

Defining the Body-Object of Minimalism: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which Yvonne Rainer's manipulation of the body was bound up with minimal sculptors' examinations of the object. Reading across texts, statements, and practices of a range of artist-critics at work through the 1960s, including Rainer, Lucy Lippard, Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Rosalind Krauss, Susan Sontag, and Barbara Rose, it seeks to identify points of transfer between critical approaches to dance and sculpture that were, on the surface and in the literature, answerable to different sets of concerns. Rather than draw a superficial analogy between the viewer's traversal of the gallery and the activity of the dancer, this movement is considered with recourse to the metonym, a linguistic trope that signals a set of active, *moving* procedures embedded in the specificity of the text. Having explored how Rainer herself reworked strategies of 'radical juxtaposition' through both her published art criticism and performance work, the metonym is further tested through a case study of her signature dance work, *Trio A* (1966). This thesis draws on archival research in order to make a case for *Trio A* as an expressive mass of material that is constituted at the intersection of an embodied, daily expenditure of energy and forms of verbal transcription, both of which serve to relay activities in the social life of the subject. Culminating in an original reading of Rainer's *Convalescent Dance* (1967), this research contributes to recent readings of minimalism's 'emotional underbelly' by examining Rainer's negotiation of externalised relations and offstage relationships.

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Introduction

With Rainer's Trio A... the possibility is proposed that dance is neither perfection of technique nor of expression, but quite something else – the presentation of objects in themselves.

Sally Banes, "Yvonne Rainer: The Aesthetics of Denial", 1977.¹

Yvonne Rainer has consistently theorised her own explorations across a range of media. Not only has she written extensively about her early choreography, but this self-analysis is further crystallised by the recycling of dance material through her turn to film with *Lives of Performers* (1972) and return to choreography in the 1990s. In place of a normative timeline of stilled, discrete objects-of-study, the researcher is confronted with a whirling revisionary activity; a process of self-analysis formally mediated by the work that anticipates the contrivance of new frameworks for understanding. Or, differently put: Yvonne Rainer exacerbates a problem that dogs art/dance-historical research in general, that of identification with one's subject. Though her analytical, wry commentary (and, by extension, her criticism on the work of her peers), would seem to bracket her subjectivity in line with the emergence through the 1960s of an 'antihumanist' sensibility, its effect is rather to entrench her authorial voice through a widening pool of (in)transitive significations that closes around the reader/viewer like a web. The difficulty then comes in not reproducing her language. But to say this is to recognise the centrality of language, and the grounds on which a study of her specific interventions into the field of artistic production of the 1960s is possible.

This thesis approaches Yvonne Rainer's early work through a study of written statements. Reading across commentaries authored by her and her peers, it considers artistic subjectivity as an effect of practices of textualization. By this term I designate a process of

¹ Sally Banes, "Yvonne Rainer: The Aesthetics of Denial", in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), p. 49.

working between adjacent forms. Textualization refers to both the verbal transcription of movement material, (i.e. written reflections on, or scoring of, choreography) and the art-critical description of objects. For my purposes, this term also refers to substitution, juxtaposition, condensation and displacement – procedures that appear in a variety of settings and are best understood in relation to metonymy. My approach is not iconographical: I do not seek to unlock the work’s ‘meaning’ through contextual analysis. Rather, by focusing on written statements, I seek to understand Rainer’s key choreographic innovations as inextricable from strategies, procedures, and practices that have a textual orientation. In this regard, commentary is approached as a co-extensive, mutually-constitutive site alongside art-making, a nexus that is historically and culturally determined.

The *OED* defines metonymy as, ‘(A figure of speech characterised by) the action of substituting for a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or phrase denoting a property or something associated with it; an instance of this’. ‘Let me give you a hand’ is an expression that clarifies the offer of ‘help’, demonstrating the actual labour involved through the substitution of ‘hand’ for ‘help’. The relative abstraction of ‘Let me help’ persists through the selection of a part of that action, the hand, which then directs it. Metonymy in this sense indicates a manoeuvring within the constraints of a given form, which, in turn, is subjected to dynamics of concealment and exposure, censorship and revelation. Such dynamics, this thesis argues, are exemplified by Rainer’s working of relations at the intersection of energy expenditure and verbal transcription.² For she has perennially been concerned with the disjunctive relationships *between* elements. In place of a total indeterminacy, she is for an environmental openness mitigated by control, selection, manipulation, exploitation. It is this, I argue, that distinguishes her approach from that taken by her peers. (And this difference will be argued for through comparative analyses of written statements.)

² While it falls beyond the scope of this thesis, I hope to pursue the connection between energy expenditure and verbal transcription by turning to Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis. As Anson Rabinbach points out: ‘Freud’s writing is suffused with the language of energetics’. See, Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 63.

Some biographical information is useful at this point. Born in 1934, Rainer relocated from San Francisco to New York over August 1956 to join her then partner, the painter Al Held, who introduced her to the art world. In her autobiography, *Feelings are Facts* (2006), Rainer recalls regular visits to the Cedar Street Tavern, whose ‘habitues’ included Abstract Expressionists and art critics:

The energy of the Cedar originated not in pounding pop music but in the steady buzz of voices locked in intense conversation... mainly I listened, as the cornucopia of artists’ names, many not yet—or never to be—canonized, and their champions spilled in desultory torrents from the mouths of the ardent discussants.³

Through metabolising the culture of advanced art, her focus shifted squarely onto dance. In *Work: 1961-73* (1974), she recalls that, ‘In 1959 I started studying [dance] in earnest’.⁴ Alongside standard ballet classes, she undertook courses with Martha Graham and, in a different setting, Merce Cunningham. A year later, she participated in Ann Halprin’s San Francisco summer workshop alongside Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Robert Morris, and La Monte Young, the last of whom introduced her and the others to principles of Cagean indeterminacy. Upon her return to New York, she joined Robert Dunn’s composition workshop as well as classes taught by James Waring. She thenceforth evolved an approach to choreography based on the juxtaposition of disparate elements with chance procedures. The Judson Dance Theater (1962-64) was sparked by a conversation between participants of Dunn’s class.⁵ A loose-knit group began to meet weekly at the Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square, Manhattan, they jointly produced twenty concerts of dance. The church’s assistant minister, Al Carmines, a key figure in the Off-off-Broadway scene, invited them to use the church’s gymnasium for rehearsals and the sanctuary for performances. Rainer produced choreographies, worked collectively, and

³ Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 157.

⁴ Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961-73* (Halifax: Nova Scotia, 1974), p. 5.

⁵ As Sally Banes reflects, ‘One day at Cunningham’s studio [where Dunn’s workshop was convened], Rainer suggested to [Steve] Paxton that they call a meeting of people who might want to work together on their own’. See, Sally Banes, *Democracy’s Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 77.

featured in numerous concerts of dance that were presented to packed, partisan audiences.

As Sally Banes narrates in her 1993 history of Judson Dance, *Democracy's Body*:

The first Judson concert had incorporated choreographic techniques and human values that reflected and commented on both the smaller dance and art world and the larger social world the dancers inhabited. Through chance, collage, free association, cooperative choice-making, slow meditation, repetition, lists, handling objects, playing games, and solving tasks, the dancers and dances described a world.⁶

Banes pictures the Judson's egalitarian spirit as well as the heterodox approach taken by Rainer and others, while usefully conveying how this dynamic scene of production was related to other emergent sites of the art world. Painters, sculptors, and musicians participated in the workshop alongside trained and untrained dancers: Jasper Johns contributed to set design, Robert Rauschenberg featured in concerts, Carolee Schneemann choreographed performances, and Robert Morris, who left the field of dance in 1965 at Rainer's behest, produced what is now considered to be the first minimal sculpture proper, *Column* (1961), after a 'dance' of the same title. The Judson Dance Theater thus represented a unique site in the landscape of Greenwich Village, in which transactions between media and artists – conducted through a collaborative framework – supported the circulation of some ideas and resistance to others, while those involved participated in a range of new intermedial forms, such as Happenings.

The Judson workshop began to fragment and splinter over 1964 as participants developed projects more independently. Even so, Rainer continued to collaborate with her peers and present new work at Judson, eventually forming the travelling company, Grand Union in 1971 before turning to film in 1972 with *Lives of Performers*. In the midst of this, the debut of *Trio A* in 1966 represented a shift from a collective-cooperative to an increasingly auteurist mode of production. Rather than figure the dance – Rainer's signature statement, and this study's key case study – as a clean break with the goofy glamour, disparate elements, sudden dynamics and chance procedures that had informed

⁶ Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 71.

her practice in the preceding period at Judson, this thesis makes a case for *Trio A* as a summation, or sublation, of that same dance activity, regardless of its apparent remove from *Trio A*'s task-like movement. From task to task-like, the metonym will enable me to track movement across developing forms.

Early on, Rainer perceived the mythical status of dominant models such as Cagean indeterminacy, the gestalt, the nouveau roman, and various schools of dance technique. Her contribution as defined by this thesis lies in her ability to work with and against these models by shifting between expressive forms in such a way as to reveal contradictions immanent to their presentation. Importantly, this awareness was advanced by her own choreography *in conjunction with* commentary on the work of her peers. The key signifier for this progression in Rainer's practice is the eponymous, formulated term 'body-object'. The dash that joins these two words represents a lateral movement that both inheres to the project of minimalism, considered in terms of the conjugation of objects and bodies in space, and describes the operative dimension of Rainer's practice per the figure of metonymy. The body-object is intended to position the dancer's specific resource, the body, in relation to the prop, a correlative that served Rainer as the starting point for the textual and movement investigations explored here. By examining these investigations across the period of time leading to the debut of *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968), my aim is to shed some light on the dynamic relationship between sculpture and movement that cuts across the field of minimalism, dance, and performance art. (Note, these art-historical categories overlap in practice.) Further, by attending to the breaks or contradictions in the metonym's transfer of meaning, I hope to place Rainer within her historical situation. The challenge is how to not treat her intentions or approach as wholly self-present.

A study of metonymic procedures in Rainer's early oeuvre is intended to contribute to existing literature on her early work in the context of the 1960s. For its reception is permeated with an attention to language and semiotics that is, again, occasioned by her own theorisations. There are historical reasons for why this has been the case.

First, and most obviously, advanced art of the 1960s turned to criticism to shore up its innovations. In fact, this decade is frequently characterised as revitalising the role of the artist-critic. With increased access to higher education and the widening distribution of an art press – *Artforum* was founded in 1962 – artists felt compelled not only to defend their innovations but to pronounce on broader artistic developments. Writing allowed Rainer and others to take a position at a time when styles, systems, and motifs were quickly consolidated and made imitable through the apparatus of an emerging gallery network. As such, the work itself no longer represented the primary index or guarantor of artistic expression; its value was increasingly discernible through promotional activities that *surrounded* its classical locus.

Art-making appeared to fragment the legacy of modernist formalism through a heterogeneous array of practices and strategies. Though the field of artistic production I am concerned with presented a new kind of open environment, it remained one conditioned by zones of permission and exclusion in which transgressions were rigorously policed. In fact, the artists I shall consider in this thesis are intelligible through their cleaving to, or against, transgression. Rainer entered a rivalrous scene that was constituted by the negation of options, in which self-actualisation depended on the artist's ability to intervene into a sphere of public opinion whose key terms were constantly being dissected and reframed. Though not *all* artists were producing specialist criticism, art-making in general was subject to an intense, often 'paranoid' (to use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's term) atmosphere of speculation that was propagated by art criticism.

Second, the 1960s saw the reception of structuralism in the US, a development that coincided with artistic culture's putative rejection of the category of expression and adoption of an 'antihumanist sensibility'. According to art historian Eve Meltzer, minimalism and conceptual art shared with emergent structuralist thought an 'investment in antihumanism' that paradoxically allowed for the renewal of 'affect'.⁷ In her view,

⁷ See, Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 33.

structuralism and conceptualism ‘thrived off the same baseline claim: that only within sign systems were the individual and the social comprehensible as such, and that, more profoundly still, the world itself could not be, indeed was not, without the sign’.⁸ The subject was increasingly seen to come into being through language. Locating the reception of structuralist thinking with a conference that took place in 1966, at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and included presentations by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Jacques Lacan, Meltzer argues that these discourses share a similar relationship to equivalence, signs, and systems of control.⁹ Hence, artistic subjectivity was discernible through an adherence to a ‘cool’ aesthetic, a fact that informs the way language gets taken up as a metaphor for understanding developments in artistic practice.

This is exemplified by the literature’s focal point and the main subject of this thesis, Rainer’s signature dance, *Trio A* (1966). A four-and-a-half minute movement series that was debuted as *The Mind is a Muscle, Part One* at the Judson Memorial Church in New York, *Trio A* has been deployed in a range of contexts and to different ends, evincing a rich performance history that has served to organise analyses of Rainer’s early practice into a coherent field of literature. It embodies the kind of textual orientation I am interested in, in part because Rainer wrote an accompanying theoretical commentary, whose title in full is, “A Quasi Survey of some “Minimalist” Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of *Trio A*”.¹⁰ Written in the same year as the dance’s debut, 1966, it set out *Trio A*’s specific intervention, furnishing contemporary critics and allies – most notably Jill Johnston, whose regular column at the *Village Voice* was a key channel for the Off-off-Broadway downtown scene – with a critical vocabulary with which to understand its key innovations.

⁸ Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved*, p. 33.

⁹ The proceedings of this conference were collected under the title, *The Structuralist Controversy*. See, Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, eds. *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (1970; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Yvonne Rainer, “A Quasi Survey of some “Minimalist” Tendencies in the Qualitatively Minimal Dance Activity midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of *Trio A*”, in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

By briefly introduced *Trio A*'s critical reception below, I want to draw attention to the centrality to the literature of language as a model for understanding. In doing so, I hope the 'where' and 'how' of my study's contribution will become clear. From there, I will introduce this study's key term, the 'body-object of minimalism', before further considering the historical conditions that precipitate a study of metonymy in Rainer's early practice.

0.1 *Trio A*: An Introduction

Not only has *Trio A* produced a massive body of critical writing, but its innovations are most intelligible through the structural dynamics of language. Annette Michelson, for instance, characterises it in a 1974 *Artforum* essay on Rainer as 'highly asyndetonic, proceeding from phrase to phrase, without pause or transition... Its evenness of utterance', she posits, 'results from the dancer's refusal to inflect movement in the sense of emphasis; it is, quite simply in one way, without stress or interruption, a succession of things'.¹¹ Michelson invokes the syntax of Donald Judd's 1965 formulation, 'one thing after another', to identify *Trio A*'s key innovation; namely, the way it sublates phrasing through the appearance of an unmodulated string of movement. Rainer's choreography prior to *Trio A* was informed by Cagean chance procedures and the navigation of disparate materials. With *Trio A*, the medium of dance was reformulated *on its own terms*. And, as indicated by Michelson, attempts to understand its innovations were from the beginning bound up with discourses of minimal art. Not only did Judd's syntax provide a rationale for her, but Robert Morris's theorisation of the gestalt in "Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two" (February; October, 1966) informed Rainer's commentary on it.¹² Consider, for instance, the chart that prefaces her analysis of *Trio A*. It was, she explains, intended as a 'shortcut' for readers requiring 'alternatives to subtle decision-making'. You can see how properties

¹¹ Annette Michelson, "Yvonne Rainer, Part One: The Dancer and the Dance", in *Artforum*, January 1974, p. 58.

¹² See, Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", in *Artforum*, Vol. 4, No. 6, 1966; "Notes on Sculpture, Part Two", in *Artforum*, Vol. 5, no. 2, October 1966.

of ‘Objects’ have been mapped onto those of ‘Dances’, so that, for instance, ‘unitary forms’ is comparable to an ‘equality of parts’. The gestalt – a perceptual whole – supplied her with a communicable formula with which to symbolise the innovation of a continuous transition – it stood for the suppression of discrete phrases. What interests me specifically is not the viability of *Trio A* as a product of minimal art, but the ways in which the interplay of movement investigations and verbal transcription that Rainer conducted in the period leading to *Trio A* may be said to have transformed the way the body is considered in relation to the object more broadly, through coeval, overlapping discourses around both sculpture and dance. And a study of this material is necessarily grounded in language. This route is not only practical: reading text allows us to shift between media, but *Trio A*’s movement quality is linked directly to semiotic analysis: To repeat, the dance presents a structural relation to language that is historically linked to an (antihumanist) conception of subjectivity that foregrounds patterns of signification.

As Sally Banes writes in her landmark 1977 introduction to Rainer in *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, ‘Violating nearly every canon of classic dance conventions (both ballet and modern), she [Rainer] brought classical lines and gestures into conflict with their own subversions. After *Trio A*, the choreographic terrain looked different’.¹³ Think about the distribution of energy required to perform an arabesque, with its discrete units of attack, climax, and recovery. Seen in Michelson’s terms, the dancer of *Trio A* is tasked with reducing such dramatic steps to a flat parataxis. Technically, the whole sequence takes place in the mid-range of bodily extension, with one or more body parts constantly diverging from each shape, pre-empting the next phrase in turn. Emphases and stresses are thus cancelled out, leaving the viewer with a constant transition that is all the more difficult to follow because the performer(s)’ gaze is averted throughout. As Rainer herself acknowledged in her 1966 commentary on *Trio A*, “Quasi Survey”, the *appearance* of continuous movement, or parataxis in Michelson’s terms, is arrived at in practice through the dancer’s ongoing modulation of energy outputs. Bodily effort is suppressed in some

¹³ Sally Banes, “Yvonne Rainer”, p. 44.

places and exaggerated in others in order to achieve the look of uninterrupted transition.

Hence, what the audience *sees* and what the performer *does* amounts to two different things – at least on paper. Yet this asymmetry becomes pivotal when read back onto *Trio A*'s status as language.

In her 2011 monograph on Rainer, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, Carrie Lambert-Beatty extends Michelson's syntax analogy by making the case for *Trio A* as an autonomous semiotic mechanism, one capable, like Roland Barthes's photographic index, of mediating a range of historical, social, and dance materials.¹⁴ To do this she harnesses its asymmetry – that is, the difference between the projected *look* of the dance and the sheer doing of it that was first identified by Rainer. In her view, *Trio A*'s 'inorganic continuity' invites the spectator to observe and reflect upon the very point at which indexicality 'flips over' into mediation, the dance effectively working the fold between presentation and representation.

These arguments, which are dealt with in Chapter Three, demonstrate how *Trio A* is amenable to structural revision. Suffice to say, the dance's transformation of the medium of dance in the US context is legible through semiotics terms. Working with and against this investment, my thesis instead approaches *Trio A* as an expressive mass of material, a mass that is constituted through the subject's ongoing work of verbal transcription. My aim in writing is to track specific, context-bound examples of the treatment of material that may obstruct the hypostatisation of the work into a critical model. By zoning on those 'backstage regions' – to use Erving Goffman's phrase – where the work of dance happens, I want to make a case for *Trio A* – so often divorced from its context and rendered into a critical paradigm – as the summation of an intense period of 'back-region' movement investigations for which verbal transcription played a fundamental role.

In this sense my project is closer to the work of Sally Banes, whose critical account of the Judson Dance Theater in general and Rainer in particular provides an authoritative

¹⁴ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

benchmark in studies on her work. Banes's 1993 history of Judson Dance, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater 1962–1964* introduces the evolution of the Judson Dance Theater, against which Rainer appears as one among others. Through an accumulation of interviews, written reflections, and other source material, Banes unsettles the neat historicism that often follows accounts of the 1960s, offering insight into the actual heterogeneity that informed the context in which Rainer produced work. Lambert-Beatty positions her own account of Rainer, which situates her dance work in relation to a media-oriented study of a culture of spectatorship, by arguing against Banes's perceived search for authenticity.

Seemingly in opposition to this material history of Judson Dance, Banes's earlier 1977 introduction to a range of postmodern choreographers, many of whom were part of the Judson workshop, provides an individualised account of Rainer's author-function through a brilliant analysis of *Trio A*. She draws a parallel between the radical summation of *Trio A* and the telos of Greenbergian modernist formalism, arguing that the former's sublation of phrasing marks the final point in dance's realisation of its medium-specificity, thereby creating the opening for a new kind of dance. Dance scholars such as Ramsay Burt and Susan Manning have rounded on Banes's reading, arguing that, by concentrating solely on the abstract merits of *Trio A*, she erases the adversarial position from which Rainer and others proceeded, effectively disallowing a socially-engaged reading of the work. Further, Banes is seen to align the advances of *Trio A* with minimal sculpture, as Michelson did before her. By describing Rainer's master statement in terms of the eclipse of modernism, Burt argues that Banes implicitly posits a kinship between Greenberg and Michael Fried, and artists like Donald Judd and Robert Morris, that is not properly historicised.¹⁵

¹⁵ Burt writes, 'Not only was Banes wrong in believing that the modern dance of the 1920s and 1930s was not modernist, but she was equally mistaken about minimal art. The minimalist approach to formalist abstraction was more avant-garde than modernist. Greenberg and Fried both therefore saw minimalism as an assault on the values they felt modernist art exemplified'. See, Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 12.

Nevertheless, Banes's analysis is far richer than the simple compact between Greenberg, minimalism, and dance that forms the object of Burt and others' ire. For she understands Rainer's search for bodily intelligence as turning on an exploration of relations to the object – a search that is intelligible through, but not limited to, coeval critical debates around minimal art.¹⁶ By studying Rainer's use of props, and in particular, the way she transcribes their usage through her written reflections on the work of her peers as well as her own movement explorations, I hope to set the scene for a different reading of *Trio A*, one that grapples with the material that comprises the dance as well as the specific ways in which it produces meaning. I do, however, intend to conduct this analysis of movement in relation to the historical context of minimal art, whose rhetoric and terms were constitutive for Rainer.

0.2 Minimalism's Emotional Underbelly

Minimalism is a heterogenous field that was consolidated by a range of critical polemics and artistic practices organised through specific publications and exhibitions during the early- to mid-1960s. This discourse exemplifies a historical form of artistic subjectivity that is frequently placed in relation to an 'antihumanist' sensibility. The geometric forms of artists like Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Dan Flavin that are associated with minimalism appear to represent a rejection of gestural expression as that which informed artistic production of a previous generation. Yet revisionary scholarship has contested this reading, arguing that affect is legible in the very emptiness, or 'objecthood' of minimal art – 'objecthood' is famously a term Michael Fried proposed in his 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood" to negatively characterise the minimalist project.¹⁷ To be clear: the re-enchantment of minimalism's blank forms was vouched for all along by 1960s criticism,

¹⁶ Banes turns to earlier dances by Rainer, such as *Room Service* (1964), in which, as she writes, 'Movement itself becomes like an object, something to be examined coolly without psychological, social, or even formal motives'. See, Banes, "Yvonne Rainer", p. 43.

¹⁷ As Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe puts it, 'Blankness signifies from the start the place of signification'. See, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, "Blankness as Signifier", in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Autumn 1997, p. 160.

the rejection of expression was from the beginning met by recognition of its persistence.¹⁸ Nevertheless, minimal art represented a shifting of the terrain of viewer/artwork that subverted the tradition of modernist formalism and precipitated a new set of expressive concerns. As Alistair Rider recently put it, ‘For an expressionist work, the formal qualities of a composition are metaphors for an inner subjective state or a felt emotion. But for the artists associated with minimalism, materials and forms tend not to represent anything other than what they are’.¹⁹ By bringing attention to our own bodies in space such forms, Rider observes, ‘act like markers... they allow a person to measure him- or herself in relation both to them and to his or her surroundings’.²⁰ In other words, they have more to do with the durational experience of passage, the space between, than with the pictorial plane associated with what Rider calls ‘expressionist work’. Note that he posits minimal expression as other than a kind of subjective reflection he terms metaphorical. Why is it that, as historians, we have recourse to linguistic tropes in order to discern the different ways in which artworks communicate? The progression from ‘metaphor’, in Rider’s schema, is towards a set of materials whose self-referentiality – ‘what they are’ – prompts the viewer to reflect on spacing, relations, and limits. Yet the presence of the artist is not voided by this concentration of materials. As James Meyer wrote in an article from 2009:

Motivation—the drive to rid the artwork of associations, of the self that generated it—is an asymptotical impulse, as Yve-Alain Bois insists. Never achieved, it has been nothing if not generative: like the Rodchenko of 1921, the serial artists of the 1950s and 1960s—the Parisian Ellsworth Kelly, the Jasper Johns of the *Number* paintings,

¹⁸ As Lucy R. Lippard writes in a 1967 essay for *Art in America* titled “The Silent Art”, ‘Monotonal painting has no nihilistic intent. Only in individual cases, none of which is mentioned here, is it intentionally boring or hostile to the viewer. Nevertheless, it demands that the viewer be entirely involved in the work of art, and in a period where easy culture, instant culture, has become so accessible, such a difficult proposition is likely to be construed as nihilist. The experience of looking at and perceiving an “empty” or “colourless” surface usually progresses through boredom. The spectator may find the work dull, then impossibly dull; then, surprisingly, he breaks out on the other side of boredom into an area that can be called contemplation or simply aesthetic enjoyment, and the work becomes increasingly interesting’. See, Lucy R. Lippard, “The Silent Art”, in *Art in America*, January-February 1967, p. 63.

¹⁹ Alistair Rider, “Minimalism’s Ascetic Tenor”, in Thaddeus Ropac, ed. *Minimal Art from the Marzona Collection* (London: Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, 2017), p. 28.

²⁰ Rider, “Minimalism’s Ascetic Tenor”, p. 28.

the Warhol of the Factory and the Minimalists—proceeded *as if* they could achieve this aim, could produce an art devoid of an author. Absolute motivation is the collective fantasy, the grail, of the American neo-avant-garde. Yet, feeling—the residue of a subjectivity more durable and more insistent than most accounts of these practices, my own among them, would have us believe—could not be entirely suppressed. This ‘subjective remainder’ is stubborn; it refuses to be silent; it is the unacknowledged term—and as the thing negated, that *must not be*—the driving engine of the serial impulse of late twentieth-century art.²¹

Meyer connects art-making and expression to coeval critical writings on the author – and here I’m thinking of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, more on whom shortly – suggesting the centrality of language to understanding the artist’s status in view of the work’s reception. In fact, the impetus for Meyer’s article comes in part from Rainer, who presents a special case of ‘minimal authorship’, as I shall argue presently. ‘Ignored or denied in the work of my sixties peers,’ writes Rainer in her 2006 autobiography, *Feelings are Facts*, (as quoted by Meyer),

The nuts and bolts of emotional life comprised the unseen (or should I see “unseemly”?) underbelly of high U.S. Minimalism. While we aspired to the lofty and cerebral plane of a quotidian materiality, our unconscious lives unravelled with an intensity and melodrama that inversely matched their absence in the boxes, portals, jogging and standing still of our austere sculptural and choreographic creations.²²

Rainer approaches the matter dialectically, arguing that the ‘quotidian materiality’, of a kind that Rider foregrounds, is inextricable from an emotional life that would seem to be antithetical to it. The artist’s search for a clean statement, the outcome of what Meyer refers to as ‘motivation’, is finally answerable to a ‘subjective remainder’. Authorship persists because the viewer cannot help but read expressive signs back onto the work, while the minimal object’s environmental openness precipitates a heightened awareness for the markers or traces of an ‘unseen underbelly’. But this paradox had a special meaning in Rainer’s case. As Meyer goes on to note, ‘a non-narrative, disjunctive, factual presentation

²¹ James Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious”, in *October*, Vol. 130, Fall, 2009, pp. 150-1.

²² Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 391; as quoted in Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious”, p. 152.

afforded a set of formal procedures for analysing emotions in her early practice'.²³ Rainer's choreography and writing may be said to have mechanised and made visible that which was implicit in the work of her peers; namely, the proximity of cool, inert form to specific and contextual modes of being. Before considering Rainer's authorship, I want to introduce the eponymous 'body-object' in relation to the present discussion of minimal art.

Rosalind Krauss's important 1977 book, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, presents minimalism as the final stage in sculpture's progressive externalisation of its ontological core.²⁴ The way sculpture interacts with surrounding physical space undergoes a massive upheaval with minimalism. Through the eradication of a part-by-part relation, the viewer confronts a form that occupies space in an analogous manner to themselves. This then provides a basis for the distinction forwarded by Rider. Krauss represents the struggle leading to sculpture's sublation of parts as occurring between conceptual, perceptual, and material orders; insofar as her inquiry is concerned with the issue of how we 'know' what we see, it positions sculpture in relation to a broader field of experience. For instance, the pictorial crosshatching that covers one plane of the deconstructed violin form of Pablo Picasso's *Violin* (1914) is described by Krauss as a 'functional redundancy' and 'a refugee from the descriptive language of another medium (painting or drawing) which seems to have no real function within a work of sculpture'.²⁵ Krauss's description, with its sensitivity to the dynamics of elimination, is clearly written from the position of minimalism. Indeed, the conclusion she reaches, that Picasso 'takes the language that had formerly been a part of the virtual space of illusionism... and makes that very language an aspect of literal space', is just as much informed by the reception of phenomenology and gestalt psychology – strands of Continental thought that rooted a contemporary understanding of categories such as perception, perspective, shape, ground and figure, and so on – as was the minimal

²³ Meyer, "The Minimal Unconscious", p. 152.

²⁴ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977).

²⁵ Krauss, *Passages*, p. 48.

sculpture produced through the 1960s.²⁶ *Passages* traces the genesis of the realisation of this new set of values to Constantin Brancusi, whose sculpture, *The Beginning of the World* (1924), deflects ‘ideal geometry’ through the neutralising of parts. This ‘deformation’ is, as Krauss puts it, ‘great enough to wrench the volume out of the absolute realm of pure geometry and install it within the variable and happenstance world of the contingent’.²⁷ In this manner, Krauss charts a progression from the ideal to the phenomenological real.

The attributes of ephemerality and duration that Krauss ascribes to this emergent form of sculpture were being worked out through performance and dance, in large part after the teachings of John Cage. In fact, performance features in *Passages* as a key site in the transformation of the perception of durational space. Krauss introduces a number of terms to describe the sculpture, such as ‘surrogate’, ‘figure’, and, most pointedly in relation to Robert Morris’s *Column* (1961) – sometimes considered the first minimal object – ‘performer’ and protagonist’. This coordination of body and object is further linked to the performance situation through the positive recasting of the term theatricality – again, proposed in relation to ‘objecthood’ by Michael Fried in his 1967 essay, “Art and Objecthood”. Though intended to disparage the forms of Morris, Judd, and others, this term paradoxically provided a useful optic for contextualising sculpture vis-à-vis developments in performance and dance. As Krauss writes,

Now it is beyond question that a large number of postwar European and American sculptors became interested both in theater and in the extended experience of time which seemed part of the conventions of the stage. From this interest came some sculpture to be used as props in productions of dance and theater, some to function as surrogate performers, and some to act as the on-stage generators of scenic effects. And if not functioning in a specifically theatrical context, certain sculpture was intended to theatricalise the space in which it was exhibited... In the event that the work did not attempt to transform the whole of its ambient space into a theatrical or dramatic context, it would often internalise a sense of theatricality—by projecting, as its *raison d’être*, a sense of itself as an actor, as an agent of movement.²⁸

²⁶ Krauss, *Passages*, p. 51.

²⁷ Krauss, *Passages*, p. 86.

²⁸ Kelly, *Passages*, p. 204.

This passage is key to my thinking of the object as metonymically related to the body. Krauss is commenting on the uses of kinetic sculpture onstage, but these reflections are definitely linked to her analysis of minimal sculpture in the gallery space. Several mediating terms, ‘prop’, ‘theater’, ‘performer’, introduce a lateral axis that undergirds the metonym, body-object. For this reason, my thesis proposes a second formulated term, ‘performer-prop’, in order to articulate this mediation in short form; for as we shall see, the ways in which performers, including Rainer, manipulate and exploit the properties of props (juxtaposition, displacement, concealment and other procedures introduced below), provided a concrete realisation of claims that were being made by sculptors who in turn looked to performance and dance in order to ratify their new conceptualisation of sculptural space.

Performance provided the engine room for developments during the 1960s, while textual commentary furnished the resulting medial transactions with a vehicle for circulation between actors. Krauss not only links sculpture to the performer through the externalisation and animation of its formal properties, but comments on sculpture’s *internalising* and *projecting* of the performer’s agency. In other words, she is arguing for a role-reversal proper, of a kind that shall be carefully unpacked through this thesis, in which sculpture recuperates those human capacities of expression that were apparently evacuated by the minimalist’s rejection of the painterly signifier. This argument has been taken up recently by scholars such as Eve Meltzer, whose *Systems We Have Loved* (2013) – to repeat – doubles down on the presence of affect in conceptual art’s and minimal art’s blank spaces. However, what Krauss seems to suggest, and what I intend to explore, is not only that a notion of expression that is rooted in modernist and humanist traditions is displaced by the work of art, but that, the concealment of this displacement simultaneously exposes other aspects of expression that are linked, not to ideals or absolutes, but to the body’s activity or daily expenditure of energy as an insistent, unavoidable correlative. At least, this is the case if we take the metonyms ‘prop’, ‘theater’, and ‘performance’ seriously.

Another important text that I consider in detail is Lucy R. Lippard's 1967 essay, "Eros Presumptive".²⁹ In it she addresses sculptural objects, ranging from the 'eccentric abstraction' of artists like Eva Hesse and Lucas Samaras to objects that are legibly minimal. For her, the coolest forms of abstraction are pervaded by a sensuousness that arises from the dynamics of viewing and the concomitant recognition of desire. The 'abstractly sensuous object' elicits a containment that slows such desire down to a near standstill. In my thesis I am interested in linking such slowness to the gestalt, or perceptual whole, whose elision with phenomenal shape is never complete. This gives rise to a partiality that is deeply wedded to the body's energy expenditure as an irreducible part of the encounter. The former's presentation is suffused with a kinaesthetic sense that addresses the body of the viewer directly, linking the lower ranges of embodied sense to 'understatement, detachment, [and] the anticlimactic in art'. Indeed, Lippard's vision of the object at a 'near standstill' is underwritten by a lexicon of energy, one that also supports Morris's presentation of the gestalt. Crucially, a similar recognition underpins the 'body mechanics' of Rainer's *Trio A* – a dance that mobilises the figure of the gestalt as a communicable formula to front the summation of her movement work. *Trio A*'s dynamic of concealment and exposure lays claim to this sensuous language of the body-object, presenting, in Lippard's words, 'The 'non-romantic, non-subjective' that is precipitated by the threshold, rather than the centre of erotic experience, as 'formally manifested by the predominance of a long, slow, deliberately regular curve... presented within a framework of simplicity'.³⁰ By foregrounding embodiment, I want to make a case for the body-object that builds on the critical utility, for Krauss and others, of the body as an analogue for the kinds of operations listed above. However, I wish to reverse the paradigm by which the body stands as an analogue for the sculptural object – a move that is summarised well by David J. Getsy in

²⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", in *The Hudson Review*, Spring, 1967; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995).

³⁰ Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", p. 217.

his 2015 book, *Abstract Bodies*.³¹ This thesis examines how the capacities of the body, its sensuous allocation of a lexicon of movement possibilities, are mobilised by Rainer, and how this work displaces coeval critical debates around sculpture.

In order to draw out this opposition, my thesis will spend time working comparatively through the varied practice of Rainer's peer, Robert Morris. I believe this is necessitated by the centrality of Morris in the literature on minimalism to thinking about the body as such an analogue for sculpture. For Morris is consistently figured as an artist whose development of form was coterminous with a positioning of the viewer's body in the visual field. It is precisely because his performance, sculpture, and writing so neatly supply Krauss's passage – quoted above – with an exemplar that I intend to think about how Rainer departs from (or, in fact, subverts) his important contribution to the 1960s. In order to do this properly, it is further necessary to engage the writings of relevant critical interlocutors, such as Donald Judd.

To make the stakes of this comparative analysis clear, consider the following: In 1994, the editors of *October*, Krauss included, convened a roundtable discussion on the subject of “The Reception of the Sixties”.³² Reflecting the journal's custodial attachment to the history of the avant-garde, the purpose of this meeting was to reassess and, if possible, to bring into a single frame established historiographical paradigms of minimalism and conceptual art. Marked by friendly disagreement, the participants' conversation rehearsed a variety of issues concerning the 1960s' relation to modernism, the development of signature style, medium-specificity, the status of expression, and the burgeoning stakes of institutional critique – all in the context of New York's emergent gallery network. Yet this conversation was galvanised by a single event that demanded immediate attention. In February of that year, a retrospective of Robert Morris's work had opened at the Guggenheim New York. Curated by Thomas Krens, the museum's then director, and

³¹ David J. Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

³² Rosalind Krauss, Denis Hollier, Annette Michelson, Hal Foster, Silvia Kolbowski, Martha Buskirk and Benjamin Buchloh, “The Reception of the Sixties”, in *October*, Vol. 69, Summer, 1994, pp. 3-21.

Krauss, “The Mind/Body Problem” was not met with universal enthusiasm. Among its negative reviews stands out that of Roberta Smith, art critic at *The New York Times*, who wrote in condemnatory fashion:

Mr. Morris’s art is overtly didactic and cerebral and weirdly unconnected. It seems to be made by someone with a mistrust of emotion, a disregard for pleasure and a strong pedagogical bent; an artist more involved with problem solving than art making who often reduces the viewer to the role of guinea pig.³³

Rather than flatly reject Smith’s ad hominem on Morris, the *October* roundtable instead attended to the legitimate grounds of her criticism, which, properly registered a few lines down, indicted the retrospective as a ‘prolonged and restless commentary that parallels artistic activity since 1960, pinpointing some of its most important issues’.³⁴ Smith’s charge, as Silvia Kolbowski, one of the roundtable participants quips, is that Morris ‘sort of whores after every cultural change or shift’.³⁵ On one level Kolbowski, via Smith, is responding to Morris’s varied artistic production, which, as Martha Buskirk approvingly remarked, ‘can’t... resolve into a signature style’, and as Benjamin Buchloh later observes, includes ‘the one that is the most painful for some of us at the table, which is figurative painting’.³⁶ Falling closer to the bone, however, Smith’s criticism may be taken as a comment on the roundtable itself. For the varied objects Morris had in 1994 produced over a thirty-year period, if in fact they were epiphenomenal to his theoretical digest of art world discourse, suggest that the interlinked scholarly projects of those around the table, themselves formed largely in response to ‘artistic activity since 1960’ for which Morris is here paradigmatic, are caught in that same ‘strong pedagogical bent’ Smith ascribes to him.³⁷ I do not mean to embrace the anti-intellectualist flair of Smith’s journalistic rebuke; rather, I draw attention to the table’s shared acknowledgment that Morris stands for the

³³ Roberta Smith, “Review/Art; A Robert Morris Tour of Contemporary History”, in *The New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1994.

³⁴ “The Reception of the Sixties”, p. 5.

³⁵ “The Reception of the Sixties”, p. 4.

³⁶ “The Reception of the Sixties”, p. 6.

³⁷ “The Reception of the Sixties”, p. 6.

infiltration of art by commentary, a problem that is constitutive of art-making of the 1960s and continues to haunt its reception. As stated, Morris's writings on sculpture of the mid-1960s are vital to Krauss's *Passages*. By tackling his thinking on the body-object head on my aim is not to further enshrine his privileged position in the field, but to further differentiate the approach taken by Rainer.

In order to understand why and how criticism infiltrated art-making, as suggested above, I want to introduce a text that has been crucial to my thinking on the 1960s.

0.3 The Fragmented Subject of Modernism

In 1981, the artist Mary Kelly published an essay in *Screen*, an extramural British film studies journal whose renewal of the historical avant-garde and reception of French theory through the 1970s paralleled the work of *October* in America. In "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", Kelly defines modernism as 'a determinant discursive field with reference to critical writing since 1945'. Her aim is to situate artistic subjectivity in relation to shifting field of modernist criticism, a term that stretches from the Kantianism of Clement Greenberg through critical debates around minimalism to the interventions of feminist theory of the 1970s.³⁸ Focusing on statements and effects, she delimits her analysis by tracking one signifier, gesture, through the 1960s' nominal repudiation of expression. 'Of all the painterly signifiers', she inquires at the outset, 'Why is gesture the privileged term of the pictorial paradigm?'³⁹ Throughout the history of abstract painting, the weighting of each brushstroke produces a distinctive index of the artist's gestural quality; the viewer's aesthetic experience is authenticated, the painting's market value realised, by the immediate apprehension of what the critic, Harold Rosenberg in 1952 termed 'act-painting'.⁴⁰ Yet this was set to change, as Kelly narrates: 'In the 1960s, when the 'avant-garde' expelled gesture, denied expression, contested the notion of an essential creativity, the spectator was

³⁸ Mary Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", in *Screen*, Volume 22, Issue 3, 1 September 1981, p. 41.

³⁹ Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", p. 44.

⁴⁰ Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters", in *ART News*, December 1952.

called upon to sustain a certain loss: the presence (or rather, presentified absence) of the artistic subject'.⁴¹ For Kelly, gesture signifies 'the artistic subject' whose transmissible presence valorises the work of art. Refining these terms, she draws on the analysis of Paul Hirst and Elizabeth Kingdom, also published in *Screen*, to describe the artist as a 'legal subject... [who] is presupposed as possessor of itself'.⁴² The 1960s' rejection of painterly gesture marks a shift to a postlapsarian state in which this 'legal subject', a testament to the liberal tradition, is apparently jeopardised. However, the market would have it otherwise.

As Kelly attests, 'What was evacuated at the level of the signifying substance of creative labour (gesture, matter, colour) — signifiers of a unique artistic presence, reappeared in the figure of the artist: his person, his image, his gestures'.⁴³ The artist's activity, whether it be performance or art criticism, came to assume the role previously fulfilled by painterly gesture.⁴⁴ Kelly reads criticism symptomatically, as suggesting a professional anxiety concerning the need to strategically stage-manage one's person in the arena of a shifting art world, for which artistic form was no longer a sufficient condition for winning prestige. She draws attention to the artwork's increasing dependence 'on an extended documentation of the installation or of the artist-at-work, and on critical commentary including statements by the artist'.⁴⁵ By linking the minimal object to the artist's circulation of their person through critical commentary, art parties, and gossip

⁴¹ Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", pp. 44-5.

⁴² Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", p. 46. She goes on: 'The legal interpellation of the creative subject coincides dramatically with its "imaginary" construction in the critical discourses of modernism'. See also, Paul Hirst and Elizabeth Kingdom, "On Edelman's Ownership of the Image", in *Screen*, Winter 1979/80, Vol 20, no 3/4, pp. 135-40.

⁴³ Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism", p. 46.

⁴⁴ This paradox must be related to a broader set of contradictions concerning social development through the 1960s in the US context. Howard Brick offers a thoughtful analysis of contradictions running through the overlapping spheres of artistic culture, education, economy, and politics. He writes, 'The primacy of the social sphere of consciousness of the 1960s followed the real drift of American life toward the organisation of skills, services, habits, and interactions on a large scale of coordination, pressing against the barriers of private, local, and sheltered experience.... [Nevertheless, this] accompanied a growing capitalist economy that still emphasised the action go lone individuals'. See, Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Kelly, "Re-viewing Modernist Criticism", p. 50.

columns, Kelly reinforces Fried's charge of theatricality in a way that orients Krauss's use of this term towards a broader field of social relations, drawing attention to the quiet forms of sociality that permeate the work and on which it relies.⁴⁶ This suggests the need to include, as part of one's analysis, a consideration of the 'backstage' spaces, such as dance studios, lofts, trips abroad, through which the work developed. (And I intend to access such zones through the study of Rainer's and her peers' written reflections, which are primarily archived at the Getty Research institute in Los Angeles.) Kelly goes on:

Although Fried referred to the minimal object as having 'stage presence', in effect it remained no more than a prop without the intervention of the actor/artist and his script [i.e. critical commentary]. Ultimately, it became both necessary and expedient for the artist to stage himself: necessary because it was logically bound up with the interrogation of the object, and expedient because at the same it rescued a semblance of propriety for ephemeral art forms.⁴⁷

The adroit handling of positions and materials, and the execution of strategies, served to shore up 'artistic presence' in lieu of the metaphorical function Rider ascribes to expressionist art of a previous generation. The displacement of presence onto the person of the artist suggests the need for a study of metonymy as a study of the work of art via the proxy forms and activities that increasingly sanctioned its value: hence my centring on processes and practices of textualization.

"Re-viewing Modernist Criticism" thus positions minimal art in terms of the fracturing of modernist discourse, whereby transcendental notions of genius, taste, and artistic subjectivity are expunged from the work of art, only to be recuperated via the artist-critic's

⁴⁶ For example, in a 2007 article title "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970", Julia Bryan-Wilson considers how Morris 'theatricalised' the worker's 'bodily involvement'. He was photographed wearing a hard hat and driving a forklift in the run up to his 1970 show at the Whitney, "Robert Morris: Recent Works", in what now seems a display intended to produce a certain response. See, Julia Bryan Wilson, "Hard Hats and Art Strikes: Robert Morris in 1970", in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 89, No. 2, June 2007, p. 333.

⁴⁷ Kelly, "Re-viewing Modernist Criticism", pp. 50-51.

staging of activities, performance, and commentary.⁴⁸ Yet the body, as opposed to the object, is the central term through this historical process; as Kelly writes:

For criticism, performance art initiated an appropriate synthesis of the disparate elements that had fractured the modernist discourse. On the one hand it provided the empirical domain with a universal object – the body, and on the other, to the transcendental field, it brought the incontestable authenticity of the artist’s experience of his own body.⁴⁹

For Kelly, the performance of a speaking subject would, seen retrospectively, define the point of intervention for the feminism that was to come, thereby marking the close of her review of modernist criticism. She brilliantly asserts that performance, feminist criticism’s point of entry, continues the tradition of modernist formalism – and in doing so, rendering it open to attack – by positing a universal, the body, in place of gesture. It is here, on this provisional, experimental turf, that Rainer intervenes. For her choreography and writing practice test out the relationship between artistic subjectivity and the body in different ways, and by a host of metonymic procedures, so as to render such universals susceptible to renewal or collapse.

Consider her programmatic “Statement”. Written over March 1968, this single A4-side was included in a programme handed out to those who had come to the Anderson Theater in New York, over the nights of April 11, 14, and 15, to watch the premiere of her evening-length performance, *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968). The first section of Rainer’s statement presents a eulogy to the body:

If my rage at the impoverishment of ideas, narcissism, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing can be considered puritan moralizing, it is also true that I love the body – its actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality. It is my overall concern to reveal people as they are engaged in various kinds of activities – alone, with each other, with objects – and to weight the quality of the human body toward that of objects and away from the super-stylization of the dancer. Interaction and cooperation on the one hand; substantiality and inertia on the other. Movement

⁴⁸ This scenario is complicated by artistic practices, such as Judd’s, that sought to transform, rather than eradicate, painterly illusion.

⁴⁹ Kelly, “Re-viewing Modernist Criticism”, p. 53.

invention, i.e. ‘dancing’ in a strict sense, is but one of the several factors in the work.⁵⁰

Dance provided Rainer with the means to ‘weight the quality of the human body toward that of objects’. Her address suggests a stripping back or reduction to essentials that reprises the concern of minimal art towards materials in themselves, as articulated above by Rider. Notice how Rainer’s regard for ‘the body’ in its relation to objects is consistently framed through, on the one hand, feeling (rage, love, etc.), and on the other, procedures such as ‘revealing’, ‘weighting’. These frames of reference coalesce into an Aristotelian presentation of states of being, ‘interaction and cooperation... substantiality and inertia’, that suggest the body is legible through the activities to which it is subjected. The presentation of what Andrew Hewitt elsewhere negatively calls ‘brute soma’ is thus qualified and directed throughout, pointing to the constitutive role played by verbal transcription.⁵¹ By focusing on the (in)transitive nature of expression, my thesis frames processes of textualization as an activity that is imbricated in physical, movement-based practice: the act of recording and movement work are, in my reading, mutually constitutive. This, as we shall see, will involve a study of intransitive versus transitive forms of expression, for which purpose I shall turn to Carrie Noland’s excellent 2009 study, *Agency and Embodiment*.⁵²

If we track through to the end of Rainer’s “Statement”, we alight on a key passage for a *different* kind of mediation – one I position my own work against – which is pursued by Carrie Lambert-Beatty in view of the 1960s’ changing culture of media consumption. For, in the final paragraph of “Statement”, Rainer places the ‘unenhanced’ body which she loves squarely in relation to emergent media and the transmission of massive historical events:

⁵⁰ Rainer, “Statement”, p. 71.

⁵¹ Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 7.

⁵² Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

This statement is not an apology. It is a reflection of a state of mind that reacts with horror and disbelief upon seeing a Vietnamese shot dead on TV – not at the sight of death, however, but at the fact that the TV can be shut off afterwards as after a bad Western. My body remains the enduring reality.⁵³

For Lambert-Beatty, Rainer's apostrophe to televised images of the Vietnam War evidences the (mass) mediation of the body-*image*; as she writes, the "actual" body of *Trio A* can no longer be thought of apart from those other bodies, precisely immaterial, flickering on the screens of American television'.⁵⁴ In her deft analysis – as discussed above – the moving body of *Trio A* is linked to the image through its adherence to both indexicality and representation. The 'enduring reality' of the body is bonded to a changing media culture. In this schema, the materiality of the body is conditioned by the image, a move that legitimately subjects Rainer's activity to the purview of media studies. This approach produces useful insights regarding a changing culture of spectatorship but it also, in my view, loses sight of the more immediate ways in which the body's 'enduring activity' is mediated. This is why I have elected to explore the body-object, considered in conjunction with the secondary formulation 'performer-prop', through the circulation of written statements in a historically-specific scene of artistic production.

In the next section, I introduce the metonym's scales of proximity in relation to methods of art history in order to differentiate my own contribution. Having contextualised this linguistic trope, I shall consider Rainer's author function in more detail and conclude with an overview of my thesis' chapter structure.

0.4 Art History and Metonymy

The primary methodological precedent for my own approach is art historian, Fred Orton's 1994 book, *Figuring Jasper Johns*.⁵⁵ By briefly summarising his uptake of metonymy from foundational texts by Roman Jakobson and Jacques Lacan (via Sigmund Freud), I hope to demonstrate this linguistic trope's efficacy in relation to a study of

⁵³ Rainer, "Statement", p. 71.

⁵⁴ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 145.

⁵⁵ Fred Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994).

modernist practice.⁵⁶ In order to think more specifically about Rainer and the context of dance I go on to examine two further texts, Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) and Susan Leigh Foster's *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (1986), both of which utilise this trope to analyse performance- and dance work.⁵⁷

In *Figuring Jasper Johns*, Orton argues that the literature on Johns has historically been 'constrained by the Modernist paradigm', focusing narrowly on the development of a form of abstraction itself legible through artistic models and schools such as Abstract Expressionism, whilst more recently, he observes, 'an increasing number of... persons are turning their attention away from matters of surface to matters of subject'.⁵⁸ In Orton's view, 'This does little other than shift the hierarchy within the opposition [of surface and subject]'.⁵⁹ Metonymy presents Orton with the means to traverse this opposition, pursuing chains of association from Johns's 'mechanisms of surface', i.e. his formal language, towards contextual material that both informs the production of surface and is subsequently codified for a private audience. Orton states his project in the following terms:

My speculation is that these repeated formal devices that are more than formal devices are discrete synecdoches and metonyms in a private language, at least as 'private language' is colloquially understood as a relatively socially-closed linguistic mode rather than a socially-open one. They contribute to the composition of more or less socially-open surfaces, but at another level they signify concepts privy only to Johns and the few close friends who would know the contextual field.⁶⁰

In contrast to metaphor, which preserves the distance between a 'literal object and its replacement', metonymy, Orton writes, replaces distance with a 'contiguous or sequential link' whose manifestness is available to those equipped with the 'necessary interpretive

⁵⁶ The classic locus of Lacan's discussion of Freud and Jakobson is a 1957 essay included in *Écrits*. See, Jacques Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud", in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁵⁷ See, Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993); Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

⁵⁸ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, pp. 42-3.

⁶⁰ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 44.

skills’, a qualification that belongs less to the art historian than to Johns’s intimates.⁶¹ Orton introduces a number of terms such as ‘reduction, expansion and association’, and, in relation to Freud, ‘condensation and displacement’, to describe the scaling of proximity – that is, the shift between a ‘relatively socially-open’ and ‘socially-closed’ language – in relation to the work’s address. To do this, he draws on Jakobson’s classic study of metaphor and metonymy, “Aphasia as a Linguistic Trope” (1953).⁶² Informed by Saussurian linguistics, Jakobson’s study of language disorders infers principles that characterise communication more broadly. In his account, the speaker is said to rely on a ‘lexical storehouse... of *prefabricated* representations’ in order to communicate to their addressee.⁶³ Orton applies this model to the ‘language of art’, arguing that visual representation is similarly structured by a syntax and grammar. As he writes: ‘It is not enough to know the [common] code of the artist and the beholder... You need to know the verbal or non-verbal context that provides the necessary area of associative reference on which intelligibility depends. The components of any message’, he goes on, are ‘linked by two modes of relation: the internal relation of similarity and contrast, and the external relation of contiguity and remoteness’.⁶⁴ Accordingly, Johns’s mechanisms of surface are internally structured in terms of modernist visual practice, offering the art historian a legible marker of value; while at the same time, the artist inflects this ‘relatively socially-open’ grammar by importing contextual material which, rather than being represented straightforwardly, is codified through ‘a kind of privacy’. Note, Orton refers to ‘a kind of privacy because, in his words, ‘Even the most private metonymy is public insofar as it is a language’.⁶⁵ *Figuring Jasper Johns* is therefore a study of instances in which the artist

⁶¹ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 27...44.

⁶² Roman Jakobson, “Aphasia as a Linguistic Trope”, in Walter de Gruyter, ed. Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings II: Word and Language* (The Hague, Mouton, 1971). See also, Roman Jakobson, “The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles”, in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *The Fundamentals of Language* (1956; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002).

⁶³ Jakobson, “Aphasia”, p. 241.

⁶⁴ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 28.

⁶⁵ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 31.

exploits and manipulates conventions and resources in order to smuggle and conceal material that might otherwise be prohibited.

The type of association that facilitates Johns's activity is further elucidated by Orton with reference to Freud's account of displacement and condensation in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).⁶⁶ Where condensation involves the coming together of 'collective and composite figures' into a single identifiable figure, displacement, Orton writes, 'occurs where the emphasis, interest or intensity of one idea becomes detached from it and is passed to other ideas that are of little interest or intensity but which are related to it by a chain of associations'.⁶⁷ Orton goes on to explain how, in his rereading of Freud, Lacan utilises Jakobson's study of aphasia to compare the activity of displacement to metonymic processes. The unconscious associations that may become attached to a referent presents, Orton writes, "the power to circumvent the obstacles of social censure' and to express 'truth in its very oppression', even as it shows its 'involuntary subjection to that oppression". Orton here quotes from Leo Strauss's 1952 book, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, a further source that Lacan brought into conversation with Freud's study of dream work in order to think about the social ramifications of such unconscious processes.⁶⁸ Before continuing, let us see this method at work, by attending to Orton's reading of Johns's well-known painting, *Flag* (1954).

Orton discusses the origins of the American flag before describing its acquisition by MoMA under the direction of Alfred J. Barr as a purchase that 'was regarded as a political act'.⁶⁹ This art world controversy reflects what Orton calls an 'equivocation' in Johns's use of this iconic subject, one that he parses through tracking its chains of association. Johns, we are told, selected this subject after waking from a dream about a flag. Rather than 'interpret' this dream, Orton merely observes that the flag already signifies for Johns as

⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by James Strachey (1899; London: Penguin, 1991).

⁶⁷ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 29.

⁶⁸ See, Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); as quoted in, Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Orton, *Figuring Jaspers Johns*, p. 93.

distinct from its common referentiality.⁷⁰ In 1954, the year Johns painted *Flag*, Orton relates how the national recognition of Flag Day took on special significance in light of Cold War paranoia, with President Eisenhower urging American citizens to honour the flag's colours with renewed zeal. As Orton observes, 'Flag Day, coincidentally and contingently, was used to emphasize the heterogeneity and diversity of United States citizens and to affirm the need, at that moment, for tolerance and unity – which is to say, it was used to obscure the intolerance and disunity of that moment'.⁷¹ Not only does this shift from tolerance to intolerance exhibit a blindspot of liberalism, legible through the unequal distribution of rights, but the flag's simultaneous obscuring and celebrating of subjects is reflected by Johns's mechanisms of surface. That is to say, Orton finds a link in the material context that metonymically reappears through the artist's facture.

While representing a unilateral subject at some distance, the surface of *Flag* is in fact constructed like a collage. Orton quotes art critic Max Kozloff, whose 1968 book on the artist in his view represents the 'best of the early attempts to characterise technically what kind of surface Johns made for *Flag*', as writing, 'Its façade is composed of newsprint scraps dipped into wax with white pigment and affixed to the canvas. In addition, the medium, coming through the paper, has been augmented by more wax, brushed sometimes in simulation of, sometimes in opposition to, a flag's stripes'.⁷² Kozloff describes a surface push-pull that is, for Orton, repeated in the flag's historically-fraught iconicity. Further, the newsprint used by Johns to construct the painting/collage's surface itself represents, in veiled form, a range of contemporary ephemera. The humour of its partially-obscured advertising- and news copy is said by Orton to 'interpellate a popular-democratic subject... that contains within itself a subversion of that self... I would call it 'camp''.⁷³ What I find fascinating is how Orton relates the flag's construction as a sign to Johns's manipulation of

⁷⁰ 'The point about the dream', Orton writes, 'is that it *is* part of the discourse of Johns, *is* already signifying for him and art criticism and history', See, Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 100.

⁷¹ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 100.

⁷² Max Kozloff, *Jasper Johns* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968), p. 16; quoted in Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 115.

⁷³ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, pp. 129-30.

the conventions of modernist practice. Not only does *Flag* look back to ‘the depicted flatnesses of Braque’s and Picasso’s collages’,⁷⁴ but Orton remarks that Johns’s delicate mechanisms of surface, understood in relation to the coeval arena of Abstract Expressionism, may be said to have ‘avoided the metaphors of masculinity that was so much a part of it’.⁷⁵ In Orton’s view, Johns effectively created space within the strictures of modernist practice for an allegorised expression of homosexuality, a ‘kind of privacy’ that functions out in the open.

At the same time, however, Orton’s invocation of a ‘metaphors’ of masculinity and femininity is not adequately explained. Johns’s expression of sexuality is presented as *Flag*’s deepest (though most surface, to some) inferential layer, yet it remains elusive, figured as that which evades censure. It is on this point that the modernist practice of painting collides with a then emerging concern for performance.⁷⁶ In Orton’s account, Johns’s *performance* of sexuality feeds back into and consolidates his profile as an allegorist, rich in covert or undisclosed meanings, whose grammar requires decoding. With Rainer there are a different set of concerns. Rainer and Johns share a privileged awareness of the relationship of subject-matter to surface-matter and the kinds of slippage that can take place between these oppositional poles. However when it comes to Rainer, not only are we dealing explicitly with performance – an ephemeral form involving real subjects – but we must confront an artist who was willing to self-consciously assert, and play on, ‘transfers of meaning’ within the space of the work via the presentation of actual bodies. And as I hope to argue, Rainer’s own chains of association are most powerfully advanced through the coordination of bodies and objects, or props, in the overlapping spaces of writing and dance. This qualification demands that we dwell further on the specific ‘metaphors’ of sex alluded to by Orton. To this end, consider a feminist study of

⁷⁴ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 116.

⁷⁵ Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Elise Archias recently attempted to think Rainer’s choreography in relation to the tradition of Modernist painting. See, Elise Archias, *The Concrete Body: Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

performance that tackles the distinction between metaphor and metonymy in a different way.

In her landmark 1993 book, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, feminist scholar Peggy Phelan writes, ‘Performance in a strict ontological sense is nonreproductive... [It] clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital’.⁷⁷ For Phelan, performance is unique in that it cannot be supplemented by other media, whether it be video, still image or witness accounts. Her primary use of the term ‘nonreproduction’ is thus medial. Performance expends itself in the moment of its execution like a combustible material, and is therefore not subject to the same controls as other media. Each repetition is elusive and singular. ‘Without a copy’, she writes, ‘live performance plunges into visibility – in a maniacally charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control’.⁷⁸ The expenditure of performance is linked to the subject’s psychic economy through the binary visibility/invisibility; in effect, performance’s afterlife corresponds to the unconscious.

Phelan addresses performance from a feminist standpoint by distinguishing it from literature. Building on the research of Tania Modleski, she explains that, historically, the production of writing comes to the reader as an effect of ‘the speaking body’ – structurally centred on the phallus – while beneath this jurisdiction subsists ‘the muted body... [of] women’.⁷⁹ This historical inequality is contested, Phelan argues, with the move ‘from the grammar of words to the grammar of the body’.⁸⁰ (The development of performance art through the 1950s and 1960s is synonymous with a turn to the actual body, a shift that highlights sexual difference per a structuralist concentration on language.) Phelan distinguishes this turn by drawing out the difference between metaphor and metonymy; she

⁷⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 148.

⁷⁸ Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 148.

⁷⁹ See, Tania Modleski, “Some Functions of Feminist Criticism, or the Scandal of the Mute Body”, in *October* 49, Summer, 1989, pp. 3-24.

⁸⁰ Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 150.

writes: '[Where] [m]etaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive... [m]etonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement'.⁸¹ 'Displacement' names one the procedures highlighted above; as we shall see, it has a different function in the performance context.

Gender is, for Phelan, a primary metaphor whose function is to organise differently-positioned bodies into a set of positive and negative values. Again, this metaphor is most efficiently disseminated through literature, as the subject comes into being through language. By presenting a concatenation of ephemeral visual codes, performance disrupts the process of gendering: the staged body recedes behind a chain of metonymic associations – costume, voice, character, movement – that, through their commingling partiality, destabilise the spectator's ability to neatly signify 'muted body... woman' even as they seem to add up to her image. As Phelan writes,

That [metonymic] 'addition' becomes the object of the spectator's gaze... Just as her body remains unseen as 'in itself it really is,' so too does the sign fail to reproduce the referent. Performance uses the performer's body to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body per se; performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body – that which cannot appear without a supplement.⁸²

Citing Cindy Sherman's self-portraits of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the artist deliberately failing to refashion herself through a range of social types, Phelan locates performance's capacity to resist the metaphor of gender through its very promise of 'plenitude'. The body onstage signifies 'woman' through a plenitude of visual codes; even in the most obfuscatory performance, bits and pieces of gender multiply around it like figural ornaments. Yet the spectator's reading of them is challenged, because that body has all but peeled away through a metonymic chain behind which it disappears as soon as it is made explosively real. In a radical gesture, performance renders hypervisible the way

⁸¹ Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 150.

⁸² Phelan, *Unmarked*, pp. 150-51.

gender is ‘written onto’ appearance – the subject’s coming-into-being, as the audience discovers, is marked by her disappearance.

As Phelan states her thesis early on: ‘Performance, insofar as it can be defined as representation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same is not assured’.⁸³ While alluring, the attempt to dismantle the metaphor of ‘woman’ by linking it to that which is unproductive is not guaranteed. Her account has been rounded upon by performance scholars for its perceived tendency to reify the medium of performance into an ontology that positions itself as exempt from supplementation.⁸⁴ Though Phelan does use the word ‘ontology’ to imbue performance with a sui generis power, I would argue that her account is modulated by a recognition of its processual character vis-à-vis sexual difference, as demonstrated by her use of metonymy to describe how the body onstage is configured in each moment, a kind of attention that moves beyond the (institutionalised) confrontation of audience/performer to address broader dynamics of subject formation. Phelan’s account offers a useful point of reflection on Orton’s analysis of Johns’s codification of his sexuality, suggesting that a ‘metaphorics’ of masculinity/femininity is relayed through an accumulation of parts that both conceals and exposes in an ongoing interplay.

Prior to Robert Morris’s first solo show in 1963 (Plate XXIII), held at the Green Gallery in New York, Rainer remembers performing ‘an improvisation with a spool of white thread... My crashing-into-walls performance in a black dress and heels was largely affected by my feeling that the whole thing was pretty chichi’.⁸⁵ Her femme attire would

⁸³ Phelan, *Unmarked*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Most significantly, Philip Auslander argues for performance’s constitution through other media, and for its documentary status. See, Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997). Moreover, in “Performance Remains Again” (2012), Rebecca Schneider poses the question: ‘If we consider performance as of disappearance, of an ephemerality read as vanishment and loss, are we perhaps limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?’ She is interested in recuperating ‘body-to-body transmission’ as a productive ‘remainder’. See Rebecca Schneider, “Performance Remains Again”, in Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, Michael Shanks, eds. *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 66.

⁸⁵ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 236.

have contrasted with the sneakers and tracksuits that were commonly worn during Judson concerts, generating a specific ‘stage presence’ in dialogue with Morris’s surrounding grey-painted plywood sculptures.⁸⁶ Rainer’s antics would have elicited a responses ranging from comradely approval and laughter through to collegial jealousy and sexist opprobrium. Those present would have been enthralled by the performance of Rainer ‘crashing-into-walls... in a black dress and heels’. In pursuit of each new and varied code signifying ‘woman’, Rainer’s actual disappearance at the end of the performance would have served a real blow, one coinciding with the subject’s coming-into-being. As her crashing around receded into memory, its hyper-visibility increasingly difficult to recover, those half-remembered codes would conjure a sign that, in Phelan’s words, ‘fails to reproduce the referent’. In other words, the *centre* of the performance becomes impossible to locate. Visiting the Green gallery for the opening of Morris’s exhibition sometime after, one can imagine the same Greenwich Village crowd being confronted by a group of plywood sculptures both devoid of the human body and strangely reminiscent of it. In a sense, Rainer’s performance allows us to think about *how* the viewer is ‘activated’ in space; it poses questions concerning the siphoning of energy and the reversal of subject and object that, while unconcerned with questions of ‘gender’, still provided the feminist analysis of sexual difference, one that was to come, with the means of squaring that analysis with the ongoing (art) world situation.⁸⁷

Given my approach to Rainer shall involve working across media, I want finally to introduce a text that draws an equivalence between the domains of writing and dance.

Susan Leigh Foster’s 1986 book, *Reading Dancing*, transformed the field of dance studies

⁸⁶ While Morris’s show was installed after Rainer’s improvisation, the fact that her narrative in *Feelings are Facts* (2006) connects these two events suggests it is possible to state a connection between them and think about its effects.

⁸⁷ Citing the contemporaneity of Betty Frieden’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Judson dance, Sally Banes observes, ‘Although the choreographers of the Judson Dance Theater certainly did not set out to create consciously ‘feminist dances’ – to claim that would be anachronistic – works by both men and women in the group reveal a profeminist sensibility to gender roles. As well, women choreographers of the Judson generation carved out a niche for themselves as artists in a way that even their female predecessors in modern dance had not’. See, Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies On Stage* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 215.

by introducing developments in post-structuralist theory and semiotics to the study of choreography. As a whole, her book argues that dancing is a signifying medium that, like written language, is amenable to a study of meaning, function, and representation. Foster introduces a range of mechanisms to describe the way choreography produces meaning, such as resemblance, imitation, replication, and reflection. She argues that the intuitive experience of kinaesthetic empathy, or ‘inner mimicry’ – a classical model for understanding dance spectatorship theorised by John Martin in his 1939 book, *Introduction to the Dance* – may be approached structurally.⁸⁸ To do this, she transforms a model for reception proposed by Jakobson in his 1960 essay, “Linguistics and Poetics”, by inserting the figures of viewer, dancer, and choreographer. (Jakobson’s schema, which is limited to context, codes, addresser, and addressee, focuses on the text.) Foster further expands his inclusion of context, which for him refers to the history of artistic form that makes way for the text, to account for the body of the dancer as an intrinsic element of the dance-text. In this way, Foster seeks to retain the interpretive coherence of Jakobson’s quadrant while allowing for the specificity of embodied movement to determine the work’s meaning. She writes:

In the case of dance, such a context would include other dances and genres of dance as well as the methods for teaching choreography and dancing. Insofar as I have implemented this idea of context, I have examined not other dances but the related arts of rhetoric and physical education. And I have done so, because I am specifically concerned with elucidating the conception of the body that informs the dance.⁸⁹

Foster’s inclusion of physical education alongside rhetoric in particular is vital for approaching Rainer’s choreography within the context of American dance pedagogy. As we shall see, dance instruction involved an approach to kinaesthesia that foregrounded the body’s comportment through a range of dance and non-dance physical activities. Foster’s expanded frame of reference not only provides a dance-centred approach to the pedestrian

⁸⁸ John Martin, *Introduction to the Dance* (1939; Princeton: Princeton Book Company Publishers, 1975).

⁸⁹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, p. 232, n. 9.

style associated with the Judson Dance Theater, but it also allows us to consider the relationship between energy expenditure and forms of verbal transcription. Foster argues that semiological study ‘allows us to look at the dance not in terms of what it is trying to say but in terms of *how* it delivers its message’.⁹⁰ The issue of transmission in dance provides a useful counterpoint to Orton’s exploration of Johns’s mechanisms of surface. Her focus on ‘how’ over ‘what’ is certainly relevant for a study of the 1960s. Indeed, as Susan Sontag writes in her 1964 essay “Against Interpretation”, the critic’s task must now be to ‘show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means’.⁹¹ In this vein, I hope to pursue Rainer’s expression of artistic subjectivity through the specific constraints of the dance-text.

The ‘formal procedures’ that Rainer deployed to advance her projects turned on strategic instances of displacement and juxtaposition, procedures which were most acutely represented by her investigation into the dancerly propensity of objects, or props, and the objective comportment of bodies. By way of an example, consider a miscellaneous note Rainer jotted down around 1969 and reproduced in her 1974 artist book, *Work: 1961-73*: ‘Objects that in themselves have a ‘load’ of associations (e.g., the mattress – sleep, dreams, sickness, unconsciousness, sex) but which can be exploited strictly as neutral ‘objects’’.⁹² Rainer deployed the mattress as a prop in a range of performance contexts. For now, however, note how this short, instructive text enacts a displacement from one kind of load to another. Associations like sleep, dream, and sex are bracketed so that the mattress may be used as an object whose materials might, in Rider’s words, represent ‘what they are’. Yet the pointed use of the verb ‘to exploit’ suggests to the reader that Rainer is deliberately *working* this material in order to produce a specific effect. Rather than separating the mattress from its symbolic register, she is interested in exploiting (and sustaining the

⁹⁰ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, p. 233, n. 11.

⁹¹ Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”, in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1987), p. 14.

⁹² Yvonne Rainer, *Work 1961-73* (Halifax: Nova Scotia, 1974), p. 106.

contradictions between) two different ways of looking at something. It is this oscillation that, as my thesis argues, suggests the need for a study of metonymy in Rainer's practice.

This miscellaneous note is clearly positioned at some distance from performed choreography on the proscenium. As a material operation, a study of metonymy compels the researcher to shift laterally between different arenas. It suggests a form of social art history that focuses narrowly on the passage of definite textual operations, providing an alternative to the study of how social relations are reproduced through the structure of the work of art. By studying transactions and transfers of meaning across texts which are themselves situated in public and private spheres of production, I hope to understand Rainer's early practice as resulting from the negotiation of available resources, a category that includes both conceptual artistic models for practice, such as Cagean indeterminacy, and objects to hand, such as the mattress. This equivalence seems blunt. However, it makes more sense when positioned at the intersection of energy expenditure and verbal transcription. For metonymy allows one to study the ways in which Rainer's commentary and criticism is contiguous to her movement investigations.

In an artist statement written in the lead up to her 1974 *Film About a Woman Who...*, Rainer reflects on her work's processing of disparate materials – through her turn from dance to film – as follows:

Autobiography, as I use it, is a rich source of material, and like all material, can be manipulated: fragmented, redistributed, magnified, analysed, juxtaposed. I am a performer, a dancer, a director, a person who has been through some shit and come up smiling, etc... Autobiography saves me needless work. When it is distributed among a number of people, as in *Lives of Performers* [1972], or depersonalised by the use of the third person pronoun, as in *This is the story of a woman who...* [1973], it has the possibility of becoming more objectively biographical, and finally, fiction.

I like to think that I have a careful screening process operating to exclude personal material that applies uniquely to my own experience. What passes my screening must somehow be identifiable with probabilities of experience of you, the audience. Surgery, no; illness and thoughts of suicide perhaps; love, pleasure, rage, self-doubt yes.⁹³

⁹³ Yvonne Rainer, "Late Random Notes and Quotes on Four Points of Focus: Performance, Autobiography, Fiction, Media", in *Work*, pp. 275-6.

