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Ancient dance through modern eyes: four studies exploring the intersections of ancient and modern dance

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INTRODUCTION

It is easy to characterize the dances of ancient Greece as lost to the modern world. No reliable record of ancient movement exists, leaving no way to verify the authenticity of modern reconstructions—we simply cannot ever know for sure what the dances of antiquity would have looked like. Regardless, the legacy of ancient dance undoubtedly persists today as a topic explored by both classical scholars and modern dance choreographers. However, these two groups approach the topic differently. The present scholarly understanding of ancient dance is based on an abstracted examination of archaeological and literary sources. Generally authors have resigned themselves to the limited understanding that can be achieved through such materials. Dance artists, on the other hand, when inspired by antiquity, may take many more liberties regarding the personal interpretations and conceptions of ancient dance they choose to incorporate when creating innovative choreography. Within Greek and Roman studies and dance as individual fields these approaches are equally valid and useful for exploring the phenomenon of ancient dance.

Problems and contradictions can arise when classical scholarship ventures into discussions of dance as a contemporary artistic practice in order to gain a more complete understanding of modern conceptions and interpretations of ancient dance. Scholars tend to disregard or misconstrue the often clearly stated intentions of choreographers. At times, authors underestimate the ability of artists to recapture an ancient dance experience, while in other instances they impose unprompted ancient references onto dance pieces. It is certainly possible for the study of ancient dance to both challenge and enrich our present experience of dance, but caution must be taken to thoroughly examine both ancient evidence and the modern phenomenon when exploring intersections and parallels between the two.

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I have identified three topics that exemplify intersections of ancient and modern dance: the dance imagery of Greek artifacts, choral dance, and Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics. All of these topics have been examined through scholarly discussion and through modern works of choreography. Reconstruction via ancient dance imagery has been a contentious issue within the classical scholarship that becomes more complicated when considering the many prominent dance artists who have used such images to construct dances of their own. The multi-faceted phenomenon of the ancient chorus is often viewed by scholars as too culturally and contextually remote to be represented within the collective performances of today. However, modern productions have continued to utilize the ancient chorus as inspiration for innovative works of dance. Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian aesthetics have been employed on numerous occasions to discuss the influence of antiquity on modern dance without considering primary source material to question Nietzsche's dichotomy.

When addressing these topics in the chapters I through III, I attempted to use my experience as both a scholar of Greek and Roman Studies and a dancer and choreographer to clarify the problems that arise in the relevant literature. Additionally, I used the guiding ideas of my discussion to choreograph my own artistic piece influenced by ancient Greek dance. Chapter IV provides my personal analysis of this work in relation to ancient dance. By approaching this topic from both a scholarly and artistic perspective, I hope to provide some clarity concerning how we today may reconcile dance as an ancient and modern practice.

I. RECONSTRUCTING GREEK DANCE THROUGH ANCIENT ICONOGRAPHY

Classical scholarship has failed to adequately address the potential for reconstructing ancient dance through examining the iconography of ancient Greek vase painting, sculpture, and fresco. Attempts toward such reconstructions largely began in the early twentieth century, when Maurice Emmanuel used classical ballet to produce an iconographical reconstruction of Greek dance. Since then, scholars have gradually come to the consensus that such endeavors are misleading and futile for advancing an understanding of ancient dance. Despite the flaws in Emmanuel's approach, the critics of reconstruction are equally if not more problematic in their discussions of the ancient imagery. Their arguments are characterized by a lack of understanding of the embodied art of dance, limiting the potentially significant work of scholars who choose to attempt reconstructions as well as choreographers and dancers who utilize ancient iconography as inspiration for their work. Reconstruction as it is currently defined and discussed in classical scholarship is the wrong measurement to use when determining the value of ancient visual depictions of dance.

Maurice Emmanuel's exceedingly innovative approach to interpreting ancient dance iconography brought reconstruction to the forefront of discussions on the visual representations of Greek dance. A French composer with interest in theater, Emmanuel, seemingly without knowledge of contemporary scholarship on ancient dance, published his highly original manuscript *The Antique Greek Dance, after Sculpted and Painted Figures* in 1896 with an English translation printed in 1916. The work provides a catalogued analysis of painted vases and relief sculptures based on their depictions of dance and gestures, with the goal of gaining insight into the technical basis and specific steps comprising the movement of ancient dance. Emmanuel bases his interpretations on a theory that "while the anatomy of the body remains the

same, the methods of movement cannot alter, so that...the modern dance must obey the same laws as the antique dance."[1] This theory promotes the idea that human dance movement has remained intact and unchanged since antiquity, which gave Emmanuel license to employ the paradigm of French classical ballet—the contemporary dance movement of his time—to guide his interpretations of the ancient iconography. Emmanuel found numerous correspondences between the stylized figures and the steps and positions of balletic technique despite the Greek images' obvious lack of ballet's characteristic formal qualities. In order to fully carry out his reconstruction of ancient movement, Emmanuel combined the images—when evidence allowed—into analytical series, which he considered akin to the results achieved through contemporary motion capturing techniques such as chronophotography.[2] He justified this method with the assertion that the Greeks intended to portray dance movements as they occurred in reality, intentionally depicting moments emblematic of specific movements. Emmanuel claims, "The Greek artists used their eyes. With a bit of clay and a few theories they fixed the most elusive moments. Compare their work with the photographs of modern dancers, and see how correctly they expressed the things before their eyes."[3] However, because he did not cite any supporting evidence, many have questioned the validity of Emmanuel's position.

Subsequent classical scholars have met *The Antique Greek Dance* with mixed responses. Some support its methodology and findings, some ignore the work entirely, and others voice explicit criticism of it. Within current scholarship, critical responses hold the most weight. Lillian Lawler, a twentieth century American classist who wrote widely on Greek dance using both literary and archaeological sources, was one of the first to formulate arguments against

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[1] Emmanuel (1916) ix.
[2] Naerebout (2010), 45-8.
[3] Emmanuel (1916), 21-2.

Emmanuel's work. Lawler specifically warns that "the observer must use great caution when interpreting vase paintings".[4] She criticizes both Emmanuel and his subsequent supporter Louis Séchan, writing "one might point out a characteristic weakness of the two Frenchmen's stand: Both insist that since human bodies are the same now as they were in ancient Greece, the dance must be essentially the same now as it was then."[5] This statement compellingly points out flaws in Emmanuel's methodology: the unjustified claims that pervade his work. Lawler emphasizes the highly conjectural nature of Emmanuel's justification for choosing ballet as the basis for his reconstruction and blatantly calls Emmanuel's conclusions into question as he fails to present any evidence supporting the premise of his work.

More recent scholarship, including the work of Tyler Jo Smith and F.G. Naerebout, has continued to identify problems with the premise of Emmanuel's work. Smith, a classical archaeologist specializing in ancient Greek figure-decorated pottery and images of performance and ritual in Greek and Roman art, identifies misunderstandings in Emmanuel's reconstruction and general perception of Greek vase painting as an art-form, such as the ability of ancient artists to reliably translate movement into static images.[6] Emmanuel argues for the accurate representations of movement in the iconographical sources. Though he concedes that figures and scenes would certainly have been constrained by the artistic medium and perhaps by the technical limitations of the artists, Emmanuel maintains that the captured moments were based in observed reality, yielding precise depictions. Smith counters this point, preemptively noting that the correct translation of dance into a two-dimensional medium depends upon careful practice or observation. She relates that though we may assume every vase painter was at least familiar with

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[4] Lawler (1964), 21.
[5] Smith (2010b), 89.
[6] Smith (2010b), 88.

dance based on the centrality of the activity to social and religious life throughout all periods of ancient Greek culture, in all likelihood every vase painter was not an accomplished dancer. The images may just as well have been conceived through the artists' memories of dance or knowledge of stylistic conventions rather than participation or close examination—a possibility that undermines Emmanuel's claim for reliable dance representations within ancient art.[7]

It is also possible that the representations were not intended to accurately depict moments characteristic of particular movements. F. G. Naerebout, a scholar of ancient and medieval history and current lecturer at Leiden University, argues that movement is necessarily continuous rather than static. Consequently, the moments depicted on Greek artifacts would not be part of the fluid movement at all—they would necessarily have been an initial or final moment of the dance or a sustained pose. He claims, "Depiction by necessity arrests movement."[8] Though many dances incorporate moments of stillness, Naerebout's point stands: Emmanuel's claim that the images were precisely depicted through observation while being taken from the midst of ongoing dance movements is difficult to reconcile.

While the accuracy of Emmanuel's work remains contested, subsequent treatments of ancient dance imagery have proved equally problematic. For a more general treatment of Greek dance iconography as a subject of reconstruction, one must first address the assertion that what we now identify as ancient dance should even be termed as such. In an attempt to resolve this objection, Naerebout suggests, "We decide that a movement portrayed belongs to dance, when it cannot be reasonably interpreted as anything else, and/or because of some contextual clues that disambiguate the image."[9] It is not wholly satisfying that Naerebout's answer to this question

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[7] Smith (2010a), 6.
[8] Naerebout (1997), 236.
[9] Ibid. 217.

amounts to something along the lines of: when we cannot think of anything else it could be, it must be dance. However, certain poses and scenes have come to be consistently recognized as implying dance movement: when one or both of a figure's feet have left the ground, when a figure stands on tip-toe, or when a row of figures is shown linking arms.[10] Objects such as musical instruments serve as context clues that help identify an activity as dance. Even after classifying a painted or sculpted image as a dance scene, it is important to recognize the interpretive limits any given image can provide. Lawler and others who draw heavily on vase iconography demonstrate a tendency to match individual images with known occasions or routines without proper evidence. This mode for treating the iconography is misleading: the captions accompanying many images in Lawler's work offer presumptions about the depicted figures based on contemporary terms: "dancers rehearsing" (fig. 2), "nocturnal dancers in a mountainous terrain" (fig. 4), "burlesque of a 'basket dance' by a phlyax dancer" (fig. 35).[11] These modern labels may impose anachronisms onto ancient evidence. Furthermore, Lawler refers to both vase painters and vases without regard for an artifact's associated region, technique, or time—all factors which may impact interpretations of the dance imagery.[12]

These observations of Lawler's work raise the question of how far scholars can reliably take their interpretations of these images. The answer depends on the particular image and context of each artifact. However, even contextually identifiable scenes often leave scholars with unanswerable questions. For instance, the presence of a divine figure, recognizable through his or her attributes, may indicate a scene from myth or may instead be showing festival dance performed by mortals emulating divinities.[13] Despite these interpretational difficulties, there is a

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[10] Ibid. 217-220. Lonsdale (1993), 10.
[11] Lawler (1964), 20, 89.
[12] Smith (2010b), 90.
[13] Lonsdale (1993), 11.

more important question regarding the reconstruction of ancient dance: How should we think about these representations in relation to dance as an actualized practice in the ancient world?

