Abstract

Title of Thesis:	*Finally, Fairies!:* A Study in Hauntological Choreography
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"Finally, Fairies!: A Study in Hauntological Choreography" is the written thesis that documents the creative research, development, and critical reflection of my dance production *Finally, Fairies!*, a requirement of the M.F.A. in Dance at the University of Maryland, College Park. *Finally, Fairies!* premiered March 11-13, 2022, at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Dance Theatre. In outlining the process from ideation to performance, I illuminate my personal history and artistic lineage in dance performance and choreography. I consider my choreographic impulses and choices in relationship to hauntology, a concept given name by Jacques Derrida and expanded upon by contemporary theorists such as Mark Fisher, Jack Halberstam, and Merlin Coverley. I explore hauntological moods, methodologies, Vaporwave music, and emergent forms of composition that involve both improvisation and choreography. Ultimately, I offer close readings of *Finally, Fairies!* to further expose what the performance proposed, as well as develop and trouble formulations of presence and embodiment through an insistence on spectrality and indeterminacy.

Finally, Fairies!
A Study in Hauntological Choreography

by

Tristan Koepke

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Introduction

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and … and … and …' This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be.' […And to] establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings.[1]
>
> – Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

I start here because there is no correct place to start.

I start here: Lost and found. All humans continuously process being and becoming, doing and undoing. The labor of dancing is a tool for both losing and finding oneself. Contemporary dancers often dedicate hours and hours to stripping away affectation, embracing an embodied habitus disguised as minimalist and neutral.[2] This process pervades, and the labor of repetitive and habitual bodily techniques often goes relatively unnoticed in the construction of identity and expression.

I propose an archaeology of flesh, memory, and movement. I propose unpacking my *bodily sedimentation* of history.[3]

---

[1] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. By Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 25.

[2] I borrow Pierre Bordieu's definition of habitus, which he describes as "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations." See *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 57.

[3] Sara Ahmed discusses sedimentation as a phenomenological concept. Expanding on the foundational works of philosophers Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed proposes bodily sedimentation as a mechanism to understand how "our bodies are shaped "by histories, which they perform in their comportment, their posture, and their gestures." I apply this term as a lens to understand the affects, actions, and techniques that are learned, prioritized, and practiced, within the body. In short, how the body performs its history in corporeality. See Sara

My professional experience is devoted to the artistry and processes of choreographers across the field of contemporary dance theater. This bodily sedimentation, the gritty soil of labor, practice, and time is comprised of embodied taste, choices, impulses, and habits. I experience this sediment as orientation, a creative and somatic directionality inhabiting both space and time, acting within and upon the physical. Sediment suspends and is suspended within the body. It settles and is settled. Bodily sedimentation, or what dance scholar André Lepecki calls *historical dust*, moves and is moved by action and presence, implying both multi-directionality, and trans-temporality.[4] Lepecki writes,

> Historical dust is not simple metaphor. When taken literally, it reveals how historical forces penetrate deep into the inner layers of the body: dust sedimenting the body, operating to rigidify the smooth rotation of joints and articulations, fixing the subject within overly prescribed pathways and steps, fixating movement within a certain politics of time and of place. It is the tensions in the subject, the tensions in subjectivity under the force of history's dusty sedimentation of the body.[5]

Sediment is tangible. Sediment is permeable, understandable, mobile yet permanent. As techniques and technologies of the body, sediment may be completely known, able to be named and located. The dancer's performance of an undercurve may be traced back to their first modern dance teacher. The quality of an arm gesture (does it carve, swipe, or fling?) is a fact of this corporeal sediment. But what of the less known? The more mysterious moods and affectations?

Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 56.

[4] An early draft of my theorization of bodily sedimentation was first published as a blog post (my blog is often a landing pad, and open-source journal for my process). My explication of sediment has since deepened through the embodiment of this project. See "Bodily Sedimentation," *Tristan Koepke*, January 4, 2021. https://www.tristankoepke.com/post/bodily-sedimentation

[5] André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: The Politics and Performance of Movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15.

Following these questions, I seek to raise parts of myself that have been hidden through layers of bodily technologies and techniques, to encounter the shadows, glorious icons, and luminous apparitions that (im)materialize throughout my dancing body.

This document is a component of my graduate thesis project focusing on the development and performance of *Finally, Fairies!*, my original dance work which premiered March 11-13, 2022, at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Dance Theatre at the University of Maryland, College Park. The production, a thirty-five-minute performance for a cast of six dancers, expanded research that started over a decade ago with the creation of my work, *Solo 2009.* This written record accompanies the performance and functions in multiple ways. It maps the creative process from *Solo 2009* to *Finally, Fairies*!, acting as oversized program notes, while constellating creative and theoretical influences. It traces those threads of inspiration and sifts through the persistent sediment of my choreographic past, present, and future. Perhaps most importantly, it summons hauntology, a concept, given name by philosopher Jacques Derrida, that complicates ontology and phenomenology, as well as troubles formulations of presence and embodiment through its persistence on spectrality and indeterminacy.[6]

This project is a form of queer and haunted time travel, as my past saturates and reorientates the present while indulging the emergence of new futures. Chapters inform each other, dancing in circles and loops, giving rise to themes and motifs. Throughout, I make liberal use of citations and footnotes, offering multiple pathways for the reader. I propose these as a

[6] Ontology is the study of being that includes looking at essence of things (objects, orientations, concepts) for what they are. Phenomenology focuses on things (objects, orientations, concepts) as they are experienced, primarily through the senses.

kind of side conversation, a queer compositional strategy that engenders the reader to playfully partake in the creative act of research by suggesting a "choose your own adventure" tactic.[7]

The chapters, despite their overlapping and swarming nature, are organized in a way that respects a requirement for some sort of linear organization. In Chapter One, I propose a plausible first tracing of my research: I look to the summer of 2009, when the material for *Finally, Fairies!* initially manifested. But even that point deserves a brief genealogy that starts and ends in past tense. I offer several encounters with the source material for this thesis project. Through personal history, artistic lineage, and phenomenological encounters with dances I've created, I lay the foundation for the creative and theoretical project that became *Finally, Fairies!*. In Chapter Two, I explore hauntology, and offer a brief review of its applications in literary and media criticism. After further surveying hauntology's relationship to queer theory, I apply it as a critical lens to contextualize my early research for *Finally, Fairies!*. Chapter Three ventures into the waters of Vaporwave, a music and aesthetic genre that contextualizes the hauntological mood of the performance and inspires various compositional designs and embodied tactics throughout the production. Chapter Four navigates the hauntological methodologies used to choreograph *Finally, Fairies!*, as well as various creative influences on my process, most notably Trisha Brown, Chris Schlichting, Neal Greenberg, Jeanine Durning, and Miguel Gutierrez. In Chapter Five, I discuss *Finally, Fairies!* as it was presented in March 2022. I offer movement description in dialogue with conversations surrounding compositional tactics, critical reflection, and shed light on key themes that emerged throughout its process and performance. Finally, I ideate

[7] Let's put this into practice. I'm referring here to the *Choose Your Own Adventure*® series, the fourth best-selling children's book series of all time. Originally written and published by RA Montgomery, each book chapter asks its reader to make a choice, which directs them to a different page, and therefore, narrative. See *Choose Your Own Adventure*®, https://www.cyoa.com.

around the potential for future expanded research possibilities that have emerged from this project.

My body, my self. A revenant. Rhizomatic, lost and found, then lost again. I start here: It is in flesh, sediment, and memory that I resurrect my multiplicity. I start here because there is no correct place to start. In mood, in affect, in emptiness. In a staging of the end, the *and*, the eschatological deluge.

Chapter One: Fairies

> A question of repetition: a specter is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back.[8]
>
> – Jacques Derrida

Fairies: A Genealogy

In August 2009, I had just finished my first two years of undergraduate study at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (UM-TC). I worked with a large group of faculty, notably Carl Flink, Toni Pierce-Sands, and Ananya Chatterjea. Much of my dance studies focused on athleticism and high virtuosity within contemporary modern dance performance. In fact, during the summer of 2009, I had just finished a project in collaboration between UM-TC and the Limón Dance Company, a performance of José Limón's *Missa Brevis* (1958).[9] My artistic inclinations were, however, more minimalist in nature, and I confess that my young and angsty self carried a disdain for what I read at the time as traditional aesthetics.[10]

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[8] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: *The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London, Routledge, 1994), 11.

[9] José Limón (1908-1972) was a prolific Mexican American dancer and choreographer, considered by most to be one of the most influential modern dance artists of the twentieth century. After beginning his performance career in the company of Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, he premiered his own dance company in 1947. He is known for establishing his own technique for training dancers, which prioritizes breath, weight, fall and recover. Some of his most iconic works include *The Moor's Pavane* (1949), *The Traitor* (1954), and *Missa Brevis* (1958). Limón died in in 1972, and yet the company he founded remains one of the longest running modern dance companies in the United States. For more information on Limón, his life, and his legacy, see *José Limón and La Malinche: The Dancer and The Dance*, ed. Patricia Seed (Austin, University of Texas Press), 2008.

[10] Although modern dance in the twentieth century revolutionized (and continued to revolutionize) Euro-American concert dance aesthetics, certain techniques and choreographies became canonized, such as the works of Martha Graham and José Limón. While certainly progressive for their time and contexts, in 2009 I saw them as upholding certain traditions, such

I was introduced to the work of Trisha Brown two years earlier when I performed a *Set and Reset/Reset* project staged by Trina Thompson-Warren and Wil Swanson, as well as Brown's work *Planes* (1968) for a two-month long installation at the Walker Arts Center.[11] In contrast to my feelings within Limón's choreography, I found solace in Brown's pragmatic affect that never asked me to play-act at a superficial level, but rather commit to doing a task as Tristan. I simply had to swing my arm, bend my knee, skip forward, and land on two feet.

After finishing the *Missa Brevis* project in 2009, I decided to return to Brown's creative landscape, and participated in a Trisha Brown Dance Company intensive in New York City. There, I studied with Diane Madden, Lance Gries, Stacy Spence, and Cori Orlinghouse. This was perhaps the first time I considered critically the deconstruction, or stripping away, of technique and affect that minimalist postmodern aesthetics desire.[12] This fundamental request, to let go of excess muscle tone, to find the simplest and most direct pathways for movement, and to free the body from exterior impositions, seduced me into its realm of pure levers, forces and

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as heteronormative gender roles in performance. It wouldn't be until years later, perhaps watching Limón Dance Company's virtual performance of *There is a Time* (1956) in 2020, which included a gender-swapped male-male intimate duet, that I found ways to respect and admire the nuance and drama of Limón's work. Additionally, I now recognize that many of the physical sensibilities, such as weight, fall, and suspension, within my bodily sedimentation can be tied historically to Limón.

[11] Trisha Brown (1936-2017) was an American postmodern choreographer. She is known for her early works (approx. 1962-1978), such as *Walking on the Wall* (1971) and *Roof Piece* (1971), which focused on non-traditional dance settings, as well as her theatrical works for the stage (approx. 1979-2012), such as *Glacial Decoy* (1979) and *Foray Forêt* (1990). She founded the Trisha Brown Dance Company in 1970, which continues to this day. Unlike Limón, she never branded a technique, however her choreographic vocabulary does have a distinct style. For more on Brown and her work, I suggest Susan Rosenberg's *Trisha Brown: Choreography as Visual Art* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2017).

[12] For more information on deconstruction, and its dialectic partner, bricolage, in postmodern aesthetics, see Melanie Bales, "A Dancing Dialectic," in *The Body Eclectic,* eds. Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol (Urbana and Chicago; University of Illinois Press, 1995), 10-21.

transmissions. And yet, the work also felt limited, in that I couldn't bring my fullest sense of self forward. In paring away affect (a technique disguised as non-technique), I reduced my performative ability to clarify and deepen both character and nuance.

Upon returning to Minnesota, I was curious about unearthing myself, my rhythmic instinct, and my personal affectation after experiencing the two disparate vocabularies of Limón and Brown. I spent one balmy afternoon in Studio 300 at the Barbara Barker Center for Dance at UM-TC, immersed in an improvisational practice of exploring these techniques in conversation with my more wild movement affectations, including my irreverent tendency to thrash, jab, and slice, juxtaposed with gestural decorations and nuanced weight shifts and pivots one could possibly call *fey*.[13]

I filmed a series of these improvisations in short clips, roughly 30-90 seconds each. The length was arbitrary: the hand-me-down Canon digital camera would only record in these short bursts before panicking and automatically shutting off. Later that night, I combed through these videos, simply out of curiosity (this was long before the proliferation of the dancer selfie videos, which now saturate Instagram and Tik Tok). There was something about the movement, perhaps my distinct rhythms, or the meditative lilting quality with which I fell, returned to motif, and fell again, that held my curiosity. I quickly edited seven of the clips together, arbitrarily ordering them into a video seven minutes and eighteen seconds in length.[14] I titled this film *Solo 2009*.

---

[13] In popular culture, *fey* is a word often used to describe effeminate gay men. Fey can allude to limp wrists, soft-spoken lisps, and lilting, spritely movements. Despite its history of being weaponized against gay people, fey, like the word *queer,* as both a concept and affect, can be cultivated and celebrated. I, as a gay man, choose to highlight fey as a performative quality to understand, practice, and value.

[14] The first and second clips had a natural seam. After recording one video, the camera shut off. After turning the camera on again, and pressing record, I entered the frame and resumed the same physical shape where I had just paused. The arbitrary ordering of the seven clips kept these

Fairies: A Phenomenology

A lanky man stands in the center of the dimly lit studio, almost silhouetted, facing forward. Wearing dark shorts and a tee-shirt, he arcs his arm around his side before his knee buckles and he hangs to one side like a broken doll. The movements of his free-swinging arm pulls him up to vertical, and he begins a series of framing gestures and 90-degree turns, articulating his body in relation to the studio: grey floors, white walls made soft grey-blue, three mirrors, ballet barres, and framed pictures of modern dance greats, such as Loïe Fuller, Erick Hawkins, and Martha Graham.[15]

He falls forward, only to catch himself, returning his legs under his pelvis while jiggling his wrists as if he's shaking a bag of marbles in each hand. Heels sharply rotate, and he places a hand on his head, a self-coronation. Busy hands fly in front of his face, and he begins to lean and fall side-to-side, describing diagonals spatially, decorating each angle with delicate hands that slip through the air. His arms swing and he falls again, stepping regularly in threes. Ball, change, step. And then again, in fours. Ba-dum-dum-Ch. He begins to speed, and his frivolously thrown arms drop him off-center. His heels rebound off the floor, catching his body in arching shapes, held without breath, soon to be blown off-kilter as he slides backward.

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two clips together in their original sequence. Additionally, I had filmed more than just seven clips that day, the rest of which, for reasons I can't remember, I did not include in the final cut. While the clip entitled *Solo 2009* has remained on my YouTube account since 2009, the original clips were held on a computer drive that has since been destroyed.

[15] Neither my memory nor the footage, both slightly fuzzy, can verify the exact people in these photographs, but they were representatives of the Euro-American modern dance canon. UM-TC has since replaced these pictures with a more comprehensive and equitable representation of global dance choreographers and icons.

Dramatic punctuation of the hands reference heart and stomach. And again, fingertips softly and quickly stabbing his heart. Quiet pivoting steps round the corner, and he slips through a sequence of almost and not-yet embraces, before wildly flailing, jumping, pounding, and leaping, pausing briefly to frame his face with a stiff hand. His rhythm intensifies, made evident even without sound. In a flurry, he tosses a leg, followed successively by his head, his arm, his opposite shoulder before his hand lands heavily across his body, stopping him in the form of a tall and twisted tree. A beat, and he unfurls, knees poking forward, hollow heart sending him forward and back, again and again.

And then again, in fours. Ba-dum-dum-Ch.

Movements start from similar initiations, only to cascade in a new direction. A low turn into a corner sends him into a rock-step, or sometimes a stuttering hop-chug. The smooth gliding arms bind themselves up, before releasing a thrashing tantrum of aggravated head and shoulders moving side-to-side. A quiet lean to the right stumbles into a frantic shimmy, and an ongoing box-step struggles to stay on top of itself while the marley floor seemingly slides underneath his feet.

By the end of the film, the space is brighter. The sun shining through the one apparent window, reflected through the mirror, saturates the room. Time has passed, or perhaps the clouds have burned off.

Fairies: A Genealogy Continued

I continued to regularly watch *Solo* 2009 weeks after making it. Although I, like many dancers, have a difficult relationship with watching myself on video, I was entranced with the repetitive, churning, and toiling qualities and efforts, and had a deep desire to become more

acquainted with my improvisational rhythms and impulses. I wondered if it would be possible to learn this choreography from the film, an effort of this scope I had never taken before. With the support of two of my peers, dancers Renee Copeland and Evy Muench, I began to spend several hours each week studying the video, and learning the phrase, one rhythm, transition, and shape at a time.