Rainer's reflections on her use of material and casting of roles makes readily available that which Orton is at pains to tease out of Johns's oeuvre. By listing actions such as fragmentation, redistribution, and juxtaposition, she demonstrates how material is practically manipulated and exploited to produce specific effects. This presentation of working methods is bound up with her transition from dance to film with *Lives of Performers* (1972), heralding a distribution of material across persons that was informed by feminist film theory. Rainer accordingly denaturalised the presentation of romantic love and relationships; film providing a medium more suited to an exploration of narrative, character, psychology – categories that she at no point refused in her dance work, as is commonly assumed, but sought to regulate from early on through the above list of procedures. The question remains, however, about 'how' this 'screening process' functioned in relation to *dance*. Rainer gives us a clue: In fleshing out her earlier exploration of autobiography she writes, 'Right now I'm trying to develop a certain kind of narrative, and since my work in a broad sense has always been autobiographical, one point of departure is my own persona of performer, as previously my own body was a point of departure'.⁹⁴ Having considered the significance of the body in its relation to the object, I now want to think more about the question of the authorship and point to sources that inform Rainer's specific author function.

0.5 The Minimalist Author

Michel Foucault's 1969 lecture-essay, "What is an Author?", offers a brilliant, historically-sensitive examination of the figure of the author.⁹⁵ In it, he ponders a paradox concerning the status of the author that, for my purposes, parallels the persistence of expression in minimal art of the 1960s. 'Today's writing', he states:

⁹⁴ Rainer, "Late Random Notes", p. 275.

⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?", in James D. Faubion, ed., Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Volume Two*, trans. by Robert Hurley and Others (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 205-22.

Has freed itself from the theme of expression. Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.⁹⁶

Foucault argues that, in order to write, the author must disappear. The effacement of their individuality is a precondition of the reader-critic's reception of the text's web of signifiers. Yet, as Foucault goes on to argue, the author's disappearance is inevitably obstructed by 'a series of transcendental barriers'.⁹⁷ Foremost is the presence of the author's name (in my case: Yvonne Rainer), the function of which is to describe and designate the limits of the discourse that is brought into being through said author's literary production. The author's name, unlike others, possesses a 'classificatory function'.⁹⁸ And unlike the author's person – the private details of their life – it, Foucault writes, 'is located in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being'.⁹⁹ It serves to regulate the process by which texts are brought into alignment with existing critical conventions, such as genre and style, providing us with a 'constant level of value' that 'neutralises the contradictions' that surface between closely-related texts. Yet, in order to stabilise this function, critics and readers have tended to 'project' the person of the author onto their name by, in Foucault's words, 'discerning in the individual a 'deep' motive, a 'creative power'.¹⁰⁰ His response to the psychologising of the author's name is, rather than denying its existence within the sphere of the text, to better describe its existence 'in the scission' between 'the real writer' and 'the fictitious speaker'.¹⁰¹ In figuring the author as bound to the relationships and properties of the discourse to which their name gives rise – in place of the 'absolute character' that adorns the 'life and work'

⁹⁶ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 206.

⁹⁷ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 209.

⁹⁸ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 210.

⁹⁹ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 211.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 213.

¹⁰¹ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 215.

approach to literary criticism –Foucault proposes a renewed attention on the author function as a fundamental element of analysis. The aim, he writes, is ‘to grasp the subject’s points of insertion, modes of functioning and systems of dependencies’.¹⁰² And he goes on to write: ‘In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse’.¹⁰³

In this thesis, I propose to study Rainer’s author function by focusing on the ways in which her production intervenes into dominant models, or ‘laws’ of making, with the emergence of a minimal art foremost in a series of models that begins with Cagean indeterminacy and the acquisition of dance technique (1959-61). In itself the claim that Rainer deliberately navigated available resources does not contribute an understanding of this period. In a sense all artists – and this was recognised by George Kubler in his influential 1962 book, *The Shape of Time* – intervene into the field in which they are situated.¹⁰⁴ Yet what distinguishes Rainer in this study is the way in which she navigates these models: an emphasis on procedure is paramount. Her peer, Robert Morris certainly invoked and inserted the body as a constituent part of his artistic practice, yet his investigations were not informed by the forms of metonymy – juxtaposition, displacement, concealment, and exposure etc. – by which Rainer manipulated and exploited bodies and objects, as well as artistic models.

How, exactly, does a work of art communicate an ‘artistic model’? In order to think more precisely about how the figures and rhetoric of minimal art become implicated through Rainer’s use of metonymic procedures, I turn to a parallel source text. Roland Barthes’s “Myth Today” is a long essay that features in his 1957 book, *Mythologies*.¹⁰⁵ In it, he describes myth as the result of a second-order semiological system. In effect, myth is a type of metalanguage that draws upon given meanings, or signifiers, in order to convey a

¹⁰² Foucault, “What is an Author?”, p. 221.

¹⁰³ Foucault, “What is an Author?”, p. 221.

¹⁰⁴ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

¹⁰⁵ Roland Barthes, “Myth Today”, in *Mythologies*, trans. by Jonathan Cape (1957; New York: The Noonday Press, 1972).

concept that *seems* grounded in history, yet whose form remains elusive. In order to express myth as secondary meaning, Barthes imagines a school lesson in which a pupil is instructed to translate the Latin sentence, *Quia ego nominor leo*. This pupil is not invited to inquire any further about the resulting translation, ‘Because my name is lion’, for its meaning is subordinate to a broader concept. As Barthes writes, ‘It tells me clearly: I am a grammatical example meant to illustrate the rule about the agreement of the predicate’.¹⁰⁶ Exemplifying what he calls ‘the language-object’, the sentence provides a vehicle for this grammatical rule only because its meaning is already complete. We receive the sentence’s meaning and its evacuation at one and the same time. As he writes, ‘The form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal’.¹⁰⁷ Myth, in this case the grammar rule, is ‘nourished’ by the sign’s meaning. At one moment its ‘instantaneous reserve of history’ is called upon to legitimise its presence, while the next, history vanishes, leaving a trace that is cipher-like.¹⁰⁸ It is in this sense that I understand, say, the figure of the gestalt or the principle of Cagean indeterminacy in relation to the concrete material form of a dance work: it signifies *through* the representation of primary – and for that, proxy – elements onstage. For example, *Trio A*’s continuous transition stands in a fraught relation to the figure of the gestalt. Barthes goes on to argue that the second-order sign, or myth, shifts laterally away from its language-object. For instance, a bunch of roses signifies passion, whose overall sign, ‘passionified roses’, constitutes the signifier for the myth of romantic love. In Barthes’s view, myth is *to one side of* the language-object it mobilises.¹⁰⁹ For him, this lateral movement is a means of visualising the transformation of language into myth (Plate I). Myth, like the metonym, therefore works by recruiting and displacing meaning along a horizontal axis. Barthes’s model thus provides a rationale for the way in which artistic models are expressed

¹⁰⁶ Barthes, “Myth Today”, p. 114.

¹⁰⁷ Barthes, “Myth Today”, p. 117.

¹⁰⁸ Barthes, “Myth Today”, p. 117.

¹⁰⁹ As Barthes writes, ‘Everything happens as if myth shifted the formal system of the first significations sideways’. See, Barthes, “Myth Today”, p. 113.

indirectly, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by the procedures linking the artwork to its ambassadorial activities.¹¹⁰

With this in mind, my thesis seeks to describe Rainer's practice in terms of the imbrication of myth and metonymy, whereby artistic models – 'myths', as I understand them – are displaced through practice. Looking back from the vantage of the 1980s, Rainer conceives of art-making of the 1960s as sharing 'with institutionalised law the idea of clearly demarcated zones of transgression and compliance'; further, she goes on to insist that 'real passion and desperate fervour were expended on art-making and theorising as autonomous and self-perpetuating exercises'.¹¹¹ In light of Barthes's account of myth, it is arguable that Rainer's use of metonymy depended on the availability of permitted, and excluded, forms. Indeed, such a condition reprises Foucault's understanding of writing as 'a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits'.¹¹² In Rainer's words, the rules that govern her practice are: "Maintain your character" and "don't give the game away".¹¹³ I now want to introduce a relevant historical source, detailing practical strategies for performance action, in order to better understand how Rainer approached this transgressive 'act' in practice.

0.6 Radical Juxtaposition

As a public intellectual, the writer and critic Susan Sontag (1933-2004) was responsible for explicating emerging cultural forms via the reception of Continental theory in the US context. This care is exemplified by her 1962 commentary, "Happenings: An Art of Radical

¹¹⁰ This lateral shift may also be figured pictorially if we take into account the role played by diagrammatic exposition for artistic culture through the 1960s. Whether it be Erwin Panofsky's tripartite schema in his methodological treatise, "Iconography and Iconology" (1939; 1955), the chart linking attributes of 'Objects' and 'Dances' that prefaces Rainer's commentary on *Trio A*, "Quasi Survey" (1968), or the emergence of Conceptual Art more broadly, Barthes's model is useful because it adheres to a dominant visual mode.

¹¹¹ Yvonne Rainer, "Revisiting the Question of Transgression", in *A Woman Who...Essays, Interviews, Scripts* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1999), pp. 102-3.

¹¹² Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 206.

¹¹³ Yvonne Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away" in *Arts Magazine*, April 1967, p. 45.

Juxtaposition”.¹¹⁴ In it, she summarises the tactics of a developing marginal scene of unruly performance activity that played out through loft spaces, the backrooms of shops and galleries, and the streets of Manhattan, and she does so with reference to the writings of Antonin Artaud and Sigmund Freud. Her essay contributed to a growing body of writing on Happenings culture that began with Allan Kaprow’s 1958 essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” and took in the publication of La Monte Young’s *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1961-3).¹¹⁵ As Judith Rodenbeck has observed, ‘Happenings have served as curious addenda to the history of the early 1960s, inhabiting the problematic liminal space—between painting and theater, between art and life—formulated in Kaprow’s early article’.¹¹⁶ As such, this form provides a useful point of reflection for a practice that, as I am arguing, cuts across forms.

The memorialising essay by Kaprow, referred to by Rodenbeck, positions Pollock’s manipulation of painting as the literal grounds from which Happenings arose. Kaprow provides a genealogy of painting that charts the progression from representational space towards mark-making’s relative autonomy. In his view, Pollock ‘destroys’ painting by displacing value from the mark on the canvas onto the gestural act – what Kaprow calls a ‘dance of dripping, slashing, squeezing, daubing’.¹¹⁷ This list of action verbs suggests that, with Pollock, painting’s centre shifted to the durational, unmediated present of the act. The position and scale of the canvas, laid horizontally on the floor, refashioned the painter as a dancer whose facture in an open ‘environment’ reoriented the medium away from narratives of modernist formalism – a severance that illustrates the shift in Kelly’s account, above. As Kaprow writes, this configuration ‘mad[e] it difficult for the artist to see the whole or any extended section of ‘parts,’ [and for this reason] Pollock could truthfully say

¹¹⁴ Susan Sontag, “Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition”, in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (1962; London: André Deutsch Limited, 1987).

¹¹⁵ La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (New York: La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, 1963)

¹¹⁶ Judith F. Rodenbeck, *Radical Juxtapositions: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock”, in Jeff Kelley, ed. *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Allan Kaprow* (1958; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 3-4.

that he was ‘in’ his work’.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, paint is relegated to one among other materials, a list that now includes, we are told, the artist’s own body.¹¹⁹ Happenings stood for the blurring of an array of media whose sustained legibility nevertheless ensured that a connection to sanctioned forms of advanced art was maintained – Jim Dine’s *Car Crash*, performed at the Reuben Gallery in 1960, for instance, involved the artist painting a collection of found objects white and his own figure in silver. Kaprow’s preposition, ‘in’, captures a state of immersion that is taken up by Sontag, who introduces Kaprow’s Happening as a ‘cross between art exhibit and theatrical performance’.¹²⁰ By briefly rehearsing Sontag’s summary of this cultural form after Kaprow, I hope to historically frame the oppositional dimension of Rainer’s author function in relation to a field that extends beyond both minimal art and Judson Dance.¹²¹

In her 1962 essay Sontag repeats Kaprow’s use of the preposition ‘in’ to describe an immersive quality, writing that Happenings ‘Don’t take place on a stage conventionally understood, but *in* a dense object-clogged setting which may be made, assembled, or found, or all three’.¹²² Sontag’s taxonomy of elements implies the centrality of procedure. She presents an equivalence between performers, costume, music, and language, suggesting that the distribution of meaning is reliant on the act of conjugation in the moment, rather than on the imposition of a predetermined narrative or plan. This procedural dimension is further qualified through the use of time, for the Happening’s duration is ‘unpredictable’; as Sontag writes, it ‘operates by creating an asymmetrical network of surprises, without

¹¹⁸ Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock”, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Kaprow’s analysis departs from Harold Rosenberg’s important account of ‘act-painting’ by turning this new-found openness to his own project of Happenings. See, Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters”, in *ART News*, December 1952.

¹²⁰ Sontag, “Happenings”, p. 263.

¹²¹ Happenings’ activation of painting stands in an interesting relation to Orton’s account of Johns.

¹²² She goes on, ‘In this setting a number of participants, not actors, perform movements and handle objects antiphonally and in concert to the accompaniment (sometimes) of words, wordless sounds, music, flashing lights, and odors. The Happening has no plot, though it is an action, or rather a series of actions and events. It also shuns continuous rational discourse, though it may contain words like ‘Help!’, ‘Voglio un bichiere di acqua’, ‘Love me’, ‘Car’, ‘One’, two three...’ See, Sontag, “Happenings”, pp. 263-4.

climax or summation'.¹²³ While appearing improvisatory, the action was in fact 'carefully rehearsed' and regulated by a brief choreographic score comprised of directions for movement and material.¹²⁴ Most strikingly, persons involved in Happenings themselves assumed the status of material; they were, in Sontag's words, treated 'as material objects rather than "characters"'.¹²⁵ This metamorphosis is carried out through a process of 'radical juxtaposition', whereby the 'sensuous properties' of objects are ascribed to persons, who are subjected to a slew of appropriate actions: 'Another way in which people are employed is in the discovery or the impassioned, repetitive use of materials for their sensuous properties rather than their conventional uses'.¹²⁶ This traversal of persons and objects represents the mirror-image of the role-reversal between body and object that Krauss ascribes to minimal sculpture, discussed above. For this reason, Happenings culture could be said to signal a dialectical pole in Rainer's transgression of minimalism's myths – an approach that, as we shall see, is intelligible through the terms of 'radical juxtaposition'.

I conclude this Introduction with a brief thesis overview. Chapter One introduces the field of minimal art through a close reading of foundational texts by artists and critics including Barbara Rose, Donald Judd, Rosalind Krauss, and Lucy Lippard. By studying the prevalence of key terms such as illusion, sensuousness, and interest, my aim is to characterise the sensibility that drove the 'passion' and 'fervour' that, in Rainer's view, characterised art-making and theorising of this period. Chapter Two explores how her own art criticism developed through a negotiation of the *nouveau roman*, an approach to literary production consolidated by the French writer, Alain Robbe-Grillet's book, *For a New Novel* – translated for an anglophone audience in 1965.¹²⁷ With this in place, Rainer's

¹²³ Sontag, "Happenings", p. 266.

¹²⁴ Sontag, "Happenings", p. 266.

¹²⁵ Sontag, "Happenings", p. 267.

¹²⁶ Sontag, "Happenings", p. 267.

¹²⁷ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. by Richard Howard (1965; Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989).

verbal transcription of the body-object (via the performer-prop) is considered in relation to her commentary on the work of her peers.

The remaining three chapters are given over to a thorough investigation of *Trio A* (1966). Chapter Three provides a countermodel to recent literature on Rainer's signal dance work by returning to the historical form of the event score. By studying the circulation of props and names, I seek to understand how *Trio A* emerged out of a field of cultural production characterised by the metonymic procedures introduced above. Chapter Four presents a comparative analysis of Morris's and Rainer's practices in an attempt to understand how the latter appropriated and transformed the body-object of minimalism. My final chapter presents a counter-history of *Trio A*. By studying the dance activity that led to its composition, the 'backstage regions' where dance happens, I make a case for it being an expressive mass of material, one best understood through movement's relation to the subject's ongoing work of verbal transcription. Finally, I hope to understand how Rainer's use of metonymic procedures generated a unique, embodied form of knowledge and awareness in response to the circumstances of a historically-specific cultural field.

Chapter One: Plotting the Field of Minimal Art

1.0 Introduction

This chapter navigates the sensibility that informed artistic production during the 1960s, considers its propagation by more recent literature, and begins to think about how the (minimal) object was transformed in relation to the body of the viewer.

The orders of statements that constitute minimal art as a historical discourse may provisionally be reduced to five overlapping types: i) artists' development of formal potentials and investigations of media through production; ii) artists' (self-)critical writings and commentary on the stakes of minimal art; iii) art critics' initial attempts to organise the field of production, i.e. early reception, as represented by Gregory Battcock's *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968); iv) the circulation of ideas comprising a 'general sensibility' one might call 'antihumanist' or 'non-anthropocentric', and v) revisionary art-historical readings of the field, spanning from the nineties through to the present.¹²⁸ In practice, these orders are connected through the motility of historically-available keywords. Occurrences across a range of texts of terms such as sensibility, three-dimensionality, illusion, interest, and sensuousness each organise this chapter's historiographical study. Moreover, I will focus on the seasons running from 1964-66, considered as a period through which different takes on minimal art had reached some resolution.¹²⁹ (Indeed, art historian James Meyer notes that 'minimal' was properly consolidated as an art world vernacular over the spring of

¹²⁸ Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). The most useful accounts for this work are James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), and Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Meyer presents a definitive year-by-year account of the exhibition history and conversations that constitute minimalism as both a 'practical field' and a 'critical debate'. See, Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 6.

¹²⁹ In his definitive account of the polemics of minimalism, James Meyer describes the 'field' of activity as it subsisted a year earlier, in 1963, as 'not yet entirely divided under the labels pop, op, color field and minimal, or modernist and non-modernist'. See, James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 55.

1966.)¹³⁰ This chapter, then, sets the scene for analyses of Rainer’s reworking of the terms of minimal art.¹³¹

Tracking the literature in this way, this historiographical study converges on Lucy Lippard’s important (and up till recently overlooked) essay “Eros Presumptive” (1967). Republished in Battcock’s *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968), “Eros Presumptive” first appeared in *The Hudson Review* a few months after the launch of the exhibition “Eccentric Abstraction” (1966). Curated by Lippard, this group exhibition showcased ways in which motifs of minimalism – seriality, the grid, industrial materials – were being reworked by artists in pursuit of less orthodox, more ‘sensuous’ kinds of making. In doing so, it brought to the surface a dynamic that was internal to the field of minimal art. The so-called ‘Postminimalism turn’, as instigated by “Eccentric Abstraction”, putatively extended the logic of minimal art to accommodate new and varied responses to the bodily.¹³² Yet minimal art was, from the beginning, a contested category that described work that now appears anything but minimal. To embrace the genealogy represented by Postminimalism is therefore to obfuscate the ways in which the body as specific to minimal art was already

¹³⁰ ‘The spring of 1966 marked the emergence of a publicly recognised style of whole geometric art, ‘a minimal look’. The season of the minimal witnessed Judd’s first solo exhibition at Castelli, important shows by [Carl] Andre and [Sol] LeWitt at the Tibor de Nagy and Swan Galleries, as well as “Primary Structures” [a major group exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in New York].’ See, Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 154.

¹³¹ At the same time, this chapter assesses more recent revisionary readings, ranging from Anna Chave’s 1990 article “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power” and Hal Foster’s “Crux of Minimalism” chapter in his book *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1966), to David J. Getsy’s *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (2015) and Jo Applin’s *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹³² Often Postminimalism is presented as a kind of safe haven for bodily explorations that is pitted against the “repressive” nature of minimalism; such an assumption sometimes relies on a psychoanalytic register that is not adequately defined. For instance, in an essay on Lee Lozano, whose early biomechanical drawings develop a vocabulary of part-objects, part-tools that have come to be associated with Postminimalist conception of the body as non-specific and unsexed, art historian Jo Applin writes: ‘Repressed by Minimalism yet chaotically disrupting Lozano’s own studio practice, the body – in all its libidinal, ludicrous, erotic, base force – came to matter, insistently, to her art’. See, Jo Applin, “Lozano’s Labor”, in Iris Müller-Westermann, ed. *Lee Lozano* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010), p. 126.

being worked through by a scene of artist-critics living and working in New York.¹³³ At the end of “The Minimal Unconscious”, a 2009 article through which James Meyer explores the ‘emotional underbelly’ of minimalism – this term he takes from Rainer – the author writes, ‘The post-Minimal field is the unleashing of those antinomies of matter and idea, of composition and non-composition, of abstraction and allusion, that the Minimalist practitioners during the early 1960s endeavoured to suppress’.¹³⁴ To present Postminimalism as an overcoming of these antinomies is to risk entering a dualistic mode of thinking, wherein the body is opposed to the ‘repressive’ object. A more situated and mediated response is necessary.

In her essay “Eccentric Abstraction” (1966), which coincided with the exhibition of the same name, Lippard observes: ‘I doubt that more pictures of legs, thighs, genitalia, breast and new positions, no matter how ‘modernistically’ portrayed, will be as valid to modern experience as this kind of sensuous abstraction. Abstraction is a far more potent vehicle of the unfamiliar than figuration’.¹³⁵ Lippard had in mind the curvaceous, distended forms of Claes Oldenburg and ‘Eva Hesse’s black, bound organs’,¹³⁶ as she referred to them in “Eros Presumptive” (1967; Plate II). Yet she extended the range of a ‘sensuous abstract object’ to its perceived obverse: ‘Mindlessness and systematisation, are characteristic of the art of the mid-sixties. Despite its detachment, an aggressive vacuity can establish a tremendous intimacy with the patient viewer’.¹³⁷ Taken to its limit, Lippard argues that the coolest

¹³³ It is worth bearing that Postminimalism is a label that is used to retroactively account for developments in artistic production through the 1960s. As we shall see, this term was coined by the critic Robert Pincus-Witten in a 1971 essay on the artist Eva Hesse. I use this term here to draw attention to the fact that this field has been determined by, and is inextricable from, intervening critical literature.

¹³⁴ James Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious”, p. 176.

¹³⁵ Lucy Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction”, in *Art International* 10, no. 9 (20 November 1966), p. 40. (N.B. It is worth noting that with the introduction of an overt feminist politics over the late-1960s and early-1970s Lippard came to reject her earlier writings on the bodily figuration. (To paraphrase) she asked, “Why can’t a breast be a breast, why does it have to be a cup?”

¹³⁶ Lucy R. Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, in *The Hudson Review*, Spring 1967; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), p. 218.

¹³⁷ Lucy Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 216.

abstraction discloses a non-representational ‘sensuousness’. For this reason, her keyword ‘sensuousness’ is important to consider in relation to the evolving object of minimal art.

Beginning with its cognate, sensibility, this chapter consider the status of art criticism more broadly before zoning in on Donald Judd’s “Specific Objects” (1965). In this important essay Judd’s term ‘interesting’ is multivalent. Keeping the five orders of statements above in mind, a study of “Specific Objects” sets the scene for Lippard’s term ‘sensuousness’. By working through these contexts, I hope to understand what it meant for Rainer to adopt certain ideas from object-centred practice and work these through in relation to movement invention. At the same time, I want to argue against the art-historical assumption that, for Rainer, the body represented an object constituted by mass and volume, and that subjectivity was solely to be located here, through a crude materialism.¹³⁸ How is the object sensuous? What impact does this have on art criticism?

The key text for this discussion is Gregory Battcock’s 1968 edited volume, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. It is here that Rainer’s “A Quasi Survey” appears alongside Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” (1967), Lucy Lippard’s “Eros Presumptive” (1967), Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two” (February; October 1966), and Barbara Rose’s “ABC Art” (1965). Battcock’s anthology is a presentation of the previous few years’ developments in one area of advanced art. A degree of competition between these texts has to be admitted, as is made clear by Anne Wagner in her 1995 introduction to the anthology: ‘To speak generally about the practice of criticism revealed in these pages is to emphasise

¹³⁸ For instance, in a 2004 article, Virginia Spivey writes, ‘Rainer’s choreography exposed the artifice of her performance by treating the dancing body as a material object... Paradoxically, Rainer’s treatment of the dancing body as an object also allowed her to highlight subjectivity as a dancer. [Dance scholar] Ann Daly has addressed this contradiction in Rainer’s work saying, ‘[she] was able to seize objectness as her subjectivity where other performers (such as ballerinas) were trained to subordinate their subjectivity—their personality, their style, their thoughtful interpretation—to further their role as object, as display’. See, Virginia Spivey, “Sites of Subjectivity: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and Dance”, in *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 35/36, Vol. 35, no. 2 – Vol. 36, no. 1 (Winter, 2003 – Summer, 2004), p. 116. For an approach focused on sculpture, see, Dominic Rahtz, “Indifference of Material in the Work of Carl Andre and Robert Smithson”, in *Oxford Art Journal* 35.1, 2012, pp. 35-51.

how much it is a self-conscious one and how much a similar self-consciousness is attributed to the artists themselves. History is waiting in the wings.’¹³⁹ Wagner foregrounds a self-reflexive mode that complicates the relationship between critic and artist; as captured by Rainer, quoted in the Introduction’s epigraph, ‘real passion’ was expended on consolidating one’s view of the situation, critical efforts that implicated the individual writer in social relations. By grappling with the terms of an emergent sensibility, one that appears in negative and positive guises throughout contributions to Battcock’s *Anthology*, I hope to better understand the stakes of criticism during the 1960s.

1.1 Sensibility and 1960s Art Criticism

‘Sensibility’, as defined in Raymond Williams’s *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), links historically-distinct spheres of activity by articulating a specific relationship between personal and public.¹⁴⁰ Following the early meaning of ‘sensible’ (14th Century) as related to sense feeling, ‘sensibility’ goes on to furnish judgment, i.e. good or common sense, and by extension the notion of ‘taste’ (16th Century). Next, it provides the 18th Century literary tradition of Sentimentalism with a watchword for the presentation of interior life through the epistolary form. Having flourished along a different axis through the consolidation of an aesthetic tradition, by the early 20th Century, Williams writes, ‘sensibility was a key word that described the human area in which artists worked and to which they appealed’.¹⁴¹ He elaborates on sensibility’s role in connecting artistic production to the public sphere as follows: ‘Sensibility became the apparently unifying word, and on the whole was transferred from kinds of response to a use equivalent to the formation of a particular mind: a whole activity, a whole way of perceiving and responding, not to be reduced to either ‘thought’ or ‘feeling’’.¹⁴² Sensibility’s extension beyond, or absorption of, ‘thought’ and ‘feeling’ – faculties related to artistic invention – served to

¹³⁹ Anne Wager, “Reading *Minimal Art*”, in Battcock, *Minimal Art*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁴¹ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 282.

¹⁴² Williams, *Keywords*, p. 282.

synchronise the realms of production and criticism. ‘Sensibility’, he writes, ‘was that from which art proceeded and through which it was received’.¹⁴³ Production and criticism thus stand in a recursive relation that is superintended by ‘sensibility’. Given its rootedness in ‘sense’, sensibility’s permeation of these sequential processes implies a specific conception of the individual. Williams draws an inference that has a bearing on the 60s art criticism that follows; ‘Sensibility’, he writes,

was more than sensitivity, which can describe a physical or an emotional condition. It was, essentially, a social generalisation of certain personal qualities, or, to put it another way, a personal appropriation of certain social qualities. It thus belongs in an important formation which includes TASTE (q.v.), cultivation and discrimination, and, at a different level, CRITICISM (q.v.), and CULTURE (q.v.) in one of its uses, derived from cultivated and cultivation. All describe very general human processes, but in such a way as to specialise them.¹⁴⁴

For Williams, a confluence of personal and social qualities underwrites the history of this term; ‘sensibility’ serves to naturalise the reality of social competition as individual self-consciousness. In a manner being explored by Roland Barthes and others through the 1960s, it points to a kind of duplicity: the anthropocentric is instantiated through the very means of denying its existence.¹⁴⁵ The critical essay functioned as a vital force for the 1960s art world because, encoded in its DNA, is the old sense that the bourgeois public is the efflorescence of a now-lost sphere of purely human relations.¹⁴⁶ Encircled by the novel

¹⁴³ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 282.

¹⁴⁴ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 282.

¹⁴⁵ In “The Rhetoric of the Image” (1964) for instance, Barthes explores the relationship between connotation and denotation in photographic representation, for which purposes he selects an advert for Panzani spaghetti. Barthes claims that natural denotations serve to “anchor” the advert’s message of ‘Italianicity’; framing this discussion in terms of ideology towards the end of the essay, he writes, ‘It is precisely the syntagm of the denoted message which ‘naturalises’ the system of the connoted message’. Similarly, the ‘cool’ minimal aesthetic serves to ‘smuggle’ the anthropomorphic into its apparent opposite. Again, this is captured by Rainer’s reference to Minimalism’s “underbelly”, explored below. See, Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image”, in *Image, music, text* (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ T.J. Clark forwards a conception of the public in relation to criticism that has informed my approach here; he writes, ‘As for the public, we could make an analogy with Freudian theory. The unconscious is nothing but its conscious representations, its closure in the faults, silences and caesuras of normal discourse. In the same way, the public is nothing but the *private* representations that are made about it, in this case in the discourse of the critic.

pathos of Samuel Richardson and others of the Sentimental tradition, this sensible sphere crystallised in the 18th Century, which Jürgen Habermas refers to in 1962 as ‘the century of the letter’.¹⁴⁷ ‘Through letter writing,’ he writes, ‘the individual unfolded himself in his subjectivity... [Understood] as the innermost core of the private, [subjectivity] was always already oriented to an audience [*Publikum*]... The sphere of the public arose in the broader strata of the bourgeois as an expansion and at the same time completion of the intimate sphere of the conjugal family’.¹⁴⁸ Paralleling Williams’s tracing of ‘sensibility’, one can track the critical essay to its genesis with the letter. The criticism explored below subsists in a strange relation to the public sphere, understood as the recrudescence of more intimate ties. As the object of 1960s criticism was purged of emotion and expression, the publicity of criticism and its private corollary, viewing, were able to absorb and safeguard these same qualities; hence the proliferation of highly-individuated rhetorical styles that accompanied the delivery of ‘new criteria’ through the 1960s.¹⁴⁹ Of course (and this will be taken up in Chapter Two’s study of Rainer’s published criticism), this mystification was addressed head-on in several places. As we shall see, Michael Fried was the first to demystify the widespread use of ‘sensibility’ by artists and critics, for whom it had served as a neutral term.

Like the analyst listening to his patient, what interests us, if we want to discover the meaning of this mass of criticism, are the points at which the rational monotone of the critic breaks, fails, falters; we are interested in the phenomena of obsessive repetition, repeated irrelevance, anger suddenly discharged – the points where the criticism is incomprehensible are the keys to its comprehension. The public, like the unconscious, is present only where it ceases; yet it determines the structure of private discourse; it is the key to what cannot be said, and no subject is more important’. See, T.J. Clark, “On the Social History of Art”, in *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1949 Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (London: Polity Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁴⁹ For instance, Alistair Rider distinguishes the approach taken by Carl Andre as follows: ‘Other artists of Andre’s generation, figures such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt and Yvonne Rainer, penned essays expounding their artistic interests in formats, which, while not always conventional, were considerably more orthodox than some of the textual offerings Andre occasionally supplied’. See, Alistair Rider, *Carl Andre: Things in Their Elements* (London: Phaidon, 2011), p. 133.

Published in the October 1965 edition of *Art in America*, Rose's "ABC Art" is an early attempt to spell out the tendencies of literal art. The survey of "ABC Art" is organised through 'sensibility', meaning something like the attitude of a group. The neutrality of this term enables Rose to marshal different things without demarcating fixed boundaries: 'I want to talk about sensibility rather than style, because the artists I'm discussing, who are all roughly just under or just over thirty, are more related in terms of a common sensibility than in terms of a common style.'¹⁵⁰ In Rose's view, the 1960s sensibility derives from Duchamp's and Malevich's drive towards 'renunciation,' a disposition that rendered their stylistically-divergent strategies commensurate. In addition to these artistic predecessors, Rose alludes to literary sources. This is important, because the mere mention of 'literature' relates the art on display back to a Habermasian conception of the public sphere. Indeed, as Meyer observes, 'The minimalists, for their part, disliked Rose's citations; they did not consider that their work needed a literary pedigree'.¹⁵¹

For instance, Rose riffs on Gertrude Stein's poetic axiom, 'A rose is a rose is a rose...' in order to broach the occurrence of repetition – an emergent trend – in the work of Rainer among others.¹⁵² Various other references to Roland Barthes, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Marshall McLuhan orbit the central placement of Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose modelling of the nouveau roman,¹⁵³ a form which rejected the literary tradition of Balzacian realism in favour of a more objective relation to the world, is said by Rose to come closest to 'the attitude of many of the artists I've been talking about'; as she writes, 'the rejection of the

¹⁵⁰ Barbara Rose, "ABC Art"; reprinted in, Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art*, pp. 280-81.

¹⁵¹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 148.

¹⁵² In fact Rose includes a quotation from Rainer that bears repeating as it addresses her choreography *The Bells* (1961), as discussed in the Introduction: 'I remember thinking that dance was at a disadvantage in relation to sculpture in that the spectator could spend as much time as he required to examine a sculpture, walk around it, and so forth—but a dance movement—because it happened in time—vanished as soon as it was executed. So in a solo called *The Bells* [performed at the Living Theater in 1961] I repeated the same seven movements for eight minutes. It was not exact repetition, as the sequence of the movements kept changing. They also underwent changes though being repeated in different parts of the space and faced in different directions—in a sense allowing the spectator to walk around it.' See, Rose, "ABC Art", p. 290.

¹⁵³ Alain Robbe-Grillet's collection *Pour un Nouveau Roman*, was translated to English in 1965, the year of publication for Rose's "ABC Art".

personal, the subjective, the tragic and the narrative in favor of the world of things seems remarkable'.¹⁵⁴ Reading with Williams, one might be hesitant to take at face value the act of renunciation heralded by Robbe-Grillet. While his polemic presents a coincidence with the 'sensibility' of minimal art, any proposition regarding the evisceration of the subjective that appears watertight and final is likely, by dint of its manipulation by 'sensible' individuals, to have an inverse side. Glimpses of the history of sensibility, though not referred to as such, appear in Rose's essay, as when she quips that '[Ad] Reinhardt's constant theorising, dogmatising, and propagandising actually helped to change the climate and to shift the focus from an overtly romantic style to a covertly romantic style.'¹⁵⁵ Gesturing to concealed subjective capacities in this way, Rose seems to invite the reader to partake in a scene of knowing collusion — at the least 'romantic style' is posited as a symptom via 'covert'. Not only did 'sensibility' serve Rose well with the unforgiving task of constructing a positive identity for a group of artists related by attitude alone, but its history served to make visible contradictions at the core of the minimalist project.

In the January-February 1967 issue of *Art in America*, Rose and Irving Sandler presented the results of a questionnaire they had submitted to a range of artists, titled "Sensibility of the Sixties".¹⁵⁶ In the opening paragraph, the authors explain their decision to disseminate a survey in terms that speak directly to a changing sense of the public:

Today it seems difficult for artists to talk to each other in any spot more public than the studio... There are no more places where art-conscious people meet regularly, like the old Club, the Cedar Street Tavern, such uptown galleries as Parsons, Kootz, Egan, Stable or the Tenth Street cooperatives downtown. The art world has grown too large and too fragmented for artists to maintain personal contacts in all sectors. And there just isn't time. Yet the need for exchange persists. Perhaps a public form of communication is the only remaining way in the sixties to discover what a broad cross-section of artists think privately. With this in mind, we recently sent the following questionnaire to a large number of artists.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Rose, "ABC Art", p. 292.

¹⁵⁵ Rose, "ABC Art", p. 286.

¹⁵⁶ Barbara Rose and Irving Sandler, "Sensibility of the Sixties", *Art in America*, January-February 1967, pp. 44-57.

¹⁵⁷ Rose and Sandler, "Sensibility", p. 44.

Rose and Sandler's questionnaire reprises the historical form of the public sphere. It represents an attempt to retrieve the intimacy of only a few years' prior, when artists frequently met as an extension of the 'conjugal family', and through a delimited number of spaces, to exchange ideas and comment on developments in artistic culture. The epistolary form of the questionnaire seems like a redoubt – indeed, Rose and Sandler's description of a society 'grown too large and too fragmented' points to a persistent romantic dimension. Yet the dynamics of (dis)enchantment are not reflected by the sociological pallor of the questions themselves:

- 1) Is there a "sensibility of the sixties"? If so, how would you characterise it?
- 2) Is there an avant grade today? What is its nature?
- 3) Has the sensibility of the sixties hardened into an academy? If so, what are its characteristics?
- 4) Has the condition of the artist changed in the sixties? Has the speed-up of communications and the increased attention of the mass media made yesterday's avant garde today's academy? How has this affected the artist? Does the growing participation of art schools in colleges and universities make for a more academic situation?
- 5) Is there the same split between the avant grade and the public as formerly? How has this relationship changed?¹⁵⁸

Artist responses included those like Allan Kaprow's, who answered each question in earnest. More common, however, were those like Ad Reinhardt, who responded either belligerently or humorously to a term that seemed to them outmoded. For at a certain point 'sensibility' fell into disfavour. As James Meyer observes, many began to 'balk at the premise of a period 'sensibility''.¹⁵⁹ Dan Flavin, for instance, responded to Meyer's interview question as follows: 'I cannot make a particular response about assumed existence of such an indefinite notion as 'a sensibility of the 1960s'. Its closest reference seems to me to be: 'refined sensitiveness in emotion and taste with especial responsiveness to the pathetic'.¹⁶⁰ Flavin is frustrated both by this term's diffusiveness and its hereditary attachment to taste. As an index of the speed of adjustment to barely-perceptible threats,

¹⁵⁸ Rose and Sandler, "Sensibility", p. 44.

¹⁵⁹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 148.

¹⁶⁰ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 148.

one can look to two subsequent uses that make its import tangible, even dangerous.

Echoing Flavin, a weather change guides Morris's use of this term in "Notes on Sculpture, Part One", published in *Artforum* in February 1966: 'At most, the assertions of common sensibilities are generalisations that minimise differences. The climactic incident is absent in the work of John Cage and Barnett Newman. Yet it is also true that Cage has consistently supported a methodology of collage that is not present in Newman'.¹⁶¹ Morris, in contradistinction to Rose, sets out to theorise sculpture 'in the interest of differences'.¹⁶² He deliberately places 'sensitivity' in a causal relation to 'climactic incident', suggesting that this kind of surface effect has little to do with 'methodology', as that properly distinguishes each art in its 'area of competence'. By cauterising this keyword, Morris implies that matters of taste or feeling are incidental to the quasi-scientific rigour of production and reception; again, this roundabout denial of human interest is symptomatic – as we shall see, it discloses a residual idealism in his argument. Moreover, it points to Morris's selective inhabiting of the roles of artist and critic, to his ability to 'play' these roles, something that sets him apart from the sincerer and more immersive – and hence 'romantic' – artistry of Judd and Flavin.

In "Art and Objecthood" (1967) Fried pauses on this term, albeit from the 'other side' of minimalism's consolidation as a style, (i.e. given the run of exhibitions of minimal art through 1966); he writes, 'From its inception, literalist art has amounted to something more than an episode in the history of taste. It belongs rather to the history—almost the *natural* history—of sensibility; and it is not an isolated episode but the expression of a general and pervasive condition'.¹⁶³ Fried's emphasis on personhood famously registers an attack on minimal art. By drawing attention to the presence of a 'latent anthropomorphism', he reveals the object's inverse, thereby drawing the curtains on a period of 'covertly romantic style' – and this move is key to the reception of minimalism. As Foster would put it in

¹⁶¹ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", in *Artforum*, Vol. 4, No. 6, 1966, p. 43.

¹⁶² Morris, "Notes on Sculpture", p. 43.

¹⁶³ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", in Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 117.

1996, ‘Fried brands minimalism as ‘largely ideological’ when most critics saw it as largely *nonideological*, altogether minimal in content, a zero degree of art’.¹⁶⁴ By linking sensibility to ‘natural history’, Fried brings to light the divergent meanings inherent to its history. On the one hand lie taste, sense, and feeling – subjective capacities that structure ‘objecthood’ but remain ‘latent’, while on the other subsists “sensibility” as a neutral term that describes an attachment to production and reception based on ideas of detachment, refusal and withdrawal. Fried’s gesture is pointed because it reveals the artist-critic’s smoothing over of these two divergent meanings. For this reason, the critical literature on what he termed ‘literal art’ tends to value his negative overview as the most cogent on offer from the time; indeed, Morris himself went on to adopt the arguments of “Art and Objecthood” in his writings of the late 1960s. Given our understanding of minimal art is informed retrospectively, it is useful to consider how these early interventions informed subsequent revisionary accounts. By tracking forwards to the reception of minimalism in the 1990s, the moralising force of Fried’s denouement can be seen to have paved the way for motivated readings of it.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 56.

¹⁶⁵ As Foster goes on to write, ‘A few readings of recent art approach minimalism and pop as such a crux, either as a break with the aesthetic order of late modernism or as a reprise of the critical strategies of the readymade (but not both); they are significant for what they exclude as well as include. In two essays from 1979 Douglas Crimp and Craig Owens depart from the aesthetic order mapped out by Fried in “Art and Objecthood”. For Crimp it is theatrical presence, condemned by Fried and repressed in late-modernist art, that returns in the performance and video art of the early 1970s, to be recontained in the pictures of Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, and others in the late 1970s. For Owens it is linguistic temporality that returns to disrupt the visual spatiality of late-modernist art: the textual decenterings of the art object in the site/nonsite works of [Robert] Smithson, for example, or the allegorical collisions of aesthetic categories in the performances of Laurie Anderson’. See, Foster, *The Return of the Real*, pp. 58-59.

1.2 Sensibility and 1990s Reception of Minimalism

The two accounts worth considering are Anna C. Chave's essay "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power", published in the January 1990 edition of *Arts Magazine*,¹⁶⁶ and Hal Foster's "The Crux of Minimalism" chapter in his book *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (1996). Where Chave identifies the 'latent anthropomorphism' of literalism with a masculine proclivity for power and violence, Foster makes claims for minimalism based on his reconceptualisation of the avant-garde. Both accounts could be said to transform the minimalist 'sensibility' into a critical function, the former rhetorical and the latter procedural. In different ways they flatten minimalism into an allegorical sign — at the service of a spectacularisation of feminist theory, in the case of Chave, and an abstracting anti-historicism, in the case of Foster. Having explored Chave's and Foster's analyses, I will turn to a discussion, via Foster, of Judd's "Specific Objects" (1965).

In "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power", Chave locates patterns of signification across written and reported language that, she writes, 'employs a rhetoric of purity, primacy, and immediacy'. In her view, this language directly links the minimalist object to the rhetoric of *power*.¹⁶⁷ For example, the reader is told:

The rhetoric Judd mustered in 'Specific Objects' to promote the new (non-)art pointed to its attainment of 'plain power' through the deployment of 'strong' and 'aggressive' materials'... For an artist, 'power isn't the only consideration,' Judd grudgingly allowed, 'though the difference between it and expression can't be too great either.' This equating of expression with power, rather than with feeling or communication, may or may not strike a reader as strange.¹⁶⁸

Following Fried, Chave argues that an attitude of impassive non-compliance effectively hid an ideological agenda that was staked on the shoring up of power and interest. It is in

¹⁶⁶ Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power", in *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 5, January 1990, pp. 44-63; Reprinted in Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris, eds. *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts* (London: Icon Editions, 1992), pp. 264-81.

¹⁶⁷ Chave, "Minimalism", p. 266.

¹⁶⁸ Chave, "Minimalism", pp. 270-71.

her view noteworthy that the production of industrial, hard forms through 1965 coincided with perpetuations of violence, running from America's bombing of Vietnam to the time 'Watts [a neighbourhood in southern Los Angeles] exploded in riots'.¹⁶⁹ Read in this way, Judd's gruff evocation of power is 'complicated by associations' that belie its claim to political neutrality.¹⁷⁰ At another point, she remarks that 'Morris's sculpture succinctly images containment or repression'.¹⁷¹ From the visual effects of 'Morris's cage-like construction of 1967' Chave adduces that 'his success at realising such authoritative and oppressive images owed more to his infatuation with power than to his interest in finding strategies to counter the abuses of power rife and visible at the time'.¹⁷² The rhetoric of minimalism is rendered complicit in the actualities of wider historical events, a parallel that is, according to Chave, reflected by its inexpressive forms. This presentation of masculine violence advances Fried's charge of 'latent anthropomorphism' by fleshing out what he called the 'surrogate person' of the object; moreover, the way images and words are linked in her argument reprises Rose's collecting of literary sources to describe the tenor of emergent "ABC Art".

The target of Chave's article is, in fact, the sexist and violent culture at large, for which minimalism in its diffuse form serves as primary evidence. 'Sensibility' – albeit a 1990s theoretical variant – thus *permeates the criticism of minimalism*. 'The work succeeds', Chave writes at one point, 'insofar as it visualises, in a suitably chilling way, a nakedly dehumanised and alienating expression of power'.¹⁷³ Such a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' succeeds in demonstrating, here and in other instances, how minimalism turned on a rhetoric of power. Yet too often it does so through the form of a simple inversion. For example, Judd's use of 'power' above, which, as we shall see, was intended to describe the extension of three-dimensionality in space, is presented as an essential attribute of the subject. Because there is no room to mitigate this attribution in Chave's article, the whole

¹⁶⁹ Chave, "Minimalism", p. 268.

¹⁷⁰ Chave, "Minimalism", pp. 266-67.

¹⁷¹ Chave, "Minimalism", p. 273.

¹⁷² Chave, "Minimalism", p. 273.

¹⁷³ Chave, "Minimalism", p. 275.

field of ‘minimalism’ is homogenised and made into a token of male violence. What is interesting is not whether or not her analysis is correct, or the roll-calling of exceptions that contradict it, but the way in which ‘sensibility’ in its different registers enables criticism to form associations that ricochet and reverse. For instance, when Chave writes that ‘There is plainly a psycho-sexual dimension to Morris’s trenchant objections to relationships and intimacy, to his insistence on distancing the viewer, as well as to his fixation on keeping his objects discrete and intact’, one cannot help but question the originating point of this ‘psycho-sexual dimension’.¹⁷⁴ (And if the presence of a ‘psycho-sexual dimension’ is taken seriously, this is best left an open question.) Chave’s analysis fosters a strong subject of minimalism; it represents one response to Fried’s countering of sensibility’ as a natural history that permeates minimal art. She determines a subject *in advance*, before selectively evidencing it – yet Chave’s was not the only reading of minimalism to calcify its subject.

Hal Foster’s *The Return of the Real* (1996) offers a fresh reading of the neo-avant-garde, which, as he writes, refers to ‘a loose grouping of North American and Western European artists of the 1950s and 1960s who reprised such avant-garde devices of the 1910s and 1920s as collage and assemblage, the readymade and the grid, monochrome painting and constructed sculpture’.¹⁷⁵ His task, in his words, is ‘to intimate a temporal exchange between historical and neo avant-gardes, a complex relation of anticipation and reconstruction’.¹⁷⁶ The anti-historicist notion of a ‘temporal exchange’ is intended to disrupt the hegemonic account of the avant-garde; for Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984),¹⁷⁷ in Foster’s view, is underwritten by an evolutionist logic that posits ‘the historical avant-garde as pure origin and the Neo-avant-garde as riven repetition’.¹⁷⁸

Further, in this account Bürger suggests that to repeat the motifs of the historical avant-

¹⁷⁴ Chave, “Minimalism”, p. 273.

¹⁷⁵ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

¹⁷⁸ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, pp. 10-11.

garde is to reaffirm the institution of art, to reverse the effects of its originary rupture. Foster's notion of an 'exchange' – made up of borrowings and anticipatory signals – therefore represents a direct challenge to this conception of historical development; outlining his own approach, Foster draws on a different resource: 'Modernist history is often conceived, secretly or otherwise, on the model of the individual subject, indeed *as a subject*... Why [then] not apply the most sophisticated model of the subject, the psychoanalytic one, and to do so in a manifest way?'¹⁷⁹

Accordingly, his vision of the avant-garde as a cyclical formation whose every recurrence serves to re-stage, as oppose to weaken, its radical break, is modelled after a Freudian understanding of 'deferred [*nachträglich*] action' that arose from his clinical studies of trauma. 'For Freud', Foster writes, 'subjectivity... is structured as a relay of anticipations and reconstructions of traumatic events.'¹⁸⁰ Thus, each 'repression' or assimilation of the avant-garde relays a future return comprised of a repetition at once contingent, different, and mobile. I want to briefly consider the *effect* of this procedural orchestration in relation to his account of minimalism.

Freud's understanding of repetition allows Foster to do different kinds of work. In "The Crux of Minimalism" he approaches minimal art as a field that is similarly contingent and subject to internal breakdowns and recodings.¹⁸¹ The chapter's first half involves a rehearsal of interlocking statements by Greenberg, Rose, Judd, Morris, and Fried, in that order, through which presentation minimalism achieves a critical *whole* different from its individual members. Foster thus continues the work of his mentor and fellow editor at *October*, Rosalind Krauss, whose *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977), he writes, 'gives

¹⁷⁹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 29.

¹⁸¹ It is worth noting that the model of trauma provided by Freud, which enables Foster to script minimalism as both subject and object of history, parallels George Kubler's 1962 book, *The Shape of Time*. Kubler develops understands the development of artistic form in terms of *seriation*; he writes, 'A work of art is not only the residue of an event but it is its own signal, directly moving other markers to repeat or to improve its solution. In visual art, the entire historical series is conveyed by such tangible things, unlike written history, which concerns irretrievable events beyond physical recovery and signalled only indirectly by texts.' See George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 19.

us a minimalist history of modernist sculpture in which minimalism emerges as the penultimate move in its long passage ‘from a static, idealised medium to a temporal and material one’.¹⁸² In this commentary on Krauss, minimalism is presented as both a historical process and as sculpture’s final stage in a graduated externalisation of its ontological core. Its location in time is difficult to place: Minimalism is no longer a practical field or a critical debate, but the very subject of history, a status that repeats Foster’s characterisation of *history* as a subject. Early on he states, ‘In short, minimalism is as self-critical as any late-modernist art, but its analysis tends toward the epistemological more than the ontological, for it focuses on the perceptual conditions and conventional limits of art more than on its formal essence and categorical being’.¹⁸³ While making a fair point about the ideational character of minimalism, the act of distinguishing its concerns from ‘the ontological’ neatly parallels his introductory rejection of what he calls ‘the biological temporality of the body, the epistemological analogy that informs Bürger via Marx’.¹⁸⁴ In effect, minimalism as a critical subject is made to line up with the psychoanalytic method he develops in order to position it, his object.

The chapter’s second half enlists the keyword ‘genealogy’ to describe how minimalism, solidified into a conceptual model, acts across historical time: ‘Minimalism’, Foster writes, ‘breaks with late modernism through a partial reprise of the historical avant-garde, specifically its disruption of the formal categories of institutional art’.¹⁸⁵ He points to a period lag that delayed the reception of what he calls the ‘transgressive avant-garde’ in the U.S. context: A ‘combination of old anti-modernist forces and new Cold War politics’, we are told, cleared ground for the ‘formalist avant-garde’ of Greenbergian modernism.¹⁸⁶ Intent on overcoming this latter formation, minimalist artists sought to recover the tools of

¹⁸² Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 42.

¹⁸³ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 40.

¹⁸⁴ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁵ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁶ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 56.

the transgressive avant-garde.¹⁸⁷ A key effect of this ‘return’ is the delineation of the transgressive avant-garde’s *institutional* character; once realised as such, Foster argues, this institutional character is able to be effectively exploited, to precipitate a critical relation to the context of an emergent gallery network through which minimal art was being exhibited and consumed, and finally to make way for institutional critique and feminist interventions of the 1970s. Minimalism thus ‘emerges as a dialectical moment’ whose action ripples across the past and the future.¹⁸⁸

In order to make phenomenal the epistemological category of ‘genealogy’, Foster turns to ‘seriality’, a key avant-gardist trope that was recovered by minimalist artists. He writes: ‘Seriality precedes minimalism and pop. Indeed, this procedure penetrated art when its old transcendental orders (God, pristine nature, Platonic forms, artistic genius) began to fall apart’. Following Jean Baudrillard’s theorisation of simulacra, Foster describes how, once these ‘transcendental orders’ had become ineffective, each work of art became a ‘discontinuous term of an indefinite series’ that related back to an original *oeuvre*.¹⁸⁹ However, and this is differentiation is key, Foster goes on to write:

Such seriality is not evident much before industrial production... Not until minimalism and pop is serial production made consistently integral to the technical production of the work of art... More than any cool sensibility, this integration severs such art not only from artistic subjectivity (perhaps the last transcendental order of art) but also from representational models. In this way minimalism rids art of the anthropomorphic and the representational not through anti-illusionist ideology so much as through serial production. For abstraction tends only to *sublate* representation, to preserve it in cancellation, whereas repetition, the (re)production of simulacra, tends to *subvert* representation, to undercut its referential logic.¹⁹⁰

By aligning seriality’s history with the disenchantment of transcendental orders, Foster positions it as working the fold between cultural change and artistic form; this alignment

¹⁸⁷ Thus, he writes, ‘[Carl] Andre turned to Alexander Rodchenko and Constantin Brancusi, [Dan] Flavin to Vladimir Tatlin, many others to Duchamp, and so on’. See, Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁸ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁹ Foster quotes Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1984), p. 104; See, Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p.63.

¹⁹⁰ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 63.

means that, under minimalism,¹⁹¹ artistic and industrial modes of production are homologous – its procedures are, he writes, ‘indicative of advanced-capitalist production and consumption’.¹⁹² But artworks are not industrial products; their mode of production and circulation is distinct. Foster’s claim that seriality ‘rids art of the anthropomorphic’ through its similarity to industrial production seems to ignore our habituation to, and the diffusion through society of, this specific mode of production. Nevertheless, by adopting seriality as opposed to minimalism’s ‘anti-illusionist ideology’ – an ideology that was already then being contested – he is able to carve out a space for minimalism that is procedural, insofar as it *performs in history* the logic he has ascribed to the avant-garde. Because of this privileged position, he argues, ‘minimalism and pop [are able to] resist some aspects of this [industrial] logic, exploit others (like mechanisation and standardisation), and foretell still others’.¹⁹³ The “Crux of Minimalism” thus abruptly separates minimalism from its sensibility, rendering minimalism into a procedure and ‘sensibility’ a historical fantasy – and because of this procedural character, minimalism obtains an inevitability that is infinitely flexible. The categories Foster deploys to describe it – epistemology, genealogy, seriality – mark a ‘return’ to the transcendental subject of the Enlightenment; by deploying the language of psychoanalysis Foster works with and around this historical record.

There is constant running through Chave’s and Foster’s accounts of minimalism: the subject. Where the former renders it into an allegorical sign for masculine violence, the latter hypostatizes it into a critical procedure. In both cases, a subject is imagined and cast into a role. These two readings, then, reflect the sensibility of 1990s academia, which

¹⁹¹ Such recuperative readings of minimalism can be read as a strategy of *October* journal. Here minimalism emerges, not as a historical formation so much as an allegorical figure, suturing the present to a range of displaced avant-garde narratives. The modelling of this transaction is addressed in Gail Day’s study, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (2011). Day extends Stephen Melville’s critique of October, as well as Craig Owens’s writings on “The Allegorical Impulse” (1980), through an interrogation of ‘the dynamic relations within the conceptualisation of allegory itself.’ See, Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 144.

¹⁹² Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 66.

¹⁹³ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 66.

promoted grand revisionary projects. Both analyses monopolise on the ‘surrogate person’ of minimalism in order to narrativise broad cultural shifts.

‘Sensibility’ has been a useful point of entry to the shifting field of minimal art, revealing that what is important is not any one position but the processual relation that joins them across time. Where does the body-object fit into this account? As we have seen, the early articulation of a 1960s sensibility has enabled critics, then as now, to designate a ‘subject’ of minimalism. Spurred on by Fried’s designation of a ‘surrogate person’, this subject has come to stand in for the work of art in the literature. This means first turning to Judd’s “Specific Objects” (1965), before going on to discuss Lucy Lippard’s “Eros Presumptive” (1967) and more recent literature on the topic.

1.3 Illusion, Interest, Sensuousness

If ‘sensibility’ allows us to conceive of the subject of minimalism, the remainder of this chapter tells a different kind of story, by turning to its object. Rather than approach the minimal artwork directly, however, I again read the literature, for this pathway keeps the historiography of the field in view. Several related keywords – illusion, interest, sensuousness – shall serve to describe the specific form of visuality elicited by these works. As we proceed, I shall engage a more recent strand of scholarship, one that is sensitive to what Meyer calls minimalism’s ‘subjective remainder’.¹⁹⁴ Often, ‘emotion’ is presented as an after-effect of what was thought to be a cool encounter. Recognition of this occurrence *in itself* is not in all cases useful. In *The Forms of the Affects* (2014) film theorist Eugenie Brinkema argues against the affective turn in film studies – here presented as a critical analogy. Viewer’s embodied responses, she inveighs, have been posited as an antidote to perceived omissions of structural or formal analysis.¹⁹⁵ She counters this generalised turn to

¹⁹⁴ Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious”, p. 151.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Thus, turning to affect has allowed the humanities to *constantly possibly* introject any absent or forgotten dimension of inquiry, to insist that play, the unexpected, and the unthought can always be brought back into the field... One of the symptoms of appeals to

movement, play or excess – to that which fails to ‘fit into’ the form-system of the film – by arguing that affects, (i.e. specific affects such as anguish, grief and disgust) may be read for *textually*, in the form of the work.¹⁹⁶

As noted, Postminimalism is often positioned as precisely this antidote to perceived omissions in minimalism. Rather than embrace what Meyer terms minimalism’s subjective remainder’ with open arms, I want to consider how subjective capacities were encoded in then-current critical language that went to describe the viewing encounter. My aim in doing so is to consider the extent to which the object *itself* was the locus of these capacities. In other words, I want to get closer to it, in order ascertain how it relates to the body (of the viewer). I begin with Foster’s removed and synthetic rehearsal of the debates of minimalism and, by degrees, move closer to a consideration of the object.

In “The Minimal Unconscious” (2009), Meyer comments on Foster’s “The Crux of Minimalism” in passing: ‘Minimalism is often seen as the final episode of modernist negation, as modernism’s curtain call. Minimalism concludes and completes modernism, as Hal Foster concisely argued; it hypostatizes negation as such’.¹⁹⁷ While Foster does correctly isolate the main points of transfer from one position to the next, as we have seen a grander narrative superintends his rehearsal of these debates; namely, the birth of postmodernism seen as an eclipse and concomitant break with the historical avant-garde, as actualised through the second neo-avant-garde, i.e. minimalism’s reflexive overcoming of its central motifs (the readymade, seriality, the grid.) In a sense, “The Crux of Minimalism”

affect in the negative theoretical sense—as signalling principally a rejection: *not* semiosis, *not* meaning, *not* structure, *not* apparatus, but the felt visceral, immediate, sensed, embodied excessive—is that ‘affect’ in the turn to affect has been deployed almost exclusively in the singular, as the capacity for movement or disturbance in general’. See, Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁹⁶ For instance, by tracking the philosophical history of ‘light’, she argues that illumination from a lamp functions in Michael Haneke’s *Funny Games* (1997), a film whose subject is a home invasion, in which the intruders eventually murder a family member, to formally structure the durational aspect of grief (the shot of the parents silently weeping in lamplight is sustained for longer than expected, rendering them into a frieze, after the Dutch 17th-Century still life genre). See, Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, pp. 98-115.

¹⁹⁷ Meyer, “The Minimal Unconscious”, p. 153.

pictures the density of exchange which informs Meyer's close readings as a sequence of neat sublations ('as Judd exceeds Greenberg, so Morris exceeds both...' writes Foster).¹⁹⁸ I briefly summarise Meyer's position in the literature here in order to contrast the approach taken by Foster.

For 'Minimalism,' Meyer opens his study *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (2004), 'is best understood not as a coherent movement but as a practical field'.¹⁹⁹ Meyer avoids ventriloquising the field's shifting factions and in doing so, hypostatizing different voices. Meaning remains subject to revision, equivocal and contingent throughout. Moreover, while *Minimalism* follows a chronological, year-by-year format, this does not result in a linear historicism: It remains faithful to the multivalent temporalities that are generated by the borrowings and renunciations that exert pressure on the form; hence it is impossible to think of Morris without Fried, of Judd without Rose. Yet this 'exchange', for Meyer, does not equate to a series of 'concise' sublations. To animate the critical reception of minimalism as a live conversation, one must thread a line *between* the literature. For instance, we learn from Foster that, with "Specific Objects" (1965), 'Judd reads the putatively Greenbergian call for an objective painting so literally as to exceed painting altogether in the creation of objects'.²⁰⁰ This interim conclusion, one that brings the chapter one step closer towards its telos, is not incorrect; Judd *did* respond to Greenberg's call for flatness in "Modernist Painting" (1961) by reclaiming the literal support, the frame, as a starting point for his investigations into the 'specific object'. But it is 'punctual and final' – and fails to outline how Greenberg's line of thinking was continued by Judd. Exaggerating the break between these two figures, Foster proceeds as if Greenberg had written his defence of painting with Judd's mishandling of his project waiting in the wings.

Written in 1964 and published in *Contemporary Sculpture: Arts Yearbook 8* (1965), Judd's "Specific Objects" is, among other things, an iconographical exercise. That is, it

¹⁹⁸ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 50.

¹⁹⁹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 6.

²⁰⁰ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 44.

relates a diverse range of artistic practices to his central argument concerning the overcoming of painting and sculpture. For Judd, ‘three-dimensionality’ is the term that rids the object of the figure-ground relation inherited from these (in his view) rear-guard media; he writes, ‘Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and literal space, space in and around marks and colours’.²⁰¹ For Greenberg, by contrast, flatness in painting must remain asymptotic; it is a state that, if made ‘absolute’, as was achieved by Ad Reinhardt’s monochromes, would render the painting a literal object that, like sculpture, can only be walked around.²⁰² Judd did not see it this way, (or at least he did not share Greenberg’s aversion to ‘sculptural illusion’). For him, illusionism can persist through the absolute flatness of an Ad Reinhardt monochrome painting, whose all-over black colour gives rise to an indefinite spatiality (Plate III). While Judd discusses colour later in the essay, he is initially interested in talking about painting in terms of literal shape: ‘The main thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall. A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits the arrangement of whatever is on or inside of it’.²⁰³ Painting can achieve a near whole, as long as it is not riven with internal configurations, i.e. mark making. But it is at most a limited whole: ‘A form can be used only in so many ways. The rectangular plane is given a life span. The simplicity required to emphasise the rectangle limits the arrangements possible within it. The sense of singleness also has a duration, but it is only beginning and has a better future outside of painting’.²⁰⁴ In order to advance this ‘future’, to retain the character of painting which he remains in some way attached to, Judd reformulates it into a new proposition: ‘The plane [like the painting] is also emphasised and nearly single. It is clearly a plane one or two inches in front of another plane, the wall, and parallel to it... Almost all paintings are spatial in one way or another’. For him, the near-resolution into

²⁰¹ Donald Judd, “Specific Objects” (1965), in Thomas Kellein, ed. *Donald Judd: The Early Works 1956-1968* (New York: Distributed Arts Publishers, 2002), p. 94.

²⁰² I here refer to Greenberg’s 1961 essay, “Modernist Painting”. See, Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting”, in *The collected Essays and Criticism: Vol 4, Modernism with a Vengeance* (1961; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 85-93.

²⁰³ Judd, “Specific Objects”, p. 88.

²⁰⁴ Judd, “Specific Objects”, p. 89.

shape of a painting by, say, Mark Rothko, whose colour fields at least duplicate the rectangle canvas (albeit inexactly), is preferable to recent sculpture, which is more prone to a part-by-part structure one would normally associate with painting; he writes:

The new work obviously resembles sculpture more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting. Most sculpture is like the painting which preceded Pollock, Rothko, Still and Newman [each of whom he esteems]. The newest thing about it is its broad scale. Its materials are somewhat more emphasised than before... The parts and the space are allusive, descriptive and somewhat naturalistic... [Dick] Higgins' sculpture mainly suggests machine and truncated bodies. Its combination of plaster and metal is more specific. [Mark] Di Suvero uses beams as if they were brush strokes, imitation movement, as Kline did... A beam thrusts, a piece of iron follows a gesture; together they form a naturalistic and anthropomorphic image. The space corresponds.²⁰⁵

Judd calls upon the language of mark making on canvas, 'brush strokes... movement... gesture', to convey his distaste for recent sculpture. Reversing Greenberg's anxiety that painting might continue to assume the illusionistic properties of sculpture, he expresses a profound disregard for 'painterly' sculpture. 'Naturalistic and anthropomorphic', terms which carry the weight of his judgment in the above passage, are imbued in the parlance of 60s art criticism with a negative and undesirable charge. Sculpture would, in Judd's eyes, do well to learn from Abstract Expressionist painting's near-resolution of shape. Some kind of 'part-by-part structure' is permissible for sculpture, as long as it is recognisable as 'a single thing'.²⁰⁶ Judd's preferred term, 'three-dimensionality', is therefore conditioned by a trading of qualities between painting and sculpture; and because of this background activity, it comes to stand for a reconciliation. Like 'sensibility' and like 'subject', its primary function is to smooth over contradictions: 'Three-dimensional work will probably divide into a number of forms. At any rate, it will be larger than painting and much larger than sculpture, which, compared to painting, is fairly particular, much nearer to what is usually called a form, having a certain kind of form. Because the nature of three dimensions isn't set, given beforehand, something

²⁰⁵ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 90. (Plate IV).

²⁰⁶ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 91.

credible can be made, almost everything'.²⁰⁷ As with 'sensibility' and 'subject', this term's capaciousness feeds its promise: intended to activate the field of production, it risks eclipsing the object. Three-dimensionality is equated directly with space; a pleonastic articulation that, for Judd, is 'powerful and specific'.²⁰⁸ Not only that, but it is infinitely versatile, 'Obviously, anything in three dimensions can be any shape, regular or irregular, and can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms, or exterior or none at all. Any material can be used, as is or painted'.²⁰⁹ (As we shall see in Chapter Four, this sense of expanded possibility – the one condition for Judd being the resonance of shape as a whole – was anathema to Morris, whose relatively narrow definition of sculpture presented some months later in "Notes on Sculpture, Part One and Two", was a thinly-veiled riposte to Judd.) Given Judd's initial stricture on the 'painterly' sculpture of Higgins and Di Suvero, it is worth noting that he employs similarly colourful language to describe artists whose work validates this conception of three-dimensionality. Returning to Meyer and enlisting the work of Alex Potts, I will consider this similitude through two interrelated keywords – illusion and interest. In doing so, I argue that "Specific Objects" ultimately resolves the diffuseness of 'three-dimensionality'.

Meyer begins his commentary on "Specific Objects" by quoting Judd, whose reply to Lucy Lippard during an undated interview recalibrates his essay's received address, 'Despite what people thought... "Specific Objects" was not supposed to be 'a doctrinaire, or dogmatic, or definitive, or anything article'.²¹⁰ Though by the end, Meyer will have reached the same conclusion as Foster, namely, that "Specific Objects" 'was a formidable challenge to modernism itself, opening up... the field of theory and practice of postmodernism', he heeds Judd's interview response by mitigating what he calls 'the flood

²⁰⁷ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 93.

²⁰⁸ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 94.

²⁰⁹ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 94.

²¹⁰ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 134.

of anti-Greenbergianism that “Specific Objects” unleashed’.²¹¹ Yes, it was a polemic that altered the style and address of American art criticism; yet this, as Meyer informs his reader, was due not to Judd’s intention at the time of writing, but to a misreading, instigated by Michael Fried in “Art and Objecthood” (1967) and perpetuated by Foster, of a specific *term* in Judd’s essay; Meyer writes:

Hal Foster, following Fried, also suggested that Judd replaced Greenberg’s Kantian demand for quality with an avant-gardist call for interest, thereby licensing ‘transgressive aesthetic play.’ Yet the fact is that Judd disliked Fried’s interpretation of the term, which cast his art and criticism in a dadaist light. In a scathing assessment of Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” [1967] Judd averred that he was ‘especially irked’ by Fried’s ‘misinterpretation of my use of the word ‘interesting.’ Having used the term ‘in a particular way,’ he was disgruntled by Fried’s reduc[tion] of it to the cliché ‘merely interesting’.²¹²

The author here refers to Judd’s well-known statement, ‘a work needs only to be interesting’.²¹³ According to Meyer, Judd’s intention in utilising the word ‘interesting’ as a definitional term was not to downplay the Greenbergian category of ‘quality’ – indeed, Judd performs taste through his judgment of a wide range of artists – but to strip quality down to its essential meaning of value or worth. An interesting work of art is, as Meyer paraphrases Judd, ‘worth looking at’. Judd’s notion of interest was derived, we are informed, from his readings of the pragmatist philosopher Ralph Barton Perry, who was a follower of William James. Meyer quotes Perry as writing in 1926, ‘In discussing the definition of value, we shall be dealing constantly with the motor-affective life; that is to say, with instinct, desire, feeling, will... It is necessary therefore to have a term which may be used to refer to what is characteristic of this strain in life and mind... The term *interest* is the most acceptable.’²¹⁴ Seen in this light, ‘interesting’ is a recasting of ‘quality’, which for Greenberg signifies the conviction of aesthetic taste. Given the lack of markers for

²¹¹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 141.

²¹² Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 141.

²¹³ Judd, “Specific Objects”, p. 94.

²¹⁴ Ralph Barton Perry, *General Theory of Value: Its Meaning and Basic Principles Construed in Terms of Interest* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1926), p. 27. As quoted in, Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 140.

‘three-dimensionality’, the faculty of taste that inheres to ‘interesting’ enables him to assign value to the field of artistic production. Foster may not have been aware of Judd’s expression of dismay over Fried’s misreading of interest as ‘merely interesting’, but it is clear that anything less than a performative negation of Greenberg would have lessened the impact of his thesis concerning the ‘crux’ of minimalism. Meyer’s commentary therefore amounts to a revision of Foster’s misrepresentation of Judd, foregrounding the ‘continuity or overlap between Judd and Greenberg’. In order to articulate this continuity Meyer turns to an early line of criticism of Judd regarding the status of *illusion*.²¹⁵

As we have seen, Judd disapproves of the ‘naturalistic and anthropomorphic image’; in fact, he calls it a ‘most objectionable relic of European art’.²¹⁶ To this he opposes ‘the

²¹⁵ The persistence of character, narrative, imagery and emotion – in a word, illusion – is a staple feature for the literature on minimalism, with this phenomenon tending to support an art-historical narrative arc that journeys from the gestalt, through the introduction of the perceptual viewer to the ‘social formation’ of that viewer. In “ABC Art” (1965), the essay which first grouped and named an artistic tendency, Barbara Rose remarks on the new category of ‘ordinary objects’: ‘I have often thought one had a sense of loss looking at these big, blank, empty things, so anxious to cloak their art identity that they were masquerading as objects. Perhaps, what one senses is that, as opposed to the florid baroque fullness of the Angst-ridden older generation, the hollow, barrenness of the void has a certain poignant, if strangled, expressiveness’. Rose’s simple negation, as opposed to renunciation, of Abstract Expressionist spirit was certainly anathema to the younger generation, but as a viewer response hers is typical: Where Eva Hesse reportedly saw images of the concentration camp shower block in Carl Andre’s Floor Sculpture series; Moira Roth commented on the Duchampian precursor to Morris’s set of practices: ‘What emerges out of a collective examination of [Jasper Johns] work is a dense concentration of metaphors dealing with spying, conspiracy, secrecy and concealment, misleading information, coded messages and clues... His early work is a warehouse of Cold War metaphors’; while Rainer herself, in a 1967 essay for *Arts Magazine*, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, describes being drawn into a state of ‘complicity’ (this is French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet’s term) with one of Morris’s sculptures, so that, as she writes, ‘Its flatness and grayness are transposed anthropomorphically into inertness and retreat. Its simplicity becomes ‘non communicative,’ or ‘noncommittal.’ Its self-containment becomes ‘silence.’ Its singularity becomes ‘boredom.’ These observations register an efflorescence of meaning that outright contradicts Susan Sontag’s aphorism, quoted above: ‘The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.’ Each of these (artist-)critics detects a sleight of hand that points to a reordering of the location, time and place, even configuration of control towards viewer reception. See (in respective order), Rose, “ABC Art”, p. 282; Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); Moira Roth, “The Aesthetics of Indifference”, in Moira Roth and Jonathan D. Katz, *Difference/indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp, and John Cage* (New York: Psychology Press, 1998), p. 43; Yvonne Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, in *Arts Magazine*, p. 74; Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation” (1964), in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1987), p. 14.