As already shown through the discussion of Emmanuel's work, ancient iconography cannot be taken as a reliable representation of embodied Greek dance. During the production of these images, dance was potentially abstracted or distorted through the minds of artists. Smith recounts, "We see the dance in translation through the vase-painter's eyes. He is the designated spectator. But what he has chosen or been commissioned to paint is ultimately the idea of dance, not an actual one...indeed the dance imagined, may have been satisfactory..."[14] This statement importantly points out that though a dependable picture of embodied dance is not preserved, an ancient idea of dance is preserved. The iconography can be interpreted as a conception of what dance was in the antiquity. The implications of this notion for the reconstruction of ancient dance via images has not been thoroughly considered.

Naerebout, like Smith, concludes that representations of dance are affected by the subjectivity of artists and artisans in ways that modern scholars will never be able to know. He argues, "'life in movement is just too rich and too manifold to allow of imitation without some selective principle,' the application of whatever 'selective principle' a given society adopts, results in a static image which is too far divorced from living movement to be easily translated back again into reality..."[15] There is no way to know what mechanisms were used in the ancient world to translate dance into two dimensional scenes. For Naerebout, this modern gap in available knowledge provides the grounds to denounce any attempts whatsoever to reconstruct Greek dance based on iconography. Naerebout states his position rather starkly:

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[14] Smith (2010a), 8.
[15] Naerebout (1997), 235.

No static image can assist in recreating even a single movement, let alone a sequence of movements, if that movement or sequence of movements is not known beforehand. Obviously, Greek dance movements should be considered unknown, as the reconstructionists will all agree, otherwise there would not be any need to try to reconstruct such movements: a simple revival (or even preservation) would be enough...ancient Greek movement is lost and we have to accept it.[16]

Naerebout's words are important when considering the limitations of iconographical reconstructions: there is no way to verify the movements in which the depicted poses would have been situated. However, his condemnation of the practice as a totally ineffective endeavor demonstrates a lack of understanding and attention to the field of dance characteristic of the scholarly discussions of this topic.

Helen Thomas, a Reader in Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, shares Naerebout's pessimism about knowing exactly what ancient Greek dance looked like in antiquity but has a more nuanced understanding of dance reconstruction. The unqualified term "reconstruction" does not properly address the exercise of translating two-dimensional images into embodied movements. Though the meaning of the word in terms of dance, reassembling fragmented movements into a continuous sequence, may appear self-evident and straightforward, the use of this term fails to specify the intentions behind the so-called reconstructions, which can have significant implications for the resulting dance. As it is currently used by classical scholars, the term reconstruction is restricted to imply intentionally replicating an original. Thomas suggests this is not generally the underlying intention of a dance reconstruction. She agrees that it is impossible to replicate an original dance because dance is a performed art constituted through the embodied practices of the performers on each and every occasion of its performance.[17] That is to say, dance is an ephemeral art: an exploration of human movement

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[16] Ibid. 234-235, 239.
[17] Thomas (2003), 123.

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within an environment informed by the unique conditions of each individual performance. No matter how closely a performance is replicated something about the dance performance will inevitably change in its next iteration, due to the passage of time if nothing else. Therefore, the very notion that a historical dance may be reconstructed and performed again exactly as it was before is conceptually flawed and inherently misleading.

Indeed, Thomas suggests two different strategies for how to approach a dance reconstruction. A reconstruction can attempt to be authentic, which would entail replicating the movement and performance qualities of a previous work as closely as possible in order to provide an accurate representation of what the work intended to do. The second type of reconstruction provides an interpretation of a previous dance, capturing the spirit of the former work's movement and performance ideas while simultaneously infusing new ideas into the dance.[18] Interpretive reconstructions allow works of dance to span time and space in such a way that they remain continually relevant and speak to contemporary audiences. Contextually, one may assume classical scholarship intends to refer to authentic rather than interpretive reconstructions. An authentic reconstruction is more apparently relevant to the study of ancient dance within its original cultural context. However, current classical scholarship discusses and critiques both authentic reconstructions, such as Emmanuel's, and reconstructions that are inherently and undoubtedly interpretive without distinguishing between the two.

Classical scholarship is obsessed with holding the work of American dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) as a failed authentic reconstruction. Smith puts it most strongly, by stating that the dances of Duncan are detrimental: "unintentionally deceiving" audiences by misrepresenting Greek dance.[19] Duncan's dance career began at the turn of the

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[18] Ibid. 122-123.
[19] See Smith (2010b), 97.

twentieth century with her family's move to Europe, reaching London before arriving in Greece by 1904. She is known to have visited museums such as the Louvre, the National Museum of Athens, and those at Berlin and Munich in order to view their substantial collections of Greek vases.[20] The influence of Greek art on Duncan's dance compositions and performance persona is well known, and she has been a focus within discussions of ancient dance put forth by numerous scholars including Louis Séchan, Auguste-Francois Gorguet, early twentieth century journalist Achilles Neis, as well as the already mentioned scholars Smith and Naerebout.[21] The majority of classical scholars demonstrate the misguided belief they may treat her work as an authentic reconstruction. For instance, Smith brings up what she sees as the condemning shortcomings of Duncan's use of ancient imagery: Duncan did not concern herself with the stylistic technique, provenance, or chronology of the vases, but drew inspiration from vases indiscriminately. Her work ignored entirely the iconographical category of Komast dancers—the most abundant form of ancient dance imagery—focusing instead on handholding female line dancers. Smith claims these oversights have lead Duncan's Greek-inspired dances to popularize a rarified image of Greek dance.[22] Not to mention that attempts to match Duncan's static forms with the images of Greek vases she is known to have encountered have failed, which according to Smith further demonstrate inadequacies with Duncan's reconstructive work.[23]

All of these critiques would stand if Duncan was composing her dance with the intention of creating an authentic reconstruction. However, numerous quotes from Duncan herself, surprisingly cited within the work of Smith, directly communicate that the inspiration of the

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[20] Naerebout (1997), 62-4.
[21] Smith (2010b), 87.
[22] Ibid. 95-6.
[23] Ibid. 87, See Daly (1995), 96-7, who juxtaposes her poses with sculpture.

Greek images was intended to inform an interpretative reconstruction. Duncan says, "I drew my inspiration from Greek sources. Strictly speaking, I do not try to reconstruct Greek dances. This is practically impossible."[24] This is one of a number of recorded quotes Duncan has made against allegations that her work attempts to authentically reconstruct Greek dance. She could not have stated more clearly that this was not her intention.

Naerebout attempts to make the misguided argument that despite Ducan's intentions her work can still be treated as an attempted reconstruction. He says, "In the end it does not, however, make much difference what Duncan actually did, said or intended, as almost everybody was convinced that she was reviving Greek dance, or was trying to do so."[25] However, contrary to Naerebout's claim, Duncan's personal intentions should be extremely important for informing how scholars, if not general audiences, should correctly interpret her work. A public misunderstanding and inaccurate conception of Duncan's work does not give scholars grounds to also misconstrue her dances, especially in the face of quoted evidence. Had Duncan intended to authentically reconstruct Greek dance, her work could have been justifiably subject to the same analysis and critique as other such authentic reconstructions. However, because evidence explicitly designates Duncan's work as interpretive, her work must be judged accordingly. Smith's and Naerebout's critiques therefore hold no real relevancy for determining the value of Duncan's work within the realm of classical academia.

Smith and Naerebout's criticism also demeans the importance of Duncan's work within the field of dance. Duncan's break from the rigidity of classical ballet technique in the early twentieth century radicalized American and European dance, moving them towards a more

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[24] Daly (1995), 101.
[25] Naerebout (1997), 63.

liberating, natural movement that she devised through her exploration into classical Greek art and culture. Consequently, Duncan is often referred to as the mother of Modern dance. Being classical scholars, perhaps it follows that Smith and Naerebout would limit their discussions regarding Duncan to the implications for their field alone. However, in doing so they have overemphasized the uselessness of dance reconstructions for classical study, while failing to take into account the continued legacy of ancient dance achieved by Duncan's work. More attention should to be paid by scholars to appropriately considering and analyzing interpretive reconstructions of ancient dance and the influence of these works on the field of dance in order to understand the perception of the ancient world as it manifests itself in the modern day.

The time and attention devoted by scholars to critiquing Duncan's work seems especially inappropriate considering the more blatantly reconstructive work created by other dance artists. Ruby Ginner, a dance teacher and scholar of ancient Greek dance contemporary to Isadora Duncan, took a much more academic approach to her Greek dance revival. Ginner interpreted recurring dance poses from Greek artifacts as definite technical positions from Hellenistic dance. These positions provided a basis for her reconstructions of Greek dance—she approximated what preceded and followed the action, and what degree of force and speed were necessary for the rhythmic flow and continuity of the whole movement.[26] Effectively, Ginner carried out an analysis similar to that of Emmanuel but went one step further by translating her study into an embodied practice. In addition to her examination of iconography, Ginner studied both ancient and modern sources regarding dance in antiquity. By combining these research methods, Ginner developed a movement technique called the Revived Greek Dance and founded the Greek Dance

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[26] Ginner (1960), 18.

Association in 1923 to promote and sustain the practice of her research.[27] It is not quite clear to what extent her work was intended to be authentic or interpretive. Ginner seemed conscious of the impossibility of exactly recreating ancient dance, but she continually promoted her work as the revival of Greek dance rather than a personally developed movement technique.[28] Ginner's approach to the ancient material, which, as an actualized practice was much more intentionally reconstructive than Duncan's approach, makes her work arguably more fitting for the discussions of Greek dance reconstruction than Duncan's. Despite the fact that a critique of Ginner rather than Duncan would have alleviated many of the problems that arise in the arguments Smith and Naerebout, Ginner remains strangely excluded from the major works of classical scholarship discussing iconographical dance reconstruction.[29] Scholars' misguided choice to focus on Duncan rather than Ginner was likely due to the fact that Duncan's work is better known and more influential within the history of dance than Ginner's. However, focusing on Duncan rather than more appropriate dance artists merely demonstrates lack of knowledge and attention regarding of the field of dance on the part of classical scholars.

In order to fully address iconographical reconstructions of Greek dance, I would like to suggest an alternative approach that may more closely approximate an authentic reconstruction. At minimum, the dance imagery of ancient artifacts preserves a static perception of dance. Why not then simply transpose the observed positions onto stationary three-dimensional bodies, without attempting to integrate the shapes into a flow or movement? According to Knowles and Cole, "Dancing is about paying attention to movement in a thorough manner within these four

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[27] See Ginner (1947) for a thorough explanation of the methodology behind Ginner's revival of Greek dance as well as detailed description of the resulting movement technique.

[28] Ibid. 19. Ginner comments on the impossibility of re-creating Greek dance.

[29] The work of Ginner is not brought up or referenced at all in Smith (2010a) or Smith (2010b) and is only named briefly by Naerebout, as an artist who took on reconstructive work. However, no further explanation or criticism of her work is provided. See Naerebout (1997), 84.

areas, space, time, shape, and motion."[30] The ancient images preserve the dance in terms of shape. The images minimize, but do not eliminate our sense of the other components of a conventional dance—time, space, motion. This can inspire a construction of dance which overemphasizes shape in relation to the other components. Though a dance of this nature would not authentically reconstruct ancient dance as an actualized practice, it would nonetheless hold authentic weight as a realization of one preserved Greek perception of dance.

