality/intention of such a context allows more freedom for the practice, without the risks I faced in public space in being without framing or contextual cues.

111. I experienced this possibility as well in my studio practice when I worked alone. At times I struggled to maintain fidelity to the practice as performance and would “fall in” to my inner experience, it drawing my intentionality/intention in such a way that the situation shifted from theatrical dance performance to personal meditation or therapy, in which my personal process become a kind of figure of attention. In these instances, the constructed situation of theatrical dance performance and some temporarily forgotten aspect of the score, questions or tools would draw me back to “the edge” of the practice. “Inviting being seen” was often a strong and helpful tool in these cases.

112. Drobnick’s definition of Hay’s term Ah-Ha has some potential resonance here. Drobnick writes that an ah-ha is: “a lucid moment of revelation. An epiphany-like moment that engenders a ‘spontaneously inclusive cosmic shift in perception’ (Drobnick and Hay qtd. in Drobnick 47).

113. In an article about Hay’s work, dance scholar Selma Odom quotes internationally renowned choreographic innovator William Forsythe describing his experience of Hay’s work: “You brought me to a level of attention that I love. And you kept me there” (Forsythe qtd. in Odom 28).

114. I adapt this two-part phrase from Kent de Spain.

115. Throughout this chapter, I will continue to use neologisms to remind the reader of the lived experiences of flux and paradoxical simultaneity that I am describing and discussing.

116. De Spain uses this term independently from any reference to Merleau-Ponty.

117. I have addressed this in reviewing the literature on Hay in chapter two, noting the way Hay herself has appropriated this language at times to reference her work.

118. In descriptive italic sections throughout this chapter, anything in quotes is either directly from the choreography – score, questions or tools or is Hay’s voice, echoing from the residency experience.

119. Again, I use these neologisms to imply the holistic and simultaneous experience of these “world” imprints in my body.

120. This is a metaphorical reference to the dance form of contact improvisation in which two dancers move together in close proximity and non-prescribed movement, sharing weight and rolling around, over, under and with each other through sustained touch and following a travelling point of contact between the two bodies: arm to arm, arm to leg, torso to back, head to hand, foot to hip, etc. For an ethnographic study of the form see Novack.

121. Here I do not address the various and complex notions of subjectivity and identity in cultural debates per se.

122. It is worth noting that my experiences of space are generally associated with touch, whereas, as will be discussed, my experiences of time are generally associated with hearing. Further analysis might reveal another layer of connection between perception of the various phenomena and specific senses, which also begins to appear in my earlier analysis of the experience of the tools in Hay’s choreography. This could be the focus of another study.

123. In developing my theoretical framework earlier in this document, I distinguished the terms movement and action. I defined action, with respect to Merleau-Ponty’s term motility, as all actualized voluntary and involuntary body activity. Action thus forms the third aspect of the triumvirate dynamic relation (intentionality/intention, attention, action) that organizes my analysis of Hay’s choreography, specifically in chapter 4. Here I use the term movement for two reasons: 1) it is the word I used in my first-order journal entries and extrapolated descriptions and therefore its use in this section maintains a clear relationship for the reader between the descriptions (from which I quote here) and my analysis in this chapter; and 2) when I use the term action, I use it as part of the triumvirate dynamic relation and I have specified that this includes the action of perception; whereas here, in using the word movement, I am more generally referring to my experience of dynamic bodily change and flux in the dance. There is also a nuance here with respect to the two terms in that “action” derives through theoretical reflection, whereas “movement” arises through experiential description. I acknowledge the relation between the two terms and use movement in this specific discussion.

124. In Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of temporality, he works through a long discussion of time through the metaphor of a flowing river or stream, a metaphor that he notes has been with us since Heraclitus. In his discussion, Merleau-Ponty critiques this metaphor and moves past it in his articulation of the phenomenon of time (*Phenomenology of Perception* 477-479).