²¹⁶ Judd, “Specific Objects”, p. 94.

powerful’ in art, a watchword expressing the primacy of form in ‘actual space’ – a wholly American product with pragmatist bearings. Three-dimensional space is a conduit that uniformly combines image, form, and material into a powerful and specific whole, effectively doing away with illusion altogether. In discussing ‘the whole’, Judd means something similar to the gestalt, though he does not name this figure: ‘An image’, Judd writes, ‘has never before been the whole work, been so large, been so explicit and aggressive.’²¹⁷ This, as far as we can tell, is the only constraint Judd applies to the production of good art.²¹⁸

Seeking to upset the orderliness of this view of things, Meyer focuses on a list of materials Judd considers to be ‘less illusionistic and allusive than traditional marble, bronze, or wood.’²¹⁹ These materials, which Judd believes to more direct, are utilised through his most recent work leading up to “Specific Objects”: ‘Formica, aluminium, cold-rolled steel, Plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth.’²²⁰ It is here that the second line of criticism comes into play; Meyer writes: ‘Both [Robert] Smithson and Krauss pointed out the arbitrariness of Judd’s claim that specificity and new materials went hand in hand, noting, to the contrary, the fugitive visual effects of the very materials Judd used’.²²¹ (Similarly in “Notes of Sculpture, Part I”, Morris targets Judd’s use of colour.) The ‘powerful’ is undermined by the sheer variety on display; an interrelation of parts Judd was not consciously or unconsciously able to forgo. For the experience of the *viewer* makes clear that the threshold for the conversion of part-by-part relations to ‘whole’ was slightly higher than had been intuited by Judd in the role of maker.

In a 1966 article for *Artforum* titled “Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd”, Krauss notes that the force of Judd’s work paradoxically relies on the *exaggeration* of the visual

²¹⁷ Judd, “Specific Objects”, p. 93.

²¹⁸ Contextualised in this way, it is not clear how Chave is able to extract an image of masculine violence from this usage of ‘powerful’, which pertains to space.

²¹⁹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 135.

²²⁰ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 135.

²²¹ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 138.

devices that characterise illusion (and allusion) in the first place. In a brilliant feat of close reading of Judd's *Untitled* (1965; Plate V), Krauss writes:

A view raking along the façade of the sculpture then, reveals one's initial reading as being in some way an illusion; the earlier sense of the purple bars' impalpability and luminosity is reversed and a clearer perception of the work can be obtained; but it is still one that is startlingly adumbrated and misleading. For now one sees the work in extension, that is, looking along its length one sees it in perspective. That one is tempted to read it as in perspective follows from the familiar repressive rhythms of the verticals of the violet boxes which are reminiscent of the colonnades of classical architecture or of the occurrence at equal intervals of the vertical supporting members of any modular structure.²²²

When viewed frontally, the lower series of enamelled violet bars appear 'impalpable and luminescent', and to be supported by the aluminium bar. Standing by the wall in profile, however, reveals that the aluminium bar is in fact hollow and at rest, thereby reversing the object's support. This reversal, which is similar to the doubling of flatness-as-infinity Judd experiences in front of a Reinhardt monochrome, amounts to an illusion, one dictated by the viewer's changing position. In the same work Krauss detects an allusion: The series of purple bars are similar to 'colonnades of classical architecture'; for their morphology conjures the visual device of Renaissance perspective, thus implying a Cartesian 'rationalisation of space' of the sort Judd rejected. Moreover, the graduated sizing of the violet bars further entrenches perspective as a mechanism – or, in Foster's words, a 'transcendental order' – that is supported by the work. Along with Smithson's observation regarding Judd's boxes of 1965 – 'an uncanny materiality inherent in the surface engulfs the basic structure'²²³ – Krauss's commentary on illusion and allusion in Judd's 'specific objects' is today, in Meyer's words 'a topos of the Judd literature'.²²⁴

But this is not the end of the story, for – as I argue – just as Fried's misreading led Foster to connect Judd's 'interest' to Dadaism (i.e. as divested of value), so is Meyer's ensuing discussion of illusion guided in turn by Krauss's close attention to formal devices,

²²² Rosalind Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd", in *Artforum*, May 1966, p. 25.

²²³ Robert Smithson, "Donald Judd", *7 Sculptors* (1965); Reprinted in, Nancy Holt, ed. *The Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 22.

²²⁴ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 138.

as above. For Krauss's identifications are as cool-headed as Judd's object purports to be: technically schematic, they display a prejudicial set of viewing conventions. And her approach directly informs Meyer's view of things. For instance, in reference to Yayoi Kusama, whose work of 1963 (exhibited as *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats* at Gertrude Stein Gallery, New York (Plate VI)), features prominently in "Specific Objects", Meyer writes: 'Judd's interest in Kusama was mainly formal; he did not explore Kusama's allusions, or the way her metaphorical strategy of combination (covering readymades with cloth phalli or dots, for example) defamiliarised the object beneath. He saw Kusama's use of repetition as a 'single interest' ...'²²⁵ Delimiting illusion to mere identification, Meyer's description omits two affective terms Judd uses to describe Kusama's treatment of the boat and furniture readymades: 'The boat and the furniture that Kusama covered with white protuberances', wrote Judd, 'have a related *intensity and obsessiveness* and are also strange objects'.²²⁶ Judd's descriptions point to a kinship between emergent minimal art and Happenings culture that is buried in the literature. These attributions are on one level descriptive, but given the aesthetic valuation of 'powerful' and 'aggressive' in relation to 'interesting', 'intensity and obsessiveness' may in fact hold terminological significance.

In his earlier analysis of "Specific Objects" in *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (2000), Alex Potts places greater emphasis than Meyer does on Judd's passing observations about the work of his contemporaries, Claes Oldenburg, John Chamberlain, and Kusama. In Potts's view, 'The real issue Judd is raising is how in the new work, form, image and affect exist in a peculiarly direct and also inherently unstable relation to one another that is not mediated by formal subtleties'.²²⁷ Looking back to Potts, one might therefore go further than Meyer in suggesting that, for Judd, 'interesting' meant not only 'of value' but also, on an affective register, 'desirable'. This, as Potts suspects, is due to the fact that, while turning to three-dimensional space and stripping the object down,

²²⁵ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 135.

²²⁶ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 96. [My Italics].

²²⁷ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 278.

the persistence of illusion in Judd's own work gives rise not only to a 'single powerfully charged, representational image', but with this, to an 'uncontrolled psychic condensation in dream images'²²⁸ that must be confronted. Potts notes this affective drive is increasingly evident in Judd's art criticism of the period, which, as he writes, 'shifts from formal structure to vivid affect', even if this was avowedly suppressed in his own work.²²⁹ Just as sense (touching, feeling) inheres to the modern usage of sensibility, so does 'desire' figure in Judd's presentation of 'interesting'.

Judd was not advocating for minimalism; yet his divergent choice of language articulates a pull at the heart of that project. It was (as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter) the critic Robert Pincus-Witten who, in a 1971 essay on the sculptor Eva Hesse, coined the term 'Post-minimalism'. Reflecting on those years in 1987, he wrote that 'numerous paths radiated from Minimalism's stylistic nexus: some maintained the fixed, reduced geometry innate to Minimalism; others moved off in paths seemingly at odds with the style of the matrix'.²³⁰ Note that he accords significance to 'style', an organising term eschewed by Rose in 1965 in favour of 'sensibility'. In effect, the entwinement of style and sensibility is a particular marker of the critical language that surrounds 'minimalism', which Pincus-Witten calls 'a logic concluded even before the paintings were begun or the sculptures made'.²³¹ Potts says as much through his registration of affects – 'intensity and obsessiveness' – that imprint on the otherwise only moderately subjective category 'interesting'. This entwinement enables Lucy Lippard to draw further conclusions about the minimal object in "Eros Presumptive" (1967), an essay that has generated some of the most current readings of minimalism. For Lippard indirectly gives expression to the pull that pervades Judd's presentation; and as a result, her break with minimalism as instantiated by "Eccentric Abstraction", the group exhibition of 1966, may be read, *against* its reception,

²²⁸ Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, pp. 283...279.

²²⁹ Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, p. 278.

²³⁰ Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism to Maximalism: American Art, 1966-1986* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), p. 10.

²³¹ Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism to Maximalism*, p. 10.

as a continuity of minimalism's problematic.²³² By reading Lippard's essay closely, my aim is to root this chapter's study of sensibility in the dynamic interrelation of viewer and object.

First published in the Spring 1967 edition of *The Hudson Review*, "Eros Presumptive" is addressed to, in Lippard's words, 'an audience visually sophisticated enough to prefer non-objective works of art as concrete objects in themselves, rather than associative look-alikes'.²³³ She thus privileges a mode of abstraction that is distinct from the associative look-alike's tendency towards erotic figuration. Her imagined audience, she continues, 'will prefer the heightened sensation that can be achieved by an *abstractly sensuous object*'.²³⁴ Lippard's text therefore argues that 'sensuousness', in its relation to non-figurative abstraction, is an underrated descriptor.

This term, which serves to organise a range of artists in her text, lies in proximity to its overdetermined cognate, sensibility. Sensuousness, as I understand it, reprises the early meaning of sensibility as 'sense'. Rather than denote a specific or non-specific affect, sensuousness describes the faculty or ability *to sense*, (the *OED*'s first entry is: 'Of, relating to, or concerned with the senses or sensation; derived from or perceived by the senses'.) Referring to the audience's 'heightened sensation', Lippard places the viewer's response front and centre, yet 'sensuous' is introduced as an attribute of the object. This has the effect of decentering the subject and foregrounding the body as a presence physically

²³² Jo Applin's book, *Eccentric Objects* (2012), is an interesting example of a recent rereading of minimalism that departs from the iconographies of Judd and Lippard. Championing 'diversity and sheer oddness', Applin seeks to redress the limitations of 'minimalism', an 'arch-concept' whose frame of reference has omitted a broader range of artistic practices. (4). For instance, her chapter on Lee Bontecou (Plate VII) positions the artist's sculptural work as in excess of both Judd's and Lippard's analyses. Where Judd, in her words, 'emphasises the apparently mechanical, industrial appearance of the work' (13), Lippard incorporates 'the visceral, bodily and erotic' (39) yet does not adequately characterise that body. Concluding her chapter by entering a zone of excess, Applin characterises this 'body', via a Kleinian vocabulary of 'part-objects' inherited from the art historian Mignon Nixon, as 'violent, aggressive and feminised'. See, Jo Applin, *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

²³³ Lucy R. Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", in *The Hudson Review*, Spring 1967; Reprinted in, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 210.

²³⁴ Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", p. 210. [My italics].

related to the object. ‘Sensuousness’ evokes the body, but without investing that body with the kinds of subjective ‘bodily’ significations that often pertain to readings of postminimalism. It denotes a proprioceptive apparatus that is a necessary but not sufficient condition of affective registration.²³⁵ (Hence its suitability to Lippard’s attempt here to picture abstraction contra figuration.) There is a connection to be made to Judd’s term ‘interesting’, a term that confers value on the object *without* explicitly stating a desirous relation to it.²³⁶ Further, sensuousness relates to a ‘body’ that is not encumbered by any theoretical inflection: this is not a ‘body without organs’ or a ‘part-object’. The frame of reference Lippard solicits to delineate ‘sensuousness’ is surprising:

[The] ancient Hindu temple sculpture, the yab/yum of Tantric yoga, where opposites are not conceived as active and passive [or as] male and female, but as an incorporation of the two... Repetition, inactivity, simultaneous detachment and involvement, understatement and self-containment are qualities shared by the arts of India and of today, as well as the purely ornamental arts of the Near and Far East.²³⁷

The ‘qualities’ that constitute this orientalist link fall somewhere between formal and bodily propensities.²³⁸ ‘Sensuousness’ relates to qualities that are common to bodies and

²³⁵ Proprioception is taken up in relation to embodied and semiotic forms of expression in Chapter Five.

²³⁶ It is worth recalling Perry’s statement, quoted above: ‘In discussing the definition of value, we shall be dealing constantly with the motor-affective life; that is to say, with instinct, desire, feeling, will... It is necessary therefore to have a term which may be used to refer to what is characteristic of this strain in life and mind... The term interest is the most acceptable.’ See, Perry, p. 27.

²³⁷ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 216.

²³⁸ In *Abstract Bodies: Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (2015), David Getsy departs from Lippard’s global art-historical comparison, which he acknowledges to be crude: ‘Lippard’s text, while focused on the erotic potential of abstraction, nevertheless points to larger reconsiderations of gender, here singled through her idea of the bi-sexed or androgynous’. (14). For Getsy, the ambivalence of ‘sensuousness’ reflects historically-changing attitudes to gender and sexuality. It sets the stage in his book for a comparative analysis of 1960s modes of abstraction and coeval, not-yet-fully-conceived discourses of transgender. Given the word “transgender” gained traction over the 1990s, its application in *Abstract Bodies* is conceptual and methodological, referring to a rising awareness of ‘gender mutability’. (32). Reading private correspondence and published criticism, he pursues an anti-intentional method, drawing connections between intimations of gender and sex identities and variegated forms of abstraction. (Getsy’s case studies include: ‘Flavin’s allegorization of the homosexual as the figure of illusionism, Chamberlain’s reliance on an orgiastic and polymorphous sexuality as a metaphor for his artistic practice, [Nancy] Grossman’s autopenetrating Ali Stoker, or [David] Smith differentiating himself from

objects. For instance, ‘detachment and involvement’ describes a relational push-and-pull, but it is not clear who or what is involved in this contrapuntal movement; ‘understatement and self-containment’ designate a low-intensity bodily state, such as being at rest, but they might just as easily describe an object’s obdurate physical composure. Informing both body and object, ‘sensuousness’ occupies a space between them; it describes a *relation or relationship*. This ambivalence is no accident: its purpose is to articulate a kinship between bodies and objects as grounds for a discussion of the abstract object. (As we shall see in Chapter Two, this same ambivalence infuses Rainer’s published criticism on the work of her peers.) Its application represents the most plausible attempt – in the criticism surveyed thus far at least – to reduce the anthropomorphism that unavoidably couches discussions of the body. Further, it implicates many different kinds of abstraction, from cool industrial sculpture to more overt renderings of the bodily, that cut across the category of minimal art. Having catalogued art whose ‘sensuous element’ is patently foregrounded – for example, Lippard discusses Keith Sonnier’s *Untitled* (1966; Plate VIII), more on which below – she converges on those artists, including Rainer, whose work seems most opposed to ‘sensuousness’. ‘Despite its detachment’, she argues, ‘an aggressive vacuity can establish a tremendous intimacy with the patient viewer’.²³⁹ The incongruous grouping of ‘aggressive vacuity’ with ‘tremendous intimacy’ initially seems intended to grab the reader’s attention. Yet it follows from her argument: The ‘patient viewer’ is able to disengage their drive for ‘associative look-alikes’ and dwell with the abstract object. Far from mere provocation, then, the limit case of ‘aggressive vacuity’ suggests a need to further define Lippard’s guiding term. With this in mind, it is worth considering an artwork from her essay.

Keith Sonnier’s *Untitled* (1966) was included in “Eccentric Abstraction”. In “Eros Presumptive”, it serves as a foil to the broader claim Lippard makes for sensuousness.

[Frank] O’Hara’s personification of his own works’. (38)). In my view, this approach provides a useful and dynamic approach to the body in its relation to the (Post-)minimalist object. Getsy’s willingness to think historically about the social circulation of sex and gender discourse in relation to artistic practice offers an alternative for the literature on (Post-)minimalism, which is otherwise saturated with affect- and psychoanalytic-laden readings of the ‘bodily’.

²³⁹ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 216.

Untitled features two triangular prisms whose inner facets are connected by a short length of industrial tubing. Lippard describes this work early on as follows: ‘When Keith Sonnier made two identical triangular forms, one of white cotton duck, one of white painted wood, and connected them by an accordionlike tube, he presented geometric and organic form without departing from geometry’.²⁴⁰ Lippard thus reads *Untitled* in dimorphic terms – for her purposes it signifies, after the yab/yum, a unity comprised of two opposites. She goes on, ‘The soft shape inflates and deflates very slowly, and while the implication is forcibly understated, the process of distention and release are [*sic*] easily associated with erotic acts’.²⁴¹ *Untitled* provides a clear, though not yet adequate illustration for her reading of the ‘abstractly sensuous object’ as different from the overt presentation of eroticism in art.

The aforementioned ‘yab/yum of Tantric yoga’, with its pictorial representation of a woman sitting on a man’s penis with her legs wrapped round his buttocks, provides Lippard with a point of comparison. She alights on this type of ancient Hindu temple sculpture because its representation is, in her (occidental) view, subverted by the dynamism of its ‘opposing aspects’; she writes, ‘Opposites are not conceived as active and passive [or as] male and female, but as an incorporation of the two: dynamic male and welcoming static female as well as passive male activated by the dynamic female’.²⁴² Through a kind of viewing that parallels Krauss’s encounter of illusion and allusion in Judd’s *Untitled* (1965), the yab/yum’s perceived switching of roles produces a ‘flow of energy’ that courses through the static sculpture like an electric charge. Subverting the merely erotic, sensuousness relates specifically to flow of energy, as captured by the yab/yum’s exchange of the active role. Recognition of this shifting role follows from the patient viewer’s engagement with the work; their embodied experience corresponds to this flow. ‘Sensuousness’ thus describes a dynamic quality common to body and object.

Having introduced this ancient antecedent, Lippard returns to Sonnier as follows:

‘Artists like Sonnier confront opposing aspects of the same form or surface and systematise

²⁴⁰ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 211.

²⁴¹ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 211.

²⁴² Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 216.

the resulting concept of change. As in classic Indian sculpture, momentary excitement is omitted in favour of a double-edged experience; opposites are witnesses to the ultimate union or the neutralisation of their own opposing characteristics'.²⁴³ Again, 'the concept of change' denotes a quality that is applicable to different kinds of things. Lippard evokes the capacity to recognise the concept of change as such, but without imbuing that concept with affective significations. This marks the attempt, after Susan Sontag's 1964 injunction 'against interpretation', to 'show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means'.²⁴⁴ Because 'sensuousness' relies on an active and present engagement – 'the durational' is implied by Lippard's address to the 'patient viewer' – any resolution of its terms marks an interpretive death knell. In a brilliant passage of writing, one that is crucial to this dissertation's developing argument, Lippard builds her argument as follows:

The danger is that total union or wholeness, the decrescendo and crystallisation of baroque activity applied to an accepted sexual dynamism, will drain it of all empathic interest. Yet the rhythms of erotic experience can be slowed to a near standstill and convey all the more effectively a languorous sensuality. In contrast to the expressionist viewpoint—the spontaneous imprisonment of the moment of ecstasy in which paint, form, and colour are sent spinning in Wagnerian approximation of orgasm—the cool approach depends on pervasive mood, the electric basis of sexual attraction, the roots rather than the results of desire. The cool sensibility that approves understatement, detachment, the anticlimactic in art, tends to approach the erotic non-romantically, even non-subjectively. Such an approach may be the consequence of something as radical as a change in morality and sexual ethics brought about by the generation now in its twenties and thirties, but sociology aside, it is well served aesthetically by an anti dynamic or at least post-dynamic sensuousness characteristic of provocation, fore or after play, rather than climax. A controlled voluptuousness, as concerned with the ebb as with the flow of energy, is formally manifested by the predominance of a long, slow, deliberately regular curve, bulky parabolic forms, exaggeratedly luxurious or obsessive surfaces and patterns, all presented within a framework of simplicity, and even austerity, eminently suited to the static nature of the 'frozen' arts.²⁴⁵

Here Lippard argues that, as with the yab/yum, Sonnier's deflating and expanding triangular prism offers too complete an illustration for the sensuous. The analogy with Judd's "Specific Objects" persists, for both authors privilege the near whole over the total

²⁴³ Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", p. 217.

²⁴⁴ Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation", in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1987), p. 14.

²⁴⁵ Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", p. 217.

whole. For Lippard, as Judd, a ‘total union or wholeness’ risks expending the viewer’s ‘interest’ in a short, if exhilarating window of time. As with Judd’s willingness to retain some relation of parts, Lippard acknowledges that the only way to sustain the viewer’s interest, to raise sensuousness to the level of awareness, is to approach a ‘near standstill’.

This slowing-down seems counterintuitive, given we are dealing with ‘the static nature of the ‘frozen’ arts’. Yet Lippard’s point is that, if the yab/yum excites an instant and climactic sexual *dynamism*, one whose ‘crystallisation’ is ‘baroque’, by contrast ‘understatement, detachment, [and] the anticlimactic in art’ make possible a slower, more ‘pervasive’ and definitely more *sensuous* relation. For these qualities, Lippard argues, find their reflection in ‘provocation [and] fore or after play, rather than climax’. In other words, abstraction devoid of associations corresponds to the fringe areas of erotic desire, areas that are not immediately legible but nevertheless *make* sense. Adumbrating her vision, Lippard writes, ‘The cool approach depends on pervasive mood, the electric basis of sexual attraction, the roots rather than the results of desire’. Rather than single out a type of mood (i.e. aroused, excited), ‘pervasive’ refers to a *quality* of ‘mood’; and instead of consummation she favours ‘the electric basis of sexual attention’. These differentiations slow down the resolution of sensuousness as far as possible; they approach ‘standstill’, a deceleration that is made possible by the object’s ‘framework of simplicity, even austerity’.

The ‘non-romantic, non-subjective’ that is precipitated by the threshold, rather than the ‘expressionist... Wagnerian’ centre of erotic experience, is, as Lippard writes, ‘formally manifested by the predominance of a long, slow, deliberately regular curve, bulky parabolic forms, exaggeratedly luxurious or obsessive surfaces and patterns, all presented within a framework of simplicity, and even austerity’. Again, these formal motifs correspond to the iconography provided by Judd in “Specific Objects”, and in particular to his valorisation of ‘intensity and obsessiveness’ in response to Kusama’s boat. However, where his presentation is constrained by ‘three-dimensionality’, a term whose conceptual diffusiveness ends up collapsing into a generalised ‘sensibility’, Lippard offers a concise

and beautiful language that I hope to work with. For the sensuous relation that is ‘near standstill’ is described through a lexicon whose central term is ‘energy’.

Lippard is finally after a ‘controlled voluptuousness, as concerned with the ebb as with the flow of energy’. Earlier in her text she observes, ‘Emotive or expressionist energy is foreign to the makers of sensuous abstraction’.²⁴⁶ Against this *type* of energy, she is interested in a certain quality – ebb and flow. Throughout, she is cautious not to pigeonhole ‘sensuousness’, to relate it to something easily limitable. Energy, as will be explored in Chapter Four, tends towards displacement, distribution, potentiality, and expenditure, qualities that describe the moving body. My intention is to extend Lippard’s exposition of sensuousness, as well as her formal motifs listed above, to think through Yvonne Rainer’s signature dance, *Trio A* (1966) in relation to the body-object. As Rainer’s commentary on *Trio A*, “A Quasi Survey” makes clear, the four-and-a-half movement series that comprises *Trio A* was modelled after the minimal object. While it is not named as such, it is evident from reading her commentary’s introductory chart, which compares desirable and non-desirable qualities common to objects and dances, that her model for thinking about ‘minimal dance activity’ was the gestalt. Accordingly, Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two” (1966) will be taken up in Chapter Four; this will have the advantage of renewing a focus on the field of minimal art.

Chapter Two considers Rainer’s published art criticism, arguing that her approach to the object is fundamentally ambivalent.

²⁴⁶ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 216.

Chapter Two: Yvonne Rainer's "Ambiguous Note"

2.0 Introduction

Several issues arose through the previous chapter's contextual study of 'sensibility' that need to be addressed. As we saw, 'sensibility' tied 1960s art criticism into a conception of the public sphere whose primary articulation is literary. This historical locus was made apparent in Barbara Rose's 1965 essay, "ABC Art", which quotes textual sources ranging from Gertrude Stein to Alain Robbe-Grillet in order to define a 'cool' sensibility that informed emergent art. While this pedigree was rejected by artists such as Morris and Judd, who sought to define their work solely within the parameters of their vision for art, the literary nevertheless conditioned the use of sensibility, an organising term that took priority over its correlate, style.

The first part of Chapter Two therefore excavates the literary basis of sensibility; this task is carried out through a study of Alain Robbe-Grillet's published writing, as collected in *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction* (1965).²⁴⁷ Translated for an American audience from the 1963 French edition (*Pour un Nouveau Roman*), these essays, published in *L'Express* and *La Nouvelle Revue* from 1955 to 1963, represent Robbe-Grillet's shifting conception of the nouveau roman. I focus on *For a New Novel* for three reasons: First, the nouveau roman's tenets of objectivity and detachment, coupled with its repudiation of anthropomorphism, gave expression to the Neo-avant-garde's rejection of Abstract Expressionism and modernist formalism; secondly, *For a New Novel* necessitates a confrontation of phenomenology and existentialism, as these philosophical categories are implicated in Robbe-Grillet's commentary on Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. (While there is not scope to venture too far down this route, these categories relate to the 'cool' sensibility and need to be considered.) Finally, in a 1967 article titled "Don't Give the

²⁴⁷ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. by Richard Howard (1965; Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989).

Game Away” published in *Arts Magazine*, which features readings of work by Robert Morris and Andy Warhol, Yvonne Rainer models her critical responses after *For a New Novel*.²⁴⁸ This study is therefore mediated via an analysis of Rainer’s art criticism. It will be important to describe the points of contact between *For a New Novel* and “Don’t Give the Game Away”, as the latter selectively transmits the former.

Reflecting on these years, Rainer writes, ‘Robbe-Grillet posits a kind of detachment and objectivity that, for me as choreographer, offered a way to obviate notions of beauty and virtuosity by ‘equalizing’ the relationships of the movement particles I was coming up with’.²⁴⁹ She connects the tenets of the nouveau roman, ‘detachment and objectivity’ to the *formal* task of “equalising’ the relationships of the movement particles’. For her, in other words, the retrograde ‘notions of beauty and virtuosity’ are specifically obviated *through* the process of ‘equalising’ the relationships of the movements’. This is important, as it suggests that, far from a diffuse poetics, ‘sensibility’ had a direct bearing on formal developments. The work of ‘equalising’ parts, as will be taken up in Chapter Four, neatly corresponded to developments in object-centre practice and the figure of the gestalt.

Accordingly, the second half of this chapter continues Chapter One’s exploration of Lippard’s 1967 use of ‘sensuousness’ by considering Rainer’s writings on the exchanges enacted between performers and props. The transition from ‘sensibility’, which permits a broader social view, to ‘sensuousness’, is prepared for by a speculative question that is forwarded in the concluding paragraph of the first article to be considered, “Don’t Give the Game Away”. There Rainer asks, ‘Have I (along with other people working in theater today) created ‘theater-objects’ that don’t ‘look back’ at the audience (therefore making ‘excessive’ demands on them), and, if so, how is that possible where human performance is involved?’²⁵⁰ This question is intended to strike an ‘ambiguous note’ in the essay’s final paragraph. It simultaneously expresses her critical view of Robbe-Grillet’s notion of

²⁴⁸ Yvonne Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, *Arts Magazine*, April 1967.

²⁴⁹ E-mail correspondence with the author.

²⁵⁰ Yvonne Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

‘complicity’ and lays the ground for a renewed focus on the object. In particular, its intermedial address suggests that object-centred problems were being worked through in the space of dance. Published a few months after “Don’t Give the Game Away”, “Notes on Two Dances by Deborah Hay” appeared in the February 1967 launch issue of *Ikon* magazine and again features commentary on the work of a peer.²⁵¹ Here, I consider a range of terminology introduced by Rainer to describe recent choreography by Hay, including the strange designation ‘body-substitute’. Dance therefore emerges as this dissertation’s primary object-of-study. Rather than begin with Rainer’s choreography, I first engage her viewpoint as a *spectator* of others’ dance. Hay’s choreography provides a useful way in, insofar as its formal propensities are contiguous with Rainer’s own movement invention.

In conclusion, I consider recent performance scholarship in order to contextualise this dissertation’s shift from art criticism to dance. This final section interrogates the problem of the body-object in relation to the performer-prop relation.

2.1 Art Criticism and the nouveau roman

In the opening section of “Don’t Give the Game Away”, Rainer challenges her reader as follows: ‘Could you describe that completely familiar thing so that it could instantly be recognised as that utterly familiar thing and not turn it into something else, something literary or poetic which then would have to undergo another transformation in the reader’s mind back into that familiar thing?’²⁵² Invited by *Arts Magazine* to contribute an essay on ‘dance in the 20th century’, Rainer repurposes her slot to reflect on the act of reading. Her aim, in reading, is to monitor her responses to ‘things’ ‘as dissimilar as Robert Morris’ latest sculpture and Andy Warhol’s *Chelsea Girls* and my own last dance, *Carriage Discreteness*’.²⁵³ Rainer effectively tests out her debt to Robbe-Grillet and the nouveau roman, for in different ways these ‘things’ *appear* consonant with his view of the world.

²⁵¹ Yvonne Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances by Deborah Hay”, in *Ikon* (Vol. 1, No. 1, February, 1967).

²⁵² Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁵³ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

Codifying the familiar – understood as that which reassures perception through its location in the everyday – the fact that these things *are artworks* and therefore demand a special kind of response serves to complicate the channels of the nouveau roman. This is a deliberate ploy. As I understand it, Rainer’s aim is to carve out a specific mode of spectatorship that can account for the way the artwork complicates, or tends to defect from, the nouveau roman’s constrained programme of sense. Labelling the artwork a ‘thing’ makes it clear that, unlike other things, it demands a level of attention. Without claiming possession over it, she introduces ‘an approach to observation’ early on:

Through an utterly indulgent subjectivity, implemented with some kind of discipline (perhaps a commitment to interaction with the object), one may arrive at meaningful observations, without resorting to historical comparison, or formalist involutions or moral impositions. What the system lacks in scholarship will hopefully find compensation in its intuitions and faithful examination of responses.²⁵⁴

The ambiguity of this approach lies in its proximity to the nouveau roman. For, while its rejection of signifying frameworks mimics that form’s relinquishing of the object, this move is undermined by the critic’s recourse to an ‘utterly indulgent subjectivity’. As we shall see, this ambiguity hinges on the contradictory nature in Robbe-Grillet’s text of *complicity*. Rainer’s responses throw a light on the nouveau roman’s blind spots; but this is done *in order* to rectify or salvage its principle of detachment. Before going any further, it is necessary to outline the nouveau roman.

“On Several Obsolete Notions” (1957) is an early essay from the 1965 edition. With characteristic antipathy Robbe-Grillet attacks a series of key words, including ‘character’, ‘plot’, and ‘atmosphere’ that have, in his view, submitted the novel to ‘the exclusive cult of the ‘human’’.²⁵⁵ These “obsolete notions” are exemplified by Balzacian realism and its diffusion through French literature; serving to load ‘things’ with signification, the characters of Balzac’s fiction organise the world into coherent patterns whose temporal continuity is designed to please the reader. As Robbe-Grillet argues, ‘character’ is

²⁵⁴ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁵⁵ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, pp. 29.

traditionally relayed by ‘a past which has folded that face and that character’.²⁵⁶ This presentation is intended, in his view, to stir the reader’s emotions, to provide them with an image of the world that is recognisable. While it appears inevitable, this universalising claim relies on the central placement of the individual, a historically-determined form. Robbe-Grillet aims to demystify the novel’s historical formation. Contemporary critics accused him of rendering fiction ‘inhuman and ‘formalist’’, yet as one commentator has argued, his rejection of character was a response to a changing world.²⁵⁷ ‘It is evident’, Robbe-Grillet writes, ‘that the present period is rather one of administrative numbers... Our world is, today, less sure of itself... [It has] given way to a larger consciousness, one that is less anthropocentric’.²⁵⁸ Herein lies the revolutionary promise of the *nouveau roman*: By gearing the novel form to this larger consciousness, the author is able to support the reader’s critical outlook on the present.

Robbe-Grillet’s thesis regarding the assimilation of phenomena to a bourgeois worldview is developed further in “Nature, Humanism, Tragedy” (1958). He argues that the vastness of the concept of nature has served to project the individual into the most hostile environments.²⁵⁹ The result of this assimilation under the guise of nature is moribund: ‘Drowned in the *depth* of things, man ultimately no longer even perceives them’.²⁶⁰ It is language that ‘drowns’ man. He argues that metaphor and adjectives are units of signification that flatten out the phenomena to which they are assigned. Language thus serves ‘to unite all the inner qualities, the entire hidden soul of things’, a process that is

²⁵⁶ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 27.

²⁵⁷ In her critical study on the *nouveau roman*, Ann Jefferson writes, ‘Robbe-Grillet argues that the redundancy of fictional character is determined by social changes in the world in which we live, and that it is not simply the result of a ‘formalist-nihilist’ literary fashion’. See, Ann Jefferson, *The Nouveau Roman and the Poetics of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 58-9.

²⁵⁸ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 29.

²⁵⁹ He writes, ‘Belief in a nature thus reveals itself as the source of all humanism, in the habitual sense of the word. And it is no accident if Nature precisely—mineral, animal, vegetable Nature—is first of all clogged with an anthropomorphic vocabulary.’ See, Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 57.

²⁶⁰ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 68.

reflected in the concept of nature.²⁶¹ By merely attending to the particularity of what one sees, the writer imbues the environment with a reflection of a ‘natural psychological state: bending the world to their viewpoint. Robbe-Grillet’s term for this mirroring effect is ‘contamination’. There is a clear affinity between the minimalist’s rejection of gesture and the approach of the *nouveau roman*: hence Rainer’s interest in Robbe-Grillet.

The aim of the *nouveau roman* is to describe things in the simplest, most ‘matter of fact’ terms, *without anthropomorphising them*. It is, as Robbe-Grillet writes, ‘deliberately to place oneself outside of them, confronting them’.²⁶² This prepositional register, whose function is to teleport the author beyond language conventions, is symptomatic. As we saw in the Introduction, Mary Kelly observes that as the painterly signifier (or, to keep the analogy going, character) becomes ‘less self-important’, its value is transferred onto activities that *surround* its marking. Robbe-Grillet’s ‘pedagogical zeal’, to borrow a term from a commentator, therefore indicates the continuity and enlargement of the expression of his role.²⁶³ It is noticeable that he accords significance to himself as a marker against which to record distances that separate him from the world. Rejecting the representational model of naturalism as ideological, Robbe-Grillet deploys a language of scale and space that nevertheless stabilises his central position as author; he writes:

To record the distance between the object and myself, and the distances of the object itself (its exterior distances, i.e., its measurements), and the distances of objects among themselves, and to insist further on the fact that these are only distances (and not division), this comes down to establishing that things are here and that they are nothing but things, each limited to itself. The problem is no longer to choose between a happy correspondence and a painful solidarity. *There is henceforth a rejection of all complicity.*²⁶⁴

In the world of Balzacian realism, literal distances are rewritten in terms of either ‘a happy correspondence and a painful solidarity’. Such terms invest the distance between

²⁶¹ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p.24.

²⁶² Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 70.

²⁶³ Roch C. Smith, *Understanding Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), p. 3.

²⁶⁴ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p.72. [My italics]

things with an emotional charge, transforming distance into ‘division’. These relationships, in turn, are subsumed by an objective narrative schema. Retaliating, Robbe-Grillet turns to ‘exterior distances, i.e. its measurements’. Relationships become relations of space. By insisting on presence as a spatial relation as opposed to a metaphysics, he urges the reader to stop supplying a relationship (division) where there is only distance.²⁶⁵ His insistent use of the possessive pronoun, ‘myself’, makes clear that the measure of the nouveau roman is the subject’s detached and momentary experience of the world. Yet, how sure can he be that ‘a rejection of all complicity’ is viable, given the subject’s immersion in the world?

Measurement and the rhetoric of distance provides Robbe-Grillet with a means of figuring detachment. Again, this language cues with the object’s reconfiguration by minimal and conceptual artists. Where Robert Morris sought to externalise the sculpture’s part-by-part relations, to make them ‘a function of space, light, and the viewer’s field of vision’, the artist Mel Bochner provided measurement itself with a visual language.²⁶⁶ In what reads like a visual aid to Robbe-Grillet’s scenario, Bochner’s *Measurement: Room* (1969; Plate IX) converts a gallery room into an accessible cube. Black tape runs horizontally along the lintel and skirting boards, and vertically past the window and walls, while numbers printed in Letraset indicate the measurement of each line. Together these lines, which vary according to the room, serve to position the subject, who is free to walk around the space. Bochner reflected on *Measurement: Room* as follows:

Measurement is one of our means of believing that the world can be reduced to a function of human understanding. Yet, when forced to surrender its transparency, measurement reveals an essential nothingness. The yardstick does not say that the thing we are measuring is one yard long.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ As Jefferson writes, ‘Robbe-Grillet is claiming that the existence of human beings in his fiction takes the form not of individuality and objective representation, but of anonymity and point of view. And he points out that anonymity and point of view have constituted an increasingly important part of [the] fiction [of]... Kafka, Faulkner and Beckett’. See, Jefferson, *The Nouveau Roman*, p. 59.

²⁶⁶ Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part Two”, in *Artforum*, Vol. 5, no. 2, October 1966, p. 22.

²⁶⁷ Mel Bochner, “Three Statements for Data Magazine”, in *Data 5/6* (Summer 1972): 63–67; Reprinted in Mel Bochner, *Solar Systems & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews 1965–2007* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

Bochner's claims for an 'essential nothingness' reprises the existential phenomenology that informed Robbe-Grillet's project. Nothingness describes the individual's relationship to the world prior to language – a state that precedes the imposition of transcendental orders. Because measurement functions as an empty shifter dependent on the coordinates of space, it voids the viewer's identification with the thing, referring them back to this prior relationship. From the standpoint of existentialism, the apprehension of nothingness presents the individual with a spur, inciting them to consciously make decisions and form commitments based on the situation and task in hand. *Measurement: Room* ought to root out 'all complicity'; it is a scene devoid of empathy in which the viewer is brought into a confrontation with this prior world. Yet measurement, like the schema of Balzacian realism, is *also* a transcendental order. It is noticeable that Bochner's installation privileges sight over the other senses; even the subject's kinaesthetic awareness, for instance, is relegated behind the visual apprehension of measurement. The conjuncture of sight and measurement connotes the Western development of perspective, a device that has historically served to enshrine individual mastery – and one that, as Krauss argued in 1966, persists through minimal sculpture. While approving of existentialism's precepts, Robbe-Grillet negative regard for the way these were implemented by its key theorists through the novel form is, in light of this history of vision, revealing. In "Nature, Humanism, Tragedy" (1958), he excoriates Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre; by working through these critiques, I hope to understand the limitations of measurement as an organising principle.

Camus, Robbe-Grillet writes, 'has named *absurdity* the impassable gulf which exists between man and the world... Absurdity is in neither man nor things, but in the impossibility of establishing between them any relation other than *strangeness*'.²⁶⁸ Absurdity thus lines up with measurement; it disallows the fulfilment of 'a happy correspondence and a painful solidarity'. Yet, according to Robbe-Grillet, Camus's well-known novel *The Stranger* (1942) defaults on its claims by establishing relationships

²⁶⁸ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 63.

nonetheless. Towards the end of Part One, Camus stages the fundamental rift between ‘man and the world’ through the climatic, senseless murder committed by Meursault on the beach; yet, the language he uses to describe this incident and the scene leading up to it reverts to a so-called ‘tragic humanism’. This, Robbe-Grillet argues, is occasioned by his pointed use of metaphor and imagery, occurrences of which serve to humanise the absurd impasse of the murder. Paraphrasing Camus, he lists ‘the brilliant sand, the gleaming knife, the spring among the rocks, the revolver...’ arguing that, ‘It is things, quite specifically, which ultimately lead this man to crime’.²⁶⁹ Some markers are necessary to situate the action, yet their overall effect is to couch the act of murder in a ‘tragic humanism’ that is mirrored in ‘Nature’. Meursault’s act of crime is humanised through the reliance on stock descriptions. Description engenders an ‘obscure complicity’, contaminating the narrator’s apprehension of the world.²⁷⁰ Such things, Robbe-Grillet writes, ‘are no longer anything but mirrors for a man that endlessly reflect his own image back to him. Calm, tamed, they stare at man with his own gaze.’²⁷¹ In other words, they *look back*.

Robbe-Grillet deploys the metaphor of the reflecting mirror to describe the perverse environmental enrichment around Meursault’s crime. He is content, it seems, to retain the central position of the narrator – indeed, the *nouveau roman* depends on their experience of the world – so long as they refuse to invest things with significance. The returning gaze represents an inescapable *intimacy* that he abhors. A paradox emerges, for he has little choice but to retain the act of seeing. This, as will now be explored, is exacerbated by Sartre in his 1938 novel, *Nausea*.

The narrator of *Nausea*, Antoine Roquentin, is constantly threatened by inanimate things; his senses of touch, smell, and hearing produce unsolicited shocks that reflect his alienation from his surroundings.²⁷² *Nausea*’s ‘strictly visceral relations’, Robbe-Grillet

²⁶⁹ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 63.

²⁷⁰ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 63.

²⁷¹ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 69.

²⁷² As Robbe-Grillet writes, ‘The three objects which provoke revelation are, in effect, respectively the pebble on the beach, the bolt of a door, the hand of the Self-Taught Man.

writes, produce ‘an entirely *tragedified* universe’.²⁷³ Smells, tastes, and sounds dramatise Roquentin’s struggle to make sense of his lived environment – yet this fundamental rift is redeemed by the object’s foreignness. In league with the senses, Robbe-Grillet argues that the object in *Nausea* stands for ‘the final recuperation of all failures, of all solitudes, of all contradictions’.²⁷⁴ In other words, narrator and object participate in a doubled negation that renders their relationship intact. Under these conditions, the narrator is no longer detached; in fact, the world is made to communicate his sense. For Sartre, self-awareness is obtained through a total immersion in the object; *Nausea* therefore represents an extreme, and for Robbe-Grillet untenable, version of amelioration, or mitigation, that is antithetical to his project. Yet, because he remains wedded to the existentialist project that informs Sartre’s novel, he performs a kind of autopsy on it.

In effect, he attempts to isolate vision from the ‘visceral relations’ of smell and taste that pervade it. Addressing the ‘domain’ of sight, he posits a further distinction between shape and colour.²⁷⁵ Where shape is, in his words, ‘generally more certain’, the tendency of colour is ‘to change with the light, with the background accompanying it, with the subject considering it’.²⁷⁶ In fact, colour is that which most readily licenses ‘complicity’ in *Nausea*. To evidence this, Robbe-Grillet records an episode in which the shape of Cousin Adolphe’s suspenders cannot be determined because Roquentin’s experience of colour overloads his perception.²⁷⁷ Colour is thus a contaminating agent that obscures the outline of shape, while shape is bonded to measurement as an ideal condition. But to make this distinction in the first place is, in a sense, to fantasise that language might obtain the natural objectivity of forms of visuality. In other words, Robbe-Grillet relies on vision’s unique ability to hide its status as language in order to salvage those aspects of Sartre’s novel that would fit *his*

Each time, it is the physical contact of the narrator’s hand which provokes the shock’. See, Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 65.

²⁷³ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 67.

²⁷⁴ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 67.

²⁷⁵ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 65.

²⁷⁶ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 65.

²⁷⁷ Robbe-Grillet quotes Sartre as follows, ‘mauve...buried in the blue, but with false humility...as if, having started out to become violet, they had stopped on the way without abandoning their pretensions’. See, Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 65.

vision of the detached viewer. His argument is littered with visual metaphors; from shape to reflecting mirror, the nouveau roman's tenets of detachment and objectivity are presented as a visual register that would go on to validate Rose's description of the 'cool' sensibility of ABC art. In a sense, 1960s art inherited the contradictions of the nouveau roman.

There is a correspondence to be drawn between Robbe-Grillet's parcelling of vision and Morris's treatment of colour and shape in "Notes on Sculpture, Part One and Two" (February; October 1966). For Morris, the eradication of colour and foregrounding of shape are necessary conditions of sculpture.²⁷⁸ Beyond the sheer coincidence of thought processes, I am struck by the vehemence of his condemnation of colour: a further level of correspondence. In his disquisition colour connotes 'Donald Judd', whose views on three-dimensionality he abhorred. For Morris, colour is inherently *camp*.²⁷⁹ This is because it calls attention to itself.²⁸⁰ Due to its lack of physicality, colour's property is intermingling, its tendency is to obscure the boundaries between things through an ever-changing, and hence uncontrollable, capture of light. Because of this capriciousness, it is inseparable from the idea of a relationship. Shape exists in stark opposition; it is constant, simple, and known, marking a spatial limit. In "Part Two", colour is paired with the artist's 'emphasis on specific, sensuous material or impressively high finishes'. Morris's use of 'specific' directly implicates Judd in his condemnation. This melange of colour and material gives rise to 'intimacy-producing relations' that blur the viewer's sense of spatial relations. Morris's negative characterisation of 'intimacy' comes after Robbe-Grillet's similar use of that term.²⁸¹ Under Morris's watch, sculpture and the nouveau roman share a drive for

²⁷⁸ For instance, in "Notes on Sculpture, Part One" he writes: 'This transcendence of colour over shape in painting is cited here because it demonstrates that it is the most optical element in an optical medium. It is this essentially optical, immaterial, non-containable, non-tactile nature of colour that is inconsistent with the physical nature of sculpture'. See, Morris, "Note on Sculpture, Part One", p. 225.

²⁷⁹ Susan Sontag's exploration of camp in "Notes on Camp" (1964) was widely circulated during this period.

²⁸⁰ For instance, he writes: 'Colour... is additive. The more neutral hues, which do not call attention to themselves, allow for the maximum focus on those essential physical decisions that inform sculptural works'. See, Robert Morris, "Part One", p. 225.

²⁸¹ For instance, as when he writes: 'And what does *Nausea* offer us? It is evidently concerned with strictly visceral relations with the world, dismissing any effort of

clarity that relies on the conversion of internal relations to spatial relations. He finally states his view with a vitriol reminiscent of Adolf Loos's 1913 diatribe against the ornament, 'The sensuous object, resplendent with compressed internal relations, has had to be rejected'. His term for the object that calls attention to itself, thereby subtracting spatial relations, is 'sensuous'. This usage differs markedly from Lippard's, considered in Chapter One. For her, 'sensuousness' signifies an intimate correspondence between object and viewer, imbuing the viewing context with a 'pervasive mood' and a 'flow of energy'. For Morris, an object that is either colourful, small, or constructed from lavish materials replaces spatial relations with a kind of intimacy that *entraps* the viewer; such an outlook corresponds point for point with Robbe-Grillet's targeting of colour in *Nausea*.

It may be assumed that a corresponding distrust for internal relations, or relationships, is in each case differentiated through the kind of mediation in play, i.e., the written description of shape differs from the visual encounter of shape. But this is to ignore the role critical commentary played in defining the visual encounter for Morris and others, and commentary's need, in turn, for literary precedents. On this basis, one can argue for a homology between art criticism and nouveau roman as similarly interested in defining the visual encounter. Because of this shared status, the reader-viewer emerges as a privileged figure.²⁸² Situated outside commentary, they are able to apprehend relationships and spatial relations simultaneously; to negotiate different modes of expression in a fluid process that follows the pattern of experience. It is a position adjacent to the fraught confrontation imagined by Robbe-Grillet and, in a different context, by Morris. In my understanding, Rainer's art criticism inhabits this position. If her commentary on *Trio A*, "Quasi Survey", is allied to a specific project, her published criticism on the work of her peers is written

description (called futile) in favour of a suspect intimacy'. See, Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 64.

²⁸² As one commentator on the nouveau roman has observed: 'The initial rejection of any kind of significance, the limiting of prose fiction to 'pure' neutral visual description of objects, gradually turns into a rejection of pre-existing meanings in favour of the text as a self-generating structure whose forms produce new meanings; in the final stage these new meanings are also seen as relevant to the world outside the text.' See, Celia Britton, *The Nouveau Roman: Fiction, Theory and Politics* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 30.

from the position of the reader/spectator. Through the two articles considered below, she is seen to accede to an ‘utterly indulgent subjectivity’.

2.2 “Don’t Give the Game Away” (1967)

“Don’t Give the Game Away” features a pull-quote from *For a New Novel* that condenses the nouveau roman into a worldview: ‘Man looks at the world and the world does not look back at him’. Given Rainer’s ‘testing’ of existential non-correspondence, its typographical placement beneath her title may be read as tongue-in-cheek. For her, not even the nouveau roman is exempt from the charge of anthropomorphism.²⁸³ Narrative continuity is an effect of the ordering of things into a schema, but it is also a way of reading that the viewer brings to any situation or text: No matter how alien or discontinuous, meaning is generated through reading.²⁸⁴ Having shunned the absolute rift of existential phenomenology, she works out an approach based on compromise.²⁸⁵ ‘Maybe I’m lazy,’ Rainer jokes.²⁸⁶ In effect, she adopts complicity as a necessary measure by allying commitment with pleasure. Where Robbe-Grillet vaunts a distance that separates narrator and object, Rainer concedes that her position is superordinate: ‘I am the constant in this melange, and I mean *I* as spectator’.²⁸⁷ She occupies the place of shape in the visual field – a constant around which things cohere. The reflexivity of ‘I’ gives the game away by admitting the ego’s constitutive role. With this order in place, she is able to recoup detachment through the terms of *engagement*, a paradoxical interplay that, as with Lippard’s use of ‘sensuousness’, reconnects formal and bodily propensities.

²⁸³ At one point in her article Rainer adds a qualifying remark in parentheses: ‘Robbe-Grillet is not exception. Much as I do admire his essays, I find his descriptive technique does little more than elaborate the suspense and obfuscate the continuity of the traditional novel. The burden of plot remains nonetheless.’ See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁸⁴ Rainer writes, ‘I have rarely been able to read any ongoing literary tract – narrative, explicative, critical, what-have-you – without backtracking and transposing the god-damned language into a continuity that didn’t seem to be there in the first place’. See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁸⁵ There is a comparison to be made between her answer to Robbe-Grillet, introduced below, and the way she negotiates the Cagean law of indeterminacy (see Chapter Five).

²⁸⁶ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁸⁷ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

“Don’t Give the Game Away” opens with Rainer’s friend, Frederick Ted Castle’s then unpublished novel, *No Anticipation Allowed* (published, 1983).²⁸⁸ Castle’s diegesis follows the letter of *For a New Novel*: things enter the narrator’s field of vision, are described, and duly abandoned without resolution or development. For Rainer, the pleasure of this approach lies in the special form of attention that is elicited by a familiar thing; this attention is itself ‘redemptive’, and enough to render the familiar beautiful.²⁸⁹ As we shall see, the ‘things’ *she* is concerned with are artworks that mediate ‘the familiar’ in different ways.

She introduces her first object, Andy Warhol’s *Chelsea Girls* (1966; Plate X), with the following observation: ‘Let’s talk about satisfaction. There are some things the longer you observe them the more satisfying they become’.²⁹⁰ Satisfaction is linked to ‘duration’, to the work’s capacity to sustain a *directness* of experience over a length of time that is determined by the viewer’s willingness to engage with it. *Chelsea Girls* comprises six-and-a-half hours of raw footage split over two screens, meaning the total running time of the film is around three hours fifteen minutes. The film was shot at different locations around New York, Chelsea Hotel included, and features various of Warhol’s friends and associates of The Factory chatting and laughing, eating and drinking, and staring off-camera, spaced out. Rainer is more interested in ‘the uniqueness and oddities of its treatment of its material’ than ‘what it’s about’.²⁹¹ Her attention is drawn to two distinct features: first, the dual-screen format whose ‘inside edge’, she writes, ‘delineates another story, another interaction of characters, and more than any other part of the frame contains the condensed

²⁸⁸ Frederick Ted Castle, *Anticipation: A Novel* (New York: McPherson & Company, 1983).

²⁸⁹ In an unpublished paper presented at the symposium, *Yvonne Rainer: Intermedial Constellations*, which coincided with the exhibition *Yvonne Rainer: Raum, Körper, Sprache*, held in 2012 at Museum Ludwig, Ramsay Burt argues that Rainer’s *detached* approach ‘the familiar’ corresponds with Michael Fried’s development of ‘absorption’ in “Art and Objecthood” (1967), which was published in the lead up to “Don’t Give the Game Away”. See, Ramsay Burt, ““Don’t Give the Game Away”: Rainer’s 1967 Reflections on Dance and the Visual Arts Revisited”, in *Yvonne Rainer: Intermedial Constellations – A Symposium*, 14-15 May, 2012 (Unpublished Manuscript), p. 1.

²⁹⁰ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

²⁹¹ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 45.

imagery'; and second, the realisation over time that the unscripted conversations onscreen are constrained by 'rules'.²⁹² These, she explains, 'narrow down to 'maintain your character' and 'don't give the game away''.²⁹³ The performers' occasional minor infractions, wholly inferred by the viewer, imbue *Chelsea Girls* with 'an extravagant logic and provides much of the dark humor of the film'.²⁹⁴

Rainer is thus an *active* viewer who makes decisions about what is worth investigating and proceeds to find a language to describe those things. Her intuitions inferentially constitute the artwork as a series of formal procedures from which she derives satisfaction. The surface of *Chelsea Girls*, which she calls 'richly textured, mottled, coruscating, chiaroscuroing', draws her attention to the properties of the moving image. Singled out by her, 'the inside edge' that joins the two projected reels generates a response that bypasses the film's dark humour: Depending on chance, the shapes, lines and tones of the two rolling images are either continuous or disjunctive, an additive process that compresses the visual, drawing attention to the inside edge's material quality. 'This', Rainer observes, 'is a familiar concept in painting, if somewhat unfashionable in that area at the moment'.²⁹⁵ The proximity of *Chelsea Girls* to modernist formalism is wholly interpolated by Rainer, but that does not make it any less a feature of the work. The reader's ability to subvert or 'colour' its structure is precisely what drives the hysteria of Robbe-Grillet's and Morris's narrow prescriptions. Conversely, Rainer's willingness to hold relations *and* relationships in play is what distinguishes her approach from, for instance, the moral criticism of Fried. Both the painting's literal support and an understated game scenario, with rules and

²⁹² Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 45.

²⁹³ Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 45.

²⁹⁴ Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 46. In order to make clear how Rainer's responses remain at the level of responses, compare her description of 'rules' to the grander interpretive image presented by a more recent account, '*The Chelsea Girls* presents a Nietzschean view of human relationships in which individuals attempt to exert power and control over others, such as Ondine's attempt to manipulate Ingrid by continually shifting the nature of their interactions'. See, J.J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 174-5.

²⁹⁵ Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 45.

consequences, are ‘things’ discovered by Rainer that redeem the familiar as presented by *Chelsea Girls*.

This critical ambivalence is further evidenced by her observations on a recent steel sculpture by Morris. Since *Untitled* (1967) is implicated in coeval critical debates, anything Rainer writes about it will seem interested. This work is familiar, not because we watch characters react to real-time situations, as with *Chelsea Girls*, but due to the fact that she lived with it on a daily basis: ‘If I focus at length on my husband’s sculpture’, she writes, ‘it is exactly because of that close relationship’.²⁹⁶ Because *Untitled* has retreated into the everyday, a degree of ‘effort’ is required in order to make contact with it. Again, in describing her responses to its effects she is inevitably placed in dialogue with contemporary criticism. For instance, her observation, ‘It doesn’t ‘aspire’: it squats’, invokes Fried’s negative characterisation of the ‘surrogate person’, leading the reader to draw certain conclusions.²⁹⁷ Yet her responses are separated on the page by a consecutive run of paragraph indents, and in the next line she seemingly drops Fried’s proposal, turning instead to the letter of Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture” essays: ‘It looks the same from every aspect. You know you won’t see anything different if you go to the other side, but you go to the other side’.²⁹⁸ The anthropomorphism of ‘squatting’ falls behind the gestalt, Morris’s theoretical guarantor.²⁹⁹ Yet these observations do not negate each other, the sculpture is *both* character and ideation, relationship and relation. Antithetical positions are not resolved; rather, the critic is content to let their contradictions coexist on the page.³⁰⁰ What follows serves to ‘redeem’ these familiar things.

²⁹⁶ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 46.

²⁹⁷ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 46. For Fried the object evinces ‘an inner, even secret, life’ that is blatantly anthropomorphic. See, Fried, “Art and Objecthood”, p. 127.

²⁹⁸ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 46.

²⁹⁹ Rainer bolsters Morris’s figure as follows: ‘You know immediately what you are seeing, but you don’t quite believe that another vantage point won’t give you a more complete, more definitive, or even altered, view of it. It doesn’t’. See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 46.

³⁰⁰ In concluding her reading of Morris’s sculpture she writes, ‘My experience of this work contains many ambiguities. It is satisfying in the actuality of its scale and impeccable proportions, but contains at the same time references to illusionism and immateriality.... It

Rainer subjects Morris's sculpture to a sequence of phenomenological reflections through a free and associative passage of writing. Circumventing the salience of shape, she addresses the sculpture's volume and mass, relating these qualities to her embodied experience. For the sculpture's displacement of air is something that she can sensuously relate to.³⁰¹ She quotes a notebook entry of the previous year she wrote late at night, in her studio, while experimenting with LSD (Plate XII):

The exquisite *containment* of my body. I can't say it's euphoria or ecstasy... But yet still I have this strange sense of limits—physical limits—and it seems such an exquisite knowledge. Perfect containment. Something to do with a finely-tuned awareness of just how, what, something to do with my own particular mass and volume. It (my body) occupies exactly as much space as it needs and it doesn't need any more than its [*sic*] got.³⁰²

Given the inclusion of this entry, her references to *Untitled*'s mass and volume subsist in a metonymic relation to the experience of her own body (Plate XI). Affected by the hallucinogens, she is made aware of her body's 'limits', experiencing a state of 'perfect containment'. Her description foregrounds its formal or physical propensities in a way that recalls the 'controlled voluptuousness' Lippard ascribes to the 'abstract sensuous object' in "Eros Presumptive". Indeed, as we saw in Chapter One, Lippard includes 'self-containment' in a list of qualities that relate recent abstraction to the yab/yum of ancient Hindu sculpture. Following this metonymic chain, we can say that Rainer's experience of 'euphoria or ecstasy' intrudes on Morris's sculpture via the perception of its mass and volume. This application is foreshadowed by her parenthetical address, 'It (my body)'. Having studied her notebooks at the Getty Research Institute, where the contents of her New York studio were transferred in 2006, I can provide some context.

On an undisclosed date in 1966, Rainer took LSD at 9:45PM. According to the subsequent entries' time notations, written in the left margins, the drugs began to take

can be encompassed instantly, but seduces me into drawn-out contemplations and reflections about its nature'. Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", pp. 46-47.

³⁰¹ 'It displaces an amount of atmosphere equal to its own volume... The dominance of mass over matter'. See, Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 46.

³⁰² Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 46.

effect around 10:30PM. She goes on to record her observations over a window of time running from 11:45PM to 01:25AM; the entry included alongside her reading of Morris's *Untitled*, quoted above, falling near the middle of this window, at 12:40AM. Towards the end of the window, at 01:20AM, Rainer jots down,

This extra-special corporeality of things. It's not that I am especially sexy sensuous aroused erotic its [*sic*] just that *everything* is. Sensuality is not a state of being. It is an inherent attribute. It is in the nature of things to be sensuous and I am in the nature of things.³⁰³

Rainer's immersion in an environment of sensuous things, and her formation *through* that environment, corresponds to Roquentin's experience of the world in Sartre's *Nausea*. Unlike him, she is not 'shocked' by things around her, instead recognising a common inherent attribute: sensuousness. Without according these reflections too much significance, it is simply worth noting that the 'sensuous' is that which mediates her self-awareness, an active movement of detachment and engagement that carries through to her responses to Morris's sculpture.³⁰⁴

Tracking earlier in time, we can see that at 11:55PM Rainer experiences her body in a totally different way:

Wow! I am observing my own body – my 2 legs bent up... Those knees are not mine. From out of my flesh come gardens. It really is 2-D. My limbs or anything 3-dimensional I focus on becomes a flattened out movie screen projecting its own lush images. So now I see on the movies of my static legs the flickering lights of Armageddon. With lots of purple and magenta.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute.

³⁰⁴ In a passage that would make Robbe-Grillet reel for the same reason as Sartre's *Nausea* does, Rainer writes, '*Chelsea Girls* does not demand participation, *whereas a Morris sculpture does*.... In the latter case one is drawn into a situation of 'complicity' with the object, to borrow a term from Robbe-Grillet. Its flatness and grayness are transposed anthropomorphically into inertness and retreat. Its simplicity becomes 'non communicative,' or 'noncommittal.' Its self-containment becomes 'silence.' Its singularity becomes boredom. These are all conditions imposed onto the work through reluctance or ability to enjoy it at face value'. See, Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 47.

³⁰⁵ Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute.

While this entry does not appear in “Don’t Give the Game Away”, it describes a different way of seeing that relates to the latter’s art criticism. In this entry, the kinaesthetic experience of mass and volume is preceded by a pure opticality. Rainer cannot help ‘flatten out’ three-dimensional things into two-dimensional surfaces; her limbs, which enter a continuum with other three-dimensional things, have been transformed into a screen onto which images are projected. These moving images, which are ‘lush’, feature a display of colour that takes on the proportions of a blockbuster film. The body becomes a ‘screen’, but it is also like a painting. Rainer observes this dynamic morphology as if inhabiting a position adjacent to it, recalling her introductory statement: ‘I am the constant in this melange, and I mean I as spectator’.³⁰⁶ Taking her self-assigned role of spectator seriously, there is a formal similitude between her psychedelic production of lush images and the inside edge of *Chelsea Girls*, whose compression of images assumes the density of painting. At the same time, there is a connection to Roquentin, whose vivid experience of colour cues with the ‘purple and magenta’ that fill Rainer’s field of vision. Colour obliterates the distinctions that separate one thing from another thing: Morris’s and Robbe-Grillet’s preferred property, shape, is relegated from view. Rainer is lying down with her legs raised over her, a viewing position that relates to the low profile of Morris’s *Untitled*, which squats non-compliantly. Her body thus enables her to mediate the formal propensities of different media.

The mechanism that supports this activity is not Lippard’s ‘flow of energy’, a physiological process that is explored in Chapter Four, but the metonym, a linguistic trope that describes the ‘transfers of meaning’ that underpin Rainer’s art criticism, allowing her to negotiate contradictory viewpoints as well as private and public zones of meaning. They form a chain that returns our attention to the work of art. Rainer’s descriptions thus supersede opposed critical positions and picture the work of art as a shifting thing, open to manipulation.

³⁰⁶ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

“Don’t Give the Game Away” ends with a speculative question that reprises many of these concerns: ‘Have I (along with other people working in theater today) created ‘theater-objects’ that don’t ‘look back’ at the audience (therefore making ‘excessive’ demands on them), and, if so, how is that possible where human performance is involved?’³⁰⁷ By invoking the audience, Rainer steps down from the office of critic and resumes her artist-performer role. The problem, i.e. “theater-objects’ that don’t ‘look back’, is unequally distributed across the above objects-of-study: where *Chelsea Girls* permits a detached kind of viewing, Morris’s *Untitled* demands participation.³⁰⁸ It is not clear whether ‘theater-objects’ is a ‘surrogate’ for the performer, in Fried’s sense of the word, or a prop, or both. The phantom artwork that is not in the end discussed, Rainer’s large-scale choreography *Carriage Discreteness* (1966), may elucidate this indeterminate status.

Performed as part of a series, *Nine Evenings – Theater and Engineering*, held at the 69th Regiment Armory, New York, over October 1966, *Carriage Discreteness* featured ‘thirty classes of props, all of which were distributed among twenty rectangles marked out in chalk on the stage’.³⁰⁹ (Plates XIII). As Rainer recalls in her 2006 autobiography, *Feelings are Facts*,

On the evening of the performance I sat with my walkie-talkie in the remote balcony overlooking the 200 x 200-foot performing area like a sultan surveying his troops on a vast marching field. (The choice of this imperial position has been a source of much subsequent embarrassment for me. Why couldn’t I have allowed the performers to move the objects in any way they pleased? After all, the piece was about ‘the idea of effort and finding precise ways in which effort can be made evident or not.’ But no, I had to exercise my controlling directorial hand.)³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

³⁰⁸ ‘*Chelsea Girls* does not demand participation, whereas a Morris sculpture does.’ See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

³⁰⁹ [Carl] Andre’s five Styrofoam beams took their place alongside an array of other generic objects – a hundred wooden slats, five mattresses, a brick, five foam rubber cubes, a sheet of metal, five pieces of papers and other things that could be considered equally non descriptive and neutral-looking’. See, Alistair Rider, *Carl Andre: Things in Their Elements* (London: Phaidon, 2011), p. 106.

³¹⁰ Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 275.

Where Rainer literally oversaw ‘performer continuity’ (Plate XIV), transmitting instructions remotely to her fifteen performers, ‘event continuity was controlled by TEEM (Theater Electronic Environmental Modular System)’.³¹¹ This latter system coordinated non-human activities, such as light changes, slide shows, and amplified tape recordings, to produce a relatively-automated environment. In the end there were too many elements in play; as Rainer remembers, ‘The walkie-talkies didn’t function. Nothing seemed to be happening... Finally all I could do was instruct the performers to move the objects at random. My piece was a fiasco’.³¹² While it had the embarrassing effect of leaving her stranded in a position of authority, this technical meltdown paradoxically allowed Rainer’s idea for *Carriage Discreteness* to take over; that is, the participants had no choice but to improvise the ‘ways in which effort can be made evident or not’.

The discrepancy between authorial control and what actually happens onstage is worth considering. From the high technical stakes of *Carriage Discreteness* to the rigid structure of Rainer’s *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965), a dance for ten people and twelve mattresses organised by a schema of discontinuous thirty-second movement segments, the act of performing to an audience throws a light on the issue of control.³¹³ Looking back, Rainer is haunted by the thought that she ought to have let the performers move the objects as they pleased; it is telling that this thought haunts her *even though* her aim was achieved, albeit inadvertently. It is clear that *Carriage Discreteness*’ ‘theater-objects’ – here let this term denote both performers and props – do more than fulfil a plan. Their presentation onstage is itself the site of a power play that Rainer, normally involved in performing, is made witness to. Because her managerial role in *Carriage Discreteness* unexpectedly short-circuits, she has no choice but to sit and watch the ‘theater-objects’ play out before her, a newly-passive member of the audience. By ‘don’t look back’, Rainer makes a general point about

³¹¹ Yvonne Rainer, *Work: 1961-73* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia, 1974), p. 305.

³¹² Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 276.

³¹³ Rainer was attuned to the narcissism and power games of being in control. Tensions surrounding her author status were brought out prominently through letters she exchanged with performers as her ongoing work *Continuous Project-Altered Daily* toured University campuses around America. Ultimately, she ceded control to her group. See, Rainer, *Work*, pp. 146-54.

performers or artworks – that in an obvious sense they carry on, or, in the case of sculptures, endure, without paying attention to the audience. But this non-compliance would have had a particular resonance for her, given the performers (and props) of *Carriage Discreteness* were effectively left to their own devices, unable to respond to their leader's commands. In response to Rainer's speculative question: the breakdown of systems on the night had the unexpected effect of exposing certain things that should have been concealed, i.e. the chain of command. The leader, in turn, experiences their role as a demand that is excessive insofar as it cannot be met.

Though *Carriage Discreteness* is not taken up in "Don't Give the Game Away", more than the other artworks discussed therein it pays homage to Robbe-Grillet's axiom: 'Man looks at the world and the world does not look back at him'. The key tropes of the nouveau roman that appealed to Rainer, detachment and objectivity, are realised on this evening. As we saw above, the nouveau roman's claim to detachment is, in practice, mitigated by language; with or without embellishment the locutionary position 'I' impresses the object, anthropomorphising it. Yet with *Carriage Discreteness* it was absurdly technology (qua object) that decommissioned Rainer, rendering her into a loose part and producing a chain of unforeseen effects. Contra the 'humanised universe' of Camus and Sartre, Rainer's loss of agency is *dehumanising*. Robbe-Grillet deploys the reflecting mirror as a figure to describe the animation of objects; here that mirror is lost and the tangible effects of his programme of sense, realised in 'measurable' time and space as opposed to the novel form, rendered undesirable.

As classically described by John Martin, dance spectatorship generates an experience of kinaesthetic empathy: the audience is stirred by the dancer, whose shifting movements catalyse their stationary musculature.³¹⁴ Here Rainer is somehow petrified, turned into an object by the autonomous movements of her performers.³¹⁵ (Note: this petrification would

³¹⁴ See, John Martin, *The Dance in Theory* (1945), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

³¹⁵ It is worth noting Rainer was taken seriously ill later that night and rushed to hospital to undergo intensive surgery – a different kind of 'breakdown of systems'.

not have been shared by the audience proper). The meaning of ‘theater-objects’ is therefore dependent on the particular configuration of roles on- and offstage, a fluid process that produces effects and responses of different kinds. As we saw in Chapter One, Lippard defines the ‘sensuous’ as the recognition of a flow of energy or a pervasive mood. The ‘sensuous abstract object’ of the ‘frozen’ arts elicits an electric charge that is registered by the patient viewer. In *Carriage Discreteness* this charge is suddenly made live. Stripped of her authority by a technical fault mid-performance, Rainer shifts from active engagement to passive detachment, a role reversal that instantaneously obliterates her kinaesthetic connection, rendering her mute, dumb, paralysed. (Again, ‘sensuousness’ does not indicate a kind of sense but the ability *to* sense.) This fault is perceived by Rainer before the others; for in that split second of non-correspondence she is made aware of what it means to be sensed and make sense. Having been taken away abruptly, ‘sensuousness’ emerges as an after-effect.

Her loss of agency effects a *deactivation* of the viewer that reverses the situation of minimal art. Yet this is to read the terms of performance onto the sculpture situation. While Rainer’s speculative question invites an intermedial response – again, given the proximity of Fried’s “Art and Objecthood”, the ‘theatricality’ of literal sculpture comes closer to ‘theater-objects’ than does dance – she specifically deals with the problem represented by this dissertation’s formulated term, the body-object, in a published commentary on the choreography of her peer, Deborah Hay.³¹⁶ My aim in turning to the situation of dance is to see how these spectator responses to the object relate to the body of the performer, who has not yet been accounted for. How else might the object supplant the performer, thereby stealing the show?

³¹⁶ As we shall see in Chapter Four, Rainer’s signature dance *Trio A* represented a more immediate relation to the ‘theater-object’; not only because Rainer developed its form in dialogue with Morris’s theorisation of the Gestalt but because one instruction for the performers was not to look at the audience. Moreover, Rainer was at work on her commentary on *Trio A*, “Quasi Survey”, around this time.

2.3 “Notes on Two Dances by Deborah Hay” (1967)

This short commentary was published in the launch issue of *Ikon* magazine, February 1967, two months before “Don’t Give the Game Away”. In it, Rainer considers the performer-prop relation in *No. 3* and *Rise* (1966), two recent choreographies by her peer, Deborah Hay. Rainer is again cast in the role of spectator-critic, yet her proximity to the formal procedures under discussion makes this commentary a useful introduction to her own work. It is here that she most clearly takes up the strategy of ‘radical juxtaposition’, as proposed by Susan Sontag in her 1962 essay on Happenings. For both *No. 3* and *Rise*, she writes, *seem* ‘simple and apparent’ upon first encounter. The two ‘protagonists’ of these dances are categorised in the following way: First, ‘a solo dancer shuffling around like a swooning Giselle’, and second, ‘anonymous assistants manipulating – in the first dance [*No. 3*] – three columns of bricks, and – in the second [*Rise*] – a wooden flat two feet wide by seven feet high’.³¹⁷ If the former is legible as a trained balletic performer, the second ‘composite’ protagonist is less intelligible. For Rainer gathers props, along with those untrained assistants tasked with manipulating them, into a single category. The juxtaposition between these two ‘protagonists’ is emphasised through opposing descriptors, ‘swooning... anonymous’. At first it seems obvious that the Giselle will stand out in relief, foregrounded by the dull background activity of the re-arranging of bricks or, in the case of *Rise*, a flat being moved across the proscenium. We assume that the Giselle’s virtuosic comportment will produce a hieratic separation that holds the audience hostage. But this is not Rainer’s experience. As the dance proceeds, the ballerina’s inimitable godlike appearance becomes less interesting. As Rainer observes, ‘Another protagonist begins to emerge, almost nullifying the first one and subverting Deborah’s primacy and nostalgic image by forcing upon us an entirely different kind of presence, that of inert, inanimate objects’.³¹⁸ To paraphrase T.J. Clark, our attention is drawn to the concrete transactions that

³¹⁷ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 2.