This method for reconstruction is not all together novel: work done by Isadora Duncan's brother Raymond, who shared her passion for ancient dance imagery, actually explored this approach in his own work by directly translating vase images into performance.[31] He embraced the notion of arrested movement, using the still poses from vases as the dance steps while limiting movement to only that which was necessary for changing positions. Such approaches have thus far not been given the scholarly consideration they deserve. Raymond Duncan's work was largely overlooked, considered by most as only marginally definable as dance. However, reductionist or otherwise unexpected methods for interpreting this ancient material may offer the most potential for interesting and innovative developments within the fields of both classics and dance in terms of authentic Greek iconographical reconstructions.

When examining the rather problematic discourse regarding ancient Greek iconographical dance reconstructions, classical scholars and dance artists clearly have different, often incompatible agendas for dealing with the ancient material. Scholars are concerned with establishing what is known, as well as the limits of what can be known about ancient Greek dance from the images. Dance artists, on the other hand, are free to take what they know about

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[30] Knowles (2008), 178.
[31] See Smith (2010b), 87.

the material and use it to move forward with their art. The Greek movement of Isadora Duncan was her own innovation, not the rediscovery of an ancient practice. Classical scholars must be cautious not to extend the restrictions of their discipline onto the field of dance—a practice which threatens to limit and denounce the lasting influence of ancient culture on the modern world. However, dance artists, when taking inspiration from antiquity, should clarify for themselves and others their intentions for invoking the ancient world within their dances.

II. RECAPTURING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ANCIENT CHORUS

Ancient choral dance has proven difficult to recapture within the performance modes of the modern western world for a variety of reasons, but in particular the modern division of art and ritual has distanced contemporary dance from the choral practices of antiquity. Whereas choral dance, as a practice in the ancient Greek world, is understood to have linked aesthetic performance with functional social ritual, especially in its pre-dramatic forms, dance performances today tend to divide these two realms of experience. For this among other reasons, scholars have doubted the possibility of representing the Greek chorus within present performance modes. This belief is rooted in a failure to recognize the difference between attempting to reconstruct the ancient chorus, an endeavor riddled with complications, and translating the experience of the ancient chorus—to the extent that we can perceive it—into contemporary collective performances. By striving to recreate the experiences of the choral participants rather than the literal actions of the chorus, artists can still consciously and productively utilize the ancient choral dance to create innovative and relevant dance works for modern performance contexts.

Choral dance, a practice in which a body of performers would sing and dance collectively in various settings, was a particularly pervasive phenomenon within ancient life, culturally integrated in a way unparalleled by any similar modern phenomenon. Ancient Greece is often described as having a song-dance culture. The contexts of dance in antiquity were as far reaching as to include agriculture, warfare, rites of passage, athletic victory celebrations, deliverance, festivals, and theater. Yana Zarifi, honorary Research Fellow of the Royal Holloway University of London and artistic director of the Thiasos Theater Company, stresses the importance of dance in ancient Greece: "dancing contributed to processes needed for the coordination, survival,

reproduction, and prosperity of the community."[32] This diverse social functionality—the ritual

quality—of choral dance has not been retained in the dance performances of the western world.

As a result, today's dances are not usually conceived of as connected to the subjective

experiences of everyday life, as they would have been in antiquity.

      The development of the ancient Greek chorus illustrates how the originally ritualized

performances, over time, lost their ritual dimension. Classical scholar Jane Harrison's book

Ancient Art and Ritual, written in the early twentieth century, provides an explanation for this

shift in dance functionality by identifying the conflation of art and ritual in the ancient world, the

subsequent loss of ritual, and the endurance of art in society. Harrison specifically identifies the

early Greek festival choruses of the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries BCE as conjoining both

concepts. She defines the concept of a ritual as an emotionally significant action carried out for a

practical end. To be a ritual, this action must be performed with the intensity of a collective body

and should be a fixed entity in regulated communal expression.[33] Art, on the other hand, is a

representation of life and emotion removed from immediate action.[34] In the ancient world, ritual

provided a bridge between life and art. For instance, the festival chorus was unpractical in its acts

of singing and dancing, but was nonetheless practical in its intent: the chorus was meant to

induce something. Art, however, when practiced is an end in itself.

      Though art and ritual remained united through the festival chorus, Harrison argues that

ritual was largely eliminated after the rise of the dramatic chorus in Athenian tragedy. The

introduction of a formal audience began to diminish the collectivity of choral performance.

Furthermore, though the dramatic chorus played a role in the large theatrical festivals dedicated

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[32] Zarifi (2007), 228.
[33] Harrison (1913), 35-7, 135.
[34] Ibid. 135.

to divinities such as Dionysus, the isolated choral performances themselves were no longer intended to fulfill an immediate practical purpose. Therefore, the choral shift toward drama coincided with a shift away from ritual. Moreover, the decay of collective religious adherence and a loss in belief of the effectiveness of certain rites continued to separate art forms from ritual practice. This eventually resulted in the divide between art and ritual recognized today. Art, including dance performance, despite its apparent lack of productive social functionality, has continued to be valued without any ritual associations.

Harrison's ideas about art and ritual in the ancient world did not arise organically out of a survey of ancient evidence. Harrison begins her discussion by pointing out the distinctly modern divide between art and ritual: the artist produces work through freedom in thought and is unhindered by conventional practices. The ritualist, on the other hand, is concerned with fixed forms and ceremonies, and with carrying out rigidly prescribed ordinances.[35] Harrison abstracts and imposes these two conceptions onto antiquity, modifying them to fit her interpretations of ancient practices. Though Harrison's work is tremendously insightful and especially useful for establishing definitions of ritual and art, her method raises the question of whether imposing a modern binary onto the ancient chorus is anachronistic. Other classical scholars who discuss the Greek chorus in terms of art and ritual, such as Felix Budelmann—a Professor of Classics at Magdalen University, Oxford—raise this concern. Budelmann, like Harrison, identifies the divide between art and ritual as a markedly modern conception. He claims that because the concepts of art and ritual are so central to modern intellectual traditions, the terms carry many associations that are counterproductive for work on antiquity. However, he eventually agrees

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[35] Ibid. 9.

with Harrison's conclusion that ancient festival choruses do seem to unify concepts that in the present day would be designated as art and ritual.[36]

Attempting to avoid anachronisms, Budelmann takes a different approach than Harrison for his discussion of art, ritual, and the ancient chorus. He grounds his argument in an analysis of Greek lyric poetry that would have been performed by choruses at Greek festivals. Rather than imposing modern categories of art and ritual onto the ancient material, he instead considers the extent to which festival choruses were functional in relation to the specific occasion for which they were composed. Conversely, he also inspects the extent to which the songs and dances were valued in their own right. In support of the idea that festival choruses had a function tied to the occasion of their performance, Budelmann cites the abundant scholarship that has already established the intricate textual relationships between Greek lyric poems and their performative contexts. Alcman's partheneia, Pindar's paeans, and Bacchylides' dithyrambs were all works of Greek lyric carefully crafted to allow specific sets of performers and communities to communicate with the divine, to define and promote themselves, to shape and solidify memories of historical events, to celebrate, and to mourn.[37] Even when re-performed and effectively severed from their original occasions, the texts conjured up such dramatically specific places and times that the canonical festival choruses maintained a ritual charge.[38]

Budelmann also provides evidence that festival choral performances were valued in their own right, both internally by the performers themselves and externally by spectators. His textual analysis of Alcman 1 is vital for proving this point. Within this poem, Budelmann cites the lines

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[36] Budelmann (2013), 82.
[37] Ibid. 82.
[38] Ibid. 86-87. Budelmann points out that it is frustrating that we do not know more about the contexts in which Athenians re-peformed foreign festival choruses, but it stands to reason that in any scenario the performance would stand in at least partial autonomy, at a certain distance from its new surroundings.

of text in which the chorus makes reference to itself: the choral members concern themselves with the quality of their own as well as their leaders' abilities as performers, expressing anxiety about the former and admiration for the latter.[39] These lines prompt reflection on the chorus qua chorus. In addition to this example of Greek lyric, the Archaic description of the Delian Maidens' choral performance from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* provides a useful testimony of the aesthetic value attributed to early choruses in addition to their ritual purpose. This passage refers to the Maidens as both intermediaries of worship and as performers skilled in vocalization and collective dance performance.[40] While the Maidens use their abilities practically to praise the gods, the beauty of their performance gains them renown. Accordingly, even this early source demonstrates the important intermixing of occasion-based ritual and aesthetic quality achieved by the festival chorus.

Budelmann concludes his argument by insisting that choral performing modes in the modern world cannot recapture the co-existence of art and ritual observed in Greek festival choruses, a position shared to varying degrees amongst classical scholars such as Joshua Billings and Fiona Macintosh.[41] Budelmann claims that performance pieces today attempting to bridge the divide will inevitably subordinate one viewpoint to the other. Correspondingly, audiences will look upon performances either as products of high art or for what they do for their performers and society but not both.[42] The observations of professionals deeply invested in the field of dance, such as dance critics, reflect the perspective held both Budlemann and likeminded classicists. Edwin Denby (1903-1983), a renowned American dance critic, sums up the conventions of the modern dance-viewing experience rather well:

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[39] For Budelmann's discussion see Ibid. 92-3. See Alcman 1, esp. ll. 85-7, 96-101.
[40] For Bedelmann's discussion see Budelmann (2013), 88. See the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, (ll. 156-64).
[41] See Billings (2013), 5.
[42] Budelmann (2013), 81, 96.

Seeing in the theater is seeing what you don't see quite that way in life. In fact it's nothing like that way. You sit all evening in one place and look at an illuminated stage…and since we are talking about a dance performance, nobody is expected to say a word, either on stage or in the house…But there are quite a lot of people, ordinary enough citizens watching the stage along with you. All…are used to having information conveyed to them by words spoken or written, but here they are just looking at young people dancing to music. And they expect to have something interesting conveyed to them. It is certainly peculiar.[43]

Denby's description reveals the experience of viewing dance performance to be rather alienating, and he gives the distinct impression that dance performance is detached from the action of day to day life. His remarks on the altered experience of seeing dance versus seeing life and the removal of spoken language during the duration of the dance emphasize this point. Denby's sentiments about performance echo Harrison's description of art: a practice that, while representing life and emotion, remains removed from the immediacy of daily action. Furthermore, the majority of modern choreographers have conceived of their work in overwhelmingly aesthetic terms, perpetuating the suppression of ritual in contemporary dance. Just as Harrison describes art as an end in itself, many prominent choreographers have adopted this view regarding their own work. The celebrated ballet choreographer of the twentieth-century, George Balanchine, declared, "movement in choreography is an end in itself: its only purpose is to create the impression of intensity and beauty."[44]

Despite this widely held artistic point of view, the ancient chorus has served as an inspiration for many inventive modern dance pieces, admittedly with varying degrees of success. Some of these pieces, such as *Red Ladies*—a dance performance piece created by the Clod Ensemble theater company—have arguably been successful in recapturing the experience of

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[43] Denby (1965), 555.
[44] Balanchine (1977), 782.

ancient choral dance.[45] Though there are certainly many ways for modern artists to incorporate interpretations of the Greek chorus into their modern work, I have chosen to discuss *Red Ladies* for its useful integration of ritual and art. *Red Ladies*, according to Clod Ensemble's artistic director Suzy Willson, was created specifically to reimagine the chorus as a relevant performing entity for the modern day.[46] The work features a chorus of eighteen women, each dressed identically in red headscarves, black trench coats, red stilettos, red vanity cases, and sunglasses. The piece is comprised of two performative elements: outside missions, also known as interventions—sequences of performance that take place in the streets and buildings of a city— and an indoor performance—an hour long theatrical demonstration in five movements that takes place in a theater or performance space within the city. This two-part performance structure holds the key for understanding the piece's integration of ritual and art.