This work takes time, and often a seemingly absurd amount. *Solo 2009* didn't consist of simple movement; it was nuanced and idiosyncratic, with weight shifts that stutter, fumble, and fall. Yet after three months of this work, Copeland and I were able to share two minutes of material in an informal showing of works-in-progress, presented in the Spring of 2010 at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.[16] I called this work *Fairies*, a rigorous celebration of the movements that my body generated as I danced through, around, and beyond my bodily sediment, gazing in wonder and curiosity about its iterations and limitations, and something else I had not yet found a way to name.

While I received supportive feedback for *Fairies*, and had hopes to take it further, eventually learning and performing the entire film, I soon became distracted with other things. After graduation from UM-TC in 2010, I began freelancing with several Minnesota choreographers, before joining Zenon Dance Company in 2011. Throughout my tenure at Zenon, I performed in the works of more than thirty choreographers, in addition to my continued freelance creative projects. While I was fortunate to have this work, most of which challenged me physically and fed me artistically, it also layered more and more movement and creative

[16] Although spread out over three months, I estimate it took about 20-25 hours of rehearsal time to learn two minutes of choreography from video and perform it in relative unison. I take note of the amount of time it took here, as I will speak to the amount of time it took to learn the rest of the choreography in the next section.

paradigms and approaches into the sediment of my body, the very thing that *Fairies* had begun to disrupt.

Yet as I moved onto other projects, *Fairies* never really left me. Although I oriented my focus towards the work in front of me, the twenty-year old dancer from *Solo 2009* was often present as a sort of lingering memory, a nagging persistence of a project unfinished, and a longing for a sort of futurity that never came to be.

Finally, Fairies!

As I continued my experience and research in performance over the next decade, my body matured and adapted to the many techniques and physicalities required of repertory work. As I moved through the next decade of my performance career, however, I never forgot *Solo 2009*, or my unrealized desire to learn and craft the entire film as I had intended to with *Fairies*. My body was drifting further and further away from that dancer from 2009, with his angular whimsy, his comical rhythmic choices, his angst, and his stubborn irreverence. I became stronger, smoother, more coordinated, and also more careful, more prone to editing choices before making them. Yet, even as I matured as a dancer and performer, I could still see the 2009 me in the mirror, or in a particular percussive improvised choice. He was present, a fairy, a specter, never fully realized, yet always there.

I longed to, if I couldn't fully inhabit my old self, at least become proximal to that lost self. To greet *Solo 2009* as if it were a revenant, back from the dead. In 2020, I bit the bullet. The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly and radically transformed my approaches to dance-making, which had always prioritized collaborative and social spaces. The pandemic provided a solitude that invited me to finally dive into this lonesome work, while simultaneously opening a door for me to consider the ways in which I could be my own collaborator. My 2009 self, dancing

through the fuzzy video footage, and I could dance together, informing each other, while the choreography took form in my present body. I spent approximately fifteen hours learning directly from the computer screen: watch, watch and try, fail, walk back to the screen, watch again, sing the rhythm, try it on, feel the choreography disintegrate right in my grasp.[17] Some days, I hooked up an old Epson projector to amplify the film, which created a scenario in which I could more accurately and acutely dance with my old self. This helped me gain more clarity around not simply the shapes the choreography asked for, but more importantly the rhythm. The choreography had a peculiar rhythmic specificity, a constant churning vibration, interrupted often by catch steps followed by a two-step, as if it were the drum kit highlighting the punchline of a joke. Good comedy is in the timing after all.

By the end of December 2020, I learned the entire film, and could perform it alongside the projected *Solo 2009* in approximate unison. This practice helped me locate a particular mood, sifting through the sediment of my body, and the trans-temporality of my creative memory. Performing the material as a duet between myself and the projected image revealed a tension between the then and now, and also frustrated the power that *Solo 2009* had over me. By completing the original task of learning the entire choreography, I had in some way deflated its spectral presence, and simultaneously crafted an exchange that invited the specter to participate in my dancing. And yet, choreography is always nuanced, providing opportunities for deepening and further interrogation. Although I had learned the choreography, that persistent specter still asked: Now what?

[17] As noted, the first two minutes took me approximately twenty hours to learn. After almost a dozen years of experience, it took only fifteen hours to learn the rest of the 7:18, a real testament to experience.

I proposed a new devised work, *Finally, Fairies!*, to continue the investigation of *Solo 2009* through an exploration of choreographic intuition and improvisational intervention. I resurrected *Solo 2009* after digging it up from the vault; what more could I find by sinking my hands a little deeper into the surrounding soil? Like a precious archeological artifact, should I clean it, preserve it, and hang it up to simply be appreciated? Or was there something more persistent, something less obvious, something translucent, that *haunted* me, that wouldn't let me let go of this material, even if I tried?

Chapter Two: Hauntology

> Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a Hauntology.[18]
>
> – Jacques Derrida

> I think of ghosts and haunting as just being alert. If you are really alert, then you see the life that exists beyond the life that is on top. It's not spooky, necessarily. It might be. But it doesn't have to be. It's something I relish, rather than run from.[19]
>
> – Toni Morrison

Hauntology: Altogether Other

Hauntology, a neologism originally suggested by philosopher Jacques Derrida in his text *Spectres of Marx*, describes the intangible, yet clearly experienced, specters of the past that impress upon, inform, and create the present.[20] The term is deliberately slippery and translucent, as it in and of itself points towards other well-lit threads of inquiry. In the original French, *Hantologie*, the word is a near-homophone for *ontologie,* English's ontology. In the words of philosopher Colin Davis, hauntology, as a puncept, intentionally "replac[es] the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive."[21] Hauntology exposes the enduring existence of the past and its implications within contemporary temporality and phenomenology.

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[18] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: *The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London, Routledge, 1994), 10.

[19] Juda Bennett, *Toni Morrison and the Queer Pleasure of Ghosts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 1.

[20] Andrew Gallix, "Hauntology: A Not So-New Critical Manifestation," *The Guardian*, June 17, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical.

[21] Colin Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms," *French Studies* LIX, No. 3 (July 2005), 373.

Derrida, a poststructuralist semiotician, utilized his concept to consider philosophical economic models.[22,23] Specifically, he theorized how capitalism and neo-liberal paradigms were constantly *haunted* by Marxism, and even Marx himself.[24] Author Merlin Coverley writes:

> Derrida used hauntology, his science of ghosts, to demonstrate that far from this being the case, the spectre of Marx, like all ghosts which have yet to be laid to rest, would return, repeatedly, disrupting the present and continuing to remind us of another possible future.[25]

Social frameworks that permeate contemporary neoliberalism are marked by the enduring presence of Marx and Leftist thought, destabilizing and dissolving conceptual fixity. Extending this understanding of hauntology beyond its economic application suggests that any subject's ontology, essentially its presence and existence, must also consider the intangible concepts, ideas, dissonances, and moods that act upon it. Nothing is ever truly only itself. Subjects are

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[22] Poststructuralism is a movement in philosophy that extends to social sciences, feminism, and critical theory. Primarily based in the idea of deconstruction, poststructuralism describes concepts/things have meaning only in relation to other concepts/things, considering how knowledge is produced rather than uncovered. For poststructuralists, positivist thinking and rational empiricism don't account for authorial presence within a text, and poststructuralist critique offers a more thorough analysis of concepts, subjects, and philosophies, and paves the way for understanding contemporary and historic discourse and bias. For a brief overview of poststructuralism, see Ben Egger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance." In *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 105-131.

[23] Semiotics is a study, or discipline, that considers how meaning is made through a system of codes and signification. I'm particularly interested in poststructuralist semiotics as a foundation through which to study creative phenomena such as dance.

[24] Marx alluded to this directly, and Derrida follows Marx to arrive at his concept of hauntology. The opening line of the preamble for the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is, after all, "A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of communism." Although the rest of the *Manifesto* is not directly related to this research, I recommend it for any who want to trace the historic threads of hauntology. This document, first published in 1948, has been published extensively, and is available in the public domain.

[25] Merlin Coverley, *Hauntology; Ghosts of Futures Past* (Harpenden, UK: Oldcastle Books, 2020), 8-9.

constantly influenced and haunted by other concepts, sometimes their opposite. What makes hauntology most alluring is the puzzle it supposes by employing ghosts and specters as metaphors: that any being cannot fully be known at its foundation without phenomenological engagement with the before, the uncanny, the other, or the multiplicity of possibility. There is no being without the manifold: what once could have been, or even unbeing itself.

Hauntology offers insight more broadly into contemporary subjects as being relational, indistinct, and not entirely independent. Through the image of the specter, Derrida calls into question the notion of any concept or presence being completely itself. To say the past informs the present is a simplification; one may say that presence is saturated with the before, the not yet, and unfulfilled, the not forgotten. To engage with hauntology requires a certain amount of poeticism, as the possibility of the haunting specter pushes at the limitations of conventional logics and fixed conclusions. Hauntology frustrates the very premise of being. Critic Frederic Jameson writes,

> Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future they offer to prophesy) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us.[26]

Since its first appearance in publication in 1987, Derrida's hauntology has since become widespread in literary and philosophical criticism, to the point at which hauntology is used as a sort of shorthand for any ghostly presence, or any presence, subject, or form that is seemingly affected by an enduring specter. Works of literature, music, theater, and film have been described by theorists and critics alike as hauntological. Some of these hauntological works directly

[26] Fredric Jameson 'Marx's Purloined Letter', in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 39.

address the subject of the ghost, while others maybe allude to the possibility of spectrality and dyschronia.[27] Some works rely on hauntological structures as well as narrative subjects. Critic Mark Fisher writes,

> Haunting can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time.[28]

Literary scholar Katy Shaw extrapolates this further, suggesting that hauntology's broken time relates not just past to the present, but also the future. She writes, "specters disturb the present with the possibility of alternative pasts and futures."[29] English literature is saturated with hauntological stories, characters, and settings that exemplify this phenomenon. Take, for example, the works of Charles Dickens. Scrooge's visits with the ghosts of Christmases Past, Present, and Future, or more abstractly, Pip's meetings with the dyschronious Miss Havisham, a living specter.[30] As the latter exemplifies, the presence of ghost is not necessary for a work's hauntological orientation, but rather a disjunction in time shown through the Miss Havisham's character's grief, trauma, and perpetual perseveration.

There are more contemporary examples of hauntology in literature and media, such as Netflix's *The Haunting of Hill House* and FX's *American Horror Story*. Both are excellent examples of narrative constructions and ghostly presences that trouble chrononormativity

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[27] Dyschronia has multiple overlapping definitions: the experience of time without duration, and to loop experience in such a way that resists linearity are two of my favorites.

[28] Mark Fisher, "What is Hauntology" *Film Quarterly,* Vol. 66, No. 1 (2012), 19.

[29] Katy Shaw, *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 7.

[30] For a more thorough investigation of hauntology in Dickens' writing, see Part One of Coverley, *Hauntology; Ghosts of Futures Past.*

through an active resistance of simple chronology. In *Hill House* a young girl is haunted by a "Bent Neck Lady," a ghostly figure that appears, watching her, at several moments throughout her life. Later in the series, she is revealed as the young girl's future self. Each time she appears, her manifestation is a disruption, or stain, upon linear order. She is a phantom, who returns again and again suturing together a trans-temporal structure for the show itself. *American Horror Story* does something similar yet frustrates the normative even further. An anthology series that features many of the same cast in new roles each season, shifting landscapes and time periods, invites the familiar faces to appear and reappear in unlimited potentialities: live characters, ghosts, creepy neighbors, and various members of the occult. This sort of hauntology, revenants moving through temporal drag, troubles conventional television's reliance on serialized linear narration.[31, 32]

Hauntology: The Queer Specter

Ghosts are a convenient metaphor for the hauntological specter in media and literature, but they are not a necessary inclusion. Hauntings may be moods, feelings, shadows, or interpretations. Hauntings are historical, but not easily (if at all) iterated in linear time. As Derrida writes, hauntology "is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after

[31] Temporal drag, Elizabeth Freeman's concept, refers to an excess of history and historical signification, or retrogression, typically through performative attire and costume. For further theoretical explication beyond this example, see Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography, "*Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005), 66.

[32] There are several critics and theorists who discuss *American Horror Story*. I strongly suggest Theresa L. Geller and Anna Marie Banker's "That Magic Box Lies: Queer Theory, Seriality, and *American Horror Story*," *The Velvet Light Trap* 79 (Spring 2017), 36-49.

day…."[33] Filled with poetic sensibility, hauntology traces themes, iteration, recombination, as well as gaps, absences, and black holes. As such, hauntology may be used as a queering of historiographic methodology and phenomenology. I employ theorist Jack Halberstam's definition of queer as "nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time," to suggest a relationship between queer theory and hauntology.[34] Queer reading, or queering, of texts that have not been always read (or created) as ontologically queer is a way to mine the subject for spectral presence of queer desire, associated pleasures and anxieties, and traumas related to queer identity and heteronormative culture. Queering seeks to find and expose the *not there* queer presence or commentary as always having been *there*, such as within Halberstam's explication of the parallels between anxieties about disrupted heteronormative family structure and the monster of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.[35]

Queer theory, with its emphasis on troubling chrononormativity and incalculability, is arguably a kind of hauntology, or at the very least a parallel inquiry.[36] Queer theorist José Muñoz argues that queerness, and by extension queer theory, does not yet exist as a fully realized or fixed concept. He instead proposes that "queerness is an ideality or a figuration of a mode of

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[33] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 3.

[34] Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 4.*

[35] Throughout the body of Jack Halberstam's work, he provides exciting examples of queering. Here, I reference his book *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 1995.

[36] Chrononormativity describes the ways in which linear time is utilized, primarily within capitalist structures to organize bodies and labor for maximum efficiency and productivity, both within domestic and work life.

being in the world that is not yet here."[37] Queerness itself is a ghost, a disembodied possibility, which creeps along and into the fabric of the normative in acts of mourning and becoming.

In the film *Rift*, Icelandic director Erlingur Thoroddson explores queerness, grief, and trauma.[38] The film begins as the relationship between two men, Einar and Gunnar, comes to an end. Gunnar has moved on, but is concerned for Einar, who is paralyzed by the failure of this relationship. When Gunnar visits Einar, the two make peace, however unseen spectral forces endanger Einar's safety. Throughout the film, a disjointed temporality paired with long shots of desolate Icelandic landscape establish an eerie and anxious tension, while slowly revealing that one of the characters is likely no longer alive. Beyond simply the possible presence of a ghost, the film suggests a queer liminality between memory, mourning, and reality, conjuring an ambiguity that confuses past, present, and future through scenes that are unclear. *Rift*'s hauntological mood, framed with flashbacks and recollections, supports queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman's notion that "queer relations complexly exceed the present."[39]

Both queer theory and hauntological inquiry, which could be tied loosely together as queer hauntology, are tools for investigating the large and the systematic as well as the small and minute. Literary theorist Juda Bennett, in his book discussing the rich legacy of a hauntology and ghostly presences within the writings of Toni Morrison, says it well:

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[37] José Esteban Muñoz, "Race, Sex, and the Incommensurate," in *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political,* ed. By Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis, Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013, 103.

[38] *Rökkur (Rift)*, directed by Erlingur Thoroddson (Myrkraverk Productions, Hero Productions, 2017), 1:51, https://www.amazon.com/Rift-English-Subtitled-Björn-Stefánsson/dp/B077S6M4VD

[39] Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography," *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2005), 59.

> We might ask, 'What is not queer?' just as easily as Derrida invites us to ask, 'what is not a ghost?' If these are conceptual tools and terms for understanding everything, certainly they need to be disciplined to keep them from meaning nothing, but Derrida ensures that his hauntology, a concept that precedes ontology, addresses everything.[40]

Every concept, subject, and object is more fully understood by looking at its backside, its abject, its chronically ignored shadows, its constellation of influences and potentialities. A queer hauntology blurs the lines between *there* and *not there*, between the ghost and the haunted subject, as well as trouble the very effability of presence and absence as distinct concepts. Bennett writes, "nothing is without ghost effects."[41,42]

Hauntology: Specters, Sediment, and Dance

The concept of hauntology, and by extension queer hauntology, has proliferated throughout literary, media, philosophical, and political criticism, yet there is a striking near-absence of scholarship relating hauntology to dance and performance studies.[43] Considering

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[40] Juda Bennett, *Toni Morrison and the Queer Pleasure of Ghosts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 4.

[41] Bennett, *Toni Morrison and the Queer Pleasure of Ghosts*, 4.

[42] Hauntology continues to have extremely broad applications, a few of which I've outlined. There are, however, many more scholars and works, whose applications of hauntology within politics, race studies, gender studies, and performance studies, are paramount to my understanding of the hauntological analytic. For example, scholars Kashif Jerome Powell and Viviane Saleh-Hanna return hauntology to its political roots as a lens to elucidate racialized cycles of abuse and the "ghosts" of abolition. Scholar Patricia Northover utilizes hauntology to critique contemporary ethics and global justice, and historian Grace Cho applies hauntology as both historiographic methodology and subject in her paper on transgenerational racialized trauma stemming from America's wars in southeast Asia. Additionally, Ingrid Vronken discusses hauntology to philosophize the politics of relation in plant-care. While these illuminating works are important examples of works important to my consideration of the applications of hauntology, they are outside the direct scope of this paper.