³¹⁸ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 2.

are normally hidden behind a ‘mechanical image of reflection’: background becomes foreground.³¹⁹

The juxtaposition of different kinds of activity – high and low, trained and untrained, melodramatic and bland, exhibitionlike and worklike – is a staple of Judson-era choreography. As dance historian Sally Banes observed in 1977, this convergence was made possible by a restructuring of performance time away from the virtual schema of balletic and expressionistic forms and towards the time it took to perform a given task or movement.³²⁰ In her words, ‘a system of duration founded on the actual’ served to re-evaluate what was worth looking at and to encode a new set of conventions that were being developed collectively.³²¹ (Hence the proximity of Hay’s and Rainer’s dance). Giselle’s balletic steps and the manipulation of inanimate bricks do not merely occur simultaneously; through a common duration these protagonists enter into an equivalence whereby it is no longer clear who, or what, is ‘familiar’ or warrants the audience’s attention.³²² Rainer’s commentary is worth studying for the reason that she dissects this equivalence, establishing new terms and categories to describe the presentation of activity in Hay’s dance. Having explored some of these terms, I return to the body-object, to think about how it relates to other ways of thinking about the minimal object.

“Notes on Two Dances” begins with a brief history of the uses to which the object has been put leading up to the innovation of Hay’s two dances. The object, in Rainer’s view, has served either as a ‘body-substitute’ onto which anthropomorphic features are projected, or as a ‘tool to accomplish a task or create movement’.³²³ In both cases the human act of manipulation is more significant than the presence of the object, which at most represents,

³¹⁹ T.J. Clark, *Image of the People*, p. 12.

³²⁰ Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1977). Moreover, Banes’s model for this transition is Robert Morris, as written about by Annette Michelson in her landmark 1969 essay on his practice, ‘Robert Morris – An Aesthetics of Transgression’.

³²¹ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 115.

³²² For instance, Banes paraphrases Rainer’s commentary on Hay: ‘It almost seemed as if the ordinary attributes and energy of the dancer had been transferred to the inanimate objects’. See, Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 115.

³²³ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 2.

in Rainer's words, an 'intermediary'. As mentioned, the crux of *No. 3* and *Rise* lies in the unexpected 'reversal of roles', whereby the inanimate bricks and flat, manipulated by anonymous performers, take on 'the glamour, apotheosis, or accentuated vagaries of the prima donna', here represented by the Giselle in *No. 3* and, in *Rise*, by the figure of Hay.³²⁴ Rather than examine the audience's responses, Rainer suggests that this reversal may be due to a 'trading of identities... on the part of the two 'protagonists''.³²⁵ Though let it be known that, in elaborating on this trade, she confuses the two dances, partnering the Giselle of *No. 3* with the grey flat of *Rise*. The other fabulated, and for her purposes richer 'partnering' involves the soloist, Hay of *Rise*, and the manipulated bricks of *No. 3*. While this Hay does not perform balletic phrases, in Rainer's words the 'implicit association with classic virtuosic movement activity... becomes lodged in the movements of the manipulated bricks'.³²⁶ In lieu of the dancer's presentation, the bricks assume an expressiveness of their own: 'It almost appears', she writes, 'that energy and dance-type attributes have been siphoned off from her activity to enhance the life of the bricks'.³²⁷ To evidence this, she refers to the bricks' 'weight, fall, clatter, scraping, accent, rhythm, density, individuation, response to gravity, and – in this instance, their very inertness after 'moving''.³²⁸ Hay's presence onstage, by contrast, becomes 'object-like', as she takes on 'the impersonal and non-demonstrative characteristics one usually associates with stable objects'.³²⁹ As we saw in "Don't Give the Game Away", Rainer herself assumed *Untitled's* quality of 'containment' through her person; yet, where that pairing was based on common mass and volume, the exchange described here has a different basis. The key term to consider is, after Hodge, movement (and its corollary, circulation).

If, in Banes's phrasing, a 'system of duration founded on the actual' renders actions or tasks of an equal projection equivalent, this equivalence is precipitated in *actual* terms by

³²⁴ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 2.

³²⁵ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 2.

³²⁶ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", pp. 2-3.

³²⁷ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3.

³²⁸ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3.

³²⁹ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3.

the expenditure of energy. As will be explored in Chapter Four, different kinds of movement may be linked through the distribution of a commensurate expenditure of energy. Rainer's reading error itself makes clear how equivalence can lead one to connect materials both on- and offstage and across different temporalities: a matchmaking that suggests these materials are *relocatable*; in person, between performers and things, and, after the fact, through writing. To avoid entering an infinite regress defined by a pure relationality, equivalence must be contextualised and strictly read through the economy of dance movement. Commenting on the 'siphoning' of energy from one partner to the other, Rainer includes in parentheses, 'This is in part an illusion, as the dance-attributes of energy and endurance are indispensable in maintaining any kind of movement continuum. The Chinese gymnastic discipline, T'ai Chi... is a classic example'.³³⁰ Here, continuum refers to the way in which a body moves *through* a set movement; it is that which undergirds the Giselle's virtuosic comportment. In this regard, 'continuum' relates to Lippard's notion of 'sensuousness', as a state that is prior to, and distinct from, a range of 'colourful' senses. Here and in other writings, Rainer deploys the *idea* of a continuum and its manifestation through an 'evenness' of movement to, in her words 'neutralise all references to character 'coloration''.³³¹ Similarly, Lippard understands the 'sensuous abstract object' as unlinked from the 'character' of eroticism.

The dynamics of 'illusion' are certainly worth dwelling on, for Rainer seems to liken the continuum to a 'real' that cuts through the narrative-based presentation of character in dance, an effect that is for her aided 'partly thru [*sic*] the relinquishment by the 'object-protagonists' of their characteristic stolidity'.³³² The inanimate object serves to safeguard those expressive qualities that are deemed too characterful when conveyed by the dancer (or artwork). Expression thus becomes palatable when it is alloyed with the 'detached and

³³⁰ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3.

³³¹ Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3. As discussed in Chapter Four, continuum stands for the emergence of the gestalt in the arena of dance: hence, Rainer's antipathy towards character 'coloration' corresponds to Morris's attack on Judd. Moreover, this neutralisation is exemplified by Rainer's signature work, *Trio A* (1966).

³³² Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 3.

objective' stolidity of bricks. We have seen how the trading of qualities can lead to a posited reconciliation, as was argued in relation to Judd's notion of 'three-dimensionality'. That term served to salvage desirable aspects of painting and sculpture while neutralising those media's (European) prestige. Or, in a different way, the highly-individuated style and rhetoric of art criticism safeguarded expression through the propagation of a 'cool' 60s sensibility. Displacement, substitution, and compensation are procedures that describe the persistence of illusion through the rejection of 'obsolete notions'; indeed, as Robbe-Grillet discovered through his readings of Camus and Sartre, this rejection depends on the displacement of illusion for its expression. The situation of Hay's two dances as described by Rainer is different in that these same procedures find their counterparts in the distribution and expenditure of energy, material processes that are *actually* unfixated, mobile and contingent. To illustrate the continued presence, however minimal, of a human protagonist, I will briefly track the evolution of one object – mentioned in passing by Rainer – through its contexts and modalities.

During *The Bells*, a solo dance of Rainer's invention from 1961, a yellow plywood column was placed on one side of the stage. In her mid-career memoirs, *Work: 1961-73* (1974), Rainer recalls a repetitive series of movements 'with many changes in frontal orientation', combined with finger-twiddling and the occasional utterance of the line 'I told you everything would be alright, Harry'.³³³ *The Bells* included the kind of 'goofy glamour' and found movement that typified the early phase of Rainer's dance. In *Feelings are Facts*, she narrates that George Sugarman had built the column for the performance, painting it yellow to match the decor. Not even ancillary in its peripheral status, the column merged with the furniture, relating to the rest of the scenery by colour alone.³³⁴ She goes on to inform the reader that, 'Bob [Morris] found it in the wings and painted it gray, then in rehearsal made it fall over while standing inside it. He cut his lip on that occasion and in the actual performance [*Column* (1961)] attached a string to the column, which he pulled from

³³³ Rainer, *Work*, p. 285.

³³⁴ As Rainer recalls, 'No one I talked to afterwards had even seen the column despite my repeated crossings before and behind it!' See, Rainer, "Notes on Two Dances", p. 2.

offstage to effect the toppling'.³³⁵ Rainer's prop was thus repurposed by Morris, painted a neutral tone and recast as a 'primary structure': indeed, his *Column* (1961) would become known as the first 'minimal' object.

Sometime after *The Bells*, the artist and impresario of Happenings, George Brecht invited Morris to participate in an evening with the Living Theater; agreeing to this, Morris devised a seven-minute performance in which the rectilinear column was pulled to the ground halfway through by a length of invisible string, where it remained for a consecutive three-and-a-half minutes.³³⁶ Rosalind Krauss's dramatic rendition of *Column* in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977) foreshadows Rainer's renewed focus on the object; noting that 'there is very little visual difference between it and the subsequent work that Morris showed in gallery or museum contexts as sculpture', Krauss designates the column a 'performer'.³³⁷ The object is, in her words, imbued with 'a kind of stage presence' that carries through to the exhibition context – a description that tallies with Rainer's prehistory of the object of Hay's two dances as 'body-substitute'.

From studio to theatre to gallery, the 'first' minimal sculpture was conditioned by the various locations through which it passed. In a brilliant 2016 article that considers Morris's oeuvre in relation to the rise of gallery network in New York, David Hodge

³³⁵ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 235.

³³⁶ Paul Cummings, 'Oral History Interview with Robert Morris', Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 10 March 1968, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oralhistory-interview-robert-morris-13065>, accessed 18 August 2018.

³³⁷ Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), pp. 203. Krauss writes, 'The curtain parts. In the center of the stage is a column, standing upright, eight feet high, two feet on a side, plywood, painted grey. Nothing else is on the stage. For three and a half minutes nothing happens; no one enters or leaves. Suddenly the column falls. Three and a half minutes elapse, the curtain closes. The author, in 1961, of both this performance and its 'performer' was the sculptor Robert Morris. Although the column was devised for an expressly theatrical setting, there is very little visual difference between it and the subsequent work that Morris showed in gallery or museum contexts as sculpture. But for most critics, it was not only the column's monolithic simplicity that carried over into Morris's later work; it was the set of implied theatrical components as well—a sense that the large obdurate forms that Morris went on to make possessed a kind of stage presence, like the column's. See, Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, pp. 201-3.

explores the ‘transfers of meaning’ precipitated by these changes in location.³³⁸ Hodge quotes Morris as reflecting in 2011 that, since *Column* was fabricated in his low-ceilinged studio, it had to be relocated in order to be set upright. Passing from the studio to the theatre out of necessity, the object’s fall onstage eclipses these different locations. Hodge responds to ‘the profoundly alienating experience presented in Morris’s performance [*Column*]’ as follows:

Since Morris could only view *Column* in its intended orientation *after* it left his working space, any idea of a ‘true’ locus receded. Furthermore, although the ‘fall’ in Morris’s performance does still seem to indicate some kind of descent or debasement, the deep ontological split within this work becomes fully evident in his subsequent installation *Two Columns* (1961). This comprises two copies of the earlier sculpture, one standing vertically and one lying horizontally, replicating the performance’s two halves. Here *Column* straddles its different locations, torn asunder by the distance between studio and gallery. With no distinction between them, *Two Columns* manifests the erasure of any locational privilege which emerges from the work’s production within a circulation process.³³⁹

Hodge argues that accounts of minimal art have tended to over-invest in a phenomenological formalism that was first propounded by Morris and later extended by Krauss.³⁴⁰ While making sense of the activation of the viewer in space, this way of seeing fails to relate the ‘location’ of that space to an evolving art world network that was governed by the logic of commodity exchange. In Hodge’s view, the synchronic presentation of *Two Columns* serves to index the lack of a proper locus, the very attraction of minimal art for emergent gallerists and dealers who were focused on the circulation of goods. This cogent argument makes *Column*’s ‘set of implied theatrical components’ – this is Krauss’s attribution – indicative of a ‘theatre’ of market circulation.³⁴¹ It shows how the

³³⁸ David Hodge, ‘Robert Morris’s Minimal Sculpture, the Rise of the Gallery Network and the Aesthetics of Commodified Art’, in *Oxford Art Journal*, Volume 39, Issue 3, 1 December 2016, pp. 421–439.

³³⁹ Hodge, ‘Robert Morris’s Minimal Sculpture’, p. 429.

³⁴⁰ While Hodge does not use the term ‘phenomenological formalism’ in this article, it serves to describe the tendency he addresses. Morris uses this term in conversation with Benjamin Buchloh. See, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘A Conversation with Robert Morris in 1985’, in *Robert Morris: October Files* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), p. 60.

³⁴¹ Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, p. 203.

production and display of the aesthetic object coincided with its circulation through the marketplace.

In “Don’t Give the Game Away”, Rainer’s initial description of Morris’s *Untitled* (1967), ‘It doesn’t ‘aspire’: it squats’, led her to focus on the mass and volume of her own body. Given the object’s stabilisation in *one* location – ‘it is talked about, it is in the house, it is he’ – this attention could not help but feed into a reactionary ‘phenomenological formalism’, hence her frustration with it.³⁴² Hodge allows us to see how the circulation or *movement* of an object can have real consequences for how it is perceived. It follows that the way to best understand the effects of this ‘formalism’ is to rigorously track the ways in which it is manipulated or passed through hands. If the gallery network offers one avenue for exploration, the performance situation, as theorised by Rainer, presents another.³⁴³ (And in fact, there may be a way of combining the two).

This is further brought out by a consideration of the final section of Rainer’s commentary on Hay, in which she focuses specifically on, as she writes, ‘the relationship between the objects themselves and the performers who manipulate them’.³⁴⁴ Hay has rendered the helpers as inconspicuous as possible. For instance, in *Rise* the wooden flat provides a literal cover for the assistant tasked with moving it across the stage, while in *No. 3* the ‘manipulators’, who are ‘camouflaged’ in grey and positioned at some distance from the bricks, pull them with an invisible string. As Rainer reflects, ‘One begins to wonder who is acting on what, or what on whom. Here again the drama of the object-movement supersedes that of the performer-movement’.³⁴⁵ In this final section, the notion of a role-reversal has given way to effective power-sharing between these helpers and objects;

³⁴² This plays out in the contradictory statements she makes about it. Towards the end of her reading, Rainer writes, ‘In front of a Morris I have a reverie; I wait for the object to ‘look back’ at me, then hold it responsible when it doesn’t’. See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

³⁴³ By foregrounding ‘phenomenological formalism’ I do not mean to label Morris a reactionary artist. Indeed, as Hodge makes clear, he was attuned to this process of circulation both through his commitment to performance and his testing out of the gallery context.

³⁴⁴ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 3.

comprising one ‘protagonist’, helper and object are consolidated into the relative unity (relative, that is, to the division of the two protagonists), of ‘object-movement’. But Rainer, who is avidly following the ‘codes’ that are produced live, comes up against a stumbling block that compels her to acknowledge ‘the inability’, in Peggy Phelan’s words, ‘to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body’. For, while camouflaged and muffled, ‘none of this activity is invisible’.³⁴⁶ Her conclusion frames the protagonists’ in/visibility in a way that chimes with Phelan’s interrogation of sexual difference vis-à-vis performance: ‘The beauty of the dance lies in the ambiguities that are set up in terms of relationships and roles that challenge our preconceptions about performance’.³⁴⁷

Rainer’s analysis pairs the detachment and objectivity of the *nouveau roman* with the recognition of an insuperable ambiguity (for Robbe-Grillet, read: complicity). This allows her to hold the door open on the performances themselves, to avoid ‘supplementing’ them with a strong reading. She does not reproduce what she sees; instead she juggles spatial relations and *relationships*: an open-ended process. In doing so, she paradoxically comes closer to fulfilling the brief of the *nouveau roman*: registering her own responses as they emerge, she nevertheless accepts a ‘constitutive lack’. While this term emerges through Phelan’s Lacanian reading of performance, it usefully suggests how Rainer makes ambiguity the centre of the work, something that is achieved *through* her readings of the performance’s additive visual codes. It is therefore fitting that her commentary ends with a discussion of ‘camouflage’.

The visibility of the manipulators, and the objects they control, renders the idea of camouflage ‘somewhat literary, or ornamental’ to the extent that it is not successful. However, as Rainer goes on to suggest, ‘What this device [camouflage] does accomplish is the equalising of the total environment pictorially so that the essential elements of the dance can emerge’.³⁴⁸ This parting observation chimes with her more recent reflection on the influence of Robbe-Grillet on her own choreographic practice, as presented in the

³⁴⁶ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 3.

³⁴⁷ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 3.

³⁴⁸ Rainer, “Notes on Two Dances”, p. 3.

introduction. To recall, the nouveau roman's tenets of detachment and objectivity allowed her to 'obviate' the beauty of performer (her views on Hay's *Giselle* reflect this) by "equalizing' the relationships of the movement particles I was coming up with'. The notion of a whole, or total environment, is germane to both minimal sculpture and the variant of dance described here by Rainer. But her conclusion is roundabout and threaded with the awareness of the dance's ambiguities. In effect, her approach to the whole reprises Lippard's and, in a different context, Judd's preference for the 'near standstill' or 'near whole'. The environment may be total, but it is subject to a 'pervasive mood' that cannot be reconciled. It is thus up to the viewer to sustain an interest in the face of "theater-objects' that don't 'look back'.

By focusing on Rainer's criticism and comparing her approach to that of the nouveau roman, I have more of a sense of the type of spectatorship precipitated by her own dance work. For as we will see, many of the themes introduced here are pertinent to a discussion of her dance. In the next chapter we come closer to a study of *Trio A*, the dance that comes closest to realising her conception of 'object-movement', a term that implicates the body in ways that remain to be seen. Again, rather than focus directly on the dance, I begin with the literature in order to locate blind spots that might further illuminate the way forwards.

Chapter Three: Locating *Trio A*

3.0 Introduction

Chapter Three examines how Yvonne Rainer's signal dance, *Trio A* (1966) has been pictured: by dance criticism then, and art history now. While not an exhaustive survey, this review of the literature serves a twofold purpose: To describe formal correspondences between the style and address of 1960s criticism and dance, thereby extending the argument of the previous two chapters; and to consider how recent art-historical scholarship has framed *Trio A* in relation to emergent media. In a sense, this chapter reprises the five orders of statements outlined in the Introduction to Chapter One, applying these to one object-of-study. Except *Trio A* is also 'different from' one object, for since its inception it has been taught onstage, written about, notated, reversed, filmed, activated as a protest action, included as an element in other work, and performed in many different contexts.³⁴⁹ Because of this performance history, *Trio A* has become a subject *for* criticism *apart from* its material presentation, an exemplary status that constitutes a site of contestation within, and point of self-reflection for, dance- and art history. If this chapter deals with the reception of *Trio A* and the way it has been purposed as a disciplinary object for art history, Chapters Four and Five consider the material presentation of the dance in depth. Where Chapter Four looks to the artist writings that informed *Trio A*, Chapter Five focuses on Rainer's phenomenological reflections about dance written during the time leading up to the composition of *Trio A*. Given the 'object like' status of *Trio A*, this trajectory leads me to a renewed understanding of the body-object of minimalism.

Having provided a brief introduction to the dance, this chapter starts with 1960s criticism. I focus on the reviews of Jill Johnston, who held a weekly dance column at *The Village Voice* through the 1960s, alongside the responses of other critics and peers.

³⁴⁹ For a comprehensive overview of its history, as of 2009, See, Yvonne Rainer, "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation", in *Dance Research Journal* 41/2, Winter, 2009.

Following Sally Banes's commentary on Johnston's style, I argue that the latter's production of 'cartoonish' names to describe *Trio A* stands in a metonymic relation to the props that were circulated through rehearsals, pedagogy, and performance. Here I double down on Rainer's assessment of Deborah Hay's choreography, as explored in Chapter Two, in order to further articulate the performer-prop relationship in relation to an economy of movement or circulation. The dissertation's formulated term, body-object, is then related to this discussion. My aim is to show how specific types of language corresponded to the 'surface mechanisms' of *Trio A*, a type of mediation that, for reasons discussed in Chapter One, is captured by the status of the prop.

Tracking forwards to more recent art-historical scholarship, the second part of this chapter offers a critical appraisal of Carrie Lambert-Beatty's monograph, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (2008), with a particular focus on her chapter "Mediating *Trio A*", which extends a 1999 article of a similar title.³⁵⁰ Contrasting Lambert-Beatty's approach to that taken by Johnston and others, I argue that she approaches *Trio A* through the rules set by a proxy medium: photography. For her chapter opens with the following injunction: 'Start with the photographs and the focus shifts: from a dance's relation to dance as an art form, to the relation between a dance and its images'.³⁵¹ I query Lambert-Beatty's likening of the form of *Trio A* to the structure of the photographic index, arguing that this imputed homology effects a structural division between the dance's mechanism and its subject matter, or material. In my view this is a strategic move, for she is primarily invested in sketching the parameters of a new critical model, one that is closer in kind to coeval structuralist discourse than to actual developments in dance. I consider how this argument is part of a broader reading of the 1960s by considering comparable analyses. This comparison, between early and recent reception, will allow us to grapple with two conflicting understandings of mediation: one geared toward context and surroundings, the other, to the emergence of mass media.

³⁵⁰ See, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Mediating Yvonne Rainer's "Trio A", in *October*, Vol. 89, Summer, 1999, pp. 87-112.

³⁵¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 131.

In closing, I think further about the performer-prop relation through a study of the evolution of the mattress through Rainer's choreography and writing practice, thereby doubling down on this first understanding of mediation. This study lays the ground for Chapter Four's close reading of primary materials related to *Trio A*.

3.1 A Rehearsal of *Trio A*

Trio A is, today, a central point of orientation in the museum's and gallery's understanding of contemporary art. Curators have, for the past thirty years, worked it into spaces and programmes.³⁵² It is a dance that reflects the value of dance (for the art world) back to dancers. Due to its overwhelming popularity, Rainer's relationship to the work has become increasingly guarded and legislative. Where she used to imagine herself as a kind of 'postmodern dance evangelist', set on teaching the movement series to the masses, in recent times she has permitted five choreographers to transmit it, to the exclusion of the rest of the profession.³⁵³ These official transmitters are tasked with sparing the work from the detrimental effects of bad technique and other media, and with making sure that the original intentions and design of the author are preserved. For, as Rainer tells in a 2009 article, *Trio A* is the only extant section of her dance output from the 1960s.³⁵⁴ Tracing a line of continuity to the present, she chronicles its preservation through many different points of transmission.

³⁵² As Rainer responds to choreographer Sara Wookey in interview, 'So the museum is not the ideal place for me. I have had the experience of *Trio A* with a curator wanting the audience to walk through it! *Trio A* is frontal. It has this very specific relation to the audience. These are art historians who don't know what they are looking at. That, probably, is changing now.' See, Sara Wookey, ed. *Who Cares? Dance in the Gallery & Museum* (London: Siobhan Davies Dance, 2015), p. 55.

³⁵³ 'Why try to cast it in stone? Why am I now so finicky and fastidious, so critical of my own performance, so autocratic about the details — the hands go this way, not that way, the gaze here, not there, the feet at this angle, not that? In the last decade I have become far more rigorous — some might call it obsessive — not only with respect to the qualifications of those whom I allow to teach the dance but in my own transmission of its peculiarities'. See, Rainer, "*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation", p. 17.

³⁵⁴ Rainer writes: 'Influenced in one way or another by John Cage's polemics against notions of 'genius,' and the eternal masterpiece, we gave little thought to documentation other than photography, with the result that much time-based work from that decade has disappeared'. See, Rainer, "*Trio A*: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation", p. 16.

If for Rainer, museums have gone too far in making room for the perceived blurring of media that characterised the 1960s moment, it is also true that her occasional sanctions against curators themselves follow on from what she in 1989 called ‘the ‘legalistic, abstracted-from-social-reality frame of mind that dominated much of the thinking about art at that time’.³⁵⁵ In order to draw this contradiction out I will provide a brief account of the dance.

Yvonne Rainer worked on the movement series, *Trio A* alone in her studio over a period of a few months in 1965.³⁵⁶ It debuted under the title *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I* at the Judson Memorial Church, 1966, as a trio performed by Rainer and fellow choreographers, Steve Paxton and David Gordon (Plate XVI). ‘One of the most singular elements in it’, Rainer reflects in “Quasi Survey” (1968), ‘is that there are no pauses between phrases’.³⁵⁷ Traditionally, phrasing in dance follows a tripartite structure, whereby the preparation, climax, and recovery of a single phrase are legible in terms of a beginning, middle, and end. In turn, phrases comprised of technical vocabularies are combined to tell a story whose dynamics, rhythm, and duration rely on a music accompaniment – for instance a grand jeté might signify as one unit in the broader schema of a *pas de deux*. In this example, the dancer’s *ballon*, or ability to effortlessly sustain a leap, is a marker of virtuosity and skill. Where previous Judson performance disrupted this structure by introducing heterodox material to the stage such as walking and sneakers, marking and chatter, *Trio A* challenged the medium by intervening on the constitutive level of phrasing. Developing a continuous and apparently unmodulated kind of movement, Rainer engineered a situation in which no one discrete movement was made to seem more

³⁵⁵ Rainer, “Revisiting the Question of Transgression”, p. 103.

³⁵⁶ The circumstances of *Trio A*’s production are explored in Chapter Five. As Rainer recalls, ‘Upon returning [to New York] from our Scandinavian tour, I resumed work on a new solo, calling it *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I*, a title that announced the first section—later called *Trio A*—of what would eventually be an evening-length dance for six people. I worked doggedly every day, accumulating tiny bits of movement. By the end of the year I was teaching it’. See, Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 266.

³⁵⁷ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, pp. 269-70.

significant than any other. At the same time, the dance is incredibly intricate, involving varied kinds of movement vocabulary and a rigid adherence to geometric floor patterns that makes learning it an arduous task.³⁵⁸

Rainer describes the quality of *Trio A*'s movement as follows: 'What is seen is a control that seems geared to the *actual* time it takes the *actual* weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions'. By 'actual' she marks a break with the hieratic image of the ballerina on two fronts: First, by substituting synthetic musical time with the movement's duration, i.e. the 'actual' time it takes the body to go through its 'prescribed motions'. (For this reason, there is no fixed length for *Trio A*; while it takes approximately four-and-a-half minutes to complete, this depends on the speed, mood, or inclination of the individual performer. As a result, the trio of performers shift in-and-out of sync as the movement series unfolds). Second, 'actual' refers to the look of the dance. In traditional phrasing, energy output is concentrated on the climax of a movement; as a result, Rainer explains, 'One part of the phrase – usually the part that is the most still – becomes the focus of attention, registering like a photograph or suspended moment of climax'.³⁵⁹ Phrasing thus lends itself to photographic capture and a passive mode of spectatorship. By instigating a continuous string of movement, energy in *Trio A* is spread equally over each part of the phrase, so that preparation and recovery are no longer auxiliary to the movement's climax. In "Quasi Survey" Rainer describes this equalised movement in terms of the difference between 'apparent' and 'real' kinds of energy output. If the former generates moments of photogenic climax, it happens that 'actual' energy output – and here it is necessary to point out that the 'look' of unmodulated movement is achieved in practice through a range of energy differentials – is difficult to see. To use Rainer's phrase, continuous movement leads to the work's 'seeing difficulty'.³⁶⁰ For it is important that *Trio A* retains the classic separation of performer and audience; the frontal perspective ensures

³⁵⁸ Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson was taught *Trio A* by Rainer in 2008. See, Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Practicing *Trio A*", in *October* 140, Spring 2012, pp. 55-74.

³⁵⁹ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 266.

³⁶⁰ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 272.

the dance is staged in the correct way.³⁶¹ The effect on spectatorship is further reinforced by the instruction that the performer(s) avert their gaze from the audience through the entirety of the performance. Of course, a paradox of this is that *Trio A* very much remains an object of spectatorship: while Rainer has described its movement as ‘worklike rather than exhibitionlike’, to link its presentation of movement to other forms of labouring or activity misses the point.³⁶²

Nevertheless, Rainer’s theorisation of energy expenditure creates, in the words of Annette Michelson, a ‘radically new economy of movement’.³⁶³ Energy on its own terms suggests a materialist basis; the challenge comes in understanding how this is mediated by the historical circumstances of the aesthetic object, *Trio A*. As this chapter explores, mediation is related by Lambert-Beatty to the image. Working through more proximate materials, in Chapter Four we shall see how Rainer’s focus on energy redirects Robert Morris’s writings on the gestalt in “Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two” (1966) – for this resource provided her with a way to think about the equalising of parts in dance. Before going on to analyse the mechanics of *Trio A* in their narrow, operational sense, it is necessary to know what the main issues at stake are for the critical literature and the art world more broadly. I now proceed to think about its uptake by critics and historians, then and now.

³⁶¹ Rainer has expressed rancour for curators who insist on letting gallery goers walk *around* the dance; an insistence that marks a difference to the viewing situation of minimal sculpture.

³⁶² Catherine Wood, curator of performance at Tate, makes this point very well: ‘The simplicity of her movement’s repetitive, minimal forms finds value and beauty in an idealised notion of ‘everyday existence’ that did not literally represent the nature of work in an increasingly industrialised America. The socialist reading of Rainer’s work is seductive, but it is too straightforward to accommodate the virulent performativity that is always at play. As is indicated by the studied nature of the ‘ordinary’ costumes, the choreography of *The Mind is a Muscle* has much more to do with image and illusion than Rainer’s discussion about work, task and the elimination of stylisation seems to admit’. See, Catherine Wood, *Yvonne Rainer: The Mind is a Muscle (One Work: Afterall)*; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 81.

³⁶³ Annette Michelson, “Yvonne Rainer”, in *Artforum*, XII (January 1974), p. 58.

3.2 Dance Criticism, Jill Johnston, and the Circulation of Props

Reviewing the debut performance of *Trio A* for the March 1966 edition of *Dance Magazine*, then America's main dance periodical, critic Jack Anderson writes:

Three dance-choreographers offered old works, new works, and works-in-progress. In her still-in-progress *The Mind is a Muscle* [*Trio A*] Yvonne Rainer gave herself, David Gordon, and Steve Paxton bouncy, springy movements reminiscent of calisthenics in some imaginary gymnasium. As they danced, strips of wood fell from the Judson Church balcony. Occurring at the edge of the stage area and intended to be glimpsed from the corner of one's eye, this device, rather than being a distraction, helped the dancers evoke the feeling of an always exhilarating, and never wearisome, perpetual motion.³⁶⁴

Anderson's brief review of *Trio A*, which debuted at the Judson Memorial Church over the evenings of January 10, 11, 12, 1966, is positive and upbeat. His tone, though, does not account for all responses to the work.³⁶⁵ If some of the audience found this minimal dance activity tiresome, for him the performance is 'exhilarating'. Given our understanding of *Trio A*'s unmodulated distribution of energy, its flat comportment, recalcitrant gaze, and anticlimactic structure, his description of 'bouncy, springy movements' seems amiss — a misreading of the dance as it would be theorised by Rainer.

Except Anderson's review is not informed by a summative understanding of *Trio A*, of what it means and does. Rather, his point of view is situated and uninformed, conveying the feeling of the performers and audience on those evenings. (Anderson, who moved to New York in 1964 to take up a role as critic to *Dance Magazine*, had been caught up in the Off-off-Broadway scene for some time.)³⁶⁶ Moreover, his reading is enmeshed in other sense

³⁶⁴ Jack Anderson, "Yvonne Rainer, David Gordon, Steve Paxton: Judson Memorial Church, January 10, 11, 12, 1966", in *Dance Magazine*, March 1966, p. 30.

³⁶⁵ As Rainer tells Lyn Blumenthal: 'It was a very unpopular concert. At that point the audiences at Judson were getting tired of some of the minimalist work. They were bored. The work was pretty dry... The only way out of Judson, if you were in the audience, was to walk across the performance space, and that is what happened at that concert. You had to be pretty disgusted—pretty unhappy to make a spectacle of yourself in that way'. See, Rainer, "Interview with Lyn Blumenthal", in Yvonne Rainer, ed., *A Woman Who... Essays Interviews, Scripts* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 65.

³⁶⁶ For a critical history of the New York Off-off-Broadway scene, to which the Judson Memorial Church played host, See Stephen J. Bottoms, *Playing Underground: A Critical*

impressions, concerning the relationship of the dancer-choreographers; the work's continued development, 'in progress'; those clattering, falling 'strips of wood', and, by extension, the interior architecture of the sanctuary's performance area, with its balcony, stage, and floor, here made to allude to 'an imaginary gymnasium'.³⁶⁷ These are factors usually left out of accounts of the dance that focus more narrowly on its formal innovations. In this chapter I want to keep this peripheral activity in view.

At the same time, Anderson's excitement is tempered by a matter-of-factness, ensuring the key technical aspect of this movement series was made known: 'perpetual motion'.³⁶⁸ This is what *Trio A* would immediately be known for; from its inception, it presented a 'new kind of movement'. Anderson's registration of 'perpetual motion' suggests that Rainer at least succeeded in transmitting live that aspect that would be enshrined as its key theoretical tenet. Yet the pairing of this constant with 'bouncy, springy movements' is interesting.³⁶⁹ It reminds me of Lippard's presentation in "Eros Presumptive" (1967), discussed in Chapter One, of 'a framework of simplicity, even austerity... [housing] a controlled voluptuousness... [as] manifested by...luxurious or obsessive surfaces and patterns'.³⁷⁰ Anderson's lack of knowledge ironically permits him to register something that is smoothed over in commentaries that followed; namely, *Trio A*'s contradictory *flourishing* of energy outputs. For the dance is beautiful. As we saw from Rainer's readings of Morris, Warhol, and Hay in Chapter Two, the responses of an 'utterly indulgent subjectivity' tend to mitigate, without properly obstructing, more programmatic readings. Anderson's happy-

History of the 1960s Off-off-Broadway Movement (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

³⁶⁷ For Anderson the sanctuary evokes 'some imaginary gymnasium'. In fact, the gymnasium, where the Judson Dance Theater's weekly workshop had, between 1962-64, been held, and where many other performances took place, was located on the other side of the Judson Memorial Church from the sanctuary. It is possible that Anderson confuses these two parts of the building, as work was regularly shown in both spaces.

³⁶⁸ Anderson, "Yvonne Rainer", p. 30.

³⁶⁹ The metaphor of a 'string' of movement comes from Rainer, who, while describing the process of developing *Trio A*, said in interview: 'I didn't know how I would link them [discrete movements] up. I was not going to use chance procedures. And they would be strung together as I made them.' See, Yvonne Rainer, "Interview by Lyn Blumenthal", in *A Woman Who... Essays Interviews, Scripts* (1984; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 62.

³⁷⁰ Lippard, "Eros Presumptive", p. 217.

go-lucky tone presents a useful counterpoint to Jill Johnston, who was far more informed about its conceptualisation.

In a way different from Anderson, whose status as an insider was not then accredited, *Village Voice* dance critic, Jill Johnston writes for two audiences: the relatively-interested general readership, and those who constituted the Off-off-Broadway scene: artists and choreographers; other critics, including Anderson; curators and organisers, poets and Greenwich villagers. As Rainer reflects in the opening scenes of *Work: 1961–73* (1974), Johnston represented a lead figure:

What stands out to me... [is] the exhilaration produced by the response of the incredibly partisan audiences, the feverish anticipation of each new review in the *Village Voice* [*sic*] by Jill Johnston and the resultant discord (from the beginning she was mentioning ‘this one’ more, or more favorably, than ‘that one’). Whatever she wrote, her columns were the greatest single source of PR since Clement Greenberg plugged Jackson Pollock.³⁷¹

For Greenberg the review or critical essay is a form categorically distinct from the medium under consideration: the critic superintends the artwork’s entry to the aesthetic after the precedent of Kantian self-criticism.³⁷² Conversely, Johnston recognised that the rules of the game were changing; the artist-critic functioned as key player.³⁷³ “Public Relations” describes a critical one-sidedness that defined the rules of the game at this time. With frequent Happenings and concerts taking place through ‘relatively socially-closed’ loft spaces and backyards, artistic form developed through the exchanges of a clique. Note that Johnston herself organised concerts, composed choreographies, and occasionally performed in the same circles as Rainer.³⁷⁴ This game ensured the ‘painterly signifier’ that

³⁷¹ Yvonne Rainer, *Work: 1961-73* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Press, 1974), pp. 8-9.

³⁷² See, Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting”, in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-69* Ed. John O’Brian (1961; Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

³⁷³ As discussed in Chapter Four. See, Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁷⁴ Or else, consider critic Lucy Lippard’s contribution of a ‘random ‘readymade’ text for a catalogue of a Duchamp exhibition at MoMA’ that was listed as an artwork.: ‘In another

delimited Greenberg's praise for Pollock was spread over a sanctioned field of activity.³⁷⁵

Johnston was part of a world from which Modernist critics were largely excluded.³⁷⁶ As

Rainer admits, her audiences were 'incredibly partisan', suggesting that the stakes of art-making and spectatorship mirrored the intensity of this term's connoted political strife.³⁷⁷

Rainer's comparison is in some sense apt. Like Greenberg, Johnston had allies; while *Trio*

A was an 'autonomous and self-perpetuating exercise' that matched the rigour of the

former's canon. Unlike Greenberg, however, Johnston responded stylistically to the terms

set for criticism by practice. The critic's evaluation still holds, but the reader is obliged to

take into consideration what was happening around that evaluation, and the mode in which

it was presented. Details of social life, public and private, frequently appeared in her dance

column alongside formal descriptions that mimicked emergent style.³⁷⁸ Johnston's review,

"Rainer's Muscle" is written in a style that is adequate to the advancements signalled by

version of role-blurring, I was asked to write a critical text in absentia (as I was living in Spain) for the influential Information show at MoMA in the momentous year of 1970, the year of Cambodia Spring and of the Kent State and Jackson State massacres. When I produced an incomprehensible randomly selected 'thing', curator Kynaston McShine had no choice but to list me as an artist, since the critical text he had asked for was definitely in absentia. (He let me do another random 'readymade' text for a catalogue of a Duchamp exhibition at MoMA. We got away with a lot in those days!) See, Lucy Lippard, "Curating by Numbers," in *Tate Papers* (Landmark Exhibitions Issue) Issue 12, 2009, <<http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7268>>

³⁷⁵ The spur to this transition was Allan Kaprow, whose 1958 essay on Jackson Pollock focuses on the performance of his practice, thus subverting the terms of Greenberg's claims for Pollock. See, Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock", in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁷⁶ Note that certain critics, such as a young Rosalind Krauss, held an allegiance to both Modernist criticism and emergent artistic practice. The nuances of this are captured by Amy Newman. See, Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* (New York: Soho Press, 2003).

³⁷⁷ In a paper she delivered on April 14, 1989, as part of a symposium titled *Strategies of Performance Art 1960-1989*, Rainer reflects: 'Although there were artists in the '60s who were attempting to integrate social criticism and formal concerns... real passion and desperate fervor were expended on art-making and theorising as autonomous and self-perpetuating exercises'. See, Yvonne Rainer, "Revisiting the Question of Transgression (1989), in *A Woman Who...*, p. 103.

³⁷⁸ Writing in 1994, Sally Banes makes the following observation: 'Johnston's participation in the aesthetic revolution of the sixties was so direct that her style and method of writing changed drastically... A fragmented, visionary, yet matter-of-fact style, studded with clichés and puns, became Johnston's hallmark after 1965'. Banes continues this trajectory, writing that, 'After she came out in print as a radical lesbian July 2, 1970, the columns became a soapbox for her evolving political ideology'. See, Sally Banes, "Jill Johnston: Signaling through the Flames", in *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p. 8.

Trio A; an openness – after Susan Sontag 1964 invective against interpretation – to *how* Johnston’s style is, rather than to ‘what it means’, may help clarify the specific relation between criticism and performance.

Compare Anderson’s review to the conversant tenor of Johnston’s review. Published in the April 18, 1968 edition of *The Village Voice*, “Rainer’s Muscle” discusses *The Mind is a Muscle*, an evening-length performance that featured two versions of *Trio A*.³⁷⁹ This longer work was presented at the Anderson Theater, New York, over April 11, 14, and 15 1968, and forms an elaboration on the earlier ‘in-progress’ *Trio A* reviewed by Anderson. Nevertheless, the latter dance’s structure remains intact, meaning Johnston is responding to the same work cast in a different context. “Rainer’s Muscle” has been selected for three reasons: First, in more recent scholarship figures of speech from this review have been lifted, decontextualised, and made to stand for an authenticated first reading of *Trio A*, and hence as a foil; second, because it metabolises Rainer’s coeval commentary on *Trio A*, “A Quasi Survey” in interesting ways; and finally, because its focus on the passage from *Trio A*’s debut in 1966 to its inclusion in *The Mind is a Muscle* in 1968 foregrounds a processual dimension.

The review opens with an idiosyncratic history of *The Mind is a Muscle*:

The work began in 1965 as a little snowball (four and a half minutes called *Trio A*) which was slowly pushed over familiar and unfamiliar territory to its present state as a huge ball containing the history of its journey. The process was accretive rather than protean. I’m sentimentally attached to it as one might be toward a baby whose birth you attended and subsequently watched in its expanded versions of itself. *Trio A* was the germinal origin of the dance. The woolen underwear, a pretty tough fabric, to be covered (though never obscured) by a multi-faceted garment made of the same sturdy stuff with certain additional embellishments. I’ve seen *Trio A* a number of times and still think I haven’t really seen it. The underwear metaphor isn’t a good one from the view that you’ve never seen such intricate underwear.³⁸⁰

“Rainer’s Muscle” plots the development of *The Mind is a Muscle* via a series of cartoonish names that indicate her comradely involvement. The dance is ‘a baby’ to which

³⁷⁹ Jill Johnston, “Rainer’s Muscle”, in *The Village Voice*, April 18, 1968; reprinted in Jill Johnston, *Marmalade Me* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971).

³⁸⁰ Johnston, “Rainer’s Muscle”, p. 65.

she is sentimentally attached, where ‘baby’ is an inoffensive metaphor that mollifies the serious issue of formal adaptations. The same goes for ‘snowball’. A secondary register anchors the meaning of these names: If ‘baby’ stands for the growth of a mutual concern, ‘snowball’ indicates the vagaries of that growth as it passes ‘over familiar and unfamiliar territory’. Because of this anchorage these names elicit imagery that separates from the narrative. For instance, ‘snowball’ stands for a process that is ‘accretive rather than protean’. Because of this extra information, the ‘little snowball’ is set free, a denotation whose image drifts over the normative account of the work. ‘Woolen underwear’, however, is a clunky metaphor that complicates the denotative ease of ‘snowball’ and ‘baby’. For this underwear’s fabrication, ‘a pretty tough fabric’, suggests a durable, durational, enduring, *boring* quality, one that cued with some critics’ responses to *The Mind is a Muscle*. (As we shall see, this metaphor was selected in isolation by Carrie Lambert-Beatty to stand for Johnston’s regard for *Trio A*.)

Underwear is a threshold image that connotes the opposing acts of dressing and undressing, private and public, concealment and exposure: hence its stymying effect on the name game. Straddling these different states, Johnston heaps pressure on this image by introducing a ‘multi-faceted garment made of the same sturdy stuff with certain embellishments’, thus linking *Trio A* to *The Mind is a Muscle*. But this pressuring is deliberate, it creates a drag effect that temporarily grounds the game established in the review’s opening paragraph. We do not know whether she is evaluating the dance – for she adds the qualification, ‘you’ve never seen such intricate underwear’ – or whether ‘intricacy’ in fact stands for a withholding of judgment in recognition of its ongoing development. This game is ambiguous, it seems to riff off the dance to achieve different ends and effects. No judgment has been meted out; rather, Johnston’s idiosyncratic style invites us to read differently.

Her chosen names are both evaluative, descriptive, and pleasing in their own right, a multivalence that signals a movement across the page. Johnston’s interjection, ‘the underwear metaphor isn’t a good one’, serves to alleviate this metaphor’s drag effect,

recovering some buoyancy that keeps this drift on the page live. Though ‘snowball’, ‘baby’, and ‘underwear’ may at first appear to be metaphors, capable of disclosing hidden intentions and meanings, they are by association closer to the comportment of props, onto which certain meanings are displaced, whether it be to produce a dramatic effect from non-dramatic material, or to dampen the effect of a run-of-the-mill cliché. For Johnston’s dance column at the *Village Voice* occupied the same institutional space as the Judson Dance Theater: they advance the same interest, their concern is mutual.

Johnston’s stylistic experimentation, which studiously mimicked artistic production, suggests these names are imbued with a kind of material potential. Following art historian Liz Kotz’s dynamic 2007 book on language in the 1960s, one can argue that these cartoonish names are related to the event score.³⁸¹ As Kotz tells, this format developed in New York around 1960 in response to the teachings of John Cage. Formalised through the publication of La Monte Young’s compendium, *An Anthology of Chance Operations* (1961/63), these short, instructive texts precipitated a range of responses. In Kotz’s words, the event score ‘can be read... under a number of rubrics: music scores, visual art, poetic texts, performance instructions, or proposals for some kind of action or procedure’.³⁸² This multivalence syncs with the cartoonish names of Johnston’s review, as I read them here. Kotz goes on to observe that ‘The concrete, operational dimension of such scores engages an overt *transitivity*, a potential acting on materials’.³⁸³ The actions of the artist served to circulate these transitive scores across media, but they also engaged the reader performatively in a direct, if equivocal manner.³⁸⁴ Kotz links this type of language production to the object, for the materiality of print, the medium that supports the transmission of the object score, is constitutive of other forms of materiality. Event scores, sculpture, and performance entered a kind of equivalence through the ways in which they

³⁸¹ Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked at: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

³⁸² Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*, p. 61.

³⁸³ Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*, p. 62.

³⁸⁴ As Kotz writes, The event scores ‘oddly condensed and inscrutable form perhaps facilitated their rapid circulation between performance, publication, and exhibition formats’. See, Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*, p. 63.

were displayed and activated. Thus a word could, as she puts it, ‘take an object form or produce a material residue’.³⁸⁵ Again, the event score enacts a substitutional economy, whereby ‘transfers of meaning’ between words, objects, and performances are materially ‘contained within just one word’.³⁸⁶ In order to read Johnston’s review through the ‘alternative poetics’ of the event score, it is necessary to provide some idea of the surround. In addition, it is worth bearing in mind that, while Kotz’s contribution fruitfully describes the ‘blurring of media’ that was one driver of Rainer’s choreography, the latter was just as concerned with how to control and delimit meaning.

The names of “Rainer’s Muscle”, explored above, join in with a game started by Rainer in 1966. During rehearsals for *Trio A* she recalls deploying imagery to give direction to performers: ‘I asked him [David Gordon] what kind of imagery he was using. He said ‘I’m thinking of myself as a faun.’ I said ‘Try thinking of yourself as a barrel’. And again, ‘On inquiring how Barbara [Lloyd] had described a particular movement, John [Erdman] said ‘bird-like’. I re-taught it to him as ‘airplane-like’’.³⁸⁷ Reflecting on the images she used as teaching aides for *Trio A*, Rainer later writes, ‘These are metaphors or images delivered by speech that reinforce the physical transmission’.³⁸⁸ While not event scores as such, they functioned in a similar way: Rainer’s images may be likened to props because they enact or condition particular kinds of movement. Word and movement are thus contiguous, comprising a chain of substitutions that potentially link with surrounding material. Though recollected in 1974, these images’ anecdotal character suggest that they were being circulated, as gossip and lore, in the time leading up to Johnston’s review. Because these pedagogical exemplars have subsequently been presented alongside *Trio A* over and again, they form part of the story of that work; they border it like those props that circulated

³⁸⁵ Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*, p. 63.

³⁸⁶ As Kotz observes, ‘This alternative poetics, of deeply prosaic everyday statements, comprised of short, simple vernacular words, presented in the form of lists and instructions, emerges in the postwar era as a countermodel to the earlier avant-garde practices of asyntacticality, musicality, and semiotic disruption’. See, Kotz, *Words to be Looked at*, p. 64.

³⁸⁷ Yvonne Rainer, “Some non-chronological recollections of *The Mind is a Muscle*,” in *Work*, p. 75.

³⁸⁸ Rainer, “Genealogy, Documentation, Notation”, p. 17.

among various concerts at the Judson Memorial Church, orchestrated by various choreographers. And like a choreography for which certain images are required, Johnston saw fit to repurpose the tenor of conversations that were taking place around *Trio A*, leading up to *The Mind is a Muscle*. By this circulation, Johnston's word-choices join the ranks of 'fake grass', 'suitcase', 'bubble wrap and rubber matting', and 'people walls', comical names of props actively and variously used for performances that have subsequently come to represent for art history, at some real expense, that which surrounds but is distinct from 'minimal dance activity'. Note that the arch-sign of this 'activity', *Trio A* is itself listed as an 'object, configuration, character' alongside these props in Rainer's "Etymology of objects, configurations, and characters," an appendix to her *Work*.³⁸⁹ By categorising *Trio A* as such, Rainer not only presents a record of its various appearances through a range of performance contexts: she defines the dance as a material and resource to be rolled out in possible conjunction with other verbal or non-verbal materials, as required by the circumstances. Johnston's names thus form part of 'the history of its journey'; they exist in a contiguous relation to the form of the work under discussion, much like the brief interim that joined the debut of *Trio A* to the 'giant plastic bag' and 'loudspeaker', props used Steve Paxton for his 'in-progress' work, *Unfinished Work: Augmented* (1966). Seen in this light, 'woolen underwear' has the ring of an in-joke, one endowed with a parental favouritism, (for Rainer was a 'star' with great presence, promoted by Johnston).³⁹⁰

But what about the least convincing of Johnston's names, 'woolen underwear'? Was the drag effect produced by it deliberate? In the next section of "Rainer's Muscle", she lets her reader know that she is paraphrasing Rainer's commentary, "A Quasi Survey" by inserting speech marks around two sentences. Gone are the cartoonish names, in place of

³⁸⁹ Yvonne Rainer, "Etymology of objects, configurations, and characters," in *Work: 1961-73*, p. 335.

³⁹⁰ Rainer writes: 'Jill's early role in relation to me—that of self-style PR lady—unfortunately incurred a debt that I feel unequipped to repay in mind.' See, Yvonne Rainer, *Work*, p. 317. Keep in mind that Rainer was *aware* of this 'star' status, and used it as *material* for dance: 'In the final version of *The Mind is a Muscle* the white motif appeared again. Everyone had a chance to be a 'star' – at least in appearance.' See, Rainer, *Work*, p. 77.

which is a technical account of *Trio A*. Recall that ‘intricacy’ is the underwear’s redeeming feature; it is this quality that, upon repeated viewings, recovers an otherwise dour image of a durable fabric. Johnston inserts this predicate among the crop of quotations and paraphrases from “Quasi Survey”, effectively elongating the reach of its subject, ‘woolen underwear’:

The solo seems to consist of innumerable discrete parts or phrases. The *intricacy* lies in the sheer quantity of diverse material presented in a short space of time. Yet all this detail is assimilated by a smooth unaccented continuity rendering some illusion of sameness to the whole thing. Each phrase receives equal emphasis.³⁹¹

Intricacy, we are told, lies in *Trio A*’s ‘sheer quantity of diverse material’’. Yet this designation abstracts and unpicks its sense, whose connotations of finesse, detail, and delicacy are more accurately evoked by the preceding sentence: ‘Innumerable discrete parts or phrases’. If this prior location places ‘intricacy’ within reach of the dancer’s kinetic memory, the attribution of ‘intricacy’ to ‘diverse material’ in the next sentence suggests that *Trio A* is comprised of something other than learnt parts or phrases. Whatever else this ‘diverse material’ might consist of is ultimately ‘assimilated by a smooth unaccented continuity’. Thus, the intricacy of *Trio A*’s ‘diverse material’ is assimilated by the look of ‘unaccented continuity’, its ‘perpetual motion’. Note that *Trio A* comprises phrases derived from balletic- and modern dance vocabularies. ‘Intricacy’ is therefore compounded by the underwear’s less pleasant characteristic, its durability, becoming concrete, prosaic, and transitive. Following its predicates into this technical account, ‘woolen underwear’ is seen to express something contradictory about the dance that accords with Johnston’s experience of it across multiple viewings; namely, the manner in which it sublates the medium of dance by drawing attention to the ‘actual’ body that transmits it while preserving its complex phrasal structure.³⁹²

³⁹¹ My italics.

³⁹² This description of the work was advanced by dance scholar Mark Franko, who posits ‘the formalisation of negated options as a procedure’ structural to *Trio A*’s form. See, Mark Franko, “Some Notes on Yvonne Rainer, Modernism, Politics, Emotion, Performance, and

This name in particular therefore strikes an ‘ambiguous note’ in a way that chimes with Rainer’s approach to criticism in “Don’t Give the Game Away” (1967; see Chapter Two). Her use of images, to quote Rainer, bespeaks ‘an utterly indulgent subjectivity, implemented with some kind of discipline (perhaps a commitment to interaction with the object)’.³⁹³ Both artist-critics explore language and imagery that is contiguous with the work under discussion. Because of Rainer’s and Johnston’s proximity, their writing and performance describe or instantiate ‘transfers of meaning’ that collaboratively develop the sense of the project in hand. Such dance or art criticism somehow shares its ‘surface mechanisms’ through stylistic contiguities and the refusal to impose frameworks from without. The event score as formulated by Kotz is an inexact, but sufficient precedent for this operation. Johnston’s names are embedded in language that anchors (and restrains) their circulation; however, by placing them in conversation with other language, as well as props, the reader may retroactively parse a circulation that informs our understanding of the work of art as shifting between relatively socially-closed and -open spaces. Crucially, this movement belies the perceived ‘deficit’ of moving image-based documentation of 1960s dance, one that has served to legitimise more recent ‘corrective’ analyses.

This may be contrasted by a more recent appraisal of ‘woolen underwear’ as signifying a value judgment about *Trio A*’s everydayness and mundanity, its regularity and incitement to boredom, end up missing the point. By contorting the historical material, this approach return the oscillations of modernist practice to the aesthetic vacuum of modernist criticism, a manoeuvre that takes place under the ambit of the discipline of art history in the U.S. Context, and the editorial interests of *October* journal. In the following discussions, I focus on Carrie Lambert-Beatty’s *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (2008), as this monograph is now the disciplinary standard for her eponymous subject’s early choreography.

the Aftermath”, in Jane C. Desmond, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 296.

³⁹³ Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 47.

3.3 *Being Watched*: A Critical Review

Carrie Lambert-Beatty's 2008 monograph, *Being Watched* provides a definitive account of Rainer's choreographic output of the 1960s. It argues that her dance uniquely reconfigured the conditions of spectatorship through this decade, and in doing so reflected broader social changes.³⁹⁴ *Being Watched* intervenes into dance literature that historicises Rainer's development of the medium by focusing instead on the issue of mediation. The body's physicality is thus intrinsically linked to other insurgent media, such as television, film, and photography, through the dynamics of spectatorship. If Rainer's analysis of Deborah Hay's choreography concerns the interrelation of performer and prop onstage, the performer in Lambert-Beatty's book stands in for a 'period eye' (to use art historian Michael Baxandall's term). Because of its structure, *Trio A* is an exemplary object for the author's study of the 'three-way relation between spectatorship, representation and embodiment'.³⁹⁵ In what follows, I argue that Lambert-Beatty creates a subject for criticism out of *Trio A* that is different from its material presentation, an action that is licensed by its fundamental ontological instability. Though her argument helps us to understand how spectatorship rewired artistic form through this decade, I argue that it is at the expense of a contextual account of the work as it developed across time. In effect, Lambert-Beatty isolates *Trio A*'s structure in order to service a broader project.

Her chapter, "Mediating *Trio A*" begins with a short presentation of critical responses to its debut in 1966. The reviews she selects are allied in their condemnation of the movement series.³⁹⁶ 'Blissfully boring', for instance, comes from the *New York Times* critic, Clive Barnes, who was opposed to Off-off-Broadway. It is therefore noticeable that

³⁹⁴ Lambert-Beatty states her thesis early on as follows: 'I see Rainer's art as structured by a peculiar tension: between showing the purely physical body and *showing* the purely physical body – between the body being, and being watched'. See, Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 6.

³⁹⁵ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 11.

³⁹⁶ 'The dance's refusal to dazzle has always been key to its reception. Critics at the time of its debut described this brief dance as a 'blissfully boring dance number' and a 'sort of boring continuum,' with one reviewer going so far as to single out as 'possibly the most stultifying dance I have ever seen.' Even an enthusiastic Jill Johnston likened *Trio A* to "woolen underwear". See, Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 130.

she includes “Rainer’s Muscle” in this camp, given Johnston’s support for Rainer. ‘Even an enthusiastic Jill Johnston’, she writes, ‘likened *Trio A* to ‘woolen underwear’.³⁹⁷ Her selection of this name is qualified a few sentences down: ‘There is some justice in Johnston’s image. The dance was both serviceable and scratchy—utilitarian in feel and for this, irritating to traditional sensibilities’.³⁹⁸ Note that Lambert-Beatty presents this unruly image in a particular light. For the properties she ascribes to it cohere with a specific version of *Trio A* introduced in the previous paragraph. In 1978, Sally Banes invited Rainer to perform *Trio A* as a solo to be filmed in the studio of Merce Cunningham. Rainer’s subsequent antipathy to this document, which was till recently available to watch on the Getty Research Institute’s YouTube channel, is well known (Plate XVII).³⁹⁹ Note that ‘serviceable and scratchy—utilitarian in feel’ more properly describe the grainy quality of 16mm film than dance movement. ‘Woolen underwear’ effectively supports a version of *Trio A* that has come to represent, through its digitised distribution, a cipher for *every* performance of the dance. It is like Barthes’s ‘language-object’, providing a resource of meaning whose erasure instantiates a different signification. By privileging this document, the history of *Trio A* is distilled into what Lambert-Beatty calls ‘a danced summation of 1960s aesthetics’.⁴⁰⁰ Rainer’s dance is reformulated as a flat image, divorced from the various contexts, public and private, of its development and performances. This image fits a critical purpose; as Lambert-Beatty writes, ‘Start with the photographs [of *Trio A*] and the focus shifts: from a dance’s relation to dance as an art form, to the relation between a dance and its images. Or better: to the relation between bodies and pictures, in the context of a changing culture of mediation’.⁴⁰¹ Her approach is legitimised by the 1960s archive, which is comprised of still images, written accounts, and various forms of ephemera. A putative

³⁹⁷ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 130.

³⁹⁸ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 130.

³⁹⁹ ‘The 1978 film reveals someone who can’t straighten her legs, can’t plié ‘properly,’ and can’t achieve the ‘original’ elongation and visor in her jumps, arabesques (yes, *Trio A* contains three arabesques!), and shifts of weight’. See, Rainer, “*Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation*”, p. 16.

⁴⁰⁰ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 130.

⁴⁰¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 131.

archival scarcity thus fuses with a cipher of the dance: In this way *Trio A* is stilled and prepared for an infrastructural examination.⁴⁰²

For the purpose of “Mediating *Trio A*”, broadly understood, is to link the structure of *Trio A* to the medium of photography. As Lambert-Beatty observes, this seems counterintuitive given our knowledge of its continuous movement. Though patently designed to resist traditional phrasing’s gifting of photogenic climaxes, she astutely points out that still images of *Trio A* are nevertheless beautiful, and full of the kind of drama apparently negated by its form. For her, this paradox is related to a discrepancy between form and structure.⁴⁰³ If ‘form’ refers to the dance’s ‘phraselessness and noninflection’, i.e. that which obstructs photographic capture, ‘structure’ signifies the dance’s proposed equivalence to a broader field of cultural experience of mass media; as she writes:

Though phraselessness and noninflection preclude quasi-photographic moments in dance performance, they do not add up to the organic model [Isadora] Duncan favoured, but to an intriguingly inorganic continuity—one that does not so much leave behind as incorporate the fracturing effect both of pictorial dance and of photography.⁴⁰⁴

This structural equivalence draws on subsidiary formal elements of the work. For instance, we know that *Trio A*’s ‘perpetual motion’ is comprised of many discrete phrases. Lambert-Beatty cites Annette Michelson’s important 1974 essay on Rainer’s dance, in which she describes *Trio A*’s composition in syntactic terms, as generating a kind of ‘parataxis’.⁴⁰⁵ The placing of words or clauses side-by-side, without conjunctions, creates a continuum that is paradoxically made up of internal brakes. This language metaphor relates the movement of *Trio A* to the minimalist tropes of seriality and repetition, both of which produce an ‘all-over’ effect, or whole, that is comprised of discrete (though equal)

⁴⁰² Recall the initial excitement of Jack Anderson, who observed upon its debut that, ‘The dancers evoke the feeling of an always exhilarating, and never wearisome, perpetual motion’.

⁴⁰³ I here introduce the distinction between form and structure to indicate where Lambert-Beatty’s intervention lies.

⁴⁰⁴ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 139.

⁴⁰⁵ Michelson, “Yvonne Rainer”, p. 59.

components. In a way that feeds into Hal Foster’s account of the ‘crux’ of minimalism – discussed in Chapter One – Michelson understands this composition through the figure of the assembly line, a key driver of industry that links artistic and commercial modes of production. This homology makes sense of the ‘intriguingly inorganic continuity’ that Lambert-Beatty observes in *Trio A*, but it is not sufficient given her focus on spectatorship. For this reason, she turns to Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media*.⁴⁰⁶ Published in 1964, McLuhan’s book links the assembly line’s mechanisation of production to the movie’s sped-up sequencing of still images. Because the continuous movement of *Trio A* is able to *mechanise* the tropes of seriality and repetition that are plastically represented by the coeval sculpture of Judd and others, it adds up (in Lambert-Beatty’s words) to ‘an intriguingly inorganic continuity—one that does not so much leave behind as incorporate the fracturing effect both of pictorial dance and of photography’.⁴⁰⁷ This structural equivalence is further reflected by Rainer’s decision, regarding *Trio A*’s debut performance, to have wooden slats dropped from the balcony onto the floor adjacent to the three performers. In “Quasi Survey” Rainer suggests that the effect of their ‘metronome-like regularity’ was intended to counterpose the dance’s ‘perpetual motion’.⁴⁰⁸ The percussive intrusion of the wooden slats serves to formalise the dance’s “fractured” continuum of movement as analogous to a broader fracturing of experience.

This equivalence is further developed in relation to Rainer’s “Statement”, a written statement that was included in the programme for *The Mind is a Muscle*, performed at the Anderson Theater, New York on the nights of 11, 14, and 15 April 1968. In this text Rainer addresses two connected subjects: her love for the ‘actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality’ of the body (as opposed to the fetishized appearance of the virtuoso ballerina); and the transmission of televised images of violence from the Vietnam War.⁴⁰⁹ These

⁴⁰⁶ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

⁴⁰⁷ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 139.

⁴⁰⁸ Yvonne Rainer, “Some non-chronological reflections of *The Mind is a Muscle*”, in *Work*, p. 75.

⁴⁰⁹ Rainer, “Statement”, *Work*, p. 71.

subjects permit Lambert-Beatty to establish a dialectic whose two poles are ‘pure materiality’ (the materiality of the body), and a pervasive and spectacular image culture. Consequently, the ‘actual’ body of *Trio A* can no longer be thought of apart from those ‘other bodies, precisely immaterial, flickering on the screens of American television’.⁴¹⁰ As the author tells, Vietnam was famous for being the first ‘living-room war’. By this she means that it was simultaneously remote and proximate; there and here, an oscillation contingent on the televisual.⁴¹¹ It is this simultaneity that leads Rainer to address, in the closing lines of “Statement”, ‘a state of mind that reacts with horror and disbelief upon seeing a Vietnamese shot dead on TV – not at the sight of death, however, but at the fact that the TV can be shut off afterwards as after a bad Western’.⁴¹² By ineffectually mediating distant reality, the televisual signals the atomisation of social life. But this has the ambiguous effect of restoring a sense of care, or dogged faith towards the image’s opposite: ‘My body remains the enduring reality’, Rainer concludes.⁴¹³ While this remainder promises some degree of stability or reassurance, Lambert-Beatty’s claim is precisely that with the rise of television this can no longer be, for ‘[to] assert one’s own physical reality in 1968 depends on the faded signal of that other corporeality’.⁴¹⁴

“Statement” thus urges the reader to think about the intrusion of mass media in relation to the body’s physicality. In pursuit of that ‘faded signal’, Lambert-Beatty invokes the artist Martha Rosler’s photomontage project series, *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72). In the collage of Rosler’s chosen by her, an image of a Vietnamese woman dressed in ‘black pyjamas’ holding a dead or injured baby is juxtaposed with the breezy interior of a typical upper-middle class American family home. This photo-montage brings into stark relief the relationship between the American public and ‘that other corporeality’

⁴¹⁰ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 145.

⁴¹¹ To support this, she quotes the philosopher Samuel Weber as follows: ‘Television overcomes distance and separation; but it can do so only because it also becomes separation’. See, Samuel Weber, “Television: Set and Screen”, in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 117; quoted in, Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 145.

⁴¹² Rainer, “Statement”, *Work*, p. 71.

⁴¹³ Rainer, “Statement”, p. 71.

⁴¹⁴ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 151.

as described in ‘Statement’. Lambert-Beatty’s reference is apt, but Rosler’s relation to Rainer is less clear. For the former was one of a class of artists including Allan Sekula and Fred Lonidier who met through grad school at San Diego, on the West Coast, and explicitly collaborated on the basis of their critical opposition to emergent media.⁴¹⁵ It is worth briefly distinguishing her approach to mediation in order to understand how Lambert-Beatty utilises it in her argument.

Rosler discusses her strategy in a key 1981 essay, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)”, which concerns her important work, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-75). By highlighting the constructedness of documentary photography, its newsreel-type universalism, Rosler draws the spectator’s attention to the social form of the medium by which its message is coded. She writes: ‘Quotation has mediation as its essence... Pointing to the existence of a received system of meaning, a defining practice, quotation can reveal the thoroughly social nature of our lives’.⁴¹⁶ Where for Rosler, 1960s Pop Art mythologised the commodity-form, quotation was used more reflexively through the seventies. (This is also true for Rainer’s subsequent turn to film with *Lives of Performers* (1972)). By bringing the far away into the American citizen’s fantasy of domestic splendour, *Bringing the War Home* positions the viewer between disjunctive life worlds. In a sense, Rosler does what Lambert-Beatty wants Rainer’s practice to do: her rich mediations supply Rainer’s “Statement” with a visual referent. As raised above, however, Lambert-Beatty’s intervention lies on a different order. If *Trio A* did not literally respond to the Vietnam War, she argues that it at least

⁴¹⁵ As Rosler puts it in her 1986 essay “Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment”, they ‘saw themselves as carrying out an act of profound social criticism, criticism directed at the domination of groups and individuals epitomised by the world of television and perhaps all of mainstream Western industrial and technological culture’. See, Martha Rosler, “Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment” in, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975 – 2001* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 54.

⁴¹⁶ Martha Rosler, ‘In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)’, in *3 Works: The restoration of high culture in Chile; The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems; In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Press, 1981), p. 81.

‘manifest[ed] a certain “seeing difficulty” with cultural relevance in the mid 1960s’.⁴¹⁷

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which her arguments for Rainer’s practice are supplemented by the proficient commitment of Rosler’s interventions.

In “Statement” Rainer refers to the horror of being able to change channels after watching ‘a Vietnamese shot dead on TV’.⁴¹⁸ From this clue, along with the time stamp ‘March 1968’, Lambert-Beatty identifies the widespread circulation of Eddie Adams’s iconic photograph of the execution of a Viet Cong officer (Plate XVIII). He, she writes, was ‘shot at once ballistically and photographically’.⁴¹⁹ This dual action serves to vivify the interpenetration of body and image as ineluctably triangulated by spectatorship. Indeed, it may be tempting to posit the body as ballast prior to a ‘disintegrating world of insubstantial images’.⁴²⁰ Yet this is to impossibly separate the body from an insurgent media culture. With this in mind, she at least recognises the limits of Rosler’s quotations for a consideration of the moving body. For her strategy, which is a good one, is to work *through* the terms of dance. If the ‘ballast’ of the body’s ‘obdurate physicality’ is incapable of superseding this hostile world of images, Lambert-Beatty goes on to argue that, with *Trio A*, Rainer’s dancer works *with* this impasse to striking effect.

In a chapter section titled “Actual Appearance”, she interrogates the ‘ideal’, put forward by Rainer in her commentary on *Trio A*, of achieving a ‘one-to-one relation’.⁴²¹ Recall that Rainer’s aim was to foreground actual over apparent energy: Whether it be ‘getting up from the floor, raising an arm, [or] tilting the pelvis’, the dancer’s expenditure of energy is ideally commensurate to the task in hand. Rainer does, however, acknowledge that in order to achieve the ‘look’ of actual movement the performer must in practice

⁴¹⁷ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 158.

⁴¹⁸ Rainer, “Statement”, p. 71.

⁴¹⁹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 146.

⁴²⁰ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 151.

⁴²¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 153.

modulate their energy levels and suppress effort in certain places.⁴²² This concession to, in Lambert-Beatty's words, 'a direct relay between bodily effort and visual appearance' jeopardises her search for a one-to-one relation. Yet it is Rainer's willingness to acknowledge this hiccup that makes *Trio A* a viable model for tackling the interpenetration of body and image. Lambert-Beatty treats her concession as programmatic, arguing that it is precisely this schism that raises mediation in way that shifts beyond Rosler's photo-montage. The division that inheres to the body's 'actual appearance' is theorised by Lambert-Beatty as a mechanism that (autonomously) produces meaning, and the analogue she deploys to support this proposition is the photographic index.

Trio A's mode of 'making meaning' is constituted at the point of contact between 'the body felt and [the body] seen'.⁴²³ 'Tooth in groove', Lambert-Beatty writes, 'the qualities of the body in motion materially affect the appearance of the movement – not as if they were the same, but as if one were the imprint of the other'. There is a causality inherent to the index, as theorised by Charles Sanders Peirce, that makes this type of sign efficacious. By animating the schism identified by Rainer, Lambert-Beatty restages formal elements on a structural order.⁴²⁴ Moreover, the dance's indexlike character is grounded through a poetics of mechanics – 'tooth in groove' is followed over the page by 'neatly appropriate' – that finds succour in the crude physiology Rainer deploys throughout her commentary: the language of energy expenditure serves to anchor the body as a requisite pole in a developing argument concerning the photographic index.⁴²⁵

⁴²² 'Of course, I have been talking about the 'look' of the movements. In order to achieve this look in a continuity of separate phrases that does not allow for pauses, accents, or stillness, one must bring to bear many different degrees of effort just in getting from one thing to another'. See, Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 270.

⁴²³ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 155.

⁴²⁴ That is, there is a decisive shift from the 'dance's mode of meaning' to 'how it makes meaning'. See, Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 155. To quote Christopher Wood, whose comments on *Strukturanalyse* apply here, the aim of such a medial approach is 'to isolate the work [of art] temporarily in order to grasp more clearly its deep structural principles, and then ultimately to reinsert the work into its primordial environment on more legitimate grounds'. Christopher S. Wood, "Introduction", in Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 8.

⁴²⁵ The art-historical precedent for this argument is, in Lambert-Beatty's account, Rosalind Krauss's 1977 essay on the index, in which she discusses a performance by Deborah Hay

Seen in this light, *Trio A* achieves a type of continuous movement that accords with the photograph, understood as a ‘message without a code’ – a phrase used by Roland Barthes to describe the press photograph in his early essay, “The Photographic Message” (1961). For him, the photograph discloses a paradox. On first impression, the camera transmits the whole of reality without any intervention whatsoever: ‘The feeling of ‘denotation’’, he writes, ‘is so great that the description of a photograph is literally impossible’.⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, through ‘connotative procedures’ ranging from lighting to posing and captioning, this denotation is subtly (and invisibly) codified. The photograph is, in fact, ‘worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic, or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation’.⁴²⁷ Similarly, the ‘actual’ of *Trio A* is comprised of discrete phrases, zones of suppressed effort, and energy modulations, which come together to support the ‘look’ of continuous movement. Having pinpointed how the dance is structurally analogous to the index, Lambert-Beatty goes on to specify what kinds of reality effects it pictures. For it is not *only* like an index, but a photograph as well.