The outdoor portion is the more obviously innovative aspect of the work, challenging the conventions of dance viewing, and is the primary element that reintroduces ritual into the performance. When the Red Ladies arrive in a city, they transform it, appearing on rooftops and in doorways, in places of political or architectural interest, commandeering their own limousines, their own brass band, once even their own helicopter.[47] The personal objectives of the Red Ladies during this section are numerous, but the relevant function of their collective body is to raise awareness and induce public questioning of the current political and social climate. For these outside missions, the Red Ladies follow "rules of engagement" to interrupt everyday occurrences, provoke thought, and transform the meaning of the spaces they inhabit for

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[45] *Red Ladies* first appeared in Trafalgar Square in 2005 as part of British Architect Week, and as of 2016 is still a current production of the Clod Ensemble.
[46] Willson (2010), 420.
[47] "Red Ladies" (2013), 1.

themselves and those who encounter them.[48] The Red Ladies are observers meant to witness the interactions of human beings, mentally record speech patterns, and document abusive or bigoted behavior. They also emphasize the ways in which public spaces are monitored: counting surveillance cameras, watching the "watchers", and drawing attention to the architecture of the city.

Overall, the Ladies engage with their immediate environment on a personal and public level. They are able to build a much more layered relationship with the places they visit than other touring dance and theater groups, who simply present conventional performances within a dark theater and before a seated audience. The missions allow the performers to experience the city and to meet and engage with people who may never even set foot in a theater. They encourage the people they encounter to ask questions—Who are they? What do they want? What do they mean? Why are they dressed like that?—while simultaneously posing more indirect questions about group identity, difference, and otherness.[49] By this means, they remove the usual distance separating performer and audience and directly involve the public in their activities. The Red Ladies' missions are not really about the spectacle they create, although there is an unavoidable element of that. As director Suzy Willson relates, "It is the intimate conversations they have with the general public as they move through a city which seem to be where [*Red Ladies*] works most powerfully."[50] Through their infiltration of an inhabited city, the Red Ladies create and participate in a new social ritual that actively brings awareness to communal anxieties that effect everyone. The piece operates at a time—the present—when there is an intense public debate about the infringement of civil liberties and a hysteria surrounding national security. By

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[48] Willson (2010), 424.
[49] Willson (2010), 425.
[50] Ibid. 427.

calling attention to these problems through their mysterious missions, the Red Ladies induce an active public consideration for these social issues.

Complementing the Red Ladies' outdoor ritual, the indoor theatrical demonstration following the interventions provide a means for the Red Ladies to explain the phenomenon that the public has just experienced. The viewers, returned to the position of an audience, perceive this portion of the show as a demonstration of group dynamics in which the group convenes together before falling apart.[51] The Ladies present their observers with a mosaic of images. They place significant world events, such as war, floods, and violence in the context of the everyday: the Ladies knit, they eat, and they wait.[52] As the staged piece unfolds, the idea of the "theatrical demonstration" seeks to reassure the audience that there is no need to get anxious when no obvious plot or dramatic narrative emerges. The piece is carried out in four movements, with choreography paced according to the symphonic structure of the music. Like the music, the performative action is linear with a beginning, middle, and end that remains plotless. The theatrical demonstration presents a work of art that abstracts the interventions into an aesthetic composition for the audience's benefit. In accordance with Harrison's criteria, this portion of the performance detaches from the immediacy of the missions. However, as the interventions still retain an element of spectacle, the indoor show still serves the practical function of explaining the ritual to the audience.

As this discussion is concerned with the practice of dance, it is relevant to consider more closely the choreography included in *Red Ladies*, especially that of the theatrical demonstration, and its relation to the ancient chorus. All the movement included in the piece is very much concerned with creating a unified group dynamic and eliminating any recognizable leader. The

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[51] Willson, (2010), 427.
[52] "Red Ladies" (2013), 1.

work attempts to achieve an aesthetic that echoes flocks of birds, herds of bison, and swarms of bees: instances in nature when complex behavior occurs without any prescribed leader. Willson describes how, in order to effectively unify eighteen diverse women, Ladies worked through the training tools developed by Jacques Lecoq.[53] First they worked in neutral masks to strip away individual mannerisms and open up to the external space, encouraging a state of discovery and openness, an energetic, dynamic, and articulate body, and an increased awareness which enables a performer to be present in a chorus without drawing attention to herself.[54] From this point on, Lecoq's pedagogy is based in imitating the movements of nature and transposing them to dramatic situations. The precise observation of how things move (not just people but animals, materials, etc.), is the basis of his teachings: something can be better understood through the act of embodying it.[55] Therefore, much of the choreographic language of *Red Ladies* is drawn from natural phenomenon: the movement dynamics of weather, the sky, and especially groups of animals. Eventually, in addition to this imitative movement, the Ladies learned a basic set of actions: running, knitting, kneeling, lamenting, preening, falling, flocking, waiting, wrestling, and jumping, which they could draw from throughout the piece. By solidifying an extensive shared movement vocabulary, the Ladies remain a group even when the chorus breaks down into disunity.

The imitative movement developed for the Red Ladies' modern chorus, interestingly parallels the concept of mimetic dance, movement derived from imitation, often brought up in relation to the ancient choral experience. Mimesis corresponds to the idea of the physical world as a model of beauty, truth, and goodness. Imitation of the physical world can evoke such

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[53] Willson (2010), 423.
[54] Ibid. 423.
[55] Ibid. 423.

qualities within a work of art. The concept of mimetic performance was first articulated within the ancient world by the writings of Plato. However, Plato aligns the practice of mimetic dance not with the festival choruses, but with the choruses of tragedy and comedy. In the third book of the *Republic*, he actually denounces festival performance, specifically Dithyrambs, as distinctly non-mimetic, but instead a lesser genre presented through the recital of 'the poet himself'.[56] However, Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, a Professor of Classics at Stanford University, argues that the role of mimesis in festival choruses seems much more complex than Plato ever conceded. Plato fails to clarify or address the fact that in Athenian festivals the audience would experience the collective performance of a chorus, not that of the poet himself.[57] However, even if mimetic dance, within the ancient world, was a practice more associated with dramatic, the conflation between this aspect of the tragic chorus and the art/ritual qualities of the festival chorus within *Red Ladies* does not take away from what this modern piece has achieved. The connection between Lecoq's techniques and mimetic dance simply reinforces the *Red Ladies* that seeks to recapture ancient choral experience. The Clod Ensemble has productively integrated different aspects of ancient performance in order to invent a choral mode that would allow modern audience to understand their own communality.

Despite classical scholars' failure to appropriately consider the achievements of innovative dance works, it is possible for modern collective performances to recapture elements of the ancient choral experience. The Clod Ensemble's *Red Ladies* excellently demonstrates how ritual may be reincorporated into modern artistic performance, recollecting the conflation of art and ritual achieved by Greek festival choruses. However, it is important to remember that such contemporary projects are not by any means reconstructions, nor are they exhaustive in the

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[56] *Resp.* 394b-c. See also Peponi (2013), 17.
[57] Peponi (2013), 18.

elements of ancient choral experience that they invoke. For instance, *Red Ladies* prioritizes their group dynamic over individual leadership, a concern that actually differentiates the piece from the recorded experience of some ancient festival choruses: poems of Alcman specifically describes the choral dancers' concerns with their own performances versus the performances of their leaders. These types of inconsistencies should not call into question the successful modern recasting of other isolated elements of ancient choral experience. Particularly because even in antiquity, the chorus was reconstituted in countless forms for various functions, attempting to pin down an ordered list of the components that characterized ancient choral experience would be unproductive for all parties. The lack of a singular finite form by which we may understand the ancient chorus has no doubt contributed to the scholarly objection to accurately representing the chorus in modern performance. However, I believe the many facets of the Greek chorus experience expands rather than restricts our potential to understand and recast the experiences of ancient chorality in modern dance performance.

III. EXPLORING APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN AESTHETICS IN DANCE

Friedrich Nietzsche defined two opposing aesthetic categories, the Apollonian and the

Dionysian, in his nineteenth century work *The Birth of Tragedy*. Dance scholars often use these

categories when attempting to articulate the modern artistic reception of ancient Greek culture

within contemporary choreography. Nietzsche's ideas have proved useful for describing

developments in modern dance movement. However, Nietzsche's aesthetic model limits analyses

that attempt to understand the legacy of antiquity within modern dance; scholarly discussions

relating ancient aesthetics and modern movement seem to require references to antiquity beyond

the aesthetic properties defined by Nietzsche in order to prove themselves. For example,

according to *The Birth of Tragedy*, a sublime work by definition must reconcile both Apollonian

and Dionysian forces. This notion has distractingly shaped discussions of modern dance pieces

which, as stand-alone works, do not inherently demonstrate a balance of aesthetic impulses.

Grounding one's approach in the ancient material that Nietzsche used when formulating his own

work, such as Plato's *Laws,* relieves the analytical limitations of using *The Birth of Tragedy* to

understand the legacy of antiquity within dance and also reveals new connections between

contemporary pieces and the ancient world.

The aesthetic descriptors Apollonian and Dionysian, as defined by Nietzsche, are indeed

relevant to the discussion of diverse modern dance movements. The dichotomy presented in *The

Birth of Tragedy* has proved particularly suitable for understanding the aesthetic shift in the

choreographed work of dance artists that occurred within twentieth century Europe and America.