[43] Despite hauntology's near absence in dance scholarship, I have found one notable dance scholar who employs hauntology in his analyses. Andrè Lepecki discusses hauntology in relation to materiality and choreography in several of his texts. Most notably, he relates the specter of

hauntology, however, is a useful tool for understanding compositional material and influences. While bodily sedimentation, described in Chapter One, offers a tangible elucidation of the techniques and technologies of physical practice, hauntology turns focus towards the more elusive, shadowy, and vague imprints and specters that inhabit a composition or choreographic process. Applying hauntology to dance-making as both a compositional inquiry and critical lens shows that specters are present as a sort of cloud, or mood, that saturates the dance; the disembodied, or not-yet-embodied, or never-embodied influences that still have tangible outcomes. The minor gestures, the Upside Down, the dark matter.

Hauntology is purposefully slippery, and it resonates within my dances, which sometimes explore and celebrate moody sensations of loneliness, inadequacy, and failure, or more explicitly mine the physicality of the disembodied ghosts in the room. My return to the *Solo 2009* is a hauntological endeavor, and the first time I intentionally employ a hauntological creative and critical approach to choreography. However, I created several works from 2019-2021 foundational to my understanding of how hauntology relates to my composition. I consider these works integral to contextualizing *Finally, Fairies!*.

Hana with Gabi by Tristan

Research for my work *Hana with Gabi by Tristan* (2019) ignited my understanding of bodily sedimentation and its relation to movement-making, choreographic design, and trans-temporality, as well as paved the way towards my hauntological inquiry in choreography. At the onset of creating this work, I investigated my own visceral and architectural bodily reactions to

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Josephine Baker, melancholia, and European colonial memory in his close reading of the work of Portuguese choreographer Vera Montaro. See Chapter 6 of his *Exhausting Dance: The Politics and Performance of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 106-122.

different spaces, such as a small office, a hallway, a large dance studio, or the front steps of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, next to the magnificent sculpture, *Ad Astra* (1976*)* by Richard Lippold. Through this research, I generated an improvisational score, *How The Space Moves Me,* and its phenomenology invited me to move in ways distinct to me, yet thoroughly informed by the space.[44] I noticed that my movements were orientated not simply to the space, but also to a non-linear, cyclical, and constantly re-orientating sense of time. I encountered in myself and my choreography an orientation towards my past. I danced with and through layers of disparate spatial and temporal influences: the dances I have danced *for others* in various spaces and various times haunted my creative process.[45]

I used *How The Space Moves Me* to generate repeatable, definable, and teachable choreography. Working with two dancers, Hana Huie and Gabi Woska, I devised a thirteen-minute work, which I cheekily titled *Hana with Gabi by Tristan* (2019). This project examined a choreography *of me*, and then, upon being learned by dancers, *of them*. The dancers explored the choreography in a way that invited interpretation while remaining clear within the original choreographic directive. Huie and Woska performed a frictive understanding of their own bodily sedimentation as well as my own. This work drew my attention to an iterative process that invited an intertemporal and hypertextual phenomenology of composition, as well as authorial

[44] A score is a term used to describe the structure, parameters, or instructions for an improvisation or emergent choreography. For the full written score for *How The Space Moves Me*, as well as several more utilized throughout this project, see Appendix B.

[45] Through this process, I encountered choreographic sensibilities I developed throughout my work with artists Chris Schlichting, Faye Driscoll, and Netta Yerushalmy. Schlichting's work will be discussed more specifically in Chapter Four. Driscoll's influence appeared in my use of the imagistic language to sculpt affect and detail in Huie's embodiment of the choreography, while the choreographic oscillation between physical state and phrasework is reminiscent of the compositions of Netta Yerushalmy, most notably *Rhythms of Defamiliarization* (2013), a commission for Zenon Dance Company, and her next work *Helga and the Three Sailors* (2014).

presence as a sort of hauntology: My body, its sedimentation, and its sensibilities, at once there and not there.[46] The spectrality of my dancing body performed by Huie and Woska proposed an indeterminacy of presence through hauntological choreography.

Long Division

This work inspired my next creative endeavor, *Long Division* (2020). *Long Division* continued an hypertextuality and intertextuality of dance-making.[47] Five dancers and I utilized the same score, *How The Space Moves Me*, throughout various hallways and studios throughout the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center.[48] Rather than originating the choreography within my own body, I asked my cast to dance first. I, in turn, learned a version of their improvisation based on memory as well as quick studies of video documentation, which was then set, or sedimented, into repeatable choreography. The dancers learned this reiterated version of their own spontaneous choreography, after having been filtered through my body's understanding. Finding regular rehearsal time with the entire cast proved challenging, which I used as a choreographic intervention that pointed me towards new technologies of making: Using film editing techniques, I layered various footage of myself dancing the choreographies onto one frame, so that I could explore compositional possibilities without the physical presence of my dancers. This revealed

[46] Hypertextuality generally describes any text that intentionally invokes a previous text without necessarily mentioning or citing it directly.

[47] Intertextuality generally suggests a direct relationship, citation or quote within a work that refers to an earlier work. For more on intertextuality, and its relation to hypertextuality and other transtextualities, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

[48] Hana Huie and Gabi Woska returned from my previous work, and we added additional dancers Morgan Pravato, Sydney Lemelin, and Gabriella Grant.

new ways of collaging and collapsing both time and space, and utilized the choreography as a conduit for ongoing dialogue between the dancers and myself, all subjects within the dance, all present, while never fully embodied. While the process was halted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and a full version of this piece was never produced, it directly fed into my next creative project.[49]

I AM IN A BASEMENT

During the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked and rehearsed remotely while in Minnesota. While searching for spaces to use as makeshift studio, I learned of a space called B100, shared by several dance artists. B100 contained a large room in the basement of the old Northwestern Building in downtown Saint Paul. Part of it was the building's original fallout shelter (and Prohibition-era storage units). It was half-renovated, another project on pause, with hissing and clanging radiator units loosely decorated with sad string lights. I found it an evocative site to explore a new work investigating loneliness, distance, and projects on pause due to the pandemic. Inspired by the evocative mood of the space and its interaction with my current feelings of creative loss, I developed a new project as an attempt to translate and reiterate the choreography into one subject: me. I'd long avoided developing solo work; however, this project unfolded a process of memory, and an intertemporal reflection of the dancers that haunt my work. In researching loneliness, I discovered the ways in which I was never alone.

I collapsed the choreographies from *Hana with Gabi by Tristan* and *Long Division* in on each other by learning each dancer's role, inhabiting the choreography while imagining dancing

[49] *Long Division* was set to premier as part of a shared concert in early April at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. It was canceled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. In lieu of a live performance, the artists shared rehearsal footage of works-in-progress virtually.

in unison with them. As I danced their parts, I summoned their presence, or at least my experience of their presence, into the room. I began wondering about myself as a haunted subject. The people that danced for and with me informed, and furthermore, *haunted*, my dances. After learning these choreographies, I devised a structure in which I purposefully switched between roles, or danced two roles simultaneously, summoning a kind of ghost party. For example, I began the work performing movement devised with and for Sydney Lemelin, long lines emerging from the upstage left corner, before jumping tracks to perform Hana Huie's taffy-like body roll. Soon after, I inhabited Gabriella Grant's whisking, stirring gesture, interrupted by Gabi Woska's punctuated foot rhythms.

This work became *I AM IN A BASEMENT,* an anthem to collaborative artists working in and through the COVID-19 pandemic, devised to be filmed and presented virtually. I worked with dancer and videographer Joe Tennis, who used a gimbal and an iPhone 11 to film, which I utilized along with two additional iPhone cameras mounted to tripods for the final edit. I included dancer Maggie Zepp in a cameo role, explicitly portraying a white-sheeted ghost, complete with whimsical heart-shaped sunglasses. Zepp's ghost acknowledges hauntology in an obvious fashion, while adding a note of camp aesthetic. [50] Additionally, I created text for the opening of this piece. Originally devised as a monologue that spoke to the ghostly presences in the work, the technological limitations of the iPhone 11 recording suggested that I add in the text

[50] Camp originally described effeminate mannerisms and performances of gay men, but now transcends to describe a sensibility, intentional or otherwise, that utilizes absurd exaggeration, irony, artifice and hyperstylization. Drag, pantomime, cabaret, John Waters' trash cinema, Tennessee Williams' Blanche Dubois, *Showgirls*, and Cher are all examples of camp. I highly suggest Susan Sontag's 1964 *Notes on "Camp,*" as well as the reader in which it appears, *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. by Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

in post-production. A happy accident, as it furthered the mood of spectral disembodied influences.[51]

Beverly, Beverly, Beverly

During the same time, most social interactions had been moved to Zoom. To interrupt our regular isolation, my grandmother, Beverly West, and I began weekly calls, which started as general check-ins, but typically evolved into my asking her questions about her life. Witnessing her through the computer frame, puttering around her house with all our family heirlooms while telling stories about her own childhood, made me particularly curious about the phenomenology of memory, and how we encounter memories as looping, cyclical and even overlapping. With her consent, I began recording these conversations for a new performance project. [52] While a straightforward memoir of her life would be a fascinating read, my creative inclinations leaned more towards exploring the sensorium's relationship to memory itself, as well as experiencing the sifting through memory as rhythm, tone, swirls, and vibrations.[53]

I created three sound scores with the audio recordings of these interviews utilizing methodologies of storytelling: reordering and discombobulating the content while also offering my own insight as narrational presence. First, I took sections of her storytelling that held evocative imagery (for example the 1938 flood in her childhood neighborhood of Los Angeles, CA), and, while listening to them, recorded my own voice emulating her rhythm and tone.

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[51] The full text for this piece is found in Appendix A.

[52] The exact content of her stories as originally told are fascinating in and of themselves, but not the focus of this study.

[53] Sensorium refers to all sensory mechanisms and apparatuses. Said differently, all that one senses when considered one holistic experience.

Second, I layered three different stories, playing each of them at once. The effect, rather than following any distinct narrative path, was an immersion of imagery: *late in the afternoon, Avenue 52, Mother and Barbara, not next to our house, set the table, a gully, cement, in the Spring, when the snow in the mountains would thaw, fried chicken, paper, could have tasted*. For the third, I applied the same methodology from track one to track two, as I recorded myself while listening to the second track, collapsing all three stories into one.[54]

This process of iteration made me curious about the rhythm of memory and revealed a desire to become intimate with memories as disembodied realities, or even as spectral performative partners. I filmed brief embodied improvisations accompanied by these audio recordings, and then projected those as layers on to a wall. Finally, I performed live alongside these reiterated memories, crafting an out-of-joint intertextuality between subjects. This performance, called *Beverly, Beverly, Beverly,* was screened virtually during a seminar course led by dance and video artist Marielis Garcia and sound artist Sam Crawford in December 2020.

I included only one lighting source, that of the projector, that offered shadows and additional projected and multiplied images of self that represent a multiplicity and unfixity of memory. Additionally, I put into practice how a performance could elucidate a certain mood that exists beyond any one piece of material. This process taught me ways to craft performative moods from a dramaturgical standpoint. Put together, all performative elements of *Beverly Beverly, Beverly* constructed a mood of contemplation, of sifting through memories that are complicated and rich, and recognize the spectralities of grief, trauma, joy, inheritance, and absurdity. One might have called this a hauntological mood, in line with Fisher's description of

[54] See Appendix A for the full transcript of this text.

hauntology as a "vague but persistent feeling of the past without recalling any specific historical moment."[55]

The Poisoned Solo

As discussed in Chapter One, *Solo 2009,* alongside its first performative iteration, *Fairies*, became an important specter of my past: a lost, and unfinished project that held the vision of an artistic and aesthetic future I, at least for a time, wanted so deeply. *Solo 2009* was full of optimism, and its ghosts contained a loss and longing for an unrealized futurity. I began a practice of the material from *Solo 2009* that further explored performative hauntological moods of contemplation and possession.

I practiced the phrase from *Solo 2009*, repeated again and again for approximately an hour, or to the point of exhaustion. I found myself getting lost in the material, its rhythms, and its pacing. The phrase became a river, and its rhythms a current. The river would take many shapes, sometimes spitting me out into distributaries, or winding me up in an eddy, and funneling me towards a waterfall. In short, themes and variations of the phrase emerged as authentic response to the process of losing and finding myself within the phrase. After one particular run-through of this one hour-long journey down the river, I filmed one more pass, staged once again in the B100 space. I created a soft opening and ending for this phrase, a choreographic frame that involved me encountering moments from the phrase in small loops. This film, created on January 29, 2021, premiered as *The Poisoned Solo*, on March 6, 2021, as part of freeskewl's On The House

[55] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014), 14.

virtually streamed performance.[56] The work was accompanied sonically by the music of Daniel Jones and Kc Coolik, which highlights the moods of reflection, nostalgia, and quiet sadness.

Hauntology suggests the past impresses upon the present, but also proposes that the present is haunted by the many futures that the past implied. As such, we may be haunted by premonition or expectation. Fisher suggested that haunting "can be construed as a failed mourning. It is about refusing to give up the ghost or – and this can sometimes amount to the same thing – the refusal of the ghost to give up on us."[57] This work of repetition, of incessant return, began as a simple compositional response to acknowledgement that *Solo 2009* had become a ghost, but it revealed new ways to consider and understand my performing self within the choreography. In giving this repetitive task a substantial length of time, I experienced what philosopher Henri Bergson described as "duration [leading to] invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new."[58] I considered myself a nexus of various points in time, a culmination of these iterative creations, an intensity drawing past, present, and future together. I encountered the stains of previous iterations of the phrase, while experiencing responsive generation and emergent choreographies with each cycle. A dancing revenant; My own body in a continuous hauntological phenomenology of reflection and regeneration.

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[56] This work borrowed its title from "The Poisoned Soul," a chapter in Franco "Bifo" Berardi's book, *The Soul At Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 74-105.

[57] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life…,* 22.

[58] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Trans. by Arthur Mitchell (1911, reis., New York: Random House Books, 1944), 14.

***The Poisoned Solo*: A Phenomenology**

A concrete wall, or three. A concrete floor. A dead end. Somewhere between beige and grey, with dripping stains and chalky smudges. Zoom out, so slowly, disorienting, otherworldly, hardly noticeable. A figure walks, footsteps light yet echoed in the deserted room, towards the far wall from out of frame. Loose black shirt and shorts, grey sneakers. He pauses briefly just before arriving at the wall, lightly balanced on his left leg. A hesitation. He takes one last step towards the wall and stretches his arms up high, cueing an eerie and nostalgic song. Meandering guitar and keys, and a woman's voice sings, melancholic and soft: *The face in the misty light.*[59]

His arms arc while he bends his side, and he lilts off center, briefly turning his face. He is coy, and turns away, before repeating his gestures, spilling through, faster this time, as if awakening from a dream. Fingers sift and carve through the air, gently turning him around as his focus brightens. A stillness, a reset. A third loop, slightly more off balance, as he leans into the wall, and scuffs his shoes on the floor. As he jumps, his chest softens, his knees lightly buckle. His arm slices forward, and he looks directly ahead. *You can never quite recall*. His eyelids almost close, as if he's searching for something inside, before they open once again with an even determination. Briefly, a fourth loop, flinging through momentum, his twin shadows along the wall racing to keep up. A solo, a trio of ghosts. *Those eyes, how familiar they seem.* He's done this before.

Falling to the side, arms swinging and folding. He rights himself, framing his body with circles and angles, lines and arcs that continue to leave traces in this cold and isolated room. This

[59] Two tracks were used for this performance, both recorded by Daniel Coolik and Kc Jones. Both are jazz standards. The first, *Laura*, was written by David Raksin. The second, *When Your Lover Has Gone*, was written by Einar Aaron Swan. Both tracks are featured on Coolik and Jones' album *Spirited Melancholy,* Valcour Records, 2021.

is a lonely dance. The guitar swells into a wistful bridge, and he begins to step faster, almost giddy, before a quick pierce of an arm tosses him into a flurry of movement, continuously cascading until suddenly, he is still. Uncannily still. A breath, and icons emerge and disappear. A star. A sad boy. And then, hugging the wall, a bright eyed ingenue. His fingers move subtly, stretching, as if recalling that they once cast spells. His back broadens, as if remembering that he once had wings. He wanders, he tosses, he recalls, he gets lost, he mourns. The song ends as he softly spins with disco arms before leaning down to bat at his knees.

He stands up, punctuates his chest with a double fist, and a pleading bend. Martha Graham is in the building. In the quiet emptiness, the rhythm of his feet becomes more deliberate, more percussive, more aggressive. He tumbles out of control, lunging, curved legs, then a hitch-kick. For just a moment, Charlie's Angel, smear the wall, bubbling tantrum, wingspan, and spill. There is no end in sight.