She returns to her earlier claim that the all-over look of *Trio A* is replete with ‘quasi-photographic stoppages’, for which parataxis, introduced by Michelson, served as a model. (That is, the dance’s ‘inorganic continuity’ is comprised of internal brakes that flash through its presentation.) Accordingly, it elicits a ‘mode of signification suspended at that point at which indexical directness flips over into mediation’.⁴²⁸ Not only does the dance function like an index, but its proximity to representation renders it capable of mediating historical phenomena. In order for this to work, such phenomena must remain structurally suspended apart from the dance’s indexlike structure.

that sees the performer drawing attention to the sensation of their movements through language. Krauss argues that, by presenting the actual transmission of dance through language, she enters a semiotic mode that may be characterised as indexical. See, Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2”, in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

⁴²⁶ Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message”, in Susan Sontag, ed. *A Barthes Reader*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 197-8.

⁴²⁷ Barthes, “The Photographic Message”, p. 198.

⁴²⁸ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 158.

Less an internal ‘switch’ to be flipped than a toolbox of critical functions, this division is strategic, for, while explicating *Trio A*, her chapter has a secondary objective of defining the parameters of a new conception of media. By reading coeval structuralist discourse, Lambert-Beatty presents *Trio A* as a recording instrument, whose pristine surface looks like a minimalist grid but functions like a semiotic schema, without that grid’s phenomenological underpinnings. History, in relation to it, appears in the form of ‘reality effects’ whose mediation is not intuitive or obvious, as it is in the case of Rosler’s photo-montage, but dependent on structural analysis for its computation. Such analysis, I argue, necessitates the suspension of *Trio A*’s circulation through different viewing contexts. Hence the suitability of Banes’s grainy film of the dance for this argument. With this analysis in place, Lambert-Beatty is able to test out *Trio A* as a responsive mechanism by selectively reintroducing material to it:

The movement of *Trio A*, however inventive and unusual, is haunted by dances past. Here, the ghost of an arabesque or a rond-de-jambe, there something that looks suspiciously like a Graham contraction or a Cunningham quirk of the leg. As Rainer has confirmed, she inscribed *Trio A* with the traces of the very dance conventions she was working to displace.⁴²⁹

Adjudicating over dislocated yet recoverable elements, one side effect of this test is the unexpected presence of another kind of discourse: that of the connoisseur. In a darkened chamber, the silent 16mm film of *Trio A* flickers and emits clues that speak directly to the historian. The reader is sent *over there*, to confront the presence of ghostly ‘traces’. The author on her part employs a phantasmal register to place them against a large enough depth of field, ensuring the dance’s indexlike structure remains intact. Yet, consider that Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham were producing and performing new work at the same time as Rainer was developing *Trio A*. Movements referenced by Rainer were not obsolete but part of a changing field in which she was actively engaged. In fact, dancers of both choreographer’s companies may have laughed along with this medley. Nevertheless,

⁴²⁹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, pp. 153-4.

these “traces” are pictured as regressive and otherworldly, haunting the dance. Fleeting snatches of dance vocabularies slide off of *Trio A*’s pristine surface.

It is telling that her chapter dilates on Adams’s iconic photograph of an execution. Read against the letter of Barthes’s essay, this image forms part of an exceptional class that are described as ‘traumatic’. Images of extreme violence are, in Barthes’s view, capable of transmitting a ‘pure denotation’ about which there is nothing to say.⁴³⁰ They carry a particular charge; indeed, Lambert-Beatty notes that Adams’s image was ‘broadcast on television to twenty million viewers... [later] becom[ing] an emblem of the American media’s powerful and powerfully ambiguous role in the Vietnam war’.⁴³¹ By placing *Trio A* in proximity to this ‘pure denotation’, and Rosler’s photo-montage, Lambert-Beatty argues for its antennae-like sensitivity to its historical surroundings.

Yet this is to overlook the ways in which the dance *actually appeared* through its surroundings. Here rather than ‘over there’; by placing *Trio A* in dialogue with coeval criticism, pedagogical imagery, props, and other performances, a different story emerges, one whose matrix is not the image but the body-object. Starting with photographs enables Lambert-Beatty to carry out an impressive structural analysis, but it has the unwelcome effect of stilling the ‘transfers of meaning’ that constitute its object’s circulation through a field of activity.⁴³² In closing this chapter I present the transit of one prop, the mattress,

⁴³⁰ At the end of “The Photographic Message”, Barthes writes, ‘Is this to say that a pure denotation, a *this-side of language*, is impossible? If such a denotation exists, it is perhaps not at the level of what ordinary language class the insignificant, the neutral, the objective, but, on the contrary, at the level of absolutely traumatic images... the traumatic photograph (fires, shipwrecks, catastrophes, violent deaths, all captured ‘from life as lived’) is the photograph about which there is nothing to say’. See, Barthes, “The Photographic Message”, p. 209.

⁴³¹ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 146.

⁴³² It is worth noting that Lambert-Beatty’s approach to mediation has influenced subsequent readings of Rainer. For instance, in her 2016 book *The Concrete Body*, Elise Archias has a long chapter on Rainer that again treats photographs as primary evidence for the dances themselves. Archias draws conclusions about the production of dance from these documents without considering their status as *effects* in a discursive field. For instance, she describes Rainer in a photo taken of her dance *Three Seascapes* (1963) as ‘an introverted Pied Piper, or a slightly autistic skipping maiden’ (48). More worryingly, in a photo taken by Peter Moore of the debut performance of *Trio A*, Archias describes Rainer as

which featured prominently in Rainer's *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965). My aim is to see how meaning was transferred across (language-based) materials, dances, and conversations that surrounded its performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

3.4 Case Study: The Mattress

We learn from an appendix to Rainer's book, *Work* (1974) that the 'mattress' was used in six performances, ranging from *Room Service* (1963) to *This is the story of a woman who...*; this list of titles chronicles its passage across the length of her early dance career. In one essay, "Some retrospective notes..." (1965), Rainer provides an overview of the performances and process that led her to *Parts of Some Sextets*.⁴³³ Her reflections reveal that the mattress was a 'protagonist' that generated different kind of movements, thresholds, tasks, and associative imagery. As a result, it provides a very clear index of the kind of circulation discussed earlier in this chapter. Again, the idea is not to reach a summative conclusion but to picture these connections in order to better understand how the mattress figured in relation to the performer.

Room Service was performed as part of the Judson Dance Theater's thirteenth concert, in November 1963 (Plate XIX). A collaboration between Rainer and the West Coast sculptor Charles Ross, her dance comprised 'follow-the-leader' style games which took place around a large environmental sculpture that resembled gym equipment, equipped with a ladder, platform, and tyres. Here is Rainer's recollection of *Room Service*, the first performance to involve a mattress:

'slouch[ing] wearily upstage'. In fact, we see that Rainer arches her back and bends her legs in order to accommodate her gaze, which is directed towards to a space between the balcony and the ceiling of the Judson Memorial Church. 'Wearily' thus voids the pose of its "actual" effort and strain. In this instance, the privileging of photographs tends to deplete the energy of the dancer. But this strategy, adopted from Lambert-Beatty, serves a purpose: to connect Rainer an image of "damaged life" that is proposed by Theodor Adorno. Accordingly, signs of "vulnerability" are read for in the work. Rainer would surely balk at this overblown psychologism. See, Elise Archias, *The Concrete Body: Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁴³³ Yvonne Rainer, "Some retrospective notes on a dance for 10 people and 12 mattresses called *Parts of Some Sextets*, performed at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, and Judson Memorial Church, New York, in March, 1965', in *Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 10, 20. 2, Winter 1965; reprinted in *Work*, pp. 45-51.

I was excited by a particular piece of business: 2 of us carrying a mattress up an aisle, out the rear exit, around and in again thru a side exit. Something ludicrous and satisfying about lugging that bulky object around, removing it from scene and re-introducing it. No stylization needed. It seemed to be so self-contained an act as to require no artistic tampering or justification.⁴³⁴

There is the satisfying weight of it. A single mattress is larger than the average body, and though not impossible to lift single-handedly, it is still cumbersome enough to warrant a helping hand. Its dimensions and weight foretell the more-than-one nature of the task, whether that means more than one person or greater than one's ability to manage it. Between two people, the mattress can be lugged about with relative ease. It is this capacity to exceed, though only by a short way, the capacities of one person, that might account for the 'ludicrous and satisfying' sensation of 'lugging that bulky object around' a circuit devised on the go. Stylisation is implicitly attached to the need to represent something onstage, to measure the distance separating the audience. Here distances are overcome. In *Room Service* all 'artistic tampering or justification' becomes incidental to the pleasure of transgressing the boundaries of the stage, of carrying the mattress from one location to the next. This 'ludicrous...self-contained act' would lead to other misadventures; Rainer goes on:

Later – May or June – at a Judson Church concert in which half the evening was devoted to individual improvisation, I invited Bob Morris to help me do some 'moving'. We moved all the furniture in the lounge into the sanctuary (which was the playing area), including the filthy dusty carpet. Thoroughly irritated everybody interfering with their activities, broke a leg off the couch, spilled ashes and sand inadvertently all over my black dress. This situation was definitely not satisfying. Was the difficulty in the nature of the materials? Could it be that a living room couch is not as 'plastic' as a mattress?⁴³⁵

The disobedient action of moving the contents of the lounge into the Judson sanctuary differed from the act of lugging the mattress in that it was less successful. Compared to the efficient transfer of the mattress this 'moving' caused all kinds of upset. If the

⁴³⁴ Rainer, "Some retrospective notes", p. 45.

⁴³⁵ Rainer, "Some retrospective notes", p. 45.

disappearance of the mattress interrupted the audience's spectatorship momentarily like a tributary branching away from a river only to rejoin it downstream, this 'moving' of furniture was all interruption. Yet, for this, it is *descriptively* interesting. That is, it elicits reactions ranging from humour to irritation that serve to embellish its narration. The utility of the performance, in other words, lies in its textual rendition. If the mattress is self-contained, this action is all tampering, all interference. Hence the questions posed by Rainer after the fact: 'Was the difficulty in the nature of the materials?'

It is not only 'moving' that interferes with that evening's improvisations onstage but the materials themselves. The couch's hard edges, carpet's dust, and cigarette's ash anger everyone, including Rainer: 'Spilled ashes and sand inadvertently all over my black dress'. Compared to unruly items of furniture that infringe on others' personal space, the mattress is relatively clear-cut. Because of its adaptation to different environments and its serviceable form, the mattress enables a circulation that is not possible in the later improvisation. This difference leads to a dualism that is, in the end, misleading. For, tracking forwards, one finds the same kind of 'camouflage' that was, for Rainer, an operative factor in the manipulation of objects in Deborah Hay's choreography (discussed in Chapter Two). That is, the two opposing kinds of effects produced by these consecutive performances may in fact be brought into a single frame.

In "Miscellaneous Notes", a short piece of writing that appears in *Work*, Rainer reflects on the object's qualities and how these may be deployed for performance purposes. The first note refers to, 'Objects that in themselves have a 'load' of associations (e.g., the mattress – sleep, dreams, sickness, unconsciousness, sex) but which can be exploited strictly as neutral 'objects''.⁴³⁶ In *Room Service* the mattress was camouflaged, or 'neutralised' through the act of lugging it across and around the stage. This transfer served to cauterise or cover over a "load' of associations' that might otherwise pervade its presentation. It is understandably difficult to think about 'sickness, unconsciousness, sex'

⁴³⁶ Rainer, "Miscellaneous Notes", in *Work*, p. 106. These were retrospective notes written sometime in the years 1969-71.

when confronted with the spectacle of a mattress being carried on and off the stage. In a way that parallels the ‘siphoning’ of energy from the Giselle to the manipulated bricks in Rainer’s fabulated version of Hay’s dance, one ‘load’ is offset by another. Except the first ‘load’, of associations, is not exactly displaced; rather, they are forgotten. If task movement immediately neutralises the mattress’ associations, why does Rainer bother mentioning them in writing?

A little further down the page Rainer speculates, ‘The performer is a residue from an obsolescent art form – theater. How to use the performer as a medium rather than persona? Is a ‘ballet mécanique’ [*sic*] the only solution?’⁴³⁷ Again, the solution to this impasse was reached by Rainer through her analysis of Hay’s choreography. By manipulating ‘neutral’ objects such as bricks or a flat, Hay subverts the ballerina’s virtuosity; displacing her energy so that, as one commentator describes the *ballet mécanique*, “things themselves’ take center stage and dance’.⁴³⁸ It appears that Rainer is interested in the ambiguity or complicity that results from the displacement of vital forces from performer to prop and vice versa. Rather than one state or the other, she is interested in the antagonism that exists between them, and in sustaining that moment in which manipulation or exploitation are intelligible. The mattress is useful to her because it somehow activates this switch; it is durable enough to undergo the consecutive ‘transfers of meaning’, theatrical and textual, that she devises for it, while interesting enough in its own right to elicit meanings that resist the uses to which it is put: ‘Decided to stick to mattresses’, she writes over the aftermath to the furniture-moving fiasco.⁴³⁹

An interlude follows in which Rainer accompanies Robert Morris to Düsseldorf; for he had been invited by Alfred Schmela to prepare a show for his gallery, to be exhibited late 1964. During their stay Rainer recalls working ‘mechanically and at times despairingly on

⁴³⁷ Rainer, “Miscellaneous Notes”, p. 106.

⁴³⁸ Felicia McCaren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 96.

⁴³⁹ Rainer, “Some retrospective notes”, p. 45.

movement’, since she ‘had nothing else to do’.⁴⁴⁰ She developed a new kind of ‘undynamic movement’, one that, as explored in Chapter Five, formed the groundwork for *Trio A*. At the same time, she was ‘also doing a lot of thinking about my group piece [*Parts of Some Sextets*]’.⁴⁴¹ Geographically separated from the circulation of props, as well as the ‘loony bin and... NY subways’ that usually informed the production of new work, she had no choice but to focus on her own movement in isolation.⁴⁴² With this in mind, it is worth considering the effect, upon her return to New York over November 1964, of reintroducing the mattress.

Parts of Some Sextets is notable for its strict organisational structure and the use of twelve mattresses. Every thirty seconds, all performers on stage were obliged to stop what they were doing and switch to a new task, and all tasks were assigned to the ten performers by Rainer prior to performance. This was carried out according to a chance procedure that involved the throwing of a pair of dice over a large 2-D chart. Derived from the teachings of John Cage, the throwing of the dice determined who did what, and when. As a result, the choreography was very hard to learn, involving kinaesthetically-discontinuous movement combinations that compelled each performer to switch like clockwork between seemingly arbitrary tasks.⁴⁴³

In this dance, the mattresses’ function was to facilitate task movement. They were stacked in piles, leant against the wall upstage, or else they were spread in a single layer

⁴⁴⁰ Rainer, “Some retrospective notes”, p. 46.

⁴⁴¹ Rainer, “Some retrospective notes”, p. 46.

⁴⁴² It is interesting to note that Eva Hesse, the New York-based sculptor, also underwent a transformation in her practice at the same time as Rainer, while accompanying her artist-husband on a residency trip to an abandoned string factory in Kettwig-am-Ruhr, near Essen, Germany.

⁴⁴³ Lambert-Beatty sees in Rainer’s presentation of task movement a mediated apprehension of the experience of industrial work, increased automation and the deskilling of labour under Late Capitalism. Reading with the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson’s analysis of the factory’s clock-time, she comments on task movement’s entanglement with the rationalisation of ‘playful activity’ along increasingly industrial lines, seeing in *Parts of Some Sextets* a ‘warning that leisure industries like television were already absorbing nonwork time into industrial logics and economies’. See, Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, p. 97.

across the proscenium (Plate XX).⁴⁴⁴ Often during rehearsals, performers were individually thrown onto the pile, or the pile was disassembled and redistributed through the studio. The mattress was divested of its ‘load’ of associations and treated like any other prop, to be manipulated by the performer as ‘neutral doer’. In “Quasi Survey”, Rainer makes an observation that pertains to the movement of *Trio A* but could be said to have its roots in her use of the mattress: ‘The irony here is in the reversal of a kind of illusionism: I have exposed a type of effort where it has been traditionally concealed and have concealed phrasing where it has been traditionally displayed’.⁴⁴⁵ Concealing illusion and exposing effort are actions that chime with Rainer’s interest in exploitation and manipulation. These opposing actions indicate how one might be able to control the point at which one ‘load’ of associations flips over into a weight to be borne, or how an unruly activity might produce an array of descriptive effects. Ambiguity becomes a means of enacting control.

Ultimately, the mattress served her because of its proximity to the body of the performer. Considered as one ‘protagonist’, the mattress-performer(s) were able to elicit and suspend contradictory and ambiguous kinds of meaning. Crucially, this production of meaning relied on the ongoing circulation of the prop, which accumulated resonances through its passage. In Chapter Four I turn to *Trio A* in order to think about how the dynamics of concealment and exposure, as well as the actions of manipulation and exploitation, play out on the body of the performer and their object-movement. As we shall see, the relation of illusion to effort is crucial to this. I explore how the opposing ‘loads’ of the mattress-performer relation relate to *Trio A*’s object-movement.

⁴⁴⁴ Rainer recalls, ‘It was in *The Mind is a Muscle* in 1968 that I got into layering part of the stage space with different surfaces, specifically 3-foot wide swaths of rubber matting and bubble wrap laid side by side upstage to downstage, so that the feet of a running group would make different sounds as they encountered these surfaces’. E-mail correspondence with the author, September 2016.

⁴⁴⁵ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 271.

Chapter Four: Gestalt, Illusion, Energy Expenditure

My performance for my shrink with its concealments and suppressions can be likened to my performance of Trio A, which demands a comparable juggling of suppression, or censorship, and exposure: of energy investment and sexuality no less than expression of self.

Yvonne Rainer, "Where's the Passion? Where's the Politics?" 2010.⁴⁴⁶

The irony here is in the reversal of a kind of illusionism: I have exposed a type of effort where it has been traditionally concealed and have concealed phrasing where it has been traditionally displayed.

Yvonne Rainer, "Quasi Survey", 1968.⁴⁴⁷

4.0 Introduction

This chapter's first epigraph is excerpted from a 2010 lecture dealing the relation of politics to self-expression; the tensile act of 'juggling' makes clear that, for Rainer, *Trio A* is inextricable from questions of control. The expression of a psychosexual dimension is controlled via the mechanism of energy investment, as that which aligns the moving body. *Trio A* thus allows for self-expression, though in ways not obviously intelligible. (This obliqueness makes sense given its rejection of the expressive form of traditional phrasing.) The parallel to Lippard's 'framework of simplicity', as explored in Chapter One, is salient. Lippard argues that 'sensuousness' is present in the abstract object, which may signify a 'pervasive mood' or 'electric charge' despite its manifest coolness. This is because, as with *Trio A*, it sidesteps more obvious expressive displays, making way for a less direct though still palpable psychosexual dimension: 'The roots rather than the results of desire'. Though she is concerned with the 'frozen' arts, the reversal of active and passive partner Lippard ascribes to the yab/rum of Hindu temple sculpture pictures a shifting of states that is

⁴⁴⁶ Yvonne Rainer, "Where's the Passion? Where's the Politics? Or, How I Became Interested in Impersonating, Approximating, and Running Around My Selves and Others', and Where Do I Look When You're Looking at Me?", in *Theater* 40, no. 1, 2010, p. 53.

⁴⁴⁷ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 271.

analogous to Rainer's approach to *Trio A* qua 'movement-as-object'.⁴⁴⁸ The issue of mediation, as that which links formal and bodily propensities, is explored further in this chapter.

In the previous, it was argued that Lambert-Beatty's likening of *Trio A*'s structure to the photographic index complicates the fact that the dance *already* relates to, or reflects its surroundings, as was illuminated by the coeval dance criticism of Jill Johnston. The performer-prop relation offered an alternative means of thinking about mediation. Defined by relations of ambiguity, exploitation, and manipulation, this kind of mediation brings us closer to the viewing encounter described by Lippard, and, above, by Rainer, because its basis is phenomenological rather than semiotic or structural. That is to say, if Lambert-Beatty's analysis isolates attributes on the order of structure, the performer-prop relation is ineluctably tied to the situated experience of viewing and dancing. Chapter Five explores Rainer's written reflections of dance training during the time leading to *Trio A*; this phenomenological inquiry throws light on the dynamic movement of body and object. In turn, the present chapter focuses on primary theoretical materials that informed *Trio A*'s composition and reception, i.e. those things that Johnston drew upon for her technical account of *Trio A* in her review of *The Mind is a Muscle*, "Rainer's Muscle" (1968).

Chapter Three closed with a case study of the mattress in her early choreography; this analysis doubled down on her commentary on the role-reversals of Hay's dances, discussed in Chapter Two, to suggest how the performer-prop relation transits between the medial zones of sculpture and dance. Recall that Giselle's energy is, in Rainer's words 'siphoned off' to her partner, the manipulated bricks. The inanimate object's activation in space suggests that a similar study may be conducted from the standpoint of sculpture. If the activation of the viewer has been enshrined as a key tenet of one version of minimal sculpture – whose spokesperson will be introduced shortly – then surely the same type of 'role-reversal' is conceivable in the emerging space of the white cube. This, of course, is to posit an equivalence between props and sculptures.

⁴⁴⁸ Yvonne Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 269.

Until now we have properly engaged with the writings of one minimal ‘sculptor’: Donald Judd. It is now time to bring Robert Morris into play. There are a few reasons for why his entry has been delayed. First, his plywood sculptures developed out of his involvement with performance and movement; this is evidenced by the discussion in Chapter Two of *Column* (1961), a prop of Rainer’s he repurposed, and which is now considered to be the first minimal sculpture. (Its traffic between studio, theatre, and gallery suggests how props and sculptures may be thought together). Second, it was necessary to have an analysis of the dynamics of desire, intimacy, and interest in Judd’s presentation of three-dimensionality in place, as Judd is a foil to Morris’s arguments of the mid-1960s. Finally, in order to get to grips with *Trio A* one must go through Morris’s writings on the gestalt, for this concept was a resource on which Rainer actively drew to consolidate her thinking about the flattening of phrases (parts) into a continuous string of movement (whole).

So far distinctions between performer and prop have been retained; the challenge of *Trio A* is that it asks us to see this distinction as constitutive to ‘object-movement’ as purveyed by the body of the dancer(s).⁴⁴⁹ The development of the performer-prop relation was contingent on Rainer’s relative isolation in Düsseldorf over late 1964, a geographical remove that led her to explore movement without recourse to props or extraneous materials. In the first chapters, the body-object posed a problem in the field of minimalism; it will now be considered as substantive and terminologically important. For Rainer, the mattress’ ‘load’ of associations is neutralised (or exploited) by the performer as neutral doer; in this way it becomes a physical load to be carried. With *Trio A* that transfer of meaning is somehow internalised; as will be argued, this is achieved through the performer’s negotiation (‘juggling’) of illusion and effort, as described in the second epigraph – the predecessor to Rainer’s statements from 2010. For, in order to approach the interlocking

⁴⁴⁹ Nevertheless, this shift is itself complicated by the fact that prop-like things embellished certain iterations of the dance, such as American flags in *Judson Flag Show* (1970) and the “Lecture” section of *The Mind is a Muscle*, in which Rainer performed *Trio A* wearing ‘tap shoes (minus the balletic furbelows)’. See, Rainer, “Some non-chronological reflections”, p. 75.

terms of Rainer's 2010 statement it is necessary to work through the terms of the 1960s. If a dynamic of suppression and exposure is retrospectively important for her, what were the correlative terms? Approaching this quandary through the source material, the terms to consider will be: illusion and effort, or energy expenditure.

The primary text for this analysis is her commentary, "A Quasi Survey" (written 1966; published 1968 in Battcock's *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*). Because of its proximity to Robert Morris's "Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two" (February; October 1966), this chapter consists of a comparative analysis. My aim is to consider how the body-object coalesces through transactions between these texts. Issues of ambiguity, control, and manipulation that circle this dyad will be pursued in relation to Rainer's theorisation of energy expenditure in "Quasi Survey". For this is the term she elects to describe how the gestalt is transposed from the apprehension of shape to the apprehension of movement. As we shall see, energy expenditure has a value that cuts across disciplinary lines and intellectual histories. While there is not scope to delve into its economical, psychoanalytic, scientific, and materialist inflections, nevertheless I will endeavour to root this term in theoretical materials that were immediately to hand; for this reason, I consider the tradition of modern dance pedagogy that was instituted by Margaret H'Doubler in 1926, and reached Rainer via her engagement with Ann Halprin and Simone Forti. This history foregrounds the daily aspect of energy expenditure as a first principle, implicating a study of physiology.

In summary, Chapter Four first provides a case for why Morris's and Rainer's commentaries may be compared, before considering the gestalt across sculpture and dance. The closing discussion of dance pedagogy serves to ground a developing account of the body-object. Finally, this commentary prepares the scene for Rainer's phenomenological reflections and a consideration of embodied and semiotic modes of expression, explored in the final chapter.

Rainer's signature work, *Trio A* is routinely cited as an exemplar of minimal sculpture carried over into an outlying field, dance. Indeed, her commentary on it, "Quasi Survey" refers in its long title to minimal dance activity'. Moreover, it opens with a chart whose two columns, titled 'Objects' and 'Dances', are organised according to the elimination and substitution of comparative attributes. For example, the second position in the 'Objects' column recommends the elimination of the 'hierarchical relationship of parts' and its substitution by 'unitary forms, modules'; this Rainer maps onto 'Dances' by exchanging 'development and climax' for 'equality of parts'. Some transpositions are more effective than others. Interestingly, the one substitution that is the same in both columns is the final number seven, 'human scale', which replaces 'monumentality' in 'Objects' and 'the virtuosic movement-feat and the fully-extended body' in 'Dances'. This common denominator suggests 'the human' is central to minimal art.⁴⁵⁰ The human may lead us to consider many things, including the status of artistic subjectivity; social relations of different kinds, including collectives such as the Judson Dance Theater (1962-64) –; the viewing situation, and a pervasive 'antihumanist' sensibility. In this chapter these considerations will loop back through its adjunct, 'scale', as that which implicates the body-object. Finally, in order to link this definitional term to the aesthetic encounter, this chapter thinks carefully about the location of the *subject*.

The prefatory chart is, in Rainer's qualifying comments, intended as a 'shortcut' for those who 'need alternatives to subtle decision-making'. As such, its outcomes are provisional rather than final.⁴⁵¹ Acknowledging that dance and sculpture were formally related, Rainer signals that such convergence should only serve as a shorthand for understanding developments happening 'in a specialised area of dancing'. The chart's two columns generate a forcefield that destabilises its very stratification, for, as Rainer admits, 'the benefit to be derived from making a one-to-one relationship between aspects of so-called minimal sculpture and recent dancing is questionable'. This identification's

⁴⁵⁰ James Mayer and David J. Getsy each distinguish between the 'anthropomorphic' and the 'bodily' to nuance the sense of 'human'. See Chapter One.

⁴⁵¹ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 264

provisionality therefore signals a turn to minimalist sculpture as a resource and simultaneous disarticulation of dance from it, albeit in ways that remain to be drawn out.

4.1 “Notes on Sculpture” and the Gestalt

Body-object signifies a dyad; its two parts constitute two separate, distinct wholes that nevertheless relate to one another. Without being defined as such, these wholes bear a glancing relation to the gestalt, a German loanword which the *OED* defines as follows: ‘A ‘shape’, ‘configuration’, or ‘structure’ which as an object of perception forms a specific whole or unity incapable of expression simply in terms of its parts (e.g. a melody in distinction from the notes that make it up)’. The use of the gestalt to describe perceived form as an intermediary, or screen between body and object is embedded in the history of critical debates around minimalism. It was, for instance, (initially) promoted by Robert Morris, whose “Notes on Sculpture” essays of the mid-late 1960s virtually override other accounts of minimal art.⁴⁵² “Parts One and Two” in this series are collected alongside Rainer’s “Quasi Survey” in Gregory Battcock’s *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968), a collection which points to the field’s contested status.

In “Notes on Sculpture, Part One”, first published in the February 1966 edition of *Artforum*, Morris defines the gestalt as a shape, ideally a simple polyhedron such as a pyramid or a cube, that is reflexively understood as a whole different from the sum of its parts (for example, see Plate XXII). He writes: ‘One sees and immediately ‘believes’ that

⁴⁵² As art historian David Hodge has noted, Morris’s ‘“Notes Part II’... [has] been especially important for his enduring reputation, since [it is] regularly anthologised and taught. Consequently, students of post-war American art almost inevitably confront Morris’s writing, often before encountering his work. Furthermore, as James Meyer has noted, despite otherwise differing in important ways, several key secondary texts on Morris from the 1960s and 1970s (namely essays by Michael Fried, Michelson, and Rosalind Krauss) adopted certain fundamental ideas from ‘Notes Part II’. These claims were therefore quickly normalised and remain hegemonic today’. See, David Hodge, “Robert Morris’s Minimal Sculpture, the Rise of the Gallery Network and the Aesthetics of Commodified Art”, in *Oxford Art Journal*, Volume 39, Issue 3, December 2016, p. 425.

the pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object'.⁴⁵³ The relation of the object to its perceptual pattern results from the viewer's accumulative experience of the visual field.⁴⁵⁴ When confronted with a known shape, the viewer automatically draws on their prior experience of the visual field; they do not need to walk around the sculpture to perceive the whole of it.⁴⁵⁵ Except, and acknowledgment of this would lead Morris to tackle the residual idealism of his argument, they do walk around it. In "Part Two", The gestalt produces a degree of 'resistance' to the relation of parts that traditionally supplies viewing with its object.⁴⁵⁶ The idea was to stop the sculpture from degenerating into parts and relations; for it to endure as a whole. (Compare the pared-down appearance of a cube to the unruly organicism of baroque form.) Pressurising this resolution of form, he sought to test the gestalt's resilience by introducing irregularities to the simple polyhedron: By slightly adulterating shape – slanting one or two of the polyhedron's planes – he defamiliarised its perceived form, thereby drawing the viewer's attention to the vagaries of the visual field.⁴⁵⁷ This handicap was designed to legitimise the whole operation in real terms, though it had the obverse effect of highlighting the theoretical character of the exercise. As he soon came to realise, the argument of "Part

⁴⁵³ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part One", in *Artforum*, February 1966, Vol. 4, No. 6, p. 44.

⁴⁵⁴ 'It is those aspects of apprehension that are not coexistent with the visual field but rather the result of the experience of the visual field'. Morris, "Part One", p. 44.

⁴⁵⁵ As James Meyer puts it: 'The new sculpture was exactly scaled, he [Morris] explained, for it was meant to be experienced by an active spectator who would circulate around it, comparing its actual shape with the mental impression, or Gestalt, of its form, in the mind's eye. The same size as a viewer, the sculpture impressed the fact of its existence—its objectness—on the beholder'. See, James Meyer, "NOTES FROM THE FIELD: Anthropomorphism", in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 94, No. 1, March 2012, p. 24.

⁴⁵⁶ This process was abetted by the annulment of colour: 'The qualities of scale, proportion, shape, mass, are physical. Each of these qualities is made visible by the adjustment of an obdurate, literal mass. Color does not have this characteristic. It is additive. Obviously things exist as coloured. *The objection is raised against the use of color that emphasises the optical and in so doing subverts the physical*'. [My emphasis]. Morris is here in dialogue with Clement Greenberg, whose essay "Modernist Painting" (1961) describes 'the optical', contra sculpture, as painting's specific 'area of competence'. See, Morris, "Part One", p. 44.

⁴⁵⁷ 'Simple irregular polyhedrons, such as beams, inclined planes, truncated pyramids', he writes, 'are relatively more easy to visualise and sense as wholes. The fact that some are less familiar than the regular geometric forms does not affect the formation of a gestalt. Rather, the irregularity becomes a particularising quality'. Morris, "Part One", p. 44.

One” was idealist because its activated subject is not the viewer in relation to other viewers and objects, but the gestalt. (This essay’s ideational basis was revealed to him by his insistence on viewing’s durational, rather than transcendental character.) Dwelling further on “Part One” discloses a symptom of this.

At one point, Morris refers to ‘a kind of energy provided by the gestalt’. Consequently, it is ‘energy’ that textually sustains the coincidence of a perceptual pattern and the durational aspect of the visual field. As is made clear by the ensuing passage, this ascription reveals contradictions in the premises of “Part One”, the recognition of which would prompt him to place the gestalt on an equal footing with the mobile viewer in “Notes on Sculpture, Part Two”:

Characteristic of a gestalt is that once it is established all the information about it, *qua* gestalt, is exhausted. (One does not, for example, seek the gestalt of a gestalt.) Furthermore, once it is established it does not disintegrate. One is then both free of the shape and bound to it. Free or released because of the exhaustion of information about it, as shape, and bound to it because it remains constant and indivisible.⁴⁵⁸

Having been named as a predicate, the lexicon of ‘energy’ is here used to animate an otherwise synthetic ideation. (This may be inadvertent, but it is definitely salient). Each operation involves the gestalt as a disinterested party in the storing, transmission, and expenditure of energy. First, the gestalt serves to ‘exhaust’ the gathering of information about it; at the end of which autotelic process it endures, a state that is negatively defined by the *maintenance* of its integrity (‘it does not disintegrate’).⁴⁵⁹ This potential energy – which, given the gestalt is a mental image based on the individual’s experience of the visual

⁴⁵⁸ Morris, “Part One”, p. 44.

⁴⁵⁹ The idealism of this presentation – ‘it does not disintegrate’ – reflects Helmholtz’s initial optimism upon discovering the first law of thermodynamics, i.e. the preservation of energy, before it was met with the second law of entropy. For instance, the historian Anson Rabinbach writes: ‘[Hermann von] Helmholtz, a pioneer of thermodynamics, argued that the forces of nature (mechanical, electrical, chemical, and so forth) are forms of a single, universal energy, or *Kraft*, that cannot be either added to or destroyed... The remarkable generosity of nature implicit in energy conservation was diminished by the almost simultaneous discovery of the second law of thermodynamics, which explains the irreversibility and decline of energy in entropy’. See, Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 3.

field, must refer back to them – means the individual is able to observe the unfolding of their ‘apprehension’ in time. Morris’s thought process is tautological: the viewer releases, or binds, the viewer, thus voiding the object. Not only does his explication begin and end with the viewer as an aesthetic norm (the term ‘indivisible’ is telling, in that it elides the gestalt with ‘unity’, from which mass noun the modern concept of ‘individual’ is derived), but it does so through a specific lexicon. On the one hand, the vocabulary of energy – exhaustion, integration, release – is employed metaphorically to describe how the gestalt coordinates the viewing situation; on the other, its implications are material and embodied, denoting physiological processes. The above passage is symptomatic of an idealist viewpoint, not because it denies the world precedes viewing, but because it routes viewing through the gestalt. (And to be clear about where this argument is going: the language of energy that is used to animate the gestalt is more obviously suited to discussions concerning dancers and dance, as will be discussed in relation to Rainer’s commentary on *Trio A*).⁴⁶⁰ In broad terms this camouflaging of the viewer adheres to a ‘cool’ sensibility, as discussed in Chapters One and Two.

Published some months later in the October 1966 edition of *Artforum*, “Notes on Sculpture, Part Two” reconciles the contradiction identified in “Part One”. Rather than address his own artistic production as he does in the first essay, Morris’s comments here pertain to sculpture more broadly. In the opening section of “Part Two” the human body is the ‘constant’ around which a ‘total continuum of sizes’ are organised.⁴⁶¹ Note that ‘constant’ was an attribute assigned to the gestalt in “Part One”. Insofar as the human subject is now named and clarified as the coordinating term, the rules of the game have changed. Shape, the actual appearance of the gestalt in the visual field, is tied to the metrics

⁴⁶⁰ As a key modern dance pedagogue writes, ‘To execute any movement, we must make an effort; this effort consists of an expenditure of energy’. See Margaret N. H’Doubler, *Dance: A Creative Art Experience* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), p. 78.

⁴⁶¹ ‘In the perception of relative size the human body enters into the total continuum of sizes and establishes itself as a constant in that field’. See, Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part Two”, in *Artforum*, Vol. 5, no. 2, October 1966; Reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art*, p. 230.

of scale and size, awareness of which positions the viewer as the decisive element.⁴⁶² Scale is now key to the operation. The upper and lower spatial orders of a previously-assumed middle range designate affects that delimit the proper remit of sculpture. Intimacy is, for Morris, an affect that describes the viewer's relation to an object of diminished size, while a feeling of 'publicness' correlates with larger, monumental work. Neither of these orders are ideal. Standing up close to a small 'ornament', the relations of space are nullified, adding to its internal relations; expressed through details of colour and design, this intimate mode is, he writes, 'essentially closed, spaceless, compressed, and exclusive'.⁴⁶³ Conversely, 'large-sized objects' are said by him to 'exhibit size more specifically as an element'.⁴⁶⁴ Sculpture, as promoted by Morris, occupies the middle, human-scale range. Again, this 'total continuum of sizes' is moderated by the viewer, whose varied movements determine scale: 'The awareness of scale', he writes, 'is a function of the comparison made between that constant, one's body size, and the object'.⁴⁶⁵ Morris is only interested in those works large enough to externalise all 'intimate relations'.⁴⁶⁶ The viewer of a successful work is tasked with 'establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions'.⁴⁶⁷ Accordingly the viewing situation becomes an arena (or stage), for the exploration of 'kinaesthetic demands' that he elliptically calls 'object-subject terms'.⁴⁶⁸ While he goes on to explain this designation, the hyphen linking each term is not merely expedient; it suggests an entanglement or pleasure that cannot be named as such because it subverts the sensibility of 'detachment and objectivity' that cloaks his project. Again, we shall explore 'kinaesthetic demands' from the standpoint of dance in the second half of this chapter.

⁴⁶² 'The object itself has not become less important. It has merely become less self-important... [It takes] its place as a term among others'. See, Morris, "Part Two", p. 234.

⁴⁶³ Morris, "Part Two", p. 231.

⁴⁶⁴ Morris, "Part Two", p. 231.

⁴⁶⁵ Morris, "Part Two", p. 231.

⁴⁶⁶ The viewer's activation in space is subsequently formulated through the essay's oft-quoted claim: 'The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision'. Morris, "Part Two", p. 232.

⁴⁶⁷ Morris, "Part Two", p. 232.

⁴⁶⁸ Morris, "Part Two", p. 233.

A fixed term was needed to organise the flux of ‘object-subject terms’. For this reason, the closing section of “Part Two” reprises the synthetic apprehension of the gestalt. Both viewer and gestalt are positioned as constants for the first time, offering a reconciliation between transcendental and durational modes of viewing that would galvanise Michael Fried to attack the ‘theatrical’ nature of literal art in “Art and Objecthood” the following year. These two constants are linked towards the end of “Part Two”:

Even [the best new work’s] most patently unalterable property—shape—does not remain constant. For it is the viewer who changes the shape constantly by his change in position relative to the work. Oddly, it is the strength of the constant, known shape, the gestalt, that allows this awareness to become so much emphatic in these works than in previous sculpture. A Baroque figurative bronze is different from every side. So is a six-foot cube. The constant shape of the cube held in the mind but which the viewer never literally experiences, is an actuality against which the literal changing, perspective views are related. There are two distinct terms: the known constant and the experienced variable. Such a division does not occur in the experience of the bronze.⁴⁶⁹

The ‘strength of the constant, known shape’ is affected by the availability of shape to the viewer. As one facet of the cube recedes behind another the viewer relies more heavily on their initial apprehension of the gestalt, whose actuality overrides, or controls the durational aspect of the visual field. As in “Part One” Morris contrives to describe a resistance that will confirm the gestalt: The partiality of each successive viewing position detracts from the gestalt, yet this counter-movement only compels the viewer to levy it as a guarantor of the three-dimensional shape in front of them.⁴⁷⁰ If Morris’s initial presentation of the gestalt was underwritten by the language of energy expenditure, here it is discretely marshalled through the terms of property ownership. For instance, its visible index, ‘shape’, is referred to as the ‘most patently unalterable property’. Shape provides the viewer with a kind of insurance as they traverse the space, ensuring that every permutation of movement will enhance their immediate apprehension. Again, ‘the strength of the constant, known

⁴⁶⁹ Morris, “Part Two”, pp. 233-34.

⁴⁷⁰ As Maurice Berger notes, ‘Morris’s interest in systems and permutable structures offered another way of avoiding a consistent and easily definable gestalt’. See, Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Sons, 1989), p. 55.

shape', whose solidity and permanence guard against the vagaries of the visual field, serves as insurance. In fact, 'the known constant' is precisely that which licenses to viewer to experiment with 'the experienced variable'; it serves to anchor the viewer's movements through an apparently unstable environment, allowing them to do pursue increasingly unstable ventures through space. The experienced variable thus amounts to risk. As we progress, we shall see how Rainer introduces terms that bring this tension to the surface.

Morris's "Part Two" is littered with thinly-veiled attacks on Judd. This is most clear in his comments on colour, bronze material, 'the application of mathematical or engineering concerns' to the fabrication process, and the crime of a polished finish. In his view, these contaminating 'properties' tend to detach 'from the whole of the work to become one more internal relationship'.⁴⁷¹ Because these relationships are 'intimacy-producing, they are wedded to the ornament, i.e. an object whose smallness absorbs spatial relations by compelling the viewer to step closer to it in order to look 'into' it. These internal relationships are visible as 'details', a pairing that inverts (and perverts) the gestalt's visible appearance as shape. Morris clearly understands the resonance of desire, will, and 'affective motor life' that inheres to Judd's use of 'interesting' as a descriptor of value. By relegating the 'experienced variable' behind the 'known constant' he seeks to stabilise a category whose perverse efflorescence is detectable in Judd's iconography in "Specific Objects" (for example, recall his approval for Yayoi Kusama's 'eccentric abstraction'). Ultimately, "Part Two" marks a concerted attempt to control, and if possible obstruct the production of illusion in the visual field – its very concession to the 'experienced variable' makes this clear. He clearly sees that the legacy of painting's illusionistic rendering of space is subsumed in Judd's "Specific Objects" to the overarching category of 'three-dimensionality'. In conclusion, Morris writes, 'The concerns now are for more control of and/or cooperation of the entire situation. Control is necessary if the variables of object,

⁴⁷¹ Morris, "Part Two", p. 232.

light, space, body, are to function'.⁴⁷² The repetition of control signals a fear about losing control.

Yet here it is necessary to take stock and remember that, for the 1994 *October* roundtable, Morris is adept at inhabiting, or performing, a variety of roles – he is a strategist par excellence. As James Meyer observes in his 2000 history of minimalism:

Morris recalled that the essay ["Notes on Sculpture"] had begun as a parody of formalist criticism. Only at [Barbara] Rose's urging did he transform the text into bona fide formal analysis... The parodistic 'version' of "Notes on Sculpture" took on a different target [to Morris's performance, *21.3* (1964)], the authoritative tone and linear historiography of Greenbergian modernism. Both *21.3* and the satirical "Notes" evoke Morris's Duchampian desire to subvert the conventional narratives of art history and the meanings and contradictions they produce'.⁴⁷³

If "Notes on Sculpture" began ironically, the conviction of Morris's tone suggests this 'parody' was nothing more than a mythical origin. Nevertheless, it points to the intractability of performance from criticism. This is implied as much through his referral in "Part Two" to 'object-subject terms', a binary that suggests something other than the registration of 'kinaesthetic demands'. That is, if the sculpture's soliciting of 'kinaesthetic demands' contracts the body (the second constant) in "Notes on Sculpture", this exchange is routed through the speaking subject. 'Object-subject terms' therefore represents a kind of bridge that needs to be crossed before we can reach the body-object – precisely because of the former's dual location in performance and criticism. This next section considers the performance counterpart to "Notes on Sculpture" as called by Meyer, *21.3*. The below case study is intended to contribute to our understanding of the mediation of the performer-prop relation by considering the place of the speaking subject in that exchange. For there is a striking similarity between the comportment of the artist in *21.3* and the levelled rectitude of the column onstage in *Column* (1961).

⁴⁷² Morris, "Part Two", p. 234.

⁴⁷³ Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 155.

4.2 Case Study: Robert Morris's *21.3* (1964)

A lean and bespectacled man in a drab suit crosses the proscenium, rests either hand cornerwise on a lectern, centre, and scans the audience in front of him (Plate XXIV). Haltingly and in a monotone, he begins to read into a microphone. At moments of emphasis or pause he changes the position of his hands, or else gestures mechanically. At an interval he pours himself a glass of water. The sound of spilling overlaps with the resumption of speech; the man silently finishes pouring water; it transpires that he is lip-syncing over a taped recording. As the lecture continues the duplication of speech moves in-and-out of sync. Twenty minutes later the tape ends and the man exits offstage (the lights brighten on Stage 73 of the Surplus Dance Theater). The figure of the professor is Morris, who, in conjunction with choreographer Steve Paxton, had arranged a programme of events at Stage 73.⁴⁷⁴ The text he parodies is the opening section of Erwin Panofsky's methodological treatise, "Iconography and Iconology" (1955), which details a street scene involving one man in the act of doffing his hat to an acquaintance in greeting.

Notice the ekphrastic similarity linking the above to Krauss's description of *Column* in her book *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977; see Chapter Two). If the column's rectilinear comportment onstage prompted her to call it a 'protagonist', in *21.3*, language's emerging technical overlay reveals its object-like character. These opposing transmogrifications are rendered in medial terms in the critical reception. For instance, Jill Johnston's coverage for *The Village Voice* is taken up with the technical procedures that constitute Morris's performance: 'The written paper is a product, and Morris illustrates the product in the process of a lecture, which in turn becomes a product illustrating the process of the paper. It all turns around on itself'.⁴⁷⁵ Her attention is reserved for the relation of process to 'product'. On this basis, she draws a connection to his early neo-Dada sculpture, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), a wooden box containing a field recording

⁴⁷⁴ As Sally Banes writes, 'Paxton organized the series, explaining to the press that the only relationship between Judson Dance Theater and Surplus Dance Theater was some overlapping of personnel'. See, Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 187.

⁴⁷⁵ Jill Johnston, "Dance: Pain, Pleasure, Process", in *Village Voice* (27 February 1964), p. 9.

of the three hours it took to construct it.⁴⁷⁶ *21.3* is really *about* the process of its coming together – for which reason the selection of a methodological treatise is apposite. For Barbara Rose writing in “ABC Art” (1965), its inclusion clarifies her view of Morris as ‘the most overly didactic of all the artists I am considering’.⁴⁷⁷ For her, this ‘dance’ is about meaning, and how it is positively lodged in space. On this basis there is little difference between his lecture-performance and recent plywood sculptures, the latter of which, she writes, ‘appear as pointless obstacles to circulation’.⁴⁷⁸ For this vein of literature, *21.3* exemplifies the artist’s control of process via the weighting of meaning across media.

There is a noticeable reluctance among these voices to engage Morris’s dragging of the humanist scholar.⁴⁷⁹ Such avoidance is cued by his deadpan miming of the art historian émigré: why *should* we pay heed to character when its expression has been reduced to the lineaments of a conceptual procedure? For, in the same breath, the dynamic intermediality of Morris’s performance is delimited to a specific type; its critical reception curiously holding it to the letter of Panofsky’s iconographical method. That is, the humour of *21.3*’s parody is carried by a serious methodical exploration of formal devices, spatial relations, and ‘kinaesthetic demands’ that falls in line with the auxiliary art-historical work of tracking types. This tacit aggregation of media and method is no quirk, for while artistic production was conditioned by a generalised ‘cool’ sensibility it is important to bear the

⁴⁷⁶ As curator Jeffrey Weiss has written, this object contests ‘the irrevocable separation of the process of a work from the work itself’. Jeffrey Weiss, *Robert Morris: Object Sculpture 1960-1965*, ed. Jeffrey Weiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 33.

⁴⁷⁷ Barbara Rose, “ABC Art”, p. 284.

⁴⁷⁸ Barbara Rose, “ABC Art”, p. 284.

⁴⁷⁹ Attention to formal and medial procedures continues through to the present. The above observations chime with a recent essay discussing the lecture-performance for *Afterall* journal (Summer 2013): ‘What makes this work so foundational for a reflection on lecture-performance is Morris’s self-conscious use of performance as an analytical device that, by means of displacement and deferral, unsettles the ‘order of things’, such as the relationship between the document and the work, between presentation and mediation’. Rike Frank, “When Form Starts Talking”, *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* (London: Summer 2013), p. 7. Kimberly Paice does go further, noting: ‘*21.3* produces the effect of form engulfing meaning, thereby closing off the very distinction between form and content on which Panofsky’s demonstration has depended’. See, Kimberly Paice, “*21.3*”, in Rosalind Krauss and Thomas Krens, eds., *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1994), p.160.

continuity of the humanist tradition in mind. How does the subject of Panofsky's text infiltrate Morris's performance?

The artists and critics under discussion were the first generation to have open access to higher education.⁴⁸⁰ Howard Singerman has observed that reforms to liberal arts education through the 1950s 'sought to combine the humanism of the Renaissance masters with the utility of the guild'.⁴⁸¹ Artists like Morris, Judd, and Rainer were trained – or expected at least – not only to produce works of art, but also to talk publicly and to teach; they were encouraged, Singerman continues, to 'stand for the dignity and necessity of artistic labor and technical command, [and] also for the wholeness and cohesiveness of public culture'.⁴⁸² The retooling of humanism in the postwar university galvanised the introduction of criticism to artistic practices whose primary target was, ironically, that same 'rotting sack of Humanism', as Morris retrospectively referred to it in 1993.⁴⁸³ The sign of this spur, "Iconography and Iconology", was implemented through core teaching upon its republication in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955; Plate XXV).⁴⁸⁴ In this edition of Panofsky's essays, published for an American audience, was also included "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline". First printed by Princeton in 1940, nine years after he fled Hamburg for the American academe, this essay properly characterises the subject *behind* the method; the subject, that is, who Morris ventriloquises through *21.3*.

'The humanist', writes Panofsky, is governed by 'an attitude... [of] responsibility and tolerance';⁴⁸⁵ for him, responsibility is not answerable to any external authority but simply

⁴⁸⁰ As Peter Osborne notes, 'The generation of New York artists who came to prominence in the 1960s were the first group of artists to have attended university'. See, Peter Osborne, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 89.

⁴⁸¹ Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 37.

⁴⁸² Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects*, p. 38.

⁴⁸³ Robert Morris, "Introduction", in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. ix.

⁴⁸⁴ Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of the Renaissance Art", in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955).

⁴⁸⁵ Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955). p. 24.

accords with the historicity of the work of art.⁴⁸⁶ The work of ‘constitut[ing] his material,’⁴⁸⁷ as he sets it out, is dependent on three interlocking principles: the diagnosis of ‘date, provenance and authorship’;⁴⁸⁸ knowledge of art theory’s ‘system of generic concepts’,⁴⁸⁹ and ‘an intuitive aesthetic re-creation’ of the work of art.⁴⁹⁰ Unlike the first two requirements, which are answerable to external controls, this final ‘intuitive’ principle showcases that side of iconology that was anathema to Morris and others, namely its centring of the subject’s *Weltanschauung*. The philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman argues that iconology, as formulated by Panofsky, subjects the work of art to a hermeneutic circle over which the historian exercises total control.⁴⁹¹ To be sure, a charge of mimetic foreclosure makes sense in relation to the latter’s notion of history as one ‘cosmos of culture,’ a cosmos that includes all ‘material’ left outside of the ‘cosmos of nature’ which in turn constitutes the domain of science.⁴⁹²

It is this outmoded sense of ‘responsibility’ Judd had in mind when attacking that ‘most objectionable relic of European art’, and which Morris derides in *21.3*. Nevertheless, in deflating the historian, Morris preserved the specification of type that was, from the standpoint of art history as a humanistic discipline, auxiliary to the work of art’s ‘meaning’. *21.3* may be identified through the disciplinary procedures of art history even as it parodies the humanistic worldview of that discipline. On this count, it is worth considering his own involvement in the academy.

In 1964, Morris was in the process of completing his MA dissertation at Hunter College, where he taught an art history survey course that included Panofsky’s text (*21.3*)’s

⁴⁸⁶ ‘The humanist’, he goes on, ‘rejects authority. But he respects tradition. Not only does he respect it, he looks upon it as upon something real and objective which has to be studied and, if necessary, reinstated’. Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 26.

⁴⁸⁷ Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁸ Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁹ Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 46.

⁴⁹⁰ Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 38.

⁴⁹¹ He writes, ‘the verb to see is conjugated in a finally transparent way with the verb to know. The practical resonance still retained by the term imitation could henceforth be encompassed and subsumed by that of iconology’. See, Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University, 2005), p. 118.

⁴⁹² Panofsky, “The History of Art”, p. 29.

title repurposes a listing from the seminar course he taught on). The subject of his dissertation was the evolution of ‘form-classes’ in the sculpture of Constantin Brancusi; his method was closely allied to the innovations of art historian George Kubler, whose 1962 book *The Shape of Time* was a significant point of departure for minimal artists.⁴⁹³ Around the publication of *The Shape of Time*, Morris wrote in a letter to the art dealer and curator Henry Flynt, ‘Today art is a form of art history’; a statement that encapsulates how closely allied his object- and writing practice was to a reformulation of art history as minimally procedural. Suffice to say, Morris was not merely interested in parodying Panofsky, but in demonstrating ideas about the development of form. This lateral approach to humanistic inquiry chimed with Kubler, who denigrated the ‘life of the artist’ approach to studying art history that was explicitly linked to Ernst Cassirer’s neo-Kantian theories of ‘symbolic forms’, via Panofsky. For Kubler, a successful artwork is the ‘hard-won solution to some problem’.⁴⁹⁴ By focusing on the *position* of the work of art within a specific ‘form-class’, Kubler foregrounded formal innovation over artistic intention, thereby turning a European model of art history on its head. To do this, he mobilised the emergent language of cybernetics and electro dynamics. For instance, he writes that ‘History is concerned with the elaboration of credible messages upon the simple foundations afforded by primary signals’.⁴⁹⁵ By constituting the work of art and history on a single plane, he posits a high degree of complementarity between them; this appealed to Morris the theoretician, whose scholarly study of Brancusi is remarkable for its sustained proximity to the question of shape.⁴⁹⁶ After Kubler, he was interested in the work of art as a strategic – to repeat Foster’s term – intervention into a sequence without which it would not be legible. The

⁴⁹³ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁴⁹⁴ Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, p. 30. In full, he writes: ‘Every important work of art can be regarded both as a historical event and as a hard-won solution to some problem... As the solutions accumulate, the problem alters. The chain of solutions nevertheless discloses the problem... The entity composed by the problem and its solutions constitutes a form-class’.

⁴⁹⁵ Kubler, *The Shape of time*, p. 21.

⁴⁹⁶ Robert Morris, *Form-Classes in the work of Constantin Brancusi* (New York: Guggenheim Archive (Manuscript), Hunter College, 1966). I am grateful to Dr. David Hodge for forwarding a scanned version of this manuscript to me.

artist's signature as legal bearer of meaning was thrown into question by this turn to sequence and seriation in a way that, as I will come on to shortly, squared with the location of the subject under emerging structuralist discourse.⁴⁹⁷ Suffice to say, Morris's rejection of method cannot be thought apart from its reconstitution on the level of artistic form; holding *21.3* and "Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two" in view leads one to ask: At what point in the relations of production, mediation and reception – of the artwork's 'signalling' across its form-class – can one locate the subject? This question has prompted a recent corrective reading of the 1960s that is pertinent to our understanding of 'object-subject terms' and, laterally, of the 1960s sensibility. As we shall see, control over method is a key driver of Rainer's presentation in "Quasi Survey", and her adopting and adapting of Morris's sculptural investigations.

In *Systems We Have Loved* (2013), art historian Eve Meltzer engages the personhood of *21.3* from precisely this angle.⁴⁹⁸ Her overall thesis is that, far from cancelling expression, a proto-conceptual work like *21.3* heralds a mimetic response to a world 'subsumed into its order of equivalences',⁴⁹⁹ and that it is paradoxically here, in the absence of 'expressive form', that the subject experiences that which 'has been normative and binding for us'.⁵⁰⁰ Sign systems appear cold and inhuman, but we nevertheless find ourselves reflected by them. It is the studied impersonality of *21.3*'s oratory that counterintuitively draws the viewer to it, as exemplary of the kinds of administrative systems we are accustomed to negotiating on a daily basis. If the subject's expression was taken to be affected by an audience pitted against the mores of Abstract Expressionism, affect was nevertheless

⁴⁹⁷ The question of authorship was explicitly addressed by Morris's *Document* (1963), a pseudo-legal document headed "Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal" that was intended to void his work, *Litanies*, of value.

⁴⁹⁸ Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁴⁹⁹ Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved*, p. 32.

⁵⁰⁰ Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved*, p. 37.

derivable from a presentation of the *effects* of the subject. The artistic subject, in the obvious sense of an artist performing on a stage, persisted.⁵⁰¹

In this vein, Meltzer views the desynchronised lip-syncing of Panofsky's lecture as indicative of the 'ironizing... of the position he [Morris] had come to take up both as an artist and as a student and teacher of art history'.⁵⁰² She pushes Morris's parodic exercise further still by substituting Panofsky's street scene with Louis Althusser's 1970 account of interpellation, positioning *21.3* as prescient in relation to the latter's account of subject formation.⁵⁰³ It is due to the exaggerated impassiveness of Morris's Panofsky – a posture recognisable to his peers as Judson stoneface – that the audience were able to extract something besides a distaste for 'humanistic' sensibility. In fact, the full extent of Meltzer's thesis is that, by reaching the hyperbolic limit of deadpan, a 'system' like *21.3* presents a recognisable blueprint of the antihumanist subject: 'belated, alienated, automated'; but for that, recognisable, present, and sensitive.⁵⁰⁴ I think Meltzer is right to see a conscious negotiation of 'effects' and 'affects' in this work; her analysis nuances Foster's description of Morris as a 'strategic' artist. Moreover, it makes sense of his need in "Notes on Sculpture, Part Two" to control the production of illusion associated with Judd. Yet there is also a sense in which her rejection of the humanist subject is premature; studying the form of *21.3* suggests an overlap between residual, dominant, and emergent notions of the subject that need to be historically related.

⁵⁰¹ For Meltzer, the reception of structuralism culminates with the Information exhibition of Conceptual Art at the Museum of Modern Art, 1970. See, Meltzer, *Systems we have Loved*, p. 33.

⁵⁰² Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved*, p. 76.

⁵⁰³ 'You are on the street again, walking along. Only this time the scenario is different. You are not greeted formally by someone you know; rather, you are called out to suddenly and from behind. The call is abstract and anonymous... Unlike Panofsky's street scenario, [Louis] Althusser's serves not as fodder for a hermeneutics, but to narrate the way in which, according to his particular version of Marxist structuralism, human subjects forcibly come to be'. See, Meltzer, *Systems we have Loved*, pp. 77-8. Her focus here is Louis Althusser's landmark essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". See, Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (1970; New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).

⁵⁰⁴ Meltzer, *Systems we have Loved*, p. 79.

In his monograph on Morris, *Labyrinths* (1989), Maurice Berger anticipates the above reading, except the terms are different: ‘Morris’s parody of the art historian can be taken as prophecy... His theater is one of negation’.⁵⁰⁵ This proprietary naming invests in Morris as a deliberative agent who expresses himself through a subversive acting out. Berger thus captures the insistence of the subject, whose self-possession shines through the ironizing of their expressive function. Rather than turn to a broad doxa in order to categorise the *type* of subjectivity in play, as Meltzer does, he reinscribes a sense of ‘responsibility’ by locating the intentionality of the artist.⁵⁰⁶ (Note, this may not be Berger’s intention; it is more likely due to the allegorical crudeness of his critical language.)

We have seen how art-historical method is on some level redeemed in 21.3. Consider that Panofsky and Morris are two individuals interested in advancing their view of things, albeit by different means. The recovery of Berger’s description may in fact stymie the neat

⁵⁰⁵ Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 3. He goes on: ‘Negation of the avant-gardist concept of originality; negation of logic and reason; negation of the desire to assign uniform cultural meanings to diverse phenomena; negation of a worldview that distrusts the unfamiliar and the unconventional’.

⁵⁰⁶ This corrective to Meltzer’s Althusserian analysis may be pursued from the standpoint of historical materialism. In *Democracy Against Capitalism* (1995) Ellen Meiksins Wood launches a full-scale attack on Louis Althusser. Her argument is that, by investing the mode of production with a structural logic, concrete historical analysis is effectively rendered obsolete; ventriloquising Althusser, she writes: ‘Rigidly determined and monolithic structural relations between self-enclosed economic and superstructural levels continue to exist in the theoretically constructed mode of production; but in the historical world, this structural bloc can be fragmented and recombined in an infinite number of ways’ (55). Because of its abstract enclosure against lived reality, the mode of production comes to stand for something like ‘totality’ and as a result, there exists a radical separation between the scientific (narrowly academic) study of production and the attempt to describe subjective experience against the terms set by that study. Wood continues: ‘It is as if ‘real, concrete’ historical social formations are composed of elements whose inner structural logic is theoretically determined, while historical processes simply break up and recombine these elements in various (arbitrary and contingent?) ways’ (55). Viewed empirically, the social formation is not substantial enough to warrant analysis of the totality; its partial, ephemeral and ‘conjunctural’ nature affords historical analysis a particularly weak subject for analysis. Althusser’s approach is thus twofold, comprising technological determinism and non-systematic description; against this Wood praises the relative historical materialism of the historian E.P. Thompson’s writings, who in turn has been accused by Althusserians of ‘dissolving ‘objective’ structures in subjective ‘experience’ and culture, of identifying class with class consciousness’ (77-8). While Wood’s presentation of Thompson risks dichotomising technology and history in the context of her discussion of Althusser, I find her insistence on an immersive engagement with ‘history’ to be pertinent to the above discussion of Morris. See, Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (1995; London: Verso, 2016).

‘belatedness’ of Meltzer’s reading of *21.3*’s personhood – a subject that, in a literal sense, was there *before* the performance. Laterally, consider that Harold Rosenberg’s 1952 essay, “The American Action Painter” served as foil to the sensibility ascribed by Barbara Rose to Judd, Morris, Rainer and others. Focusing on the act of painting, it argues that the ‘heroism’ of the artist is located in their product.⁵⁰⁷ This locus chimes with the attitude of postwar American society, a moment when the economy was consolidating itself after the losses of the war and a new drive towards material wealth, twinned with social conformism, produced fantasies of individual agency that found expression through Hollywood industrial products and Abstract Expressionism. It would seem impossible to think Rosenberg’s statement in relation to the deadpan farce of *21.3* or *Trio A*’s rejection of phrasing in dance – both works presume the annihilation of this subject; but such a parallel may be drawn if one foregrounds, as Mary Kelly does, the renewed self-possession of the bourgeois subject through activities and performances that were previously extraneous to the work of art. *21.3*’s staging of the artist caricatures the art-historical channels by which artistic subjectivity is circulated and valued, but on another level – and this is registered in the silent switch in “Notes on Sculpture” from Duchampian parody to serious conviction – subjectivity is dramatically aggrandised through these same subversive acts. The academy persists. As Kelly writes:

For criticism, performance art initiated an appropriate synthesis of the disparate elements that had fractured the modernist discourse. On the one hand it provided the empirical domain with a universal object – the body, and on the other, to the transcendental field, it brought the incontestable authenticity of the artist’s experience of his own body.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ ‘The painting itself is a ‘moment’ in the adulterated mixture of his life—whether ‘moment’ means, in one case, the actual minutes taken up with spotting the canvas or, in another, the entire duration of a lucid drama conducted in sign language. The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist’s existence’. Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters”, in *ART News*, December 1952, p. 23. I intend to explore Fred Orton’s writings on Rosenberg’s Marxism in the future.

⁵⁰⁸ Kelly, “Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism”, p. 53.

The performance of the antihumanist subject had the obverse effect of shoring up the capacities of the humanist subject against those administrative systems that, in Meltzer's view, substitute it with a structural logic. There is a seriousness of endeavour to *21.3* that is not unrelated to Judd's subjective attachment to that which is 'interesting'. Illusion shares with the most deadpan, 'pseudo-formalist' kinds of criticism a common, qualitative basis in the form of the bourgeois subject. In summary, Kelly's restitution of this subject through the antihumanist turn may be traced through the gestalt's reliance on the lexicons of energy and property in "Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two", as well as the artist's adherence to method in *21.3*. The legacy of humanistic inquiry inheres to artistic form; yet the persistence of subjective capacities is not always straightforward. Hence my interest in the 'ambiguous note' struck by Rainer's experiments through the overlapping realms of criticism and performance.

Morris's presentation of the subject, in contrast to Rainer's tone, is pointedly oppositional. Berger argues that he deliberately presents an aggressive front in order to provoke his audience. The obtuse nature of Morris's experiments across criticism and performance are, in his view, evidence of a psychosexual dimension.⁵⁰⁹ Referring to Lippard's notion of an 'abstractly sensuous object', Berger claims that 'it was precisely the *repression* of eroticism that Morris's works attempted to dramatise'.⁵¹⁰ By hardening critical language into a positivist husk, obstructing the viewer's circulation through space, or delivering a deadpan lecture, he sought to exacerbate nodes of resistance within an outmoded formalism in order to provoke a moment of desublimation.⁵¹¹ Berger argues that

⁵⁰⁹ Berger writes, 'The provocative, aggressive relation of Morris's sculpture to the spectator's body suggests an even more complex level of confrontation – an erotically charged confrontation meant to overturn the purity and aloofness of much formalist sculpture [and criticism]'. See, Berger, *Labyrinths*, pp. 56-7.

⁵¹⁰ Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 58. He goes on: 'The viewer was aggressively confronted by imposing, unfamiliar forms inserted disconcertingly into the neutral space of the gallery or museum'.

⁵¹¹ Berger writes: 'For Marcuse, art could be liberated from the repressive order of logic and reason. In this way, [C.S.] it was Peirce's and Merleau-Ponty's questioning of rationalist principles, reinterpreted through Marcuse's political critique of the repressive logic of late capitalism, that constituted the social basis for Morris's brand of Minimalism'. See, Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 67.

this strategy was driven by his readings of Herbert Marcuse, whose diagnoses of social repression were accompanied by positive calls for action. The extent to which this was Morris's intention is difficult to say, but if we take Meltzer's account seriously, it is to suggest that the attempt to reveal the insidious nature of social repression paradoxically enabled the audience to identify further with their condition: a repressive desublimation after all.

Written around the same time as Berger's account of Morris's 'theater of negation', Sally Banes's landmark 1977 account of Rainer's dance mobilises a similarly strong critical figure, 'an aesthetics of denial', to describe the action of *Trio A*.⁵¹² From what we know of its unmodulated distribution of energy, flat comportment, recalcitrant gaze, and anticlimactic structure, it may be feasible to apply the above analysis of 21.3 to it. In what follows I argue that the presentation of materials around *Trio A* offers a different path to the 'object-subject terms' that underwrites Morris's presentation. Denial and negation do not properly describe the form of the dance. Rainer's specific relation to control generates a different kind of oppositional stance; one less ironical or parodic, less routed through language; and more overtly ambiguous, more reliant on the body. This divergence makes sense partly – though not wholly – through the lens of sexual difference, a strand of Kelly's argument I address towards the end of this chapter. For the body of the viewer is epiphenomenal to Morris's explorations of 'object-subject terms' if one considers the fact that the language of energy is attributed to the gestalt, a synthetic concept that bolsters his phenomenological formalism. I do not mean to position him as foil, but simply to consider how Rainer diverges from a kind of strategising that was undeniably important for her own investigations through criticism and performance. If the language of energy is harnessed to the speaking subject in Morris's presentation – a form of rhetoric – we shall see how Rainer's approach to the body offers a more material, dynamic, and processual 'product'.

⁵¹² Sally Banes, "Yvonne Rainer: The Aesthetics of Denial", in *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), pp. 41-54.

4.3 “Quasi Survey”, Energy Expenditure

The figure of the gestalt was a stopgap that served Rainer’s purpose: to provide *Trio A* with a verifiable frame of reference at a time when formal procedure assumed the ‘legalistic’ appearance of necessity. ‘Comparing the dance to Minimal Art provided a convenient method of organisation’, she concludes in “Quasi Survey”.⁵¹³ It would therefore be wrong to take her indebtedness to Morris’s writings on sculpture at face value. My aim in the rest of this chapter is to understand how those categories that have come to define the work were in practice transformed. Here I follow her own sense of care towards “Quasi Survey”, as stated in 1989: ‘Since – twenty-five years later – all this sounds like patent cant, I feel obliged to attempt a salvage operation’.⁵¹⁴

The attempt to look beyond the framing of *Trio A* is complicated because its negation is accounted for in her commentary. Not only does she delimit the usefulness of minimal sculpture as an analogy, but in concluding “Quasi Survey” she undercuts its prefatory chart through a separate procedure, ‘There are many concerns in the dance. The concerns may appear to fall on my tidy chart as randomly dropped toothpicks might’.⁵¹⁵ The dance’s ties to minimalism are jeopardised by a separate framing that was a significant part of Rainer’s process: the law of Cagean indeterminacy (Plate XXVI). Carrie Lambert-Beatty sees in the ‘toothpicks’ a reference to Marcel Duchamp’s *3 stoppages étalon (3 Standard Stoppages)* (1913-14), in which he drops a length of string on a piece of wood, creating arbitrary lines that provided the template for a series of three cut-outs. This reference places the chart in closer proximity to Morris’s early sculptural work and, by association, the Duchampian tenor of his criticism and performance. Yet the dropped toothpicks may more fruitfully be related to the Cagean indeterminacy that guided Rainer’s choreographic method over the period leading to *Trio A*’s composition. Before analysing the terms of “Quasi Survey” it is worth considering her own contested relation to ‘object-subject terms’ via Cage.

⁵¹³ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 273.

⁵¹⁴ Rainer, “Revisiting the Question of Transgression”, p. 103.

⁵¹⁵ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 272.

Rainer came under the influence of John Cage's method while attending Robert Dunn's workshop at the space of Merce Cunningham in the early 1960s. Recall the throwing of dice over a 2-D chart that determined movement segments for *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965; discussed in Chapter Three). Indeterminacy presented a sure-fire means of overcoming authorial control and was enshrined as method by a range of choreographers on this basis. It offered an alternative model for the 'antihumanist' subject: Divested of responsibility concerning the arrangement of material, the artist becomes a part of the overall environment. Yet Rainer's tacit negotiation of this 'law' had the effect of exposed certain contradictions immanent to its presentation.

Her subscription to Cage in theory and defection from his method in practice is exemplified by the fact that she obstructed the dice throwing by making so-called 'deliberate choices with an eye to larger and simpler configurations'.⁵¹⁶ In a 1981 article, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", Rainer assesses the legacy of Cage: her comments reveal how fraught the question of control was at the time of *Trio A*'s composition.⁵¹⁷ She first summarises the utility of the 'gift' bequeathed by him to her, among others; in short, the 'relaying of conceptual precedents' made it possible to abdicate authority. This deposition served, in Cage's words, to 'get one's mind and one's desires out of its way', in order to let 'excellent life' and the 'world' happen uninterrupted.⁵¹⁸ For him, indeterminacy held a kinship with the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Looking back, Rainer is cognisant of blind spots that resulted from this knowledge exchange. She argues that, by interpolating 'arbitrariness in the relation of signifier to signified', indeterminacy ultimately led to the 'denial and suppression of a relationship altogether'.⁵¹⁹ No matter how 'neutral', any procedure is still formed through language. The attempt to work 'in a realm of pure idea,

⁵¹⁶ Rainer recalls: 'It is apparent that the placement of the marks was not truly 'random,' as my choices were intuitive and subliminally aesthetic. 'Randomness' precludes motivation and the exercise of taste... What actually happened was that on the second half of the chart I made more deliberate choices, with an eye to larger and simpler configurations'. See, Rainer, "Some retrospective notes", pp. 50-51.

⁵¹⁷ Yvonne Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", in *October*, no. 17 (Summer 1981).

⁵¹⁸ John Cage quoted in, Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", p. 87.