Prior to this period, classical ballet—known for its strict formal movement technique—prevailed

as the dominant mode of western dance performance. Scholars have retroactively designated this

style as a solely Apollonian art form. Nietzsche equates the Apollonian with restrained

rationalism, Socratic dialogue, science, and individuality. Furthermore, the Apollonian represents an ideal of harmony and order that one only has access to through illusion: it can only be fully realized in dreams.[58] Many historical facets of classical ballet, a practice that became institutionally formalized within the seventeenth-century French court of Louis XIV, demonstrate how the genre embodies Apollonian principles in light of Nietzsche's discussion: the absolutist principles of order and harmony demanded of the practice by the social atmosphere of the royal French court, ballet's professionalization through the founding of the Academie Royale de Danse in 1661 that designated classical ballet as an individual, non-amateur practice, and nineteenth-century Russian Imperial Theaters' development of a technical movement vocabulary that emphasized the continual pursuit of the ideals of classical proportion, social orderliness, and distilled beauty in form.[59]

As the nineteenth century came to a close, choreographers began to work outside of the strict specifications demanded by the classical tradition, developing new movement techniques that radicalized the ballet genre (e.g. the work of George Balanchine) and would come to be the basis of Modern dance (e.g. the work of Martha Graham). The expressionistic dances resulting from this aesthetic shift away from classical ballet beginning around 1900 have been recognized as pointedly Dionysian. Choreographers aimed to break with the austere conventionality of Apollonian balletic forms, moving with more spirit and emotion and less virtuosity. Nietzsche associated the Dionysian with the will of the unconscious, the life force, the communicative body of the communal chorus, and with the wilder elements of corporeal expression—all points of departure that inspired the innovative techniques of early 20th century modernist choreographers. The artists of this time explored Dionysian ideas such as dissonance and the physical

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[58] Nietzsche (1999), 16.
[59] Stanger (2010), 349-350.

embodiment of tension and weight to counter the symmetry, refined lines, and anti-gravitational elevation strived for in classical ballet.[60] Rather than the illusory dream realm of the Apollonian, the Dionysian experience is epitomized by the euphoric experience achieved through intoxication. The manifestation of the Dionysian in the dances of modernist choreographers is difficult to categorize succinctly due to the number and diversity of important works produced in twentieth century Europe and United States. However, a few examples include the unfettered performing style of Isadora Duncan, the passionate bodily expression called for by Michel Fokine of the Ballet Russe, and the psychological drama evoked in the work of Martha Graham.[61]

Nietzsche developed his conceptions of Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics, which have become so useful for characterizing diverse dance movement, through the exploration and interpretation of ancient Greece. Consequently, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes broad claims regarding antiquity. He saw Greek civilization on the whole as a struggle between the Apollonian and Dionysian. Attributing the greatness of the classical world to the conciliation of these two forces, he argues that these impulses must be resolved in order to make great art. The harmonious order of Apollo can only occur by the incorporation of the Dionysian forces of Dionysus through suffering and conflict. Speaking on the Apollonian beauty of Athenian art, Nietzsche declares, "How much must this people have suffered in order to become so beautiful! But now follow me to the tragedy and let us perform a sacrifice in the temple of both deities."[62] To Nietzsche, fifth-century BCE works of Athenian tragedy represent the pinnacle of ancient art, best exemplifying the tense yet balanced interplay between Apollonian and Dionysian impulses.

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[60] Jones (2013), 56.
[61] Stanger (2010), 350.
[62] Nietzsche (1999), 131.

However, despite the ancient basis for the claims made in *The Birth of Tragedy*, various scholars have suggested that the Nietzsche's aesthetic model is in fact more persuasive when dissociated from an ancient context and applied solely to the modern world.

Nietzsche's representations of Apollo and Dionysus likely distort the deities as they existed in Greek culture. To distill his terms, Nietzsche combines characteristics and functions of the gods from various ancient sources of myth and cult religion, thereby imposing a coherence on the deities that may have not existed in antiquity.[63] M. S. Silk, a Professor of Classics at King's College London, and J. P. Stern (1920-1991), a Professor of German at University College London from 1972 to 1986, argue that Nietzsche does more than simply interpret given aspects of the gods: "he reinterprets them, he even reinvents them. The end of the process is two new composites which carry the Greek gods' names as symbols without any consistent historical justification."[64] Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus, then, are Greek to begin with, but in the end are compiled into generalized archetypes. Silk and Stern assert that this causes Nietzsche's corresponding aesthetic descriptors to be much more fitting when describing the modern world than the ancient.[65] This notion perhaps explains why dance scholars who utilize Nietzsche to understand the place of antiquity within modern dance choose to discuss at length only dance pieces that make additional, more explicit references to ancient culture.

Two examples of this tendency can be found in the work of Susan Jones, Professor of English Literature at Oxford University, and Arabella Stanger, Lecturer in Dance at the University of Roehampton. These scholars each promote the presence of Nietzsche's aesthetics in dance as an important means for understanding the modern artistic reception of the ancient

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[63] Silk (1981), 167.
[64] Ibid. 167.
[65] Ibid. 185

world—Jones does so in her chapters "Nietzsche, Modernism, and Dance" and "Modernism and Dance: Apolline or Dionysiac?" and Stanger in her chapter "Contemporary Classical Choreography".[66] Jones chooses to focus her discussion on the ballet *Apollo*, a work choreographed by the renowned twentieth-century choreographer and co-founder of the New York City Ballet, George Balanchine.[67] Stanger, in addition to *Apollo,* also analyzes Balanchine's *Agon*, William Forsythe's *Eidos: Telos*, and Michaels Clarke's *Stravinsky Project*.[68] Jones and Stanger both identify the presence of Nietzsche's aesthetic dichotomy within each of these pieces, explaining different ways in which the opposing impulses of the Apollonian and the Dionysian manifest in modern choreography. *Apollo* exemplifies the aesthetic polarity of Nietzsche by negotiating between the Apollonian formal elegance of the culminating work and Balanchine's Dionysian creative struggle while revising the original work.[69] *Agon* presents a similar Apollonian aesthetic to *Apollo* in terms of its clean architectural movement and balletic virtuosity, while the explicit sexuality intentionally exhibited in *Agon*'s *Pas de Deux* adds a distinctly Dionysian element.[70] A similar use of the classical body to reference the sexual act defines the work of Clark, himself an admirer of Balanchine.[71] Forsythe also brings the beauty of formal Apollonian clarity to his *Eidos: Telos* by demanding precision from classically trained dancers. However, Forsythe infuses his work with Dionysian principles of instability, fragmentation, and chaos, constantly deconstructing the movement he presents.[72]

While Jones and Stanger use the presence of Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy to claim connections to antiquity, each of the pieces already explicitly evokes the

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[66] See Stanger (2010), Jones (2013), and Jones (2010).
[67] Balanchine choreographed an initial version of *Apollo* in 1928 and later revised the work in 1979.
[68] *Agon* was choreographed in 1946, *Eidos: Telos* in 1994, and the *Stravinsky Project* in 2008.
[69] Jones (2010), 314.
[70] Ibid. 352-3.
[71] Ibid. 353.
[72] Ibid. 360.

ancient world. In the case of *Apollo*, the ballet's title and corresponding narrative—the artistic maturation of the young Greek god—clearly reference ancient mythology. *Agon*, though more narratively obscure, has a title transliterated from the Greek ἀγών meaning a "struggle" or "contest". Clark's *Stravinsky Project*, is in part a re-imagining of Balanchine's *Apollo*, thereby usurping ancient connotations of Balanchine's work. Forsythe's *Eidos: Telos*, transliterated from the ancient Greek εἰδός: τέλος, translates loosely to "form: end", and the underlying narrative of the work draws from the mythology of Persephone. Solely using pieces that manifest antiquity even without the critical frame of Nietzsche's aesthetics reveals a limitation of his model: the weight of the aesthetic dichotomy as a recognizable legacy of Greek culture is called into question when examining pieces that display Nietzsche's aesthetics without any additional reference to antiquity.

One such piece is Balanchine's *Four Temperaments*. First performed in 1946, it employs aesthetics very similar to both *Apollo* and *Agon*, especially in terms of the Apollonian formalism achieved by the lean, angular style of Balanchine's ballet choreography, but lacks any explicit connection to antiquity. *Four Temperaments* is performed on a barren, starkly lit stage with simple leotards and tights for costumes. The piece is divided into five sections, a theme and four variations, and each section is comprised of a compilation of solos, duets, and group numbers. Each section after the initial theme supposedly reflects one of the four temperaments: melancholic, sanguine, phlegmatic, and choleric. Balanchine however, downplayed the references to the medieval humors that supposedly determined a person's temperament, using the four personality types merely as points of departure for the creation of abstract dance to music. In terms of narrative the piece is effectively plotless. That being said, the choreography reflects the title by evoking a very visceral sense of the emotionality from the dancers that is quite

palpable to the audience—a markedly Dionysian quality according to Nietzsche's aesthetics. This is especially apparent in the first variation, *Melancholic*, in which the male soloist seems to continually sink beneath the weight of grief. The dancer recurrently transitions out of high jumps and powerful balances and poses with a dramatic arch in his spine—throwing back his head and arms while bending his knees so his chest faces the ceiling. This habitual movement allows the dancer to channel both his momentum and his passionate sentiments into an emotionally charged, visually-striking posture—thereby, reaching a pinnacle of Apollonian and Dionysian expression. However, despite its reconciliation of these opposed aesthetics, *Four Temperaments* has never been recognized in scholarship as a work continuing the legacy of antiquity. Quite the opposite—*Four Temperaments* has been canonized as a distinctly modernist work of dance, notable for its abstracted examination of the body as material.[73] Without the contextual backing of specific references to antiquity, it becomes much more difficult to impose the idea that works such as *Four Temperaments*, celebrated as distinctly contemporary innovations, perpetuate the ideologies of antiquity. Nietzsche's aesthetics lose their overt attachment to the ancient world, as Silk and Stern argue they are apt to do, and become more understandable as modern rather than ancient aesthetic descriptors.[74]

An additional problem with using *The Birth of Tragedy*'s aesthetic model to access the reception of antiquity within dance is Nietzsche's pervasive assumption that great works of art necessarily must demonstrate a reconciliation between the Apollonian and Dionysian. This idea most strongly effects discussions regarding Balanchine's *Apollo*. The ballet narratively centers on Apollo, the Greek god of the arts, depicting his maturation and education via instruction of

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[73] Scholl (1994), 90.
[74] See Silk (1984), 185 for a discussion of how Nietzsche's aesthetic model is better suited to modernity than antiquity.

the Muses and eventual assertion of divine authority. The piece, similarly to *Four Temperaments*, is presented on a pristine stage without a set and with minimalistic white costumes, accompanied by the score of Igor Stravinsky. The entirety of the ballet is a quartet danced by one male, Apollo, and three women, the three Muses. While easily observing the Apollonian impulses ingrained within Balanchine's highly technical, form-based choreography, and the geometrical shapes and patterns that guide the dancers' trajectory as they move across the stage, scholars have struggled to explain the place of the Dionysian in *Apollo* without rejecting its presence and denying the ballet's sublime reputation. Unlike the sexual overtones of *Agon*'s *Pas de Deux* or the visceral emotionality of *Four Temperaments*, *Apollo* is more reserved. The ballet, guided by the restraint of rationalism rather than any sort of passionate expression, seems on every account decidedly devoid of the Dionysian.