125. Of course sometimes this flux opens to me in daily life, such as when I encounter a very old object, for example, and I fleetingly perceive its enduring materiality, the pastness in its present. This brief perception is rapidly obscured by the layers of meaning and context – my grandmother’s ring, my grandmother, my mother, passing down of heirlooms, weddings, pearls, oysters, shells, sand, ocean – that slide in over top and shift the perceptual relation and experience of time to the background of experience. Yes, within the layers of meaning and context, we can also still understand the signs of experiential time; however, they are signs comprehended logical/rational (cognitively) and not perceptions apprehended somatically.

126. This description of my experience of time as linear progression recalls Laban's analysis of the dimension of time in movement in which movement can reveal an attitude of either fighting/quickening (strong resistance to time) or indulging/sustaining (going with the flow). Though I am describing a lived experience in this particular extrapolation, time is still here conceptualized as a force outside of myself.

127. I would like to remark here that the three dimensions I discuss here: I-world, body-space and movement-time seem to align with the triumvirate dynamic relation of intentionality/intention, attention and action via Laban Movement Analysis. In LMA, the vertical dimension activates a sense of weight, having thus to do with a sense of self or "I" and the capacity for intention. The horizontal dimension activates an awareness of environment, having to do with a sense of space and the capacity for attention. The sagittal dimension activates an awareness of goingness, having to do with flow through time and the capacity for progression or action. This could be a fruitful overlap to explore in a separate study.

128. This term becomes important in chapter 6 where I discuss what I consider to be the unconsummated, pre-relationality precipitated in Hay's work.

129. I will further address this point about Hay's work as practice versus training in my conclusion.

130. Here in her text Albright references her invocation of Heidegger's notion of dwelling from his *Poetry, Language, Thought* in the chapter "Building Dwelling Thinking".

131. Note that Godard links the gestural anacrusis to his concept of the tonic dialogue which could be examined with respect to Merleau-Ponty's global motility and primordial contact and also with respect to LMA's discussions of Weight Sensing with respect to developmental reflexes and patterning. Interestingly, Godard uses Trisha Brown as an example of a choreographer who is working through an understanding of and inquiry into what he calls the "tonic dialogue", though Brown's work is invoked to illustrate the way in which dance organizes intensities and releases of the gravitational system to express poetic quality. Hay's project is different in its resistance to poesis of that kind. However, it's worth remarking on the fact that these choreographers are contemporaries, with roots in the 1960s avant-garde, and have each been working, exploring, practicing dance, movement, choreography, relatively consistently for over fifty years. It's not surprising that this longevity and commitment could reveal substantial somatic knowledge. Nicely also completes a case study on Trisha Brown that could possibly be brought into contact with Godard's thinking.

132. This discussion could be considerably expanded through the literature on creativity; however, this is beyond the scope of my project. Considering Hay's work in the context of creativity, generally, also implies an interest in the purpose, outcome or result of this experience of the "unknown open". This is not Hay's interest, nor mine at this juncture. I am aiming to describe and articulate the experience and how Hay choreographs it. In the following chapter, I will consider some possible "thens" to Hay's "What if...?". For now, on the topic of creativity as raised by Manning, I will point out that her interval – where she locates the nexus of creativity – comes after both preacceleration and relation, in her dynamic process. I align somatic anacrusis with Manning's preacceleration and as such, somatic anacrusis would come before creativity *per se*. Briefly thinking this through, I would point out that I have articulated somatic anacrusis as arising from a destructuring process and that creativity is arguably a structuring or restructuring

process. Creativity might benefit from or even require a destructuring process in advance but this destructuring is distinct from creativity as I'm thinking about it here. Somatic anacrusis pulls away from meaning-making; creativity pushes toward it. This short digression is relevant to the following section in which I distinguish Hay's choreography from improvisation and set choreographic work because both improvisation and set dance work value and work toward meaningfulness, or what Hay has identified as "resolution".