⁵¹⁹ Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", p. 89.

anterior to language' paradoxically reinstates a notion of transcendence that positions the author as external agent.⁵²⁰ Reflecting back on the 1960s, Rainer can see that indeterminacy is bound to the uncritical acceptance of life as inherently good.⁵²¹ At worst, her selective use of indeterminacy – itself a contradiction – discloses an unshakable attachment to authority; at best, it gestures to an incipient interest in the deferral, as opposed to refusal, of meaning.⁵²² Her reintroduction of control and selectivity is ambiguous, but this is why it is worth dwelling on.

It is not anachronistic to read Rainer's critique of Cage back onto her comments in "Quasi Survey" given its coincidence with the development of the semiotic square.

Algirdas J. Greimas's *Semantique Structurale* was published in French in 1966.⁵²³

Although the semiotic square was not available to Rainer, her qualifying remarks about the chart are not dissimilar to those forwarded by Erwin Panofsky and, in a different context, by Roland Barthes.⁵²⁴ Read together, these authors' concessions to the practical limitations

⁵²⁰ Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", p. 90.

⁵²¹ In a 2007 article, published in *Grey Room* journal, Branden W. Joseph argues precisely against the critical position adopted by Rainer: 'Frequently, the idea of chance, apart from any understanding of Cage's use of it, is hypostatized as his sole concern and equated with relativism. Caricaturing him as a holy fool, dismissing him as an imitator of dada, or disparaging him as a religious reactionary, critics overlook the logical, self-critical, and utterly consistent development of the first two decades of Cage's career' (60). In Joseph's view, indeterminacy did more than simply enable Cage to overcome 'the relations between composition, score, performance, and audition, [relations which] involved the imposition of something like semantic force' it represented a continual disruption of disciplinary medium' (64). See, Branden W. Joseph, "The Tower and the Line: Toward a Genealogy of Minimalism", in *Grey Room*, No. 27 (Cambridge: MIT Press, Spring, 2007).

⁵²² She writes: 'The reintroduction of selectivity and control, however, is totally antithetical to the Cagean philosophy, and it is selectivity and control that I have always intuitively—by this I mean without question—brought to bear on Cagean devices in my own work... it is possible to see Cage's decentering—or violation of the unity—of the 'speaking subject' as more apparent than real'. Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth", p. 88.

⁵²³ See, Algirdas J. Greimas, *Semantique Structurale*, (1966; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015). It formed the basis for Rosalind Krauss's celebrated 1979 essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field". See, Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986)

⁵²⁴ Panofsky introduces a schema detailing the three strata of his interpretive method of iconology with the following apology, or qualification: 'But we must bear in mind that the neatly differentiated categories, which in this synoptical table seem to indicate three independent spheres of meaning, refer in reality to aspects of one phenomenon, namely, the work of art as a whole. So that, in actual work, the methods of approach which here appear as three unrelated operations of research merge with each other into one organic and indivisible process.' See, Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology", p. 39; In "The

of systematic thinking suggest a shared regard for the phenomenological subject as constitutive to the process of meaning making. For this reason, it is wrong to think of Panofsky's interpretative schema as merely synthetic, just as it makes no sense to unlink the antihumanist subject from the humanistic tradition it sets out to negate.

Working laterally with the semiotic square, one can feasibly divide the chart's columns titled 'Objects' and 'Dances' into four equally-weighted quadrants: Non-objects – Non-dances; Objects – Dances. This redescription posits a feedback between 'eliminations' and 'substitutions' not permitted by the chart's hierarchical arrangement; it permits anomalies that challenge a normative reading of *Trio A*, eliciting new 'viewing angles' that, in Morris's terms, relinquish the surety of the 'known constant' for the 'experienced variable'. The two-way circulation between the chart's obsolescent top half and the general law of the lower is virtually ongoing. Her exposition of and retraction from method, as pictured by this chart vis-à-vis indeterminacy, is itself an index of the style of *Trio A*, falling in line as it does with the circulation of names and props that surround its execution. It makes sense that the dance is 'difficult to see', for the issue of its method is purposefully unresolved or deferred. As with Morris, an emergent conception of the antihumanist subject comes into conflict with older forms of responsibility, an antinomy that inheres to the presentation of method. The movement of Rainer's chart resists both fixity of purpose and a relativism (in which qualities are rejected one second, recouped the next), because it is ultimately routed through the moving body – the only reason it is possible to posit this semiotic flow is because the chart relates to this dynamic movement.⁵²⁵ Where Lambert-Beatty describes eliminated-yet-recoverable qualities as phantasmal – i.e., a Graham contraction 'haunts' *Trio A* – a shift from the 'body watched' to a study of the moving body allows us to locate

Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), Barthes writes that 'The distinction [between a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message] has an operational validity, analogous to that which allows the distinction in the linguistic sign of a signifier and signified (even though in reality no one is able to separate the 'word' from its meaning except by recourse to the metalanguage of definition)'. See, Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image", in *Image, Music, Text* (1964; London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 37.

⁵²⁵ In Chapter Five I consider the interrelation of transitive and intransitive modes of expression in relation to the dancer.

this recovery as a present, dynamic, changing process. Far from a denial of spectatorship, this is to honour the dance's key *transmitted* element: its 'perpetual motion'. Moreover, as I will go to argue, it is to posit the interrelation of definitions of energy expenditure that were previously held to be distinct.

The ensuing analysis of Rainer's commentary on *Trio A*, "Quasi Survey", focuses on the relation of illusion and effort in terms of the body. To an extent these categories are imported from the sculptural situation, but they are not defined by the sculptural as such. One complication of defining the movement of *Trio A* as objectlike arises from its relation to other sources; *Trio A*'s composition involved the accumulation of bits of movement material – hence its imbrication in other passages, scenes, contexts.⁵²⁶ Explored in the final chapter, these other locations suggest that 'perpetual motion' goes further than describing the dancer's objectlike status; it registers an ongoing transfer of meaning and an iterative structure that is fundamental to the dance's allure. But first: How is *Trio A* like an object?

From our readings of Donald Judd and Robert Morris we have seen that, through the mid-1960s, the object is reformulated as a term in a total environment.⁵²⁷ While there are polemical differences between their respective presentations, both "Specific Objects" (1965) and "Notes on Sculpture, Parts One and Two" (1966) are symptomatic of a displacement of aesthetic value from the (sculptural) object onto an environment that includes the viewer. Recall that, for Judd, the illusory effects of painting and sculpture are subsumed by the umbrella term 'three-dimensionality' – painterly illusion is salvageable on the proviso that 'almost all paintings are spatial in one way or another'.⁵²⁸ His radically broad-minded approach, for which an open or extended relation to space is the single

⁵²⁶ For instance, Rainer recalls that *Trio A* 'echoes somewhat the smooth continuity in some of *PoSS*'s more dancerly moves by me and Judith Dunn in the "Corridor Solo" [segment]'. Email correspondence with the author.

⁵²⁷ This process sets the stage for Conceptual Art and the minimisation of the visual referent. See, Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁵²⁸ Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 89.

condition, is in Morris's view unconscionable.⁵²⁹ Morris's thinly-veiled rebuke in "Parts One and Two" is equally a response to the minimal look that had, by Spring 1966, crystallised through the imitative work of a broader set of artists. Nevertheless, his exposition (and subsequent mitigation) of the gestalt develops an approach to space that refines the viewer as pictured by "Specific Objects". Morris first neutralises the environment by ridding the sculpture of its illusory qualities; 'three-dimensionality' (although he does not use this term) then indicates the activation of the viewer in space as a constitutive element of the aesthetic encounter. His approach, especially in "Part Two", is legislative, censorious, and geared to control, as if he were intent on educating the viewer before introducing them to a privileged arena. On the face of it, Judd is uninterested in the viewer as a constitutive part of the encounter (at least compared to Morris's decisive *inclusion* of 'kinaesthetic demands' in "Part Two"). Yet, his aesthetic term 'interesting' is carried by the philosopher Ralph Barton Perry's emphasis on, in Perry's words, 'the motor-affective life; that is to say... instinct, desire, feeling, will'. Given that the breadth of Judd's presentation demands a renewal of aesthetic judgment it is notable that his aesthetic category, 'interesting', secures the body of viewer to the extent that their 'motor-affective life' is posited as a recursive part of the viewing situation. While circuitous, this inclusion of the body is overtly reflected in the kinds of artworks he selects to write about: Yayoi Kusama's painted furniture and Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures both count as 'abstractly sensuous objects', things that, as we know from Lippard, refer the viewer to the experience of their own body.

Morris for his part explicitly includes the body as a 'constant'; its purpose: to ground the presentation of the gestalt through its scalar equivalence to shape. The lexicons of energy expenditure and property hold an affinity with the 'motor-affective life' that underwrites Judd's presentation of the 'interesting'. Both Judd's and Morris's presentations

⁵²⁹ For instance, Judd writes: 'Because the nature of three dimensions isn't set, given beforehand, something credible can be made, almost anything'. See, Judd, "Specific Objects", p. 93.

therefore implicitly and explicitly posit the body of the viewer as constitutive to the field of minimal art.

By theorising ‘movement-as-object’ in “Quasi Survey”, Rainer brings body and object together: the viewer’s ‘motor-affective life’ and ‘kinaesthetic demands’ are channelled through the dancer, whose movement both activates space and forms an objectlike element in a total environment. If this synthesis seems facile, it is worth noting that her decision to mobilise the gestalt as a resource to describe *Trio A* provided a communicable formula to front less-communicable work; namely, her varied and far from neutral investigations into the performer-prop relation (as explored in Chapters Two and Three). This fact alone provides ballast to resist the popular reading of the dance as straightforwardly minimal. Her mobilisation of the gestalt is analogous to her adoption of Cagean indeterminacy; both resources served as vehicles to advance experimentation in ways that would be intelligible to her audience. (Fred Orton’s distinction between ‘relatively socially-open’ and ‘relatively socially-closed’ spaces is key to advancing the sense of this; for example, it is clear from Jill Johnston’s review, “Rainer’s Muscle” (1968; see Chapter Three) that she understands how these vehicles were being controlled, manipulated, and exploited by Rainer, in ways that would not be obvious to those without the requisite knowledge).

Trio A is widely-known for marking the transition from task movement, involving objects, to tasklike movement, centred on the body. As hinted at thus far, this transition involved the internalisation, or inscription on the body, of the performer-prop relation. The terms for this, to be explored shortly, are illusion and effort. Though the gestalt is not named in “Quasi Survey”, its actual counterpart, constant shape, is dispersed throughout Rainer’s commentary. Tracking from ‘Objects’ to ‘Dances’ in the prefatory chart, for instance, one finds the equivalent of ‘unitary forms, modules’ with ‘equality of parts’; ‘nonreferential forms’ with ‘neutral performance’, and ‘simplicity’ with ‘singular action,

event, or tone'.⁵³⁰ These transpositions indicate that “Notes on Sculpture, Part One and Two” provided a blueprint for her presentation. In addition, the terms she employs to provide a technical account of *Trio A* depart from Morris’s conception of the ‘known constant’, whether it be shape or the body the viewer. For instance, she points to ‘the smoothness of its continuity... movement shapes... of equal weight... [and] sameness of physical ‘tone’.⁵³¹ These markers describe the comportment of the dancer’s body, but they could easily be ascribed to minimal sculpture. Crucially, this synthesis is disrupted as soon as it is stated, for as Rainer admits, she has been describing ‘the ‘look’ of the movements’ – a degree of illusion is involved in the execution of an objectlike procedure that exceeds the remit of Judd’s and Morris’s expositions. (Illusion is an intractable feature of the aesthetic encounter – where Judd seeks to transform it, Morris suppresses it.) Even so, neither account is equipped to deal with the interlinking of illusion and effort that is specific to the comportment of the dancer, however objectlike.

For Lambert-Beatty, Rainer’s acknowledgement that ‘different degrees of effort’ are required to achieve the look of unmodulated movement evidences *Trio A*’s privileged location between indexical and representational modes of meaning making – as argued in the previous chapter, this is to subtract from the specific type of mediation that informs the presentation of movement. For Rainer introduces terms to think about this problematic that do not depart from the moving body. The category of effort, and the embodied and semiotic modes of expression that attend to it, is specific to dancer. By analysing its correlate, energy expenditure, my aim is to consider how Rainer renews a conception of the ‘object-subject terms’ that underwrite the field of minimalism.

“Quasi Survey” is written from the standpoint of the dancer whose relation to phrasing and technique is circumscribed by, in Rainer’s words, ‘the way in which energy is

⁵³⁰ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 263.

⁵³¹ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

distributed in the execution of a movement or series of movements'.⁵³² Though her distinction between 'real' and 'apparent' energy appears analytical, it is important to reckon with its habitual resonance for Rainer-the-dancer, whose various instructors and teachers through the early 1960s conveyed information via the language of energy expenditure: 'It is common', she observes in "Quasi Survey", 'to hear a dance teacher tell a student that he is using 'too much energy' or that a particular movement does not require 'so much energy'.⁵³³ If this terminology runs like a thread through distinct dance styles and vocabularies, it underwent specific changes through the tradition of modern dance pedagogy in the pre-war US context. Without acknowledging this history, the risk is that energy, as presented by Rainer, is hypostatized and hitched to other, less relevant areas of study.⁵³⁴

Over the summer of 1960 – a critical moment in her development as a dancer – Rainer participated in the San Francisco Dancer's Workshop, a programme convened by choreographer Ann Halprin each summer on the deck of her California home. Rainer made the trip west with Robert Morris, Trisha Brown, and Simone Forti. She first encountered *tasklike* movement, whose mythic origin for art history is *Trio A*, through her engagement with Halprin, for whom improvisation opened up a space in which the most ordinary

⁵³² Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 266.

⁵³³ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 266.

⁵³⁴ For instance, Carrie Lambert-Beatty responds in an extended footnote to the claim that 'the body in *Trio A* is understood and deployed as a system of weights and forces' by invoking, in her words, 'the faint shadow cast by an old model of corporeality'. For this purpose, she turns to Anson Rabinbach's history, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). She posits his account of the labouring body, which was, in his telling, reformulated in relation to accounts of mechanical energy running from Hermann von Helmholtz's first law of thermodynamics through to Frederick W. Taylor's science of work management, as a 'residual formation' that is *pictured* by the so-called 'body mechanics' of *Trio A*. In her argument this turn to Rabinbach, while interesting, comes at the expense of a study of 'body mechanics' in relation to modern dance pedagogy, a field arguably more pertinent to our understanding of Rainer's development of movement in *Trio A*. It is to render the richness of the dance into an allegorical sign that precipitates the absorption of a distinct intellectual history to an *October*-decreed understanding of Modernist artistic practice. See, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Moving Still: Mediating Yvonne Rainer's "Trio A"", in *October*, Vol. 89, (Summer 1999), p. 140.

movements provided material to dissect.⁵³⁵ This infinitive is not a metaphor, for Halprin's approach to teaching was developed through a tradition of dance pedagogy that held the study of anatomy, physiology, and kinaesthetics at its core. Halprin studied under Margaret H'Doubler, who instituted the first dance degree for women in 1926 at the University of Wisconsin. Her curriculum, which included a class in anatomy, foregrounded a proper understanding of the dancer's 'body mechanics'. This approach was informed by two sources: First, John Dewey's explorations of learning through experience, encountered by H'Doubler through lectures presented by him through the 1920s, led her to privilege improvisation over the transmission of set phrases and specific vocabularies; second, her studies in New York under the biologist Mabel E. Todd imparted the importance of a thorough understanding of the musculature for the development of the body's kinaesthetic potential. Todd's signal publication, *The Thinking Body* (1937) argues that the performance of a specific action, whether it be sitting, walking, or lifting, may be refined through the physiological study of energy expenditure.⁵³⁶ The uptake of these bodies of work led

⁵³⁵ As Janice Ross remarks in her brilliant monograph on Halprin, 'For Ann [of the mid-1950s], even a simple movement task, like repetitive walking, could become exciting to observe. There was no telling where it might lead if it were allowed to unfold naturally, free from anxieties about making it look interesting to an audience. [Simone] Forti underlined that Ann's approach 'was absolutely breakaway from the dominant modern dance approach of the time, where you would learn certain movements and you would learn a technique that would give you a certain style. It was radical in terms of what dance could be. What movement could be dance and how was the dancer really owning his or her exploration and discovery of movement? In that way I think it was also political'. See, Janice Ross, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 132. This point is echoed by subsequent commenters; for instance, Gabriele Wittmann writes, 'Having breakfast, walking, standing, cooking, erecting scaffolding – any everyday activity could be the starting point for artistic exploration of a movement... The Judson Dance Theater in New York later adopted 'task movements' as one of their approaches, but Halprin had invented them with the SFDW [San Francisco Dancers' Workshop] – not for stylistic reasons, but with the sole purpose of breaking away from common assumptions'. See, Gabriele Wittmann, "The Life and Work of Anna Halprin", in Gabriele Wittmann, Ursula Schorn and Ronit Land, eds., *Anna Halprin: Dance – Process – Form* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015), pp. 24-26.

⁵³⁶ Mabel Elsworth Todd, *The Thinking Body: A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man* (London: Constable & Company, 1938). Here is a demonstration of Todd's approach: 'If a muscle is to lift a weight it should contract before the load is taken on. This is a prime rule in the conservation of muscular energy: prepare for the load. Try, with fingers relaxed, to lift this book; note how heavy it seems and how it almost slips from your grasp. Now put it down, and with a sense of its weight in mind grasp it and feel how light it seems'. See, Todd, *The Thinking Body*, p. 63.

H'Doubler – and consequently Halprin – to encourage, in one commentator's words, 'a physical unfeeling of the body's habituated responses until one reached a core truth'.⁵³⁷

H'Doubler's popular study, *Dance: A Creative Experience* (1940) was particularly radical in that it presented a history of dance 'without names'.⁵³⁸ Bracketing the history of style and movements, *Dance* offers a matter-of-fact account of the baseline categories of technique and expression.⁵³⁹ 'To execute any movement', H'Doubler writes:

We must make an effort; this effort consists of an expenditure of energy. Subjectively it manifests itself by specific kinesthetic sensations... Generally speaking, the movements that are most pleasurable are those that give us the greatest return for the most economical expenditure of energy, and not necessarily those which demand the least effort.⁵⁴⁰

This passage demonstrates a tightly-controlled description of the body in terms of effort, or energy expenditure. It exemplifies a type of rhetoric that directly informs Rainer's approach in "Quasi Survey". In 1965 Rainer interviewed H'Doubler's protégé, Halprin, for the *Tulane Drama Review*; her elaboration on Halprin's comment, below, compounds this rhetoric in the time coinciding with *Trio A*'s composition:

Halprin: I had also gotten attached to the idea that I wanted people to have tasks to do. Doing a task created an attitude that would bring the movement quality into another kind of reality. It was devoid of a certain kind of introspection.

Rainer: I remember that summer I was here with you and you assigned tasks. But as I understood it, the tasks were to make you become aware of your body. It wasn't

⁵³⁷ Ross, *Anna Halprin*, p. 31.

⁵³⁸ Margaret H'Doubler, *Dance: A Creative Art Experience* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1940). I borrow the phrase 'without names' from the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. See, Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (1929; London: Dover, 1986).

⁵³⁹ In a recent monograph on Simone Forti, Meredith Morse mobilises this tradition to defend against the criticism of Forti's use of the term 'natural' to describe her movement invention of the early 1960s; namely, that it results in a blindness to race. In short, the category 'natural' is for Forti linked to the 'neutral' study of physiology. See, Meredith Morse, *Soft is Fast: Simone Forti in the 1960s and After* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016). Ramsay Burt provides a much-needed study of race in relation to Judson Dance and Forti specifically. See, Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁵⁴⁰ H'Doubler, *Dance*, p. 79.

necessary to retain the task but to do the movement or the kinaesthetic thing that the task brought about.⁵⁴¹

The distinction between ‘real’ and ‘apparent’ energy that opens “Quasi Survey” evidences the knowledge of a mid-century dancer whose approach to dance was informed by a history of pedagogy rooted in physiology.⁵⁴² This approach, whose emphasis is pedagogical rather than performance-oriented, sees dance as a privileged space for examining discrete types of comportment underwriting ‘performances’ that collapse the boundary between the stage and other areas of social life.⁵⁴³ It provides an alternative rationale for the ‘object-subject terms’ that are, in Morris’s case, inscribed by the art-historical tradition of humanistic inquiry. How does the rhetoric of energy expenditure play out through “Quasi Survey”?

For Rainer, ‘real’ energy indicates a physiological effort that is not delimited to what takes place onstage: an expenditure of energy links movement onstage to a multitude of equivalent expenditures offstage.⁵⁴⁴ In the obsolescent top half of the chart, ‘illusion’ (Objects) is mapped onto ‘performance’ (Dances). Accordingly, it would seem that

⁵⁴¹ Yvonne Rainer, “Yvonne Rainer Interviews Ann Halprin”, in *Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter, 1965), pp. 147.

⁵⁴² Dance scholar Dee Reynolds distinguishes between kinetic and kinaesthetic forms to energy: ‘This energy is ‘kinaesthetic’ as opposed to kinetic’. Both terms are etymologically related to movement (Greek *kinein*, to move). However, kinetic energy can be quantified in scientific descriptions and ascribed to inanimate objects in motion, which have no experience of movement. Kinaesthetic energy, by contrast, refers to energy as it is experienced by a subject. See, Dee Reynolds, *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham* (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2007), p. 4.

⁵⁴³ The critical theorist Andrew Hewitt has approached this problematic from the study of movement presented by Siegfried Kracauer in his 1927 “Mass Ornament” essay. For Hewitt, dance is an exemplary site for the study of ideology, insofar as choreography can at moments literalise the ‘plan’ of everyday movement, blurring the boundary between the proscenium and public space. He is interested in hitching the non-referentiality of the dancing body to the development of cultural forms; however, in a similar way to Lambert-Beatty, his approach, which is conducted from the standpoint of ideology critique, erases the resources of Dance Studies. See, Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁵⁴⁴ Rainer writes, ‘The demands made on the body’s (actual) energy resources appear to be commensurate with the task – be it getting up from the floor, raising an arm, tilting the pelvis, etc. – much as one would get out of a chair, reach for a high shelf, or walk down stairs when one is not in a hurry’. See, Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

Rainer's goal is to smash through the barrier of the stage, to link real bodies to real objects without the stymying effects of illusion. In this case, the movements that follow from 'real' energy are, in her words, 'not mimetic.... But factual'.⁵⁴⁵ On the surface, her endeavour to suppress the mimetic links her argument to Morris's and Robbe-Grillet's different attempts to exert control over *how* a situation is experienced or read. Indeed, the figure of 'control' is salient in "Quasi Survey" and seems to guide her account of energy expenditure.⁵⁴⁶

Yet her concession to the 'look' of such expenditure cues her reader to expect something different. The flattening of energy outputs was intended to effect the appearance of an unmodulated string of movement; its objective, to negate the tripartite structure of traditional phrasing – preparation, attack, and recovery.⁵⁴⁷ In practice, this negation relied on a differential of energy investments that subverted the distinction between 'real' and 'apparent' energy with which her essay opens. For the emphasis is different.

Demystifying the 'apparent' energy of traditional phrasing in the opening section, Rainer writes that, 'The term 'phrase' can also serve as a *metaphor* for a longer or total duration containing beginning, middle, and end'.⁵⁴⁸ A few lines down, the display of phrasing is likened to 'a romantic, overblown plot... [involving] introversion, narcissism, and self-congratulatoriness'.⁵⁴⁹ These attributions directly rehearse the tenor of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *For a New Novel* (1965), in which he lambasts realist and existentialist authors alike for their anthropomorphic viewpoint. Unlike Robbe-Grillet, however, she does not take the unrealistic step of totally eliminating metaphor and plot (or, in short, 'illusion'). This is because she is aware of an obstacle that he only gradually conceded:

⁵⁴⁵ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 270.

⁵⁴⁶ She writes, 'The execution of each movement conveys a sense of unhurried control... What is seen is a control that seems geared to the *actual* time it takes the *actual* weight of the body to go through the prescribed motions, rather than an adherence to an imposed ordering of time'. See, Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 270.

⁵⁴⁷ To illustrate this point, she refers to the *grand jeté* as follows: 'It is easy to see why the *grand jeté* had to be abandoned. One cannot 'do' a grand jeté; one must 'dance' it to get it done at all, i.e., invest it with all the necessary nuances of energy distribution that will produce the look of climax together with a still, suspended extension in the middle of the movement'. See, Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 267.

⁵⁴⁸ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 267. [My italics].

⁵⁴⁹ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 267.

illusion is perceived by the reader/spectator.⁵⁵⁰ We can garner this from her aside, ‘Of course, I have been talking about the ‘look’ of the movements’.⁵⁵¹ Accordingly she elects to *conceal* illusion; for instance, her foregrounding of ‘matter-of-fact’ movement involves ‘the submerging of the personality’ – another byword for illusion.⁵⁵² Yet, since it is equally unrealistic to expect to conceal illusion for any duration, she makes a point of simultaneously *exposing* it. Her previous investigations involve the location of that pressure point at which the ‘load/load’ of the performer-prop relation is drawn to the surface. The dynamic of concealment and exposure that drives the body-object metonym of *Trio A* is intelligible through movement alone, hence it is possible to speak of the mediation of the performer-prop relation through the body’s comportment. In *Trio A*, effort or energy expenditure is the mechanism by which she aims to exert control over illusion.⁵⁵³

Though *Trio A* involves a ‘perpetual motion’, the accumulated bits of movement that comprise the dance are each, in Rainer’s words, ‘intact and separate with respect to its nature’.⁵⁵⁴ This may strike the reader as a contradiction: How can movement(s) be simultaneously continuous and discrete? Johnston, in her 1968 review of *The Mind is a Muscle*, commented on the ‘intricacy’ of the movement series. In order to clue the reader in, Rainer articulates this through the lens of minimal sculpture: ‘The series progresses by the fact of one discrete thing following other’.⁵⁵⁵ For Lambert-Beatty, these ‘stoppages’ were evidence of the dance’s ‘inorganic continuity’, something akin to the photographic index. Yet this is to void the generative or renewable formation of these stoppages through

⁵⁵⁰ In “Don’t Give the Game Away”, Rainer writes: ‘Much as I admire his essays, I find his [Robbe-Grillet’s] descriptive technique does little more than elaborate the suspense and obfuscate the continuity of the traditional novel. The burden of plot remains nonetheless’. See, Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away”, p. 44.

⁵⁵¹ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

⁵⁵² Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 267.

⁵⁵³ Rainer’s famous “NO Manifesto”, which in fact formed the postscript to her 1965 essay “Some retrospective notes”, concludes with a relevant observation that qualifies its polemical tone, ‘The challenge might be defined as how to move in the spaces between theatrical bloat with its burden of dramatic psychological ‘meaning’ – and – the imagery and atmospheric effects of the non-dramatic, non-verbal theatre (i.e., dancing and some ‘happenings’) – and – theatre of spectator participation and/or assault’. See, Rainer, “Some retrospective notes”, p. 51.

⁵⁵⁴ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 271.

⁵⁵⁵ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 271.

effort, or energy expenditure. The first law of thermodynamics guarantees a perpetual motion that, for the entirety of *Trio A*'s duration, is liberated from the second law of thermodynamics: entropy. This strange occurrence, which continues to elude or mesmerise audiences, is intelligible through the residual idealism of the gestalt. For Rainer, 'movement is a complete and self-contained event' – meaning it is able to be perceived as a whole.⁵⁵⁶ This capacity depends on two measures: the 'look' of unmodulated energy outputs and the avoidance of repetition. In Rainer's view, repetition serves to 'enforce the discreteness of a movement, objectivity it, make it more objectlike... literally making the material easier to see'.⁵⁵⁷ Eschewing repetition and denying the climactic moment both obstruct the spectator's ability to hoard one part of what they see. These movement-based solutions chime with Morris's avoidance of the ornament, an object whose diminished size compresses spatial relations, returned them as internal configurations. By enacting these two measures, Rainer is able to exert a degree of control over the viewer's *reading* of the performance.⁵⁵⁸ (It is therefore possible to think about Rainer's intervening modifications of the dance in terms of the testing of the resilience of its gestalt.)⁵⁵⁹ In *Trio A* the actual counterpart of the gestalt is not shape, but the 'constant' of perpetual motion. Rainer's description of this is remarkable:

My *Trio A* dealt with the 'seeing' difficulty by dint of its continual and unremitting revelation of gestural detail that did *not* repeat itself, thereby focusing on the fact that the material could not easily be encompassed.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 271.

⁵⁵⁷ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", pp. 271-72.

⁵⁵⁸ This is aided by secondary measures, such as the instruction that the performer(s) avert their gaze from the audience at all times. This, along with the orientation of the dance's geometric floor patterns, necessitates a frontal viewpoint.

⁵⁵⁹ Here I am thinking primarily about *Trio A Pressured* (1999). Rainer's listing for this performance on the 'Video Data Bank' website is as follows: 'On October 4, 1999, *Trio A* was performed at Judson Church by Pat Catterson, Y.R. [Rainer], Douglas Dunn, Steve Paxton, and Colin Beatty as *Trio A Pressured*. Pat Catterson danced it backwards; Rainer, Dunn, and Paxton as a trio; Y.R. and Beatty as a duet in which his movements were predicated on keeping her face in view; Catterson and Y.R. as a duet accompanied by The Chambers Brothers' In the Midnight Hour'. See, <<http://www.vdb.org/titles/trio>>

⁵⁶⁰ Yvonne Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 272.

According to the *OED*, the word ‘revelation’ derives from the Latin verb ‘revelare’, meaning to ‘unveil, uncover, lay bare’. The dance, it could be said, involves the exposure of ‘gestural detail’ – a term whose extravagance conjures the sense of illusion, (for Morris, ‘detail’ refers to the object’s ‘compressed internal relations’, which are intimacy producing).⁵⁶¹ Such ‘material’, as ‘gestural detail’ is renamed in the final clause, is allied to the effort of the work’s ‘continual and unremitting revelation’. Rainer’s use of ‘revelation’ seems odd – why not use the more familiar term ‘performance’? Its primary meaning, according to the *OED*, is: ‘A surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others: *revelations about his personal life*’. Revelation’s exposure implies an origin point that comes before the dance. Pertinent also is the fact that the exposed ‘material’ is not easily ‘encompassed’; that is, it exceeds the scope of the revelation. The spectator experiences this ‘seeing difficulty’ – of material that both precedes and exceeds its duration – when pulling away from the dance. For those locations or origins that would serve to anchor this revelation are not obviously indicated – the lack of repetition means its ‘gestural detail’ cannot easily be objectified or made ‘objectlike’. Its revelation is thus ‘sensuously abstract’ – in Lippard’s terminology a ‘framework of simplicity or austerity’ houses ‘a controlled voluptuousness... [as] formally manifested by the predominance of a long, slow, deliberately regular curve’. The dance elicits an invitation to pursue its material further, but all avenues seem closed: we perceive a gestalt, and no more; yet this tension only exacerbates the audience’s desire to *see* the material that inheres to the dance.

The choreographer’s ‘revelation’ discloses the presence of a psychosexual dimension that is named as such by Rainer in a more recent assessment, as referenced by this chapter’s first epigraph. By centring on the relation of illusion to effort, we come closer to understanding how *Trio A* allows for an ‘expression of self’ while remaining ‘cool’. The

⁵⁶¹ This connection is reinforced by Susan Leigh Foster, whose description of *Trio A* recalls Morris’s interest in the midrange as indicative of human scale: ‘The entire phrase occurred in the midrange of body extension, occupied a moderate amount of floor space, and maintained a uniform pace, neither fast nor slow, with no perceptible accelerations or decelerations’. See, Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 174.

dance is a tightly-controlled metonym, body-‘movement-as-object’, whose revelation implicates passages and contexts that precede, or at least fall outside of its four-and-a-half minute duration. Hence the ‘relatively socially-closed’ relation of those five transmitters who are tasked with preserving it. ‘The axis of contiguity and displacement’ that propels Rainer’s art criticism and performance is epiphenomenal to her lived experience, as a dancer and woman, of effort, or energy expenditure.⁵⁶² Its revelation is underwritten by energy expenditure – and this is where it may be possible to locate a historically-emergent awareness of sexual difference.

Despite the unexpectedly mesmerising beauty of the dancers, their movements resist the crystallisation of shape or pose through a continuity of transition. The audience’s apprehension of kinetic imagery struggles to keep up with the dancers, who have already progressed to the next bit of movement.⁵⁶³ Importantly, this spectatorial lag is not determined by speed, for at any one moment dancers engage two or three body parts in different actions, giving rise to an unpredictability that is exacerbated by their averted gaze. While we have the impression of a continuous transfer of weight, the dancer is actually engaged in the effort of coordinating *discontinuous* movements across different parts of the body. (This is why the dance, which seems simple, is very difficult to learn). The magnitude of the discrepancy between ‘look’ and effort depends in part on the dancer’s ‘sureness of arrival’, on their mastery of the movement series. Even so, *the disjunctive simultaneity of perpetual motion and discontinuous movement makes the dance impossible*

⁵⁶² In early 2017 I met with choreographer Sara Wookey, one of five transmitters of *Trio A*. It is her contention that the dance provided Rainer with a means of ‘creating space’. Not only did she spend many hours in solitary, working on the movement series, but it is (to paraphrase Wookey), so hard to do, so complex, that there is no space in one’s mind for another else – something that is felt acutely by beginners. As a woman who loved performing, Wookey suggests, this process of construction enabled Rainer to get away from herself, and the pressures she experienced in her own life.

⁵⁶³ As Susan Leigh Foster remarks, ‘Just when one saw a familiar dance shape, the configuration of the body would shift, sometimes to a foreign shape, sometimes to a commonplace shape that seemed oddly out of place ion the dance’. See, Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 175.

to follow; however receptive, the audience is unable to identify originating points because two distinct presentations are being transmitted.

Trio A precipitates a bizarre detachment of material from effort, or energy expenditure; the images its movement generates are not locatable in that movement.⁵⁶⁴ We catch glimpses of phrasing, but these are instantly swallowed – a pedestrian action overlaps with an arabesque, whose clipped exposition blurs into something less recognisable. What we *see* is transition. Rainer's term for this phenomenon, a 'revelation of gestural detail', describes a paradox: by concealing the origin of illusion, illusion's basis in effort is exposed. *Trio A*'s proliferation of imagery cannot confidently be assigned to the movement of the dancers, whose continuous transition never departs from a mid-range of bodily extension. We have no choice but to suspend illusion as it is brought to light – the immediacy of this contradiction elicits a point of view that galvanises us to query the base of its 'body mechanics'.

This chapter has sought to define the body-object of minimalism through a study of the 'object-subject terms' that support its presentation. Control over method, as that which links the related activities of performance and criticism, has emerged as a key site of contestation in this field. These activities disclose the contradictory renewal of the humanist subject through the 'cool' sensibility of the 1960s. Reading comparatively, I have endeavoured to explain how dance departs from sculpture, a far from obvious step given the latter's explicit centring of the body. Rainer's investigation of the performer-prop relation only exacerbates this distinction. If Morris sought to activate the body's 'kinaesthetic demands' through his plywood sculpture, thus implying an affinity to dance whose validity is confirmed by his involvement with Judson dance and the prop-like motility of his sculpture through different spaces, it is necessary to posit Rainer's departure

⁵⁶⁴ In his famous essay, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", Leo Bersani writes, 'Sexual desire initiates, indeed can be recognised by, an agitated fantasmatic activity in which original (but, from the start, unlocatable) objects of desire get lost in the images they generate'. See, Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", in *Is the Rectum a Grave? And other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 28.

on a different order. Accordingly, I have developed a focus on the metonym, a procedure that may be tracked across her art criticism and dance work. This, it was argued, enables a degree of control over the production of illusion that transforms the field of minimal art. Having addressed Rainer's art criticism in Chapter Two, more analysis is required to understand how the metonym functions specifically through her movement work. This term is linked to the dance-based category of 'transition' in the final chapter.

Chapter Five: Passage – Transition – Expression

She would get what she needed and split.

Yvonne Rainer, “Epilogue (for Merce Cunningham)”, 1973.

5.0 Introduction

This dissertation’s final chapter considers materials that depart from the field of minimalism, thereby extending the presentation of the body-object to areas that fall beyond the remit of the project in its current form. At the same time, it develops claims made in Chapter Four for Yvonne Rainer’s specific intervention into the field of minimalism by unpacking her use of the metonym. Tracking across art criticism and dance, we have seen how metonymy enables Rainer to negotiate the mythic principles of minimalism. Mechanisms of control considered thus far – ambiguity, manipulation and exploitation, concealment and exposure, the modulation of energy investments – enact transfers of meaning, whether it be from prop to performer or sculpture to body, (Rainer would go on to refer to the prop as a ‘body-adjunct’). The temporal sense of ‘transfer’ is complicated in “Quasi Survey” (1968), her commentary on *Trio A*, by the ‘revelation of gestural detail’. Revelation, it was argued, refers to the exposure of a prior effort – *Trio A* exposes an effort, or energy expenditure that precedes its performance. This is the case if one foregrounds the process of its composition and rehearsal, as well as its value for Rainer as material for daily practice. Though no movement is repeated, the dance is iterative in that it has subsequently been performed and recombined as an element through a range of contexts, as detailed by Rainer in 2009.⁵⁶⁵ Iterability repeats the metonym’s ‘horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement’ along a diachronic axis, inviting us to consider its surroundings as an

⁵⁶⁵ See, Yvonne Rainer, “Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation”, in *Dance Research Journal*, 41/2 Winter 2009.

intrinsic part of its structure regardless of the finitude of its four-and-a-half minute duration. In other words, while *Trio A*'s discrete movement is perceivable as a whole, its form may nevertheless be differentiated by considering its presentation through a range of contexts across times.⁵⁶⁶

The aim of this chapter is threefold: to situate the *passage* of *Trio A*'s revelation with an appropriate model; to understand the dance-making significance of the *transition* for Rainer in the time leading to *Trio A*, and finally, to consider the transitive and intransitive status of *expression* in relation to the dance. While distinguished by object, this chapter's three keywords each refer to a common processual movement that expands our sense of the metonym. The parameters of analysis have changed correspondingly: In place of published art criticism and the performance situation, this chapter's sites of inquiry comprise background activities of different kinds: phenomenological reflections regarding the composition of movement; notes on the dance class and improvisation session, and a letter sent by one performer to another inviting them to participate in a performance. This orientation away from foreground configures *Trio A* as material and effort embedded in a circulation that precedes and exceeds the performance context. In the spirit of process, this chapter is not conclusive but rather presents grounds for further research.

5.1 Passage

I begin with two historical sources that suggest a processual dimension. Yvonne Rainer first encountered the plays and writings of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) while attending the 'Workman's Circle' in San Francisco as a teenager – her parents were both anarchists and Italian immigrants. In 1954 she sold tickets at the San Francisco Cinema Guild, whose films often featured music from *The Threepenny Opera* (1928).⁵⁶⁷ If Brecht's influence was more apparent through her film career, starting with *Lives of Performers* (1972), the formal devices that related to his theorisation of Epic Theatre were instructive for her through the

⁵⁶⁶ In the dissertation's conclusion, I consider *Trio A*'s performance by Rainer as a solo titled *Convalescent Dance*, in the context of Angry Arts Week, 1967.

⁵⁶⁷ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, pp. 108-9.

1960s. Rainer's relation to Brecht may best be considered a negotiation: Epic Theatre was more a resource than a law, per her engagement with Cagean indeterminacy and the gestalt.⁵⁶⁸ Though she only mentions his name in passing, her management of artistic elements – especially character – shares a didacticism with Brecht that warrants attention.

In his landmark essay, “A Short Organum for the Theatre” (1949), Brecht tackles the hierarchy of the star system of ordinary theatre by suggesting that, in his words, ‘the actors should sometimes swap roles with their partners during rehearsal, so that the characters can get what they need from one another’.⁵⁶⁹ This prescription bears relevance to Rainer's account of the ‘siphoning’ of energy from Giselle to the brick pile in Deborah Hay's choreography (see Chapter Two). Not only did she implement strategies to deflate her own star quality, but her conscious stage management of other elements is analogous to Brecht's tendency to measure the utility of what is demonstrated through deliberating over admissions and exclusions.⁵⁷⁰ Beyond this coherence, what specifically interests me is the sense of passage that underwrites his vision for an Epic Theatre. Actors are people who make clear, through various means, that character has been adopted. The audience's registration of this discrepancy makes it transparent that a social point of view is being demonstrated. In turn, this realisation galvanises the spectator to think critically about what they see and, better still, to produce social commentary of their own. Rainer was not, in the 1960s, primarily interested in social commentary; her priority lay with the advancement of

⁵⁶⁸ As expected, Rainer has at different points distanced herself from the legacy of Brecht. This negotiation of the Brechtian ‘law’ is most apparent in a 1976 interview conducted by the *Camera Obscura Collective*. As Rainer recalls, ‘I had somehow found myself playing devil's advocate throughout, dragging my feet through their certainties and hell-for-leather faith in Brechtian correlations between form and social good’. See, Yvonne Rainer, “Interview: the *Camera Obscura Collective*”, in *A Woman Who: Essays, interviews, Scripts...* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999) p. 141.

⁵⁶⁹ Bertolt Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre”, in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of a New Aesthetic*, ed. John Willett (1949; London: Methuen Drama, 1964), p. 197.

⁵⁷⁰ For instance, Rainer writes of *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968): ‘I had the same ambivalence about decor [as] I had about music: It shouldn't hang around too long, and the more grand the effect the briefer the appearance... In the final version of *The Mind is a Muscle* the white motif appeared again: In each section a different person wore all white. Everyone had a chance to be a ‘star’ – at least in appearance’. See, Rainer, ‘Some non-chronological recollections”, pp. 75-7.

formal potentials. Nevertheless, Brecht's interest in performance as demonstration filtered through her practice and may serve to elucidate the tenor of *Trio A*'s revelation.

Brecht clarifies the temporal sense of 'demonstration' in a short essay from 1950. "A Street Scene" is the result of a deduction; for him, it represents the most basic principle of Epic Theatre.⁵⁷¹ His essay hypothesises about the aftermath of a road traffic accident, in which an eyewitness demonstrates what has occurred to other passers-by. Brecht selects an episode apparently devoid of artistic elements as an appeal to his reader's common sense: intuitively we understand that the witness deploys character as a means to an end, whether it be to assign responsibility or reflect on social causes – 'he was obviously rushing to get to work'. For their part, the spectating passers-by know this demonstration is preceded by an actual event; as Brecht writes, 'the demonstrator should derive his characters entirely from their actions'.⁵⁷² Crucially, this knowledge does not preclude the use of artistic elements: the demonstrator can choose to emphasise or exaggerate their dramatisation without taking possession of character or erasing this passage to the actual event.⁵⁷³ Amateur artistry will not lead to what Brecht derisively calls 'the engendering of illusion' – a feature of ordinary theatre – as long as this passage is maintained.⁵⁷⁴ The site of a road traffic accident poses no difficulty: the demonstrator is detached from those involved in the crash and can therefore command a greater range of artistic elements without obfuscating the actual traffic accident. Such demonstration seamlessly invites commentary, as passers-by are led to corroborate or protest what is presented to them.

⁵⁷¹ Bertolt Brecht, "A Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre", in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of a New Aesthetic*, ed. John Willett (London: Methuen Drama, 1964). For my purposes it is interesting to contrast the 'object-subject terms' of this essay to the street scenes of Panofsky and Althusser discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁷² Brecht, "A Street Scene", p. 124.

⁵⁷³ As Brecht writes, 'It is important that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre should be excluded from our street scene: the engendering of illusion. The street demonstrator's performance is essentially repetitive. The event has taken place; what you are seeing now is a repeat. If the scene in the theatre follows the street scene in this respect then the theatre will stop pretending not to be theatre, just as the street-corner demonstration admits it is a demonstration (and does not pretend to be the actual event)'. See, Brecht, "A Street Scene", p. 122.

⁵⁷⁴ Brecht, "A Street Scene", p. 122.

Brecht makes further specifications to explain how actors may overcome the illusion-engendering effects of the stage. What concerns me, however, is his description of the passage from actual event to demonstration. Is it possible to view *Trio A*'s 'revelation of gestural detail' as a demonstration of an effort that has already taken place? How does this movement series intervene so effectively? How has it come about? This chapter will consider *Trio A*'s unique mode of expression; however, it is still not clear how its 'revelation' relays an actual event that precedes it. Recall that, for Rainer, *Trio A* involves the juggling of concealments and exposures, a process or mood that discloses, in her words, an 'expression of self'. This 'self' is different from the traditional presentation of character, understood as a fixed entity that is filled out or coloured by phrasing, in that it is non-locatable. It approaches Brecht's demonstration, yet the lack of an obvious 'actual event' presents a stumbling block. What kind of prior 'self' is expressed through its simultaneity of perpetual motion and discontinuous movement? The notion of 'passage' needs to be approached from a different point of access. By turning to a disciplinary source, I hope to gain some perspective on Rainer's defection from method.

Erving Goffman's sociological study, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969) explores how social performance of different kinds relies on the management of activity, or effort.⁵⁷⁵ Goffman employs the language of dramaturgy to explore sites of social interaction that border the public/private distinction, such as the work place.⁵⁷⁶ Performance, for him, is a broad category that denotes a 'front' behind which different activities take place; this is exemplified by the restaurant, which is organised into back and front of house. In front of house, it is expedient for both waiter and customer if a front is easily apprehended as such: 'Observers', Goffman writes, 'then need only be familiar with a small and hence

⁵⁷⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1969). The doctoral research of Catherine Elizabeth Spencer, which focuses on the relationship of sociology to 1960s art, is relevant in this regard.

⁵⁷⁶ As one commentator has observed, 'A metaphor can be used as an idiosyncratic map to the social world'. See, Philip Manning, *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology* (London: Polity Press, 1992), p. 15.

manageable vocabulary of fronts'.⁵⁷⁷ As the waiter enters the dining room, the heterogeneous activity of the kitchen gives way to an 'abstractness and generality' that is regulated by cleanliness, competence, and the task in hand.⁵⁷⁸ This front is pressurised, however, if the performance takes place in back of house, as when the restaurant manager walks into the kitchen. In a summary passage, Goffman writes:

Sufficient self-control is exerted so as to maintain a working consensus; an idealised impression is offered by accentuating certain facts and concealing others; expressive coherence is maintained by the performer taking more care to guard against minor disharmonies than the stated purpose of the performance might lead the audience to think was warranted. All of these general characteristics of performances can be seen as interaction constraints which play upon the individual and transform his activities into performances. Instead of merely doing his task and giving vent to his feelings, he will express the doing of his task and acceptably convey his feelings. In general, then, the representation of an activity will vary in some degree from the activity itself and therefore inevitably misrepresent it. And since the individual will be required to rely on signs in order to construct a representation of his activity, the image he constructs, however faithful to acts, will be subject to all the disruptions that impressions are subject to.⁵⁷⁹

Goffman addresses the switch from 'mere' activity to 'mere' performance. Through wonderfully staid prose, he isolates and comments on the passage from one to the other. The boss provides an 'interaction constraint' that transforms activity into performance. As with Brecht's street demonstrator, this is commonsensical: If a restaurant manager were to enter back of house, the kitchen porter would continue washing dishes, but their activity would imperceptibly be transformed into the *representation* of washing dishes for the manager's benefit.⁵⁸⁰ Due to the suddenness of this constraint, they are liable to lose their

⁵⁷⁷ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 36.

⁵⁷⁸ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 36.

⁵⁷⁹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 72.

⁵⁸⁰ As Goffman observes at a later point, 'One form of decorum that has been studied in social establishments is what is called 'make-work'. It is understood in many establishments that not only will workers be required to produce a certain amount after a certain length of time but also that they will be ready, when called upon, to give the impression that they are working hard at the moment... From a consideration of make-work it is only a step to the consideration of other standards of work activity for which appearances must be maintained, such as pace, personal interest, economy, accuracy etc... When one's activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed'. See, Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, pp. 112-114.

rhythm and misrepresent their activity, and will hence be forced to supplement this loss by channelling their energy into the *look* of washing dishes. For Goffman, performance amounts to a kind of ‘impression management’, in which one party expends additional effort in order to convincingly represent or provide an image of their activity. Socialisation, or acclimatising to a new working environment, involves the acquisition of strategies and shortcuts that allow for the least additional effort: ‘accentuating certain facts and concealing others’.⁵⁸¹ Activity, that which precedes performance, is subjected to a dynamic process of concealment and exposure. Though the worker has control over this process, their performance is ultimately regulated by the constraint of the observer(s). However, as Goffman remarks, this hierarchy is challenged by the fact that teammates involved in a performance are not performing for each other. Tasked with maintaining the semblance of workplace efficiency, teammates become so-called ‘accomplices’, whose cooperative familiarity permits, in Goffman’s words, ‘a kind of intimacy without warmth’.⁵⁸² While keeping the manager and head chef happy, kitchen staff are obliged to cordon off a ‘backstage region’ to carry out their activities unimpeded.⁵⁸³ By successfully manipulating the illusion of activity, workers secure a ‘back region’ in which they are free to contrive shortcuts, swap roles and responsibilities, or pursue their own activities. These forms of management chime with Rainer’s direction of performers and props.

This heterogenous area is akin to the Off-off-Broadway site of the Judson Dance Theater. The Judson’s sanctuary and gym provided ‘relatively socially-closed’ space, in which participants featured in each other’s work; in-progress performances and rehearsals were frequently staged, and the audiences were comprised of ‘teammates’ and fellow travellers from Greenwich Village. It is *in*, as opposed to against this backdrop that I locate

⁵⁸¹ N.B: This process of acculturation relates to Rainer’s practical negotiation of different methods and laws.

⁵⁸² Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 88.

⁵⁸³ Goffman offers an equivalent example at a later point: ‘If a factory worker is to succeed in giving the appearance of working hard all day, then he must have a safe place to hide the jig that enables him to turn out a day’s work with less than a full day’s effort’. See, Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 116.

the circulation of props and names discussed in Chapter Two. This is not to accept the myth of participatory democracy and egalitarianism that mystifies the history of Judson Dance; as we know, certain individuals were promoted and others relegated in a way not dissimilar to the Hollywood star system.⁵⁸⁴ However, it can be said that the most interesting work to emerge from Judson developed strategies to highlight this contradiction, by foregrounding the switch from ‘mere’ activity to ‘mere’ performance.

In “Quasi Survey”, Rainer lists some strategies explored by her peers; she refers at one point to Steve Paxton’s *Transit* (1962), for which he instructed performers to mark movement onstage. As Rainer explains, “marking’ is what dancers do in rehearsal when they do not want to expend the full amount of energy required for the execution of a given movement’.⁵⁸⁵ Paxton oversaw the conveyance of a back-region activity in order to test the mettle of the performance situation. His use of marking is reflected by Rainer’s decision with *Terrain* (1963; Plate XXIX) to have performers relax against a street horse onstage, instead of in the wings, while waiting for further cues.⁵⁸⁶ A similar motivation informs *Trio A*: she refers to its dancers as ‘neutral doers’, their performance is ‘matter-of-fact’ and ‘banal’.⁵⁸⁷ The success of *Trio A* lies in its acute pressurisation of the switch itself – something these earlier strategies only hint at; in Goffman’s terms: ‘Instead of merely doing [her] task and giving vent to [her] feelings, [she] will *express* the doing of [her] task’.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ As Sally Banes puts it: ‘Within the Judson workshop, a commitment to democratic or collective process led... to methods that metaphorically seemed to stand for freedom (like improvisation, spontaneous determination, chance)’. See, Sally Banes, *Democracy’s Body*, p. xvii.

⁵⁸⁵ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 269.

⁵⁸⁶ Rainer reflects, ‘I hated the ‘magic’ of entrances and exits, the nowhere or imaginary ‘somewhere’ of the wings, or off-stage area. In *Terrain’s Solo Section* the street barricade had provided an expedient and decorative observation post. At the Anderson Theater [during *The Mind is a Muscle*] the inactive ones simply stood quietly at the back of the stage. I seem to have persisted with this device despite the complaints of my performers about ‘getting cold’. Now we do a brief warm-up in view of the audience. Those of us with dance training’. See, Rainer, “Some non-chronological reflections”, p. 77.

⁵⁸⁷ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 267.

⁵⁸⁸ My italics.

Goffman's study of the passage from activity to performance builds on our understanding of Brecht's street demonstrator. In both instances, the individual's performance conveys an activity, or in Brecht's words an 'actual event', that has a social or material value. Together, these accounts allow us to locate the revelation of *Trio A*. What we see is the performer's effort or activity. This activity is simply dance; yet dance understood in terms of daily practice rather than culinary art. The revelation of *Trio A* comprises dance activity, understood as effort, or energy expenditure. Performance onstage is linked by an equivalent expenditure to activity offstage. This is hardly surprising, for the abundance of imagery generated by the movement series is not locatable in its 'perpetual motion': beyond this 'seeing difficulty' what we see is the expression of dance activity.⁵⁸⁹ If we take this passage seriously, it is necessary to consider the process of *Trio A*'s coming together across time. For this reason, I examine a range of activities that precede its revelation, before turning to a discussion of the value of transition in dance training.

In 1964, Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris were invited to show work alongside the Merce Cunningham Company in London, before travelling to Stockholm to participate in a festival of music and art at the Moderna Museet, organised by Billy Klüver and Pontus Hulten.⁵⁹⁰ While in Stockholm, Morris was invited by Alfred Schmela, a prominent German gallerist, to prepare an exhibition at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf, opening during October 1964. Rainer, who agreed to accompany him, was provided with a studio. As mentioned in Chapter Three, this residency was significant because it led her to work on movement in isolation, away from the Judson Dance Theatre's context of collaboration and idea sharing, as well as the circulation of props. In fact, their trip coincided with its dissolution. Before considering the Düsseldorf work, it is necessary to work through this context.

⁵⁸⁹ The full title of Rainer's commentary is, "A Quasi Survey of some "Minimalist" tendencies in the quantitatively minimal *dance activity midst the plethora*, or an analysis of *Trio A*". My Italics.

⁵⁹⁰ See Chapter 11 in Yvonne Rainer, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016)

In *Democracy's Body* (1993), dance historian Sally Banes chronicles the Judson Dance Theater over the period 1960-64.⁵⁹¹ Of the time immediately preceding Rainer and Morris's trip to Europe, she writes: 'Concerts were no longer collaboratively produced, but planned by individuals or smaller groups who requested the use of the space directly from the church office'.⁵⁹² The dissolution of Judson's weekly workshop compelled Rainer, among others, to explore new affiliations and resources. Rainer's geographical remove in Düsseldorf thus reinforced a determinate shift from a collective-cooperative to an increasingly auteurist mode of production.⁵⁹³ In Banes's history, Rainer frequently appears as a participant in the work of her peers; this serves to destabilise the myth of the star, who, located in a broader field of activity, is seen to share common traits.⁵⁹⁴

Rainer's written reflections provide another resource to picture these activities. The below passage of writing, which reflects on her time in Düsseldorf, first appeared in her 1965 essay for the *Tulane Drama Review*. "Some retrospective notes..." recorded activities that led to the composition of her dance, *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965). This essay was

⁵⁹¹ Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993). Her history begins with Robert Dunn's workshop, convened at the studio of Merce Cunningham from 1960-62. She pinpoints how the Judson emerged from Dunn's workshop: through which concerts and networks of people. Foregrounding interviews, word of mouth, and programme documentation, *Democracy's Body* overwhelms the reader with detail and hearsay, to the point of disorientation. As a result, her account is rooted in this emergent collective's specific social form. The preponderance of voice and second-person address immerses us in a real-time situation, so that we experience the Judson attitude as distinctly heterogeneous.

⁵⁹² Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 166. According to Rainer's peer, Judith Dunn, in 1964 the Judson workshop moved from the 'great collective period to the solo period to the bus stop period'. See, Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 166.

⁵⁹³ This is reflected by Rainer's demand, in 1965, that Morris leave the field of dance behind; she writes, 'Egged on by my shrink, I lowered the boom. Either Bob [Morris] had to get out of my field or I had to get out of his life'. See, Rainer, *Work*, p. 10. In addition, the Judson's increasingly auteurist turn was signalled by Robert Rauschenberg's involvement in 1964; as Rainer recalls: 'Upon Rauschenberg's entry – through no error in his behaviour but simply due to his stature in the art world – the balance was tipped, and those of us who appeared with him became the tail of his comet... The situation manifested itself in the change in the audiences (the power-oriented critics and dealers and glamour-oriented art-stars and collectors came *en masse*)'. See, Rainer, *Work*, p. 9.

⁵⁹⁴ Yvonne Rainer sent a letter to critic Arlene Croce, dated July 18, 1980, intended to illustrate the complex relations joining choreographers through the 1960s (Plate XXVIII). Rainer writes, 'I fervently wish you Sunday historians might acquire a sense of history based on something other than a sequence of one-man/woman epiphanies, Things are more complicated than that'. See, Yvonne Rainer, "Letter to Arlene Croce", in *A Woman Who*, p. 101.

republished in her mid-career book, *Work: 1961-73* (1974). In 1974, curator Kasper Koenig commissioned Rainer, Claes Oldenburg, Simone Forti, and others, to write artist handbooks as part of the “Nova Scotia Series: Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts”. Rainer’s *Work* brings together a wealth of idiosyncratic material: letters, photographs, diary entries, choreographic plans, newspaper clippings, and published writing (including “Some retrospective notes...”) that reflect her early career as a choreographer. Chunks of this material, including the below excerpt, were lifted from *Work* for her more recent autobiography, *Feelings are Facts: A Life* (2006). The below writing thus stands for this textual history: bar minor modifications, its content remains the same, yet its meaning is affected by the passage from 1965 to 1974, and on to 2006. Düsseldorf, for instance, is no longer a city in West Germany, and the rise of globalisation weakens the sense of atomisation that, in 1964, expresses Rainer’s experience of modernity:

I went everyday to a tiny sixth-floor walk-up ballet studio in the Altstadt [the Old City of Düsseldorf], from the windows of which I could see the Rhine beyond the old rooftops. One day there was a fire in the next block, producing much smoke and activity. I felt like a cuckoo in a Swiss clock observing another intricate mechanised toy go through its paces. All those little firemen and townsfolk seemed wound up as they scurried around in mindless circles. Beyond them, in the distance, was the flat river and green-washed Rhine meadow. The whole scene was decidedly depressing.⁵⁹⁵

The outbreak of fire is analogous to the traffic accident of Brecht’s “Street Corner”, an actual event whose elements, here seen from a distance, are repeated through a demonstration. A fire has broken out in the adjoining block and, as a result, the neighbourhood comes alive with ‘activity’. Instead of volunteering her lot to the ‘firemen and townsfolk’ on the street, Rainer freezes in response, undergoing a momentary loss of recognition. From her vantage, the movements of those below appear mechanical, as if they have been ‘wound up’ for someone’s amusement; their scurrying to and fro, in ‘circles’ suggesting a purpose defeated, register as ‘mindless’. This definition of the situation is not accompanied by any self-aggrandisement or sense of relative superiority; instead, she

⁵⁹⁵ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 255.

experiences the impasse separating her from her surroundings as a bind: ‘I felt like a cuckoo in a Swiss clock observing another intricate mechanised toy go through its paces’. A sense of alienation, ‘the whole scene was decidedly depressing’, is described in kinaesthetic terms. Nearing paralysis, Rainer establishes an empathic relation to those she witnesses that renders them equivalent. That is, insofar as a mechanised way of being is held in common, her inability to respond ‘humanely’ establishes a mimetic relation. The stand-off between clock and toy gives rise to motifs of intactness, containment, and exposure, elements that come to describe Rainer’s *actual* distance to the event. And because of this distance, her demonstration is solely kinaesthetic, recalling the effect of the breakdown of systems in *Carriage Discreteness* (1966), which rendered her a mute object, exposing the chain of command (see Chapter Two). In contrast to that unwelcome experience, this event’s lack of clear kinaesthetic cues directly fed her ongoing movement work, as can be seen from the next part of her reflection:

Since there was nothing else to do, I worked. Worked mechanically and at times despairingly on movement. It was necessary to find a different way to move. I felt I could no longer call on the energy and hard-attack impulses that had characterised my work previously, nor did I want to explore any further the ‘imitations-from-life’ kind of eccentric movement that someone—I forget who—once described as ‘goofy glamour.’ So I started at another place—wiggled my elbows, shifted from one foot to the other, looked at the ceiling, shifted eye focus within a tiny radius, watched a flattened, raised hand moving and stopping, moving and stopping. Slowly the things I made began to go together, along with the sudden sharp, hard changes in dynamics. But basically I wanted it to remain undynamic movement, no rhythm, no emphasis, no tension, no relaxation.⁵⁹⁶

This reflection delineates a passage linking an actual event, witnessed from a point of view whose vantage is a determining factor, to its demonstration through movement invention. ‘Mechanically’ does not name a movement quality as such; instead, it registers this sense of passage: ‘Since there was nothing else to do, I worked’. Though stated obliquely, this passage and its effective demonstration coincided with the shift (to repeat) from a collective-cooperative to an increasingly auteurist mode of production. Rainer’s

⁵⁹⁶ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 255.

kinaesthetic response to the mechanised figures below galvanised her to recognise the need, in the broader social context of the Off-off-Broadway scene, for ‘a different way to move’. This, in Brecht’s words, accounts for a ‘socially practical significance’ that may explain its repeated inclusion by Rainer.⁵⁹⁷ The event of the fire was not merely an interesting vignette; rather, it directly impacted on her dance work, representing a chain of association or passage that contributes to our sense of *Trio A*’s revelation of dance activity.

The new kind of movement, described by Rainer here, represents the first step towards a reconfiguration of the performer-prop relation through the terms of the body. Rejecting the source material that had informed her ‘eccentric movement’, she aims for an ‘undynamic movement’ whose characteristics bear a resemblance to the unmodulated ‘perpetual motion’ of *Trio A*. Perpetual motion is not, however, promoted by the above account. Recently, Rainer denied that any of the Düsseldorf work fed into *Trio A*.⁵⁹⁸ However, this reading may be given a different slant that is itself revealing of the processual nature of its passage.

In “Quasi Survey” (written 1966), Rainer admits that, two years earlier in Düsseldorf, while exploring a kind of movement that ‘contained few accents... the idea of a different kind of continuity as embodied in transitions or connections between phrases did not seem to be as important as the material itself’.⁵⁹⁹ In other words, the defining feature of *Trio A*, its continuity, had not yet been arrived at – concerns over the transmission of material prevailed. Writing *after* the composition of *Trio A*, Rainer rejects the ‘sudden sharp, hard changes in dynamics’ described in the above excerpt. Indeed, in “Quasi Survey” her commentary on the Düsseldorf work is laden with sarcasm, ‘Everytime ‘elbow-wiggle’ came up one felt like applauding’.⁶⁰⁰ Yet surely there was *enough of* the comportment of *Trio A* in the above ‘different way to move’ to suggest, if not a complete resemblance, then

⁵⁹⁷ Brecht, “A Street Scene”, p. 122.

⁵⁹⁸ Rainer writes: ‘I really can’t recall whether anything I made while in Dusseldorf ended up in *Trio A*’. E-mail correspondence with the author, 2017.

⁵⁹⁹ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 269.

⁶⁰⁰ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 269.

at least a step in the right direction. In my view, the partiality of this success foregrounds the need for a study of the movement's passage.

In "Quasi Survey", the need for a 'continuum of energy' is confidently stated by Rainer in response to the perceived inadequacies of the Düsseldorf work.⁶⁰¹ As we know, this development was enacted through a privileging of the transition. No wonder, then, that after a short but intense period of progress – upon her return to New York in late 1964, Rainer worked consistently on movement in her studio – she derided her earlier interest in 'sudden sharp, hard changes in dynamic'. Yet, studying the dance activity – instruction and improvisation – in the years leading up to the Düsseldorf residency, suggests an unexpected kinship between transition and the fragmentation of movement represented by 'hard changes in dynamic'. This study troubles the binary of transition/sudden dynamics that supports Rainer's view. To further understand this determinate shift, it is necessary to go behind the 'relatively socially-open' performance situation in the run up to her 1964 trip; I will now consider a range of back region transactions, beginning with a written request that was not honoured.

The Judson's Concert #7 (Summer, 1963) featured Carolee Schneemann's *Chromelodeon* (4th *Concretion*), performed by Lucinda Childs, Ruth Emerson, Deborah Hay, Carol Summers, and John Worden. As Banes observes, 'Schneemann had originally planned, as a finale, a rooster solo for Rainer, inspired by *Three Seascapes*'.⁶⁰² Banes is likely thinking of the final section of *Three Seascapes*; in Rainer's words, her 1962 choreography closed with a 'screaming fit downstage right in a pile of white gauze and black overcoat'.⁶⁰³ In her *Village Voice* review of its debut, Jill Johnston called Schneemann's *Chromelodeon* a 'messy, brainless "Happening" with lots of clothes, paper,

⁶⁰¹ 'A continuum of energy was required. Duration had to be considered'. See, Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 269.

⁶⁰² Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 148

⁶⁰³ Rainer, *Work*, p. 286.

rag, burlap, and paint'.⁶⁰⁴ It was composed with Rainer specifically in mind. Banes's history of it excerpts at length from a letter addressed by Schneemann to Rainer, that opens with the petition, 'Why-you-for-rooster-madness'. Written in a hybrid form, this letter is typical of Schneemann's style; it presents a mood board for *Chromelodeon* comprised of striking impressions and corporeal detail, while telegraphically instructing the recipient on what to do. Its choreographic score is contiguous to the performance, a relation that is made concrete through its proximity to the historical form of the event score (see Chapter Three). Since the rooster solo is tailored for her, it pictures Rainer-the-dancer; at the same time, her attributes are described with a degree of generality that, as will be argued, communicates renewed possibilities for the category of expression through a broader field of activity. Having studied the letter at the Getty Research Institute, I see that Banes decides not to excerpt its opening paragraph, as follows:

A given visual image, as distinct from mental image: a group of dancers/performers standing at ease. Individual body contains, *projects* its potential energy, a very particular articulation of weight, mass, contour within space all determined by structure, by the proportions structure gives. I assume an aim for extremes; for expressive control in areas of movement both likely and unlikely for a given body.⁶⁰⁵

Schneemann addresses Rainer elliptically. The lexicon of 'energy' she deploys sustains an order of generality that both singles Rainer out, 'a very particular articulation', and installs her among others, '... of weight, mass, contour within space'. She is differentiated from the others by the 'expressive control' she is able to leverage. In practical terms, this competency 'projects its potential energy', supplying Schneemann's 'given visual image' with ballast consisting of rudimentary elements. The beginning of Banes's excerpt of Schneemann's letter builds on this demonstration: 'Any movement appears to be the quality of its physical source — intention is only what is done, how it is possible at all. (A

⁶⁰⁴ Jill Johnston, "From Lovely Confusion to Naked Breakfast", in *Village Voice*, 18 July 1963, p. 12.

⁶⁰⁵ Schneemann, Letter to Yvonne Rainer, 19 March 1963. See, Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 148.

small compact body will not cut space with propulsion of a long, thin limbed body)'.⁶⁰⁶ Again, 'Yvonne Rainer' obtains through a lexicon whose generality implicates the individual in a broader field of activity. Instead of naming instances in which Rainer successfully performed her role – her coveted solo in *Three Seascapes* is alluded to by Banes – Schneemann instigates a reduction to the body-object. That is to say, she – Schneemann – approaches the dancer through the 'physical source', or resource, of her 'body mechanics'. Her pointed use of physiological terminology to describe the specific 'quality' of Rainer's 'source' draws on a live tradition of dance pedagogy, introduced in Chapter Four, that formed the grounds for Morris's subsequent description of the body's 'kinaesthetic demands' in "Notes on Sculpture, Part Two" (1966).⁶⁰⁷ Schneemann construes her petition to Rainer through language that would appeal specifically to her; her address strategically consolidating the language of "Quasi Survey" at the time of its emergence through the dance pedagogical reformulation of expression along physiological lines. The language of energy expenditure was available for elaboration by different parties and for different purposes; its currency is somehow obfuscated by Rainer's sarcastic dismissal of her experimentation in Düsseldorf in "Quasi Survey". The 'continuum of energy' that she went on to achieve with *Trio A* emerged from a field of dance activity, as pictured by Schneemann's letter, through which the terms of effort or energy expenditure were open to trial and error. By drawing a line under this experimentation, Rainer inadvertently contributed to the mystification of her signature work.

Nevertheless – as already mentioned – Schneemann's parentheses, 'arms to fly out the sockets', indicate that Rainer is being singled out in particular; her 'expressive control', a quality that demarcates physical as well as verbal prowess, serves to differentiate her from

⁶⁰⁶ Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 148.

⁶⁰⁷ This connection is not drawn explicitly; I raise it to register the fact that a specific kind of language was circulating through artistic culture during the mid-1960s, forming a substratum or resource for projects that have been separated retroactively along institutional and art-historical lines.

the Judson *corps de ballet*.⁶⁰⁸ The old criteria of aesthetic judgment are alluded to by her physiognomical aside, ‘The face: plastic concentration of expressive details—psychological focus. (Have the body grin, wink, stare, subdue a question.)’ Except, we see that Schneemann’s hitching of expression to energy drew on a broader reformulation of that term through dance pedagogy that genuinely subverted those criteria. The rooster’s choreographic score is worth quoting at length in order to flesh these ideas out:

Rooster... Figure of independent movement. Continually in quest. Standing self-absorbed...something about the floor...the look of it... Following slow motion of eye passage—crack between boards—walking into minute space may be the sense...that the body could be where the eye is, actually!... Walking quickens. The floor patterns are set by where you need to be. Head moves to free itself from eye peel; quick succession of staccato head assertions and the arms begin to grow rhythms against this head, (eyefull) [*sic*]. Squawk could be breath release on tension between head-arm movement. And quickening. Independence of head from arms and neck provoke the feet, the knees...they are lifting...jumping...fingers fly apart. (A bird can fly...a rooster flies a little more than a man can.) A way of becoming another source of energy; its necessity takes on our own aroma, hue.⁶⁰⁹

This choreographic score visualises Rainer, whose attributes have already been defined, performing the rooster solo. The perceived neutrality of the animal – relative to the human’s burden of anthropomorphism – provided Schneemann with an effective vehicle to articulate expression unimpeded.⁶¹⁰ ‘Rooster’ is an American term for male chicken, or cockerel. The rooster is by nature polygamous. Because he is unable to guard the nests of several hens at the same time, he resorts to perching on an elevated post – hence the verb ‘to roost’ – from where he can scour the scene for signs of trouble. Occasionally he will issue a crow so as to assert control over his territory. Rainer’s ‘expressive control’ is

⁶⁰⁸ As Banes attests, when Rainer rejected the role, ‘Schneemann replaced the rooster solo with a chicken cluster for five dancers, “It took [five] dancers to do the part of Yvonne [Rainer] wouldn’t do,” she [Schneemann] claims’. See, Banes, *Democracy’s Body*, p. 149.

⁶⁰⁹ Banes, *Democracy’s Body*, p. 148.

⁶¹⁰ Her description of the rooster relates to Simone Forti’s engagement with confined animals in Rome’s zoo over the late 1960s while on a residency. Forti’s drawings recorded movement styles that served as the basis for choreographic work. On this subject, Julia Bryan-Wilson writes, ‘While in Rome, Forti immersed herself in observing animals at the zoo, using her drawings of them walking, pivoting, rolling, rocking, eating, and swaying as source material for her own investigations about anatomy, ritual movement, gravitational forces, and limberness’. See, Julia Bryan-Wilson, “Simone Forti goes to the Zoo”, in *October* 152, Spring 2015, p. 35.

mirrored by the rooster's commanding presence. In Schneemann's score, s/he dominates by the mere act of 'standing self-absorbed': The surrounding 'floor' falls under her jurisdiction, as 'the floor patterns are set by where you need to be'. This direction does not mean 'improvise'; rather, the rooster cannot *but* determine their own movement. Control is here codified by the fantasised enlargement of the rooster's eye to the proportions of the body.⁶¹¹ Further, Schneemann conveys Rainer's relative distinction, again in parentheses, through the metaphor of flight: The statement, 'a rooster flies a little more than a man can', effectively elides Rainer's actual competency – her ability to secure 'another source of energy' – with an elaborate 'visual image'. The rooster's behaviour is expressed *through* the language of energy expenditure established in the first part of the letter, 'Squawk could be breath release'. That she refused to participate in Schneemann's dance only corroborates the near total compact between the natural authority of the rooster and her competency as a dancer. As clarified by the letter's closing address, energy remains the central term:

Why you to do it. What I mentioned about the goose on stage, in fright during concert, and your turn to help it, that you assumed its gestures, its intent. Range of energy you control is what I see for this part, and No One else has a comparable range.⁶¹²

Schneemann refers to a private conversation – a less instrumental, though still significant back region transaction – in which she was reportedly impressed by Rainer's control of the 'goose on stage'. This figure of fear is introduced in order to evidence the 'range of energy' Rainer controls, from timid goose to swaggering rooster. The phrase, 'range of energy', is useful because it undergirds the binary, transition/sudden dynamics, that unhelpfully isolates *Trio A* from the dance activity that precedes it, as exemplified by the Düsseldorf work. In other words, Schneemann's letter provides an insider's view of the

⁶¹¹ I.e., 'That the body could be where the eye is, actually!' On the primacy of sight over the other senses, and the proliferation of visual metaphors through language, See, Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also the discussion of sight in relation to Alain Robbe-Grillet in Chapter Two.