Jones, attempting to bring the Dionysian into the discussion, embarks on a prolonged narrative explanation involving not only the stand-alone work as it is preserved today, but the entirety of Balanchine's creative process regarding to the piece. The *Apollo* known today was staged in 1979, and resulted from the rather dramatic revisions of a previous work entitled *Apollon Musagete* that premiered in 1928. According to Jones, this initial version, which emphasized narrative, more clearly demonstrated the conflict of artistic drives outlined by Nietzsche. *Apollon Musagete* showcased additional plot-driven scenes, invoked a stronger sense of setting with involved props, backdrops, and set pieces, and created a distinctly Hellenistic feel with elaborate Grecian costumes. Choreographically, the ballet plotted out Apollo's maturation and aspiration for divine ascension and sublimity. The ballet begins, following a scene of the god's birth, with a tentative solo by Apollo, characterized by off balance movements as the god searches to find his own sense of equilibrium. This beginning stands in contrast with the ballet's

ending pose, when Apollo, finished with his artistic education, comes into his own authority. Apollo perches on a stage-crafted Mt. Olympus, with the muses strewn out behind him. His arms are thrown upwards, leading the steady gaze of his eyes, as he waits for transcendence and divine recognition. The trajectory of the piece expresses an aspiration for the sublime that illustrates both the Apollonian and Dionysian conflict and convergence of these forces.[75] Inherent in Apollo's maturation is the image of physical struggle: only after a series of precarious trials (beginning with the initial solo) can Apollo attain his divine authority (finally realized in the powerful, decisive ending pose). Therefore, the ballet's distinctly portrayed narrative allows the viewer to ascertain the Dionysian struggle for expression undergone by the young god.

The narrative action of ballet was largely consolidated when the work was re-staged in the 1979 and re-named simply *Apollo*. Balanchine eliminated a number of the plot-driven scenes, such as Apollo's birth, stripped the stage of set pieces and backdrops, and minimized the costumes. Without the narrative framework of the original piece, it becomes more difficult to interpret Balanchine's abstract movement as representationally significant. An expression of beauty through bodily forms now takes precedence over the original narrative function of the piece, and aesthetically the piece became much more Apollonian.[76] Balanchine, when revising the ballet, ultimately rejected the Nietzchean perspective creative struggle in his ballet and elected instead to present a more elegant aesthetic experience characterized by the economy of form and harmonious beauty. Rather than the triumphant stance of Apollo waiting for transcendence that concludes *Apollon Musagete*, the ballet now ends in an abstracted final pose created by the layered bodies and extended limbs of the four dancers: a vision of beauty through the perfection of form. Therefore, in order to place *Apollo* within the aesthetic model of

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[75] Jones (2010), 325-7.
[76] Jones (2010), 327.

Nietzsche, Jones must guide her discussion to somehow accommodate the lack of the Dionysian in the final piece without losing the sense that the creation of the piece demonstrates a reconciliation of aesthetics. Jones proposes that Balanchine's own creative struggle to produce the work, demonstrated by his substantial revisions, replaces the struggle of Apollo that was recognizable in *Apollon Musagete*. Thus Jones concludes that through his process of revision, "Balanchine negotiates between the elegance of an Apollonian aesthetics emphasizing the beauty of the dancing figure, with a tougher, more masculinist account of creative struggle associated with Nietzsche's Dionysiac."[77] Balanchine himself as the creator rather than the figure of Apollo supplies this element of Dionysian struggle to the revised *Apollo*. Jones finds it necessary to bring the external presence of the choreographer into her discussion since a stand-alone evaluation of *Apollo* would not accommodate Nietzsche's demand for aesthetic reconciliation in great works of art.

An alternative to the Nietzsche's aesthetic model can be found by examining the ancient sources to which Nietzsche referred when developing his own work, such as Plato's *Laws*.[78] Book II of Plato's *Laws* offers a detailed discussion of an Apollonian/Dionysian duality in specific relation to the practice of choral dance.[79] The *Laws* takes the form of a dialogue between Athenaeus and Kleinias, and this twelve-book work provides musings on the ethics of government and law. Book II specifically concerns itself with the educational value of instituted choral performance. Within this book Athenaeus brings up Apollo and Dionysus as the two pivotal deities in the origin of human dance. The gods, out of pity for humans, a race born unto

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[77] Jones (2010), 314.
[78] See Hutter (2006), 187. for Nietzsche's utilization of Plato's *Laws*.
[79] Though dance is briefly mentioned in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the majority of the argument is concerned not with the art of dance, but with music.

misery, provided them with the practice of choral dance as a source of pleasure and joy.[80]

Apollo, his Muses, and Dionysus were designated to be the "companions in dance" (συγχορευτάς) to mortals.[81] The addition of the prefix σύν, used alone as a preposition meaning "in company with", onto the noun χορευτάς "choral dancers" communicates the integration of Apollonian and Dionysian influences into dance practices by conjuring imagery of the gods themselves dancing together with mortals. Athenaeus then describes that every young creature is innately unable to keep still in body or utterance, but always seeks to move and cry "as if they were dancing with pleasure" (οἶον ὀρχούμενα μεθ᾽ ἡδονῆς).[82] The use of οἶον "as if" in this phrase, presents the innate movement of mortals as a prefiguration to dance, but without the influence of the gods humans do not yet have the means to regulate these movements within a structured dance.

Humans, singled out from among all other creatures, were granted by Apollo the ability to order these urges through the perception of "rhythm and harmony" (τὴν ἔνρυθμόν τε καὶ ἐναρμόνιον).[83] Both these words carry with them a sense of coordination, ἔνρυθμόν can alternatively refer to any regularly recurring motion or measured time, and ἐναρμόνιον specifically refers to the harmony of musical sounds. Thereby, the gifts of Apollo served as ordered principles that men could use to coordinate themselves into regulated groups for the purpose of choral performance. Antheneaus furthermore relates that the dance causes the people to move as a collective body "by linking us one with another" (ἀλλήλοις συνείροντας).[84] Once again the force of σύν when added to the verb εἴρω "string together" emphasizes the importance

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[80] Pl., *Laws* 653d-654a.
[81] Ibid. 653e.
[82] Ibid. 653d-e
[83] Ibid. 654a
[84] Ibid. 654a

of the group dynamic in choral performance. The perception of rhythm and harmony allows man

to follow dance steps and match his sung notes to the melody, cementing an integrated

relationship between movement and music. Each man must be able to "accompany"

(συνακολουθεῖν), more literally "follow together", the rhythm with his steps and his sung notes

with the music that he may choose the steps and notes that are "proper" (προσήκοντα).[85]

Successfully carrying out the choral dance results in what Atheneaus refers to as "harmless

pleasure" (ἀσινεῖς ἥδωνται)—e.g. pleasure which is good for men.[86] Presumably dance was

considered a harmless rather than harmful pleasure since received as a gift from the gods. Thus,

the Apollonian in Plato's *Laws* manifests as the coordination of the group dynamic, regulated

through the organizing principles of rhythm and harmony, which effectively links together the

movements of the dance and the music.

According to Plato, Dionysus plays a very different role for choral dance. Athenaeus

insists upon the choral participation of citizens of every age, status, and gender. Old men are

especially important as they will be the most practiced and knowledgeable of choral

performance. However, old age may result in an increasing reluctance to sing and dance.

Therefore, those of old age may invoke Dionysus and, through intoxication, reach a state of

uninhibited expression, similar to the innate desire for movement attributed to uneducated youth,

the souls of the drinkers "becoming fiery, softened, and youthful" (διαπύρους γιγνομένας

μαλθακωτέρας γίγνεσθαι καὶ νεωτέρας).[87] The word for "fiery" (διαπύρους) is used in a previous

passage to specifically refer to young creatures, thus further supporting the return, described as a

softening of the soul (μαλθακωτέρας), to youthful expression achieved through intoxication.[88]

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[85] Ibid. 670d
[86] Ibid. 670d
[87] Ibid. 666a-d, 671b
[88] Ibid. 664e

However, those in this Dionysian state, by functioning within the structure of the chorus, still maintain some semblance of regulation that distinguishes them from young creatures. Furthermore, the invigorating wine of Dionysus allows for "on the one hand the reverence of the soul" (αἰδοῦς μὲν ψυχῆς) and "on the other hand the health and strength of the body" (σώματος δὲ ὑγιείας τε καὶ ἰσχύος).[89] The word for reverence (αἰδοῦς) can also translate as "awe" or "respect" either for oneself or others. These lines seems to refer to the restorative effects of dance, especially for those of old age who are losing touch with their innate desire to move, due either by the loss of youthful innocence and curiosity (the "awe" of the soul) or failing health, and their respect for the collective body of the chorus. On the whole the Dionysian impulse for Plato functions as a restorative principle to return dancers to a state of uninhibited expression by means of the ecstatic intoxication.

The Apollonian and Dionysian influences described in *Laws* share some similarities with Nietzsche's duality. The organization, collective coordination, and integration of dance and music that define Plato's Apollonian anticipates the rational formalism of Nietzsche's, and the concept of uninhibited expression through intoxication are common between both explanations of the Dionysian. However, the source specific definitions of Plato contrast the more expansive, compiled definitions of Nietzsche. Plato's definitions are in fact much more rooted in the practice of dance social and ritual activity. Nietzsche, though briefly mentioning dance in *The Birth of Tragedy* focuses mainly on the drama of the ancient world and the specific practice of music in modernity. Additionally, Plato, unlike Nietzsche, is not urgently concerned with the reconciliation of the two impulses within choral performances. For Plato, the Apollonian and the Dionysian are actually somewhat unified in that they each urge the dancers towards joyful,

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[89] Ibid. 672d

pleasurable expression. Atheneaus specifically cites the activity of "dance" (χορός) as stemming

from the experience of "joy" (χαρά).[90] For Nietzsche, emotionality comes from Dionysian

suffering or the violent ecstasy of intoxication, while the Apollonian remains austerely rational.

Joy, as brought up by Plato, is harder to find in Nietzsche's model. The dissimilarities between

these sources lead to slightly different results when used to analyze works of contemporary

choreography for the purpose of understanding the legacy of ancient aesthetics in the modern

world. Therefore, I will succinctly revisit the two work discussed earlier when demonstrating the

limitations of Nietzsche's aesthetic model, Balanchine's *Four Temperaments* and his 1979

version of *Apollo.*

Both *Four Temperaments* and *Apollo* adhere to Plato's Apollonian principles, by

displaying a balanced group dynamic. Though individuals depart at times from the group to

dance as soloists, these individuals do not present themselves as isolated from their fellow

dancers, but rather as being in conversation with the group—an idea demonstrated by

Balanchine's careful attention to the fluid transitions between solos and group pieces. The

coordination of the group dynamic is easily observable in the precise geometric patterns

achieved in the dances, the synchronicity of movement exacted by the performers, and the well-

integrated partner work that appears in each ballet. Furthermore, the choreography of both ballets

is entirely dependent upon the rhythmic and melodic structure of their musical scores.

Balanchine created his movement to not only complement but to integrate itself with the music,

creating a harmony between the embodied and aural experiences of the dancers, and the visual

and aural experience of the audience—a facet of Balanchine's work that reflects the attention to

the coordinated dance steps and musical rhythms promoted by Plato's *Laws*.

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[90] Ibid. 654a.