133. As I wrote this description, working from bodily sensing to find descriptive language, the word "kindling" jumped forward as the apt word to describe this experience and only as I worked through the description did I find in that word the connotations of fire and light, which align so well, culturally speaking, with cognition and thinking. This in itself is a kind of example of the process I'm trying to describe in which I had a "felt experience" of the form or action of cognition and allowed the experience to register sufficiently that cognition could jump in and name it "for me", thus drawing out meaningfulness.

134. Douse is the right word here too, with respect to the fluidity of experiencing as I am describing it.

135. I have indicated earlier, in chapter 4, that I adapted this section as City, not Mall. Nonetheless, I maintained fidelity to the score's cues in this section.

136. Of course there is a great range of approaches to both improvisation and set work, across a spectrum of genres and practices. Much more nuance and gradations of resolution could be revealed through individual experiences than I can address here. I recognize the generalization I'm making, which serves its purpose in this discussion. For a survey of approaches to improvisation in dance see Buckwalter. Further, my triumvirate dynamic relation of intentionality/intention, attention and action would be interesting to apply in emergent choreographic analyses of other task-based, pedestrian and performance art-type events. Such analyses would no doubt refract the distinctness of Hay's work and develop further specificity with respect to improvisational practices in dance.

137. Considering the performance context, the theatre and the audience, opens up the possibility to discuss the particular relationality engendered by Hay's work, which I will address in my final chapter.

138. I address Bauer's writing on Hay more fully in chapter 6.

139. See my earlier discussion of the presentation of Hay's work *Blues* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 2012.

140. Or perhaps, in another play on words in keeping with the above, pre-forming, but I will leave this play for another time.

141. As I have quoted earlier: Hay writes in her 1988 article "Remaining Positionless": "In *The Man Who Grew Common In Wisdom* (1987), I return to choreography but remove all movement that could not be created by a traffic cop from Duluth. It is deliberately prosaic. The choreography is similarly reduced, stripped of everything unusual" ("Remaining Positionless" 22-23).

142. In dance, this term is used to describe the process of quickly running through a movement sequence or choreography without actually dancing it fully. Marking involves gesturing through the material, abbreviating various elements in order to generally map the order, spacing and timing of the sequence.

143. Of course this impulse is not new. The history of theatre broadly speaking, as Jacques Rancière points out in his essay “The Emancipated Spectator”, has always been concerned with the role of the audience, the spectator, and “activation” strategies have run the gamut: Rancière makes reference to the Brechtian and Artaudian paradigms.

144. Because in this study, I am working from the experience of the performer, I am not able to directly address audience members’ experiences of the work – which in any event cannot be subsumed into a generalizable experience.

145. Here, I note the unmistakable echo of Derrida’s trace in Daly’s reception, which could be further explored in relation to my experiential analysis of Hay’s work here.

146. In both Irigaray’s text and in my understanding of Hay’s dance, the emphasis on the present, and even on the future, in a kind of inciting act, recalls Erin Manning’s use of the future anterior tense to characterize movement’s incipency (Manning 24). Here, I want to point out how Irigaray’s and Hay’s projects have a political edge because of the way that their work performs the potential of incipency. Nicely also makes this connection with Manning’s thought (171) and characterizes Hay’s choreography as a kind of future writing, her main thesis and the connecting thread among the choreographic case studies she analyses in her dissertation.

147. For a related provocation, see Patrick Finn’s *Critical Condition*, in which through an invigorating discussion of the history of critical thinking and a critique thereof, he calls for its replacement by what he calls “loving thinking” based on practices of creativity, found in their most fully realized form in the performing arts.

148. In considering the ‘agency’ of the artwork, it might also be interesting, in combination and potential contrast with this effort, to consider the object-oriented criticism proposed by Graham Harmon.

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Note to the reader: In all citations, treatments (italics, boldface, underlines, insertions) are from the source unless otherwise noted.

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