⁶¹² Schneemann, Letter to Yvonne Rainer, 19 March 1963. See, Banes, *Democracy's Body*, p. 148.

heterogeneity that surrounded Rainer's increasingly doctrinaire approach to energy expenditure. It provides a useful starting point, complicating the passage in Rainer's performance history from 'eccentric movement', through task movement and sudden dynamics of *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965), to the 'perpetual motion' of *Trio A*. However, the phrase 'range of energy' is crude. In order to test its challenge to Rainer's self-criticism in "Quasi Survey", it is necessary to go further into the teammates' back region of instruction, training, and improvisation.

5.2 Transition

Prior to the emergence of the Judson Dance Theater in 1962, Rainer studied with a range of instructors. Among them, James Waring has received little attention. Rainer joined his composition class in Spring 1961, having been impressed by one his students, Aileen Passloff. She continued to perform in his dances through 1964. Though she struggled to identify with his balleticism, he encouraged her to work with a broad range of material and to juxtapose seemingly unwieldy elements.⁶¹³ As the class progressed, he imported Cagean chance procedures that were already a fixture of Robert Dunn's workshop, which Rainer had joined in 1961. For Waring, chance was less a representational strategy than, as dance historian Leslie Satin puts it, a 'backstage choreographic tool', whose utility lay in dismantling the dancer's ego in order to raise their 'intuition, instinct, and impulse' to the order of selected material.⁶¹⁴ Aleatory method supported the fluid transaction between concrete and abstract gestures, where 'concrete' refers to a gesture whose meaning is external, such as a mimed action, and 'abstract' denotes one whose meaning is self-referential.⁶¹⁵ This equivalency went some way to neutralising expression; the dancer was

⁶¹³ As she reflects: 'I was put off by the mixture of camp and balleticism in his work... he had this gift of choosing people who 'couldn't do too much' in conventional terms but who – under his subtle directorial manipulations – revealed spectacular stage personalities'. See, Rainer, *Work*, p. 6.

⁶¹⁴ Leslie Satin, "James Waring", p. 74. Satin's account is seminal, forming the basis for Ramsay Burt's presentation of Waring in *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (2006).

⁶¹⁵ See, Leslie Satin, "James Waring", p. 71.

encouraged to subject concrete and abstract gestures to the same process of analysis, effecting a leaden type of humour or ‘front’ that sometimes baffled outsiders. As one commentator observed in 1970, ‘Movement was regarded almost simultaneously within a dramatic context and outside of it’.⁶¹⁶ Through her involvement with Waring, Rainer was – as mentioned – encouraged to explore the so-called “imitations-from-life’ kind of eccentric movement’ that she would later reject during her Düsseldorf residency, in 1964.

In a notebook she kept over the period 1961-2, she lists some of the things that she brought to Waring’s class as material for movement invention:

I dance about things that affect me in a very immediate way. These things can be as diverse as the mannerisms of a friend, the facial expressions of a woman hallucinating on the subway, the pleasure of an ageing ballerina as she demonstrates a classical movement, a pose from an Etruscan mural, a hunchbacked man with cancer, children’s play, and of course my own body impulses generated in different situations – a classroom, my own studies, being drunk at a party.⁶¹⁷

Read in isolation, each ‘thing’ in Rainer’s list poses a difficulty to be worked through in class.⁶¹⁸ Yet, the list’s paratactic structure demonstrates that more important still were the points of contact, or transitions, that linked this material into a durational, Dadaist collage. As with Schneemann’s proposed solo, such imagery is calibrated to the available resources of the dancer, who applies dance technique in order to play them in space. Fed through the

⁶¹⁶ Don McDonagh, *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (1970; London: Dance Books, 1990), p. 152. He goes on: ‘At times dancers would break out of their roles as ‘abstract movement machines’ to assert themselves as persons. The audience thus in effect was invited behind the scenes to see the performer as well as the performance’.

⁶¹⁷ “Descriptions of YR Movements in Two Dances by James Waring, 1961-2”, Yvonne Rainer Papers, Box 1, Getty Research Institute.

⁶¹⁸ There are several brilliant passages in Rainer’s early letters to her brother, Ivan, that demonstrate her attachment to eccentric movement in the city. For instance, she wrote the below (March 28, 1953) upon moving to Chicago: ‘But John was ‘swinging’ with it all – with the sounds, the hectic movement, the idiotic snapping open and shut of centrally-controlled train doors; with the hurtling, with the turn-stiles, with the glaring billboards plastered end to end on the walls of every station, with the hordes rushing in and out of doors doors doors open close clock snap rush away against through a mole-tunnel hurry hurry My god please get there somewhere anywhere on time time we must keep time while squat grimy heaps of brick can’t tell time time go go go snap click oh joy What joy it was to him to be back in this madhouse of mindless movement’. This writing preceded her turn to dance training, yet its language evidences a rhythm and movement. See, Box 8, Folder 1, “Letters to Ivan”, Sat, March 28, 1953, Getty Research Institute.

mill of indeterminacy, high and low imagery supersedes the boundary between balletic and avant-gardist styles, acceding to the dancer's 'intuition, instinct, and impulse'. Waring taught Rainer, alongside other Judson dancers such as David Gordon – her 'teammate' for *Trio A*'s debut – to trust in their intuition. His instruction utilised chance while allowing for the agency of the dancer to shine through, a defection from the teachings of Cage that determined Rainer's own complicated filiation (see Chapter Three). Note that, in the above list, the conjunction 'and' is withheld to the final clause. Between the listed source material and 'my own body impulses', a parity is suggested by the equivalency of concrete and abstract gestures in Waring's class. Rainer's declaration, 'I dance about things', is underwritten by an approach to expression that is both transitive, i.e. legible through a range of source material, and intransitive, embodied. I consider the historical awareness of expression towards the end of this chapter. Yet it is clear, as with Schneemann's address to Rainer's 'physical source', that the dancer's 'range of energy' remains key to the assimilation of material to movement. In order to understand the full extent of this configuration of material, it is necessary to contend with an exaggerated instance.

Rainer began her dance training in earnest in 1959, undertaking two daily classes at the Martha Graham School, alongside one of ballet. It is well known that her interest in task- and tasklike movement, informed by chance procedure, developed in reaction to Graham's movement-based approach, which, in Rainer's view, subordinated movement to 'a dramatic and psychological necessity'.⁶¹⁹ As she later recalls, 'At the Graham School they had told me that I should become more 'regal' and less athletic!'⁶²⁰ This comparative phrase articulates a basic resistance that served to unify the emerging Judson workshop; while its portfolio of concerts contained permutations of many styles, including Graham technique, its teammates were driven by a unilateral antipathy to the injunctive to 'become more

⁶¹⁹ Yvonne Rainer, "The Mind is a Muscle", in *A Woman Who... Essays, Interviews, Scripts* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 28.

⁶²⁰ Rainer, *Work*, p. 5.

‘regal’’. Given this antipathy, we may consider it strange to learn that Rainer was impressed by Graham, or that she found an acceptable way to use her technique.⁶²¹

Martha Graham drew on Hellenic mythological iconography to produce grand characters for her staged productions; dancers underwent a strict regimen of training centred on her ‘contraction and release’ technique, a combination of breath and movement leading to an exultant, hieratic state that elevated the dancer to a mythic plane.⁶²²

Eschewing this plane, Rainer’s early dancing was nonetheless cumulatively informed by Graham technique, (at least, this was unavoidably the case till she stopped attending her classes a year later, in 1960). During this intense though brief period of attendance, Rainer remembers watching an improvisation that was informally presented by Simone Forti in their shared studio that, in her words, ‘affected me deeply’; as she recalls,

[Forti] scattered bits and pieces of rags and wood around the floor, landscape-like. Then she simply sat in one place for awhile, occasionally changed her position or moved to another place. I don’t know what her intent was, but for me what she did brought the god-like image of the ‘dancer’ down to human scale more effectively than anything I had seen.⁶²³

The simplicity of this improvised performance contrasted with Graham’s high energetics, yet what attracted Rainer was not the movement quality, but the underlying attitude. Rainer met Forti shortly before they both attended Ann Halprin’s summer workshop on the West Coast in 1960. From Halprin, Forti learnt to free herself from the

⁶²¹ Reflecting at a later point, Rainer writes, ‘I myself had been bowled over by seeing her [Martha Graham] dance Medea in *The Cave of the Heart* in her late fifties. She was amazing; she had me glued to my seat.’ See, Rainer, *A Woman Who*, p. 27.

⁶²² As dance scholar Dee Reynolds writes, ‘Graham’s rhythmic innovations drew on the percussive energies of an aggressively masculinist and Americanist modernism, which she paradoxically appropriated for the empowerment of the female dancer. Epitomised in her ‘contraction and release’, Graham’s kinaesthetic imagination produced innovative techniques for vigorous projections of energy, which generated feelings of strength and high energy’. See, Dee Reynolds, *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham* (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2007), p. 16.

⁶²³ Rainer, *Work*, p. 5.

expectations of the audience, and to pursue movement like a train of thought.⁶²⁴ As she recalls, ‘One of the most important tools Ann gave me was how to work from nature’.⁶²⁵ Though ‘nature’ failed to appeal to Rainer, whose orientation to the city led her to value the ‘eccentric’, in the context of Halprin’s workshop it stood for an indiscriminate approach to movement that radically ignored prevailing dance style, (for example, see Plate XXXI).⁶²⁶ Forti’s willingness to ‘sit in one place for awhile’ literally grounded the ethereality of dance; a rescaling to the human that, crucially, was not reliant on the negation of Graham technique. Rather, it resulted from an attitude to movement predicated on the individual’s non-prejudicial exploration of material through the kinaesthetic resources of the body; compared to Merce Cunningham’s highly-ordered uptake of Cagean indeterminacy, it might even be argued that Halprin’s pedagogy more effectively abdicated authority by turning to the ‘natural’. Forti’s ‘range of energy’ divested movement of its meaning – technique was reformulated as minimally expressive, per the conduit of the natural, i.e. neutral body.⁶²⁷ Her improvised performance led Rainer to see that Graham’s contractions may be explored as material, without subscribing to its ‘dramatic and psychological necessity’. In order to further understand the effect Forti’s performance had on Rainer, let us consider her reflections on an improvisation session they shared around the same time.

⁶²⁴ N.B. This freedom was based in the naturalness (read: neutrality), of anatomy. It may be interesting to consider Hannah Arendt’s writings on anatomy in, Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind, Vol. 1* (New York: Harcourt, 1981).

⁶²⁵ See, Ross, *Anna Halprin*, p. 126.

⁶²⁶ It makes sense to think about Halprin’s use of ‘nature’ in relation to Theodor Adorno’s writings on ‘natural beauty’; for him, it is linked to non-identity in art making that is derived from Hegel. See, Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: Alfred Knopf, 1978).

⁶²⁷ Dance historian Meredith Morse properly explicates Halprin’s and Forti’s sense of the ‘natural’. She links this category to the study of physiology in the context of dance pedagogy. See, Meredith Morse, *Soft is Fast: Simone Forti in the 1960s and After* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016). By way of example, here is Forti reflecting in 1974 on her time with Halprin: ‘Ann approached technique through the idea that the body is capable of doing all kinds of movement. She gave us such problems as running while moving the spine through any possible positions. We called such problems ‘explorations.’ The body would give whole responses around the point of predetermination, and would come out with movement that went beyond plan or habit. We spoke of expanding our movement vocabulary, And it did seem that the more material one explored, the more material one could season and articulate. And of course each new kind of movement that one came upon was a welcome surprise’. See, Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, p. 29.

In a notebook entry dated 23rd May, 1960, Rainer records her responses to a series of improvisatory sessions she shared with Simone Forti and Nancy Meehan – the latter of whom, the ‘first ‘professional’ dancer I had known’, she met in 1957.⁶²⁸ The date of 23rd May sets these sessions some weeks before the commencement of Halprin’s workshop; one week before Merce Cunningham’s June course started up, and a short time after she had stopped attending dance classes at the Graham School. Rainer, Forti, and Meehan met to dance during a holiday period; for Rainer, these sessions provided a space to consolidate and ‘unfeel’ the academic year’s instruction, making way for new information (Plate XXX).

As she reflects, over a preliminary two-hour period the three dancers, ‘tried moving about simultaneously, but separately to a record of solo piano by Thelonious Monk’.⁶²⁹ She voices her frustrations with the session, ‘By the end of two hours I was played out and somewhat frustrated. My movements felt repetitive – not repetitive through choice, but through a constriction of imagination and technique’.⁶³⁰ Her improvised movements are repetitive because they are constrained by technique; the attempt to transpose refined kinetic reflexes to an open environment is unsuccessful. There is a second cause for this unwanted repetition; namely, the lack of material to hand: without having something to work *with*, the scope of what is possible within an open environment constricts. Her frustration foregrounds the need for material as a correlative to technique; the obvious solution to this problem, it is implied, was arrived at by all three: ‘We agreed each to bring in some idea or problem for the following Thursday’. The introduction of material was intended to de-rigidify technique and free up the imagination. As Rainer recalls, where ‘Nancy brought in two records - Kabuki and Indian music... Simone presented her problem – 2 people, one working with great care and economy (‘sparsely’), the other giving in to

⁶²⁸ Rainer, *Work*, p. 4.

⁶²⁹ Yvonne Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”, Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute.

⁶³⁰ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

big, ‘lush’, driving movement. I took the latter role’.⁶³¹ In contrast to the previous week’s session, Rainer is enabled by this disjunctive combination of material, music, and instruction, ‘I was so busy being ‘lush’ that I was completely unaware of what Simone was doing other than that she occasionally got in my way and so forced me to restrain my ‘lushness’’.⁶³² The inverted commas indicate that ‘lushness’ is treated as material to hand, as opposed to an inner emotional state dependent on technique.

In this part of the session, Meehan takes on the role of spectator – but only because she is not actively participating at that time. Rainer recalls becoming lost in her explorations of lushness, losing awareness of those around her. This persists ‘until,’ she writes, ‘in a sheer weariness I stood still, not knowing where she [Forti] was, and then she backed up behind me and *touched* me! It was a shocking contact. It forced me into an awareness of her presence and made me deal directly with her for the first time’.⁶³³ While exploring her own course, Forti’s unanticipated touch ‘forces’ Rainer to refine and adapt her distribution of weight and orientation. What works with the exercise set by Forti is not Rainer’s assumption of lushness as such, but her ability to cope with Forti’s unexpected touch. The directive, ‘big, ‘lush’, driving movement’, cuts into the tenor of Graham technique – again, this should not be understood as a negation of technique. In fact, rigid technique, redescribed as ‘material’, comprised Rainer’s offering to the group:

We started to work on an idea that I had brought in - movement impelled by an explosion of energy somewhere in the center of the body. Like a Graham ‘being kicked in the stomach’ contraction, but not necessarily a contraction. An explosion that might lift me off the floor or send one hurtling toward it. We were too beat to explore it fully, but in the process I discovered, from something S. was doing, a peculiar spiralling jump from a squatting position. Resembles something in a circus tumbling act.⁶³⁴

Rainer proposed a drill she had learnt at the Martha Graham school, her ‘idea’ transparently derived from Graham’s ‘contraction and release’ technique; further, this

⁶³¹ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

⁶³² Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

⁶³³ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

⁶³⁴ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

inclusion was reciprocated by Forti's decision to 'spiral', another hallmark Graham motif.⁶³⁵ What specifically interests me is the way in which Rainer describes this drill. Note, its designation as technique is relegated by the use of simile: 'Like a Graham 'being kicked in the stomach' contraction'. Technique has been expropriated from its instructive basis and reformulated as material in an extra-institutional back region context: the improvisation session.⁶³⁶ This simile is transformational: technique remains constant, yet its form is subtly changed. Eschewing the mythic plane, the Graham contraction is reformulated by Rainer as 'an explosion of energy somewhere in the center of the body'. This centring on 'an explosion of energy' – likely auxiliary information of Graham's that is here made primary – subjects technique to a non-prejudicial attitude that precedes Rainer's introduction to Halprin's pedagogy. Having passed through a failed first session, Rainer is less concerned about getting it wrong. An 'explosion of energy' is simply that, an explosion – divested of emotional charge, per Graham's expectations. This subversion of technique forms part of the revelation of *Trio A*; in a Kublerian sense, such dance activity may be considered part of an evolving 'form-class', whose solution consisted of *Trio A*'s sublation of phrasing.

The expropriation of technique allows for the description of movement in terms that exceed institutional parameters; for instance, Forti's 'spiralling', derived from Graham,

⁶³⁵ Rainer perhaps took succour from Forti's own disregard for Graham's approach. As Wendy Perron notes, 'Forti never aspired to become a dancer in the sense of virtuosic bodies we see on a proscenium stage. Taking the intensive June course in 1960 at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York, she was appalled when told to hold her belly in – a standard correction in almost any dance technique class'. See, Wendy Perron, "Simone Forti: bodynatureartmovementbody", in *Radical Bodies: Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer in California and New York, 1955-1972* (Santa Barbara: Art & Design Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017), p. 100. Susan Leigh Foster describes Graham technique as follows: 'Martha Graham's investment in the contraction and release and her exploration of the spiral suggested a body that no longer embodied a set of lines to be formed into geometric shapes, but instead, an amalgam of forces to be harnessed according to flow'. See, Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 113.

⁶³⁶ The term 'expropriation' is intended to extend Mary Kelly's discussion of the self-possession of the artist, introduced in Chapter One. In which case, 'technique' and 'phrasing' relate to property ownership, realised through the capacities of the body. However, this connection is still unclear and needs to be developed.

here ‘resembles something in a circus tumbling act’. Again, simile is transformational: it situates Graham technique on an ‘axis of contiguity and displacement’ – this is Phelan’s term – eliciting a metonymical image that does not interfere with the movement but sits alongside it, like those cartoonish names Jill Johnston would incorporate in her 1968 review of *The Mind is a Muscle*, (see Chapter Three). In summary, these phenomenological reflections inaugurate a new contract between technique, material, and movement that was reached through the activity of teammates and complimented by the instruction of James Waring.

The next entry is dated 30th May; it was written after Rainer attended the first class of Cunningham’s June course, (a slight anachronism that is not accounted for in the text, see Plate XXXII). The continuity of this particular entry is worth tracking. She begins by commenting on that evening’s class, comparing his approach favourably to Graham’s: ‘He tells you *what* to do, but not *how* to do it, in contrast to Graham’s, where the smallest detail is mapped out and examined’.⁶³⁷ Though not explicitly stated, there is a quiet affinity between the directive of her shared improvisation sessions and the tenor of Cunningham’s approach; one that possibly served to ground her treatment of Graham’s technique, as recorded in the previous entry. Moreover, the relative freedom permitted by Cunningham connected to Waring’s interest in the dancer’s agency. Having reflected on that evening’s class, Rainer turns to consider her ongoing improvisation sessions: ‘Had a fairly uneventful session with Nancy last week – Simone couldn’t come’.⁶³⁸ She describes copying and trying to improve upon a movement of Nancy’s, suggesting that she herself was the beneficiary of her own instruction, forwarded in the previous entry: ‘For next week the problem of forcing a self-involved dancer to deal with the movement of another, as when S. [Forti] came up behind me’.⁶³⁹ Tracking this entry demonstrates how concrete strategies

⁶³⁷ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”. She goes on to add, ‘Merce simply gives a very careful demonstration, and from there it is up to you’.

⁶³⁸ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

⁶³⁹ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”. As Rainer writes, ‘Also tried developing a motif of Nancy’s – first copying a kind of *balancé* she was doing, then adding my own convolutions to it’. N.B. It is possible to see the beginnings of a substitutional economy, in which

emerged through the ‘relatively socially-closed’ negotiation of different modes of instruction.⁶⁴⁰ In a new paragraph that veers away from both Cunningham’s class and the improvisation sessions, Rainer gathers her thoughts as follows:

I’ve been getting images of and actually finding myself acting out various kinds of fragmentized movement. For instance – in the middle of executing a gesture that I feel is overly intimate to my body or too close to what I learn in class – then I ‘fragment’ it, break it up or literally throw it away, or try to do it in an exaggerated manner. Certain mannerisms with my arms, for instance. It is an idea: to try doing this to a classic *port de bras*. – Wobbling of elbows, sudden thrusts of knuckles, pumping shoulders, big arcs with the entire arm, etc. Also find myself in sudden ‘retreats’ from familiar movement: Retreat, attack, retreat, attack – until the ‘stuttering’ creates its own dynamic.⁶⁴¹

This thought process develops her treatment of Graham technique; here, actions of fragmenting, exaggerating, and erasing serve to renew gestures that have otherwise congealed through technique. In a sense, she is attempting to hijack and mine classic gestures for their effort, or energy expenditure. Imagery – ‘I’ve been getting images’ – acts as a corollary to this process; serving to dramatise the very moment of exploitation or manipulation. This type of repurposing may be legible as Dadaist, yet its specific effects in the context of dance instruction are not adequately captured by this historicist designation; instead, it is necessary to read these actions through the historical specificity of Rainer’s recorded reflections.

In balletic terms, *port de bras* (literally, ‘carriage of the arms’) designates an exercise involving the movement of the arms through each of the five positions. In the context of the ballet class, *port de bras* stands for the concealment of effort, allowing the dancer to

movement or energy is siphoned from one to the other dancer, as Rainer described happening in Hay’s dance works (see Chapter Two).

⁶⁴⁰ The relative privacy of these ‘back region’ negotiations is brought home by the fact that different improvisation sessions were being shared by combinations of dancers who were known to each other. For instance, in an undated letter sent from Forti to Halprin – in the year 1960 – Forti writes, ‘I’ve had a very good improv session with Trish [Trisha Brown]. In fact it almost revived my interest in movement... I want to continue working with her’. See, Simone Forti, “Letters from Forti to Halprin, 1960-1961”, in *Radical Bodies: Anna Halprin, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer in California and New York, 1955-1972* (Santa Barbara: Art & Design Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017), p. 152.

⁶⁴¹ Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

seamlessly shift between positions, as incorporated by phrases: for instance, shifting the arms from third to first position provides both the momentum to lead into a pirouette and the centrifugal force to produce speed and balance, while a *relevé* – in which the dancer rises onto their tiptoes – is aided by shifting the arms from first to fifth position. By fragmenting or exaggerating this auxiliary technique, Rainer aims to expose the very effort that was previously concealed – congealed – in these phrasal movements: ‘Wobbling of elbows, sudden thrusts of knuckles, pumping shoulders, big arcs with the entire arm, etc’, are some of the unforeseen shapes to emerge from this process. (These quirks hint at character, without assuming or possessing it as such.) However, she goes further. Her aim is not merely to unfeel the classic *port de bras*, but to stabilise the resulting exposed efforts through a consistent new kind of movement; the endgame of her ‘retreats’ from familiar movement’ is that, in her words, ‘the ‘stuttering’ creates its own dynamic’, one that further conceals these efforts’ origin in technique. The assimilation of exposed efforts to a ‘dynamic’ accords a level of generality that is not unrelated to *Trio A*’s ‘continuum of energy’, though, as we have seen, for Rainer writing in “Quasi Survey”, ‘sudden dynamics’ represent the exact opposite of such a continuum. The stabilisation of ‘stuttering’ into something versatile and reusable is formally related to the development of a continuum: the Düsseldorf work put these thoughts into practice – a time when Rainer *had* time. In summary, the disarticulation of technique served to expose efforts and produce unpredictable new shapes that could form a new kind of language. Yet the means by which these efforts and shapes adhere to a level of generality is not yet clear.

Directly after this more associative, general reflection on recent work, Rainer returns to consider Cunningham’s class of that evening:

I had a renewed appreciation for some of Merce’s ‘non sequitur’ combinations tonight. Actually, the very effort of the body to move from one thing into a seemingly unconnected something else makes for a relationship between movements. There is no such thing as “disconnection” if the transition is successfully made. And

I suspect that this ‘success’ partially depends on the comfort – or appearance of comfort or ease and ‘sureness of arrival’ – in the individual dancer.⁶⁴²

An analogy may be drawn between Rainer’s sudden dynamics and ‘Merce’s ‘non sequitur’ combinations’: both result in unpredictable sequences of movement. She may have had in mind his recently premiered dance, *Rune* (1959; Plate XXXIII). According to his archivist, David Vaughan, *Rune* resulted from the application of Cagean indeterminacy; in his words, it ‘explores space in a layered way, with independent events happening in the foreground, middle, and rear of the stage, all simultaneously viewed by the audience’.⁶⁴³ Isolated movements were assiduously prepared in line with prescribed technical constraints, yet the chance combination of these movements rendered their sequence discontinuous and unpredictable.⁶⁴⁴ In opposition to performance, Rainer here describes the transmission of his approach through class instruction, ‘He tells you *what* to do, but not *how* to do it’. What appealed to her was the relative freedom accorded to the dancer, who privately developed the means of transitioning between prescribed steps; again, this is different from the appreciation of its performance value. If, at first, it appears as if she were backtracking towards a reconstructed notion of phrasing, her approval must be qualified.

The object of her approval is, in her qualifying statement, ‘*Actually*, the very effort of the body to move from one thing into a seemingly unconnected something else makes for a relationship between movements’. Just as she took an ‘explosion of energy’ from Graham, bracketing the terminology of ‘contraction and release’, so with Cunningham, she zones in

⁶⁴² Rainer, “Notebook 1960-62”.

⁶⁴³ <<https://dancecapsules.mercecunningham.org/overview.cfm?capid=46095>>

⁶⁴⁴ As dance theorist Mark Franko writes, ‘chance procedure was meant to ensure that no inflection of movement, no intentional allusiveness, would creep into dance’. See, Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 77. Dance historian Gay Morris makes clear how committed Cunningham was to chance; she writes, ‘*Suit of Chance* (1953)... was among Cunningham’s early fully realised works using chance techniques. In this piece he made up charts that took him a few hours a day for several months to complete... he constructed charts to indicate a variety of elements, including steps or movement sequences and their order, space and direction, and the duration of movement, then used chance procedures to determine how the various elements would be combined’. See, Gay Morris, *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945-1960* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), p. 172.

on a specific quality of effort, detaching this from his corpus. Her appreciation is not directed towards the performance of his prescribed technical constraints, but to the sheer fact that ‘transitions’ were gifted by him to the individual dancer. Successfully made, the effort of a transition may connect ‘non sequitur’ combinations; that is, when executed ‘successfully’, a transition is able to mitigate the discordance of his combinations. Conversely, an unsuccessful transition leads to an undesired ‘disconnection’, drawing attention to the discontinuity of the movement. The value of transition is captured by the phrase ‘sureness of arrival’, whose inverted commas indicate its broad currency as dance instruction parlance. (Note, these are lessons she carried forwards through the composition of *Trio A*).

Reinserting this reflection in the continuity of the entry, it may be argued that the relative freedom of that evening’s class, as represented by the gift of the transition, presented Rainer with the means to formalise or consolidate her back-region experimentations with sudden dynamics. She took succour from the generality or conventionality ascribed to the transition by Cunningham, at a time when she was in the process of consolidating her own language of sudden dynamics. Further, this is to suggest the possibility of a mutually-constitutive relation between transitions and sudden dynamics that is, on the face of it, denied by their superficial opposition for her.

In Chapter Four, it was argued that the disjunctive simultaneity of perpetual motion and discontinuous movement makes *Trio A* impossible to follow. Its systematic rejection of phrasing is most straightforwardly articulated through the transition.⁶⁴⁵ Yet, as we know, this transit is actually comprised of body parts that do different things; it is precisely this internal breakdown that stymies the audience’s kinaesthetic perception of the dance, in such a way that they register an over-all effort, or energy expenditure. Transition has been enshrined as the dance’s key development because it is what we *see*; yet its ‘seeing difficulty’ results from the presentation of discontinuous movements, involving two or

⁶⁴⁵ As noted by Rainer in “Quasi Survey”, ‘The limbs are never in a fixed, still relationship. And they are stretched to their fullest extension only in transit, creating the impression that the body is constantly in transitions’. See, Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

three body parts doing different things. Her sarcasm, regarding sudden dynamics in “Quasi Survey”, expresses a performer’s need to shore up a particular definition of the situation, or ‘front’ of ‘abstractness and generality’; *Trio A*’s ongoing preservation depends on its isolation from the activity that constitutes its specific ‘revelation’. Recall that Jack Anderson, whose review of its debut was uninformed by the reflections of “Quasi Survey”, perceived ‘bouncy, springy movements reminiscent of calisthenics’ – a turn of step that seems at odds with a common understanding of the dance.

Rainer’s book, *Work*, features a 1973 epilogue addressed to Cunningham that retrospectively narrates her debt to him. For her, Cunningham ‘just danced... his physical presence – even when involved in the most elusive material – made everything seem possible’.⁶⁴⁶ The self-possession she accords to him mirrors Schneemann’s address to her in 1963; control over a ‘range of energy’ figures for both Rainer and Schneemann as a marker of the dancer’s ease, or sureness of arrival. In this epilogue, Rainer refers to herself in the third person, usefully fitting the activities we have been studying to a narrative frame:

It all comes flooding back to her: those early impressions of him dancing with that unassailable ease that made him look as though he was doing something totally ordinary. She knew that she would never dance like that. The ballet part of the shapes he chose she could only parody. But that ordinariness and pleasure were accessible to her. ‘No’ she thinks, ‘she didn’t know that then to articulate it like that but she knew about ‘just doing it’ because she remembers saying that to her friend Nancy Meehan and she knew there were specific things she could copy and other things she would absorb by watching and being around him.’ So she applied herself to learning the work part of his teaching: careful sequential placing of different parts of the body on the floor in 4/4 time that carried the body from one side of the room to the other; sudden spurts of furious swift movement reversing direction on a dime; long long combinations with different parts... Then there were the ones where one part of the body did one thing while another part did another, maybe even in a different rhythm. This in particular, as a way of multiplying movement detail, was later to characterise some of her own work.⁶⁴⁷

The division of Cunningham’s approach into ‘ballet’ and ‘work’ is retrospectively drawn by Rainer; at the time, she dealt with her inability to keep up with his ballet shapes

⁶⁴⁶ Rainer, “Epilogue (for Merce Cunningham)”, *Work*, p. 327.

⁶⁴⁷ Rainer, “Epilogue (for Merce Cunningham)”, *Work*, pp. 327-28.

by focusing instead on what she *could* do: ‘just doing it’. She realised, in a crude way, that his virtuosity was incidental to the ‘unassailable ease’ of his movement; in fact, what appealed to her was the look of ‘doing something totally ordinary’. This, she sought to apply to what she *could* learn from him, the ‘work part of his teaching’ that involved a series of exercises: Alongside ‘sudden spurts of swift movement’, she executed different movements simultaneously across different parts of her body, the second of which, as she herself clarifies, fed into the compositional process of *Trio A*.

Modern dance pedagogy’s centring on physiology offered a resource for Rainer’s language of ‘energy expenditure’ in “Quasi Survey”. However, this obfuscates the fact that she lay claim to this language precisely because it enabled her to negotiate her self-perceived technical limitations as a dancer and advance her own approach. By differentiating work from ballet, the attitude of ‘just doing it’ initially served this purpose – Rainer was able to access the ‘ordinariness and pleasure’ that was, for Cunningham, firmly allied to neo-classical technique. Further, the improvisation sessions she shared with Forti and Meehan provided a back region through which she could make these gains; without the space to test ideas out and respond to others, she may have reacted differently to the classroom’s constraint. In practical terms, these sessions enabled her to develop a type of movement that ‘juggled’ transitions and sudden dynamics. The revelation of *Trio A* lies in the exposure of dance activity. Yet, at the same time as affirming effort, her signature dance’s continued adherence to technique must be foregrounded – without the countervailing dynamic of concealment, the ‘perpetual motion’ of its taut surface would slacken and collapse into Judson’s heterogeneous activity. The regulation of technique and effort animates the switch between ‘mere’ activity and ‘mere’ performance; Rainer maintained control over the performance situation by successfully regulating her presentation of activity. While calibrated to performance, the dancers’ movement almost withdraws itself, producing an expression whose locus and effect is left undecided in each moment.

Having tracked the development of *Trio A*'s disjunctive simultaneity, and more clearly understood its 'revelation of gestural detail', it is necessary to grapple with her comment, 'just doing it'. Her address to Cunningham elaborates on this attitude:

[He] knew all too clearly that the rewards would be commensurate with the effort, that is – the reward of more work for work done. 'You must love the daily work' he would say. She loved him for saying that, for that was one prospect that thrilled her about dancing – the daily involvement that filled up the body and mind with an exhaustion and completion that left little room for anything else.⁶⁴⁸

From her recollections of the Düsseldorf work, we know that Rainer was able to work 'mechanically', even doggedly. Her reflections on dance instruction and improvisation sessions are evidence that 'daily work' – in interview with Lyn Blumenthal she reflects that 'it took six months to make a five-minute solo' – took priority over the performance situation.⁶⁴⁹ In "Quasi Survey", she characterises the dancer as a 'neutral doer', yet this designation is seemingly contradicted by the statement, made in the same breath, that 'I was more involved in experiencing a lion's share of ecstasy and madness than in 'being myself' or doing a job'.⁶⁵⁰ For her, the doing of daily work comprises a 'range of energy' whose standard is 'ecstasy and madness'; this tallies with Schneemann's assessment of the 'expressive control' Rainer is able to exercise over her 'physical source', the body. Yet, to avoid simply affirming the authenticity of 'doing' within a framework of 'work', it is necessary to historically situate this gerund's expressive content. The final section, which lays grounds for future research, seeks to understand the metonym's lateral shift through kinaesthetic terms.

5.3 Expression

Cunningham's introduction of chance procedures to his choreography, beginning with his dances of the early 1950s, resulted in the unlinking of movement from its musical

⁶⁴⁸ Rainer, "Epilogue (for Merce Cunningham)", *Work*, p. 328.

⁶⁴⁹ Rainer, "Interview with Lyn Blumenthal", p. 64.

⁶⁵⁰ Rainer, "A Quasi Survey", p. 267.

accompaniment – in traditional forms of ballet and modern dance, note, expression is intelligible through movement’s imitation of music. As dance historian Mark Franko argues, for Cunningham, the locus of expression shifted from the body’s imitation of music onto the dancer’s ‘invisible energy source’; yet, in his view, this gave rise to a paradox.⁶⁵¹ ‘Music’, he writes, is ‘the initial impression whose impact on the soul (sensation) is translated into the physical movement of dance’.⁶⁵² With the unlinking of music, movement springs directly from the performer’s source of energy, which seemingly absorbs the conduit of the soul.⁶⁵³ A focus on energy would seem to rid dance of expression, yet in Franko’s schema this is not quite what happens: ‘Movement is still a *reaction* to the hidden *action* of an impression. Yet, for Cunningham, it is in reaction to a physical rather than to a spiritual reality, to energy rather than to the soul’.⁶⁵⁴ In other words, energy replaces music’s compact with the soul, forming a background for movement. Expression is preserved through the performer’s negotiation of their impressions; he concludes, ‘Cunningham secularises expression theory, aestheticizing it’.⁶⁵⁵ Franko argues that Cunningham paradoxically preserves the expressive content of movement’s imitation of music by the dancer’s establishing of a relay between sense impressions and movements, an action and reaction that mimics the imitative quality of traditional dance. Rainer’s expression, ‘just doing it’, grew from movement’s incorporation of its musical accompaniment; the attempt to clarify what this means in practice is aided by a theory of embodiment.

In a 2010 article dealing with the location of expression in Cunningham’s early dance, critical theorist Carrie Noland begins with Franko’s claim about the yoking of expression to energy, but goes further:

⁶⁵¹ ‘Music’, Franko writes, is ‘the initial impression whose impact on the soul (sensation) is translated into the physical movement of dance’. See, Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 80.

⁶⁵² Franko, *Dancing Modernism*, p. 76.

⁶⁵³ In conversation with Jacqueline Lesschaeve, Cunningham provide a basis for this, stating, ‘movement comes from something, not from something expressive, but from some momentum or energy’. See, Franko, *Dancing Modernism*, p. 80.

⁶⁵⁴ Franko, *Dancing Modernism*, p. 80.

⁶⁵⁵ Franko, *Dancing Modernism*, p. 80.

An artistic act can be conceived as antinarrative, apsychological, and yet fully expressive. The dance can move its audience without relying on pathos embedded in plot, or energy framed as categorical emotion. There is no external referent that the body's movement refers to; it is not expressing more than it is (or, rather, more than it is doing). On this reading, expression is borne by a materiality—the moving body—it can only transcend by losing itself.⁶⁵⁶

As with Franko, Noland suggests that expression for Cunningham is bound to movement's energy source. Its normative location in plot, narrative, and character is subverted by 'a materiality—the moving body', which rids the work of external reference.⁶⁵⁷ While aligning her argument concerning the primacy of energy with Franko, she develops a line of inquiry through reading Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), arguing that Cunningham's dance produces a theory of expression that is comparable to Adorno's exposition of that category.⁶⁵⁸ For Adorno, who did not write about dance specifically, the locus of expression shifts from subjectivity to, in Noland's words, 'embodiment, understood as a function of locomotion and sensual existence'.⁶⁵⁹ Energy is linked to embodiment, a category that stands in opposition to subjectivity, which, for Adorno, is understood primarily as a psychic phenomenon.⁶⁶⁰ While this turn to the body risks staging a new kind of authenticity, Noland makes the point that to *not* take the body

⁶⁵⁶ Carrie Noland, "The Human Situation on Stage: Merce Cunningham, Theodor Adorno, and the Category of Expression", in *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Summer 2010), p. 50.

⁶⁵⁷ This chimes with James Waring's 1957 account of Cunningham's approach: 'The grammar is the meaning, Cunningham likes to say, quoting Gertrude Stein. The quality of energetic life in containment has been visible since such early solos as *Totem Ancestor* (1942) and *Root of an Unfocus* (1944) and persists in *Lavish Escapade* (1956)'. See, James Waring, "Merce Cunningham: Maker of Dances (1957)", in Richard Kostelanetz, ed. *Merce Cunningham: Dancing in Space and Time* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), pp. 31-31.

⁶⁵⁸ More recently, Elise Archias brings Rainer into conversation with Adorno in *The Concrete Body* (2016), writing, 'For Adorno, the 'expressed meaning' in a work of art is located in its 'sedimented' and 'meaningless' aspects. In art, "expression is the antithesis of expressing something," a product of what Adorno calls 'natural history'...' See, Archias, *The Concrete Body*, p. 31. Also see, Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970; London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁶⁵⁹ Noland, "The Human Situation on Stage", p. 48. And here, Noland includes in parentheses, '(in Franko's words, 'something more fundamental than emotion, while just as differentiated')'.

⁶⁶⁰ Going forwards, I intend to think about this commentary in relation to Adorno's critique of phenomenology.

into account is to fail to reckon with the way meaning is produced.⁶⁶¹ If the subjectivity model of expression underwrites the production of illusion in dance – from Cunningham’s and Rainer’s partially-aligned perspectives, this is intelligible through Graham’s ‘dramatic and psychological necessity’ – the ‘doing’ body nevertheless stands for that model’s material basis. As Noland explains, Adorno provides a means to think through this paradox; his account of embodiment focuses on the interlacing of transitive and intransitive modes of expression, where ‘transitive’ refers to culturally-legible forms, and ‘intransitive’ denotes expression that is properly embodied.⁶⁶² This distinction positions ‘energy’ in relation to a broader field of sense-making, one that parallels the relation of concrete and abstract gestures taught by James Waring in his composition class.

Noland goes further than Franko in describing what this means in phenomenological terms, for intransitive, or embodied expression is only superficially simple; as she writes, ‘The ‘human situation on stage’ [this is Cunningham’s archivist, David Vaughan’s phrase] can be summed up as a set of kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, weight-bearing, and sometimes tactile problems to be solved’.⁶⁶³ Noland describes a lexicon of ‘problems’ that allow for a renewed focus on Rainer’s phrase, ‘just doing it’. The separation of effort from technique does not portend a chaotic, unintelligible sphere that is somehow free from signification;

⁶⁶¹ This point is expounded most fully in *Agency and Embodiment* (2009), where Noland take issue with scholar Andrew Hewitt’s denouncement in *Social Choreography* (2005) of what he calls ‘brute *soma*’, as follows: ‘To his mind, crediting kinaesthetic sensations with the capacity to speak ‘truth’ about the body is tantamount to reestablishing an essential paradigm that veils the historical construction of bodies *and* their ‘truths.’ My question, though, is how, without according value to kinaesthesia, we can explain why so many movement practitioners... seek recourse to kinaesthetic sensation to improve coordination, balance, contact, and skeletal alignment?... To be sure, it would be an exaggeration to state, as Martha Graham famously did, that ‘Movement never lies.’ As scholars and movement practitioners have long known, images and discourse provided by culture can indeed influence what a subject thinks she feels. But we must guard ourselves from assuming constructivism’s most undialectical posture. Clearly, bodily sensations do not *always* lie. At times they offer valuable information about cultured its disciplines, information that. We can draw on to develop new ways of moving through and inhabiting space’. See Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 11.

⁶⁶² ‘The human body is doubly expressive: it can be expressive transitively, in an easily legible, culturally codified way, and it can be expressive intransitively, simply by exposing its dynamic, arc-engendering force’. See, Noland, “The Human Situation on Stage”, p. 54.

⁶⁶³ Noland, “The Human Situation on Stage”, pp. 54-55.

for, the lexicon of ‘problems’ that comprise intransitive, or embodied expression are reflexively involved in the transmission of culturally-legible forms. Technique, for example, presents a transitive mode of expression: a Graham contraction is culturally legible as such; it is, in Waring’s terms, a concrete gesture.

In her book, *Agency and Embodiment* (2009), Noland theorises these ‘problems’ through close readings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, among others.⁶⁶⁴ Her subject, in summary terms, is ‘the dialogic and recursive relation of kinetic potentials to social forms’.⁶⁶⁵ Working against a social constructivist approach, one that posits the subject as an assemblage of social and cultural codes, she makes the claim that bodies are not merely repositories for learnt behaviours but actively recondition those behaviours through a set of ‘kinetic potentials’.⁶⁶⁶ In her view, movement is constitutive of, as opposed to incidental to, processes of individuation – a position that develops the argument of Marcel Mauss’s 1935 essay, “The Techniques of the Body”.⁶⁶⁷

By dint of its specialisation, dance provides an exemplary space in which to think about the workings of everyday social comportment. Noland’s balancing of recent phenomenological dance scholarship with studies of embodiment extends the modern dance pedagogy, introduced in Chapter Four, whose approach to physiology forms the backdrop to Rainer’s and her peers’ movement investigations. Kinaesthetic experience, that which is foregrounded by Rainer through her negotiation of sudden dynamics and transitions, is not prior to technical vocabularies but subsists as an order that constantly refines and adapts how these are expressed.⁶⁶⁸ This is useful, as it allows us to think about

⁶⁶⁴ Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁶⁶⁵ Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁶ As Noland writes, ‘Kinaesthetic experience, produced by acts of embodied gesturing, places pressure on the conditioning the body receives, encouraging variations in performance that account for larger innovations in cultural practice that cannot otherwise be explained’. See, Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁶⁷ Marcel Mauss, “The Techniques of the Body”, 1935.

⁶⁶⁸ This vocabulary was then being used, albeit not in the same way; as Forti reflects on the early 1960s, ‘Another term we used a lot was ‘kinaesthetic awareness.’ The kinaesthetic sense has to do with sensing movement in your own body, sensing your body’s changing dynamic configurations’. See, Forti, *Handbook in Motion*, pp. 29-31.

the relation between a Graham contraction and an ‘explosion of energy’ without recourse to the language. In other words, dance activity not only forms a passage to *Trio A*’s ‘revelation of gestural detail’; this passage is internally configured in the dance itself through performer’s ongoing negotiation of ‘kinetic potentials’, in a way that parallels its description in writing. Kinetic feedback is here related the metonym’s ‘axis of contiguity and displacement’.

For Noland, ‘culturally framed interoceptive experiences constitute a type of knowledge’.⁶⁶⁹ Working through her responses to Cunningham’s classes and collaborations with Forti and Meehan, Rainer’s dance is productive of knowledge. While this goes for dance work in general, the way in which Rainer negotiates dance instruction distinguishes her knowledge production in particular. Noland argues that, by affording the dancer limited freedom, Cunningham urged them ‘to develop refined coping mechanisms for creating continuity between disarticulated movements’.⁶⁷⁰ In this way, he generated an arena – inhabited by Rainer in 1960, alongside others – in which dancers were tasked with exploring interoceptive experiences without recourse to the cultural framing that makes expression easily legible: ‘He tells you *what* to do, but not *how* to do it’. Noland elaborates on the ‘arena’ provided by Cunningham as follows:

Dynamics are thus not preconceived by the choreographer but instead emerge from the dancer’s creation of unscripted, ‘discovered’ transitions leading from one movement, or one movement sequence (phrase), to the next. These transitions providing continuity are forged by the dancer’s own coping mechanism, her way of assimilating each movement into a new sequence, a new logic, that only the body can discover in the process of repeated execution.⁶⁷¹

Rainer’s reflections on the first class of Cunningham’s June course corroborate this account.⁶⁷² The transition presents an opportunity for feedback, in which the dancer is able

⁶⁶⁹ Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, p. 6.

⁶⁷⁰ Noland, “The Human Situation on Stage”, p. 55.

⁶⁷¹ Noland, “The Human Situation on Stage”, p. 54.

⁶⁷² As Rainer recalls in her 2006 memoirs, ‘It was not until I had been through the Graham ‘factory’ and embarked on serious study with Cunningham that I could fully appreciate the

to recursively condition prescribed movements. It is difficult not to rely on linguistic metaphors to describe this freedom; Noland herself uses the term ‘unscripted’. Yet it happens that Rainer’s advances in movement invention are – excepting *Trio A*, which is all transition – available to us through her written reflections. In the case of her notebooks, the knowledge generated by her ‘discovered transitions’ is translated through the description of technique’s kinaesthetic cues. For instance, her use of simile *stands for* her transformation of a Graham contraction. Far from devaluing dance work, this is to suggest a complicated relationship that further embeds the effort, or energy expenditure of dance in other semiotic forms of expression. In fact, Rainer’s ‘radical juxtapositions’, her manipulation of technique and forms, depends on the correspondence between her dance and writing practices. This intermediality enables the control, or pressure, she exerts on the field of minimalism. Her art criticism, for instance, differs from the more didactic approaches of Morris and Judd, by actively seeking out the ‘discovered transition’. In Chapter Two, we saw how her readings of Morris, Warhol, and Hay ignored art world partisanship by eliciting ‘transfers of meaning’; for instance, Morris’s fibreglass sculpture, *Untitled* (1967) led her to describe the ‘exquisite containment’ of her body while high on LSD – yet this association relied on the subversion of the mediating art-critical positions of Morris and Fried. I have elected the metonym to describe this approach; its activation of contiguities and displacements is comparable to the transition, as described above.

Trio A is unique among Rainer’s dances for its transmission is not fully accounted for by textual explication; while describing its effects, the explanatory commentary of “Quasi Survey” is not formally related to its movement quality in the way that her essay, “Some retrospective notes” has come to share a space with *Parts of Some Sextets* (both 1965). Not only is it the one dance of Rainer’s from the 1960s that remains extant, but, as Annette Michelson wrote in 1974, *Trio A* ‘is, quite simply in one way, without stress or interruption,

heretical notion espoused by the Cage/Cunningham school—namely, the implicit humanity and emotionality of the human body’. See, Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 170.

a succession of things, a true temporal order of movements experienced as seen one after the other'.⁶⁷³ By detaching effort from technique, and refining the means to conventionalise effort's subsequent exposure, Rainer was able to maintain the transition over a duration of four-and-a-half minutes. *Trio A* presents a constant and dynamic adaptation of transitive forms, exemplifying the type of knowledge presented by Noland. Its constant transition indicates a multi-layered gathering of 'interoceptive experience' from many different kinds of dance instruction, suggesting it would be possible to construct a reading of it based on a collation of sources – yet the look of the dance is other than the accumulated bits of movement that went into it. Its ceaselessly 'unscripted, 'discovered'' status is reflected in the fact that its five transmitters constantly seek out new ways to instruct students on how to move through the dance.⁶⁷⁴ In learning the movement series, dancers have no choice but to develop their own 'coping mechanisms'. Moreover, given the transition stands in a recursive relation to culturally-legible forms, dancers are galvanised to consider a whole range of activity, technique, and material. By studying the back-region dance activity that led to the composition of *Trio A*, this chapter has tried to understand what Rainer meant by its 'constant and unremitting revelation of gestural detail'. The keywords passage, transition, and expression have enabled this work by allowing us to leave the performance situation behind.

⁶⁷³ Annette Michelson, "Yvonne Rainer, Part One", p. 58.

⁶⁷⁴ This has been discussed with Sara Wookey, one of five transmitters, and Martin Hargreaves, who has performed *Trio A* and co-curated the 2014 retrospective of Rainer's work at Raven's Row, London.

Conclusion

Through writing this thesis, I have attempted to understand the ways in which Yvonne Rainer's manipulation of the body was bound up with minimal sculptors' examinations of the object. Reading across texts, statements, and practices by a range of artist-critics at work through the 1960s, my aim has been to identify points of transfer between critical approaches to dance and sculpture that were, on the surface and in the literature, answerable to different sets of concerns. Rather than draw a superficial analogy between the viewer's traversal of the gallery and the activity of the dancer, I have sought to describe this movement through recourse to the metonym, a linguistic trope that signals a set of active, *moving* procedures that are embedded in the specificity of the text, action, or dance under consideration. Hence my approach has privileged close reading over broad, synchronic analysis: by attending to the letter I hope not to have lost sight of the field; in fact, my inquiry is permeated with a consideration of the sensibility of the 1960s. Although it looks very different from a study of social relations and the ways in which the structure of the work of art reflects the contradictions of broader social processes, an approach that foregrounds processes of textualization is as committed to a social art history. This is because the text, as I understand it to function in Rainer's practice, is situated at the intersection between movement and writing, between an embodied, daily expenditure of energy and forms of verbal transcription, both of which serve to relay activities in the social life of the subject.

In order to understand the context into which Rainer intervened, I first approached the 1960s cool sensibility through reading art criticism, armed with the knowledge that minimal art's rejection of gesture, what Mary Kelly calls the 'painterly signifier', was more apparent than actual. (The scene of Judson Dance, which Rainer helped bring about participated in, may be approached through similar terms; though the prevalence of 'Judson stoneface', a deliberate expressive blankness, was often undercut through the use of melodramatic and camp elements.) Working through a series of interlocking keywords such

as ‘illusion’, ‘interest’, and ‘sensuousness’, I considered emergent modes of abstraction in relation to the persistence of the viewer’s embodied states of desire. This paradox, which was reflected by the artist-critic’s use of irony or subterfuge, was vocalised by Rainer’s own art criticism while informing her advanced coordination of performers and props.

In a 1966 essay, the art critic Brian O’Doherty described the critic’s rhetoric as dysfunctional and symptomatic:

What has emerged instead of a movement is a mode of thinking with certain implicit prescriptions, a mode that projects a kind of mental furniture which has in it the key to survival – for this aesthetic furniture can be all things to all men while remaining totally unchanged. The latest objects, which *pretend* to be inert or non-emotional (this is simply a brilliant convention of camouflage within which art is functioning now) have clearly patented a way of avoiding all the expectations about how ‘new’ art should behave when it appears.⁶⁷⁵

O’Doherty’s assessment of minimal art as more properly a *mode* of thinking prefigured Michael Fried’s own charge, in “Art and Objecthood” (1967), that ‘literalist art has amounted to something more than an episode in the history of taste. It belongs rather to the history—almost the *natural* history—of sensibility’.⁶⁷⁶ But if Fried’s ire is directed towards the ways in which objects themselves dramatise space, imbuing their surroundings with a ‘latent anthropomorphism’, O’Doherty by contrast jocosely characterises the critic’s inability to measure the object’s ‘camouflage’. He satirises a situation in which ideas or systems are overtly or covertly dissembled, leading to a regress of cancellations that leaves the critic’s ‘mental furniture’ in disarray: gestural expression is jettisoned in favour of ‘non-emotional’ production, making relies on models that reinstate the presence of the artist-critic and so on, so that the critic is, in his words, brought into a ‘state of marvellous paralysis, that has reduced some criticism to phenomenology’.⁶⁷⁷ This reduction to phenomenology, which O’Doherty addresses negatively, suggests that the viewer’s

⁶⁷⁵ Brian O’Doherty, “Minus Pluto”, in *Arts and Artists*, September 1966; Reprinted in, Gregory Battcock, ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 252.

⁶⁷⁶ Fried, “Art and Objecthood”, p. 117.

⁶⁷⁷ O’Doherty, “Minus Plato”, p. 253.

reading, their ability to reveal the object's 'pretence', is now a determining factor in the artwork's display.

It is this ability to read that distinguishes Rainer's own art criticism. For instance, in a 1967 article for *Arts Magazine* titled "Don't Give the Game Away", she characterises her then partner, Robert Morris's fibreglass sculpture (also 1967) in terms that point to a camouflaging effect:

Its flatness and grayness are transposed anthropomorphically into inertness and retreat. Its simplicity becomes 'non communicative,' or 'noncommittal.' Its self-containment becomes 'silence.' Its singularity becomes boredom. These are all conditions imposed onto the work through reluctance or ability to enjoy it at face value.⁶⁷⁸

Written in the months after the publication of "Art and Objecthood", Rainer's unfolding of the sculpture's anthropomorphism serves to deflate the puritanism of Fried's criticism of 'literalist art', transforming O'Doherty's charge of paralysis into grounds for further contemplation. The attitudes and poses that, on Rainer's watch, emerge from the object's inert disposition point to an unavoidable *involvement* on her, the viewer's part. For Rainer, this involvement differs from Morris's argument, in "Notes on Sculpture, Part Two" (1966), that his sculpture engages the body of the viewer through a spatial network of externalised relations, to the extent that she characterises the body's *relationships*. The shift from relations to relationships, whereby 'simplicity becomes 'non communicative'', is taken up by certain figures – we have encountered similar passages in Lucy Lippard's and Barbara Rose's writings. Yet Rainer went further by developing the means to exploit this unavoidable involvement to particular effect, an operation that, I argue, depended on her dual role as choreographer and writer.

In 2010, she reflected that: 'Meaning itself can be created out of relatively inert materials'.⁶⁷⁹ Far from an unexpected outcome, the creation of 'meaning' comes about through the displacement of qualities and characteristics. Rainer had experimented with

⁶⁷⁸ Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 47.

⁶⁷⁹ Rainer, "Where's the Passion?", p. 48.

jarring combinations of music, costume, props, and choreography in the early 1960s at Judson, a phase of production she termed ‘goofy glamour’, yet the clearest expression of this displacement is illustrated by her 1967 commentary on two dances by Deborah Hay, in which the prima ballerina, Giselle, is reduced *for her* to the mundanity of a pile of bricks which is in turn dramatised, assuming the characteristics of the ballerina. As with the Morris sculpture, this role reversal is not implied by the materials as such; rather, it is an effect that is read for and expressed, by Rainer, through the means available to her: verbal transcription – and this is wonderfully illustrated by the fact that Hay’s ‘radical juxtaposition’ comes about through Rainer’s conflation props and performers belonging to two separate choreographies.

The relationship between performer and prop onstage, as exemplified by Giselle and the pile of bricks, is a useful point of reference; it personifies the anthropomorphism that Rainer locates in Morris’s sculpture. It also serves to clarify the conjuncture that, in my view, drives Rainer’s investigation of relationships through materials more broadly; namely, the meeting of energy expenditure and verbal transcription, two co-extensive vectors that, for her, are equally amenable to metonymic ways of working. As she writes, ‘It almost appears that energy and dance-type attributes have been siphoned off from her activity to enhance the life of the bricks’.⁶⁸⁰ Energy expenditure is the channel by which transfers of meaning are enacted in durational time and space. This is not merely recognition of a thermodynamic law; rather, a lexicon of energy provided Rainer and her peers with the means to accommodate the anthropomorphism that, as they recognised, unavoidably emanates from the reader-viewer’s engagement with the ‘cool’ work of art. Energy also stood for dance’s claim to expression after the unlinking of its classical locus of expression, musical accompaniment; providing a language with which to describe movement’s continued signification.

The language of energy expenditure, as we saw, remains implicit in the writings of Robert Morris and other minimalist artists, but it is animated in Lucy Lippard’s 1967 essay,

⁶⁸⁰ Rainer, “Two Dances”, p. 2.

“Eros Presumptive”, who observes that the object’s apparent ‘framework of simplicity’ nonetheless generates a ‘controlled voluptuousness’ by way of a ‘flow of energy’.⁶⁸¹ Inhering to the ‘coolest’ forms of presentation, this sensuous transfer carried over from sculpture to dance – the blatant displacement of Rainer’s misreading of Hay offers a stunning example. In its most compelling guises, however, sensuousness and the ‘flow of energy’ that underpins it are facilitated by the object – or body – caught at a ‘near standstill’; as Lippard writes, ‘the cool approach depends on pervasive mood, the electric basis of sexual attraction, the roots rather than the results of desire’.⁶⁸² In Lippard’s terms, Rainer’s *Trio A* is ‘abstractly sensuous’ because the dancer’s evasion of the audience sustains a cool front while simultaneously transmitting a ‘revelation of gestural detail’.

By studying *Trio A* in depth, I have traced a historical transition from obvious forms of metonymic displacement, as are enacted by the inferred ‘radical juxtaposition’ of Hay’s dances, to a form that is conducted solely through the terms of the body; a transition I understand through the consecutive terms ‘performer-prop’ and ‘body-object’. This attention follows Rainer’s own shift from the presentation of task to *tasklike* movement, i.e. from movement involving the performer in different kinds of activities, often involving the manipulation of objects – as with *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965), in which ten performers lug twelve mattresses around the stage – to movement that assumes an objectlike character. With *Trio A*, Rainer exploited the body’s objectlike bearing in order to camouflage this same ‘revelation of gestural detail’: the audience registers its expressive capacity as an after-effect of its perpetual motion.

Rainer’s convergence on the body-object is expressed by a passage of hers that I dealt with in my second chapter and wish to return to now. Not only does the below text encapsulate the reasons why I have elected to study the metonym, but it itself metonymically segues into my thesis’s final case study, an iteration of *Trio A* Rainer performed in 1967 under the title, *Convalescent Dance*. By focusing on the below passage

⁶⁸¹ Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 217.

⁶⁸² Lippard, “Eros Presumptive”, p. 217.

and performance together, I hope to answer the above claim to social art history while pointing to future lines of inquiry:

The exquisite *containment* of my body. I can't say it's euphoria or ecstasy... But yet still I have this strange sense of limits – physical limits – and it seems such an exquisite knowledge. Perfect containment. Something to do with a finely-tuned awareness of just how, what, something to do with my own particular mass and volume. It (my body) occupies exactly as much space as it needs and it doesn't need any more than its [*sic*] got.⁶⁸³

Rainer reflects on her corporeality after having taken LSD. Before reckoning again with what she writes, consider the history of this text. It first appears as one among several time-coded entries recorded in a notebook on an undisclosed day in 1966 and now archived at the Getty Research Institute. Rainer subsequently quoted it in “Don't Give the Game Away”, this passage appearing in a section of the 1967 article detailing her responses to a fibreglass sculpture by Robert Morris, excerpted above. Most striking, however, is the use of part of it as a caption for a still image of *Convalescent Dance*, a photograph that is juxtaposed with a reproduction of Morris's sculpture of the same year (Plate XI). The caption's reference to ‘mass and volume’ suggests a contiguity between the two photographs as two subjects sharing attributes in some manner of equivalence, enacting a displacement from one kind of mass, the object, to another, the body, that is kept *in motion* by dint of Rainer's deliberate juxtaposition on the page.

The ambiguity of this passage's location is repeated by the writing itself. Starting with the climactic formula, ‘It (my body)’ and working backwards, let us consider how the metonym does its work. First, note Rainer's use of parentheses to index the body's ‘containment’; depicting a shell-like epidermis, the brackets' pictorial containment of the body is nonetheless affected by its role as verbal qualifier of the subject, ‘it’. One signifying system, language, displaces or supplements another, so that the reader-viewer is unable to settle the phrase's stark pictorial quality in either direction. The pronouns ‘it...

⁶⁸³ Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute; quoted in, Rainer, “Don't Give the Game Away”, p. 46.

my' sit on either side of the open bracket, a double bearing that risks breaking the body's whole into a relation of parts. The attempt to keep its status as object (it) *and* subject (my body) simultaneously in view can only lead in this direction: a matter-of-factness that is prepared for by the sentences preceding its presentation.

Feelings of 'euphoria or ecstasy' are elicited by Rainer's sense of 'my body' as an objectlike 'it' comprised of 'physical limits' and 'my own particular mass and volume'. Our apprehension of the formula, 'It (my body)', is thus directed by the impersonal as the very site of intense subjective feeling. Rainer's adoration bends Lippard's apprehension of sensuousness to a consideration of the body as that which previously served Lippard as an analogue for how she experiences the 'abstractly sensuous object' held at a 'near standstill'. In other words, Rainer's verbal transcription of an embodied, intransitive form of 'exquisite knowledge' concretises minimal art's claim, as made by its most radical adherents, to sensuous experience. Rainer actualises the body which for Lippard is ultimately a metaphor, and in doing so works dialectically in response to her claims for an 'abstractly sensuous object'. This recognition is at the core of my thesis.

If subjective feeling was proscribed by other artist-critics in the wake of Abstract Expressionism, we can be sure that Rainer was not interested in its elimination, at least not without definite forms of retrieval. Nor are feelings of 'euphoria and ecstasy' reserved for her drug-induced writing: in "Quasi Survey", her commentary on *Trio A*, she observes that 'I was more involved in experiencing a lion's share of ecstasy and madness than in being 'myself' or doing a job', while in "Don't Give the Game Away" her readings are directed by an 'utterly indulgent subjectivity' in search of satisfaction, a state that is generated, not through a confrontation with the beautiful, but through the recognition of a situation's rules of engagement.⁶⁸⁴ For her the body continues to gesture, signify, and emote after it has been extricated from dance's circuit of narcissism, but this is contingent on her direction of its energy expenditure. Recall her intention, as forwarded in the programme statement for *The Mind is a Muscle* (1968):

⁶⁸⁴ Rainer, "Don't Give the Game Away", p. 44.

It is my overall concern to reveal people as they are engaged in various kinds of activities – alone, with each other, with objects – and to weight the quality of the human body toward that of objects and away from the super-stylization of the dancer.⁶⁸⁵

Rainer's interest in the body is geared towards the acquisition and practice of 'exquisite knowledge'. Her love of the body's 'containment' is inseparable from 'activity', a term whose sole condition, as I understand it, is the registration of directed forms of energy expenditure through language. That is, Rainer is interested in the inert, volumetric state of the body, its proximity to the object, *because* its expression is at each stage recuperable through language. The actions of 'revealing' and 'weighting' have a material heft, but our access to these terms is reliant on Rainer's passionate textual explication of their effects. To return to Foucault, one can say that a focus on writing's relation to movement enables us to locate her author function 'in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being'.⁶⁸⁶ With this in mind, I want to differentiate between two instances of writing's interrelation with movement in Rainer's practice.

Her easiest-to-follow transcription work comes in the form of imagery deployed as a pedagogical aide. For instance, dance scholar Martin Hargreaves recalls that when Rainer visited London in 2006 to correct the results of Melanie Clarke's Labanotation of *Trio A* at the Greenwich Dance Agency, she – Rainer – described the opening 'five arm swings around the body' as 'having stones on the ends of strings', while a movement towards the end of the series resembled 'a dog pissing against a lamppost'.⁶⁸⁷ Movement, then, is adapted and refined in response to the verbal relaying of imagery, whose function is integral to the dancer's acquisition of stylised comportment: in Rainer's words, 'These are metaphors or images delivered by speech that reinforce the physical transmission.'⁶⁸⁸ These

⁶⁸⁵ Rainer, "Statement", *Work*, p. 76.

⁶⁸⁶ Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 211.

⁶⁸⁷ E-mail correspondence with the author.

⁶⁸⁸ Rainer, "*Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation*", p. 17.

verbal instructions enable her to treat *Trio A* as material to be rolled out through a range of pedagogical and dance contexts; their strong imaginative legibility renders them closer in kind to metaphor than metonymy, a classification that also, perhaps, describes the overt juxtapositions Rainer ascribes to Hay's choreography, even though the displacement of Giselle's characteristics, as I have argued, veers towards metonymy.

Rainer's reflections concerning 'It (my body)' are, by contrast, wedded to the metonym, a classification that also describes the stubborn ephemerality of *Trio A*. As she recently observed, we see 'the performer performing, the self receding, and the passion hiding, in plain sight'.⁶⁸⁹ *Trio A*'s concentration of effort marks a turning-inwards that is not resolvable as inwardness; the dancer's movement becomes 'abstractly sensuous', inviting the viewer-reader to reflect on the body's means of expression by suspending the coalescence of created meaning. In order to elaborate on this 'seeing difficulty', I will now consider Rainer's performance of *Trio A*, under historically-specific circumstances, as *Convalescent Dance*.

In 1967, the New York-based group Artists Protest organised a week of dissident activities, featuring over five-hundred artists, to protest the ongoing Vietnam War.⁶⁹⁰ Running from January 29th to February 4th, this week was comprised of a series of events named after the word 'dissent'; programmes were delivered under titles such as Broadway Dissents, Off-Broadway Dissents, and Dancers Dissent.⁶⁹¹ The centrepiece of this activity was a vast installation, produced by a mass of artists and presented at New York

⁶⁸⁹ Rainer, "Where's the Passion?", p. 54.

⁶⁹⁰ As Julie Ault writes, 'Artists Protest was one of the first post-World War II groups to use the fame of individual members to forge a platform to effect its political goals... [Participants included] Rudolf Baranik, May Stevens, Elaine de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Denise Levertov, Mitchell Goodman'. See, Julie Ault, "A Chronology of Selected Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists' Groups, and Organisations in New York City, 1965-85", in Julie Ault, *Alternative Art New York: 1965-1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 17.

⁶⁹¹ Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1999), p. 116.

University's Loeb Student Center, titled *The Collage of Indignation* (Plate XXXIV).⁶⁹² Comic-book graphics, distorted mainstream icons including political figures, and hastily-wrought depictions of violence – often commenting on the US military's use of napalm – loomed over thousands of visitors. In scale, *Collage* was comparable to the *Peace Tower*, a gigantic anti-war construction erected the previous year by several artists in Los Angeles. Contributors to *Collage* included well-known artists and activists such as Carolee Schneemann, Nancy Graves, and Mark di Suvero, alongside younger artists. In the months leading to *Angry Arts Week* art critics Max Kozloff and Dore Ashton, two members of Artists Protest who organised the week of activities, sent out a letter in December 1966, inviting submissions as follows:

We, the ARTISTS AND WRITERS PROTEST, call upon you to participate in a Collage of Indignation, to be mounted in the cause of peace, from January 29 to February 4, 1967, at Loeb Student Centre, New York University. Titled *The Angry Arts*, it will feature, in a context of happenings, poetry readings, films, music and theater, panoramic sized canvases, upon which you the artists of New York, are asked to paint, draw, or attach whatever images or objects that will express or stand for your anger against the war... We are also interested in whatever manner of visual invective, political caricature, or related savage materials you would care to contribute. Join in a spirit of cooperation with other artist communities of this city in a desperate plea for sanity.⁶⁹³

Strategies pursued in response to this call are reflected by the discontinuities and eruptions of *Collage*; as noted by Beth Ann Handler, 'For the most part... contributors abandoned their typical artistic strategies or any traditional artistic strategy'.⁶⁹⁴ Artists deployed political caricature and text to communicate their 'anger' over the Johnson administration's ongoing support for the war in Vietnam, galvanising a collective sense of

⁶⁹² As Francis Frascina observes, *Collage* 'was a linked sequence of twenty 10-feet by 6-feet many-imaged canvases. Much of it was made in a loft in Prince Street over five days by the artists painting, fixing on objects, images, and slogans'. See, Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent*, p. 115.

⁶⁹³ Copy of letter in Dore Ashton File, PAD/D Archive (Museum of Modern Art Library); as quoted in, Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent*, pp. 114-15.

⁶⁹⁴ Beth Ann Handler, *The Art of Activism: Artists and Writers Protest, the Art Workers' Coalition, and the New York Art Strike Protest the Vietnam War*, Unpublished Dissertation Manuscript, Yale University, May 2001, p. 51. Thank you to Dr. Rachel Warriner for drawing my attention to this dissertation.

return to the radical intersection of art and politics of the 1930s.⁶⁹⁵ The art press was not so enthusiastic. Harold Rosenberg, who had observed different conjunctures of art and politics in the US context, wrote scathingly of *Collage* as follows:

The ‘Angry Arts’ exhibition... while dedicated to protest... expressed the hopelessness of artists in regard to political art and their contempt for politics or their fear of it in that almost all the works were dashed off without regard for craft standards, as if in a rush to return to the serious business of making paintings and sculptures.⁶⁹⁶

Collage’s noisy panels missed the mark because, in a rush to vindicate their righteous anger, artists neglected ‘craft standards’ that, in Rosenberg’s negative appraisal, were wrongfully reserved by them for ‘the serious business of making paintings and sculptures’. Even Kozloff, who had co-authored the invitation, remonstrated against the individualistic tenor of many of the panels, especially those daubed with the artist’s own name; these, in his view, amounted to a form of ‘emotional relief’.⁶⁹⁷ In Rosenberg’s and Kozloff’s comparable views, *Collage* demonstrated the extent to which sanctioned forms of abstraction had strayed from their historically-evidenced capacity to reflect social concerns, its panels reflecting an expediency riven by histrionics. To use Herbert Marcuse’s 1964 term, *Collage*’s overall cartoonish effect was seen by its critics as a sweeping instance of ‘repressive desublimation’.⁶⁹⁸ Yet these criticisms disregard the vagueness of the original letter’s instructions, which appear to invite the artist to suspend, even sabotage, the normal course of their practice: ‘whatever images or objects...whatever manner of visual invective’. Further, its call for art that ‘will express or stand for your anger’ relies on a representational model of allegory, or mimesis, that was by then theoretically outmoded. In a sense, this criticism is symptomatic of the difficulty in art circles of those years of

⁶⁹⁵ As Howard Brick observes in relation to ‘US military escalation in Vietnam during 1965’, ‘the war and the antiwar movement of the mid-1960s helped radicalise the left-wing critique of American society’. See, Brick, *The Age of Contradiction*, p. 147.

⁶⁹⁶ Harold Rosenberg, ‘The Art World: Art of Bad Conscience’, in *The New Yorker*, no. 43, December 16, 1967, p. 139.

⁶⁹⁷ Max Kozloff, ‘A Collage of Indignation’, *The Nation*, February 20, 1967.

⁶⁹⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (New York: Beacon Press, 1964).

addressing the representation of expression or subjective feeling in art-making. As I will now explore, Rosenberg's and Kozloff's desire for more highly-mediated forms of visual representation is, on the surface, answered by Rainer's contribution.

Having read Artists Protest's invitation, Rainer resolved to perform *Trio A* under the title, *Convalescent Dance* (Plate XXXV). She performed it as a solo at a fringe site, away from the Loeb Student Center where *Collage* was displayed, dressed head to toe in white and with her hair swept into a ponytail. The dance's new title addressed the fact that she was then recovering from a life-threatening illness, having undergone intensive surgery a few months prior. Scant documentation of *Convalescent Dance* exists. What we do know, however, is that, in the words of Sally Banes, for Rainer it represented 'the most perfectly realised version of the sequence, since her convalescent state suffused her performance with exactly the right quality of lightness'.⁶⁹⁹ Further, in her 2006 memoir *Feelings are Facts*, Rainer refers to it as a 'frail and light *Trio A*' and recalls visiting the Judson gym twice a week in the run up to the performance to rehabilitate her dancer's body and practice the movement series.⁷⁰⁰ Her physical weakness and muscular degeneration led to smoother transitions, realising *Trio A*'s key innovation, the look of an equal distribution of energy expenditure.