In terms of emotional quality *Apollo* remains within the realm of pleasure induced by adherence to the coordinating principles of Plato's Apollonian, while *Four Temperaments* seems to align itself with the restorative enlightenment brought on by the *Laws* definition of the Dionysian. Balanchine's demand for controlled, precise execution of highly specific and technically challenging choreography achieves for the dancers a heightened emotional experience of pleasure. The final pose of the ballet embodies this experience: the pristine collective pose, exuding energy from the dancers extended legs and arms, demonstrates both the thrill created by the exactitude of what they have just accomplished and the joyous reverie instilled now that the performance has come to completion. The *Four Temperaments* contrasts the rational restraint of *Apollo* with more emotionally charged choreography throughout the piece. However, the emotional experience comes to resolution in the final moments of ballet when the entire cast joins in a coordinated choreographic montage that appears to purge the dancers of the emotional qualms explored in the work's various sections. This corresponds to a musical key change from minor to major, producing a triumphant, revelatory ending for to work. The prevailing joy achieved in the final moments of *Four Temperaments* corresponds to the restorative power of Dionysian influence presented in Plato's *Laws*.

The double comparison produced by analyzing works of Balanchine from both a Nietzschean and Platonic perspective demonstrates interesting variations in how we may view the reception of ancient ideologies within contemporary choreography, specifically regarding Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics. While Nietzsche's aesthetic model can be quite useful due to its expansive definitions of Apollonian and Dionysian and its general relevance within modern life, his model is somewhat limited in that it seems to require a larger ancient contextual backing to convincingly demonstrate connections with antiquity. It also urges scholars to guide their

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discussions toward parsing the reconciliation of the opposed artistic impulses. Plato's model relieves these restrictions. Since gained directly from an ancient source, it needs no further references to support its connection to ancient culture. Moreover, the *Laws* is not specifically concerned with reconciling two conflicting aesthetics in the same manner as *The Birth of Tragedy*. Rather they can be applied individually or in tandem as is fitting for a particular dance. Though both valid approaches in their own right, as both Nietzsche and Plato present an individualized conception of ancient culture, I believe it is important to revisit ancient source material whenever possible in order to maintain a baseline for our collective understanding of antiquity.

IV. APOTHEOSIS: A CHOREOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Apotheosis, as an original work of dance, is my personal artistic exploration of how the practice of ancient Greek dance can be recast in works of contemporary choreography. The piece draws on dance imagery from Greek artifacts, examines the practice of choral performance, and emphasizes the dichotomy between Apollonian and Dionysian movement. Each movement of the dance deals specifically with one of these three topics. This work does not seek to reconstruct ancient Greek dance; rather through this piece I hope to add my own artistic interpretation to the current dialogue of scholarly and performance work attempting to understand the place of ancient dance in the modern world. The following analysis provides for each section of the work a summary of the research that inspired the section, a description of the dance this inspiration produced, and finally an analysis demonstrating the connections between my research and my choreography.

Σχῆμα (schēma)
A figure of the dance; steps

The first movement of the piece was inspired by the imagery of dancing figures found on ancient Greek artifacts such as painted vases and sculpture relief. The usefulness of this imagery for the study of ancient dance has been contested within classical scholarship: some scholars have attempted to reconstruct ancient dance through these images, while others have critiqued their methods, arguing that the static, two dimensional images do not provide enough information to reliably translate ancient dance into three dimensional movement. External to the scholarly debate, numerous dance artists, such as early 20th century choreographers Isadora Duncan and Ruby Ginner, have been inspired by Greek imagery to create works, claiming various levels of authenticity for their "ancient" dances.

As a method of representation, the imagery preserves various shapes that reliably record an ancient perception of dance, if not the actualized ancient activity. This is an important distinction to make since the mechanisms through which the imagery was produced are not known. The artists and artisans responsible for dance imagery may have observed dancers as they practiced their movement in real life, but may also have been adhering to stylized motifs of figure drawing that had become abstracted from practical observation. Either way, the figures being represented were recognized as dancers. Whether or not the images dependably relate shapes that characterized ancient dance as an embodied practice, an ancient conception of dance is preserved within the static images. Therefore, to connect my choreography to ancient dance by means of this imagery, I focused on emphasizing the shapes of dance provided by the artifacts.

I conceived of the first movement as a dance piece that would give shape a more prominent role than other elements typically employed in dance such as time, motion, and space. I chose the Greek word *Σχῆμα (schēma)* for the title. Not only does the general definition of the word—form, shape, or figure—aptly describe the focus of this movement—the shapes of dancing figure imagery—but the word has also been used to specifically reference figures of a dance, meaning the postures and positions. When envisioning the aesthetic for this piece the idea of moving sculpture came to mind. To form my choreography I utilized various poses observed from Greek artifacts and modified them to compliment the figures of my dancers. The piece begins with the detached, atonal, but nonetheless soothing, notes of John Cage's *Thirteen Harmonies*. Four dancers, dressed in nude tops and light nude skirts, enter one after another from stage right onto a bright, warmly lit stage. They slowly move through a sequence of geometrically informed attitudes. As in the processional arrangements of Greek relief sculpture the dancer's bodies intermittently spread out and overlap across a two dimensional vertical plane.

About two thirds of the way through *schēma*, after pausing in a tiered formation of circular shapes on stage right, the dancers exit. They re-enter from the upstage wing as the music changes to selections from John Cage's *Six Melodies*, a more energetic, rhythmical soundscape. The lights fade to deeper tones of red and pink. This visual and auditory shift corresponds with a change in the mode of movement. Choreographically, I retained and developed the shapes from the beginning of the piece, but the dancers move through positions much more quickly. The backdrop fades into darkness, while the figures are left illuminated by red side lighting—a color scheme referring to the red-figure painted vessels of antiquity. One dancer breaks away from the previous synchronicity of the quartet, and the piece comes to an end as the other three performers encircle the defector one by one before leaving the stage. The lone dancer returns to a pose from the beginning of *schema*, before she too exits to the right.

Throughout the majority of the piece I had the dancers remain in a flat, frontal orientation. I hoped to minimize the audience's awareness of the stage's three-dimensional depth, and create a more two-dimensional viewing experience. I chose in the final moments of the piece, to give the audience a playful reminder of the depth of space actually available. A single dancer leaves the horizontal plane occupied by the other three, moving first behind and then in between them. Their roles then reversed when the three dancers walk in a circle around the solitary dancer before exiting.

I attempted to abate the importance of timing within the piece by playing with duration. For the first two thirds of the *schēma*, the dancers sustain their positions for longer than I would normally consider comfortable for either them or the audience. In the latter half of the piece, by increasing the tempo of the movement and reducing stillness, I examine whether the same sculptural aesthetic can still be viewed in fleeting poses and un-sustained movements.

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In addition to simply incorporating a considerable amount of stillness into the piece, I reduced the role of motion by having formal position changes occur largely in place. Almost all the noticeable progression through space, especially in the first two-thirds of the dance, was achieved by walking. The faster, more rhythmical section allowed the dancers to gain more momentum and move greater distances with their changes in positions. However, I chose to use walking as the primary and most effective means for moving the dancers across the stage. I coached my dancers to walk in a calm, statuesque manner in accordance with the aesthetic of the dance. Despite my choreographic manipulation of the dancers' natural walking movement, I still hoped the audience would recognize the accessible action of walking within dance as something like a place holder between the more 'dancelike' moments of the piece—thereby minimizing the amount of motion involved in the sculpted moments.

<div align="center">

Χορός (*choros*)
A dance; a group of dancers; a dance floor

</div>

While composing the second movement of the piece, I took inspiration from the phenomenon of ancient choral dance. Because of the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the ancient chorus, I decided to include two different sections within the 'choral' movement of *Apotheosis*. I addressed different aspects of ancient choral dance experience through a group number of six dancers and a subsequent solo that I perform myself.

The chorus in the ancient world was a collective body of performers who would sing and dance at various occasions such as festivals and dramatic performances. One idea that particularly struck me about the ancient chorus was the conflation of art and ritual achieved in their performance. The chorus was valued for its pleasurable aesthetic qualities as well as its social functions. In today's world, however, there is generally a recognized divide between dance

as a ritual and dance as an art form. Modern dances that attempt to incorporate both are generally seen as having to favor one over the other. Due to my concern in past choreography with patterns, formations, and movement aesthetics, I have personally considered my previous dances to be works of art rather than ritual practice. Therefore, for Apotheosis' second movement, I was inspired to challenge my intuitive choreographic tendencies and create a piece of dance conscious of ritual as well as aesthetic qualities.

I attempted to make the group piece less preoccupied with the frontal forms that would be presented to the audience and more concerned with the ongoing experience of the dance participants. I entitled this section *Χορός (choros)*, which translates to "a dance," "a group of dancers," or "a place for dancing". The nuances of this word's meanings reflected my ideas about how to bring forth both a ritualistic experience from a dance that would still be conventionally viewed in a formal theater setting. I wanted the piece to allow the dancers to find a new level of awareness in their own individual bodily movement, the dynamic of the group, and the space in which they were dancing. I find this kind of awareness reveals the ritual potential of dance in modern society because it renders audience validation unnecessary. The dance becomes about the act of moving rather than about the aesthetic product of that movement.

Choros begins with a single dancer entering a starkly lit stage. The cyclical, slowly-building music of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* begins to play. Though beginning softy, the driving rhythm of the music infuses energy into the performers throughout the piece. The first dancer to enter progresses through a sequence of movements comprised of small gestures such as shakes of the wrist, suspended fluttering of the appendages, and tapping on the floor, combined with expansive movements such as running jumps. At random intervals the other five dancers enter the stage, progressing through the same cycle of movement. Different, ever-

shifting patterns and spatial relationships emerge throughout this initial sequence. I intentionally did not set the path of each dancer so that the opening of the piece would never be the same—always an opportunity for a new exploration of self, group, and space. Finally, the dancers lower themselves to the ground in a centrally oriented circle. They each reach an arm towards the midpoint of the formation, and gently pat the ground with an outstretched hand.

The dancers begin to rise. They twist and extend their hands and arms as they elevate themselves to their knees, collapsing down once more before successfully getting to their feet. The dancers carry out small jumps and flick their limbs before progressing into a fluid movement I came to call "blooming" in which over and over they beseechingly reach their arms upwards while pushing onto demi point before retreating down to a hunched posture. The blooming continues, slowly transitioning into a more forceful, downward-thrusting movement. The dancers sustain the rhythm of this movement until one dancer rushes to the front of stage right, followed closely by the others. They pose together in an overlapping manner reminiscent of a Greek frieze. Suddenly the house lights come on and the audience is confronted with the direct gaze of the dancers. They slowly sink to a crouching position with bowed heads. Joining hands, they raise themselves up as the house lights fade. The dancers run to the upstage left corner where they unwind their conjoined arms and spread out diagonally across the stage in three couples. There is finally a shift away from the stark colorless lighting, and the stage is illuminated with warm pink and orange tones. A new swinging rhythm develops in the music. Each duet performs separate movements that move them down the diagonal until they exit the stage, one couple at a time.

While waiting for the dancers still performing their duets, the dancers begin to walk on in the upstage right corner, pausing briefly in a solid standing position before walking off again.