Again, a song, ruminative, and starry-eyed. *What good is the scheming, the planning, and dreaming that comes with each new love affair?* He is alone here, simultaneously full of hope and futility. *The moonlight dies at break of dawn.* He falls, and this time his wrists hit the floor with a resonant impact. He stands, getting up and returning, again and again to continue. Incessant, enduring, perseverating. He reaches an arm up high like a herald directing his trumpet up to the heavens. His face pushes forward, tense and shaking, as if straining against an unseen force, or thick layers of plastic wrap, or a strong wind. *What lonely hours the evening shadows bring? What lonely hours with memories lingering like faded flowers?* Sighing, he drifts back once more, lightly churning his arms, drawn into his hazy reverie. His hand moves forward, recalling a gesture from before, or remembering that it is late. He pauses, then walks away to

where he started, out of sight. Again, an empty concrete room. Stained with what was, what could have been, and what's about to be.

Chapter Three: Vaporwave

> Sensibility is the ability to understand what is unspoken.[60]
>
> – Franco "Bifo" Berardi

> What haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twenty-first century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate.[61]
>
> – Mark Fisher

Vaporwave: Capitalist Reality and Lost Futures

I first encountered the writing of Mark Fisher, a prolific music critic and blogger, shortly after his death in 2017. He wrote extensively across disciplines, drawing connections between music, aesthetics, films, politics, and art. Fisher first introduced me to hauntology as a pervasive concept within postmodern culture. He argued that neo-liberal political reality, or what he called capitalist realism, "gradually and systematically deprived artists of the resources necessary to produce the new," which informs a hauntological sensibility. Contemporary hauntology refuses to abandon the possibility of futures promised by the optimistic past. Supporting his theories that music, and by extension art, directly reflects neo-liberal politics and embodied reality, Fisher famously discussed many musical artists and styles that exemplify contemporary hauntology. In his discussion of electronic music of the 2000s' response to the "euphoric" aesthetic of the 90s, Fisher stated "the future [had] not arrived, [and] it no longer seem[ed] possible."[62] One such style, most pertinent to *Finally, Fairies!*, is Vaporwave.

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[60] Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of The End,* 35.

[61] Mark Fisher, "What is Hauntology," in Film Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Fall 2012), 18.

[62] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life…*, 21.

Vaporwave is a music and aesthetic style which emerged in the early 2010s. It derived as a meditation and critique on lost retrofuturities. Evolving from other electronic music genres such as Chillwave and Hypnagogic Pop, Vaporwave samples electronic music and media from the 80s and early 90s, including pop songs, corporate Muzak, and late-night news programs and commercials, saturated with sensibilities of longing and inevitable entropy. Vaporwave was popularized on websites and forums such as Tumblr, 4Chan, and Reddit, "making it the first genre to be completely globalized," and allowed artists expert and novice alike to create and share.[63] Blogger Arnau Horta writes,

> Vaporwave has always circulated outside of the margins of the music business and its usual channels, so it has always been phantasmagorical in a sense: a musical hauntology trapped between the past and the future, safe from fads and the market logic in the internet's hidden non-places.[64]

Distilling Fisher's theories, Horta describes the hauntological nature of Vaporwave as multifaceted invoking specters while maintaining its own globalized ghostly presence.

Vaporwave: History, Sensibility, and Choreographic Gesture

Vaporwave is a play on *vaporware*, a term used in the tech industry since at least the mid-1980s. Vaporware refers to software that was developed, and even marketed, but never released.[65] Sometimes, the vaporware products never existed, or were so lost in development and

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[63] Wolfenstein OS X, "Vaporwave: A Brief History," Created 2015, Accessed 12/1/21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lN7DAuzWFg

[64] Arnau Horta, "Vaporwave: The Musical Wallpaper of Lost Futures." *CCCBLAB*. April 4, 2017. https://lab.cccb.org/en/vaporwave-the-musical-wallpaper-of-lost-futures/

[65] Kate Johanns, "Tech Time Warp: Frist Published Reference to Vaporware," Smarter MSP. February 2, 2018. https://smartermsp.com/tech-time-warp-vaporware/.

redevelopment limbo that they never lived up to the potential they promised to fulfill.[66] Vaporware directly reflects the mood of promise and disappointment, while Vaporwave develops these themes into musical and aesthetic sensibility, highlighting a playful critique of consumerism while underscoring themes of loneliness, degeneration and decline. Vaporwave however is dialectic, as it also involves slowed down and layered sounds that often have a strange warmth and soothing effect.

The origins of Vaporwave can be traced to specific artists, such as Daniel Lopatin, James Ferraro, and Ramona Xavier, however it was truly borne out of an internet mimetic culture interested in the redistribution of 80s aesthetics, elevator music, glitch art, roman busts, Japanese landscapes, samples of Microsoft screensavers, and early Nintendo games.[67] Arguably, the first Vaporwave album was Daniel Lopatin's *Eccojams Vol. 1*, which was released under the pseudonym Chuck Person.[68] *Eccojams Vol. 1*'s tracks were comprised of slowed down, spliced, and looped samples from 80s pop music. The sound and visual aesthetics of Vaporwave cannot be separated. For example, Lopatin's YouTube Channel, sunsetcorp, which preceded the release of Eccojams Vol. 1 by about a year, consists of several short films of digital landscapes and slowed down and layered scenes from cartoons, late-night public access television, and home videos.[69] The films, with names like "TIME STAND STILL," "nobody here," and "END OF LIFE ENTERTAINMENT SCENARIO #1," are at once calming and disturbing, engaging an

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[66] For a time, the phrase from *Solo 2009*, after its first reveal as *Fairies*, existed as a sort of vaporware.

[67] Luke Morgan Britton, "Music Genres are a Joke That You're Not in On," *VICE*, September 26, 2014. https://www.vice.com/en/article/rmjmmq/a-definitive-guide-to-trolling-music-genres

[68] Britton, "Music Genres are a Joke That You're Not in On."

[69] sunsetcorp, YouTube Channel. https://www.youtube.com/c/sunsetcorp/videos

insomniac mood between dreaming and waking life. Vaporwave utilizes repetition as one of its key methodologies, which musician and author Grafton Tanner describes as "exhaustive, [meant] to walk that fine line between funny and uncanny." He continues, "listening to an entire track can waver between transcendental elation and disengaged ennui."[70] I utilized tracks from Vaporwave artists luxury elite and SPORTSGIRLスポーツ少女⍟ for my works *I AM IN A BASEMENT* and *Beverly, Beverly, Beverly* to highlight the same themes that Tanner describes.

Ramona Xavier, also known as Vektroid, released her album *Floral Shoppe* in 2011 under the pseudonym MACINTOSH PLUS. *Floral Shoppe*, and in particular its track "Lisa Frank Modern Computing 420," continues to be one of the most well-known examples of early Vaporwave. The sounds, consisting entirely of samples, distorted, slowed down, looped, and layered, offering depletions of determined meaning and new cohesions built out of, as blogger Effie "Ebbtide" Rollins describes, "ironic signifier[s] to a perversely sentimental future dislocated in the past." [71] The album cover was perhaps the first to utilize the image of a Greek bust, which was paired with Japanese characters and an apocalyptic city-scape, all staples of Vaporwave memes, images, and videos. Rollins wrote about *Floral Shoppe*'s strength as,

> [its] ability to render something as both a fleshy, grotesque fetish object and a hologram of itself, infinitely retreating into its own artifice. The songs on this album are alternately uncomfortable and comforting — an alien version of the warmth its component parts are supposed to signify. This is a disquieting listen because of its ability to turn the song into a sort of object in its own right, an object that acts sort of like a musical readymade, taken and dislocated and rendered unfathomable. And the song-object, in its sensual, disgusting glory, can't help but be approached.[72]

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[70] Grafton Tanner, *Babbling Corpse* (Winchester, UK; Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2016), 7.

[71] Effie "Ebbtide" Rollins, "Thoughts on Floral Shoppe," *Medium*, May 18, 2019. https://medium.com/@henryrollins_48182/thoughts-on-floral-shoppe-2d9076a8c132

[72] Rollins, "Thoughts on Floral Shoppe."

Rollins' account helped me reflect upon *The Poisoned Solo*, and how I planned to continue to cultivate the phrase from *Solo 2009* as a sort of object to be embodied, performed, and transformed by a cast of dancers.

The questions raised through theorizing Vaporwave resonated within my performance *The Poisoned Solo*, discussed in Chapter Two. In my process of creating *Finally, Fairies!*, I looked towards Vaporwave's creative gestures as demonstrative of a parallel hauntological inquiry. Choreographically, I located and borrowed Vaporwave sensibilities that dislodged fixed temporality, utilizing generative prompts like sampling, layering, repetition of a theme until its efficacy shifted, hollowed, or even became artificial.[73]

Deep Blues

In June 2021, I visited Lebanese-born visual artist Rayyane Tabet's new work, *Deep Blues*, at the Walker Arts Center. The work consisted of two large-scale installations, both multifaceted meditations on temporality, artificiality, dematerializations, and aesthetics subsumed by capitalism.[74] In one gallery, suspended Eames chairs created a ghostly theater: Tiered seating invoked the spectral presence of an audience, their gaze set upon a wall-sized light installation saturating the space in a cycle of eight shades of blue. The colors were all sourced from IBM's corporate color palette, specific shades which "are harmonious with nature, yet chosen for their luminous quality in the digital world."[75] I spent an hour sitting on a bench at the

[73] I'll discuss these themes and choreographic prompts more in Chapter Four.

[74] *Deep Blues* was on exhibit June 12-October 27, 2021, at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, MN. I visited several times to experience the work. A brief description of the work can be found at https://walkerart.org/calendar/2021/rayyane-tabet.

[75] "Color," *IBM Design Language*, Accessed December 12, 2021. https://www.ibm.com/design/language/color/

edge of the space, listening to the accompanying text, read aloud by an artificial intelligence designed to perfectly mimic the qualities of Tabet's own voice.

Deep Blues located a new way for me to consider hauntology within spatial design and the construction of mood. The installation brought forward aesthetics of the past that, similarly to Vaporwave, offered a critique of capitalism and capitalist realism through their evocation of inevitability and entropy, while refusing to rely on simple nostalgia or pastiche. Rather, Tabet sampled aesthetics that pointed towards the labor and corporatization of art, while maintaining the embodied absence and spectral presence of living bodies as his primary subject. The hanging chairs were not quite empty, as the audience sensed the disembodied possibilities, memories, bodies, and ideas that the chairs held. The voice, reading an essay written by Tabet, sounded uncannily human, yet the project description on the wall made clear that the voice was actually a computer: an artificial intelligence that had learned to sound exactly like Tabet himself. The shifting blue light had a calming effect, functioning almost like a light therapy box, which cascaded out into the second part of the installation, in which the large lobby windows directly outside the gallery were covered in filters, spreading the same blue hues throughout the museum. The mood was inescapable.

Deep Blues invited me to consider how sampling sources from the past, such as the blue tones, or the Eames chairs, which had all been of use at one time at the IBM Building in Rochester, MN, conjured hauntological inquiry by summoning their spectral passengers as well as accentuating the empty and vast qualities of the negative space. Tabet, who trained as an architect and a sculptor, said that when making a new work, he enters the space and first

imagines it empty.[76] Purposefully unsettling presence, he proposed a sensibility of emptiness to lead him to know where to fill or shade the space. Tabet, like the Vaporwave artists working in a digital landscape, crafted a palpable environment for hauntological inquiry by gradating the felt presence of spectrality in the space.

In a way, Tabet's exhibit involved similar research questions as *How the Space Moves Me*, the choreographic study outlined in Chapter Two. Can spatial design evoke memories at once incorporeal and discernable? Can an environment slyly point towards emptiness as a perceptible force? Witnessing these questions materialize in *Deep Blues* influenced my design impulses for *Finally, Fairies!*. I was interested in incorporating a scenic design as a fundamental element to the work. In collaboration with scenic designer Andrés Poch, I investigated ways in which the stage space could sample from Vaporwave aesthetics and sensibilities, while crafting an alluring environment in which to place the choreography. Poch created a scenic design made to function primarily as a landscape, sparsely filled with artifacts: old televisions, some discarded and broken mannequins, and a glass block wall. The theater with these items inside suggested a sort of storage room that contained discarded materials, mimicking the vaporware-like source of the movement material.

Vaporwave: Practical Aesthetics

In early meetings with my production and design team, I brought the same questions and curiosities outlined above to the entire group.[77] I was assigned a phenomenal group of artists, in

[76] I am paraphrasing here from an artist talk held at the Walker Arts Center in June 2021. The full conversation can be found at "Artist Talk," Posted August 23, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1trDyVJci8Y.

[77] These meetings began in August 2021.

addition to Poch, directly by the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, including Deja Collins (media design), Channing Tucker (costume design), Heather Reynolds (lighting design), and Emily Pan (sound design).[78] My primary considerations were including Vaporwave aesthetics without trying to recreate a Vaporwave image pixel by pixel. Like the process utilized by Vaporwave artists, could we sample a few key themes, images, or textures to evoke a Vaporwave sensibility? Could we express wonder at capitalist aesthetics of the 1980s, highlight their inevitable entropy, and yet create a sort of temporal liminality through the design? How could we express an aesthetic hauntology, rather than accidentally "set the work" in the 1980s?

All the artists had strong visual ideas: For example, Reynolds and I devised a window gobo, projected on the floor of the stage, that slowly stretched and moved across the space throughout the duration of the work. Collins created scrambled video collages of waves, digital sunsets, abandoned malls, and never-ending escalators. We worked together over a period of months, and then even more intensively in the weeks leading up to the show, to decide when particular design elements would take the lead or alternately lean into more of a supporting role. Lighting and media designs, which included projections on the floor, and cyc, as well as videos directly feeding into the three televisions on stage, needed to be in direct conversation to support each other.[79] Additionally, due to budget constraints, Poch worked to create a structure that alluded to a glass block wall, however was built of metal and sheet-plastic. Collins offered

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[78] Fionna Dougherty Clark was originally assigned to this project as costume designer, however had to step away. Channing Tucker was brought on in December 2021. She made new designs, inspired by the Fionna's original vision. The end results, however, are Tucker's.

[79] Cyc, or cyclorama, is a flat panel of fabric that serves as the backdrop of many theater spaces.

textured projections that brought dimensionality to the structure, at times creating an illusion of glass block materials.

This design process taught me about holding space for collaboration, while simultaneously taking lead as director in order to decide and mobilize the team towards aesthetic priorities in support of the choreography. *Finally, Fairies!*, after all, was proposed primarily as a dance performance, and the design elements became a container, mediator, and amplifier for the embodied compositional and philosophical themes of the research. Together, by evoking Vaporwave, the designers and I created a sort of holding cell, or waiting room, in the stage space. The storage room in the back corner of an abandoned mall. A liminal space in which to weave a hypnogogic and hauntological choreography.

Chapter Four: A Hauntological Choreography

> Conversing with spectres is not undertaken in the expectation that they will reveal some secret, shameful or otherwise. Rather, it may open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know.[80]
>
> – Colin Davis

> You worry this knowledge until it breaches the ordinary with what might be an event or might, like most things, be healed by secondary intention. Not knowing until later what will have been easy and what will have been hard, what's a weapon and what nothing, what's an extraordinary or ordinary touch, what's a sneeze or sickening.[81]
>
> – Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart

The Phrase: Hauntological Inquiry

Through the works and processes outlined in Chapters One, Two and Three, I had developed an approach to understanding and contextualizing my choreography through the critical lens of hauntology. My continued interest in hauntological inquiry provided the impetus for me to propose my new work, *Finally, Fairies!*, as an extension of this research. I was curious to further develop my understanding of hauntological approaches to composition in addition to critical contextualization. How could I present these inquiries as aesthetic gesture? What movement sensibilities may arise, intrude, persist, or dissolve? What understandings might hauntological inquiry offer approaches and strategies to movement composition such as phrasemaking, improvisation, movement, and stillness? Ultimately, what choreographies might

[80] Colin Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms," *French Studies* LIX, No. 3 (July 2005), 377.

[81] Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, *The Hundreds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019), 40.

emerge from these questions, and how might weaving them together into a performance work illuminate and complicate my understanding of composition and hauntology?

In developing and performing *The Poisoned Solo*, a solo performance in which I investigated iterations of the improvised choreography from *Solo 2009*, I wondered about the possibilities of amplifying the research by involving more performers. I decided to invite a cast of dancers, with all of whom I've had some sort of collaborative or performance history, to reconstruct and eventually deconstruct the phrase. The material felt personal, and I also understood the nuanced understanding of idiosyncrasy and rhythmic specificity that the phrase required. I began with a core cast of four dancers: Hana Huie, Emilia Bruno, Rebecca Steinberg, and Carlo Antonio Villanueva. Christina Robson, another member of the cast, joined us later in the process. I hovered on the edge of the cast, and eventually decided to declare myself a performer as well. Together, we built approaches to mining the phrase from *Solo 2009*, encountering new inspirations and directions for the work, and developing improvisational scores and strategies for encountering emergent choreography.