Rather than view her convalescent state as a mere technical advantage, however, I want to consider its effect, under specific historical circumstances, on the body of the dancer. As Sally Banes writes, 'With Rainer's *Trio A*... the possibility is proposed that dance is neither perfection of technique nor of expression, but quite something else – the presentation of objects in themselves'.⁷⁰¹ I have hesitated from reflecting on this episode as, in an essay written in 1973, Rainer stated that: 'What passes my screening [to exclude personal material] must somehow be identifiable with probabilities of experience of you, the audience. Surgery, no; illness and thoughts of suicide perhaps; love, pleasure, rage, self-

⁶⁹⁹ Conversation between Sally Banes and Yvonne Rainer, New York, August 1978. See, Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 52.

⁷⁰⁰ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 278.

⁷⁰¹ Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, p. 49.

doubt yes'.⁷⁰² However, not only has she subsequently addressed these her past illness through film – in *Privilege* (1990), she narrates being ‘so weak my legs wouldn’t support me’ – but more importantly, given my understanding of Rainer’s deliberate use of language in the performance context, her choice of title suggests a bodied displacement that must be reckoned with.⁷⁰³ In other words, the title *Convalescent Dance* is itself a metonym, indicating a tangible difference from the urtext of *Trio A*.

During the night of October 15, 1966, some hours after the debut performance of *Carriage Discreteness* in which Rainer’s Walkie-Talkie had malfunctioned, rendering her a passive spectator, she recalls ‘lying on a gurney and projectile vomiting black liquid into a basin held by a nurse standing five feet away’.⁷⁰⁴ She had contracted gangrene and peritonitis and, having been rushed to the hospital in a taxi by Robert Morris and Robert Rauschenberg, underwent emergency surgery. Her recollection of this episode in *Feelings are Facts* (2006) relies on correspondence from that time, reproduced in writing, indicating a citational practice that follows on from her early inclusion of the LSD reflections in her 1967 article, “Don’t Give the Game Away”. In this vein I shall consider a letter, archived at the Getty Research Institute, that she wrote to her brother, Ivan, during the six months of her convalescence.

Her observation, ‘Yesterday – Sunday – walked out of hospital with Bob [Morris] after 4 weeks of incarceration’, in the first paragraph of this letter suggests a rough date of Monday, November 14, 1966. Given its proximity to her LSD reflections, also 1966, I want to keep in mind her description of her body’s ‘exquisite containment’ while attending to a different order of bodily experience:

I am beginning to have convalescence problems. I have always known about the existence of that word convalescence, but it is hard to believe that it just goes on indefinitely. You go to bed at night like a ton of bricks, you wake up in the morning feeling the same way, eat breakfast, then maybe for an hour or so feel passable. I have begun to do a few light exercises on my good days. I do a few chores – wash

⁷⁰² Rainer, *Work*, pp. 275-6.

⁷⁰³ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 278.

⁷⁰⁴ Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, p. 277.

dishes, make the bed. Then I sit down. And that's it. When I decide to get up again, its that ton-of-bricks feeling, with weakness, faintness. Then there are the days when I just don't get out of bed and sleep all day. I really must find out why surgery affects one this way. OK, I can understand the anomie, being run down etc. But a complete and utter loss of muscle tone? After 5 days they tried to stand me up and my legs would not support my weight. I'm sure it must be all the drugs they pump into you. I can still hardly walk up stairs. I am beginning to have a phobia about going out. The last few days I was home I was determined to behave as normally as possible. I went to the supermarket and had groceries delivered. I walked to 8th St and back – about 3/4 mile. I noticed on the way back that I had to concentrate pretty hard on keeping the legs moving. The next day was spent in bed. And so it goes: good days, bad days, a uniform lack of energy, periods of extreme and sudden fatigue and no noticeable line of improvement, although I suspect that if I keep track for a month or more I may find the number of good days increases. Time is heavy for me. I find it hard to concentrate; people's visits are a welcome diversion and have been invaluable both in the hospital and here.⁷⁰⁵

Rainer's short sentences testify to her convalescent state. 'The above was written over a week ago', starts one paragraph midway through the letter, further indicating the physical exertion of writing. Convalescence, previously a 'word', has become a lived reality, and it feels 'like a ton of bricks'. Rainer experiences her body as a weight; heavy, slow, and objectlike. This simile is interesting as the pile of bricks would, in her commentary on Hay's choreography the following year, assume the qualities and characteristics of the prima ballerina. A similar depletion of energy affects the dancer here, or so it would seem. For in a strange way, the language she uses to record her body's transformation into an objectlike weight is close to the letter of her commentary on *Trio A*, "Quasi Survey", also penned by her in 1966. In that essay Rainer writes, 'Ideally one is not even oneself, one is a neutral 'doer''.⁷⁰⁶ Illness, as demonstrated above, precipitates a 'not feeling like oneself', an experience that is, for her, most acutely felt through the body's physicality: 'I can understand the anomie, being run down etc. But a complete and utter loss of muscle tone?' In her depleted state the only activity she can accommodate are 'a few chores', and these she carries out despite 'that ton-of-bricks feeling'.

Rainer's reduction of activity coheres with the dancer's *tasklike* movement as described in "Quasi Survey": 'The demands made on the body's (actual) energy resources *appear* to

⁷⁰⁵ Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute.

⁷⁰⁶ Rainer, "Quasi Survey", p. 267.

be commensurate with the task – be it getting up from the floor, raising an arm, tilting the pelvis, etc. – much as one would get out of a chair, reach for a high shelf, or walk down the stairs when one is not in a hurry’.⁷⁰⁷ The chores Rainer forces herself to do while sick are separate from the ‘few light exercises’ that she does on her ‘good days’ insofar as they are driven by a need to carry on with the labour of social reproduction; as she remarks earlier in the letter: ‘Bob [Morris] is a perfect lovely. He cleared the place up and made a delicious beef stew for my arrival. It is hard for me to realise how hard it’s been for him’. The few chores she can do are geared to recompensing her partner’s increased load of domestic work: ‘I was determined to behave as normally as possible. I went to the supermarket and had groceries delivered’; and later, ‘I feel bad for my own sake and bad on Bob’s account. I offer him no stimulation’. *Trio A*’s tasklike movement is thus connected to everyday, practically invisible forms of expenditure – a displacement onto the stage she acknowledges in “Quasi Survey” by drawing the following distinction: ‘The movements are not mimetic, so they do not remind one of such actions, but I like to think that in their manner of execution they have the factual quality of such actions’.⁷⁰⁸ This description of *Trio A*’s continuous transition as ‘factual’ rather than ‘mimetic’ doubles down on the equivalence being drawn between dance and non-dance activities along the axis of energy expenditure, whose lateral transfer of meaning informs my understanding of this letter’s self-reflective address. Indeed, Rainer’s summary of her convalescence, ‘a uniform lack of energy... and no noticeable line of improvement’, perfectly matches her search with *Trio A* for ‘a control that seems geared to the *actual* time it takes the *actual* weight of the body to go through its prescribed motions’. Suffice to say, it was through convalescence that Rainer properly acquired knowledge of ‘actual’ time and weight: ‘Time is heavy for me’, she observes.

Having reflected on her bodily experience thus, the next section of the letter draws connections to the surrounding world:

⁷⁰⁷ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

⁷⁰⁸ Rainer, “Quasi Survey”, p. 270.

My main problem now is that I find it hard to muster an interest in anything. My interest in people, things, events, the world has always been tangential to my work. It took me awhile to find what my work was, and valuing and exercising that discovery gave me a window out on and a point of focus for everything else. Now that I can't work, it seems that I am interested in nothing.

The underlying sentiment is that work has always been the most important thing, providing her with a 'point of focus for everything else', and that, now she is unable to work, she has lost all interest in the world: 'I am interested in nothing'. Yet the section we have just read would seem to contradict these feelings of apathy and inertia, for convalescence furnished her with knowledge that fed directly into her most innovative work.

At this point, it is worth considering her addressee, Ivan. Without narrating the history of their relationship – I am wary of seeking causes in private worlds, 'psychologising' the author – it is nonetheless the case that Rainer was used to sharing her work progress with her brother, and that Ivan in turn would frequently relay his affairs and moods to her. For instance, in a letter to him dated July 10, 1959, around the time Rainer had begun to take dance classes, she enumerates her new-found passion for 'work' as follows:

Dance =

1. A way out of an emotional dilemma.
2. A place where the training period is so long and arduous as to almost indefinitely postpone a coming to grips with things like purpose and aesthetic or vocational direction.
3. A place that offers some rare moments of 'rightness' (that word again; I think it is equivalent to joy, or 'fitness', i.e., things fit).
4. Something that makes my throat fill up sometimes.
5. Something to do every day.
6. A way of life, where most other things in life assume a lesser importance and value.
7. Something that offers an identity: 'I am a dancer', also 'I am a hard worker, I work my ass off in class in spite of being handicapped by a crazy Rainer body.' The virtue of hard work, salvation through sweat, is very important here. I am sure most dancers are martyrs of one variety or another.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁹ Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute; quoted in, Rainer, *Feelings are Facts*, pp. 180-1.

Though tempered with irony – ‘most dancers are martyrs’ is a typical Rainerism – this set of responses to ‘dance’ usefully draws out the relationships that weight ‘work’, ‘world’, and ‘interest’ in the above excerpt. The world is ‘tangential’ to work because of the latter’s intensity; all worldly concerns are ‘indefinitely postponed’ by the ‘long and arduous’ training period. Dance as daily work provides ‘something to do every day’; it is a ‘way of life’ that ‘offers an identity: ‘I am a dancer’’. As a result, the convalescent obstruction of daily work leads directly to a loss of identity: ‘I can’t work, it seems that I am interested in nothing’. The question remains however, as to how we are meant to square the apathy that results from a division between work and world with the fact that Rainer’s convalescence produced the very equivalence that, by her own admission, realised the plan of *Trio A*; the dance that, as I have argued, stands for a ‘revelation’ of this same dance activity, her work.

In a letter sent to Rainer over August, 1967, her brother laments as follows: ‘Life seems so much for me to be a battle between energy and apathy, and I despair of the former ever winning’. Ivan’s reflection on his mental health turns on the language of work as expenditure, language that would certainly have been familiar to Rainer; indeed, his ‘battle’ reflects his sister’s own experience of apathy of a few months’ prior. Ivan’s portrayal of energy and apathy suggests why *Convalescent Dance* was so successful in Rainer’s eyes. In a sense, her experience of objectlike inertia, the ‘ton-of-bricks feeling’, provided the necessary drag effect for ‘feelings of euphoria and ecstasy’ that, taken on their own, risked limiting her dance to a narrow perception of the body. Convalescence allowed her to locate ‘the enduring reality’ of her body between the two poles, as set out in her “Statement” for *The Mind is a Muscle* (March, 1968), of ‘interaction and cooperation on the one hand; substantiality and inertia on the other’.⁷¹⁰ The unwelcome experience of inertia thus stands in a metonymic relation to the awareness Rainer derived, through LSD, of ‘the exquisite *containment* of my body’: her euphoric experience of ‘my own particular mass and volume’ *displaces* the sense of her body as a ‘ton of bricks’. In other words, the obstruction of her dancer’s body allowed her to transcribe an experience of energy expenditure that, prior to

⁷¹⁰ Rainer, *Work*, p. 71.

her illness, was basically theoretical. But how much of this experience was transmitted to the audience of *Angry Arts Week*?

When she got up onstage to perform *Convalescent Dance* at Hunter College, the audience, the majority of whom were engaged in art-making and political work, would have been made aware by the title that Rainer was in recovery, if in fact they were not already privy to this news. Though *Trio A*'s uniformity of energy expenditure was an effect conjured for the audience, with this performance of it Rainer recalls an almost seamless elision between movement seen and movement felt. Her 'frail and light' comportment, moreover, suggests a marked contrast to the graphic depictions of violence that comprised the *Collage of Indignation*, as well as a concurrent performance by Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater that, as one commentator describes, featured 'a physician lecturing to medical students about napalm burns and the treatment of them' while a puppet 'representing a Vietnamese citizen extended a giant hand to the audience, asking for treatment for the napalm victims in a 'fumbling gesture of the helplessness of the victims of war'.⁷¹¹ This overt display of commitment, to repeat, would have contrasted with the depleted elision of *Convalescent Dance*. Yet, by the same token, it would be wrong to polarise these performances in a knee-jerk concession to Kozloff's and Rosenberg's desire for art's renewed possibilities – that would be to take Rainer's humorous allusion to the dancer's 'martyrdom' literally.

Consider that, like Schumann's physician, Rainer was also dressed all in white; costume that evoked illness and health through the connotation of a hospital nurse's work attire. And for those who had attended other performances of *Trio A* this outfit may have had additional associations still. Without mentioning *Convalescent Dance*, Rainer herself reflected on the trajectory of the 'white motif' in her 'non-chronological recollections of *The Mind is a Muscle*' as follows:

⁷¹¹ Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American Artists Against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), p. 73.

The photo of the early performance shows wooden slats on the floor. They were hurled one at a time with metronome-like regularity from the balcony of the church for the duration of the dance (nine minutes, or *Trio A* done twice). They constituted the original ‘music’ for *Trio A*. Audience members complained afterwards about the relentlessness of this ‘music’. It may have been at this performance that a man sitting in the front row picked up a slat, attached a large white handkerchief to it, and waved it over his head... In the final version of *The Mind is a Muscle* the white motif appeared again: In each section a different person wore all white. Everyone had a chance to be a ‘star’ – at least in appearance.⁷¹²

In Rainer’s view, the harmonious musical accompaniment quite literally constitutes a form of violence, invoking ‘the impoverishment of ideas, narcissism, and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing’ that she had sought to overcome with *Trio A*.⁷¹³ Indeed, the word ‘music’ itself undergoes various forms of devolution through her writings, from muzak to muzek to mucus.⁷¹⁴ The wooden slats that ‘accompany’ the debut of *Trio A* are ‘hurled... from the balcony of the church’, a ‘relentless’ airborne assault that prompted one spectator to ‘attach a large white handkerchief’ to one of them in an apparent act of surrender. As such, the ‘white motif’ signified wartime conflict, albeit humorously, an association that ‘[re]appeared’ in *The Mind is a Muscle* through the distribution of white outfits among the performers, who each ‘had a chance to be a ‘star’’. *Convalescent Dance* therefore responded to the call for artworks representing ‘anger against the war’, despite its blank expression.

In a profound sense, Rainer’s expenditure onstage presented the weight of ‘objects themselves’, signalling the ‘enduring reality’ of the body under a discontinuous array of circumstances ranging from her own convalescence, through feelings of euphoria and

⁷¹² Rainer, *Work*, pp. 75-7.

⁷¹³ Rainer, *Work*, p. 71.

⁷¹⁴ Douglas Crimp quotes an unpublished ‘rant’ about music by Rainer, as follows: ‘That’s right, I would like to say that I am a music-hater. The only remaining meaningful role for muzek in relation to dance is to be totally absent or to mock itself. To use ‘serious’ muzach simultaneously with dance is to give a glamorous ‘high art’ aura to what is seen. To use ‘Program’ moosick or pop or rock is to generate excitement or coloration which the dance itself would not otherwise evoke’. Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute; quoted in, Douglas Crimp, “Yvonne Rainer: Muciz Lover”, in *Grey Room*, No. 22, Winter, 2006, pp. 50-1.

ecstasy, to the distant horrors of the Vietnam War.⁷¹⁵ This final link is crude, but it could be said that, in the context of *Angry Arts Week* and in light of Rosenberg's and Kozloff's responses to the *Collage of Indignation*, the frail dancer supplied an interval, permitting the audience to attach different meanings to the 'abstractly sensuous' presentation of *Convalescent Dance*.

I have endeavoured to read this dance metonymically, attending to transfers between published and archived textual material in order to understand its various resonances.

I want to conclude with a more recent conversation. Rainer frequently uses the phrase 'register and move on' when teaching *Trio A*, a direction that, as dance scholar Martin Hargreaves informs me, indicates that while 'there are no rest points' in the movement series, dancers *are* able to 'choose to remain in the execution of one of the units before progressing'.⁷¹⁶ Through the concealed presence of 'micro rests', as Hargreaves refers to them, dancers of *Trio A* are able to refine and adapt the movement's progress in response to kinaesthetic cues thrown up by the performance context. In this way, *Trio A*'s perpetual motion is tempered by momentary openings for recursive feedback, suggesting that the dancer, like the spectator, is able to sift through circumstances in the passage of its execution.

Rainer's most recent analysis of *Trio A* reprises the language of "Quasi Survey", joining it to an exploration of the self's performativity; she writes:

There is a difference between the concentration required by a particular physical action that completes a task, such as hammering a nail into a board or rolling up a carpet, and the trancelike look of slow motion. Although I sometimes call *Trio A* my tai chi chuan, I have never conceived of it as a way to enlightenment or transcendence... *Trio A*'s cool absorption in the *work* of dancing is neither exhibitionistic nor character-bound, but rather demonstrates a kind of alert

⁷¹⁵ By focusing on the metonym my intention has been to provide a countermodel to Carrie Lambert-Beatty's analysis of *Trio A* in relation to the photographic index, as discussed in Chapter Three.

⁷¹⁶ E-mail to the author, September 2018.

detachment from audience and fellow performers alike, a selfless, rather than narcissistic, absorption.⁷¹⁷

The examples have changed – hammering a nail substitutes ‘reaching for a high shelf’ – but the presentation of tasklike movement remains central to her theorisation of the dance. If anything, this new reading doubles down on those attributes, detachment and absorption, that first connected it to debates surrounding minimal sculpture. Whether it be Fried’s diatribe against presence, Morris’s idealisation of the gestalt, or Lippard’s analysis of the sensuous, the ‘work’ of *Trio A* remains in contact with minimal art’s exploration of the body’s relation to the object. The audience, for Rainer, are practically evacuated from this reading, suggesting that the performer of *Trio A* is finally absorbed in nothing other than a routine (insofar as *Trio A* requires daily practice) expenditure of energy. As such, the dance’s objectlike movement is bonded to the performer’s self, as that which varies with activity.

This thesis contributes to readings of the 1960s, and of minimalism in particular, that think about the persistence of expression after its nominal evacuation. I have argued that Rainer’s investigation of the body’s objectlike character changes the way we think about minimal art, entreating the reader-viewer to observe relationships that lead from the object’s externalised relations to other areas of social experience. In Rainer’s words, ‘As far as *Trio A* was concerned, PASSION (*shout*) was a given; it resided offstage, in the obsessions of the artist, among other excesses and more quotidian expressions of emotion’.⁷¹⁸ My aim now is to further investigate the lateral axis that connects energy expenditure to different forms of verbal transcription – work that I have only just begun.

⁷¹⁷ Rainer, “Where’s the Passion?”, pp. 50-1.

⁷¹⁸ Rainer, “Where’s the Passion?”, p. 49.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

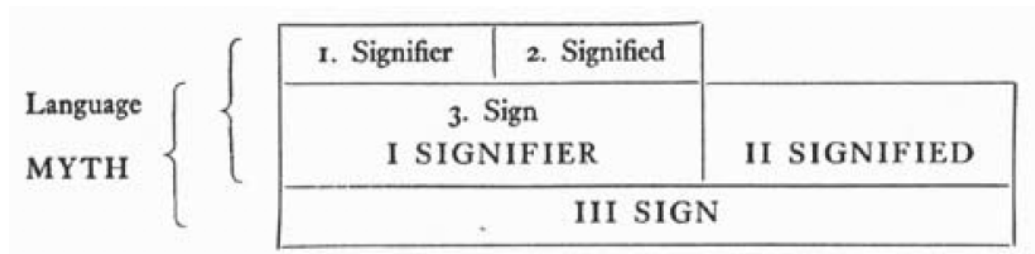


Plate I: Roland Barthes, “Myth Today”, 1957. This diagram presents the lateral shift between the linguistic system and myth. The sign of the first system – the example I take from Barthes is “passionified roses” – forms the basis of the myth, romantic love.

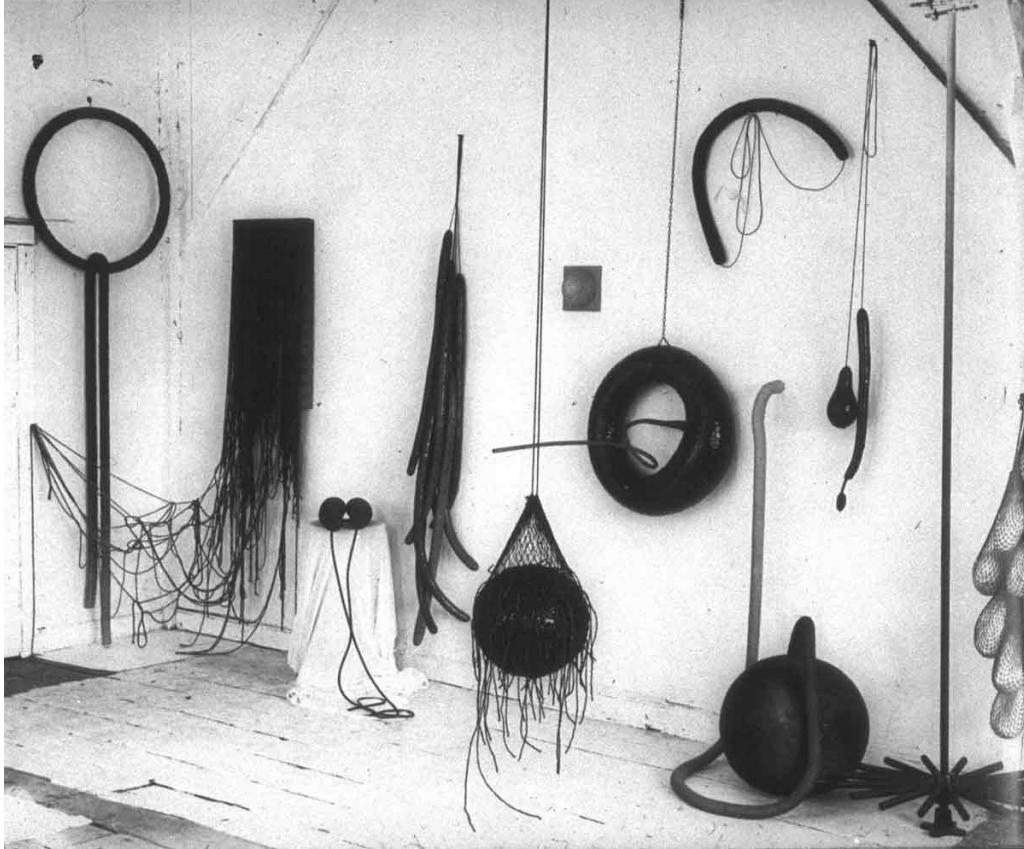


Plate II: Works from 1965-66 in Eva Hesse's studio.



Plate III: Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting No. 5*, 1962.



Plate IV: Mark Di Suvero, *Ladderpiece*, 1962.



Plate V: Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1965.



Plate VI: Yayoi Kusama, "Aggregation: One Thousand Boats", 1963, Gertrude Stein Gallery, New York.

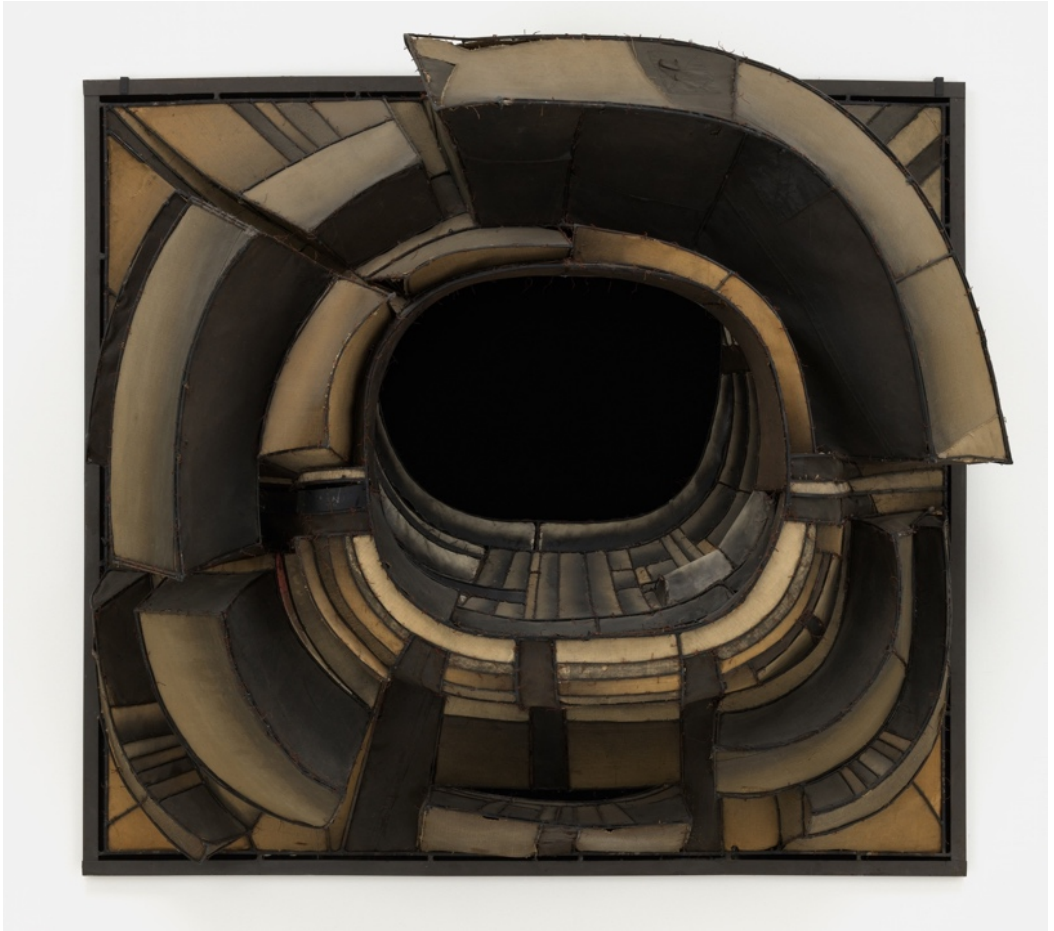


Plate VII: Lee Bontecou, *Untitled*, 1961.



Plate VIII: Keith Sonnier, *Untitled*, 1966.

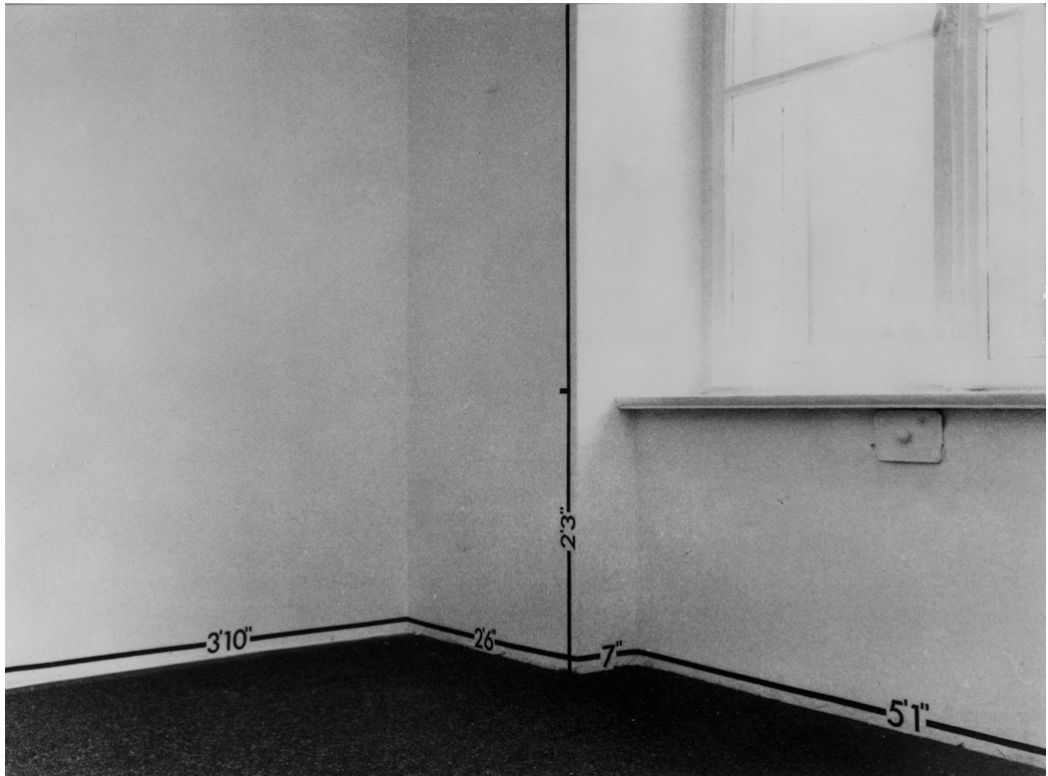


Plate IX: Mel Bochner, *Measurement Room*, 1969.



Plate X: Andy Warhol, *Chelsea Girls*, [16mm standard version], 1966.

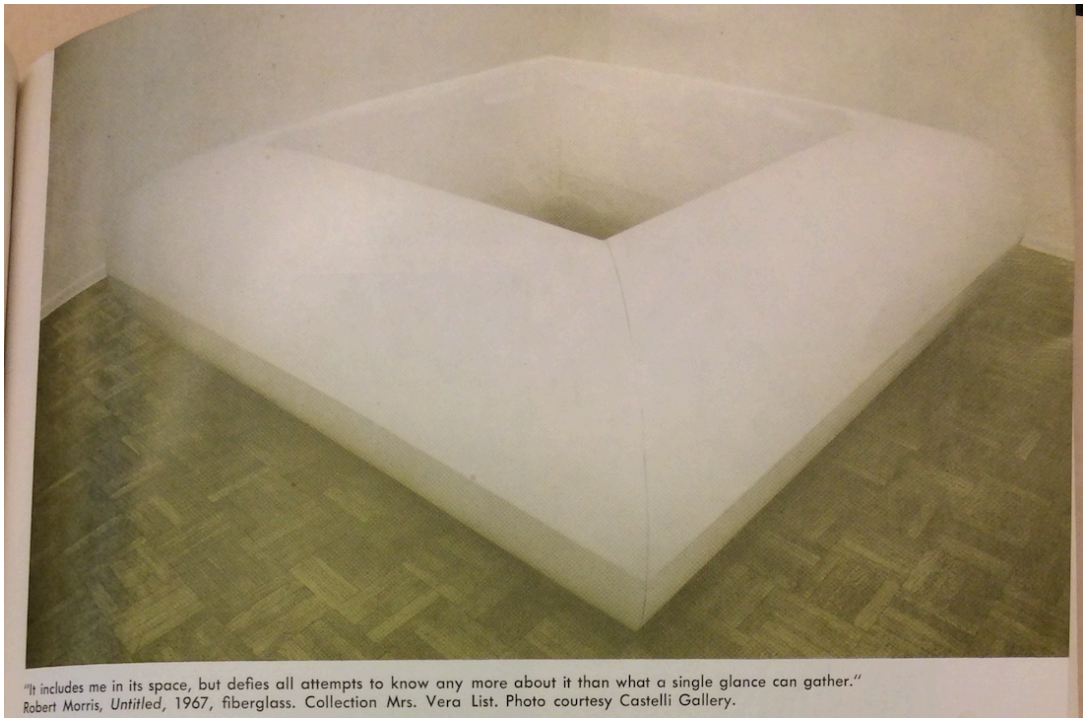


Plate XI: Robert Morris, *Untitled*, and Yvonne Rainer, *Convalescent Dance*, both 1967, as featured in the latter's essay, "Don't Give the Game Away", 1967. The positioning of captions reflects the author's 'transfers of meaning'.

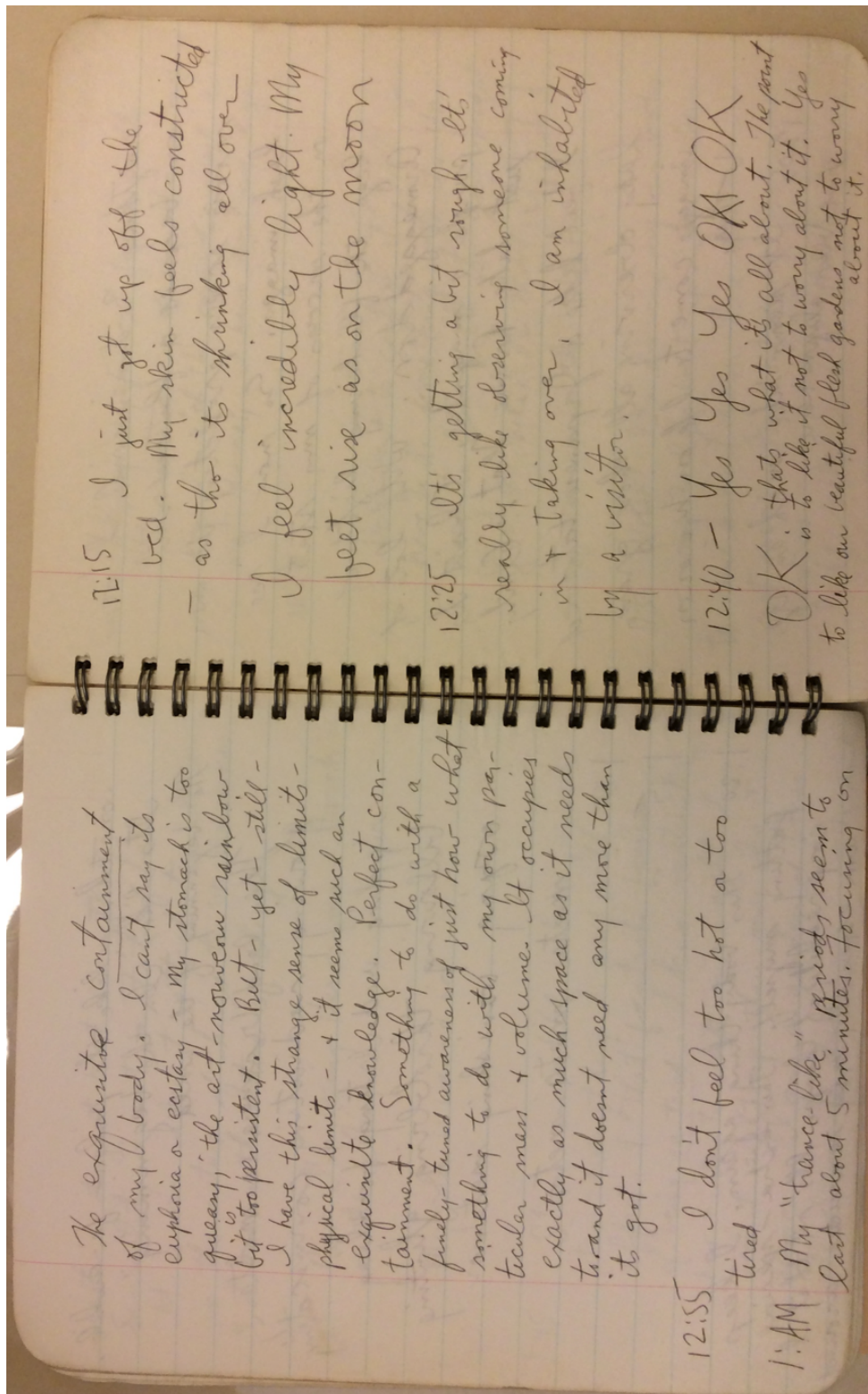


Plate XII: Yvonne Rainer, "Notebook 1966", Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute. Rainer's responses to her LSD trip are recorded here.

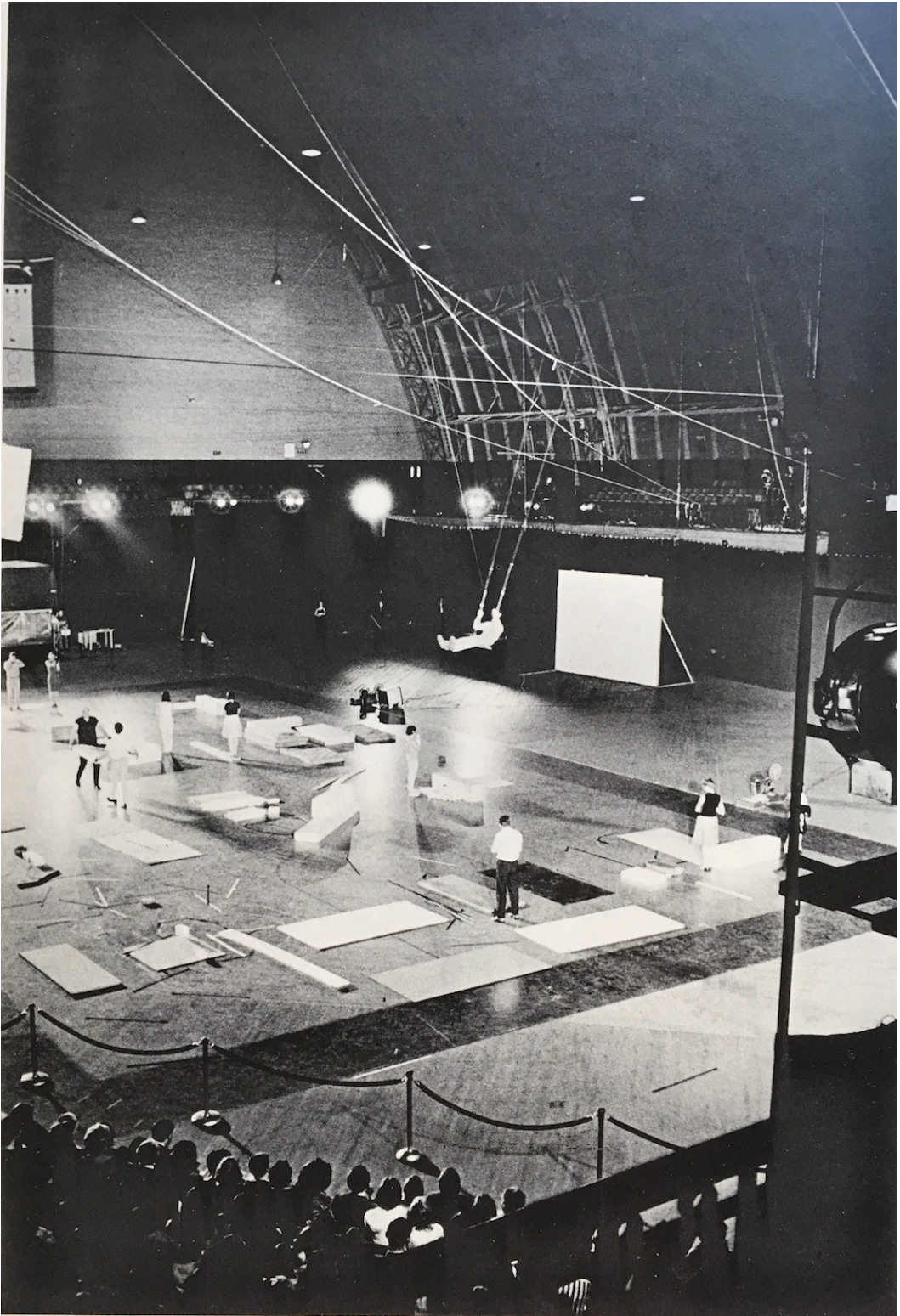


Plate XIII: Yvonne Rainer, *Carriage Discreteness*, 1966.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1966.



Peter Moore

Plate XIV: Yvonne Rainer, *Carriage Discreteness*, 1966. Photograph by Peter Moore. *The New York Times*, October 16, 1966.

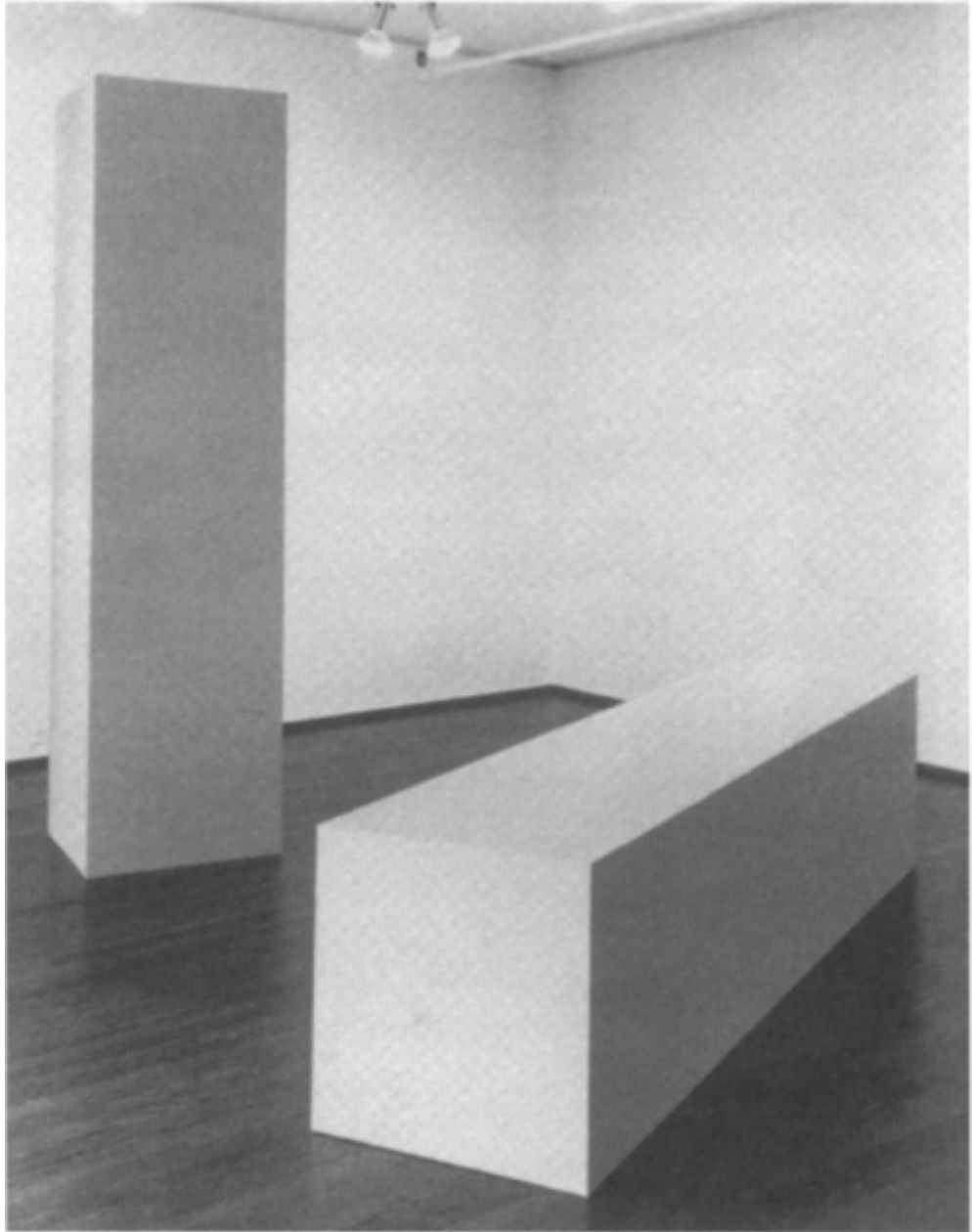


Plate XV: Robert Morris, *Two Columns*, 1961.

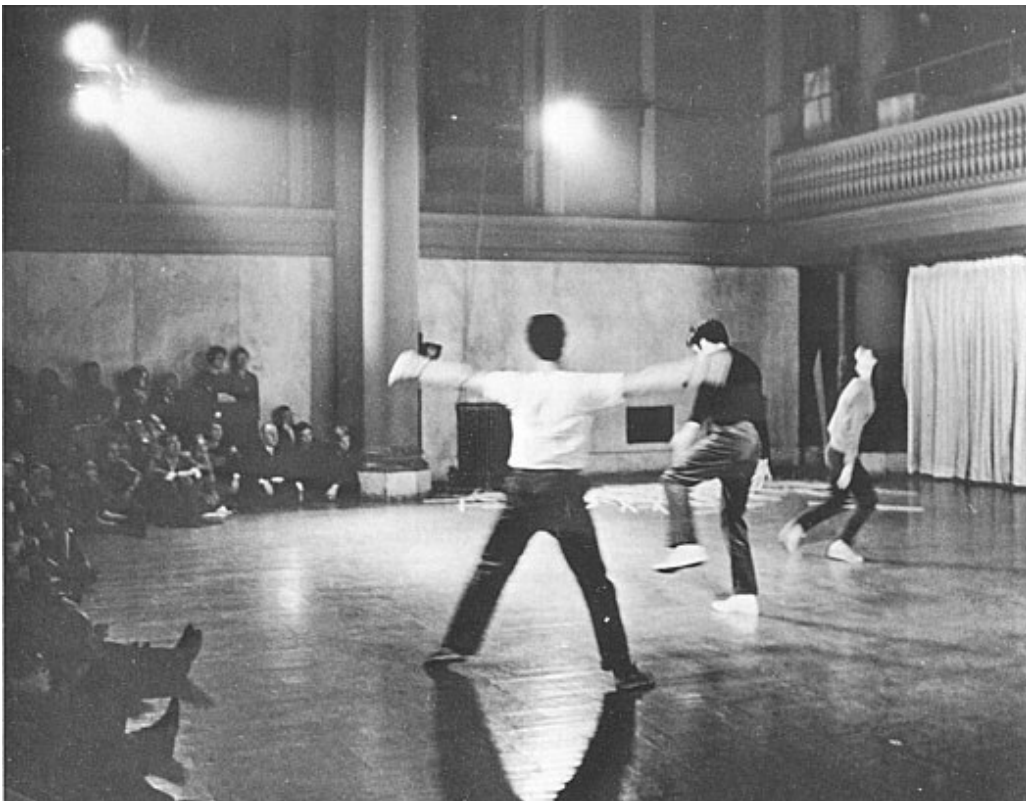


Plate XVI: Yvonne Rainer, *The Mind is a Muscle, Part I (Trio A)*, Judson Memorial Church, 1966: Yvonne Rainer, David Gordon, and Steve Paxton.



Plate XVII: Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A*, 1978 16mm film, produced by Sally Banes.



Plate XVIII: Eddie Adams, *Vietnam War Saigon Execution*, Suspected Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem (also known as Bay Lop) was executed by Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the national police, on a Saigon street, Feb. 1, 1968, early in the Tet Offensive.

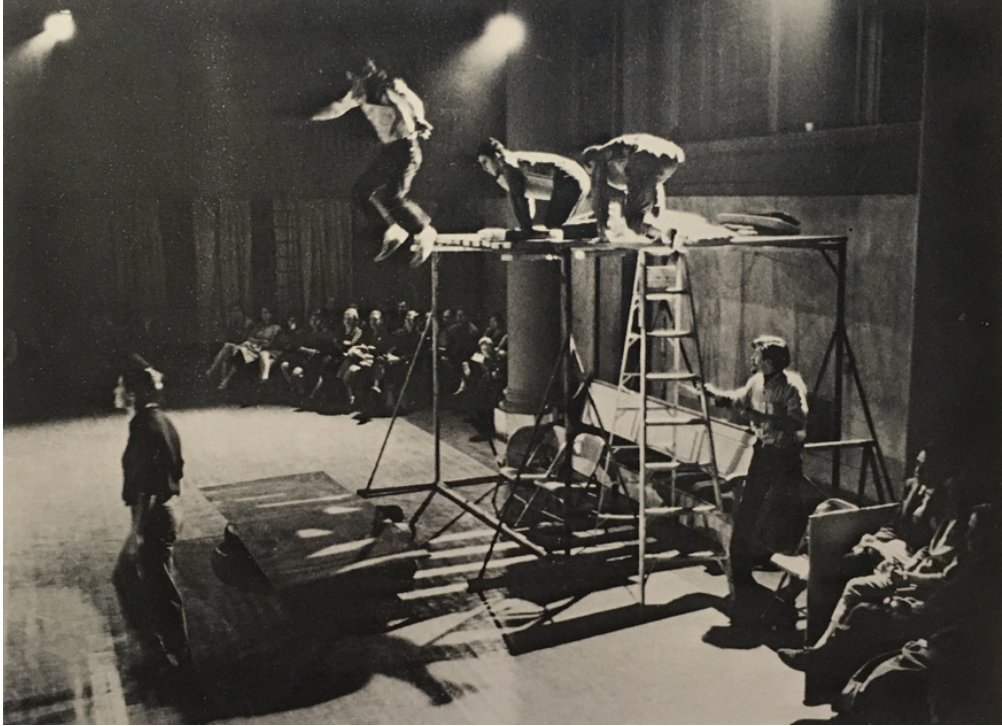


Plate XIX: Yvonne Rainer, *Room Service*, 1963.



Plate XX: Rehearsal for Yvonne Rainer, *Parts of Some Sextets*, 1965.



Corridor Solo and Crawling Through at the Wadsworth Atheneum



19 *Fling* at Judson Church, March 1965 – Steve

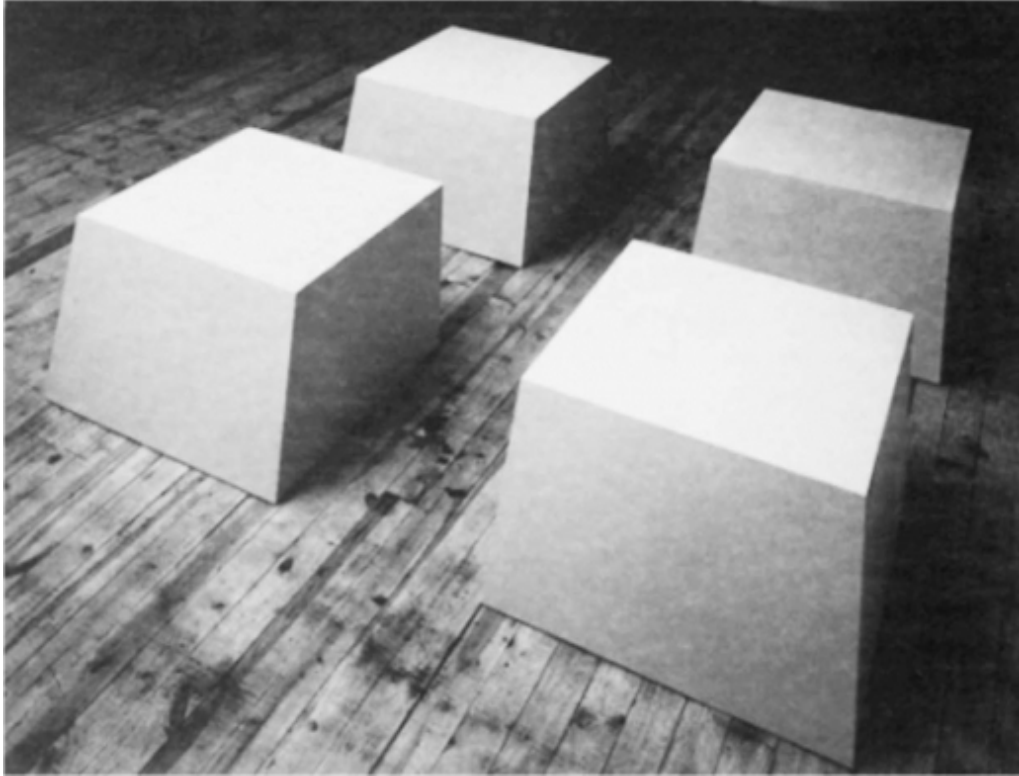


Plate XXII: Robert Morris, *Untitled (Battered Cubes)*, 1965. Painted plywood.

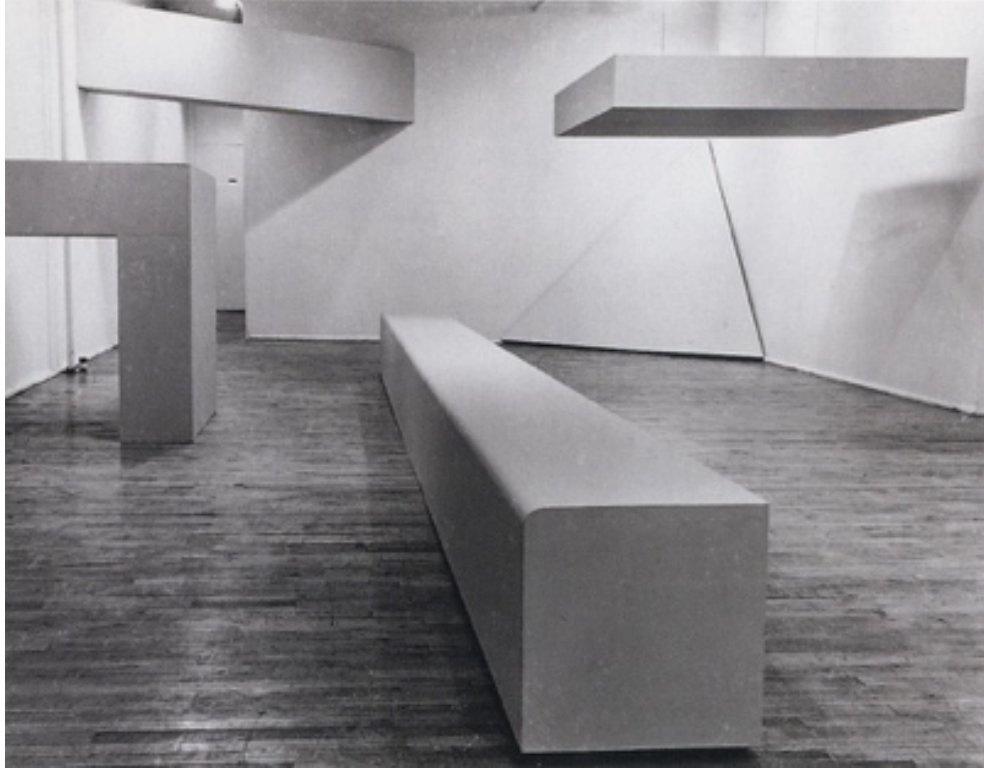


Plate XXIII: Robert Morris, Installation at Green Gallery, 1963. Polyhedrons made from 2x4 Plywood, Painted Grey.

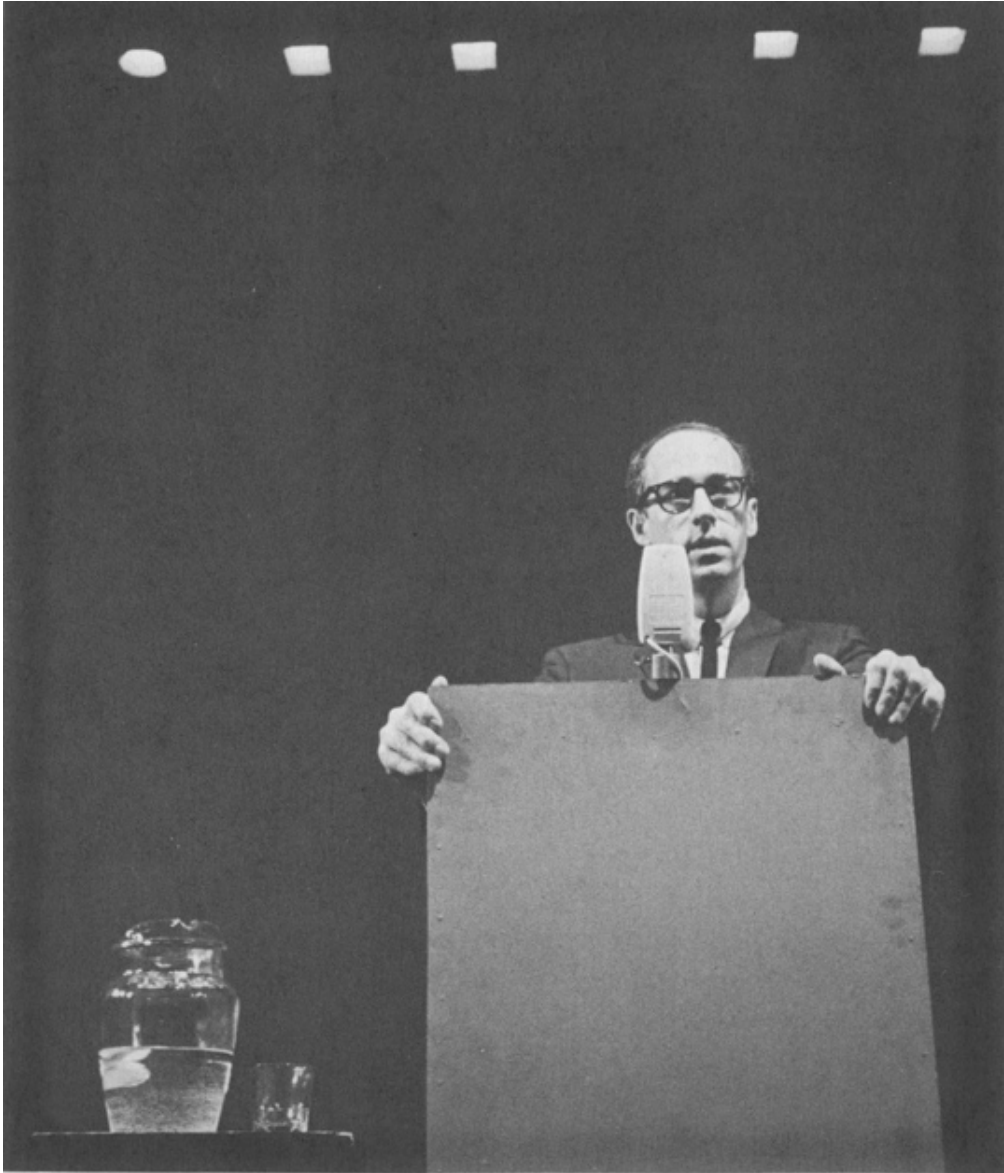


Plate XXIV: Robert Morris, *21.3*, 1964. Surplus Dance Theater, Stage 73, New York.

Table 3
Panofsky's Final Schematization of an Interpretive Strategy, 1939

OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION	ACT OF INTERPRETATION	EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION	CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION
I—Primary or natural subject matter—(A) factual, (B) expressional—, constituting the world of artistic motifs.	<i>Pre-iconographical description</i> (and pseudo-formal analysis).	<i>Practical experience</i> (familiarity with <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i>).	History of <i>style</i> (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i> were expressed by <i>forms</i>).
II—Secondary or conventional subject matter, constituting the world of <i>images</i> , <i>stories</i> and <i>allegories</i> .	<i>Iconographical analysis</i> in the narrower sense of the word.	<i>Knowledge of literary sources</i> (familiarity with specific <i>themes</i> and <i>concepts</i>).	History of <i>types</i> (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific <i>themes</i> or <i>concepts</i> were expressed by <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i>).
III—Intrinsic meaning or content, constituting the world of 'symbolical' values.	<i>Iconographical interpretation</i> in a deeper sense (<i>Iconographical synthesis</i>).	Synthetic intuition (familiarity with the <i>essential tendencies of the human mind</i>), conditioned by personal psychology and 'Weltanschauung.'	History of <i>cultural symptoms</i> or 'symbols' in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, <i>essential tendencies of the human mind</i> were expressed by specific <i>themes</i> and <i>concepts</i>).

HISTORY OF TRADITION

Objects		Dances
	eliminate or minimize	
1. role of artist's hand		phrasing
2. hierarchical relationship of parts	development and climax	
3. texture	variation: rhythm, shape, dynamics	
4. figure reference		character
5. illusionism		performance
6. complexity and detail	variety: phrases and the spatial field	
7. monumentality	the virtuosic movement feat and the fully-extended body	
	substitute	
1. factory fabrication	energy equality and "found" movement	
2. unitary forms, modules		equality of parts
3. uninterrupted surface	repetition or discrete events	
4. nonreferential forms		neutral performance
5. literalness		task or tasklike activity
6. simplicity	singular action, event, or tone	
7. human scale		human scale

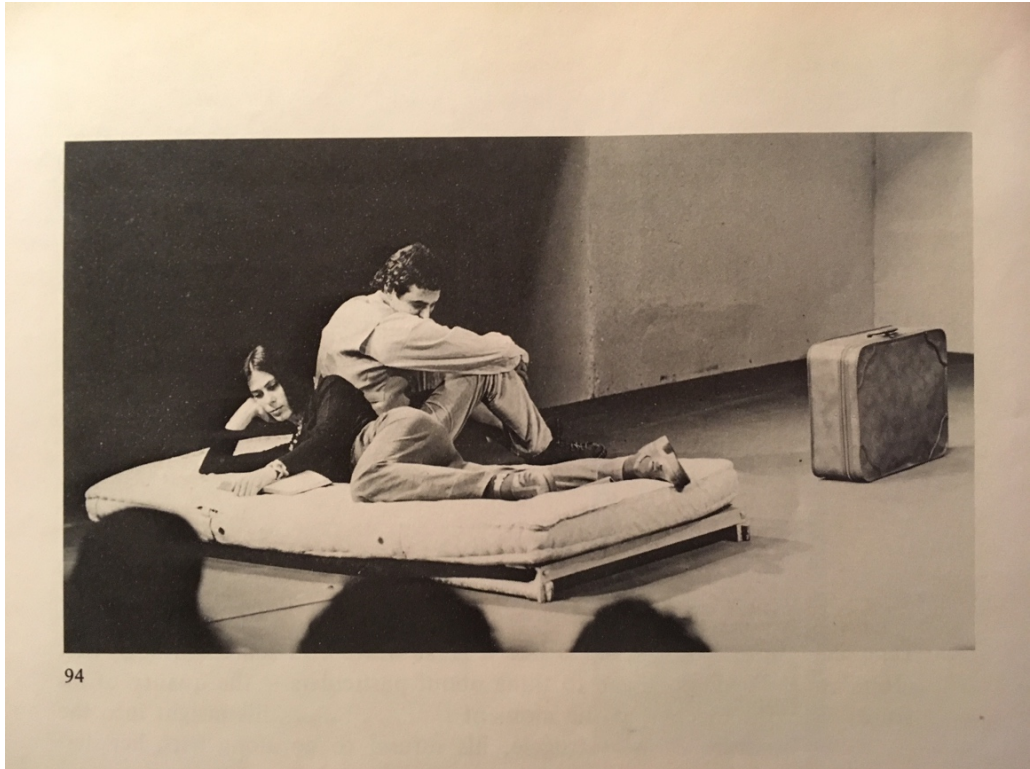


Plate XXVII: Yvonne Rainer, *This is the story of a woman who...*, Theater for the New City, March 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, 31, 1973.

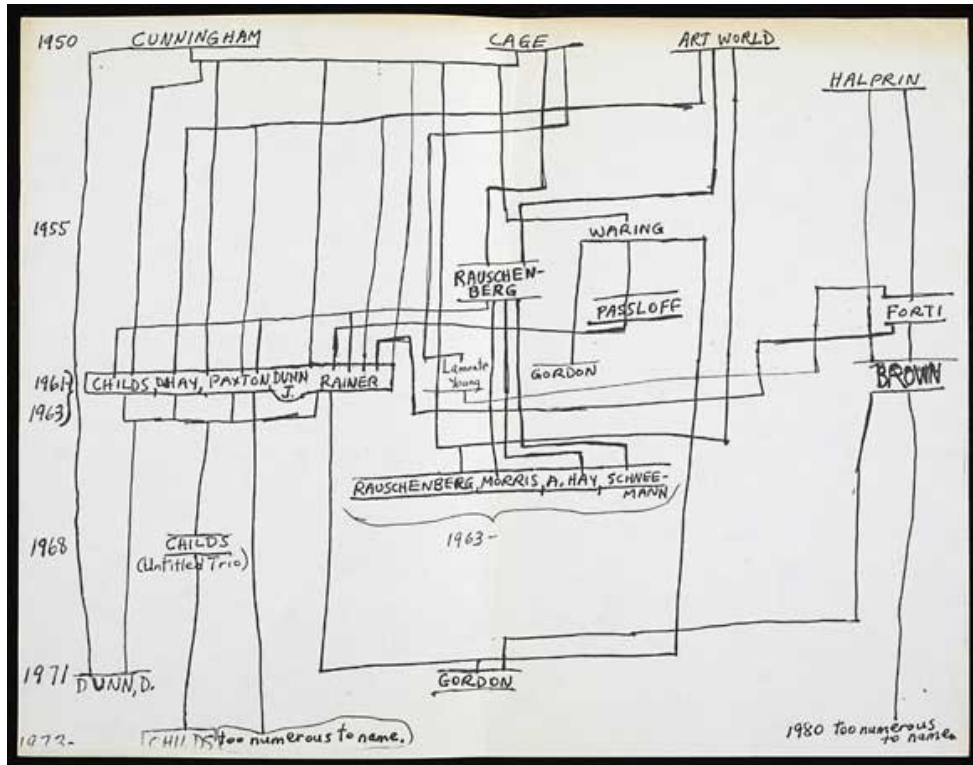


Plate XXVIII: Drawing included by Yvonne Rainer in a letter sent to critic Arlene Croce, dated July 18, 1980, illustrating the complex relations joining choreographers through the 1960s.



Plate XXIX: Yvonne Rainer, *Terrain*, 1963.

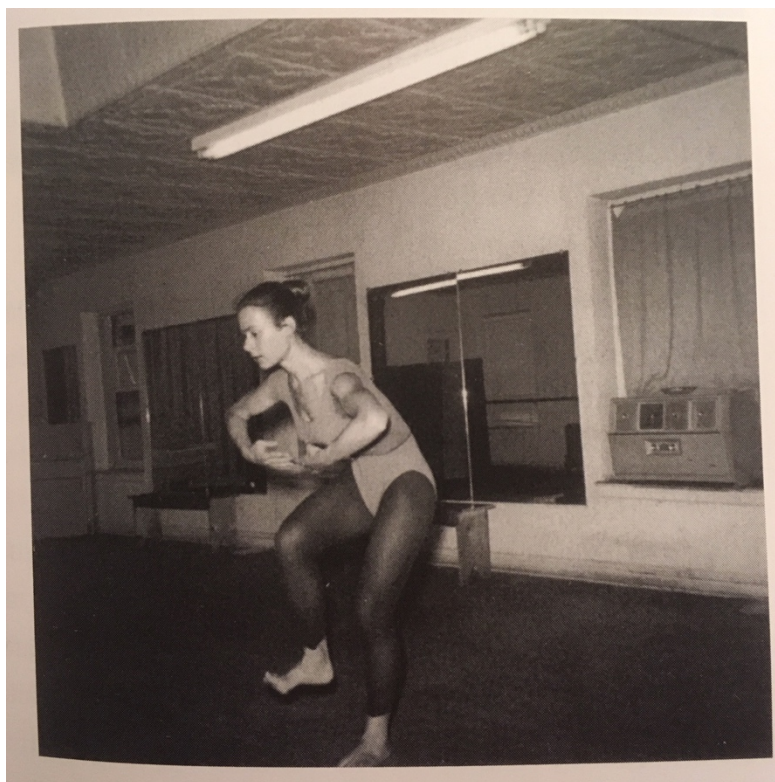
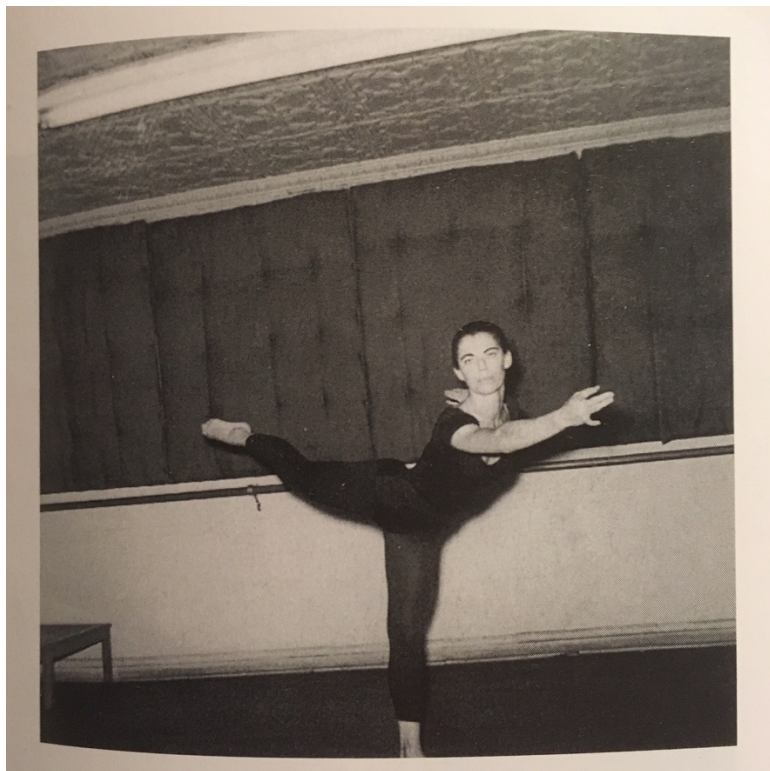


Plate XXX: Nancy Meehan (top) and Yvonne Rainer (bottom), during an improvisation session shared with Simone Forti, 1960.



Plate XXXI: Martha Graham, *Phaedra*, 1962.

problem of forcing a self-involved dancer to deal with the movement of another, as when S. came up behind me.

5-30

First class of Merce's June course tonight - I had a good class. ~~Then~~ Rediscovered one aspect of his teaching that I had forgotten about - he tells you what to do, but not how to do it, in contrast to Graham's, where the smallest detail is mapped out and examined - how to stand, where to hold your weight at any given point, when and where to shift weight, etc. Merce simply gives a very careful demonstration, and from there it is up to you. Moving across the width of the studio toward the mirrors: from first pos. to croisé attitude on relevé; round back, plié on same leg, other leg remaining in attitude; shift standing heel 1/4 circle so that one faces other diagonal in second pos. - but forward leg plied into forced arch, back leg straight; return to first pos. facing straight front; repeat to other side.

Had a fairly uneventful session with Nancy last week - Simone couldn't come. 2 things worth mentioning: To a slow blues

Plate XXXII: Yvonne Rainer, "Notebook 1960-62", Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute. A slight anachronism is apparent in Rainer's entry on Cunningham's class.



Plate XXXIII: Cunningham, *Rune*, 1959.



Plate XXXIV: *The Collage of Indignation*, Loeb Student Centre, New York University. *Angry Arts Week*, 1967.

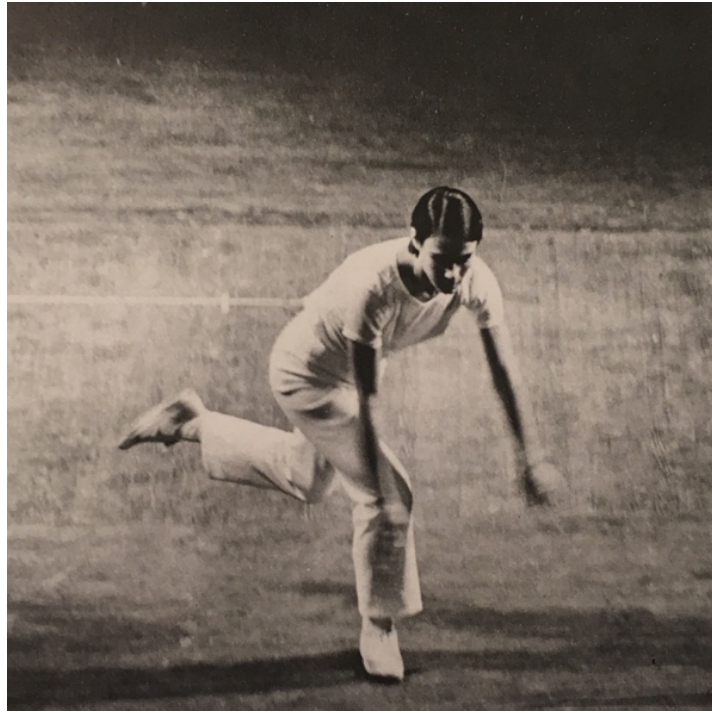


Plate XXXV: Yvonne Rainer, *Convalescent Dance*. *Angry Arts Week*, 1967.