The dancers enter and exit in this manner, pausing in different linear facings, until all the dancers have congregated in a small clump. In cannon, they begin to erupt away from the group with a new movement sequence that emphasizes weight and suspension. The dancers move in a swarm-like fashion across the stage, all doing the same sequence on their own timing. They assemble a final time in the upstage left corner, before synchronically turning to face the audience, performing a short rising a falling phrase of movement, and letting momentum carry them off stage.

When I began choreographing *choros*, rather than come up with my own movement right away to teach to the dancers, I began the process by asking the dancers to devise their own phrases through improvisation. As a guideline for this improvisation, I instructed them to choose a phenomenon or entity from nature and embody it—an idea I obtained from the movement techniques of Jacques Leqoc, as employed by the Clod Ensemble when creating *Red Ladies*. I believed this would be an appropriate and productive way to begin this section for three reasons: firstly, by asking the dancers to externalize their internal perceptions and experiences of the world through improvisation I hoped to gain a sense of their natural movement and how they related to the space around them. These were important observations for me to make as I sought to establish an integrated group dynamic yet keeps my six dancers' individuality somewhat intact. Secondly, I was broadly interested in the potential of mimetic movement—the concept of mimesis, imitation or mimicry, arose in the writings of Plato and has been used as a descriptor for the imitative qualities of ancient choral movement. Thirdly, I felt for this section that a component of collaboration, rather than strictly asking the dancers to take my direction, would transform the dancers' connection to the piece in a way that would more closely approach the experience of the ancient chorus. I wanted the dancers to feel the piece was being made for them

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and about them, as a simultaneous exploration and celebration of their personal dance experience, rather than being a formal composition created for the sake of an audience. Since I would not be performing in this particular piece, I felt using at least some movement from the dancers themselves would help to authenticate the experience. I incorporated and staged, with slight modifications, two phrases of movement devised by two different dancers: the sequence that begins the section and the phrase that occurs as the dancers rise from the floor after forming a circle.

I chose to use these particular phrases because they very much allowed for a sensory exploration on the three different scales I wanted to examine. For instance, small joint articulations allowed for the dancers to reflect on the individualized experience of their moving body. The traveling jump steps and rhythmical movements allowed them to explore the variability of the group dynamic as they traveled around each other and played with each other tempo-wise (either choosing to synch up with another dancer's rhythm or to purposefully ignore it). The many steps that took the dancers into contact with the floor or other boundaries of the stage allowed them to contemplate the space in which they were performing.

I wanted to subvert the experience of the audience in addition to reestablishing the experience of the performers. I tried to do this in two ways. In conventional dance viewing, the audience members are often isolated consumers who observe the spectacle in conscious anonymity, while the dancers display themselves openly. Therefore, while the dance is underway, the exchange between the audience and the dancers is unequal. At the point when the dancers run to the front of the stage and assume their frieze-like position, I chose to bring up the house lights in order to equalize the dancers and audience. With the lights up, the performers can finally see and meet the gazes of the individuals watching them. The audience, now conscious

that they too are on display, momentarily become active participants in the dance. Another less

explicit tactic I took to complicate the viewer experience was to create simultaneous layers of

movement throughout the dance, preventing the audience members from easily taking in the

composition as a whole. By not directly guiding the eye of the viewer to look at anything in

particular (the dancers moved in unformed groups rather than formations), the audience was

forced to make their own choices about what to observe. By consciously making these decisions,

I hoped the viewers might grow more cognizant of their positions as audience members, and

thereby become more active in and aware of the "ritual" of dance viewing.

<div align="center">
Κόσμος (cosmos)
The universe
</div>

Following *choros*, I created a solo for myself in order to explore further ideas in

connection with ancient choral dance. Within the solo I wanted to explore the notion of a

"cosmic dance". I came across this phrase within numerous ancient, mainly philosophical texts

in which the authors compared the movement of celestial bodies to the rhythmical movements of

choral dance. Not only was I inspired by the imagery evoked by this phrase, but I quickly drew a

connection between the cosmic dance of the ancient world and certain innovative theories about

dance and movement brought up by early 20th century choreographers such as Isadora Duncan.

Recorded quotes of Duncan describe the potential for natural movement to put us in accord with

the rhythms of the universe.

> To express what is most moral, healthful and beautiful in art—this is the mission
> of the dancer, and to this I dedicate my life. These flowers before me contain the
> dream of a dance; it could be named "The light falling on white flowers." A dance
> that would be subtle transition of the light and the whiteness. So pure, so strong,
> that people would say: it is a soul we see moving, a soul that has reached the light
> and found the whiteness. We are glad it should move so. Through its human
> medium we have a satisfying sense of movement, of light and glad things. Through
> this human medium, the movement of all nature runs through us, it transmitted to

us from the dancer. We feel the movement of light intermingled with the thought of whiteness. It is a prayer, this dance; each movement reaches in long undulations to the heavens and becomes a part of the eternal rhythm of the spheres.[91]

I named my solo *Κόσμος (cosmos)*, which explicitly translates as "the universe." I was intrigued by the idea that my own natural movement could in fact connect me to some greater universal force: through dance I could both epitomize my human experience as well as transcend it. The solo begins as I walk on stage into a pool of light. The music is a mixed version of Ezio Bosso's *The Sky Seen from the Moon*, which for three and a half minutes repeats the same hauntingly beautiful melodic mantra, swelling in drama and intensity and the piece goes on. At first I confine my movement to the edges of the spotlight, but soon venture out beyond its borders in a wide semi-circle that takes me to the upstage left corner. By this time the spotlight has disappeared from view, and the stage is bathed in cool blue light. My movements grow fuller and larger as I travel diagonally across the stage. Finally, I break out of the phrasing of my dance and run in an arching circle around the stage. I end how I begin, once again confined to a spotlight. Both the music and the light fades out and the audience believes the dance is over, but just as the silent darkness settles the light and music returns for a final verse. With this second conclusion I softly slip off stage.

The movement of this solo all came out of my own improvisation (my natural movement), which I then solidified and gave a form and structure. Performing the solo proved to be very introspective. I selectively chose when to engage the audience and when to focus internally. Putting a fade in the lights with a simultaneous fade out in the music was a way to deceive the audience into believing the piece was over, surprising them when the lights and music return and I reprise the dance. I felt that ending the solo in this manner would further

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[91] Duncan (1928), 56-7.

isolate the audience. It was important for me to communicate to the audience that this dance was not for them. It was an opportunity for me to take stock of myself, my body, my space, at a very specific point in time. I choreographed the work quickly and did not take time to rethink or adjust what I had done, lest the piece lose the satisfying rawness I experienced the few times I rehearsed it. I do not think I can as of yet claim that my experience creating and performing this dance was transcendent or put me in harmony with the rhythms of the universe, but I do know that it was the closest I have yet come to such and experience.

<div align="center">

Χαρᾶς (*charas*)
Of joy

</div>

The third and final movement of Apotheosis was inspired by the aesthetic conceptions of the Apollonian and Dionysian. These concepts have been used from the 20th century onward to both inspire dance as well as to talk about dance, especially when attempts are made to drawn connections between ancient and modern dance—no doubt because of the terms' explicit allusions to Greek mythology. When invoked, these categories are most often understood through the definitions established by Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. However, an alternative model for Apollonian/Dionysian aesthetics can be derived from Plato's *Laws*, which I decided to use to construct the last movement of *Apotheosis*. Plato relates that the desire to move, to skip and leap uncontrollably is implanted in every young child. The gods Apollo and Dionysus come to humans as divine companions in dance in order to regulate the previously uncontrollable movement into dance. Apollo brings rationality and order to the dance in the form of rhythm and harmony, whereas the impassioned intoxication of Dionysus allows men to return to the untamed frenzy of youth (however some order remains since the Dionysian force still operates within choral dance). Lastly, Plato describes that all dance movement stems from the expression of joy.

The final movement of *Apotheosis* takes the form of a trio. I used Plato's connection between dance and joy and named the piece *Χαρᾶς (charas)*, "of joy." The dancers begin on stage in a triangular formation to the right of center. Three soft pools of light from above illuminate their half of the stage. Nico Muhly's *Honest Music* starts to play. The dancers move together while maintaining their formation. I began choreographing the beginning of this section by teaching all the dancers the same phrase of movement. I then gave them each a solo that starts at a different point in the phrase. At the end of their solo they return to the original movement phrase. The achieved effect is that two dancers are always in synchronization while a third moves independently, though is still clearly bound by the energy of the group.

After this opening section concludes, the dancers explode with a sudden swell in the music. Bright, golden light floods the stage and the dancers leap through space to the upstage corner. The lighting dims somewhat as the three re-establish their triangle. By performing movement sequences in cannon, and executing some interactive partnering work, the dancer's triangular unit returns to center. They then spread apart as the stage goes dark save a spotlight on the downstage left dancer. She performs a solo phrase of grounded movement. After which, the spot fades out and there is a stretch of darkness—only music plays for about ten seconds. A spotlight in the center appears suddenly with a change in the music and the three dancers perform their solo sections from the opening simultaneously. The lights and music change to repeat the beginning of *xaras*. The dancers return to their original positions and reprise the opening movement phrase without the individual solo parts. Finally, as the music swells at the end of the piece, the dancers "bloom" as they did in the choros section (first more violently and then more calmly). Meanwhile the lights pulsate brighter and darker a number of times before at last fading to darkness.

I choose to choreograph this section as a trio because by having three people on stage there is an inherent formal Apollonian order. The dancers are always arranged as a triangle. A number of times I challenged the rational force of the triangle by having one or more of the dancers do a different movement sequence or having the dancers move in between each other. However, the triangle by and large remains intact throughout the piece. The only moment when the triangle truly fades from view is when the lights fade to show only one dancer. I believed this fitting as that moment in particular was meant to epitomize the Dionysian.

In terms of the choreography itself, I generated two modes of movement which I intertwined throughout the piece. Movement driven by restraint, control, and containment of energy and movement that allowed for the liberating release of energy. The opening movement sequences (both the group and individual movements the section opens with) are of the former type. The dancers' energy is drawn close to the body by the sweeping arms and leg movements. However, just after this section the mode of movement shifts to the Dionysian mode, in which the dancers are free to release their energy in ecstatic expression as they charge across the stage. The choreography continues to subtly shift between the tasks of restraint and release. I hoped to reconcile the two modes to the point that the dance flowed together seamlessly despite the changes in the required articulation of movement. The changes in the modes of movement, and the choreography for this section in general, are very much influenced by the music. The moments of controlled, Apollonian movement, correspond to the calmer, more rhythmically paced sections of the music, while the unrestrained Dionysian movement correspond to the more forceful, dynamic music passages.

As a unified whole I wanted the piece to make reference to Plato's statement that dance arises out of joy. I did not want the piece to be an explicit embodiment of joy. I wanted the

dance to arise and progress out of an experience of joy, but at the same time be shown as an experience in its own right. I believe this concept is best displayed in the piece during the solo. For this part, by having the dancer arc to the ground and carry out the floor sequence, I hoped to make clear the mix of struggle within ecstatic expression. The dancer must struggle to find a release of energy as she braces herself against the floor, yet eventually resolves this struggle by gently returning herself to a seated position, victorious over her emotions.

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