The Phrase: Repetition and Loops

Beginning in August 2021, rehearsals with Huie, Bruno, Steinberg, and Villanueva primarily involved me teaching the phrase from *Solo 2009*. We met four hours a week for five weeks, repeating and drilling the material. This process was familiar to me, as I had worked similarly with choreographer Chris Schlichting. In developing *Period*, his 2019 performance work, Schlichting asked his cast to learn a series of brief 30-60 second improvisations that he had filmed of himself. In that process, the labor was on the dancers to watch, interpret, and perform the material. For *Finally, Fairies!*, I instead taught the phrase directly, and acted as a

sort of mediator between past (2009 me), present (my current interpretation of the phrase), and future (the cast's interpretation and performance). While at times treating the phrase as an object or artifact to encounter was a useful lens, I resisted crystallizing *Solo 2009* in an overdetermined way, which risked deadening its vibrancy, vitality, and potency. Sculpting improvisation into choreography risked an over-codification of movement. Translating the original accidental or incidental movements of an improvisation into a sequence that could be known, crafted, and repeated could simply reinforce my understanding of bodily sedimentation, outlined in the Introduction, and not allow for the sort of hauntological inquiry I was seeking.

While I remained curious about the alluring possibility of exactly replicating the material and seeing it in pure unison, I desired the phrase to breathe, relate individually to each performer, and invite a sense of taught negotiation between known and unknown. I became equally concerned with both choreographic specificity and precarity, as well as crafting a choreography that emboldened the dancers to play between exactitude and defiance. Through hours of practice, of incessantly drilling and repeating the phrase, the cast and I settled on an approach to the material that continued to invite the phrase to exist, similar to how I encountered it in the process for *The Poisoned Solo,* as a stream or a river which would sweep up the dancers into its rhythms, currents, and flows. The dancers could then agree on rhythmic specificity, while allowing for possibilities of individual textures and nuances with each subtle change in the river's current. This softening of a rigid attempt at unison preserved the vivacious spark of the generative impulse that created *Solo 2009*, as well as relied on the expert skills and experience of the cast.

The first creative task beyond learning the phrase generated a movement section called *Loops*. Assigning teams of two, I tasked the dancers with creating a sequence of movements, sampled from the first section of the phrase, that relied on Vaporwave sensibilities such as

looping, echo, crackle, and interference. Looping, whereupon a dancer sampled a gesture or movement from the Phrase and repeated it incessantly, was fairly straightforward. Following suit, echo allowed each iteration in a loop to shift with subtlety, expanding or contracting in size, tempo, or volume. Crackle and interference all required a certain amount of abstract interpretation from each dancer. Through experimentation, we decided that crackle was a sensibility that could exist as a sort of stuttering rhythm, carried by the feet but reverberating through the body. Interference involved some sort of textural interruption, such as beginning a gesture with a sharp and determined quality, then suddenly encroaching with another less determined texture, such as cloudy or misty. This resulted in a sort of physical obfuscation. Lastly, upon experimenting with these movement sensibilities, the performers set their duet material, and following the Vaporwave aesthetic gesture of layering, we wove the duets together in shared space, crafting a group composition. We made several iterations of *Loops*, three of which (*Loops 1, Loops 2, and Loops 3)* were performed in *Finally, Fairies!*.[82]

The Phrase: Set and Reset

Learning improvised material from video invited several specters into this room in addition to Schlichting.[83] Choreographer Neil Greenberg's dance works famously rely heavily, and often exclusively, on his dancers learning his own filmed improvisations verbatim.[84]

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[82] Appendix F contains section titles along with corresponding timestamps for the March 11, 2022, recording of *Finally, Fairies!*.

[83] It is reductive to refer to Schlichting et al. as simply influences. They are apparitions; they are phantasmic ghostwriters. They are pervasive forces that imbue my poetic sensibility with hints of their own.

[84] Greenberg's works for decades only involved his own improvisations performed by other dancers. For more recent works, such as *This* (2014) and *To The Things Themselves!* (2018), he

Greenberg's process involved a phenomenological questioning of presence that is, even without him naming it, hauntological. In the obsessive attempt to recreate past improvisational impulse, performers frustrate the possibility of both true repetition and linear evolution. This hauntological methodology involves an indeterminacy of the performance object while simultaneously attempting, and failing, to capture the moment of origination.

Choreographer Trisha Brown may not have been the first to create a phrase and ask her dancers to utilize the phrase as improvisational material, but her 1983 work *Set and Reset* featured that process as primary content for a set work.[85] She first taught her performers a phrase that she created through embodied impulse that highlights her own eccentric movement habits, after which she invited her performers to work collaboratively to spontaneously generate group choreography based on the original phrase material. She asked them to hold primarily to her phrase material, while using the following prompts: keep it simple, play with visibility and invisibility, act on instinct, and get in line.[86]

I referenced this process in rehearsals with the cast, as they used a section of the phrase to create a group composition that relied on their improvisational instincts. The group would start together, improvising with and around the phrase, relying on their choices to chart a new

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involved his cast's own recorded and learned improvisations into the movement vocabulary. Those works, as well as many more, are available on his Vimeo channel. See https://vimeo.com/channels/neilgreenberg.

[85] The word *set* becomes shorthand for repeatable choreography, typically a phrase. There is some grey area, as the terms improvisation, emergent choreography, and set choreography truly live on a spectrum, and experienced performers may move freely between if the composition allows.

[86] These rules are written about in many sources, although my knowledge of this work is primarily sourced from the *Set and Reset/Reset* project I participated in in 2007, which I reference in Chapter One.

pathway in the space, change facings and pacing, briefly abandon, restart, or jump to another part of the phrase. After a bit of time, typically around ten seconds, a dancer would say, "stop," and the group would reset to the beginning. This process continued, without my interruption or intervention, the dancers relying on quick recollection and broad strokes, until the material had accumulated into a 90-second dance. This composition, which I referred to as *SR,* invited an unruly individuality, as the connections in spacing and timing between the dancers were never strict or exact.[87]

The Phrase: *Pure Moods*

Choreographer Miguel Gutierrez, in writing about his 2017 work *Cela Nous Concerne Tous (This Concerns All of Us)*, described pursuing a choreography that presents a restless and ecstatic liveness.[88] The work, a roughly fifty-minute work for twenty-one dancers of the Ballet de Lorraine, involved layers of deconstruction. The performers began with an exploration of abstracted clothing items as a sort of exchangeable and mutable skin, and extended this curiosity of self and sensation into a sort of choreographed riot, ecstatic and triumphant. Gutierrez wrote that in creating the work, he and the dancers crafted small and large group compositions and vignettes, then took the "'set' material and reverse-engineered it into an improvisational practice that [was] about taking the map of the known material and 'corrupting' it, losing [their] way."[89]

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[87] *SR* was an abbreviation of *Set and Reset* as a process and was a simple way to differentiate it from Brown's composition.

[88] "Cela Nous Concerne Tous (This Concerns All of Us)," *Miguel Gutierrez*, Accessed January 10, 2022. https://www.miguelgutierrez.org/cela-nous-concerne-tous-this-concerns-all-of-us.

[89] Miguel Gutierrez, "It Concerns All of Us," *ArtsMeme*, November 7, 2017, https://artsmeme.com/2017/11/07/it-concerns-us-all-says-choreographer-miguel-gutierrez/.

My experience of watching *Cela Nous Concerne Tous (This Concerns All of Us)* was dizzying, as the form itself was unstable, with moments of reliable composition appearing and disappearing amidst the chaos. I borrowed Gutierrez' notion of corrupting choreography as another way to understand and push further the unruliness that *SR* presented in rehearsal. I was interested in the ways that craft and improvisation could intersect such that each run-through of the material, and inevitably the entire performance of *Finally, Fairies!,* could quietly reveal new moments and connections. To practice purposefully embracing this possibility of a mutable and unreliable choreography, the dancers and I experimented with utilizing performative moods to the choreography, as if applying a filter to a photo. In this process, I was additionally inspired by musicians who produce several versions of the same track, such as Sufjan Stevens, who along with his most well-known song *Chicago*, has since recorded and released several more versions. *Chicago (Acoustic Version)*, *Chicago (Adult Contemporary Easy Listening Version)*, and *Chicago (Multiple Personality Disorder Version)* are essentially the same song with different tones or genre influences.[90]

The dancers and I created a catalogue of twenty-one performative moods that could all be applied to *SR*. I asked the dancers to use their material from *SR* as a sort of framework that could repeat on end while practicing switching and performing these various moods with specificity. Some of the moods in our catalogue were straightforward, such as "Speed Demon," "Overconfident," and "Sleepy Baby." Others were a bit more elusive, and involved more individual interpretation from each performer, such as "Bibliography," "What's For Dinner?," "Doris," and "Biblical." At times challenging and comical, they presented a nuanced and confounding performative challenge; choreography became more idiosyncratic and peculiar as

[90] Sufjan Stevens, *Illinois*, Asthmatic Kitty, 2005 and *The Avalanche*, Asthmatic Kitty, 2006.

the performers physical tones and rhythms dramatically shifted from mood to mood. I named this section of choreography *Pure Moods*, a version of which was performed in *Finally, Fairies!*[91]

The Phrase: *Rough and Tumble*

Gutierrez wrote about his process of corrupting *Cela Nous Concerne Tous (This Concerns All of Us)*:

> I [was] most interested in movement when I [was] confused by it, when I [didn't] really know what [was] going on or when [he couldn't] easily organize it into a recognizable order. I [found] that recognition in dance comforts us in not a good way — it tells us that 'everything is ok' and that the dancers are pretty and strong and able to make nice shapes. I [preferred] working with time and behavior in such a way that another psychic and emotional terrain [were] revealed."[92]

For Gutierrez, the illegibility of form that emerged from resisting recognition is a political statement that disrupts capitalism's control of beauty and the aesthetic balm of performance. Unsettled choreographies suggest the liminal possibilities of art by taking up as well as upsetting the conjunction of art and political reality. Like the Vaporwave sensibilities discussed in Chapter Three, Gutierrez wrestled with both aesthetic observation and discomfiting the fabric of composition to point towards new and as-yet-unknown possibilities.

Choreographer Jeanine Durning, whose work also inspired some of my choreographic process for *Finally, Fairies!*, asked similar questions through very different compositional methodologies. In her 2015 work, *To Being!*, she proposed an ongoingness of physicality and endurance to break through patterns of habit and ambivalence. Three performers, Durning

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[91] This section takes its namesake from the iconic new-age compilation album, *Pure Moods*, Virgin Records, 1994.

[92] Miguel Gutierrez, "It Concerns All of Us."

included, moved constantly at a virtuosic sprint for over an hour, bursting at the seams of cardiovascular limitation. She called this process "non-stopping — always moving, absent destination— always becoming, never arriving."[93] I took up this notion of non-stopping in rehearsal, proposing a compositional landscape that constantly looped through our various choreographies. I asked what could happen when the dancers were let loose within the phrase, falling downhill at higher and higher speeds. I worked to create structures in which each possible end point dissolves so that the end itself is unnamable and unknowable. I called this section *Rough and Tumble*. The dancers were completely untethered to any particularly formal spatial or temporal composition. They were simply tasked with boldly improvising within and around the phrase and their various scores, continuously moving while deprioritizing or even disbanding their compositional decisions. *Rough and Tumble* dissolved any particular directorial vision and emboldened the simple idea of emergent choreographic possibilities.

Hauntological Scores

Part of the research for this project involved experimenting with weaving together these disparate choreographies into one continuous work. To this end, I created several improvisational scores that held their own substantive weight, as well as served as both transition and disruption for the more set sections. The scores, imbuing the holistic composition with additional textures, offered further resistance of clear structural legibility. The first score recalled Tabet's *Deep Blues*, discussed in Chapter Three, and investigated embodied proposals of dancing from an impulse of emptiness. Alongside dancers Huie and Bruno, I began practicing the score, which

[93] Jeanine Durning, "To Being," Accessed January 10, 2022, http://www.jeaninedurning.com/?page_id=235.

eventually became two different scores. The first, entitled *Empty Meets Empty,* involves the performers entering a space and imagining it empty, while simultaneously imagining their body as an empty shell, drained of its contents and density. The second, *Empty Duet*, expands on this while in conversation with more specified movement design, distilling the sensations of emptiness into short, responsive, movement loops. The dancers practiced prioritizing movement impulse based on imagery and imagination. In doing so, the dancers were confronted with the limits and boundaries of imagination and perception, and they sometimes encountered a persistent physical reality that contradicted the proposed emptiness. In these moments, the inevitable fact of their bodies' weight and density remained at the forefront of their mind despite the prompt to focus on emptiness. In this space of investigation and tension, playful possibilities arose while performers committed to the task, such as when Huie described their dancing as "a balloon full of air in a room full of air." This observation later became integrated directly into the score.[94]

I created the scores *Saturation* and *Constant Shell* in response to the two previously described scores. *Saturation* involved the dancers engaging an imagined environment so immersed with color, light, and heat, and *Constant Shell* invited a dancer to consider themselves as a sort of hollow space with a thin and malleable boundary of skin. *Saturation* was primarily a slow-moving, or even still, performance of sensation, and *Constant Shell* included a directive to be in continuous motion and locomotion.

Lastly, I re-investigated and clarified my approach *How the Space Moves Me*, the score, described in Chapter Two, which launched the preliminary research into hauntology for this project, naming this new version *Architecture/Stains*. In clarifying these scores, I prioritized both

[94] Conversation in rehearsal, October 19, 2021.

a specificity of sensed experience and the imperative of poetic interpretation. In fact, when written, all these scores exist more as poetic proposition than as directive. For example, part of *Saturation* reads, "Your skin, beyond itself, camouflaged, continuous with its surroundings. Your skin is everywhere, and you are nowhere."[95] Part of *Architecture/Stains* reads, "I stain the space with every gesture, my tracings proof of what will remain when I am gone. I am carving memories. This dance, a spectral memory." Because of this poetic entry, the dancers were tasked with troubling their own fixed and logic-based knowledge of self and sensation, and directly engaged a somatic hauntological inquiry in each exploration and performance of the scores.

Hypnogogic Sounds

Throughout most of my rehearsals leading up to *The Poisoned Solo*, discussed in Chapter Two, I played various Vaporwave tracks and playlists, primarily featuring artists such as 18 Carat Affair, VAPERROR, luxury elite, and Don Aaron, looping infinitely at low volume. I was curious about how Vaporwave could exist as ambience, and how that ambience would reflect in choreographic sensibility. I extended this landscape of sound into rehearsals for *Finally, Fairies!*. However, very early on in the process I started to wonder how Vaporwave could be a launchpad for original sound score that wasn't necessarily exclusively Vaporwave, utilizing it as a creative launchpad rather than simply paying homage. More specifically, I proposed a musical landscape that was inspired by hauntological moods as well as the creative procedures of Vaporwave artists. The sound score would act as a cloudy mirror to the compositional methodologies and sensibilities throughout my research process.

[95] All these scores can be found in full in Appendix B.

I approached Minneapolis-based musician Skyler Nowinski to create original music. I'd known him and his music for some time, having admired his band The Controversial New Skinny Pill and his music videos on Instagram.[96] Although he didn't typically work in Vaporwave, his approach to songwriting and recording involved a certain amount of hauntology and pastiche, sampling 1970s and 1980s funk music. In our conversations, he seemed keen to dive deep into Vaporwave sensibilities, and spend time recording melodies, loops, and ambience. Using a variety of instruments (synthesizer, bass, electronic media) as well as samples of other media (Gregorian chant, local news jingles), he created a catalogue of sound files that could be slowed down, distorted, crackled, and repeated.

I began playing Nowinski's catalogue in rehearsals, experimenting with volume and texture, sometime overlapping tracks or leaving spaces of silence. I treated this catalogue mostly as a sort of Muzak, a loose accompaniment without any particular temporal relationship; The dancing was never *set* to music, but the music simply continued.[97] Playing with extremes of volume, such as incredibly quiet, suggested that the sounds might be coming from outside the studio, creating the mood of liminality, imminence, and an almost but not quite emptiness.[98] At times, high volume seemed to suggest an all-encompassing and unyielding saturation, somehow

[96] @cnspband, The Controversial New Skinny Pill, Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/cnspband/.

[97] I use the term Muzak to describe a certain relationship to music: the sound and action continue regardless of active listening and active relationship. I resist adding "in the background," because I don't want to accidentally suppose a hierarchy of media, and the sound created a specific atmosphere integral to the research and production.

[98] I appreciated this as a nod to Trisha Brown's *Foray Forêt* (1990), a work which included an accompanying marching band, an unseen force moving around the outside of the venue.

suggesting both pleasure and dread. These sensibilities carried over into the movement vocabulary and compositional tone, as well as the visual design elements for the stage.

Memory Hallway

As mentioned, Christina Robson joined rehearsals after the phrase had been taught and learned, and the hauntological approaches outlined in the Chapter were well into development. I welcomed this as a compositional intervention and complication: a disruption to the expected and neat order of deconstructing the material. Thematically, I was curious about introducing Robson into the landscape of the dance as an embodiment of false memory, a manifestation of misremembrance, the multiverse, or a nod towards Mandela Effect.[99] While she learned and practiced the hauntological scores, I offered her additional directions, such as "You've seen this phrase once. Now, dance what you think it is." This task of course was not meant to be completed to perfection. Rather, relying on Robson's own keen eye and illustrious performance skills, I created a scenario in which multiple complications and possibilities could arise convoluting choreographic perfection, and leaned further into Gutierrez' proposal of a corrupted and unruly choreography.

I kept Robson's initial task of performing her own recollection of *Solo 2009* as an improvisational prompt. Additionally, this prompt was an impetus for a section of the work called *Memory Hallway*, which, recalling the process from *Long Division* outlined in Chapter

[99] The Mandela Effect is a conspiracy-theory turned phenomenon that describes altered memories of minute details (such as misremembering the correct spelling of KitKat, or *The Berenstain Bears*) as evidence of a multiverse, or at the very least a parallel reality. See Aaron French, "The Mandela Effect and New Memory," *Correspondences*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2018): 201–233.

Two, funneled through iterations of my own embodiment of her movement proposals.[100] *Memory Hallway* traced a corridor, roughly from upstage-left to downstage-right, with each dancer engaged in choreographies that were dyschronious, or at least temporally precarious, in relation to each other. For example, while Steinberg, Villanueva, and Bruno were engaged in incessant loops of their material from *Pure Moods*, Robson entered her *Memory Hallway*, roughly when Huie performed material sampled from *Hana with Gabi by Tristan*. All performers were tasked with shifting performative moods, as if recalling a solo from long ago, while navigating the group composition's shifting terrain and timing. While there were some scheduled meetups, choreographic moments designed to connect and synchronize, I invited the performers to linger, to be late, or stand each other up.[101] Each performance of this section invited new moments of compositional misalignment, presenting embodied memory as hazy and inconclusive. Said another way, *Memory Hallway*, described a hypnogogic recollection of iterations and circulations of semiotic ambivalence that blurred and agitated fixed subjectivity.

[100] *Long Division* was described in Chapter Two.

[101] Most works in dance and theater rely on some structure of cues. In most works, these cues are defined and precise. In rehearsal for *Finally, Fairies!*, I described most cues and landmarks as being purposefully loose so as to engender nuance and surprise within every performance.

Chapter Five: *Finally, Fairies!* or, No Longer, Not Yet

> Perhaps beauty is an ironic tolerance for the imperfections of real life, relaxing the tensions between an organism and its environment, between mind and body, between existence and being for death.[102]
>
> – Franco "Bifo" Berardi

Finally, Fairies!

I premiered my work, a 35-minute dance performance for the stage called *Finally, Fairies!*, at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's Dance Theatre at the University of Maryland, College Park on March 11, 2022. Three more runs of the show occurred over the next two days. The work included archive footage, an original sound score, a scenic landscape integrated with lighting and media designs, original costumes, and six live performers, including myself, who synthesized the research detailed in the previous four chapters of this thesis through improvised and choreographed compositions. Although primarily envisioned and produced as an event for a live audience, *Finally, Fairies!* was simultaneously streamed, under the direction of media artist Luis Garcia, on March 11, 2022, for an at-home audience.

In this chapter, I discuss themes, values, and aesthetics proposed by the performance. Relying on movement observation and description, as well as theories outlined throughout the previous four chapters surrounding hauntology and Vaporwave, I examine possible understandings of the work by illuminating a constellation of seven layered concepts that work in and through each other in rich and evocative ways. As I illuminate these ideas, I speak to my own reading of the work, and suggest that any particular and specific elucidation of themes and

[102] Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of The End (*Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 36.

qualities also leaves room for a multiplicity of alternative interpretations. In this effort, I am both insider and outsider, as throughout the rehearsals and performances I held the roles of dancer and choreographer/director. I reflect on my experience both inside the performance and outside the work from dramaturgical and directorial perspectives.

Some of the ideas presented throughout this chapter were present throughout my research since its proposal, and others developed throughout the process and performance of *Finally, Fairies!*. More than present as compositional approaches, these themes offer aesthetic and intellectual proposals to the audience through their performance. Through this project, I've begun to understand these themes and sensibilities as foundational to my aesthetic values and practices. While I am only able to introduce them here as emergent sensibilities, all of them are bountiful topics in their own right, and deserve to be addressed more in-depth, perhaps as jumping off-points for further creative inquiries and choreographies involving hauntology and dance-making.[103]

Non-Place

The audience enters the theater, encountering a dimly lit stage sparsely littered with objects: three TVs stacked in a pyramid, each playing a similar distorted black-and-white sequence of a face, stoic and authoritative yet ambivalent. On the opposite side of the stage are two benches, turned askew, as if they are discarded extras, left behind long after their utility is through. Besides them sits a mannequin, holding a contemplative resting pose, seemingly taking in the stage from an audience's perspective. He is illuminated in yellow light from a bright

[103] The full Compositional Map for *Finally, Fairies!* may be found in Appendix E. As I speak to themes throughout this chapter, I occasionally jump around between various sections. The Compositional Map, as well as the time stamps found in Appendix F, may be helpful to the reader as I reference the names of particular sections.

window, but the only window in sight is a non-functional frame hovering above the house of the theater. These objects, and their orientations, are out of synch. Do they belong together? Are they waste? Who left them here? Two more partial mannequins, blue and chrome, lay abandoned throughout the stage. Behind them, a large wall, divided into squares, creates a canvas for projected images of distant and out-of-focus palm trees swaying in the breeze.

Six performers enter from the house and stand near the audience. They, too, turn their attention to the space, which evokes a vague nostalgia without a clear distinct temporality. Hauntological, but not quite historical. This space is a non-place, with design elements that suggest a waiting room, an airport, a spa, and a pre-packaged resort vacation simultaneously. Anthropologist Mark Augé discusses these "non-places of supermodernity" as spaces related to commerce, travel, and leisure primarily defined by individual's relation to the space rather than to each other.[104] Urban design scholar Mayhar Arefi expands this further by describing that,

> Freeways, airports, supermarkets, even automatic teller machines (ATMs) exemplify solitary contractual obligations where codes and 'how to' instructions shape the individual's behaviour and obligations.[105]

Meanwhile, Merlin Coverley describes these non-places "leav[e] people with a "feeling as if [they] could be anywhere."[106]

Non-places are salient territory for Vaporwave artists, which draw upon these liminal locations that proliferated the aesthetic landscapes of the 1980s and early 1990s, key moments in the globalization of corporate aesthetics mobilized by neo-liberalism. Composer Skyler

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[104] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995), 94.

[105] Maymar Arefi, "Non-place and placelessness as narratives of loss: Rethinking the notion of place," *Journal of Urban Design* Vol. 4, No. 2 (1999), 182.

[106] Merlin Coverley, *Hauntology; Ghosts of Futures Past* (Harpenden, UK: Oldcastle Books, 2020), 375.

Nowinski's sound compositions, which play throughout *Finally, Fairies!,* lean into Vaporwave sub-genres such as mallsoft and late-night lofi, sampling corporate muzak to evoke sounds of the non-place. These Vaporwave collages include imagery from shopping malls, vacation oases, and visions of capitalist luxury, establishing them as virtual and digital realms, while emphasizing their inevitable decay and entropy in practical reality. Musician and author Grafton Tanner says that "Vaporwave is the music of 'non-times' and 'non-places' because it is skeptical of what consumer culture has done to time and space."[107] Non-places in Vaporwave harbor a longing for the promises, such as freedom, excess, fitness, money, success, and immediacy, that consumer culture holds, while simultaneously understanding that what is being offered is only temporary. Vaporwave suggests that the assurances suggested by consumer culture and accompanying capitalist aesthetics generally lead to sensations of emptiness and loneliness. Establishing the context of *Finally, Fairies!* within the non-place offers a particular understanding of the environment and mood that permeates the work. The performance begins, in the section called *Prologue/Outline*, with the action described above. It creates a tone in which time and space are removed from practical reality, ideas swirl around continuously, and the past and future comment on each other in tandem.

The non-place indicates a queer temporality and spatiality. Time and space are out of joint, seemingly disintegrated. Throughout *Prologue/Outline*, the dancers trace memories of what is yet to come. They move between selected highlights of choreographies about to be seen, collectively creating a how-to manual for the audience by introducing key themes, vocabularies, and performative textures. In this way, *Prologue/Outline* also offers a kind of code, offering the audience aesthetic tools with which to read the dance. After entering, standing, and

[107] Grafton Tanner, *Babbling Corpse*, 36.

acknowledging the non-place, the performers step forward and enter their dance: contemplatively walking into the stage, now lit with bright white and lavender hues, they begin individual movements with no clear relation. The performers aren't quite ignoring each other, but carry out their own actions without any group coordination. They dance alongside, but not necessarily with, each other. They are paradoxically alone and together. Their movements are mostly gentle, without any sense of rush or necessity. A slow turn of the head, a sweep of a leg, or even a dramatic lunge, all performed with casual introspection as each dancer traces through sections of movement from throughout the work in no particular order. At times, their shadows move quietly against the block wall, as if dancing among the palm trees.[108]

The Still-Act

A rush of color floods the stage: dense blue and purple light fill the space, enveloping the performers with slow moving textures of clouds, waves, and sea foam that fill the backdrop. The performers soon become rather still, as if the density of color and image permeating their skin interrupts their action, temporarily subduing their drive to continue, and instead turning them toward a somatic experience of weight, pleasure, and repose. In their slowness and stillness, the performers display variations of tone, density, and delicacy, while suspending expectations of pace and time. Dance scholar André Lepecki suggests that such "still-act[s]" in performance show,

> How the dust of history, in modernity, may be agitated to blur artificial divisions between the sensorial and the social, the somatic and mnemonic, the linguistic and the corporeal, the mobile and the immobile.[109]

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[108] See Appendix F for timestamps, corresponding with the recording of *Finally, Fairies!* from March 11, 2022, for *Prologue/Outline*, as well as the following sections described throughout this Chapter.

[109] Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: The Politics and Performance of Movement*, 15.

This notion of blurred lines becomes important throughout this next section of the dance, called *The Scores*, as well as to the work as a whole. In creating this section, I sought to create a performative world in which somatic exploration worked in tandem with the dramaturgical and theoretical underpinnings. Establishing a landscape of slow and deliberate somatic exploration, even sometimes performed with the performers' eyes closed, refuses to categorize the work in any distinct way, and lays a foundation from which both audience and performers alike take their time yielding to their sensorium's response to the living, breathing embodiments and compositions at play.

Throughout *The Scores*, the performers move from this still and slow density to a lacier weight; the lights and projections on stage follow suit as the space slowly empties itself of saturated color, leaving behind traces of its hues and patterns within the purple, teal, and blue costumes. The performers begin to move faster, curving, arcing, and sliding their bodies in continuous motion and locomotion. They move with a diffusing quality, allowing their bodies to slip between air particles themselves. Arms ribbon upward, directing the rest of their bodies.

Their eyes begin to take more agency with every action. They are more persistent and assertive as they travel. They maintain their individual trajectories across the space like weather systems in a global climate. The space accumulates a layered quality, as each performer carves their movements into the composition, like a continuous line drawing made by a team of artists with different charcoal, pastels, pencils, and paintbrushes. Soft gestural threads mix with punchier and more aggressive rhythmic interruptions, activating the stage with both heightened energetics and ghostly qualities. The movements coalesce into trans-temporal conversation, as if the performers are dancing in the same space across vast periods of time. Echoing some unseen force, the performers reiterate similar movement vocabularies and pathways, oscillating between

carving fingertips, limp wristed flitting, rolling spines, and sweeping extended-limb athletic passages.

The Revenant

Hauntology, the theories, histories, and compositional prompts of which have been traced throughout the earlier chapters of this thesis, considers the ways in which the past, and inevitably the future the past may have suggested, saturate all notions of presence. *Finally, Fairies!* proposes a hauntology in many ways, primarily through its resurrection of the phrase from *Solo 2009*.[110] Almost all movement vocabulary performed throughout *Finally, Fairies!* is derived from *Solo 2009*. The performers continue their relentless movements at the end of *The Scores*, a phrase emerges. It appears, sneakily at first, through a simple arm movement of one dancer upstage, and then almost a minute later, carried by a group of three in unison. The phrase takes hold of certain dancers, possessing them, while simultaneously presenting its presence as cloudy and precarious. Throughout *The Phrase*, the rhythmic force of the phrase, danced mostly in unison, continues to gain more steam, as eventually two more performers join to create a quintet. However, dancers occasionally slip away one or two at a time, jolted back to their embodied exploration of swirling tides and space-staining movements from *The Scores*. Spatially, the fixed presence of the phrase remains in question for most of its duration, coming in and out of focus, often with one dancer slightly askew, at an odd angle, or placing themselves in a partially obscured part of the stage.

[110] See Chapters One, Two, and Four.

Hauntology suggests an ineffability of presence, while addressing the backside, the underlayers, and the disordered elements of any subject. Hauntological sensibility in composition disturbs expectations of order and chrononormativity in ways both grand and minute. Throughout *Finally, Fairies!*, I crafted simple compositional disturbances to forward motion, persistently looping material, or creating situations in which one performer remains in an act of repetition, or in one spot like a ghost, for long durations. At the top of a section called *Trumpets*, performer Rebecca Steinberg tumbles through the end of the phrase only to pause just before its very last move, stuck in extreme deceleration whilst the rest of the performers continue forward.

In performance, I utilized semiotician Jacques Derrida's seminal text on hauntology as an additional revenant. Media designer Deja Collins and I worked together to create a short film, which plays on the three TVs, as well as being projected upon the block wall, throughout *Trumpets*. In the film, performer Caroline Rocher Barnes reads excerpts from Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, the text in which he first coins hauntology, primarily in its original French with a few moments of English translation. The theoretical language of hauntology becomes its own sort of muzak, a background wash, with short recognizable blips of words and phrases that evoke more specific meaning. Through Barnes' reading, Marx, Derrida, and even Shakespeare are summoned into the work as specters with phrases such as "staging for the end of history," "'to be or not to be,'" and "how to comprehend in fact the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end?"[111] The film glitches, cuts, and turns sideways and upside down. Barnes' voice is layered with itself, creating a digitally cloned choir. Barnes herself only ever appears directly on film throughout the work, creating an elusive presence reminiscent of visual artist Sondra Perry's film

[111] Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 10.

and installation work.[112] Often, shadows partially obscure Barnes' face, but her haunting presence and voice permeates.

In *Trumpets*, dancer Christina Robson and I perform a duet, which presents another hauntology composition. When I created *The Poisoned Solo*, described in Chapter Two, I improvised beginnings and endings to each performance of the phrase from *Solo 2009.* For this duet, I learned the beginning, while Christina learned the ending from the recording. We danced the beginning and ending simultaneously, as if gently sifting through memories coiled around each other. This duet has a patient pace, creating a mood of recollection and reminiscence, as gestural connections emerge and vanish. Momentarily creating a trio, the TVs begin to play *Solo 2009*, with a bit of grainy texture for affect, before Robson leaves me to dance alone with my former self. What's left is a feeling of "overwhelming melancholy," in line with hauntological sensibility, which includes, according to Mark Fisher, a "preoccup[ation] with the way in which technology materialize[s] memory."[113]

Gentle Camp

Throughout the process for *Finally, Fairies!*, I honed an aesthetic quality that informed my movement and creative decisions, such as the inclusion of props, such as the mannequins, gel eye face masks, and a bubbling foot bath. Dance scholar Caitlin Marshall, who attended the opening night performance, gave name to this sensibility: gentle camp. Camp aesthetics refer to absurd exaggeration, effeminate artifice, ironic humor and hyperstylization. Perhaps, then, gentle

[112] I was introduced to the work of visual artist Sondra Perry only after filming Barnes' reading with Collins. Several of Perry's works, including *Studio Test (No, No, No)* (2003) and *Efficiency Prototype #1* (2016), are working with similar themes of interrupted faciality, digital cloning, and a collapse of real and virtual visual fields. See www.sondraperry.com.

[113] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 21.

camp refers to the same aesthetic sensibilities with a quieter, more subtle, or more diffuse touch. Some of these qualities may be viewed through a hauntological lens, since, as I've established, hauntology may be applied to anything and everything. As such, gentle camp involves a spectrality of queerness through sly nods towards gay iconography, commentary, and satire.

The mannequins were always a part of the aesthetic design of the non-place from the first draft of Poch's scenic design, but the benches, towels, masks, and foot bath, collectively referenced as The Spa, that live downstage-left were devised as a solution to a compositional problem. Some sections of the choreography involve smaller groups, such as *The Phrase* and *Trumpets.* In rehearsals, I approached the compositions assuming that there would be no entrances or exits, and dancers not directly engaged in the primary action of a given scene would need to engage some sort of task.[114] There is a convention in contemporary dance performance in which dancers not directly engaged in the dancing, but not invited to exit, stand and watch the action while performing a certain sort of embodied witnessing: tall posture, focused vision, sometimes even a leaning-in. Another convention, more postmodern in its approach, would be for the dancers to completely drop the theatrical artifice while stretching their bodies and drinking water, like athletes waiting to get called back into play. Creating The Spa as a part of the geography of the non-place created an alternative. At various points throughout the work, dancers Robson and Villanueva spent time at The Spa, invited to engage both conventions

[114] Of course, the work *could* have involved entrances and exits, and in fact it did in its final production. There were already plenty of layers of theatrical artifice at play, and throughout the rehearsal process I was more concerned with a sort of dramaturgical world-building that kept all its materials swirling around, ever-present. However, researching hauntology through this process also pushed me to follow new creative impulses, involving the sudden disappearance of a dancer from the stage space, while remaining only as a memory or specter, such as when I travelled behind the block wall during *Loops 2* to return five minutes later during *Pure Moods 3*, cheekily suggesting that I have continued dancing the same vocabulary, out-of-sight, and perhaps stuck in some sort of temporal wormhole. In *Finally, Fairies!*, no one is every really gone.

described above with a sense of visual irony. At one point during *Trumpets*, Villanueva dons one of the bright blue gel eye masks and puts his feet in the foot bath, a moment accentuated by sound designer Emily Pan's contribution of an audio track of bubbles.

These moments of gentle camp invite the audience into considering the work as both serious and not. Silliness and absurdity are intentional, and valued complications to the ongoing themes of nostalgia and loneliness, as well as strategies to work against a preciousness of choreography that could generate an austere distance. Gentle camp also provides a broader aesthetic strategy through which to acknowledge the fey quality, mentioned in Chapter One, inherent to the phrase from *Solo 2009*. The flitting and lilting nature of the traveling steps, the persistence of limp and floppy wrists, and an irreverence towards gendered tropes of movement. Queer motifs and references are displayed throughout the phrase with a certain dryness. Through this lens of gentle camp, one can also more accurately sense hauntological vernacular and vocabulary. There are moments, rhythms, and even quotations of movement within the phrase that harken toward queer icons, such as a few steps that suggest Gwen Verdon's Lola, or the infamous aerobics montage from the film *Perfect*.[115,116]

[115] Particularly, I am referring to Verdon's dancing in the song "Whatever Lola Wants," from the film *Damn Yankees!*, directed by George Abbott and Stanley Donen (Originally Released 1958, Distributed by Warner Home Video, 2004), 1hr, 50 min. https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B005KGPYCI/ref=msx_wn_av.

[116] *Perfect*, directed by James Bridges (Originally Released 1985, Distributed by Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2002), 2hrs. https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B006VDNF6G/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r.

Psychological Gesture

In anticipation of filming her reading of Derrida's text, Barnes and I met with acting coach Jen Ring. Barnes had no formal training in acting or public speaking before this project, and we were looking for some tools and guidance for inflection, tone, and facial expression in performance. Ring introduced us to a technique used by playwright and director Anton Chekhov called Psychological Gesture (PG). In this technique, actors endeavor to generate physical tones and gestures through an exploration and examination of a character from physical, intellectual, and emotional perspectives. For example, as an approach to crafting nuanced performance of character, one might explore a quality, such as "whole body simmer," or "smash," while exploring stillness externally.[117] These qualities are specifically imagistic. While I have no formal acting training outside of my dance performance experiences, PG technique offers a framework for understanding the exploration of performative moods throughout *Finally Fairies!,* most notably in its sections *Pure Moods* and *Rough and Tumble*.

As discussed in Chapter Four, I crafted *Pure Moods* by tasking the performers with cycling through the same framework of set choreography while inhabiting or being inhabited by different performative moods. While the particular moods aren't important for the audience's reading of the section, there is a specifically wild and nuanced element of performativity that is heightened by the dancer's employment of these moods through the suggestion of PG. While the

[117] After Jen Ring introduced me to the topic, I found Anjalee Deshpande Hutchinson's article outlining the technique from a teacher's perspective very helpful. I'm excited to learn more about these techniques and see how they can continue to deepen my process through the use of imagery. See "Psychological Gesture: Michael Chekhov Exercises on Physicalizing the Objective," in *Objectives, Obstacles, And Tactics in Practice: Perspectives on Activating the Actor*, edited by Valerie Clayman Pye and Hillary Haft Bucs (New York: Routledge, 2020) 26-27.

dancers engage in incessant repetition, they perform with an energetic bubbling, a burning from the inside. I find this performative approach extremely confounding and disorienting, as it asks the viewer to continuously sift through unsteady ground, and read each performer, and their interactions, with a multiplicity of character.[118]

Semiotic Ambivalence and Hauntological Sensibility

In *Pure Moods*, performers spill from one image and idea into the next, inviting the audience into a sense of wanderlust. Someone taps their chest, throwing her arm behind her, the rest of her body stumbling to keep up. She's wearied, or perhaps just apathetic. Then suddenly, slapping the air on her sides with both hands, she is determined. Behind her, another dancer kneads invisible bread while performing exacting balletic foot patterns. Yet another spins gloriously with arms outstretched like Maria Von Trapp, then grabs some invisible residue in the air as if tearing down wallpaper. Suddenly, another scurries across the stage like an energized squirrel, only to meet the edge of the stage space with a sort of slow and melancholic drift. Once again, dancers are mostly amongst each other in their actions, although twice there is actually physical contact: the graze of hands across another's sides, as if tracing their imprint, and a brief, but visually loud, high five.

This composition, comprised of so many moving parts rich with possible interpretations, creates a landscape of semiotic ambivalence. Gestures, pathways, and connections all pointing

[118] I must note here that through almost the entirety of the process leading towards the performance, the dancers and I all work masks due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. Most of the performers decided, as was an option at that point based on CDC guidance and UMD protocols, to remove their masks for the performance. I'm thrilled with our exploration of PG to affect the tones, speeds, and affects of our bodies in performance, but there is more work to be done in future projects to engage faciality, beyond the eyes, as an integral part of PG practice without the obscuring limitation of the mask.

towards multiple possibilities of references and meanings, exactly what makes dance such a rich site of imagination. Maria Von Trapp is one possible citation for the whirling dancer described above. She could have also been embodying a tornado, or a fidget spinner, or a Flutterbye Fairy. These possibilities invite the audience to engage a nomadic imagination outside the realm of narrative coherence. Scholar Kate Haffey describes narrative coherence as including

> …The chronological movement of time, the sequencing of events, the progression through conventional narrative stages (exposition, rising action, falling action, climax, resolution) in which meaning comes into focus in a conclusion, the sense of closure produced by an ending, a consistent point of view, and character development, to name just a few.[119]

Scholar Jack Halberstam's notion of queer temporality, the "perverse turn away from narrative coherence," is at play here. This is a political move that emboldens the audience to let go of concern over what the dance *means*, and instead wonders about what it *could* mean without the need for the normative logics of narrative.

Indulging this queer temporality through semiotic ambivalence promotes a hauntological sensibility in its viewership. Franco "Bifo" Berardi, describes sensibility as a "sense-driven creation of conjunctions, and the ability to perceive the meaning of shapes once they have emerged from chaos."[120] Yet the hauntological sensibility suggests that these layers of meaning are not meant to be interpreted in any fixed way, and there is no way to fully comprehend or capture each compositional moment. *Finally, Fairies!*, like Derrida's ghost, "is not a puzzle to be solved, and it cannot (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us… push[ing] at the boundaries of language and thought."[121]

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[119] Haffey, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time,* 4.

[120] Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of The End,* 14.

[121] Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms," 378-379.

You Can't Hold Beauty

The composition of *Finally, Fairies!* includes both set choreography and improvisation. Every run, whether in rehearsal or performance, presents moments of beauty. Sometimes, these moments were based on conventional order, or a sudden moment of illumination or satisfaction, a Eureka moment when a group of dancers' actions would coalesce into a moment of compositional satisfaction. One could almost hear the "mmms" in the imagined future audience in response to a beautiful and serendipitous connection. In process, I was faced with a choice: move towards these compositional alignments to create a work that may be more accessible to many theatergoers or stay true to task of exploring hauntological composition that could, like Miguel Gutierrez' choreography described in Chapter Four, challenge notions of craft and beauty.

Yet beauty, especially in its conventional understanding, is a concept called into question by the same queer temporalities and spatialities explored through hauntological research. Beauty is treated as a commodity, especially within artworks developed in capitalist frameworks, the very same frameworks that Vaporwave calls into question. Moments of beauty, especially when defined by visual cohesion and neatness, risk providing a sort of contentedness that suggests "all is good in the world," and those witnessing are not asked to engage or challenge their own expectations, desires, imaginations, or beliefs. Gutierrez suggests this creates complacency in the viewer. Instead, *Finally, Fairies!* suggests, through its subtle corruptions of choreographic reliability described in Chapter Four, a more expansive valuation of beauty more in line with that of philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi. He suggests,

> Beauty occurs with the derailing of the customary, predictable relation between sign and meaning, and with the discovery of unforeseen and multiple perspectives. Beauty has to do with surprise. Symmetry and dissymetry are simply modalities of the configuration of signs, whereas aesthetic value is dependent on improbability, unpredictability, and strangeness: a distance from the predictable order.[122]

In this vein, *Finally, Fairies!* suggests that beauty is everywhere. Following this, certain conventional logics of framing beauty begin to break down.

I am interested in challenging visual hierarchy, specifically as it relates to concepts of beauty, that puts weight on certain events over others. In theatrical disciplines, this hierarchy often places the dancing as less important, and privileges narrative convention over abstraction and experimentation. I intervened on this phenomenon when, in an early technical rehearsal, lighting designer Heather Reynolds cued a pool of light "a special" to illuminate the TVs anytime a dancer interacted with them. Compositionally, these moments were no more important than anything else on stage, so the special had to be cut. In *Finally, Fairies!*, all actions, from the pedestrian and mundane to the more virtuosic and expressive, are on an even playing field. Movement, things, and events simply happen.

Finally, Fairies! suggests a certain sort of viewing. Through this research, I crafted a world in which beauty is anywhere one looks for it: in the still-act, incessant repetition, quiet, and gentle camp. Yet it can never be grasped or kept. You can't hold beauty. Instead, the work teaches its audience something about appreciating choreography as mutable and unreliable as beauty itself. It introduces ways of noticing emergent composition that is everywhere; it awakens a sensitivity to a hauntological poetic sensibility that embraces the seams and specters that provide composition with so much richness. It's not important that the audience walks away with a clear understanding of hauntology. More significantly, *Finally, Fairies!* proposes a sense

[122] Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of The End*, 36.

of deep listening and watching, emboldening an audience to embrace multiplicities of immanence, welcoming surprise and wonder without attachment.

Conclusion: Many Futures

> The long, dark night of the end of history has to be grasped as an enormous opportunity. The very oppressive pervasiveness of capitalist realism means that even glimmers of alternative political and economic possibilities can have a disproportionately great effect. The tiniest event can tear a hole in the grey curtain or reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. From a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again.[123]
>
> – Mark Fisher

I end here because there is no correct place to end.

I entered this project seeking to raise parts of myself that have been hidden through layers of bodily technologies and techniques through the exploration of a single moment and its persistence on my creative imagination. *Solo 2009*, as a piece of vaporware, haunted me. But more than just this artifact, what was haunting me was a longing to craft my own directorial vision. My body, my self. A ghost. I spent over a decade focusing my creative output in service of other choreographers' visions. I will always be grateful for this, as I lived and worked proximally to so many diverse choreographic possibilities. But paradoxically, this was immobilizing. The thought of crafting an evening-length work spun me into an existential crisis. Creating felt futile. I wasn't quite sure what my particular creative angle was. I didn't know my own voice.

My body, my self. A revenant; a choreographer. I stayed away from this revenant for so long, but working through the hauntological choreographies outlined in this paper, from *Solo 2009* to *Finally, Fairies!,* ultimately taught me to consider all my experiences as a choreographic contributor and performer as a boon. They offer me bountiful possibilities and strategies for

[123] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative*? (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009), 81.

generating ideas that are in dialogue with epistemologies, concepts, and creative visionaries across disciplines. Developing *Finally, Fairies!* made me strengthen my voice and clarify my own sensibilities while embracing the specters that inhabit my choices, desires, and creative outcomes. The revenant is here to stay.

This project taught me how to develop a project that is *of* me, but not solely *about* me. I mined my own experience in such a way as to invite a multiplicity of performative ranges in my cast. The dancers embodied my ideas and vocabularies, learned to listen to the ghosts around and within them, and their own creative agency. As with any rich creative project, I now have more questions than answers, but also more clarity as to how to mine these questions for exciting and resonant creative outcomes. I want to continue to pull apart the themes and sensibilities outlined in Chapter Five for more specificity. Each of those concepts warrant their own research project. Why Gentle Camp, and what does the gentle treatment offer that camp doesn't? How can Psychological Gesture be re-purposed specifically for the dancer? Additionally, I am curious about how the improvisational scores, outlined in Chapter Four, may be employed for community practice. How can they be expanded and deepened to continue to suggest new ways of relating to each other through nuanced ways of seeing and listening? How can these scores alone suggest emergent composition, while moving participants away from futility and towards possibility?

All endings are arbitrary, simply replacing a comma with a period. Even a title as declarative as *Finally, Fairies!* presents possibilities through its forward motion. The work continues, rhizomatic, spurring out new threads of inquiry in multiple directions. *And*, not end.

I *and* here because there is no correct place to end.

Epilogue: ~~*Finally,*~~ *Fairies!*

> Saying goodbye is never an easy thing. But you never said that you'd stay forever. So, if you must go, oh, darling I set you free, but I know in time that we'll be together. I won't try to stop you now from leaving 'cause in my heart I know… love will lead you back.[124]
>
> -Taylor Dayne

Toward the end of *Finally, Fairies!*, dancers Hana Huie, Rebecca Steinberg, and myself disappear behind curtains or the block wall. One by one, our momentum from the section *Rough and Tumble* simply flings us out of view, never to return. The remaining dancers, Emilia Bruno, Carlo Antonio Villanueva, and Christina Robson are left alone in their labor of continuing. As the lights grow at first dim, then intensify to a sort of nuclear ferocity, the dancers cycle through variations on earlier sections of the work, primarily *Saturation* and *Prologue/Outline*. They have returned to the beginning, an endless loop, only with less people remaining.

I have been curious about what *Finally, Fairies!* could become outside of the 35-minute time limit, and how the work could more specifically explore the themes of loneliness and being left behind. How could we mine this further in a longer format? What would emerge if we performed the work six times in a row, with just one person leaving during *Rough and Tumble*? How could we strategize around continuing to trouble linear organization by variably fast-forwarding and rewinding to reveal more or less people, the forgotten and abandoned, and until there is only one?

[124] Taylor Dayne, "Love Will Lead You Back," *Can't Fight Fate*. Arista Records, 1989.

I was able to plant the seed of this curiosity sooner than expected. As we walked off stage after bowing on Saturday, March 12, 2022, composer Skyler Nowinski's cover of Taylor Dayne's "Love Will Lead You Back" serenading us, I noticed dancer and cast-member Christina Robson holding her back with one hand. She had just brought a particular wild abandon that she is known for to the performance. It's one of her many abilities; it's also what can lead to injury. The following day was our final performance. Robson generously offered to still join us on stage, but her back was still in spasm. I made the choice to do the performance, without her, as a cast of five. As much as I am committed to my art, I am more committed to the long-term health of my dancers and friends.

We performed our last show without Robson, due to her recovering from her injury. I gave the dancers and myself the task to notice when we used to see, interact, or acknowledge Christina's action on stage. Then, we could decide what to do: either do nothing outside of noticing or dance our memory of Robson's action. Throughout this run, there were times when Robson's absence was felt as an emptiness in the stage, or a prolonged stillness when she used to be the only one moving. Other times, such as when I danced a variation of our duet as a solo, Robson's presence was felt through her gestures and fiery drive persisting through my own embodiment. Of course, I never want any of my cast to be injured, or to have to bow out of a process. But I'm glad to have had the chance to test out these performative strategies, as it makes me surer that I want to continue working in this way, and eventually present a longer work that evolves from this exploration. And this time, I won't wait a dozen years to finally develop the idea.

Appendix A: Texts

Text from *I AM IN A BASEMENT*

This is a story about ghosts. I am about to be what was supposed to be. What would have worked then and doesn't quite work now. The floor is dirty.

People. I am not a solo. I feel feelings. I make sounds.

This is a story of ghosts, and the spaces they inhabit. I am in the space. The space is in me. Sooooo this space. This whole space. The whole earth. Tombs. Immediate. Repeated. Underground. And them, the ghosts. Impressed upon me.

Longing. Belonging.

Deep.

Deep.

Deep.

Deep in your bones. And them, the ghosts. Impressed upon me. Is this too heavy? Is it heavier than a pound of butter?

Am I bigger than a bread box?

Text From *Beverly, Beverly, Beverly*

You can never go back. Recognize it deep in your bones. You can never once again be proximal to those that have held you when you were small. That there will always be distance, temporal and spatial. Catastrophic loss. Deep in your bones.

Marjorie died last year, and I'll never get another chance to fill in the gaps. To understand the parts of myself. Her. The mystery, the shadowy passages. Her. And him. When he pushed his daughter down the stairs. Or the other he, the one that crawled into bed. You're as cold as your mother.

I'm thinking about trauma, and how I'm not interested in exploiting trauma for the sake of art. But I'm also thinking about the fact of the traumatic instant. Moments linger. They live. Their fingers reach deep into the mud, turning warm earth to tar. My toes on hot tar in the summer, tracing the cracks in the parking lot, trying not to get tagged. Hot, hot wood chips. The logic of retrospective confabulation. A moment too late.

You're it. I'm still still still not bigger than a breadbox. I'm still still still not sure my memory can be trusted. I don't want to miss a thing. Perpetually noticing what should have been obvious.

I never got to ask Marjorie everything, but I can start with Beverly. Beverly, who lived with Barbara, who lived with Florence. Florence. She never got the tell-all either. Barbara at the very least had her poetry, embracing the spirit of autumn and so on. Go now, go on, go on.

I don't remember. No I don't remember anything about his ever being around. I don't remember anything I remember people talking about him and but I...I…I don't remember, and I don't recall ever seeing him. Well, you know, I probably could have asked more, but I just never, you know I never thought Mother wanted to have any conversation about it, and if if if we ever asked anything she kind of put it off and I always felt that it wouldn't be fair to mother to you know ask a lot of questions so I just never did I don't right at the moment I can't even think I have a file folder of things that that I don't know Barbara always knew more than I did in her life just just that's the way it was and where mother ever met him I don't know I often think I should have asked her more about that that that trip out there I just I think about driving a car across the desert across the mountains to go you know when you think about it the way cars were those days they were hardly a car.

You're it. I'm still still still not bigger than a breadbox. I'm still still still still not sure my memory can be trusted. I don't want to miss a thing. Perpetually noticing what should have been obvious. Hardly a car.

Well because she always couldn't have memory very exciting usually we would have still been working late in the afternoon we might have lived on Avenue 52 and if we got home from school gramma and grampa DeSpain Barbara and I work excuse me we not next to our house we set the table and next to that house even if she had a gully a culvert it was some meant she cooked on and we'd have fried potatoes and in the spring when it was snow on the ground and in the

mountains and especially if there was rain my favorite meal a lot of water so this year there is a lot of rain and apparently a lot of snow So what we now jokingly lot of water rushing down colorful I mean I always and it was deep probably mashed potatoes I I visualize I mean in six or eight feet deep well she could friedchicken I mean and discovered I still have her water friedchicken in the house now I remember mother tries I might so paper could have tasted like she and Barbara friedchicken and grandma I don't know why across the bridge 'cause uncle right next to him he had a son who is in business with him and and just you know going none of us could write in the car stop that and he probably didn't want to I couldn't really walk 'cause I she was too young and pouring down rain and the police officer carried me another remember screaming talking about it and other than other than moving to Wisconsin later that day the bridge went out and got my gosh it seemed like it was like a house washed away and since I got here and course my my dad started working right away the 1st of July and the dairy when they bought it was one building and I just you know quit I quit and then I did and then when he quit we we spent the day at friends home watching Rose Bowl and the other space and he couldn't smoke in that house either and at that time when he got it cigarettes bottle the milk that you got from the farm the drug store and you pasteurize it and why do you need it it wasn't long and the wrong button and then I said he said I guess I won't and he was real crabby when he quit then they he stopped smoking but until he really got over it they must have bought the pasteurizer and started pasteurizing milk when they were in that little tiny space but they also immediately there were a lot of little dairies where the person had just just one route I guess and and we learned that a whole bunch of the whole the whole bunch grampa DeSpain got sick and you know she had a scholarship but and remodeled it at Allstate teachers and homogenized the milk so they had they had a scholarship and they still space had they had they had in quite a few around if you got sick a quite a few employees she would have been able to go back to school and then that's when she asked asked by asked why they drive to the mountains California and there weren't many of these no no an opportunity to do something you better do it I don't know why she decided to but she did she chose two and they'll deliveries of to Amherst as well as in Stevens Point and that's the way it was well you know I I always often often should have should have asked her more about that they delivered milk every day I just think about driving a car across A to be cross cross the mountains and they were going to be some testing of big families and when you think about it the way cars were back then and in those days

I don't remember no I don't remember anything about his ever being around I don't remember anything I remember people talking about him and but I I I don't remember and I don't recall ever seeing him well you know I probably could have asked more but I just never you know I never thought mother wanted to have any conversation about it and if if if we ever asked anything she kind of put it off and I always felt that it wouldn't be fair to mother to you know ask a lot of questions so I just never did I don't right at the moment I can't even think I have a file folder of things that that I don't know Barbara always knew more than I did in her life just just that's the way it was and where mother ever met him I don't know I often think I should have asked her more about that that that trip out there I just I think about driving a car across the desert across the mountains to go you know when you think about it the way cars were those days they were hardly a car.

Appendix B: Scores

How the Space Moves Me
I move from one place to another. Down a hallway, or downstage to upstage, because depth is everything. I see what I see, and I situate myself. My body is an architectural response, moving through constant relation with the space. I see a wall, I could be a wall, or brush up against the wall. I am as tall as the building I am in. I am a grain of wood within the floor. I am lines, I am curves.

Empty Duet
Enter the space. Feeling it empty. Set adrift in a sea of empty. Wash ashore on the phrase. There is a tide. You may experience loops that are stains in space. You may experience spillage. You may become an icon, but if you do, experience the empty room, and experience the emptiness in you. You are celestial. Your fingertips are everything. Collect shells as you go.

My hip is empty
My elbow is empty
My throat is empty
My goals are empty
My tricep is empty
My palms are empty
My hands are small I know

Palintonic desire?
The organs and fascia are proving themselves?

A balloon full of air in a room full of air.

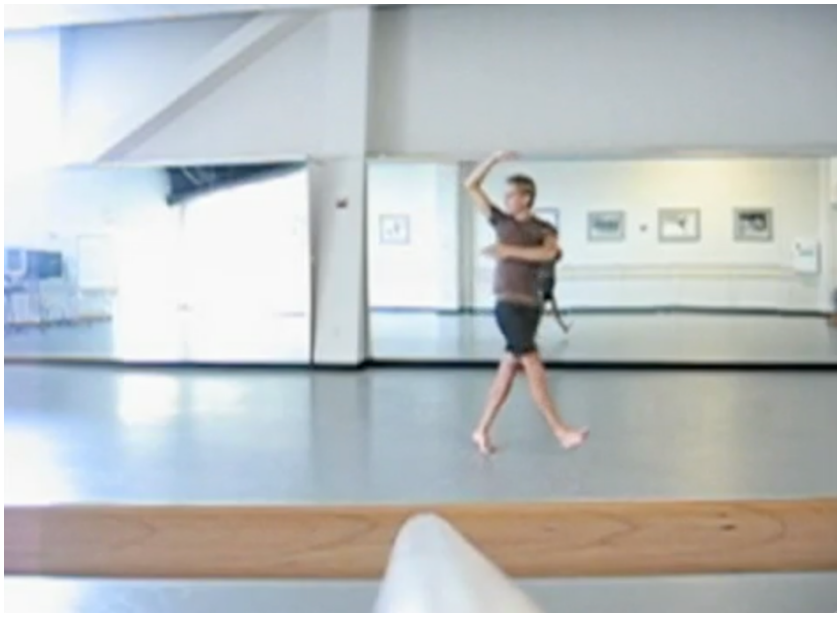
Saturation
Your skin, simultaneously porous and impermeable. A contradiction.
Your skin, saturated with color, with light, the heat of a late afternoon.
Your skin, beyond itself, camouflaged, continuous with its surroundings.
Your skin is everywhere, and you are nowhere.

Emptying/Empty meets Empty
Imagine the space draining of itself, and your skin, containing an empty volume. A volume that is lighter than air, because it might be nothing. How empty can you be (this is imagination). Step by step, take a survey, and apply this emptiness systematically to your body. Now, that emptiness extends beyond you. The space beyond the black hole, where density and emptiness cease to mean or exist.

Constant Shell
This can only happen after Empty meets Empty. An added layer: stillness is no longer possible. Movement is inevitable, mandatory, everywhere, and only. Do the locomotion with me.

Architecture/Stains
I move from one place to another. Down a hallway, or downstage to upstage, because depth is everything. I see what I see, and I situate myself. My body is an architectural response, moving through constant relation with the space. I see a wall, I could be a wall, or brush up against the wall. I am as tall as the building I am in. I am a grain of wood within the floor. I am lines, I am curves. I am an internal volume that senses vastness and possibility, proving my density, my frameworks, my potentialities. I stain the space with every gesture, my tracings proof of what will remain when I am gone. I am already gone. I am carving memories. This dance, a spectral memory. I enliven my focus from the inside out.

Appendix C: Images



[Image 1: Screenshot of *Solo 2009*]

[Image 2: Screenshot from rehearsal footage, November 12, 2020]

[Image 3: Screenshot from *Hana with Gabi by Tristan.* Dancers left to right: Hana Huie and Gabi Woska.]

[Image 4: Screenshot from rehearsal footage for *Long Division*, February 24, 2020. Dancers left to right: Sydney Lemelin and Morgan Pravato.]

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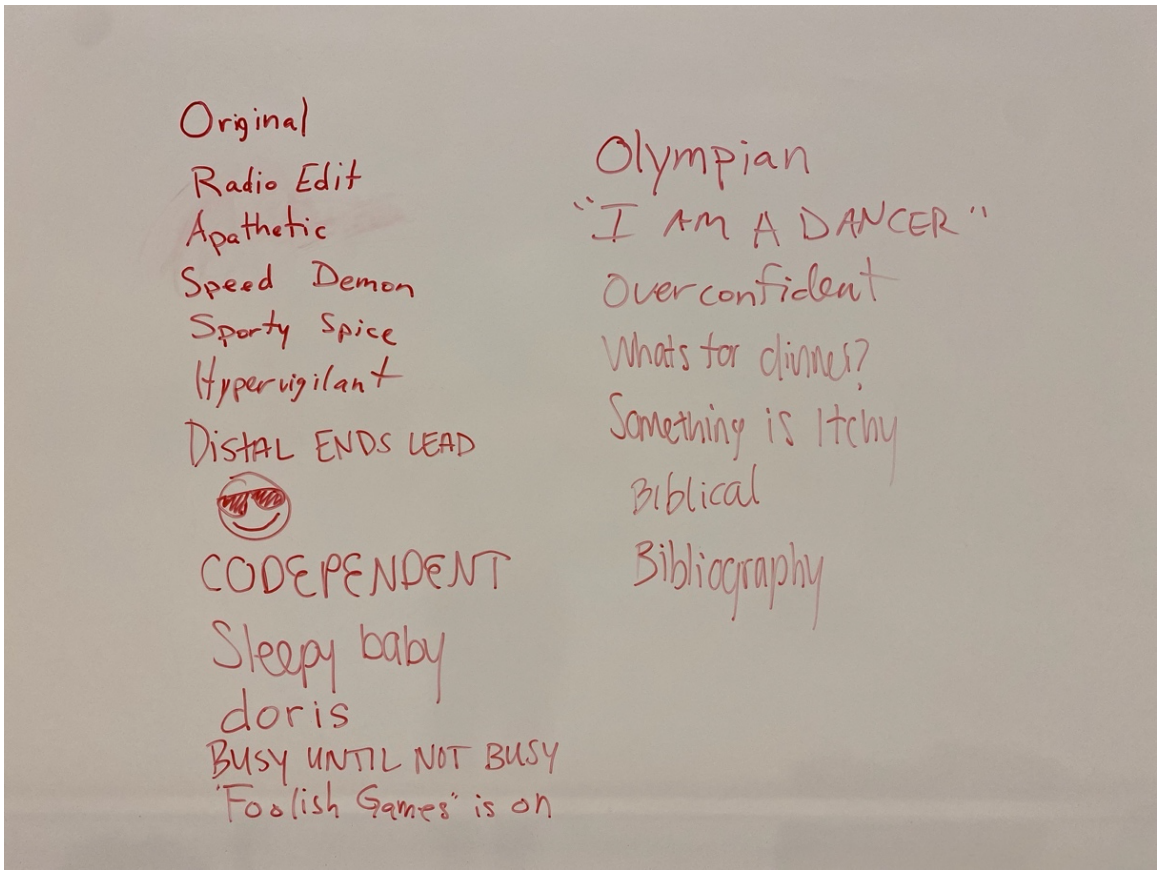
[Image 5: Screenshot from *I AM IN A BASEMENT*.]

[Image 6: Screenshot from *I AM IN A BASEMENT*.]

[Image 7: Screenshot from *Beverly, Beverly, Beverly*.]

[Image 8: Still from footage screened on projector from *Beverly, Beverly, Beverly*.]

[Image 9: Screenshot from *The Poisoned Solo*.]



[Image 10: *Pure Moods* Catalogue.]

[Image 11: Production still of *Finally, Fairies!*. Photography by Jonathan Hsu.]

Image 12: Production still of *Finally, Fairies!*. Dancers left to right: Emilia Bruno, Hana Huie, Rebecca Steinberg, and Tristan Koepke. Photography by Jonathan Hsu.]

[Image 13: Production still of *Finally, Fairies!*. Dancers left to right: Tristan Koepke, Christina Robson, Rebecca Steinberg, and Carlo Antonio Villanueva. Photography by Jonathan Hsu.]

[Image 14: Production still of *Finally, Fairies!*. Dancers right to left: Carlo Antonio Villanueva, Christina Robson, and Emilia Bruno. Photography by Jonathan Hsu.]

Appendix D: Titles

This is a brief list of additional working titles that came up as possibilities throughout this process, in no particular order. Eventually, I decided on *Finally, Fairies!*.

Fairies Undone
The Poisoned Solos
Poison
Tropical Pesticide
Finally, Fairies!
There She Is
A Balloon Full of Air in a Room Full of Air
A Room Full of Air
This Dance is Going to Be Torn Down
Fairies®
Altogether Other
All Together Other
f i n a l l y f a i r i e s
F@1R13$!
f@i®i3$
chill fairies choreo to relax and study to
Kirkland signature
A balloon full of fairies® in a room full of fairies®
An air full of room in a fairies full of balloon
Ghost Effects
Swayze
Thelma and The Breeze
~~Finally~~, Fairies!

Appendix E: Composition Map

Entrance → **Prologue/Outline** (Tracing memories of what's to come)

The Scores
SATURATION
Empty Meets Empty
Constant Shell
Architecture/Stains

The Phrase (Emilia, then Hana and Rebecca) Architecture/Stains
(Carlo's late) Architecture/Stains
(Tristan's later) ↓
(Christina goes to spa)
{Caroline/Ghost on the Screen/Derrida} (Carlo goes to spa)

TRUMPETS, stutter
- Rebecca, Queen Entropy
- Christina, The Herald (Ending score from The Poisoned Solo)
- Tristan, The Premonition (Beginning score from The Poisoned Solo)
- Carlo, Self-Care First!
- Emilia and Hana, Empty Duet
- The Poisoned Solo, evaporate

Loops 1 (Christina and Rebecca)
Loops 2 (Add Emilia)
Loops 3 (Add Carlo and Hana)

Pure Moods (SR) 1 ↔ **Memory Hallway** (Christina)
Pure Moods 2 ↔ **Modern Dance** (Hana)
Pure Moods 3/Olympian
- Tristan replaces Emilia
- Emilia joins Modern Dance

Rough and Tumble, evaporations/disappearances/sudden loss
Christina, retrograde scores, SATURATION at your own time
Emilia, The Phrase revisited
Carlo, The Wise Owl

Prologue but it's the end and almost everyone's gone.
Re-SATURATION/Burn your skin off/The end of the world.

Curtain/Love Will Lead You Back

Appendix F: Time Stamps

Below are the approximate timestamps for each section of *Finally, Fairies!*, as recorded by videographer David Andrews on Friday, March 11, 2022. Several sections, and their corresponding timestamps overlap as the sections are layered or woven together.

Prologue/Outline	0:20-2:20
The Scores	2:20-9:00
The Phrase	9:00-17:18
TRUMPETS	17:18-21:06
Loops 1	21:06-21:42
Loops 2	21:42-22:56
Loops 3	22:56-25:15
Pure Moods 1	25:15-26:23
Memory Hallway	25:32-28:35
Pure Moods 2	26:23-27:27
Modern Dance	26:23-28:34
Pure Moods 3/Olympian	27:27-28:43
Rough and Tumble	28:08-30:40
Re-SATURATION	30:40-34:35

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